

CHRISTOPH UNGER*

Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim

christoph.unger@ntnu.no

DEGREES OF PROCEDURE ACTIVATION AND THE GERMAN MODAL PARTICLES *JA* AND *DOCH* – PART 1

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Abstract

In this paper I argue that a unitary account of the modal and non-modal uses of the German particles *ja* and *doch* can be provided by appealing to essentially non-representational properties of the theory of procedural meaning in Relevance Theory (RT). According to Wilson (2011), procedural indicators such as *ja* and *doch* function by raising the activation level of cognitive procedures, increasing the likelihood that audiences following the RT comprehension heuristic will use these procedures. Partially following proposals by König (1997) and Blass (2000, 2014), I would like to posit that *ja* and *doch* trigger a procedure to raise the epistemic strength of the proposition conveyed. *Doch* triggers a second procedure in addition, a constraint on context selection to the effect that the proposition conveyed must be processed in a context containing its negation. Since raising the activation level of cognitive procedures can be done in degrees, I argue that the basic difference between modal and non-modal uses of *ja* and *doch* is a reflection of differences in the degree of activation level rise: non-modal uses of *ja* and *doch* raise the activation of the manifestness procedure to a high degree, giving rise to effects such as emphasis or contrast, whereas modal uses raise this procedure's activation level merely to some degree. As a result, modal *ja* and *doch* are uniquely suitable to mark propositions that do not need much evidential strengthening but would benefit from some such effect. This is most typically

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the case in mutually manifest assumptions that the communicator intends to use as premises in arguments. However, in some discourse contexts assumptions that are not mutually manifest may also fit this description. The prediction of this analysis is that the modal uses of *ja* and *doch* do not form a clearly delimited class; rather, borderline cases exist defying generalizations. I will present data from a qualitative corpus study that confirms these predictions.

1. Introduction

In this paper I want to look at the German modal particles *ja* and *doch* in order to address the question how their modal (1–2) and non-modal uses (3–7) may be related.

- (1) Morgen gibt es ja die neuen Angebotspreise im Geschäft, da ist es besser, wenn ich morgen einkaufen gehe. [Modal use]
‘Tomorrow, the new sales prices apply, so it is better that I go shopping tomorrow.’
- (2) Es ist doch kein Problem, wenn ich morgen erst einkaufen gehe. [Modal use]
‘(After all,) it’s not a problem if I go shopping only tomorrow.’
- (3) A: Kannst du morgen einkaufen gehen?
A: ‘Can you go shopping tomorrow?’
B: Ja. [Non-modal use as affirmative response particle]
B: ‘Yes.’
- (4) Heute betrachten wir noch eine weitere Theorie der Diskursanalyse. Ja, es ist verwirrend, so viele Theorien kurz hintereinander zu behandeln. [Non-modal use as emphasis marker]
‘Today, we look at yet another theory of discourse analysis. It is indeed confusing to deal with so many theories in a short time.’ (‘Yes, it is (indeed) confusing...’)
- (5) Ja, kannst du denn nicht MORGEN einkaufen gehen? [Non-modal use as question introducing particle]
‘Well, can’t you go shopping **tomorrow**?’
- (6) A: Kannst du denn nicht morgen einkaufen gehen?
A: ‘Can you not go shopping tomorrow?’
B: Doch, das kann ich auch. [Non-modal use as corrective response particle]
B: ‘Yes, I can do this, too.’
- (7) Es gibt eine verwirrende Anzahl von Theorien über Modalpartikeln. Doch um einen Überblick zu bekommen, reicht es, die zwei wichtigsten zu betrachten. [Non-modal use as contrastive particle]
‘There is a confusing number of theories about modal particles. But in order to gain an overview, it is enough to look at two of the most important ones.’

