

Particles and the dimensions of meaning

workshop Radboud University Nijmegen
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In many languages, pragmatic or discourse particles are a crucial means within linguistic communication. They are expressions that in one way or another indicate the speaker's assumptions, attitudes, communicative strategies and conversational goals in a particular discourse situation. They are typically also of crucial importance in establishing discourse coherence.

These expressions, however, are also well-known for both their cross-categorical and category-internal polyfunctionality (cf. Foolen 1996, Fischer 2006). The German particle *doch*, for instance, can function as a contrastive adverb, a modal particle or a response particle, and also within its modal use usually a distinction is made between different functions (cf. Foolen 2006, Karagjosova 2004, 2012). It is a notoriously difficult challenge for semantics/pragmatics to understand what exactly these functions are and, secondly, how they relate to each other.

It has by now become commonplace to assume that this polyfunctionality at least partly corresponds to different layers or dimensions of meaning: a particle can for example target the propositional content in one function, the speech act in another (e.g. Karagjosova 2004, Egg 2013 on modal particles in German). Other functions seem to pertain rather to the level of information-structure (e.g. those of focus particles (König 1991) and topic markers) or involve coherence relations between units of discourse (connective or text-structuring functions, as in e.g. Fraser 1999). While this reference to different layers of discourse often seems an intuitive way of thinking about the different usages, it also raises many important questions. These range from more methodological ones (what tests can we use to argue for particles working at a certain dimension?) to more fundamental ones (what structure do notions such as common ground and context need to have for an adequate description of particles?).

The goal of the present workshop is contribute to these central questions which have often been implicit in particle research. In this way we hope to arrive at a clearer picture of the dimensions of meaning in the context of particle research. We aim to bring together different perspectives on these matters, both from a more cognitive and a more formal semantic approach.

Topics of interest include:

- The theoretical foundations:
 - What kind of meaning dimensions and linguistic concepts are needed cross-linguistically for an adequate description of the different functions particles can fulfil (Fischer 2006 and Degand, Cornillie and Pietrandrea 2013)? How rich a notion of meaning do we need?
 - How do the notions of common ground (Clark 1996) and context (both linguistic and extra-linguistic) relate to each other? What structure do they need to have to be able to model the contribution of particles to a discourse?
- Tests: What arguments can be used to argue for a particular particle function within a particular dimension? What are the specific linguistic tests, clues or parameters that can be used?
- Scope: What does it mean for a particle to ‘have scope over’, ‘pertain to’ or ‘target’ a linguistic unit (e.g. NP, clause, sentence)? How does this relate to the different dimensions?
- Polysemy: How can we argue for either a monosemic, a polysemic or a heterosemic account of a certain particle (cf. Hansen 1998, Autenrieth 2002, papers in Fischer 2006), especially in view of the different dimensions of meaning? Is a particle by definition ambiguous if it works at more than one dimension?
- Classification of particles: Should we make a strict distinction between purely attitudinal/modal functions (in terms of e.g. speaker attitude or degrees of strength/certainty) and discourse-oriented (coherence) functions of particles (cf. papers in Degand, Cornillie and Pietrandrea 2013)? How is this distinction related to the questions of meaning dimensions and linguistic scope?
- Particles as a distinct class: How do particles that express evidence relate to expressions which are likewise interpreted in terms of evidence: evidential adverbs or evidentials expressing strength (Matthewson forthcoming)?
- Approaches: What do the differences between a cognitive and a formal linguistic approach to particles ultimately boil down to? Can the ideas in one approach be translated to the other and vice versa or are there unbridgeable differences? How do functional discourse-oriented notions such as discourse acts and moves (cf. Kroon 1995, Hengeveld and MacKenzie 2008) relate to notions such as sentence mood (Gutzmann 2015) or speech acts à la Searle (as in Karagjosova 2004, Egg 2013)?
- Special environments:
 - What does the co-occurrence of certain particles tell us? How can we tell whether one particle has scope over the other?

- What does it mean if a particle occurs in subordinated clauses (cf. Döring 2013, Gutzmann 2015)? What does this mean both in view of their scope and for the dimension at which they work?

Submission

We invite interested researchers to submit abstracts on any of the above-mentioned topics. The submission deadline is April 7, 2017.

The abstracts must be written in English and must not exceed two pages in PDF format, including examples and references.