

Modal Particles & Commitment – The view from German *schon*

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Talk's objective:

Case study of how a single modal particle (*schon*) can be alternatively used for expressing **strengthened or weakened speaker commitment** to prejacent.

<i>schon</i> + context(s) 1a,b,...:	weakening
<i>schon</i> + context 2:	strengthening

Talk's objective:

Case study of how a single modal particle (*schon*) can be alternatively used for expressing **strengthened or weakened speaker commitment** to prejacent.

- ⇒ Depending on context, different interpretive effect on discourse structure
- ⇒ Speaker commitment **NOT** lexically coded!

Talk's objective:

Case study of how a single modal particle (*schon*) can be alternatively used for expressing **strengthened or weakened speaker commitment** to prejacent.

Q1: Universal property of modal expressions?
e.g. von Fintel & Gillies (2010) on variable force with universal modal *must*; see also §5!

Structure:

- §1 Intro: Modal particles and commitment strength in German
- §2 Main claim
- §3 Unified analysis of aspectual & modal *schon* (Krifka 2000, Zimmermann 2018)
- §4 *schon* & speaker commitment: Context!!!
- §5 Discussion

1.1. Diachronic Source of German modal particles

Most German particles used for modifying speaker certainty/ commitment strength diachronically derived from scale-based degree adverbs:

- (1)
- a. Hein ist **wohl** auf SEE. (weak)
,Hein may be at sea.'
 - b. Hein ist **schon** auf SEE, aber... (weak)
,Hein is at sea alright, but ...'
 - c. Hein ist **fei** auf SEE! [Hinterwimmer & Ebert 2018]
,But Hein is at SEA!'

1.1. Diachronic Source of German modal particles

Most German particles used for modifying speaker certainty/ commitment strength diachronically derived from scale-based degree adverbs:

- (2)
- | | | |
|----|--|--------------------------------------|
| a. | wohl < wohl _{ADV} ,well‘ | woh lerzogen
well-educated |
| b. | schon < schon _{ADV} ,nicely‘ | Schlaf schön !
Sleep well! |
| c. | fei < fein (lat. Finis) | fein gemacht
well done |

1.1. Diachronic Source of German modal particles

Q2: How common is the diachronic path from scale-based degree expression to modal particle from a cross-linguistic perspective?

NB: the notion of **degree-based comparison** is inherent in a Lewis-Kratzer style semantics of modal expressions via the notions of *ordering*, *closeness*, *comparative possibility*, etc.

(world ordering defined via equivalence classes)

1.2. Accenting and modal strength

Some of the particles come in accented-unaccented pairs: Accent on the particle **typically** associated with stronger speaker commitment or assertive force (in a pre-theoretical sense).

- (3) a. Hein ist **WOHL** auf SEE!
 ,Hein is indeed / very well at sea.'
- b. Hein ist **SCHON** auf SEE!
 ,Hein IS at sea!

1.2. Accenting and modal strength

Some of the particles come in accented-unaccented pairs: Accent on the particle **typically** associated with stronger speaker commitment or assertive force (in a pre-theoretical sense).

⇒ Does (non-)accent on *schon/SCHON* mark a lexical distinction wrt speaker commitment, or is this just a reflex of information structure interacting with a uniform underlying particle meaning?

1.2. Accenting and modal strength

Some of the particles come in accented-unaccented pairs: Accent on the particle **typically** associated with stronger speaker commitment or assertive force (in a pre-theoretical sense).

Q3: Is speaker commitment **lexically coded** in natural language expressions, or rather a more indirect **discourse effect**?

2. Main Claim:

(Un)Accented instances of modal *schon* only weakly correlated with weak/strong speaker commitment

- (4) a. St. Pauli ist **schon** `n gutes TEAM, aber... **weak**
 ,St. Pauli are a decent team alright, but...‘
- b. St. Pauli ist **SCHON** `n gutes TEAM! **strong**
 ,St. Pauli are indeed a decent team.‘

2. Main Claim:

(Un)Accented instances of modal *schon* only weakly correlated with weak/strong speaker commitment

⇒ In contrast to first impressions (4ab), we will argue that the German MP *schon* is not lexically ambiguous:

Observable differences in commitment strength are systematically derived from the interaction of a uniform basic lexical meaning and information & discourse structure.

