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WELL BREAKING BAD: ENGLISH *WELL* AND ITS HUNGARIAN COUNTERPARTS IN SCRIPTED DIALOGUES

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1. INTRODUCTION, PRELIMINARY THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

OVER the past few decades research on discourse markers (henceforth DMs) has been rapidly expanding and the theoretical appeal is amply demonstrated by the number of frameworks that have been applied to the study of these items (Relevance Theory, Rhetorical Structure Theory, Construction Grammar, coherence-based studies, Interactional Sociolinguistics, Conversation Analysis, to mention but a few). At the same time, empirical research has yielded detailed analyses of a variety of items in a wide range of languages.

There have been, however, some unfortunate consequences of the process whereby the study of DMs has turned into a growth industry. The field of DM research has become rather heterogeneous with no "overarching theoretical framework" (Aijmer and Simon-Vandenbergen 2006: 1); what is more, there is no generally accepted functional typology and no agreement on the role DMs in general and individual items in particular play in utterance interpretation. Some even argue that further empirical research is futile until a generally agreed model of communication is outlined and such fundamental issues as categorization and functional classification are clarified (cf. Dér 2010: 3).

More recently, however, empirical research has taken a new direction: cross-linguistic studies have moved from their traditional linguistic fields of semantics and lexicology into the areas of pragmatics and discourse analysis. As a consequence, an increasing number of case studies are aimed at deepening our insight into the functions and distributions of DMs *across*

languages, thereby attempting to find universal pragmatic and discourse functions.

Similar to an approach to content words which uses translation equivalents in order to establish semantic fields, a cross-linguistic perspective on DMs is aimed at mapping the functional spectrum of a given DM across a wide range of bi- or multilingual contexts. As a result of the extreme multifunctionality and context-dependence of DMs, one can expect a larger number of correspondences between DMs across languages than, for example, between translation equivalents of nouns or verbs. Still, many argue (cf. Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2004: 1786) that finding translation correspondences is in many ways a more reliable method of describing individual DMs than providing paraphrases and glosses, or establishing co-occurrence patterns, exemplified by the majority of monolingual research. In addition, a cross-linguistic approach can also substantiate previous accounts of particular DMs and can confirm or refute hypotheses which are based on a single language only.

2. PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON ENGLISH *WELL* AND HUNGARIAN *HÁT*

2.1. Semantic bleaching and stigmatization

In terms of laypeople's (i.e. non-linguists') perceptions, of all the DMs, *well* is probably second to *you know* only in terms of the low status that is attributed to its use, which is mainly due to the fact that the most readily perceived function of *well* is to mark the speaker's hesitation and stalling, or to change / complement what has already been uttered. The stigmatization of *well* is most probably related to the fact that of all the DMs *well* is perceived to have been most bleached of its original conceptual meaning. In Schiffrin's words, "except for *oh* and *well* . . . all the markers I have described have meaning" (1987: 314). Levinson, on the other hand, claimed that *well* has "at least a component of meaning that resists truth-conditional treatment" (Levinson 1983: 87-88). In this respect, the perceived use of *well* is similar to that of its most frequent Hungarian translation, *hát,* which has also attracted a wide range of prejudiced misconcep-

tions, for similar reasons. The misperceptions regarding its use include the extremely popular but inaccurate belief that it is not only improper and almost obscene to start a sentence with *hát*, but it is downright ungrammatical, and it somehow violates the true spirit of the Hungarian language. In fact, it is very typical of DMs to appear in initial position, yet there is not a single Hungarian person who has not heard the above claim at least a few times, or who has not been wrongly corrected while speaking his or her own mother tongue. Unlike in the case of the majority of common misperceptions, the source of these linguistic misconceptions is not the Internet, or some other popular media format, but mainly teachers of literature and grammar, and the classroom environment in general, where most students in Hungary first come across the objection to the use of sentence initial *hát*. These are only reinforced through everyday interactions, and even if it is unavoidable to "break the rule," speakers are often careful to point out to their interlocutors that while they are "educated enough" to be familiar with the generally accepted stigmatization of using *hát*, they seem to have no other choice in certain speech situations. Thus, there is a vicious circle, an endless, culturally guided feedback loop whereby the correct usage of a DM involves the perpetuation of a linguistic myth.

2.2 The functional spectra of *well* and *hát* based on previous accounts

Semantic bleaching and the resulting stigmatization are not the only features the two DMs under scrutiny have in common. If we compare previous accounts of *well* with Schirm's (2011) analysis of *hát*, we can see that a great number of the two DMs' functions overlap.

One of the earliest accounts of *well* as a DM is found in Lakoff (1973), who observes that answers might be prefaced by *well* (1) if the answer is an indirect one (Lakoff 1973: 458), (2) if the information supplied with the utterance prefaced by *well* is only part of the answer (1973: 459), (3) in cases "where the speaker senses some sort of insufficiency in his answer" (1973: 463).

