2014 NIAN WAIYU JIAOXUE YU YANJIU LUNWENJI

2014年外语教学与研究



主 编◎刘明宇 副主编◎卢丹军 马蓉 王铭



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内容提要

本书收录了北京工商大学外国语学院教师约四十篇 2014 年度的论文,文章类型涉及翻译、语言学、教学法探讨与教学习得、外国文学与文化、教学管理及实验教学的探索等。论文研究语种以英语为主,兼有法语、日语。这些作者有教授、副教授、讲师,有博士、硕士,有海归学者,他们都具有多年的教学经验,目前都工作在外语教学的第一线。作者以自己的亲身体会结合经典理论形成了独特的文风和对教学实践有指导意义的观点。

汇编出版本书,不仅有助于作者之间相互交流、共同提高,也可以供其他学校的 同行参考借鉴,给大学在校生、研究生的英语学习提供指导和帮助。

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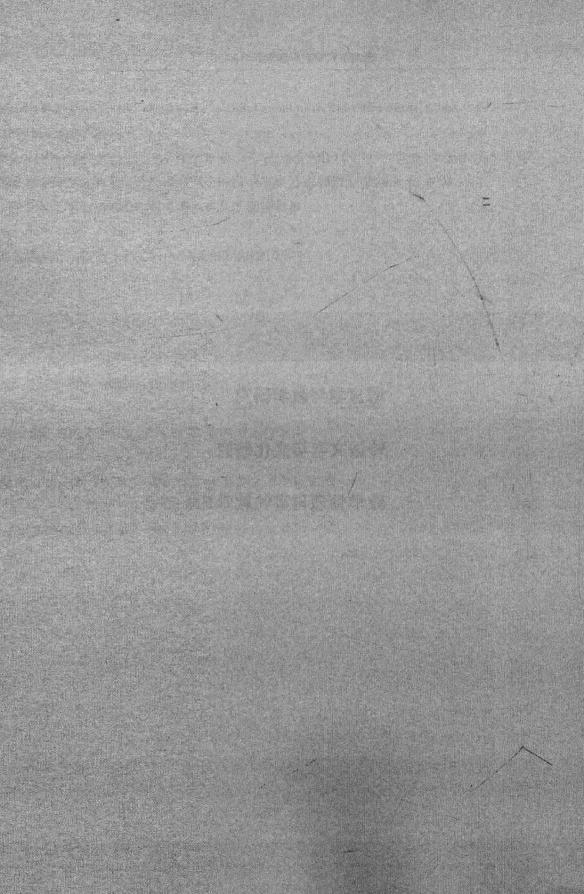
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翻译研究 🗊

语言学与教学研究

外国文学与文化研究

教学管理与实验教学研究



The Pragmatic Function and Its Translation of the Discourse Marker "Well" in Desperate Housewives (V)

张艳华

摘 要:话语标记语在日常对话中十分常见,是人们在日常交流中不可或缺的一部分,作用也十分多样。正确使用话语标记语会使人们更好地理解他人的语句。近年来,话语标记语逐渐成为语用学研究中的热点。在众多标记语如and、so、then等中,well的频繁出现使它具有很高的研究价值。所以很多学者从各个不同方面研究了语用功能中的话语标记语,但是使之与翻译相结合的研究却不很常见。

本文根据以往对well作为话语标记语的研究,以美剧《绝望的 主妇》第五季为资料,研究well的语用功能,并分析如何在翻译中 体现出话语标记语well。

关键词: 话语标记语 well; 语用功能; 翻译策略

1 Introduction

The study of discourse markers (DMs) began at the end of 1970s (van Dijk, 1979; Fraser, Bruce, 1980). DMs had aroused Schourup (1982), Schiffrin (1987), Blakemore (1988, 1996) and many other scholars' interest de-

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cades ago. But few of them could tell the exact definition of discourse marker at that time. Until now, we can find different definitions of discourse markers: First, a discourse marker is a word or phrase that is relatively syntax—independent and does not change the meaning of the sentence, and has a somewhat empty meaning. Second, discourse marker as a word or expression shows the connection between what is being said and the wider context (Michael Swan) which can help people understand the inner connection of the conversation, the purpose of the speaker and can make the conversation more fluent.

Well has been widely used in our conversations. This word has many parts of speech and usages. For example, she sings well (adverb). The farmer digs his well in the field (noun). It might be well for you to see a doctor (adjective). We can see from the sentences above that well affects the sentence's true condition, and adds extra meanings to the sentence. Well, here we are at last. Well is an interjection in this sentence. It is not a part of the sentence, but the function of it is non-traditional. Therefore, we can draw a conclusion that well also has many pragmatic functions in various contexts.

Example 1:

A: It depends. Do you eat three meals on time each day?

B: Well, doctor, you see, I studied very late yesterday afternoon. So I lost track of time and had a sandwich for supper.

