

What do you do if you don't have modal particles?*

ANNA CARDINALETTI

1 Introduction

Languages differ in the words speakers have at their disposal. One major difference between German and Italian is the very rich system of modal particles found in the former language (about 20 particles) vs. the restricted modal lexicon of the latter (few particles, such as *ben*, *mai*, *poi*, *pure*, Coniglio, 2008; Cardinaletti, 2011). Does Italian have other ways of expressing the semantics conveyed by modal particles? It has often been observed that Italian makes use of marked word orders in contexts in which German displays modal particles (Helling, 1983; Masi, 1996; Tamborra, 2001, a.o.). In this short paper, I will show, on the basis of Grosz' (2010) analysis of German particles *doch* and *ja*, how the sentences containing these particles, which do not have an Italian counterpart, can be translated into Italian. It is shown that Italian may make use of syntactic devices such as Left and Right Dislocation when the particle has a smaller scope than the entire proposition. The discussion will also point out a difference between Italian Left and Right Dislocation not discussed before.

2 German *doch* and *ja* and their Italian counterparts

It is a common understanding that *doch* and *ja* mark the proposition in which they appear as 'familiar/old/given' (Abraham, 1991; Jacobs, 1991; Karagjosova, 2001; Karagjosova, 2004; Karagjosova, 2008; Lindner, 1991; Ormelius-Sandblom, 1997, among many others; cf. Thurmair's 1989 [bekannt] feature). Grosz (2010) formalizes these observations by extending to *doch* Kratzer & Matthewson's (2009) semantic analysis of German *ja*. He points out that the proposition modified by these particles is already "established in some sense, i.e., its negation is no longer under consideration (from the speaker's point of view)." Both *doch* and *ja* trigger an "uncontroversiality" presupposition; *doch* further triggers a "correction" presupposition. In Grosz' words, "*doch p* presupposes that *p* is uncontroversial in some sense and that *p* corrects a salient *q*."

In what follows, we will make a simple exercise: translating into Italian the different contexts in which German particles *doch* and *ja* are used, as discussed by Grosz (2010). We will

* This paper is offered to Josef Bayer. It would have been less struggling to learn modal particles as a student of German as a foreign language if his illuminating work on modal particles were available at the time.

see that in Italian, some of the sentences that contain modal particles can have Italian counterparts with left- and/or right-dislocated elements, which are identified as topics established in the discourse (from the speaker's perspective).

Grosz (2010) observes that in (1), where the modified proposition is shared knowledge, the particles *ja* and *doch* are both possible, whereas the absence of particles (signalled by \emptyset) is pragmatically odd, given that it is unnecessary to assert shared information:

- (1) Context: Speaker and hearer are both well aware that the hearer has been to Paris before, and the speaker wants to make this fact salient in order to follow up on it:

Du warst ja/doch/# \emptyset schon in Paris.
 you were ja/doch already in Paris
 'You've (ja/doch /# \emptyset) already been to Paris.'

Since being in Paris is the topic of the discourse and presumably outside of the proposition modified by the particles, the Italian counterpart of (1) can contain a left- (LD) or right-dislocated (RD) locative (*a Parigi*). A marginalized locative is also possible after a constituent pronounced emphatically (signalled in (2c) by extra-length on the stressed syllable; for Marginalization vs. Right Dislocation, see Cardinaletti, 2002). In the same context, a simple sentence with unmarked SVO word order, as in (2d), would be as odd as is the absence of particles in German:

- (2) a. A Parigi, ci sei già stato. LD
 in Paris, there you.have already been
 'You have already been in Paris.'
 b. Ci sei già stato, a Parigi. RD
 there you.have already been, in Paris
 c. Sei già STA::to, a Parigi. Marginalization
 d. #Sei già stato a Parigi. SVO

Differently from the examples in (1), the sentence in (3) expresses new information. Grosz (2010) observes that in this context, both particles *ja* and *doch* are ill-formed:¹

- (3) Context: The hearer is an amnesiac and believes that she has never been to Paris. The speaker doesn't know whether the hearer has been, and discovers an old flight ticket to Paris with the hearer's name on it:

Du warst #ja/#doch schon in Paris.
 'You've (#ja/#doch) already been to Paris.'

In the Italian counterpart to (3), marked word orders would be inappropriate (4a)-(4b), and only a simple SVO sentence is possible (4c):

1 Grosz observes that stressed DOCH, which lacks the uncontroversiality component, is acceptable:

(i) Du warst DOCH schon in Paris.
 'You've (DOCH) already been to Paris.'

- (4) a. #A Parigi, ci sei già stata. LD
 in Paris, there you.have already been
 b. #Ci sei già stata, a Parigi. RD
 c. Sei già stata a Parigi. SVO
 ‘You have already been in Paris.’

