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"Same same but different"¹ – Modal particles, discourse markers and the art (and purpose) of categorization

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1. Introduction

Like other grammatical categories and/or semantic domains such as, for example, modality and evidentiality, or aspect and tense, modal particles and discourse markers have been a major testing ground for linguistic categorization. As the title of this volume *Discourse markers and modal particles: two sides of the same coin?* explicitly spells out, the question is whether and on which criteria modal particles (MPs) and discourse markers (DMs) should be treated as one category, as two distinct categories, or as two subclasses (with possibly different hierarchical status) of one more abstract category. In order to solve these problems concerning the categorial relationship between DMs and MPs some preliminary issues have to be decided upon first. These are:

¹ The motto in the title is inspired by the film *Same same but different* directed by Detlev Buck in 2009.

1. Are DMs and MPs seen as cross-linguistically relevant – universal – categories or as language-specific ones?
2. What are the essential characteristics evoked for a definition or classification?
Functional or formal? Onomasiological or semasiological?
3. Are these criteria used equally for both classes? Or is there a difference in the classificational bases between MPs and DMs?

Taking into account prior research, the first part of this paper is devoted to these issues. It will become obvious that DM and MP are labels for linguistic phenomena which refer to different layers of linguistic structure and therefore are non-comparable: The term DM tends to be defined via universally relevant functional (i.e. onomasiological) criteria, the term MP usually refers to a language-specific word class which is typically defined via formal, i.e. semasiological, as well as functional characteristics. Seen from this angle, the guiding question of this volume, i.e. whether MPs and DMs are two sides of the same coin, is slightly misleading: DM and MP are coins belonging to different currencies. As such they may be exchanged against each other but they cannot be integrated into one valuta system. Nevertheless, as German is a language displaying DMs as well as MPs, the paper undertakes the task of disentangling these items for German, and suggests a language-specific classification which, however, may pave the way for cross-linguistic categorization. While this task is undertaken in the second half of this contribution (see sections 3 to 5), a quick glance at some German data (typical oral utterances overheard in joint activity situations like constructing wood toys together) is in place here for orientation.

(1) *Es soll halt schwimmen.*

It is meant HALT to swim.

'The thing is, it is meant to swim.'

(2) *und dann kommt der große Balken, gell?*

and then comes the large beam, GELL?

'and then comes the large beam, am I right?'

It is common knowledge that while *halt* in (1) is used as a modal particle, *gell* in (2) is an instance of a discourse marker (for definitions see next sections). Furthermore, there is agreement that many items functioning as MPs or DMs in German display polyfunctionality and/or heterosemy, i.e. they change their function and their word class membership depending on context and distribution. Thus, the type *ja*, which appears three times in sentence (3), is an instance of this polyfunctionality and heterosemy as it is used in different functions and/or with different word class membership in each of its three tokens. The first token shows *ja* as a DM, more precisely a turn-taking signal (speaker signal), the second token represents the modal particle *ja*, and the third token again is a DM, this time a turn-final signal.

(3) *ja, und dann kommt ja der große Balken, ja?*

JA, and then comes JA the large beam, JA?

'Okay, and then – we know that – comes the large beam, right?'

Thus, we witness a complex situation in German. On one hand, as *halt* and *gell* in (1) and (2) show, German has clear-cut, prototypical examples of each class which do not have heterosemes (i.e. which are lexicalized/inventarized only as MP or DM respectively). This is a fact that strongly supports the claim for two distinct categories in the language. On the other hand, there are various intermediate, polyfunctional and heteroseme cases (see *ja* in 3), which call for a concept of flexible categorization. Moreover, in addition to synchronic complexity,

the diachronic data of the items in question display a strong tendency towards grammaticalization, and thus we are confronted with all the accompanying phenomena of trans- and intercategoryality.² While sections 3 and 4 are devoted to the features of German MPs as a distinct word class and grammatical category with a language-specific correlation of functional and formal characteristics, section 5 will briefly discuss data on intercategoryality. Taken together, this discussion leads on to suggesting language-specific flexible categorization founded on cross-linguistic categories. This plea will be supported by more general reflections on the art and purpose of linguistic categorization in the final section 6.

2. Discourse markers – definitions and earlier research

An important first step towards clarifying the notions of discourse markers and – to a lesser extent – modal particles is made in the collective volume edited by Fischer in 2006.³ Fischer herself states that “there is surprisingly little overlap in the different definitions” (Fischer 2006: 2) and an enormous “diversity of views regarding which items should be considered, how they should be labelled, which functions they fulfil, and which units they act upon” (p. 7). She specifies this observation as follows:

Moreover, the studies available so far are hardly comparable; the approaches vary with respect to very many different aspects: the language(s) under consideration, the items taken into account, the terminology used, the functions considered, the problems focussed on, and the methodologies employed. (Fischer 2006: 1)

² For the diachronic development of modal particles, which is not discussed here, see Diewald 2006, 2008, Diewald & Ferraresi 2008, Diewald, Kresic & Smirnova 2009.

³ For recent discussion also cf. Degand & Vandenberg (eds) 2011.

As the topic of the present volume shows, this situation has not changed substantially since then. Therefore, it is necessary to briefly discuss earlier definitions and to indicate which one is chosen here. As discourse markers are more widely disputed than modal particles, it is useful to start with the former. Following Fischer, we may discern two broad “schools” in the field: One school restricts the term “discourse marker” to items with a text-connective function that are syntactically integrated, i.e. “hosted” by a sentential matrix. The second school regards discourse markers as non-integrated material, independent of syntactic structure, but bound to utterance structure.⁴ Their defining function is discourse management, i.e. they connect non-propositional components of communicative situations.⁵

Fraser, a proponent of the first position, defines discourse markers as follows:

To summarize, I have defined DMs as a pragmatic class, lexical expressions drawn from the syntactic classes of conjunctions, adverbials, and prepositional phrases. With certain exceptions, they signal a relationship between the segment they introduce, S2, and the prior segment, S1. They have a core meaning which is procedural, not conceptual, and their more specific interpretation is ‘negotiated’ by the context, both linguistic and conceptual. There are two types: those that relate aspects of the explicit message conveyed by S2 with aspects of a message, direct or indirect, associated with S1; and those that relate the topic of S2 to that of S1. (Fraser 1999: 950)

⁴ The criterion of syntactic or topological integration is a complex one as it depends on language-specific features as well as on the syntactic theory adhered to. Anticipating explanations in the rest of this paper, it may be stated that – as far as German is concerned – modal particles are topologically and syntactically integrated into the sentence (cf. section 3), whereas there are no comparable positional restrictions for discourse markers. For a detailed discussion of this issue see also Fischer & Alm (this volume).

