DE GRUYTER OPEN

Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Philologica, **8**, 3 (2016) 31–41

DOI: 10.1515/ausp-2016-0029

Vajon in Translated Hungarian

Diverging Patterns in Two Fiction Genres

Andrea GÖTZ
Eötvös Loránd University
Translation Studies PhD Programme
gotzandrea@caesar.elte.hu

Abstract. This paper presents an analysis of the structures the discourse marker *vajon* forms in translated Hungarian fiction. Although translation data has been deployed in the study of discourse markers (Aijmer & Simon-Vandenbergen, 2004), such studies do not account for translation-specific phenomena which can influence the data of their analysis. In addition, translated discourse markers could offer insights into the idiosyncratic properties of translated texts as well as the culturally defined norms of translation that guide the creation of target texts. The analysis presented in this paper extends the cross-linguistic approach beyond contrastive analysis with a detailed investigation of two corpora of translated texts in order to identify patterns which could be a sign of translation or genre norms impacting the target texts. As a result, a distinct, diverging pattern emerges between the two corpora: patterns of explicit polarity show a marked difference. However, further research is needed to clarify whether these are due to language, genre, or translation norms.

Keywords: discourse markers, translating discourse markers, translation method, language norms, corpus-based translation studies

1. Introduction: translating discourse markers

In recent years, the translation of discourse markers, pragmatic markers, or discourse particles – as several terms are used for these forms – has increasingly gained attention. Following the introduction of the so-called "translation method" by Aijmer & Simon-Vandenbergen (2004), many studies deployed translation data to investigate the function or meaning of discourse markers (DMs), as reflected by their translations (e.g. Aijmer 2007, Degand 2009, Fischer 2007, Furkó 2015, Mortier & Degand 2009). However, these studies represent a corpus-driven, contrastive approach which does not account for the properties of translated or translational texts (Károly 2007) as such. In order to facilitate

BDD-A25246 © 2016 Scientia Kiadó
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:50:38 UTC)

an analysis that can accommodate translation phenomena, the overarching patterns found in translation corpora need to be investigated. These patterns can be shaped by the culturally diverse and genre-related norms of translation. The effects of translation norms are especially relevant for the translation of DMs, as the socio-pragmatic functions of DMs are well established (see Schiffrin 1987, Foolen 2012). However, variation in translation data regarding DMs can be heavily influenced by genre norms as well (Niemegeers 2009).

Translated texts do not solely reflect the properties of the source texts but are increasingly seen as the products of a particular type of textual composition that includes both re-productive and creative processes (Károly 2014). The textual properties of the source text, due to cross-linguistic and, frequently, genre differences, cannot always be simply re-created in the target text. Translated texts will exhibit their own patterns of cohesion and coherence, which are of particular interest to the study of translated discourse markers since DMs are also thought to contribute to discourse cohesion and coherence (Fraser 1999, Schiffrin 1987). It is becoming increasingly clear that contrastive approaches need to be combined with translation-studies-specific considerations in order to distinguish between cross-linguistic and translation-specific phenomena. Indeed, studying cohesive markers (grammatical or lexical forms) in translation has proved to be useful for both fields (Behrens 2005, Becher 2011).

The extent to which the translator is seen as an executor of norms and, indeed, how profoundly the controversial phenomena known as translation universals influence the target text remain a much-contested issue (Meylaerts 2008). Since the emergence of corpus-based translation studies (Baker 1993, 1996), the idiosyncratic patterns of translated texts (e.g. universals such as explicitation), which differentiate them from non-translated, or authentic texts, and the effect language norms have become widely researched topics. Patterns specific to translated texts are usually accommodated within the framework of translation universals, i.e. a higher count of explicit grammatical features in translated texts are attributed to the translation universal of explicitation (Olohan & Baker 2000), which is thought to affect all translated texts, hence its universal nature.

This study addresses these issues by presenting an analysis of translation data, which expands contrastive analysis with a corpus-based investigation. The present paper investigates the translation data of the Hungarian DM *vajon* in two fiction corpora composed of English source texts and their Hungarian translations. *Vajon*-structures in translated Hungarian are examined for their patterns, which could point either to the influence of specific translation phenomena and genre norms or to cross-linguistic differences. The marking of explicit polarity is found to show a distinct difference between the two corpora. The variation in the two corpora in terms of marked polarity is examined in detail.

