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# Focus Particles as Utterances – the Case of German *Ausgerechnet!*<sup>1</sup>

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Focus particles such as *auch* ‘also’, *nur* ‘only’ and *sogar* ‘even’ form a closed word class and do not occur as immediate constituents in German. They usually have to adjoin to an associated focus constituent and are even occasionally referred to as function words. It is quite surprising that the focus particle *ausgerechnet* ‘of all X’ (*Peter kommt ausgerechnet heute* ‘Peter is coming today of all days’) also occurs as an independent utterance as in *Peter kommt heute. Ausgerechnet!* ‘Peter is coming today. Of all days!’. The article describes this little studied (colloquial) use of *ausgerechnet*. It presents a detailed analysis of the focus particle *ausgerechnet* showing that it is an expressive item in the sense of Potts (2005, 2007). The expressive semantics motivates its use as an utterance in analogy to exclamations with expressives such as the interjection *Donnerwetter!* ‘Oh dear!’ or the adjective *Toll!* ‘great’. The analysis is presented in a construction-based framework and illustrates the need to integrate core and peripheral grammatical phenomena.

Keywords: focus particles, expressives, exclamations, construction grammar, analogy.

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## 1 Introduction

Focus particles such as *auch* ‘also’ in (1a) and *allein* ‘only’ in (1b) add an extra layer to the propositional content of a clause by establishing a relation between the referent of the focus constituent and a set of other possible referents. The main contribution of the clause in (1) is that Peter got a shirt, while the inclusive focus particle *auch* in (1a) adds the information that Peter got other things apart from the shirt, and the exclusive focus particle *allein* in (1b) that Peter got nothing but a shirt (König 1991a, 33-34; Sudhoff 2012, 205 *f.*, a.o.).

- (1) a. Peter hat [auch ein Hemd] bekommen.  
Peter has too a shirt got  
‘Peter also got a shirt.’  
b. Peter hat [allein ein Hemd] bekommen.  
Peter has only a shirt got  
‘Peter only got a shirt.’

Some focus particles such as *sogar* ‘even’ in (2) also contain an evaluative component (a scalar interpretation), here that a shirt is low on a scale of being expected as a present.

- (2) Peter hat [sogar ein Hemd] bekommen.  
Peter has even a shirt got  
‘Peter even got a shirt.’

Focus particles appear to be syntactically restricted. They usually adjoin to their focus constituent, and they fail the canonical test for constituency in German since they cannot occur alone in the prefield. They are sometimes considered function words (De Cesare and Andorno 2015, 3), and they tend to develop into conjunctions (Eberhard 2017) or to behave like modal particles (Trotzke and Mayol 2021; Kim and Jahnke 2011). And yet, Altmann (1978, 66) observes that some German focus particles occasionally occur alone as utterances in e.g. responses. Altmann goes on to say that acceptability judgements are insecure and that naturally occurring instances are difficult to find. A striking exception is the German scalar focus particle *ausgerechnet* ‘of all X’ (henceforth: AG - also in glosses) (Altmann 1978; König 1991a, 1991b; Pożlewicz 2006; Sudhoff 2012; Trotzke ms.; Trotzke and Mayol 2021 a.o.). Originally a past participle of the verb *ausrechnen* ‘to calculate’, *ausgerechnet* marks the referent of the focus constituent as a non-optimal choice (König 2017, 28) in the context out of a set of alternatives. In (3) the speaker considers a shirt the least appropriate choice of a present for Peter – for whatever reason.

- (3) Peter hat ausgerechnet ein Hemd bekommen.  
Peter has AG a shirt got  
‘Peter got a shirt, of all things.’

AG is special in that it also occurs alone as a comment of the speaker on her own contribution or as a response to a contribution by an interlocutor.

(4) Ausgerechnet! Peter hat ein Hemd bekommen.

AG Peter has a shirt got

‘Of all things! Peter got a shirt.’

(5) A: Peter hat ein Hemd bekommen. B: Ausgerechnet!

‘Peter has got a shirt.’

AG

‘Of all things!’

It appears to be very marked for other scalar focus particles to occur as independent utterances as noted by Altmann. The following figure shows how often a number of scalar focus particles in German including AG occur alone, i.e. capitalized before a sentence boundary in authentic texts (the DeReKo<sup>2</sup> corpus). The numbers clearly indicate that AG has established itself as an independent utterance unlike other focus particles even though the numbers should be treated with care.<sup>3</sup>

Table 1: Focus particles in independent use

Focus particle	Total number	Capitalized before sentence boundary	Clearly independent use
<i>zumindest</i>	1.507.617	131	26
<i>sogar</i>	3.447.018	113	11
<i>nicht einmal</i>	65.312	101	52
<i>insbesondere</i>	959.987	119	29
<i>ausgerechnet</i>	app. 424.178	1497	app. 1350
<i>vor allem</i>	5.086.803	448	46

