GERMAN DISCOURSE PARTICLES ARE WEAK SENTENCE ADVERBS

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German discourse particles have received much attention since the pioneering works of Weydt (1969) and Krivonosov (1977). Recently their semantic properties have been in the focus of studies such as Kratzer (1999) and Zimmermann (2004a, 2004b). In this article, I investigate their syntactic properties and propose to treat German discourse particles as weak sentence adverbs in terms of Cardinaletti & Starke (1999). I assume that they are base-generated within specifiers of clausal functional projections along the lines of Cinque (1999). Their syntactic properties indicate that they must remain in their base-position to have their deficiency compensated for by the clausal functional head with which they are associated.

1. The Phenomenon

Discourse particles\(^1\) are functional elements which do not contribute to the proposition expressed by an utterance, but modify the latter on a higher level of meaning (cf. Weydt 1969, Kratzer 1999, Zimmermann 2004a, 2004b). The particles' main function is to express the speaker's attitude or belief states towards the expressed proposition. The set of German discourse particles minimally includes\(^2\) aber, auch, bloß, denn, doch, eben, eigentlich, etwa, halt, ja, mal, nur, ruhig, schon, vielleicht, wohl (cf. Thurmair 1991).

Focusing on their syntactic properties, one of the most striking characteristics of German discourse particles is that they are restricted to the middle field in overt syntax. In traditional German syntax, middle field denotes the area between verb-second and verb-final position. The observed restriction is intriguing, as there are arguments to assume that discourse particles must be interpreted within the left periphery of the clause at LF, in which they overtly never occur (cf. Abraham

\(^1\) German discourse particles are also called Abtönungspartikeln ‘downtoners’ or Modalpartikeln ‘modal particles’ in the German literature.

\(^2\) Note that no glosses can be given due to the abstract functional meaning of such particles.
2000, Zimmermann 2004a, 2004b). The proposal put forth in this paper accounts for their restriction to the middle field and is independently motivated by other properties of these particles such as their strict linearization, their abstract semantics, and their inability to be coordinated or modified.

2. Discourse Particles Associated with Clausal Functional Projections

Couched within the cartographic framework, Cinque (1999) proposes that the IP layer of the clause consists of a universal hierarchy of functional projections. This claim accounts for strict linearization of clausal modifiers such as sentence adverbials, mirrored by inflectional endings, particles and auxiliaries.

It has been observed in the literature (Thurmair 1989, Abraham 1995, 2000, amongst others) that most German discourse particles are subject to similar rules of strict linearization. Note that analogous ordering restrictions have been studied for discourse particles in Dutch (cf. de Vriendt, Vandeweghe & van de Craen 1991). Based on Thurmair (1989:278-279), (1) shows the strict relative orderings of seven German discourse particles: *ja, denn, doch, wohl, nur, ruhig and mal*.

(1) a. ja > {doch, wohl, nur, ruhig, mal}
   b. denn > {doch, wohl, nur, 'mal}#
   c. {ja, denn} > doch > {wohl, nur, ruhig, mal}
   d. {ja, denn, doch} > wohl > {'nur, mal}
   e. {ja, denn, doch, 'wohl} > nur > {ruhig, mal}
   f. {ja, doch, nur} > ruhig > {mal}
   g. {ja, 'denn, doch, wohl, nur, ruhig} > mal

Example (2) illustrates that these restrictions on linearization are relatively strict. Other orderings are ill-formed for most native speakers of German.

(2) a. Ich bin ja doch deine Mami.

   b. *Das ist doch ja sowieso nicht wahr.
   this is [jadoch] anyway not true
   ‘This [doch ja] isn’t true anyway.’ (Thurmair 1989:286)

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1 There are some exceptions to this observations such as the pairing of the nearly synonymous *halt* and *eben* within one clause, where both orders, *halt eben* and *eben halt* are possible (cf. Abraham 2000:340). The discussion of such cases extends the scope of this paper.

2 The superscripted question mark denotes ‘only marginally compatible with the particle in bold type’, the symbol > denotes ‘obligatorily precede(s)’.

3 Discourse particles are glossed as *prt*. Within the translations they are marked in brackets, unless the symbol ≈ indicates that an approximative translation of their contribution is attempted.
In Grosz (2005) I argue that *ja* and *denn* can be assumed to occupy the same position in the clause. They perform analogous functions and are generally complementary distributed: *ja* is restricted to declaratives, *denn* to interrogatives. Therefore, the overall ordering in (3) can be proposed for the seven elements presented in (1) above.

