

# ***eigentlich*: On Content, Context, and Contrast<sup>1</sup>**

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In this paper, I will show that the German adjective and adverb *eigentlich* is tied to its linguistic context in several ways. I propose a uniform analysis for the adjective and the focus sensitive adverbial use which rests on the assumption that *eigentlich* denotes the identity function on properties and proposition, and contrasts with a contextually given notion of misconception or fakes. This analysis can be shown to improve on earlier proposals by Schmitz/Schröder, as well as discussions in traditional German descriptive linguistics. The analysis finally predicts that we need to distinguish a use of *eigentlich* as an emotive marker which differs from the content use in prosody, syntax, focus sensitivity and meaning.

## **1. Data**

The German word *eigentlich* can be used in a range of contexts, with meanings and implications that are hard to delimit. Interest of linguists was first raised by *eigentlich* as a discourse particle, like in (1) (where *eigentlich* is to be read without accent). Its contribution is hard to translate into English in such examples, and it is equally difficult for native speakers of German to define or paraphrase the meaning of the word.

- (1) a. *Was willst Du eigentlich hier?*  
what want you eigentlich here  
'what do you want here *after all / at all / anyway / ... thinking about it*'  
b. *Da hast Du eigentlich recht.*  
there has you eigentlich right  
'You are right *after all / thinking about it / to tell the truth*'

We will approach these uses indirectly, via the meaning of the intuitively more contentful, more graspable *stressed* adjectival and adverbial use. Let me start by listing some of the facts about the use of *eigentlich*. The sentences in (2) offer some examples for adjectival *eigentlich*. Adjectival *eigentlich* typically, but not exclusively, occurs with an accent. Small caps indicate accents.

- (2) a. Der EIGENTLICHE Chef ist verreist.  
'the real boss is on a trip'  
b. Der EIGENTLICHE Mörder war Smith.  
'the true murderer was Smith.'  
c. Das EIGENTLICHE Problem ist seine Faulheit.  
'the essential problem is his laziness'

The English translations illustrate the possible range of paraphrases. There seems to be no single possible translation that would match all uses. The adjective can not occur in predicative use. Hence, examples like in (3) are all ungrammatical.

- (3) a. \**Das Problem war eigentlich.*  
the problem was eigentlich  
b. \**Der Mörder wurde eigentlich.*  
the murderer became eigentlich

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<sup>1</sup> The paper reflects joint work that substantially draws on Port (2006). I would like to thank Angelika for many insightful criticisms and her continuous challenges with real data.

Moreover, there is no antonym to *eigentlich* that can be morphologically derived in a transparent way. Isolated exceptions can be found in expert languages where *eigentlich* has a specific, theory-internal meaning. (4.b) lists examples.

- (4) a. \**Das ist ein / der uneigentliche Garten.*  
 this is a / the un-eigentliche garden  
 b. *un-eigentliches Integral* (= mathematics), *un-eigentliches Kompositum* (linguistics)

One striking fact about *eigentlich* is that in positive contexts, it can only be used in definite NPs. Indefinite uses are restricted to negative contexts, like in (6) (*few* or *rarely* can not license indefinite+*eigentlich*), and quantificational uses like in (7) are not allowed in Standard High German.<sup>2</sup>

- (5) a- *Der eigentliche Chef kommt nur dienstags.*  
 ‘the EIG boss only comes on Tuesdays’  
 b. *Die eigentlichen Bewohner sind gerade verreist.*  
 the EIG inhabitants are just away  
 c. \**Ein eigentlicher Chef kommt nur dienstags*  
 ‘an EIG boss ...’ (even if there are several bosses.)  
 d. \**Ein eigentlicher Bewohner hat gerade das Haus verlassen.*  
 ‘an EIG inhabitant ...’
- (6) a. *Ein eigentlicher Vertrag wurde nicht abgeschlossen.*  
 ‘there was not made any eigentlicher contract’  
 b. *Niemand hatte einen eigentlichen Lösungsvorschlag.*  
 ‘noone had any *eigentliche* proposal how to solve the problem’
- (7) a. \**Die meisten eigentlichen Stadträte wohnen im Süden.*  
 ‘most of the eigentliche senators live in the South’  
 b. \**Einige eigentliche Spieler traten am Samstag an.*  
 ‘some *eigentliche* players came on Saturday’

In this respect, complex nouns of the form ‘*eigentliche(r/s) N*’ share semantic properties of superlatives. There seems to be a notion that the individual that *is* the *eigentliche N* is a unique (single or plural) individual.

Finally, there is a strong trend to use *eigentlich* in the sense of *true / real / actual / essential* with a stress. Stressed uses will inevitably yield a semantic contribution in one of these senses. This sets *eigentlich* apart from other adjectives or adverbs which usually can also be used in a non-stressed way. Prose discussions in earlier work suggest that the stress on *eigentlich* has some kind of motivation. Authors state that some kind of contrast is evoked to earlier utterances without, however, aiming at a concise analysis of the prosodic facts. These should at least also include rare unstressed adjectival uses like in (8).

- (8) *Der eigentliche CHARME an der Sache ist aber, daß GM die Renovierung auch noch zahlt.*  
 ‘the EIG TRICK about the thing is, however, that GM will even pay for the renovations’

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<sup>2</sup> GOOGLE searched data show convincingly that rare positive hits of the kind in (7) offer clear evidence for an interesting dialectal variation between Standard German and Swiss German.

(8), like all other examples so far, is offered without preceding discourse. In that sense, the presentation of accenting patterns has been incomplete so far. The examples should be read with the following footnotes:

- It is most natural to read sentences with *eigentlich* in positive definite contexts with an accent. In this accentuation, speakers are easily able to reconstruct some vague pre-discourse that matches the accent pattern (whatever its contribution may be).
- In negative contexts, as in (6), *eigentlich* needs to carry no accent.
- In an example like (8), speakers seem also to be able to reconstruct some vague pre-discourse if *eigentlich* remains unaccented (whatever the contribution of the accent may be).

So far, we have restricted attention to adjectival *eigentlich*. In the adverbial use, the role of accent becomes yet more prominent. The presence or absence of the accent makes a clear distinction between uses in a vaguely contentful sense (*truly, really, in fact*) and the discourse particle use.

- (9) a. *Wie heißen Sie EIGENTLICH?* (= ‘what is your real name?’)  
b. *Wie HEISSEN Sie eigentlich?* (= ‘what’s your name, by the way?’)