B comes to see a doctor because of his stomachache which is caused by the irregular meal schedule. So when the doctor asks whether he has meals on time, it is too embarrassed for B to answer it directly. So B uses *well* to express his emotions. Such a function can not be explained by traditional grammar but can be understood from pragmatic view. It can be regarded as a discourse marker.

Desperate Housewives is an American television series, created by Marc Cherry, which began airing on ABC in 2004, in HDTV. Set on Wisteria Lane in the fictional town of Fairview, Eagle State, the TV series tracks the lives of four housewives, following their domestic struggles while several mysteries involving their husbands, friends and neighbors unfold in the background.

Desperate Housewives Season (V) opens with a car accident of Mike and Susan. In this accident, a woman and a girl died. Eddie comes back with a husband who is not that innocent as he looks. He pretends to be a good guy to gain other people's trust. But in fact, he is the man of the wife and daughter who was killed in the accident years ago. This attack makes him decide to take revenge to Mike. So a series of plots comes out. During his revenge, several innocent people lost their lives. At last, Mike found truth and saved his wife and son in time. The bad guy called Dave was arrested into mental hospital.

2 Pragmatic Functions of DM Well in Desperate Housewives

Well has a great many functions: topic changes, reformulations, discourse planning, stressing, or hedging. More and more people come to an agreement on the fact that the main function of the word has the similar effect or structure—pragmatic functions, not syntactic functions or semantic functions. The pragmatic functions of well can mainly be categorized into three: a contemplation marker, a turn-taking marker and as an attitudinal marker.

2.1 Constraints on Assumptions and Renegotiation

There are lots of discourse markers such as so, oh, and so on. Well is one of the most complex ones. That is the reason why it becomes a hot word studied by scholars. The idea that an expression may constrain the phrase of comprehension was first put forward by Diane Blakemore (1987) who thinks that DMs don't make contributions to the true conditions of utterance, but constrain the comprehension. Well is an effective way to constrain the supposition made by the listener and helps him to renegotiate with a speaker's purpose. The pragmatic functions of well can mainly be categorized into three: a contemplation marker, a turn-taking marker and as an attitudinal marker.

2.1.1 Well as a Contemplation Marker

According to Schourup's theory, well is often used to imply the speaker's

thought. When the speaker says something, it must conclude her/his idea. When they say well, it contains the suggestion, suspicion, expectation or some hints and so on. The speakers try their best to convey their real meanings by using well in the sentences. The contemplation function is presented in the following example.

Example 2:

Susan: I just want you to understand why I can't let you in my life.

Jackson: Well...do you mind if I hang out for the next few months and see if you change your mind?

Susan and Jackson have been together for 4 months. But Susan never lets her friends or son know that, because she can't get through the terrible experience of the car accident. She tells Jackson the reason. Jackson makes a tentative suggestion trying to seize the last chance to get together with her open and upright. Well here is used to express Jackson's state of mind: he totally understands and respects Susan's feelings and options.

2.1.2 Well as a Turn-taking Marker

A conversation actually is a combination of getting turns, keeping topics or giving up the topics. *Well* is widely used in conversations when a change of turning point is needed. In this case, it is used to bid the topic, hold the topic, relinquish the topic and promote a response.

◆Bidding the Topic

In a conversation, people often use some certain DMs to express their intentions and their purposes. Sometimes they need to interrupt other's conversations with politeness. They use some DMs to help them, and to remind others that they want to interrupt. The speaker searches for a chance for them to start speaking. This function can be demonstrated in the following example.

Example 3:

Bree takes out a hotdog.

Benjamin: Can I?

Bree: You have to promise not to tell your mommy.

Benjamin: Ok.

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Bree: Well, what do you think?

In this conversation, Bree tries her best to persuade Benjamin to eat hotdog and finally she makes it. When Benjamin is chewing, she asks the feeling of Benjamin by using a *well* to tell Ben that she wants to start a conversation.

◆ Holding the Topic

In a normal conversation, sometimes some uncertain reasons may break the conversation. A stop at the end of the conversation is regarded as a possible end in a conversation. But if someone doesn't want to end this dialogue, she/he may use some DMs to get the topic or the right to talk back. Here are the examples.

Example 4:

Lynette: I just need five seconds to bitch about Tom, and then I'll... oh, my God. Your painter isn't done yet?

Susan: Yeah. He...he's hard to keep track of.

Lynette: Well, anyway, Tom refuses to acknowledge that the twins are turning into juvenile delinquents.

Lynette comes to Susan's house to complain about her husband. She is attracted by the unpainted house. Susan starts to talk about the "mysterious painter" and the unpainted house. But Lynette wants to be back to her previous topic: she wants to keep complaining. So she uses a *well* to hold the utterance.