(3) \[ ja/denn > doch > wohl > nur > ruhig > mal \]

Based on these observations, it is appropriate to propose a treatment along the lines of Cinque’s (1999) hierarchy, claiming discourse particles are base-generated in specifiers or as heads of clausal functional projections. I will now show where the functional projections hosting discourse particles are roughly localized in relation to co-occurring sentence adverbs.

First, it can be shown that a sub-class of discourse particles can occur high up in the structure in relation to co-occurring sentence adverbs. For instance, *ja* can precede the evaluative sentence adverb *glücklicherweise* ‘luckily’. Interestingly, *ja* also seems to be able to follow *glücklicherweise* ‘luckily’. This is illustrated in (4).

(4) a. Du kannst *ja* glücklicherweise ruhig mal zu ihr gehen.  
    ‘Luckily you can [ja ruhig mal] go over to her place.’

b. Du kannst glücklicherweise *ja* ruhig mal zu ihr gehen.  
    ‘Luckily you can [ja ruhig mal] go over to her place.’

Also, it can be argued that the higher position in which *ja* precedes *glücklicherweise* ‘luckily’ is its canonical position, as it is less restricted. *Ja* can always precede evaluative sentence adverbs if it can co-occur with them. However, utterances are often judged odd or unacceptable when *ja* follows such adverbs. This is illustrated in (5).

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6 In certain instances, *denn* appears to be able to occur in declaratives and thus co-occur with *ja* if licensed by the co-occurrence of other discourse particles such as *doch*. However, the nature of *denn* in declaratives is disputed and, if it is a discourse particle at all, there are reasons to assume that it is distinct from the interrogative discourse particle *denn* (cf. Thurmair 1989:222).
Analogous observations can be made for other discourse particles that occur higher up in the clause such as eben and wohl (cf. Grosz 2005). It might be proposed that discourse particles perform a focusing function when appearing in the non-canonical lower position, as proposed for higher sentence adverbs by Cinque (1999:31-32). This issue is left open for further research.

It should be noted that not all discourse particles seem to be base-generated as high as ja. The particles ruhig and mal obligatorily follow glücklicherweise ‘luckily’, as illustrated in (6). Note that they also follow co-occurring discourse particles (cf. (3)).

(6) a. 
Du kannst ja glücklicherweise ruhig mal zu ihr geht,  
you can prt luckily prt prt to her  
übergehen.  
‘Luckily you can [ja ruhig mal] go over to her place.’

b. ?* Du kannst ja ruhig glücklicherweise mal zu ihr geht,  
you can prt prt luckily prt to her  
übergehen.  

c. ?* Du kannst ja ruhig mal glücklicherweise zu ihr geht,  
you can prt prt prt luckily to her  
übergehen.  

This indicates the need for sub-classification among discourse particles. A first sketch of the overall distribution is outlined in (7a); its implementation in a framework such as Cinque (1999) is sketched in (7b).
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(7) a. ja > ... > glücklicherweise ‘luckily’ > ... > ruhig > mal
   b. \[FP-a \ ja \ [... \ [Mood-evaluative\ glücklicherweise \ [... \ [FP-a \ ruhig \ [... \ [FP-m \ mal

Regarding the function and semantic contribution of these discourse particles the following remarks can be made. Zimmermann (2004b) suggests that higher discourse particles such as ja (but not wohl) trigger conventional implicatures (cf. also Kaufmann 2004). Contrastively, lower discourse particles such as ruhig or mal have been proposed to modify the illocution or the illocutionary force itself (cf. Thurmair 1989). For instance, questions containing mal can only be interpreted as indirect requests (with weakened illocutionary force), and not as ‘real questions’. An exact grouping of discourse particles into sets corresponding to specific areas of the hierarchy of functional projections is left open for further research.

3. Discourse Particles as Deficient Elements

In this section, I will propose that German discourse particles can be accounted for by the framework of Cardinaletti & Starke (1999) (henceforth C&S) in combination with Cinque (1999). C&S propose a tripartition of syntactic elements into strong, weak and clitic elements which they assume to cut across all lexical categories. They assume that the difference between the three types is due to gradual deficiency. Deficient elements lack extended projections that the less deficient elements project. This is illustrated in (8) (cf. C&S, p.195). L denotes any lexical category, the C LiP contains referential features, the Σ LiP prosodic features, and the I LiP contains the Φ-features of L.

