

An instructional account for *on the contrary* based on Portolés's studies on counterargumentative connectors¹

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to contribute to the pragmalinguistic explanation of the English discourse marker *on the contrary* applying the instructional framework developed by Portolés (2001) for Spanish discourse markers. In order to account for the procedural meaning of this marker, particular attention is paid to his descriptions of the counterargumentative connectors *por el contrario*, *en cambio* and *al contrario*, and to the development of polyphonic instructions (Ducrot 1980, Portolés 2011, Murillo 2016). In the current proposal, *on the contrary* encodes counterargumentative, informative, and polyphonic instructions, and the main polyphonic configurations are presented and exemplified. A comparison between *on the contrary*, *por el contrario* and *al contrario* is subsequently offered, and some issues for translation are addressed.

Keywords: discourse markers, counterargumentative connectors, polyphonic instructions, locutor, enunciator.

Una explicación instruccional para *on the contrary* basada en los estudios de Portolés sobre los conectores contraargumentativos

Resumen: El objetivo de este trabajo es contribuir a la explicación pragmalingüística del marcador del discurso inglés *on the contrary* mediante la aplicación del marco instruccional desarrollado por Portolés (2001) para los marcadores del discurso en español. Para dar cuenta del significado procedimental de este marcador, se presta especial atención a las descripciones de los conectores contraargumentativos *por el contrario*, *en cambio* y *al contrario* y al desarrollo de instrucciones

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polifónicas (Ducrot 1980, Portolés 2011, Murillo 2016). Se plantea que *on the contrary* presenta instrucciones contraargumentativas, informativas y polifónicas, y se presentan las principales configuraciones polifónicas encontradas. Sobre la base de este análisis, se ofrece una comparación entre *on the contrary*, por *el contrario* y *al contrario*, y se abordan algunas cuestiones relativas a su traducción.

Palabras clave: marcadores del discurso, conectores contraargumentativos, instrucciones polifónicas, locutor, enunciador.

1. Introduction: Portolés's (2001) instructional framework

According to Portolés's seminal definition, «discourse markers are invariable linguistic units, they have no function in relation to sentential predication, and have a task that coincides with that of discourse: to guide, according to their different morphosyntactic, semantic and pragmatic properties, the inferences that take place in communication» (Portolés 2001: 25-26, my translation). Portolés's model (2001) integrates the notion of procedural meaning from Relevance Theory (Blakemore 1987), with the proposal of Argumentation Theory that the description of the meaning of each discourse marker is in fact a hypothesis that includes a series of instructions (Ducrot 1980, 1984; Anscombe and Ducrot 1994; Portolés 1998a, 1998b). As Portolés (2001: 76) explains, Relevance Theory focuses on the importance of the inferential part of what was thought to be purely linguistic, while Argumentation Theory accounts for the linguistic side of pragmatic content.

Thus, with this framework the meaning of discourse markers like *por el contrario* or *on the contrary* can be described by means of the set of instructions they encode. This approach has an important explanatory potential as it allows us, by the method of commutation, to easily differentiate instructions that are —or are not— shared by discourse markers which are morphologically or semantically similar, also from a contrastive point of view.

The model is flexible, as new instructions can be incorporated. In the first version of his model, in his book *Marcadores del discurso*, Portolés (2001) included argumentative (following Anscombe and Ducrot 1994), formulative (Gülich and Kotschi 1983; Briz 1998) and informative (van Kuppevelt 1995a, 1995b) instructions. In Portolés et al. (2020), the last version of the framework, other types of instructions have been integrated, taking subsequent research into account: instructions concerning focus and alternative (Portolés 2009), scales (Portolés

2007), polyphony (Portolés 2011), and evidentiality (González Ramos 2016; Sainz 2018).

The aim of this paper is to provide an instructional framework that can explain how *on the contrary* is used. In order to do this, it will be useful to revise Portolés's accounts of other similar markers in Spanish, and to focus on the instructions conveyed by this discourse marker, specifically on the polyphonic instructions.

