An exploratory study of complementary contrastive discourse constructions in English

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This paper studies the fundamental characteristics of a subgroup of members of the family of complementary-contrastive discourse constructions in English. Following Ruiz de Mendoza and Gómez-González (2014) by discourse constructions this article refers to form-meaning pairings capturing relational meaning such as addition, exemplification, contrast, etc. grounded in high-level cognitive models. A discourse construction (e.g., *X Let Alone Y*; cf. Fillmore, Kay, & O'Connor, 1988), generally consists of a fixed part and two variables, where the fixed part is a connector (a discourse marker or a conjunction). The constructions under scrutiny indicate a relation between two elements or situations in the world that are opposites but not exclusive of each other. Many of the members of this constructional family have frequently been treated as fully interchangeable in standard lexicographic practice. By contrast, this paper argues that each of these constructions introduces small but decisive changes in focal structure, resulting in important differences in meaning. Taking this evidence into account, the paper specifies the cases where one construction is used with preference over the others.

Keywords: discourse constructions, complementary contrast, construction grammar, active zone, profile

1. Introduction

While Cognitive Linguistics has heartily embraced the notion of construction and cognitive linguists have developed several accounts of Construction Grammar (see Butler & Gonzálvez-García, 2014 for an extensive overview), the focus of attention has been on the study of idioms and on the argument structure level of description, with increasing inroads into illocution (Del Campo, 2013; Pérez Hernández, 2001, 2009, 2012, 2013; Stefanowitsch, 2003). The notion of discourse construction has been initially explored in Mairal and Ruiz de Mendoza (2009) and Ruiz de

Mendoza and Gómez-González (2014) with a view to capturing high-level, non-lexical constraints on meaning-bearing discourse relations such as restatement, contrast, condition, and the like.

Explicit meaning-bearing discourse relations have been extensively studied in terms of discourse markers, which are generally defined as functional units whose role is to organize discourse into segments (see Blakemore, 2002; Fraser, 2006, 2010; Schiffin, 1987 and the references therein). But precisely because of their organizational function, discourse markers constrain the nature of the elements that they combine, which could call for a complementary account of discourse connections in terms of constraining factors. This is precisely the orientation of the study carried out by Fillmore, Kay, and O'Connor (1988) on the *Let Alone* construction. However, these authors study the construction in isolation and do not take into account other constructions with a related meaning. Similarly, from a functionalist perspective, Hannay, Martínez Caro, and Mackenzie (2014) offer an analysis of the connective *besides,* but still fail to explore its interconnections with other semantically-related markers. This weakness in the study of explicit discourse constructions has been pointed out by other authors such as Mairal and Ruiz de Mendoza (2009), and Ruiz de Mendoza and Gómez González (2014). However, these studies only go as far as determining the main organizational dimensions of discourse constructions (e.g., contrast, comment, specification, addition, exception, etc.). However, constructions belonging to any given dimension are treated as isolates rather than as members of a network of relations, as have been postulated for constructions at other levels (see, for example, the seminal study of the resultative family carried out by Goldberg & Jackendoff, 2004). This is a serious deficiency that needs to be addressed. Except for a preliminary investigation on complementary alternations (Iza Erviti, 2015), there are no studies that deal with families of discourse constructions from a cognitivist perspective. For all these reasons, the object of this study is to provide an initial explanation of a so far largely unexplored group of discourse constructions that have been labelled *complementary contrastive discourse constructions* in English. According to Mairal and Ruiz de Mendoza (2009), these constructions differ from contrastive alternation constructions (e.g., *Either you win, or you lose*) where two alternates are presented as being antithetical. In complementary-contrastive alternation constructions, the alternates are not exclusive of each other (*No one insulted him nor did physical harm to him).*

In this paper, using a number of dictionaries and thesauri,[1] we analyze the connectors that show contrast between their two alternates but are not exclusive of

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1. The dictionaries used were the *Collins Cobuild dictionary,* the *Merriam Webster dictionary online,* the *Cambridge dictionary online, Dictionary.com, Wordreference online,* and *Thesaurus.com.*

each other (i.e., connectors such as *however, nonetheless, even though* etc.). These constructions, therefore, could be said to be in complementary contrastive alternation. Interestingly enough, some of these connectors are treated as fully synonymous by most dictionaries, even though small corpus searches (of around 50 occurrences) reveal that on some occasions one connector may not be allowed in the construction while the other one may be. This is the case, for example, of the connectors *nevertheless* or *nonetheless*, which, according to the *Collins Cobuild dictionary*, are identical in meaning, or the case of *anyway* and *anyhow*. These small-scale searches also reveal that discourse connectors can have different meaning nuances depending on the context where they are used. This observation has led us to contemplate the application of the Langackerian notion of *active zones* within a given *profile* (or designated entity) to explain the meaning distinctions of what could otherwise be regarded as the same conceptual construct. Section 2 discusses how this distinction applies fruitfully to discourse constructions. After that, Section 3 provides an overview of complementary contrastive constructions and defines the six profiles that we have been able to identify in this discourse dimension. These are neutral, concessive, correcting, topic changing, topic avoiding, and refusal-apology constructions. Then, Sections 4 and 5 study two of the profiles, concessive and correcting constructions. Space limitations prevent an exhaustive description containing all profiles. However, the selected profiles are very productive in terms of the number and kind of constructions they contain, which will provide readers with reasonable illustration of how constructional profiles within a group are organized. The article concludes with a summary of the main contributions made in it.

2.   Profiles and active zones in discourse constructions

In Langacker's Cognitive Grammar (henceforth CG; see Langacker, 1987, 1999), concepts are understood in terms of profile/base relationships. The profile of a concept is whatever it designates. An example of this is the term "dog", an animal that barks, has four legs and a tail, etc. But "dog" is understood differently if we think of guide street dogs, hunt dogs, stuffed dogs or domestic dogs. Now, when we say *The dog barked* or *His dog was very soft*, the same entity "dog" is interpreted in terms of different active zones: in the first example, we picture the mouth of the dog opened to produce the characteristic sound dogs make when they bark, whereas in the second we picture a hand caressing the dog's fur. These are relevant parts of the meaning characterizations that the term "dog" has; such relevant parts of the designatum are what Langacker calls the active zones of the profiled concept.

According to Del Campo (2011), for every conceptual characterization, whatever its intrinsic complexity (e.g., whether it refers to an entity or to a situation) or its degree of genericity (i.e., whether it is a high or low level representation), we can postulate the existence of profile/base relations and of active zones (or relevant meaning facets) within profiles. Del Campo (2011) illustrates her point by examining an array of illocutionary constructions. For example, *How about X?* designates (i.e., profiles) a proposal for action within the context (i.e., base domain) of the *cost-benefit cognitive model*, which is a high-level situational characterization specifying a number of socio-cultural stipulations. One such stipulation captures the idea that people are generally expected to do their best to benefit other people even if this involves a cost to the former (see for a thorough, more technical treatment Baicchi & Ruiz de Mendoza, 2010; Ruiz de Mendoza & Baicchi, 2007). Del Campo (2011) argues that this proposal for action has at least two different active zones each of which underlies a different illocutionary interpretation: (i) a suggestion (e.g., *How about buying another car?*), where the speaker puts forward a good option that may benefit the addressee; (ii) an invitation (e.g., *How about coming and seeing my apartment?*), where the speaker asks the addressee to join him in a common course of action that will benefit both of them although in different ways (the addressee is expected to be benefitted by taking part in the action, while the speaker's benefit is derived from the positive feelings originating in social acceptance).

