Two Sides of the Same Pragmatic Move: The German Discourse Particles *Etwa* and *Nicht*[*]

Simone Gieselman and Ivano Caponigro

University of California, San Diego

1.   Introduction

The German words *nicht* and *etwa* can be used in two very different ways. Under one use, *nicht* semantically resembles the clausal negation marker *not* in English, while the word *etwa* is close in meaning to the adverb *approximately*. In this use, *nicht* and *etwa* affect the truth-conditions of the sentence, just as their English equivalents. But *nicht* and *etwa* can also be truth-conditionally inert without any straightforward counterparts in English. In this latter use, they affect the discourse conditions instead by behaving like discourse particles, as already noticed in descriptive grammars (e.g. Thurmair 1989).

Our main goal in this paper is to present arguments supporting the discourse particle use of *nicht* and *etwa* and highlighting the content of their pragmatic contribution. In particular, we argue for the novel claim that *nicht* and *etwa* are closely related pragmatically. They mark the two sides of the same pragmatic move by imposing very similar discourse conditions concerning the speaker's belief in a complementary way (Sec. 2). We conclude by sketching a preliminary account of the pragmatic behavior of *nicht* and *etwa* within Gunlogson's (2008) framework for discourse structure (Sec. 3).

2.   Similar but Complementary

The goal of this section is to provide evidence to our central claim that the discourse particles *etwa* and *nicht* are similar and complementary in marking the two sides of the same pragmatic move. They are similar in their general discourse conditions (Sec. 2.1) that they impose, in their distributional restrictions across sentences (Sec. 2.2) and within a sentence (Sec. 2.3), and in the fact that they both affect the licensing of polarity items (Sec. 2.5). They are complementary in the specific discourse conditions that they require

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(Sec.2.1), in the impossibility of co-occurrence (Sec. 2.4), and in the way they affect the licensing of polarity items (Sec. 2.5).

2.1 Discourse Conditions

In this section, we present and discuss the different conditions that *nicht* and *etwa* impose on the discourse. We do so by looking at the felicity of the three polar interrogatives in (1) when uttered in the general scenario in (2) and the four different sub-scenarios in (3)-(6). The results are summarized in the table in (7) below. Notice that the three polar interrogatives in (1) are identical, except that (1)a has *nicht* occurring between the subject *Veronica Ferres* (a famous German actress) and the temporal adverb *yesterday*, (1)b has *etwa* instead, while (1)c has nothing in the place of *etwa* and *nicht*.

(1) a. War Veronica Ferres **nicht** gestern auch an der Schule?
    was Veronica Ferres *nicht* yesterday also at the school
    'Is it not the case that Veronica Ferres was also at school yesterday?'
  b. War Veronica Ferres **etwa** gestern auch an der Schule?
    was Veronica Ferres *etwa* yesterday also at the school
    'Was Veronica Ferres also at school yesterday by any chance?'
  c. War Veronica Ferres Ø gestern auch an der Schule?
    was Veronica Ferres   yesterday also at the school
    'Was Veronica Ferres also at school yesterday?'

(2) **General Scenario (S)**: Anne and Maria are talking about an event that Anne saw at their children's school yesterday. Anne says: "*Many famous German actors and actresses came and talked to the children*!"

(3) **Subscenario 1 (S1): Some positive evidence**. Maria has <u>some evidence</u> that her favorite German actress Veronica Ferres <u>was</u> at the school based on rumors that she had heard before. Then she asks Anne (1)a/ (1)c

(4) **Subscenario 2 (S2): Some negative evidence.** Veronika Ferres is Maria's favorite actress but Maria has <u>some evidence </u>that the actress <u>was not </u>at the school based on some rumors that she had heard before that Ferres is shooting a movie abroad. Maria asks Anne (1)b/ (1)c

(5) **Subscenario 3 (S3): No evidence.** Maria hadn't heard anything about this big event before and has <u>no evidence</u> whether Veronica Ferres was or was not at school. She asks Anne (1)c

(6) **Subscenario 4 (S4): Strong evidence.** Maria saw Veronica Ferres getting out of her car and entering the school yesterday. She therefore has <u>strong evidence</u> to believe that Veronica Ferres <u>was</u> at school yesterday. She asks Anne ...

