

BUT: CONTRADICTION AND RELEVANCE¹

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Abstract

This paper builds on Blakemore's (1987, 1989) analysis of *but* as a semantic constraint on the pragmatic interpretation of utterances. I discuss the denial of expectation and the contrast use of *but*, which Blakemore presented in her recent paper and, unlike her, I conclude that in addition to its constraining function *but* makes some contribution to the truth conditional content, i.e. has *and* as part of its meaning in all of its uses. In the last section I argue that one of the words used for *but* in Greek namely *para* lexicalises another use of *but*, the correction use. The proposed account of *para* shows that the correction use of *but* falls out from the way in which *but* generally functions as a constraint. Thus, my analysis supports Blakemore's claim that there is only one *but*-constraint which can be instantiated in slightly different ways.

1 *But* as a semantic constraint on Relevance

Grice (1975) labelled the suggestions conveyed by words like *therefore* and *but* conventional implicatures. Such words have attracted the interest of many writers ever since (Karttunen and Peters 1975, Nishiyama (forthcoming), Wilson 1975, etc.); none of them, however, has proposed a satisfactory solution to the basic problem associated with these expressions, namely that although they do not contribute to the truth-conditional content of the utterance containing them, they nevertheless cause semantically determined differences in meaning, i.e. differences conventionally attached to these very words. For example, consider (1) and (2):

- (1) The boss is in today *but* he won't see you
- (2) The dining room is large *but* there is no room for more than one in the kitchen

These sentences will be true if and only if both their subparts are true; moreover, they will not be considered to be false if their subparts are found to be true but there is no relation of contradiction or contrast between them. In other words *but* is considered to be truth-conditionally equivalent to *and*. However, in (1) and (2) the hearer undoubtedly retrieves a relation of contradiction or contrast established between the subclauses by the very presence of *but* as part of the overall meaning.

Blakemore (1987, 1989) argues persuasively that *but* and similar words,

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which she calls discourse connectives, do not contribute to the truth-conditional content of the sentence containing them; 'their sole function is to guide the interpretation process by specifying certain properties of context and contextual effects' (Blakemore 1987:77).

Blakemore's analysis is placed within Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Theory. In this theory the context of an utterance is psychologically defined: it is not the people, time, place and events in which an utterance is situated but rather the individual's mental representation of all these, i.e. the set of beliefs and assumptions that she holds about them. Moreover, the context of an utterance is not considered to be given and determined prior to the utterance but rather the hearer is supposed to select the set of assumptions against which he is going to process the newly presented proposition. The context's selection is guided by the hearer's search for relevance: the hearer will choose that particular context in which the utterance to be processed yields enough 'contextual effects' to make the processing worthwhile. There are three kinds of contextual effects: contextual implication, strengthening of an assumption and elimination of an assumption. Such effects are derived via what Sperber and Wilson call the deductive device and their computation involves a procedure of hypothesis formation and confirmation, i.e. non-demonstrative inference, though with a crucial deductive element (Sperber and Wilson 1986:64-117). The speaker, on the other hand, in ostensive-inferential communication is expected to communicate that a set of assumptions I is relevant enough to make the stimulus from which I is inferable worth processing and that I is conveyed via the most relevant stimulus, i.e. the one requiring the least processing effort. This is in the interest of the hearer in the sense that he will derive relevant information as easily as possible and in the interest of the speaker provided that she is not pretending to communicate but wants to be understood. Since communication is assumed to be goal-directed rational behaviour, the hearer is entitled to interpret an utterance on the assumption that the level of relevance which satisfies these conditions, i.e. optimal relevance, is met. Sperber and Wilson refer to this as the principle of relevance (1986:158). It follows that at most one interpretation can be found to be consistent with the principle of relevance since as Sperber and Wilson (1988: 142) put it 'although many interpretations may be adequate on the effect side, only one can be satisfactory on the effort side'.

If it is true that it is in the interest of both speaker and hearer that the effort required to process an utterance is offset by the contextual effects it gives rise to, then it is to be expected that the speaker may exploit the hearer's search for relevance. In particular she may try to minimise the effort required to process the information conveyed by the utterance. But how is she going to do it? Well, as Blakemore (1987, Brockway 1981) claims, if the speaker has a specific interpretation in mind, then she may direct the hearer with the aid of a range of linguistic devices towards that interpretation by making a certain set of contextual assumptions immediately accessible, thus ensuring their selection under the principle of relevance. Such linguistic devices will then be thought of as constraints on the hearer's choice of context and contextual effects, i.e. as constraints on the pragmatic interpretation of utterances. The linguistic devices that can be used as constraints are certain syntactic structures, like clefting, particular intonation contours (J.House 1989) and discourse connectives like *after all*, *you see*, *therefore*, *moreover*, etc.

