References


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The central goal of Andvik’s book is to describe the function of two Norwegian modal particles, namely jo and nd. The author distinguishes different uses of these two modal particles and proposes a unified meaning for each of them. This analysis is presented in the central chapter 4, which – with its 68 pages – covers more than half of the book. Three short introductory chapters and an equally short concluding chapter make up the rest of the text.

Andvik’s study has been strongly inspired by the research on German modal particles in the 1970s and 1980s. Weydt (1969) is often considered as the starting point of this
research tradition. So, we now celebrate the 25th anniversary of modal particle research. Part of the German literature is reviewed in chapter 2, in particular those studies that the author considers relevant for his analysis of *jo* and *nå* (Lütten 1977, among others).

In chapter 1, Andvik argues that Norwegian has a form class that is strongly comparable to the class of German modal particles. Distributional restrictions and the typically elusive meanings, which have both been observed as typical characteristics of the German modal particles, are equally valid for the Norwegian counterpart of this form class. On the basis of distributional criteria, Andvik considers the particles *jo*, *nå*, *da*, *vel*, *nok* and *visst* as members of the class of Norwegian modal particles. He points out, however, that the exact demarcation of the group is disputed in the literature. And in fact, in a recent analysis of Norwegian *altså* and *nemlig* (Vaskó 1993), these particles are also considered to be members of the class.

Chapter 3 is devoted to general pragmatic theory. Searle’s speech act theory and Grice’s theory of conventional and conversational implicatures are summarized. Particles have been analyzed as hedges on illocutionary force and as hedges on conversational maxims (for example in Fraser 1975). Andvik supports this theoretical orientation. In this chapter, he also explicates what he means with ‘pragmatic analysis’ (see title): ‘An investigation wherein aspects of meaning not covered by propositional semantics are to be explored’ (p. 35).

The functional analysis of *jo* and *nå* in chapter 4 is based on a corpus of written plays and letters. The 220 examples that support the analysis in this chapter, are all presented with a context (textual or situational) and accompanied by an English translation, so that the analysis is easily accessible to the non-native reader. I will now discuss his analysis more extensively.

Andvik considers the modal particle *jo* to be derived from the response particle *jo*, which reverses the polarity of the previous sentence, cf. (1):

   ‘That’s not possible.’
   B. Jo.
   ‘On the contrary, it is possible.’

*Jo* is also used as a sentence-final particle, in tag-position, cf. one of Andvik’s favorite examples (2):

2. A. Du pisset ikke ut av vinduet?!
   ‘You didn’t piss out of the window?!!’
   B. Dassen er tett som en purk jo.
   ‘Sure I did! The can is as clogged as heck!’

This sentence-final use is possible for most of the Norwegian modal particles (cf. Fretheim 1989). Andvik considers this ‘tag’ use as different from the modal use and he
thus excludes it from his analysis in chapter 4. He suggests that, from a diachronic, grammaticalizing point of view, the sentence-final use can be considered as intermediate between the response particle use and the modal particle use.

The strong grammaticalization of the modal particles has led to a formal reduction (no stress and strongly restricted distribution) and, at the same time, semantic reduction. However, what exactly is reduced in the semantics of jo is not made clear by Andvik.

The modal particle jo only occurs in statements, not in the interrogative or imperative sentence type. On an observational level, Andvik distinguishes four uses of jo: supportive, oppositional, concessive and contra-expectational. One could discuss this categorization: the concessive use in particular seems questionable to me as a separate category. But more important than this low-level distinction is the unification on a higher level that Andvik proposes for jo. With the modal particle jo, a speaker indicates that he considers the information in his utterance as shared knowledge, i.e. shared between speaker and hearer. At the same time, the use of jo indicates that some idea that runs counter to this assumed consensus is felt to be present.

The general function of jo can most clearly be illustrated with an example of the 'oppositional' use, in which the speaker expresses opposition to an idea or implication presented in a previous utterance by the addressee, cf. (3):

(3) A. Hvorfor har du ikke tatt på deg buksene?
   ‘Why haven’t you put on your pants?’
B. Jeg sa jo at de er borte!
   ‘But I told you (yo) they’re gone!’

In supportive use, the jo-containing utterance supports a previous argument from the speaker himself. In the background, however, a possible intervening objection from the addressee must be assumed.

From Andvik’s analysis of jo, it becomes clear that this particle functions more or less in the same way as the German modal particle doch, and his analysis is highly comparable to the one Franck (1980) has given for German doch.

The analysis of the modal particle nd follows the same pattern as that of jo. The non-modal basis from which the modal nd is derived, is the temporal adverb nå (‘now’). Note that in German, the equivalent of the temporal adverb nå, nun, does not function as a modal particle. Dutch does, however, use the temporal adverb nu (or nou) as a modal particle.