(8) a. strong elements: [C LiP ...[Σ LiP ...[I LiP ...[LP ...]]]]
   b. weak elements: [Σ LiP ...[I LiP ...[LP ...]]]
   c. clitic elements: [I LiP ...[LP ...]]

The analysis of C&S is based on observations on strong, weak and clitic pronouns in Germanic and Romance languages. Strong pronouns are relatively flexible in their syntactic behavior, can refer directly, be coordinated and undergo modification of the whole noun phrase (which C&S label c-modification, in contrast to NP internal modification). Weak pronouns, and weak elements in general, are assumed to lack a C LiP containing referential features. C&S argue the lack of such features implies these elements cannot be c-modified or coordinated. Furthermore, they must be in a local Spec-Head-relation with a functional head by which the lacking features are compensated for. This requirement triggers ‘weak movement’ of weak pronouns to the specifier of a clausal agreement projection. Contrastively, clitic elements lack both the C LiP and a Σ LiP containing prosodic features. To compensate for their lack of a Σ LiP their head must adjoin to a
functional head containing prosodic features to associate with them. However, clitic elements also lack a C_LPs. Therefore, they must also remain in a local relation with a head providing referential features, on a par with weak pronouns. This apparent contradiction is solved by proposing that clitic elements are inserted as maximal I_LPs projections. As I_LPs they have referential features assigned by an appropriate clausal functional head; later in the derivation their I_0 head is extracted and head-adjoined to a functional head containing prosodic features.

Bearing this tripartition in mind, it can be shown that German discourse particles display syntactic properties which in the framework of C&S are characteristic for weak elements. They are restricted to the middle field, they cannot be modified, and they cannot be coordinated (cf. Weydt 1969, von Stechow & Wunderlich 1991, Hartmann 1998, Abraham 2000, May 2000, among others). In these regards these particles contrast with sentence adverbs, such as offensichtlich ‘obviously’.

Example (9) illustrates a clause where the discourse particle ja and the sentence adverb offensichtlich ‘obviously’ are located in their base-position, following the verb in verb-second position.

(9) a. Diese Behauptung ist offensichtlich falsch.
    this statement is obviously wrong
    ‘This statement is obviously wrong.’

b. Diese Behauptung ist ja falsch.
    this statement is prt wrong
    ‘This statement is [ja] wrong.’

Example (10) shows that offensichtlich ‘obviously’ can occupy the sentence-initial position, preceding the verb-second position. This is not possible for ja.

(10) a. Offensichtlich ist diese Behauptung falsch.
    obviously is this statement wrong
    ‘Obviously, this statement is wrong.’

b. *Ja ist diese Behauptung falsch.
    prt is this statement wrong

Furthermore, (11) shows that offensichtlich ‘obviously’ can be modified by adverbs such as ganz (lit. ‘completely’) which in this function roughly translates to English ‘quite’. In contrast, discourse particles cannot be modified.
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(11) a. Diese Behauptung ist ganz offensichtlich falsch.
    this statement is quite obviously wrong
    ‘This statement is quite obviously wrong.’

b. *Diese Behauptung ist ganz ja falsch.
    this statement is quiteprt wrong

Finally, (12) shows that sentence adverbs can be coordinated, while discourse particles cannot be coordinated – neither with other discourse particles (cf. (12b)) nor with sentence adverbs (cf. (12c)).

(12) a. Diese Behauptung ist offensichtlich und eindeutig falsch.
    this statement is obviously and definitely wrong
    ‘This statement is obviously and definitely wrong.’

b. *Diese Behauptung ist ja und wohl falsch.
    this statement is prt and prt wrong

c. *Diese Behauptung ist ja und eindeutig falsch.
    this statement is prt and definitely wrong

Based on these observations I propose that German discourse particles can be treated as weak elements in terms of C&S, namely as weak sentence adverbs. Such an analysis is supported further by the semantics of such particles. The lack of a C\textsubscript{Adv}P implies a “non-referential” reading in the terminology of C&S (p.209) which manifests in their abstract, discourse-linked semantics. Confer Kratzer’s approximation of the meaning of ja, given in (13).

(13) \[ [[\text{ja}(\alpha)]]: \]
    \text{ja} \(\alpha\) is appropriate in a context c if the proposition expressed by \(\alpha\) in c is a fact of \(w_c\) which – for all the speaker knows – might already be known to the addressee.
    (Kratzer 1999:1)

In other words, ja contributes two assumptions of the speaker: Firstly, the proposition expressed by the modified utterance is true in the possible world \(w_c\) which is selected by the context c. Secondly, the hearer already knows (or might know) that this is the case.