2. Portolés's accounts of *por el contrario*, *en cambio* and *al contrario*

On the contrary presents similarities at the formal and functional levels with the Spanish discourse marker *por el contrario*. *Por el contrario* and other Spanish discourse markers such as *en cambio*, *por contra*, *antes bien*, *sin embargo*, *no obstante*, *con todo*, *ahora bien* and *eso sí* have been classified as counterargumentative connectors; their meaning is essentially argumentative, as they «link two discourse members, in such a way that the second is presented as supressing or attenuating some conclusion which could have been obtained from the first» (Portolés 2001: 140, my translation).

This common argumentative instruction can be encoded in different ways. Taking Portolés's comparisons of *por el contrario* and *en cambio*, the former conveys a meaning of opposition and can be used in a contrast (1) or in a refutation (2):

- (1) En los últimos 15 años, el precio de la vivienda se ha triplicado. Los sueldos, *por el contrario*, han estado permanentemente congelados. (*El País*, 14 November 1996, *Diccionario de Partículas Discursivas del Español*)
- (2) La verdad de la justicia nunca es un resplandor. Es, *por el contrario*, una convención. (J.C. Recalde, en *El País*, 14/XI/1996, 13, *Diccionario de Partículas Discursivas del Español*)

Por el contrario does not appear in those cases in which there is only a simple contrast and not contrary meaning (1998b: 254):

- (3) María se ha comprado un jersey encarnado y Pedro, *en cambio*, (# *por el contrario*), uno verde pálido.

However, though it does not present as contrary the discourse members it links, *en cambio* can link two contrary discourse members;

it is thus possible to find cases in which *por el contrario* specifies the sense of *en cambio* (1998: 254):

- (4) A Alicia le gusta el teatro. *En cambio*, a su marido, *por el contrario*, le desagrada.

Besides argumentative meaning, counterargumentative discourse markers encode some other instructions that characterize and differentiate them from other markers in the same group. In the case of *por el contrario* and *en cambio*, they encode informative instructions. These instructions are based on previous research by van Kuppevelt (1995a, 1995b). As Portolés explains, both markers can present the discourse member in which they appear as a comment on a different topic (2001: 124):

- (5) Yo pienso que la solución está en la negociación. Ellos, *por el contrario*, creen que está en el enfrentamiento.
- (6) Yo pienso que la solución está en la negociación. Ellos, *en cambio*, creen que está en el enfrentamiento.

The first discourse member (*Yo pienso que la solución está en la negociación*) could be an answer to the question *¿Qué piensa?* ‘what do you think?’, but the second discourse member (*Ellos creen que está en el enfrentamiento*) cannot be an answer to the same question.

However, only *por el contrario* can present the discourse member in which it appears as a comment on the same topic of the previous member, that is, allowing topic repetition:

- (7) Yo pienso que la solución no está en la negociación. *Por el contrario*, está en el enfrentamiento.
- (8) Yo pienso que la solución no está en la negociación. # *En cambio*, está en el enfrentamiento.

With *por el contrario*, both discourse members could be an answer to the same question *¿Qué piensa?* ‘what do you think?’).

Another feature highlighted by Portolés concerning *por el contrario* is the fact that its use is related to polyphony, that is, to the interplay of different voices in discourse (Ducrot 1980, 1984). In the following example,

- (9) No compra caramelos. *Por el contrario*, los regala.

Portolés (1989b: 255) explains that with *por el contrario* we oppose an enunciator or point of view that supports *compra caramelos*, as, according to Ducrot (1984: 212), negative statements are intrinsically polyphonic: in a negative statement two points of view coexist, one that affirms it and another one that denies it. In the previous example from the entry for *por el contrario* of the *Diccionario de Partículas Discursivas del Español*,

- (10) La verdad de la justicia nunca es un resplandor. Es, *por el contrario*, una convención. (J. R. Recalde, en *El País*, 14/XI/1996, 13)

As Portolés explains, the discourse member [*la verdad de la justicia es, por el contrario, una convención*] opposes *la verdad de la justicia es un resplandor*. What is negated in the first discourse member —*es un resplandor*— is what *por el contrario* opposes and replaces —with *es una convención*—, as this is a refutation.