It is all the more necessary to understand the role of accenting, literal contribution and pragmatic effects of adverbial *eigentlich*. In delimitating the semantic analysis of *eigentlich*, we will proceed from clearer to more sophisticated cases. We will start by devising a semantics for the uses of stressed adjectival *eigentlich*, including an analysis for the accent pattern. We will propose an account for unstressed adjectival uses in positive and negative contexts. Finally, stressed adjectival uses will be analysed in their semantic and pragmatic dimensions. Against this background, we propose that adverbial unstressed *eigentlich* just serves to annotate an utterance with a certain attitude which arose as a pale generalization of side messages of stressed *eigentlich*. For this reason, we will subsume adverbial unstressed *eigentlich* under the category of *discourse particles*, the existence of a homophonous contentful adverb notwithstanding.

## 2. Earlier Analyses

There is a wide range of authors who approached the meaning and use of *eigentlich* from a descriptive perspective in German linguistics. While I will not review all these in detail, there are several main issues that delineate different positions in this debate.

- a. Are there one or two homophonous adverbial *eigentlich*?
  - b. Does its effect lie in weakening or strengthening the assertion?
  - c. What is the role of its contrasting function?
  - d. In questions: Does it always convey casualness, friendliness?
- (A) Should we distinguish adverbial *eigentlich* from a homophonous discourse marker?

Those who opt in favour of a two-way distinction (e.g. xx ) argue roughly as follows: There are clearly discourse marking uses of *eigentlich* where nothing except a certain “flavour” is added to the assertion. Diagnoses vary from author to author as to what the exact nature of this flavour should be, but it seems hard to give any clear paraphrase (or English translation). (10) offers an example.

- (10) *Ich mag ihn eigentlich.*  
I like him *eigentlich* (‘thinking about it a bit, I’d say that I like him in fact’).

Such uses usually occur sentence internal or final. *Eigentlich* is not stressed. On the other hand, we also find *eigentlich* in stressed uses, and in topic positions, two features that discourse markers do not normally allow (see Meibauer, 1994). Such uses moreover convey a more graspable message, something like “in truth”, “in actual fact”, “really”.

(11) EIGENTLICH heisse ich Max.

Even though none of the authors so far could define a clear demarcation line between uses like in (10) and uses like in (11), this camp agrees that the poles of the continuum of uses are distinct enough to warrant the assumption of a “discourse particle” on one side, and a contentful adverb on the other side.

Those who assume that only one entry *eigentlich* is sufficient point out that the proposed grammatical properties of discourse markers (in Meibauer, 1994) should be seen as prototypical features rather than necessary properties. Hence, uses like in (11) will only contradict a statistical trend. Moreover they argue in favour of a parsimonious semantic modelling, they point out that all uses of *eigentlich* rest on one common underlying semantic core, that no morphophonological dissociations can be traced that would support two different lexical entries.

(12) *Ich mag ihn eigentlich.*  
I like him *eigentlich*.

(13) EIGENTLICH heisse ich Karlheinz.  
*eigentlich* am-called I “Karlheinz”

Let us address the speculations about the semantic core of *eigentlich* in some more detail. Most traditional approaches characterize the contribution of *eigentlich* in terms of “weakening” or “strengthening” the assertion made by the sentence. This is puzzling not only in that it remains unclear in what sense an assertion can be strengthened or weakened. It is also puzzling in that authors (and sometimes even one) diagnose that *eigentlich* can both, weaken and strengthen assertions. I will add two examples which were classed as “weakening” use and “strengthening” use without further attempts at spelling out the intuition.

(14) EIGENTLICH habe ich keine Zeit. (“weakening”, discussed in Kohrt, 1988)  
Eigentlich habe I no time

(15) *Gehst Du heute Abend mit ins Training? — Ich habe eigentlich keine Zeit.*  
Will you join me to go to training tonight? — I have *eigentlich* no time  
 (“strengthening”, discussed in Weydt 1986:354)  
(both from Frühwirth, 1999)

These apparently conflicting diagnoses in traditional grammar do not, without comment, add to our understanding of the meaning of the term, and urgently require elucidation.

A further observation concerns the relation of an *eigentlich* sentence with the local discourse context. Frequently, the sentence is contrasted with a preceding or following utterance. Frühwirth offers examples like the following.

(16) *Ich hasse Oliven. Naja, eigentlich mag ich sie nur nicht besonders gerne.*  
‘I hate olives. Oh well, in fact I just don’t like them very much.’

(17) *Ja, aber eigentlich kam es mir nicht nur so vor! Ich war es tatsächlich!*  
‘Yeah, but in fact it not just *seemed* to be like that. I really *was* it.’ (it=xx)

- (18) *Obwohl es sehr belastend war, hat mich die Wiedervereinigung eigentlich gefreut.*  
Although it was very depressing, the reunification *eigentlich* made me happy

The contrasting function of *eigentlich* is unanimously acknowledged by authors. It is at the basis of the only formal approach to the contribution of *eigentlich* that seems to exist to date, the analysis by Schmitz+Schröder (2004). They assume that *eigentlich* serves to block some default inference that the listener would otherwise derive from the sentence. The sentence in (19) is the prime example in their paper.

- (19) *Eigentlich geht Ostwind. Aber es regnet.*  
Eigentlich is an easterly wind. But it's raining.

Schmitz+Schröder observe that the assertion “there is an easterly wind” will give rise to the default expectation (in the meteorological context of Germany) that the weather is dry. In (19): ‘there is an easterly wind’ nonmonotonically implies: ‘the weather is sunny’ (in a central German climate). The function of *eigentlich* lies in signalling that this nonmonotonic inference should be blocked. The following sentence asserts a proposition which is in conflict with this default inference. (The authors offer a very elegant implementation of this idea in terms of update semantics)

Schmitz and Schröder in fact capture an essential insight about the use of *eigentlich*. The analysis leads to very reasonable predictions in many examples. However, for the sake of a unified semantic analysis the authors disregard both the adjectival use as well as the question whether an extra discourse marking function must be acknowledged. The latter seems the more serious omission. Examples like (18) show that **not all uses of *eigentlich* block default inferences:**

- (20) A: *Sollen wir zum Frühstück einen Sekt aufmachen?*  
Shall we for breakfast a champagne open?  
B: (hesitating) *Ach— heute ist ja eigentlich Sonntag! Gut, machen wir das.*  
Ach — today is prt. *eigentlich* Sunday. Well, let's do so.
- (21) *Du hast eigentlich recht.*  
'You are right, in fact.'

