The interpretation of a "contrast-marking" particle

Beáta Gyuris

Research Institute for Linguistics, HAS

Benczúr u. 33. Budapest, H-1068, Hungary

gyuris@nytud.hu

Abstract

The paper discusses the interpretation of the obligatorily stressed csak discourse particle in Hungarian that is often referred to in the literature as a marker of contrast. It is argued that this particle has the function of an adversative context marker, defined in Zeevat (Presupposition triggers, context markers or speech act markers, 91–111, 2003, A dynamic approach to discourse particles, 133–148, 2006). The discourse particle use of csak is contrasted to its older, exclusive particle use, whose interpretation is described in terms of Beaver and Clark's (Sense and sensitivity: how focus determines meaning, 2008) proposal. It is shown that the meaning change in the course of which csak acquired its adversative context marker interpretation can be accounted for in terms of semantic reanalysis, along the lines of Eckardt's (Meaning change in grammaticalization: an inquiry into semantic reanalysis, 2006) theory.

Keywords: context marker, discourse particle, exclusive particle, contrast, semantic reanalysis.

1. Aims

This paper[1] analyses the interpretation of the obligatorily stressed *csak* discourse particle in Hungarian, which has been claimed to be a marker of contrast (Kocsány 1986). After providing an informal characterization of the necessary and sufficient conditions for the

appearance of this particle in Hungarian sentences (Sect. 2.1), we will formalize them in the framework proposed by Zeevat (2003, 2006), relating the interpretation of stressed *csak* to the interpretation of accented Dutch *toch* and German *doch* (section 2.2). The particle *csak* in Hungarian has a much more prominent and older use as a focus sensitive particle with an exclusive interpretation analogous to English *only*. In Sect. 3 of the paper we will look at the contribution of this exclusive *csak* to the presuppositions and truth conditions of Hungarian sentences, proposing that they are best accounted for in the framework of the theory proposed by Beaver and Clark (2008). It will then be argued in Sect. 4 that the latter approach also leads naturally to an account of the meaning change in the course of which *csak* acquired its discourse particle use in terms of semantic reanalysis, assumed to have taken place in order to avoid pragmatic overload (cf. Eckardt 2006). The paper ends with a summary of the conclusions. In what follows, in the text and in the constructed examples we will refer to the obligatorily stressed discourse particle under investigation as *CSAK*.[2] However, the examples from the written corpus will be reproduced in their original form, for easier reference.[3]

2. The discourse particle *CSAK*

2.1. Some data

Example (1) below illustrates a context where a sentence containing an obligatorily stressed *CSAK* particle can appear in Hungarian:[4]

---

[2] There are several discourse particle uses of non-stressed *csak*, most of which are analogous to the discourse particle uses of German *nur* 'only' (cf. Gyuris 2007).

[3] The historical texts are reproduced here in the form found in the source referred to in the corresponding footnotes.

[4] VM refers to the category 'verbal modifier,' which includes, among others, the class of verbal prefixes in Hungarian (cf. É. Kiss 2002).

(1) A: *I don't think John will be invited.*

B: *I've just heard Mary invite him.*

A: *Szóval/Tehát #(CSAK) meghívták Jánost.*

so CSAK VM:invited:3pl John:ACC

"So, John did get invited (after all)."

Although leaving the particle *CSAK* out from A's second sentence would not make it ungrammatical or alter its truth conditions, it would definitely make the sentence inappropriate in the context, since the speaker would have to be attributed beliefs that are normally felt to be incompatible on standard assumptions (even though they are strictly speaking not contradictory). Thus, (1) suggests that the contribution of the particle to the interpretation of the sentence is to mark that the speaker is aware that the propositional content of his present utterance is in conflict with the propositional content of a previous utterance of his. The above example is thus a typical case where the use of a particle serves the aim of indicating the "speaker's epistemic attitude" towards the truth of the proposition (Zimmermann 2011: 2013), thus ensuring the coherence of the discourse. The latter interpretational features have been attributed in the literature to the so-called *modal* or *discourse particles* (cf. Kiefer 1988, Thurmair 1989, Meibauer 1994, Zimmermann 2011, among others), whose characteristic features on the formal side include the fact that they cannot be negated, do not answer any questions, cannot be coordinated, and do not form a constituent with other expressions. In the rest of this section we will look more closely at what *CSAK* signals about the context and in exactly what cases its presence is necessary for the coherence of the discourse.

As (2) illustrates, the acceptability of an utterance containing *CSAK* does not depend on whether it is uttered by an interlocutor who made a previous utterance with the conflicting propositional content or by somebody else:

(2) A1: *I think John will be invited.*

B: *I don't think so, Mary does not like him.*

C: *I've just heard Mary invite him.*

A2: *(Szóval/Tehát) #(CSAK) meghívták Jánost.*

so/thus CSAK VM:invited:3pl John:ACC

"(So,) John did get invited (after all)."

The fact that in the Dutch counterpart of (2A2), the presence of the accented *toch* particle, referred to as *TOCH*, is required for the well-formedness of the discourse (T. Veenstra, p.c.) suggests that *CSAK* and the latter have similar interpretations:

(3) *(Dus,) Jan   is   #(TOCH)   uitgenodigd.*   (Dutch)
     so   John is   TOCH   invited:PTCP
     "(So,) John got invited (after all)."