2. Main claim on modal *schon*



2. Main Claim:

(Un)Accented instances of modal *schon* only weakly correlated with weak/strong speaker commitment

- (5)
- a. *schon*/SCHON + **some** verum focus: strong
 - b. *schon*/SCHON + other focus: weak

2. Main Claim:

⇒ (Un)Accenting of *schon* predictable from information structure, but **NOT** from commitment strength!

- (6)
- a. *schon*: accent can/must be placed elsewhere
 - b. *SCHON*: accent cannot be placed elsewhere (because of vP/VP-givenness ⇒ deaccenting)

3. A unified analysis of aspectual & modal *schon*



3.1. Aspectual *schon* ,already' (Krifka 2000):

Aspectual *schon* is a focus-sensitive scale-alignment particle; it presupposes that the salient focus alternatives are at most as high on some (intrinsically ordered) scale as the focus denotation:

$$(7) \quad \text{ALREADY}(\langle B, F, \leq_A \rangle) \Leftrightarrow \langle B, F, \leq_A \rangle;$$

defined iff $\forall X \in A [X \leq_A F]$ [Krifka 2000:404]

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(8) CONTEXT: Lydia grows older so fast.

Sie ist jetzt **schon** DREI Monate alt

'She is now already three months old.'

(ALT: 1, 2 ,3 months)

ORDERING_{ALT} "less or equal": {<1,1>, <1,2>, <1,3>, <2,2>, <2,3>, <3,3>}

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⇒ Discourse effect: *schon* constrains set of licit focus alternatives to be less than or equal to the ordinary value of X_F . [cf. Beaver & Clark 2008 on *only*]

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Krifka adds a monotonic mapping between alternatives and temporal intervals

(7') $\text{ALREADY}(\langle B, F, \leq_A \rangle) \Leftrightarrow \langle B, F, \leq_A \rangle$; [Krifka 2000:406]
defined iff $\forall X \in A[X \leq F]$ & \leq_A is time-aligned

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Aspectual *schon* is a focus-sensitive scale-alignment particle; it presupposes that the salient focus alternatives are at most as high on some (intrinsically ordered) scale as the focus denotation:

⇒ Lower alternatives on the scale (1, 2, 3 months) tend to temporally precede the prejacent,

BUT...

3. A unified analysis of aspectual & modal *schon*



3.1. Aspectual *schon* ‚already‘ (Krifka 2000):

... there are counterexamples to a lexically hard-wired relation between temporal and alternative ordering with aspectual *schon* ‚already‘:

(9) Q: When did Mary arrive?

A: Maria ist **schon** am MON\tag angekommen.

Mary is already on Monday arrived

‘Mary has already arrived on MON\day.’

⇒ ALTs (Mon, Tue, Wed) are **later**!

3. A unified analysis of aspectual & modal *schon*



3.1. Aspectual *schon* ,already' (Krifka 2000):

... there are counterexamples to a lexically hard-wired relation between temporal and alternative ordering with aspectual *schon* ,already':

(10) A: I've applied for American citizenship.

B: Is your husband also applying?

A: Er IST **schon** Amerikaner. Er ist dort geboren.

'He is alREA\dy American, for he was born in America.'

3. A unified analysis of aspectual & modal *schon*



3.1. Aspectual *schon* ‚already‘ (Krifka 2000):

... for which reason Krifka proposes an intensionalized analysis on which the particle presupposes an ordering of alternative developments B, that is event-time relations, in terms of their relative speed.

- (11) $\forall X \in A \forall i \forall i' [B(i)(X)(\zeta) \wedge B(i')(F)(\zeta) \rightarrow B(i) \leq B(i')]$
with i, i' intensional indices, B a backgrounded development relation between events and times, and ζ an event or time argument.