Virtually every scholar researching these particles states that the modal and non-modal uses of the respective particles are so different in nature that different types

of analyses are needed to explain them. In fact, a widespread view is that every modal particle has a non-modal homonym (see e.g. Abraham 1991). On the other hand, the same scholars point out that there are strong intuitions that the modal and non-modal uses of the particles in question are somehow related. Against this background, the question about the relation between the modal and non-modal uses of particles has become one of the most central ones for theoretical accounts to solve. But apart from Waltereit's (2001) polysemy account and Blass' (1990) relevance theoretic unitary account of the modal particle *auch*, no detailed answers to this question have been given so far. In a programmatic article, König (1997) argues that a unitary account of the relation between modal and non-modal uses of particles may be possible on the basis of relevance theory. However, previous relevance theoretic accounts of *ja* and *doch* have not yet advanced to the state where a solid unitary account could be provided (Blass 2000, 2014). In this paper I argue that a unitary account may be available by appealing to essentially non-representational properties of the theory of procedural meaning in relevance theory. According to Wilson (2011), procedural indicators such as *ja* and *doch* function by raising the activation level of cognitive procedures, increasing the likelihood that audiences following the relevance theoretic comprehension heuristic will use these procedures in the course of utterance interpretation. Following Blass (2000, 2014), I would like to suggest that *ja* and *doch* trigger a procedure to raise the manifestness of the proposition conveyed. *Doch* triggers a second procedure in addition, a constraint on context selection to the effect that the proposition conveyed must be processed in a context containing its negation. Since raising the activation level of cognitive procedures can be done in degrees, I argue that the basic difference between modal and non-modal uses of *ja* and *doch* can be accounted for in terms of differences in the degree to which the activation level is raised: non-modal uses of *ja* and *doch* raise the activation of the manifestness procedure to a high degree, whereas modal uses raise this procedure's activation level to a low degree. As a result, modal *ja* and *doch* are uniquely suitable to mark propositions that do not need much evidential strengthening but would benefit from some such effect. These properties are most typically present in mutually manifest assumptions that the communicator intends to use as premises in arguments. However, in some discourse contexts assumptions that are not mutually manifest may also fit this description.

This paper is organized as follows: in section 2 I will review previous approaches to modal particles in German, in particular considering their relation to the indication of common ground. In the next two sections, I will present data from qualitative corpus research on *ja* and *doch* in the *Deutsches Referenzkorpus* maintained at the Institut für Deutsche Sprache in Mannheim. In section 5, I introduce the central theoretical notions of procedural meaning and mutual manifestness. In section 6, I will develop my proposal for a unitary analysis of *ja* and *doch* in detail. I explain the details of the proposal in 6.1, compare it to other procedural accounts of modal particles in 6.2 and discuss predictions and linguistic evidence for these predictions in 6.3. I conclude with a summary of the main points and some suggestions for further experimental testing.

2. Modal particles in German

German (and other Germanic languages) has a set of particles with the following salient features: they occur in sentence internal position, i.e. after the finite verb and before the non-finite part of the verb (if there is one); they are typically unstressed in this position. The functions of these particles are particularly difficult to pin down: they are most often untranslatable into languages like English, their meaning cannot be described in conceptual terms, and they do not appear to affect the truth-conditions of the sentence uttered.

While this simplified characterization of salient properties provides a useful heuristic for identifying modal particles, König (1997) provides a fuller list of negative and positive criteria:

(8) Properties of modal particles

<i>Negative criteria</i> Modal particles...	<i>Positive criteria</i> Modal particles...
cannot occur pre-verbally	occur in the middle field
cannot be focused	occur before the rheme
cannot be questioned	occur after all pronominal elements
cannot be coordinated	occur only in some sentence moods
do not affect truth conditions	multiple modal particles may occur in one sentence
	occur mostly in spoken language

Particles with these properties have been called *modal particles* (Modalpartikeln) or *colouring particles* (Abtönpartikel). The particle *ja* is one of this class, and I will illustrate the properties of modal particles with *ja*:

- (9) Peter kann ja auch morgen einkaufen gehen.
 Peter can MP as.well tomorrow shopping go.
 'Peter can go shopping tomorrow as well.'

Example (9) shows that it is not possible to find a corresponding particle in English. Moreover, the translation seems fine without a literal rendering of *ja*. Whatever the effect of *ja* in German, it does not seem to be possible to replicate this in English with an explicit rendering.

