Abstract of: Zur diskursiven und modalen Funktion der Partikeln *aber, auch, doch*, und *ja* in Instruktionsdialogen

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Diewald, G. and Fischer, K.: Zur diskursiven und modalen Funktion der Partikeln *aber, auch, doch*, und *ja* in Instruktionsdialogen (1998), Linguistica 38,1, pp. 75-99, attempt at identifying a grammatical function for the German word classes modal particle, discourse particle and conjunction respectively.

Traditionally, modal particles and particularly discourse particles, both being much more frequent in spoken than in written language, are denied a grammatical status. In contrast to this it is taken here that the 'pragmatic' functions of particles are part of the grammar of German, grammar being understood as those rules and mechanisms which serve in encoding cognitive contents. Thus, comparable to the grammatical category of past tense or of pronouns, particles display a relational, indexical, structure, pointing to an aspect of the context.

Furthermore, particles do not accidentally display their functional spectrum observable. Instead, their functions are motivated by their basic semantics which consists of two parts: the indexical structure common to all particles and a denotational, lexeme-specific semantic content. The lexical content of a lexeme functions in qualifying the general relational structure. Thus, semantic oppositions can be identified for the four particles investigated, while they all display the same relational structure.

The modal and the discursive function of particles, and therefore the word classes modal vs. discourse particle, can be distinguished regarding the class of elements to which they refer. Modal particles refer to propositional structures describing information 'at hand', while discourse particles refer to structured aspects of the communicative situation. Conjunctions, however, refer to propositions which are explicitly encoded.

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proposition 1	conjunction	porposition 2
Das war im Vorgabemodell glaube ich anders	*aber*	das habe ich dann eigenmächtig so zusammengebaut

Tabelle 1: Schema for the conjunction *aber*

pragmatic pretext	modal particle	proposition
das sieht genauso aus	*aber*	bei mir sieht das genau andersrum aus

Tabelle 2: Schema for modal *aber*

The corpus under consideration consists of dialogues in which one speaker instructs the other one how to build a toy airplane [2].

For instance, the particle *aber* may be used as a conjunction, conjoining two propositions:

(1)   das war im Vorgabemodell glaube ich anders *aber* das habe ich dann eigenmächtig so zusammengebaut

'the original was different I think *but* then I have composed this myself'

In contrast, the modal particle *aber* refers to some pragmatic pretext which does not belong to those propositions explicitly made but to the information 'at hand', the *pragmatic pretext*:

(2)   bei mir sieht das *aber* genau andersrum aus

'*but* mine looks completely different'

Discourse Particles, finally, may fulfil a number of functions depending on which communicative domain of the utterance situation they refer to (for details see [1]). For instance, *ja* may refer to the flow of information between the speakers:

(3)   das sind die Lager nachher dafür aber ähm

'these are the parts for afterwards but uhm'

ja

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flow of information	discourse particle	proposition
you say: das sind die Lager nachher dafür aber ähm	*ja*	I hear: das sind die Lager nachher dafür aber ähm

Tabelle 3: Schema for *ja* as a feedback signal

pragmatic pretext	modal particle	proposition
Flugzeuge sollen fliegen	*ja*	es soll auch fliegen

Tabelle 4: Schema for modal *ja*

'*yeah*'

Like *aber*, *ja* may however also be used as a modal particle. In this case it also refers to a pragmatic pretext:

(4)   es soll *ja* auch fliegen

'*eventually*, it is also supposed to fly'

The semantic contents of *aber* and *ja* differ in so far as *aber* signals an adversative relation while *ja* signals a relation of accordance. Thus, the model proposed explains not only the grammatical status of the particles investigated but allows also a specification of their possible functions as well as an account of their semantic differences.

Literatur

[1] Fischer, K. (1998): A Cognitive Lexical Pragmatic Approach to the Polysemy of Discourse Particles. PhD thesis, University of Bielefeld.

[2] Sagerer, G., Eikmeyer, H.-J., Rickheit, G. (1994): Wir bauen jetzt ein Flugzeug. Konstruieren im Dialog. Arbeitsmaterialien. SFB 360, Universität Bielefeld.