I analyse the independent use of AG in (4) and (5) as *expressive exclamations*. I define *expressive* as an affect-transmitting expression (Jain 2021) and *an exclamation* as a non-sentential utterance type, in this case a single-word utterance (Culicover and Jackendoff 2005). The question is: why can the otherwise syntactically restricted focus particle AG be used as an exclamation? I will propose that AG in (4) and (5) is used in analogy to interjections or evaluative adjectives such as *Donnerwetter!* ‘Oh dear!’ or *Toll!* ‘Great!’ due to its semantics. Like *Donnerwetter!* or *Toll!* AG is an expressive in the sense of Potts (2005, 2007) in contrast to its

<sup>2</sup> Deutsches Referenzkorpus am Leibniz Institut für Deutsche Sprache. Mannheim.

<sup>3</sup> The numbers in Table 1 should be seen as approximations. The total number of occurrences of *ausgerechnet* in the corpus also contains the instances of the past participle. The number in the table gives the number for the focus particle reading, which is estimated to be 87%. Of the first 100 occurrences of *ausgerechnet*, 87 were focus particles. Furthermore, the search engine identifies a <CR> as a sentence boundary, even though the sentence occasionally continues on the next line. For focus particles with a low number of occurrences the independent uses were manually selected. The number of independent uses of *ausgerechnet* was estimated to be 90% of the total number since 90 occurrences of the first 100 were clearly independent uses.

Catalan counterpart *precisament* ‘precisely’ discussed by Trotzke and Mayol (2021).<sup>4</sup> AG expresses an emotional attitude, and it is speaker-oriented. I provide a construction-based analysis which eliminates the need for an additional syntactic categorisation of AG (e.g. as an interjection) which is problematic according to Altmann (1978, 66).

The paper is structured as follows: section 2 describes the data and the choice of theoretical framework. Section 3 provides a description of the independent use of AG and relates it to the use as a focus particle. Section 4 shows that the syntax of AG gives no reason to expect an independent use, while the semantic analysis of AG as an expressive in section 5 motivates that AG is used as an utterance in analogy to other expressives. This idea is spelled out in section 6 using Construction Grammar. In section 7 I reach a conclusion.

## 2 Data and Theoretical Framework

The description of the independent use of AG is mainly (but not exclusively) based on corpus data from DeReKo (see footnote 2). From a search on capitalized *Ausgerechnet* occurring before a sentence boundary from October 23, 2019, the first 1000 occurrences out of a total of 1274 instances were selected. 500 instances were randomly exported through the export facility of the corpus system, and every 5<sup>th</sup> instance was manually selected. These 100 instances were coded for the position of AG as preceding or following its target clause as well as the target constituent and its position in the target clause (independent AG occurring interposed was not found in this search but have been added for illustration purposes). It is a limitation of the study that the examples were only coded by the author since the identification of the target constituent is not always clear. However, the goal has been to establish that some focus particles (in this case German AG) can also occur alone as utterances and to analyse the syntax and semantics of this use. This is also the reason why no attempt has been made to limit the study to a specific variety of German or to either written or spoken language. The data is intended to document that AG is used as an utterance in naturally occurring text in different varieties of German. It does not, however, show that isolated AG occurs in spontaneous spoken language as pointed out by a reviewer.

The analysis is embedded in a construction-based framework (Goldberg 1995, 2005; Goldberg and Suttle 2010 a.o). In Construction Grammar all linguistic expressions (whether lexical or phrasal) are constructions, i.e. pairings of form and meaning. There is no separation between lexicon and grammar, where grammar is understood as rules for combining lexical items. Also syntactic structures of arbitrary size are associated with meaning. The advantages of using CG are twofold: for one thing CG makes no distinction between core and periphery. Peripheral phenomena such as verbless utterances like *Toll!* ‘great’ and *Ausgerechnet!* ‘of all X’ have a

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<sup>4</sup> Trotzke and Mayol (2021) analyse the Catalan focus marker *també* ‘too’ as an expressive in one of its uses but not *precisament* ‘precisely’. The present analysis differs from Trotzke and Mayol in that the focus particle AG itself is analysed as an expressive as also briefly hinted at by Trotzke and Mayol (p. 902).

natural place in the linguistic description and the present discussion underlines the need to integrate peripheral phenomena. Secondly CG predicts the possibility of linguistic change based on semantic analogy. Constructions are stored as part of the linguistic knowledge complete with form and meaning providing a locus for analogical extensions based on either form or meaning (or both). Stored grammatical patterns can be used as bases for new constructions (Nikolaeva 2020, 28). I will propose that the focus particle AG can be used as an utterance through analogical extension based on other independently motivated constructions for expressives used as utterances.