Now, one way to improve your overall representation of the world is by eliminating false assumptions that you happen to hold. The elimination of an assumption takes place when there is a contradiction between old and new information. To resolve such a contradiction the deductive device compares the strength of the contradicting assumptions and automatically erases the weaker one (assumptions come with varying degrees of strength depending on the way they were acquired, see Sperber and Wilson 1986:75-83). For example, in the following conversation Sarah's reply (Q) explicitly contradicts Jim's existing assumption that she believes Peter to be a show-off (P):

(3) Jim: Sarah believes Peter is a show-off

Sarah: No, I don't

In this case, if Jim trusts Sarah, he will normally abandon his existing assumption (P) on the basis of the new piece of information (Q) which not only contradicts (P) but is also more strongly evidenced than (P), since it is given by Sarah herself.

In accordance with Blakemore's point of view if the speaker intends the hearer to abandon some assumption P (that the speaker assumes the hearer to hold) not only will she provide evidence for *not P* but she will also instruct the hearer to process her utterance in such a way, i.e. in such a context, as to eliminate *P*. A way of doing this is by using *but*.

Thus, *but* is considered to be a discourse connective which functions as a semantic constraint on the pragmatic interpretation of utterances: it instructs the hearer to establish the inferential relation of contradiction between a proposition which is part of the interpretation of the first clause and a proposition which is part of the interpretation of the clause introduced by *but*. Or, as Blakemore puts it in her latest article, (Blakemore 1989:34), *but* 'instructs the hearer to derive a negation of a proposition P' where 'the value of P is determined by the interpretation of the first clause'.

Regarding *but* and the other discourse connectives as constraints Blakemore accounts for the fact that their presence affects the way in which the utterances containing them are relevant, i.e. their pragmatic interpretation. Moreover, treating them as semantic constraints she accounts for the fact that the differences in meaning that they cause are semantic differences, i.e. differences due to the meaning conventionally associated with these words. Her analysis suggests that one should distinguish between two kinds of linguistic semantics: 'on the one hand, there is the essentially conceptual theory that deals with the way in which elements of linguistic structure map onto concepts - that is onto constituents of propositional representations that undergo computations. On the other, there is the essentially procedural theory that deals with the way in which elements of linguistic structure map directly onto computations themselves - i.e. onto mental processes' (Blakemore 1987:144).

According to Blakemore (1987, 1989), *but* has two special uses, the denial of expectation use and the contrast use, which both fall out from the way *but* functions as a semantic constraint on relevance. In the following sections I will discuss these two suggestions conveyed by *but*.

2 *But*: denial of expectation

Imagine that (1), repeated below, is said by the boss's secretary to a young employee who has been trying to see him in the last few days:

- (1) The boss is in today *but* he won't see you

According to Blakemore (1989:25-26) *but* here indicates that the hearer is expected to have derived on the basis of the first clause of (1) repeated below as (4a) and the contextual assumption (4b) the implicated conclusion (4c):

- (4) a. The boss is in today
b. If the boss is in today, he will see me
c. The boss will see me

However, the speaker is explicitly denying (4c) by the second clause in (1), i.e. by the proposition introduced by *but*. The speaker intends the proposition introduced by *but* to contradict the assumption (4c) and thus typically lead the hearer to abandon it. Thus, according to Blakemore (1987, 1989) *but* indicates in this case that the proposition it introduces is relevant as denial of an expectation created by the utterance of the first clause.

In (1) the proposition introduced by *but* explicitly denies an expectation created by the first clause. As the following example shows, however, the denial can also be implicit:

- (5) The boss is in today *but* he is very busy

Processing the first clause of (5) the hearer is expected to have derived (4c); processing the second half of (5) the speaker is expected to derive the proposition (6c) on the basis of a contextual assumption like (6a) and the information explicitly conveyed by the second clause of (5), repeated below as (6b). The proposition in (6c), as *but* indicates is relevant in virtue of being the denial of (4c).

- (6) a. If the boss is busy he will not see me
b. The boss is busy
c. The boss will not see me

As Blakemore (1989, 1987) correctly argues there is no doubt that it is the presence of *but* which forces the hearer to interpret the proposition it introduces as denial. Evidence for this claim comes from the fact that the corresponding conjoined and fullstop utterances, (7a) and (7b), do not necessarily convey the suggestion of denial of an expectation created by the first sentence:

- (7) a. The boss is in today. He is very busy
b. The boss is in today and he is very busy

It is obvious that in (7a) depending on contextual assumptions the hearer may or may not derive the suggestion of denial: he may construe the second sentence as providing the reason the boss is in today or further evidence for the fact that the boss is in today and so on. In (7b), on the other hand, Blakemore (1989:28) believes that the hearer can not derive the suggestion of denial at all. However, it seems to me that when the contextual information available supports such an interpretation (7b) can very well convey the suggestion of denial of an expectation created by the first conjunct.