In (20), speaker B first contemplates the negative consequences of having champagne so early in the morning—first, it's fun, but afterwards one is tired, one wants to take a nap, or one can not work properly. Yet, he then comes across a fact that might still support A's suggestion: It's Sunday after all. So, let us behave accordingly. In this example, no default inference of “it is Sunday” seems to be withdrawn. To the contrary, if any default plays a role here, it is “Sundays are lazydays” which is supported, not blocked, in this context. An utterance like (21) likewise is used normally to convey agreement-after-some-reflection. The speaker states that the hearer is right. And that one should act, behave, or decide accordingly. I will in the following label such examples as the “let's act accordingly” use of *eigentlich*. In later sections, it will be argued that this distinction corresponds to

- a. *adv. eigentlich* in association with focus; operator on properties; stressed;  
related to adjectival *eigentlich*  
in questions: operates on questioned property.
- b. *mp eigentlich*: unstressed; speech act signal; no relation to focus;  
no transparent relation to adjectival *eigentlich*  
*let's act accordingly* uses  
in questions: adds the ‘after some reflection’ flavour

At the present point, the data simply show that Schmitz and Schröders uniform analysis of adverbial *eigentlich* does not make the right predictions for all data, and that the analysis moreover does not offer any clue how the prosody and word order facts of examples can be turned into a prediction about the nature of the examples in question: Are they an *eigentlich—but* use (i.e. in line with their analysis) or an *eigentlich—let's act accordingly* use (and hence unpredicted). Let me mention that Schmitz and Schröder acknowledge an extra discourse marking use in questions, e.g. questions like in (22).

(22) Wie heißen Sie eigentlich?

They briefly characterize the function of *eigentlich* as marking a casual, friendly question. I will come back to this claim when we deal with the discourse marking function of *eigentlich*.

### 3. Semantics and pragmatics of adjectival *eigentlich*

We propose that *eigentlich* denotes an operator which maps predicates to predicates (i.e. of type  $((s,(e,t)), (s,(e,t)))$ ). We will use EIG to refer to this operator. Its logical type matches the type of adjectives like *former* or *alleged* which are likewise restricted to attributive (= adnominal) uses. It is less evident how predicates P and EIG(P) relate to each other. Example (2.c) refers to *das eigentliche Problem* (= ‘the EIG problem’) and suggests that other facts in the given context could constitute ‘minor problems’. It is not clear whether these other facts would remain ‘problems’ if the *core* problem were removed. Still, one could conclude that EIG serves to map a predicate P to the stereotypical, major, important elements in its extension.

Examples like (2.a) and (2.b) however are of a different nature. If one calls someone the *eigentliche Mörder* (‘EIG murderer’), one rarely refers to circumstances where more persons hurt the victim in minor ways. Usually, the speaker refers to *hypothetical* or *apparent* murderers, persons which were for some time hypothesized to be murderers but turned out not to be. The opposite of *eigentlicher Mörder* hence is *scheinbarer Mörder*. Comparing the meaning of *Mörder* and *eigentlicher Mörder*, it turns out that the two are co-extensional. Murderers are true murderers, and one can not more truly kill someone than by being a murderer (*eigentlich* or not).

(23) EIG( MURDERER) = MURDERER

Similar observations hold for *Chef* and *eigentlicher Chef* (= boss). Persons may be mistaken as being the ‘boss’ but reference to EIG( CHEF ) suggests that from that point on, no such *ersatz* bosses should be called *Chef*. This analysis is likewise nicely exemplified by a classical quote in Adelung (1774, taken from Schmitz and Schröder 2004:12).

(24) *Das eigentliche Griechenland, derjenige Theil Griechenlands, welchem dieser Name der schärfsten Wahrheit nach zukommt.*

If we imagine the geographical map of Greece, we can delineate those parts that count as the “true, real” extension of Greece. Everything outside is “Greece-under-a weaker-standard”, “parts that were erroneously taken to belong to Greece”, or similar hedges. The resulting picture reflects nicely what we assume to be the semantic contribution of *eigentlich*. It is used to cut a property’s extension down to the true core.

The range of examples suggests that there is no uniform way to characterize those parts of

In order to come to a uniform representation of the effects of EIG, we propose that EIG contrasts with a family of operators that will be glossed as FAKE. FAKE takes predicates P to extensions which comprise entities that could erroneously be mistaken as P objects. Importantly, there seems to be no uniform notion of what can count as an instantiation of FAKE in a given context. Sometimes, FAKE is instantiated as ‘mistaken to be P’ but in other

examples, like (2.c) for instance, FAKE can be instantiated as ‘a minor nonstereotypical instance of’. Another example discussed in Port (2006) is the following:

- (25) *Der eigentliche Garten ist hinter dem Haus*  
 ‘the EIG garden is behind the house’

Port clearly argues that (25) can be uttered in view of a small patch of lawn in front of the house. While such patches sometimes already count as ‘garden’, sentence (25) signals that the speaker will use the word ‘garden’ in its strict sense where a certain amount of square meters, or certain kinds of plants are necessary for some piece of land to qualify as ‘garden’.

These assumptions also explain the nature of *eigentlich*’s context dependency. In order to use *eigentliches N*, the discourse context has to provide an appropriate notion of FAKE N, commonly instantiated by referents in earlier discourse. Given that German does not lexicalize any uniform notion of FAKE, it can be derived that *eigentlich* in the described use can not possess an antonym (see also Horn 2002xx). Stress is licensed by the contextual contrast between FAKE and EIG; the stress pattern can be analysed as contrastive stress in an alternative semantics.

Uniqueness does not yet fall out of the analysis. Recall that even pluralities of *eigentliche N*’s need to be referred to with definites. Presently, uniqueness will be captured by the following stipulation.

- (26)  $EIG(P) = \lambda x ( P(x) \wedge \neg \exists y ( P(y) \wedge x \leq y ) )$

$EIG(P)$  will have singleton or empty extension. In the former case, competition between indefinite and definite determiner will lead to definite reference in positive uses. If there are no elements in  $EIG(P)$ , however, this can be reported with an indefinite. No quantified uses are possible on basis of (26).

