

## Beyond Ouch and Oops.

### How descriptive and expressive meaning interact

Angelika Kratzer, University of Massachusetts at Amherst  
Cornell Conference on Theories of Context Dependency  
March 26th 1999

#### 1. Why not Ouch and Oops?

There is a phonology. There is no syntax. There is no compositional semantics. There are no interactions to investigate. Are we even looking at Language?

#### 2. Discourse particles

They are expressives, too. There is a phonology. There is a syntax. There is a compositional semantics. There are interesting interactions to investigate. German, Greek, and Papago are known examples of discourse particle languages. Intonation has been said to have similar uses in other languages.

#### 3. Ja

Roughly (nobody seems to have gotten that quite right yet):

Ja 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.

(1)<sup>1</sup> Spencer is walking up the stairs in front of Webster.

Webster: **Du hast ja'n Loch im Ärmel.**

You have JA' a hole in+the sleeve

There is a hole in your sleeve.

---

<sup>1</sup> This is a variation of an example given in Katrin Lindner: “ ‘Wir sind ja doch alte Bekannte’. The Use of German *ja* and *doch* as modal particles.” In W. Abraham (ed.): Discourse Particles. Amsterdam /Philadelphia (John Benjamins Publishing Company), 1991, 163-201.

- (2) Webster runs into Spencer at the bus stop:  
 Webster: **Du hast ja 'ne neue Frisur.**  
 You have JA a new hairdo.
- (3) Webster asks Spencer: "Who did Austin marry?"  
 Spencer: \* **Austin hat ja Ashley geheiratet.**  
 Austin has JA Ashley married  
 Austin married Ashley.
- (4) Webster has just become a father and he is breaking the news to Spencer:  
 Webster: \* **Wir haben ja eine Tochter.**  
 We have JA a daughter

#### 4. The scope of ja

- (5) a. ....weil sie ja / wahrscheinlich im Büro ist  
 because she JA / probably in+the office is  
 because she is JA / probably in the office.
- b. \* ....weil ja / wahrscheinlich sie im Büro ist.  
 because JA / probably she in+the office is
- (6) a. \*.... weil niemand ja / wahrscheinlich im Büro ist.  
 because nobody JA / probably in+the office is
- b. .... weil ja / wahrscheinlich niemand im Büro ist.  
 because JA / probably nobody in+the office is

- The scope of ja determines the proposition that is commented on through the use of ja. The scope of ja is determined by the same syntactic principles as the scope of other sentential adverbs.

## 5. What's special about discourse particles

- Discourse particles and other kinds of expressives are ignored in the computation of descriptive meanings (except in reported speech contexts, see below).

- (7) a. **Sie kann ja nicht kommen, weil sie ja doch ihre Zwillinge**  
 She can JA not come because she JA DOCH her twins

**versorgen muss.**

take care of must

She JA cannot come, because she JA DOCH must take care of her twins.

- b. Relevant for the computation of descriptive meaning:

**Sie kann nicht kommen, weil sie ihre Zwillinge versorgen muss.**

She can not come because she her twins take care of must

She cannot come because she must take care of her twins.

- Other expressives in the scope of a discourse particle are ignored in the computation of the expressive meaning contributed by that particle.

- (8) a. **Sie muss ja doch ihre Zwillinge versorgen.**

She must JA DOCH her twins take care of

She must JA DOCH take care of her twins.

- b. Ingredients for expressive meaning:  
 { **Ja (she must take care of her twins) , doch (she must take care of her twins) }**

- (9) **Sie haben ja den Webster - das Arschloch - endlich gefeuert.**  
 They have JA the Webster - the asshole - finally fired  
 They JA finally fired Webster, the asshole.

- The epithet das Arschloch is not in the scope of ja.

## 6. Computation of meaning<sup>+</sup>, first shot

- (10) a. **Webster schläft ja.**  
 Webster sleeps ja  
 Webster is ja sleeping.

- b. Descriptive meaning:  $s(\text{sleep}(\text{Webster})(s)) = p$

- c. Expressive meaning contributed by ja (roughly):  
 $s(p(w_s) \& \text{might}(s)(s'(\text{know}(s')(p)(x(\text{addressee}(s)(x))))))$

- Descriptive meaning of a sentence :  $p$   
 Expressive meanings attached to :  $q_1, \dots, q_n$   
 Meaning<sup>+</sup> of :  $s(p(s) \& q_1(s) \& \dots q_n(s))$

## 7. Main prediction: Intervention effects

- Since the scope of a discourse particle has to express a proposition, the scope of a discourse particle cannot include pronouns that are bound from outside. That is,

no discourse particle can intervene between a bound variable pronoun and its binder.

- (11) a. **Tracy, die ja in Syracuse wohnt, wird kommen.**

Tracy, who JA in Syracuse lives will come

Tracy, who JA lives in Syracuse, will come.

- b. **Eine Kollegin, die (\*ja) in Syracuse wohnt, wird kommen.**

A colleague who JA in Syracuse lives will come

A colleague who lives in Syracuse will come.

- c. **Als ich (\*ja) in Syracuse gewohnt habe, war ich oft in Ithaca.**

When I JA in Syracuse lived have, was I often in Ithaca

When

- d. **Stacie hat ihren Job verloren, weil sie ja in der Gewerkschaft war.**

Stacie has her job lost because she JA in the union was

Stacie lost her job, because she was JA in the union.

- e. **Jeder von diesen Arbeitern hat seinen Job verloren, weil er (\*ja) in der**

Each of those workers has his job lost because he JA in the

**Gewerkschaft war.**

union was

Each of those workers lost his job because he was in the union.

- f. **Ich weiss, dass sie ja Stacie eingeladen hat.**

I know that she ja Stacie invited has

I know that she JA invited Stacie.

g. **Ich weiss, wen sie (\*ja) eingeladen hat.**

I know who she JA invited has

I know who she invited.

## 8. Reported Speech

(12) **Webster sagte, dass er ja niemanden gekannt habe.**

Webster said that he JA nobody known had

Webster said that he JA hadn't known anybody.

(13) **Jederder Zeugen behauptete, er habe ja mit eigenen Augen gesehen, dass....**

Each of the witnesses claimed he had JA with own eyes seen that

Each of the witnesses claimed he had JA seen with his own eyes that....

(14) **My father screamed that he would never allow me to marry that bastard**

**Webster.**

- If is the scope of a verbum dicendi, then the expressive meaning of may be predicated of the reported situation, rather than the utterance situation. But note that at least in English, the reference of first person pronouns and other indexicals is still fixed by the utterance situation. In reported speech contexts, then, epithets and indexicals behave differently in English.