Discourse constructions naturally follow the same pattern of conceptual organization: all complementary contrastive discourse constructions have the same meaning base (X and Y are in an antithetical relationship, without being mutually exclusive of each other), but they profile this meaning relation from different perspectives. And within each profile, depending on which meaning zone is activated by the connector, the same construction can belong to one profile or another (the active zone is that which is directly relevant to the interpretation of the designated element). This is why some constructions show more than one meaning depending on which meaning zone they have activated. This is the case of the construction *X all the same Y*, which we shall discuss in greater detail later. For the time being, it will be enough to note that this construction can have two possible meaning interpretations. In one of them, it can suggest that a statement is true or relevant in spite of other things that have been or will be said. An example of this interpretation is found in the sentence *I realize she can be very annoying, but **all the same** I think you should apologize for losing your temper with her.* In another interpretation, this construction can introduce a reply to someone when you want to indicate reluctance, disbelief, refusal, or an apology as in *I won't need your help. Thanks **all the same**.* Notice that the same construction has two different meanings obtained by activating two different zones of the same connector. Still, X and Y

keep being two opposites that are not exclusive of each other. In this manner, the distinction between base, profile and active zone allows us to:

i.   Relate constructions that designate the same relation in the world (a complementary contrastive relation, according to which X and Y are antithetical, but are not mutually exclusive of each other).
ii. Classify these discourse constructions according to the meanings they could profile, and
iii. Pin down and motivate subtle meaning differences between discourse connectors.

We will now see how this analytical pattern applies to the two constructional profiles that we have selected. But before we do so, we will briefly define complementary contrastivity as a basic discourse relation and outline the steps that allow for the classification of discourse connectors according to the meanings they profile.

3.   Complementary-contrastive constructions

As was explained in the introductory section of this paper, the base of the complementary contrastive constructional family is a relation between X and Y in the world or between two features of X (m and n) where X and Y or m and n are opposites but not exclusive of each other (i.e., the existence of X does not preclude the existence of Y or the existence of m does not preclude the existence of n). Nevertheless, this meaning base can be profiled very differently depending on the construction selected to characterize it.

The constructions that we have identified as having this meaning base are listed in Table 1 below.

Some of these constructions are more neutral than others. "Neutral" in this context refers to the fact that the meaning base and the meaning the construction profiles are almost identical. In other words, the most neutral member of a constructional family is the one that profiles the base the least thus capturing a higher number of features of the base. Neutrality is not to be confused with vagueness since in a neutral construction form-meaning correspondences are stipulated with precision.

In the case of complementary contrastive discourse constructions, the most neutral member is the construction *X but Y,* because it adapts its meaning to many different contexts (i.e., many discourse connectors could be replaced by *but* without apparent differences in meaning in most contexts), as it practically does not profile the base. The meaning that *but* profiles and that of the base of the construction are almost identical, i.e., it links two opposing elements by making them

Table 1. Complementary contrastive discourse constructions

Excuse me but Y/I'm sorry but Y	Leaving aside X, Y	Much as X, Y
Not so much X as Y	X (but) still Y	X after all Y
X against Y	X all the same Y	X although Y
X anyhow Y	X anyway Y	X at any rate Y
X at least Y	X be that as it may Y	X besides Y
X but (then) Y	X but Y	X despite Y
X even (now/so/then) Y	X even (so) Y	X even if Y
X even more/less M than Y	X for all Y	X howbeit Y
X however Y	X in any case/event Y	X in spite of Y
X is more M than N	X never mind Y	X nevertheless Y
X nonetheless Y	X notwithstanding Y	X on the other hand Y
X on/to the contrary Y	X regardless Y	X though Y
X while admitting Y	X while Y	X would rather Y (than Z)
X yet Y		

complement each other, although not completely. It is not possible to use *but* in all contexts, because some of them require more specificity.[2] For example, the connector *but* cannot be used to correct a particular statement by being more specific as in *They felt, or at any rate/in any case/at least Dan felt, both relieved and still frightened.*

Our next step is to study in detail the meanings that each of these constructions can profile. The Table 2 below summarizes the six constructional profiles for the family of complementary contrastive constructions in English. For reasons of space, however, only the constructional profiles 2 and 3 in Table 2 will be ana-

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2. Traditionally, grammarians and language philosophers have recognized that *but* is very generic, and that it has a rather broad meaning that must be parameterized in context. According to Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1986) *but* was said to have a generic meaning that had to be adjusted pragmatically, generating an explicature as opposed to an implicature. Other authors such as Bach (1994) used the term *impliciture* instead of *implicature*, but this term is roughly equivalent to Sperber and Wilson's *explicature.* In the present proposal we defend the view that this phenomenon is simply the application of a high-level cognitive operation: for reasons of cognitive economy, humans can assign a very generic value to some words and adjust their meaning in context. By means of the high level metonymy GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC, we adjust the generic meaning of *but* to each of the specific meanings it adopts in different contexts, and therefore, explicatures are merely the result of the application of this cognitive operation. In any case, contextual clues are always needed for this pragmatic adjustment (Galera & Ruiz de Mendoza, 2014, p. 145).

lyzed in this paper. These constructional profiles refer to concessive and correcting constructions within the complementary contrastive family in English.

Table 2. Constructional profiles

Constructional Profiles	Definitions	Examples
Constructional Profile 1: **Neutral complementary-contrastive constructions**	To present a state of affairs from a different but complementary point of view to what was mentioned or expected. Such a complementary assumption may in this manner contradict previously raised expectations.	*Some living composers **are more dead than** alive.* *It was **not so much** an argument **as** a monologue*
Constructional Profile 2: **Concessive constructions**	To suggest that one assumption (i.e., the one within the scope of the marker) is more important than the rest, independently of whatever has been or will be said.	*I don't know whether he was doing science, law or math.* ***In any event** he became a full professor.* *I realize she can be very annoying, but **all the same** I think you should apologize for losing your temper with her.*
Constructional Profile 3: **Correcting constructions**	To correct or modify the content elements of an utterance whatever its illocutionary force, by changing all or part of it or by specifying it.	*Come early evening, after tea time, **at any rate**.* *…the hooligans –**at least** two strong men-are believed to have rocked the seats until the bolts snapped*
Constructional Profile 4: **Topic changing constructions**	To change the topic or return to a previous topic.	*Stereotypes are sometimes difficult to overcome. **Be that as it may**, tell me about yourself. What brings you here and where do you dream of going?*
Constructional Profile 5: **Topic avoiding constructions**	To avoid discussing or considering a particular subject or aspect of something.	***Leaving aside** for a moment a discussion of the disadvantages, let's turn to the advantages.*
Constructional Profile 6: **Refusal-apology constructions**	To introduce a reply to someone when you want to indicate reluctance, disbelief, refusal, or an apology.	*I can give you a lift if you wait-no, thanks, **anyway*** ***Excuse me, but** I think you're wrong there.*

4.   Concessive constructions

Some of the constructions identified within the family of complementary contrastive alternations make the content of the second constructional variable (Y) seem more important than the first (X). This can be exemplified by the following sentence: *I don't know whether he was doing science, law or maths; **in any event** he became a full professor.*

These constructions convey the idea that, whatever the nature of X, what really matters is Y. This meaning implication is achieved by giving prominence to the second variable of the construction over the first. As a result, this change in focal structure makes the content of the first variable seem less important from the speaker's perspective. The speaker may have chosen to emphasize Y either because X might have sounded too restrictive (i.e., it is a subjective judgment belonging to Halliday's interpersonal function of language; Halliday, 1978), or because Y is considered to be objectively more important than X (i.e., it is presented as an objective judgment in terms of Halliday's ideational function of language). We can identify this second meaning profile in these examples: *I decided to postpone the idea of doing a course, and **anyway** I got accepted by the Council* or in *I don't think there's been an edition since 1977; **at any rate** that's the one I'll be referring to.*

