

# German *also*: a focus particle or a discourse-pragmatic focus marking device?\*

MARIA ALM (LUND UNIVERSITY)

## Abstract

This paper deals with the possible use of the German word *also* ('so') as a focussing device. The starting point is Konerding's (2002, 2004) proposal that *also* be interpreted as a focus particle in certain contexts. This analysis is discussed with reference to the literature and examples from authentic conversations. Covering two distinct topological positions of *also*, two different alternatives of analysis are presented: It is suggested that *also* between utterances is not concerned with the immediately following constituent (focussed or not) but with the marking of the segmentation boundary between the entire utterances, functioning as a discourse particle. *Also* in a sentence-medial position might indeed be used for focussing, but not as a focus particle, which operates on the following focus, but as an optional use of the conjunctive adverb *also* to mark the constituent(s) that constitute the discourse-pragmatic focal information of the sentence.

## 1 Introduction

Examining consecutive conjunctive adverbs in German, Konerding (2002) notes that in a sentence-medial position these words are often used in immediate connection with what he calls focussed constituents, i.e. constituents carrying focus accent. He illustrates his point with the conjunctive adverbs *also* ('so') and *folglich* ('consequently') in example (1) below (in example (1c) the conjunctive adverb does not immediately precede the constituent carrying the focus accent, but Konerding still seems to classify it together with the sentences in (1a-b)):<sup>1</sup>

- (1) a. Ihr wart also / folglich ALle brav.  
you were **also** / **folglich** ALLgood  
'Consequently you were ALL behaving (well).'
- b. Wart ihr also / folglich ALle brav?  
were you **also** / **folglich** ALL good  
'Were you consequently ALL behaving?'

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<sup>1</sup> **Also** in bold in the translations indicates the German word *also* ('so'). Non-bold *also* in the translations indicates the English word *also* ('including').

- c. Wart ihr also / folglich alle BRAV?  
 were you **also** / **folglich** all GOOD  
 ‘Were you consequently all beHAving?’

(Konerding (2002:204); translation, M.A.)

According to Konerding, the tendency to appear immediately before a narrowly focussed constituent makes it very difficult to distinguish these words from the so-called focus particles (German: Gradpartikeln). There is a useful test, though: the position in front of the finite verb in a German declarative clause (the so-called front field) can as a rule contain only one (primary) clause constituent at a time. Since focus particles form one syntactic constituent with their “focus”<sup>2</sup>, i.e. the focussed expression they are associated with, they and their focus can occupy the German front-field position together (Konerding 2002:219). Konerding observes that the consecutive conjunctive adverbs without pitch accents generally cannot precede a front-field constituent carrying pitch accent (as in (2a)) but focus particles and *also* can (as in (2b)) (Konerding 2002:204, 219):

- (2) a. <sup>??</sup>Folglich RObertkommt morgen zum Essen.  
 folglich RObertcomes tomorrow for dinner  
 ‘Consequently RObert is coming for dinner tomorrow.’  
 b. Also RObert kommt morgen zum Essen.  
 also RObert comes tomorrow for dinner  
 ‘So RObert is coming for dinner tomorrow.’

(Konerding (2002:217); #(78b); translation M.A.)

*Also* does not only differ from the other consecutive conjunctive adverbs in this respect. Konerding notes that *also* can also appear after the constituent carrying the pitch accent whereas the other consecutive conjunctive adverbs cannot. This is illustrated for the front field in (3a) and for the middle field in (3b) (the middle field being the position(s) between the finite verb and the infinite verb elements in a German declarative clause). Konerding (2002) holds the position in (3a) to be marked and the post-accent position in (3b) to be impossible for any other consecutive conjunctive adverb but *also* (Konerding 2002:219):

- (3) a. RObert also kommt morgen zum Essen.  
 RObert also comes tomorrow for dinner  
 ‘So RObert is coming for dinner tomorrow.’

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<sup>2</sup> This term is adopted from König (1991) and refers to the focussed constituent that the focus particle operates on.

- b. Robert kommt MORgen also zum Essen.  
Robert comes toMORrow also for dinner.  
'So Robert is coming for dinner toMORrow.'

(Konerding (2002:217); #(78c) and (79e))

Considering the deviating behaviour of *also*, Konerding (2002) suggests that *also* may be in the very early stages of gaining a focus-particle function.