Svartvik (1980) identifies the primary use of *well* as a "sharing device" (Svartvik, 1980: 168). He agrees with the functions Lakoff (1973) identified with regard to answers, and supplements them with a number of other functions, which he subsumes under the categories of "qualifiers" and "frames." *Well* as a **qualifier**, indicates or marks (1) agreement, positive reaction or attitude (2) reinforcement, (3) an incomplete answer to a wh-question, (4) a non-direct or qualified answer (Svartvik, 1980: 173ff). *Well* as a **frame** (1) shifts the topic focus to one of the topics which have already been under discussion, (2) introduces explanations, clarifications, etc., or (3) indicates the beginning of direct speech (Svartvik, 1980: 174ff). In addition, Svartvik claims that *well* also functions on the level of discourse techniques: "as floorholder, hesitator, or initiator" (1980: 176).

According to Schiffrin *well* is primarily a "response marker" used "when the options offered through a prior utterance for the coherence of the upcoming response are not precisely followed" (Schiffrin 1987:127). She also states that even in cases when it is used outside of question-answer sequences, "*well* locates a speaker as a respondent to one level of discourse and allows a temporary release from attention to others" (Schiffrin 1987:127). She identifies a whole range of sub-functions on the basis of her corpus compiled from sociolinguistic interviews, such as (1) *well* after utterances where the speaker's assumption is inaccurate, (2) *well* as disagreement minimizer, especially before unexpected responses, (3) *well* used in reaction to an insufficiently broad wh-question, (4) *well* marking information search, (5) *well* before skip-connecting, (6) *well* used in narratives, especially before story abstracts, (7) emphatic *well*, especially in cases where it is used to elicit information that previous questions failed to elicit or before a request for clarification.

Schourup (1985) labels *well* with the term "evincive," which is

> a linguistic item that indicates that at the moment at which it is said the speaker is engaged in, or has just then been engaged in, thinking; the evincive item indicates that this thinking is now occurring or has just now occurred but does not completely specify its content.
>
> (Schourup 1985: 18)

Most of Schourup's (1985) categories correspond to the ones Schiffrin identified (e.g. *well* after deficient questions, as self-repair / other-repair, reluctance to speak, *well* in narratives), to these functions he added (8) *well* before exclamations (e.g. *Well, I'm damned*), (9) *well* introducing quotations, and (10) *well* before topic shifts.

Within the framework of conversation analysis / ethnomethodology, the discourse marker *well* has been argued to be one of a set of markers or announcers of dispreferred seconds in adjacency pairs (cf. Levinson 1983: 334; Pomerantz 1984:72, 99). Accordingly, if a speaker disagrees with a statement, rejects an invitation or denies a request etc., he/she is more likely to use the discourse marker *well* than if he/she agrees, accepts or complies.

Ethnomethodologists' notion of "dispreferred seconds" can be in many ways taken as an overarching category for several of the uses of *well* identified by Schiffrin (1987), especially functions (1), (2) and (7) above.

As Jucker and Smith (2002) observe, the treatment of *well* as a preface to dispreferred seconds also suggests a solution to the problem of the individual, i.e. full-turn DM use of *well*, since

> in many cases it is sufficient for a speaker to utter what she and her addressee know to be an announcer of a dispreferred second to indicate that a preferred second will not be forthcoming at this point. This hypothesis can be corroborated through an analysis of the utterances which follow *well*-only turns (Jucker and Smith 2002: 152).

On the other hand, the association of *well* with dispreferred seconds and preference organization in general ties in nicely with face management and face threatening acts, since "a feature of preference organization [is] that it makes possible a whole range of face-preserving strategies and techniques" (Brown and Levinson 1987: 39).

Hát, similarly to *well*, can function as a (1) face-threat mitigator and, as such, as a politeness strategy (Schirm 2011: 40), it may serve as a (2) delay device (2011: 113), (3) frame (2011:101) and (4) marker of insufficiency (2011: 28). Schirm also lists a number of minor uses associated with *hát* that are based on intuitive responses to sample sentences, provided by a group of native speakers from all genders and ages. Through this exten-

sive data collection process, the following additional functions were incorporated in the list of uses: (5) urging the listener to hurry up with the response; (6) putting stress on important segments of the speech act; (7) controlling the topic and turn-taking; (8) repetition; (9) interjection; (10) objection; and a group of functions with fuzzy boundaries that were labelled by the speakers as (11) "empty," "depleted" of meaning, etc. (cf. Schirm 2011: 100). Schirm also takes a diachronic approach to *hát* and refers to several archaic literary works in her quest to identify the very first occurrences of *hát*. Moreover, Schirm's analysis makes another interesting point: authors very often used DMs in order to imitate spoken language in a book or essay, in other words, to make the speech act sound more natural, resembling a "written movie" (2011: 25).

In addition to the parallels above, *hát* and *well* are also equally predisposed to occur in similar DM clusters such as *hát akkor~well then*, *hát most~ well, now*. What is more, in the case of *hát* and *akkor* ("then") there is an interesting etymological correlation confirming that diachronic development frequently lies behind the present-day functional spectrum of DMs (cf. Traugott: 1995). *Hát* and *akkor* used to convey the same meaning, and as a result they still often reinforce each other, in spite of the fact that they split into two different semantic directions in the course of their diachronic development (cf. Schirm 2011: 39). The difference between the DM clusters *akkor hát* and *hát akkor* underline this diachronic functional split: the former marks conclusion, the latter marks topic shift as its core function.

