

PRAGMATIC PARTICLES INDICATING EXPECTATION—THE CASE OF *PERSZE*

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to introduce the Hungarian pragmatic marker *persze* through its versatile function in the language and to collect evidence that it can also occur as a marker of epistemic modality. *Persze* is particularly salient in oral communication, where it relates its host unit to the previous utterance and has a variable scope ranging from a single lexical item to a whole paragraph. It preserved its core meaning in all of its occurrences, namely pinpointing the self-evidence of the truth of the proposition it stands with and encodes a specific epistemic attitude of the speaker to the proposition expressed by the clause in which *persze* appears.

Keywords: concession, epistemic stance, evidentiality, expectation, pragmatic marker

1. Introduction

It is a well-known fact that whenever we make an utterance we aim to communicate more than just the proposition(s) the utterance itself encapsulates. There are a number of linguistic and non-linguistic devices to indicate the actual message the speaker wants to communicate to the addressee. For various reasons (politeness, uncertainty, etc.) speakers often try to avoid a direct commitment to the truth of the propositions expressed or want to signal a certain attitude towards the content of a particular utterance. Discourse markers and modal particles therefore occur frequently in everyday conversation, linking the states of affairs of the utterances and the assumptions of the participants in the discourse.

1.1. Modal particles, discourse markers, pragmatic markers

Modal particles, discourse particles, and diverse kinds of pragmatic markers have all been thoroughly examined in many languages. They have been investigated in their various aspects, according to different linguistic theories and, as Kerstin Fischer (2006) put it, we can find a “jungle of publications” on this subject.

In spite of the fact that there is an increasing amount of research in this field, it is not always straightforward to decide whether we call a particular language token a modal particle, a discourse marker, or a pragmatic marker. One of the possible explanations for the lack of a universal description is that languages do differ from each other with respect to exploiting their linguistic devices: a modal particle in German or in Norwegian is more or less a grammatical category, with a specific syntactic position, while in languages like English and Hungarian functions fulfilled by modal particles can be expressed in many other ways, too. Some modal particles are also referred to as discourse particles because they can serve a variety of discourse functions in an interaction. Although epistemic modality is likely to be associated with discourse markers, not all discourse markers, or so-called discourse particles, necessarily express modality.

Fraser (1996) defined discourse markers as a type of pragmatic markers: “an expression which signals the relationship of the basic message to the foregoing discourse. [...] discourse markers do not contribute to the representative sentence meaning, but only to the procedural meaning: they provide instructions to the addressee on how the utterance to which the discourse marker is attached is to be interpreted.” This kind of approach is in accordance with Schiffrin’s (1987) and Blakemore’s (1987; 1992) analyses.

Aijmer et al. (2006) also accept the idea that discourse particles belong to the more general category of pragmatic markers, emphasizing that “one of the difficulties in deciding whether a given form should be considered to be a pragmatic marker is that a single form often fulfils in certain of its uses a function on the propositional level, and in other uses a function on the non-propositional level.” There exists, for example, a non-truth-conditional use of the Hungarian marker *akkor* ‘then’ in addition to its truth-conditional use as a discourse anaphor—either temporal or conditional (Vaskó 1998).

As a result of these considerations I have chosen to adopt the term *pragmatic marker* or even *pragmatic particle* in the description of the Hungarian modifier *persze*.

2. *Persze*, a pragmatic marker

It often takes some consideration to attempt to find the core meaning of the linguistic item we are investigating, as pragmatic markers and modal expressions do not necessarily have an easily recognisable semantic content; rather, they have some kind of pragmatic function. In many languages, pragmatic markers develop through internal lexical semantic change, and this may lead to polysemy and to the multifunctional character of these lexemes (Traugott 2003).

As far as *persze* is concerned, it is not difficult to identify the core meaning of the word. *Persze* was borrowed into Hungarian from the Latin expression *per se intelligitur*, meaning ‘naturally’, ‘it is self-evident’. In present-day Hungarian it is used as any other adverb or modifier without any special link to its Latin origin. I am going to argue that, although there can be no doubt about the basic semantic content of *persze*, it has a versatile pragmatic function in the language and can occur as a marker of epistemic modality.

With the help of pragmatic markers speakers can convey their evaluation of the utterance, like its evidentiality, its being in accordance with the speaker’s expectation. At the same time speakers can also signal their attitudes towards the addressee or the context of the utterance. The role of *persze* is also varied accordingly. It strengthens the proposition it stands with via the indication of mutual manifestness.