In her analysis Blakemore emphasises that *but* constrains the interpretation of the utterance it introduces by indicating that it is to be understood as denial of an expectation created by the first clause and as giving rise to the contextual effect of elimination of an assumption. However, it is equally important that in this way *but* also constrains the way in which the preceding utterance is intended by the speaker to be interpreted by the hearer. In other words, if the hearer had not on his own derived (4c), while processing the first part of (1) the presence of *but* would force him to look back at the first clause and reinterpret it in the appropriate way. To take another example let's say that we are talking about Tom and I have no reason to believe that you believe that dancers are gay but I believe it myself and you don't know that I believe so. I think I can appropriately utter (8)

(8) Tom is a dancer *but* he is not gay

reflecting my own thoughts. You, as a hearer who doesn't believe that male dancers are gay, will not automatically derive that Tom is gay by processing the first half of (8) ; moreover, I know you haven't since I know you don't believe that if a male person is a dancer he is gay too. In this case *but* will force the hearer to reinterpret the first part of (8) so as to derive an assumption like (9)

(9) The speaker believes that male dancers are gay

which is in a relation of contradiction with what is explicitly said in the second half of (8). It follows from the above discussion that *but* not only constrains the interpretation of the clause it introduces but the interpretation of the preceding clause as well.

As shown so far, in the case of two clauses connected by *but* the interpretation of the second one as denial depends on the interpretation of the first one. In (1) and (5) an assumption accessed in the course of interpreting the first clause, namely (4c), functions as the (minimal) context in which the contextual effect of elimination of an assumption is established by the clause introduced by *but*. As Blakemore (1989:22, 1987:122-125) would say, in this case the relevance of one utterance is dependent on the interpretation of the other. In this respect *but* is similar to the other discourse connectives such as *therefore*, *after all*, *moreover*, etc.: it generates a relation of dependent relevance between the propositions it connects. In the case of 'dependent relevance', Blakemore argues, each of the propositions is consistent with the principle of relevance individually. Thus, for example in (1) the speaker has reason to believe that it is relevant to the hearer both that the boss is in and that he will not see him. Moreover, dependent relevance is a particular kind of coherence, namely the coherence achieved when information provided by one discourse

segment is used in establishing the contextual effects of the next (Blakemore 1987:112). I will come back to the notion of dependent relevance later on.

3 *But*: contrast

In addition to its denial of expectation use, Blakemore (1989:28-35) argues, *but* also has a contrastive use. Imagine you have just rented a new flat and you utter (2) while describing to your friends its advantages and disadvantages.

- (2) The dining room is large *but* there is no room for more than one in the kitchen

It is obvious that in (2) the speaker uses *but* to draw the hearer's attention to the fact that whereas the dining room is large, the kitchen is tiny. Because of the presence of *but* the hearer cannot but derive this suggestion of contrast. According to Blakemore's analysis, *but* here functions as a linguistic constraint on relevance in the sense that it instructs the hearer to derive the negation of a proposition P. In particular, if (2) is uttered in the context described above, then the interpretation of the first half of the utterance will give the hearer access to a property F where, for example, F=being spacious. The fact that the speaker introduces the second part of her utterance with *but* instructs the hearer to derive on the basis of the information made available an assumption of the form *not* (F (kitchen)). Thus, the ascription of the property of being spacious which is asserted in the case of the dining room in the first clause is negated in the case of the kitchen in virtue of the proposition introduced by *but*.

Blakemore (1989:28-35) claims that unlike its denial of expectation use in which *but* does not make any contribution whatsoever to the truth conditional content of an utterance containing it, in its contrast use *but* is not a purely non truth functional constraint, i.e. it does make some contribution to the truth conditions of the utterance containing it. In the following section I am going to discuss this claim and suggest that *but* has *and* as part of its meaning in all of its uses and therefore always contributes to the truth conditional content of an utterance.

4 Does *but* have conceptual content ?

Blakemore claims that *but* in its contrast use, and only in this use, has *and* as part of its meaning and forms part of a conjoined proposition. One of her arguments in favour of this claim is that the suggestion of contrast conveyed by *but* can be implicitly conveyed by the corresponding full stop utterance and the corresponding conjoined utterance. So, to take Blakemore's example (1989:28), (10a), (10b) and (10c) all convey the suggestion of contrast, which of course doesn't necessarily happen in the case of denial *but*, as I showed in (7a) and (7b).