2.3 Previous accounts of *nos*

In the Hungarian literature (cf. e.g. Keszler: 2000), discourse markers are traditionally categorized on the basis of the part of speech they belong to, which also serves as a major indicator of their functions. Schirm (2011) as well as Markó and Dér (2008) state that discourse analysis in general and discourse marker research in particular remained a neglected area of research in Hungarian linguistics for over a decade even after Schiffrin's (1987) seminal book on DMs. As a result, Schirm (2011) is, to date, the only comprehensive (discourse analytic) account of

Hungarian *hát*, and we find no similar work on the functional spectrum of *nos*.

In general terms, *hát* and *nos* can be thought of as very similar, even interchangeable in a variety of contexts, however, *nos* is less stigmatized than *hát*. One possible reason for the different perception of the two DMs is the higher degree of politeness generally associated with *nos* as a result of which it is less likely to be stigmatized or thought of as a meaningless filler.

As far as the etymology of *nos* is concerned, it is the blending of the interjection *no* (~*hey/~oy/well, then*) and the conjunction *és* (~*and*), or *no* and *'s* (the short form of *és*) (Zaicz 2006: 570). Consequently, the majority of Hungarian monolingual dictionaries list *nos* as an independent interjection, used for the expression of a variety of emotions and mental states such as curiosity, inquiry or insistence, as well as assertion / assertiveness, objection or emphasis. However, Hungarian dictionaries seldom mention its status as a discourse marker, marking, among others, new topics, turn-taking or other aspects of conversation management.

According to Bell (1998) discourse markers do not hold individual semantic meanings, instead their possible interpretations depend on their host unit, i.e. context in which they occur. However, the primary interpretation needs to come from, or at least be related to the item's original sense, in other words, its core meaning. Accordingly, the core meaning/etymological sense of *nos* remains relevant in its current analysis as a discourse marker, in that it is used for the expression of impatience and urgency, alternatively, it sheds light on the significance of the utterance it occurs in. Schirm (2011) acknowledges the fact that, unfortunately, no historical record is available as to how and what was responsible for the functional shift from attitudinal to discourse organizational functions in the case of either *well* or *nos*.

3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

3.0 Preliminaries

Several preliminary remarks are in order with regard to the study of dramatised dialogues. Methodological issues concern-

ing data gathering as well as the nature/constitution of data for analysis have been heavily debated by discourse analysts and will most probably continue to be the focus of research methodology. Brown and Yule, for example, differentiate between the "constructed-data" approach and the "performance-data" approach (Brown & Yule 1983: 20). One of the criteria Van Dijk sets up to define the term discourse is that it must be actual language in use, i.e. authentic and not invented language data (van Dijk 1985: 2). More recently, however, Chovanec distinguishes between data based on prototypical kinds of interpersonal communication such as "real-life conversations" (Chovanec 2011: 243) and data based on less prototypical types of interaction such as "television dialogue and other kinds of scripted dialogue" (ibid.). Both Chovanec (2011) and Dynel (2011) argue in favour of the legitimacy of the latter type of data in the field of language studies in general and discourse analysis in particular. Dynel (2011) observes that scripted discourse mirrors "language users' everyday communicative patterns" (2011: 43) and invokes "an illusion of real-life conversations" (ibid.). Furkó (2010) argues that similarly to linguists who rely on their own intuitions in order to make grammaticality judgements, the discourse analyst who looks at dramatised dialogues relies on "script writers' intuitions about conversational mechanisms and communicative strategies" (Furkó 2010: 114). Moreover, since the script-writer's intuitions and skills manifest themselves in the "verisimilitude of fictional interactions" (Dynel 2011: 43), the study of scripted data strikes up a balance between the "armchair approach" to linguistics (i.e. theorizing about the implications of linguistic phenomena on the basis of constructed examples, cf. e.g. Hudson: 2001), and field methods that rely on the study of real-life conversations.

If we accept that (good) script writers' skills and intuitions are reliable with respect to conversational mechanisms and communicative strategies, we can presume that corpora based on film as well as TV scripts contain DMs in a wide range of communicative contexts and with an adequate range of textual and interpersonal functions. Moreover, Furkó (2011) found that co-occurrence patterns (DM clusters, collocations, speech act-DM pairings, etc.) observed in scripted data closely correspond to those established in research based on real-life conversations. Naturally, we expect different patterns of use with respect to

functions associated with performance phenomena such as self-repetition/self-correction, false starts and lexical search: while real-life conversations are replete with mispronunciations, misformulations, overlaps, etc. (often marked by DMs), such occurrences are scarce in scripted data (cf. e.g. Richardson: 2010), so that "the viewer's understanding is not impeded or even precluded" (Dynel 2011: 45). However, as we will see, the nature of our data does not restrict the following analysis to discourse-organizing and interpersonal uses of *well*, and will enable us to consider strategic and discourse-monitoring functions, as well.

