

# Disagreement in Hungarian

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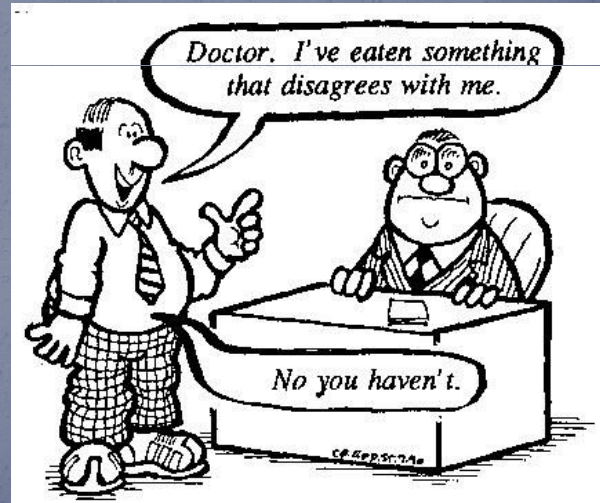
## Structure

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# Introduction

- an increasing interest in conflict talk in several different fields, e.g., psychology, philosophy, sociology, and linguistics
- the study of disagreement *per se* within conflict episodes and its features is relatively recent
- may pose a challenge for the interactants if they intend to "get one's point across without seeming self-righteous or being injurious" (Locher, 2004:94)



Disagreements investigated within the following frameworks:

- speech act theory (Sornig, 1977)
- politeness theory (Holtgraves, 1997)
- conversational analysis (Pomerantz, 1984; Sacks, 1987; Kotthoff, 1993)
- discourse analysis (Schiffrin, 1985; Kakava, 1995; Georgakopoulou, 2001)
- relevance theory (Locher, 2004)
- social psychological pragmatics (Muntigl and Turnbull, 1998)



Conflict episodes investigated in different contexts:

- family talk (Kakavá, 2002; Schiffrin, 1990; Muntigl and William, 1998)
- workplace interaction (Angouri, 2012; Holmes & Stubbe, 2003)
- radio talk shows and phone-in broadcasts (Bilmes, 1999; Hutchby, 1999)
- TV shows (Culpeper, 2005, 2011)
- army training discourse (Culpeper, 1996)
- courtroom discourse (Garcia, 1991; Lakoff, 1989)
- therapeutic discourse (Lakoff, 1989)
- parliamentary discourse (Harris, 2001)
- academic discourse (Rees-Miller 2000; Rohmah, 2012, Tannen 2002)
- fictional texts (Culpeper, 1998; Tannen, 1990)
- computer mediated communication (CMD): e-mails, blogs, forums (Angouri & Tseliga, 2010; Bolander, 2012; Graham, 2007)

To date, the majority of research on disagreement...

- focused on the English lg. (e.g. Angouri, 2012; Harris, 2001)
- predominantly investigated the linguistic manifestation of disagreement and ignored its functional spectrum
- ignored the role and analysis of prosodic features
- in comparison to studies on other speech acts (e.g. apologies, requests, compliments) research on the act of disagreement carried out in Hungarian is extremely limited



# Terminological turmoil

- there is a lack of a uniform definition and conceptualization of the notion
- In the literature of conflict talk various closely related terms are used – often interchangeably – for the phenomenon of disagreement without any explanation of their meaning
- *opposition* (Kakavá, 2002), *argument* (Emihovich, 1986; Maynard, 1985; Muntigl & Turnbull, 1998; Schiffrin, 1984, 1985), *debate* (Johnson & Johnson, 1985), *conflict* (Honda, 2002), *dispute* (Corsaro & Rizzo, 1990; Goodwin et al., 2002; Kotthoff, 1993; Sprott, 1992), *confrontation* (Brown, 1990; Hutchby, 1992), *oppositional talk* (Bardovi-Harlig & Salsbury, 2004; Corsaro & Maynard, 1996), and *conflict talk* (Grimshaw, 1990; Honda, 2002; Leung, 2005)

(Koczogh, to appear)

- closely related terms with varying scope and fuzzy boundaries
- the distinctions are made along the lines of positive/negative attitude and the local/interactional dimensions
- most frequently used terms: *disagreement*, *argument*