◆Relinquishing the Topic

A conversation often occurs between more than two people. The conversation can keep going only if two of them are very interested in the topic. But, sometimes, the listener may not be interested in the speaker's topic, or after listening, the listener feels speechless or has nothing to add. At that time, the listener may uses some DMs, like *well* in their conversations to achieve the success of the conversation.

Example 5:

Assistant: Uh, there is no next size up. They don't make princess dresses for girls over 7.

Gabrielle: She is only four and half.

Assistant: Oh, well.

Gabrielle: Look, my daughter was invited to a princess party...

In this example, Juanita is invited to a princess party. Everyone should wear a princess dress. But she is too fat to get the proper size. Gaby wants a next size up. The assistant thinks that her daughter is 7 years old, because comparing with other girls who are 4 years old, she is too fat. Her mother tells the assistant the girl's real age. The assistant is surprised and has nothing to say. So she uses *well* to show that she doesn't have something to say and wants to end this conversation. But Gabrielle doesn't seem to realize that. She repeats her words again.

◆Promoting the Response

Well is also used in a conversation to indicate that a response is required. In this case, well is often spoken with a rising intonation to demand information. By this way, the speaker expresses an inadequacy of the conversation, so he/she expects the listeners' response. It is believed that the listener can realize the inadequacy. This well is used as a promoter which needs the listener's response. This function can be seen in the following example.

Example 6:

Mike: Well, have a good weekend. Doing anything special?

Susan: Well, I've sort of start seeing someone.

In this dialogue, Mike and Susan get divorced, though they still have feelings about each other. When Mike comes to pick MJ, he wants to say something to Susan and expects her response. The word *well* is used here to express his feeling.

2.1.3 Well as an Attitudinal Marker

Well, serving as an attitudinal DM, which indicates how the speaker feels about something, is distinguished from the structural discourse. Well provides a hint of how or what follows.

Example 7:

Bree: I can do anything so long as it complements beef tenderloin.

Danielle: Actually, we don't eat meat. We are vegetarians.

Bree: Excuse me?

Danielle: So is Benjamin.

Bree: Well...Since when?

Bree is preparing a big meal with meat, but her daughter tells her that both of them are vegetarians. Bree is so surprised, but she tries to keep calm to show a good impression. So she uses a *well* to express her surprise and, at the same time, to calm herself down.

2.2 Reinforcements of Coherence

A conversation happens so quickly that the speaker has no time to consider what he/she just said or what he/she plans to say. They often use well, you see, you know, eh, and other DMs to help them to organize their sentences, which can reinforce the coherence of the whole conversation.

2.2.1 Well as an Indicator of Topic Shifting

It seems to be necessary for the speaker to reestablish a common understanding of "where they are" in the discourse with the hearer. One way in which this is done is by using *well* to indicate a shift of topic. In these cases, optimal relevance and coherence will require no such deviation from topic (Sperber & Wilson, 1995), so *well* is used as a signal to the hearer that the forthcoming sentence is not the expected one.

Example 8:

Eddie: His seminar was called "getting what you want, " and he did... three times. Before dinner.

Bree: Well, it's certainly nice to meet you, Dave.

The housewives see that Eddie is back with a husband, so the housewives come to Eddie's house to say hello to Dave. But during the chatting, Eddie is always talking about the private things between Dave and her. Bree can't bear listening to this kind of privacy. She uses a *well* to get the topic back to the point.

2.2.2 Well as an Indicator of Narrative Staging Marker

This function of *well* is very similar to the one of the topic shift. The use of *well* aims at establishing a mutual understanding between the speaker and the listener.

Example 9:

Katherine opens the book and reads the dedication.

Katherine: You dedicated to me?

Bree: Well, you make this all possible. It's the least I could do.

At first, Katherine is a little angry with Bree's behavior. Bree totally understands that, because the photo shooting takes that long, so she prepares a gift. Then Katherine feels a little surprise. Bree uses a *well* to relate the fact that she can't do this without Katherine. She wants to establish the mutual understanding between Katherine and her.

2.3 Mitigation of Offence

Certain kinds of acts directly threaten face, for example, a request which is refused rather than granted, an assessment which is followed by disagreement rather than agreement; a suggestion which is declined rather than accepted; an offer which is followed by a rejection rather than acceptance; an order which is disobeyed rather than obeyed. Mitigation (Fraser, 1980) is defined not as a particular type of speech act but the modification of a speech act: the reduction of certain unwelcome effects which a speech act has on the hearer. Well as a face—threatening mitigator, has the function to mitigate some offence. There are two ways in which well is used in the data; as an indicator of due consideration in process and signaling resignation.

2.3.1 Well as an Indicator of due Consideration in Process

Well is used in a conversation to express that the speaker needs for the reconsideration of the previous assumption to save face. And sometimes it also indicates that the expected answer will not occur. This function of well can be demonstrated in the following example.

Example 10:

Tom: I mean, look, the whole school is talking about their card game.

Do you realize it was, like, the place to be on a Monday night?

Lynette: Oh, my God.