



faculty of social
sciences, arts
and humanities

48/2026

Research Journal
Studies about Languages
pp. 129-143

ISSN 1648-2824 (print)

ISSN 2029-7203 (online)

DOI 10.5755/j01.sal.1.48.43978

TRANSLATION / VERTIMAS

'Actually' in translation: The case of English and Slovak

Received 12/2025

Accepted 07/2026

HOW TO CITE: Knižková, Z. (2026). 'Actually' in translation: The case of English and Slovak. *Studies about Languages / Kalbų studijos*, 48, 129–143. <https://doi.org/10.5755/j01.sal.1.48.43978>

'Actually' in translation: The case of English and Slovak

Anglų kalbos prievėiksmio *actually* vertimas į slovākų kalbą

ZUZANA KNIŽKOVÁ, University of Prešov, Slovakia

Abstract

This pilot study examines how the English adverb *actually* is rendered in Slovak translation, drawing on a corpus of literary texts and their translations. As a multifunctional item, *actually* performs a range of syntactic and pragmatic functions in context, most notably those of emphasis and disjunct. The analysis draws on three Slovak translations of works by the same English-speaking author. Although each translator worked on a different set of books, the corpus still makes it possible to compare translation strategies within a relatively consistent authorial style and to observe how individual translators deal with the same multifunctional source item. The study combines qualitative functional analysis with quantitative observations in order to identify recurrent Slovak renderings of *actually*, including lexical substitution, structural reformulation, attenuation, and omission. The findings suggest that translation difficulty arises not from the lack of Slovak expressive resources, but from differences between English and Slovak in the grammatical encoding of discourse-related meaning. In particular, functions expressed in English through sentence adverbials do not always correspond to a single formal category in Slovak, which increases the likelihood of functional shift or translation loss. The study contributes to translation studies and contrastive linguistics by showing how the pragmatic contribution of a frequent multifunctional item may be preserved, reinterpreted, weakened, or omitted in translation, and how these outcomes vary across translators.

KEYWORDS: actually, English–Slovak translation, translation strategies, contrastive linguistics, pragmatic meaning, functional shift.

Introduction

Discourse-related expressions shape meaning beyond propositional content by signalling evaluation, emphasis, correction, contrast, and speaker stance. Because such meanings are highly context-dependent and are not always tied to a single morphosyntactic category, they present a recurrent problem in translation. This is especially true when the source and target languages differ in how discourse-related meanings are grammatically encoded. One expression that illustrates this difficulty is the English adverb *actually*, a frequent and multifunctional item whose interpretation depends on both syntactic position and communicative context.

In descriptive accounts of English, *actually* has been associated with a range of functions, including emphasis, correction, contrast, and discourse-level evaluation. Traditional reference grammars discuss such uses in terms of the distinction between clause-integrated and sentence-level adverbials, especially between emphaticizers and disjuncts (Quirk et al., 1985; Greenbaum et al., 1990). In other descriptions, comparable sentence-level functions are treated more broadly as stance adverbials or discourse-organizing expressions (Biber et al., 1999; 2002). Research focused more directly on *actually* likewise shows that its interpretation is sensitive to position, scope, and discourse environment, and that the item may serve not only propositional but also interactional and discourse-pragmatic functions (Aijmer, 1986; Oh, 2000; Clift, 2001; Keizer & Kojadinovic, 2025). For the purposes of the present study, attention is restricted to two syntactic functions that are both frequent and analytically relevant for the translation of *actually*: emphaticizer and disjunct.

From a contrastive point of view, the English–Slovak pair is particularly relevant because the two languages do not categorize such meanings in the same way. English grammatical description recognizes sentence-level adverbials expressing stance or evaluation as a distinct functional area, whether labelled disjuncts or stance adverbials. Slovak grammatical tradition, by contrast, does not recognise a directly corresponding adverbial category. Meanings comparable to English sentence-level uses are instead expressed through other resources, most notably pragmatic markers, conjunction-based constructions, and clause-level reformulation. As a result, forms that are grammatically classified as adverbials in English may require lexically or structurally different solutions in Slovak. This asymmetry creates a translation problem not because Slovak lacks the relevant meanings, but because the two languages differ in how those meanings are formally encoded.

Such non-correspondence is especially important in the translation of multifunctional items. In translation studies, it has often been noted that expressions contributing pragmatic or discourse-level meaning are vulnerable to reformulation, attenuation, or omission when no direct formal equivalent is available (Baker, 2011; Hatim & Mason, 1990). In the Slovak context, Ivanová (2018) demonstrates, on the example of the English pragmatic marker *fair enough*, that its Slovak renderings form a variable set of translation equivalents and may also include zero equivalents. This suggests that pragmatic items need not be translated by one stable formal counterpart even when functional correspondence is sought. Yet the English adverb *actually* has not been systematically examined from this perspective in English–Slovak comparative studies, particularly not in a way that combines functional analysis with a comparison of multiple translators.

The present study contributes to contrastive linguistics and translation studies by examining how *actually* is rendered in Slovak translations of literary texts by a single English-speaking author. The focus falls on its uses as an emphaticizer and disjunct, and on the ways in which these functions are preserved, reformulated, weakened, or omitted in translation. The inclusion of translations by three different translators makes it possible to compare recurrent translation strategies within a relatively consistent authorial domain, even though the translators worked on different books. As a pilot study, the article aims to provide a functional account of how the English adverb *actually* is rendered in Slovak translation, with particular attention to its uses as an emphaticizer and as a disjunct. By treating *actually* as a case study of a multifunctional discourse-sensitive item, the study contributes to discussions of functional equivalence and the translation of discourse-sensitive meaning between languages with different grammatical resources.

English Sentence Adverbials and the Functions of ‘actually’

Theoretical Framework

In English grammatical description, adverbials are treated as a heterogeneous set of elements whose interpretation depends not only on their semantic contribution but also on their degree of syntactic integration and their scope within the clause. In the descriptive tradition represented by Quirk et al. (1985, p. 501) and Greenbaum and Quirk (1990, p. 162), adverbials are commonly classified into four functional types: adjuncts, subjuncts, disjuncts, and conjuncts. This classification reflects the fact that adverbials do not all operate at the same level. Some modify a specific constituent or the clause-internal event, while others comment on the proposition as a whole or mark the relation between stretches of discourse.

