PROCEEDINGS OF THE SYMPOSIUM

"Information structure in a cross-linguistic perspective", held at the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters, November 30 - December 2, 2000

Concessive connectors in English and Swedish

Bengt Altenberg,
University of Lund, Sweden
Concessive connectors in English and Swedish

Bengt Altenberg
University of Lund

1. Introduction

Discourse connectives have attracted a great deal of attention in recent years. The reason for this is no doubt partly the growing interest in discourse and pragmatics, but also the demand for rigorous descriptions in such areas as computer-assisted translation and text generation. An additional reason is the complexity of the field itself. There are many descriptions and classifications of discourse connectors, especially in English (e.g. Halliday & Hasan 1976, Quirk et al. 1985, Martin 1992, Halliday 1994), but these are often in conflict and the functions of different connectors tend to be described in rather vague terms. Many aspects of their use are still poorly understood. This seems to be particularly true of contrastive connectors, such as but, however, on the other hand, nevertheless, at any rate, etc. In a recent comparison of English and Spanish contrastive connectors, Fraser & Malamud-Makowski (1996: 865) describe the situation as follows:

The notion of contrast in English, and probably in other languages, is not well defined. Definitions of contrast in the literature range across the semantic, logical, pragmatic, functional, and discourse domains, and some of these definitions overlap and intersect. Given this uncertainty over what seems to be a basic notion, it is hardly surprising that there is no agreement on what constitutes the class of contrastive discourse markers, if in fact a class exists.

The problems of defining the notion of contrast and of specifying the functions of contrastive connectors are similar in Swedish. In their recent account of Swedish contrastive adverbial connectors, Teleman et al. (1999: 135) complain that the syntactic and semantic use of these “is insufficiently investigated”.

In this study I will compare the use of English and Swedish adverbial connectors expressing concession on the basis of the English-Swedish Parallel Corpus. The aim is not primarily to define the notion of ‘concession’ but, rather more modestly, to examine the degree of correspondence between English and Swedish concessive connectors and the functions they express. The English-Swedish Parallel Corpus is a bidirectional translation corpus consisting of 40 text extracts (20 fiction and 20 non-fiction texts) of 10,000-15,000 words from each language and their translations into the other language, totalling over 2 million words. The advantage of using a bidirectional translation corpus is that it provides an empirical basis for observing how the same meaning is expressed in two languages. It also offers a useful methodology for exploring the complex form-meaning relationships that are characteristic of a fuzzy area like ‘concession’: we can start from a form in one language and examine its translations in the other language; we can then reverse the perspective and repeat the procedure in the other direction. In this way, the languages can be used as mirror images of each other.

1 For detailed information on the corpus, including the text codes used in this paper, see Altenberg et al. (1999) and Altenberg & Aijmer (2000).
2. Concessive relations

Discourse connectors serve to signal the relationship between a unit of discourse and its verbal and situational context. Concessive connectors, such as yet, nevertheless, still and even so, are usually said to present the discourse unit they occur in, here called S2, as unexpected in view of a preceding unit, S1 (cf. e.g. Quirk et al. 1985: 639 and Rudolph 1996). They are often regarded as a subtype of contrastive connectors, but the relationship between the types has been specified in various ways. Fraser (1998), for example, divides contrastive connectors into three mutually exclusive subtypes, largely on the basis of their substitutability. The subtypes impose different kinds of restrictions on the relationship between S1 and S2. The largest subtype, headed by the coordinator but, imposes the least restrictions but it includes further subtypes, among them the concessives, with more specific meanings. A shared feature of concessive connectives and other connectors belonging to the but class, such as however and on the other hand – which I will here refer to as ‘adversatives’ – is that they all signal that the message conveyed by S2 contrasts with an explicit or indirect message conveyed by S1. What distinguishes the concessive subtype is that S2 “exclusively targets an indirect message of S1” and that this message “must be expected” (Fraser 1998: 318). Hence, while the concessive connector nevertheless is unacceptable in (1), it is acceptable in (2):

(1) John is tall. However, but*nevertheless Sam is short.
(2) We started late. Nevertheless we arrived on time. [Expected: ‘We will arrive late’]

However and but are also possible in (2), but only nevertheless signals clearly that the expected implication of S1 is ‘We will arrive late’.

A slightly different classification is proposed by Knott & Mellish (1996) and Knott & Sanders (1998). Like Fraser, they use substitutability tests to create a hierarchical taxonomy of connectors. This is interpreted in terms of a limited set of semantic primitives reflecting basic coherence relations in discourse. Contrastive connectors are distinguished by having ‘negative polarity’ (‘S2 is inconsistent with S1’) and concessive connectors by also being ‘causal’ in nature (‘S2 is a consequence of S1’). By combining these (and other) features the function of individual connectors can be specified and related to each other. For example, while nevertheless is specified for two features, negative polarity and causality, but is only specified for the former and can thus be regarded as a hypernym of nevertheless. Hence, adversative but is a more general connector than concessive nevertheless. As a result but can generally replace nevertheless, whereas the reverse is not always the case.