### 3 *Ausgerechnet* as an Expressive Exclamation

#### 3.1 *The Syntax and Semantics of AG as an Exclamation*

In the examples in (6) through (8) AG is used as an independent utterance. In (8) AG is even described as an exclamation (“Zuruf”) by the author. AG occurs alone without adjoining to an overt focus constituent. Example (7) is ambiguous though: AG is used as a parenthetical expressive utterance but immediately preceding its associated constituent. Still, the hyphens and the exclamation mark suggest that AG is intended to be understood as an exclamation.

- (6) Es war das Handy in der Hosentasche von Philipp Müggler. Ausgerechnet!<sup>5</sup>  
 it was the cell.phone in the pocket of Philipp Müggler AG  
 ‘It was the cell phone in the pocket of Philipp Müggler. Of all people!’
- (7) Wespe kaufte zwei von ihnen nach der Ausmusterung, einer davon wurde  
 Wespe bought two of them after the phasing.out one of.them was  
 - ausgerechnet! - als Touristenbus nach Costa Rica verschifft.<sup>6</sup>  
 AG as tourist.bus to Costa Rica shipped.of  
 ‘Wespe bought two of them when they were phased-out, one of them was – of all things  
 to do – shipped off to Costa Rica as a tourist bus.’
- (8) Was Sie hier mit Ihrem Antrag tun, ist jedenfalls an keiner Stelle in irgendeiner Weise  
 seriös.  
 ‘What you are trying to do with this proposition is in no way serious.’  
 (Zuruf von der CDU: Ausgerechnet!)<sup>7</sup>  
 Shouting from the CDU AG  
 ‘(Someone from the CDU shouting: And who is saying that?)’

As an exclamation AG serves as a newsmark in the sense of Heritage (1984, 340). It indicates that the speaker considers the information in the target clause especially noteworthy (cf. the discussion in Trotzke and Mayol 2021, 893) or newsworthy (Heritage 1984, 340).

<sup>5</sup> A12/DEZ.06718 St. Galler Tagblatt, 15.12.2012, S. 45; NAMEN & NOTIZEN über das klingelnde Handy bei der Operette Sirmach und einen Fussballfan, der keine Saisonkarte bekommt.

<sup>6</sup> A09/OKT.04506 St. Galler Tagblatt, 17.10.2009, S. 33; Wie ‘Diesel-Sepp’ zu JosÈ wurde

<sup>7</sup> PNW/W13.00060 Protokoll der Sitzung des Parlaments Landtag Nordrhein-Westfalen am 05.06.2002. 60. Sitzung der 13. Wahlperiode 2000-2005. Plenarprotokoll, Düsseldorf, 2002

In monological use independent AG serves as a comment by the speaker on her own contribution. AG typically immediately precedes or follows its target clause as in (9) and (10), but it also occurs interposed as in (7) above.

(9) Anna arbeitet in einem Kurhaus, pflegt Patienten. Ausgerechnet. Denn in Anna works in a sanatorium cares.forpatients AG because within ihr brennt ein unlöschbarer Hass, der entfacht worden ist durch frühe her burns an extinguishable hatred which ignited been hasthrough early und bleibende Verletzungen.<sup>8</sup>

and enduring injuries

‘Anna works in a sanatorium, cares for patients. Of all things. Because an extinguishable hatred is burning within her ignited by early lasting injuries.’

(10) Ausgerechnet. Fast zeitgleich mit der Geburt seiner Zwillinge Leo und AG almost simultaneously with the birth of.his twins Leo and Lenny ist eine weitere Beschwerde gegen Federers Feriendomizil auf der Lenny is a further complaint against Federer’s holiday.retreat at the Lenzerheide eingegangen.<sup>9</sup>

Lenzerheide filed

‘That too! Almost at the very same time as his twins Leo and Lenny were born another complaint was filed against Federer’s holiday retreat at the Lenzer Heide.’

In both retro- and prospective use the speaker indicates to the addressee that the focus of the target clause is noteworthy in view of an evaluation of the referent of the focus constituent as the least appropriate or expected in the context: Anna's choice of occupation in (9) and the birth of the twins coinciding with the complaint in (10). At the same time AG is forward-looking in that it calls for an elaboration, namely why the referent of the focus constituent is inappropriate, in (9) the reason is Anna's personal disposition as being hateful. Example (10), in turn, can be analysed using König's (1991b) analysis of the focus particle AG as emphasizing the identity of an argument in conflicting roles. In (10) the shared argument is a particular time  $t_i$ , and the conflicting propositions are *the complaint is filed at  $t_i$*  and *the twins are born at  $t_i$* : an unpleasant event happening simultaneously with a pleasant event. The semantic analysis of AG as a focus particle carries over to AG as an expressive exclamation, but the focus constituent is resolved contextually.

