The Hungarian Discourse Connective Pedig

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1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to discuss the semantics and pragmatics of the Hungarian discourse connective *pedig*, investigating its function and the way it contributes to utterance interpretation. Discourse connectives are generally viewed as linguistic devices that indicate coherence in a stretch of text. In the relevance-theoretic view, connectives can be described as linguistic devices that constrain the search for the recovery of contextual effects without undue processing costs. Though the two approaches do share some common features, here the latter will be adhered to. As it is claimed in the literature on discourse connectives\(^1\), they play an important role in guiding the interpretation of the two segments they link by putting constraints on the inference the hearer is expected to draw. In actual discourse, the speaker (she) directs the interpretation recovered by the hearer (he), by constraining the hearer’s choice of the context within which the utterance is expected to be interpreted. *Pedig* encodes a certain type of contrast between two discourse segments, consequently it is often glossed by the English adversative connective *but*. However, this is not always the case. It is quite common that *pedig* functions as a concessive coordinator (*although, nevertheless, however, still*). In addition to signalling juxtaposition, *pedig* is assumed to make the phrase it has scope over more manifest.

In this paper, I will be concerned with two things. First, I will examine the encoded meaning of *pedig*, considering whether or not it really has an encoded adversative semantics. I will compare it to other concessive connectives, such as *de* (but), *jóllehet*\(^2\) (although) and *noha* (although, whereas). Second, I will consider how the encoded meaning of *pedig* signals to the hearer the kind of inferential relation that exist between the *pedig*-clause and other neighbouring clauses.
2. Polysemy or pragmatic ambiguity

A number of investigations concern the multifunctional roles of connectives and raises the question of polysemy versus semantic underdeterminacy and pragmatic enrichment. Sweetser argues, for example, that the ambiguity of connectives is realised in different linguistic domains, thus their analysis as simple logical operators would not be satisfactory and therefore cannot offer an overall explanation for the various interpretational possibilities of their use. She says (1990:76): ”… conjunctions… are ”ambiguous” among usages in the content, epistemic and conversational domains. … In polysemy, a morpheme has several related semantic values; in pragmatic ambiguity a single semantics is pragmatically applied in different ways according to pragmatic context.” Sweetser mentions among others the connective but in conjuncts, where but does not signal the contrast between the content of the two conjoint sentences, but it signals a possible contrast between the existing premises and the conclusion to be drawn. Consider (1)³.

(1) John keeps six boxes of pancake mix on hand, but he never eats pancakes.
‘John hat doboz palacsintapot tart kéznél, de sosem eszik
John six box pancake+mix+acc. hold on-hand but never eat+3rd.p.sg. palacsintát.’
pancake+acc.

If somebody has a pile of pancake mix we have more than enough evidence to conclude that the person in question is fond of pancakes. This conclusion, however, contradicts the message of the second clause.

In example (2) the speaker is understood to be communicating a reassurance. She preempts the hearer’s possible objection. One might suppose that a visit at the library can take a longer time.

(2) I have to drop into the library, but it won’t take more than a few minutes.
‘Be kell ugranom a könyvtárba, de nem tart sokáig.’
in have-to jump+3rd.p.sg. the library+to but not hold for-long
Now the question is whether we can consider the above mentioned examples of *but* as polysemy, or we are dealing with the same lexical item. Sweetser suggests that the pragmatic interpretation of the two conjuncts are always determined in context, and it is not the semantic meaning of the conjunctions that changes. *De* (*but*) constrains the interpretation of the segment it introduces in such a way that an inference one might have drawn from the first conjunct becomes invalid. These examples seem to confirm the suggestion that the semantic meaning of connectives is insufficient to convey the speaker’s intended meaning.

Fretheim (2001:80) prefers an analysis in favour of pragmatic enrichment. He says that “… oftentimes, what would traditionally be considered a case of lexical polysemy should rather be analysed as monosemy, as a lexical item with a univocal meaning which will necessarily be modified in context by a process of inferential enrichment of the encoded lexical meaning.”

We shall see that *pedig*-conjunctions can describe various states of affairs, and the relationship between the two conjuncts can be accounted for in different ways, however *pedig* can be assumed to have a well defined unified semantic content, which is modified by a process of inferential enrichment in different contexts.