⁵ Cf. Fischer (2006: 8): “[...] on the one hand, there are those items that constitute parts of utterances, such as connectives; on the other, there are completely unintegrated items that may constitute independent utterances such as feedback signals or interjections.”

This view, which explicitly confines DMs to *anaphoric items, i.e. to items pointing backward in the text*, is affirmed by Fraser (2006: 191).⁶ In the present volume, Cuenca follows this definition:⁷

It is hardly controversial that conjunctions (e.g. *and, or, but*) are discourse markers. Conjunctions are linking words that indicate grammatical relationship (subordination and coordination) and propositional meanings (addition, disjunction, contrast, concession, cause, consequence, condition, purpose, comparison, time, place, manner). They typically introduce clauses in compound sentences. (Cuenca, this volume)

According to this approach *so* in the following example, which is uttered in the context of scheduling a business meeting, is classified as a typical discourse marker:

- (4) *mdmr 3 06: yes; I'm free two to five on Wednesday, so how 'bout meeting three to five?* (quoted from Fischer 2006: 8)

As in this view discourse markers appear as syntactically integrated text connectives of propositionally relevant entities, the modal particles of German, which share this property (see section 3), must be regarded as a sub-group of DMs of school 1, i.e. on a par with conjunctions, connective adverbials, and other text-connective devices,⁸ whereas items with

⁶ For diverging positions see also Fischer & Alm (this volume), Squartini (this volume), Aijmer (this volume) and Valdmets (this volume).

⁷ A similar, though not identical position is held by Lewis 2006 who lists items like *well, I mean, so, in fact, though, of course, anyway, actually, on the other hand* as members of the group of discourse markers (2006: 43). Her definition, which is language-specific for English, is as follows: "English discourse marker in the approach described here is a label for an expression that combines the semantics of discourse-relational predications with syntactic dependency on a clausal host and low informational salience. Discourse markers are defined by these discourse-semantic, syntactic, and information-structural parameters" (Lewis 2006: 44).

⁸ In section 4 it will be expounded that the type of backward pointing achieved by MPs is different from that of truly anaphorical devices insofar as MPs point back to non-expressed propositional and illocutionary entities which are assumed as given, can be interpolated, and are variants of the proposition or speech act containing the MP.

discourse-organizational functions (which are defined as discourse markers by the second school) are excluded. As a label for a super-ordinate category, incorporating both text-connective and discourse-organizational items (i.e. DMs as defined by school 1 and DMs as defined by school 2), Fraser (2006: 189) suggests the term “pragmatic markers”.

The alternative solution offered by school 2 takes the term “discourse” to refer to dialogic interaction, and thus defines discourse markers as linguistic elements that fulfill discourse-organizational functions, i.e. the management of conversation. DMs seen as are elements that “relate items of discourse to other items of discourse” (Diewald 2006: 406). Squartini (this volume), who shares this view and links it to the notion of “conclusivity”, speaks of discourse markers “strictu sensu”.⁹

Diewald (2006: 408) goes on to expound that discourse markers “relate non-propositional discourse elements which are not textually expressed, [and which are] syntactically non-integrated, i.e., [have] no syntactically fixed position [and thus] no constituent value”. In other words, DMs are prosodically, syntactically, and semantically independent. A similar view on the functions of discourse markers is expressed in Hansen.¹⁰ As this quote is very illuminating, it is given in full length:

Like many others working in this area, I define discourse markers in primarily functional-pragmatic, rather than formal-syntactic terms. According to my definition, the role played by linguistic items functioning as discourse markers is nonpropositional and metadiscursive, and their functional scope is in general quite variable.

The role of markers is, in my view, to provide instructions to the hearer on how to

⁹ He continues with the observation that the definition given by Diewald 2006 is “rephrased by Detges & Waltereit (2009: 44) with their characterization of discourse markers as elements denoting a ‘two-place relationship’”.

¹⁰ See also Fischer, who points out that the various functions fulfilled by DMs in this reading of the term “concern domains such as the sequential structure of the dialogue, the turn-taking system, speech management, interpersonal management, the topic structure, and participation frameworks” (Fischer 2006: 9); cf. also Schiffrin 2006.

integrate their host utterance into a developing mental model of the discourse in such a way as to make that utterance appear optimally coherent. This means that markers have connectivity (in a wide sense) as at least part of their meaning. Importantly, however, connectivity is not limited to relations between neighbouring utterances or utterance parts, and the notion of a ‘developing mental model of the discourse’ is not constituted by language only – the context (situational and cognitive) is an essential part of it, and the connective role of discourse markers may therefore pertain to relations between the host utterance and its context in this wider, nonlinguistic sense. (Hansen 2006: 25)

This description is highly compatible with the approach suggested here. It should be noted that Hansen uses the criterion of syntactic (non-)integratedness in a general way as she speaks of integration of DM into their *host utterance*, which is not a syntactic but a discourse pragmatic type of segment.

As to the connective function pragmatic markers in general are acknowledged to share, it is referred to in the present paper as *indexical or relational function*. It is a pointing relation between an origo (a starting point), and a target, i.e. the entity pointed to. As such – as an indexical relation – it always is a *two-place relation* no matter whether the target is expressed in the linguistic string or not.

DMs “strictu sensu” as defined by school 2 are independent of syntactic structure; their scope is not the sentence, not the clause, and not (only) the speech act, but the utterance. They may appear utterance initial, utterance final, utterance internal, or independently of any utterance. Examples for discourse markers in this sense are *gell* in (5), which repeats example (2), *obwohl* in (6), and *aber* in (7):

(5) *und dann kommt der große Balken, gell?*

and then comes the large beam, GELL?

‘and then comes the large beam, *am I right?*’

(6) *Glaubst du, daß er das Spiel gewinnen wird? Obwohl – mir kann's ja egal sein.*

Do you think he'll win the game? OBWOHL – I don't care.

'Do you think he'll win the game? *Well, anyway* – I don't care.'

(Zifonun, Hoffmann and Strecker 1997: 2316)

(7) *K: und das wird dann da so seitlich draufgeschraubt oder?*

‘and that's going to be screwed there to the side this way, isn't it?’

I: ja genau, aber mach das erstmal so.

yes exactly, ABER do it this way first.

‘yes exactly, *but* do it this way first.’