\Rightarrow **Scalar comparison with aspectual *schon* does not necessarily operate on temporal scales**

3. A unified analysis of aspectual & modal *schon*



3.1. Aspectual *schon* ‚already‘ (Krifka 2000):

... another example (Zimmermann 2018)

(12) A: What is Peter's profession?

B: #FRÜH/er war er BÄCK\er,

aber JETZT/ ist er *schon* FLEI\scher.

before was he baker but now he is already butcher

#‘Before he was a baker, but now he's already a butcher.’

⇒ (12B) infelicitous despite correct temporal ordering of alternatives *as long as baker and butcher are ranked equally on the scales of social prestige, income etc.*

3. A unified analysis of aspectual & modal *schon*



3.1. Aspectual *schon* ‚already‘ (Krifka 2000):

Temporal ordering is of lesser importance for the licensing of *schon*. What IS relevant is the comparative ordering of salient alternatives on **some** scale!

3. A unified analysis of aspectual & modal *schon*



3.1. Aspectual *schon* ,already' (Krifka 2000):

Temporal ordering is of lesser importance for the licensing of *schon*. What IS relevant is the comparative ordering of salient alternatives on **some** scale!

NB: (12B) also infelicitous on Ippolito's (2007) analysis of aspectual *already*?

$$(13) \quad [[\text{already}]]^{c,g,w} = \lambda t. \lambda D_i. \exists e \in D_i. \lambda P \in D_{\langle | \langle it \rangle \rangle}: \\ \exists t' > t [P(e)(t')] = 1. P(e)(t) = 1$$

3. A unified analysis of aspectual & modal *schon*



3.2. Extension to spatial and marginal *schon*:

Instances of spatial and marginal *schon* ‚already‘ involve comparison of alternatives on non-temporal scales [König 1977]:

(14) Konstanz is 48kms from here, ...

... und Kreuzlingen ist schon 50\ km entfernt.

and Kreuzlingen is already 50 km away

‘Kreuzlingen is already 50 kilometers away.’

= 1 iff Kreuzlingen is 50km away from the speaker;

defined iff $\forall X \in \text{ALT}_{\text{DIST}}: X \leq_{\text{DIST}} 50\text{km}$ (48 ≤ 50)

3. A unified analysis of aspectual & modal *schon*



3.2. Extension to spatial and marginal *schon*:

Instances of spatial and marginal *schon* ,already‘ involve comparison of alternatives on non-temporal scales [König 1977]:

- (15) Paul ist noch geMÄ\ßigt. PE\ter ist **schon** radiKAL\.
Paul is still a moderate. Peter is already radical.
‘Paul is still a moderate. Peter is (by comparison) already radical.’ (König 1977:183)

ALT = {moderate, radical}

3. A unified analysis of aspectual & modal *schon*



3.2. Extension to spatial and marginal *schon*:

Aspectual *schon* denotes scale-related **generalized degree operator** (Zimmermann 2018):

schon presupposes that all contextually salient focus alternatives be lower on some intrinsic or **contextually** given scale (temporal, speed, distance, property, ...)

Alternatives are either logically entailed or implicated by the at-issue component (Beaver & Clark 2008)

3. A unified analysis of aspectual & modal *schon*



3.2. Extension to spatial and marginal *schon*:

Aspectual *schon* denotes scale-related **generalized degree operator** (Zimmermann 2018):

$$(16) \quad [[\text{schon}]]^C \langle BG, F, \leq_A \rangle = BG(F);$$

defined iff $\forall X \in A_C [X \leq_A F]$

3. A unified analysis of aspectual & modal *schon*



3.2. Extension to spatial and marginal *schon*:

Aspectual *schon* denotes scale-related **generalized degree operator** (Zimmermann 2018):

- (9) A: Maria ist schon am MON\tag angekommen.
Mary is already on Monday arrived
'Mary has already arrived on MON\day.'