## ARGUMENT:

1. traditional rhetorical sense
2. an interactive process



### Classical interpretation

- based on logical reasoning, conceptualized as unidimensional (single speaker “presents an intact monologue supporting a disputable position” (Schiffrin 1985: 37))

### Argument as an interactive process

- two or more participants who “openly support disputed positions” (Schiffrin 1985:37)

### **Disagreement vs. argument**

- argument (Jacobs & Jackson, 1982): formally an expansion of the speech act of disagreement, functionally a means of managing disagreement in interaction
- broader than a single act of disagreement (Schiffrin, 1984: characterized by sustained disagreement and competition for interactionally negotiable goods)
- “the conversational interactivity of making claims, disagreeing with claims, countering disagreements, and the process by which such disagreements arise, are dealt with, and resolved” (Muntigl & Turnbull, 1998: 225)

## Definitions of disagreement

- “the communication of an opinion or belief **contrary to** the view expressed by the previous speaker” (Edstrom, 2004:1505)
- “the expression of a view that **differs from** that expressed by another speaker” (Sifianou, 2010)



disagreements expressed verbally and non-verbally + deals with conflict on a content level

- „A Speaker S disagrees when s/he considers untrue some Proposition *P* uttered or presumed to be espoused by an Addressee A and reacts with an utterance the propositional content or implicature of which is *Not P*.” (Rees-Miller, 2000: 1088) → rules out irony and nonserious verbal dueling
- “any **utterance** that comments upon a pre-text by **questioning part of** its semantic or pragmatic information (sometimes its formal structure as well), **correcting or negating** it (semantically or formally)” (Sornig, 1977: 363)”



# Defining disagreement

(1) The truth value of S1's utterance & that of S2's don't have to be in contrast

## Example 1

*Two tourists are talking about S2's itinerary:*

*S1 So, are you going to visit The Big Apple tomorrow?*

*S2 No, I'm going to New York City.*

(2) S2's utterance doesn't have to mirror S's belief (e.g. joke, teasing)

## Example 2

*Two students are talking:*

*S1 No wonder that every girl in class is into me: I have a baby face and star-like eyes.*

*S2 Star-like is your head!*

(3) The disagreeing utterance does not have to oppose the whole of an antecedent utterance, it can be inconsistent with a part of it.

## *Example 3*

*S1 This car is cheap and reliable.*

→ *S2 Cheap? / I don't think it is reliable at all.*

Full inconsistency :

## *Example 4*

*S1 Tom is a handsome and intelligent guy.*

→ *S2 I don't think so.*

(4) Disagreement can be generated by all kinds of prompts, including non-verbal expressions of opinion. This prior prompt does not need to precede the disagreement immediately.

(5) Disagreement is not always judged negatively. Its interpretation is highly context and culture dependent and is influenced by parameters such as the participants, the interactional goal, the norms, the topic of conversation, etc.



- (7) Speech act theory seems to be too rigid to account for the dynamics of disagreement.

Disagreement : “situated activity, interactionally managed by interlocutors” (Sifianou 2012: 1557), which has to be interpreted in context

*„Verbal disagreement is a situated activity whose function is to express an opinion (or belief) the propositional content or illocutionary force of which is – or is intended to be – partly or fully inconsistent with that of a prior (non-verbal) utterance.” (Koczogh, 2012: 170)*

## Previous studies on disagreement

Rees-Miller (1995, 2000)

- the expression of disagreement in academic setting,
  - organizes the acts of disagreement into three broad categories “based on the presence or absence of identifiable linguistic markers” (2000: 1993)
1. Softened disagreement (positive comment, humour, inclusive 1st person, partial agreement, questions, *I think / I don't know*, downtoners (*maybe, sort of*), verbs of uncertainty)
  2. Disagreement not softened or strengthened (contradictory statement, verbal shadowing)
  3. Aggravated disagreement (rhetorical question, intensifiers, personal accusatory *you*, judgemental vocabulary)



## BUT:

- linguistic markers include some types (e.g. partial agreement, contradictory statement) that seem to be rather functional than linguistic categories
- it does not make mention of the most direct way of disagreeing (i.e., *I don't agree* or *I disagree*)
- some of the categories are fuzzy (e.g. questions)  
? ??disagreeing utterance that is expressed by a question with the intention of challenging the other person???
- A given linguistic item can have several functions. For instance, *I think* can be a hedge or a booster depending on such factors as context and/or intonation.