- (10) a. Susan is tall *but* Mary is short
 b. Susan is tall. Mary is short
 c. Susan is tall and Mary is short

However, I think that the suggestion of contrast in these examples is due to the meaning of the words 'tall' and 'short', i.e. it is due to the fact that these are antonyms. Consider the following examples:

- (11) a. Mary is in the garden *but* John is in the sitting room
- b. Mary is in the garden. John is in the sitting room
- c. Mary is in the garden and John is in the sitting room

In (11a) the hearer cannot but derive the suggestion that there is a contrast between the two states of affairs described by the two propositions. In (11b) and (11c) on the other hand, the hearer may or may not derive such a suggestion exactly as in the case of denial of expectation *but* illustrated in (7a) and (7b): thus, for example, on the basis of appropriate contextual information he may take the first proposition to provide evidence or justification for the second; or he may not connect the two propositions at all. Thus, in this respect the contrast *but* does not differ at all from the denial of expectation *but*.

The most important argument in favour of Blakemore's claim that *but* in its contrast use is not a purely non truth functional constraint on relevance is that the contrast *but* can be embedded in the scope of logical operators like *if...then*. Thus, for example, in the conditional

- (12) If Susan is tall *but* Mary is short, Peter won't fall in love with either of them

the suggestion of contrast does not itself contribute to the truth conditions: the antecedent must simply be a conjoined proposition. However, if this argument is to be taken seriously then we have to admit that *but* can happily be embedded not only in its contrast sense but in its denial of expectation use as well. For example, the denial of expectation suggestion conveyed by *but* in R.Lakoff's well-known example in (13)

- (13) John is a Republican *but* he is honest

does not contribute to the truth conditions of a conditional like (14)

- (14) If John is a Republican *but* he is honest, then I will change my mind about the Republicans

In this respect *but* differs significantly from the other discourse connectives like *after all* and *therefore* which cannot be embedded at all, as the following examples show:

- (15) * It is not the case that if John wins a scholarship *after all* he has worked hard, then he can be proud of himself
- (16) * It is not the case that if Susan is tired *therefore* she doesn't want to make the meal then Mark will order a pizza

All this suggests to me that *but* has *and* as part of its meaning in all of its

uses; thus *but*, unlike the other discourse connectives that Blakemore has considered, though a semantic constraint on relevance also makes a contribution to the truth conditional content.

A possible counterargument to my claim that *but* always has *and* as part of its meaning might go along the following lines: if the semantics of *but* is exhausted by its constraining function, then *but* does not appear in the logical form of the utterance containing it. Now if this is the case then (12) and (14) will constitute counterexamples to a purely non truth conditional approach to *but* only if it is assumed that sets of assumptions (e.g. John is a Republican, John is honest) cannot fall under the scope of logical operators. However, as D.Wilson pointed out (Blakemore 1987:140) there are examples suggesting that this assumption cannot be maintained:

- (17) If you care for Sandy, really really care for her, then marry her
- (18) If you do this: read the literature and produce arguments for each one of your claims, then your essay will get a good mark

In view of such examples, one could argue there's no reason to think that the antecedent of the conditional in (12) and (14) is a conjunction. Thus, a unified non truth conditional approach to *but* can be maintained.

However, I think that this doesn't constitute a very strong argument. It seems to me that processing the antecedent in (12) and (14) the hearer will either connect the two propositions with *and* or introduce the second one with an extra *if*. Moreover, (12) and (14) differ significantly from (17) and (18): whereas in (12) and (14) the antecedent is formed by two distinct propositions, in (17) the logical form of the second part of the antecedent differs from the first only with respect to the presence of the adverb 'really'; the speaker's point in uttering (17) seems to be to make clear to the hearer that she believes he should get married only if he really cares for Sandy. So, it seems to me that in this case the hearer will take the antecedent to be: 'if you really really care for Sandy'. In (18) on the other hand there is really only one conjoined proposition which is introduced and falls under the scope of the sentential operator *if*, since 'read the literature and produce arguments for each one of your claims' is nothing but the propositional content of 'this' which the speaker spells out in detail. Lastly, according to the counterargument presented above the logical form of the antecedent in (15) and (16) will be a set of assumptions: {John wins a scholarship, John has worked hard} in (15) and {Susan is tired, Susan doesn't want to make the meal} in (16). If, however, the logical form of an utterance is a well formed formula as Sperber and Wilson believe, then how is the ungrammaticality of (15) and (16) to be accounted for?