Example (10) illustrates the syntactic position of *ja* in the middle field. The finite verbal element is underlined and the non-finite one is in italics:

- (10) a. Peter ist ja aus lauter Zerstreueung nach Hause *gegangen*.
 Peter is MP out. of much absent-mindedness to home went
 'Peter went home out of great absent-mindedness.'
 b. Peter ist ja nach Hause *gegangen* aus lauter Zerstreueung.
 c. *Peter ist nach Hause *gegangen* ja aus lauter Zerstreueung.
 d. *Peter ja ist nach Hause *gegangen*.
 e. Ja, Peter ist nach Hause *gegangen*.

Whereas some material such as the phrase *aus lauter Zerstreung* ('out of absent mindedness') may be right dislocated (particularly in spoken language), *ja* cannot move with it, as illustrated by the contrast between (10b) and (10c). Neither can *ja* move to a position before the finite verb, as shown in (10d). However, *ja* can occur in sentence initial position, but in this case the particle has a different function than the one it has in the middle field position. In (10e), for instance, *ja* has the response particle function and is rendered in English by 'yes'. (I will discuss the non-modal uses of *ja* in more detail below.)

That modal particles cannot be coordinated can be easily demonstrated in (11):

- (11) *Peter ist *ja und sogar* nach Hause gegangen.

The non-truth conditional nature of modal particles [pointed out first by Weydt (1969)] can be seen by the fact that they do not fall under the scope of logical operators. The attempt to negate whatever *ja* contributes to the meaning of the utterance results either in ungrammaticality (example 12c) or in failure: (12a) negates the proposition PETER WENT HOME and is equivalent to (12b).

- (12) a. Peter ist *ja* nicht nach Hause gegangen.
 b. Peter ist nicht nach Hause gegangen.
 c. *Peter ist nicht *ja* nach Hause gegangen.

The following examples show that *ja* does not fall under the scope of the conditional, either. Assuming that *ja* contributes the meaning that could be paraphrased as (13b), we can test whether *ja* in (13a) falls under the scope of the conditional operator by asking which of the conditions in (13c) must be true. Clearly, the truth of (13a) depends only on the truth of the premise *Peter went home*, not on the truth of (13b). Hence *ja* is non-truth conditional.

- (13) a. Wenn Peter *ja* nach Hause gegangen ist, dann haben wir nicht genug Mitspieler für Monopoly.
 'If Peter *MP* went home, then we don't have enough players for a monopoly game.'
 b. It is common knowledge that Peter went home.
 c. Wenn Peter nach Hause gegangen ist und das gemeinsames Wissen ist, dann haben wir nicht genug Mitspieler für Monopoly.
 'If Peter went home and it is common knowledge that Peter did so, then we don't have enough players for a monopoly game.'

Modal particles precede the rheme of the uttered sentence, as can be seen by the fact that the material that answers question (14a) occurs after the modal particle *ja* in (14b):

- (14) a. What did Peter do?
 b. Peter ist *ja* nach Hause gegangen.

Another property on the list in (8) is that modal particles follow all pronominals in the sentence. Consider (15): the only appropriate response to the question in (15a) is (15b).

- (15) a. A: Peter wollte doch unbedingt einmal die Queen sehen. Wir müssen
 A: Peter wanted MP by.all.means once the queen see. We must
 ihm sagen, dass morgen eine einmalige Gelegenheit dafür ist.
 him tell that tomorrow a singular opportunity for.this is.
 A: 'Peter desperately wanted to see the Queen once. We must tell him that tomorrow there will be a unique opportunity for this.'
- b. B: Peter hat sie ja schon gesehen.
 B: Peter has her MP already seen.
 B: Peter has already seen her once.
- c. B: ??Peter hat ja sie schon gesehen.
 d. B: ??Peter hat ja schon sie gesehen.

The examples in (16) show two points: first, it is not possible to use any of these interrogatives to question the unique contribution of *ja*. In particular, neither (16a) nor (16b) could be used to ask *Is it common knowledge that Peter went home*. Second, these examples show that *ja* cannot occur in interrogative sentences. This illustrates the fact that modal particles are restricted in their distribution to certain sentence moods.