In this paper, the interpretation of *also* in connection with adjacent constituents carrying pitch accents will be examined, using occurrences of *also* taken from two German conversations, BR001B and BR006A. In the next section, some of Konerding's (2002) arguments for the focus-particle analysis of *also* will be discussed and compared to other conjunctive adverbs and to other word classes. In section 3 a classification of the meanings of genuine focus particles will be presented and compared to the interpretation of *also* before a front-field constituent carrying pitch accent. In section 4 the relationship between *also* and middle-field constituents with an accent is discussed. In section 5 the findings of this paper and some remaining questions are summarized.

## 2 The topological and prosodic arguments in the focus-particle analysis: pros and cons

As is discussed above, Konerding argues that *also* displays a distributional pattern like a focus particle because it often appears adjacent to constituents carrying a pitch accent – both before and after them – and because it can precede a front-field constituent with a pitch accent without itself carrying a pitch accent. Examining this intriguing suggestion, we will start by noting a couple of possible objections to Konerding's (2002) description of focus particles:

In Konerding's analysis the focus-**inducing** function of the consecutive conjunctive adverbs is taken for granted (German: fokusstiftend Konerding 2002:219). According to this approach the focus particle bestows the pitch accent upon the focussed expression. Implicitly advocating this analysis of focus particles, Konerding (2002, 2004) follows a well-established tradition of focus-particle analysis, as it seems (cf. e.g. Abraham (1991:214)). In opposition, quite a few linguists working on the phenomenon of focus claim that the contribution of the focus particle consists in attaching to the already existing focus and operating on it, not in creating it (cf. Rooth (1985)) (see next section).

Following his focus-inducing analysis, Konerding (2002) suggests that *also* highlights the first element in the rare case of a doubly filled front field like that in example (3a). Among the consecutive conjunctive adverbs *also* might be unique in this respect, but not with respect to the entire group of conjunctive adverbs (see Thim-Mabrey (1985:57) for a list). Thim-Mabrey (1985:56)

suggests that this accent assignment to the first element is due to the particular construction, not to the conjunctive adverb item. A similar analysis is found in the comprehensive grammar book by Zifonun et al (1997:1638). Moreover, in Zifonun et al (1997) it is explicitly stated that conjunctive adverbs in the middle field are not to be considered focus-inducing items. This is due to the general claim that highlighting should not be a class defining criterion. If it were, then beside the focus particles also negation particles, modal particles, conjunctive adverbs and certain conjunctions would be highlighting other expressions. This Zifonun et al (1997:869) find an unsuitable description from a semantic point of view, from which there are important differences between the mentioned word classes (see also König (1991:12); the correlation between modal particles and constituents carrying a focus accent are analysed in Hentschel (1986) and Thurmair (1989); an examination of the relationship between sentence adverbs and focus is made by Hetland (1992)).<sup>3</sup>

In example (3b) above, Konerding (2002) took his observation that *also*, but not the other consecutive adverbs, can appear after the middle-field constituent carrying pitch accent to indicate that *also* was functioning as a focus particle with local scope solely over the preceding accentuated constituent. On the other hand, Thurmair (1989:33) draws attention to the same placement flexibility for the modal particles. As long as the constituent carrying the pitch accent conveys thematic (“old”) information, it can precede the modal particle. The choice of placement does not affect the sentence scope or word class identity of the modal particle:

(4) Du brauchst nicht abzuspülen.

‘You don’t have to do the dishes.’

Das kann ja ICH machen / Das kann ICH ja machen.  
that can ja I do / that can I ja do

‘I can PRT do that/ I can PRT do that.’

(Thurmair (1989:33); #(48) and (49); translation, M.A.)

Konerding’s (2002) first argument for the analysis of *also* as a focus particle is, then, the observation that *also* behaves differently from the other consecutive conjunctive adverbs, as is illustrated in examples (3a-b) above. His second argument is based on complicated sentence manipulations regarding the possible combinations with *also* and the other consecutive conjunctive adverbs, obviously under the assumption that two of these adverbs, which basically should have the same consecutive meaning, will not combine that easily. This assumption he finds to hold true for all combinations of two randomly chosen

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<sup>3</sup> The different observations are rather difficult to compare, since the terminology, the definitions and the conscious and consistent usage of the definitions are not the same in all of these approaches.

consecutive conjunctive adverbs – except for some combinations with *also* (Konerding 2002:223-229). If *also* in these cases could be analysed as belonging to a different word class with a slightly different meaning and function, such as a modal particle or a focus particle, then troublesome combinations as the one in example (5) below could be explained elegantly:

- (5) Folglich kommt (RObert <also) MORgen zum Essen.  
folglich comes (RObert <also) toMORrow for dinner.  
'Consequently, so RObert is coming for dinner toMORrow.'  
(Konerding (2002:228); #(92'c); translation, M.A.)