## Locher (2004):

- the interface of power and politeness in the realization of disagreements in (1) an informal dinner among family and friends, (2) a business meeting, and (3) spoken discourses collected during the 2000 US presidential election
- Strategies through which disagreement was expressed:
  - (1) hedges (*well, just, uhm, uh, I think, I don't know*),
  - (2) giving personal or emotional reasons for disagreeing,
  - (3) modal auxiliaries,
  - (4) shifting responsibility,
  - (5) objections in the form of a question,
  - (6) the use of *but*,
  - (7) repetition of an utterance by a next or the same speaker,
  - (8) unmitigated disagreement (p. 113)



## BUT:

- some of the categories (hedges, modal auxiliaries, discourse connectives) are ways in which disagreements are *mitigated* rather than *expressed*
- contains of mixture of functional and structural categories
- examples that can be regarded as belonging to several categories at the same time, e.g. *But uh I think it might be fair only in certain cases.* → (1), (2), (3) and (6)
- Locher's model cannot account for partial agreement and some aggravated forms of disagreement (e.g. evaluations/judgements).

## Bándli (2009):

- disagreement strategies in Hungarian (employed by Hungarian people in naturally occurring spontaneous verbal interactions)
- judgement/qualification: S makes an explicit evaluative statement on the other speaker (e.g., *You are insane!*), the propositional content of the other S's utterance (e.g., *These glasses aren't good.*) or the other S's opinion (e.g., *That is nonsense!*)
- statement of completed action (e.g., *I did put it there.*)
- explanation/listing of reasons (e.g., *It ruins your eyes.*)
- alternative suggestions (e.g., *You should have gone to the doctor first.*)
- doubts/uncertainties: criticizes/questions the validity of the other speaker's stance (e.g., *Are you serious?*, *Are you sure it's good?*) or expresses the speaker's own unwillingness to do something (e.g., *I wouldn't take something like that.*)
- partial acceptance: S emphasizes his/her partial agreement with the previous speaker's utterance and implies that s/he is on a different opinion (e.g., *Stay alive then and tell me about it!*)



- the first attempt to identify the linguistic strategies used for expressing disagreement in Hungarian

BUT:

- some of the categories (e.g., strategies (2)-(4)) are used as if they were self-evident
- the difference between some of the strategies is not clear e.g. *You should have gone to the doctor first.* → criticism including a negative evaluation on the past action/behaviour of the other interactant; a judgement/qualification
- Bándli (2009) does not discuss the prosodic features of her examples.
- The examples are out of context.
- some of the categories (e.g. statement of completed action, alternative suggestions) are likely to be specific to the contexts investigated
- the model is not elaborate enough to enable the categorization of disagreements that express challenge or simple contradiction.

## Aims of the research

- to examine how verbal disagreement is accomplished linguistically in the mixed-sex conversations of Hungarian undergraduate students
- to identify the functional categories of disagreements occurring in the research corpus
- to create a category system of my own that can serve as a suitable analytical tool for providing us with a comprehensive analysis of disagreements



## Data & participants

- audio-recorded semi-structured elicited conversations of mix-sex dyads without the researcher present
- **corpus:** 68,194 words (app. 7.5 hrs of task-based speech)
- **participants** (n=30):
  - university students aged 18-24
  - native speakers of Hungarian
  - siblings
  - couples dating each other for at least 1 year
  - strangers

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## Analysis

- 525 tokens of verbal disagreement
- non-verbal ways are not within the scope of this research

### But:

- paralinguistic features often contribute to the identification of an utterance as disagreement and help assign functions to it; intonation and other prosodic features can differentiate meaning and function → intonational patterns are marked on the examples
- audio files of substantial quality were subjected to acoustic analysis using Praat 5.3.23 and a further developed version of Prosogram (v.2.8) 04) by István Szekrényes (cf. Szekrényes et al., 2011)



## Proposed model of verbal disagreement

- Previous models: had difficulty with the relationship between linguistic markers and functional categories (*either* used only one of the two aspects *or* mixed them without reflection)
- My attempt: to clarify the relationship btw. linguistic markers & functional categories → a model making use of both groups at the same time
- Despite their imperfections, previous frameworks of disagreement types serve as a starting point for mapping the functional spectrum of disagreements.
- I used the categories that seemed to be the most relevant and appropriate ones with some modifications and additions (to avoid the flaws of the previous models).