(Sagerer et al. 1994, quoted from Diewald and Fischer 1998)

The turn-final DM *gell* in (5), an instance for the sub-group of turn-taking signals, asks for agreement and initiates the transition of the turn from the present speaker to the hearer. The correction signal *obwohl* in (6) has the function of withdrawing the illocutionary force of the previous utterance and introducing the following segment as a justification for this withdrawal. The domain of *aber* in (7), finally, is the thematic plane of discourse. The first line renders the first interlocutor's (K) question concerning the next step in the common interaction (constructing a toy airplane), the second interlocutor (I) responds to that, and in using *aber* relates his or her utterance to the preceding utterance of the partner, simultaneously indicating that he or she wants to change the topic (cf. Diewald & Fischer 1998: 87). Finally, (8) gives an example for a DM that has utterance status itself, thus displaying the limiting case of zero realization of a host.

- (8) A: *hast Du?* B: *ja.*
A: 'got it?' B: 'yes.'

The large variety of functions of DMs provides criteria for establishing sub-groups like response signals, segmentation signals, hesitation markers, etc. As to their morphological shape, discourse markers are very variable, including non-lexicalized material (like interjections), particles, and syntactic strings (like *I think*) of various size. In German, among the most frequent discourse markers are items such as *ach, äh, ähm, also, gut, hm, ja, nee, nein, oh* and *okay* (Fischer & Johantokrax 1995, Diewald & Fischer 1998).

Summarizing the position of the second school, discourse markers are defined as indexical elements relating items of discourse to other items of discourse. Their indigenous functional domain is the expression of those types of connections and interrelations that are essential to and distinctive of spoken dialogic communication. They point to organizational and structural features as well as to chunks of the non-linguistic situation and environment; they take care of the thematic structure, and they control the turn-taking system and other aspects of speech management.

The definition of school 2 has the advantage of taking the notion of *discourse* literally and of using it to set off the group of markers operating on the interactional dialogic plane from markers for text-connective (ana- and cataphoric) functions. The definition of DM according to school 2 calls for a further terminological convention that will be followed in the rest of the paper. While DMs are discourse relational items as defined by school 2, the group of items and functions called DM by school 1 is called *text-connective markers (TCM)*. I refrain from inventing a cover term for both classes ("pragmatic markers" may do, though it carries misleading associations).

It should have become obvious that the functional commonalities of all elements discussed here – DM as seen by school 1, and DM as seen by school 2 – are their indexical or relational potential. This is the feature shared by both groups. It is the criterion by which they are *the same*. They may be distinguished, though, by the domains to which this indexical potential is applied. For one group, this is the textual, propositional, conceptual domain, and for the other group, it is the communicative, dialogic, non-propositional domain. It is this feature by which they are *different*.

As the definitions of both groups rely on the functional, onomasiological feature of indexicality, they have to be judged as universal labels that do not make any claim as to language-specific realization and categorization. The functions of communication management as well as textual coherence may be fulfilled by a vast number of linguistic categories and constructions. Consequently, the extension of each class of DM – no matter whether it is defined according to school 1 or to school 2 – encompasses linguistic items of all types of formal appearance (from individual word classes via multi word constructions to non-lexical material).

The formal criterion of syntactic integratedness – though being semasiological – is universal, too. It correlates with the functional criterion, and supplies an additional means of discerning both classes.

This provides us with a first stable dividing line between (a) syntactically non-integrated items with discourse connective (non-propositional) functions, and (b) syntactically integrated items with connective functions on the propositional, textual plane.

Now, how about modal particles? They are syntactically integrated and point to propositional entities (see next section), i.e. they obviously – at least at first sight – belong among group 2 (TCMs). This means that we are not able to set up a direct, immediate opposition between MPs and DM, as MPs are a sub-class of TCM.

Furthermore, as mentioned in the introduction, MPs typically are defined as a language-specific word class (for its features, again, see next section), while DMs as well as TCMs are defined by universal criteria (be they functional or formal). Thus, we are dealing with classes on completely different theoretical levels. We are dealing with different valuta, which cannot be subject to one homogeneous classification. Due to this, we also do not yet have a criterion to single out MPs from the class of TCM, and make them visible against the other classes united in the universal class of TCM. The next section is devoted to exactly this task. It provides evidence for establishing a language-specific (German) class of MPs in contrast to other language-specific classes of non-inflecting word categories like conjunctions, connective adverbials, scalar particles etc., which are all on duty for specific functions in the universal domains of TCM as well as DM.

3. The modal particles of German as a word class

The MPs of German have been of heightened interest to linguists in recent decades. In present-day German, there are about 40 items which are generally acknowledged to belong to the class of MPs either as core members or as peripheral members. The core group consists of the following 15 extremely frequent items: *aber, auch, bloß, denn, doch, eben, eigentlich, etwa, halt, ja, mal, nur, schon, vielleicht, wohl* (Gelhaus 1998: 379, Helbig and Buscha 2002: 421ff.).¹¹ Peripheral members are more numerous and – due to ongoing grammaticalization – typically do not (yet) display all features and functions found in the prototypical members of the category (Diewald 2007: 118). The following items are frequently mentioned as participants of this group: *fein, ganz, gerade, glatt, gleich, einfach, erst, ruhig, wieder*.

¹¹ A similar list, without *eigentlich* and *wohl*, is given in Helbig & Buscha (2002: 421ff.). Weydt & Hentschel (1983: 4) refer to the core group by the label “Abtönungspartikeln im engeren Sinne”, and exclude *einfach, erst* and *ruhig*. Zifonun, Hoffmann, Strecker [et al.] (1997: 59) count the regional particle *man* among the core group.

Membership of a peripheral candidate in the class of MPs can be tested via its replaceability by core items.

In the present volume, a number of articles deal with modal particles in languages other than German, e.g. in Catalan (Cuenca), in Italian and French (Squartini), in Swedish (Aijmer; Fischer & Alm), in Dutch, Danish and Norwegian (all three treated in Aijmer). It is worth noting that the majority of them refer to the research tradition on German modal particles, and most prominently so when the class of modal particles is defined explicitly and with some rigor. In the light of the results produced by this strong tradition of research (see below) we may assert that there is a broad and substantial understanding concerning the core features of this class as well as its core members. Peripheral members of the class, which are in the process of grammaticalization, i.e. of developing towards a particular grammatical function, by necessity display intercategoryal behaviour, and it is not surprising that there exist different judgements on the degree of development of single items by different researchers (cf. e.g. Schoonjans (this volume) for a discussion of gradience and instances of non-complete realization of prototypical features).