Taxonomies of these kinds are interesting because of the theoretical assumptions they are based on. The problem is that they are rarely tested on empirical data and that finer distinctions encountered in real discourse are generally ignored. It is symptomatic that none of the approaches mentioned above attempts to analyse concessive relations in detail. The aim of the present study is therefore to find out what kinds of relation can be identified in a corpus-based study of concessive connectors in English and Swedish.

Only adverbial connectors will be considered. The focus will be on the ‘meaning’ of the connectors, i.e. the relationship they indicate between the unit they occur in, S2, and some preceding unit, S1. Their syntactic, prosodic and stylistic characteristics, though important, will be largely ignored.

3. Method

A useful starting point for the comparison is to consider the ‘mutual correspondence’ (MC) of English and Swedish adverbial contrastive connectors, i.e. their tendency to be translated by
each other the corpus. Figure 1 gives a rough picture of the MC of adverbial contrastive connectors occurring at least 10 times in the original English and Swedish texts in the corpus. The connecting lines indicate the degree of MC between different cross-linguistic pairs: the thicker the line, the higher the MC value. Apart from indicating the degree of correspondence between contrastive connectors in the two languages, the figure also gives an indication of some functional subsets within the contrastive paradigm. Some subsets are clearly distinct, without any obvious links to other subsets (e.g. the ‘replacive’ pair instead : i stället), others have weak links to neighbouring sets but are nevertheless fairly distinct (e.g. the ‘adversative’ set however : emellertid/dock). One clear exception is the ‘concessive’ set in the lower half of the figure, starting with the English item nevertheless and the Swedish item ändå. This group includes a number of rather weakly related members. It is this complex and fuzzy set that will be examined in the following sections.

Figure 1. Cross-linguistic correspondences of contrastive adverbial connectors

The procedure will be as follows. Starting with the concessive pair with the highest MC value (27%) – yet : ändå – we shall first look at the Swedish translations of yet and examine the functional uses of these. The perspective will then be reversed: using Swedish ändå as a starting point we shall examine its English translations and their functions. As a third step we shall select some functionally distinct English connectors revealed in the previous step, reverse the perspective again, and examine the functions of their Swedish translations. To obtain a more exhaustive picture of the concessive connectors in the two languages, this

---

2 Briefly, the MC value of two cross-linguistic items is the ratio between the number of mutual translations in a bidirectional translation corpus and the sum of their frequencies in the original texts, expressed as a percentage. The value will range from 0% (no correspondence) to 100% (full correspondence). For a more detailed description, see Altenberg (1999).

3 Figure 1 is a revised and expanded version of a similar figure in Altenberg (1999). The MC values in Figure 1 range from 82% (on the other hand : ä andra sidan) to 2% (yet : dock). Broken lines indicate MC values below 5%. Correspondences with a MC below 2% have not been included.
zigzagging procedure should ideally be repeated on the basis of additional connectors (cf. Dyvik 1998), but the three steps described above must suffice here.

4. Swedish translations of *yet*

*Yet* can be regarded as a prototypical concessive connector. It has a single function in the corpus: it signals ‘contrary to expectation’, i.e. S2 challenges an assumed consequence implied by S1. S1 is typically to be found in the context (clause or sentence) immediately preceding S2. This is illustrated twice in (3):

(3) I thought about this conversation for quite a while afterwards. Here we were, three reasonably intelligent people discussing the merits of *his* and *his or her* and *their*. Tiny little words, *yet* we couldn’t agree. And we were friends. *Yet* we couldn’t agree. (JB1) Jag funderade på den här debatten rätt länge efteråt. Där hade vi stått, tre relativt intelligenta personer, och diskuterat enkla små ord. Enkla små ord — *ändå* kunde vi inte komma överens. Vi var ju i alla fall vänner. *ändå* kunde vi inte komma överens.

The implied expectations rejected in the two examples can be expressed as something like "tiny little words should not cause disagreement" and "friends can be expected to agree", respectively. These examples are representative of all the occurrences of *yet* in the corpus, although the expected consequences implied by S1 are not always as easily specified as in (3).

The examples in (3) are also typical in another way. The dominant Swedish translation equivalent is *ändå*. As shown in Table 1, *ändå* accounts for 48% of the Swedish translations. This may not seem an impressive figure, yet *ändå* is by far the most common translation among several possible alternatives. The only frequent competitor is the coordinator *men* ‘but’ (32%). Other alternatives are comparatively rare. There are also few cases of omission in the Swedish translations, a fact which indicates that the translators have no difficulty finding an appropriate Swedish equivalent of English *yet*.