Another example that illustrates the polyphonic nature of *por el contrario* when used in refutations is the following (Portolés 2004: 27):

- (11) No supone Zaratustra que la risa sea algo espontáneo, al alcance de cualquiera en cualquier momento, sino, *por el contrario* algo que requiere un aprendizaje. (F. Savater, *Invitación a la ética*, España, CREA, 1982)

Here the discourse member introduced by *por el contrario*, *la risa es algo que requiere un aprendizaje*, replaces the opinion that could have been wrongly attributed to Zaratrusta, *la risa es algo espontáneo* (Portolés 2004: 27).

Regarding the differences between *por el contrario* and *al contrario*, the latter encodes contrary meaning (but not contrast) and refutation. Further, Portolés explains that *al contrario*, unlike *por el contrario*, can be autonomous and occupy a conversation turn (as in example 12), although it can be followed by an explanation (example 13) (Portolés 2001: 82-83):

- (12) ALICIA: Me han dicho que no te gustan las alcachofas.
JUAN: ¡*Al contrario*!
- (13) ALICIA: Me han dicho que no te gustan las alcachofas.
JUAN: ¡*Al contrario*! [Me encantan.]

Another characterizing feature of *al contrario* is that it cannot appear in a monologic text as a refutation of a first discourse member that has not been previously explicitly negated (Portolés 2004: 31-32). So the following example – which is a translation – is considered strange (Portolés 2004: 31):

- (14) # Pensábamos que la comunidad internacional sería sensible a la injusticia y al exilio impuesto a los palestinos, que nos apoyaría. *Al contrario*, aplaudió la Victoria israelí. (<http://www.unesco.org>)

3. Previous accounts of *on the contrary*

On the contrary is a formal connector in English, and it can be useful in academic English in order to provide counterarguments and also to articulate different points of view. Its description, however, poses some difficulties.

Dictionaries include definitions that can provide interesting cues for the issues concerning the description of *on the contrary*. In the first of the following definitions, the focus is on dialogic uses, and in the second on monologic ones:

- (15) -used to introduce a statement that says the opposite of the last one. «It must have been terrible». «*On the contrary*, I enjoyed every minute». (Oxford Learners Dictionaries, <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com>)
- (16) -used for emphasizing that something is true, even though it is the opposite of something that has been said. «The risk of infection hasn't diminished – *on the contrary*, it has increased». (Macmillan Dictionary <https://www.macmillandictionary.com>)

The problem with some of these definitions is that they account for the example they offer, but cannot really explain some other examples. With the first definition, it would be difficult to explain the second example, as *has increased* is not the opposite of *hasn't diminished*.

For Ball (1986: 89), the connector *on the contrary* «is a direct denial of what has been asserted: 'What you have said is not factually correct'». He provides the following two examples, both in dialogic uses, with a positive (17) and a negative (18) first member:

- (17) Politicians disagree:
 A: The redrawing of the constituency boundaries will be to the advantage of the Labor Party.
 B: *On the contrary*, it may well result in giving the tories an extra 20 seats. (*BBC TV*)
- (18) Doctors disagree:
 A: There is no connexion between drinking and suffering a stroke.
 B: *On the contrary*, excessive consumption of alcohol is certainly a contributory factor in the present epidemic of heart disease and stroke. (*The Sunday Telegraph* 1984)

Again, it would be difficult to explain the example in the second dictionary (example 16) by means of Ball's account.