Thus, it is useful to take a closer look at the classification of modal particles in German, embedded into a quick survey of non-inflecting word classes. As is generally known “[a]mong non-inflecting linguistic items, membership in a specific word class is primarily defined via functional criteria, with concomitant morpho-syntactic features providing additional criteria” (Diewald 2006: 406). A fine-grained classification of non-inflected, particle-like words in German is suggested in Zifonun, Hoffmann, Strecker [et al.] (1997:66f.) with alternative terminology given in the first column (my translation; see also Diewald 2007: 119).

Category label (alternative label)	Central feature	Examples
Abtönungspartikel (Modalpartikel)	erwartungs-/wissensbezogen 'refers to knowledge and expectations'	<i>eben, vielleicht, ja</i>
Gradpartikel (Fokuspartikel)	Gesagtes gradierend 'grades what is being expressed'	<i>ausgerechnet, bereits, sogar, vor allem</i>
Intensitätspartikel (Steigerungspartikel)	Eigenschaft spezifizierend ,specifies characteristic feature'	<i>recht, sehr, ungemein, weitaus</i>
Konnektivpartikel (Rangierpartikel)	relationale Integration von Satz / K[ommunikativer] M[inimaleinheit] 'relational integration of sentence / communicative basic unit'	<i>erstens, allerdings, dennoch, indessen, sonst, zwar</i>
Modalpartikel (Modalwort)	Sachverhaltsgeltung spezifizierend 'specifies degree of factuality of proposition'	<i>bedauerlicherweise, sicherlich, vielleicht</i>
Negationspartikel	Sachverhaltsgeltung negierend 'negates proposition'	<i>nicht, gar nicht</i>

Table 1: Classification of particle items according to Zifonun, Hoffmann, Strecker [et al.]

(1997: 66f.) [my translation]

Though group membership is not always easy to decide upon, the classification provides us with an indispensable grid for investigating these elements further. Most grammars of German take into account that among the class of particles the so-called modal particles form a distinct subclass. It is not possible here to fully discuss the criteria for singling out the other classes of particles, but it is worth devoting some space to the *standard criteria for defining modal particles*, which typically are given as a list containing the following, widely acknowledged features (cf. Helbig & Buscha 2002: 421ff., Helbig 1994, Weydt & Hentschel 1993, Hentschel & Weydt 2002, Zifonun, Hoffman, Strecker [et al.] 1997: 59, König 1997: 58, Möllering 2004: 21-39):

a) Modal particles are non-inflecting. Lexemes functioning as modal particles do not inflect even if their heterosemes do. This is a feature modal particles share with all other particles of German.

b) Modal particles have heterosemes in other word classes. This applies to all modal particles of German (with the exception of *halt*). Among the word classes modal particles are heterosemes of are conjunctions, focus and scalar particles, so-called modal words (Modalwörter), adverbs and adjectives. Thus *aber* in (9) is a modal particle, *aber* in (10) is a conjunction; *schon* in (11) is a particle, while in (12) it is a temporal adverb (Helbig & Buscha 2002: 425ff.):

(9) *Das ist aber eine Überraschung.*

That is ABER a surprise

‘That is a surprise, *isn’t it.*’

(10) *Ich würde gerne kommen, aber ich habe Grippe und kann nicht aus dem Haus.*

‘I would love to come, *but* I have got the flu and cannot leave the house.’

(11) *Das ist schon eine Gemeinheit.*

That is SCHON a dirty trick.

‘That is a dirty trick, *to be sure*.’

(12) *Schon sind wir fertig.*

‘We are done *already*.’

c) Modal particles are obligatorily unstressed. Most authors (see however Meibauer 1994) hold that modal particles per definition are unstressed, and consequently classify stressed items as heterosemes to modal particles (i.e. as adverbs, focus particles etc.; cf. Helbig 1994, Thurmair 1989). This discussion will not be taken up here.

d) Modal particles do not have constituent value or phrasal value. They can neither be used as sentential equivalents, nor can they appear in the first position of a German V-2 sentence. They cannot be coordinated or questioned. These features separate them from neighboring non-inflecting classes like adverbs and modal words.

e) Modal particles are combinable. Though they cannot be coordinated, they may be serialized, whereby complex rules of combination and order apply (Thurmair 1989). In these combinations, the item more to the left always has scope over the item(s) to the right. An example is given below:

- (13) *Hast du denn vielleicht mal die Suppe probiert?* (Zifonun, Hoffma, Strecker [et al.] 1997: 59)

Have you DENN VIELLEICHT MAL tasted the soup?

‘Do you happen to just for once have tasted the soup?’

f) Modal particles are restricted to the middle field of the German sentence (Thurmair 1989: 25-32, Abraham 1990), that is to the right of the finite verb in V-2 position and to the left of the right sentence bracket (see Fischer & Alm (this volume) for further details). Within the middle field, they may appear in various slots, as illustrated in the following sentence, where each potential MP-slot is indicated by bracketed *ja*.

- (14) *Mit einem Karateschlag hat (ja) Frau Müller (ja) gestern (ja) im Büro (ja) den Schreibtisch des Abteilungsleiters (ja) in zwei Hälften zerlegt.*

With a carate blow has (JA) Mrs Müller (JA) yesterday (JA) at the office (JA) the desk of the department head (JA) into two parts knocked.

‘As we all/both know, Mrs Müller knocked the desk of the department head into two parts yesterday at the office.’

While numerous studies work towards an explanation of this fact, there is still no satisfactory final solution.¹² It is important to note, though, that the middle field criterion is a robust and testable criterion for class membership as it separates MPs from all other non-inflecting word classes, i.e. from conjunctions, adverbs, discourse marking particles, modal adverbs etc. None of the latter ones are subject to the same restrictions: All other non-inflecting items either are non-restricted to a particular field, or may appear in any constituent position (adverbs), or do have other restrictions (e.g. conjunctions), or are syntactically non-integrated to begin with

¹² Cf. Abraham 1991, Thurmair (1989: 29ff.), Brandt [et al.] (1992: 73ff.), König (1997: 58), Möllering 2004.