(7)

Evidence:	S1: Some positive	S2: Some negative	S3: No	S4: Strong
Nicht	OK	#	#	#

Etwa	#	OK	#	#
∅	OK	OK	OK	#

In sum, the discourse particles *nicht* and *etwa* in polar interrogatives impose complementary conditions on the speaker's knowledge with respect to the issue raised by the interrogative. In particular, if a polar interrogative S with denotation {p, ~p} (and therefore raising the issue if p is true or not) contains the discourse particle *nicht*, then the speaker can utter it only if she has some (not too strong) evidence that p is true. Similarly and complementary, if *etwa* replaces *nicht* in the same interrogative, then the speaker has to have some (not too strong) evidence that p is false to utter the interrogative. If neither discourse particle occurs, then the only condition left to satisfy is the rather trivial one that the speaker does not already have strong evidence about p being true or false, i.e. that the speaker does not already know the answer to the question she is asking (unless the polar interrogative is uttered as a rhetorical question).

In conclusion, the discourse particles *etwa* and *nicht* both impose very similar and complementary conditions on the speaker's knowledge when they occur in polar interrogatives, suggesting that they should receive a similar analysis. But what about when they occur in sentences other than polar interrogatives? As shown in the next section, the discourse particles *etwa* and *nicht* cannot occur in any other construction.

2.2   Distribution across Sentence Types

As we saw in the previous section, the discourse particles *etwa* and *nicht* can occur in polar interrogatives, once the relevant discourse conditions are satisfied. Another example is given in (8). The speaker can utter (8) with *etwa* if she has any previous reason to believe that the boy may have not liked the cake, while she can use *nicht* if her bias is toward the boy having liked the cake.

(8)   Hat der Junge **etwa / nicht** den Kuchen gemocht?
       has the boy   *etwa   nicht* the cake   liked
       etwa: 'Did the boy like the cake by any chance?'
       nicht: 'Is it not the case that the boy liked the cake?'

It turns out that polar interrogatives is the only environment where the discourse particles *etwa* and *nicht* are found (their truth-conditional homophones have a larger distribution). No matter what the discourse conditions are, they cannot occur in declaratives with falling intonation that act as statements, nor in declaratives with raising intonation that act as questions, as shown in (9)[1].

(9)   Der Junge hat (*__etwa__/*__nicht__) den Kuchen gemocht ./?
       the boy   has   *etwa nicht* the cake   liked
       'The boy liked the cake./?'

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[1]   These judgments are based on a reading where there is no special stress on discourse particle or verb. If a discourse particle is stressed, it is used as its truth-conditional homophone (Thurmair 1989).

The discourse particles *etwa* and *nicht* cannot occur in constituent interrogatives either, as shown in (10).

(10)   Wer hat (*__etwa__/*__nicht__) den Kuchen gemocht?
        who has   *etwa nicht*   the cake   liked
        'Who liked the cake?'

Unlike *etwa* and *nicht*, other German discourse particles are not restricted to polar interrogatives, but they are found in constituent interrogatives and declaratives as well (Thurmair 1989; Bayer 1991 a.o.). These distributional facts bring further support to our hypothesis that *etwa* and *nicht* are closely related.

     Schwarz & Bhatt (2006) discuss a use of *nicht* that they label *light negation*. Light negation is claimed to occur in polar interrogatives (11)a – like our discourse particle – but also in other NPI-licensing environments such as the antecedents of conditionals (11)b and the restrictor of quantifiers like *keiner* 'nobody' (11)c.

(11)   a.   Hat Fritz __nicht__ <u>schon</u> Frage 3 beantwortet?
                has Fritz LN   PPI   question 3 answered
                'Is it not the case that Fritz already answered question 3?'
        b.   Wenn Fritz __nicht__ <u>schon</u> Frage 3 beantwortet hätte, wäre er durchgefallen.
                if   Fritz LN   PPI question 3 answered   had   was he failed
                'If Fritz hadn't already answered question 3, he would have failed'
        c.   Wir haben keinen angenommen, der __nicht__ <u>schon</u> Frage 3 beantwortet hat.
                we have   nobody accepted   who LN PPI question 3 answered had
                'We didn't accept anybody who hadn't already answered question 3.'

