

■ Hungarian *ugye* is a tag, isn't it?

CECÍLIA SAROLTA MOLNÁR

Research Institute for Linguistics,
Hungarian Academy of Sciences
molnar.cecilia@nytud.mta.hu

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ABSTRACT

The paper deals with the formal and functional properties of the Hungarian particle *ugye* and its use in sentences encoding question acts. The investigation is based on a corpus study of the “Budapest Sociolinguistic Interviews”. As *ugye* is referred to as a tag, a comparison is made between *ugye*-sentences encoding question acts and English tag questions. This reveals that these constructions share most formal (e.g., basic structure, complex sentence type, resistance to embedding, intolerance to NPIs) and functional properties (e.g., bias for one of the answers, encoding of a complex speech act), although a few differences are also found (e.g., preference of particles, occurrence in declaratives).

I am grateful to László Kálmán for many things. First, and most importantly, I would like to thank him for teaching me to be suspicious of rash theoretical generalizations and respect the diversity and variability of linguistic data.

1. Introduction

The Hungarian discourse particle *ugye* has been investigated by several linguists during the past decades. The process of its development is well known: the elliptical interrogative matrix clause *úgy van-e* ‘so be-E’ (literally: ‘is that so?’) was reduced to the shorter form *ugye*, and at the same time, its distribution became less constrained. In contemporary Hungarian it appears to be compatible both with polar interrogatives and declaratives. (These assumptions, however, will have to be qualified later.) As discussed below, there is little agreement in the literature as to how the interpretation of this constituent should be described. The following examples illustrate

the variety of its uses in utterances realizing question acts. I am referring to this construction as *ugye-Q*:¹

(1) (B7313)

I: És számolni, hát számolni azt meg tudni kell.
and count.INF so count.INF that.ACC and know.INF must
'One should definitely know how to count.'

F: **Ugye, hogy tudni kell?**
UGYE that know.INF must
'One should know, shouldn't one?'

I: Nagyon kell, ...
really must
'Of course one should, ...'

(2) (B7402)

F: **Ott magyarul beszéltek, ugye?**
there Hungarian.in spoke.3PL UGYE
'You spoke Hungarian there, right?'

I: Hát ott magyarul beszéltünk,
well there Hungarian.in spoke.1PL
de az első-második osztályban németül tanultunk, ...
but the first-second class.in German.in learned.1PL
'Yes, there we spoke Hungarian, but in the first and the second classes we learned German ...'

(3) (B7307)

LF: **Akkor ugye nem, nem érezte magát ilyen veszélyben, ugye? ...**
then UGYE not not felt.3SG self.ACC such danger.in UGYE
'So, you didn't feel you were in such danger then, did you?'

I (laughing): Nem, nem. Ilyenre nem.
no no such.onto not
'No, no, I didn't.'

¹ Most of my examples are from the corpus of the Budapest Sociolinguistic Interviews (BuSI). In the examples cited here, I did not retain the transcription used in the corpus, I rather follow Hungarian orthography. "I" stands for "informant", and "F" stands for "field worker". Each of the examples is cited together with the number of the interview in which it appears.

(4) (B7404)

LF: **Ugye akkor hol dolgozott az édesapja?**

UGYE then where worked.3SG the father.your

'Remind me, where did your father work at that time?'

I: Malomszerelő Vállalatnál dolgozott.

mill-construction company.at worked.3SG

'At the mill construction company.'

This paper investigates the form and the uses of the particle *ugye* in *ugye*-Qs. I use the BuSI corpus as an empirical basis for this investigation, where 239 discourse segments can be found in which *ugye* has the relevant function. The main goal of the paper is to investigate the similarities and the differences between Hungarian *ugye*-Qs and English tag question constructions (TQ). If *ugye*-Qs turn out to be similar to TQs in most respects, their discourse-semantic description should also follow that of TQs. This may be the theoretical impact of my work.² The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 briefly reviews earlier descriptive and theoretical work about the contributions of the particle *ugye* in questions. Section 3 presents a possible distinction between tag questions, following Reese's (2007) dissertation. Section 4 contrasts the theoretical generalizations about TQs with Hungarian *ugye*-Q data. Finally, section 5 summarizes the conclusions.

2. Hungarian *ugye* as a question tag

In this section I briefly summarize the main claims of the previous literature on the syntactic distribution and the different uses of the particle *ugye*. In the first part, I go through the descriptive works, and then, in the second part, I discuss semantic-pragmatic analyses that treat *ugye* as a discourse particle. My aim here is to enumerate the main claims on *ugye*, the evaluation or critique of earlier approaches is not in the focus of my work.

² Despite the fact that there are many results for particle *ugye* in declarative, and a few in imperative sentences in the BuSI corpus, this article cannot deal with all these uses. Further research should investigate whether these different uses are connected to each other, and if so, how this connection can be described in a coherent way on the level of sentence types, conventional meaning, and discourse function.

2.1. Etymology and descriptive grammars

According to the Hungarian Historical-Etymological Dictionary (Benkő 1967–1984), the first occurrence of the *ugye* particle dates back to 1585. The matrix interrogative clause *úgy van-e* became a compound consisting of the adverb³ *úgy* ‘so’, and the polar interrogative marker *-e*. This compound was used in utterances where the speaker intended to confirm, acknowledge, or reinforce the truth of a statement. Thus, the particle was first only used in utterances realizing question acts, where, according to Benkő’s assumptions, it had a typical interrogative prosody (a rise-fall contour on the penultimate syllable).⁴ Benkő, incorrectly, claims that later the rise-fall contour disappeared, and *ugye* became an “intensifying modifier”, more recently a “meaningless expletive element” (*ibid.*, 1027).⁵ From the above assumption it would follow that the conditions under which *ugye* can be used currently are less constrained than they were earlier. However, the corpus study below does not prove that the particle can be used freely, without any syntactic constraints as “a meaningless expletive element”. I will show that the distribution of *ugye* is constrained by syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic factors.

Kenesei et al.’s (1998) descriptive grammar argues that sentences containing *ugye* encode “leading questions”. By using this type of question, the speaker expects agreement or confirmation from the partner. The particle can appear in any syntactic position within the sentence, there is no limitation on its use either in affirmative or in negated sentences. They treat *ugye* as the only marker of biased (or leading) questions.⁶ The complementary distribution of the *-e* interrogative particle and *ugye*, which they point out, can be seen as a consequence of this functional differentiation, i.e., *-e* is the marker of neutral questions (cf. Gyuris 2017), while *ugye* is the marker of biased questions. (See also H. Molnár 1959 and Kugler 1998

³ In Hungarian, Benkő (1967–1984) uses the term *módosítószó* ‘modifier word’.