- (16) a. ??Ist Peter *ja* nach Hause gegangen?
 Did Peter *MP* go home?
 b. ??Weisst du, ob *ja* Peter nach Hause gegangen ist?
 Do you know whether *MP* Peter went home?
- (17) a. Peter ist *ja auch* nach Hause gegangen.
 b. Dass Peter nach hause gegangen ist, ist *doch aber auch* wirklich die Höhe!
 That Peter went home is really outrageous!

As Schoonjans (2013) discusses in detail, these criteria do not always deliver clear results. Consider, for instance, the criterion that modal particles are unstressed. While this is true for modal *ja* in declarative sentences, the same particle receives stress in imperatives:

- (18) Pass **ja** gut auf!
 Pay close attention!

Is this an instance of the modal use of *ja*? Abraham (1991) affirms this and includes this stressed *ja* in the class of modal particles, whereas Lindner (1991) does not. Gutzmann (2010) discusses these uses in detail and argues that they are indeed instances of modal uses. However, the stress they receive is not focal stress, rather it is an indicator for a *verum focus* operator, a kind of non-contrastive focus expressed on the finite verb or complementizer in German that puts the truth of the proposition expressed by the utterance in focus (Höhle 1992). In other words, these uses do not invalidate the criterion given in (8) that modal particles cannot be focused; some modal particles may in some uses receive stress, but this stress does not trigger contrastive or constituent focus interpretations.

Because of problems with the mechanical application of intensional criteria for modal particle identification, König (1997) argues that the class of modal particles is better characterized in extensional terms by listing its members. He suggests the following list of modal particles:

- (19) aber, auch, bloss, denn, doch, eben, eigentlich, einfach, halt, ja, mal, nur, ruhig, schon, vielleicht, wohl.

However, Schoonjans (2013) shows that an extensional characterization of modal particles is likewise problematic. He surveyed 11 studies of German modal particles published between 1975 and 2010 and found that only 8 particles are listed as modal particles in all of these publications, listed in (20). In total, these studies list the 21 particles in (21) as modal particles.¹

- (20) bloss, denn, doch, eben, ja, mal, nur, schon

- (21) aber, auch, bloss, denn, doch, eben, eh, eigentlich, einfach, etwa, erst, halt, ja, mal, nicht, nur, ruhig, schon, sowieso, vielleicht, wohl.

While this suggests some considerable disagreement about what elements the class of modal particles contains, a closer look at Schoonjans' survey reveals that among the works published since 1989 there appears to be a fairly good consensus that the class of modal particles contains the items on König's list in (19). Gutzmann (2009, 2010, 2015) cites the following list from Hartmann (1998: 660), which differs minimally from König's:

- (22) aber, auch, bloss, denn, doch, eigentlich, eben, etwa, einfach, erst, halt, ja, nun, mal, nur, schon, vielleicht, ruhig, wohl.

However, the list remains unstable as suggestions for adding items continue to be made [see, for instance, Pittner's (2009) detailed proposal to add *wieder* to the list of modal particles].

As König (1997: 57–58) points out, these lists of modal particles overlap with lists of other word classes and particle types:

- (23) a. Adjectives and adverbs: doch, etwa, vielleicht, wohl, einfach ruhig, mal, nun (nunal), halt, eben
 b. Focus particles: erst, auch, nur, bloss, schon
 c. Conjunction particles: aber, denn
 d. Response particles: ja, eben.

This overlap is widely regarded as resulting from the historical development of modal particles, which appear to be the end point of a grammaticalization process that started with words of different classes (Burkhardt 1994; König 1997: 58; Traugott 2007; Waltereit, Detges 2007; Pittner 2009; Zeevat, Karagjosova 2009). However,

¹ Burkhardt (1994) lists as many as 51 modal particles in German. However, most lists stay within the range of 15–20 items.

this way of looking at the class of modal particles raises the question of how these different particle classes are related. Is it really the case that a given item such as *ja* may be simultaneously a member of different word classes? Or are there several homonymous particles such as *ja* belonging to different word classes? Or are there merely several uses of particles, e.g. modal uses of *ja* and response word uses of the same particle?

One observation that has been taken to suggest a homonymy account of modal and non-modal particles is that the same particle can occur two or more times in a simple sentence as long as the two occurrences are not of the same type (e.g. Abraham 1991: 207). Diewald (2013: 21) gives the following example for *ja*:

- (24) *ja*, und dann kommt *ja* der grosse Balken, *ja*?
 JA, and then come JA the large beam, JA?
 ‘Okay, and then – we know that – comes the large beam, right?’