Combinations between consecutive particles are probably very rare in authentic sentences. In my material I have found only one such combination. In this case both particles, *somit* ('so') and *also* form a three-particle sequence together with the modal particle *mal* ('just once'). If one of these particles would have to be assigned a focus-particle interpretation with scope only over the following constituent carrying pitch accent, it would have to be the last particle *mal* and none of the preceding consecutive conjunctive adverbs (the possibility to claim *also* be a modal particle remaining open, though):<sup>4,5</sup>

- (6) The speaker Dirk has found out that several of the important places in the life of Nietzsche are located in the area:

Dirk: =.hh äh erFAH:ren daß: (.) .h daß also schönFO- (.) ne schulFORta un:d- (.) .h (.) und LÜTZen also: (och) RÖCKen janz in der NÄHe (.) lägen, und sich somit also mal die NIETzsche-sachen .hh und geDENKstätten AUFSuchen könnte.

(BR001B)

Dirk: .hh eh learned that (.) .h that also schönFO- (.) no schulFORta and- (.) .h (.) and LÜTZen also: (also) RÖCKen were situated in the vicinity, and so also mal one could visit the NIETzsche-things .hh and meMORials.

In all, this renders a rather complicated picture. Nevertheless, Konerding's suggestion that *also* be analysed as a focus particle when preceding noun phrases with a pitch accent is very interesting and deserves further investigation.

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<sup>4</sup> The sequence *somit also*, though not in immediate succession, is considered highly unlikely by Konerding (2002:228), #(94'c)), but as these combinations are extremely rare in spoken German, there is no empirical material with which to double check this sequence to see whether it is a "normal" phenomenon or an occasional result of a planning failure due to talk online.

<sup>5</sup> For transcription conventions, see the end of the article.

### 3 *Also* in comparison to the meanings of genuine focus particles

In this section I will compare the interpretation of *also* in an adjacent position to a front-field constituent carrying pitch accent to the contribution of genuine focus particles, using König's semantic (1991) classification of focus-particle as a starting point for the discussion.

König (1991) states that not only are German and English focus particles used together with a focus, i.e. they not only help to identify the focussed constituent, but also contain additional lexical information (König 1991:29). The presence of a pitch accent on a constituent activates the interpretation of a set of alternatives. The focus particles have an encoded meaning that consists of the instruction to a quantificational operation on a set of alternatives like the set activated by the accent: "Focus particles contribute quantificational force to the meaning of a sentence, i.e. they quantify over the set of alternatives (to the value of the focussed expression), brought into play by the focussing itself" (König 1991:33).

Considering the nature of the operation instruction encoded in the focus particles, König divides the focus particles into the two most important subclasses: the inclusive and the exclusive particles (König 1991:33). Apart from this two groups, under which almost all focus particles can be subsumed (König 1991:34), König recognizes two more subclasses: focus particles that emphasize the identity of their focus, and focus particles that operate on their focus from a temporal-aspectual<sup>6</sup> perspective.<sup>7</sup>

The inclusive particles indicate that the state of affairs described in the clause also applies to values other than the value that is explicitly chosen in the focus (sentence (a) in Table 1 below), whereas the exclusive particles indicate that the state of affairs described by the clause does not apply to any possible members of the set of alternatives other than the value mentioned in the focus (sentence (b) below).<sup>8</sup> The focus particles that affirm the identity of their focus emphasize the relevance of exactly that value for the context (sentence (c) below). The temporal-aspectual focus particles, finally, are originally aspectual operators, operating as focus particles when attached to clause constituent (sentence (d) below) (König (1991:63, 106, 126, 141); #(4b), (31a), (4b) and (4a); bolds and italics, M.A.):

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<sup>6</sup> This apt term for König's (1991) fourth semantic subclass originates in Foolen's (1993) review of König (1991).

<sup>7</sup> These subclasses (and some more) can be also found in Helbig (1988:45-46).

<sup>8</sup> The inclusive and the exclusive focus particles can be divided into further subclasses, such as the scalar or non-scalar particles (German: Gradpartikeln), depending on the fact if they order the members of the set of alternatives according to a scale or not (König 1991:37-38). Inclusive and non-scalar is for example Eng. *also*, inclusive and scalar is Eng. *even*.