2.1. Syntactic position

Persze is very flexible with regard to sentence position. It can function as a hedge, in the beginning of a sentence, but can stand in the middle of a sentence—even though it is not part of the propositional meaning—, signalling in both cases that according to the speaker the proposition of the utterance is not only the expected state of affairs, but that it goes without saying. When the speaker indicates that she has strong evidence for the truth of the proposition expressed, she can also imply that the listener is also aware (or should be aware) of this particular piece of information.

- (1) Harmadszorra utasították el a pályázatát, **persze** hogy csalódott.¹
 third.time.onto rejected.3pl prev the application.his.acc that disappointed
 ‘This is the third time his application has been turned down, **of course** he is disappointed.’
- (2) Egy iskolába jártak, néhány év különbséggel, **persze**.
 one school.into went.3pl some year difference.with
 ‘They went to the same school, different years, **of course**.’

At this point I am not going to discuss the incidental syntactic differences between sentences where *persze* occurs with or without the complementizer *hogy*. Anyhow, in most cases the complementizer can be omitted, but when they do appear together *persze* and *hogy* form one intonation unit.

- (3) **Persze** hogy elvettek tőle mindent.
 that took.3pl from.him/her everything.acc
 ‘**Of course** they took everything from her.’

Persze is frequently used as an emphatic reply in short dialogues (cf. section 4), regardless of whether it is a positive or a negative one. In most situations *persze* stands alone, as a sharp, definite answer (4B1), but it can also co-occur with the predicate of the previous utterance (4B2).

- (4) A: Ismered azt a fickót?
 know.2sg that.acc the guy.acc
 ‘Do you know that guy?’
- B1: **Persze.** B2: **Persze** hogy ismerem.
 that know.1sg
 ‘**Of course.**’ ‘**Of course**, I do.’

Persze signals that the speaker considers the statement following or co-occurring with *persze* to be self-evident, something that emerges naturally from the course of events, like in the following overheard family conversation (5). A family sitting in a French restaurant:

¹ Many examples in this paper are from the HUNGLISH corpus of the Research Institute for Linguistics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

- And that is exactly what *persze* stands for, verbalized by the little girl, indicating the point of view of speaker B: once you are dining in a French restaurant, it is to be expected, it is self-evident for the speaker, that the meal should be accompanied by French wine.

3.1. Expectation

(6) A januári 18 fok **persze** kivételnek számít.
 the January.of 18 degree exception.dat count.3sg
 ‘18° centigrade is **of course** an exception in January.’

(7) **Persze** nem tudhatták _____ róla, _____ hogy allergiás a _____ halra.
not know.possib.past.3pl from.him/her that allergic the fish.onto
'Of course, they could not know that he was allergic to fish.'

Acta Linguistica Hungarica 59, 2012

claims superior knowledge, the use of *persze* conveys authority, just the opposite of politeness or solidarity. The speaker signals that her knowledge is or should be general knowledge and is hence not to be disputed (8). In argumentative contexts and particularly in political debates this power-oriented function can dominate (9).

- (8) Mondanom sem kell **persze**, hogy itt tilos a dohányzás.
 say.inf.1sg not must that here forbidden the smoking
 ‘It is needless to say, **of course**, that smoking is prohibited here.’
- (9) Az ellenzék **persze** egyetlen egy megoldást sem javasolt.
 the opposition single one solution.acc not recommended.3sg
 ‘The opposition hasn’t made one single suggestion, **of course**.’

In arguing and debating speakers often wish to demonstrate that the proposition the modal marker stands with is generally known, self-evident, so that even the speaker’s conversational partner should know it. Intonation, word order, and emphasis also play an important role. Example (10) illustrates that the same sentence with different intonation patterns can express solidarity as well as contempt.

- (10) Önnek ez **persze** kínaiul van.
 you.dat this Chinese.in is
 ‘This **must be** double Dutch to you.’

Persze shares some characteristic features with the so-called certainty markers in the sense that frequently these items are more likely to express various degrees of uncertainty rather than certainty. The use of the pragmatic marker evokes the illusion of certainty which serves actually the function of irony or reproach (11):

- (11) És azt hiszed **persze**, ez a te dolgod.
 and that.acc believe.2sg this the you thing.your
 ‘You think (**I suppose**) you are the one to do it.’