Table 1. Swedish translations of *yet*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Swedish translations</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concessive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>åndå</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>likafullt</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>likväl</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(detta) trots att (subord.)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inte desto mindre</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trots detta</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i varje fall</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fastän (subord.)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>även om (subord.)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adversative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>men</em> (coord.)</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dock</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>samtidigt</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emellertid</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>samtidigt som (subord.)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>medan (subord.)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>utan att (subord.)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omission</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
However, there is one striking tendency in the translations that deserves some comment. As shown in Table 1, the Swedish connectors can be divided into two categories: those having a specific concessive meaning (with åndå as their main exponent) and those having a more general ‘adversative’ meaning (with the coordinator men as their main exponent). Only 57% of the translations are concessive, while as many as 40% are adversative. If we adopt Knott & Sanders’ hierarchical classification of contrastive connectors and regard the concessives as a hyponymous (more specific) subset of a superordinate (more general) adversative category, we see that the Swedish translators have a strong tendency to choose a less specific rendering of yet. There are probably several reasons for this. In some cases the concessive relation expressed in the original is weak – or at least interpreted as weak by the translators or insufficiently validated by the context. In such cases a shift to an adversative connector does not change the reading of the passage dramatically.

In other cases the change to a coordinator (generally men) is obligatory. In English yet is often used as a semi-coordinator (cf. Quirk et al. 1985: 927f), linking an elliptical S2 unit (a clause, predicate or phrase) to the preceding S1 unit, as illustrated in (4) and (5). This is not possible in Swedish and the translator therefore either has to replace the English connectors by the coordinator men, as in (4), or insert a coordinator before a concessive connector, as in (5).

(4) On the British side, there was much wisdom about the problems of mounting an invasion, yet also a reluctance to embark upon a bloody showdown with the Germans […] (MH1)

På engelsmännens sida fanns en mängd kunskap kring problemen med att starta en invasion men också en motvilja mot att gå in på en blodig uppgörelse med tyskarna.

(5) For the privilege of being the first to tread this useless yet so desirable spot, both men were prepared to drag themselves 1,500 miles across a frozen wilderness […] (RH1)

För äran att vara den förste som beträde denna värdelösa men åndå så åtråvärda fläck var båda männen beredda att släpa sig 2 800 km över en istäckt ödslighet […]

In the majority of cases, however, the shift to men merely seems to be a convenient, though less specific, rendering of a contrast whose exact meaning can be inferred from the context. Hence, the ‘adversative drift’ in the Swedish translations should not be taken to mean that yet is polysemous, but rather be regarded as a tendency among the translators to choose a less ‘marked’ variant from two closely related contrastive sets.

5. **English translations of åndå**

Let us now reverse the perspective and examine the English translations of Swedish åndå. These are listed in Table 2. The picture that emerges from the table is more complex than that displayed by yet. First, while yet could be shown to have a single concessive function, åndå has several. Five different functions have been distinguished, labelled ‘(basic) concession’, ‘dismissal’, ‘explanation’, ‘qualification’, and ‘hypothetical wish’ (see below). Second, åndå is much more common in the Swedish original texts (48 occurrences per 100,000 words) than yet is in the English texts (27 occurrences per 100,000 words). This is partly due to the functional versatility of åndå, but another reason is that yet has several frequent synonyms that share the concessive function, especially still, nevertheless and all the same. In other words, there is no obvious ‘standard’ equivalent of åndå, even in its concessive function. The most common translation equivalent is yet, but this connector only accounts for 14% of the translations. Instead, there is a wide range of alternatives (30 different translation types) that are partly, but not entirely, functionally determined.
Table 2: English translations of Swedish ändå

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English translations</th>
<th>Concession</th>
<th>Dismissal</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Hypothetical wish</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Omission</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yet</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>still</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nevertheless, nonetheless</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>all the same</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>after all</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>even so</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>but (coord.)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anyway, anyhow</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emphatic do, indeed, in fact</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at least</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in any case</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>if only</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in spite of this (NP)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(even) though (subord)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>despite/in spite of the fact that (sub.)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in any event</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>just the same</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>despite all this</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for all that</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on the other hand</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>however</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>189</strong></td>
<td><strong>27</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td><strong>232</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A third striking difference is the large proportion of omissions in the translations: no less than 28% of the occurrences of ändå are left untranslated in the English versions. This is rarely due to a lack of English translation equivalents. Rather, the English translators often seem to regard a concessive surface marker as superfluous, either because the relation is evident from the context or because it is signalled by some other means, e.g. by a concessive marker in the preceding clause. This is illustrated in the following example where the relation is already marked by även om: despite:

(6) **Även om** restaurerarna gick hårt fram i modern tid, är dessa hus **ändå** fina exempel på den baltiska tegelgotikens arkitektur. (LI1)

Despite the restorers' overenthusiasm in modern times, these houses are fine examples of the Baltic brick Gothic architecture;

In other cases emphatic do or an emphasising adverbial (e.g. in fact, indeed) is used to bring out the contrast between S2 and (the implication of) S1:

(7) **Den gemensamma europeiska marknaden innebär att även arbetskraften blir internationellt mer rörlig. Rörligheten kommer antagligen inte att leda till att särskilt stora grupper flyttar över gränserna, så länge reallönsskillnaderna är måttliga och de kulturella hindren avsevärda. Men**

**With the European internal market, the international mobility of labour is also increased. As long as real wage differentials are moderate and cultural obstacles are appreciable, this is unlikely to lead to sizeable movements. But together with the fixed exchange rate, integration does alter**
tillsammans med den fasta växelkursen
innebär integrationen åndå förändrade villkor
för lönebildningen och arbetsmarknadens
funktionssätt. (LU1)

In some contexts a concessive connector is impossible in English. For example, when a second speaker objects against the claim of a previous speaker only but seems to be possible:

(8) — Jag känner dom inte. "I don’t know them.”
— Men det måste du väl åndå göra. (LG1) "But you must do.