Lake (2004) expresses concern for the fact that non-native academic English writers use *on the contrary* in an incorrect way, confusing it with *on the other hand*. According to this author, this is because in reference materials *on the contrary* is described as a phrase of contrast or contradiction —he mentions White and McGovern (1994) and Jordan (1990). He states that this kind of description makes it difficult for the students to understand non-dialogic uses —example 16—, in which the segments linked by *on the contrary* do not contradict but «complement one another» (Lake 2004: 139), in other words, they represent «reiterative emphasis» (Lake 2004:142).

Lake (2004) seems to find problematic a polyphonic account of *on the contrary*, although he somehow considers it. He mentions Paquette (1999), who states that *on the contrary* «can only be used to introduce a statement that [...] is opposite to what has previously been stated or to what is expected», providing the following example: *Today is not cold. On the contrary, this is the warmest day thus far this spring*. Lake thinks one would expect the warmest day of spring to be «not cold», so he finds Paquette's explanation inadequate. He admits that the example could be a conversational «rejoinder to a non-included but implied statement that went before» about today being cold, in which case there would be an opposition between the two segments. Nevertheless, he dismisses this type of account in the context of academic writing, arguing that non-native students are better at interpreting explicit than implied content.

In a similar way, Fraser (2009) divides uses into the two-speaker and the one-speaker cases. He provides the following examples (2009: 88):

- (19) a) A: I don't suppose you remember where they are, do you?
 B: *On the contrary*, my dear Watson, I know exactly where they are.
- b) I'm not hungry. *On the contrary*, I'm starved.

By using *on the contrary*, he explains, in (a), the second speaker corrects the first speaker's representation, while in (b), the speaker corrects the positive version of the first segment.

With respect to the one-speaker case, he goes beyond previous accounts in what concerns polyphony and differentiates those cases in which the content of the first segment is attributed to another speaker (Fraser 2009: 90),

- (20) a) (You ask) Is Sam dishonest? *On the contrary*, he's incredibly honest.
 b) (You think) She is gorgeous. *On the contrary*, I find her rather ordinary looking.
 c) (You are suggesting that I) Throw the game? *On the contrary*, the hell with you.
 d) Fred, a gentleman? *On the contrary*, he is a bastard.

from those cases in which there is a «polarity constraint» in the first segment (Fraser 2009: 90), that is those cases including a negative element in that discourse member:

- (21) e) I am positive that George didn't speak out against the tyrannical administration. *On the contrary*, he never spoke at all.
 f) Mary didn't make a trivial mistake. *On the contrary*, she made a horrendous error.
 g) I don't object to Pete's manners. *On the contrary*, it's his morals I object to.

Those linguists who have considered the discourse marker *on the contrary* do not include contrastive uses of *on the contrary*, or find them incorrect (Ball 1986, Crewe 1990, Lake 2004, Gilquin et al. 2007, Fraser 2009). As Crewe explains (1990: 325), there seems to be some lack of clarity because some reference materials include lists of discourse markers —even in Quirk et al. (1986)— in which *on the contrary* is listed together with *on the other hand*, as

‘untithetic’². These uses are similar to those cases of *por el contrario* with topic change (see examples 1 and 6 above), but I am not going to consider them here either.

4. An instructional framework for *on the contrary*

Taking into account Portolés’s studies (1994, 1998b, 2001) and previous research on *on the contrary* (Ball 1986; Lake 2004; Fraser 2009), my proposal for this marker includes the following instructions:

a) Argumentative instructions: the two discourse members are anti-oriented; one refutes/contradicts the other.

b) Informative instructions: there is a topic repetition (i.e. the same topic is dealt with in both members).

c) Polyphonic instructions: the marker articulates different voices or points of view.

These three instructions would account for all the uses in Section 2. In all these examples there is a refutation or contradiction of a first discourse member; there is also a topic repetition, as both discourse members could be an answer to a same question.

Polyphonic instructions are central to the uses of *on the contrary*. Those examples in which *on the contrary* is used dialogically are clearly polyphonic. In the monologic examples above, the marker emphasizes a previous negative, which in fact reflects another voice or point of view.