Having arrived (result state) on Monday

⇒ Having arrived on Tuesday, Wednesday, ...

3. A unified analysis of aspectual & modal *schon*



3.3. Extension to modal *schon* (Zimmermann 2018):

Modal *schon* denotes **modal degree operator**:

Modal *schon* compares prejaacent **p** to its polar opposite **$\neg p$** along the modal dimension of (the amount of) **available circumstantial evidence** for **p** vs **$\neg p$**

(diachronically bleached focus operator (Eckardt & Speyer 2014) or flexible syntactic adjustment sites (Beck, accepted))

3. A unified analysis of aspectual & modal *schon*

3.3. Extension to modal *schon* (Zimmermann 2018):

Modal *schon* denotes **modal degree operator**:

$$(17) \quad [[\text{schon}_{\text{mod}}]]^C \langle BG, F, \leq_A \rangle = BG(F);$$

defined iff $\forall X \in \{p, \neg p\} [X \leq_{\text{EVAL},x} F]$

$$(18) \quad \neg p \leq_{\text{EVAL},x} p = 1$$

iff $|\{q \mid q \in \text{MB}_{\text{CIRC},x} \wedge q \text{ supports } \neg p\}| \leq$
 $|\{q \mid q \in \text{MB}_{\text{CIRC},x} \wedge q \text{ supports } p\}|$

3. A unified analysis of aspectual & modal *schon*



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 $|\{q \mid q \in \text{MB}_{\text{CIRC},x} \wedge q \text{ supports } p\}|$

(more appropriately, comparison is between weighted sums of evidence for and against p ...)

3. A unified analysis of aspectual & modal *schon*



3.3. Extension to modal *schon* (Zimmermann 2018):

Modal *schon* denotes **modal degree operator**:

- (19) a. St.Pauli ist schon_{MOD} 'n gutes TEAM\
'St.Pauli is a good team, alright.'
- b. Im Angriff sind sie zwar schwach_{q4,not-p}, aber sie haben eine gute Abwehr_{q1,p}, eine gute Nachwuchsarbeit_{q2,p}, und super Zuschauer_{q3,p}.
'The strikers may be ineffective, but they have a good defense, talented youth players, and excellent supporters.'

3. A unified analysis of aspectual & modal *schon*



3.3. Extension to modal *schon* (Zimmermann 2018):

Modal *schon* denotes **modal degree operator**:

- (19) a. St.Pauli ist schon_{MOD} 'n gutes TEAM\
'St.Pauli is a good team, alright.'
- b'.#Sie haben zwar eine schwache Abwehr_{q1,not-p},
praktisch keine Nachwuchsarbeit_{q2,not-p} und
ein mieses Publikum_{q3,not-p}, aber im Angriff sind
sie stark_{q4,p}.
'The defense may be lousy, they may have practically
no talented youth players, and the supporters are
terrible, but their strikers are good.'

3. A unified analysis of aspectual & modal *schon*



3.3. Extension to modal *schon* (Zimmermann 2018):

Modal *schon* denotes **modal degree operator**:

Range of evidence considered can be made explicit with *insgesamt* ,all in all':

- (20) **Insgesamt** ist St.Pauli schon_{MOD} 'n gutes TEAM\.
'All in all, St.Pauli is a good team, alright.'

3. A unified analysis of aspectual & modal *schon*



3.3. Extension to modal *schon* (Zimmermann 2018):

Modal *schon* denotes **modal degree operator**:

Presence of modal *schon* points to existence of some evidence for $\neg p$, for otherwise the non-modal alternative would be preferable.

- (21) Die Erde ist (??**schon**) eine KU\gel.
,Earth is round alright.'

3. A unified analysis of aspectual & modal *schon*



3.3. Extension to modal *schon* (Zimmermann 2018): Modal *schon* denotes **modal degree operator**:

Informally:

Use of modal *schon* expresses overall speaker commitment to p , whilst acknowledging that there are legitimate reasons for believing $\neg p$.