3. Relevance theory

Pragmatic research following and developing Grice’s ideas (1957, 1975) on linguistically encoded meaning usually emphasizes the importance of the assumption that lexical items occurring in everyday utterances are often underdetermined with respect to what the communicator means, as well as what is said (the explicature\(^4\)). The encoded meaning of a linguistic item forms the basis for an inferential process which leads to the derivation of the communicative message of a given utterance.

The theoretical background of the present paper is the cognitive linguistic theory developed by Sperber and Wilson (1986, 1995) focusing on the inferential nature of communication. Sperber and Wilson do not comply with Grice’s Co-operative Principle, but suggests that all successful communication is generated by the search for optimal relevance. According to relevance theory, the cognitive effects that an utterance
can give rise to are of three different types: contextual implication, strengthening of an existing assumption and contradiction which leads to elimination of an existing assumption. An utterance is optimally relevant when it yields maximum contextual effects for minimum processing effort. As Diane Blakemore (1987, 2002) suggests some connectives can serve as linguistic devices to guide the hearer towards the intended cognitive effects. *Pedig* seems to be one of such lexical items.

3.1. Conceptual and procedural meaning

Lexical items, which highlight inferential relations between propositions in the comprehension process, are often referred to by their function, rather than by their semantic meaning. They do not encode concepts, but rather information on the kind of inferential process that the hearer needs to go through in order to arrive at the intended interpretation, using minimum processing effort.

In the present paper I try to show that *pedig* does not encode a concept which relates to the proposition expressed in the conjunct sentences. Rather, it has a non-truth-conditional procedural meaning, directing the addressee towards the intended communicative message, namely that the proposition of the *pedig*-clause represents a state of affairs potentially in contrast with previous assumptions, that is worth the attention of the hearer.

3.2. Discourse connectives

It follows from the discussed points above that discourse connectives can be considered as linguistic devices that facilitate utterance interpretation. A discourse connective can direct the hearer to the most relevant information bearing part of the context, and in this way it can narrow the inferential phase of the communication.

In most languages we can find different connectives that have very similar functions; several connectives may indicate one form of contrast or the other. The contrary is also be true, that one and the same function, though with subtle differences, may be expressed using different lexical items. Since these connectives play an essential role in generating specific inferential relations, it is of utmost importance that the spe-
aker uses the proper connective that directs the addressee to a context that facilitates derivation of the intended cognitive effects.

4. The origin of the discourse connective *pedig*

Although the present paper has no intention to discuss the etymology of the connective *pedig*, it is perhaps worth mentioning that the present-day discourse connective has gone through several formal and functional changes during the years (Simonyi 1881-83). The different forms, sometimes with partially modified functions, often existed side by side at the same time in the language. The multifunctional usage of the connective in the modern language might be ascribed to this perplexed history of the word. Simonyi believes that *pedig* might have originally been an adverb of time, so it did not encode any kind of contrast, it served to combine two propositions: p while q, where both p and q are believed to be true and their relation can be of different sorts: adversative, explaining, concessive or simply additional.

In present-day Hungarian *pedig* functions as a binary coordinator, in other words it can only have two arguments; the *pedig*-clause can be related to only one single state of affairs, irrespective of the kind of relation it signals, whether this is a contrast, concession, counter-expectation or something else. *Pedig* occurs in the second clause in a conjunction of clauses, but its position in the second segment can vary according to the function *pedig* performs. The usual position for *pedig*, when it indicates contrast is between the topic and the focus, while the concessive-*pedig* can only stand in clause initial position, introducing the second conjunct.

It is not unusual that concession or counter-expectation is expressed in two juxtaposed main clauses. *Pedig* is a frequently used connective in everyday communication, and it is quite common that the two conjuncts appear as two separate sentences. *Pedig* often occurs in Hungarian narrative texts, translations, where *and* or *but* is used in the foreign text as illustrated in (3).