Adjuncts are the most clause-integrated type of adverbials and typically express circumstantial meanings such as time, place, manner, or degree. Subjuncts are also linked to clause structure, but they contribute more specialized meanings, including viewpoint, approximation, emphasis, or modification of intensity or extent. By contrast, disjuncts and conjuncts are less integrated and are often treated as sentence adverbials. Disjuncts express the speaker's attitude, evaluation, or comment on the proposition, whereas conjuncts indicate a logical, rhetorical, or textual relation between one unit of discourse and another. In this respect, disjuncts are of particular relevance to the present study, since they operate outside the propositional core and contribute speaker-oriented meaning. Quirk et al. discuss style disjuncts and content disjuncts separately, with style disjuncts commenting on the manner of speaking and content disjuncts on the propositional content itself (cf. Quirk et al., 1985, pp. 501 – 653; Greenbaum et al., 1990, pp. 162 – 187).

A related but broader descriptive perspective is offered by Biber et al. (1999), who discuss comparable sentence-level meanings under the heading of stance adverbials. Their model of stance marking includes not only single adverbs and adverb phrases, but also prepositional phrases and clausal constructions, which shows that speaker-oriented meaning in English is not tied to one formal structure alone (Biber et al., 1999, pp. 969 – 970). In addition, stance adverbials are associated with positional flexibility and are distinguished from more clause-integrated adverbials by their discourse-related function (Biber et al., 1999, pp. 853 – 854). Although the present study works primarily with the Quirkian distinction between clause-integrated and sentence-level adverbials, Biber et al.'s description usefully highlights that speaker-oriented meaning can be realized not only by adverbials, but also by other grammatical forms.

Within this general framework, the English adverb *actually* occupies a particularly interesting position. It is a frequent and multifunctional item whose interpretation depends on syntactic position, scope, and discourse context. Research on *actually* shows that more propositional or clause-integrated uses tend to occur in medial position, whereas discourse-marking uses are more often associated with sentence-initial or sentence-final placement, even though the correspondence is not absolute (Keizer and Kojadinović, 2025; cf. Oh, 2000). In clause-medial position, *actually* may function as a clause-integrated modifier contributing emphasis or factual reinforcement, as in *She actually knows the answer*. In such cases, it is linked closely to the proposition and foregrounds the truth, reality, or unexpectedness of a state of affairs. In sentence-peripheral position, however, *actually* may function at the level of the whole utterance, as in *She knows the answer, actually*, where it no longer modifies only a constituent but introduces a speaker-oriented comment, correction, or reassessment (Keizer & Kojadinović, 2025; Clift, 2001).

This position-related distinction broadly corresponds to the contrast between *actually* functioning as an emphasizer and *actually* functioning as a disjunct. When used as an emphasizer, *actually* reinforces the factual status or unexpected validity of the proposition expressed. When used as a disjunct, it operates at the discourse level and introduces a speaker-oriented meaning, such as correction, contrast with an expectation, or a shift in perspective. Although these two functions can be distinguished analytically, they are not always identified by means of a single formal criterion. Syntactic position may provide an important clue, but it is not fully decisive, since the interpretation of *actually* also depends on its immediate co-text and on the communicative role of the utterance (Quirk et al., 1985; Oh, 2000; Clift, 2001; Keizer & Kojadinović, 2025).

Corpus-based and discourse-oriented studies further the importance of context in the analysis of *actually*. Clift (2001) shows that different placements of *actually* are associated with different interactional effects, especially in turn-initial and turn-final position, where the item may signal revision, change of mind, topic shift, or the presentation of information as informative. Keizer and Kojadinović (2025) likewise confirm that the relationship between function, position, and prosody is systematic but not absolute. Taken together, these observations support a functional approach to *actually* in which syntactic position, scope, and discourse role are considered jointly. In the present study, this approach provides the basis for distinguishing between constituent-related emphasis and discourse-level evaluation in the analysis of English source-text instances of *actually*.

'Actually' as a Multifunctional Item

The English adverb *actually* has long been described as a multifunctional expression whose interpretation depends on the interaction of lexical meaning, syntactic position, scope, and discourse context. In addition to its uses within clause structure, *actually* may also function at the level of discourse, where it contributes meanings such as correction, contrast with an assumption, topic management, or speaker stance. For this reason, it has been discussed not only in descriptive grammars, but also in corpus-based and discourse-pragmatic studies concerned with the relation between form, meaning, and interaction (Aijmer, 2002; Oh, 2000; Clift, 2001; Keizer & Kojadinović, 2025).

Aijmer's work is especially relevant in this respect. She treats *actually* as a discourse particle with several related functions and emphasizes that its interpretation cannot be reduced to one invariant meaning independent of context. At the same time, she observes positional tendencies: medial *actually* is more often associated with clause-integrated uses, whereas initial and final *actually* tend to be linked to textual or interpersonal functions (Aijmer, 2002, pp. 253, 256–259). These observations are important because they suggest that position may serve as a useful indicator of function, even though it does not determine it mechanically.

A similar point is made by Oh (2000) who compares *actually* with 'in fact' and argues that *actually* is best understood through the notion of unexpectedness. In her analysis, the expression may contribute either to the propositional content of the utterance or to its discourse-pragmatic interpretation, depending on how the speaker presents the relation between reality and expectation. This account is useful for the present study because it helps explain why *actually* may sometimes reinforce the truth of a proposition and at other times signal correction, adjustment, or contrast with an assumed perspective (ibid).

Clift (2001) approaches *actually* from an interactional perspective and shows that its meaning is closely related to its placement within the unfolding utterance. In turn-initial position, *actually* may introduce a revision, a change of direction, or a self-correction; in turn-final position, it may mark information as informative, contrastive, or in some way unexpected relative to what precedes. Her analysis is particularly important because it demonstrates that the function of *actually* cannot be identified solely on the basis of sentence-level syntax. Rather, its interpretation depends on its role in the local interactional environment and on the activity being performed by the utterance (Clift, 2001, pp. 272–277, 286–288).