The speaker can confirm her agreement with the listener’s anticipated inference. She supposes that knowing the context the listener would also go through the same inferential process and come to the expected conclusion (12):

- (12) Hatalmas zivatar kerekedett és mi **persze** bőrig áztunk.
 large storm arose.3sg and we skin.till soaked.1pl
 ‘A fierce storm arose and **of course** we got wet through.’
- (13) Hatalmas zivatar kerekedett, nálunk **persze** nem volt esernyő
 large storm arose.3sg at.us not was umbrella
 és bőrig áztunk.
 and skin.till soaked.1pl
 ‘A fierce storm arose and **of course** we had no umbrella with us, and got wet through.’

Persze points backwards in a causal relation, (13), linking the proposition *persze* stands with to the proposition of the previous clause. In both cases *persze* functions as an expectation marker, but the nature of the expectation is different.

It seems that *persze* can be used together with propositions that express common knowledge—in heavy showers it is not surprising if you get wet—as well as in propositions that are assumed to be known for the speaker for various reasons, in this case for example knowing that the speaker never carries an umbrella.

- (14) Joan nagyon kedves volt; megpróbált minket is bevonni a
 Joan very kind was tried.3sg we.acc also involve.inf the
 beszélgetésbe, de hát ez **persze** nem sikerülhetett.
 conversation.into but well this not succeed.possib.past.3sg
 ‘Joan out of kindness tried to include us in the conversation, but that failed, **of course**.’

Persze in (14) is a genuine expectation marker, where the propositional content covers exactly the situation foreseen by the speaker. The marking of epistemic attitude and indirect evidence is generally highly relevant in verbal interaction, and has a strong metapragmatic function (Verschueren 1999).

Though something can be considered “common knowledge”, or a natural presumption, the speaker can still feel it necessary to draw the attention of the listener to a fact that is supposed to be known, that is the correct conclusion:

- (15) Csak a kedvedért tettem, és nem igazán hivatalos **persze**.
 only the sake.your.for made.1sg and not really official
 ‘I did it only for your sake and it is quite unofficial, **of course**.’

Persze can by all means be considered to be a member of “expectation adverbs” which according to Simon-Vandenberg and Aijmer (2007) “express certainty, together with ‘according to/in conformity with expectation’. What they share is the expression of commitment to the truth of the proposition, based on the fact that the state of affairs referred to in that proposition is to be expected, follows on from other states of affairs or from what we know about the world.”

When the speaker presents a proposition in her utterance that she considers to be true and anticipates that the hearer also considers it to be true, the role of *persze* is to underline this shared knowledge about the truth value of the proposition.

Indicating expectation does not necessarily mean that the expectation is fulfilled. The speaker in (16) believes that *p*, but her attitude—which is highly context dependent—is also communicated. She can mean for example that the homework should have been ready by the time of the utterance, or that it is understandable that the child could not begin writing the homework earlier.

- (16) A leckéd **persze** még mindig nincs kész.
 the homework.your still always neg.be ready
 ‘Your homework is still not ready, **of course**.’

Uttering (16) with an interrogative intonation the speaker also expresses a slight hope that *p* is not the case, that her expectations are wrong.

When *persze* co-occurs with a personal pronoun it can be associated with positive politeness strategies, but often the case is quite the contrary. The combination of *persze* and a personal pronoun then marks an aggressive question and persuasion, an attempt at manipulating the interlocutor. In their research on *of course*, Simon-Vandenberg and Aijmer (2004) gave evidence for this frequent use especially in political talks where the discourse marker serves “to express knowledgeability and certainty (epistemic stance) as part of their role as persuaders”.

- (17) **Maga** előtt **persze** nem említette a nevemet.
 you in.front.of not mentioned.3sg the name.my.acc
 ‘But **of course** she did not mention my name to you.’

- (18) **Persze, magát** úgysem lehet rábeszélni arra,
 you.acc not.at.all possible persuade.inf that.onto

hogy Tyrell utasításait kövesse.
 that Tyrell instructions.his.acc follow.3sg
 ‘I **suppose** nothing will induce you to do any of the things Tyrell advised?’

The various uses of *persze/of course* are naturally context dependent, but individual language use (style, register, etc.) is crucial, as well (cf. Furkó 2007).

As many other expectation markers *persze* is naturally related to—some would even say belongs to—the class of linguistic devices indicating evidentiality where the speaker has either direct evidence (e.g., seeing something) (19) or indirect evidence based on mental reasoning or conclusion (20).

(19) Hát **persze** hogy ezek itt az én kulcsaim!
 well that these here the I keys.my
 ‘**Surely** these keys here are mine!’