⁴ In fact, Benkő (1967–1984) uses the term “interrogative sentence” here, which I think is problematic.

⁵ In the course of sketching the historical development of *ugye*, Benkő ignores the fact that in contemporary Hungarian it depends on the intended speech act (question or assertion) whether *ugye* bears the rise-fall intonation contour.

⁶ In Hungarian, polar interrogatives are either marked by intonation (rise-fall contour) or by the *-e* particle. Although the use of the latter in root clauses is limited in some dialects, it is acceptable in formal style (e.g., marriage ceremony, legal contexts) for speakers of every dialect. Embedded polar interrogatives are obligatorily marked by the *-e* particle.

who treat *ugye* as the marker of the interrogative sentence type). They do not mention that the particle can also appear in declaratives encoding assertions.

The descriptive grammar of Keszler (2000) claims that the function of *ugye* is similar to that of other “mood markers” (like *-e*, or the interrogative rise-fall intonation), adding that *ugye* usually appears in tag questions, but it does not specify other syntactic environments where the particle can appear. It is also claimed that with *ugye*, the speaker *post factum* modifies the mood of a declarative sentence (which has declarative intonation and expresses a proposition). Note that the fact that the distribution of *ugye* and that of *vajon* (to be discussed below), on the one hand, and the distribution of *ugye* and that of *-e*, on the other hand, are complementary, does not necessarily mean that their functions are identical. This can easily be proven by the fact that in a given discourse an *ugye-Q* usually cannot be replaced either by an interrogative sentence containing *-e* or by an interrogative sentence containing *vajon*.

The descriptive syntax of Kálmán (2001) does not mention sentences containing *ugye* in the chapter on questions (*ibid.*, 98–135).⁷ This may be due to the fact that *ugye-Qs* fail the syntactic tests of polar interrogatives. According to these, first, a Hungarian sentence is an interrogative if and only if the particle *vajon* can be inserted into it. Second, an interrogative is a polar one in case it can be answered by a simple *nem* ‘no’ (*ibid.*, 100). The latter criterion aims to differentiate polar interrogatives from *wh*-interrogatives, which cannot be answered by a simple *nem* ‘no’ in any circumstances.⁸ As mentioned above, the distribution of *ugye* and *vajon* is complementary, thus, according to this test, *ugye-Qs* cannot be treated as interrogatives, as (5a) illustrates. However, as (5b), an example from the BuSi corpus shows, *ugye-Qs* (at least with negation) can be answered felicitously by a simple *nem* ‘no’. As (5c) illustrates, though, there are cases when a simple *nem* ‘no’ does not sound like a sufficient answer to *ugye-Qs*, especially in cases where the question has a positive (affirmative) root (or *achor*) (see also 3.2.).

⁷ The title of the chapter is “Questions” (not “interrogatives”) despite the fact that it deals mostly with the formal properties of the relevant sentences.

⁸ Kiefer (1980) lists several types of polar interrogatives in the case of which a simple *nem* ‘no’, or *igen* ‘yes’ answer, although formally adequate, does not sound sufficient or natural.

- (5) a. *Vajon ott magyarul beszéltek, ugye?
 VAJON there Hungarian.in spoke.3PL UGYE
 ‘You spoke Hungarian there, didn’t you?’
- b. (B7514)
 F: És ugye nem volt azért az olyan borzasztó?
 And UGYE not was still that so awful
 ‘It was not so awful, was it?’
 I: Nem.
 ‘No.’
- c. A: Ott magyarul beszéltek, ugye?
 there Hungarian.in spoke.3PL UGYE
 ‘There, you spoke Hungarian, right?’
 B: #Nem.
 ‘No.’
 B’: Nem, ott már nem magyarul beszélünk, hanem németül.
 no there already not Hungarian.in spoke.1PL but German.in
 ‘No, we didn’t speak Hungarian there any more, we spoke German.’

Following Kálmán (2001), we can conclude that *ugye*-Qs are ambivalent in nature: they fail the *vajon*-test, so they are not “real” interrogatives, but, at the same time, they pass the *nem*-as-answer-test.⁹ We will see in sections 2.2. and 4.2.2. that other tests also point to the conclusion that *ugye*-Qs do not belong to the interrogative sentence type. Along with this, their semantics/pragmatics is more complicated. We will see that in most cases an *ugye*-Q definitely requires an answer from the partner. The answer can be either *igen* ‘yes’ or *nem* ‘no’, and the *ugye*-Q is biased for one of these answers (see 4.2.). In 4.2.3. I argue that in spite of the fact that the particle seems to attach to declaratives, *ugye*-Qs realize question acts.

2.2. Hungarian *ugye* as a discourse particle

There are several recent theoretical and empirical approaches to discourse particles¹⁰ in Hungarian, which also address *ugye*. Gyuris (2008; 2009; 2018) and Alberti and Kleiber (2014) intend to give unified accounts of

⁹ Note that a simple *nem* ‘no’ is a felicitous reaction not only to polar interrogatives but also to declaratives, thus, the relevant test does not discriminate between the latter two sentence types.

¹⁰ Alternative terms in the literature include that of “discourse marker” or “pragmatic marker”.

the distribution and/or interpretation of different uses of *ugye* based on theories of biased questions, or the theory of “context markers”. The assumption that there should be a limited number of general rules governing the distribution and interpretation of *ugye* can also be supported by arguments from language acquisition. Gyuris (2009) makes a distinction between two forms: *ugye-declaratives* and *ugye-sentences* encoding a question. She describes the meaning of *ugye* in declaratives by saying that it indicates that the propositional content *p* of the declarative sentence in which *ugye* appears follows from the Common Ground (*CG*) by default reasoning (following Zeevat 2003). Gyuris (2009) considers *ugye*-questions to be similar to tag questions in English both in their distribution and interpretation, which she judges to be feasible for the following reasons. First, the distributions of particle *-e* and *ugye* are complementary, cf. (6). Second, the distribution of *ugye*-questions and polar interrogatives is not identical: *ugye*-questions cannot be embedded; an embedded *ugye*-sentence can only be interpreted as a declarative, cf. (7a–b).¹¹ Third, whereas polar interrogatives are compatible with weak NPIs (e.g., *valaha is* ‘ever’) *ugye*-questions are not, cf. (8). Fourth, the historical development of *ugye* (see 2.1.) and the fact that it first appeared on the peripheries of the clause also points to the conclusion that *ugye* is a tag-like element.