More recent corpus-based work confirms this general picture while offering a more systematic account of the relation between function, position, and prosody. Keizer and Kojadinović (2025) distinguish between propositional and discourse-marker uses of *actually* and show that the former are more typical of medial position, whereas the latter prefer peripheral positions, especially initial and final placement (pp. 753–755). At the same time, they stress that there is no strict one-to-one correspondence between position and function, which means that interpretation must rely on contextual and functional analysis rather than on placement alone (pp. 752–754).

Taken together, these studies show that *actually* should not be treated as a semantically uniform item with a single fixed equivalent. Rather, it is a multifunctional expression whose contribution may range from constituent-related emphasis to discourse-level commentary. In the present study, this broader multifunctionality is acknowledged, but the analysis focuses specifically on two uses that are both frequent and contrastively relevant: *actually* as an emphazier and *actually* as a disjunct. This restriction reflects the analytical focus of the present study, namely the examination of those uses of *actually* that are most directly relevant to the translation problem discussed here: clause-integrated emphasis and sentence-level speaker-oriented meaning.

Slovak Means of Expressing Comparable Discourse-Level Meanings

The grammatical description of Slovak differs from English not in the availability of speaker-oriented or discourse-level meaning, but in the way such meaning is categorized and formally represented (cf. Kačmárová, 2006; Kačmárová et al., 2018). In English descriptive grammar, sentence-level meanings such as stance, evaluation, correction, or contrast are often discussed within the framework of disjuncts or, more broadly, stance adverbials. Slovak grammatical tradition, by contrast, does not posit a directly corresponding ad-

verbal category. This does not mean that Slovak lacks the means to express comparable functions. Rather, such meanings are distributed across a range of lexical and structural resources and are not grouped under one adverbial label in the way they are in English (cf. Kačmárová, 2006; Kačmárová et al., 2018).

Standard Slovak grammatical accounts describe adverbs primarily with reference to clause-internal functions such as circumstance, manner, degree, or modality (Oravec & Bajžíková, 1984; Pavlovič, 2012). In this respect, the Slovak description of adverbials is narrower than the English one. Meanings comparable to English sentence-level evaluation or speaker stance are therefore typically treated outside the category of adverbials proper. One important resource in this area is the word class of 'častice', which does not have a direct counterpart in English grammatical terminology and will therefore be referred to here as 'discourse particles'. These are uninflected items that do not primarily modify a verb, adjective, or another constituent, but instead affect the utterance as a whole by expressing emphasis, evaluation, modality, or the speaker's attitude. In Slovak grammatical description, 'častice' are recognized as a distinct part of speech (Oravec & Bajžíková, 1984; Pavlovič, 2012).

Comparable discourse-level meanings in Slovak are not expressed exclusively through the word class of discourse particles. Slovak may also express discourse-level stance by means of conjunction-based constructions, lexical choices, or clause-level reformulation (Kačmárová, 2006; Dvonč et al., 1966). In some cases, a function comparable to an English disjunct is conveyed by *vlastne*, one of the Slovak expressions that can serve as a context-dependent counterpart of English *actually*; in others, it may be expressed through a concessive or contrastive construction, through a predicative reformulation, or through a separate clausal comment. The formal realization of such meanings is therefore more dispersed than in the English grammatical tradition, where many comparable functions are subsumed under sentence adverbials (cf. Kačmárová, 2006; Oravec & Bajžíková, 1984; Pavlovič, 2012).

As early as in the 1960s, Dvonč et al. (1966) drew attention to the fact that certain Slovak lexical items cannot be assigned a single grammatical function independently of context. A given form may operate as a conjunction in one utterance and as a discourse-level item in another, depending on whether it establishes a syntactic relation between clauses or instead contributes explanatory, evaluative, or interpretative meaning outside the propositional core. This observation is important for the present analysis because it helps explain why apparently similar functions may be realized in Slovak by formally different means and why the interpretation of such means depends heavily on their contextual integration.

From a contrastive perspective, the crucial point is therefore not that English possesses discourse-level meanings that Slovak lacks, but that the two languages organize and describe these meanings differently (Kačmárová, 2006; Kačmárová et al., 2018). English grammatical tradition provides a relatively stable label for sentence-level stance within the category of adverbials, whereas Slovak distributes comparable meanings across several descriptive categories. As a result, formal similarity cannot be assumed to guarantee functional equivalence, and lexical items that appear parallel across the two languages may differ in scope, degree of syntactic integration, or pragmatic force.

For the purposes of the present study, this means that the Slovak rendering of English *actually* cannot be evaluated solely in terms of direct lexical substitution. If *actually* functions as a disjunct or as an emphaser in the English source text, its Slovak counterpart may take the form of the word class of discourse particle, a conjunction-based structure, a clausal reformulation, or no overt marker at all. The relevant analytical question is therefore whether the target text preserves, shifts, weakens, or omits the discourse-sensitive function performed by the English item in context.

Implications for Translation

The contrast outlined above has important implications for translation. If English and Slovak differ not in communicative potential but in the grammatical categorization and formal realization of discourse-level meaning, then the translation of multifunctional items cannot be assessed solely in terms of direct lexical correspondence. In such cases, the relevant issue is functional equivalence: whether the target-text solution preserves the discourse-sensitive contribution of the source expression, even if it does so by differ-

ent formal means. This is particularly relevant in the case of *actually*, whose contribution may range from clause-integrated emphasis to sentence-level correction, contrast, or speaker-oriented evaluation.

Research in translation studies has repeatedly shown that expressions carrying pragmatic or discourse-level meaning are especially vulnerable in translation when they are not overtly tied to propositional content. Hatim and Mason (1990) emphasize that translation involves the interpretation and transfer of discourse values, not only propositional meaning. Baker (2011) likewise notes that equivalence cannot be reduced to word-level substitution and that contextual meaning may require substantial reformulation in the target language. From this perspective, the translation of *actually* is unlikely to be a matter of choosing one stable verbal equivalent. Rather, it may involve lexical substitution, structural reformulation, attenuation, or omission, depending on how the source-text function is interpreted in context.