#### 4. The adverbial use

While most other studies on *eigentlich* address only its adverbial use, the present study deliberately spent time on a close investigation of the adjectival case. This will pay in the present section. I will argue that the adjectival use can be adapted to the adverbial case with minor changes. At the end of the section, I will briefly point out why other possible analyses, not inspired by the adjectival case, do less justice to the data.

##### 4.1. Stress = contrastive topic accent.

The first important observation concerns the prosodic facts of the adverbial use. It was mentioned in section 2 that adverbial *eigentlich* can occur stressed or unstressed, and that authors tend to correlate this difference with two possible uses (which will be confirmed in the present analysis). It has, to my knowledge, never been pointed out that the stress of stressed *eigentlich* (as in (27)) can not be a simple focus accent. In fact, (27) with a single accent on *eigentlich* is prosodically and pragmatically illformed (see (28)). The hearer perceives but can not interpret the single accent. A more appropriate prosody is given in (29) where a second accent occurs on ‘keine’ (‘no’).

- (27) *Eigentlich habe ich keine Zeit.*  
 Eigentlich have I no time  
 (28) single accent  
 \*EIGENTLICH habe ich keine Zeit.  
 (29) contrastive topic accent  
 EIGENTLICH/ habe ich KEINE\ Zeit.

This suggests that *eigentlich* associates with a second focus, and that an analysis in terms of contrastive topicality would be more faithful to the data than one in terms of simple focus. I will completely disregard the option of an uninterpreted “lexical” accent here. Let us investigate how different loci of the second accent influence our understanding of the overall message conveyed.

#### 4.2. *eigentlich* in association with focus

Sentences like (29), as well as (30) below, strongly suggest certain kinds of context of use. They echo situations that we all know too well, and we would strongly tend to read them in the prosodic pattern that seems most natural in these situations. Hence, the literature contains no discussion of the fact that other accents would be possible in other situations.

- (30) *Eigentlich heiÙe ich THOMAS<sub>F</sub>. (But everyone calls me “Ede”)*  
 Eigentlich am-named I Thomas.

Let us take the minimal pair in (31)/(32) as starting point to investigate accenting.

- (31) *Eigentlich DUSCHE<sub>F</sub> ich gerade.*  
 Eigentlich take-a-shower I now.  
 (32) *Eigentlich dusche ICH<sub>F</sub> gerade.*  
 Eigentlich take-a-shower I now.

Both sentences have a ring of protest to them and suggest possible continuations which spell out this undertone. However, different continuations are natural for either example.

- (31’) *Eigentlich DUSCHE<sub>F</sub> ich gerade ...* but there are certain suggestions *p* around that seem to be based on the assumption that I was not taking a shower. E.g. *p* = You ask me to answer the phone.  
 (32’) *Eigentlich dusche ICH<sub>F</sub> gerade ...* but there are certain propositions *p* that are more coherent with *someone else* taking a shower. E.g. *p* = Tom, whistling, is leaving the bathroom with the soap.

The observations in (31’) and (32’) are hard coherency facts. Violations are as bad as coherency violations can ever be. A cross-change of the continuations as in (31’’) and (32’’) yields clearly incoherent discourses.

- (31’’) # *Eigentlich DUSCHE<sub>F</sub> ich gerade.* And/but Tom has stolen the soap.  
 (32’’) # *Eigentlich dusche ICH<sub>F</sub> gerade.* And/but you ask me to answer the phone.

An adequate analysis of the meaning of *eigentlich* needs to be able to predict these differences in coherency, and hence has to take focus into account. Note that the default inference blocking analysis by Schmitz+Schröder (2004) correctly predicts that the acceptable cases are acceptable (default inferences of S are contradicted by next sentence). Yet, it can not explain why the nature of possible contrasting propositions is influenced by focus structure.

#### 4.3. Adverbial *eigentlich* as contrasting modalities

My analysis will rest on the assumption that *eigentlich* in the adverbial domain denotes the modality of *being actually true* and refers to a further modality SEEM which specifies those possible worlds *w'* which are such that one could *think* that matters were as in *w'*. SEEM is evidently the correlate to the notion of FAKE in the domain of individuals. Like FAKE, it does not uniformly refer to one modality but can chose different modalities. In all cases,



these modalities will be counterfactual, ie. refer to a set of worlds for which it is clear that it does not contain the actual world. Let us turn to the details of the proposal.

Most importantly, all uses of (stressed) adverbial *eigentlich*+S that have been discussed in the literature confirm that the context of use provides some proposition  $q$  which conflicts or contrasts with the content of S. We have seen several examples, including cases like S= ‘my name is Thomas’ in conflict with  $q$ = ‘everyone calls me Ede’, S= ‘there is an easterly wind’ in contrast to  $q$ = ‘it is raining’, S= ‘I am taking a shower’ in conflict with  $q$ = ‘I am supposed to answer the phone’. *eigentlich* seems to correct misconceptions about the world that are based specifically on the content of  $q$ . This suggests the following definition:

$$(33) \quad \text{SEEM}_w(q) := \{ w' \mid w' \models q \ \& \ w' \text{ are normal } q\text{-worlds, as seen from } w \}$$

Eckardt (1998) spells out how the notion of normal worlds offers the basis to draw default inferences from  $q$ ; you could read  $\text{SEEM}_w(q)$  as those worlds which exhibit all default conclusions that one would expect on the basis of  $q$  in lack of further information. Note that  $w$  generally doesn’t need to be in  $\text{SEEM}_w(q)$ . I will not specify the modal base for SEEM. It will turn out in the discussion of examples that different modal bases are used in different types of discourse.