3.1 Types of corpora in DM research

In cross-linguistic analyses of DMs two kinds of corpora are most frequently used: comparable corpora and translation corpora (cf. Aijmer & Simon-Vandenbergen: 2006). Both comprise a set of two or more subcorpora; depending on the number of languages in which DMs are being compared, these are named Language A corpus (LAC), Language B corpus (LBC), Language C corpus (LCC), etc. In the case of comparable corpora, the subcorpora are matched in terms of contextual factors such as style, genre, discourse type, discourse function, etc., but there is no utterance-by-utterance correspondence between them. In translation corpora, as the name suggests, the Language A corpus comprises a text, or, more likely, a collection of texts that have been translated into a target language or languages, while the translations constitute Language B, Language C, Language D, etc. (sub)corpora. There are both advantages and disadvantages of using comparable as well as translation corpora; the most important advantages of using the former is that the Language B (C, D, etc.) subcorpora contain no translation effects and that there is a possibility to compile a corpus (i.e. a set of subcorpora) that comprises only naturally-occurring discourse. For the purposes of the present study of English *well* and its Hungarian counterparts, we decided to use a translation corpus because, even though we had to account for translation effects, it proved to be a simple process to establish correspondences between DMs in the two languages, what is more, choosing a translation corpus enabled us to put together a large amount of language data in a relatively short period of time. In addition,

we used transcripts of dramatised dialogues for the purposes of the research, thus the measure for using naturally-occurring discourse in the Language B corpus was irrelevant.

Accordingly, for the purposes of the study of English *well* and its Hungarian counterparts, we compiled a translation corpus with two subcorpora: the Language A corpus (henceforth LAC) consists of the dialogues in the first four seasons of the popular TV show *Breaking Bad*, while the LBC is a collection of the corresponding Hungarian translations. In the course of compiling the two subcorpora, whenever possible, we made a point of using scripts and transcripts rather than subtitles. For LAC we extracted the relevant dialogues from the television transcripts database (available at tvtdb.com). In order to make electronic search and concordancing easier, LBC was compiled from the Hungarian subtitles of the relevant episodes; however, a mini-corpus containing the occurrences and translations of *well* and *hát* was also used and was based on the transcripts of the Hungarian-dubbed version of the show. In order to lessen the "translation effect" that might influence the reliability of the research findings, we considered alternative translations of the same LAC, which were readily available in the form of different subtitles / transcripts of the Hungarian-dubbed episodes.

3.2 General remarks about the corpus

As for the source of the dramatized dialogues under scrutiny, the following short synopsis of *Breaking Bad* is provided by the Internet Movie Database (IMDb):

> When chemistry teacher, Walter White, is diagnosed with Stage III cancer and given only two years to live, he decides he has nothing to lose. He lives with his wife and teenage son, who has cerebral palsy, in New Mexico. Determined to ensure that his family will have a secure future, White embarks on a career of drugs and crime. He proves to be remarkably proficient in this new world as he begins manufacturing and selling methamphetamine with one of his former students.

In the story, the reason for Walter White's success as a drug manufacturer is the fact that he is extremely well-trained in

chemistry and was originally planning to work as a leading scientist in his own firm. When his plans go haywire and he ends up teaching in a secondary school, financially broken, he realizes that even if he is forced to make drugs, he can make the best of it by making a professionally clean product yet unknown on the streets, that is of high value, and only available through him. The challenge is to build up an extreme fortune with the help of a highly condemned and dangerous branch of business, while keeping up his role both as a husband and a father. Ironically enough, it is of utmost importance that his family stays oblivious to his plans and illegal activities, since his brother-in-law works for the Drug Enforcement Administration, very much aware of and furious over the new meth product.

Due to the complexity of the characters and the story-line, each person is represented as interacting with interlocutors who are essentially at the opposite end of the social continuum. The characters are faced with conflicting speech environments and need to take account of the social and cultural gaps between the people they portray. The screenplay is carefully written with a clear intent to resemble naturally-occurring conversation, moreover, the speech situations appear even more authentic because of the above mentioned focus on cross-cultural differences and social tensions. Consequently, the script is able to provide us with a rich variety of occurrences of *well* (and its most suitable Hungarian translations), either uttered by characters who interact with one another in a rather friendly or familiar manner, or with the often hostile intention of organizing drug-trade, or other criminal activity.

As we saw in section 3.0, an important objective of scripted discourse is to imitate coherent spontaneous spoken language as convincingly as possible. While the series does manage to do this quite successfully and in a takingly professional manner, we have to address some of the translation effects present in the Hungarian subtitles of the episodes that were subjected to concordancing and analysis. The translators adapted almost perfectly to having to imitate speech in the noticeably conflicting contexts, highlighted by the fact that the DM *well* is translated by a wide range of lexical items (e.g. *nos, szóval, hát*, or in a lot of cases, conceptual-compositional items) based on particular functions, and the way they suited each utterance and context.