Since *doch* provides an established fact from the speaker’s perspective, Grosz (2010) tests its occurrence in utterances that provide hearer-new information. Typically, these are experience reports, in which the speaker recalls a recent experience and may correct his or her own expectations. As shown in (5), *doch* is possible (while *ja* is not because it lacks the correction component):

- (5) Context: The speaker tells a recent story that the hearer cannot possibly have heard before:
 Jetzt hör dir an, was ich erlebt habe! Das wirst du nicht glauben. Otto hat doch tatsächlich angerufen und sich entschuldigt.
 ‘Now listen to what I experienced! You won’t believe this. Otto (*doch*) really called and apologized.’

By using *doch*, the speaker intends to correct his prior expectation that Otto would never call and apologize. In Italian, a simple declarative sentence with emphasis on the most prominent syllable as in (6c)-(6d) (with or without the direct object) would be a perfect translation of (5). In this context, a left dislocation would however also be appropriate (6a), while a right-dislocated structure is excluded (6b)² (we will come back to this contrast below):

- (6) Sai cosa è successo? Non ci crederai.
 a. Otto, Maria l’ha chiaMA::ta e si è scusato. LD
 Otto, Maria, her he.has called and REFL is apologized
 ‘Otto called Maria and apologized.’
 b. #(Maria,) l’ha chiamata, Otto, e si è scusato. RD
 c. Otto ha chiamato MaRI:a e si è scusato. SVO
 ‘Otto called Maria and apologized.’
 d. Otto ha chiaMA::to e si è scusato. SV
 ‘Otto called and apologized.’

Finally, Grosz considers surprise contexts, in which neither the speaker nor the hearer has knowledge of the proposition modified by *doch* and *ja*:

- (7) Context: Speaker and hearer are at a party, believing that Hans is currently in Paris. Suddenly the speaker notices Hans talking to the host:

2 In (6a), a left-dislocated object (*Maria*) has been added to make sure that the preceding subject (*Otto*) is also left-dislocated.

Das ist ja/doch der Hans! Was macht der hier?
 that is ja/doch the Hans. what does he here?
 ‘That’s (ja/doch) Hans over there! What is he doing here?’

As pointed out by Grosz, in (7) the relevant presupposition is that the negation of the modified proposition is not considered as a possibility given that the truth of the proposition is obvious. In this context, Italian would allow a simple SVO sentence, optionally introduced by the adversative coordinative element *ma* ‘but’:

(8) (Ma) quello è Hans! Cosa ci fa qui?
 but that is Hans! what there he does here?
 ‘That’s Hans over there! What is he doing here?’

3 Italian Left vs. Right Dislocation

The contrast in (6) brings us to the well-known difference between Italian Left and Right Dislocation. In the terms of Frascarelli (2007) and Frascarelli & Hinterhölzl (2007), left-dislocated topics can be Aboutness-shift topics or Familiar topics, right-dislocated topics are only Familiar topics, where Familiar topics are defined as “textually given and d-linked with a previously established Aboutness topic.” We believe that the difference between Left and Right Dislocation has one more component, namely, the speaker’s perspective. In other words, the use of Familiar topics does not simply involve the retrieval of given information but adds the speaker’s point of view. While Right Dislocation necessarily implies shared knowledge, Left Dislocation is a means for the speaker to establish a topic which is not necessarily shared by the hearer. This is exactly the kind of context tested in (5) and (6). In (6a), the left-dislocated *Otto* is established by the speaker as a topic not shared by the hearer. In this type of context, (6b) is ungrammatical: if the speaker believes that the hearer does not share his/her knowledge about *Otto*, he/she cannot right-dislocate *Otto*. The difference between Left and Right Dislocation is made evident by the following examples. In the context of (9), Chomsky is given information. By using a Right Dislocation, as in the answer in (9), the speaker intends to claim that he/she shares the hearer’s knowledge. It is therefore odd to ask whether the hearer has this knowledge:

(9) a. Question:
 Conosci Chomsky?
 you.know Chomsky
 ‘Do you know Chomsky?’
 b. Answer:
 No, non lo conosco, Chomsky. #Tu sì? RD
 No, not him I.know, Chomsky. You yes
 ‘No, I do not know Chomsky. Do you?’

If the speaker does not know whether the hearer shares his/her knowledge, and wants to ask about this, he/she must use a Left Dislocation, as in (10a), or a simple declarative sentence containing a clitic pronoun, as in (10b):

- (10) a. Question:
 Conosci Chomsky?
 ‘Do you know Chomsky?’
- b. Answer:
 No, Chomsky, non lo conosco. Tu sì? LD
 No, Chomsky, not him I.know. You yes?
 ‘No, I do not know Chomsky. Do you?’
- c. No, non lo conosco. Tu sì? clitic pronoun
 No, not him I.know. You yes?
 ‘No, I do not know him. Do you?’