(DM, see section 2). Thus, the restriction to the middle field is an essential criterion, and all items looking like an MP, but being located outside the middle field, are to be treated as heterosemes of that MP.

g) Modal particles very often display an affinity with a particular sentence type, i.e. either with structural types, or with illocutionary types, or with complex constructions, called *Satzmodi* (sentential moods). For example, the MP *aber* is restricted to sentences with exclamative and directive functions; *eben*, *halt* and *ja* are confined to statements, *schon* to statements and directives; *denn*, *eigentlich* and *wohl* show affinity with questions, and *bloß*, *nur* and *vielleicht* are restricted to wishes and exclamations; *doch*, on the other hand, is very volatile and only excluded from genuine questions (cf. Gelhaus 1998: 380, Thurmair 1989).

h) Modal particles do not have referential meaning. Very often, this feature sets them in sharp contrast to their heterosemes in the class of adjectives or adverbs, e.g. *bloß*, *eben* or *ruhig*. If these items are used as adjectives, they display lexical content, if used as modal particles, they encode few abstract semantic features. (15) and (16) illustrate this difference. (15) shows the adjective usage of *ruhig* ('calm'), in which it can be replaced by other adjectives with a similar meaning, like *still* or *gelassen*. (16) is an example of its modal particle usage, where *ruhig* is not substitutable by those adjectives, but by other modal particles, e.g. *doch* or *schon*.

(15) *Den ganzen Tag blieb er ruhig (still/gelassen).*

'All day long, he stayed *calm*.'

(16) *Da darf es ruhig (doch/schon) (*still/*gelassen) ein bißchen später, so zwischen 4 und 5 Uhr, sein.* (Keil 1990: 45)

Then it may RUHIG get a bit later, say between 4 and 5 o' clock.

‘It may get a bit later, *as far as I am concerned*, say between 4 and 5 o’clock.’

i) Modal particles have *sentential* scope or *utterance* scope (illocutionary scope), i.e. they have the widest scope of all sententially integrated particles. Therefore, they cannot function as the reference point of a negation particle (Zifonun, Hoffmann, Strecker [et al.] 1997: 59). Their wide scope separates them from scalar particles like *sehr* in (17) and focus particles like *sogar* in (18), which grade or focus individual constituents (Gelhaus 1998: 377ff.; for the distinction of MPs and “scalar particles” s. Abraham 1991: 243ff.):

(17) *Über die Einladung habe ich mich sehr gefreut.*

‘I am *very* glad about the invitation.’

(18) *Sogar meine Schwester ist pünktlich gekommen.*

‘*Even* my sister came in time.’

As mentioned, this cluster of features is generally acknowledged (with continued discussion about single problematic points) as relevant and sufficient for identifying MPs. Still, it is obvious that most of these criteria are negative ones, i.e. they specify what MPs are *not*. The next section lays out the positive distinctive feature of the class of MPs in German, which is a functional one.

4. The class-constitutive function of modal particles in German

Traditionally, modal particles are assumed to have a variety of only vaguely describable pragmatic functions, and researchers very often do not even think of looking for a class-

constitutive common function, which would be similar, say, to the function of conjunctions.

This predominating general attitude is summarized in the following quote:

Die Funktion der Abtönungspartikeln läßt sich (beim derzeitigen Forschungsstand) nur grob bestimmen. Sie tragen zur Einpassung der kommunikativen Minimaleinheit in den jeweiligen Handlungszusammenhang bei, indem sie auf den Erwartungen und Einstellungen des Sprechers und Adressaten operieren. (Zifonun, Hoffmann, Strecker [et al.] 1997:59)

The function of modal particles can be circumscribed but roughly (given the actual state of the art in particle research). They contribute to the fitting of the communicative minimal unit [i.e. the sentence] into the relevant interactional context, by operating on the expectations and attitudes of the speaker and recipient. [my translation].

In a number of studies, I have argued against this quasi agnostic position, and have shown that the modal particles form a clear-cut grammatical category with a well-defined categorial function and distinctive oppositions between the core members of the category (Diewald 2006, 2007, 2011, Diewald & Fischer 1998, Diewald & Ferraresi 2008: 79f.). As this is important in the present context, the central points of the argumentation are summarized in the following paragraphs.

The distinctive function of MPs is best illustrated by minimal pairs contrasting an utterance with MP and the same utterance without an MP, e.g. *eben* in (19a) versus the same string without *eben* in (19b). It should be kept in mind that *mutatis mutandis* – i.e. abstracting from the specifics of the MP lexeme *eben* – these explanations hold for all MPs, and that they address the constitutive function of the whole class:

- (19) a. *Deutsch ist eben schwer.*
 German is EBEN difficult
 ‘And yes, German is difficult.’

- (19) b. *Deutsch ist schwer.*
 ‘German is difficult.’

In contrast to an unmodalized statement like *Deutsch ist schwer* (‘German is difficult’) in (19b), which does not refer to any linguistic or non-linguistic entity, the MP *eben* in (19a) provides an indexical relation to a particular proposition. As Foolen (1989: 312f.) rightly points out this presupposed proposition is always a “logical variant of the explicitly expressed proposition”.¹³ In the case of our sentence (19a) this variant is ‘Deutsch ist schwer’. Thus, by using *eben* in *Deutsch ist eben schwer*, the speaker indicates that the proposition ‘Deutsch ist schwer’ to him or her counts as known information (which, of course, may be a mere imputation), and that he or she affirms that statement. A paraphrase for this complex meaning of utterance (19a) might be: ‘The statement *Deutsch ist schwer* [= given proposition *p*] has been expressed by many people, including myself, before. You and I know that. I iterate this statement indicating its givenness, and therefore say: *Deutsch ist eben schwer* [= modalized variant of given proposition: *eben p*].’

In short: By using a modal particle the speaker marks the very proposition it is used in as given, as communicatively presupposed, as a particular type of pragmatic presupposition.

In earlier work, I have called this pragmatically given unit the “pragmatic pre-text” of an utterance with a MP, in order to indicate three important characteristics of this type of givenness: i. it is *propositional content* (sometimes together with illocutionary information) as

¹³ Foolen is one of the few linguistics having argued for a substantial class constitutive function of the MPs as early as in the late 80s of the last century. The relevant quote is: “[als] Klassenbedeutung für Modalpartikeln gilt, daß sie immer auf eine implizite, im Kontext relevante Proposition hinweisen. Diese implizite Proposition ist immer eine logische Variante der explizit ausgedrückten Proposition” Foolen(1989: 312f.).

opposed to discourse pragmatic chunks of information, ii. it is *pragmatically given* in the communicative situation, i.e. it is typically not expressed in the linguistic medium itself, and iii. – notwithstanding ii. – it is *potential text*, i.e. it can be made explicit via a linguistically encoded proposition.