In the modal particle use of nå, the semantic element of ‘present time’ recedes. According to Andvik, the speaker, by using the modal nå, implies that he and the addressee share a common perspective. Nå indicates a recourse to shared perception or values.

In contrast to jo, nå can be used in all three main sentence types, assertion (indicative is Andvik’s term), interrogative and imperative. The effect of nå in an assertion is
that the information is not forced upon the hearer. Instead the speaker appeals to a common perspective in the hope that this makes the hearer prepared to accept the information. The occurrence of nå in the imperative makes the utterance an entreaty or appeal and a nå in the interrogative turns the utterance into an exclamation. Andvik derives these different conversational effects from the basic meaning that he assumes for the modal particle nå, namely recourse to shared perception or values. Thus, while jo makes recourse to shared knowledge, nå makes recourse to a shared perspective.

In the concluding chapter 5, Andvik discusses some general theoretical points. He argues that monologue is in fact a special type of dialogue. According to Andvik, modal particles support this view: if a modal particle occurs in monologue, it implicates a possibly reacting hearer. Secondly, Andvik criticizes Searle’s definition of the speech act ‘assertion’. An assertion is never purely representative; there is always a manipulative aspect involved. Again, Andvik sees his analysis of the function of jo and nå as support for this critical note.

Finally, Andvik discusses the interesting question of what the functional difference might be between modal particles and modal sentence adverbs. This point can be illustrated with German wohl versus wahrscheinlich, cf. (4):

\[(4a) \text{ Peter ist wohl krank.} \]
\[(4b) \text{ Peter ist wahrscheinlich krank.} \]

Both in (4a) and (4b), the speaker indicates that he is not certain about Peter’s illness. In (4a) he uses the modal particle wohl: it cannot be stressed and not appear sentence-initially. In (4b) the modal adverb wahrscheinlich has more or less the same effect. Wahrscheinlich is a ‘normal’ adverb: it can appear sentence-initially and can be stressed. Unfortunately, Andvik’s analysis of the functional difference between particle and adverb does not seem very clarifying: ‘Modal particles are an implicit or covert expression of the speaker’s attitude, while modal adverbs are explicit and overt’ (p. 114). In my view, the crucial difference between the two is that modal adverbs operate on the proposition of the utterance, whereas modal particles operate on a higher level or layer which could be called the illocutionary or discourse-functional level.

Whereas Andvik’s analytical and descriptive practice is strongly inspired by German modal particle research, his theoretical orientation is primarily influenced by Grice and Searle. In chapter 5, he gives jo and nå the status of ‘hedges on felicity conditions’. It is difficult to evaluate this theoretical orientation. Modal particles are so elusive in their meaning, that nearly every theory seems to fit. Thus, König (1991, chapter 8) analyzes German modal particles in the framework of Relevance theory. In my appreciation, if one looks for a theoretical framework for the analysis of modal particles, Grice and Searle are at least as good as Sperber and Wilson. For the analysis of discourse particles like well, anyway, moreover, etc., Relevance theory might be the better choice. (Cf. Lingua 90 (1/2), a special issue on the analysis of particles and other forms in the framework of Relevance theory (Wilson and Smith 1993).)
Andvik seems to be associated, in some way or other, with the Summer Institute of Linguistics. His book appears in the publication series of SIL and in the acknowledgments he expresses his 'deepest appreciation to dr. Robert E. Longacre', who himself has written on 'mystery particles' (Longacre 1976). Against this background, I wonder why Andvik did not use the opportunity to integrate other research and publications of the Summer Institute into his discussion on modal particles. It would have been interesting to confront ideas from the German tradition with, for example, Morton (1978), who analyzes 'performative particles' in Parji, a Dravidian language.

This brings me to the point of cross-linguistic research. It is to be applauded that the German literature is picked up and applied to other languages, in this case to Norwegian. But that is still rather close to home. Andvik does make some casual references to research on particles in less well-known languages on p. 50, where he points to equivalents for modal jo in a variety of languages. But systematic cross-linguistic research on modal particles seems, I am afraid, not a feasible goal in the near future. The reference grammars often fail to give the relevant information. That means that we first need more language-specific monographs like the one Andvik has presented us.

Andvik's study does not provide the research on modal particles with new insights. At times, due to overcautious formulation, it is not even clear what Andvik's theoretical position is. The value of the book is primarily on the descriptive level. Andvik has shown convincingly that Norwegian, like German, has a class of modal particles. His analysis of jo and nà is well documented by the many examples of his corpus. Finally, the book is valuable in that it makes some of the ideas developed in German particle research accessible to those who do not read German.

References


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