

The Modern Greek particles

(and some consequences for the interfaces of syntax)

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The existence of a grammatical category *Particle* is in itself problematic. The reason for this is that no good definition of *Particle* exists that is applicable to any significant range of elements. Categories are usually defined (directly or indirectly) either from a functional semantic core, e.g. T(ense), Asp(ect), Num(ber) etc. or from a (morpho)-syntactic one N, V, C, Adj, Adv. When we turn to elements that are usually referred to as *particles*, there is no remotely coherent semantic notion that would unify the different elements that are usually subsumed under the label *particle*. Morphosyntactically, apart from the (generally speaking) clitic-like behaviour of particles (Zwicky, 1985), there is again little that is uncontroversial or actually particularly useful. Most of the time, particles are defined *negatively*. Particles have been *Identified* so to speak across different domains and they are realisations of (small) chunks of both the V and N extended projection. A particularly thorny issue is that of so-called discourse particles or discourse markers. They convey a range of what is sometimes called *use-conditional* meanings (Gutzmann, 2015, a.o.). How these particles are integrated in the syntactic structure is also highly controversial. In this talk I will focus on these discourse particles of (Modern) Greek. After a whirlwind historical overview (One cannot not start at Denniston (1954)), I will construct a list of the relevant particles, propose a decompositional analysis in the spirit of Tsoulas (2017), develop their formal pragmatics/semantics and explore some

novel ideas in terms of syntactic variation. My objective in the second part of the talk will be to propose a model for the interfaces of syntax that can accommodate that subset of the meaning of the particles that is relevant to each interface. I will argue that a multidimensional syntax (to be defined more precisely in the talk) is required for a multidimensional pragma-semantics.

I will conclude with some further thoughts on the acquisition of discourse particles drawing some conclusions from studies in other languages and sketching possible ways to proceed in studying the situation in Greek.

References

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