In the Slovak context, this problem can be observed in Ivanová's (2018) analysis of the English pragmatic marker *fair enough* in an English–Slovak parallel corpus. Her findings show that the Slovak renderings of this item form a heterogeneous set of translation equivalents rather than one fixed counterpart, and that zero equivalents also occur. Although that study focuses on a different expression, it supports the assumption that pragmatic items may be transferred by formally divergent means and that their discourse contribution may sometimes be weakened or left implicit in translation.

In the translation of expressions such as *actually*, the relevant solutions need not involve direct lexical equivalence alone. Depending on whether *actually* functions as an emphasizer or as a disjunct in the source text, the target-text rendering may take the form of lexical substitution, structural reformulation, functional reinterpretation, attenuation, or omission. These solution types are especially relevant in cases where English encodes discourse-sensitive meaning through sentence adverbials, while Slovak distributes comparable meanings across different lexical and structural means. For this reason, the present study approaches translation solutions not as fixed formal correspondences, but as function-oriented strategies motivated by the communicative role of the source-text item in context.

Methodology

The corpus used in this pilot study consists of selected English-language novels by Sarah J. Maas and their published Slovak translations. Although the corpus includes works from several series and each translator worked on a different set of titles, all analysed examples originate from a single source author. This makes it possible to compare Slovak translation solutions within a relatively consistent source-text style while reducing variation caused by differences between source authors. A list of the analysed works is provided in **Table 1** below:

Table 1 List of analysed books

English title	Slovak title	Translator
A Court of Thorns and Roses	Na dvore z trňov a ruží	Miriám Fulmeková
A Court of Mist and Fury	Na dvore z hmly a besu	Miriám Fulmeková
A Court of Wings and Ruin	Na dvore z krídel a zmaru	Milica Nováková
House of Earth and Blood	Rod zeme a krvi	Milica Nováková
Queen of Shadows	Kráľovná v tieňoch	Zuzana Kamenská

The English source texts and their Slovak translations were consulted in electronic form. All instances of the adverb *actually* were identified in the English texts by means of electronic search and were subsequently checked in context. Their corresponding Slovak renderings were then identified in the target texts, and all relevant examples were extracted into a separate dataset for further analysis. The extraction

therefore included both cases in which *actually* was rendered by an overt Slovak expression and cases in which no overt equivalent was present.

In addition to qualitative functional analysis (see Results 1), the extracted instances were also quantified (see Results 2) according to the type of translation solution applied, including lexical substitution, functional shift, and omission. The frequency of these solutions was then compared across the three translators to identify broader translation strategies.

To ensure a consistent functional classification of the extracted instances, an identification test was applied. Its purpose was to determine whether *actually* and its Slovak renderings functioned as an emphaser, a disjunct, or another type of discourse-related modifier in the given context. The identification test was applied after extraction and before both the qualitative interpretation and the quantitative categorization of translation solutions, thus serving as an intermediate analytical step that guided the subsequent analysis.

The aim of this pilot study is to provide a functional account of how the English adverb *actually* is rendered in Slovak translation. To achieve this aim, the study addresses the following research questions:

- 1 What communicative functions does *actually* fulfil in the analysed English source texts?
- 2 How are these functions rendered in Slovak translations?
- 3 What translation solutions recur in the Slovak renderings of *actually*?
- 4 To what extent do the Slovak renderings preserve, modify, weaken, or omit the discourse-sensitive function of *actually* in context?

For the purposes of the present study, function refers to the communicative or discourse-pragmatic role performed by an item in context, rather than to its part of speech or sentence-member status. In the English source text, *actually* is analysed using English grammatical labels such as disjunct and emphaser. In the Slovak target text, its rendering is described separately in terms of formal category (e.g. discourse particle, conjunction-based structure, clausal reformulation, or zero rendering) and discourse-pragmatic effect.

Identification Test

The distinction between emphasers and disjuncts in the present study was established based on syntactic behaviour and communicative function, with particular attention to scope and relation to the propositional content. Following Kačmárová et al. (2018, pp. 126–127), emphasers are understood as expressions contributing to the factual or epistemic status of a proposition. They confirm or foreground the validity of what is being asserted, their function is therefore epistemic.

In English, Emphasers such as *actually* are typically integrated into the clause structure and are closely linked to the proposition whose validity they reinforce. Although they may appear adjacent to particular constituents, their semantic scope extends beyond a single word and applies the asserted state of affairs more generally. As a result, their position within the clause may affect interpretation. This can be illustrated by the sentence *A girl — a mortal girl actually killed Andras*, translated as *Dievča — ľudské dievča vážne zabilo Andrasa*. Here, *actually* [vážne] does not intensify the verb killed, but confirms the factual reality or unexpected validity of the event.

Disjuncts likewise contribute speaker-oriented meaning, but they differ from emphasers in the level at which they operate. While emphasers comment on the epistemic status of the proposition, disjuncts function outside the propositional core and express evaluation, correction, reformulation, or stance with regard to the utterance as a whole. Syntactically, they are characterized by relative detachment from clause structure, often signalled by punctuation or, in spoken discourse, by a separate intonation contour. Another important feature is positional mobility: disjuncts may occur in sentence-initial, medial, or final position without substantially changing the propositional content of the utterance.

The above distinction can be illustrated by the following sentence *It's a wonder that you're still here, actually* translated as *Vlastne je zázrak, že tu ešte stále si*. In this case, *actually* [vlastne] does not confirm the truth of the proposition but introduces a speaker-oriented comment that reframes or reassesses what has just been said. Unlike emphasers, which are tied to the epistemic status of the proposition, disjuncts operate at the discourse level and may be repositioned without affecting the factual content of the utterance.

At the same time, emphasizees and disjuncts share certain properties, particularly their contribution to speaker stance and their sensitivity to context. As Kačmárová et al. (2018) note, both categories participate in the expression of evaluation, but they differ primarily in scope rather than in overall pragmatic orientation. This partial overlap is particularly relevant for translation analysis, since it creates contexts in which an English emphasizeer may be rendered by a Slovak item that performs a comparable discourse-pragmatic function but belongs to a different formal category, or vice versa. The identification test applied in this study, therefore, relied on a combination of criteria:

- 1 the syntactic integration or detachment of the expression,
- 2 its positional mobility, and
- 3 its communicative function with respect to the proposition.