Let us next consider the role of focussing in more detail. The minimal pair in (31)/(32) suggests that the conflicting proposition  $q$  must match the alternatives raised by the sentence. More specifically, the request to answer the phone is related to the opposing propositions ‘that I am taking a shower’ and ‘that I do P’ for any activities P which are more compatible with taking phone calls. Similarly, the possessor of the soap (Tom) relates to the propositions ‘I take a shower’ and ‘Tom takes a shower’ and would clearly be more compatible with the latter than the former. *eigentlich*+S seems to say, in prose: “Given that  $q$ , you could *think* that S’ were the case. But actually, S holds true.”

$$(34) \quad \begin{array}{l} w \models \text{SEEM}(q) ( S' ) \\ w \models \text{ACTUALLY}( S ) \end{array}$$

$$(35) \quad \begin{array}{l} w \models \text{SEEM}(q) ( p ) \text{ iff } \text{SEEM}_w(q) \subseteq p. \\ w \models \text{ACTUALLY}( p ) \text{ iff } w \models p. \end{array}$$

For the sake of simplicity I will assume the actuality operator in (35.b) instead of resorting to a more elaborate analysis of ‘actually’ in terms of two-dimensional modal logic (e.g. Segerberg, 1994). While future investigations might bring out data which make such a refinement necessary, this simplistic analysis seems well motivated at the present point in that it generalizes the denotation of adjectival *eigentlich* to the modal domain.<sup>3</sup>

These ingredients offer the basis for an analysis of stressed *eigentlich* examples in terms of contrastive topic in association with focus (Büring, 2003). Stressed *eigentlich* as the contrastive topic (CT) denotes ACTUALLY and evokes a contextually specified SEEM modality. The context, specifically, provides the contrasting proposition  $q$  which drives the

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<sup>3</sup> It would be an interesting project to investigate the actual contexts of use of words like *actually* or *in fact* and see how much of their informational content consists in contrasting the truth of  $p$  with the possibility, illusion, vision, etc. of some counterfactual  $q$ .

interlocutors' expectations. The focus in the sentence, finally, restricts the choice of alternative propositions  $p'$  in Alt(S) which the hearer might expect to hold, given that  $q$ . Let us go through the main steps of an example:

- (36) *Eigentlich*<sub>CT</sub> geht ein OSTWIND<sub>F</sub>.  
 'eigentlich there is an easterly wind'
- (37) a.  $[[Eigentlich_{CT} \text{ geht ein OSTWIND}_F. ]]^0 = \lambda_w.EASTERLYWIND(her, w)$   
 b.  $[[ \text{ ein OSTWIND} ]]^f = \{ \lambda_s \lambda_w.EASTERLYWIND(s, w), \lambda_s \lambda_w.WESTLYWIND(s, w), \lambda_s \lambda_w.NORTHLYWIND(s, w), \lambda_s \lambda_w.SOUTHLWIND(s, w) \}$   
 c.  $[[Eigentlich_{CT} \text{ geht ein OSTWIND}_F. ]]^f = \{ \lambda_w.EASTERLYWIND(her, w), \lambda_w.WESTLYWIND(her, w), \lambda_w.NORTHLYWIND(her, w), \lambda_w.SOUTHLWIND(her, w) \}$   
 d.  $[[Eigentlich_{CT} ]]^CT = \{ \text{Actually, SEEM}(q) \}$   
 with  $q$  given by context. In Schmitz+Schröders' discussion of (36),  $q = \text{'es regnet'}$  ('it is raining').  
 e.  $[[Eigentlich_{CT} \text{ geht ein OSTWIND}_F. ]]^CT =$   
 $\{ \{ \lambda_w.EASTERLYWIND(her, w), \lambda_w.WESTLYWIND(her, w), \lambda_w.NORTHLYWIND(her, w), \lambda_w.SOUTHLWIND(her, w) \},$   
 $\{ \lambda_w.SEEM(q)(EASTERLYWIND(her, w)), \lambda_w.SEEM(q)(WESTLYWIND(her, w)), \lambda_w.SEEM(q)(NORTLYWIND(her, w)), \lambda_w.SEEM(q)(SOUTHLWIND(her, w)) \} \}$   
 In prose: Set of two questions (i) 'Which wind is there actually?', (ii) 'Which wind would you expect, given that it is raining?'

Note that at this point, the *eigentlich* construction deviates from ordinary uses of contrastive topics. In common uses of CT, the respective sentences is required to be part of a larger discourse where the questions in the CT-value of the sentence together exhaust the current global Question Under Debate (QUD), and where preceding or subsequent turns in the discourse address those questions in  $[[ S ]]^CT$  which are not answered by  $[[ S ]]^0$  (roughly). The use of contrastive *eigentlich* however makes its own conventionalized use of  $[[ S ]]^CT$ . What the discourse should specify next is the contextual parameter  $q$ : Which proposition  $q$  is such that a different answer to the question "Which wind do we have?" would be more plausible than the one that is actually true? If *eigentlich* is used to contrast two propositions, a good next turn consists in "But  $q$ ".

Matters are different if  $q$  is derived from a question, command or request. In that case, *eigentlich* can be used to implicate various kinds of answers. Let us go through some more examples. The following request scenario is a dialog between A and B:

- (38) B: Could you answer the phone, please?  
 A: *Eigentlich* DUSCHE ich gerade.  
 Eigentlich, I am just [taking a shower]<sub>f</sub>.
- (39) a.  $[[Eigentlich_{CT} \text{ DUSCHE}_F \text{ ich gerade.} ]]^0 = \lambda_w.SHOWER(I, now, w)$   
 b.  $[[DUSCHE_F ]]^f = \{ \lambda_x \lambda_s \lambda_w.SHOWER(x, s, w), \lambda_x \lambda_s \lambda_w.READ(x, s, w), \lambda_x \lambda_s \lambda_w.POTTER-AROUND(x, s, w), \dots \}$   
 c.  $[[Eigentlich_{CT} \text{ DUSCHE}_F \text{ ich gerade.} ]]^f = \{ \lambda_w.SHOWER(I, now, w), \lambda_w.READ(I, now, w), \lambda_w.POTTER-AROUND(I, now, w), \dots \}$   
 d.  $[[Eigentlich_{CT} ]]^CT = \{ \text{Actually, SEEM}(q) \}$   
 with  $q$  given by context. Here, I will assume  $q = \text{'you can answer the phone'}$ .

e.  $[[Eigentlich_{CT} DUSCHHE_F ich gerade. ]]$ <sup>CT</sup> =  
 $\{ \{ \lambda w. SHOWER(I, now, w), \lambda w. READ(I, now, w), \lambda w. POTTER-AROUND(I, now, w), \dots \},$   
 $\{ \lambda w. SEEM(q)( \lambda w. SHOWER(I, now, w)), \lambda w. SEEM(q)( \lambda w. READ(I, now, w)),$   
 $\lambda w. SEEM(q)( \lambda w. POTTER-AROUND(I, now, w)), \dots \} \}$

Paraphrase:

Set of two questions (i) ‘What am I doing, actually?’, (ii) ‘What do you think I am doing, given that you think that I can answer the phone?’.