In dialogical use AG serves as a response to a contribution by an interlocutor. It patterns with responses such as *Na sowas!* ‘Well, I never’ or *Das darf doch nicht wahr sein!* ‘Oh no, really?’. Again, AG marks the focus of the prior contribution as newsworthy (Heritage 1984, 340;

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<sup>8</sup> A98/APR.20544 St. Galler Tagblatt, 01.04.1998, Ressort: TB-KUL (Abk.); Lichterloh Liebe und Hass.

<sup>9</sup> SOZ14/MAI.00865 Die Südostschweiz, 08.05.2014, S. 5; Haben die Federer-Zwillinge bald fertig gespielt?

Gubina and Betz 2021, 375) while at the same time expressing a negative attitude<sup>10</sup> towards (parts of) the informing of the interlocutor. In (11) B considers the fact the Peter got a shirt newsworthy since B knows that Peter does not wear shirts. AG invites a reconfirmation by the interlocutor (possibly with a further elaboration) or it projects an elaboration by the AG-speaker herself: an explanation of her surprise.

(11) A: Wir haben Peter ein Hemd geschenkt.

‘We have given Peter a shirt.’

B: Ausgerechnet! Er trägt doch nie Hemden.

AG ‘He never wears shirts.’

‘Of all things! He never wears shirts!’

Since the focus constituent is resolved at discourse level and not within the clause, the identification of the “offending” referent is not governed by syntactic principles and therefore less restricted. AG can also serve as a reaction or a response to extra-linguistic content just like exclamations with evaluative adjectives such as *Toll!* ‘great’ (Günthner 2009, 160/61). In (12) B is annoyed that A starts interrogating about B’s well-being. Example (8) above repeated as (13) below is from a political discussion, and AG is a comment on the fact that a particular speaker dares to deem someone else’s request unserious.

(12) A: Wie geht es dir denn so?

‘So how are you doing?’

B: Ausgerechnet!

AG

‘Of all things!’ (i.e. A starts interrogating me)

(13) Was Sie hier mit Ihrem Antrag tun, ist jedenfalls an keiner Stelle in irgendeiner Weise seriös.

‘What you are trying to do with this proposition is in no way serious.’

(Zuruf von der CDU: Ausgerechnet!)<sup>11</sup>

Shouting from the CDU AG

‘Someone from the CDU shouting: And who is saying that?’

In (12) and (13) AG cannot occur in the target clause at all. There is not even a target constituent. What is considered inappropriate, has to be inferred from the context.

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<sup>10</sup> There is some debate as to whether AG represents a neutral or negative judgement. Zifonun et al. (1997, 894) characterize the scale of AG as “factual or moral appropriateness” (*sachliche oder moralische Angemessenheit*) and the position on the scale as “strongly deviating from a standard” (*stark vom Standard abweichend*) but with no judgement. It is difficult not to understand a strong deviation in appropriateness as a negative judgement (cf. also Altmann 1978: 151; Trotzke and Mayol 2021, 901/902). A further argument in favour of positing a negative judgement is the restriction against use in the imperative. See section 5.

<sup>11</sup> PNW/W13.00060 Protokoll der Sitzung des Parlaments Landtag Nordrhein-Westfalen am 05.06.2002. 60. Sitzung der 13. Wahlperiode 2000-2005. Plenarprotokoll, Düsseldorf, 2002



As an exclamation AG allows for both an assertive (falling) intonation as in (6) or an interrogative (rising) intonation (an exclamation mark or a question mark in writing) as in (14).

(14) ZEIT: Zu welchen Daten waren Sie denn mit der DDR einverstanden?

ZEIT at what times were you PART with the GDR agreeing

Mueller-Stahl: Nachdem die Mauer gebaut wurde, 1961.

Mueller-Stahl after the wall built was 1961

ZEIT: Ausgerechnet?<sup>12</sup>

ZEIT AG

‘ZEIT: At what times did you find yourself in agreement with the GDR? Mueller-Stahl:

When the wall was built, 1961. ZEIT: Of all times?’

With a rising intonation *Ausgerechnet?* expresses surprise or disbelief by asking the addressee for a re-confirmation of the truth of the target proposition while *AG!* with a falling intonation simply acknowledges a piece of information. *Ausgerechnet?* ‘of all X’ behaves like the exclamation *Echt?* ‘really’ discussed in Imo (2007) and Gubina and Betz (2021). The difference is that AG is inherently negative while *echt* is neutral.<sup>13</sup> Crucially, AG is not understood as an information-seeking polar question despite interrogative intonation. This is reflected in the kind of speech-act verbs that can be used to refer to an utterance containing AG with interrogative intonation. Brandner (2010) illustrates for exclamative clauses how the speech-act verbs used to refer to an utterance reveal their illocutionary force. Verb-initial clauses are canonically associated with polar questions, but a verb-initial clause used as an exclamative as the one in (15) is referred to with the verb *wissen* ‘know’ and not the verb *fragen* ‘ask’ as you would expect if the verb-initial clause were a polar question and not an exclamative.