4 Concluding remarks

In this short paper, I have argued that the Italian counterparts of German sentences containing modal particles like *ja* and *doch* may contain a left- or right-dislocated constituent. The common component of sentences with modal particles in German and sentences with Left or Right dislocation in Italian is the involvement of the CP layer. Italian dislocated items occur in CP and identify the topic of the discourse.³ In spite of their IP-internal position, German modal particles are taken to be interpreted with a high scope in the CP domain and to modify features, such as clause type and illocutionary force, which are encoded in projections of the CP layer (see Bayer, 2012; Coniglio, 2007; Coniglio, 2009; Coniglio, 2011; Zimmermann, 2004a; Zimmermann, 2004b). The particle may take scope over the entire proposition or a smaller constituent. In the former case, a declarative sentence with unmarked SVO order is used; in the latter, dislocation is more appropriate in Italian. Depending on the speaker’s presuppositions on the hearer’s knowledge, a left- and/or a right-dislocated constituent is chosen.

References

- Abraham, W. 1991. Discourse particles in German: How does their illocutive force come about? In W. Abraham (ed.), *Discourse particles*, 203–252. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Bayer, J. 2012. From modal particle to interrogative marker: A study of German *denn*. In L. Brugé, A. Cardinaletti, G. Giusti, N. Munaro & C. Poletto (eds.), *Functional heads*, 13–28. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cardinaletti, A. 2002. Against optional and zero clitics: Right dislocation vs. marginalization. *Studia Linguistica* 56. 29–57.
- Cardinaletti, A. 2011. German and Italian modal particles and clause structure. *The Linguistic Review* 28. 493–531.
- Coniglio, M. 2007. German modal particles in root and embedded clauses. *University of Venice Working Papers in Linguistics* 17. 109–141.

3 In an antisymmetric view of Right Dislocation, right-dislocated constituents sit in CP on a par with left-dislocated constituents (see Cardinaletti, 2002, for discussion).

- Coniglio, M. 2008. Modal particles in Italian. *University of Venice Working Papers in Linguistics* 18. 91–129.
- Coniglio, M. 2009. Deutsche Modalpartikeln in Haupt- und Nebensätzen. In W. Abraham & E. Leiss (eds.), *Modalität: Epistemik und Evidentialität bei Modalverb, Adverb, Modalpartikel und Modus*, 191–221. Tübingen: Stauffenburg.
- Coniglio, M. 2011. *Die Syntax der deutschen Modalpartikeln: Ihre Distribution und Lizenzierung in Haupt- und Nebensätzen*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag.
- Frascarelli, M. 2007. Subjects, topics and the interpretation of referential pro: An interface approach to the linking of (null) pronouns. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory* 25. 691–734.
- Frascarelli, M. & R. Hinterhölzl. 2007. Types of topics in German and Italian. In S. Winkler & K. Schwabe (eds.), *On information structure, meaning and form*, 87–116. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Grosz, P. 2010. German *doch*: An element that triggers a contrast presupposition. In *Proceedings of CLS 46*.
- Helling, C. 1983. Deutsche Modalpartikeln und ihre italienischen Entsprechungen. In M. Dardano, W. Dressler & G. Held (eds.), *Parallela: Akte des 2. österreichisch-italienischen Linguistentreffens*, 376–386. Tübingen: Narr.
- Jacobs, J. 1991. On the semantics of modal particles. In W. Abraham (ed.), *Discourse particles*, 141–162. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Karagjosova, E. 2001. Towards a comprehensive meaning of German *doch*. In *Proceedings of the Sixth ESSLLI 2001 Session Helsinki*, 131–142.
- Karagjosova, E. 2004. German *doch* as a marker of given information. *Sprache & Datenverarbeitung* 28. 71–78.
- Karagjosova, E. 2008. Contrast and underspecification: The semantics of *aber* and *doch*. In *Proceedings of SuB12 Oslo*, 287–302.
- Kratzer, A. & L. Matthewson. 2009. Anatomy of two discourse particles. Handout for SULA 5. Harvard/MIT.
- Lindner, K. 1991. “Wir sind ja doch alte Bekannte.” The use of German *ja* and *doch* as modal particles. In W. Abraham (ed.), *Discourse particles*, 163–201. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Masi, S. 1996. *Deutsche Modalpartikeln und ihre Entsprechungen im Italienischen*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.
- Ormelius-Sandblom, E. 1997. *Die Modalpartikeln ja, doch und schon: Zu ihrer Syntax, Semantik und Pragmatik*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International.
- Tamborra, A. 2001. *Particelle modali tedesche e frasi italiane ad ordine marcato*. SSLMIT Forlì MA thesis.
- Thurmair, M. 1989. *Modalpartikeln und ihre Kombinationen*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.
- Zimmermann, M. 2004a. Discourse particles in the left periphery. *ZAS Papers in Linguistics* 35. 543–566.
- Zimmermann, M. 2004b. Zum *wohl*: Diskurspartikeln als Satztypmodifikatoren. *Linguistische Berichte* 199. 1–35.