- (6) (*Ugye) Mari (*ugye) volt-e (*ugye) Párizsban (*ugye)? (Gyuris 2009, (16))
 UGYE Mari UGYE was-E UGYE Paris.in UGYE
 ‘Has Mary been to Paris?’

- (7) a. Józsi tudja, hogy Mari ugye volt Párizsban. (ibid., (18))
 Józsi knows that Mari UGYE was Paris.in
 ‘Joe knows that, as you know, Mary has been to Paris.’
 b. *Józsi tudja, hogy Mari ugye volt-e Párizsban.

- (8) *Mari ugye volt valaha is Párizsban? (ibid., (20))
 Mari UGYE was ever too Paris.in

Gyuris (2018) derives the interpretation of *ugye* in declaratives from its original interpretation in questions, and provides a unified meaning for the two, according to which *ugye* introduces a condition on input contexts: the interlocutor of the default perspective center of the speech act under consideration (that is, the hearer in assertions and the speaker in questions) is committed to the propositional content.

¹¹ I will return to this observation in sections 3.1. and 4.2.

Alberti and Kleiber (2014) treat *ugye* as a particle whose “pragmatico-semantic” contribution is to encode the speaker’s bias towards the positive answer in “polar interrogatives”.¹² Thus, they treat *ugye* as if it had only one function, they ignore its uses in declaratives and other sentence types.

Schirm (2009) presents an empirical study of a corpus of parliamentary discourses. In this corpus *ugye* turned out to be the second most frequent particle after *hát* ‘so’. She claims that in declaratives, *ugye* serves to confirm or emphasize, as a default, that a statement is correct/acceptable/right, while in interrogatives it expresses that the speaker expects the positive answer (*ibid.*, 172). The corpus data shows that in parliamentary speech *ugye* has various additional functions. Its use is frequent in emotional, emphatic questions: it indicates that the speaker is happy about some negative developments involving the hearer, or that she blames the latter for some developments.

In parliamentary dialogues *ugye*-Q is often used as a means of argumentation: it encodes a “rhetorical question”, by which Schirm means those that cannot be answered, or for which the answer is so obvious that there is no need to formulate it explicitly. The repetitive use of *ugye* enhances the rhetoricity of the text. In addition, it can be seen as a device of self-protection in the case of face-threatening acts: asking a question in general, even an *ugye*-Q, is much less face-threatening than asserting the corresponding proposition (*ibid.*, 173). Summarizing all these features, Schirm claims that *ugye*, generally speaking, expresses the speaker’s attitude. But it does not seem easy to identify the contribution of *ugye*, because the sentences cited from the corpus remain rhetorical, and “emotionally loaded” even if we leave out the particle. The question of how these different uses are interconnected also remains open in this work.

Abuczki (2015) works with the most recent Hungarian multi-modal corpus, HuComTech. Based on the corpus data, she identifies three different uses of *ugye*: (i) a tag in tag questions, (ii) an evidence marker or context marker (usually with rhetorical function), (iii) a tool of emphasis, marking new information, truth, explanation, or narrative structure. The possible connections between these interpretations remain unclear.

Despite the number of open questions concerning the different uses of *ugye*, the literature confirms the idea of treating *ugye*-Qs (or at least a subset of them) as tag questions. In the next chapter, I turn to syntactic and semantic properties of English TQs in order to compare them with *ugye*-Qs.

¹² The authors thus disregard the above mentioned difficulties with treating *ugye*-Qs as interrogatives.

3. Tag question constructions in English

Examples (9)–(10) below show that English tag questions (TQs) are complex forms: they consist of a full declarative sentence, the anchor, and a reduced interrogative clause, the tag. Two different types of TQs can be distinguished: (9a,b) are examples of reversed polarity tags, while (10a,b) are examples of constant polarity tags. (The examples are simplified versions of Reese's (2007) examples.)¹³

- (9) a. Jane is coming, isn't she?
 b. Jane isn't coming, is she?
- (10) a. Jane is coming, is she?
 b. Jane isn't coming, isn't she?

Compared to positive polar interrogatives, TQs are marked forms. In most uses a TQ is assumed to encode a non-neutral, biased question. In what follows, I am going to summarize Reese's main theses about TQs.

3.1. The form of tag questions

Reese (2007) claims that English TQs are a syntactically mixed sentence type, being composed of a declarative and an interrogative clause. Their structure can be represented schematically as in (11).

- (11) [NP Aux (XP)], [Aux Pro] (Reese 2007, 40)

It is easy to see that the form of the tag depends on the form of the anchor. Furthermore, Reese (2007) claims that the form of the tag is constrained by the anchor not only syntactically, but semantically and pragmatically too. The pronoun in the tag must be co-referential with the matrix subject of the anchor. The auxiliary verbs (Aux) used in the anchor and the tag need to be compatible with each other. And the proposition expressed by the anchor need to be a possible answer to the question expressed by the tag.

If we take prosody into account, the above picture about TQs gets more complex. TQs can be pronounced with a falling (12a) or a rising (12b) contour. In addition, following Ladd's fundamental work (Ladd 1981), TQs

¹³ According to Reese (2007), the latter type only exists in American dialects, and its use is not widespread. Other authors (e.g., Quirk et al. 1985) do not treat it as a special or rare form.

can be classified as nuclear (13a) or post-nuclear (13b). The latter type is always pronounced with a rising contour, while the former can get both a falling or a rising contour. According to Ladd (1981, 167), nuclear TQs “have a separate nucleus or nuclear pitch accent, generally preceded in the rhythm of the sentence by a noticeable pause or intonational boundary” (indicated by “/”), while post-nuclear TQs “have no separate nucleus, the pitch contour on the tag merely continuing the nuclear contour begun at the preceding nucleus in the main sentence” and “there is noticeably less of a pause or boundary before the tag” (indicated by “=”). The possible uses of these forms are also different (see section 3.2.).

- (12) a. Jane is coming, isn't she? ↓¹⁴
 b. Jane is coming, isn't she? ↑

- (13) a. Jane isn't coming / is she?¹⁵ ↓ / ↑
 b. Jane isn't coming = is she? ↑

In the course of investigating the semantics and pragmatics of biased questions, embedding is a useful test for TQs and other marked forms (see Farkas & Roelofsen 2017, 8, examples (15)–(16)).

- (14) a. *John told Bill that [Jane is coming, isn't she].
 b. *I know that [Jane is coming, isn't she].

The examples in (14) show that English TQs cannot be embedded. For Hungarian *ugye*-Qs the same was shown by Gyuris (2009), see examples (7a–b) of section 2.2. I also applied the “embedding test” for all *ugye*-Q data of the BuSI corpus, the results are presented below, in section 4.2.