The contrast between a Dutch example by Zeevat (2000), repeated in (4), and an analogous Hungarian example in (5) points, however, to the need for attributing *CSAK* a different "epistemic commitment" (Zimmermann 2011) from that attributed to *DOCH* by Zeevat, discussed below:

(4) *Jan droomde dat hij was gezakt voor het examen,*   (Dutch)
     maar hij had het TOCH gehaald.
     "Jan dreamt he would fail the exam, but he passed after all."   (Zeevat 2000: 88 (28))

(5) *János azt   álmodta,   hogy   veszíteni   fog   a   csapata,*
     John that:ACC   dreamt:3sg that   lose-INF   will:3sg the   team:his
     de   (#CSAK)   győztek.
     but   CSAK   won:3pl
     "John dreamt that his team would lose but they won after all."

   Although the Hungarian translation of (4) is impeccable, as shown in (6), I believe it has to do with certain cultural assumptions, superstitions about the impact of bad dreams on one's performance:[5]

---

[5] M. den Dikken (p. c.) remarks that he finds the following version of (4), w:here the verbs for *fail* and *pass* are exchanged, awkward with TOCH:

i) *Jan droomte dat his was geslaagd voor het examen, maar hij was (TOCH) gezakt.*

   "John dreamt that he would fail the exam but he passed after all."

H. Zeevat (p. c.), however, does not find the above example unacceptable, which might point to a dialectal difference that we cannot discuss here any further.

(6) *János azt   álmodta,   hogy meg fog bukni   a   vizsgán, de*
John   that:ACC dreamt:3sg that VM   will fail:INF the   exam:on   but
    (CSAK) átment.
CSAK   VM:passed:3sg
"John dreamt that he would fail the exam but he passed after all."

There are two further facts to be observed concerning the use of *CSAK*. First, as (7) shows, the propositional content *p* of a *CSAK*-sentence does not have to be in conflict with the propositional content of one single sentence in the previous discourse:[6]

(7) *Zsuzsi:*   *Hisz' ez azé   a   kis   tolvajé!*   *oly kegyetlen volt*
but   this that:POSS the small   thief:POSS:3sg so   cruel   was
            nagyságod,   hogy elvette   tőle?
            your:majesty   that   VM:took   from:him
            "But this belongs to that small thief! Was your majesty cruel enough to take it away from him?"
    Countess: CSAK   nem hagyhattam   a   karján!
            CSAK   not   leave:could:1sg   the   arm:POSS:on
            "I could not leave it on his arm after all!"

What the propositional content of the second speaker's sentence is incompatible with in the case of (7) is the proposition expressed by the first speaker's first sentence, the presuppositions introduced by her second sentence ('the countess took the thing referred to'), and default inferences based on the latter two together ('one should leave the things that belong to a person with him').

Second, *CSAK* is not only licensed in discourse by previous utterances whose propositional contents or presuppositions are in conflict with the propositional content of the *CSAK*-sentence. The felicity of the following exchange, for example, is ensured by the existence of shared beliefs regarding the normal (expected) consequences of not preparing for an exam between the interlocutors (which are viewed to be in conflict with the content of A's sentence):

---

[6] Source: *Figaro's Wedding,* by Ede Paulay (1877). (Hungarian Historical Corpus, http://www.nytud.hu/hhc.)

(8) A: *John did not prepare for the exam.*

    B: *CSAK átment.*

       CSAK VM:went:3sg

       "He still passed."

The *yes-no* interrogative in (9) below, which would also be appropriate as the third sentence of the discourse in (1) above, and the second, imperative sentence of the exhange in (10) illustrates that *CSAK* is not restricted to the declarative sentence type:

(9) A: *(Szóval) #(CSAK) meghívták Jánost?*

      so   CSAK   VM:invited:3pl John:ACC

      "(So) did John get invited after all?"

(10) A: *I don't think John would come to the party even if he got an invitation.*

    B: *#(CSAK) hívjuk meg!*

       CSAK   invite:IMP:1pl   VM

      "Let us still invite him!"

The conditions under which *CSAK*-sentences belonging to the latter two sentence types can or must appear in a discourse are analogous to those under which the corresponding declaratives are licensed: there is a conflict between the propositional content of the *CSAK*-sentence and the propositional contents of previous utterances in the discourse, the presupposition of the latter, and/or certain general default assumptions. The following example shows that in addition to (negated) verb phrases, *CSAK* can also precede an immediately preverbal focus constituent, with or without the focus-sensitive exclusive particle *csak* 'only' (cf. Sect. 3 for further discussion), indicating a contrast between the focus denotation and its alternatives with respect to some property:

(11) A: *They said that the person they invite would be Mary.*

    B: *CSAK (csak) Jánost hívták meg.*

       CSAK only   John:ACC invited:3pl VM

      "Still, it was John whom they invited."

Having illustrated the basic facts about the use of the *CSAK* discourse particle, in the next section we will make a proposal to capture its meaning in terms of Zeevat's (2003, 2006) theory.