Importantly, there is a clear difference between the spellout of the SEEM modality in example (36) and (38). In examples like (36), the speaker contrasts two facts which are both accepted to be true. In the request case, the modal operator refers to the epistemic alternatives of the requesting person B. A’s answer is a counter-request to B to adjust his epistemic alternatives to some important fact (A is taking a shower) and to reconsider the original question (‘can you answer the phone?’) in the light of this adjustment. In other words, A’s answer strongly suggests that B would, as a polite person, not have asked in the first place if he had taken into account all relevant informations. The net information conveyed by A’s utterance hence comes close to a plain “no”.

The final kind of example that I will discuss here is the famous weakening effect of *eigentlich* when the speaker names reasons to decline a request, but signals room for negotiation.

(40) B: Will you join us to the movies?

A: *Eigentlich* habe ich KEINE Zeit...

*Eigentlich*, I DON’T have time (but following my lower instincts, ... )

(41) a.  $[[Eigentlich_{CT} habe ich KEINE_F Zeit. ]]$ <sup>0</sup> =  $\lambda w. \neg HAVE-TIME(I, now, w)$

b.  $[[KEINE_F ]]$ <sup>f</sup> =  $\{ \lambda P. P, \lambda P. \neg P \}$ <sup>4</sup>

c.  $[[Eigentlich_{CT} habe ich KEINE_F Zeit. ]]$ <sup>f</sup> =  
 $\{ \lambda w. \neg HAVE-TIME(I, now, w), \lambda w. HAVE-TIME(I, now, w) \}$

d.  $[[Eigentlich_{CT} ]]$ <sup>CT</sup> =  $\{ \text{Actually}, SEEM(q) \}$  with  $q$  given by context.  
 I will postpone specification of  $q$  to the discussion below.

e.  $[[Eigentlich_{CT} habe ich KEINE_F Zeit. ]]$ <sup>CT</sup> =  
 $\{ \{ \lambda w. \neg HAVE-TIME(I, now, w), \lambda w. HAVE-TIME(I, now, w) \},$   
 $\{ \lambda w. SEEM(q)( \lambda w. \neg HAVE-TIME(I, now, w)),$   
 $\lambda w. SEEM(q)( \lambda w. HAVE-TIME(I, now, w)) \} \}$

In prose: Set of two questions (i) ‘Whether I have time?’, (ii) ‘Whether I have time, under some contextually chosen modality SEEM?’

Let me discuss reasonable instantiations of  $q$  and SEEM in this example. If we’d follow the patterns of the previous examples (which can be multiplied easily),  $q$ = ‘I can/will go to the movies’ could be possible choices. In this case, SEEM might refer to epistemic alternatives of the speaker, and e.(ii) would be paraphrased as ‘Given that I will go to the movies, would it rather seem that I have time or that I don’t have time?’ This analysis would be tenable, although unconvincing in two respects:

<sup>4</sup> I will not attempt to disentangle negation, determiner and the fact that VPs with bare mass term object NPs in German require a determiner in negation: I will simply take ‘keine Zeit haben’ as the negation of ‘Zeit haben’.

- How does it come about that the same choice of  $q$  — a hypothetical fulfillment of B’s request — leads to a challenge of the epistemic alternatives of B and an eventual denial in (38), while (40) shows the famous weakening-cum-surrender effect?
- The tentative analysis entails that (40) should have an undertone of ‘I will do the exceptional and go to the movies in spite of not having time’. This is not a correct prediction of the actual side message. Hesitant utterances like (40) don’t suggest that A is going to do something *exceptional* but rather that A intends to *lower her standards* for ‘having time or not’.

The proposed frame allows for a different account for example (40), including the surrender effect. We can assume that the contextual parameter  $q$  does not exert any restrictions here (e.g.  $q = \lambda w(a=a)$ ) and that the main contribution of context consists in the appropriate choice of modality in this case. SEEM rests on the modal base of the speaker’s buletic alternatives (what the speaker wants): Which answer to the question “do I have time?” would I like to be the true one. Due to the contrastive topic, the speaker suggests that a *different* answer than the actual answer would be desirable (“that I HAVE time”). The net message of A’s utterance in (40) so far can be summed up by

(40’) *I don’t have time, but I would very much like to have time.*

The final step is in sight. Typically, the weakening function arises in sentences *eigentlich+S* where the truth or falsity of S depends in part on the subjective judgement of the speaker. This general trend is once more illustrated by (38) and (40), which we will compare one last time. In the scenario in (38), it is an undeniable fact that A is taking a shower. The truth of “I am taking a shower” does not rest on any subjective notions. In (40), however, the truth of ‘I have time’ is a more subjective matter. It depends usually on factors like ‘what do I have to do?’, ‘when does that have to be finished?’, ‘how much time do I need for each subtask’ etc. This is where A invites B to beg her reconsider this subjective judgement, perhaps to lower professional ideals about which tasks require what amount of time etc. and, eventually, to join B to the movies. Yet, A leaves it open whether this reconsiderations will be successful. This is the reason why B can not answer “ok, then let us go!” straight away. The last turn in (41) would be incoherent.

(41) A: *Will you join us for dinner?*  
 B: *EIGENTLICH habe ich keine Zeit. (‘eigentlich, I don’t have time)*  
 A: *#Ok, then let’s go.*

#### 4.4. Does *eigentlich* cancel default entailments?

The present analysis agrees with Schmitz+Schröder (2004) in that both locate the contributions of *eigentlich* at the level of default inferencing. The two approaches differ in the exact spellout of this idea, which becomes clear when we compare the respective analyses for one simple example. I will use (36), repeated below, in view of the fact that it is Schröder+Schmitz’ prime example.