3.2. The use of tag questions

Reese (2007) claims that TQs encode complex speech acts: they realize an assertion and a question at the same time.¹⁶ He proves this by applying Sadock's distributional tests (Sadock 1974) to TQs. These tests show that TQs have the distributional properties of both assertions and questions. Sadock assumes that certain discourse markers select utterances with

¹⁴ “↓” marks the *falling* and “↑” the *rising* intonation contour.

¹⁵ I use Ladd's notation for distinguishing nuclear and post-nuclear TQs.

¹⁶ According to other authors (e.g., Farkas & Roelofsen 2017; Malamud & Stephenson 2015; Krifka 2017), the assertion expressed by a TQ is “tentative”.

specific illocutionary forces. For example, the expression *after all* can be inserted into sentences that convey an assertion, but not into those that convey a neutral question. Sentences encoding questions (but not assertions), however, remain grammatical after the insertion of the expressions *by any chance* and *tell me*. The latter two expressions can discriminate between neutral and biased questions. *By any chance* can only be inserted into interrogatives encoding neutral questions, while *tell me* is compatible with all types of questions (see Sadock 1974). Applying these tests to TQs, we can see that TQs¹⁷ tend to convey an assertion and a biased question at the same time, but no neutral questions, cf. (15).

- (15) a. After all, Jane is coming, isn't she? ↓ (Reese 2007, 51, (13), simplified)
 b. #Jane is coming, by any chance, isn't she? ↓ (*ibid.*, 51, (14), simplified)
 c. Tell me, Jane is coming, isn't she? ↓ (*ibid.*, 52, (15), simplified)

To sum up, we have seen so far that as a rule, English TQs encode biased questions. Moreover, biased questions conveyed by TQ-forms differ in interpretation depending on their intonation. On the one hand, if the tag has a falling contour, the speaker is really committed, strongly biased towards the truth of the proposition expressed by the anchor. In this case the function of the TQ is to seek the partner's acknowledgement (*acknowledgement TQ*). On the other hand, if the tag has a rising contour, the speaker has some doubts or uncertainty (or only weak bias) towards the truth of the proposition expressed by the anchor. In this case the function of the TQ is to seek confirmation from the partner (*confirmation TQ*). Thus, both uses are biased, but on a different level.

According to Reese (2007), the strong commitment of the speaker to the anchor of an acknowledgement TQ is of the same type as in an assertion realized by a declarative sentence. As opposed to this, the anchor of a confirmation TQ conveys "weak assertion". As a consequence, a confirmation TQ can be felicitously answered by a plain "no", while an acknowledgement TQ cannot, as (16) shows:

- (16) A: Well, that's interesting, isn't it? ↓ (Reese 2007, 58, (24), modified)
 B: #No. / #No, it isn't.

Summing up Reese's suggestions about TQs: he says that the semantic/pragmatic complexity of English TQs is due to their complex form,

¹⁷ Reese (2007) presents a special type of TQ that can convey a neutral question: the negative anchor post-nuclear TQ pronounced with rising contour, as in *Jane isn't coming too, by any chance = is she?* ↑ (*op.cit.*, 53, (20b), simplified).

that is, they are of a mixed sentence type. In the next chapter, I turn to Hungarian *ugye*-Qs to compare their properties with those of English TQs.

4. Are Hungarian *ugye*-constructions tag question constructions?

In this section I compare Hungarian *ugye*-Qs with English TQs. I describe the properties of *ugye*-Qs based on my database consisting of BuSI-2 corpus data. In this database I collected all utterances containing the particle *ugye* together with their contexts (together with preceding and following utterances). In what follows, I first briefly present the BuSI-2 corpus and the *ugye*-data in it, and some arguments for using this corpus for this study. Then I turn to the similarities and the differences between Hungarian *ugye*-Qs and English TQs.

4.1. Introductory remarks on the BUSZI-2 corpus

The interviews constituting the BuSI-2 corpus were recorded in 1987 (under the direction of Miklós Kontra). The corpus contains 50 personal interviews conducted by four field workers. Members of five different social groups were involved in the interviews (ten persons in each group): university students, high school teachers, shop assistants, factory workers, and apprentices. For this study, I used the annotated and analyzed transcripts of these anonymous interviews.¹⁸

The BuSI-2 interviews are not recent, they do not record contemporary spoken language, but it still seemed to be worth using them in the investigation of Hungarian polar interrogative forms (including the problem of *ugye*-Qs). The main argument for using this corpus was that the social statuses of the informants are quite different and they speak in a relaxed, natural manner. Another advantage is that the spoken data is accurately transcribed, and the database can be accessed and searched on-line.¹⁹ One disadvantage is that the 30-year-old recordings are not of a good quality, so for intonational analyses they are inappropriate. Finally, I should admit, that for my purposes it is not ideal that most questions are asked by the field workers.²⁰

¹⁸ Despite the fact that I got permission to access some of the sound files of the interviews, I could not properly investigate the intonation pattern of the *ugye*-utterances, because of the bad quality of the recordings.

¹⁹ The BuSI-2 corpus is accessible after a short registration process here:
<http://buszi.nytud.hu>.

²⁰ Most declarative *ugye*-sentences, however, are produced by the informants.

In BuSI-2 there are 562 dialogues in which *ugye* appears; the number of *ugye*-tokens is higher, because there are dialogues in which it has multiple occurrences. Out of these, 239 utterances realize question acts (*ugye*-Qs). Since BuSI-2 is a spoken language corpus, these utterances are not always realized by complete, grammatical sentences, but there are many (multiply) interrupted, fragmented clauses in it. In most cases (in 217 utterances) the fieldworker asks the *ugye*-Q.