Next, let us consider the different functions revealed by åndå in the material.

5.1 Basic concession

As shown in Table 2, the great majority of the occurrences of åndå (81%) have a basic concessive function: S2 refutes an assumed consequence implied by S1 and can thus be said to express ‘contrary to expectation’. This is also reflected in the English translations. If we disregard the omissions, no less than 89% of the English renderings retain the concessive meaning of the original in one way or another, while only 7% have a more general adversative meaning (but, however, on the other hand) and another 4% express meanings which deviate from the original in various ways (e.g. emphatic do, indeed, in fact). But is rarely used as a translation equivalent (4%). In other words, there is no ‘adversative drift’ of the kind demonstrated by the Swedish translations of yet. When åndå is translated at all, the concessive meaning of the original is generally preserved.

When åndå has this function it is rendered by the following English adverbial connectors in the corpus: yet (33 examples), still (25), nevertheless (22), all the same (20), even so (9), after all (3), nonetheless (3), in spite of this (1), despite all this (1), just the same (1) and for all that (1). Some illustrations are:

(9) Visst knakade det ibland i golvtjorna i gamla hus, så att det kunde låta som fotsteg som trampade omkring. Det var bara det att i rummet intill hennes var det en mjuk heltäckande matta. Inte trågolv. Åndå låt det som stegen gick över trågolv.

Men det var åndå ingenting att oroas sig över. De här stegen ville henne inget ont, det kändes hon och det var huvudsaken. (MG1)

Of course floorboards in old houses sometimes creak, sounding like footsteps. But the room next to hers didn’t have a wooden floor. It had plush wall-to-wall carpeting. yet it sounded as if the steps were walking across a wooden floor.

But there was still nothing to worry about. She felt that those steps meant her no harm, and that was the main thing.

(10) Kungen råkade i dimman och stridsröken rida in i fiendens led, han kom i närstrid och stupade. Svenskarna lyckades åndå slutföra slaget till seger, men halva styrkan låg kvar på slagfältet, över 5 000 i dödade och sårade. (HL1)

In the smoke and dust of the fighting the king rode by mistake into the enemy’s lines, became involved in hand-to-hand combat and was killed. The Swedes managed to win the battle of Lützen nevertheless, though half their forces, 5 000 or more, were killed or wounded.

Note that the adverbial connectors frequently co-occur with other contrastive connectors in both languages, especially with men but. Table 2 only records but as a translation equivalent of åndå when but is the only rendering of åndå and does not correspond to men in the original, while omission means that åndå has no equivalent at all in the translation. However, when there is omission, but often remains as a contrastive marker (corresponding to men in the original). In such cases of omission it is possible to see an ‘adversative drift’ of the kind we have observed in the Swedish translations of yet.
In these cases the English concessive connectors are generally interchangeable. If we disregard syntactic and stylistic differences, they can be regarded as forming a synonymous set.

However, despite this general similarity, it is possible to distinguish two concessive subtypes, although the distinction is not always clear-cut. In the cases illustrated above S2 challenges an assumption implicit in the immediately preceding context. This locally anchored function is by far the most common one in the corpus and seems to be the only possible use of yet. It is also, of course, the only possible use of connectors containing an anaphoric element, such as even so, in spite of this, for all that. In some cases, however, the expectation must be inferred from the larger context or on the basis of general knowledge, as illustrated in the following example:

Here after all is clearly concessive: S2 challenges the implied assumption that 'Gerda does not have much weight'. However, this assumption cannot be derived from the preceding text but must be inferred from the general context ('Gerda is a woman'). In such 'general' concessive cases the relation can be roughly paraphrased as 'despite everything' or 'considering the circumstances'. The element of expectation or 'surprise' is less pronounced, the connector tends to be unstressed, and after all cannot easily be replaced by yet and its synonyms (even if the syntax is restructured to permit this).

5.2 Dismissal

Four English connectors — anyway, anyhow, in any case, in any event — reveal another function of ändå. In these cases S2 provides an explanation for some event or circumstance conveyed by S1, but instead of serving as a mere reason for the state of affairs expressed in S1, it dismisses this as irrelevant or unimportant:

To break the silence, I started to tell him how you could discover traces of arsenic poisoning in a body several hundred years after it had been poisoned. But he just said: 'What's the point of that? By then, everyone would be dead anyway.'
den gyttriga bebyggelsen. Känslan för det gamla var inte särskilt stark, det mesta av den gamla bebyggelsen menade man ändå snart skulle ersättas. (LI1)

road straight through the built-up area. The feeling for what is old was not particularly strong; most of the old buildings would have to be replaced in any case, the argument ran.