(36) *Eigentlich geht Ostwind. (Aber es regnet)*  
*eigentlich there is an easterly wind. But it’s raining.*

Schmitz+Schöder argue that *eigentlich* invites the hearer to withhold a certain default inference  $q$  that would usually follow. In this example,  $q$  is taken to be something like  $q =$  ‘*the weather is dry*’, contradicting the content of the ‘but’-continuation. Schematically:

- (42)  $S = \textit{there is an easterly wind.}$   
 contextually salient:  $q = \textit{the weather is dry}$   
 $S \rightarrow_{\text{default}} q$   
*eigentlich* prevents update with  $q$   
 and for good reason, because  $\neg q$  is in fact the case:  $\neg q = \textit{it is raining.}$

The crucial default inference is hence one with  $S$  as antecedent, leading to some expected consequent ( $q$ ). The analysis that was proposed here takes a different direction of reasoning. I proposed that there is some contextual proposition  $r$  which leads us to expect, per default, one of the alternatives  $S'$  of  $S$ . Rephrasing the analysis in terms of default expectations, we might come to (43) where I will use the same labels for the propositions in question to ease comparison:

- (43)  $S = \textit{there is an easterly wind.}$   
 contextually salient:  $\neg q = \textit{it is raining}$   
 $\neg q \rightarrow_{\text{default}} S'$   
 $S'$  one of the alternatives of  $S$

If we moreover assume that the alternatives are mutually exclusive,  $S'$  will entail  $S$  and hence (43) leads to the more coarse-grained (44).

- (44)  $S = \textit{there is an easterly wind.}$   
 contextually salient:  $\neg q = \textit{it is raining}$   
 $\neg q \rightarrow_{\text{default}} \neg S$

The crucial entailments in (42) and (44), were they part of classical logic, would in fact be logically equivalent and hence, we could conclude that the present account is a way of restating the Schmitz+Schröder account in terms of possible world semantics. Interestingly, however,  $S \rightarrow_{\text{default}} q$  and  $\neg q \rightarrow_{\text{default}} \neg S$  are not equivalent in default reasoning. Take  $S = \textit{'x is a man'}$  and  $q = \textit{'x does not own a racing car'}$ . We would agree that  $S$  per default entails  $q$ : *'usually, men do not own racing cars'*. However, it does not follow that the usual owners of racing cars are female. In fact, the usual owner of a racing car *is* male, just not a common one. Following Schmitz+Schröder's analysis, we would expect that the discourse "*Eigentlich S. But not q.*" should be coherent. On the present analysis, however, we'd expect that this discourse is odd or requires additional repair assumptions. (45) shows the case in question.

- (45) #*Eigentlich ist Dani ein Mann. Aber Dani besitzt einen Sportwagen.*  
*eigentlich* Dani is male. But Dani owns a racing car.

This two-sentence discourse leaves the hearer/reader puzzled as to what legitimates the use of *eigentlich*. (The puzzlement could be approximately reproduced in English by using *in fact*, or *actually*.) Unlike what Schmitz+Schröder would predict, the use of *eigentlich* can not be interpreted as an invitation to withhold the default assumption that Dani, being a normal man, will not own a racing car (or perhaps some positive contrary like "own one car which is an Opel Kadett").

The present analysis, in contrast, would predict that the hearer needs to (a) understand alternatives to 'Dani is a man', and (b) see that the second sentence contributes a fact  $r$  which would lead one to erroneously assume that one of the alternatives is true. In the present example, an accessible way to understand alternatives to 'Dani is a man' might be 'Dani is a woman' (i.e. assume focussed 'ein Mann'). However, the fact that Dani owns a racing car

does not lead us to assume, erroneously, that Dani might be a woman. Hence, we'd expect that there is no simple discourse-internal way to resolve the contribution of *eigentlich* in (45).<sup>5</sup>

I don't want to end without pointing out that the notion of "erroneous assumption" that is encoded in the SEEM modality in the present analysis will require further investigation. That this is so is shown by examples like in (46).

- (46) #*Eigentlich ist Dani kahlköpfig. Aber Dani ist eine Frau.*  
*eigentlich, Dani is bald. But Dani is a woman.*

This is another one of those examples where the reader/hearer is left puzzled, and will conclude that the contextual informations that are necessary to understand the contribution of *eigentlich* are missing. Given that bold persons are, as a rule, male persons, Schmitz+Schröder can not predict this observation. However, given that female persons are, as a rule, nonbold persons, the present account *in its formal spellout* can't either: Worlds where 'Dani is a woman' holds true and where 'Dani has hair' is true are more likely than worlds where Dani is female and bold. More investigations into examples like these are necessary in order to delineate the kind of deceptive fact that is addressed by *eigentlich*. (46) would improve, for instance, if we could add some fact about Dani that makes her *look* like if she had hair even though she is—*eigentlich*—bold. Further restrictions on possible instantiations of SEEM should be developed on the basis of this and similar examples.<sup>6</sup>

#### 4.5. Extension to Questions

Note that this analysis naturally extends to *wh*-questions. The *eigentlich* question suggests that there are facts in context which suggest a plausible but wrong answer to the question. Some examples are listed below.

- (47) *Wie heißt Du EIGENTLICH?*  
How are-called you *eigentlich*?  
*EIGENTLICH* heisse ich THOMAS. (*But everyone calls me "Ede"*)
- (48) *Wann hast Du EIGENTLICH Sprechstunde?*  
When have you *eigentlich* office hours?  
*EIGENTLICH* habe ich DONNERSTAGS *Sprechstunde*.  
*Eigentlich* have I on-Thursday office hours. (*Even though I give advice to students at any time.*)

Focus in questions standardly serves to contrast them with other questions. The focus on *eigentlich* (denoting ACTUALLY) evokes the parallel question about what seems to be the case,

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<sup>5</sup> The discourse in (45) could be used felicitously in a larger context where the crucial contrasting proposition *p* is not the 'but'-clause. I will leave it to the inventiveness of German readers to construct such contexts; it is all but simple, and requires a lot of toying around with plausible focus structures and contrasting propositions.

<sup>6</sup> Once again, example (46) could be licensed by a wider context. We could, for instance, be looking for a bold person to act as the devil in a drama. If there is a further restriction that the devil should be played by a male person, (46) can be resolved in this context as follows: Contrasting proposition *q* = 'Dani can't play the devil'. *q* is more plausible with an alternative to the actual facts (e.g. 'Dani has long blonde hair') than with the actual state of affairs ('Dani is bold'). The explicit 'but'-clause offers an indirect link to the *real* contrastive proposition *q* by expressing something ('Dani is female') that entails *q* ('Dani can't play the devil').

e.g. ‘What name *seems* to be your name?’. Questions like (47) and (48) are standardly used if the answer *q* to the question about what seems to be the case is salient in the context. The respective propositions are given in brackets above. The contribution of the question in (47) could be paraphrased as follows:

- (47’) contextually salient: ‘What name *x* is such that a contextually given fact *q* suggests that *x* is your name?’  
 given fact *q*: everyone calls you ‘Ede’.  
 Suggests answer: ‘Ede’ is the name such that ... Ede might be your name.  
 explicit question: What name is in fact your name?  
 explicit answer: *Eigentlich*, my name is ‘Thomas’  
 use of *eigentlich* licensed by *q* and alternative ‘Your name is Ede’.