These criteria were applied consistently in the analysis of both source and target texts in order to determine whether a given instance of *actually* functioned as an emphasizeer or as a disjunct in context.

Results and Discussion

The findings are organized by translator in order to compare how each of the three Slovak translators renders the English adverb *actually* in context. The section includes examples in which *actually* functions as a disjunct and as an emphasizeer, with particular attention to recurrent renderings such as *vlastne* and *naozaj*, as well as to cases of structural reformulation, functional shift, attenuation, and omission. Taken together, these examples make it possible to identify translator-specific tendencies and to assess the extent to which the communicative function of *actually* is preserved, modified, or lost in translation.

Results 1

Translator A

In the translations produced by Translator A, the data reveal a relatively broad range of solutions for rendering *actually*, including direct lexical substitution, functional reinterpretation, and clausal reformulation. Compared with the other two translators, Translator A more frequently preserves the distinction between discourse-level and clause-integrated uses, although several examples still involve functional shift.

In Example 1, the Slovak discourse particle *vlastne* [*actually/in fact*] renders *actually* in its disjunct function. Placed before the clause and separated by punctuation, it operates outside the propositional core and introduces a clarifying comment on the preceding utterance. In this respect, the discourse-level function of the English source item is preserved.

In Example 2, *actually* functions as an emphasizeer, contributing to the speaker's commitment to the truth of the proposition. This function is retained in the Slovak translation through *naozaj* [*really/truly*], which likewise foregrounds the factual validity of the utterance and strengthens the interrogative force of the question.

Example 3 is noteworthy because the source-text disjunct *actually* is rendered by the expression *Ale áno!* [*But yes!*], which allows more than one interpretation. On the one hand, the expression has a strongly affirmative and emphatic value; on the other hand, its structural detachment from the following clause gives it a discourse-level character. The Slovak rendering therefore occupies an intermediate position between clause-level emphasis and discourse-level commentary. This ambiguity illustrates how an English disjunct may be translated by a formally different but functionally related expressive discourse particle.

In Example 4, *actually* is not rendered by a direct lexical equivalent, but by a clausal reformulation: *Dokonca by som povedal, že...* [*I would even say that...*] Rather than preserving the form of a sentence adverbial, the translation re-encodes the speaker's evaluative stance in a separate predicative structure. This solution represents structural reformulation, but the evaluative discourse-level effect of the source expression is broadly preserved.

Table 2 Translator A

Ex 1	I had no idea where Cesere even was—what it was, <i>actually</i> .	Netušila som, kde vôbec Ceser je – <i>vlastne</i> , čo to vôbec je.
	Function: Disjunct	Function: Discourse Particle functioning as Disjunct
Ex 2	Is it —is it <i>actually</i> Jurian's eye?	Je to – je to <i>naozaj</i> Jurianovo oko?
	Function: Emphasizer	Function: Discourse Particle functioning as Emphasizer
Ex 3	“No born fighters in this lot?” “Three, <i>actually</i> ,” Mor said. “Three out of ten isn't bad at all. ...”	„Takže žiadne rodené bojovníčky v tejto hŕstke?“ „ <i>Ale áno!</i> Tri,“ povedala Mori. „Tri z desiatich, čo vôbec nie je zlé. ...”
	Function: Disjunct	Function: Discourse Particle functioning as Emphasizer / Disjunct
Ex 4	The most fun I've had in ages, <i>actually</i> .	<i>Dokonca by som povedal</i> , že najväčšia zábava, akú som zažil za posledné roky.
	Function: Disjunct	Function: Evaluating Predication
Ex 5	She didn't remember—or maybe she'd never <i>actually</i> known, then, that I wouldn't have been able to read them, anyway.	Nepamätala si – alebo možno <i>teda</i> ani nikdy nevedela, že by som ich aj tak nebola schopná prečítať.
	Function: Emphasizer	Function: Discourse Particle (delimiting)
Ex 6	I skidded to a stop, breathing raw. I thought my lungs might <i>actually</i> be bleeding.	Zabrzdila som a snažila sa lapiť dych. S pocitom, že mi krvácajú pľúca.
	Function: Emphasizer	Function: Translation loss

In Example 5, *actually* functions as an emphaser, reinforcing the factual validity of the epistemic state expressed by *had never known*. In the Slovak translation, this function is not preserved. Instead, the discourse particle *teda* [that is...] introduces an explanatory or delimiting discourse move rather than truth-value emphasis. The result is a functional shift from clause-integrated emphasis to discourse-level organization.

Example 6 represents a case of translation loss. In the source text, *actually* contributes an additional emphatic or discourse-sensitive nuance, but the Slovak translation contains no overt element that would render this function. As a result, the basic propositional meaning is preserved, while the communicative effect of *actually* is left unexpressed.

Translator B

The renderings produced by Translator B show less reliance on direct lexical equivalents and a greater tendency toward functional redistribution. Although some examples preserve the source-text function of *actually*, others shift the meaning toward degree, concession, or reaction, often through formally different structures.

In Example 7, the source-text disjunct *actually* is rendered by the particle *vlastne* [actually/in fact], which likewise functions outside the propositional core and introduces a corrective or specifying comment. This is a relatively direct functional equivalent.

In Example 8, *actually* functions as an emphaser, reinforcing the factual validity of the proposition expressed by the verb phrase *do work*. This emphatic value is retained in the Slovak translation by means of a discourse particle *naozaj* [really/truly]. In Slovak grammatical terms, *naozaj* [really/truly] may be treated as clause-integrated, while functionally it still performs the role of an emphaser. The translation therefore preserves the source-text function despite a shift in descriptive category.