Another indication that *but* is not a purely non truth functional constraint on relevance is that contrary to the way all the other discourse connectives behave, *but* can happily appear in reported speech. Consider the following examples:

- (19) Mary said that Peter loves her *but* she doesn't love him
- (20) Jane said that she spent her weekend watching television *after all* she didn't have anything better to do

While (19) is perfectly acceptable, (20) is acceptable only as a case of free-indirect speech similar to (21) or (22):

(21) Anne said would he please close the door

(22) Mary wondered would he possibly get a degree

The claim that *but* has *and* as part of its meaning also finds support in the fact that *but* cannot cooccur with *and* in either English or Greek as the following examples show (*but* in Greek is *ala* or *ma* or *para* and *and* is *ke*):

(23) * Peter is not married *but and* he is always in the company of beautiful women

* O Petros den ine pantremenos *ala/ma/para ke* sintrofevete panta apo omorfes ginekes

(24) * Peter is not married *and but* he is always in the company of beautiful women

* O Petros den ine pantremenos *ke ala/ma/para* sintrofevete panta apo omorfes ginekes

In fact this is another respect in which *but* differs from some of the other discourse connectives: whereas *but* cannot cooccur with *and*, *therefore* and *moreover* can:

(25) Bill has a full time job *and therefore* is free only at the weekends

(26) Nick didn't drink at lunch *and moreover* he didn't smoke. So, he decided to lead a healthy life²

The discussion above suggests that both in its denial of expectation use and in its contrast use *but* does make some contribution to the truth conditional content. If it is correct that *but* has *and* as part of its meaning, then *but* forms part of a conjoined proposition. Let's see in detail what the term conjoined proposition means in Relevance theory.

In the case of dependent relevance, as I explained in section 2, each proposition is consistent with the principle of relevance individually. On the other hand, in the case of a conjoined proposition like (27):

(27) Well, we went shopping. I bought a book on Art and my sister bought a dress

Blakemore (1985, 1987) argues that the speaker guarantees the relevance of

² Note, however that like *but*, *after all* and *you see* cannot cooccur with *and*:

* Mary got a distinction *and after all* she had worked hard

* Mary got a distinction *and you see* she had worked hard

the whole proposition rather than the relevance of its conjuncts taken individually. This is not to say that each of the conjuncts may not be relevant in its own right; 'the point is that a speaker who is conforming to the principle of relevance cannot expect the hearer to undertake the processing entailed by the use of *and* unless he believes that the conjoined proposition his utterance expresses has relevance over and above the relevance of each of its conjuncts taken individually' (Blakemore 1985:5). Now, one of the ways in which a conjoined proposition may be relevant is illustrated by the following example:

(28) The road was icy and she slipped

Blakemore (1985,1987,1989:34) claims that in (27) 'the hearer will treat the first conjunct as contributing towards and hence modifying the context for the interpretation of the next'. Thus, in (28) the event in the second conjunct is typically understood as the result of the state of affairs described in the first. It follows that you can't change the order of the conjuncts without changing the meaning of the whole utterance:

(29) She slipped and the road was icy

Similarly in (2), repeated below, you cannot reverse the order of the propositions without changing the meaning of the whole utterance:

(2) The dining room is large *but* there is no room for more than one in the kitchen

According to Blakemore (1989:34) 'the asymmetry' of two propositions connected by the contrast *but* as in (2) 'can be given a similar explanation'. In particular in (2) the interpretation of the first clause gives access to a property F which takes its value from the context, say F=being spacious. The ascription of this property to the kitchen is then negated by the proposition introduced by *but*. Thus, the interpretation of the first half of (2) could be said to 'contribute and hence modify the context for the interpretation of the next'.

However, I don't think that examples (2) and (28) can be said to be processed in the same way. The reason for that is that the coherence involved in each case is of a different type: the coherence achieved in (28) is at the level of propositional content whereas the coherence achieved in (2) is at the level of contextual effects. According to Blakemore (1987:112) 'on the relevance based approach we can distinguish two kinds of coherence in discourse: a) the coherence that arises when information made available by the interpretation of one segment of discourse is used in establishing the propositional content of the next, and b) the coherence that arises when the information made available by the interpretation of one discourse segment is used in establishing the contextual effects of the next'. This second kind of coherence gives rise to the relation of dependent relevance. Now, as Carston (1988) has shown the optimally relevant interpretation of a conjoined proposition like (28) will go beyond its linguistic content. In particular, the logical form of (28) will be enriched to the effect that the state of affairs described by the second proposition will be understood as the result of the state of affairs described in the first one. Thus, the explicature of (28) will be:

- (30) The road was icy, and as a result of that she slipped

Now, it seems to me that a conjoined proposition like (31) below will be processed in a similar way.