⇒ this acknowledgement will result in a weakened commitment to p with factual/discourse-external circumstantial evidence.

3. A unified analysis of aspectual & modal *schon*



3.4. Kinds of circumstantial evidence:

Modal *schon* frequently found in subjective assessments of debatable statements that are evaluated against the available **external, factual evidence** (19a, 20)

BUT: Modal *schon* also licit in more objective statements, in particular with accented *SCHON*!

3. A unified analysis of aspectual & modal *schon*



3.4. Kinds of circumstantial evidence:

(22) CONTEXT: There is no debating!

Die UKRAINE ist **SCHON** ein unabhängiger Staat!
the Ukrain is PRT_{MOD} a sovereign nation
'There is no debating. Ukrain is a sovereign nation,
alright.'

⇒ Licit because of an interlocutor's implicitly or explicitly
manifest belief that $\neg p$, which constitutes relevant
evidence for $\neg p$ in the circumstantial modal base

3. A unified analysis of aspectual & modal *schon*



3.4. Kinds of circumstantial evidence:

(22) CONTEXT: There is no debating!

Die UKRAINE ist **SCHON** ein unabhängiger Staat!
the Ukrain is PRT_{MOD} a sovereign nation
'There is no debating. Ukrain is a sovereign nation,
alright.'

⇒ Interlocutors' public discourse commitments to $\neg p$ can license almost any instance of modal *schon* – as long as the interlocutor is taken serious or as a peer.

3. A unified analysis of aspectual & modal *schon*



3.4. Kinds of circumstantial evidence:

(23) Naive Western observer: The Donbass no longer belongs to Ukrain.

Ukrainian ambassador:

Doch, der Donbass gehört (??SCHON\) zur Ukraine.

but the Donbass belongs PRT to Ukrain

‘Well, the Donbass belongs to the Ukraine, alright.’

⇒ Use of *schon* indicates that Westerner’s remark is - despite its rejection – taken serious by ambassador as potential evidence for $\neg p$ (rhetorical function)

3. A unified analysis of aspectual & modal *schon*



3.4. Kinds of circumstantial evidence:

⇒ *schon* illicit in super-objective statements that any (sane) person would commit to:

(24) ?#Gegenstände fallen **SCHON** auf den Boden,
wenn man sie los lässt.

objects fall PRT to the ground
if one them go lets

‘Objects fall to the ground, alright, if one lets go of them.’

3. A unified analysis of aspectual & modal *schon*



3.5. **Summary:** Modal *schon* as a modal degree operator:

- i. Compares p vs $\neg p$ along the modal dimension of circumstantial evidence:
 - objective facts OR
 - discourse events: speaker commitments
- ii. Expresses that there's more evidence for p than against
- iii. Concedes that there may be some reason for thinking $\neg p$ (often leading to weaker commitment)
- iv. Can occur in two forms: **unaccented or accented**

4. The (non-) effects of accenting on commitment strength

4.1. Distribution of (un)accented *schon*/*SCHON*:

Accented *SCHON*: restricted to contexts in which the rest of the clause is explicitly or implicitly given, and hence deaccented (Schwarzschild 1999):

i. Answers to Y/N-questions: **weak** commitment

(25) a. A1: Is St.Pauli a GOOD team?

B: Ja, das ist SCHON\ 'n gutes Team. (#schon)

4. The (non-) effects of accenting on commitment strength

4.1. Distribution of (un)accented *schon*/*SCHON*:

Accented *SCHON*: restricted to contexts in which the rest of the clause is explicitly or implicitly given, and hence deaccented (Schwarzschild 1999):

ii. Affirmation/Acceptance: **weak** commitment

(25) b. A2: St.Pauli is a GREAT\ team!

B: Ja, das ist **SCHON**\ 'n gutes Team! (#schon)

4. The (non-) effects of accenting on commitment strength

4.1. Distribution of (un)accented *schon*/*SCHON*:

Accented *SCHON*: restricted to contexts in which the rest of the clause is explicitly or implicitly given, and hence deaccented (Schwarzschild 1999):

iii. **Correction: strong commitment!**

(25) c. A3: St.Pauli isn't a GOOD\ team!