In sum, German discourse particles clearly qualify as weak elements in the sense of C&S. Most imperatively, this proposal not only accounts for their abstract semantics and for the fact that they cannot be modified or coordinated; such an analysis also accounts for their restriction to the middle field. Being weak, these discourse particles must have their lack of a C\textsubscript{Adv}P compensated for by being in a
local Spec-Head-relation with an appropriate clausal functional head. In what follows, I will show that this constraint bars them from movement out of the syntactic middle field (i.e. the area between verb-second and verb-final position) which can be assumed to roughly correspond to the IP layer. Clearly, the relevant question at this point is which functional head is appropriate to license weak sentence adverbs. This can be argued to be one of the clausal functional heads within Cinque’s hierarchy of functional projections.

In a framework such as Cinque (1999), clausal modifiers base-generated in functional specifier positions are by definition associated with the heads of their functional projections. In other words, the functional heads semantically select (i.e. s-select) for the elements in their specifiers (cf. Rizzi 2004). Accordingly, in a standard checking theory the respective heads can be assumed to contain semantic features corresponding to features of the adverb. Such an approach is taken by Rizzi (2004:5) who notes that s-selection positions (where elements are base-generated) are marked by the features contained in the head with which they maintain a local relation. My proposal is that the features which discourse particles lack by not projecting a CAdvP are still contained in their corresponding functional head. The particles’ lack is thus compensated for in their base positions, explaining their restriction to the middle field (roughly corresponding to the IP layer) as they cannot leave the functional specifier in which they are base-generated.

Notably, the middle field restriction does not follow from an adjunction approach which assumes that sentence adverbs and discourse particles are freely adjoined to functional projections of the clause. Under such an approach, no functional head is associated with the adjoined elements and it must be stipulated which functional projections they may adjoin to.

The contrast between weak pronouns which obligatorily undergo ‘weak movement’ and weak adverbs which are frozen in their base position also follows naturally from the approach presented in this paper. C&S associate nominal CAdvPs with functional Case. Based on this assumption, they propose that weak (and clitic) pronouns obligatorily move to the specifier position of a Case-assigning functional head in order to be licensed. However, in contrast to nominal elements which are s-selected in the position where theta marking takes place, adverbal elements are already licensed in their base position by means of s-selection itself (cf. Rizzi 2004). In other words, AdvPs are inserted within the SpecFP position where they are licensed, whereas NPs are inserted earlier in the structure and subsequently have to move up into their licensing position.

Observations such as the discourse particles’ watershed function (cf. Krivonosov 1977) of separating old and new information in the clause follow straightforward from the presented analysis. In Cinque (1999) DP-related clausal functional projections are assumed which are interspersed among the adverb-related ones. It can be assumed that DPs which introduce new information remain within the VP or in lower areas of the IP layer. In contrast, DPs which refer back to
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old information move to DP-related projections located higher than the projections hosting discourse particles. This approach can be extended to the observation that non-clitic discourse particles must follow weak pronouns. It can be assumed that weak pronouns obligatorily rise to a high DP-related functional projection, presumably triggered by their need to compensate for a lacking CₜP projection (i.e. for the purpose of licensing or having functional Case assigned). In this regard, a functional specifier approach is conceptually more favorable than an adjunction approach. Both must assume that unstressed pronouns move to a clausal functional projection high up in the clausal IP layer. However, an adjunction approach must stipulate further that discourse particles cannot be adjoined higher than this functional projection. Such a stipulation is not necessary under a functional specifier approach.

4. Clitic Discourse Particles

Clitic discourse particles provide further empirical evidence in favor of a tripartition of sentence adverbs. In Colloquial Non-Standard Viennese German (Ger. Wiener gehobene Umgangssprache), two forms of the discourse particle denn appear, a full form and the reduced form dn. In the following part of this article I will show that the latter behaves as a syntactic clitic. First, consider example (14) illustrating that reduced dn obligatorily follows clitic pronouns. Note that dn is further reduced to n in (14a).