(15) A: Hat der sich aufgeregt! (Brandner 2010, 94, ex. 34)

‘Did he get upset!’

B: Ich weiß / # Das frage ich mich auch.

‘I know.’ / ‘I ask myself too.’

AG or *echt* ‘really’ with interrogative intonation as in (16) cannot be referred to with the verb *fragen* ‘ask’ either. If C is to agree with B in (16) she must refer to B’s utterance with the verb *say* and not *ask*.

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<sup>12</sup> Z14/APR.00310 Die Zeit (Online-Ausgabe), 17.04.2014; "Ich wollte einfach fliegen"

<sup>13</sup> This is the reason why *echt* ‘really’ and AG can cooccur in a response without being redundant.

(1) A: Peter hat ein Hemd bekommen,

‘Peter has got a shirt.’

B: Echt? Ausgerechnet?

‘Really? Of all things?’

- (16) A: Peter kommt heute.  
 'Peter is coming today.'  
 B: Ausgerechnet? / echt?  
 AG really  
 'That too?' / 'Really?'  
 C: Das sage ich auch. / # Das frage ich mich auch.  
 'That's what I am saying' / 'That is what I am asking.'

In this respect AG is different from other focus particles used alone. Inclusive focus particles such as *auch* 'also' trigger the speech-act verb *fragen* 'ask'.

- (17) A: Peter hat ein Auto.  
 'Peter is coming today.'  
 B: Auch?  
 'Also?'  
 C: ?#Das sage ich auch. / Das frage ich mich auch.  
 'That's what I am saying' / 'That is what I am asking.'

### 3.2 The Focus Sensitivity of AG as an Exclamation

Not only does independent AG make the same semantic contribution as the focus particle AG, it is also focus sensitive in most of its uses. Focus particles derive their name from being associated with the information structural focus of the clause. Sudhoff (2008) assumes that only focussed constituents are in the domain of focus particles, and that the VP (roughly the middle field) forms the focus domain in the German clause. When AG is used as an exclamation, the "offending" focus constituent is resolved contextually, but it is the last constituent in the middle field of the target clause in almost 65% of the cases. In (18) the target constituent is the *Christmas market*, in (19) it is the *fertiliser industry*.

- (18) So heruntergekommen wirkt die Unterführung der unteren Bahnhofstrasse in  
 so desolate appears the tunnel on.the lower Bahnhofstrasse in  
 Rapperswil-Jona. Sie verbindet den Bahnhof Rapperswil mit dem Christkindlimärt.  
 Rapperswil-Jona it connects the station Rapperswil with the Christmas-market  
 Ausgerechnet. Denn durch dieses dunkle Loch müssen die Touristen, wenn sie  
 AG because through this dark hole have.to.go the tourists when they  
 an den Märt kommen. Und auch, wenn sie ihn wieder verlassen.<sup>14</sup>  
 to the market come and also when they it again leave.  
 'The tunnel on the lower Bahnhofstrasse in Rapperswil-Jona seems so desolate. It  
 connects the railway station with the Christmas-market. Of all places. Because all the  
 tourists have to pass through this dark hole when they arrive to the market. And again

<sup>14</sup> SOZ11/DEZ.03193 Die Südostschweiz, 15.12.2011, S. 2; Liebe Touristen, willkommen zum Christkindlimärt!

when they leave it.’

(19) Heute warnt davor regelmäßig nur noch die Düngemittelindustrie.  
today warns against.that regularly only just the fertilizer.industry  
Ausgerechnet. Der Grund: Den angesäuerten Wäldern wird seit langem hoch  
AG the reason the acidified woods are for long highly  
subventionierter Kalk verschrieben.<sup>15</sup>

subsidized lime prescribed

‘Today only the fertilizer industry warns against that. Of all. The reason: The acidified woods have already for long been prescribed highly subsidized lime.’

The target constituents are the actual information update of the target clause: the information which the addressee is supposed to add to the existing stock of knowledge (Vallduví and Engdahl 1996, 469). A proposition can be divided into a pragmatic presupposition representing the old information which the hearer is assumed to know in advance, and the pragmatic assertion representing the new information which the hearer is assumed to learn from the sentence (Dalrymple and Nikolaeva 2011, 46). The focus is the relation between the pragmatic assertion and the pragmatic presupposition, the part in which the pragmatic assertion differs from the pragmatic presupposition. The information structure of the clause preceding AG in (18) can be represented as in (20) (Dalrymple and Nikolaeva 2011, 48). AG targets the focus *Christmas-market*.

(20) Pragmatic presupposition: the tunnel connects the station with X.

Pragmatic assertion: X is the Christmas-market

Focus: Christmas-market.