Table 3 Translator B

Ex 7	Bryce smiled blandly. "It was three daemonaki, <i>actually</i> ."	„Vlastne to boli traja démonaci,“ nevýrazne sa usmiala Bryce.
	<i>Function: Disjunct</i>	<i>Function: Discourse Particle functioning as Disjunct</i>
Ex 8	"We do <i>actually</i> work for the Aux, Bryce. That requires the occasional bit of training."	„Vieš, Bryce, my <i>naozaj</i> pracujeme pre Zbory. A to si vyžaduje aj nejaký ten tréning.“
	<i>Function: Emphasizer</i>	<i>Function: Discourse Particle functioning as Emphasizer</i>
Ex 9	At his side, Eris had the wits to <i>actually</i> look worried. But Beron continued to ignore his son's pointed stare and hissed at me, "Did you know that while your mate was warming Amarantha's bed, most of our people were locked beneath that mountain?"	Eris po jeho boku bol <i>natol'ko</i> duchaprítomný, že sa zatváril ustarostene, ale Beron naďalej ignoroval uprený pohľad svojho syna a zasyčal: „Vedela si, že kým tvoj druh zohrieval Amaranthe posteľ, väčšina našich ľudí bola uväznená pod tou horou?“
	<i>Function: Emphasizer</i>	<i>Function: Discourse Particle functioning as Intensifier (Amplifier)</i>
Ex 10	This afternoon, the Pack of Devils was <i>actually</i> heading over to the CCU arena to cheer for Ithan, but Bryce and Danika hadn't bothered to attend an away game since sophomore year, when Danika had been sleeping with one of the defensemen.	Svorka sa <i>síce</i> poobede išla pozrieť na univerzitný štadión a povzbudiť ho, <i>ale</i> Bryce a Danika neboli na zápase mimo mesta od druhého ročníka. A aj vtedy chodili len preto, že Danika spávala s jedným z obrancov.
	<i>Function: Disjunct</i>	<i>Function: Concessive construction / structural reformulation</i>
Ex 11	"You <i>actually</i> did it," Amren murmured, gaping as the three immortals slammed into Hybern's lines, and the screaming began.	„ <i>Tak</i> si to dokázala,“ zamrmlala Amren a hľadela, ako sa traja nesmrteľní vrhli na línie Hybernu a začalo sa ozývať jačanie.
	<i>Function: Emphasizer</i>	<i>Function: Discourse Particle (evaluative/reactive)</i>
Ex 12	And the half-wolf, half-daemonaki bouncer had the nerve to <i>actually</i> hold out a hand.	Polovlk-polodémonak, čo robil v klube vyhadzovača, drzo zdvihol ruku.
	<i>Function: Emphasizer</i>	<i>Function: Translation loss</i>

A different functional outcome is observed in Example 9. In the source text, *actually* functions as an Emphasizer modifying the verb phrase *look worried*, thereby highlighting the unexpected or noteworthy nature of Eris's reaction. The emphasis lies in the fact that Eris did, contrary to expectations, manage to appear worried, rather than on the extent or degree of any particular quality. In the Slovak translation, this emphatic function is not preserved. Instead, the discourse particle *natol'ko* [to such an extent/so much] is employed, which expresses degree and functions as an intensifying modifier. The emphasis on factual or unexpected validity is therefore replaced by scalar modification, resulting in a clear functional shift.

In Example 10, *actually* again functions as a disjunct, commenting on the proposition as a whole and introducing a corrective or contrastive stance, which signals that the situation being described differs from a potential assumption or expectation. This discourse-level function is further reinforced by the conjunction *but*, which explicitly marks the contrast between the two clauses. In the Slovak translation, the meaning contributed by *actually* is rendered through the concessive construction *síce ... ale* [admittedly ... but], in which *síce* [admittedly] functions as a conjunction. According to Slovak descriptive dictionaries, *síce* [admittedly] introduces a conceded or presupposed premise that is subsequently contrasted or corrected by *ale* [but], thereby structuring the utterance in a contrastive manner (Jazykovedný ústav Ľudovíta Štúra SAV,

2003). Rather than functioning as a stance-marking adverbial, this construction encodes contrast through syntactic means, thereby preserving the discourse-level interpretation of the proposition. This example, therefore, represents a case of structural reformulation, in which the discourse-level function of *actually* is not conveyed through a direct lexical equivalent but is instead expressed by syntactic means, while the intended contrastive meaning is retained.

In Example 11, *actually* functions as an emphasizer modifying the verb phrase *did it*, reinforcing the unexpected realization that the action has indeed been carried out. In the Slovak translation, this emphatic meaning is rendered by the discourse particle *tak* [so], which does not modify the proposition in the same way but introduces a reactive and evaluative discourse move. The translation therefore involves a functional shift from clause-integrated emphasis to discourse-level confirmation or reaction.

Example 12 illustrates translation loss. In the source text, *actually* reinforces the unexpectedness or markedness of the gesture, but the Slovak translation contains no overt element that would render this emphatic contribution. The target text preserves the event itself, yet the additional pragmatic force conveyed by *actually* is not represented explicitly. This example further supports the tendency observed in Translator B’s data toward functional reduction or redistribution rather than consistent preservation of the source-text function of *actually*.

Translator C

Translator C combines direct lexical substitution with more frequent attenuation and omission. Some examples preserve the source-text function relatively closely, while others weaken the discourse effect of *actually* or leave it unexpressed.

Table 4 Translator C

Ex 13	I got the idea from you, <i>actually</i> .	Ten nápad si mi <i>vlastne</i> vnukol ty.
	Function: Disjunct	Function: Discourse Particle functioning as Disjunct
Ex 14	“You <i>actually</i> admit to liking me?”	„ <i>Naozaj</i> si práve priznala, že ma máš rada?“
	Function: Emphasizer	Function: Discourse Particle functioning as Emphasizer
Ex 15	“It was such an easy trap that I’m <i>actually</i> disappointed he fell for it.”	„Bola to veľmi priehľadná pasca, preto som <i>trochu</i> sklamaná, že mi na to skočil.“
	Function: Disjunct	Function: Discourse Particle functioning as Intensifier (Downtoner)
Ex 16	I think they would have liked you more than me, <i>actually</i> .	Myslím si, že by ťa ľudia mali radšej ako mňa.
	Function: Disjunct	Function: Translation loss
Ex 17	She looked downright shocked by the small concession, <i>actually</i> .	Aj takýto malý ústupok ju zjavne šokoval.
	Function: Disjunct	Function: Translation loss

In Example 13, *actually* functions as a disjunct and is translated by *vlastne* [*actually/in fact*], which similarly operates at the discourse level by adding a clarifying comment to the proposition.