- (31) The dining room is large and there is no room for more than one in the kitchen

The optimally relevant interpretation of this conjoined proposition may be that the second conjunct describes a state of affairs contrastive to that described by the first. In the course of maximising relevance, the hearer may (on the basis of sufficient contextual information) enrich the logical form of (31) so that its explicature becomes:

- (32) The dining room is large and as a contrast to that there is no room for more than one in the kitchen

It is clear that in both (28) and (31) the coherence achieved is at the level of propositional content. However, the information made accessible to the hearer by the first proposition in (2) does not help in establishing the propositional content of the following utterance. Whereas the concept AND is enriched to AND AS A RESULT in (28) and AND AS A CONTRAST in (31), the logical form of the utterance in (2) cannot be said to be enriched in any way. *But* in the second clause simply instructs the hearer to derive a proposition which describes a state of affairs where the ascription of the property F to the kitchen is negated. *Not(F(kitchen))* is not part of the propositional content of the utterance introduced by *but*; rather it is a contextual implication derived by a hearer following the instructions that *but* carries, namely the derivation of the negation of a proposition P. It follows that the coherence achieved in (2) is the kind of coherence that arises when information made available by the interpretation of one discourse segment is used in establishing the contextual effects of the next. Thus, *but* in its contrast use generates a relation of dependent relevance between the propositions it connects exactly as in its denial of expectation use.

In this section I suggested that *but* is a semantic constraint on relevance which is partly truth functional and which gives rise to the relation of dependent relevance between the propositions it connects. An obvious question is whether it is possible for a semantic constraint to form part of a conjoined proposition and give rise to the relation of dependent relevance at the same time. In connection with this Blakemore says in an earlier paper (1985:9): 'the use of *and* gives the hearer an explicit indication that it is the relevance of a conjoined proposition that is being guaranteed. This means that we would not expect a speaker conforming to the Principle of Relevance to convey a relation of dependent relevance in a conjoined utterance'. However, I don't see any reason why this cannot be the case. In fact it seems to me that in addition to the discourse connectives like *therefore*, *after all*, etc. which are not truth functional and generate a relation of dependent relevance alone, there is another group of discourse connectives like *but* and perhaps *although* which are not purely non truth functional but still give rise to a relation of dependent relevance. Good evidence for this claim comes from Greek where *although* is expressed by two linguistic items *an ke*, the second of which is *and (ke)*.

5 Para: rectification or correction

In Greek there are as far as I can see three words for *but*: *ala*, *ma* and *para*. I deliberately leave out *omos* because it seems to me to be similar to the English *though* and *however* which lie outside the scope of this paper. As I have explained in detail in my MA dissertation *ala* and *ma* generally behave in a similar way and can convey both the suggestion of denial of expectation and the suggestion of contrast. *Para*, however, as I will try to show in this section does not convey either of the suggestions of *but* discussed so far but rather gives rise to a suggestion of correction or rectification. *para* differs from *ala* and *ma* in that it can be used to connect two clauses, which are understood to be uttered by one speaker, only if the first one is explicitly negated. Therefore, all the examples that I'll be considering here will be of the form [(den P) *para* Q] or in English [(not P) *but* Q].

Consider:

- (33) I Ana den pige gia psonia para pige na di to filo tis
'Anne did not go shopping *but* she went to see her boyfriend'
- (34) Den itan i mitera mu pu apantise to tilefono para (itan) i adelfi mu
'It was not my mother who answered the phone *but* (it was) my sister'

Traditionally these examples would be considered as illustrating the contrastive use of *but*. In a rather broad sense of the notion of contrast you could say that there is a contrast between the negative proposition in the first clause and the non-negative one in the following one. However, I think that such a characterization does not exhaust the suggestion conveyed by *para* in the above examples. According to my intuitions a speaker would most appropriately utter (33) in a context where she intends to deny the assumption that Anne went shopping which she assumes the hearer to hold, and to replace it by the assumption that Anne went to see her boyfriend, which she presents to the hearer as being the correct one; similarly in (34) the speaker assumes the hearer to be under the misbelief that it was her mother who answered the phone and she wishes to point out to him that it was her sister, not her mother. In both cases it seems that the suggestion conveyed by *para* is that the speaker's prime intention is to 'correct' the hearer.

Such intuitions indicate that *para* lexicalises in Greek another use of *but*. In a relevance oriented framework we would say that the proposition introduced by *para* is relevant by virtue of correcting a misbelief that the speaker assumes the hearer to hold. This is quite different from the case where the utterance introduced by *but*, *ala* or *ma* in Greek, is relevant as denial of an expectation. In the denial of expectation use of *but* the proposition introduced by *but* is a denial of an assumption that the speaker assumes the hearer to have accessed while processing the preceding clause. On the other hand, in the case of two propositions connected by *para* it is the first one which by being explicitly negated constitutes a denial of an assumption that the speaker believes the hearer to hold. In the first half of (33), for example, the speaker intends the hearer to abandon the assumption 'Anne went shopping' which she assumes the hearer holds and which she considers to be false. Processing the denial 'Anne did not go shopping' the hearer will presumably be faced with a question like 'Well, if she didn't go shopping, then what did she do?'. The utterance

introduced by *para* is relevant by virtue of providing the answer to this question. The proposition expressed by this utterance offers the hearer the piece of information with which he is expected to replace his old belief 'Anne went shopping' which is according to the speaker false. In other words *para* indicates that the proposition it introduces is relevant as correction of a misbelief of the hearer which has already been denied by the proposition in the preceding clause.