2.2. CSAK as a context marker

Zeevat (2003, 2006), investigating the interpretation of a number of discourse particles in various languages, including English *indeed*, Dutch *immers, toch, wel*, or German *ja* and *doch,* argues for considering them so-called *context markers* instead of nonstandard presupposition triggers, particularly due to the fact that this allows a more uniform treatment of a larger number of particles in his opinion. As Zeevat (2006) explains, a potential analysis of the semantic/pragmatic contribution of discourse particles based on the assumption that they introduce a presupposition appears less attractive because it cannot provide an explanation for certain nonstandard properties shared by the majority of them. These include the following: the purported presuppositions cannot be accommodated, the particles are not optional, they "have a rather minimal meaning apart from their presuppositional properties", and some of them "can occur in contexts that are not accessible from the position of the trigger in the sense of discourse representation theory" (Zeevat 2006: 136–137).[7] Context markers are seen by Zeevat (2006: 138) as "markers of a relation of the content of the current sentence to the context (or to another parameter of the utterance context)", and their presence is attributed by him to "functional necessity"[8] or "a universal principle that requires the marking of the relationship". The relations Zeevat considers relevant for marking include the following: the propositional content of the sentence the particle is situated in is viewed by the speaker as being part of the *common ground* (*CG*, containing the propositions that represent the mutual knowledge of speakers, cf. Stalnaker 1978*)*, it is viewed as having been suggested to be false in the context, as having been denied in the common ground, or as addressing a topic that has been addressed before. He considers the use of context markers to be motivated by the existence of the difficulties that hearers face when attempting to integrate recent information with information already available.

Zeevat assumes that the obligatory presence of such context-marking particles can be

---

[7] Zeevat (2006: 146) remarks, nevertheless, that not all particles can be analyzed as context markers, either.

[8] Functional necessity means that "if the relation in question is unmarked, wrong interpretations result." (Zeevat 2006: 138)

modeled in optimality-theoretic syntax by postulating a constraint requiring that if the relation R obtains between context parameters and the current utterance, the particle P should be added to the utterance (2006: 140), referred to as *max(R)*, which would overrule a constraint against special devices referred to as **Particle*. The order of the above two constraints thus guarantees that a context marking particle is present if and only if the particular relation holds between the content of the sentence and the context parameter.

Zeevat (2003, 2006) argues that German accented *DOCH* and Dutch accented *TOCH*[9] are *adversative context markers*, signaling that "the content of the current utterance goes against material that was already present in the common ground" (Zeevat 2006: 141). (12) contains the formal definition:

(12) ADVERSATIVE(CG, φ), iff CG $\models$ *presumably(not-φ)* or CG $\models$ *suggested(not-φ)*

(Zeevat 2006: 141)

Given a proposition p, *presumably(p)* is true in an information state if there are a set of propositions $\psi_1, \ldots, \psi_n$ which "together constitute a reason for thinking that" p in the commmon ground, but there are no set of propositions that support a similar argument for *not-p* (Zeevat 2006: 141). The proposition *suggested(p)* is defined in a recursive manner, as follows:

(13) *suggested(p)* $\Leftrightarrow$ *may p $\wedge$ (p $\vee$ O_1 p $\vee$ ... $\vee$ O_n p $\vee$ suggested(p))*   (Zeevat 2006: 141)

where the set $\{O_1, \ldots O_n\}$ contains operators like *x dreams that, x suggests that, x believes that.*

---

[9] Note that Zeevat (2003, 2006) distinguishes between "accented" *TOCH/DOCH,* which he classifies as adversative markers and "contrastively stressed" *TOCH/DOCH,* which he considers corrective markers (together with Dutch *WEL* and *NIET* and English *DO* and *DON'T,* all with contrastive stress). Corrective markers intend to change the common ground by indicating the "retraction of (the reasons for) ¬φ and the addition of φ as a replacement." (Zeevat 2003: 104) A typical context for a corrective marker thus appears to be i), which is incompatible with the use of *CSAK:*

i)   A: *John wasn't invited.*

       B: *# CSAK   meghívták   Jánost.*

              CSAK   VM:invited:3pl   John:ACC

              Intended: "John WAS invited."

(13) means that *suggested(p)* is true if and only if *p* is possible, and either *p* itself, *suggested(p)* or any O_i *p* are true, where O_i is an element of a set of operators.

The data presented in section 2.1 suggest that Hungarian *CSAK* should be analyzed as an adversative marker along with Dutch accented *TOCH* and German accented *DOCH*. This explains why the licensing of *CSAK* in a sentence can depend on the propositional contents and presuppositions of previous utterances plus the joint assumptions of the interlocutors, which all are assumed to be included in the *CG*, as illustrated in (1)–(2) and (5)–(6) above, and why the particle is not excluded from non-declaratives, as shown in (9)–(10).

However, the contrast between (4) and (5)–(6) above points to a difference: *CSAK*, as opposed to Dutch accented *TOCH,* does not automatically get licensed in a sentence with propositional content *p* where *suggested(not-p)* is entailed by CG but *presumably(not-p)* is not. Given these findings we will assume that Hungarian *CSAK* belongs to a subtype of adversative context markers that are inserted into a sentence with propositional content *p* if and only if CG |= *presumably(not-p).* In other words, it indicates that there is a set of propositions in the common ground that constitute a reason for thinking that *not-p* is true, but that an analogous requirement does not hold for *p.*

Having illustrated the contribution of the discourse particle *CSAK* to the meaning of Hungarian sentences, we consider the interpretation of its homonym, the exclusive particle *csak,* in order to find out how the adversative particle use came about.