## Disagreement strategies

Prototypical examples of reactions to the utterance *Men can cook better than women*:

- **partial agreement/token agreement**: partial agreement - an utterance that makes a concession before expressing disagreement in order to soften the force of disagreement (e.g., *Igen/jó, de vannak kivételek.* ~ *Yes/Fine, but there are exceptions.*). Token agreement: polite disagreement disguised as an agreement (e.g., *Lehet.* ~ *Maybe.*; *Talán.* ~ *Perhaps.*)
- **explanation (give/ask for reason/example)**: an utterance that gives (*De azt mondják, hogy a nagymamád és az anyukád főztje a legjobb a világon.* ~ *But it is said that your grandmother's and your mother's cooking is the best in the world.*; *Ha ez így lenne, akkor ők lennének a háziasszonyok.* ~ *If it was so, they were the housewives.*) or asks for (*MIÉRT?* ~ *WHY?*) a reason or example to indicate that the previous S's proposition cannot be accepted by the S. When asking for a reason, the speaker's interrogation is usually accompanied by a critical or doubtful tone.



- **contradictory statement:** an utterance that expresses contradiction by either negating the proposition expressed by the previous claim (e.g., *Nem. ~ No.; Nem főznek jobban, mint a nők. ~ They can't cook better than women.; A nők főznek jobban, mint a férfiak. ~ Women can cook better than men.*) or directly stating that it is not true (e.g., *Nem igaz. ~ That's not true.*).
- **implied contradiction:** an utterance that, by itself, “does not bear any markers of disagreement. However, in the context in which it occurs, it contradicts a previous utterance” (e.g., *Teát! ~ Tea!; Én meg tudok a vízen járni! ~ And I can walk on water!*) (Rees-Miller 1995: 116). Contradiction is only implied → understanding the implicature requires more mental processing on the part of the listener.
- **stating disagreement:** an utterance that explicitly states that the S disagrees with the previous proposition (e.g., *Ezzel nem értek egyet. ~ I don't agree with this.*).

- **challenge:** an utterance that displays strong disagreement with the prior proposition by questioning the addressee's position and implying that (s)he cannot provide evidence for his/her claim (e.g., *És elmondanád, hogy miért? ~ And could you tell me why?; Akkor te miért főzöl olyan pocskékul? ~ Why do you cook so badly, then?; Akkor mondj már egy olyan férfit, akire ez igaz! ~ Then tell me a man of whom it's true.*).
- **disbelief:** an utterance that indicates that the S doesn't believe or doubts the previous proposition and thus cannot accept it (e.g., *Á:! ~A:h!; Ugyan már! ~ Come on!; Ki van zárva! ~ That's out of the question!*).
- **evaluation:** an utterance that expresses a negative evaluation of the previous S's proposition, indicating strong disapproval (*Hülyeség! ~ Nonsense!; Ez marhaság! ~ That's bullshit!*). Typically has the syntactic form of interrogative or imperative.



- **clarification of speaker's meaning:** an utterance that clarifies the usually misunderstood meaning of the S's previous utterance (e.g., *Szóval te jobban főzöl, mint én?* ~ *So you can cook better than me?*; *Magyarul én béna vagyok a főzéshez.* ~ *So I am lame at cooking.*), which contradicts or corrects the other interlocutor's previous proposition (e.g., *Én nem erről beszélek.* ~ *I'm not talking about that.*; *Nem arra értem.* ~ *I didn't mean that.* ; *Nem úgy.* ~ *Not that way.*).