In Example 14, *actually* functions as an emphasizer reinforcing the speaker’s stance toward the proposition, and this function is preserved in Slovak through *naozaj* [*really/truly*], which likewise reinforces the commitment to what is being said.

Example 15, however, shows a clear case of attenuation. In the source text, *actually* contributes to the speaker’s evaluative stance toward the proposition. In the Slovak translation, this effect is weakened by

trochu [a little], which functions as a downtoning degree modifier. Unlike cases of complete omission, the source-text effect is not lost altogether, but reinterpreted and reduced. For this reason, the example is better described as attenuation with functional shift, not as translation loss.

Examples 16 and 17 represent translation loss more clearly. In example 16, the discourse-level nuance contributed by *actually* is omitted entirely, and no overt Slovak element conveys its corrective or evaluative function. In example 17, *actually* is likewise not represented in the target text. The adverb *zjavne* [obviously] does not correspond to *actually*, but rather to the intensifying component elsewhere in the source clause. Unlike Example 15, where some evaluative effect remains in attenuated form, these two examples involve the absence of any overt rendering of the discourse-level function of *actually*.

Results 2

In addition to the qualitative analysis presented above, the distribution of translation solutions across the three translators was examined in order to identify broader tendencies in the rendering of *actually*. Table 5 summarizes the frequency of translation loss, the two most common lexical equivalents (*vlastne* and *naozaj*), and other solutions observed in the corpus.

Table 5 Distribution of translation choices for *actually* across translators

Translator	Total instances	Translation loss n (%)	'vlastne' n (%)	'naozaj' n (%)	Other solutions n (%)
A	49	11 (22.4)	15 (30.6)	14 (28.6)	9 (18.4)
B	39	25 (64.1)	4 (10.3)	3 (7.7)	7 (17.9)
C	24	11 (42.3)	1 (3.8)	3 (11.5)	9 (34.6)
Total	114	49 (43.0)	20 (17.5)	20 (17.5)	25 (21.9)

The quantitative distribution broadly supports the tendencies identified in the qualitative analysis, while also showing clear differences among the three translators. At the same time, the figures do not in themselves explain the reasons for those differences. What they do show is that the translators differed substantially in the extent to which they rendered *actually* by overt lexical means, by alternative structural solutions, or not at all.

Translator A shows the most balanced distribution of solutions. Translation loss is less frequent than the combined use of the lexical equivalents *vlastne* and *naozaj*, and other solutions are also represented. This pattern corresponds to the qualitative examples discussed above, where Translator A relatively often preserves either discourse-level evaluation or clause-integrated emphasis, while also using structural reformulation in selected cases.

Translator B shows the highest frequency of translation loss and the lowest reliance on the recurrent lexical equivalents *vlastne* and *naozaj*. As the qualitative analysis indicates, this pattern is associated not only with omission, but also with cases in which the source-text function of *actually* is redistributed through degree modification, concessive structure, or discourse-level reaction. In such cases, the pragmatic contribution of *actually* is not preserved directly, but is weakened, shifted, or re-encoded by other means.

Translator C exhibits a mixed profile. Although some instances are rendered by standard lexical equivalents, attenuation and omission occur relatively frequently, and the category of other solutions is proportionally more prominent than in Translator A or B. As shown in the qualitative analysis, this includes cases in which discourse-level meaning is weakened through downtoning or replaced by a different type of modification.

Taken together, the quantitative results support the general observation that the rendering of *actually* depends strongly on how its function is interpreted in context. Where the source-text function is preserved, Slo-

vak offers several lexical and structural means capable of conveying comparable emphatic or discourse-level effects. Where such preservation does not occur, the result may be functional shift, attenuation, or omission. These findings underline the importance of function-based analysis in the translation of multifunctional expressions whose contribution extends beyond propositional content.

Conclusions

This pilot study examined how the English adverb *actually* is rendered in Slovak translation on the basis of a corpus of literary texts from a functional perspective, with particular attention to its uses as an emphatizer and as a disjunct. By analysing contextualized instances of *actually* in Slovak translations of literary texts written by the same source author, the study combined qualitative functional analysis with quantitative observations in order to identify recurrent translation solutions and patterns of functional shift or loss.

The findings suggest that the translation of *actually* is shaped by differences between English and Slovak in the grammatical categorization and formal realization of discourse-sensitive meaning. While English grammatical tradition treats meanings such as stance, correction, or discourse-level evaluation within the framework of sentence adverbials, Slovak distributes comparable meanings across a wider range of lexical and structural means. As a result, the function of *actually* is not always rendered through direct formal correspondence, but may be preserved, reformulated, weakened, or omitted in translation.

The analysis also shows that the three translators differ considerably in how they handle this problem. Some instances of *actually* are rendered through relatively direct lexical equivalents such as *vlastne* and *naozaj*, while others involve structural reformulation, functional redistribution, attenuation, or complete omission. In several cases, the source-text function of *actually* is not preserved directly, and the target text instead shifts toward degree modification, reactive stance, concessive structure, or no overt marking at all. These patterns show that omission and functional shift are not marginal phenomena, but recurrent translation outcomes.

Taken together, the findings underline the importance of function-based analysis in the translation of multifunctional expressions whose contribution extends beyond propositional content. The study suggests that the main challenge lies not in the absence of Slovak expressive resources, but in the non-correspondence between the formal means by which comparable meanings are encoded in the two languages. From this perspective, the translation of *actually* provides a useful case study for the broader problem of how discourse-sensitive meaning is transferred under conditions of grammatical and functional non-equivalence.

As a pilot study, the present research is necessarily limited in scope: it is based on one source author and a restricted corpus of literary texts and their Slovak translations. Nevertheless, it offers an initial account of how the English adverb *actually* is rendered in Slovak translation and points to recurrent areas of preservation, shift, attenuation, and loss. In this respect, the study contributes primarily to contrastive linguistics and translation studies, while also offering a basis for further research on the translation of discourse-sensitive items across larger corpora, additional translators, and other language pairs.