If light negation *nicht* and discourse particle *nicht* are the same phenomenon, then our previous conclusions on its distributions are incorrect since the discourse particle *nicht* would not be restricted to polar interrogatives, but would also occur in constructions such as (11)b and (11)c. We believe, instead, that the term 'light negation' conflates two different phenomena or, equivalently, two *nicht*. The phenomenon exemplified in the polar interrogative in (11)a <u>is</u> our discourse particle *nicht*. The phenomenon in (11)b and (11)c <u>is not</u>, and the label 'light negation' should be used only for these cases.

     The two phenomena share some properties. They both occur before the object (a syntactic surface position uncommon for clausal negation in German) and they both license PPIs in their scope – at least the PPI *schon* 'already' (11)a-c.

     Nevertheless, light negation crucially differs from the discourse particle *nicht* in having truth-conditional import. (11)b is true in a world in which Fritz fails in the case that he has <u>not</u> yet answered question 3. Removing light negation *nicht* from (11)b changes the truth-conditions: the sentence would now be true in a world in which Fritz fails if he <u>has</u> answered question 3 already. Similarly, (11)c is true in a world in which an individual x is not accepted in the case that x has <u>not</u> yet answered question 3. Removing the light negation *nicht* from (11)c changes the truth-conditions: (11)c would now be true in a world in which an individual x is not accepted in the case that x <u>has</u> already answered question 3. The *nicht* in (11)a, instead, does not have truth-conditional import, as discussed in the following section.

2.3   Syntactic Distribution within Polar Interrogatives

We saw that the discourse particles *nicht* and *etwa* can only occur in polar interrogatives. Still, they do not occur just anywhere within this clause type. Their syntactic surface position distinguishes them from their truth-conditional homophones. This section discusses the distributional restrictions of the discourse particles *nicht* and *etwa* within polar interrogatives and the differences with their truth-conditional homophones.

In polar interrogatives, *etwa* and *nicht* can occur in both, their function as discourse particles and as their truth-conditional counterparts. Notwithstanding, their use can be distinguished by means of their syntactic surface position. The *etwa* surfacing in the higher part of the clause in (12)a – preceding the object or even the subject – is the discourse particle, since it imposes the discourse conditions discussed in Sec 2.1. The *etwa* surfacing within the prepositional phrase in (12)b, instead, truth-conditionally modifies an amount expression (*50%*), similarly to the adverb *approximately* in English.

(12)   a.   Hat (**etwa**) Max (**etwa**) die Prüfung mit 50% der Punkte bestanden?
                    has (*etwa*) Max (*etwa*) the exam with 50% the-gen points passed
                    'Did Max pass the exam with 50% of the points by any chance?'
          b.   Hat Max die Prüfung mit **etwa** 50% der Punkte bestanden?
                    has Max the exam with approximately 50% the-gen points passed
                    'Did Max pass the exam with approximately 50 percent of the points?'

In addition to the syntactic cues for discriminating *etwa* from its truth-conditional homophone, the truth-conditional import of truth-conditional *etwa* as modifier of an amount is easy to detect. This makes the differentiation between discourse particle *etwa* and its truth-conditional homophone straightforward.

Turning to *nicht*, the polarity changing effect of its truth-conditional contribution is difficult to detect in polar interrogatives with denotation {p, ~p}. However, like *etwa*, *nicht* as a discourse particle occurs in the higher part of the clause, preceding the object or even the subject (13)a, in contrast with the homophonous negation marker, which immediately precedes the main verb (13)b.

(13)   a.   Hat (**nicht**) Max (**nicht**) die Prüfung mit 50% der Punkte bestanden?
                    has (*nicht*) Max (*nicht*) the exam with 50% the-gen points passed
                    'Is it not the case that Max passed the exam with 50% of the points?'
          b.   Hat Max die Prüfung mit 50% der Punkte **nicht** bestanden?
                    has Max the exam with 50% the-gen points not passed
                    'Did Max not pass the exam with 50% of the points?'

When *nicht* occurs before the object, it imposes the discourse conditions we discussed in Sec. 2.1; when *nicht* follows the object, instead, it is interpreted as truth-conditional clausal negation.

It is a well-known fact that the clausal negation *nicht* cannot precede the object or even the subject in German, but has to follow definite or indefinite objects, as shown in

(14)a with a declarative clause and in (14)b with a constituent interrogative clause (see also Schwarz & Bhatt 2006).

(14) a. Der Junge hat (***nicht**) den Kuchen (**nicht**) gemocht.
          the boy has not   the cake   not   liked
          'The boy (didn't) like(d) the cake.'
      b. Wer hat (***nicht**) den Kuchen (**nicht**) gemocht?
          who has (not) the cake   (not)   liked
          'Who (didn't) like(d) the cake?'