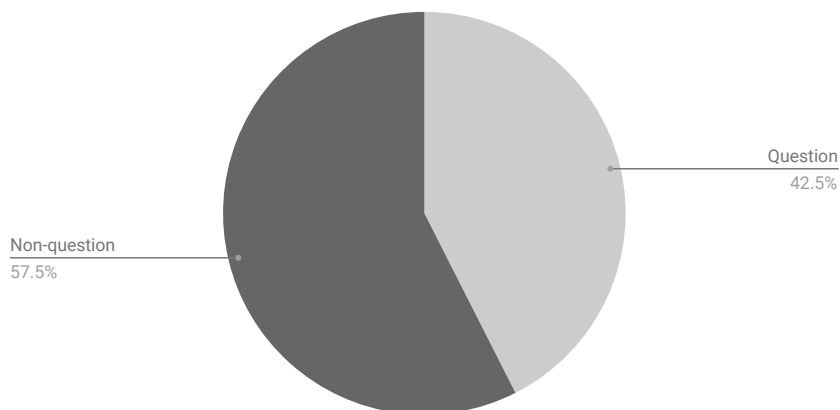


Figure 1: Distribution of *ugye* according to whether the sentences encode a question or not

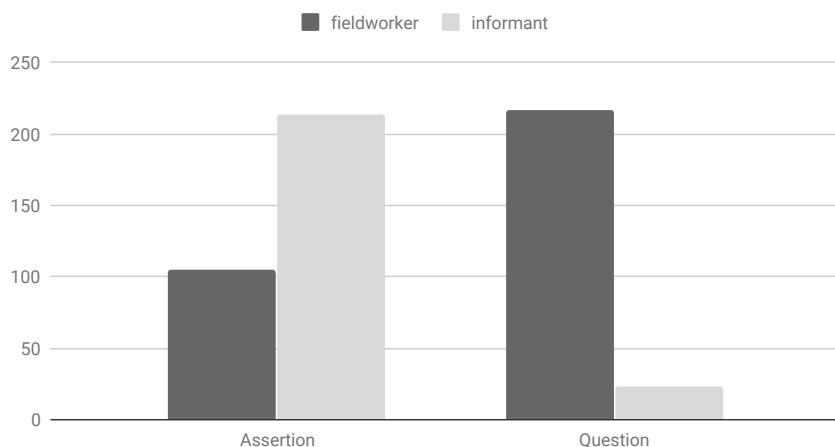


Figure 2: The role of the speakers producing *ugye*-sentences

To distinguish between *ugye*-declaratives realizing only assertions and *ugye*-Qs that can realize questions, I applied the tests proposed for the identification of speech acts by Sadock (1974), discussed above. I categorized an *ugye*-sentence as an *ugye*-Q if it can realize a question act according to the Hungarian counterpart of Sadock's speech act test for questions, i.e., when it remains grammatical after the phrase *mondd csak* 'tell me' is inserted into it (see 4.2. for further discussion).²¹ In fact, most of the relevant examples are marked with a question mark (?) in the transcription, and the reaction to the utterance could either be *igen* 'yes' or *nem* 'no'.

After having summarized the basic properties of the corpus I used, I turn to the comparison of English TQs and Hungarian *ugye*-Qs.

4.2. Similarities and differences between Hungarian *ugye*-Qs and English TQs

I start the comparison of English TQs and Hungarian *ugye*-Qs with the formal properties of these constructions, and then I turn to their possible functions.

4.2.1. Anchor and tag

According to Keszler (2000) and Gyuris (2009), the forms encoding *ugye*-Qs can be divided into a declarative and an interrogative part, so we can analyze these sentences as consisting of a declarative anchor (the sentence without the particle) and an interrogative tag (the particle itself) – see section 2.

(17) a. (B7301)

F: Szóval maga mindig pesti volt, ugye?
 so you always Pest.from was UGYE
 'So, you have always been living in Budapest, right?'

I: [Igen]
 ['Yes']

²¹ Note that these utterances also satisfy the Hungarian counterpart of the test proposed by Sadock for the identification of assertions (insertability of the phrase *végül is* 'after all'), see 4.2.3. below for discussion. Thus, if we follow Sadock's and Reese's approach, *ugye*-questions should be assumed to encode both a question and an assertion at the same time.

b. (B7301)

F: Nem tudja, ugye?
 not knows UGYE
 'You do not know it, do you?'

I: Nem tudom.
 not know.1SG
 'No, I do not know it.'

In (17a) the anchor is the *Maga mindig pesti volt* 'You have always been living in Budapest' part, to the truth of which the speaker commits herself by uttering the sentence. She adds the tag *ugye* to indicate that she is seeking confirmation from her partner for the truth of the latter. In (17b) the anchor is negated, but the form of the tag remains the same. Thus, while the structure of *ugye*-sentences, and the functions of the "tag" are similar to those of TQs, the form of the Hungarian tag does not depend on the form of the anchor. In many cases *ugye* is interchangeable with other tag-like elements (*nemde?* 'not?', *igaz?* 'right?').

Word order shows another important difference: while in English the tag seems to have a fixed, sentence-final position in most cases, *ugye* can occur in most positions of the Hungarian sentence (see Kenesei et al. 1998). In BuSI-2 there are many examples for sentence-initial as well as non-peripheral occurrences of "questioning" *ugye*.²²

(18) a. (B7106)

F: Ugye, magának most lukasórája van?
 UGYE you.DAT now empty.hour.your be.3SG
 'You have free time now, haven't you?'

I: Igen, lukasórám van.
 Yes empty.hour.my be.3SG
 'Yes, I have free time.'

b. (B7416)

LF: Ott önnel találkoztunk, ugye benn a cégnél?
 there you.with met.1PL UGYE inside the company.at
 'We once met each other at your company building, right?'

²² Kenesei et al. (1998) and descriptive grammars (e.g., Keszler 2000) treat *ugye* as completely free element: it is claimed that it can be situated anywhere in the sentence, no word-order constraints delimit its occurrence. Looking more closely at the data, it becomes obvious that its word order is not completely free: it cannot be placed into the immediately pre-verbal position (the so called focus position), for example. Here I cannot go into details about the exact syntactic distribution of the particle.

But if we take the frequency of the word order patterns into account, we can see that examples with sentence-final *ugye* are by far the most frequent (153 occurrences) in BuSI-2, and the second most frequent case is when the particle stands alone (isolated) after a separate declarative sentence (52 occurrences) – see Figure 3.²³ In sum, comparing the ratio of sentences with *ugye* in peripheral positions and those with *ugye* in internal positions we can see that the former case is ten times more frequent than the latter – see Figure 4.²⁴