AG as an exclamation can also target a focus in the prefield as in (21) where the number *mit der 13* ‘with the 13’ is the target for AG. The only other option, the pronoun *alles* ‘everything’ does not qualify as an actual information update due to its semantic vagueness. In (22) AG targets *Nur ins Silicon Valley* ‘only to Silicon valley’ since *die Franzosen* ‘the French’ is the topic of clause, i.e. the old information.

(21) Elvira Hahn, 62, Lottofee, Erzhausen. Mit der 13 fängt alles an.

Elvira Hahn 62 lottery.girl Erzhausen with the 13 begins everything PART

Ausgerechnet.<sup>16</sup>

AG

‘Elvira Hahn, 62, lottery girl, Erzhausen. Everything begins with number 13. Of all

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<sup>15</sup> T04/DEZ.70143 die tageszeitung, 09.12.2004, S. 3, Ressort: Themen des Tages; Komapatient gesundgebetet

<sup>16</sup> U05/DEZ.05339 Süddeutsche Zeitung, 31.12.2005, S. 16; Die Glückssucher

numbers.’

- (22) Nur ins Silicon Valley zieht es die Franzosen nicht. Ausgerechnet.<sup>17</sup>  
only into Silicon Valley drags it the French not AG  
‘But Silicon Vally is the only place where the French do not choose to go. Of all places.’

The IS-representation for (22) is given in (23).

- (23) Pragmatic presupposition: the French are not attracted to X as the only place  
Pragmatic assertion: X is Silicon Valley  
Focus: Silicon Valley

Still, it is not always possible to determine the target of AG as an exclamation unambiguously. In (24) both the NP-subject (*die deutsche Bank*) and the PP-adjunct (*wegen der Deutschen und ihrer Politiker*) appear to be candidates as focus constituents.

- (24) Die Deutsche Bank fordert in ihrer Studie " Mehr Wachstum für Deutschland"  
the Deutsche Bank calls.for in its study more growth for Germany  
einen neuen Wertekanon - wegen der Deutschen (träge) und ihrer Politiker  
a new set.of.values because.of the Germans sluggish and their politicians  
(machtbesessen). Ausgerechnet!<sup>18</sup>  
obsessed.with.power AG  
‘In its study “More growth for Germany” the Deutsche bank calls for a new set of values because of the Germans (sluggish) and their politicians (obsessed with power). Hard to believe!’

To sum up: AG as an exclamation behaves semantically and information structurally like the focus particle. It differs syntactically in that it is an independent utterance where the focus constituent is identified contextually.

#### 4 The Syntax of *ausgerechnet* as a Focus Particle

As far as the syntax is concerned, it is unexpected that AG<sup>19</sup> can occur alone as an independent utterance. Like other focus particles AG appears to be rather restricted syntactically: it occurs with an associated focus constituent, and it usually precedes the focus constituent as an adjunct. The focus constituent can be almost any constituent of the clause including VP and V (Altmann

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<sup>17</sup> U13/JAN.02903 Süddeutsche Zeitung, 22.01.2013, S. 17; Grenzenlos

<sup>18</sup> T04/FEB.12250 die tageszeitung, 28.02.2004, S. 18, Ressort: zweite Meinung; Kategorischer Ackermann

<sup>19</sup> Though diachronically a past participle of the verb *ausrechnen* ‘to calculate/to expect’, the focus particle AG is a separate word, i.e. homophonous with the participle. The syntactic contexts of the participle and the particle can be told apart clearly (see also Altmann 1978, 44-45).

1978, 12; König 1991a, 10 f., a.o.)<sup>20</sup> which gives the impression of syntactic variability as illustrated for a verb-final clause in (25).

(25) weil (ausgerechnet) die Bundeskanzlerin (ausgerechnet) die neuen Probleme  
because AG the chancellor AG the new problems  
(ausgerechnet) in ihrer Partei (ausgerechnet) bestätigt.  
AG in her party AG confirms

AG can also occur in front of a focus constituent embedded in another constituent, e.g. in DPs or in coordinations (Altmann 1978, 36). AG is even found within PPs which is considered rare but not ungrammatical in German (König 1991a, 25; Bouma, Hendricks, and Hoeksema 2007).

(26) Eine Verbindung Vitas mit ausgerechnet diesem Mann ist für die brasilianische  
a connection of Vita with AG this man is for the Brazilian  
Gesellschaft nicht tragbar.<sup>21</sup>  
society not bearable  
'A connection between Vita and this man of all people is unbearable for the Brazilian society.'

AG only occurs alone if there are independent reasons why it cannot precede its focus constituent. In the so-called distant position ("Distanzstellung") (Altmann 1978, 35) AG follows its associated focus constituent, but it can only do so in a V2-clause.<sup>22</sup> In (27) the focus constituent *Neuseelen* is in the prefield stranding AG after the finite verb (see also Altmann 1978, 30 f.; Sudhoff 2008, 449). In (28) the focus constituent is the verb *schläft* 'sleeps' which has to be in the second position as a simplex main verb in a V2 clause (Sudhoff 2008, 449).