(3) Nemrég jött vissza Angliából, ahol a lányát, Lucyt látogatta meg. Amikor *pedig*
daughter+gen+acc. Lucy+acc. visited+3rd.p.sg. VPRT\textsuperscript{6} when but 
végre sikerült telefonon beszélnünk, éppen úton volt Bécs 
finally managed telephone-on speak+1st.p.pl, just way-on was Vienna 
felé a bátyjához. 
towards the brother+gen+to 
‘She recently got back from the UK where she visited her daughter Lucy, 
but when I spoke to her she was on her way to Vienna to visit her 
brother.’\textsuperscript{17}

Making an assumption more manifest is the basic function of \textit{pedig}. 
Sometimes the first clause of a conjunct can even be omitted, if it was 
earlier mentioned in the course of conversation or its assumption is un-
derstood from the context, as shown in (4).

(4) \begin{itemize}
\item[A]\textsuperscript{.} A: Elfelejtettem feladnia levelet.
\textsuperscript{.} forgot+1st.p.sg. to-post the letter+acc.
\textsuperscript{.} ‘I have forgotten to post the letter.’
\item[B]\textsuperscript{.} Pedig nagyon fontos lett volna.
\textsuperscript{.} but very important was aux
\textsuperscript{.} ‘But it would have been very important.’
\end{itemize}

4.1 ‘Pedig’ indicating contrast

One of the most frequent uses of \textit{pedig} is when the two discourse seg-
ments \textit{pedig} links together represent adversative states of affairs or 
thoughts. The opposition can occur on different linguistic levels. We can 
compare similar concepts, where the opposition concerns only a spe-
cific part of the context. In (5a) two propositions are suggested to be 
true at the same time (the \textit{pedig}-clause is eliptical as the verb is missing), 
but the subjects and the objects are different. Exchanging the contrast-
ing \textit{pedig} with the connective \textit{és} (and), we still get an acceptable utter-
ance as in (5b), and what’s more, we can even use the two connectives 
together as shown in (5c).

The opposition does not yield the logical content of the two seg-
ments in examples (5). If in the course of conversation, based on possi-
ble previous hints the hearer should come to the conclusion that Lili is 
drinking coffee, too, then the hearer is wrong. The connective \textit{pedig} does 
not contribute to the proposition expressed. The task of \textit{pedig}, is to fa-
cilitate the interpretation of the utterance for the audience. It draws the attention of the listener to the point the speaker wanted to make, namely it is not coffee, but tea Lili is drinking.

(5) (a) Tomi kávét iszik, Lili pedig teát.
   Tomi coffee+acc. drink+3rd.p.sg. Lili while tea+acc.
   ‘Tomi is drinking coffee, while Lili (is drinking) tea.’

(b) Tomi kávét iszik, és Lili teát.
   Tomi coffee+acc. drink+3rd.p.sg. and Lili tea+acc.
   ‘Tomi is drinking coffee, and Lili (is drinking) tea.’

(c) Tomi kávét iszik, és Lili pedig teát.
   Tomi coffee+acc. drink+3rd.p.sg. and Lili while tea+acc.
   ‘Tomi is drinking coffee, and as for Lili, she is drinking tea.’

There are two parallel states of affairs described in the two connected conjuncts of the above examples. *Pedig* is “stronger” than *és*, it demands more attention from the hearer. It indicates that the assumption drawn from the *pedig*-clause is significant according to the speaker. This comes clear especially in (5c), where the speaker does not seem to be satisfied with the connective *and* alone.

We can make an interesting observation here. Connectives, as usual, connects two constituents of a sentence and they are situated between these two constituents. What we can observe in (5a) is that *pedig* comes between the topic and the focus of the conjunct (Bánréti 1992:758) directing the attention of the hearer to the new information (tea). Putting *pedig* into initial position of the second conjunct we get a different pragmatic interpretation (5d):

(5) (d) Tomi kávét iszik, pedig Lili teát.
   T. coffee+acc. drink+3rd.p.sg. while Lili tea+acc.
   ‘Tomi is drinking coffee, in spite of the fact that Lili is drinking tea.’

The speaker in (5d) is understood to be communicating her view that since Lili is drinking tea, Tomi should have done the same thing. The two *pedig*-conjuncts in (5a) and (5d), requires different intonational pattern, underlining their unlike pragmatic interpretations. The contrastive function is present in both (5a) and (5d), coffee versus tea. However, while
in (5a) the speaker’s goal is to draw the listener’s attention to the different sorts of drink, in (5d) by changing the syntactic position of the connective, she also communicates her objection or surprise that the content of the first clause is not what she expected.