These data further support our claim that if *nicht* precedes the subject and/or the object(s) in polar interrogatives, then it is unambiguously the discourse particle.

Since the intuitions about the truth-conditional import of clausal negation in polar interrogatives may not be so clear, we suggest a test with the answer particle *genau* 'exactly' to strengthen them.

(15) a. Hat Max **nicht** den Kuchen damals gemocht?
          has Max *nicht* the cake   then   liked
          'Is it not the case that Max liked the cake back then?'
      b. Hat Max den Kuchen damals **nicht** gemocht?
          has Max the cake   then   not   liked
          'Didn't Max like the cake back then?'

In (15)a, *nicht* precedes the object and therefore –we argue– it is a discourse particle. The answer *genau* to (15)a is interpreted as conveying the proposition 'that Max liked the cake', just as it would be in the case of the same polar interrogative without *nicht*. In other words, the presence of the 'higher' *nicht* does not affect the polarity of the proposition conveyed by the answer *genau*. By contrast, in (15)b, with *nicht* immediately preceding the verb as typical of clausal negation, the answer *genau* is interpreted as conveying the proposition 'that Max did <u>not</u> like the cake.' This contrast to what the answer *genau* conveys depends exclusively on the position of negation and follows straightforwardly from our claim that *nicht* in (15)a is a discourse particle and occurs in a dedicated position.

Finally, a further piece of evidence supporting the different syntactic positions of the discourse particles *nicht* and *etwa* vs. their truth-conditional homophones comes from the fact that each discourse particle can co-occur with its truth-conditional homophone. This is true although standard German[2] does not show phenomena such as double negation for the purpose of reinforcement or cancellation as shown by the unacceptability of the declarative with two *nicht* in (16)a. By contrast, the polar interrogative with both the discourse particle *nicht* and the negation marker *nicht* is acceptable (16)b.

(16) a. * Der Junge hat **nicht** damals den Kuchen **nicht** sonderlich gemocht.
             the boy has not   then   the cake   not all that much liked
      b.   Hat **nicht** der Junge damals den Kuchen **nicht** sonderlich gemocht?

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[2]   Dialects of German sometimes show instances of negative concord.

has *nicht* the boy   then   the cake   not   all that much liked
'Is it not the case that the boy didn't like the cake all that much back then?'
Alike the discourse particle *nicht*, the discourse particle *etwa* can only co-occur with its truth-conditional homophone in polar interrogatives (17)b but not in declaratives (17)a.

(17)   a.   *   Der Junge hat **etwa** die Prüfung mit **etwa** 50% der Punkte bestanden.
                    the boy   has *etwa* the exam with appox. 50% the-GEN points passed
        b.   Hat **etwa** der Junge die Prüfung mit **etwa** 50% der Punkte bestanden?
                    has *etwa* the boy   the exam   with approx. 50% the-GEN points passed
        'Did the boy pass the exam with approximately 50% of the points by any chance?'

To sum up, while truth-conditional *nicht* is restricted to occur in the 'lower' parts of the clause and truth-conditional *etwa* within the amount phrase it modifies, the discourse particles *nicht* and *etwa* occur higher up in the clause, before the object or even before the subject. The syntactic surface position too can therefore differentiate between the discourse particles and their corresponding truth-conditional homophones.

2.4   Complementary Distribution

German discourse particles can often co-occur with other discourse particles in the same sentence (Thurmair 1989), as long as their discourse conditions are not in conflict with one another. The discourse particles *etwa* and *nicht* can never co-occur, however, suggesting that their contributions to the discourse conditions are similar and complementary (i.e. in conflict). The polar interrogative in (18) is almost identical to the fully acceptable polar interrogative we discussed in (8) above, except that now, both *nicht* and *etwa* occur, sequentially. They are both used as discourse particles, as determined by their syntactic surface position (Sec. 2.3). The sentence in (18) is completely unacceptable.

(18)   Hat der Junge (***nicht etwa***) den Kuchen gemocht?
        has the boy   *nicht etwa* the cake   liked
        'Is it not the case that the boy liked the cake (*by any chance)?'