(27) Neuseelen heißt es ausgerechnet.<sup>23</sup>

Neuseelen is.called it AG  
'It's called Neuseelen of all things.'

(28) Ich schufte die ganze Zeit und Peter schläft ausgerechnet.

I drudge the whole time and Peter sleeps AG  
'I am constantly drudging and Peter is sleeping of all things.'

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<sup>20</sup> Sudhoff (2008) presents a somewhat different view. He suggests that focus particles associated with immediate constituents occupy a fixed position on the left periphery of the focus domain of the clause in German. This is the maximal VP right after sentence adverbials. He further assumes that backgrounded elements preferably move to the left out of the focus domain. This gives the impression of focus particles occupying different positions. This analysis connects focus particles with the (information structural) focus domain but at the cost of assuming movements in the syntax. Sudhoff explicitly does not attempt to account for focus particles embedded in other constituents such as the PP in (26) (p. 457).

<sup>21</sup> A07/NOV.01001 St. Galler Tagblatt, 02.11.2007, S. 41;

<sup>22</sup> Altmann (1978, 35) discusses such examples but claims later that no convincing examples of the distant position ("Distanzstellung") can be found (p. 73).

<sup>23</sup> DWDS: Lebert, Benjamin: Crazy, Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch 1999, S. 83.

The most conclusive argument in favour of a more syntactically autonomous AG is for it to be able to occur in the prefield before the finite verb in a V2-clause. In general, focus particles are assumed not to occur in the prefield (König 1991a, 24; Breindl 2008, 32) and not to be immediate constituents of the clause (Altmann 1978, 18). Still, AG occasionally does occur in the prefield with the associated constituent in the canonical focus position at the end of the clause as in (29) and (30) (“the tree with the nest” and “about bread and meat” respectively) (see also the discussion of similar cases in Altmann 1978, 60).

(29) Ausgerechnet habe aber dasstarke Gewitter den Baum mit dem Nest  
 AG had howeverthe fierce thunder.stormthe tree with the nest  
 geknickt.<sup>24</sup>

broken

‘Of all things the fierce thunder storm had broken the tree with the nest.’

(30) Denn gerade in diesem Augenblick der Nachforschungen über den verfälschten  
 because right at that moment of investigations of the fake  
 Joli-Text meldeten die Druckergesellen eigene Forderungen an, und  
 Joli-text made the journeymen own claims PARTand  
 ausgerechnet ging es auch um Brot und Fleisch.<sup>25</sup>

AG was it also about bread and meat

‘Because right as the investigations about the fake Joli-text were running, the journeymen made their own claims and they were about bread and meat of all things.’

The syntactic behaviour of AG does not suggest that AG is any way different from other focus particles or that it is becoming more autonomous or even capable of constituting an utterance. Only the possibility of having AG in the prefield could be an indication of AG becoming a phrasal adverb. But this is still a rare and marked option.

## 5 AG as an Expressive Item

AGs potential for use as an expressive exclamation is to be found in its semantic contribution. AG can be used as an expressive item in the sense of Potts (2005, 2007): it transmits speaker affect (cf. Jain 2021), its semantic contribution cannot be cancelled, and it is speaker-oriented. In the following I will show that AG fulfils the criteria for being an expressive as discussed in Potts (2005, 2007) and as hinted at in Trotzke and Mayol (2021, 902).

<sup>24</sup> A99/JUN.41178 St. Galler Tagblatt, 11.06.1999, Ressort: RT-PIA (Abk.); Krankenhaus für verletzte Vögel

<sup>25</sup> DWDS: Schuder, Rosemarie: Agrippa und Das Schiff der Zufriedenen, Berlin u. a.: Aufbau-Verl. 1987 [1977], S. 223.

*Expressives are not truth-functional:* expressives such as *verdammt* ‘damn’ in (31) are speaker comments on the “at-issue” (descriptive) content of a clause, but they do not contribute to the truth conditions. Example (31) asserts that the engine fails to start, and the speaker expresses her annoyance with the engine. AG in (32) behaves the same way: it asserts that Peter got a new shirt, and the speaker presents this as an unfortunate choice for a present.

(31) Der verdammt Motor springt nicht an  
 the damn engine starts not PART  
 ‘The damn engine does not start.’

**At-issue-content:** the engine does not start

**Comment:** speaker is annoyed about the engine

(32) Peter hat ausgerechnet ein Hemd bekommen  
 Peter has AG a shirt got  
 ‘Peter has got a shirt of all things.’

**At-issue-content:** Peter got a new shirt

**Comment:** speaker considers a shirt the least appropriate choice.

Expressives can even be repeated without being redundant. Repetition strengthens the expressive content as in (33) (Potts 2007, 167).