Hence, if the translator grasped the cultural situation, its purpose, and the types of relationships/attitudes between speakers, it is right to assume that the DMs they used as translation equivalents are in correspondence with what the English speaking writers originally wanted to imply.

Though the functions recur, the selection, frequency and types of DMs vary in obviously distinct speech environments. The conversational skills are likely to be the same, but put to different uses when a character/person is explaining or telling something to a family member, an older but not related person, to a boss, to a colleague, to a school mate, or to random friends with varying states of intimacy. Accordingly, the use of DMs varies according to age, status differences and the formality as well as the medium of the exchange. As for the latter, DMs are ten times more frequent in spoken language than they are in written texts (Louwerse and Mitchell 2003), and they are somewhat more frequent during informal, friendly exchanges than in formal ones.

In *Breaking Bad* the age difference between interlocutors does not count as much as differences in social status. Walter has a very different relationship towards his son, his students, Jesse (his business partner), Jesse's friends and other drug-trading youngsters, and a very different relationship towards his wife, his brother, his sister-in-law, his colleagues and his "superiors" in the drug-trade. The latter group is especially interesting, since the language that is used among them seems casual and colloquial, yet Walter's linguistic choices often convey respect (e.g. negative politeness) and even veneration. His speech depends on the level of comfort, safety, self-doubt, or self-confidence he feels in a particular speech situation. He speaks to the first drug lord that threatens him very differently from the way he interacts with the criminal whom he is forced to assassinate in spite of their initial agreement. His character change is enormous, as he becomes strongly affiliated, even controlling and competent in the given layer of society and business. These changes are reflected in the speech patterns, conversational style, and, as a result, the functional spectrum of the DMs he uses. In order to illustrate these changes, in the following section the functional spectrum of *well* in *Breaking Bad* will be mapped with a view to investigating if the translation

equivalents followed the various functions in any uniform manner at all.

4. THE FUNCTIONAL SPECTRUM OF *WELL* AND ITS HUNGARIAN COUNTERPARTS IN THE TRANSLATION CORPUS

4.1. (Polite) Disagreement

The reason *polite* is parenthesized in the label of this category is that in spite of the fact that many DMs are listed as evident face-threat mitigators, in some cases they are also compatible with the expression of hostility and conflict. In this group, *well* usually appears in initial position, and serves to soften (or to strengthen) the edge of an upcoming disagreement that could be interpreted as aggressive or disrespectful. It is a convenient tool whereby the speaker signals in advance that for some reason s/he is not in the position to agree with what the interlocutor has just uttered (whether it is an assertion, or a question containing a presupposition). Thus a DM is often an indispensable part of both formal conversations and friendly debates, in which it is important to maintain a non-hostile and amicable facade whatever the topic may be. In the following example, speaker B (an oncologist) uses the DM *well* in an utterance that clearly expresses that A's statement makes false assumptions, but at the same time speaker B manages to remain gentle and sustain Mrs. White's (speaker A) hopes regarding the success of her husband's treatment:

(1) A: Couldn't that mean that the chemo is working?
B: ***Well***, realistically, it may just mean that we've got the antiemetics tuned right.

While in the Hungarian version no DM is used that directly corresponds to *well* (*valójában~in fact* corresponds to *realistically*), the translator uses other linguistic strategies to avoid crudeness on the part of the doctor, thus, the Hungarian translation conveys the same implicature as the utterance in the LAC, i.e. that while it is not certain that the amelioration is already a direct sign of cancer remission due to chemotherapy,

there is still reason to believe that the treatment will eventually be effective.

(1b) Valójában ez lehet, hogy csak azt jelenti, hogy . . .
In fact this might possibly just mean that . . .

In some cases, as mentioned before, especially when used sarcastically, *well* marks impoliteness rather than politeness. This use makes the implicature that the speaker is confident that his/her interlocutor is wrong much more accessible and unequivocal. In most cases when this happens, there is a salient co-occurrence with items such as *yeah*, and *oh*:

(2) A: He seemed cool to me.
B: Yeah, ***well*** . . .
(2b) A: Pedig nekem elég lazának tűnt. *He seemed rather cool to me.*
B: Na, persze . . . ***DM, DM*** (~*of course, sure*)
(3) (A: We will produce a chemically pure and stable product that performs as advertised. No adulterants. No baby formula. No chili powder.
B: No, no. Chili P's my signature.)
A: Not anymore.
B: Yeah, ***well***, we'll see about that.
(3b) A: Ezentúl nem. *Not from now on.*
B: Igen, nos, majd meglátjuk. *Yes,* ***DM****, we'll see.*

In a corpus of 308 occurrences, *well* serves as a polite, or pseudo-polite marker that accompanies disagreement 49 times. Out of these occurrences, 17 times the translation equivalent is the rather formal Hungarian DM *nos*, in 11 cases it is *hát*, and in 21 cases disagreement is expressed in terms of conceptual linguistic items rather than DMs. Due to the difference in the degree of formality between *nos* and *hát*, the former is more often utilized to convey condescension, while the latter, more colloquial DM is a preferred way of rendering an adversarial position hesitantly polite. The translator's choice of one over the other depends on the translator's intuitions and understanding of the nature of the speech act as well as the (fictional) speaker's intentions inferred on the basis of his or her behaviour.