Polyphonic instructions seem, however, to be an underexplored theoretical element in the accounts offered in the literature. It is thus worthwhile to explore the different polyphonic patterns in which *on the contrary* appears.

5. Polyphonic patterns of *on the contrary*

² It is actually possible to find corpus examples with contrastive *on the contrary*, such as the following:

- (i) The mighty Thames had dignity and sober beauty but, despite Wordsworth’s sonnet, I always thought of it as business-like, the powerful engine-room of the city. The Seine, *on the contrary*, was fantasy. Those islands! (Young, Irene, “Enigma variations: a memoir of love and war”, Edinburgh: Mainstream Pub. Ltd, 1990, pp. 61-168, *British National Corpus*).

To this effect, Nall (2014) carried out a diachronic study and concluded that the refutation use of *on the contrary* has always been the most frequent one, and that the contrastive use is decreasing, particularly in the United States, where it has been almost completely abandoned. It remains to be seen what effects the use of contrastive *on the contrary* by non-native speakers will have in the long term (cf. Murillo 2018).

In order to study the different polyphonic patterns in which *on the contrary* occurs it is necessary to recall briefly some relevant points of the theory of polyphony that can be applied to the study of discourse markers³. As Portolés explains (1989a: 89-91), Ducrot states that the speaker is not to be understood as a unit, as in each act of speech there are three types of characters: the empirical subject, the locutor and the enunciator. The empirical subject is the real person that exists in the world. However, for the purposes of linguistic research it is necessary to resort to two discourse entities, the locutor and the enunciator. The locutor is responsible for the utterances, and the enunciators support the different points of view. This can be illustrated with reported speech: in direct reported speech we have two locutors (and two enunciators), and in indirect reported speech one locutor and two enunciators.

In the following example of direct speech, if Peter says,

(22) John told me: «I will come». (cf. Ducrot, 1984: 198)

we have two locutors, Peter and John, and two enunciators or points of view.

In indirect reported speech we find one locutor and two enunciators:

(23) John told me that he would come.

Here Peter is responsible for the utterance, he is the locutor. Then there are two points of view or enunciators: Peter's and John's.

As Ducrot (1980: 46) explains, there are linguistic expressions that allow us to see that the locutor is different from the enunciator, for instance: *Il paraît que.../ Le bruit court que.../ Certains disent que...* ('It seems that.../ It is rumoured that.../ Some (people) say that...').

In negative utterances such as the following example, there is a kind of dialogue between two points of view or two enunciators: E_1 and E_2 . E_1 supports that Mary likes Mathematics and E_2 negates this position. The locutor identifies her/himself with E_2 (Ducrot 1984:212).

(24) Mary does not like Mathematics.

Different patterns with *on the contrary* can be illustrated with examples from different sources. All the cases present polyphonic features: (a) they can be dialogic (with or without an explicit negative in the first discourse member), (b) monologic with an explicit negative

³ See Murillo (2016) for an application to the study of reformulation markers in English and in Spanish.

in the first member, or (c) monologic with reported speech, as well as presenting (d) more complex configurations; that is why polyphonic instructions should be considered in a description of these markers.

a) The first pattern concerns the concurrence of two locutors and two enunciators, supporting two opposing points of view in dialogic cases. These would correspond to Fraser's two-speaker cases. The first discourse member can be affirmative or include an explicit negative.

- (25) —You'll get tired of it.
—*On the contrary*, I shall enjoy it. (*Collins Cobuild Student's Dictionary*, taken from Lake 2004: 139)
- (26) —I suppose the job wasn't very interesting?
—*On the contrary*, it was fascinating. I loved it. (M. Swan, *Practical English Usage*, 1980, Oxford: OUP: § 159)

b) The second pattern corresponds to monologic cases (Fraser's one-speaker cases), with one locutor and two enunciators, plus another enunciator supporting the affirmative point of view underlying the negative. Thus, in the following example, *I think it's rather beautiful* opposes *it seems ugly to me*.

