



I. Introduction

- ▶ German discourse particles (DiPs) differ in their compatibility with sentence types.
- ▶ The DiP *ja* (lit. 'yes', roughly 'as we know')
 - ▶ fine in declaratives
 - ▶ incompatible with information-seeking questions (ISQs)
 - ▶ appears in rhetorical questions (RQs) only in combination with other DiPs or adverbs, as in (1).

(1) *Wer hat ja *(schon) gerne Fußball?*
who has JA SCHON gladly foot fungus
'Who likes to have athlete's foot?'

II. Understanding the problem

Discourse Particles (DiPs)

- ▶ apply to propositions or sets of propositions
- ▶ contribute non-at-issue meaning

ordinary semantic meaning	P	[[JA]](P<st,t>)	p is uncontroversial.	non-at-issue meaning
	Q	[[SCHON]](Q<st,t>)	The answer to Q follows from the Common Ground (CG). (<i>schon</i> is a lexical marker of rhetorical wh-questions.)	
	Q	[[DENN]](Q<st,t>)	The answer to Q is required for contextual reasons.	

Rhetorical Questions (RQs)

- ▶ Syntactically, RQs are questions (*wh*-movement, V1, etc.).
- ▶ Semantically, RQs are questions too, but according to the speaker, the answer to Q follows from the CG.
- ▶ RQs and ISQs differ on the speech act level.

Objective

1. How reliable is the acceptability contrast in (1)?
2. Why can *ja* appear in RQs but not in ISQ?
3. Why must it be accompanied by *schon* or comparable lexical items?

Hypotheses

- ▶ If DiPs interact with each other, *ja* should be rescued by the presence of *schon* (in contrast to *denn*).
- ▶ If DiPs do not interact, *ja* should be equally (un)acceptable with or without *schon*.

III. Material

Context	<i>Ab und zu ist es bewölkt,</i> from and to is it cloudy 'From time to time it is cloudy'	Target	<i>aber wer hat (ja/denn) (schon) das perfekte Wetter in den Herbstferien?</i> but who has JA/DENN SCHON the perfect weather in the fall holidays 'but who has perfect weather in the fall holidays?'
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- ▶ Reference sentence (Exp. 1 & 2)
Die Angestellten haben, dass der Chef Probleme hat, nicht sofort bemerkt. (score: 0)
'The employees did not immediately notice that the boss has problems.'

- ▶ Continuations (only Exp. 3)

a) disambiguating towards RQ reading
Wir stellen uns deshalb auf die Jahreszeit ein.
'We therefore adjust to the season.'

b) disambiguating towards ISQ reading
Diejenigen sollen einen Reisebericht schreiben.
'They should write a travel report.'

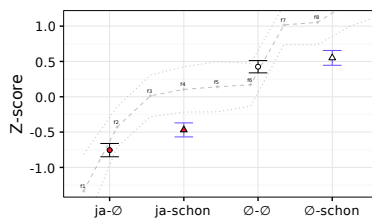
- ▶ Conditions – DiP-combinations across experiments

Exp. 1	Exp. 3	Exp. 2
JA-Ø	JA-SCHON	Ø-Ø
<i>ja</i>	<i>ja schon</i>	Ø-SCHON
		<i>schon</i>
		DENN-Ø
		<i>denn</i>
		DENN-SCHON
		<i>denn schon</i>

IV. Results and Discussion

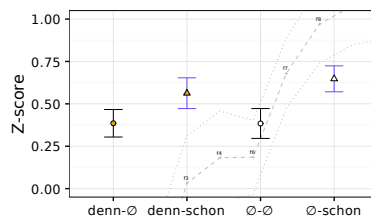
Experiment 1

- acceptability judgement task (30 participants, 28 items & 34 fillers, errorbars 95% CIs) -
- ▶ significant increase for *schon*
- ▶ strong decrease for *ja*
- ▶ All conditions are relatively acceptable (fillers).



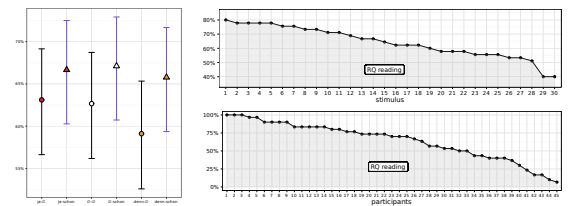
Experiment 2

- ▶ significant increase for *schon* (replication of Exp. 1)
- ▶ no effect for *denn*
- ▶ All conditions are relatively acceptable (fillers).



Experiment 3

- forced choice task (45 participants, 30 items & 35 fillers) -
- ▶ RQ reading higher than chance in all conditions (59–67%)
- ▶ DiPs do not bias toward RQ or ISQ reading.
- ▶ substantive variation per item and per participants



Fillers (only Exp. 1 & 2)

- f1 (Ein Mörder treibt in unserer Gegend sein Unwesen. Ich ging dennoch hinaus, um mich mit meinen Freunden zu treffen.) Letzten Endes kann ich mir nicht hinauszugehen auch nicht vorstellen, auch wenn die Gefahr groß ist.
- f4 (Das Jahrestreffen unserer Ortsgruppe des Wildblumenvereins war sehr erfolgreich.) Aber wer brachte denn den elften Kuchen für das Dessert?
- f8 (Diese Eltern verstehen einfach nicht, woran es liegt. Bereits hundertmal haben sie ihre Kinder vor dem heißen Bügeleisen gewarnt. Trotzdem greifen sie immer wieder nach dem Kabel.) Eigentlich ist die Ursache ganz simpel, denn Kleinkinder nehmen die Welt mit ganz anderen Augen wahr.

Discussion

- ▶ *ja* is dispreferred in RQs vs. *denn*.
- ▶ *schon* does improve RQs with *ja* but does not entirely cancel the degradation.
- ▶ Stable effect of *schon* indicates facilitation of processing RQ reading.
- ▶ Relatively high acceptability of *ja* indicates violation of felicity conditions rather than hard grammatical constraints.

V. Felicity Conditions

Contextual felicity

- ▶ Closer inspection of natural examples reveals that *ja schon*-RQs introduce additional felicity conditions.
 - ▶ [[JA]](Q<st,t>)=# (type mismatch)
 - ▶ [[JA]]([[SCHON]](Q<st,t>))<st,t>
- non-at-issue meaning: It is uncontroversial that the answer to Q follows from the CG.

Types of RQs in Context

- (2) A: You should have helped Hans.
B: Was hätte ich (#ja) schon tun können?
'What could [JA SCHON] I have done?'
- (3) A: Would have been nice if you could have helped him.
B: Klar, aber was hätte ich ja schon tun können?
'Right, but what could [JA SCHON] I have done?'

VI. Conclusions

- ▶ *schon* is necessary but not sufficient to license *ja* in RQs.
- ▶ *ja schon*-RQs have very specific felicity conditions.
- ▶ This accounts for the relatively low acceptability (Exp. 1) and the rare occurrence.

On the application of multiple discourse particles in rhetorical questions

Yvonne Viesel¹ & Constantin Freitag²

¹Universität Konstanz
²Universität zu Köln

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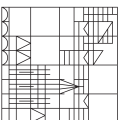
Universität Tübingen

–yvonne.viesel@uni-konstanz.de–
–constantin.freitag@uni-koeln.de–



DFG
Chance Structure and
Utterance Meaning: Word
Order, Particles, Emphasis

Universität
Konstanz



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