Interestingly, the combination *etwa nicht* (rather than *nicht etwa*) in polar interrogatives is degraded, but not unacceptable, as shown in (19).[3]

(19)   ?Hat der Junge **etwa nicht** den Kuchen gemocht?
         has the boy *etwa* not   the cake   liked
        'Did the boy not like the cake by any chance?'

In (19), though, *nicht* does not function as a discourse particle, but rather as its truth-conditional homophone, i.e. the clausal negation marker. Here are some arguments supporting this claim. First, when *nicht* follows *etwa*, it sounds more natural in the

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3   Thanks to Sophie Repp for bringing this fact to our attention.

position in which the negation marker occurs (Sec. 2.3), as shown in (20), which is preferred over (19). By contrast, the discourse particle *nicht* occurs preceding the object (Sec. 2.3). If *nicht* in the sequence *etwa nicht* is the negation marker, these facts follow.

(20)   Hat der Junge **etwa** den Kuchen **nicht** gemocht?
         has the boy   *etwa* the cake   not   liked
         'Did the boy not like the cake by any chance?'

Furthermore, the discourse particles *etwa* and *nicht* can co-occur with the clausal negation marker (the rightmost *nicht*), as shown in (20) and (21)a, respectively. The combination *etwa nicht*, instead, can never co-occur with the negation marker (21)b.

(21)   a.   Hat der Junge **nicht** den Kuchen damals **nicht** gemocht?
                 has the boy   *nicht* the cake   then   not   liked
                 'Is it not the case that the boy didn't like the cake?'
        b. *   Hat **etwa nicht** der Junge den Kuchen damals **nicht** gemocht?
                 has *etwa* not   the boy the cake   then   not   liked

The facts above follow straightforwardly if *nicht* in *etwa nicht* is negation rather than discourse particle.

2.5   Polarity Items

The discourse particles *etwa* and *nicht* are similar and complementary also in the way they affect the licensing of polarity items, both positive polarity items (PPIs) and negative polarity items (NPIs). The German PPI *ziemlich* 'rather' is not licensed in polar interrogative (22)a. However, if the discourse particle *nicht* is added to the interrogative in (22)a, then the PPI *ziemlich* is licensed (22)b (see also Schwarz & Bhatt 2006).

(22)   a.   Hat der Junge den Kuchen (? **ziemlich**) gemocht?
                 has the boy   the cake   PPI   liked
                 'Did the boy (? rather) like the cake?'
        b.   Hat der Junge **nicht** den Kuchen   **ziemlich** gemocht?
                 has the boy   *nicht* the cake   PPI   liked
                 'Is it not the case that the boy rather liked the cake?'

Not surprisingly, the PPI *ziemlich* is not licensed in the scope of a negative element like *nichts* 'nothing' either, as (23)a shows. Interestingly though, the acceptability of the very same polar interrogative improves if the discourse particle *etwa* is added (23)b.

(23)   a.   Hat der Junge nichts   (***ziemlich***)   gemocht?
                 has the boy   nothing   PPI   liked
                 'Did the boy like (*rather) nothing?'
        b.   Hat der Junge **etwa** nichts **ziemlich** gemocht?
                 has the boy   *etwa* nothing PPI   liked|
                 'Did Max like nothing by any chance?'

Turning to NPIs, the German NPI *sonderlich* 'all that much' is licensed in positive polar interrogatives (24)a, but is anti-licensed by the discourse particle *nicht* (24)b (see also Schwarz & Bhatt 2006).

(24)   a.   Hat der Junge den Kuchen **sonderlich** gemocht?
                 has the boy   the cake   NPI   liked
                 'Did the boy like the cake all that much?'
        b.   Hat der Junge **nicht** den Kuchen (***sonderlich)** gemocht?
                 has the boy   nicht the cake   NPI   liked
                 'Is it not the case that the boy liked the cake all that much?'

The NPI *sonderlich* is licensed in the scope of the negative element *nichts* 'nothing', as expected (25)a. Surprisingly though, if the discourse particle *etwa* is added to the very same interrogative, then *sonderlich* is anti-licensed and can no longer occur (25)b.

(25)   a.   Hat der Junge nichts **sonderlich** gemocht?
                 has the boy nothing   NPI   liked
                 'Did the boy like nothing all that much?'
        b.   Hat der Junge **etwa** nichts (? **sonderlich)** gemocht?
                 has the boy *etwa* nothing   NPI   liked
                 'Did the boy like nothing all that much by any chance?'