BDD-A25246 © 2016 Scientia Kiadó
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:50:38 UTC)

2. Classification of structures

In the following, the categories for classifying the various *vajon*-structures present in the Hungarian corpora (see 4.1.) are introduced and notions from functional grammar (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014) are applied to their description. Since *vajon* occurs in a diverse set of structures, a brief overview of these is in order.

Vajon, traditionally understood as an interrogative particle with modal properties (Keszler 2000), appears in both interrogative sentences and subordinate interrogative clauses. As part of a hypotactic projected clause, in a subordinate construction, it can be preceded by the complementizer *hogy*. In the case of a hypotactic structure, various cognitive verbs (referred to as C in 4.1.), such as *wonder*, *think*, *know, contemplate*, can appear in the projecting clause. This is relevant since, in some cases, an English projecting clause complete with a cognitive verb can be translated as an interrogative sentence, not as a hypotactic clause, as in (1). Source contexts are marked "a", translations "b" in all examples, the abbreviation of the corpus and the text of the example are enclosed between square brackets. In (1), the first part of the clause nexus to the sign || represents the projecting clause, and the latter half the projected clause. The Hungarian translation does not follow this structure, and the cognitive verb is not retained.

(1)a I wonder || if she lives alone except this little girl; (…)

b	Vajon	kettesben	él-e	a kislánnyal?
	DM	[two of them] together	lives-POL.PART	with the little girl? [B/Je]

In other cases, cognitive verbs are retained in the translation, as in (2). In (2), the cognitive verb *wonder* is substituted for 'tűnődik' in the target context, and the polar interrogative subordinate clause is retained. The complementizer *hogy* may or may not appear in the projected clause in the position *whether* occupies – in (2), it is not present.

(2)a I often wonder, Shirley, || whether most men resemble

b	Gyakran tűnődöm,	Shirley,	vajon	más	férfiak	is	olyanok-e
	I often wonder	Shirley	DM	other	men	as well	are like [B/Sh]

In a high number of cases, *vajon* cannot be attributed the presence of a linguistic form in the source context. In the literature, such instances of "added" target forms that do not correspond to a source form are referred to as additions, insertions, zero forms, or zero equivalents. In this paper, these are referred to as zero forms. In (3), we can see such an example.

BDD-A25246 © 2016 Scientia Kiadó
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:50:38 UTC)

(3)a What can it be?
b Vajon mi történhetett?
DM what could have happened? [B/Se]

In some cases, the source context cannot be identified as a clause nexus composed of a projecting and a projected clause. Instances such as these are labelled as "other structures". This category is illustrated by (4).

(4)a (…) how I longed to follow it farther!
b (…) vajon hová vezet?
DM where does it lead? [B/Je]

3. Corpus and methods

The corpus of this study consists of eight novels translated from English into Hungarian, four from the young adult genre (corpus A) and the other four are romantic novels (corpus B) dating from the 19th century (see *Sources*). The young adult corpus represents a part of Robin's revisional corpus (Robin 2014) of translated Hungarian fiction, who gave permission for its use. The texts were selected for consistency within the corpora, similarities in the genres, and some marked differences between the two in register and style. These differences are assumed to be reflected in the Hungarian translation of the novels as well. From each translated novel, the first 25 contexts featuring *vajon* were selected, together with their source language contexts. Thus, the eight novels yielded 200 source- and 200 target-language contexts in total, with 100–100 occurrences in each corpus. Although the data collection itself represents a corpus-driven approach, the data are analysed from a more corpus-based point of view.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Quantitative results: target and source forms

The two fiction corpora show an overall similarity and some significant as well as marginal differences. *Table 1* presents the various target structures containing the DM *vajon* in the two corpora.

BDD-A25246 © 2016 Scientia Kiadó
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:50:38 UTC)

Table 1. *Target-language vajon-structures*

	Corpus A (YA)	Corpus B (R)
vajon	45	38
vajon + -e	7	32
c || vajon	7	4
c || vajon + -e	8	23
c || hogy + vajon	18	2
c || hogy + vajon + -e	12	1
|| hogy + vajon	3	0

Both datasets comprise similar numbers of *vajon*; however, there is a striking difference in the prevalence of *vajon* + *-e* structures between the two genres. In total, across all structures, corpus B displays 56 target forms with the interrogative particle *-e* in contrast to the 27 occurrences of *-e* in corpus A. At the same time, projected clauses displaying an explicit complementizer *hogy* were more frequent in corpus A, including *hogy*-clauses with the particle *-e*. Corpus B contained a significantly lower number of clauses with the complementizer *hogy* being present. From all 48 subordinate clauses in corpus A, 33 contain the complementizer *hogy,* which number for corpus B is three, in relation to a total of 30 subordinate clauses. This difference could point to a diverging norm of translation, although it could also be affected by the variation of source forms regarding the two corpora.