The constructions that profile this meaning within this constructional family are the following: *Much as X, Y; X after all Y; X against Y; X all the same Y; X although Y; X anyhow Y; X anyway Y; X besides Y; X but (then) Y; X despite Y; X even (now/so/then) Y; X even if Y; X for all Y; X however Y; X in any case/event Y; X in spite of Y; X nevertheless Y; X nonetheless Y; X notwithstanding Y; X regardless Y; X (but) still Y; X though Y; X while admitting Y; X while Y; X yet Y;* and *X at any rate Y.* Each of these constructions introduces small differences in meaning that may block the use of a connector in a given context. Nevertheless, in most contexts, these variations do not preclude the interchangeability of markers, as all these constructions metonymically realize the same "whatever-is-the-case" meaning captured by this meaning profile (see Figure 1 below).
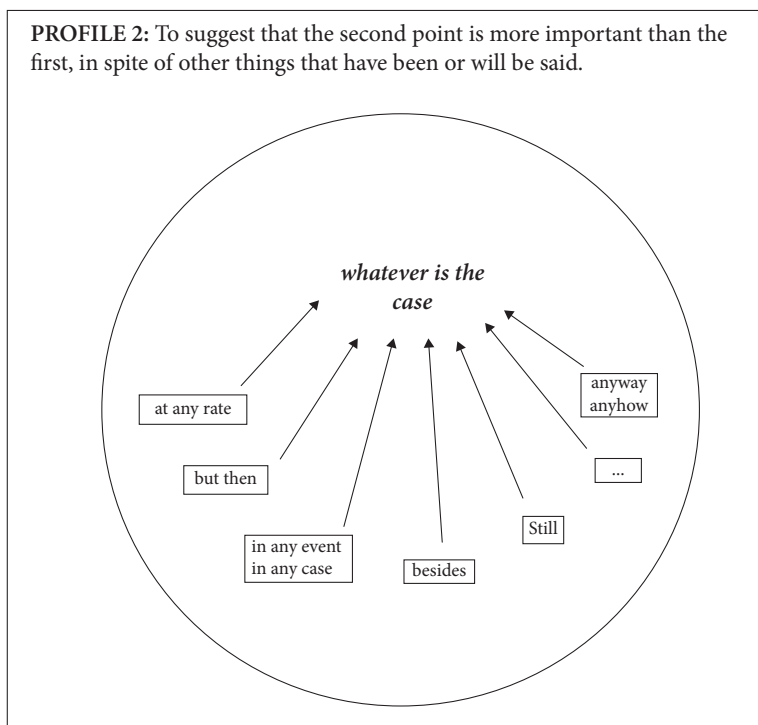
PROFILE 2: To suggest that the second point is more important than the first, in spite of other things that have been or will be said.

whatever is the case

at any rate

but then

in any event
in any case

besides

Still

...

anyway
anyhow

Figure 1. Some profile 2 connectors

Consider, for example, the case of the connectors *at any rate* and *in any event:*

(1) But perhaps there would be some way of persuading her; **at any rate**, Emily would not give up her ideas.   (BNC, CKD2281)

(2) As it turns out, his crime is an ambiguous one and, **in any event**, his actions are determined by a family curse: his father had wanted to kill his mother but had been dissuaded from doing so.   (BNC, EFX 188)

In Examples (1) and (2) above, *at any rate* or *in any event* can be used indistinctly, without any apparent differences in meaning. Since the two markers are straightforwardly interchangeable, it is difficult to find examples where one of them is not allowed in the construction (except for their metaphorical extensions). But there are cases where *in any event* and *at any rate* are not fully equivalent. Consider Examples (3) and (4) below:

(3) I don't know whether he was doing science, law or maths; **in any event/?at any rate** he became a full professor.

(4) He did something, something in industry **at any rate/?in any event**.

This degree of incompatibility is due to the fact that when we use *in any event,* we must have different alternative scenarios, and the existence of any scenario is possible. In contrast, *at any rate* emphasizes a unique scenario and different possibilities within that scenario. Besides, *at any rate* indicates the frequency range in which something happens, based on the premise that if something occurs very frequently, it might be the case that it may always happen. Through a metonymic extension process of the frequency parameter, we get access to the meaning of "whatever the circumstances" or "whatever is the case", because the events in question "always" occur. By contrast, *in any event* profiles a number of alternative events, not on the grounds of the frequency with which they occur, but on the grounds of their existence. The alternative scenarios are explicitly mentioned, but the construction suggests that these scenarios do not matter, because Y always occurs independently of them. On the other hand, by using *at any rate,* speakers profile one or more alternative events (the X variable) from the point of view of how often they take place within a given period of time. *At any rate* suggests that no matter the frequency with which X occurs, Y is what actually matters.

In practice, these two connectors have become very close in meaning, resulting in the "whatever-is-the-case" meaning via a metonymic extension, as depicted in Figure 1 above. It is difficult to argue in favor of the use of a connector over the other. There are only preferred options, depending on the active zone activated in the context: sometimes speakers find it preferable to focus on frequency (the case of *at any rate*) while, on other occasions, the focus of attention is on the existence of alternative scenarios (the case of *in any event*).

A parallel explanation applies to the constructions *X anyway Y* and *X anyhow Y*. Both are almost identical in meaning, and both are related to the manner in which Y is achieved. The difference lies in that *anyway* is based on the experiential conflation between a goal and the path followed to reach that goal, as dictated by the underlying metaphor MEANS TO ACHIEVE A GOAL ARE PATHS TO ACHIEVE A DESTINATION (see Lakoff, 1993). By contrast, in the case of *anyhow* the meaning is literal, i.e., 'in any manner'.[3] Our corpus searches have yielded numerous examples of these constructions that show this "whatever-is-the-case" meaning. Examples (5) to (9) illustrate this point:

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3. Corpus searches attest to the greater frequency of *anyway* over *anyhow*. This is not a problem to put the two constructions in contrast, however, since they belong to the same meaning dimension and their use can become equivalent in practice, their use being a matter of speaker's preference, as in the case of *at any rate/in any event*, except when their subtle meaning differences call for one or the other.

(5)   But we found a way to it **anyhow**.   (*Collins dictionary*)

(6)   I decided to postpone the idea of doing a course, and **anyway** I got accepted
      by the Council.   (*Collins dictionary*)

(7)   Who would believe you **anyway?**   (BNC, FYV 937)

(8)   They wouldn't have found us **anyhow**.   (BNC, A6N 413)

(9)   The country is ours now **anyhow**.   (BNC, A6N 505)

The case of the construction *X but then Y* is different. *But then* is an amalgam of
a conjunction (*but*) and a discourse marker (*then*) that takes on new discourse
value. By means of experiential conflation, speakers easily identify the chronologi-
cal order in which events occur with the evidence that these events have occurred.
A metonymic extension of the original temporal meaning of *then* is generated,
which causes *then* to acquire a new evidential meaning. *If A then B* means that, if
B has occurred, then A must have occurred. The existence of B, then, is evidence
of the existence of A (i.e. if there is a second floor in a building, then there must
be a first floor). *But* is introduced to contrast or contradict a false assumption that
the listener may be entertaining. The connector *but then*, therefore, is halfway be-
tween having both evidential and contrasting meaning values.

(10)   Death still seemed impossible **but then** I suppose it always does.