Thus, MPs are a convenient and subtle way of introducing all kinds of implications, assumptions, allusions, without being explicit about that, and this potential is the reason for the wealth of specific communicative and rhetoric functions for which MPs in German are renowned and which have led to a long listings of functions attributed to them (cf. Zifonun, Hoffmann, Strecker [et al.] 1997: 904 with the relevant bibliographical notes). Without belittling these functions, it has to be stated that all of them can be derived from the basic function of pragmatic backward pointing described in the last paragraphs, the essence of which in turn can be summarized and expanded to its discourse pragmatic relevance as follows: In referring back to a propositional or illocutionary entity that is treated as communicatively given, though unexpressed, *the MP marks its utterance as a non-initial utterance, i.e. as a second, reactive turn in a dialogic structure* (which need not be enacted in reality but which is presupposed as communicative background).

In addition to this indexical meaning, which is constitutive of the class of MPs, each modal particle has a diachronically motivated, lexeme-specific semantic feature. The specific semantic content of *aber* is adversative ('*p* in contrast to the pragmatically given unit $\neg p$ '), that of *ja* is affirmative ('*p* identical with the pragmatically given unit *p*'), that of *auch* augmentative ('*p* confirming and enriching the pragmatically given unit *p*'), and that of *schon* concessive ('*p* inspite of low relevance of pragmatically given unit *p*'). This produces paradigmatic oppositions as in (20) (cf. Diewald & Ferraresi 2008: 79f.), which can be explicated by full accounts of their systematic backward pointing structure (for reasons of space, however, the particle meanings are given as very rough glosses only in the paraphrase):

(20) *Deutsch ist eben/aber/ja/auch/schon schwer.*

‘German is difficult – I iterate this/in contrast to the opposite assumption/we all know/this and other things hold /admittedly.’

The combination of a class meaning and relatively abstract distinctive meanings between items belonging to the class is one of the essential characteristics of a grammatical paradigm (others being the degree of obligatoriness and the type of relational meaning). Diewald 2011 has shown in detail that the German MPs form a grammatical paradigm in the strict sense such as, for example, the paradigm of determiners. For reasons of space this discussion is not taken up here at any length.

As shown in sections 1 and 2, MPs are members of the broad domain of pragmatic markers which contains DMs and TCMs, sharing as a common feature an indexical function. On the other hand, MPs differ from typical DMs as well as from typical TCMs: They occupy a place between discourse markers like turn taking signals on one hand and text-connective markers like conjunctions on the other (cf. Diewald 2006). The difference between them lies in the type of the target item of the pointing process, i.e. the domain addressed by the pointing relation. Unlike DMs, MPs apply to propositions and speech-act alternatives (they have propositional or speech-act scope), while DMs point to non-propositional elements of discourse, i.e. they have scope over non-propositional discourse elements of various sizes (cf. section 2 for examples).

The distinction between MPs and TCMs in the strict sense can be pinned down to the fact that MPs refer to non-expressed but supposedly given propositional elements, while conjunctions (and other TCMs in the strict sense) connect textually encoded (typically propositional) conjuncts; cf. the conjunction *obwohl* in the following example:

(21) *Obwohl es schon spät war, machte sie sich zu einem Spaziergang auf.*

‘Although it was already late, she set out for a walk.’

Furthermore, there is a marked difference in the topological restrictions applying to conjunctions on one hand, and to MPs on the other : Conjunctions have a fixed position at the left periphery (of one or both conjuncts), MPs have a fixed position in the middle field.

Using the combination of the universal functional and formal criteria and the specific discourse structuring function of MPs introduced in this and the preceding sections, we are able to complete our classification for DMs, TCM and MPs in German and set up the following distinctions (cf. Diewald 2006: 408):

DMs relate non-propositional discourse elements which are not textually expressed, which are syntactically non-integrated (i.e. have no syntactically fixed position) and which do not have constituent value. DMs are found in a variety of formal realizations. The latter is also true for TCM, which, however, in contrast to DMs are syntactically integrated, and have functions on the propositional and conceptual level. DMs as well as TCMs are *not* specific word classes (neither in German or any other language).

MPs, on the other hand, are one of the acknowledged word classes of German. They are characterized by a cluster of features (high syntactic integration, topological restriction to the middle field, no constituent value, morphological particle etc.). Their function is indexical as is the function of DMs and TCMs, but it is specific insofar as it points to propositions and speech-act alternatives which are not textually expressed but treated as ‘given’. Thus, German is a language that is equipped with an array of fine-grained grammatical devices for indicating relational pragmatic functions. It has numerous language-specific word classes acting in the broad universal domains of DMs and TCMs. The most familiar ones are discourse relevant items like *ne, ja, gell* etc., on one hand, and conjunctions, pronominal adverbs, modal words etc., on the other. And, in addition to these, there is the class of MPs. Diewald 2006 comments on their specific function as follows:

[...] MPs, which are an important grammatical device of contemporary spoken discourse, cover an intermediate domain between the functions of text-connecting elements such as conjunctions and conjunctive adverbs on the one hand, and discourse-structuring elements such as turn signals, hesitation markers, etc. on the other. That is to say, modal particles are treated here as the link between strictly textual functions and strictly discourse-relational functions. Taking into account that languages like English, which have been the object of extensive research concerning their discourse marking devices, do not have a functional class comparable to MPs in German, the latter might even be called the 'missing link' to deepen our understanding of the interrelations between 'text-connecting' and 'discourse-marking' elements. (Diewald 2006: 408f.)

In short, German has a proper word class as a missing link between two much less clearly delimited, only universally specified groups (DMs and TCMs).

One further issue deserves attention here. The fact that the function of MPs is a grammatical function in German, of course, does not mean that it must be realized as a grammatical function in other languages, or that this function must be expressed by a separate set of items in a language at all. Therefore, the following consideration by Cuenca [this volume] is not a counter-argument against the class of MPs as a truly grammatical category of German.

[...] discourse markers are a set of expressions that include different word classes. The same can be said of modal markers and, among them, of modal particles. Waltereit (2001), for instance, convincingly argues that the functions of German modal particles

can be equivalent to the effects created by lexical and morphological devices in English or Romance languages, which lack for such particles.¹⁴

Thus, we may conclude this section as follows: MPs are a separate word class in German, and therefore not comparable to DM or TCM. In particular, we cannot integrate the notions MP and DM properly into one level of classification. DM is a label on a different theoretical level than MP. The answer to the question raised in this volume whether they are two sides of the same coin is clearly: No, they are not.

- MPs are different from DMs concerning their hierarchical level as well as their specific function.
- MPs are different from TCMs concerning their hierarchical level as well as their specific function.
- They are the “same” only in so far as they share a broad indexical function.

Having made these decisions, we need to take a look at the indeterminacy, gradiences and intercategoryality of the class of MPs in German.