- (27) It doesn't seem ugly to me; *on the contrary*, I think it's rather beautiful. (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, taken from Lake 2004: 139)

The negative can also be expressed by words other than *not*. In example (28) it is introduced by *rarely*, in (29), by *discouraged* and *little*:

- (28) But the Indians **rarely** profit from the mahogany trees cut from their land. *On the contrary* they are being wiped out as the loggers introduce new diseases, alcohol and guns along with the roads they are driving through the rainforest. («Central television news scripts», *British National Corpus*)
- (29) Movements for industrial democracy have been similarly **discouraged**, and even socialist governments, whether reformist or revolutionary, have shown **little** enthusiasm for a devolution of their powers which would permit a greater involvement of ordinary people in the direction of their everyday economic activities. *On the contrary*, with the exception of Yugoslavia, where the system of workers' self-management did something to diffuse responsibility for decision making, there has been a tendency towards increasingly centralized

and bureaucratic administration in economic and other spheres of social life. (Bottomore, Tom, «Political sociology», London: Pluto Press, 1993, pp. 12-109, *British National Corpus*)

In certain cases some explicit information is offered about the enunciator that supports the underlying affirmative point of view. In example (30) the source is stated as popular belief (the point of view is that copyright was designed to restrict access to the works), in (31), the source is the council (the point of view, that those cases were the result of slack administration by the chief steward):

- (30) In the United States Constitution, copyright was intended as an incentive for scientific, artistic, or other creative achievement. It allows for the author of a work to retain the sole rights to copy or distribute that work for a certain time period. Copyright was not, **as is popularly believed**, designed to restrict access to these works. *On the contrary*, the idea behind copyright was that by allowing authors to retain the rights to their work, the authors would feel more inclined to create more works, thus increasing the volume of creative effort within the society in general. (<http://www.aitech.ac.jp/~iteslj/Articles/Harris-Copyright.html>, taken from Lake 2004, 144)
- (31) But such cases were not, **as the council claimed**, the result of slack administration by the chief steward. Gloucester was, *on the contrary*, exercising his good lordship. «Waste» usually meant profit in someone's pocket. (Pollard, A J., «Richard III», Gloucester: Alan Sutton Pub. Ltd, 1991, pp. 27-132. *British National Corpus*)

Explicit information can be offered as well about the source of the enunciator that supports the negative point of view in the first discourse member, as in the following example:

- (32) **It is evident from all these different points of view that** a 'typical' Asian city does not exist, and that there can be no collective Asian identity. *On the contrary*, there are a wide number of highly diverse urban concepts that are also reflected in this exhibition. (http://www.artnode.se/city/cities_on_the_move.html, taken from Lake 2004, 144)

Or to indicate there is no support for a given point of view:

- (33) **There is no evidence that** the court circle in East Anglia, including those elements most closely identified with the queen, was inimical to Gloucester, or that the duke regarded them as rivals for power in the region. *On the contrary*, ducal influence in East Anglia should probably be seen as another component of this influential court connection. There were certainly points of contact between members of the two circles. (Pollard, A J., «Richard III», Gloucester: Alan Sutton Pub. Ltd, 1991, pp. 27-132. *British National Corpus*)

Examples with this second pattern are useful and frequent in order to prevent certain interpretations:

- (34) The fact that it was rejected in a referendum last year **does not mean that** it was a bad reform package. *On the contrary*, Mulroney, himself a bilingual Quebecker, although of Irish stock, worked constructively with the province's premier Robert Bourassa. (World affairs material, *British National Corpus*)
- (35) On the other hand, however, although 20th Century publications, taken as a whole, showed a lower-than-average proportion of items in need of repair (3%), **it would be wrong to conclude that** such material is in no danger. *On the contrary*, not only were some publications from each decade of the present century in need of attention, but a significant proportion of items from its first three decades proved defective, with 19% of items published between 1900 and 1909 showing the need for repair -- a higher proportion than for any group other than 19th Century publications. (National Library of Scotland, newsletter, *British National Corpus*)