Although Diewald does not quote any co-text and does not describe any situational context for this example, one can easily imagine this sentence being uttered in a situation where the speaker (let’s call her Petra) and her addressee (let’s call him Michael) are in the process of putting up a pre-fabricated garden booth. Michael just asked whether they should execute a certain step in the instructions. Petra responds with (24). The first *ja* is used as the indication of an affirmative response (‘yes’). The continuation of the utterance expresses her statement that the next step would be to handle the large beam. *Ja* inside this sentence is a modal particle, indicating that Petra believes this statement to be common knowledge (presumably because Michael and Petra have discussed the instruction manual previously). The tag particle *ja* (with rising intonation), however, indicates that she is asking for reassurance whether her statement is in fact correct.²

Finally, a property of modal particles that is pointed out at least since Lütten’s (1979) study of *doch*, *ja* and *eben* is that the proposition(s) they operate on are to be taken as common ground, as uncontroversial among the communicators. Later studies claim that this is not only a property of some modal particles, but a property of modal particles as a class (Fischer 2006; Degand, Cornillie, Pietrandrea 2013; Repp 2013). Thus, in example (15b), *ja* indicates that the communicator assumes that it is common knowledge and uncontroversial between communicator and audience that Peter has already seen the Queen some time in the past (but that the audience needs to be reminded of this).

Having reviewed the properties of German modal particles in general, I will now turn to a closer examination of the properties of *ja* and *doch* in particular. Unless otherwise indicated, the data for this discussion is taken from the *Deutsches Referenzkorpus* maintained by the *Institut für Deutsche Sprache* in Mannheim.

² In some dialects, the tag question would be expressed with (phonological variants of) the expression *nicht wahr* rather than *ja*.

3. *Ja*

3.1 Sentence initial *ja*

3.1.1 Response particle

Ja can be used as a response particle to indicate that the communicator gives a positive answer to a question. Example (3), repeated here as (25), illustrates this use:³

- (25) A: Kannst du morgen einkaufen gehen?
 B: Ja. [Non-modal use as affirmative response particle]
 A: Can you go shopping tomorrow?
 B: Yes.

In the following example, the sentence introduced by *ja* can be understood as an indirect quotation of an answer given by the interviewee:

- (26) Die 50er Jahre. *Ja*, da brummte es im Quartier. Der Niedergang begann erst später – etwa 1995, “mit dem Aussterben der zweiten Mieter-Generation”, weiß Heimatpfleger Hartmut Alder.
 The 1950ies. Yes, it was lively in this neighborhood then. The decline started late – roughly in 1995 “with the dying out of the second generation of renters,” as local historian Hartmut Alder knows to report. (BRZ13/JAN.07109 Braunschweiger Zeitung, 19.01.2013, Ressort: SZ-Lok; *Hier steckt die Energie überall*)

This example is taken from a newspaper report on an interview with a local historian. As such it is clear that the second sentence conveys information that is indirectly attributed to historian Hartmut Alder, who is quoted verbatim in the third sentence.

Ja can also be used to respond to implicit questions. Consider the second instance of *ja* in (27):

- (27) Eigentlich heißt es ja “mit Speck fängt man Mäuse”. Ich könnte zu diesem Thema neuerdings beisteuern: Mit weißer Macadamia-Nuss-Schokolade fängt man Mäuse. Und zwar ganz schnell und unblutig. *Ja*, ich gestehe – wir hatten eine Maus im Haus.
 “The traditional saying is “one catches mice with bacon”. I could add to this theme: one catches mice with Macadamia nut chocolate. And this quickly and bloodless. Yes, I admit – we had a mouse in the house.” (BRZ13/JAN.06395 Braunschweiger Zeitung, 18.01.2013, Ressort: Helmstedt-Lokal)

In the first four sentences, the writer claims to know rather well that one can bait mice with a non-traditional bait such as Macadamia nut chocolate. This raises an implicit question: *How does the writer know? Did s/he have a mouse in the house to catch with this method?*, to which the writer responds positively with *Ja* ‘yes’.