4.2 The explaining role of ‘pedig’

Simonyi published his book on Hungarian connectives in 1881-83 and already at that time he managed to point to specific tasks, that today we would describe as functions of pragmatic connectives. One interesting point however, must be mentioned here. Simonyi (1881-83:140-141) refers to several linguistic and non-linguistic sources concerning the origin of the word suggesting that *pedig* developed its present form from a demonstrative and an adverb of time, meaning *at the same time, while*. This information might be relevant if we consider the role *pedig* plays in utterance interpretation.

According to Simonyi it is crucial in understanding the function of *pedig*, that the proposition of the second conjunct is not really stated in contrast to the first one, but it is rather set besides it. The relation between the two conjuncts, let it be adversative, explaining or concessive is indicated by *pedig* in such a way that the connective draws the attention of the hearer to the truth of the proposition it occurs with. *Pedig* emphasizes and increases the manifestation of certain contextual assumptions which might not be achieved if the two clauses were joined by *és* (and).

The following conversation is from a radio interview with a representative of ambulance drivers:

(6) A: Nem tehetünk semmit a mentőautóknak ütköző kocsikkal.  
not can-do+1st.p.pl. nothing the ambulances-to crashing cars  
‘We can’t do anything with cars crashing into ambulances.’

B: Sajnos, *pedig* ez nagyon gyakori eset.  
unfortunately however this very frequent case  
‘Unfortunately, *however*, it is a very frequent case.’

As it was mentioned earlier the two conjuncts can be uttered by two different persons. B seemingly continues the thoughts expressed in A’s utterance. One might suspect that we have another function of *pedig* to
deal with. The first segment is an adverb, so what is the *pedig*-clause contrasted with? Actually, the conjunctions belonging together would sound like this: ‘Unfortunately, we can’t do anything with cars crashing into ambulances, although it is a very frequent case.’ Though it is difficult to believe, ambulance crashes are frequent, that is why something should be done. According to our knowledge of the world, ambulances should have priority in traffic. This, however, contradicts the fact that there are a number of crashes involving ambulances. *Pedig* directs the attention of the hearer to the truth of the proposition expressed by the clause it occurs in, that otherwise could have appeared unbelievable to the hearer A.

We can often hear utterances like (7) where new information or explanation is offered in the *pedig*-clause. The speaker’s intention is to avoid that the hearer should come to a wrong conclusion or maybe she just wants to change the topic of the conversation.

(7) Pali elég jómódú, a felesége *pedig* rendkívül csinos.
Pali quite well-off the wife+gen. while extremely pretty
‘Pali is quite well off, and as for his wife, she is extremely pretty.’

The connective *pedig* indicates that the communicated message, the truth of the second proposition was considered important by the speaker. It is by no means a hint to indicate any kind of opposition between being well off and having a pretty wife. It is an additional information, but the speaker attaches greater importance to it than just to connect the conjunct to the previous one with *és* (and). On the other hand, it can be assumed that the speaker wants to direct the attention towards other contextual assumptions.

4.3 Concessive ‘pedig’

The adversative character of the connective can best be spotted in the functions of concessive *pedig*. There is an obvious opposition between the two conjoint segments, the task of the connective is however the same as in all other functions, namely to emphasize the state of affairs represented in the *pedig*-clause. In case the hearer assumes that the proposition of the first conjunct in (8a) is true, then the second conjunct introduced by *pedig* assures the hearer that this case is also unexpected,
unusual for the speaker. *Pedig* signals an important contextual assumption and prevents the hearer from drawing wrong conclusions.

(8) (a) Nem tudta a választ, *pedig* máskor Ő a legjobb
   not knew 3rd. p.sg. the answer while otherwise (s)he the best
   a csoportban.
   the group+in
   'He did not know the answer, *while (inspite of the fact that)* usually he
   is the best in the group.'

   (b) Nem tudta a választ, *noha* máskor Ő a legjobb
   not knew 3rd. p.sg the answer, whereas otherwise (s)he the best
   a csoportban.
   the group+in
   'He did not know the answer, *whereas* usually he is the best in the
   group.'