(20) **Persze** hogy holnap kezdődik a fesztivál.
 that tomorrow begin.3sg the festival
 ‘The festival begins tomorrow **of course**.’

Epistemic modality and inferential evidentiality are widely recognized to be overlapping domains rather than separate categories. Both evidential markers and epistemic modal devices seem to indicate that the speaker wants to qualify her commitment to the truth of what is being said. There is, however, a kind of contrast between knowledge and expectation. There is a difference between indicating one’s judgement of the reliability of the truth and marking the source of information. Evidentials express a degree of reliability and evaluate the status of knowledge with expressions such as *probably*, *certainly*, *surely*, etc. like in (21). The meaning of the marker is that the speaker considers the state of affairs to be true, the only reasonable assumption.

(21) **Persze** / **Alighanem** / **Bizonyára** ez az egyetlen logikus megoldás.
 possibly surely this the single logical solution
 ‘**Of course** / **Possibly** / **Surely**, it’s the only logical solution.’

In Hungarian, evidential functions are generally linked to lexical rather than grammatical devices, to expressions and stance adverbs like *állítólag* ‘allegedly’, *valóban/tényleg* ‘indeed’. Some of them (*feltehetőleg* ‘presum-

ably', *valószínűleg* 'probably') signal the degree of commitment to the proposition, others indicate epistemic modality.

3.2. Concession

In conjoined sentences where *persze* stands in the first segment, the second segment includes an adversary marker *de* that usually introduces the clause: *Persze p, de q* (22).

- (22) Az ember **persze** folyton változik, **de** az igazi barátok
 the person always change.3sg but the real friends
 mindig megmaradnak.
 always stay.3pl
 'One changes all the time, **of course**, **but** real friends stay forever.'

Proposition *p*, to which *persze* is connected, represents an assumption belonging to the mutually manifest context in which the clause expressing *q* should be processed. *Persze*—in addition to its core meaning—fulfils here the same function as any other concessive marker in Hungarian (cf. Vaskó-Fretheim 2004). In a concessive discourse relation where the two propositional members are *p* and *q*, *q* tends to be new information while *p* carries old information; also indicated by the encoded meaning of *persze*, the truth of this proposition is to be expected.

Persze as an indicator of metapragmatic awareness shares a number of functions with other members of this class dealing with the epistemic or illocutionary status of the propositional content.

- (23) A lakás **persze** kicsi, de a célnak tökéletesen megfelel.
 the flat small but the purpose.dat perfectly suffice.3sg
 'The flat is small **of course**, but it is perfectly all right for the purpose.'

The speaker admits that the flat is not as big as one would desire, but nevertheless she is satisfied with it. The two related propositions *p* and *q* are in a concessive relation to each other as *q* (suitable for the given purpose) is true in a context where *p* (the flat is small) is also true, although based on the assumption of *p* one would normally infer that *q* is false. In a concessive relation *p* represents the concession, and the linguistic form of the second conjunct *q* expresses the unexpected state of affairs. The truth of the proposition in the counter-expectation part in a concessive relation is pragmatically more relevant than that of the

concession. Concession and counter-expectation can often be expressed in two juxtaposed main clauses, in a conjunction of clauses, or as contrastive coordinate constituents of a single main clause (24).

- (24) Megnéztük a regényből készült filmet. Nem olyan jó **persze**,
 watched.1pl the novel.from made film.acc not so good
 mint a könyv, de azért izgalmas.
 as the book but still exciting
 ‘We’ve seen the film based on the novel. **Of course**, it is not as good as the book,
 but still exciting.’

As it is presumed, *persze* marks the epistemic stance of the speaker. The content of the proposition is in accordance with her expectations that films based on popular novels seldom override the success of the original story. However, she admits that the film is still worth seeing. One would expect that *persze* necessarily occurs in the first clause *p*. It is interesting to note, however, that *persze* can also appear with the counter-expectation member of the concessive relation.

- (25) Nem olyan jó, mint a könyv, (de) **persze** azért izgalmas.
 not so good as the book but still exciting
 ‘It is not as good as the book, (but) still exciting, **of course**.’

When devices expressing expectations are used, their meaning comes close to “as everyone knows” and “as you listener probably know”. Simon-Vandenberg and Aijmer (2007), investigating the English adverb *of course*, found that

“*Of course* presupposes ‘as everyone knows’ and can therefore be used as a rhetorical ploy. In such contexts it has almost weakened into the meaning of a concessive conjunction such as *although*. The loss or weakening of semantic content is counterbalanced by the development into signals of ‘generally known, hence old, hence unimportant’.”