This use of *ja* as a response particle to implicit questions raised in the discourse can become rather complex. In the following example, the implicit questions raised appear to be rhetorical:

³ This use is so well-known that I use an invented example for its conciseness.

- (28) Es ist einfach nur kalt. *Ja*, es ist Winter, und die momentane Wetterlage ist allemal besser als die herbstliche Dauerberieselung, die wir noch um Weihnachten hatten, aber ich präferiere dann doch Temperaturen jenseits der 20-Grad-Grenze.
 ‘It is simply only cold. *YES (MP)*, it is winter, and the present weather is certainly better than the constant dripping (of rain) in autumn, but I do prefer temperatures over the 20-degree-point.’ (BRZ13/JAN.06013 Braunschweiger Zeitung, 17.01.2013, Ressort: Helmstedt-Lokal)

The first sentence *Es ist einfach nur kalt* ‘It is just cold’ raises an implicit question such as *Is it not winter, and isn’t it good to have cold, winter-like weather?* Responding to this implicit question initially with *ja*, the writer agrees with statements behind these implicit rhetorical questions before elaborating on his or her complaints about the weather (after the connective *aber* ‘but’).

3.1.2 Question modifier

In example (29), the sentence starting with *Ja* does not answer an implicit question and cannot be understood as a response particle. Rather, it introduces an explicit question that in the writer’s opinion arises saliently in the discourse at this point:

- (29) Und Waschbären und womöglich noch andere Tiere wagen es doch tatsächlich sich in unseren Gärten zu bedienen oder kommen sogar in unsere Häuser. *Ja*, woran liegt das denn wohl? Vielleicht daran, dass die Menschen in ihrem Nicht-genug-kriegen-können wesentliche Teile der Erde bereits für sich in Anspruch genommen und für die Tiere nicht mehr genug freie, unvergiftete Natur übrig gelassen haben?
 ‘And racoons and even other animals dare indeed to help themselves to food in our gardens or even come into our houses. *MP*, what is the reason for this? Maybe because people in their unending crave for possession already have claimed large chunks of parts of the world and did not leave enough free, unpoisoned natural habitat for animals?’ (BRZ13/JAN.03491 Braunschweiger Zeitung, 10.01.2013, Ressort: BS-Leser; Wir müssen den Tieren ihren Lebensraum lassen)

Although *ja* introduces a question in (29), it does not by itself trigger the interrogative interpretation. This function is carried out by word order and intonation. Intuitively, *ja* gives more weight to the question, thereby raising the expectation that the answer to this question is regarded by the speaker as highly significant. What is important to notice is that *ja* contributes in some way to how the question is supposed to be understood and cannot be seen as a variant of a response particle use of *ja*. Since *ja* occurs sentence intially it is also not a modal use.

3.1.3 Re-assuring the audience about speaker’s belief in P

Sentence initial *ja* can be used to re-assure the audience that the communicator believes the proposition conveyed is true and encourages the audience to at least entertain it as possibly true. Consider (30):

- (30) Mir gab diese Begegnung sehr viel. *Ja*, man sieht sich im Leben meistens zweimal...
 ‘This meeting meant much to me. *Indeed (MP)*, one often meets twice in life...’
 (BRZ13/JAN.00691 Braunschweiger Zeitung, 03.01.2013, Ressort: WN-Lok; Zufällige Begegnung)

The statement introduced by *ja* has not been common ground before the utterance. Even when uttered, it is questionable whether the audience accepts it as true, so it is questionable whether it really becomes common ground. Nevertheless, the communicator claims to hold this belief and encourages the audience to do so, too.

Similarly in (31):

- (31) “Wir wissen schon seit langem, dass wir immer älter werden und keine jungen Mitglieder mehr zu uns in die Kyffhäuserkameradschaft dazustoßen. *Ja*, es ist traurig und sehr schmerzhaft, euch dies mitteilen zu müssen”, so Petzold, “wir kommen nicht umhin, unseren Verein auflösen zu müssen.”
 “We know already for a long time that we are becoming older and young people don’t join us anymore in the Kyffhäuser-club. *Yes (MP)*, it is sad and painful to announce this to you,” says Petzold, “but we cannot avoid having to dissolve our club.” (BRZ13/JAN.02198 Braunschweiger Zeitung, 08.01.2013, Ressort: Gifhorn-Lokal; Kyffhäuser in Jembke lösen sich auf)

The information marked by *ja* may have been (more or less weakly) common belief before the time of utterance – having been made manifest through the preceding text. But the main point is: the communicator guarantees the audience that he believes the proposition expressed.