(14) a. Seit wann regnet-s-n schon?
    since when rains-it-prt already
    ‘Since when has it [denn] been raining?’

b. *Seit wann regnet-(d)n-s schon?
   since when rains-prt-it already

c. *Seit wann regnet-(d)n es schon?
   since when rains-prt it already

In contrast, while full denn obligatorily follows both clitic and unstressed pronouns, reduced dn by default precedes unstressed pronouns. This contrast is given in (15) versus (16), capital letters indicating main sentence stress. Note that there are cases where (16a) has been judged acceptable; however, in such cases du ‘you’ and ihr ‘her’ are generally interpreted and realized as clitic pronouns rather than as unstressed non-clitic ones. This is indicated by the use of % instead of a star. The fact that (16a) is only acceptable if the pronouns are interpreted as clitics
allows for the conclusion that \(dn\) cannot follow unstressed non-clitic pronouns. In contrast, when \(dn\) precedes unstressed pronouns as in (16b), they cannot be analyzed as clitics, as \(dn\) must follow pronominal clitics (including the unpersonal pronoun \textit{man} ‘one’, cf. Grosz 2005).

\[(15)\]
\begin{enumerate}
\item a. Was schenkst du ihr denn zum GEBURTSTAG?
\begin{itemize}
\item what give.as.present you her prt to.the birthday
\end{itemize}
‘What are you [denn] going to give her for her birthday?’
\item b. * Was schenkst denn du ihr zum GEBURTSTAG?
\begin{itemize}
\item what give.as.present prt you her to.the birthday
\end{itemize}
\end{enumerate}

\[(16)\]
\begin{enumerate}
\item a. % Was schenkst du ihr-dn zum GEBURTSTAG?
\begin{itemize}
\item what give.as.present you-prt to.the birthday
\end{itemize}
‘What are you [denn] going to give her for her birthday?’
\item b. Was schenkst-dn du ihr zum GEBURTSTAG?
\begin{itemize}
\item what give.as.present-prt you her to.the birthday
\end{itemize}
\end{enumerate}

Further evidence for the clitic status of reduced \(dn\) is given in (17) and (18). Reduced \(dn\) precedes all non-pronominal DPs, while full \(denn\) may also follow them (cf. König and Requardt 1991:64).

\[(17)\]
\begin{enumerate}
\item a. Wieso hat denn der Otto die Anna geküsst?
\begin{itemize}
\item why has prt the O the A kissed
\end{itemize}
‘Why has Otto [denn] kissed Anna?’
\item b. Wieso hat der Otto denn die Anna geküsst?
\begin{itemize}
\item why has the O prt the A kissed
\end{itemize}
\item c. Wieso hat der Otto die Anna denn geküsst?
\begin{itemize}
\item why has the O the A prt kissed
\end{itemize}
\end{enumerate}

\[(18)\]
\begin{enumerate}
\item a. Wieso hat-dn der Otto die Anna geküsst?
\begin{itemize}
\item why has-prt the O the A kissed
\end{itemize}
‘Why has Otto [denn] kissed Anna?’
\end{enumerate}

\footnote{In Grosz (2005) I discuss exceptional cases where the clitic discourse particle \(dn\) appears to be able to follow stressed pronouns. I show that in such cases \(dn\) can be assumed not to be a clausal modifier, but a DP-internal modifier of the preceding stressed pronoun. In this case, \(dn\) is assumed to be base-generated within the extended projection of the latter, where it cliticizes to the pronominal functional head containing prosodic features (cf. also Zimmermann 2004a for a DP-internal occurrence of the discourse particle \textit{wohl}).}
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b. * Wieso hat der Otto-dn die Anna geküsst?
   why has the O -prt the A kissed

c. * Wieso hat der Otto die Anna-dn geküsst?
   why has the O the A -prt kissed

The differences that I have presented between denn and dn in Colloquial Non-Standard Viennese German follow from assuming that dn is a clitic discourse particle. While denn remains in the functional specifier position where it is base-generated, illustrated in (19), the IAdv₀ head of dn is extracted and adjoined to the canonical clitic position. This is sketched in (20)⁸.

(19) discourse particle:
   \[ C\_Wieso \ [C\_ [c\_hat] \ [IP-Layer \ldots \ [FP\_Spe\_FP \LAdv\_denn] \_F^0 \ldots \] \]

(20) clitic discourse particle:
   \[ C\_Wieso \ [C\_ [c\_hat-dn] \ [IP-Layer \ldots \ [FP\_Spe\_FP \IAdv\_P \IAdv\_t\_ ] \_F^0 \ldots \] \]

In conclusion, the typology of deficiency as proposed by C&S can be applied to German sentence adverbs as illustrated in (21).