5. Intercategoryality

Class membership cannot be reliably attributed to particular linguistic items *per se* (whether lexical or not), i.e. it is not determinable on the basis of isolated segmental units, but has to take into account contextual and functional features. This problem of fundamental intercategoryality is illustrated by linguistic elements of German which do have functions as

¹⁴ Cuenca continues as follows: “The basic difference between both classes can be determined by considering that discourse markers, at least in their more traditional definition as connective elements or items bracketing units of talk, are two position operator, i.e. units typically linking two content segments, whereas modal markers are one position operators modifying the illocution of an utterance”. As should have become clear, this definition and classification is not supported here.

MPs, but also fulfill functions typical of other word classes. Two phenomena are of interest here:

1. Heterosemes: One item has several functions and word class affiliations in complementary contexts (isolating contexts).
2. Ambiguity: An item allows two distinct readings in one usage.

Ad 1: Heterosemes. As discussed in section 3, modal particles have heterosemes in other word classes, ranging from major lexical word classes like adjectives and adverbs to so-called function words like conjunctions, focus particles and discourse markers of a variety of types. As several examples have already been given in sections 1 and 3 (cf. the use of *ja* in 3 and 8, the uses of *aber* and *schon* in 9 to 12, and the use of *ruhig* in 15 and 16), it is sufficient here to add just a few further examples.

Doch has adverbial (22) and modal particle (23) usages:

(22) *Ich habe es echt mehrmals probiert, aber dann habe ich es doch falsch eingelegt.*

‘I did try several times, but then I inserted it in the wrong way *nevertheless*.’

(23) *Das ist doch ein Klacks für Dich.*

This is DOCH very easy for you.

‘This is very easy for you – *I am convinced of it after deliberating about whether it is or whether it is not.*’

The adverbial usage in (22) can be translated by e.g. *nevertheless* in English. The MP usage of *doch* refers to a given pragmatic pre-text which consists of a deliberate choice between two alternative propositions, contrasted by their polarity (p1: ‘Das ist ein Klacks für dich’ – p2:

‘Das ist kein Klacks for dich’). The utterance with *doch* points to this choice, and confirms the first alternative as a result of deliberating upon the two (p1 & MP: *Das ist doch ein Klacks für dich*). Similarly, *aber* and *auch*, and a number of further MPs of the core group have conjunctive, adverbial and modal particle usages.

Not only core members, but also peripheral members of the class of MPs show heterosemes and complementary, i.e. isolating contexts. *Ruhig*, for example, can be used as an attributive adjective (24), a predicative adjective and/or verb phrase adverb (25), as a modal particle (26, identical with example 16), and as a – beginning – discourse marker (27).

(24) *Er ist ein ruhiger Mensch.*

‘He is a *calm* person.’

(25) *Sie kommen ruhig herein.*

‘They enter *quietly*.’ / ‘They enter *in a composed state of mind*.’

(26) *Da darf es ruhig ein bißchen später, so zwischen 4 und 5 Uhr, sein* (Keil 1990: 45)

Then, it may get RUHIG a bit later, say between 4 and 5 o’clock.

‘It may get a bit later, *as far as I am concerned*, say between 4 and 5 o’clock.’

(27) *und ich darf das ruhig einmal sagen ohne als sentimental zu gelten* (IDS-DSAV, FR 182_50)

and I may RUHIG say that for once without counting as sentimental.

‘and I may – *aptly* – say that for once without counting as sentimental.’

The function of *ruhig* as MP is much less known than that of core members of the class.

Therefore, a short description is appropriate. As laid out in Diewald (2008: 227f.), the MP

ruhig is known to be restricted to particular types of directive speech acts, namely to various types of permissions (including advice and general suggestions). An act of permission can be defined as “a directive speech act the recipient has asked for”, i.e. as incorporating a reactive semantic component. This reactive meaning is explicitly emphasized by the MP *ruhig*, and can be summarized as suggested in the following quote:

It [the MP *ruhig*] indicates a contrast between the expected attitude of the speaker and the actual attitude of the speaker concerning the imminent action. By using *ruhig* the speaker says: ‘in contrast to your/somebody’s expectation (irrelevant reservations), I do not have objections’. (Diewald 2008: 227f.)

Thus, utterance (26) with *ruhig* as MP, may be paraphrased as:

(28) ‘In contrast to your presupposition that I might object to it being later, I say that it may be later, about between 4 and 5 o’clock.’

In (26) the combination of the formal subject *es* and the stative predicate excludes the interpretation of *ruhig* as an adjective, i.e. neither the predicative nor the adverbial reading are possible here. The interpretation of *ruhig* as a modal particle is the only one available in this context, i.e. we have an isolating context for the MP-reading here.

Parenthetical, formulaic usages like the one in (27), which display the first step of *ruhig* towards the development of a discourse marker (a floor keeping signal), are restricted to first person subjects and declarative sentences. They are a 20th century innovation (discussed in Diewald 2008). Though further research is needed here, this usage supports the assumption that discourse markers develop from connective devices like conjunctions, connective adverbials and modal particles (cf. Haselow [to appear], Barth & Couper-Kuhlen 2002,

Günthner 1999).¹⁵ That is, we may assume that transcategorial linguistic change from MPs to turn-organizational DMs is a common phenomenon.

Summing up the remarks on heterosemes: Due to language change (mostly, but not necessarily grammaticalization) and lexical split, we have multiple heterosemy in German in the field of non-inflecting word classes including MPs. For each heteroseme, there are isolating contexts bringing out their distinctive, class-constitutive features.

The fact that linguistic items participate in different word classes in one synchronic layer is an instance of intercategoriality of particular lexemes, which is the result of transcategorial language change.

Ad 2: Ambiguity. The second point to be discussed, functional ambiguity, is closely connected to the dynamic forces of language change as well. Functional ambiguity is intercategoriality in its narrow sense. It is relevant in those cases, where class membership of a particular item cannot be determined unequivocally, although there is one given linguistic context. As modal particles are restricted to the middle field, this phenomenon, too, is observable only in this topological position. Among the most common cases is the ambiguity between modal particle (with features like non-referential, non-constituent etc., see section 3) and adverbial (with features like referential meaning, constituent value etc., see section 3), as in the following example:

(29) *Ich gehe eben zur Post.*

I go EBEN to the post office

Eben can be interpreted either as a temporal adverb meaning ‘just now’ as in the paraphrase (30) or as a modal particle as paraphrased in (31):.

¹⁵Haselow [to appear] investigates final *then* in English asking whether this phenomenon might be seen as the rise of a new word class comparable to the class of modal particles in German.

(30) ‘I am on my way to the post office *just now*.’