The role of *persze* in concessives corresponds here to the Hungarian connective *jóllehet* ‘though’, ‘although’. It modifies the concession part of a concessive relation between two propositions *p* and *q*, very frequently in such a way that *jóllehet/persze* is in the first of two conjoined clauses, while the Hungarian adversative connective *de* ‘but’ or the concessive adverb *mégis* ‘still’, ‘yet’, ‘nevertheless’, whose negative counterpart is *mégsem*, appears in the second conjunct. And *de* and *mégis* can even be

combined in the counter-expectation part of the concessive relation, as seen in (26) and (27).

- (26) **Persze** drágák voltak a jegyek, **de** a terem **mégis** tele lett.
 expensive.pl were the tickets but the hall still full became
 ‘The tickets were expensive **of course**, but still the hall was full.’
- (27) **Jóllehet** drágák voltak a jegyek, **de** a terem **mégis** tele lett.
 although expensive.pl were the tickets but the hall still full became
 ‘**True**, the tickets were expensive, but still the hall was full.’

It is also possible to start the utterance with a declarative and then add a clause modified by *persze/jóllehet*, indicating that the explicature of the preceding clause may contradict someone’s expectations. In example (28), the speaker first states that the concert hall was full, then admits that it was filled up in spite of the expensive tickets.

- (28) Tele volt a terem, és a jegyek **persze** drágák voltak /
 full was the hall and the tickets expensive.pl were
jóllehet a jegyek drágák voltak.
 although the tickets expensive.pl were
 ‘The hall was full, and the tickets were expensive **of course** / the tickets, **it’s true**, were expensive.’

The most important pragmatic implication of an utterance like (28) with an afterthought clause modified by *persze* or *jóllehet* is that the tickets were nevertheless worth the price, cost notwithstanding. Thus the concessive relation seems to be between an explicit concession referring to a state of affairs evaluated as negative and an implicitly conveyed subjective evaluation. The assumption communicated is that the cultural event referred to here was so great or so rare that its positive effect on the audience outweighed the expenditure, which also explains the fact that it was sold out.

The data presented in (29) shows how the linguistic appearance of *persze* can indirectly affect the pragmatic interpretation of the truth-conditional content of an utterance. In this case certain activation of background assumptions or previous information is necessary, e.g., Hanna needs a car to get back to work, etc.

- (29) Hanna és Márk vett még egy kocsit
 H. and M. bought.3sg still one car.acc
 ‘Hanna and Mark have bought another car.’
- (a) A költségek megduplázódnak.
 the costs double.3pl
 ‘The costs will double.’
- (b) A költségek **persze** megduplázódnak.
 the costs double.3pl
 ‘The costs will double, **of course**.’

The pragmatic assumption that makes (29a) relevant is that the speaker’s information about the higher costs makes her worry how the family can cope with this financial burden. By adding *persze*, as in (29b), the speaker orients the listener’s attention in the direction of the information that higher costs are less significant than the unexpressed information in the corresponding covert ‘counter-expectation’ part of the concessive relation. Hence the listener will infer that the reason why Hanna and Mark are willing to spend some money on a second car is something that compensates them for the expenditure.

3.2.1. *Persze* in afterthoughts

Persze can often be observed in hedging afterthoughts and halfway renunciations of what was said immediately before, emphasizing the speaker’s uncertainty or scepticism. It appears in the role of a concessive marker like *bár/habár*, English *though/although*.

- (30) Több időt kellett volna szentelnem matematikai
 more time.acc had.to be.past.cond devote.inf.1sg mathematical
 tanulmányokra... **persze** / **bár** nem is tudom.
 studies.onto although not also know.1sg
 ‘I ought to have spent more time studying mathematics ... **though** I don’t know.’

There is some discrepancy between what the speaker says and what she thinks. *Persze* as well as the concessive marker *bár* may be used to moderate or mitigate the foregoing speech act, possibly informing the listener that the speaker’s epistemic commitment may not be exactly what the preceding utterance suggests. Afterthought clauses modified by *persze* can sometimes represent moderation of the speaker’s commitment to whatever was said immediately before.

- (31) Jó lenne újra találkozni vele,
 good be.cond again meet.inf with.him/her
persze lehet hogy nem (jó ötlet).
 possible that not good idea
 ‘It would be nice to see him again, **though** maybe (it’s) not (a good idea).’