In summary, corpus B displays a greater tendency to use the particle *-e* and insert *vajon* + *-e* structures, and is less prone to use the complementizer *hogy* in *vajon*-structures. As these variations, in addition to translational norms, could also be influenced and motivated by a variation in the source structures, it is necessary to examine their source forms in order to investigate the reasons for the discrepancies in question.

Table 2 demonstrates the English source structures that were translated with *vajon*-structures shown in *Table 1*. A few differences are immediately evident.

Table 2. *Source-language structures*

	Corpus A (YA)	Corpus B (R)
zero	34	44
wonder	20	7
wonder || whether	4	6
wonder || if	22	1
c	9	7
c || if	2	3
c || whether	5	17

BDD-A25246 © 2016 Scientia Kiadó
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:50:38 UTC)

	Corpus A (YA)	Corpus B (R)
other structures	4	12
|| as to	0	2
|| whether	0	1

In corpus A, we find 34 zero forms, ten per cent less than in corpus B. Although the difference is not significant, it might point to a more pronounced tendency on the part of the translators or editors to insert *vajon* into the target text. As we have seen above, target structures in corpus B contained a higher number of the particle *-e*. This finding is surprising, as the source contexts of corpus B contain fewer instances of explicit markers of polarity, i.e. grammatical clues that could trigger the use of forms that expressly signal polarity. In corpus A, 33 occurrences of *whether* or *if* are observed, which could motivate the use of *-e* in the translation, whereas corpus B comprises 28.

Corpus A also has a much higher number of *wonder*-structures as source forms (46) than corpus B (14), taking all structures featuring *wonder* into account. *Wonder* is treated separately from the other cognitive verbs due to its frequency. In corpus A, we find 20 *wonder*-structures, which could introduce wh-question clauses, and 26 *wonder*-clauses which contain a marker of polarity: *whether* or *if*. In corpus B, on the other hand, from the 14 *wonder*-structures, seven introduce wh-question clauses, and seven if-/whether-clauses. Another point of difference is the number of *other structures* rendered as *vajon*-structures in the target texts. Corpus B contains 12, three times as many as corpus A, and two occurrences of *as to*. This could point to a greater willingness on the part of the translators of corpus B to deploy creative solutions. However, to gain a clearer understanding of the possible norms guiding translation, the relation of source and target forms needs to be studied further.

4.2. Qualitative results: the presence of the polar particle *-e*

As seen before, there is a clear difference in marked polarity between the two sets of target texts, with corpus B showing a higher percentage of polarity markers (56) despite exhibiting fewer markers of polarity in the source texts (28). In the following, we examine the results relevant for the translation of polarity, as presented in *Table 3*.

BDD-A25246 © 2016 Scientia Kiadó
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:50:38 UTC)

Table 3. *The translation of polarity*

	Corpus A (YA)	**Corpus B (R)**
Marked polarity in the target texts e.g. structures with *-e*	27	56
Marked polarity in the source texts e.g. structures with *whether, if*	33	28
Polar source structures translated in the target texts without the explicit polar marker *-e* e.g. *I wonder* || *whether it is so.* → *Vajon csakugyan így esett**[-e]**?* ('Did it really happen like this?') [B/Se]	13	2
Source wh-structures translated with *-e* in the target texts e.g. *I always wondered* || *when she would notice that…* → *Mindig érdekelt, hogy vajon feltűnt-e neki, hogy…* ('I always wanted to know whether she noticed that…') [A/Sh]	3	2
Target structures with *-e* from zero source forms e.g. *Will she ever come back?* → *Vajon hazatér**-e** valaha?* ('Will she ever return home?')	3	18
Target structures without *-e* from polar zero source forms e.g. *Will he leave it again soon?* → ***Vajon** rövidesen megint útra kel**[-e]**?* ('Is he going to leave again soon?')	15	7
Polar target forms with markedly polar source forms e.g. *I wonder* || **if** *she lives alone except this little girl;* → *Vajon kettesben él-**e** a kislánnyal?* ('Does she live together with the little girl?') [B/Je]	20	25
Other source structures rendered with *-e* in the target text e.g. *a doubt sometimes entered her mind **of their being really engaged*** → *Elinor elméjébe olykor már-már kétely lopózott: **vajon** csakugyan **jegyesek-e*** ('a doubt snuck into Elinor's mind: **whether they were really engaged**') [B/Se]	1	9

The findings indicate that there is no complete "conversion" between source and target structures marked for polarity. A closer look at the structures reveals that in corpus A 13 instances of marked polarity in the English source texts did not become manifestly polar in the Hungarian target texts. This number for corpus B is two. The number of evidently wh-structures in the source texts translated into Hungarian as polar structures is low for both corpora, with three in corpus A and two in B, although *zero* forms and *other structures,* which might be interpreted as polar, were not included in this figure.