## Pragmatic force modifiers (PFMs)

**Mitigators** (linguistic items and devices that soften the force of disagreements):

- **humour:** a mitigating device that softens the force of the disagreement usually engendering laughter on the part of the S, listener, or both. The utterance is made in a non-serious, joking manner .
- **hedge:** mitigating devices used to (1) soften the face-threatening force of disagreement by indicating uncertainty on the part of the S (e.g., *szerintem* ~ *I think*, *lehet* ~ *maybe*, *esetleg* ~ *perhaps*, *-hat, -het* ~ *can, could*), (2) lower the effect on the meaning of another element (e.g., *valamennyire* ~ *to some extent*, *egy kicsit* ~ *a little*) or (3) fill in the time used for thinking (e.g., *ö* ~ *uh*, *m:* ~ *u:hm*, *hát* ~ *well*).
- **impersonalization:** the use of impersonal/passive structures to shift responsibility. It makes the utterance appear as coming from a different source (e.g., *Egyesek szerint* ~ *Some say*, *Azt mondják, hogy...* ~ *It is said that...*).



- **tag question:** a short Q added to a statement which requests assurance or affirmation regarding what is expressed in the main clause. It serves to seek confirmation either explicitly or rhetorically and to involve the H in the discourse (e.g., *ugye? ~ right?*). Only those that soften the force of the utterance by showing positive face considerations and facilitate conversation!!!
  - **conditional:** a mitigating linguistic device expressing a hypothetical situation, thus softening the pragmatic force of the utterance
  - **term of endearment:** a word or a phrase used to address a person in a way that conveys solidarity and affection and thus softens the propositional content of the utterance (e.g., *Maci, Macika ~ Honey Bear*).
- !!! not always reflect immediacy: can have either positive or negative polarity (determined by intonation and context). In the research corpus, they were uttered with a soft tone and falling intonation, which conveys solidarity .

**Aggravators** (linguistic items and devices that aggravate the pragmatic force of disagreement):

- **mockery:** an aggravating device (indicated by tone of voice) in which the real intent of the S is “concealed or contradicted by the literal meaning of words or a situation” (Encyclopedia Britannica Online, 2006). Types in the research corpus: irony (hidden mockery) and sarcasm (open mockery).
- **intensifier:** words or phrases (e.g., *egyáltalán ~ at all, teljesen ~ totally, mondom ~ I’m telling you*) used to emphasize and strengthen the effect of disagreement.
- **interjection:** words (e.g., *ha! ~ ha!, m: ~ u:hm , á: ~ a:h*) or phrases (e.g., *ugyan már! ~ come on!*) used to convey emotion (e.g., disbelief, surprise, anger, irritation, etc.) on the part of the S typically placed at the beginning of an utterance. Meaning depends on their intonation contour.



- **verbal shadowing, repetition:** repetition of a previous S's words, phrases or entire utterance (and sometimes intonation) by another S to question the content of the previous utterance. Intonation usually entails criticism.
- **rhetorical question:** “a question to which no answer is expected because there can be no answer, the answer is obvious (implication: to the meanest intelligence), or because the S provides an answer. (...) its basic purpose is to score points against an opponent” (Rees-Miller, 1995, 137-138). Generally occurs with a falling intonation.
- **tag question:** a short question added to a statement which has the function of strengthening the aggravating force of the utterance by challenging the position of the other interlocutor (e.g., *ugye?* ~ *right?*, *nem?* ~ negative tag such as *isn't it?*).