Medical care and, even more so, pensions are cumbersome, rigid systems and it takes a long time — of necessity in the case of pensions — to introduce new solutions.

The argument against efforts for increased saving is that economic growth will give future generations a larger cake to share in any event.

The effect is similar to that of a conditional-concessive clause relation (cf. Quirk et al 1985: 1099 ff.). The concessive meaning arises from the implication that S2 is the case whatever the situation or circumstances indicated by S1 may be, i.e. under all circumstances (‘in any case’). Hence, S2 can be said to have ‘dismissive’ force, overriding any point made in S1.

An interesting variant of these cases can be seen in some examples where ändå has been translated by already:

But in the summer Jacob got hold of a ghastly stump-grubber, it was up for sale at the auction of the effects of Elis of Lillåberg; […] Jacob got it home on an open-sided wagon, as he had already borrowed Gabriel Israelsson’s horse and was going in the direction of Svartliden.

Here the overriding nature of the reason given in S2 is reinforced by a temporal adverb and we can paraphrase: ‘since S2 was already the case, the action expressed in S1 was not a great sacrifice’.

The English connectors are normally stressed and placed in clause-final position. However, occasionally they occur clause-initially:

But the truth was that it had been too late for two years, yes for the whole time. And who can know for certain that she wanted to live?

When Hanna, Hanna Burvall, heard that she was dead […] then she thought: "Anyway it’s unavoidable, someone must tell him, and now I’m the only person left in the world who can talk to him.”

Here the function of anyway is close to the topic-resuming use that is also common in the corpus (see section 6.2). In both cases it can be said to dismiss preceding matter as irrelevant.

5.3 Explanation

Although after all can be concessive (see 5.1), it also has another function:

"But to go with a loose female like that. After all, you are a minister’s children."
(19) Och Anton Lundmark [...] ropade in två bonaderna, dem kan komma att få sitt värde sade han, dem är ju ändå nästan som någon sorts konstverk. (TL1)

And Anton Lundmark [...] purchased two wall-hangings. "They may come to have some value," he said. "They are, after all, a bit like works of art."

Here S2 acts as a justification for the preceding utterance. In (18) S2 does not cancel an implied consequence of S1 (‘if you consort with a loose female, you are not a minister’s children’), but rather serves to justify the exclamatory advice conveyed by S1: ‘since you are a minister’s children, you shouldn’t consort with a loose female’. Similarly, in (19) S2 acts as a justification of S1 (‘since the wall-hangings are a bit like works of art, they may come to have some value’). This use of after all typically suggests that the information conveyed by S2 should be known to the listener (cf. Blakemore 1987: 81 f.). In Swedish the same notion is generally expressed by the pragmatic particle ju, which either co-occurs with ändå, as in (19), or replaces it entirely (cf. Aijmer 1996: 417 ff. and Altenberg 1999: 258).

It has been claimed that the position of after all has an important disambiguating function in English (cf. Blakemore 1987: 86): in clause-initial or medial position it is explanatory, in final position concessive. This is also largely borne out in the corpus, as illustrated in (18) – (19). However, there is one clear exception in the corpus:

(20) Till slut vart han tvungen att rätta opp sig och gå in dittill Gerda och dricka vattnet. Ska du icke göra helgen snart, sade hon. Det är ändå lördagen. (TL1)

At last he was forced to straighten up and go in to Gerda and drink some water. "Aren’t you going to take a rest soon?" she said. "It is Saturday after all."

Here S2 clearly serves to justify the previous utterance (‘as you well know, people finish work early on Saturdays, so why don’t you do the same’). Hence, it is the contextual relationship between S1 and S2 rather than the position of after all that ultimately determines how we interpret the function of S2.

5.4 Qualification

In a few examples ändå is translated by the focusing adverb at least, indicating yet another function. Following Kay (1992), we can distinguish two (non-quantitative) senses of at least, which I will here call ‘corrective’ and ‘evaluative’. In the corrective use S2 expresses an afterthought qualification or correction of the content of S1, suggesting that S1 is not quite true as it stands:

(21) Till och med den eleganta ledstången slutade plötsligt. Ett egendomligt halvfärdigt bygge — det var nog ändå det inträck man fick. (LG1)

Even the fine banisters suddenly stopped. A strangely incomplete building — at least, that was the impression it gave.