Zero forms served as source structures for polar structures in the target texts in three cases in respect to corpus A and in 18 in corpus B, which means that

BDD-A25246 © 2016 Scientia Kiadó
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:50:38 UTC)

translators and editors working on the texts of corpus B were six times likelier to construct marked polar structures. In fact, following a closer examination regarding *vajon*-structures from zero forms in the source texts, it emerges that in corpus A in 15 cases polar zero source forms were not rendered as markedly polar in the target texts, i.e. the target contexts contain a *vajon*-structure, not a *vajon* + *-e* structure. This is observed in seven cases in corpus B. Corpus B has also constructed nine markedly polar structures in the target texts from *other structures* in the source, more than corpus A, which created only one such structure. Corpus B also contained two *as to* structures, one of which was translated with *-e* in Hungarian.

Corpus B was thus more likely to translate English source contexts as markedly polar in Hungarian (20 in corpus A, 25 in corpus B), and also less likely not to translate polar source structures as not markedly polar. This, however, does not mean that the remaining structures would not have been rendered as polar, only that they are not marked as such with the polar particle *-e*. Since clauses and sentences without the polar particle *-e* would still be grammatical – and function as polar questions – the difference in this pattern between the two corpora could reveal diverging norms of translation, influenced by genre norms.

All in all, corpus B shows an altogether more pronounced tendency than corpus A to use the polar particle *-e,* but without investigating the source structures as well it would not be possible to discern whether this tendency is due to the properties of the source texts or, indeed, whether it could be attributed to other factors such as translation norms. However, we cannot yet claim that corpus B displays different translational norms than corpus A as due to the small scale of the study the incomprehensive analyses cannot substantiate such claims.

Conclusions

This paper examined *vajon*-structures present in two corpora of translated Hungarian texts from different genres. Although the two datasets displayed an overall similarity, in terms of marked polarity structures, a marked difference was revealed, with texts in the romance genre showing a greater prevalence of the polar particle *-e.* In addition to marked polarity, texts in the YA corpus contained a higher percentage of the complementizer *hogy* in comparison to texts in corpus B. Since the analysis concerns small datasets, generalizations regarding genre and translation norms, norms of translated Hungarian, or translation universals cannot be drawn. The results, however, delineate potential lines of inquiry for future research.

The presence of these function words and the levels of grammatical explicitness should be contrasted with the frequency of these forms and levels of explicitness

BDD-A25246 © 2016 Scientia Kiadó
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:50:38 UTC)

found in authentic Hungarian texts, across genres, as the potential influence of genre norms cannot be ignored.

A similar finding, which established a difference between the patterns *that* in translated English as opposed to authentic English, has been interpreted as evidence for the translation universal of explicitation (Olohan & Baker 2000). Although such claims and comparisons are not made in this study, it is clear that DMs and the structures they form can offer insights into the properties of translated texts. However, in order to explore this in greater detail, cross-linguistic, corpus-driven approaches need to be extended beyond the scope of contrastive analyses in order to accommodate methodologies more suitable for studying translated language. These translation-specific characteristics, of course, do exert an effect on the individual tokens found in the corpora. In conclusion, to fully investigate the patterns of translated DMs, and their implications for translation studies, a combined approach is needed.

References

Aijmer, K.–Simon-Vandenbergen A-M. 2004. A model and a methodology for the study of pragmatic markers: the semantic field of expectation. *Journal of Pragmatics* 36(10): 1781–1805.

Aijmer, K. 2007. The meaning and functions of the Swedish discourse marker *alltså* — evidence from translation corpora. *Catalan Journal of Linguistics* 6: 31–59.

Baker, M. 1993. Corpus linguistics and translation studies: implications and applications. In: Baker Mona et al. (eds), *Text and technology: in honour of John Sinclair*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 233–250.

1996. Corpus-based translation studies: The challenges that lie ahead. In: Sager, Juan C.–Somers, H. L. (eds), *Terminology, LSP, and translation studies in language engineering in honour of Juan C. Sager.* Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 175–186.