3. The meaning of the exclusive particle *csak*

The Hungarian exclusive particle *csak* appears to be a close counterpart of the exclusive particle *only* in English, illustrated in (14) below, whose semantic-pragmatic properties have been studied intensively in the last decades:

(14) Only John made a perpetuum mobile.

Although there is general agreement concerning the fact that (14) simultaneously conveys that 'John made a perpetuum mobile' (the 'prejacent', cf. Horn 1969) and that 'Nobody other than John made a perpetuum mobile' (the 'exclusive proposition'), it is a hotly debated issue in the literature what the status of the latter two propositions are, whether they are

entailed, presupposed or implicated.[10]

Regarding the interpretation of Hungarian exclusive *csak*, a further challenge presents itself, due to the fact that constituents situated in the immediately preverbal position are attributed an exhaustive reading (cf. Szabolcsi 1981, 1994 and É. Kiss 1998, among others, for the discussion and analysis of the relevant data): sentences containing preverbal focus constituents and those containing *csak* (associated with focus) cannot replace each other in all contexts, particularly, they cannot substitute for each other under negation. Szabolcsi (1994) makes a proposal (based on Kenesei 1989) that accounts for the contrasts between the interpretation of these two structures, illustrated in (15)–(16) and (17)–(18) below, by proposing that *csak*-sentences presuppose their prejacent and assert that no alternative propositions are true that are not entailed by the latter, whereas sentences containing a preverbal focus introduce an existential presupposition and assert that the focus denotation is identical to the entity whose existence is presupposed. This account can successfully derive the truth conditions of (15)–(18) (as well as those of their negative counterparts), where capital letters mark the syllables bearing the heaviest stress within the sentences (which are equivalent to the information structural focus here):[11]

(15) *JÁnost   hívták   meg.*
John:ACC   invited:3pl VM
"JOHN got invited."

(16) *Csak   JÁnost   hívták   meg.*
only   John:ACC   invited:3pl VM
"Only John got invited."

---

[10] In the current paper, we cannot even start to provide an account of the major results in the quest for the most adequate analysis of the meaning of *only*. In order to get a glimpse of the issues at stake and the various options of resolving them, the reader is advised to turn to Atlas (1993), Beaver and Clark (2008), Geach (1962), Geurts and van der Sandt (2004), Horn (1969, 1996), Ippolito (2007), Rooth (1992), and van Rooij and Schulz (2007), among others.

[11] In these examples, information-structural foci are all identical to or included in the constituent situated in the syntactic focus position, referred to as [Spec,FP] in É. Kiss (2002), which is not necessarily always the case. (See Gyuris 2012 for further discussion.)

(17) *KÉT   diákot   hívtak   meg.*
two   student:ACC   invited:3pl VM
"TWO students got invited."

(18) *Csak   KÉT   diákot   hívtak   meg.*
only   two   student:ACC   invited:3pl   VM
"Only two students got invited."

Szabolcsi's (1994) account can successfully explain why (16) is considered false if there is a true proposition among the alternative propositions generated by replacing the denotation of the focus for all of its alternatives (e.g. 'Mary got invited'),[12] but why the truth of (18) is compatible with the truth of the non-identical proposition 'There is a student who got invited.'

The above approach, however, runs into difficulties when it comes to the question of why *csak* is not superfluous in (19) in contexts where it is presupposed that everyone has one single occupation:

(19) *Mari   csak   egy   DIák   volt.*
Mary   only   a   student   was
"Mary was only a student."

Intuitively, the presence of *csak* in the sentence above seems to indicate that the speaker expected Mary to have an occupation situated higher within the hierarchy of alternative occupations, like being a lecturer or being a professor, etc. The same meaning component, referred to as *mirativity* in the literature (cf. Beaver and Clark 2008 and Zeevat 2009) is also present in the case of (16) and (18): (16) suggests that the expectation was that more people in addition to John would be invited, and (18) that more than two students would be invited.

It appears that the intuitions about the interpretation of *csak* described above can be captured successfully with the help of the proposal made by Beaver and Clark (2008) for formalizing the meaning of exclusives, which equally takes into account their truth-conditional impact (excluding higher values on a scale) and their mirative function. Beaver

---

[12] Note the string-identity and the simultaneous interpretational difference between (11) above and (16). The latter parallels the contrast betweeen the prosodic forms.

and Clark's definition, shown in (20) below, assumes an ordering on the set of possible true answers to the Current Question (the question that the particular utterance addresses), which includes the prejacent of the sentence containing the exclusive particle, from weak to strong. The ordering creates a structure on the set of true alternatives that can either be a pre-order or a partial order, and it is either based on entailment or some relevant pragmatic notion, e.g. newsworthiness.[13]

(20) *Meaning of exclusives*

The lexical meaning of exclusives is exhaustively described by:

Discourse function: To make a comment on the Current Question (CQ, […]), a comment which weakens a salient natural expectation. To achieve this function, the prejacent must be weaker than the expected answer to the CQ on a salient scale.

Presupposition: The strongest true alternatives in the CQ are at least as strong as the prejacent.