In the evaluative subtype S2 expresses something that is less than optimal in relation to S1 but is nevertheless regarded as something positive, i.e. it contrasts with a situation that is or could have been worse (roughly: ‘whatever you can say of S1, (at least) S2 is true’):

(22) Det hade gått så långt att jag måste erkänna kroppen som en nästan jämstark motståndare. Everything had gone so far that I had to accept my body as an almost equally strong

5 Quirk et al (1985: 604) classify at least as a restrictive focusing subjunct on the basis of its narrow syntactic and semantic scope. This is especially clear in its quantitative use (as in At least ten workers reported sick yesterday). No such examples occur as translations of ändå in the corpus.
Neither the basic concessives (yet, nevertheless, etc) nor adversative but seem to work as substitutes of at least in these examples. Yet, there is a clear link between at least and concession. In both examples at least emphasises that S2 is true only in respect of a focused element (impression and that much, respectively) and that this cancels a possible or imagined assumption related to S1 (‘the building may not be incomplete, yet …’ and ‘living with Siiri and Lamek may not have taught me much, yet …’). As we shall see, in Swedish both the concessive connector i all fall and the focusing adverb åtminstone are possible translations of at least (see section 6.3).

5.5 Hypothetical wish

In a few cases ändå occurs in an independent conditional clause expressing a hypothetical wish. S2 implies a negative (counterfactual) state of affairs that is in turn evident from the preceding context:

(23) Om Dag ändå vore hemma!
Hon hade behövt honom att prata med för att komma ifrån den här oron. Om han bara ville komma nu, så skulle det inte hända, det skulle åtminstone bli uppskjutet...
Nej, nu ville hon inte sitta här längre och grubbla! Hon sprang ut i köket och tog ett stort grönt äpple från skålen på köksbordet. Just då ringde telefonen.
Skönt! Det skulle bryta den overkliga stämningen att få prata ett tag. Om det ville vara till henne ändå! (MG1)

If only Dag were home!
She needed to talk to him to get away from this uneasy feeling. If only he would come home now, then it wouldn't happen, or at least it could be put off.
She couldn't stand to think about it any longer. She rushed into the kitchen and took a big green apple from the bowl on the table. Suddenly the phone rang.
Talking to someone would break the unreal atmosphere. I hope it's for me, she thought.

Although ändå (like bara ‘only’) here serves to emphasise the hypothetical nature of S2, and thus its negative implication (‘Dag is not at home’, ‘the call may not be for me’, etc), this cannot be interpreted as an expected consequence of the immediately preceding context. Hence, yet and its synonyms are impossible translations in English. Instead, if only is used or a paraphrase indicating the hypothetical wish (I hope).

6. Reversing the perspective

As we have seen, while English yet seems to have a single ‘basic’ concessive function, Swedish ändå has a wide range of meanings. Since only one of these seems to correspond to the basic concessive function expressed by yet and its synonyms (still, nevertheless, all the same, even so, etc), we are left with a variety of new functions that diverge from this basic concessive use. To establish the Swedish correspondences of these we must reverse the perspective again and examine the Swedish translation equivalents of the English connectors expressing these functions. This can only be suggested here. In the next section I shall briefly examine the Swedish renderings of three items: after all, anyway and at least.
6.1 Swedish translations of after all

As we have seen, after all (translating åndå) has two main functions: explanatory and ‘general’ concessive. These functions reappear when we reverse the perspective and look at the Swedish translations of after all, shown in Table 3. Two features are striking. Åndå rarely occurs as an equivalent of after all; in fact it is only used once, with a general concessive function. Instead, the translations reveal a preference for other Swedish equivalents: när allt kom(mer) omkring, trots allt and i alla fall. In addition, the particle ju is used four times as a substitute for an explanatory connector, emphasising the ’common knowledge’ feature of this use of after all.

(24) It was hard to associate the sunshine and dense blue sky outside with the first of January but, as everyone kept telling us, it was quite normal. After all, we were in Provence. (PM1)

Det var svårt att förknippa solskenet och den djupblå himlen utanför fönstren med den första januari, men som alla påpekade för oss var detta något fullt normalt. Vi var ju i Provence.

Table 3. Swedish translations of after all

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Swedish translations</th>
<th>Explanatory</th>
<th>Gen. concessive</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>när allt kom(mer) omkring</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trots allt</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zero</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ju</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i alla fall</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>åndå</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>faktiskt</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>37</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Second, när allt kom(mer) omkring, trots allt, i alla fall and åndå obviously form a synonymous set, but they are also ambiguous in the same way as after all: all can signal the same two relations, the explanatory and the general-concessive. Two examples involving när allt kom(mer) omkring will suffice to illustrate this:

(25) My specific field of interest has been just the Swedish businessman. After all it is he, with his international contacts, who is acting ambassador for Sweden and can do so much to make or mar the Swedish reputation. (JPM1) [Explanatory]

Mitt intresse riktades just mot den svenska affärsmannen. När allt kom(mer) omkring är det han som genom sina internationella kontakter agerar som ambassadör för Sverige och kan göra så mycket för att hjälpa eller stjälpa det svenska ryket.

(26) Then, suddenly, I feel wonder. I have achieved, finally, a face that a moustache can be drawn on […] A public face, a face worth defacing. This is an accomplishment. I have made something of myself, something or other, after all. (MA1) [General concessive]


---

6 It is interesting to note that när allt kom(mer) omkring only occurs twice in the Swedish original texts. Its greater frequency in the Swedish translations suggests that it is regarded as a ‘standard’ translation of after all by the translators.