(31) ‘I am *just* on my way to the post office.’

An analogous and also very common case is the ambiguity between a predicative (or adverbial) function and a modal particle function, which may arise in instances like the following (cf. also example 25):

(32) *Kommen Sie ruhig herein!*

Come RUHIG in!

Ruhig can be interpreted as an adjective used predicatively or adverbially (‘Come in in a calm state of mind’, ‘Come in quietly’) on one hand, or as a modal particle on the other (‘Come in – I don’t object’). This ambiguity arises in all instances of directives containing *ruhig* in the middle field together with a modal verb, an infinitive of an action verb, and an animate subject.

Most interesting of course are instances of intercategoryality between the modal particle function and a discourse marking function. Again – due to the topological restriction of the class of MPs – these are only possible in the middle field; e.g. in the following examples (which were produced in group discussions):

(33) *sagen wir ruhig die Reaktionäre* (IDS-DSAV FR200_54)

say-SUBJI-1PL we RUHIG the reactionaries

(34) *gehn wir ruhig mal kriminalistisch vor* (IDS-DSAV FR212_60)

go-SUBJI-1PL we RUHIG once criminologically ahead

Quite obviously, these are instances with a particular constructional make-up: They display a V1-pattern with the verb in the subjunctive I, followed by the first person plural subjects (*wir*) and the item *ruhig*. This construction shows an ambiguity between the reading of *ruhig* as MP, and another reading as a kind of DM. The MP reading for (33) can be paraphrased as follows:

- (35) ‘Though you might think we object to saying “die Reaktionäre”, we do not object to it.’

However, this construction no longer expresses a true permission, but a hortative construction (i.e. a “permission” of the first person to a first person plural subject). Therefore, the illocutive function of permission changes into a kind of encouragement including the speaker, whereby the dialogic and reactive component is reduced as compared to the prototypical MP-usages. Thus, the use of the MP *ruhig* in this new construction also marks the rise of a new discourse function. A paraphrase of *ruhig* in this use might take the following wording:

- (36) ‘I suggest (we do) *proposition* although we have refrained from (doing) *proposition* before.’

Data like these suggest the existence of a continuum leading from MP to DM, i.e. from partly implicit textual relations (relation to pragmatic pre-text) to (non-textual) discourse relations. It is assumed here that these changes are grammaticalization processes leading to further differentiation in the domain of pragmatic functions, and that modal particles in German do in fact constitute a distinct category, which however is part of a continuum of several word

classes in the neighboring domains of DMs and TCMs. A language-specific categorization like the one to be found in German, systematizes these continua between DMs and TCMs and makes them manageable. However, as linguistic entities shade into each other in their usage, categorization has to take into account intercategoriality as a widespread and natural phenomenon.

6. Same same but different – a plea for flexible categorization

This final section takes up the issue of flexible categorization, i.e. the problem of “the complexity of categorizing multifunctional expressions” as observed by Degand et al. in the conception of this volume. We have seen that classes of linguistic items situated on different hierarchical levels of linguistic structure and on different planes of the communicative context cannot be compared directly, nor subsumed together under one classificatory system. This is particularly true when universal categories are confronted with language-specific categories. Thus, MPs, which are language-specific items defined according to the formal and functional criteria of the language in question, cannot be directly compared to or jointly categorized with universal functional categories, like DMs or TCMs. Or briefly put: MPs and DMs are coins of different currencies.

Nevertheless, the function that is fulfilled by the word class of MP in German can be fulfilled by other means of any degree of grammaticalization or lexicalization in any language. Thus, it is appropriate to look for functional equivalence and to compare the respective linguistic exponents of that function in different languages. For example, German MPs are known to be rendered by tag questions in English very often, and – to add an example from more distant area of grammar – the English continuous form (e.g. *The children are playing in the garden*) is known to be rendered by adverbials like *gerade* (*Die Kinder spielen gerade im Garten*) or

the construction with the verb 'to be' (*sein*) and a prepositional phrase with *am* and the nominalized main verb (*Die Kinder sind am Spielen*) in German. Still, in the latter case, nobody would claim that German has a grammatical category of aspect and, in the former case, nobody would claim that English has a grammatical category of MPs.

Analogously, observing that the functions fulfilled by MPs may be fulfilled by other discernible items in another languages (e.g. in Romance languages as discussed in Cuenca, this volume), does not *per se* lead to the conclusion that these items are modal particles.

In German, on the other hand, all relevant tests show that MPs have a specific and distinctive function and constitute a grammatical category and word class. As such (i.e. as a language-specific class) they can be set off from the broad functional domains of DMs and TCMs. In order to tackle these facts, it is necessary to apply a concept of flexible categorization. The notion of flexible categorization does not mean arbitrary classification. Instead, it refers to the fact that different perspectives and intentions will lead to different ways of prioritizing particular features. Flexible categorization answers the need to reconcile universal functional categories with language-specific classes as well as the need to provide for intercategoryality on a language-specific level. In the argumentation presented in this paper, it has become evident that i. linguistic categories are language-specific, insofar as their realization is subject to and integrated into the semasiological distinctions and paradigmatic oppositions of that particular language, that, therefore, ii. if generalization across languages is aimed at, the items and features to be compared must be sufficiently abstract and typically defined in functional terms, and that iii. the findings and tenets of grammaticalization studies concerning clines and non-discrete boundaries in linguistic categories are fundamental for any attempt at classifying linguistic items (independently of whether the issue of grammaticalization is explicitly addressed).

Widening the view to a more general perspective, we may conclude with the following list of general considerations concerning the art and purpose of linguistic categorization:

- Linguistic categories – such as word classes or functional/grammatical categories – are not ontologically given items. Depending on the respective language, they are subject to the specific conditions and restrictions that are operative in that language, and thus, any two particular languages may realize equivalent functions deploying very different formal and structural techniques on different layers of the linguistic system (e.g. morphological marker versus intonational contour).
- The relevant features constituting a category and their internal hierarchies vary between languages.
- Classifications in linguistic research are set up in accordance with the epistemological layout of the research to be undertaken.
- Linguistic categories are working hypotheses. They are not set up once and for all, but may be modified when new research questions arise or new results are achieved.
- There may be different categorizations for different purposes at the same time.
- Correspondences between different categorizational choices as well as their mutual (in-)translatability and (non-)compatibilities should be made as explicit as possible.

Though seemingly trivial, the neglect of these considerations lies at the bottom of many misunderstandings and misguided attempts at finding final solutions for classificatory questions. The present paper is meant as a step towards overcoming these deadlocks.

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