   (c) Nem tudta a választ, *jóllehet* máskor Ő a legjobb
   not knew 3rd. p.sg. the answer, although otherwise (s)he the best
   a csoportban.
   the group+in
   'He did not know the answer, *(a)though* usually he is the best in the
   group.'

*Noha* and *jóllehet* are subordinators with very similar functions to concessive *pedig*. All of them could possibly be glossed by the English *(a)though* or *inspite of*. The main difference that can distinguish these subordinators from *pedig* is that the contrast stated between the two conjunct sentences are not so strong; they are rather concessive. The speaker is not so determined to prove her right. *Pedig* on the other hand signals the speaker’s expectation or her reaction to the peculiarity of the situation in question. If we can talk about counter-expectation, it is rather to be found in the proposition of the first conjunct. The *pedig*-sentences can best be paraphrased as “not p, inspite of the fact that q”. Starting with a negative sentence the speaker quickly adds a contrast, emphasizing that the hearer should bear in mind the importance and the truth of the proposition the *pedig*-clause.
4.4 ‘Pedig‘ with other connectives

In everyday usage pedig frequently occurs with other connectives or adverbs (ha(if), vagy (or), akkor(then)). Pedig follows the other connective it co-occurs with. In these functions pedig plays a secondary role, emphasizing the function of the other connective it collocates with. It still has an important part in computation, leading the hearer to the intended context. Pedig may point to connections, logical relations between contexts either from background information or from the conjuncts that otherwise could escape the hearer’s attention.

(9) Ha (pedig) sikerül találkoznunk, átadom személyesen.
    If (however) manage meet+1st.pl. over+give+1st.p.sg. personally
    ‘If we (however) manage to meet, I’ll give it to him personally.’

(10) Vagy (pedig) kezdhetünk mindent előlről.
    Or (however) start-can+1st.pl. everything+acc beginning-from
    ‘Or (else) we can start everything from the beginnig.’

In both examples (9) and (10) the speaker underlines the fact that the proposition pedig occurs with is only an option, however an important one. There must be other alternatives already mentioned in the conversation. With the help of pedig the speaker can show the contrast and compare the possibilities, leading the hearer towards the intended contextual effects.

5. Pedig or de

Pedig can often be exchanged with the adversative connective de (but). Let’s consider again examples (1) and (2), repeated here as (11) and (12).

(11) John keeps six boxes of pancake mix on hand, but he never eats pancakes.
    ‘John hat doboz palacsintaport tart kéznél, de sosem eszik
    John six box pancake+mix+acc. hold on-hand, but never eat+3rd.p.sg.
    palacsintát.’
    pancake+acc.
    ‘John hat doboz palacsintaport tart kéznél, pedig sosem eszik

(12) I have to drop into the library, but it won’t take more than a few minutes.

‘Be kell ugranom a könyvtárba, de nem tart sokáig.’
in have-to jump+1st.p.sing. the library+to, but not hold for-long

#‘Be kell ugranom a könyvtárba, pedig nem tart sokáig.’
in have-to jump+1st.p.sing. the library+to, but not hold for-long

The Hungarian translations show some difference. While in (11) both de and pedig can be used, in (12) only de is acceptable. The connective de points to the adversity that lies between John’s two habits, while pedig also indicates the speaker’s own surprise, and her wish to share some new piece of information with the hearer.

Let’s assume that if two propositions P and Q are in concessive relation, then Q is true in a context where P is also true, though the truth of P normally would indicate that Q is false. The main difference between the two pedig-clauses in (11) and (12) is that while in (11) the proposition occurring with pedig contradicts the speaker’s expectations, this is not the case in (12).

We cannot really talk about an explicit contrast in (13a), rather it is the occurrence of the two events at the same time which calls for attention. We can imagine a situation where (13a) is uttered. The first conjunct assures the hearer that he should not worry about the little girl, however, at the same time the speaker also admits that the girl has fever. The speaker is assumed to believe that the proposition expressed in the second conjunct would get less concern in favour of the first one. The speaker is more concerned about the truth of the second proposition. The speaker can choose any of the connectives in (13a-b). Although we can only speak about subtle nuances, the connectives signal the speaker’s attitude. While pedig has a connecting-contrasting function, the connective de in (13b) indicates that although the little girl was lying peacefully, it does not mean that there was no reason to worry.