B: Doch! Das ist **SCHON**\ 'n gutes Team.
(#schon)

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Accented *SCHON*: restricted to contexts in which the rest of the clause is explicitly or implicitly given, and hence deaccented (Schwarzschild 1999):

iv. implicit QUD (Büring 2003): **weak** commitment

- (26) A: Tell me something about St.Pauli!
QUD_{impl}: Are they a good team?
B: Das ist **SCHON** \ 'n gutes Team.

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Accented *SCHON*: restricted to contexts in which the rest of the clause is explicitly or implicitly given, and hence deaccented (Schwarzschild 1999):

⇒ Accented *SCHON* occurs with high frequency in CT-FOC contexts with focus on sentence polarity (yes/no) (26):
commitment = normal assertion (with speaker-internal contrast)

4. The (non-) effects of accenting on commitment strength

4.1. Distribution of (un)accented *schon*/*SCHON*:

Accented *SCHON*: restricted to contexts in which the rest of the clause is explicitly or implicitly given, and hence deaccented (Schwarzschild 1999):

- (27) In DIE/sem Jahr wird es KEI\ne Spende von mir geben.
 In this year will it no donation from me be
 ‘This year, there will be no donation from me.’

GENERELL/_{CT} mache ich das SCHON\
 normally do I that PRT_{MOD}

‘Normally, I do donate.’

4. The (non-) effects of accenting on commitment strength

4.1. Distribution of (un)accented *schon*/*SCHON*:

Unaccented *schon*: in contexts in which accent can or must be placed elsewhere in the clause:

i. Narrow contrastive focus: **weak**

(28) A: Did Peter WALK or did he RUN?

B: Na, er ist **schon (eher)** geRANNT\ (#SCHON)
well, he is PRT_{MOD} rather run
'Well, he RAN alright.

4. The (non-) effects of accenting on commitment strength

Digression:

schon is the **not-at issue counterpart** of at issue *eher* ,rather' (Herburger & Rubinstein 2014)

... same as *wohl* vs modal *werden* (DeVeough-Geiss 2014)

Q4: How frequent is lexicalized **at-issue/not-at issue doubling** in the expression of modal meanings?

4. The (non-) effects of accenting on commitment strength

4.1. Distribution of (un)accented *schon*/*SCHON*:

Unaccented *schon*: in contexts in which accent can or must be placed elsewhere in the clause:

ii. Verum focus + accent on AuxinC: **strong**

(29) A: St. Pauli aren't a good team, are they?

B: Doch, das IST\ **schon** `n gutes Team
(even if they often lose ...)

4. The (non-) effects of accenting on commitment strength

4.1. Distribution of (un)accented *schon*/*SCHON*:

Unaccented *schon*: in contexts in which accent can or must be placed elsewhere in the clause:

iii. Last resort accent placement on (non-given) V: **strong**

(30) A: There's a hole in my pants.

B: Das MERKT **schon** /*SCHON keiner.
 that notices PRT_{MOD} nobody
 'No one will notice, don't worry.'

4. The (non-) effects of accenting on commitment strength

4.2. Accounting for strong/weak speaker commitment

Both versions of *schon* have the same lexical meaning:

- i. *schon/SCHON* express weak speaker commitment in contexts without previous (explicit or inferred) discourse commitment to $\neg p$.

This includes SOME verum focus contexts: Affirmation

(25) b. A2: St.Pauli is a GREAT\ team!

B: Ja, das ist **SCHON**\ 'n gutes Team!

⇒ without *schon*: verum accent on Aux *IST*:

4. The (non-) effects of accenting on commitment strength

4.2. Accounting for strong/weak speaker commitment

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This includes SOME verum focus contexts: Affirmation

- (25) b'. A2: St.Pauli is a GREAT\ team!
 B: Ja, das **IST** 'n gutes Team!