A good way of checking whether *para* illustrates another use of *but*, the corrective *but*, which is indeed different from both the contrast and the denial of expectation *but*, is to try to paraphrase the suggestions conveyed by *but*. The best way to paraphrase the suggestion of denial of expectation is by *parolafta* in Greek and *nevertheless* in English. Thus, (1) could be paraphrased in the following way:

- (35) To afentiko ine edo simera, *parolafta* den tha se di
'The boss is in today, *nevertheless* he will not see you'

On the other hand, the suggestion of contrast conveyed by *but* is successfully paraphrased in Greek by 'antithetos' or 'eno' and in English by 'whereas'. Thus, a good paraphrase of (2) would be:

- (36) I trapezaria ine megali, *antithetos/eno* stin kuzina den xorane perisoteri apo enas
'The dining room is large, *whereas* there's no room for more than one in the kitchen'

(33), however, cannot be paraphrased by 'parolafta' or 'nevertheless'; moreover, it cannot be paraphrased by 'antithetos' or 'whereas' without loss of meaning. This indicates that *para* does not convey either the suggestion of denial of expectation or the suggestion of contrast. (33) can be appropriately paraphrased by the somewhat archaic 'antaftu' in Greek and 'rather' in English:

- (37) I Ana den pige gia psonia; antaftu pige na di to filo tis
'Anne did not go shopping; rather she went to see her boyfriend'

In my opinion (37) strongly suggests that *para* conveys the suggestion that the proposition it introduces is a correction.

Strong evidence in favour of the claim that *para* conveys the suggestion of correction comes exclusively from the Greek data. As I said earlier it is a necessary condition for the appropriate use of *para* that the first of the two propositions it connects be explicitly negated. However, this is clearly not a sufficient condition as the following examples are unacceptable:

- (38) * Den fantastika pote oti ta pragmata tha ekselisolotan etsi *para* na pu eGINE
'I never thought things would turn out this way *but* they did'
- (39) * I Lisa den ine omorfi *para* ine kalos anthropos
'Lisa isn't pretty *but* she's a nice person'
(Context: the speaker considers marrying Lisa: if she isn't pretty, I won't marry her; if she is nice, I will)

Both of these examples would be perfectly acceptable with *ala* or *ma*. In this case *ala* or *ma* would convey the suggestion of contrast in (38) and the suggestion of denial of expectation in (39). The reason *para* cannot be used is that a speaker uttering (38) and (39) in the given context will not be understood as wishing to correct a misbelief of the hearer's. Thus, the conclusion seems to be that *para* can only be used to convey the suggestion of correction.

Having established that *para* gives rise to the suggestion of correction let me describe now what goes on in (33) in terms of Relevance Theory.

In the first half of (33) the speaker is explicitly denying an assumption that she assumes the hearer to hold, namely that Anne went shopping. Now, when the deductive device is faced with two contradictory assumptions, for example 'Anne went shopping' and 'Anne did not go shopping', it compares their strength and automatically erases the weaker one (Sperber and Wilson 1986:114). Provided that the hearer trusts the speaker and provided that the assumption 'Anne did not go shopping' comes with a greater degree of strength, the hearer is expected to abandon his old assumption that Anne went shopping after processing the first part of (33). Thus, the contextual effect to which the first part of (33) gives rise is that of elimination of an assumption.

The proposition in the second clause of (33) is introduced by *para*. *para* is truth conditionally equivalent to *and*, and at the same time functions as a linguistic constraint on the pragmatic interpretation of the utterance it introduces. In particular, *para* constrains the hearer's choice of possible contexts against which the utterance it introduces is to be processed and the kind of contextual effect to which this utterance gives rise. *para* constrains the context in the sense that it points out to the hearer that the assumption 'Anne did not go shopping' must be part of the context in which the utterance following *para* must be processed. In other words *para* indicates to the hearer, thus saving him processing effort, that the assumption 'Anne did not go shopping' is the smallest context in which the utterance it introduces can be optimally relevant, i.e. yield an adequate range of contextual effects for no unjustifiable processing effort. *para* also constrains the contextual effect derived from the utterance it introduces in the sense that it indicates that the utterance is relevant by virtue of providing further evidence for the assumption 'Anne did not go shopping'. In other words the utterance introduced by *para* yields the contextual effect of strengthening an existing assumption. Thus, the proposition introduced by *para* corrects the hearer's misbelief that Anne went shopping by informing him what Anne did instead of going shopping.