Naturally, what is emphasized in the sense of made more certain has often been common ground already. But this is not always the case. Therefore it is obvious that *ja* may affect the evidential strength of an assumption or its salience. But whether it is already common ground does not matter.

What examples (29)–(31) have in common is that *ja* occurs sentence initially and its function cannot be reduced to or traced back to the use of *ja* as response particle. However, one difference should be noted as well: in spoken discourse, (29) is unstressed whereas in (30) and (31) the particle receives stress.

3.2 Sentence internal (middle field) *ja*

3.2.1 Colouring or modal use

As pointed out above, the typical modal use of *ja* is where the particle occurs in the syntactic middle field, after the finite verb and before the non-finite element of the verb, if there is one, and where the particle is unstressed in this position. Such modal uses of particles typically occur in material that is assumed to be common ground between communicator and audience. (32) is a typical example of such a modal use of *ja*:

- (32) Diese Jungs aus Turin rocken. Waste Pipes sind sympathisch, spielen gut und werden *ja* schon mal als die heimlichen Nachfolger von Led Zeppelin bezeichnet.
 ‘These boys from Turin rock. Waste Pipes are congenial, play well and are (MP) sometimes already called the secret successors of Led Zeppelin.’ (A09/JAN.00035 St. Galler Tagblatt, 03.01.2009, S. 34; Hin und Weg)

This example is from a concert review. The readers of such a review must be assumed to be interested in the particular kind of concert and therefore knowledgeable about famous bands. Such a readership must be assumed to be at least partially familiar with the idea that the band *Waste Pipes* are rumoured to be successors of a famous precursor. Hence the review author cannot pass on this information as something new. By using *ja*, the author gives a clue to the audience that she is not advancing this information as something new, but rather expects the audience to have encountered it before. In other words, *ja* indicates that the sentence provides information that is presented as a reminder of its relevance in the text.⁴

Blass (2000) points out that this common ground indicating function of *ja* may be exploited for argumentative, perhaps even manipulative, purposes. She provides the following example from the weekly magazine *Der Spiegel*, from an interview with the politician Oskar Lafontaine:

- (33) S: Der Ansturm billiger Arbeitskräfte aus Spanien, Portugal und Griechenland
the storm cheap labour from Spain Portugal and Greece

land beginnt gerade erst. Wie wollen Sie die Billigkonkurrenz stoppen?
starts just only how want you the cheap-competition stop

‘The storm of cheap labour from Spain, Portugal and Greece has just begun. How do you want to stop the cheap competitors?’

L: Jedenfalls nicht durch eine Senkung der deutschen Löhne auf
in-any-case not by a reduction of-the German wages to

das portugiesische Niveau. Die Befürworter einer solchen Strategie
the Portuguese niveau The supporters of-a such strategy

fordern Lohnsenkungen ja nie für sich, sondern immer
demand wage-deductions of.course never for themselves, but always

nur für andere.
only for others

‘Under no circumstances by lowering the German wages to the Portuguese level. Those who are in agreement with that demand this lowering never for themselves, of course.’ [Example 17 from Blass (2000: 50)]

Many people would not agree with the claim that all who propose wage cuts propose this only for others, and L knows this, still he uses this claim as an uncontroversial

⁴ As Kaja Borthen pointed out to me in personal communication, if the audience is able to access a contextual assumption to the effect that *Only ‘Led Zeppelin’ is another band making music of the same genre and that could be described as congenial and good playing*, then they could inferentially anticipate the idea that *Someone might call ‘Waste Pipes’ as the secret successors of ‘Led Zeppelin’*. In this way, the proposition conveyed in the clause containing *ja* may be accessible to the audience without being known to them. The relevance theoretic notion of *manifestness* introduced below applies to such potentially inferrable information as well as to information being known (i.e. metally represented as facts) and is therefore broader and arguably in a better position to cover the various ways in which information may be said to be common ground.

assumption supporting his argument. *Ja* indicates that the audience should entertain the proposition expressed as if it were mutually manifest.

