



International Pragmatics Association
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ABSTRACTS



17th International Pragmatics Conference

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27 June – 2 July 2021

17th INTERNATIONAL PRAGMATICS CONFERENCE

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“All’s Well that Starts Well”: An Intermodal and Interlingual Perspective on the Use and Translation of Well

Panel contribution

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Metadiscourse markers are explicit linguistic items used “out of consideration for our readers or hearers” to “help them process and comprehend what we are saying” (Hyland, 2017). By their very nature, metadiscourse markers are particularly frequent in oral discourse to catch the audience’s attention and get it involved, to make the argumentation clearer, and as discourse fillers. *Well* is one of the most used (Zarei, 2012) and versatile (Aijmer, 2011) discourse markers; it may be considered as a frame marker (Hyland, 2005) or topicalizer (Crismore et al., 1993) indicating a shift in topic or turn taking, as a marker of insufficiency modifying or qualifying a previous utterance, a face-threat mitigator, and a delay device (Jucker, 1993) or gap filler for pausing and planning (Aijmer, 2011, p. 237). Given its multiple functions, *well* may pose considerable challenges to translators, especially in hybrid settings where oral texts are transcribed and/or translated, as is the case for TED Talks, short talks delivered by high-profile experts and freely available online. Most talks are translated in a variety of languages; they are not dubbed, but time-coded transcripts and subtitles are provided thanks to crowdsourcing. Translation involves in this case not only the code switch from one language to another, but also a shift from the oral to the written medium that is not reflected in the content, form and style of the text. Hence, discourse markers typical of oral discourse, e.g. *well*, are replicated in the talk transcript and often also in its translations. This paper will investigate the presence and function of the metadiscourse marker *well* in a parallel aligned corpus of 56 English TED talk transcripts and their respective Italian translations. The analysis will aim at identifying and classifying the utterances of *well* in the English subcorpus, on the one hand, and investigating whether and how this metadiscourse marker has been translated in the Italian transcripts, on the other hand. This study will thus combine the pragmatic analysis and the interlingual perspective to observe how and to what extent pragmatic devices can pose a translation problem in terms of readability, naturalness and idiomaticity of the target text, particularly when the translator fails to consider the medium switch implied in the transcription of oral discourse.

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