It is obvious from the above discussion that the speaker guarantees that each of the propositions expressed by the utterance in (33) is consistent with the principle of relevance: the speaker has reason to believe that it is relevant to the hearer both that it is not the case that Anne went shopping and that she went to see her boyfriend. Moreover, the relevance of the utterance introduced by *para* depends on the interpretation of the preceding utterance. More specifically, it is the assumption 'Anne did not go shopping', which is derived from the first utterance as the result of the resolution of the contradiction between the assumptions 'Anne went shopping' and 'Anne did not go shopping', that gets strengthened by the proposition introduced by *para*. Thus, the discourse coherence achieved in (33) is at the level of contextual effects. In other words, *para* generates a relation of dependent relevance between the propositions it connects.

Another indication to the effect that *para* constitutes a constraint which

forces the hearer to connect the two propositions in a particular way is that like the rest of the discourse connectives *para* cannot be replaced by *ke* (*and*):

- (40) I Ana den pige gia psonia ke pige na di to filo tis
'Anne did not go shopping and she went to see her boyfriend'
- (41) Den itan i mitera mu pu apantise to telefono ke itan i adelfi mu
'It was not my mother who answered the phone and it was my sister'

As is obvious from these examples the suggestion conveyed by *para* does not survive when *para* is substituted by *and*.

On the other hand, the suggestion conveyed by *para* does not itself contribute to the truth conditions of the proposition it introduces, i.e. if it is found that the conjunction of the two propositions in (33) is true but the propositions are not connected in the way *para* indicates, the speaker won't be said to have spoken falsely.

It is evident from the above discussion that *para* has all the properties characteristic of those expressions that Blakemore has called discourse connectives and which function as linguistic constraints on relevance. However, *para* (and *but* in its corrective use in English) seems to be a constraint altogether different from *ala* and *ma* (or *but* in its contrast and denial of expectation use in English). Whereas an utterance introduced by *ala* or *ma* yields the contextual effect of elimination of an assumption, one introduced by *para* gives rise to the effect of strengthening a denial. While *ala* and *ma* establish an inferential relation of contradiction between the propositions they connect, *para* does not.

However, it seems to me that it is possible to reconcile the way *para* functions with Blakemore's analysis of *but* and thus maintain the claim that there's only one *but*-constraint. Let's go back to (33). Let 'Anne did not go shopping' be P, 'Anne went to see her boyfriend' be Q and 'Anne went shopping' be R. According to the proposed analysis, P yields the elimination of R and Q strengthens P. If we take however a closer look, we will see that Q strengthens P in a particular way: it provides a new piece of information which constitutes further evidence in favour of the elimination of R, namely that the speaker's point in uttering Q is to establish the elimination of R. This fits in very well with the fact that once faced with two contradictory assumptions the deductive device is not always able to resolve the contradiction in a straightforward way, usually because the contradictory assumptions are equally strong; in this case you search for further evidence in favour of one or the other of the contradictory assumptions; once one of them is better evidenced the deductive device erases the weaker one (Sperber and Wilson 1986:115). Thus, the proposition introduced by *para* does contribute to the derivation of the contextual effect of elimination of R; it does so however in an indirect way, i.e. by first strengthening Q. If this is indeed the case then *para* does not function essentially differently from (the other uses of) *but*: all establish the inferential relation of contradiction between a proposition R and the proposition they introduce and all give rise to the contextual effect of elimination of R.

Modified Occam's Razor ('senses are not to be multiplied beyond necessity') is not the reason I am trying to maintain the claim that there is only one *but*-constraint (with different uses); there are many indications which suggest that this is the right course to take. For example, in English the three different

suggestions, of contrast, denial of expectation and correction are conveyed by the same linguistic item *but*. Moreover, in Greek *ala* and *ma* can also convey the suggestion of correction. Thus, (33) would be perfectly acceptable with *ma* or *ala* instead of *para*:

- (42) I Ana den pige gia psonia *ala/ma* pige na di to filo tis
'Anne did not go shopping *but* she went to see her boyfriend''

6 Conclusion

In this paper I have tried to argue that *but* is a semantic constraint on the pragmatic interpretation of utterances which makes some contribution to the truth conditional content. Following Blakemore (1989), I also argued that there is only one *but*-constraint, which instructs the hearer to establish a relation of contradiction between the proposition it introduces and an assumption which is part of the interpretation of the utterance in the preceding clause. This *but*-constraint can be realised in three slightly different ways: *but* may convey the suggestion of denial of an expectation created by the first clause or the suggestion of contrast or the suggestion of correction which is lexicalised in Greek with *para*.

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¹ There is a difference between (33) and (42): (33) is understood to be more emphatic than (42); moreover, unlike (33), in (42) the first clause doesn't have to be interpreted as a denial (but (42) carries the suggestion of correction only if the first half is understood as a denial).

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