4.2. Topic Management

The function of Topic Management makes up for almost one third of the total number of occurrences of *well*. There are 95 utterances in which *well* serves conversation management functions such as emphasis, organizing turn-taking, introducing, maintaining or altering topics, marking subjectivity/personal opinion or prefacing a story. By way of using DMs in these contexts, speakers maintain a general conversational style and convey messages that do not mark attitudes. Similarly to the previous functional category, *well* occurs turn-initially, thereby enabling the speakers to take or hold the floor, and, at the same time stay relevant to the previous utterance. DMs seem much more unmarked and necessary elements of speech in this position, hence their function is more uniform and neither provokes nor requires creative, unique patterns to emerge. The comparison of the LA and LB corpora with reference to the particular contexts in which *well* performs topic management functions does not reveal any unique patterns, the translation options of the DM *hát*, *nos* and the absence of a DM appear randomly distributed. Some of the examples include the following:

(4) (new scene) ***Well***, Walt, we've made such headway with your treatments. . .
(4b) Bizonyos eredményeket értünk el a kezelésben. ***no DM*** *We've made a certain progress with your treatments.*
(5) Remember the electrolytes? ***Well***, think about it.
(5b) Emlékszel az elektorlízisre? Gondold végig. *Remember the electrolytes?* ***no DM****, think it through.*
(6) (A: You're the one who dropped it.
B: I didn't drop it. I didn't drop.
A: Shit! You dropped it.
B: Shut the hell up about it.
A: You shut up!
B: You shut up.
C: Get up. Shut up. Shut up! Both of you. You know who might have done it?)
B: I have an idea. ***Well***, here's what I think.
(6b) A: Tudod, ki csinálhatta? *You know who might have done it?*
B: Van ötletem. Elmondom, mit kéne tennünk. *I have an idea.* ***no DM*** *Here's what I think we should do.*

4.3. Reformulative functions: second thoughts and false starts

Second Thought and False Start tokens of *well* are both delaying devices, but the reason why speakers use them is much more apparent and easy to establish in the first case than it is in the second. In the case of Second Thoughts, the delay happens as the inevitable consequence of the speaker feeling the need to complement or to comment on what has already been said, thus the speaker interrupts and re-organizes his or her message on purpose. These occurrences are not the result of hesitation (cf. section 4.4. below), but rather the process of adaptation to the context as well as the speaker's efforts aimed at reaching optimal relevance. Despite the possibility that the speaker ends up changing the general direction of the utterance as a whole, and contradicts everything prior to the time of speaking, this sudden change of mind is relatively rare. A switch such as this occurs if, for example, the speaker is rushed into answering something before even reaching the final stage of the actual decision-making process. In the whole corpus, and out of the 14 examples that were listed in the *Second Thought* category, there is only one token that fits this description:

(7) Chirality on the midterm? No, no. ***Well***, maybe.
(7b) A kiralitás a félévi vizsgában? Nem, nem, hát, talán.
Chirality on the midterm? No, no, ***DM,*** *perhaps.*

On the other hand, *well* more frequently conveys the idea that the speaker recognizes his/her utterance as ambiguous or incomplete immediately after producing it, alternatively, s/he might signal in advance that his or her opinion could be different if the conditions were to change as the interaction proceeds:

(8) A: Would you be interested in a felony quantity of methamphetamine?
B: ***Well***, yes, but maybe with a little more salesmanship, perhaps?

Although there seems to be a tendency not to translate *well* as *nos* or *hát* in the case of Second Thoughts, the LBS includes these translation options in a few cases where the DM is in utterance-initial position. However, when self-correction occurs in utterance-medial position (i.e. in 8 out of 14 cases), the trans-

lator uses conceptual and compositional Hungarian phrases that perform reformulative functions, such as *jobban mondva (~better to say)*, *illetve (~or rather)*, *valójában (~in fact)*, which in turn are regarded more as equivalents of *I mean*, rather than *well.*

4.4. Speech monitoring functions: hesitation and stalling

There are several clues / co-occurrence patterns that help to identify DMs as markers of hesitation, such as pauses of varying length (either before or after DMs), hesitant intonation, stammering and non-verbal (facial, hand or other body) gestures. Its use entirely depends on the thoughts of the speaker, and the reasons for stammering cannot always be known to the hearer. This function is a monitoring rather than a strategic DM function, as it appears if the speaker has no other choice than to stall for time. The lack of confidence can be credibly imitated in dramatized dialogues, i.e. scripted discourse, when justified by the surrounding context. In the following example, Walter hides the fact that he is lying rather badly, since he is obviously in the process of coming up with an explanation of why he needs to own a second cell phone, the existence of which he has been trying to keep a secret from his rather distrustful spouse:

> (9) I've been using it a lot as a medication reminder . . . to, ***well***, remind me to take my medication. And, ***well***, the weird thing is . . .