4. The (non-) effects of accenting on commitment strength

4.2. Accounting for strong/weak speaker commitment

Both versions of *schon* have the same lexical meaning:

- ii. *schon/SCHON* express strong speaker commitment in contexts containing an explicit previous discourse commitment to $\neg p$: **corrective verum focus**

4. The (non-) effects of accenting on commitment strength

4.2. Accounting for strong/weak speaker commitment

Both versions of *schon* have the same lexical meaning:

- ii. *schon/SCHON* express strong speaker commitment in contexts containing an explicit previous discourse commitment to $\neg p$: **corrective verum focus**

⇒ Strong speaker commitment is due to the fact that the previous interlocutor's assertion is corrected.

⇒ **Same strong commitment found with corresponding corrective utterances without modal *schon/SCHON*!**

4. The (non-) effects of accenting on commitment strength

4.2. Accounting for strong/weak speaker commitment

Both versions of *schon* have the same lexical meaning:

- ii. *schon/SCHON* express strong speaker commitment in contexts containing an explicit previous discourse commitment to $\neg p$: **corrective verum focus**

(28') A: St. Pauli aren't a good team, are they?

B: Doch, das **IST** 'n gutes Team
(even if they often lose ...)

4. The (non-) effects of accenting on commitment strength

4.2. Accounting for strong/weak speaker commitment

Both versions of *schon* have the same lexical meaning:

- ii. *schon/SCHON* express strong speaker commitment in contexts containing an explicit previous discourse commitment to $\neg p$: **corrective verum focus**

⇒ Strong commitment not lexically coded in ***schon/SCHON***, nor is weak commitment!

5. Conclusion & Implications

- Do modal particles code commitment strength?
 - Case study of German *schon/SCHON* as a generalized (modal) degree operator comparing evidence for and against p
 - *schon/SCHON* uncorrelated with commitment strength
 - no lexical coding; strength of commitment follows from contextual factors = information structure and discourse structure (verum focus, correction)
- ⇒ Implications for other expressions/ other languages?

5. Conclusion & Implications

Other modal expressions in other languages show the same underspecification wrt strong/weak commitment:

- (30) a. She climbed Mount Toby.
b. She **must** have climbed Mount Toby. **weak**
(Kratzer 1991)
- (31) The ball is in A or in B or in C.
It is not in A. . . . It is not in B.
So, it **must** be in C. **strong**
(von Fintel & Gillies 2010)

5. Conclusion & Implications

Other modal expressions in other languages show the same underspecification wrt strong/weak commitment:

- (32) A: They said it was going to rain. I wonder whether it has started.
B: I don't think so, it was still dry when I came in 5 minutes ago.
A: Look, they're coming in with wet umbrellas. There is no doubt at all. It **must** be raining now.
strong

(von Fintel & Gillies 2010)

5. Conclusion & Implications

Other modal expressions in other languages show the same underspecification wrt strong/weak commitment:

- (32') A: They said it was going to rain. I wonder whether it has started.
- B: I don't think so, it was still dry when I came in 5 minutes ago.
- A: Look, they're coming in with wet umbrellas. There is no doubt at all. It **IS** raining now. **strong**

⇒ **corrective verum focus = strong *schon***

5. Conclusion & Implications

Q5: Is commitment strength ever a **semantic** meaning component of modal expressions?

⇒ Judith Degen et al. (2019, *Journal of Pragmatics*).
Definitely, maybe: A new experimental paradigm for investigating the pragmatics of evidential devices across languages.

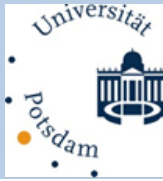
„We offer a novel experimental paradigm to **the cross-linguistic investigation of speaker commitment in modals and evidentials.**”

5. Conclusion & Implications

Q5: Is commitment strength ever a **semantic** meaning component of modal expressions?

⇒ How much sense does it make from a semantic point of view to measure commitment strength of lexical items (in the absence of context)?

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