## Pre-sequences

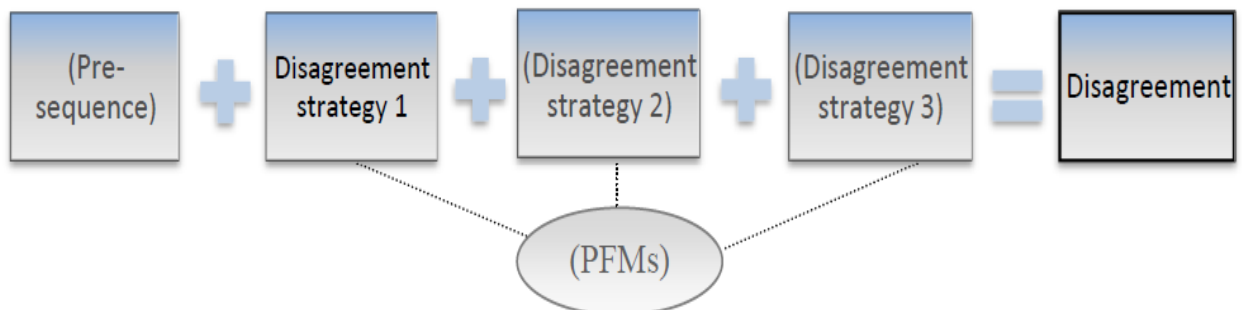
- sometimes disagreements were preceded by small segments of talk (*pre-sequence*) that are not an intrinsic part of the expression of disagreement *per se*, but resulted in a delayed delivery of the disagreement
- Pre-sequence functions in my data: (1) *hesitation* (e.g., *Nem tudom.* ~ *I don't know.*), (2) *agreement* (e.g., *Jó.* ~ *Fine.*, *Az biztos.* ~ *That's for sure.*), (3) *alert hearer* (e.g., *Figyelj már.* ~ *Listen.*, *Nézd!* ~ *Look!*), and (4) *metacommunication* (e.g., *Tudtam, hogy ezt fogod!* ~ *I knew that you would {do} this!*)
- Share at least 3 of the following characteristics (one is always being syntactic position): (a) they occur before the actual disagreement, (b) they do not contain the disagreeing message, (c) they form a separate syntactic unit which is signalled by intonation as well, (d) they are followed by a pause



# Note

The lists of disagreement functions, PFMs, and pre-sequences are not exhaustive by any means. Other categories might be discovered in other contexts.

# Structure of disagreement





# Examples

## Example 4

S1: *Ez nem fair, mert neki ugyanolyan diplomája lesz, mint neked, aki állandóan tanulsz.*

*This is not fair, because he'll have the same kind of degree like you who study all the time.*

S2: *Ez száz... És ezzel TELJES MÉRTÉKBEN egyet is értek veled, de:*

*This is for sure... And I TOTALLY agree with you on this, but:*

- 'This is for sure.': precedes the disagreement, does not express disagreement on its own, constitutes a separate syntactic unit with a falling intonation at the end, and is followed by a short pause .
- Agreement (pre-sequence) + partial agreement (strategy)+ intensifier (PFM)

## Example 5

F05 @@@ *Hát jó, de a Révésznek akkor se kellett volna @@@ Well fine, but still the Ferryman shouldn't have*

M05 *De lehet, hogy a Révész és a Haramiák haverok voltak.*

*But maybe the Ferryman and the Thieves were friends.*

F05 */\•Ó: igen ||!*  
*Yea:h, right.*

disbelief (disagreement strategy) + mockery (PFM)



## Example 6

*Fog ... Hát szerintem nem kellene kötelező tandíjat bevezetni, mert most én azért fizessek, mert tanulni akarok? Nekem ez így nem ... kapcsolódik össze.  
... Well I don't think compulsory tuition fees should be introduced because should I pay because I want to study? For me this doesn't ... make any sense.*

*Mo9 Hát /•jó || de azt azért \•figyelembe kell venni ||, hogy a \•háttérben azért van egy apparátus || amit \•biztosítanak számodra || /\•azért hogy tanulhass ||.  
Well fine, but it needs to be taken into consideration that there is some apparatus provided (for you) in the background so that you can study.*

- hedge + partial agreement + explanation

## Conclusion

- Proposed taxonomy distinguishing btw. disagreement functions (*strategies*) and linguistic devices that either mitigate or aggravate the force of the opposing utterance (*PFMs*) seems to serve as a suitable analytical tool for providing us with a comprehensive analysis of disagreements
- allows for an analysis of utterances that contain a combined use of disagreement strategies → more complete and sophisticated than previous models
- functional categories are less subjective, since they are assigned typically co-occurring PFMs and acoustic features → more distinguishable categories, more robust model
- sheds light on strategies (e.g. IC, STD) that have not been identified in previous lit. + others (e.g. DIS) that have been noted in Hun. lit. exclusively
- a framework of verbal disagreement that seems more reliable and sophisticated than other rival models



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*THANK YOU*

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*FOR YOUR ATTENTION!*



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