

**Panel on ‘Discourse particles and epistemic stance’ at the SLE 2019
(Leipzig 21st - 24th August 2019)**

Discourse particles are an under-examined area in typological and descriptive studies of minority languages, but even many majority languages, as they are often treated as extra-grammatical items. *Discourse particles/markers* are short and phonologically reduced items, which routinely occur in oral speech, have little or no propositional meaning and display textual and interpersonal pragmatic functions, such as connecting current with prior talk, claiming the hearer’s attention, organizing discourse (e.g. indicating new topic, initiating or closing discourse, denoting old and new information, initiating repair), and indexing the speaker’s stance, attitudes and evaluation towards the addressee and his/her contribution (e.g. see Blackmore 2003, Brinton 1996, Norrick 2009, Schiffrin 1987, Zimmermann 2011). This panel targets the latter function of discourse particles, namely their function as markers of epistemics/epistemic stance. Following Ochs (1996), we understand *epistemic stance* as a central meaning component of social acts and social identities that refers to knowledge or belief vis-à-vis some focus of concern including degrees of certainty of knowledge, degrees of commitment to truth of propositions, and sources of knowledge among other epistemic qualities. Discourse particles that express epistemic stance are well-known from Germanic and Slavonic languages (Abraham 1991, Jucker and Ziv 1998), e.g. German *doch*, Russian *že*, and a few other languages (see the analysis of Hebrew *harey* by Ariel 1998, the studies in Heritage and Sorjonen 2018) For example, in Japanese *a*-prefaced turns convey that the action or content of the prior turn was unexpected (Hayashi and Hayano 2018).

We know little about the epistemic functions of discourse particles in minority languages and largely lack a coherent cross-linguistic perspective due to the lack of typological studies (but see Auer and Maschler 2016 for a comparative study of the uses of the members of the NU/NÅ discourse marker family across European and other languages). Linguists in the field often find it difficult to tackle the pragmatic diversity of discourse particles and tend to throw these small items in the grammar’s dustbin. Yet, these ‘trivial’ items play an important role in communicating cultural meanings in speech communities.

This panel aims to navigate the complex domain of discourse particles and epistemics by identifying patterns of commonality and diversity in discourse particles expressing epistemic stance across languages. We want to bring together scholars working across various subfields of linguistics, including typology, pragmatics, interactional linguistics, and using different methods and theories.

For our workshop proposal we invite contributions including, but not limited to, the following topics:

- (i) Descriptive accounts of the (functional, discourse-pragmatic, morphosyntactic) properties of discourse particles in lesser-known languages.
- (ii) Typological studies of the functions of discourse particles expressing epistemic stance.
- (iii) Diachronic studies on the origin and evolution of discourse particles.
- (iv) Corpus-based studies on the use of discourse particles in natural speech.
- (v) Experimental studies on the functions of discourse particles.
- (vi) Areal and language contact perspectives on the functions of discourse particles.

Call for Papers:

Potential participants are invited to contact the workshop conveners with an expression of interest: diana.forker@uni-bamberg.de
and Angeliki.Alvanoudi@jcu.edu.au

Important Dates

- Submission of abstracts (for a 20-minute presentation, max. 300 words) to workshop conveners: 9 November 2018
- Notification of inclusion of abstract in the workshop proposal: 20 November 2018
- Notification of acceptance/rejection of the workshop proposal by the SLE organizers: 15 December 2018
- If our workshop proposal is accepted, submission of full abstracts to SLE by the participants: 15 January 2018

References

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