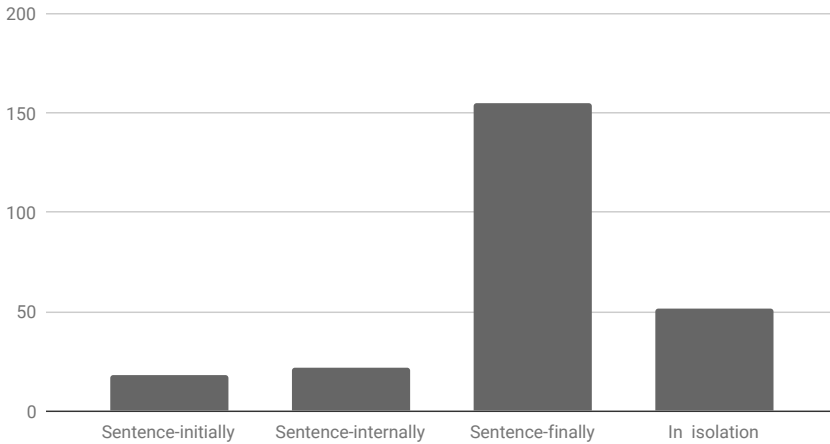


Figure 3: Syntactic distribution of *ugye* in *ugye*-Qs 1

Corpus studies on British and American English presented in Tottie & Hoffmann (2006) show that reversed polarity TQs are significantly more frequent than same polarity TQs in both dialects. Additionally, the positive anchor is much more frequent than the negative one (see *ibid.*, 290, Figure 3). Analysis of the BuSI-2 data revealed the same pattern: negative

²³ I am aware of the problem of using the abstract term “sentence” in case of spoken data, given possible difficulties of segmentation. In my analysis, I consequently relied on the intuition (and the consistency) of the transcribers. Sentence-final position means that in the transcription there is no full stop after the declarative sentence (the anchor), but there is a full stop after the particle *ugye* (the tag). *Ugye* is treated as “isolated” when there is a full stop after the declarative sentence, and the first letter of *ugye* is capitalized, and there is a question mark after it. (It is transcribed as a separate sentence.)

²⁴ Although I do not deal with *ugye*-sentences encoding (only) assertions here, I have to mention that in those cases the syntactic distribution of *ugye* is different from that in *ugye*-Qs.

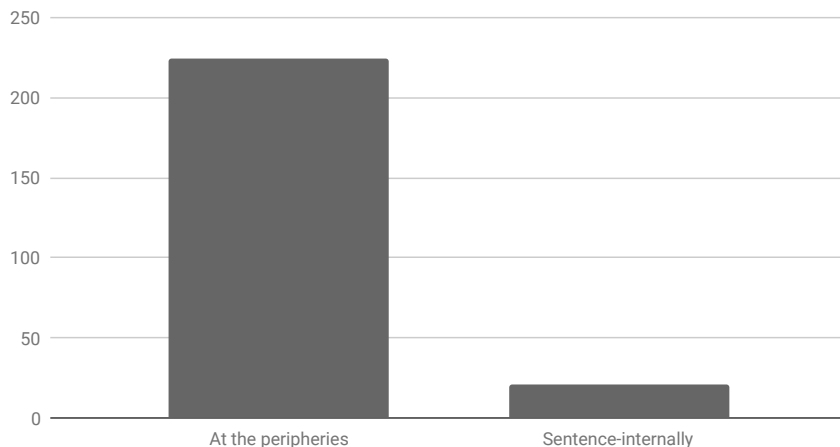


Figure 4: Syntactic distribution of *ugye* in *ugye*-Qs 2

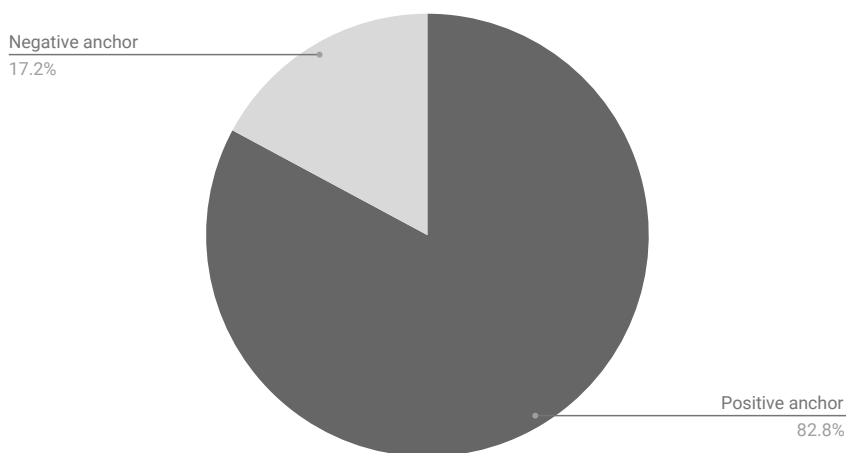


Figure 5: The polarity of the anchors in *ugye*-Qs

anchors are rare in Hungarian as well – Figure 5. (However, I could not find an explanation for this difference in frequency in the relevant literature.)

As far as syntactic distribution is concerned, we can conclude that although the position of the particle *ugye* within the sentence seems to be relatively unrestricted, it prefers the peripheries of the sentence, especially the right periphery (that is, the sentence-final position). So does the tag in English TQs.

4.2.2. Embedding and negative polarity items

As was already mentioned, Gyuris (2009) presents two tests with which she demonstrates that the distribution of Hungarian polar interrogatives and what she refers to as *ugye*-“interrogatives” (thus avoiding commitment to the interrogative status of structures with *ugye* encoding questions) is not the same (see section 2.2. for further details). One of the tests shows that while canonical polar interrogatives (expressing neutral questions) are grammatical with weak negative polarity items (NPIs), *ugye*-“interrogatives” are not (see example (8) in section 2.2.). Farkas and Roelofsen (2017) made the same observation about English TQs. I applied the test for the utterances of the BuSI-2 corpus I consider *ugye*-Qs, and I found that all of them are ungrammatical with *valaha is* ‘ever’. In (20) I show that the insertion of the weak NPI above makes (1)–(2) ungrammatical.

- (19) a. *Ugye, hogy valaha is tudni kell?
 b. *Ott magyarul beszéltek valaha is, ugye?

The other test by Gyuris (2009) shows that *ugye*-“interrogatives” cannot be embedded under the matrix declarative *X tudja, hogy...* ‘X knows that...’. As mentioned in section 3.1 above, Farkas and Roelofsen (2017) demonstrate the same property for English TQs. Having applied the same test for the *ugye*-data from BuSI-2, I found that the ones I consider to be *ugye*-Qs cannot be embedded either.

- (20) a. *Józsi tudja, hogy ugye, hogy tudni kell.
 b. *Józsi tudja, hogy ott magyarul beszéltek, ugye.
 c. *Józsi tudja, hogy akkor nem érezte magát ilyen veszélyben, ugye.
 ‘Józsi knows where your father worked at that time.’

Thus, with respect to the weak NPI-insertion and embedding tests, Hungarian *ugye*-Qs and English TQs show the same syntactic behavior, which is different from that of canonical interrogatives encoding neutral questions.