7 In addition ju co-occurs with an explanatory connector (när allt kom(mer) omkring, trots allt, i alla fall) in five cases.
Third, the two functions of *after all* are positionally biased in the same way as described in section 5.3: the explanatory function is especially common in clause-initial position, the circumstantial function in clause-final position. But again, there are also clear exceptions to this tendency:

(27) Rook looked at the waitress, expecting that she'd understand. She was a country girl, after all. (JC1) [Explanatory]

(28) Certainly a visit to the plains of Africa gives one an immediate impression of how conspicuous the stripes are and how easy it is to spot a herd of zebra in almost any terrain. Perhaps, after all, they are meant to be seen. If so, why? (DM1) [General concessive]

6.2 Swedish translations of *anyway*

*Anyway* is a versatile connector. As shown in Table 4, four main functions can be distinguished in the corpus: specific concessive, dismissive, topic-resuming and qualifying. The dismissive function is most common, while the basic concessive function is rare. The dismissive function also has the widest range of Swedish correspondences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Swedish translations</th>
<th>Spec. concess.</th>
<th>Dismissive</th>
<th>Topic-resuming</th>
<th>Qualifying</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>i alla fall</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>additive advl</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>hur som helst</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>ända</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zero</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>i vilket/varje fall</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>atminstone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>men</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>ju faktiskt</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>överhuvudtaget</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>all right</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>64</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The four functions are illustrated in (29) – (32):

(29) The lettering generally ran out of space before the message was completed, but it was so familiar, from pictures and reports of what was happening in the schools of real blacks that it could be read, *anyway*. (NG1) [Spec. concessive]

(30) What did it matter that the seaside hotels, the beaches, pleasure-grounds with swimming-pools were not for us? We couldn’t afford hotels, *anyway*; (NG1) [Dismissive]

(31) Bokstäverna fick ofta inte plats, budskapel blev ofullständigt men det var så allmänt bekant, från bilder och reportage om vad som händer i de riktiga svartas skolor, att det *ändå* kunde läsas:

(32) Vad gjorde det att badortshotellen, stränderna, nöjesfälten med badbassänger var förbjudet område för oss? Vi hade *ändå* inte råd att bo på hotell;
(31) My full name: that’s all there is to it. No middle name. Hughes was the name of my parents, who were married for twenty-five years. They called me Stuart. I didn’t particularly like the name at first – I got called things like Stew and Stew-Pot at school – but I’ve got used to it. I can handle it. I can handle my handle.

Sorry, I’m not very good at jokes. People have told me that before. Anyway, Stuart Hughes – I think, that’ll do for me. I don’t want to be called St John St John de Vere Knatchbull. (JB1) [Topic-resuming]

The use of anyway in (29) is specific concessive: S2 contrasts with the implied consequence of S1 (‘the lettering could not be read’) and (but) anyway can be replaced by yet. The difference is that, unlike yet, anyway can occur in clause-final position and be given greater prominence.

In (30) anyway is dismissive: S2 adds a decisive point or reason that dismisses any previous argument or circumstance as irrelevant (‘no matter whether S1 is true or not, S2 is the case and more important’). As we have seen, this is also one of the functions of after all. Several Swedish connectors match this sense: ändå, i alla fall, hur som helst, i vilket/varje fall. It is interesting to note that in no less than 12 translations the notion of an additional point is conveyed by an additive (rather than dismissive) connector such as dessutom, förresten and för övrigt. One example with dessutom is:

(32) "Tad, remember what your father said," she told him now. "There aren’t any such things as monsters."

"Not in the daytime, anyway," he said, and smiled at her so openly, so beautifully, that she was charmed out of her fears. (SK1) [Qualifying]

The fact that S2 presents an overriding reason or argument is also indicated by överhuvudtaget (‘in the first place’), by ju faktiskt (‘of course in fact’) and by frequent additions of the particle ju in the Swedish translations.

From ‘dismissal of a preceding point’ the step is not far to a dismissal of a deviation from the discourse topic and a ‘resumption of the previous topic’, as illustrated in (31). The intervening part of the discourse is dismissed as irrelevant and the topic is brought back on track.

