Abstract for CUSP8  

**German *doch* is an anaphoric mirative**  
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The German unstressed modal particle (MP) *doch* is often analyzed as relating a speaker’s utterance to the state of the discourse. But exact relation is highly debated. For many, the utterance *contradicts* a salient proposition in the discourse (Diewald 2007, Rinas 2007, Grosz 2014, Müller 2014). For others, the utterance marks *epistemic normativity* (information that should have been known; Thurmair 1989) or an attempt to *re-resolve an issue* previously closed but reopened by another party (Rojas-Esponda 2013). All of these predict that (1) is a felicitous discourse because: a) *q* contradicts *p*; b) A should have (clearly) known *q*; or c) A’s assertion re-opens an issue that B considers established fact.

(1) A: Komm, wir schauen das Endspiel. B: Super Bowl? Das ist doch total langweilig. ‘Hey, let’s watch the last game.’ = p ‘Super Bowl? That’s totally boring!’ = q

I argue that, at its core, *doch* is a mirative, a marker of *surprise* (DeLancey 2001), which I formalize along the lines of Rett & Murray (2013) as a marker that some salient proposition (default: the utterance) has low probability for a salient individual (default: the speaker). This approach can be seen as a generalization of the accounts above – B uses *doch* to mark her surprise at A’s uttering *p*, which could be because *q* is obvious/known/settled, among other reasons. But it also captures *doch*’s contribution in imperatives, exclamatives, and discourse initial declaratives, all environments previously overlooked by extant theories where there is no sense of contradiction/normativity/re-resolution (CNR).

**CNR-less *doch***: As Thurmair notes, *doch* in imperatives and exclamatives functions typically to soften a command and heighten an assessment, respectively. (2) shows this for imperatives, and in this case, there is no CNR-like contribution. In fact, as (3) shows, there need not be any CNR-relation in declaratives either:

(2) A mother and child are in a parking lot. The mother is worried about safety. She utters: Nimm doch meine Hand. take *doch* my hand. Just hold my hand. (Aber) Es schneit doch! ‘But it’s snowing!’

(3) You are walking through the snow and encounter a crocus. You indicate it and utter: ‘(But) It’s snowing!’

The utterance in (3) doesn’t contradict, isn’t normative, and isn’t a re-resolution. What *doch* is doing is referencing the sense that someone’s expectations have been violated. I show that an argument against low probability mistakes a problem with discourse relations for one about the licensing of *doch*. Similarly, an account that re-raises a previously closed issue cannot capture discourse-initial *doch* utterances like (3).

Following Rett & Murray (2013), I propose that a *doch* utterance has the logical form \[\ldots \text{doch}_{q,x} \ldots\], where *q* is anaphoric to a proposition in the context *C*, and *x* is anaphoric to a salient doxastic center, which may be the speaker, addressee of a salient third party protagonist. Such an utterance is expressively correct iff: there is a contextual degree of probability \(d_C\) s.t.: \(\text{EXCEPTION}_{x,C}(q) < d_C\).

This definition has two degrees of freedom: *x*, the referent whose expectations count, and *q*, the proposition of low expectation (PLE). While these may default to the speaker and the content of the utterance, they may freely vary. Simply stating that the semantic content of *doch* provides the surprise or violation of expectation of a conversational participant is not enough. That is, the source of this mirative component, *q*, must minimally be able to reference the semantic content of an utterance as well as the fact that an utterance occurred at all. Recall (3). The first degree of freedom *x* references the speaker’s surprise, while the second, *q*, is the unstated but pragmatically understood proposition *a flower is blooming*.

While I have in principle divorced the PLE from the content of the utterance, I assume that there are coherence constraints on the relation between the PLE and *u*, which will be outlined in the talk, of which I have identified three. Each of these relations provides an explanation for *doch*’s mirativity. The PLE of utterances like (1) is simply the semantic content of *u*. Cases like (2) show that the PLE is the fact that *u* occurred. Finally, examples like (3) indicate that the PLE can be another proposition entirely, a proposition which explains *x*’s surprise.