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Splitting up Force: evidence from discourse particles

Discourse particles are used to express the speaker's attitude with respect to a proposition. The studies on discourse particles started from the research done for German and other Germanic languages (cf. Thurmair 1989, Bayer 2001, 2008, etc.), but gradually crosslinguistic evidence has proved them to be a more widespread phenomenon.
Based on data from Italian and Romanian, we will suggest that the distribution of discourse particles can provide important evidence for postulating two distinct projections encoding illocutionary force and clause type, respectively.
It is a well-known fact that not all particles can appear in all clause types (cf. Thurmair 1989:49). For example, the contrast in (1) shows that the Romanian particle *oare* is restricted to interrogative clauses.

(1a) *Oare* la ce oră s-a terminat meciul aseară?
   PRT   at what hour has finished match-the last night
   '(I wonder:) what time did the match finish last night?'
(1b) (*Oare) la ce oră   târzie s-a terminat meciul   aseară!
   PRT   at what hour late   has finished match-the last night
   'The match finished so late last night!'

Thus, it is the clause type (declarative, interrogative, exclamative, etc.) that determines the type of particles which can occur in a sentence.
However, if we take into account the function of discourse particles, we notice that these elements do not modify the type, but rather the illocutionary force of the clause. As observed by Jacobs (1986), particles take the illocutionary force of a given clause (X) and turn it into a different, more precisely specified illocutionary force (X'). If we consider example (1a), we observe that, if the particle *oare* is present, the *wh*-question is interpreted as a rhetorical question (or a question which does not necessarily require an answer).
Therefore, a discourse particle on the one hand must check its compatibility with clause type, while on the other hand it interacts with illocutionary force by modifying it.
Besides occurring in main clauses, as already seen, discourse particles can also appear in embedded contexts, as in (2).

(2)   Filmul   a   durat până târziu,
   movie-the has lasted until late,
   în timp ce meciul   *oare* la ce oră   s-a terminat aseară?
   while   match-the PRT at what hour has finished last night?
   'The movie lasted until late, while what time did the match finish last night (I wonder)?'

More specifically, they can only be licensed in 'peripheral' clauses, which according to Haegeman (2002, 2004a,b, 2006) are endowed with illocutionary force. Therefore, the distribution of discourse particles shows that they are to be considered main clause phenomena (in the sense of Emonds 1970). Also cf. Coniglio (to appear) for German and Italian particles.

Summing up, it is the clause type that restricts the possible discourse particles which can occur in a specific clause. However, only the presence of illocutionary force can syntactically license a particle.

Notice that the licensing of the clause type, too, interacts with and depends on the presence of illocutionary force. If the latter is present, as in root contexts, all possible clause types will be available (interrogative as in (2), but also declarative, imperative, etc.). In contrast, central subordinate clauses, which have no illocutionary force, must necessarily be of the 'default' declarative type.

Consequently, it appears necessary to distinguish a projection for clause type and a higher projection for illocutionary force. Theoretically, this distinction raises the question as to how discourse particles interact with these two projections.

In our proposal, particles are assumed to have two uninterpretable features. For example, *oare* in (1a) has a [*u*rhetorical] feature related to illocutionary force, and a [*u*interrogative] feature related to clause type. In order to be licensed, the particle first has to get its [*u*interr] feature valued. Given that all non-declarative clause types must also be licensed by the presence of illocutionary force, the interrogative feature of CT (clause type) will be uninterpretable, too, thus it cannot itself license the [*u*interr] feature on the particle. Both [*u*interr] features are checked by their interpretable counterpart in ILL (illocutionary force). ILL then checks [*u*rhet] as well.

(3) ILL [*i*interr; *i*rhet]   >   CT [u̶interr]   >   *oare* [u̶interr; u̶rhet]

This account predicts that discourse particles can be licensed in all root contexts. It also derives the impossibility for particles to occur in central clauses, where the lack of illocutionary force leaves the uninterpretable features of the particles unchecked at Spell Out, causing the derivation to crash.

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