Example	Semantic subclass
a. You cannot eat THIS, <b>either</b> .	additive meaning
b. <b>Only</b> an EXCELLENT performance will please the boss.	restrictive meaning
c. <b>Eben/genau</b> deshalb möchte ich nicht dorthin gehen. 'This is <b>exactly</b> why I don't want to go there.'	emphatic affirmation of identity
d. <b>Schon</b> 1950 wurde dies offensichtlich. ' <b>Already</b> in 1950 this became obvious.'	temporal-aspectual meaning

Table 1: The four semantic subclasses of focus particles in König (1991)

I claim that if *also* is really used as a focus particle then it should in these cases correspond to one of the meanings illustrated in Table 1 above.

Of the four semantic subclasses above, the temporal-aspectual focus particle meaning can be excluded, since *also* in German does not function as an aspectual operator. As for the other three subclasses, Konerding (2002) suggests that the German *also* is a quantificational focus particle interchangeable for focus particles with a “restrictive and exclusive” meaning such as *sogar* (‘even’) and *nur* (‘only’) (Konerding 2002:229).<sup>9</sup> Konerding (2004) presents the first analysis of this focus-particle operation instruction for *also* ever made in the literature: *also* emphasizes a certain, usually pre-mentioned discourse entity from a presupposed set of potentially pre-mentioned alternatives (this is “selection”), possibly by ordering them according to a scale of preference (Konerding 2004:207).<sup>10</sup> Scrutinizing this analysis, however, there is no explicit mention of the **exclusion** of alternatives. Possibly, Konerding (2004) considers the mere **choosing** of the value of the focus to mean the exclusion of the rest of the alternatives. However, inclusive particles like English *even* and the emphatically identifying focus particles like English *exactly* are also associated with a choice, but not with exclusion.

The interpretation of *also* with respect to an adjacent constituent carrying pitch accent will now be examined in authentic examples from the empirical material similar to the context in example (2b) above where unstressed *also* precedes a front-field constituent with pitch accent.

In example (7) below, Gisela asks her interlocutor Thomas whom he thinks can influence politics, if ordinary people cannot. In Thomas’ answer ‘**also** proFESSionals do the politics’, *also* is immediately preceding a front-field constituent carrying pitch accent:

<sup>9</sup> This comparison by Konerding is interesting, as *even* and *only* belong to different semantic subclasses in König (1991) as in Helbig (1988), to whom Konerding (2002:229) refers.

<sup>10</sup> In original: “Also hebt eine bestimmte, in der Regel vorerwähnte Diskursentität aus einer präsupponierten Menge von potentiell vorerwähnten, gegebenenfalls präferentiell geordneten Alternativen hervor (Selektion)” (Konerding 2004:207).

- (7) Who actually does the politics, if “ordinary people” have no influence?  
 Thomas: so als- als kleine LEUte kann man keene politik machen.  
 /.../  
 Gisela: und wer (...)?  
 Thomas: (.) ((Schnalzer)) **also** PROfis machen die politik.  
(BR006A)
- Thomas: as small PEOple you cannot do politics.  
 /.../  
 Gisela: and who (...)?  
 Thomas: (.) ((smacking)) **also** proFESSionals do the politics.

Example (7) is a clear case of contrast. The contrast is signalled by the pitch accent that brings about the interpretation of a set of alternatives to the element carrying the pitch accent and by the other members of the alternative set, which can either be pre-mentioned in the context or remain implicit, depending on the definition of “contrast” you advocate (see Molnár 2006:210-211). In example (7) the alternatives are pre-mentioned (small people), which makes the utterance in example (7) a contrast in the narrow sense (see Molnár (2006:210-211, 217).

The element carrying the pitch accent will be highlighted in relation to the other possible alternatives in the set through the accent itself. The exact nature of the relationship between the accentuated constituent and the other members of the alternative set will depend on the context, though – or it can be explicitly specified by a focus particle. In Thomas’ reply in example (7) above, there is an exclusive relationship between the focussed expression and the other members of the alternative set: **only** the politicians by profession, no other people, can have an influence on politics. In this context, *also* is indeed exchangeable for *nur* (‘only’).