4.2.3. Complex speech act

It was already mentioned in section 3, based on Reese’s (2007) assumptions, that the formal complexity of TQs leads to semantic/pragmatic complexity. Applying Sadock’s speech act tests (Sadock 1974), Reese shows that English TQs convey complex speech acts: they are assertions and questions at the same time. I applied the speech act tests of Sadock for all

ugye-data from the BuSi-2 corpus. This means that I tested the grammaticality of each *ugye*-Q with three expressions: (i) *elvégre/végül is* 'after all', (ii) *mondd csak* 'tell me', and (iii) *véletlenül* 'by any chance'. Following Sadock, I assumed that *elvégre* 'after all' can be inserted into sentences encoding assertions, while *mondd csak* 'tell me' can be inserted into sentences encoding questions, and *véletlenül* 'by any chance' can be inserted into sentences encoding unbiased (neutral) questions. The tests showed that almost 80 per cent of the *ugye*-Qs can be said to realize a question and an assertion at the same time (see Figure 6), and (almost) all *ugye*-Qs are unnatural with *véletlenül* 'by any chance'. Thus, according to Sadock's tests, *ugye*-Qs are not neutral but biased (see example (21)).

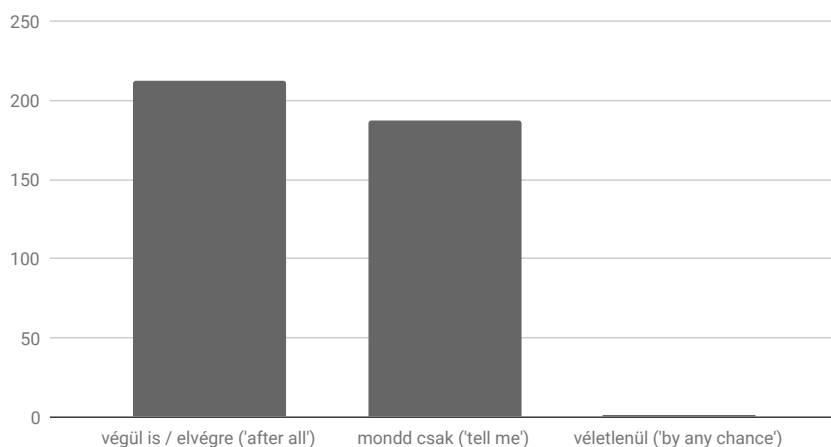


Figure 6: Results of the Sadock-tests for *ugye*-Qs

(21) a. (B7402)

F: Az két év vót, ugye?
that two year was UGYE
'It was two years, wasn't it?'

I: Igen.
'Yes, it was.'

b. Elvégre/végül is az két év volt, ugye?
after.all that two year was UGYE
'After all, it was two years, wasn't it?'

c. Mondd csak, az két év volt, ugye?
tell.IMP.2SG only that two year was UGYE
'Tell me, it was two years, wasn't it?'

- d. *Véletlenül az két év volt, ugye?
 by.any.chance that two year was UGYE
 ‘By any chance, it was two years, wasn’t it?’

Given Figure 6, one can ask what speech act the remaining 20 per cent of the examples realize. As I have already mentioned, analyzing spoken language data is not easy because of the elliptical, interrupted, fragmented structures. *Ugye* is often used in elliptical sentences like (22) and in isolation, like in (23). In these cases the Sadock-tests cannot be applied at all, or can only be applied in a restricted way. This is the reason why only the 80 per cent of the relevant data has turned out to indicate the presence of a complex speech act.

(22) (B7303)

- L: Na, utolsó követ(kezik).
 so last follow.3SG
 ‘So, this is the last one.’
- I: Igen.
 ‘Yes.’
- F: Már ideje is, ugye? [laughing] Na, parancsoljon.
 already time.its also UGYE so order.IMP.3SG
 ‘It’s time for it, right? [laughing] So, here you are...’

(23) (B7105)

- F: Hát én is kapocsnak hívom.
 well I also brace.DAT call.1SG
 ‘I call it a brace.’
- I: Ugye.
 ‘Do you?’
- F: Én is kapocsnak hívom.
 I also brace.DAT call.1SG
 ‘I would also call it a brace.’

As mentioned in section 3, the discourse function of English TQs depends on their intonation. In case of a falling intonation, the speaker expects acknowledgement from the addressee, and in case of a rising intonation, he/she expects confirmation from the partner. Since I could only use the transcription for the present analysis of the BuSI-2 data, I cannot say anything about these properties of Hungarian *ugye*-Qs. It is worth mentioning, though, that *ugye*-Qs in the corpus hardly ever get negative responses (see Figure 7). Two possible explanations present themselves: (i) *ugye*-Qs only

have an acknowledgement reading, and this is why they cannot felicitously be answered by a plain *nem* 'no' without any further explanation, as mentioned above; or (ii) this is a specific characteristic of the BuSI corpus and not of *ugye*-Qs in general, because the participants recorded here were exceptionally polite.

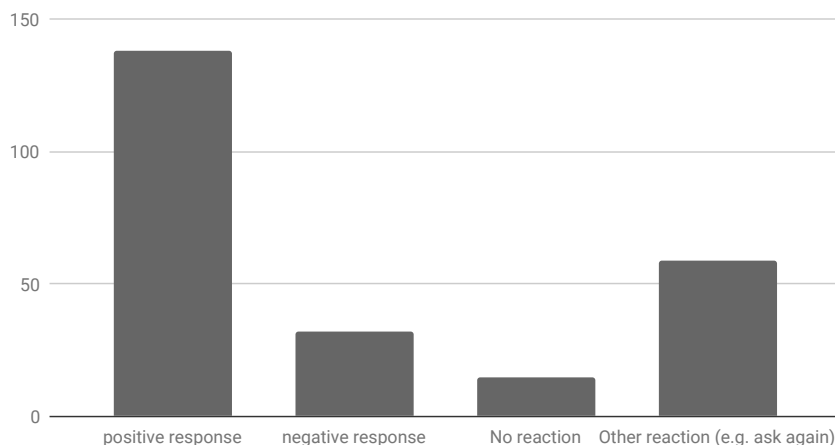


Figure 7: The polarity of the responses for *ugye*-Qs

Examining the polarity of the responses is not enough to make any conclusions about the possibilities of rejecting the propositions expressed by the anchors of *ugye*-Qs. Figure 5 above shows the polarity of *ugye*-Q anchors. Out of 239 situations where *ugye* appears only 18 include an answer rejecting/denying the proposition in the anchor, as in (24).