This is the category that is the most often followed (or sometimes preceded) by other DMs in order to successfully extend the time of thinking while speaking. There are several utterances that comprise such clusters of DMs: interestingly the order in which they appear is so frequently the same that they seem to have developed into conventionalized strings, such as "*Well, you know, actually. . . .*"

Other clusters include: *Well, I guess; Well, I mean; Well, I think; Well, yeah; Yeah, well; Oh, well; Uh, well*. The Hungarian subtitles rely on both translation equivalents of the DM *well* (again, with respect to the distinct levels of formality of *nos* and *hát*); the orthographic strategy of triple-dot punctuation, as well

as the widely used Hungarian clusters of *Nos, lássuk csak (~DM, let us just see); Hát, tudod (~DM, you know); Nos, azt hiszem (~DM, I think); Hát, hogy is mondjam (~DM, how to put it)*. What is more, Hungarian subtitles sometimes imitate spoken *ummm*, with written *öhm* or *őőő*, to display in a written form the verbal gestures that tend to accompany DMs, even if *well* itself does not have a translation equivalent other than an interjection.

4.5. Avoiding Elaboration

Avoiding Elaboration is a typical strategy of avoiding uncomfortable social situations and of expressing insecurity or appearing unconfident. In such cases, rather than using delaying devices, the speaker chooses to express his or her reluctance to elaborate on the subject introduced in the previous utterance/turn. In these contexts, *well* serves as a low-key response that is still sufficient and appropriate by itself and signals that the consequent utterance, or lack thereof, will include all the information the inquirer is likely to get. This is a relatively frequent type of function in the *Breaking Bad* corpus (with the total of 44 occurrences), since the main character often faces inconvenient conversations either due to his lies about his secret business life, or due to his terminal illness, which he prefers to keep to himself, instead of making it a matter of discussion. Walter is represented as a reserved type of person in the TV series, hence he is the character who chooses this conversational strategy the most often.

Again, this is a strategy that requires *well* to appear in utterance-initial position, occasionally preceded by *yeah*, which makes it clear in advance that a brief answer is forthcoming, but, at the same time it signals a certain level of politeness.

> (10) A: (Elliott told me about the cancer. [. . .] I'm so sorry. I don't know what to say except I'm always here for you. Both of us are.)
> We wanted you to know that . . .
> B: Yeah, ***well***, thank you.
> (10b) Azt akarjuk, hogy ezt tudd. *We want you to know this.*
> Igen, nos, köszönöm. *Yes,* ***DM****, thank you.*

In (10) the speaker goes as far as to interrupt the other person in order to cut the discussion short about his condition and related health insurance worries. The DM *well* with this functions is not translated 50% of the time, in the remaining cases *hát* and *nos* are used as translation equivalents, the tendency to use *hát* in less-formal circumstances is most noticeable when *well* in the LAC appears in order to avoid elaboration:

> (11) (A: I apologise in advance for the earful you're gonna hear from Skyler. [. . .] I should have just kept out of it. Me and my big mouth, I guess.
> B: You know, it happens. It's no problem. No worries.)
> A: Yeah, ***well***, thanks, man. I appreciate that.
> (11b) ***Hát***, kösz, ember. Nagyra értékelem. *DM, thanks, man. I appreciate that.*

The choice of *hát* and *nos* according to the formality of the context underlies the translators' awareness of the stigmatization of *hát* as discussed in section 2.1: *nos* appears mainly in conversations between Walter's family members and his colleagues at school, while *hát* is often a means to signal the less sophisticated speech of those who take part in the underworld of the drug-trade, especially in the case of gang members who take care of the distribution of illegal products. Criminals higher up in the chain of command, those, for example, who organize international trafficking are usually depicted as more educated and less distinguishable from the rest of society, in their speech *nos* appears invariantly as the translation equivalent of *well*.

4.6. Offers and hedges

Politeness is an issue in the case of numerous functions of *well* because of the simple fact that DMs are essential linguistic ways of signalling the relationship between consecutive utterances, between the speaker and the message, as well as between the speaker and hearer. An offer or hedge assists in the organization of a topic, especially one that involves some kind of negotiation, the sharing of ideas, offering a solution, or taking an active part or responsibility in some upcoming event. In such

contexts *well* invariably precedes the actual contribution that the speaker is willing to make, in order to put an emphasis on the upcoming offer. However, since this is still a careful way to make suggestions, the use of *well* in this category co-occurs with other politeness strategies, such as converting the message into question format in a few (5 out of 39) cases, using *will instead* of *going to* (e.g. *I'll swing by . . .*) (6 out of 39 tokens), and using conventional indirectness forms such as *can*, *shall,* or *maybe* (e.g. *Well, maybe I can explain to her . . .*) to leave space for the hearer to disagree, or to express that the plan is flexible. The distribution of translation equivalents confirms this pattern: the more polite/formal *nos* is used 13 times, *hát* appears in this category only 4 times, while in the rest of the tokens some other morpho-syntactic strategy is used in the translations.