                                                                  (BNC, B19 170)

(11)   It was fairly obvious that Jo did not want to be recognized, **but then** who
       would with Nevil in tow?   (BNC, HW8 1939)

It is worth noticing that Examples (10) and (11) show a slightly different way of
profiling the same concessive meaning; while previous examples transmitted the
idea of Y being actually more important than X, these examples achieve a very
similar effect by diminishing the importance of the X element of the construction.
It is a matter of conceptual prominence: if X is regarded as unimportant, then,
what really matters is Y.

    In the case of the construction *X still Y*, X and Y are also in direct opposition,
Y being more important than X. The X element is always a fact while the Y ele-
ment can either be a fact that is maintained over time, or a judgment on the part of
the speaker as in *Whatever they have done, they are still your parents*. The general
meaning of the construction is that even though circumstances in X are true, what
is more important is that the circumstances in Y (that have not been altered in
time) are true as well. Consider the following examples in this respect:

(12)   Just as I reached the bus-stop the bus went off. **Still**, that's life, isn't it?

                                                                  (*Collins dictionary*)

(13)   I've got to find the money from somewhere. **Still**, that's my problem.

(Collins dictionary)

Other constructions that include a time dimension in their semantic composition are *X all the same Y, X while admitting Y, X while Y* and *X yet Y.*

In the construction *X yet Y,* X and Y are apparently two opposite values where the existence of one of the elements would preclude the existence of the other. However, this is not the case, and X and Y take place at the same time, which allows for the contrast between both X and Y. The general meaning of this construction is that even though the circumstances in X are true, what matters is that the circumstances in Y, which have not been altered in time, are true as well. In consequence, the existence or reality of the element introduced by *yet* is presented as being always the one that holds for the speaker. In Example (14) below, the subjects in question attack the state and at the same time draw money from it. The fact that they attack the institution from where they get money is surprising for the speaker, and both circumstances contrast with each other. Example (15) contrasts and combines the qualities of being firm and being gentle, as it is assumed that a firm thing is hardly gentle.

(14)   They attack the state, **yet** draw money from it…   *(Collins dictionary)*

(15)   A firm **yet** gentle hand…   *(Collins dictionary)*

The construction *X all the same Y* can also transmit the idea that the state of affairs contained in X has not been altered in time, but it does so implicitly (i.e., all the things being equal at this time). In essence, this configuration involves that everything that was said in X is as valid as what the speaker is going to introduce in Y. In this construction the X element is always a fact, while the Y element can either be a fact that is maintained over time or a judgment on the part of the speaker. In the second case, *all the same* presents the speaker's indifference with respect to the content that is taken for granted in X, as in *All the same, the result was somewhat less decorous than the usual.*[4] Using this configuration, the speaker implies that, on another occasion, under the same circumstances, his attitude/opinion on the events would have also been the same, so the circumstances do not matter. According to corpus data, this configuration can also be used to create an exception. In this case, using *all the same* the speaker places X and Y at the same level, and, considering everything expressed in X, asks the listener to make the exception contained in Y, which creates the contrast between X and Y, as in *I realize she can be very annoying, but all the same I think you should apologize for losing your temper with her* or in *We were too late in submitting an amendment, but I ask you*

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4. BNC, EDA 87

to consider it all the same.[5] As can be seen from these two examples, the connector of the construction can take different places within the construction.

In turn, in the constructions *X while Y* and *X while admitting Y* the two contrasted elements are conceived as parallel in time, focusing on the features that make the two elements different, as in *Flats are expensive, while houses are cheap (Collins dictionary)*. The main restriction that this construction presents is that the contrasted elements must happen at the same time for the comparison between X and Y to be meaningful. These constructions bring to mind the image of a scale where two arguments (X and Y) are weighted and put into relation. In these constructions, the speaker generates an impression of a balanced contrast between X and Y: If X is regarded as positive, then Y has to be negative in the construction, and vice versa. In other words, X is related to Y and Y is related to X, creating a relation of interdependence, i.e., one element contains the attributes that the other one lacks, one element is positive and the other one is negative, etc. The *X while Y* construction is only used with propositions designating fully-fledged states of affairs, as in the following examples extracted from the COCA corpus and the *Collins dictionary* respectively:

(16)   Arrows marked with a plus sign (+) indicate positive relationships, **while** those marked with a minus sign (-) indicate negative relationships.

(COCA, 2012)

(17)   One group of children was fairly stable, **while** the second group was severely disturbed.   (*Collins dictionary*)

The difference between the constructions *X while Y* and *X while admitting Y* is that in the latter the speaker shows a stronger commitment for his own opinion (contained in the Y element of the construction, based on ideas, opinions, probabilities, or possibilities for something to happen) than for the existing, non-debatable fact itself (included in the X element of the construction), as in Examples (18) and (19) below. This is why in this construction the Y element is more debatable than in other constructions in the family.

(18)   **While admitting** that his testimony to Congress in 1986 had contained inaccuracies, he denied that it had been his intention to mislead the investigation.   (BNC, HLN572)

(19)   **While admitting** that forested areas were becoming smaller as a result of "rapid development", it claimed that both Indonesia and Malaysia had taken steps "to sustain forest resources".   (BNC, J2R 708)

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5. WebCorp, http://es.bab.la/diccionario/ingles-espanol/we-late.

In the construction *X even so Y,* the circumstances in the X part of the construction would logically forbid the circumstances in Y from happening, but Y happens anyway. The construction works by including an element in the list that had been previously segregated by the speaker, because he had assumed that the element in question was not part of the conjunct. An example is the complex sentence *He smokes and drinks, but even so I bet he'll live till he's a hundred* (*Collins dictionary*). World knowledge suggests that people that smoke and drink tend to have shorter lives than healthier people, which would lead one to believe that the subject in this example would not live much longer. Instead, the speaker conveys the idea that the subject in question will live for many years, no matter how much he drinks and smokes. This construction might seem fully equivalent to the *X even then/now Y* construction. However, these two constructions differ in significant ways, which explains why some contexts allow only the use of one or the other. The *X even so Y* construction presents a 'meta-concession': the speaker has an expectation about what the hearer believes is the case, and accepts it as true, but the speaker adds to that belief (the Y element of the construction) thus creating a contra-expectation between what the hearer actually believes and what the speaker thinks is the case, which is regarded as more important as in *This could lead you up some blind alleys. Even so, there's no real cause of concern.* In turn, the *X even now/then Y* construction introduces a temporal dimension, not necessarily present in the *X even so Y* configuration thanks to which the speaker's surprise arises from the fact that the Y element is actually the case at a time that is not supposed to be, as in *I often led her money, even now…* or in *I suppose we looked very odd, even then.* The new state of affairs generated by the inclusion of the Y element in the construction always contains more elements than the expected.

As was the case with the construction *X but then Y,* the construction *X even now/then Y* also conflates the connector *even* and a temporal adverb (*now* or *then*). This construction transmits the idea that it is surprising that something is true in view of the nature of a previous state of affairs. The speaker is surprised because he would have expected the circumstances in Y (which naturally follow from X) to be different on account of past events, or simply because the passing of time, would have altered the course of events preventing Y from happening. But the fact contained in the Y element of the construction still takes place, which surprises the speaker, cancelling the expectations of the speaker that assumed Y would not take place, as in the following examples:

(20) **Even now**, after a week alone in the house, she still expected to hear his key in the front door…

(21) **Even now** that the company has gone public, some 40 per cent of shares remain in the hands of staff or former staff.   (BNC, ABU 189)

In Example (20) the speaker presumed that after being a week alone in the house the subject of the sentence would not expect the person in question to come into the house. However, this is not the case as she still expects him to come. Much in the same way, in (21) the speaker expected that once the company went public, its shares would not remain in the same hands, so no matter how much the scenario changes in time, the situation is the same as in the past.