Or to question possible interpretations:

- (36) **But is this to say that** the author deliberately chose a means of expression which did not communicate what he wanted to communicate? *On the contrary*, by correcting himself in this way the author is making a particular point: that although the occasion might have been regarded as a performance by some, that although it might have in time become a performance, this description is not an accurate representation of the narrator's memories. In this way, both the original and the correction contribute to the overall relevance of the

text. (Blakemore, Diane, «Language and Literature», 2, 2 1993, Harlow: Longman Group UK Ltd, pp. 101-119, *British National Corpus*)

c) Interestingly, there are intermediate cases between a) and b), that is, monologic with reported speech (explicitly presenting two voices as in dialogues). For instance, monologic cases with direct reported speech and a negative first discourse member, as in example (37). These cases resemble dialogic cases with a negative first member.

- (37) In fact, it is precisely here, if nowhere else, that the EC resembles the German Empire: when the latter was being built many said it was unique and *sui generis*. The national liberal politician, Johannes von Miquel, wrote that «the suggested constitution could not be compared with the Swiss or American model», adding for good measure that «great peoples do not copy». *On the contrary*, the federation or confederation of states, whether for the purpose of pursuing common goals, ensuring common defence from a foreign power or in order to come to terms with a powerful neighbour, is as old as the federation of the city states of ancient Greece, [...]. (Cash, William, «Against a federal Europe: the battle for Britain», London: Gerald Duckworth & Company Ltd, 1991, pp. 14-118, *British National Corpus*)

The following example is a monologic case with indirect reported speech (one locutor and two enunciators), but no negative in the first discourse member. The first enunciator is identified as Pacifica's critics. These cases resemble dialogic cases with an affirmative first member.

- (38) But the other side bears equal responsibility for this fiasco. It has also become a caricature: A group of committed leftists ripping apart their own institution in a factional dispute. **Pacifica's critics claim** they have been muzzled. *On the contrary*, for more than three months KPFA staff have had unaltered access to the air to put forward their grievances. (<http://past.thenation.com/issue/990809/0809cooper.shtml>, taken from Lake 2004, 144).

Another example, with a non personal subject as the first enunciator (*the title of this work*):

- (39) **The title of this work suggests that** it is an essay in the sociology of transport, a subject that has crept into some degree and other courses at University level. *On the contrary*, it is a short, but comprehensive introduction to personnel work in both the haulage and road passenger sides of the industry. (Company newsletter, *British National Corpus*)

d) Finally, there are also more complex polyphonic configurations. The following example would correspond to cases in b), with one locutor, two enunciators and a negative first discourse member, but the whole case is itself an instance of direct reported speech so there is an additional locutor:

- (40) He was the most eloquent spokesman on the founding principles of American self-government. As he himself said, «I know my own principles to be pure and therefore am not ashamed of them. *On the contrary*, I wish them known and therefore willingly express them to everyone.» (<http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/jefferson/quotations/>, taken from Lake 2004, 144)

6. A comparison of *on the contrary* with *por el contrario* and *al contrario*

There are some differences between English *on the contrary* and Spanish *por el contrario*⁴: *on the contrary* encodes contradiction and topic repetition; it can occur in dialogic uses; *por el contrario* encodes contradiction and topic repetition, or contrast and topic change, but it does not appear in dialogic uses (Portolés 1998b, 2001).

If we retake the following examples, in the first one, *por el contrario* is used as English *on the contrary*, encoding contradiction and topic repetition.

- (41) La verdad de la justicia nunca es un resplandor. Es, *por el contrario*, una convención. (*El País*, 18 November 2002, in Portolés, *Diccionario de Partículas Discursivas del Español*)

In the second, *por el contrario* introduces a contrast and a topic change:

⁴ The translations in the *Diccionario de Partículas Discursivas del Español* offer approximate equivalents for the discourse markers, but only from Spanish to English, so the picture is not complete.