A focus particle like *only* indicates the exclusion of all the other alternatives to the focussed expression. The context in example (8) below is not compatible with this kind of strong exclusion. In example (8), the interlocutors are discussing why the citizens of East Germany, on the brink of the fall of the East German regime, got so preoccupied by financial issues. At the beginning of the example, the interlocutor Thomas is meditating in general terms on what factors could have caused this focus on financial issues. By uttering ‘**also I** exPERienced it like THIS’, Thomas changes perspective from general speculations to his personal, actual experiences. This time the pitch accent on **I**<sup>11</sup> functions as a hedge; the speaker is drawing the interlocutors’ attention to the very possibility that there might be other people who would not share the speaker’s view. On the other hand, the speaker is not excluding the possibility

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<sup>11</sup> Here it should be pointed out, that ICH ‘I’ in example (8) is produced with a low accent tone (T\*) and not with a so-called I-contour (see Molnár (2006: 219)) that consists of a clear fall-rise accent.



that there might be other people who share his view, either:

- (8) The interlocutors speculate over the reasons for the East German citizens to become so fixated on money:

Thomas: [und dann haben viele: gemerkt, wie sie hier:] äh »ganz schön über 's OHR gehauen worden sind,

Gisela: ja.

Thomas: .hh / und- ((Artikulationslaute)) beSCHWINdelt worden sind, / un:d da hatten viele dann sicher die nase vo:ll, / also: (.) ENDgültig,

Gisela: ja.

Thomas: und dann haben sie sich gesagt, / also: / bis HIER und nich WEIter. (..) also ICH hab das:: SO erLEBt, ich hab ERST gedacht, das sind irgendwelche RECHTSradikale irgendwie ne / ne kleine minderheit.

(BR006A)

Thomas: and then many people discovered how they had been mistreated

Gisela: yes.

Thomas: and ((articulation sounds)) CHEAted on, / and then surely many people had had enough / also for GOOD,

Gisela: yes.

Thomas: and then they said to themselves, / SO far but not any FURTHER. (..) also I exPERIenced it like THIS, at first I thought, they are some kind of RIGHT radicals some kind of / a small minority.

So far, 'also proFESSIONals' in example (7) above is not compatible with an inclusive interpretation, whereas 'also I' in example (8) above is not compatible with an (all)-exclusive interpretation.<sup>12</sup> As stated above, the notion of membership in a set of alternatives for the focussed element is triggered by the pitch accent alone; the existence of *also*, however, does not seem to contribute much to making **interpretation** of the relationship within the set of alternatives any clearer. The exclusive and inclusive interpretation, respectively, depends entirely on the context. Most likely, what is actually described Konerding's (2004) analysis of the operational instruction of *also* as a focus particle is the **function of the pitch accent in contrastive cases** and not the function of *also*.

What makes Konerding's analysis difficult to falsify is the claim that *also* is only in the very beginning of becoming a focus particle. This allows for *also* to be interpreted as a focus particle only in certain contexts and for variation in its focus-particle operation due to the context. The exclusive or inclusive operation meaning of *also* would merely be a (frequent) implicature, and in contexts that

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<sup>12</sup> For accentuated front-field constituents, this weak-exclusive interpretation, in which **at least one** but **maybe not all** of the other members of the set of alternatives would be excluded, is associated with the special I-contour (see footnote 11) in the literature. Therefore, it should be repeated, for the sake of clarity, that that ICH in example (8) is produced with a T\*-accent and **not** with a rise or a fall-rise accent (i.e. an I-contour).

do not allow for the implicature, it will be cancelled. In my judgement, though, there is no preference for the one kind of implicature over the other. I find that *also* has no developing implicatures of quantificational operation on a set of alternatives.

The remaining subclass in König's (1991) classification, namely the emphatic assertion of the identity of the chosen value of the focus, is more difficult to assess, since it is often the function of a pitch accent to highlight the exact value of a constituent as especially relevant. Since this subclass is not in itself quantificational, its members are compatible with both exclusive and inclusive contexts (König 1991:125-127).

Still, I would like to point out some alternative explanations for the placement of *also* close to constituent carrying pitch accent. As for the occurrence of *also* between utterances like in example (7) and (8) above, this can be accounted for by the fact that *also* in spoken German is very often used in this position as a discourse particle. It is then usually produced without pitch accent and fulfils functions with respect to the whole following utterance, not concentrating only on the front-field constituent. Utterances that form pairs for comparison such as in example (7) above, or even additionally constitute the transfer from one perspective to another, as in example (8), are contexts that lend themselves optimally for the marking of the segmentation boundary.<sup>13</sup> For the sentence medial occurrences of *also*, the proposal that *also* has a special relationship with a following constituent with pitch accent might be maintained, but treated from a different perspective. In the next section it will be discussed whether lexical items stand in a special relationship to highlighted constituents without having a meaning that operates on a set of alternatives.