(24) (B7308)

- F: Namost *ugye* nekem közelebb van itt a villamosmegálló, mint a busz.
 so UGYE I.DAT closer is here the tram.stop than the bus
 'So the tram station is nearer here than the bus stop, right?'
- I: Nem mert itt van lent a buszstop.
 not because here is down the bus.stop
 'No, because the bus stop is just down here.'
- F: Ja, igen. Aha.
 'Oh, yes, OK.'

So far, we have seen that *ugye*-Qs, like English TQs, are biased. The anchor presents the preferred answer. However, based on the transcription of the

BuSI-2 data alone, we cannot give a conclusive answer about the exact discourse function (seeking confirmation or acknowledgement) of this form.

4.3. Non tag-like properties

I have shown above that in several respects, Hungarian *ugye*-Qs are similar to English TQs. We have also seen that their semantic/pragmatic properties are partly the same. In what follows, I mention some properties of *ugye*-data from BuSI-2 which are not typical tag-like properties. These properties point to the conclusion that we should not categorize *ugye*-Qs as pure TQs.

Unlike English tag elements, *ugye* is not always used as a tag, its use is widespread in declaratives and it appears even in imperative sentences (intended as requests), cf. Figure 1 above.²⁵ More than half of the *ugye*-tokens appear in declarative sentences in BuSI-2.

As was mentioned above, *ugye* can be used in elliptical sentences and in isolation. This is not typical for English tags (with the probable exception of the invariable tag *innit*, cf. Tottie & Hoffmann 2006).

Another difference between English tag elements and *ugye* is that the latter can appear in constituent questions too, as (4) illustrates. In the BuSI-2 corpus there are 15 results for *ugye* in *wh*-interrogatives. Since *ugye* cannot be considered a tag in constituent questions, the latter use has been assimilated to the use of the particle in declaratives (for further discussion see Molnár 2016).

Finally, Hungarian *ugye* very often co-occurs together with other discourse particles. This seems to be a common main characteristic of all types of *ugye*-sentences. But this is not a property of English tags. Figure 8 shows the particles that co-occur with *ugye* most frequently.

Maybe this property is due to the fact that BuSI-2 interviews come from spontaneous speech, and thus it is not special to *ugye*-sentences.

²⁵ *Ugye* in sentences with a verb in imperative mood is only illustrated with a few examples in the BuSi corpus, cf. (i) below. (Mood is marked morphologically in Hungarian.)

(i) Na, először is ugye át, azért csak gondosan fusd át,
 so first UGYE through though just carefully run.IMP.2SG through
 meg nézted végig mind.
 VM saw.2SG till.end all
 ‘So first just run through it, just carefully run through it, have you seen it all till the end?’

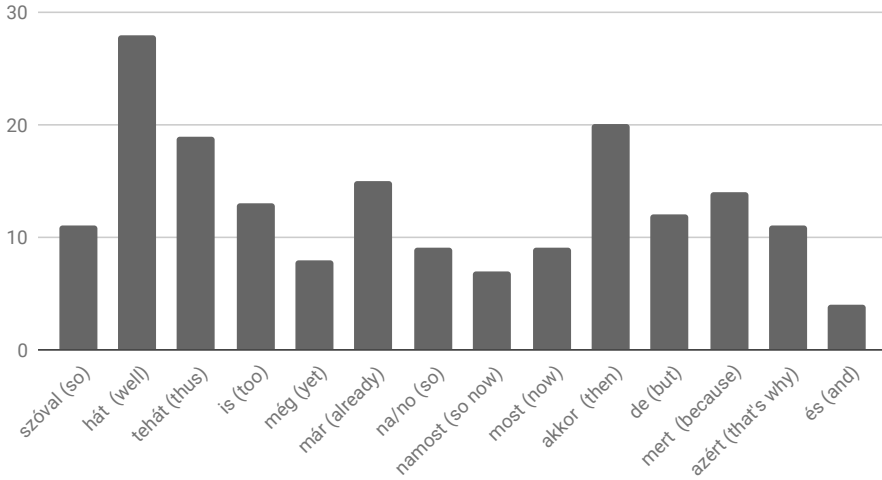


Figure 8: Particles co-occurring with *ugye* in *ugye*-Qs

Figure 9 compares *ugye*-Qs and *ugye*-declaratives with respect to the co-occurrence of *ugye* with other particles.

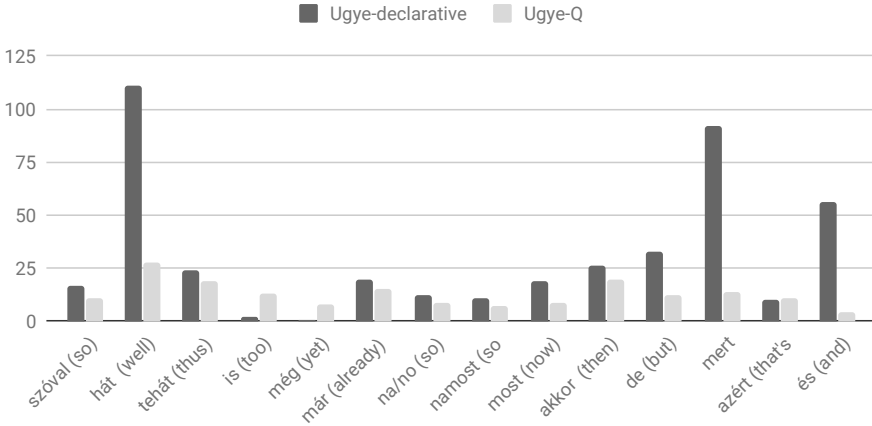


Figure 9: Particles co-occurring with *ugye* in *ugye*-Qs and *ugye*-declaratives

5. Conclusion

This paper has investigated the properties of utterances containing the particle *ugye* that encode question acts, and compared them to those of English TQs. Table 1 summarizes my findings.

Table 1: Properties of English TQs and Hungarian *ugye*-Qs

	English TQs	<i>Ugye</i> -Qs
Structure: anchor + tag	+	+
The syntactic position of the tag is fixed	+	–
Tag occurs in elliptical sentences and in isolation	–	+
The proposition expressed by the anchor is a possible answer to the question encoded by the tag	+	+
Co-occurrence with particles is typical	–	+
Multiple occurrences of the tag within one sentence	–	+
Can be embedded under the matrix clause ‘X knows that...’	–	–
Co-occurrence with NPIs	–	–
Realizes a complex speech act (assertion + question)	+	+
Encodes a biased question	+	+
The occurrence of the tag is not restricted to utterances realizing question acts	–	+

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