The pattern in (22)-(25) shows that both *nicht* and *etwa* affect the licensing behavior of polarity items. While *nicht* licenses the PPI *ziemlich* and anti-licenses the NPI *sonderlich* in <u>positive</u> polar interrogatives, *etwa* licenses the PPI *ziemlich* and anti-licenses the NPI *sonderlich* in <u>negative</u> polar interrogatives. Though an account of this polarity-licensing pattern goes beyond the purposes of this paper, the pattern itself supports our central claim that the discourse particles *nicht* and *etwa* are similar and complementary.

3.   Sketching our Proposal

We have showed that the discourse particles *etwa* and *nicht* are similar and complementary. In particular, they can only occur in polar interrogatives and require the speaker uttering a polar interrogative {p, ~p} to have some reason to believe that ~p (if *etwa* is used) or p (if *nicht* is used) is true. This was our main goal of in this paper. In this last section, we sketch a preliminary account of these properties within the framework for discourse structure proposed in Gunlogson (2008). This should be taken as a suggestion for future investigation, rather than a conclusive explanation.

3.1   Gunlogson's Framework for Discourse Structure

Gunlogson (2008) views utterances with respect to their ability to publicly *commit* the speaker and/or the addressee to the propositional content of the utterance. In other words, utterances are viewed in terms of their ability to signal the speaker's willingness to add the propositional content of the utterance to the *common ground* (cg). The *speaker's*

commitment set (cs) is the structure keeping track of the set of worlds in which the propositional content that the speaker has committed to is true. More concretely, a falling declarative sentence such as *Mary liked the cake.* publicly commits the speaker s to the proposition p 'that Mary liked the cake'. Within Gunlogson's framework, uttering a declarative sentence with content p has the discourse effect of changing the speaker's commitment set cs_s. p is added to cs_s:

(26)   *Discourse Effect of a Falling Declarative Clause:* $cs_s' = cs_s \cap p$

In contrast to declarative sentences, neutral polar interrogatives like *Did Mary like the cake?* do not change the speaker's commitment set cs_s since a neutral polar interrogative does not express commitment to propositional content as depicted below.

(27)   *Discourse Effect of a Neutral Interrogative Clause:* $cs_s' = cs_s$

There are also constructions halfway between declaratives and interrogatives. A rising declarative sentence such as *Mary liked the cake?* has the syntactic structure of a declarative, but requires an answer like an interrogative. In order to account for rising declaratives, Gunlogson introduces a weaker form of commitment called *contingent commitment*. The idea is that the speaker commits to the propositional content of the rising declarative, but the commitment can only be maintained if the *authority* of the addressee supports it.

(28)   *Discourse Effect of a Rising Declarative Clause:*
       $cs_s' = cs_s \cap p$ if supported by the authority of the addressee

The notion of *authority* refers to the idea that in discourse, the speaker, the addressee or both might be *authoritative* in regard to the question under discussion. That is, by posing an interrogative, the addressee, not the speaker, inherently receives the authority in terms of what should enter the commitment set(s); the speech act of posing a declarative inherently identifies the speaker as the authority with regard to the truth of the proposition conveyed by the declarative. In the case of a rising declarative, the speaker cannot be the authority because of its interrogative nature, but the authority can not be the addressee's either, because of its declarative nature. The construction itself does not clarify the authority relations. Therefore, the context has to clarify the authority relations.

3.2   Polar Interrogatives with *etwa* and *nicht* versus Rising Declaratives

Just as with rising declaratives, polar interrogatives with *etwa* and *nicht* are not regular interrogatives in that they impose discourse conditions with respect to the evidence and belief the speaker holds. It is another example of a construction with features of both, interrogatives (they require an answer) and declarative constructions (the speaker indicates that she has evidence regarding the correct answer to the question). Like falling declaratives, polar interrogatives with *nicht* and *etwa* change the commitment set. However, while the commitment of falling declaratives only requires the speaker's

support (*full commitment*), the commitment of polar interrogatives with *etwa* or *nicht* is contingent on the addressee's support as well (*contingent commitment*). This is the same as with rising declaratives that we briefly discussed above: Both constructions convey contingent commitments requiring the support of the addressee to be maintained.

Nevertheless, polar interrogatives with *etwa* and *nicht* and rising declaratives do not serve exactly the same conversational purpose. Consider the scenario in (29) in the general context in (2) above, where the speaker has some evidence from before the current conversation that Veronica Ferres was at school. In this scenario, the polar interrogative in (29)a can be uttered felicitously, while the rising declarative in (29)b cannot.