On the other hand, in the construction *X though Y*, which also contrasts the propositions X and Y, Y can be either positive or negative. This is due to the fact that this form-meaning pairing has a wider active zone, allowing the overall meaning of the construction to be either positive or negative (this positivity or negativity has to be parameterized in context). In this configuration the connector *though* introduces the speaker's judgment into the sentence, which means that if Y is regarded as positive by the speaker, the overall meaning of the construction will also be positive, and vice versa. But this construction can activate two meaning zones: (i) Y can add new information to correct what has been said in X, preventing someone from thinking something that may follow logically from what have just been said, or (ii) it can add new information to enlarge the information about the scenario provided by X, thus contradicting what has been said. These two possibilities are displayed by the following examples extracted from the *Collins Cobuild dictionary*.

(22)   She was, after all, quite sweet. **Though** annoying…   (*Collins dictionary*)

(23)   The classrooms are small, **though** not unsuitable…   (*Collins dictionary*)

(24)   I can't stay. I'll have a coffee, **though**…   (*Collins dictionary*)

(25)   It's not very useful. It's pretty, **though**… isn't it?   (*Collins dictionary*)

Example (22) extends the knowledge the hearer has about the subject of the sentence. The X part of the construction provides positive information about the subject, which may lead to the erroneous conclusion that the speaker liked the subject in question. The connector *though* introduces the negative aspect of the subject (she was annoying) preventing the addressee from reaching the unwanted conclusion that the speaker completely liked the subject. The same phenomenon takes place in the rest of the examples, but in these cases, the purpose of introducing the Y part is not to extend our knowledge of X, but simply to correct an erroneous assumption, i.e., that a small classroom is unsuitable, in (23), that the subject can't have a coffee with the hearer, in (24), or that the speaker wouldn't buy something unusable even if it were pretty, in (25).

This justification simplifies the explanation of the use of the connector *though* in context, since it does not matter whether *though* acts as a conjunction or as an adverb in the sentence.

Now, it is necessary to distinguish between the constructions *X though Y* and *X although Y*, which are very similar in form and meaning. The connectors that make up these constructions (i.e.,, *though* and *although)* have also been treated as equivalent in dictionaries, but depending on the context, one construction is preferred over the other: The connector *although* establishes a fact. It can be exchanged for *though* when it is located at the beginning of the sentence (e.g., *Although he was late he stopped to buy a sandwich*). But if *though* is located at the end of the sentence, it is tinged with subjectivity and takes on a more contrastive meaning, adding a new dimension of subjectivity (i.e., the speaker's opinion) to the sentence. This is exemplified by the following sentence: *The house isn't very nice. I like the garden, though.* In this example, it is clear that the speaker sees the garden as a subjective exception to his initial claim. This initial claim is to be taken as one that the speaker regards as a fact, but this is not the case with the corrected thought "I like the garden, though". To see if the opinion introduced by *though* is positive or negative, the hearer will have to parameterize its meaning according to textual and contextual factors.

On some occasions, the contrast introduced by *though* conveys the feeling that the contrast is being softened or minimized, as with Example (24) above (*I can't stay. I'll have a coffee, though*). In these cases, X and Y seem to be in a concessive relation, more than in direct contrast. This is possible because the relations of concession and contrast are very close in meaning and can merge in practice.

The constructions *Much as X Y, X for all Y, X in spite of Y, X despite Y* and *X notwithstanding Y* concentrate on the element(s) that would allow a given state of affairs to hold, or on the assumption that an event would have prevented another event from happening. But the efforts involved in the state of affairs designated in Y are not enough for the desired circumstances to follow. In all these constructions the connector introduces and emphasizes a new fact, surprising the hearer because the new information contradicts what has been said before and it was unexpected. This new information prevents the hearer from making certain assumptions, as the actual state of affairs is different from what was logically expected from the construction, surprising the hearer with the new state of affairs. In all these constructions, if the Y element is conceptually negative, the X element presents a better situation than the situation that would have logically been inferred from Y, as in *In spite of poor health, my father was always cheerful…* (*Collins dictionary*). That does not mean that X is positive. It only means that it is more positive than what was logically expected to follow from Y. If X is conceptually positive, Y is conceptually negative, and instead of surprise the construction conveys a feeling

of sadness, remorse, impotence, culpability etc., as in *For all my pushing, I still couldn't move it (Wordreference dictionary online)*.

To begin with, the construction *Much as X Y* involves a big effort from the subject's part to do something, but that something does not happen, despite X. What distinguishes this construction from the configurations *X for all* Y or *X in spite of Y* is that *Much as* is used with verbs of state or desire, not with action verbs, as the following examples illustrate:

(26)   **Much as** she likes him she would never consider marrying him.

(*Collins dictionary*)

(27)   **Much as** I'd like to blame you, I know I can't.   (*Merriam Webster online*)

In turn, the construction *X for all Y* presents two main restrictions in its use: (i) it has to be used with defined elements because it lists a group of possibilities identifying them (ii) the connector *for all* needs to be necessarily used with a plural countable noun. In this configuration, what is observed in X, either an obstacle or not, is something that can be overcome, and so, it is regarded as something being unimportant. The construction therefore transmits that what is observed in X is not important. As was the case with the construction *Much as X Y, X for all Y* also transmits iteration of attempts or intensity, focalizing many attempts of performing the same action. But these two constructions differ in three crucial aspects that explain why speakers select one with preference over the other in a given context: (i) the construction with *for all* always refers to something factual, while the connector *much as* is accompanied by something desirable, hypothetical, or that may take place in the future; (ii) in contrast to *much as, for all* may not be accompanied by a verb (see *for all my knowledge/I know*). When this is the case, the meaning of iteration is lost, but the intensity is maintained; (iii) the syntactic differences between both markers (i.e., *for all* is a prepositional form while *much as* is conjunctive). Examples (28) and (29) below display two different ways of using this construction: in (28), the connector introduces the element that would forbid something from happening, while in (29) the connector anticipates the elements that would allow something to take place, even if the desired circumstances do not finally materialize.

(28)   **For all** their differences among themselves, they reached some kind of
consensus, some common philosophy of life.   (*Collins dictionary*)

(29)   **For all** my pushing, I still couldn't move it. (*Wordreference dictionary online*)

Besides, *X in spite of Y* contains a more negative dimension than other concessive connectors due to the origin of the word *spite*, which indicates contempt. While iteration is what characterizes the constructions *Much as X Y* and *X for*

all Y, negativity is what distinguishes *spite of* from the rest of the connectors in the family. This construction establishes a concessive relation based on very little debatable facts. As opposed to other constructions in the family, the connector *in spite of* can be defined or undefined, that is, it can refer to the X element of the construction in an undefined way. The construction *X despite Y* is equivalent to *X in spite of Y* but according to corpus data the former is used in formal contexts. Examples (30) to (32) present different uses of these constructions extracted from the *Collins dictionary:*

(30) **Despite/In spite of** the difference in their ages they were close friends…
<div align="right">(Collins dictionary).</div>

(31) The cost of public services has risen steeply **despite/in spite of** a general decline in their quality.   (*Collins dictionary*).

(32) **In spite of** poor health, my father was always cheerful… (*Collins dictionary*).