In concessive constructions—as we have seen previously—two propositions are represented, an argument and an unexpected counter-argument, respectively. The propositional content of *p* represents what the communicator regards as something expected and natural, or old information, while *q* represents the counter-balancing propositional content. The proposition of the second conjunct *q* can even be a denial of a proposition but is definitely not entailed by *p*. In salient cases the second part of the concession may be missing: there is no linguistic trace of a counter-expectation proposition *q* following a concession modified by *persze*, not even in the form of an interrupted second conjunct meaning ‘but still’. If that position is linguistically empty, the addressee must identify the “counter-expectation” proposition *q* exclusively through inference.

- (32) Megesik **persze** az ilyen...
 happen.3sg the such
 ‘**True**, such things happen...’
- (33) Nem engedhetnék **persze** senkit a beteghez...
 not allow.cond.1sg nobody.acc the patient.to
 ‘**Actually**, nobody would be allowed to see the patient...’

What the addressee will infer upon being told (33) is that we have an exceptional case: although it is not the first time it has happened that nobody should see the patient, this time is an exception.

A proposition *p* in the first part of a concessive discourse relation may or may not contain discourse-given information, while *q* with its unexpectedness is supposed to carry more weight than the concession *p*. The function that *persze* fulfils can be considered indexical insofar as it points backwards from the linguistic unit in which it appears and relates the utterance to a proposition or speech-act alternative which the speaker regards as relevant and given. As *q* represents new information and therefore contributes relatively more to the relevance of the utterance than *p*, one might expect *q* to be always overtly expressed. But we have

seen examples with *persze* where assumption *q* is communicated by way of an implicature.

When *persze* appears in discourse in a concessive relation without the second clause *q*, the addressee has to make a mental representation of *q* through an inferential process based on mutually manifest contextual assumptions the source of which is likely to be the utterance to which *persze* was added. It is the one that provides the addressee with contextual clues that are necessary for a successful pragmatic derivation of *q*.

3.3. Backgrounding

Persze presumes some kind of common ground between speakers and listeners, but as it follows on from the nature of pragmatic markers it also conveys a constant need for seeking confirmation or acknowledgement of mutual manifestness. The speaker appeals for reassurance from the listener. The role of *persze* in backgrounding is closely connected to its concessive function.

- (34) Nincs annyi pénze, hogy megvegye a házat,
 neg.be so.much money.his that buy.imp.3sg the house.acc
persze / **bár** ki tudja?
 although who know.3sg
 ‘He doesn’t have enough money to buy the house, **though** who knows.’

The use of *bár* indicates a communicated lack of speaker commitment to the truth of the concessive clause proposition. A postposed concessive clause is intended to cast doubt on the felicity of the preceding speech act or on the previously asserted truth of its propositional content. *Persze* in (34) appears to be much stronger, even able to cancel the truth value of the previous clause.

It seems that *persze* can occur with propositions which indeed express mutual manifestness, but also with propositions which are only presented to cover common knowledge for various communicative reasons, as in (35). The speaker indicating the background actually claims that she is ready to change her mind.

- (35) Én **persze** kételkedem, de engedem magam meggyőzni.
 I doubt.1sg but allow.1sg myself persuade.inf
 ‘I’m sceptical, **of course**, but I’m willing to be convinced.’

3.4. End of list

Persze is particularly salient in oral communication, where it relates its host unit to the previous utterance or utterances and has a variable scope ranging from a single lexical item (36) to a whole paragraph. When enumerating a number of items *persze* would often appear with the last thing mentioned. It is quite common with the connective *és* ‘and’, as a kind of ‘last but not least’ remark. Its main function is to emphasize that it is not only a member of a list, albeit the last one, but an important member.

- (36) Megvettem mindent: húst, zöldséget, gyümölcsöt,
 bought.1sg everything.acc meat.acc vegetable.acc fruit.acc
 és **persze** a tortát is.
 and the cake.acc also
 ‘I’ve bought everything: meat, vegetables, fruit, and the cake **of course**.’

With keeping the best for the last the speaker indicates that it is self-evident and goes without saying that the last item is also on the list. Actually, it is needless to mention so, but still she is well aware of the fact that this statement should be made for one reason or another. It can be mere politeness, accuracy or highlighting the best. Although the speaker knows that the addressee or addressees is/are in possession of the information, she would like to draw particular attention to it.

This again confirms the idea that *persze* is used in contexts when speaker and listener share or are supposed to share common knowledge.