(29)   **Scenario 1: Previous evidence**. Maria heard rumors <u>previous to the current</u> <u>conversation</u> and therefore has some evidence that her favorite German actress Veronica Ferres was at school and asks:
   a.   War Veronica Ferres **nicht** gestern auch an der Schule?
           was Veronica Ferres DiP yesterday also at the school
           'Is it not the case that Veronica Ferres was also at school yesterday?'
   b. #   Veronica Ferres war gestern auch an der Schule?
           Veronica Ferres was yesterday also at the school
           'Veronica Ferres was also at school yesterday?'

In the scenario in (30)[4], instead, there is immediate evidence for the truth of the propositional content p 'that the weather is supposed to be good this weekend.' In this scenario, a rising declarative is felicitous (30)a, while the polar interrogative with *nicht* or *etwa* in (30)b is not.

(30)   **Scenario 2: Immediate evidence**. Gina and Harry are officemates. Harry has an internet window open with the weather forecast for the weekend. Gina sees it and thinks she recognizes the sun symbol, but isn't sure because she is too far away. Gina hadn't heard anything about the weekend weather previous to this conversation and asks:
   a.   Das Wetter am Wochenende soll schön werden?
           the weather at the weekend shall good become
           'The weather is supposed to be good this weekend?'
   b. #   Soll *nicht / etwa* das Wetter am Wochenende schön werden?
           shall *nicht / etwa* the weather at the weekend good   become
      nicht: 'Is it not the case that the weather is supposed to be good this weekend?'
      etwa: 'Is the weather supposed to be good this weekend by any chance?'

In the case of rising declaratives, the immediate context has to identify the addressee as the authority (Harry is sitting in front of an open internet window with the weather forecast and Gina knows it). Furthermore, the source of the speaker's evidence that the weather is supposed to be good this weekend has to be visible to both interlocutors (Gina

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4   This scenario is adopted from Gunlogson (2008) with slight changes. We translated the utterances into German and added discourse particles to the polar interrogative.

thinks to recognize the sun symbol, and Harry knows that Gina can see his computer screen with the weather forecast). In the case of polar interrogatives with *nicht* or *etwa*, the speaker's belief has to be due to previous evidence and cannot be created in the present situation of discourse.

3.3   Semantic and Pragmatic Analysis: A Sketch

Based on the conclusion in the previous section, we suggest that the discourse contribution of polar interrogatives with *nicht* and *etwa* can be formulated within Gunlogson's framework (Sec. 3.1) as in (31) and (32), respectively.

(31)   *Discourse Effect of a Polar Interrogative with* nicht:
$cs_s' = cs_s \cap p$ if supported by the authority of the addressee and
if the speaker has some prior evidence that p is true

(32)   *Discourse Effect of a Polar Interrogative with* etwa:
$cs_s' = cs_s \cap {\sim}p$ if supported by the authority of the addressee and
if the speaker has some prior evidence that ~p is true

Syntactically and semantically, we analyze both *nicht* and *etwa* as identity functions adjoined to IP that apply to the proposition denoted by their IP sister and return p, as shown in (33). The whole interrogative ends up denoting the usual set {p, ~p}, after the question operator Q is applied.

(33) $[[CP]] = \{p, {\sim}p\}$

Q $[[IP_2]] = p$

nicht/etwa $[[IP_1]] = p$
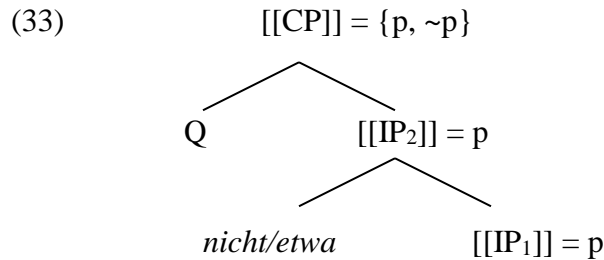
The distributional restrictions of the discourse particles *etwa* and *nicht* we described in Sec.2.2 follow from our proposal in (31)-(33). *Etwa* and *nicht* cannot occur in constituent interrogatives because the denotation of the lowest IP of a constituent interrogative is not a (closed) proposition – the only kind of object *etwa* and *nicht* can apply to to produce their semantic and pragmatic output.[5] *Etwa* and *nicht* cannot occur in falling declaratives, because falling declaratives convey full commitment, while *etwa* and *nicht* give rise to contingent commitment, and the two kinds of commitment are incompatible (intuitively, you cannot be strongly and weakly sure at the same time that something is true). *Etwa* and *nicht* cannot occur in rising declaratives because they impose incompatible discourse requirements. Rising declaratives require the immediate context to identify the addressee