4.7. Dispreferred / unexpected second-pair parts

The last category that comprises the functional spectrum of *well* in the LAC is similar to the very first one on the list, i.e. Polite Disagreement. This is due to the fact that while unexpected responses sometimes arise from simple misunderstandings and differences in terms of awareness / foregrounding of certain elements in the interlocutors' mutual cognitive environment (cf. example 9), DMs' potential of conveying politeness often becomes subject to exploitation, i.e. sarcasm (as in 10):

(12) Marie: You're looking good Walt, your colour's better.
Walt: Yeah? Thanks.
Skyler: He's actually on the pretty strong stuff now. Dr. Docovoli's trying to talk him into taking some time off from work.
Walt: ***Well***, actually, I just talked to Carmen [the headmaster] this morning. . .
(12b) ***Nos***, tulajdonképpen épp ma reggel beszéltem Carmennel . . . *DM, as a matter of fact, I talked to Carmen just this morning. . .*

(13) (Walter: OK, so he's a distributor?
Jesse: Yes.

Walter: OK, so is he . . . in other words, what is his reputation for violence?

Jesse: ***Well***, he did try to kill us both yesterday, so there's that.)

(13b) ***Nos***, um . . . tegnap mindkettõnket megpróbált kinyírni, úgyhogy asszem igen. ***DM***, *he tried to do both of us in yesterday, so I think [phonologically reduced] yes.*

In (12) it is apparent that the speaker's purpose is only to let his wife know that he has talked to Carmen already, whom she brought into the conversation not knowing about the particular phone call that was made earlier. However unexpected, it is a polite and justifiable contradiction of the previous utterance. Example 13, however, clearly expresses sarcasm and mockery towards a suggestion that the speaker feels is uninformed, irrational, and cannot be taken seriously if one looks at the larger context. It can even be regarded as a verbal challenge to force the hearer to face certain facts – facts that the hearer is likely to be aware of but refuses to take into consideration. In the *Breaking Bad* corpus the appearance of the latter function is salient due to the nature of the series and the main theme, its occurrence is more frequent than what we would normally consider to be reasonable in everyday conversation. Out of 48 sentences, 12 are noticeably sarcastic, and practically all of them can be traced back to colloquial, drug-gang related discussions. Again, the translation equivalents fit the patterns identified in previous functions, with the (mockingly) formal *nos* appearing more than *hát* (19 compared to 10 occurrences), and with the absence of non-conceptual translation equivalents occurring half the time.

5. CONCLUSIONS

By way of concluding our paper let us echo Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer's programmatic statement that cross-linguistic studies of DMs, even such small-scale analyses as the one above, ideally serve three different purposes: descriptive, theoretical and applied (2002/03: 33ff).

As for the *descriptive* goals, the above analysis shows that cross-linguistic data can reveal (and make explicit) functions as well as contexts of use that have not been dealt with in mono-

lingual studies. The reformulative use of either *well* or *hát*, for example, has not been the focus of previous, monolingual accounts, as we saw in section 2.2. We have also seen that *well* has several recurring Hungarian counterparts, however, its use permitted a significant number of utterances where these were abandoned for creative and intuitive wording, adjusted mainly to the dramatic value of the situation, and the interpretation of the assumed reaction of a character. What was perhaps surprising was the high occurrence of *nos* translations, which seemed inadequately formal in many cases compared to *hát*, however analysis of the related occurrences revealed a possible correspondence between *nos* and the exploitation of negative politeness / formality of register in order to express sarcasm or irony.

A major *theoretical* conclusion of the paper is that as a result of diachronic processes, *hát* fulfils a range of functions that are close / related to its core meaning, however, such functions coexist with a wide range of more opaque, semantically bleached uses that cannot (from a synchronic perspective) be linked to its semantic core.

From an *applied* point of view, it is clear from the above (quantitative as well as qualitative) results that *well* is used more widely and in a variety of contexts where neither *hát* nor *nos* would be appropriate and would convey unwanted implicatures. Although pragmatic transfer cannot be entirely predicted on the basis of a cross-linguistic analysis of L1 and L2 pragmatics (cf. Kasper 1995: 7), the above study of English and Hungarian DMs (and further studies of a similar kind) might enable EFL teachers to provide explicit instructions concerning the target language DMs' contexts of use and to anticipate the underuse of *well* in particular contexts by Hungarian (as well as other foreign) speakers of English.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of our paper is to map the functional spectrum of non-conceptual (i.e. discourse marker) uses of English *well* in a corpus based on the transcripts of the popular TV series *Breaking Bad*. In the first part of the paper, after some preliminary notes about methods of investigating the use of discourse markers, we will provide an overview of previous accounts of *well* as well as its most frequent Hungarian translation equivalents *hát* and *nos*. In the second, empirical part of the paper a corpus-based analysis of the most salient functions of *well* will be given with special reference to its translation equivalents and the contextual factors underlying the choice of specific translation options. By way of conclusion, we will argue that a cross-linguistic study of discourse markers in a translation corpus might reveal functions as well as contexts of use that have not been the focus of monolingual studies. Our results also suggest that *well* is used more widely and in a variety of contexts (e.g. as a reformulation marker) where Hungarian *hát* would be inappropriate and would convey unwanted implicatures.

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