(13) (a) A kislány nyugodtan feküdt az ágyon, szeme pedig the little-girl peacefully lied the bed-on, eyes+gen. while láztól csillogott.
fever-from shone
‘The little girl was lying peacefully on the bed, while her eyes were shining of fever.’

(b) A kislány nyugodtan feküdt az ágyon, de szeme láztól csillogott.
‘The little girl peacefully lied the bed-on, but eyes+gen. from-shone
‘The little girl was lying peacefully on the bed, but her eyes were shining of fever.’

Directing the hearer’s attention to the proposition *pedig* occurs with, is an important task attributed to the connective. It can be a contrast, an explanation, or just addition of some new information. It is a signal that the inference drawn on the basis of previous contextual assumptions should be abandoned.

(14) (a) Mindenki hazamehet, ti pedig itt maradtok kitakarítani.
‘Everybody can go home, but as for you, you stay here to tidy up.’

(b) Mindenki hazamehet, de ti itt maradtok kitakarítani.
‘Everybody can go home, but you stay here to tidy up.’

A common feature for both *pedig* and *de* is that they indicate an opposition. This contrast can occur between the two conjuncts, but can be between the conjoint sentences and some previous text or other linguistic context, or expectations. As it is emphasized in relevance theory, discourse connectives have an essential role in choosing the right context. Thus, in answer to the question what differences may be detected between the connectives *pedig* and *de*, we first have to find the answer to the question of what sort of contextual assumptions these connectives highlight to the hearer in the interpretation process.

(15) (a) Péter egy naptárt kapott tőlem karácsonyra.
‘Péter one calender got+3rd.p.sg. from-me Christmas-for’

Nem köszönte meg, de ez nem (is) szokása.
The role of the connective *de* in example (15a), often supported by the focus particle *is* (*too*), is not to indicate a contrast between the two sentences. The speaker preempts the possible reaction of the hearer to the first segment and she wants to indicate that she did not expect any appreciation for the present, contrary to the usual expectancy.

Without the focus particle (*is*) the utterance is ambiguous (Vaskó, 2000). *Pedig* in (15b) on the other hand indicates the speaker’s surprise, contrasting the content of the first sentence with the speaker’s expectations, previous experience. In both cases we talk about a possible contrast, (hence we need both connectives *de* and *pedig*) the speaker’s attitude to P (He didn’t thank me for it) and the speaker’s view on the hearer’s attitude to the same proposition. In case the first sentence surprises the hearer, the second one supplies him with further information to enable him to draw the necessary conclusion.

6. Conclusion

The goal of this paper was to discuss the role the connective *pedig* plays in discourse and its contribution to successful utterance interpretation. *Pedig* functions as an instruction to the hearer to put the proposition *pedig* occurs in relation to other available propositions. This relation can be concessive, contrasting or explaining, but the connective’s main role is to indicate that the speaker considers the proposition in the *pedig*-clause especially important and instructs the hearer to pay special attention to it, either because it contradicts a manifest assumption or because it is additional new information which according to the speaker can be more relevant than the proposition in the other clause. In other
words the connective guides the hearer towards the intended context. The speaker gives clear guidelines in order to reach the optimal interpretation of a given utterance using the least possible effort.

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Notes

1. See, for example, Blakemore (1987, 2002), Carston (2002).
3. Example (1) is taken from Sweetser (1990:100).
4. An assumption is an explicature “if and only if it is a development of a logical form encoded by the utterance” (Sperber and Wilson 1986:182).
5. See Bánréti (1992) on classification of Hungarian coordinators and subordinators.
6. verbal particle
8. He writes the following about *pedig*: “… a második gondolatot nem éppen szembeállítjuk az elsővel, hanem inkább csak melléje, … midőn a következő eseményt jobban ki akarjuk emelni, semhogy az és szócskával szorosan hozzákötnők az elsőhöz” (1881-83:146).
    “…we do not really set the second thought in contrast to the first one, but rather next to it, as we would like to give a stronger emphasis to the following event than just to connect it to the first one with an *and*.”

References

Vaskó, I. 2000. The Interplay of Hungarian *de* (but) and *is* (too, either).