Descriptive Content: The strongest true alternatives in the CQ are at most as strong as the prejacent. (Beaver and Clark 2008: 251)

By adopting Beaver and Clark's (2008) proposal for the analysis of *csak* we can correctly account for why none of its occurrences are predicted to be superfluous in (15)-(19): each of them introduces a presupposition saying that among the alternative true answers that the speaker would have found appropriate to the Current Question beforehand, all are stronger or at least as strong as the prejacent. Given the descriptive content attributed to exclusives, the proposal correctly predicts that in cases where the alternative propositions do not exclude each other, the truth of a *csak*-sentence entails the falsity of alternative answers stronger than the prejacent, but does not exclude the truth of weaker alternative answers.[14]

---

[13] In the CIL18 talk that this paper is based on I made a suggestion for capturing the contribution of scalar *csak* to the presuppositions of Hungarian sentences that resembled Beaver and Clark's (2008) proposal very much, without having been aware of the latter.

[14] Zeevat's (2009) proposal, which analyses *only* as expressing low quantity mirativity ("less than expected"), and attributes exhaustivity not to the semantics of *only*, but to the prejacent containing a focus seems to be a viable candidate for capturing the interpretation of Hungarian *csak* as well. Since by the time Zeevat's paper appeared the present paper was already submitted for publication, detailed discussion of the above approach will have to be left for another occassion, as well as the discussion of Balogh's (2009) treatment of *csak*, which closely follows the latter.

Having discussed the interpretation of exclusive *csak* in Hungarian, in the next section we will argue that assuming an interpretation of the type shown in (20) for exclusive *csak*, it is possible to put forth a reasonable explanation for how it acquired the discourse particle interpretation described in section 2 historically.

4. From exclusive particle use to discourse particle use: historical development through semantic reanalysis

In this section, I would like to show that by assuming the interpretation proposed by Beaver and Clark (2008) for exclusives in (20), we can account for the problem of how the adversative discourse particle use described in Sect 2 developed for *csak*, to which no fully convincing solution has been proposed in Hungarian historical linguistics so far.[15,16] The explanation offered here is based on the idea that the semantic change in the course of which the particle *csak* acquired its adversative context marker interpretation was a consequence of semantic reanalysis, which took place in order to avoid *pragmatic overload*, an important motivation for meaning change, according to Eckardt (2006).

Eckardt (2006) claims that when an expression is used in a particular type of construction where the information necessary to compute the presuppositions/implicatures introduced by it is not readily available to the hearers, and therefore too much pragmatic accommodation is required in order to understand the meaning of the construction, semantic reanalysis takes place. What this means is that the hearers re-distribute the parts of the meaning of the whole sentence (which they are assumed to understand in full) among the constituents in a way that frees the relevant constituents from the pragmatic overload.

The earliest appearance of *csak* as an exclusive particle is found in a codex written in the 14th–15th centuries (Jókai codex, cf. Pólya 2008). The earliest occurrences of the particle where it clearly has the adversative discourse marker interpretation I found in texts dating

---

[15] Cf. Pólya's (2008) overview of the various interpretations of *csak* that it acquired historically, which, incidentally, contains only one example for adversative *csak*, from 1737.

[16] Although the question of how frequently the homonymy between an adversative discourse marker and an exclusive particle is attested in other languages would need further investigation, the cases of adversative particles turning to mirative markers discussed by Malchukov (2003) indicate that it is not an isolated phenomenon. Cf. also Zeevat (2009) for the claim that *only*-type mirative particles have a tendency to turn into adversative particles in Dutch or English.

from the middle of the 17th century.[17,18] (21)-(22) below show two examples from the above period where *csak* can only be given an adversative interpretation. (Speakers of present-day Hungarian only find the examples grammatical if the particle is pronounced stressed.)

(21) *Kedveseb   jószágunk   nincsen   az   életnél*
     more:dear   value:our   be:NEG:3sg   the   life:than
     Halálnak   sarcoló   pénzt   ha   fizethetnél
     death:DAT   ransom   money:ACC   if   pay:could:COND:2sg
     Van-é oly   kedves jód,   mellyet   kimilhetnél,
     is-E[19]   such   dear   good:your   that:ACC   save:could:COND:2sg
     Az   mig   kedved   tartya,   csak   addig   élhetnél.
     that   as:long   liking:your   hold:3sg   CSAK   that:until   live:could:COND:2sg
     "We have nothing more valuable than our lives / If you could pay ransom to death / Is there any of your dearest properties that you would not sacrifice / To be able to live just as long as you wish?"[20]

     (from the poem *Murány Venus conversing with Mars,* by István Gyöngyösi, 1664[21])

---

[17] Benkő (1993–1997) argues that the first occurrence of *csak* having an interpretation that is to be translated into German with the help of the particle *doch* (which would correspond to the adversative discourse marker interpretation) dates back to the middle of the 16th century. There are, however, strong reasons to debate the accuracy of the author's interpretation of the use of the particle he provides as an example. Szabó T. (1978: 12) cites an example from 1608 that he translates as *doch* into German, but which cannot be analyzed properly due to lack of information about the preceding context.