#### **4 *Also* as a marker of discourse-pragmatic focus?**

A common function of the focus accent is to mark the new information in a clause which is relevant because it is not yet known to the hearer (often called "information focus" or "presentational focus" (cf. Molnár 2006:200). The marking of new information is such an important function of the focus accent that it is tempting to include the notion of "new information" into the definition of "focus". Following Molnár (1991), however, I will keep the notions of "new

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<sup>13</sup> Konerding cannot suggest such an interpretation for the cases in example (7) and (8), since he has a more specified interpretation of discourse particles (Konerding 2004:214). I, however, find several good reasons to assume that *also* in example (7) and (8) is used as a discourse particle, see Alm (in prep.). Suffice it to repeat that Konerding himself notes that the other consecutive conjunctive adverbs – which, incidentally, have no discourse particle uses – are highly unlikely to appear in this position. The claim that discourse particles can be produced without pitch accent and that they can be prosodically integrated into the following sentence like *also* in example (7) and (8) has already been proposed several times in work on discourse particles (see Auer (1996:308); Hirschberg & Litman (1993)).

information” and “relevant information” apart (see below). Molnár defines the notions of “background” and “focus” exclusively with respect to the speaker’s judgment of what is the relevant information in the sentence under production. The relevant information in respect to the context is foregrounded, the rest backgrounded.

The proposal that the speaker might employ linguistic items in order to mark discourse-pragmatic focus, i.e. to mark special pieces of the sentence (or the text) as deserving extra attention from the listener has, for example, been made for the English word *like*. Fleischman & Yaguello (2004:131), following Underhill (1988), suggest that *like* marks whatever occurs to the right of it as focal information. They illustrate this notion of “focus” with the utterances in example (9) below. The intended focus might pertain to structures of varying syntactic complexity: a single word (9a), a phrase (9b), a hierarchically complex sentence constituent (9c) or an entire utterance (9d-e):

- (9) a. Our library’s like lame...  
b. I’m only going to walk like so far  
c. Spain’s like the perfect place for vacation  
d. I couldn’t come to class yesterday, like I had this accident on the freeway.  
e. A: You seem dissatisfied? B: Like what do you mean?  
(Fleischman & Yaguello (2004:131); #(6a), (7b), (8b) and (9a-b)<sup>14</sup>)

The marking of information structural functions like focus I consider to be a discourse-particle function, but contrary to most discourse particles, *like* can be syntactically and intonationally integrated into the sentence in this function. In this way, *like* does indeed show a topological pattern that is reminiscent of that of a focus particle, being both integrated into the sentence and a scope below the sentence level – but like *also* it triggers no quantificational operation on a set of alternatives.

The possibility to integrate *like* used in this function in a sentence-medial position leads to the question if the mysterious tendency to place *also* close to an accentuated constituent could be explained in the same way. Unfortunately, Fleischman & Yaguello (2004) do not mark accents in their transcriptions, but it is not unreasonable to imagine that the relevant information in the scope of *like* is additionally marked by accent.

Traditionally, *also* has been classified as a conjunctive adverb when appearing in an integrated, sentence-medial position. As a conjunctive adverb, *also* is assumed have sentence scope. *Like*, on the other hand, never has sentence scope in a sentence-medial position: it is always restricted to a constituent scope. This is a difference between *like* and *also*; if we want to prove that *also* can be

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<sup>14</sup> Example (9e) originates from Underhill (1988:244), #(58)).

used exclusively as a marker of relevant information in some contexts (and not as a conjunctive adverb) we will have to prove that it does not have sentence scope. This would e.g. be the case, if *also* were used more than once within the same sentence. This can be proven for *like*. When used for information-structural aims, *like* is ambiguous as to the extent of its scope. Accordingly, some speakers have developed strategies in order to come to terms with the openness of the right-hand boundary of the scope. Firstly, *like* can be repeated as in example (10a) below, displaying that both *happening* and *really late* are items of importance. Secondly, *like* can be used to mark both the beginning and the end of the intended focus, as in example (10b):

- (10) a. ...this is weird cos it's like happening like really late.  
 b. Well she tried to act like really friendly like.  
 (Fleischman & Yaguello (2004:132); #(10c) and (11b))

Considering *also*, there are no signs of it being used in a similar way within the boundaries of one and the same sentence in the empirical material. The closest case is example (11) below: the speaker Dirk is telling his interlocutors that an inn keeper told him that several of the important places in Nietzsche's life were located in the neighbourhood of the inn:

- (11) The speaker Dirk has found out that several of the important places in the life of Nietzsche are located in the area:  
 Dirk: =.hh äh erFAH:ren daß: (.) .h daß also schönFO- (.) ne schulFORta un:d- (.) .h (.) und LÜTZen also: (och) RÖCKen janz in der NÄHe (.) lägen, und sich somit also mal die NIETzsche-sachen .hh und geDENKstätten AUFsuchen könnte.  
 (BR001B)  
 Dirk: .hh eh learned that (.) .h that also schönFO- (.) no schulFORta and- (.) .h (.) and LÜTZen also: (also) RÖCKen were situated in the vicinity, and so also could visit the nietzsche-things .hh and memorials.

Returning to the argumentation with respect to example (4) in section 2 above, it can be observed that assigning one of the occurrences of *also* in example (11) a function above or below the sentence level would remove the problem of having two conjunctive-adverb occurrences of *also* within the same sentence. In example (11) the second occurrence, 'LÜTZen **also**', is preceded by several hesitation indicators, and *also* could be interpreted as some kind of final or belated hesitation marker (not a focus particle), i.e. a discourse function on a very local syntactical level, having scope only over the expression searched for by the speaker (i.e. LÜTZen). Theoretically, this would leave the sentence-scope level open for the first occurrence of *also*. In all other cases, sentence-medial *also* is used only once, and is thus compatible with an interpretation as a

conjunctive adverb with a sentence scope.

However, using *also* as a conjunctive adverb is no obstacle for the speaker to use it additionally – and optionally – to signal the information structural status of parts of the sentence. Such information marking correspondences have already been suggested for the German modal particles (Hentschel (1986)<sup>15</sup>; Thurmair (1989)) and for the sentence adverbs (Hetland 1992:256-258). Like the conjunctive adverbs, these are word classes with sentence scope that have a great deal of mobility within the middle field of the German sentence. What makes the speaker decide where to place them? From the speaker's point of view, would it not be optimal to be able to use explicit, lexical items e.g. for information structural purposes?

In the German literature, the discussion of this kind of strategic placement of the adjuncts has been focussing on the possible interaction between the modal particles and the marking of the information structural theme-rheme division (old vs. new information) of the sentence (Hentschel (1986); Thurmair (1989)). Since the rhematic information of a sentence often constitutes a (focus) accent domain (the above mentioned new-information focus) and since Hentschel (1986) explicitly uses the focus accent as a means of identifying the rheme, at first sight there seems to be no obvious obstacle to moving the discussion into the field of accentuated and non-accentuated constituents, i.e. into the focus-background division of the sentence.

In some cases, the placement of *also* seems to indicate some information structuring function for *also*, too. In example (12) below, *also* is occupying an unusually late position in the middle field. Instead of its typical position at the beginning of the middle field, it is atypically produced after a prepositional phrase, immediately preceding the most relevant – and accentuated – information of the sentence, namely the evaluation of the earlier mentioned arrangement in Berlin: an UNforgettable event:

(12) The interlocutors are sharing experiences from the period just before the fall of the East German regime:

Gisela: na so 'ne ähnliche funktion hatte ja denn in berlin der vierte november,=also das war für viele leute also ein / UNvergeßliches (er-)erlebnis eigentlich,

(BR006A)

Gisela: well a similar function like that had PRT then in berlin the fourth of november,=also that was for many people also an /UNforgettable event really,

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<sup>15</sup> Hentschel (1986:231) suggests that modal particles be only referring to the rheme of the sentence and not to the entire clause – but there is no mentioning of them losing their sentence scope while doing so.

Further, as a marker of discourse-pragmatic focus, *also* could be placed at either boundary of the focus constituent: before it or after it. This would solve Konerding's (2002) preoccupation that *also* can be placed after the constituent carrying pitch accent (see example (3b) and (4) above). *Also* following the accentuated constituent could still be fulfilling the same focus marking function. Admittedly, *also* with discourse functions is dispreferred in the host-unit final position in my material, but it does occur (see the hesitation marking function in example (11) above).

An interpretation of *also* as a pragmatic focus marker is also consistent with Konerding's (2002:226) assumption that the consecutive conjunctive adverbs are **not** used as focus particles at the beginning of the middle field of a sentence with "normal stress" (wide focus), since they are then followed by a wide focus. Konerding only considers the conjunctive adverbs focus-particle candidates if they are associated with a narrow focus (constituent focus). If *also* is instead interpreted as a marker of discourse-pragmatic focus it would simply mark the entire wide focus domain as focus – and this is how Underhill (1988) interprets like in this kind of context.