4. Emphatic reply

In alluding to the versatile syntactic position of *persze*, it has been mentioned that it is often used as an emphatic answer. It is not rare that pragmatic markers or modal particles can function as short answers confirming the preceding utterances. A strong affirmative meaning can be deduced from the speaker’s commitment to the truth of the proposition, which is to be expected or which is obvious. Given the core meaning of *persze*, it is not surprising that it has an emphatic role and that it signals that the speakers’ commitment to the truth of their utterances is to be taken for granted in communication. In (37) it is clear, obvious, or should be clear also for the speaker that B is ready. Kugler (2002)—in her analysis of sentence adverbs in Hungarian—mentions *persze* as an example of

emphatics based on the categories and forms of Biber–Finegan (1989, 98). It is a frequent change in languages that an epistemic certainty marker turns into an emphasizer.

- (37) A: Elkészültél?
get.ready.past.2sg
‘Are you ready?’
B: **Persze.**
‘Of course.’

Although we can find *persze* in many kinds of casual conversation, this straightforward answer is especially common in children’s language.

- (38) A: El tudod énekelni a dalt?
prev can.2sg sing.inf the song.acc
‘Can you sing this song?’
B: **Persze.**
‘Of course.’

Persze indicates that the truth of the proposition it stands with or refers to is taken for granted. Besides context, intonation can play a key role in the interpretation of utterances.

In contrast to showing solidarity, “common platform”, self-evident *persze* can also indicate a condescending, disdainful attitude. Here self-evidence means that the interlocutor is considered to be ignorant when he apparently overlooks or lacks a significant fact that the speaker believes to be crucial. With *persze* the speaker focuses on the addressee’s failure in recognising the importance of the issue.

- (39) A: Esik?
fall.3sg
‘Is it raining?’
B: **Persze.** Mit gondolsz, mitől vagyok csurom vizes?
what.acc think.2sg what.from be.1sg soaking wet
‘Of course. Why do you think I am soaking wet?’

By describing an argument as self-evident the speaker may present a point of view as marginal or less relevant, hence bringing up her own reasons.

5. *Persze* in interrogatives

Attitude markers reveal the speaker’s attitude toward the propositional content. *Persze* expresses that something is in line with expectations. But how can we account for expectation markers in interrogative sentences?

According to Kiefer (1988), “by using a modal particle in questions the speaker may wish to indicate that he has some evidence to believe that one of the alternatives is more likely to occur than the other one(s). They may have two main discourse functions: 1—to connect the question to the previous discourse and 2—they signal the preferred or expected answer”.

In the case of *persze* both requirements are perfectly fulfilled.

- (40) Mit tudsz te **persze** a valóságról?
 what.acc know.2sg you the reality.from
 ‘(Actually) What do you know about real life?’

Even if we consider the generally accepted view that the basic modal value of questions is to envisage several alternatives of a possible world, it is not straightforward to unravel the reasons for the appearance of an expectation marker in a *wh*-question. Example (40) presupposes a linguistic context where the speaker has gained enough evidence for concluding that the addressee has little or no evidence at all about the hard side of life.

Most of the interrogative sentences where *persze* occurs can be viewed as rhetorical questions, but they would not necessarily be considered rhetorical questions without the pragmatic marker. Context and especially intonation may play a significant role.

- (41) Kinek jutott **persze** először eszébe a dolog?
 who.dat got.3sg first mind.into the thing
 ‘Who was the first to think of it (of course)?’

(41) can either communicate an appreciation or a reproach depending on previous discourse utterances. The presence of *persze* does not affect the emotional background, it underlines on the other hand that the answer to the question agrees with the speaker’s own conclusion. The speaker has good reason to believe that she knows who initiated that particular state of affairs, and a possible confirmation would also be in accordance with her expectations. Without *persze* the interrogative is an open *wh*-question, for example in case of investigation.

- (42) Mikor kell **persze** a telefonnak csörögni?
 when must the telefon.dat ring.inf.3sg
 ‘When should the phone ring (of course)?’

- (43) Ki gondolta volna **persze**, hogy idáig fajulnak a dolgok?
 who thought.3sg be.past.cond that here.till degrade.3pl the things
 ‘Who would have thought (**of course**) that it goes as far as that.’

