Anatomy of two discourse particles
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Overview. Discourse particles such as German *ja* are often analyzed as placing constraints on the hearer's epistemic state. For example, Zimmermann (2007) claims that in (1), *ja* signals that the speaker 'takes the hearer to be aware of the fact that Max is at sea.'

(1) Max ist ***ja*** auf See
Max is ***PRT*** at sea

This type of analysis has interesting consequences for the Salish language St'át'imcets, which is argued by Matthewson (2006, in press) to lack any elements which place constraints on the hearer's knowledge state, but which nevertheless possesses a discourse particle *qa7* which looks very similar to *ja*. In this talk we resolve the apparent problem for Matthewson's analysis, by showing that neither *qa7* nor *ja* is lexically specified so as to place requirements on the hearer's knowledge state. Instead, the use of St'át'imcets *qa7* α or German *ja* α in a context c indicates that the speaker of c is firmly committed to p (where p is the descriptive content of α), and moreover doesn't consider the question whether or not p to be on the agenda for either the current or any future inquiry. We show that St'át'imcets *qa7* and German *ja* differ in that only the former always requires some suitable relation to the preceding discourse.

Data. At first sight, *qa7* and *ja* might seem to signal that the hearer knows the information presented. They are freely offered and accepted when the information is already known by the hearer, as in the second clause in (2).

(2) qílh=t'u7 aoz kw=s=súcwt-en-tsin; xaxel-qw-am'=lhkacw=á=***qa7***
almost=PART NEG DET=NOM=recognize-DIR-2SG.OBJ cut-head-MID=2SG.SUBJ=A=***qa7***
'I almost didn't recognize you; you've had a haircut.'

The particles are also felicitous when the information is obvious or verifiable in the speech situation, as already observed by Lindner (1991) and Kratzer (1999, 2004) for *ja*.

(3) *Context: I caught my sweater on a nail going upstairs and it made a hole but I don't know about it yet. Just after that I feel somebody staring, and I ask 'Why is he looking at me?' and you say:*

wá7=a=***qa7*** s-xetq ti=spíts'a7-sw=a
be=A=***qa7*** STAT-hole DET=sweater-2SG.POSS=EXIS
'Your sweater has a hole in it.'

On the flip side, *qa7 and ja* are often rejected when the information is known to be new to the hearer, as in (4).

(4) *Context: You have just been asked 'Who did John marry?'*

# nilh=a=***qa7*** s=Christina ti=melyíh-s-as=a
FOC=A=***qa7*** NOM=Christina DET=marry-CAUS-3ERG=EXIS
'He married Christina.'

Interestingly, however, *qa7* and *ja* are felicitous in some situations where the information is neither previously known to the hearer, nor verifiable in the speech situation, as in (5-6).

(5) *Context: You are trying on clothes in a store and you say to a stranger you see there:*

tsílkst=***qa7***i=n-stsmál't=a; áy=t'u7 kw=s=kwikws ti=n-gwelín=a lhkúnsa
five=***qa7*** DET.PL=1SG.POS-kids=EXIS NEG=PRT DET=NOM=small DET=1SG.POS-belly=EXIS now
'I have five children; my stomach is not small now.'

(6) Wir geben unseren Katzen keine Milch. Sie können den Milchzucker ***ja*** nicht verdauen.
'We don't give our cats milk. They can't digest the lactose.'

Differences between *qa7* and *ja*. *Qa7* and *ja* differ in that St'át'imcets *qa7* always requires some suitable relation to the preceding discourse. German *ja,* in contrast, is felicitous in out-of-the-blue exclamatives expressing surprise about a fact that is accessible in the utterance situation. There often is a special surprise intonation in these cases. For example, the second clause in (2) is rejected if uttered in isolation, but the corresponding German exclamation *Du hast dir **ja** die Haare schneiden lassen!* 'You cut your hair!' is a perfectly acceptable utterance. Similarly, while in German it is fine, if out hiking in the woods, to express surprise by saying *Da ist **ja** ein Bär!* 'There is a bear!', the St'át'imcets (7a) is rejected in the same situation. It is corrected to (7b), where a causal relation with another fact is spelled out.

(7) a. # wá7=a=***qa7*** ti=míxalh=a
be=A=***qa7*** DET=bear=EXIS
'There's a bear!'

b. o, aoz kw=á=su ka-nás-a áta7, wá7=a=***qa7*** ti=míxalh=a
oh NEG DET=IMPF=2SG.POSS CIRC-go-CIRC DEIC be=A=***qa7*** DET=bear=EXIS
'Oh, you can't cross over there, there's a bear.'

Analysis. We assume that discourse particles like *ja* and *qa7* do not contribute to truth conditions; both operate at the level of *expressive meaning* (Kaplan 1999; cf. Kratzer 1999, 2004, Potts 2003, 2005), and their expressive contents restrict their use to situations in which the speaker is firmly committed to the descriptive content p, and doesn't consider the question whether or not p to be on the agenda for either the current or any future inquiry. p could be a triviality that is plain obvious to anyone, or a fact that can be verified on the spot in the discourse situation, or a fact that has already been established by relevant experts on the issue and is no longer news. Those experts may or may not include the speakers and/or hearers themselves. Crucially, there is no requirement that hearers have to know about the fact, even though this is often the case when these particles are used. Facts whose status as facts is shared knowledge among discourse participants are bound to be paradigm cases of unquestionable facts. This much accounts for the acceptability of (2,3,5,6) and the unacceptability of (4). The particle *qa7* is furthermore inherently relational and requires a relation between the fact described by its own sentence and another fact that has been made salient in the discourse by linguistic or non-linguistic means. There don't seem to be any special requirements on the nature of the discourse relation. Concessive, as well as causal relations, including metalinguistic causal discourse relations (Scheffler 2008) seem acceptable. The relational requirement accounts for the unacceptability of the second clause of (2) in isolation, and for (7a) vs. (7b).

Broader significance and further predictions. St'át'imcets-internally, our analysis enables us to account for the distribution of *qa7* without making reference to the epistemic state of the hearer. This brings *qa7* into line with Matthewson's (2006, in press) claim that the entire St'át'imcets language possesses no lexical items that constrain the knowledge state of the hearer.

Cross-linguistically, our analysis predicts that there should be no environment where *qa7* is possible, but *ja* is completely impossible, but there should be environments where *ja* is possible, but *qa7* is impossible because the respective requirements on coherence relations are not met. Our data show those predictions to be largely correct. Our analysis of these particles in two unrelated languages lends support to the hypothesis that, universally, discourse particles might be built from the same inventory of subtle discourse monitoring devices.