(21) a. sentence adverbs:
    \[ C\Adv\_P \ [\Sigma\Adv\_P \ [I\Adv\_P \ [AdvP]]] \]

b. discourse particles:
    \[ \Sigma\Adv\_P \ [I\Adv\_P \ [AdvP]] \]

c. clitic discourse particles:
    \[ I\Adv\_P \ [AdvP] \]

In German, lexemes such as wohl and doch are cases where both the strong form (i.e. the sentence adverb) and the weak form (i.e. the discourse particle) appear to be present, cf. (22). Note that in spite of the clear semantic difference between the strong and the weak form, scholars as early as Weydt (1969) have argued that both occurrences might share one core lexical entry.

(22) a. strong sentence adverb:
    Die Preise sind (sehr) WOHL gestiegen.
    the prices have (very) well risen
    \(\approx\) ‘(In contrast to what you said,) the prices have in fact risen.’

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⁸ For illustrative purposes, CP is not split in the sketches (19) and (20); accordingly the C⁰ head (corresponding to the verb-second position) is assumed to be the host for syntactic clitics.
b. weak sentence adverb (i.e. discourse particle):

Die Preise sind (*sehr) wohl gestiegen.

the prices have (very) pt risen

≈ ‘Presumably, the prices have risen.’

As demonstrated above, Colloquial Non-Standard Viennese German has a full and a clitic form of the discourse particle denn, illustrated in (23).

(23) a. weak sentence adverb (i.e. discourse particle):

Wieso hat-a DIR den Arzt denn empfohlen?

why has-he you the doctor prt recommended

‘Why did he [denn] recommend this doctor to you?’

b. clitic sentence adverb (i.e. clitic discourse particle):

Wieso hat-a-dn DIR den Arzt empfohlen?

why has-he-prt you the doctor recommended

‘Why did he [denn] recommend this doctor to you?’

More imperatively, Colloquial Non-Standard Viennese German also appears to have a strong adverbial counterpart of denn, given in (24a) (originally adapted from Weydt 1969:45). The nature of stressed DENN has been disputed in the literature; in particular, there has been disagreement on whether it is a sentence adverb or a discourse particle (cf. Abraham 2000, May 2000). However, there are several factors indicating that stressed DENN is a strong sentence adverb. Its semantic interpretation clearly differs from that of unstressed denn. The core function of DENN is of a contrastive nature, whereas unstressed denn mainly serves the purpose of contextualization (cf. Thurmair 1989, Grosz 2005). More imperatively, stressed DENN can be replaced without change in meaning by the stressed sentence adverb DANN ‘then’ which in these contexts clearly has a logical, causal function (cf. May 2000:134). Contrastively, unstressed denn cannot be replaced by dann ‘then’, indicating that stressed DENN is a variant of the strong sentence adverb dann ‘then’9. Furthermore, the particle denn is commonly assumed to have diachronically originated from the causal (or temporal) adverb dann ‘then’ (cf. May 2000, Abraham 2003) which further supports a view which considers stressed DENN/DANN ‘then’ as strong counterparts to unstressed denn. In sum, these factors support a treatment of stressed DENN as a strong sentence adverb, contrasting with unstressed denn being a weak sentence adverb, i.e. a discourse particle. Witness thus the tripartite contrast between the strong adverb in (24a) and the weak and clitic adverbs in (24b) and (24c).

9 Such an assumption is supported by data from South German dialects in which denn and dann in declaratives are in free variation, both denoting temporal or causal ‘then’ (cf. Thurmair 1989).
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(24) a. strong sentence adverb:
Wie heißt du DENN/DANN? (... wenn nicht Fritz.)
how are.called you then
≈ ‘What then is your name? (... if it’s not Fritz.)’

b. weak sentence adverb (i.e. discourse particle):
Wie heißt du denn/*dann?
how are.called you prt/then
≈ ‘(In the light of the given context,) What’s your name?’

c. clitic sentence adverb (i.e. clitic discourse particle):
Wie heißt-dn du?
how are.called-prt you
≈ ‘(In the light of the given context,) What’s your name?’

5. Conclusion

In this paper I have proposed to treat German discourse particles as weak sentence adverbs contrasting with strong sentence adverbs and clitic discourse particles. They must have their lack of an adverbial CP compensated for by remaining in a Spec-Head-relation with the clausal functional head in whose specifier they are base-generated. This accounts for their syntactic restriction to the topological middle field, as well as for their ‘watershed function’ of separating old information from new information within the IP layer. In conclusion, German discourse particles clearly support Cardinaletti & Starke’s claim that all lexical categories exhibit a tripartition into strong, weak and clitic elements.

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