[18] The electronic corpus of the Hungarian Generative Diachronic Syntax project at the Research Institute for Linguistics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, which contains 47 codices, 24 shorter texts, and 244 letters (2,2 million words) from the Old and Middle Hungarian periods (until the beginning of the 16th century) does not include any occurrences of *csak* where it has the adversative discourse marker interpretation. The Hungarian Historical Corpus, also at the Research Institute for Linguistics, collects texts from 1780 onwards, and includes many occurrences of the adversative context marker *csak*. Since at the time of collecting material for the paper there were no searchable databases of texts written between the beginning of the 16th and the end of the 18th centuries, I was relying on the investigation of printed texts constituting the corpus of the (non-generative) historical   grammar   of   Hungarian,   Benkő   (1991,   1992) (http://www.nytud.hu/oszt/nyelvtort/abcrendeskkforras.pdf) .

[19] Interrogative particle marking *yes/no* interrogatives in Hungarian.

[20] Literal translation, B. Gyuris.

[21] Source: Gyöngyösi, István 1664. *Márssal társolkodó Murányi Vénus*, strophe 216. Available at:

(22) … *egy darabig mind igyekezénk a szelet megcsalni*
one while:for continually tried:1pl the wind:ACC cheat:INF

oldalfélt … való mesterséges evezésekkel, … de hiába, csak meg
sideways being artificial rowing:PL:with but in:vain CSAK VM

kelle fordulni…
must:PAST turn:INF

"… for a while we continually tried to cheat the wind by rowing sideways artificially, … but in vain, we had to turn round after all…"

(from a letter by Miklós Bethlen, 1672[22])

Assuming that the normal preference of humans is to live forever, the exclusive interpretation of *csak* in (21), which would convey that the preferred length of the life of the addressee is ordered lower on some (unspecified) scale than alternative lengths is rather unlikely. However, on the adversative reading of the particle the *yes/no* interrogative is taken to ask whether the addressee would make all possible sacrifices to live as long as s/he wishes, which is taken to be in opposition to what follows under normal circumstances from the common ground, namely, that the length of somebody's life does not depend on how long that person wishes to live. The latter seems to be the only correct reading of the sentence.

Turning to (22), on the exclusive reading of *csak,* the sentence would convey that the only thing, the least significant or the least newsworthy thing that happened was that the speaker and his company had to turn round. By considering the wider context, it becomes clear that the turning round was quite a newsworthy and significant thing, because they fought quite hard to avoid it. On the adversative reading, the sentence is interpreted as saying that the speaker and his company had to turn round, which is in opposition to what would follow from the common ground under normal circumstances. This seems to be the correct reading given the huge efforts described in the preceding text that the company made to avoid turning round.

The following example, which can, however, be interpreted by assigning an exclusive reading to *csak,* illustrates that the position of the particle in front of the verb phrase does not automatically give rise to an adversative reading:

---

(23) … *és   mikor   észrevevém   magamat,   csak   elhűlék   nagy*
        and when realized:1sg myself:ACC   CSAK VM:be:amazed:1sg   big

   álmélkodással...
   surprise:with

   "…and when I realized my position, I was just struck dumb with amazement…"

                                                        (Miklós M. Tótfalusi Kiss, 1698[23])

On the exclusive reading of *csak* (23) thus means that the only thing the speaker did after realizing his position was being struck dumb with surprise (instead of obvious alternative actions like shouting, quitting, crying, etc.), which seems to be a reasonable interpretation.

I believe that the semantic reanalysis in the course of which the adversative interpretation of the *csak* particle came about was initiated by constructions that shared the following properties. First, the set of alternative answers to the Current Question is not made explicit, except for the prejacent. Second, based on the lexical meaning of the focus within the prejacent or on the wider context, all theoretically possible alternatives to the prejacent mutually exclude the latter. Third, based on the lexical meaning of the focus within the prejacent or on contextual information, the prejacent is considered to be ordered lowest among these alternatives. Fourth, there is reason to assume the opposite of the prejacent under normal circumstances given the content of the common ground. Below we illustrate two examples for the case under consideration:

(24) … *mert   engemet csak   héában   igyekezel   hozzád   hajtani.*
        because   I:ACC   CSAK in:vain   strive:2sg   towards:you   bend:INF

   "… because your efforts to bend me in your direction are in vain after all."

                                                        (Bálint Balassi, 1589[24])

(25) … *ha   a   lovak   magokban mind sánták,   ha   öszve   fogjákis*
        if   the horse:PL alone:PL:in all   lame:PL if   together harness:3pl:also

   tsak   sánták.
   CSAK lame:PL

---

[23] M. Tótfalusi Kiss, Miklós 1698. *M. Tótfalusi K. Miklósnak Mentsége*. Kolozsvár.

[24] Balassi, Bálint 1589. *Szép magyar komédia*. Available at: http://mek.oszk.hu/00600/00610/00610.htm

"… if the individual horses are all lame, they are still lame if they are harnessed together."   (from the *Sárospatak Dispute*, 1660[25])

Let us consider first the interpretation of (24) before the reanalysis. The wider context does not make it clear what alternatives of the prejacent are assumed by the speaker. The use of *csak* introduces the presupposition that the strongest true alternatives are at least as strong as the prejacent. Given that the focus of the prejacent is *héában* 'in vain', the theoretically possible alternatives to the prejacent in the CQ include the propositions 'your efforts will lead to mild success,' 'your efforts will lead to medium success,' 'your efforts will lead to great success,' etc., among which the prejacent, equivalent to 'your efforts will lead to no success,' is ordered lowest according to the most natural ordering imaginable. The descriptive content introduced by *csak* says that none of the alternatives stronger than the prejacent are true, which, again, follows from the fact that none of the alternatives can be true simultaneously with the prejacent. Given that both the presupposition and the descriptive content follows from the meaning of the sentence already, in the lack of explicit reference to alternative answers to the CQ, interpreters have the problem of identifying the reason for the use of *csak*. After the reanalysis, the interpretation of the prejacent is retained, and *csak* conveys that this interpretation is the opposite of the proposition that the common ground constitutes a reason for assuming under normal circumstances. This is supported by the fact that the common ground contains information about how hard the addressee has tried to gain the heart of the speaker.