Blakemore, D. 2006. Discourse markers. In: Horn, Laurence R.–Ward, L. Gregory (eds), *The handbook of pragmatics*. Oxford: Blackwell, 221–240.

Olohan, M.–Baker, M. 2000. Reporting that in translated English. Evidence for subconscious processes of explicitation? *Across Languages and Cultures* 1(2): 141–158.

Becher, V. 2011. When and why do translators add connectives? A corpus-based study. *Target* 23(1): 26–47.

Behrens, B. 2005. Cohesive ties in translation: a contrastive study of the Norwegian connective *dermed*. *Languages in Contrast* 5(1): 3–32.

BDD-A25246 © 2016 Scientia Kiadó
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:50:38 UTC)

Degand, L. 2009. On describing polysemous discourse markers. What does translation add to the picture? In: Simon-Vandenbergen, A. M. et al. (eds), *From will to well: studies in linguistics, offered to Anne-Marie Simon-Vandenbergen*. Gent: Academia Press, 173–183.

Fischer, K. 2007. Grounding and common ground: modal particles and their translation equivalents. In: Fetzer, Anita–Fischer, Kerstin (eds), *Lexical markers of common grounds*. Amsterdam: Elsevier, 47–66.

Foolen, Ad. 2012. Pragmatic markers in a sociopragmatic perspective. In: Andersen, Gisle–Aijmer, Karin (eds), *Pragmatics of society*. Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 217–242.

Fraser, B. 1999. What are discourse markers? *Journal of Pragmatics* 31(7): 931–952.

Furkó, B. P. 2015. Perspectives on the translation of discourse markers: a case study of the translation of reformulation markers from English into Hungarian. *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Philologica* 6(2): 181–196.

Halliday, M. A. K.–Matthiessen M. I. M., Ch. 2014. *Halliday's introduction to functional grammar*. Fourth Edition. Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Károly, K. 2007. *Szövegtan és Fordítás*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó.

2014. *Szövegkoherencia a Fordításban*. Budapest: ELTE Eötvös Kiadó.

Keszler, B. (ed.). 2000. *Magyar grammatika*. Budapest: Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó.

Meylaerts, R. 2008. Translators and (their) norms: Towards a sociological construction. In: Toury, Gideon et al. (eds), *Beyond descriptive translation studies investigations in homage to Gideon Toury*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 91–102.

Mortier, L.–Degand L. 2009. Adversative discourse markers in contrast: the need for a combined corpus approach. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics* 14(3): 338–366.

Niemegeers, S. 2009. Dutch modal particles *maar* and *wel* and their English equivalents in different genres. *Translation and Interpreting Studies* 4(1): 47–66.

Robin, E. 2014. *Fordítási univerzálék a lektorált szövegekben*. PhD dissertation. Budapest: ELTE.

Schiffrin, D. 1987. Discourse markers. *Studies in Interactional Sociolinguistics* 5. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sources:

Corpus A

Stiefvater, M. 2009a. *Shiver*. New York: Scholastic.

2009b. *Shiver–Borzongás*. Szeged: Könyvmolyképző Kiadó.

BDD-A25246 © 2016 Scientia Kiadó
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:50:38 UTC)

Penney, Stef. 2006. *The Tenderness of Wolves*. Birmingham: Quercus.
2010. *Gyengéd, mint a farkasok*. Szeged: Könyvmolyképző Kiadó.
Diamand, Emily. 2008. *Reavers' Ransom*. Frome: Chicken House.
2009. *Kalózok nyomában*. Budapest: Agave Könyvek.
Cashore, Kristin. 2009. *Fire*. New York: Dial Books.
2009. *Fire–Zsarát*. Szeged: Könyvmolyképző Kiadó.

Corpus B

[All texts are available from: http://www.gutenberg.org and http://mek.oszk.hu.]
Brontë, Charlotte. 1847. *Jane Eyre*. Available from: http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1260.
1991. *Jane Eyre*. Budapest: Európa.
1849. *Shirley*. Available from: http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/30486.
1977. *Shirley*. Budapest: Európa.
Austen, Jane. 1811. *Sense and Sensibility*. Available from: http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/161.
1976. *Értelem és érzelem*. Budapest: Európa.
1817. *Persuasion*. Available from: http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/105.
1980. *Meggyőző érvek*. Budapest: Európa.

BDD-A25246 © 2016 Scientia Kiadó
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:50:38 UTC)