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[5]   The denotation of the (lowest) IP of a constituent interrogative is usually assumed to be an open proposition or a property.

as the authority while at the same time identifying the source of the speaker's belief in a way that is visible to both, the speaker and the addressee (Sec. 3.2). On the other hand, the commitment signaled by *etwa* and *nicht* requires that the speaker's evidence for her belief originate in prior experience. Finally, *etwa* and *nicht* occur in complementary distribution within polar interrogatives (Sec. 2.4) because they impose complementary commitments. If p is the proposition denoted by the IP of the polar interrogative, *etwa* commits the speaker to ~p and *nicht* commits the speaker to p.

3.4   Discourse Particle *nicht* is not like Preposed Negation in English

During the discussion of the discourse particle *nicht*, the reader might have wondered whether preposed negation (Romero & Han, 2004) in English can be equalized with the discourse particle *nicht* in German. Let us briefly address this issue before we conclude.

Romero & Han (2004) distinguish between what they call 'preposed negation'[6] (34)a and non-preposed negation (34)b in polar interrogatives in English.

(34)   a.   Is<u>n't</u> Jane coming? *preposed negation*
          b.   Is Jane <u>not</u> coming? *non-preposed negation*

Preposed negation resembles our discourse particle *nicht* in two ways. First, like our discourse particle *nicht*, but unlike regular negation, it surfaces in the high syntactic position preceding the subject. Second, in a polar interrogative with denotation {p, ~p}, preposed negation indicates that the speaker believes p to be the true answer, similarly to what our discourse particle *nicht* does.

Despite these similarities, the two phenomena differ with respect to their truth-conditional import. Unlike our discourse particle *nicht* (Sec. 2.3), preposed negation has truth-conditional import, and Romero & Han analyze it as such. The basis for this assumption is the fact that *either* can adjoin to polar interrogatives with preposed negation, according to Romero & Han (35). Although *either* is not a NPI (v. Stechow p.c.), it still requires a truth-conditional negation in the sentence it adjoins to.

(35)   Isn't Jane coming either?

We therefore conclude that the truth-conditional import of preposed negation distinguishes preposed negation from our discourse particle *nicht* and an analysis of our discourse particle *nicht* along the line of the VERUM operator Romero & Han argue for preposed negation is not feasible (besides being unfit for handling the complementary discourse particle *etwa*)

4.   Conclusion

Etwa and *nicht* had been recognized as discourse particles not affecting the truth-conditions but imposing discourse conditions (e.g. Thurmair 1989). In this paper, we

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[6]   'Preposed Negation' is also known as 'outer negation' as opposed to 'inner negation' (Ladd 1980; Büring & Gunlogson 2000)

have shown that *nicht* and *etwa* are not just two unrelated particles but they are similar and complementary – they are two sides of the same pragmatic move. They are similar in imposing discourse conditions involving the speaker's belief, in their distribution, and in their ability to affect the licensing of polarity items. They are complementary since their use requires the speaker to have opposite beliefs (p or ~p), they cannot co-occur, and exhibit complementary licensing behavior of polarity items. We have sketched a preliminary analysis in Gunlogson's framework for discourse structure. Our analysis captures the similarity of *etwa* and *nicht* by analyzing them as markers of contingent commitment. As for their complementary nature, our analysis treats *nicht* as adding the proposition p conveyed by the IP of the polar interrogative to the speaker's commitment set, while it treats *etwa* as adding ~p to the speaker's commitment set. Our proposal derives some of the main distributional restriction of *etwa* and *nicht*. Further research has to determine if and in which way *etwa* and *nicht* relate to other discourse particles of German, and whether other languages have particles that have similar functions to *etwa* and *nicht*.

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Department of Linguistics
University of California, San Diego
9500 Gilman Drive. #0108
La Jolla, CA 92093-0108

simoeneh@gmail.com

ivano@ucsd.edu