Rhetorical questions are mostly posed for persuasive reasons without expecting a reply. In the case of (42) the use of a rhetorical question is an ironic form for indicating the speaker’s presupposition—possibly based on her previous experience—that telephones sometimes ring at an inconvenient time. It is used to produce an effect or to make an assertion and not to elicit a reaction. However, *persze* does not appear in these utterances in a role of a rhetoric particle. As rhetorical questions are not supposed to be answered, the speaker is, in a way, talking to herself. At the same time rhetorical questions with *persze* imply a rather definite reply, sometimes even the negation of the propositional content attributed to the question:

- (44) You know nothing about real life.

- (45) Nobody would have thought that.

Choosing this form of figure of speech combined with the pragmatic particle the speaker can achieve a more convincing impression in the course of the conversation.

It is not rare that we find *persze* in *yes-or-no*-questions, which typically would be glossed with tags in English. Given the fact that they are interrogative utterances, *persze* cannot indicate the speaker’s attitude, it implies nevertheless the speaker’s doubt by questioning the addressee’s approach.

- (46) A tavalyi ruha **persze** már nem felel meg?
 the last.year’s dress already not suffice.3sg prev
 ‘Last year’s dress wouldn’t do, **I suppose?**’

- (47) Te **persze** már teljesen elfelejtetted a dolgot?
 you already completely forgot.2sg the thing.acc
 ‘**I suppose** you’ve quite forgotten it now, **haven’t you?**’

No matter whether we are dealing with a declarative or an interrogative, the point is that *persze* signals that the speaker takes it for granted that the propositional content, or the presupposed propositional content, is true, that it is to be expected of the two possible choices.

I consider *persze* to be a modal marker because it encodes a specific epistemic attitude to the proposition expressed by the clause in which it appears in case of interrogatives, propositions attributed to the questions. More particularly, it is a general marker of expectation because it encodes the assumption that the state of affairs described by the propositional content is in accordance with the speaker's previous views.

6. *Persze* and some pragmatic markers in other languages

Of course appears to be the most natural English gloss for *persze*. The various translations, on the other hand, underline that it is not always the case. This, I think, confirms again the versatile pragmatic function of *persze*, apart from obvious stylistic considerations. We can also observe that both expressions are flexible with regard to position within the sentence. However, while the modal adverb *of course* has developed from a noun as a result of grammaticalization, *persze*—as I have mentioned earlier—is a reduced form of a Latin construction. Moreover, *persze* is a grammatical chameleon. When placed in concessive constructions, it often introduces the concession part of the concessive conjunct, but *persze* can also be used in the counter-expectation clause. The interpretation of pragmatic markers can very much depend on the situations in which they are used. Many previous studies show that they cannot be used randomly and are not interchangeable. However, since one and the same marker can fulfil different tasks in different contexts, a particular pragmatic function or a speakers's stance can be achieved by several linguistic devices.

Examples taken from the various translation corpuses and the internet also proved that the communicative role fulfilled by *persze* in the Hungarian examples are indicated in various ways in the English translations, not necessarily by *of course*. Cross-linguistic investigations may always shed new light on the linguistic behaviour of these words. English and Norwegian translations suggest that the speaker's attitude can be interpreted in several different ways, which are highly dependent on the context. Translations I have seen so far do not really offer a systematic paradigm for the gloss of *persze*. *Persze* can refer to common knowledge, mark self-evidentiality, but its occurrences may differ as far as solidarity and oppositional functions are concerned.

7. Conclusion

Expectation, certainty, and common knowledge are crucial notions in communication strategies. Ensuring a shared context is one of the most important aims throughout a course of conversation in order to ensure a successful exchange of thoughts and ideas. Pragmatic markers and other metalinguistic devices are therefore necessary pillars in utterance interpretations. It was mentioned earlier that, although epistemic modality is likely to be associated with discourse markers, not all discourse markers, or so-called discourse particles, necessarily express modality. All adverbs of certainty express the speaker's judgement regarding the truth of the proposition, and expectation markers like *persze* come close to certainty and emphasis. *Persze* has a multifunctional role in everyday communication, but it preserved its core meaning in all of its occurrences, namely pinpointing the self-evidence of the truth of the proposition it stands with. It invites the listener to draw his own conclusion to match the common ground that provides the premises for utterance interpretations. I have argued that, in cases where it indicates that something is evident and the speaker came to this conclusion by inferential processes, *persze* does fulfil the role of a modal particle. The polyfunctionality of particles and the impact of contextual factors on their respective interpretations is a complex problem, but I assume that the linguistic item *persze* is going through a process of grammaticalization and pragmaticalization.

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