The construction *X against Y* also concentrates on the obstacles that would prevent something from happening, instead of focusing on whatever would allow for something to take place. In this construction the given state of affairs finally takes place, in spite of the difficulties contained in the element introduced by *against* in the construction. This way, the blocking circumstances contrast with the circumstances that actually take place, as can be seen in Example (33) below, where nobody expected 'it' to survive ten American presidents, or in (34), where bringing the attention of people to the natural world is perceived as something unattainable, but that finally takes place:

(33) **Against** all predictions, it not only outlived ten American presidents, but also the departure of its symbol, Fidel Castro, from power.[6]

(34) **Against** all odds, Greenpeace has brought the plight of the natural world to the attention of caring people.   (BNC, A7G 1272)

Other constructions that contain a shade of negativity due to their semantic composition are *X in any case/event Y, X regardless Y* and *X nevertheless Y.* What the constructions *X in any case/event Y* and *X nevertheless Y* have in common is that in both constructions the element introduced by the connector acts as the sealing argument of the discussion. The X and Y elements of the constructions do not need to be directly related externally, but the speaker sees the connection between both elements, regarding Y as the fundamental reason or element. When the configuration *X in any case/event Y* is used, the possible scenarios are explicitly mentioned, but the construction suggests that these scenarios do not matter, because Y always

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6. http://fride.org/publication/538/cuba:-the-legacy-of-a-revolution

occurs independently of them, as in *I couldn't shelter behind him all the time, and in any case he wasn't always with me* (*Collins dictionary*). The only difference between using *X in any event Y* or *X in any case Y* is that when we use *in any event,* we must have different alternative scenarios, and the existence of either scenario is possible, while with the use of *in any case* we profile the sequence of events on the basis of their existence. Consider the following examples in this respect:

(35)   I don't know whether he was doing science, law or maths, **in any event** he became a full professor.

(36)   The precise function of this organ is not certain. It probably varies **in any case** from species to species.   (*Collins dictionary*)

In turn, *X nevertheless Y* only focuses on the idea that Y should never be considered less important than X, which in practice is the same as considering Y more important than X. This construction conveys the idea that X is a particular fact for which Y should not be expected to happen. *Nevertheless* contradicts this expectation without minimizing the importance of the circumstances in X. In this construction, X and Y are regarded as equally important and both take place at the same time, contradicting each other and surprising the speaker because Y, which was not expected to happen due to X, takes place anyway. As can be appreciated from Examples (37) to (39) below, *but* can be introduced in the construction to reinforce the existing contrast between the X and Y elements:

(37)   She saw Clarissa immediately, **but nevertheless** hovered there a moment longer and pretended to look around for her.   (*Collins dictionary*).

(38)   Her date was a bit of a slob, **but** she had fun **nevertheless**.
                                                              (*Merriam Webster online*)

(39)   It was a predictable, **but nevertheless** funny, story. (*Merriam Webster online*)

The construction *X regardless Y* acts in exactly the opposing direction to the previous two constructions; while *in any case/event* and *nevertheless* introduce the actual scenario, in the construction *X regardless Y* the connector *regardless* introduces the blocking factor that would prevent X from happening. In Example (40), the law is perceived as a possible blocking factor for the strike to take place, and one may think that a very strong disease could impede a body to heal after the treatment in (41). However, these blocking factors are not sufficient for X not to take place (the strike in (40) and healing in (41)), so they should not be taken into account, thus making X more prominent than Y. In this construction, the disregard of the second element is internal to the content of the proposition and it literally means that, since the speaker can disregard Y, X is what is important. This

construction can sometimes be replaced by the *X in spite of Y* configuration, but in *X regardless Y* there is no need to include the speaker's assessment, which makes this construction more neutral than other configurations in the group:

(40)   If they are determined to strike, they will do so **regardless** of what the law says.   (*Collins dictionary*)

(41)   Dr. Gerson became convinced that the treatment helped the body to heal itself, **regardless** of the nature of the disease.   (BNC, A1X 122)

Besides being used in formal contexts, the construction *X notwithstanding Y* is also distinguished from the rest in that it is used to correct the assumption that the particular thing mentioned in the X part of the construction has an effect on the situation that is being described, as *notwithstanding* introduces something that is rather immaterial. As opposed to the *X in spite of Y* configuration, *X notwithstanding Y* does not contain any negative dimension, as can be seen in the following examples:

(42)   **Notwithstanding** a brilliant defense, he was found guilty.   (*Dictionary.com*)

(43)   She went to the game anyway, doctor's orders **notwithstanding**.
                                                              (*Dictionary.com*)

(44)   It was the same material, **notwithstanding** the texture seemed different.
                                                              (*Dictionary.com*)

The construction *X however Y* is preferably used to introduce a comment that seems to contradict what has just been said. In this construction, the X part would suggest one thing, but the speaker prevents the hearer from thinking that particular thing by way of adding a new statement (Y) that suggests something different from what would have logically followed from X. The speaker therefore shares with the listener his surprise about the circumstances in Y because the circumstances in X would have suggested otherwise. Therefore, the Y part of the construction somehow cancels the elements of the X part of the construction, as in *The more I talked, the more silent Eliot became. However, I left thinking that I had created quite an impression* (*Collins dictionary*).

Finally, the construction *X even if Y* suggests that in the hypothetical situation that Y would be the case, the speaker would not care about Y, focusing on the X element of the construction. The speaker very reluctantly accepts the Y element, but consciously decides not to discuss it, as in *Even if your skin's greasy in summer, you still need the protection of a moisturiser to stop it drying out.*[7] When analyzing this construction, politeness factors have to be taken into account: by making a

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7. BNC, EFG 818

fact seem hypothetical, we enable the listener to cancel out whatever we assume to be the case for the listener (i.e., in Example (45) below *even if you disagree with her* allows the hearer to say that he does not disagree with her). So we can save the addressee's face. Presenting as hypothetical a situation that the speaker knows to be real allows the listener to pull back, saving the hearer's face.

(45)   **Even if** you disagree with her, she's worth listening to…   (*Collins dictionary*).

5.   Correcting constructions

The complementary-contrastive relation between the X and Y elements can some-times be the result of the speaker's need to correct or modify the content elements of an utterance that he may have uttered, whatever its illocutionary force. This meaning profile is generally activated in one of the following scenarios:

i.   The speaker says Y because X is too vague to be understood as in *Come early evening. After tea-time, at any rate.*
ii.   The speaker says Y because he has realized that X is not completely right as in *They felt, or at any rate Dan felt, both relieved and still frightened.*
iii.   The speaker says Y because X has been too strong/too restrictive, as in *That's all it ever did. As far as we knew, anyhow.*

The correction or modification of content that characterizes this constructional family can be made by specifying the content of the statement (i.e., the case of the scenario (i)), or by changing all or part of a statement (i.e., scenarios (ii) and (iii)). The difference between these two mechanisms (i.e., specification and correction) is that by means of the first, the speaker adjusts the new information to the old one, whereas by means of the second he cancels out the old information in order to focus on the new one.

In the first scenario, where the speaker feels the need to specify the informa-tion he has just given, the speaker does not completely reject or change his previ-ous statement, but simply adjusts it in consonance with the new situation, which could also be regarded as a manner of correcting his previous statement. In this case X and Y are not in complete contrast, and Y is dependent on X to a certain degree. When we correct by specifying, a first general idea affords access to a par-ticular idea within that domain. This is in fact a high-level (or non-lexical) met-onymic operation involving the reduction of the source domain. In this scenario of possibilities, if X is true, Y is even truer, or if X happens, Y will happen for sure.

By contrast, when specification is not enough and the speaker feels the need to correct his/her previous statement, as in scenarios (ii) and (iii), part of X's content is eliminated in favor of the new concept Y, but not completely.