The meaning (25) before and after the reanalysis can be calculated in an analogous way: here again all alternative answers to the CQ are incompatible with the prejacent (since they all entail that the horses harnessed together are not lame), which is ordered lowest among the alternatives on every natural ordering.

The only remaining question regarding the latter interpretation then is why the particle must obligatorily be stressed. I suggest that it is due to the fact that stressing some constituent of the prejacent is prohibited given that the whole of the latter is considered given information, whereas on the exclusive reading the focus constituent is not given, thus available for being stressed. Since there has to be a constituent that bears the main stress of

---

[25] Source: Kulcsár, Árpád. 1999. A sárospataki hitvita 1660 szeptember 30-október 1. In Csaba Fazekas (ed.) *Fiatal egyháztörténészek írásai*. Miskolc: Miskolci Egyetem BTK Újkori Magyar Történeti Tanszék, 21-46. Available at: http://mek.oszk.hu/02000/02082/html/kulcsar.htm

the sentence, on the adversative reading the particle receives it as a last resort.[26]

The only analysis in the literature of the relation between the exclusive and the adversative interpretations of *csak* is provided by Simonyi (1881). According to him, the adversative interpretation of the particle, which he illustrates with the example in (27) below, developed from another discourse particle use of non-stressed *csak*, to be paraphrased as 'without interruption', illustrated in (26) (Simonyi 1881:193). (Interestingly, this latter interpretation is not discussed either by Benkő 1993-1997 or by Szabó T. 1978.)

(26) *csak beszélek, csak beszélek neki,   de   hiába*
     only talk:1sg   only talk:1sg   he:DAT   but   in:vain.
     "I keep talking to him, but in vain."

(27) *Akármint   ragyogjon   a   nap, de   csak   nem lát   a   vak*
     no:matter:how   shine:SUBJ:3sg   the   sun but CSAK   not see:3sg   the   blind
     "No matter how strongly the sun shines, the blind cannot see."

(*Proverb*, cited in Simonyi 1881: 193)

The scarcity of the relevant data available does not allow one to decide whether this explanation is on the right track. I believe that to be able to do so, one should have proof for the use of non-accented *csak* on which it is to be paraphrased as "without interruption" being earlier than the adversative use. Also, the number of constructions where *csak* is followed by an activity or a state verb (phrase) should be higher than the number of those where the particle is followed by accomplishment or achievement verbs, immediately after the adversative interpretation arises. In any case, I have not been able to find any examples for the reading of *csak* where it means 'without interruption' in the seventeeenth century sources I have consulted and where examples in (21)-(22) and (24)-(25) illustrating the adversative reading come from.

It is assumed that the interpretation of *csak* as an adversative context marker spread to all three sentence types where it can now appear (declaratives, *yes-no* interrogatives and imperatives), including structures where *csak* cannot have an exclusive reading at all, illustrated in the contemporary examples below. In (28), stressed *CSAK* is followed by a universal noun phrase, and in (29) by a negated noun phrase, neither of which can be

---

[26] I thank Manfred Krifka for suggesting this explanation.

interpreted as being the focus associating with an exclusive particle:

(28) *CSAK mindenki Jánost hívta meg.*
    CSAK everybody John:ACC invited:3sg VM
    "Everybody invited John after all."

(29) *CSAK nem Jánost hívták meg.*
    CSAK not John:ACC invited:3pl VM
    "It wasn't John who got invited after all."

5. Conclusions

In this paper, the interpretation of the Hungarian stressed *CSAK* discourse particle was investigated. It was argued that the necessary and sufficient conditions for its appearance in discourses indicate that it has the function of an adversative context marker, as proposed by Zeevat (2000, 2003, 2006). It was shown that a plausible motivation for the meaning change in the course of which the exclusive particle *csak* acquired this discourse particle use can be given by assuming Beaver and Clark's (2008) analysis for the interpretation of exclusive *csak,* and a process of semantic reanalysis due to pragmatic overload, a process of semantic change, described by Eckardt (2006).

References

Atlas, Jay David. 1993. The importance of being 'only': Testing the neo-gricean versus neo-entailment paradigms. Journal of Semantics 10. 301-318.

Balogh, Kata. 2009. *Theme with Variations. A Context-Based Analysis of Focus.* Doctoral Dissertation, University of Amsterdam.

Beaver, David I. & Brady Z. Clark. 2008. *Sense and Sensitivity: How Focus Determines Meaning.* Chicester: Wiley-Blackwell.

Benkő, Loránd. (ed.). 1991. *A magyar nyelv történeti nyelvtana I. [A Historical Grammar of the Hungarian Language.]* Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó.