- (42) En los últimos 15 años, el precio de la vivienda se ha triplicado. Los sueldos, *por el contrario*, han estado permanentemente congelados. (*El País*, 14 November 1996, in Portolés, *Diccionario de Partículas Discursivas del Español*)

It seems that, like *al contrario* (and unlike *por el contrario*), *on the contrary* can be used on its own, with grammatical independence (example 43), and it can also appear in intermediate positions (example 44), like *por el contrario* (and unlike *al contrario*). Though not frequent in these two uses, it shares them with French *au contraire* (cf. Portolés 2002: 153-154).

- (43) There are no signs of ageing; *on the contrary*. (*Times, Sunday Times* (2011) <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/on-the-contrary>)
- (44) This was not, said Walter Lippmann in the *Washington Post*, the work of a decadent people: This *on the contrary* is the work of political genius requiring the ripest wisdom and the freshest vigour, and it is done with an elegance and a style that will compel and will receive an instinctive respect throughout the civilized world. (Tidrick, Kathryn, «Empire and the English character», London: I B Tauris & Company Ltd, 1992, pp. 172-260, *British National Corpus*)

All this means that *on the contrary* is not a one-to-one equivalent to *por el contrario* or to *al contrario*. In contrastive cases (those with topic change), *on the contrary* and *por el contrario* are not equivalent. In English other markers such as *on the other hand*, or *in/by contrast* appear in these contexts. In refutation uses, *on the contrary* and *por el contrario* are equivalent (also when they occupy an intermediate position in the discourse member). However, when *on the contrary* is used with grammatical independence, it translates as *al contrario* (if it is a monologic case, it should include a negative, though (Portolés 2004:31-32)). *On the contrary* is often used with strong punctuation, usually with an explanation following (example 44), but sometimes without explanation (example 45).

- (45) That so much is dull, bad or unexplained does not make the show uninteresting. *On the contrary*. All kinds of attics have been raided to bring it together and it provides a sharp view of our Royals. (*Daily Telegraph*, elect. edn. of 13/04/1992, *British National Corpus*)

- (46) And, ominously, these displayed no hint of defeat nor dejection; *on the contrary*. (Tranter, Nigel, "Flowers of chivalry", Sevenoaks, Kent: Hodder & Stoughton Ltd, 1987, pp. 74-177, *British National Corpus*)

7. Conclusion

The more we know about discourse particles, the better we'll be able to translate them and to explain to our students how they operate. José Portolés (2001) developed a framework which can potentially explain the procedural meaning of similar discourse particles in Spanish and in comparison to other languages, as in the case of *por el contrario*, *al contrario* and *on the contrary*. *On the contrary* would encode argumentative (the two linked discourse members are anti-oriented, one refuting the other) informative (the same topic is dealt with in both discourse members) and polyphonic instructions (different voices are articulated). As I have highlighted, polyphonic instructions seem to be an important component of the use of *on the contrary*, and this marker can be used in different configurations. *On the contrary* can occur mainly in dialogic patterns with an affirmative or negative first discourse member, or in monologic patterns with a first discourse member explicitly negated or presenting reported speech and a negative or affirmative first discourse member.

The comparison of the three markers, taking into account their instructions and some other discourse features, yields some fine-grained differences which can be relevant for their translation. In some refutative uses, i.e., when they occur in monologic uses introducing a second discourse member, *on the contrary* and *por el contrario* are equivalent discourse markers, even when they are used in intermediate positions in the second discourse member. However, in other refutative cases *on the contrary* is similar to *al contrario*, specifically, when they appear in dialogic uses and as independent discourse members, with or without a following explanation. In contrastive uses, *on the contrary* is usually considered incorrect: *on the other hand* and *in/by contrast* can be used in these contexts, the same as *al contrario*.

Finally, I would like to point out that this paper is just a first approach to these differences and that a large-scale contrastive corpus study could be carried out in order to validate and expand on the results presented here. José Portolés's ideas will remain a source of inspiration for many of us.

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