PROFILE 3: To correct or modify the content elements of an utterance, whatever its illocutionary force.
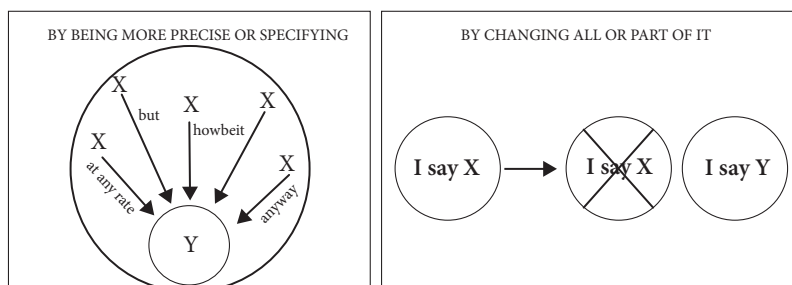

Figure 2. Profile 3 cognitive operations

The constructions that have been found to be operational within this particular meaning profile are *X anyway Y, X anyhow Y, X at any rate Y, X at least Y, X but Y, X even (so) Y, X howbeit Y, X never mind Y, X on/to the contrary Y*, *X though Y,* and *X yet Y* and *X even more/less M than N.* Again, most of the connectors that participate in these constructions have traditionally been treated as equivalent in standard lexicographic practice. However, these connectors exhibit subtle but important differences in their meaning structure. The following lines discuss each of these constructions.

The constructions *X anyhow Y* and *X anyway Y* are used when the speaker believes that Y is true but he is not certain about the truthfulness of all the aspects of the situation described in X. This use is observed in the following examples extracted from the *Collins dictionary:*

(46)   All of them? I ask. Some, **anyway**….   (*Collins dictionary*)

(47)   That's all it ever did. As far as we knew, **anyhow**.   (*Collins dictionary*)

(48)   He never said anything against him, not in my presence **anyhow**.

(COCA, 2011)

In Example (46) the word *some* cancels out the previous implication that all the individuals where included in the group by specifying that at least some were. In Examples (47) and (48), the speaker corrects his statement as he becomes aware of the possibility of the subject doing or saying other things that he may not know about, concentrating on the things that he is sure the subject may have done or said. In all these examples, a high-level whole-for-part metonymy is responsible for the understanding of the construction.
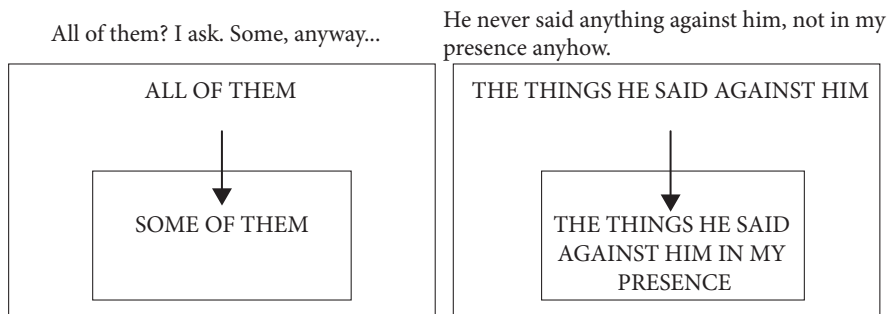
All of them? I ask. Some, anyway...

He never said anything against him, not in my presence anyhow.

ALL OF THEM ↓ SOME OF THEM	THE THINGS HE SAID AGAINST HIM ↓ THE THINGS HE SAID AGAINST HIM IN MY PRESENCE

Figure 3. Whole-for-part metonymies

In other cases, the constructions *X anyway Y* and *X anyhow Y* serve to correct a particular statement by cancelling out what has been previously held as true. This is the case of the following example, where the speaker corrects someone's previous assumption that the person he is talking about was a policeman:

(49)   He probably wasn't a policeman **anyway**, more likely a member of the KGB.

(BNC, CML 2020)

According to corpus data, there is no difference in use between the constructions *X anyway Y* and *X anyhow Y*. These two constructions can therefore be used indistinctly when they profile the meaning that a particular assumption is to be modified. In the case of the configuration with *anyhow*, the construction literally points to the way the actions are performed, whereas with *anyway* the same meaning is accessed – as we noted above – through a high-level metaphor whereby the alternative means to achieve an end (the target meaning) are seen in terms of the different paths that one can follow to reach a destination (i.e., 'whatever way we take').

The construction *X at any rate Y* also serves the function of correcting a particular statement by being more specific. In this configuration, the circumstances in Y are part of the X situation, and thus the speaker posits the circumstances in Y as more specific. In Example (50) below, the speaker first says that all the members of a particular group of people felt relieved and still frightened, but being aware that not all members in the group might have felt the same way, he subsequently focuses on a particular subject within that group that he knows felt that way for sure, correcting his first statement by means of this specification:

(50)   They felt, or **at any rate** Dan felt, both relieved and still frightened.

(*Collins dictionary*)

This use of *at any rate* is derived from its use as a member of the complementary alternation family. Remember that *X at any rate Y* can profile one or more alternative events in terms of their frequency. But in (50), event X is not seen as an

alternative, but as an assumption that the speaker decides to discard on second thoughts (i.e., the speaker comes to admit that maybe only Dan felt relieved and still frightened). This derivation is grounded in the GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC metonymy (see Panther & Thornburg, 2000). Thus, in (50), the idea of "whatever scenario is the case" is made to stand for "only one relevant scenario is the case". It is this specific target meaning that overrides the previous source meaning. Note that, while the metonymy underlies the meaning derivation, the derived use of *at any rate* is now conventional, and does not necessarily involve any metonymic thinking. The following examples extracted from the BNC provide additional evidence on the issue under scrutiny:

(51)   There was something rather reckless in my attending the present lectures at all, because it was in the depths of winter, and from where I now lived it was rather a long walk to the town – over a mile, **at any rate**.   (BNC, AC7 1337)

(52)   It was notable that Zuwaya from underprivileged lineages, **at any rate** in Kufra district, were more aware of the opportunities for social mobility through education, and more open to them, than men of longer pedigree.
(BNC, ADW 395)

(53)   It was expected in Kit's house that there would be some period of study after supper, most nights **at any rate**.   (BNC, CCM 1474)

In (51) "a long walk" is more generic than "over a mile", which is more specific. The construction with *at any rate* conveys the idea that, whether the hearer agrees or not that the distance was long does not really matter. In this way, the initial assumption that the walk was necessarily a long one is cancelled out. In (52) Zuwaya might not be "from underprivileged lineages", although initially presented this way. What counts is that they were in Kufra district. Finally, in (53) the initial assumption, before correction, is that it was customary in Kit's house to study after supper, probably always or almost always. Absolute frequency is then reduced to high frequency, on second thoughts, and the previous implication is disregarded.