Benkő, Loránd. (ed.). 1992. *A magyar nyelv történeti nyelvtana II. [A Historical Grammar of the Hungarian Language.]* Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó.

Benkő, Loránd. (ed.). 1993-1997. *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Ungarischen I-III.* Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó.

Eckardt, Regine. 2006. *Meaning Change in Grammaticalization: An inquiry into semantic reanalysis.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

É. Kiss, Katalin. 1998. Identificational focus versus information focus. *Language* 74. 245–273.

É. Kiss, Katalin. 2002. *The Syntax of Hungarian.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Geach, Peter. 1962. *Reference and Generality*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca.

Geurts, Bart and Robert van der Sandt. 2004. Interpreting focus. *Theoretical Linguistics* 28. 1-44.

Gyuris, Beáta. 2007. Contrasting expectations: the Hungarian modal particle *csak*. Paper presented at the 3rd Workshop on Contrast, 4 May 2007, ZAS, Berlin.

Gyuris, Beáta. 2009. A hangsúlyos *csak* diskurzuspartikula interpretációja. [The interpretation of the stressed *csak* particle.] In Márta Maleczki & Enikő Németh T. (eds.) *A mai magyar nyelv leírásának újabb módszerei VII.* [New Methods for the Description of the Hungarian Language.] Szeged: Szegedi Tudományegyetem Általános Nyelvészeti Tanszék, 157–178.

Gyuris, Beáta. 2012. The information structure of Hungarian. In: Manfred Krifka & Renate Musan (eds.) *The expression of information structure.* Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 159-186.

Horn, Laurence R. 1969. A presuppositional analysis of *only* and *even*. In Papers from the Fifth Regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistics Society. Chicago: University of Chicago, 98-107.

Horn, Laurence R. 1996. Exclusive company: *Only* and the dynamics of vertical inference. *Journal of Semantics* 13.1-40.

Ippolito, Michela. 2007. On the meaning of *only. Journal of Semantics* 25.45-91.

Kenesei, István. 1989. Logikus-e a magyar szórend? [Is Hungarian word order logical?] *Általános Nyelvészeti Tanulmányok* XVII. 105–152.

Kiefer, Ferenc. 1988. Modal particles as discourse markers in questions. *Acta Linguistica* 38.107–125.

Kocsány, Piroska. 1986. *A mondás mint szövegtípus*. [*The saying as a text form.*] DSc

dissertation, MTA, Budapest.

Malchukov, Andrej. L. 2003. Towards a semantic typology of adversative and contrast marking. *Journal of Semantics* 21:177-198.

Meibauer, Jörg. 1994. *Modaler Kontrast und konzeptuelle Verschiebung. Studien zur Syntax und Semantik deutscher Modalpartikeln.* Tübingen: Niemeyer.

Pólya, Katalin. 2008. A *csak* partikula történeti változásaihoz. [On the historical changes characterizing the *csak* particle.] In László Büky, Tamás Forgács & Balázs Sinkovics (eds.) *A nyelvtörténeti kutatások újabb eredményei V. [New results in diachronic research.]* Szeged: Department of Hungarian Linguistics, SZTE, 177-184.

Simonyi, Zsigmond. 1881. *A magyar kötőszók.* [*Hungarian Conjunctions*.] Budapest: A Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Könyvkiadó Hivatala.

Stalnaker, Robert C. 1978. Assertion. In Peter Cole (ed.) *Pragmatics. Syntax and Semantics 9.* New York: Academic Press, 315–332.

Szabolcsi, Anna 1981. Compositionality in Focus. *Folia Linguistica* 15. 141-161.

Szabolcsi, Anna. 1994. All quantifiers are not equal: the case of focus. *Acta Linguistica Hungarica* 42–43. 171–187.

Szabó T. Attila. 1978. *Erdélyi magyar szótörténeti tár II.* [*Transsylvanian Hungarian Historical Dictionary Vol. II.*] Bukarest: Kriterion Könyvkiadó.

Thurmair, Maria. 1989. *Modalpartikeln und ihre Kombinationen*. Niemeyer: Tübingen.

van Rooij, Robert and Katrin Schulz. 2007. *Only:* Meaning and Implicatures. In Maria Aloni, Alastair Butler & Paul Dekker (eds.) *Current Research in the Semantics/Pragmatics Interface.* Oxford and Amsterdam: Elsevier, 193-223.

Zeevat, Henk. 2000. Discourse particles as speech act markers. *LDV-Forum* 17. 74–91.

Zeevat, Henk. 2003. Particles: Presupposition triggers, context markers or speech act markers. In Reinhart Blutner & Henk Zeevat (eds.) *Optimality Theory and Pragmatics.* Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 91-111.

Zeevat, Henk. 2006. A dynamic approach to discourse particles. In Kerstin Fischer (ed.) *Approaches to Discourse Particles*. Oxford & Amsterdam: Elsevier, 133–148.

Zeevat, Henk 2009. "Only" as a mirative particle. *Sprache und Datenverarbeitung 33/*1-2: 179-196.

Zimmermann, Malte. 2011. Discourse Particles. In Paul Portner, Claudia Maienborn & Klaus von Heusinger (eds.) *Handbook of Semantics*. (= Handbücher zur Sprach- und Kommunikationswissenschaft). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2012-2038.