In (33) S2 expresses a qualification of S1. The connector signals a hypothetical contrast with some other element: ‘even if S1 may not be true in all respects, at least S2 is true’ (cf. the description of i alla fall in Teleman et al. 1999: 141).
6.3 Swedish translations of at least

The focusing adverb at least, finally, has two qualifying functions, corrective and evaluative (see section 5.4). Their distribution and Swedish translations are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Swedish translations of at least

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Swedish translations</th>
<th>Corrective</th>
<th>Evaluative</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>åtminstone</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i alla fall</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zero</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i alla händelser</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i varje fall</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To begin with we can note that ändå does not appear as a Swedish translation equivalent (cf. section 5.4). Instead four other equivalents turn up: åtminstone, i alla fall, i alla händelser and i varje fall. The first two are used in both functions, the last two only in the corrective sense (although both seem possible also in the evaluative sense). Two typical examples are:

(34) We now know that our universe – or at least its most recent incarnation – is some fifteen or twenty billion years old. (CSA1) [Corrective]

(35) Mind you, Jean didn’t seem to care about Angus; just raised her eyebrows and talked to him as if he were a child. Arthur could at least make his wife weep, and took comfort from the fact. (FW1) [Evaluative]


Fast Jean verkade sannerligen strunta blankt i Angus, hon höjde bara på ögonbrynen och talade till honom som om han vore ett barn. Arthur kunde åtminstone få sin fru att gråta och det var ju en tröst.

Hence, again we have a situation in which a multifunctional English ‘connector’ is matched by an equally multifunctional Swedish set. In other words, the Swedish counterparts do not provide a straightforward disambiguation; only the context can tell which function is the intended one. However, the two uses are often syntactically distinct. The corrective function of at least is often introduced by or, the evaluative by but. Moreover, the corrective use tends to have less than clausal scope, is often parenthetic, and can occur after the focused element.

7. Conclusion

The functional types and the cross-linguistic correspondences that emerge from the corpus are summarised in Figure 2. Only the main types distinguished are shown; subdivisions (e.g. the ‘specific’ and ‘general’ types of concession) and minor subtypes (e.g. ‘hypothetical wish’) are ignored.

The figure displays a symmetrical cross-linguistic pattern of functional categories with partly overlapping sets of connectors associated with each category. How should this picture be interpreted? One possibility is to regard the functions as forming a coherent concessive system that deviates from other contrastive or adversative relations in signalling a contrast with an assumption or consequence implied in the (immediate or general) context. Another possibility is to view the category labelled ‘basic concession’ as representing a core function from which the others shade off in various ways depending on the assumptions implied. To judge from the functional overlap of many connectors, especially in Swedish, the functions seem to be related in some way. The basic concessives – representing the core
function – indicate that S2 cancels an expected consequence implied by S1. This expectation can either be triggered by the immediate context (‘specific’) or, more distantly, by the general context or knowledge of the world (‘general’). However, S2 can also express a contrast with a hypothetical situation that is either suggested by the immediate context or imagined. This seems to be what relates the other functions. The dismissive function is basically ‘conditional-concessive’ emphasising the truth of S2 no matter what the situation or circumstance indicated by S1 may be (‘be S1 as it may, S2 is true’). Topic-resumption is very similar: a preceding deviation from the topic is dismissed as irrelevant and the main topic is resumed (‘be S1 as it may, what I want to say is S2’). The qualifying function contrasts S2 with an imagined situation (S1) that may not be quite true as it stands (‘correction’) or could have been worse (‘evaluation’). The explanatory function, finally, which seems least ‘concessive’, presents S2 as evidence for uttering S1, but with the implication (reminder) that the evidence is self-evident or should be known despite any possible objections.

The element of concession that seems to be lurking in all the functions displayed in Figure 2 is reflected in the multifunctionality of many connectors. This is particularly striking in Swedish where few connectors are functionally distinct (disambiguating). The connector *i alla fall* (‘in all cases’) is used as a translation equivalent for all the functions, *ända* for all functions except topic-resumption, and *i varje fall* (‘in each case’) and *hur som helst*
'whatever may be the case’) for three functions. Moreover, trots allt (‘in spite of everything’) can be used as a paraphrase for all the relations except specific (anaphoric) concession. This multifunctionality of the Swedish connectors is one important reason for the complexity and fuzziness of the mutual correspondences displayed in Figure 1. By comparison, the English connectors are less versatile. None is used to signal all the functions and few of them (e.g. anyway and after all) are multifunctional. Moreover, yet and most of its synonyms are practically restricted to the basic concessive function. However, this difference between the languages may well be apparent and due to the fact that the step-wise comparison of the two languages was interrupted after the third step. A fourth reversal of the perspective, using some other Swedish connectors as a starting point, would no doubt have revealed greater multifunctionality among the English connectors.

This last point underlines the exploratory nature of the present study. The structure of the English-Swedish Parallel Corpus permits a number of cross-linguistic comparisons, only some of which have been exploited here. Moreover, the functions emerging from the data have been defined in rather informal and tentative terms and little attention has been paid to syntactic and stylistic constraints on the choice of connectors and to the information structure of the related discourse units. In a more exhaustive investigation all these features will have to be considered.

However, what I hope this study has demonstrated is the great research potential of a bidirectional translation corpus and the methodological advantages it offers. It is difficult to see how the English and Swedish ‘concessive’ paradigms could have been revealed, and how the correspondences between them could have been demonstrated, without the aid of such a corpus. The cross-linguistic perspective and the mirror image approach that such a corpus provides open up new possibilities of research that will lead not only to more refined descriptions of the languages compared but also to a better understanding of such fuzzy notions as ‘concession’ in the future.

References