In other cases, this type of correction by specification can become a concession when the reason for the correction is because the speaker believes that X is too restrictive. In any case, the marker *at any rate* within this meaning profile can always be replaced by *at least.* This can be observed in Example (54), where the speaker asks the addressee to come early (a general, vague term that may sound too restrictive for the addressee), but then adjusts the meaning of *early* to "after tea-time", a more specific time later in the day but still within the early evening domain that allows the addressee to come later:

(54)   Come early evening. After tea-time, **at any rate** …   (*Collins dictionary*)

The last construction that uses specification in order to correct a particular statement is *X at least Y*. In this construction the circumstances in Y are part of the X situation, and thus the speaker mentions the circumstances in Y to be more specific. This construction concentrates on a particular element within the group of elements previously mentioned, reducing the X domain to Y. In practice, what this construction transmits is that Y is more important than X because Y is more accurate or correct than X, as in *The hooligans – at least two strong men – are believed to have rocked the seats until the bolts snapped. (BNC, CH2 1527)*

As for the *X howbeit Y* construction, it is worth noticing that the connector *howbeit* is not included in the *Collins Cobuild dictionary,* and that other dictionaries (e.g., *Merriam Webster*) define it as *although*, as if these two terms were synonymous. But *howbeit* and *although* are used in different situations. In *X howbeit Y*, the propositions X and Y are part of a scenario where the X part of the construction lists the positive characteristics of the situation while the Y part lists the negative, positing X in direct contrast to Y. Both X and Y are true, but the connector *howbeit* introduces the speaker's personal judgment (the Y variable) making the hearer perceive the whole situation as negative. Y creates a counter-expectation in a scenario where what was expected was the thought positivity transmitted by the X part of the construction. This counter-expectation, a very common psychological phenomenon, attracts our attention, making the listener focus on the second and more negative part of the construction. This psychological attention selection mechanism towards unexpected elements is therefore manifested constructionally in language. In any case, this expression is becoming obsolete, as only four examples of this configuration were found in the COCA, three in the BNC and one in the *Merriam Webster dictionary online*. The following are two of these occurrences:

(55) Our visit to Niagara Falls was very pleasant, **howbeit** slightly shorter than we had planned.   (*Merriam Webster online*)

(56) The shepherding within the house church movement has also met a need in people seeking direction, **howbeit** often given in an over-paternalized way.
(BNC, B05 42)

Another construction that requires the proposition X to be syntactically negative, just like *X howbeit Y*, is the construction *X on/to the contrary Y*. In this configuration, the speaker cancels or corrects previous expectations contained in X by making Y more prominent conceptually. The difference with previous similar constructions is that the syntactic negativity contained in X combines with the connector *on the contrary* to form the proposition Y. As was the case with *X howbeit Y*, the Y part of the construction becomes more prominent by means of a change in focalization from X to Y, but in this case, the selected lexical elements are as

important as the form of the construction for the correct realization of the sentence in question:

(57)   There was no malice in her; **on the contrary**, she was kind.

(BNC, AE0 3470).

Example (57) corrects the previous presupposition contained in X by which it was assumed that there was malice in her, while in (58) what is cancelled is the presupposition that the prison was somehow successful:

(58)   Not that the prison was successful in its intended goal of reforming
         criminals; **on the contrary** its failure in this respect was almost immediately
         apparent.   (BNC, FBC 851)

In *X yet Y,* the circumstances in Y prevent someone from thinking something that may follow logically from what has just been said in X. This marker has two active zones: in the first the marker is used as a comparative, as in *The dole queues are likely to grow longer yet…* (*Collins dictionary*). In this sentence the speaker prevents the hearer from thinking that the dole queues will stay as long as they are at the moment, suggesting that no matter how long they are, they will still get longer. In the other, the marker contrasts two different and apparently opposing propositions, as in *It's lightweight, yet very strong* (*Wordreference dictionary online*) to prevent the hearer from thinking that these two opposites cannot commune (i.e., the hearer cancels the implication that a lightweight object is necessarily weak). In the first type, we could change *yet* for *even* before the adjective (the dole queues are likely to grow even longer). In the second type, the marker could be replaced by *still.*

   Finally, besides the constructions that are formed by the X and Y elements linked by a connector, other types of configurations find a place within this profile. The configuration *X even more +adj. than Y* is used when the speaker believed X to be true, but the circumstances in Y lead to a cancellation of the expectations about X, owing to the existence of the real Y situation. Example (59) below illustrates this:

(59)   I must be **even more** tired than I thought.   (*Collins dictionary*)

In this sentence, proposition X ('I am actually more tired than what I had previously thought') and proposition Y ('I thought I was tired to a certain degree') are also in contrastive alternation, because both propositions are in contrast (the degree of tiredness in one proposition contrasts with the degree of tiredness in the other). But they are at the same time complementary, as both help the hearer to picture the speaker's surprise about the degree of his tiredness.

6.   Conclusion

This paper has offered an inventory of constructions at discourse level that belong to the family of complementary contrastive discourse constructions in English. These constructions are formed by two variable components (X and Y) in direct opposition but not exclusive of each other, brought together by a fixed connector (a discourse marker or a conjunction).

Using the Langackerian notions of base, profile and active zones, the most significant contribution of the present study is the finding that different constructions that profile the same base domain are members of the same constructional family. Thus, all the constructions under scrutiny can be grouped within the complementary contrastive constructional family, because they all share the same meaning base (i.e., X and Y are in an antithetical relationship without being mutually exclusive of each other). Based on these notions, this paper has concentrated on two particular meanings that these constructions can profile. In one profile, the constructions are used to make the Y element seem more important (concessive constructions); in the other, the constructions are used to correct or modify the content elements of an utterance, whatever its illocutionary force (correcting constructions). These two meaning profiles are only two of the six meaning profiles identified for this constructional family, the second and third constructional profiles respectively. The constructions that have been found to participate in the second meaning profile (i.e., the constructions that profile a concessive meaning) are *Much as X, Y; X after all Y; X against Y; X all the same Y; X although Y; X anyhow Y; X anyway Y; X besides Y; X but (then) Y; X despite Y; X even (now/so/then) Y; X even if Y; X for all Y; X however Y; X in any case/event Y; X in spite of Y; X nevertheless Y; X nonetheless Y; X notwithstanding Y; X regardless Y; X (but) still Y; X though Y; X while admitting Y; X while Y; X yet Y;* and *X at any rate Y.* In turn, the construction that belong to the third profile (i.e. correcting constructions) are *X anyway Y, X anyhow Y, X at any rate Y, X at least Y, X but Y, X even (so) Y, X howbeit Y, X never mind Y, X on/to the contrary Y*, *X though Y,* and *X yet Y* and *X even more/less M than N.*

This study demonstrates that even though the connectors used to build these constructions have been largely treated as fully equivalent in previous work, each construction introduces subtle changes in focal structure, resulting in relevant differences in meaning. The findings reported in this paper open in this manner new paths of research in the classification and investigation of such constructions from a cognitive perspective. Finally, the article has also provided the conditions for the preference of use of one connector over another giving a cognitive account of the discourse understanding process, which may also prove useful for English language learners/teachers.

Acknowledgements

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Resumen

El presente artículo estudia las características fundamentales de un subgrupo de miembros de la familia construccional contrastivo-complementaria a nivel discursivo en inglés. Siguiendo a Ruiz de Mendoza y Gómez-González (2014), entendemos por construcciones discursivas emparejamientos de forma y significado que captan significado relacional como adición, ejemplificación, contraste, etc. sobre la base de modelos cognitivos de alto nivel. Las construcciones a nivel discursivo (e.j., *X Let Alone Y*; cf. Fillmore, Kay, & O'Connor, 1988) constan, en general, de una parte fija y dos variables, donde la parte fija es un conector (un marcador de discurso o una conjunción). Las construcciones analizadas indican una relación entre dos elementos contrarios o situaciones opuestas en el mundo, pero que al mismo tiempo no son excluyentes la una de la otra. Muchos de los miembros de esta familia construccional han sido tratados con frecuencia como totalmente intercambiables en la práctica lexicográfica común. Por el contrario, este trabajo sostiene que cada una de estas construcciones introduce pequeños pero decisivos cambios, dando lugar a importantes diferencias en significado. Tomando esto en consideración, el documento especifica los casos en los que una construcción es utilizada con preferencia sobre los demás.

Palabras clave: construcciones discursivas, contraste complementario, gramática de construcciones, zona activa, perfil

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