Finally, I would like to return to the use of *also* between complete utterances. In examples (9d-e) above, Fleischman & Yaguello (2004) suggested that *like* mark the whole succeeding utterance as a pragmatically relevant focus. Does such an interpretation hold for the discourse particle *also* between utterances as well? This does not seem to be the case. In examples (7) and (8) above, *also* preceded utterances relevant to the context, but in example (13) below, it precedes a parenthetical remark:

(13) Dirk is describing the evening in the hotel after a hike in the rain:

Dirk: denn, (.) wie das so ist im: im so n hoTELzimmer,=da LIEGt man denn abends aLLEIN und SCHAUt noch ein WEInig zu den STERnen hinauf, die dann übrigens wieder DA waren,=**also** es klarte sich auf- .hhh (t)ja. ((tief ausatmend)) und- und NÄCHsten TAgEs

(BR001B (62))

Dirk: then, (.) as it is in: in such a HOtel room,=there you are Lying in the evening aLone und LOOKs a LITtle at the STARs, which incidentally were THEre again,=**also** it cleared up- .hhh tja. ((breathing out deeply)) and- and the NEXT DAY

As the discourse particle *also* precedes utterances of varying textual relevance, it is uncertain at least for the discourse particle use of *also* whether it is really used to mark a discourse-pragmatic focus.

For the middle-field occurrences of *also* the marking of a discourse-pragmatic focus (without performing operations on a set of alternatives) in addition to its conjunctive adverb functions seems to be a possible analysis, but there are still many aspects not discussed here to take into consideration. It is true that *also* in

my material usually precedes – immediately or not – the constituent carrying the pitch accent in those cases in which the middle field contains such a constituent, but one still has to consider the fact that *also* is preferably used in the beginning of the middle field, which enhances the probability that it is used before the accentuated constituent. Also, there is often more than one accent in the utterance and even in the middle field. This could be interpreted to mean that *also* is followed by a wide focus domain that is being divided into many accent domains; according to Uhmman (1991:221-223) this is possible provided that the last accent is on the focus exponent, which is usually the case in the material used for this paper. However, the common multiple accent utterances in authentic spoken language do complicate the analysis of the focus-background division of the sentence and thus also the analysis of the interplay between *also* and focus.

## **5 Summary and remaining questions**

In this paper it was claimed that the German word *also* does not display focus-particle meanings in the traditional sense with respect to an adjacent constituent carrying pitch accent. Instead, it was suggested that due to its mobility within the middle field, *also* could be used by the speaker as a marker of discourse-pragmatic focus, in addition to and without relinquishing its original function as a conjunctive adverb.

However, before this analysis can be sustained, one has to examine the interplay between the placement of *also* and the focus structure of multiple-accent utterances in authentic conversation. Also, the relevance of the theme-rheme for the placement of *also* has to be examined, this information-structural division having been claimed to be of great importance to the placement of the German modal particles. With respect to these two distinct information structural levels, the following questions remain to be answered: Does the position of *also* correspond rather to the theme-rheme division or to the focus-background division, or can none of these two information structural dimensions be claimed to be decisive for the placement of *also* within the sentence? Does *also* share its topological placement preferences with modal particles rather than with the other conjunctive adverbs? Do the other conjunctive adverbs really differ considerably from *also* and the modal particles in their topological placement preferences?

Finally, it should be mentioned that between utterances *also* was suggested to be a discourse particle. As such, it precedes textually relevant as well as less relevant host utterances. This indicates that at least this use of *also* is not used unambiguously to mark discourse-pragmatic focus.

**Transcription conventions:**

- . indicating terminal intonation
- , indicating progressive intonation
- ? indicating rising intonation
- als- indicating the cutting off of the word/sound
- / indicating a prosodic break
- (.) (..) pauses: iconic length
- = indication no pause at all, immediate succession
- .h .hh in breath: iconic length
- moMENT cardinals indicating stressed syllables
- un:d colon indicating the prolongation of a sound
- [ne] indicating a stretch of simultaneous talk
- ((breathing)) double brackets indicating the transcriber's metacomment

Spoken material used:

The conversation BR001B from the German Language Archives in Mannheim, Germany.

The conversation BR006A from the German Language Archives in Mannheim, Germany.

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Maria Alm

maria.alm@tyska.lu.se