The main feature of these manipulative uses of *ja* is that a proposition (an idea) is presented as if it were common ground that the audience does not necessarily subscribe to. This is a case of common ground accommodation, as it were. However, there are also uses of *ja* with propositions that are not common ground and that cannot be described as inviting (or tricking) the audience into assuming this information to be common ground even though they disagree with it. Consider (34):

- (34) Ob ihm das nie Probleme bereitet habe, diese doch eher mässige Körpergrösse, wollen wir wissen. «Ursprünglich wollte ich *ja* Opernsänger werden», sagt er. «Dafür war ich aber definitiv zu klein. Dann hat mir Fred Tanner, ein ganz toller und baumlanger Schauspiellehrer, gesagt: «Du kannst mit Deiner Grösse so viele Rollen spielen, die mir verwehrt sind.» Und genau diese Erfahrung habe ich gemacht.»
 ‘We wanted to know whether this has never caused him any problems, this rather modest body size. “Originally I wanted (*MP*) to become an opera singer”, he said. “For this, I really was too small. Then Fred Tanner, a wonderful acting teacher tall like a tree, told me: “given your size, you can play so many roles that I just can’t fit.” And this is exactly the experience that I made.” (A09/JAN.00054 St. Galler Tagblatt, 03.01.2009, S. 25; Der Vielseitige)

The information in the sentence marked with *ja* is not already common ground. This might, of course, be a case of the manipulative use of *ja*, attempting to accommodate something that is not common ground as indeed mutually believed. But the communicator does not attempt to present the information in the clause with *ja* as a true and agreed premise in an argument. A speaker checking for whether this information is actually ‘agreed’ will not feel deceived – rather, the impression is that indeed this is new information which is interesting to know. A vigilant audience will not feel deceived – therefore, analyzing this example along the lines of the manipulative *ja* [as in (33) above] is not the right approach.

This example shows that claims about a common ground indicating function of modal particles are overstated. Not all modal uses of *ja* indicate common ground. This is in line with König’s (1997: 69–70) observations on examples (35) and (36):

- (35) Dein Mantel ist *ja* ganz schmutzig.
 Your coat is *MP* completely dirty.
- (36) Paul hat *ja* noch gar nicht bezahlt.
 Paul has *MP* not yet payed.

(35) can be used discourse initially to point out something to the addressee that he has not noticed yet (e.g. the back of the addressee’s coat is dirty and the speaker has noticed it). By exclaiming (35), the speaker alerts the addressee to this fact, and (36) can be said by someone newly discovering while checking payment records that Paul has not payed yet (again, this would be an exclamation).

A noteworthy variant of the modal use of *ja* is its use in concessions:

- (37) Es ist *ja* schön und gut, wenn die High-Society der Pädagogikdirektoren und Fachleute diskutiert, ob der naturwissenschaftliche Unterricht phänomenologisch und anwendungsfreundlicher gestaltet werden muss, damit sich endlich mehr junge Menschen für die Ingenieur-Laufbahn entscheiden.
 'It is (*MP*) all well and good that the high society of directors of pedagogy and experts discuss whether teaching science should be approached in a phenomenological way and in a more application-aware manner in order that more young people decide to become engineers.' (A09/JAN.00056 St. Galler Tagblatt, 03.01.2009, S. 22; Pisa und die andere Realität)

It is expected that the text continues with *Aber...* *Ja* marks a concession, and a concession is by nature something that is mutually believed.

3.3 Summary

Ja has a variety of non-modal uses, including that of response particle and question modifier. Non-modal *ja* can also have a kind of emphasis function by re-assuring the audience that the communicator believes the proposition expressed and encourages the audience to do the same. Modal uses of *ja* often indicate that the proposition conveyed is common ground, or that the audience should treat this proposition as common ground. However, there are modal uses of *ja* that carry genuinely new information rather than pointing to common ground.

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