The semantics and pragmatics of the answer is exactly the one as derived in the previous section. I will refrain from a full spell-out here. Let me just mention that Schmitz+Schröder’s analysis is once more problematic at this point. They need to claim that the *eigentlich* question asks for a fact that the speaker does not yet know, but she already is supposed to know which default entailment of this unknown fact she wants to cancel. While this might be a technically feasible claim, it does not plausibly model actual question-answer discourse.

## 5. *Emotive particle use*

In this section, I want to delineate the analysis in section 4 from uses of *eigentlich* where it signals a certain mental attitude of the speaker without being part of the semantic composition. The analysis in 4 is tailored for cases where *eigentlich* associates with focus, brings alternative propositions to the fore, refers to a contrasting proposition *q* in context and conveys that *q* would lead one to expect one of these (false) alternatives rather than the actual facts. It does not cover cases where (a) no contrasting proposition, or (b) no ‘fake’ alternative propositions are conveyed. In such uses, *eigentlich* is unstressed and

- in assertions: conveys an element of reflection or contemplation before making an assertion
- in questions: signals that the question was asked after some reflection, or after previous interaction, or contemplation before asking

I will illustrate these with some examples. The utterances in (49) – (51) show the assertion case.

- (49) *Peter ist eigentlich ein netter Kerl.*  
 ‘Thinking about it, Peter is actually a nice guy’  
 (50) *Wir schlafen eigentlich nur.*  
 ‘Thinking about it, we are always sleeping.’  
 (51) *Da hast Du eigentlich recht.*  
 ‘Thinking about it, you are right.’

In a sentence like (49), the speaker asserts that ‘Peter is a nice guy’, that she has come to this conclusion after some thinking about Peter’s character, and that there is presently nothing that would cast doubt on this fact, or suggest that Peter might be a nuisance. I dubbed such uses as *let’s act accordingly* uses. Formally, they correspond with a completely de-accented use of *eigentlich*. The analysis that has been proposed here will even predict that such de-accented uses of *eigentlich* can not just be unfocussed uses. The present analysis rests on the assumption that *eigentlich* leaves the content of the sentence untouched. It does not make any

semantic contribution itself. We would therefore expect that speakers attribute it a shifted interpretation, and this is exactly what happened.

Unstressed *eigentlich* in a question, finally, suggests that the question came to mind after some thinking / interaction. This interaction can be friendly ('casual question') or aggressive.

- (52) *Sind Sie eigentlich wahnsinnig?* ('Are you mad?')
- (53) *Wie heissen Sie eigentlich?* ('By the way / what's your name / anyway!?')
- (54) *Wollen Sie eigentlich noch Kuchen?* ('Would you like some more cake?')

The unstressed *eigentlich* in questions is definitely bad if the speaker *starts* interaction with the hearer with the purpose to ask exactly this question, or if the question is an essential part of the professional interaction between speaker and hearer. The following exchanges are all marked, the effects ranging from "funny" to "offensive". Hence, learners of German need to be cautioned against the idea that *eigentlich* invariably makes a question sound more polite!

- (55) Waiter when approaching customers: *Was wollen Sie (#eigentlich) essen?*  
what want you eigentlich eat ( $\approx$  'what do you want to eat anyway?')
- (56) Dentist asks whimpering patient: *Haben Sie (#eigentlich) Schmerzen?*  
have you eigentlich pains ( $\approx$  'by the way, are you in pain?')
- (57) Police officer checking you after you passed a red traffic light:  
*Wie ist (#eigentlich) Ihr Name?*  
what is eigentlich your name? ('what's your name anyway?')

### 5.1 Postlude: A dialectal twist

When we tried to verify our intuitions about possible and impossible uses of adjectival *eigentlich* via GOOGLE, we were surprised by accidental matches for patterns that the analysis, as well as our intuitions would not support. Among these were hits for *ein eigentlicher/-s* in positive contexts, quantified uses like *die meisten eigentlichen ...* and *uneigentliche* in non-expert language. Closer investigation revealed that all such matches came from Swiss sites, or were quotes from Swiss authors or newspapers, or were on sites / by authors with a very likely Swiss background (e.g. Swiss embassy in Berlin). Further explorations on such sites suggest that Swiss German uses *eigentlich* more or less as a synonym of *wirklich*, *echt* ('true'). Specifically, Swiss *eigentlich* needs no contextual licensing, can hence be used in quantificational NPs, and has a welldefined antonym. We could not so far establish the prosodic patterns of adjectival *eigentlich* in Swiss German but would expect that accenting is much freer than in German. In summary, Swiss *eigentlich* offers a minimally contrasting 'normal' *eigentlich* variant and hence highlights the context dependency and discourse function of German *eigentlich*.

### Summary

In the present paper, we proposed a truth conditional analysis of adjectival and adverbial *eigentlich*. We assume that both denote identity operators on suitable domains, and that both are used stressed in order to relate the utterance to some contextually given misconception, error or fake instances of a property. The adjective serves to contrast objects with property *P* to objects that seem to be *P* (are "fake *P*" objects). The adverb serves to contrast the actual facts with plausible but wrong believes that one could maintain on basis of a contextually salient *misleading fact q*. The alleged "stress" on adverbial *eigentlich* was shown to be a contrastive topic accent with requires another focus later in the sentence. The focus makes a regular contribution to the interpretation of the full utterance.



Apart from one earlier formal treatment (Schmitz+Schröder, 2004) this is the first fully spelled-out semantic analysis of *eigentlich*. Schmitz+Schröder's treatment of *eigentlich* as a blocker of default inferences has helped a lot to clarify the data under consideration and to strengthen faith that a formal analysis could be feasible. The present proposal goes beyond its predecessor in several respects. First, it offers a uniform analysis for adjectival and adverbial use. Second, the analysis makes crucial use of the information structure of the sentences in question. Third, this makes a clear prediction about the demarcation line between truth conditional and emotive uses of *eigentlich*. Finally, the present approach could cut short some of the overgeneration inherent in the Schmitz+Schröder theory. Further investigations of the data should lead to future refinements, as pointed out in the course of the paper.

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