Acknowledgment

The present paper presents research undertaken within the following research grants: Recovery and Resilience Plan – Scholarships for Excellent PhD Students (R1) (code 09I03-03-V02); GAPU 10/2025 Effectiveness of tools for computer-aided translation of English medical academic text into Slovak; VEGA Research providing grounds for establishing a new subfield – writing-for-translation stylistics

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Declaration on the Use of AI

During the preparation of this article, the author used generative AI tools *ChatGPT* and *undermind.ai* for literature search. AI was not used to analyze, evaluate or interpret data. After using the tools, the author reviewed and edited the content as needed and takes full responsibility for the content of the publication.

References

- 1 Aijmer, K. (1986). Why is actually so popular in spoken English? In G. Tottie & I. Bäcklund (Eds.), *English in speech and writing: A symposium* (pp. 119-129). Almqvist & Wiksell.
- 2 Aijmer, K. (2002). *English Discourse Particles: Evidence from a Corpus*. John Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/sci.10>
- 3 Baker, M. (2011). In *Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge. Retrieved July 10, 2026, from <https://nlp.csie.org/~sound/translation.pdf>
- 4 Biber, D., Johansson, S., Leech, G., Conrad, S., & Finegan, E. (1999). *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English*. Longman.
- 5 Biber, D., Conrad, S., & Leech, G. (2002). *Longman Student Grammar of Spoken and Written English*. Longman.
- 6 Clift, R. (2001). Meaning in Interaction: The Case of Actually. *Language*, 77(2), 245-291. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3086775> <https://doi.org/10.1353/lan.2001.0074>
- 7 Dvonč, L., Horák, J., & Oravec, J. (1966). *Morfológia slovenského jazyka*. Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo.
- 8 Greenbaum, S., Quirk, R., Leech, G., & Svartvik, J. (1990). *A Student's Grammar of the English Language*. Longman.
- 9 Hatim, B., & Mason, I. (1990). *Discourse and the Translator*. London, England: Longman.
- 10 Ivanová, M. (2018). Pragmatický marker Fair Enough a jeho prekladové ekvivalenty v Anglicko-Slovenskom paralelnom korpuse. *Journal of Linguistics/Jazykovedný Casopis*, 69(3), 395-414. <https://doi.org/10.2478/jazcas-2019-0019>
- 11 Kačmárová, A. (2006). On Conveying Strong Judgements in English and Slovak. Prešov: Prešovská univerzita v Prešove
- 12 Kačmárová, A., Bilá, M., & Vaňková, I. (2018). *The Conceptualizing of Conceptualization (of Linguistics Metalanguage)*. Prešov: Prešovská univerzita v Prešove.
- 13 Keizer, E., & Kojadinovic, Z. (2025). Actually: function, position and prosody. *English Language and Linguistics*, 29(4), 1-29. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1360674324000558>
- 14 Oh, S.-Y. (2000). Actually and in fact in American English: A data-based analysis. *English Language and Linguistics*, 4(2), 243-268. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1360674300000241>
- 15 Oravec, J., & Bajžíková, E. (1984). *Súčasný slovenský spisovný jazyk: Morfológia*. Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo.
- 16 Pavlovič, J. (2012). *Syntax slovenského jazyka I*. Pedagogická fakulta Trnavskej univerzity.
- 17 Jazykovedný ústav Ľudovíta Štúra SAV. (2003). *Síce*. In *Krátky slovník slovenského jazyka 4*. Retrieved July 22, 2026, from savba.sk
- 18 Quirk, R., Greenbaum, S., Leech, G., & Svartvik, J. (1985). *A Comprehensive grammar of the English language*. Longman.

Zuzana Knižková.

Santrauka

Anglų kalbos prieveiksmio *actually* vertimas į slovakų kalbą

Šiame bandomajame tyrime nagrinėjama, kaip anglų kalbos prieveiksmis *actually* verčiamas į slovakų kalbą grožinėje literatūroje. Kaip daugiavienis kalbos vienetas prieveiksmis *actually* kontekste atlieka įvairias sintaksines ir pragmatines funkcijas, iš kurių svarbiausios yra pabrėžiamoji ir sakinio modifikatoriaus funkcijos. Analizė grindžiama penkiais to paties anglakalbio autoriaus kūrinių vertimais į slovakų kalbą, kuriuos parengė trys skirtingi vertėjai. Nors kiekvienas vertėjas vertė naudodamas skirtingus knygų rinkinius, sudarytas tekstynas leidžia palyginti vertimo strategijas gana nuoseklaus autoriaus stiliaus kontekste.

Tyrime derinama kokybinė funkcinė analizė ir kiekybiniai stebėjimai, siekiant nustatyti pasikartojančius *actually* perteikimo būdus slovakų kalboje, įskaitant leksinį pakeitimą, struktūrinę pertvarką, semantinį susilpninimą ir praleidimą. Tyrimo rezultatai rodo, kad vertimo sunkumų kyla ne dėl slovakų kalbos raiškos priemonių stokos, o dėl anglų ir slovakų kalbų skirtumų gramatiškai koduojant su diskursu susijusią reikšmę.

Visų pirma, funkcijos, kurios anglų kalboje reiškiamos sakinių modifikuojančiais prievaisiais, ne visada atitinka vieną formalią kategoriją slovakų kalboje, todėl padidėja funkcinio poslinkio arba vertimo nuostolių tikimybė. Tyrimas prisideda prie vertimo studijų ir gretimosios lingvistikos plėtros, parodydamas, kaip dažnai vartojamo daugiafunkcio kalbos vieneto pragmatinė funkcija vertime gali būti išlaikoma, perinterpretuojama, susilpninama arba praleidžiama ir kaip šie sprendimai skiriasi tarp vertėjų.

About the Author

ZUZANA KNIŽKOVÁ

PhD student, Institute of Translation and Interpreting Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Prešov, Slovakia

Research interests

Medical translation, syntax, modality, adverbials

E-mail

zuzana.knizkova@smail.unipo.sk; knizkovazuzana@outlook.com



This article is an Open Access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 (CC BY 4.0) License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)