(33) Ausgerechnet. Peter kommt ausgerechnet heute.  
 AG Peter comes AG today  
 ‘That too! Peter will be here today, of all days!’

*Expressives are difficult to describe:* as expressions of evaluative attitudes or affect, it is difficult to define the meaning contribution in descriptive terms, the “descriptive ineffability” of Potts (2007, 166). Common to the uses of AG is that it marks the referent of the associated constituent as a noteworthy and unexpected choice. Other semantic characterizations have been mentioned previously: the speaker considers something annoying or surprising (Duden 2003). König (1981, 121) suggests that AG evaluates the referent on a scale of preference and that the speaker would prefer any other instantiation of the focus constituent than the one given, while König (1991b) says that the referent is minimal on a scale for achieving a given goal (p. 20). In König's (1991b) revised analysis mentioned above AG marks the identical value of an argument in two conflicting propositions. In (34) *Peter* is the shared argument and his aversion towards animals makes him inappropriate for working in a zoo.

(34) Ausgerechnet Peter arbeitet in einem Zoo. Dabei mag er keine Tiere.  
 AG Peter works in a zoo yet likes he no animals  
 ‘Peter of all people is working in a zoo. And he doesn’t even like animals.’

All accounts revolve around AG marking a referent as non-optimal (König 2017) or dispreferred and with a negative connotation (e.g. Altmann 1978, 138), but it is difficult to pinpoint the exact semantic contribution as also noted by Altmann (1978: 138).

*Expressives contribute Conventional Implicatures (CIs):* expressives such as *verdammt!* in (31) are analysed as CIs in Potts (2005) and so are scalar focus particles such as *nur* ‘only’ (Sudhoff 2012, 207) and the expressive use of Catalan *també* (Trotzke and Mayol 2021, 878). CIs cannot be cancelled and they are speaker-oriented. Also AG contributes a CI as expected. The example in (35) illustrates that AG cannot be cancelled.

(35) # Der Vorstand hat ausgerechnet Ute zur neuen Vorsitzenden gewählt.  
the management has AG Ute to new chairwoman elected  
Das hatte ich bei ihren hervorragenden Kompetenzen auch erwartet.  
that had I in.view.of her extraordinary competencies also expected.  
‘The management has elected Ute as new chairwoman of all people. I had expected that too in view of her extraordinary competencies.’

At first the speaker claims that Ute is the least appropriate choice for a chairwoman and then she goes on to claim that Ute is a very good choice for a chairwoman. This contradiction cannot be resolved as the incoherence of the discourse illustrates.

AG is also speaker-oriented. The meaning contribution of AG is invariably attributed to the speaker.<sup>26</sup> Even in embedded contexts such as reported speech where the speaker refers what a figure (someone else) have said, the attitude expressed by AG can be attributed to the speaker instead of the figure being quoted.<sup>27</sup> An example is (36) where the speaker reports on a suggestion from Peter. The speaker is surprised that she should invite Maria, not Peter himself.

(36) Peter sagt, dass ich ausgerechnet Maria einladen soll.  
Peter says that I AG Maria invite should  
‘Peter says that I should invite Maria of all people.’

AG cannot even have been part of what Peter originally said.

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<sup>26</sup> Hess (2018) shows that CIs can be attributed to other entities than the speaker depending on perspective. For the present purposes it is important that AG behaves just like other expressives.

<sup>27</sup> As noted by Potts (2005, 28) this does not imply that an item such as AG is always speaker-oriented. AG can also be included in what a figure actually said.

(2) Peter sagt, dass ich nicht ausgerechnet zum Chef gehen soll.  
Peter says that I not AG to.the boss talk.to should  
‘Peter says that I should not talk to the boss of all people.’



(37) # Peter: “Du sollst ausgerechnet Maria einladen!”  
 Peter you should AG Maria invite  
 ‘Peter: You should invite Maria of all people!’

Trotzke (ms., 2017) shows that the semantics of AG is incompatible with imperatives encouraging the addressee to carry out the action denoted by the verb as in (38a). AG only occurs in negative imperatives as in (38b) where the addressee is warned against carrying out the action denoted by the verb.<sup>28</sup>

(38) a. # Geh bitte ausgerechnet zum Chef!  
 go please AG to.the boss  
 ‘Please, go to the boss of all people!’  
 b. Geh nicht ausgerechnet zum Chef!  
 go not AG to.the boss  
 ‘Don’t go to the boss of all people!’

On Trotzke’s account AG is incompatible with imperatives because the speaker – in using an imperative – prefers or does not mind for the speaker to make the proposition *p* come about. At the same time AG marks the referent of some argument in *p* as the least appropriate choice in the context, which leads to a contradiction. In (38a) the speaker would not encourage the addressee to talk to the boss if this very same speaker thinks the boss is the last person to learn about a particular matter. AG is felicitous in the negated imperative in (38b) where the point is to prevent the addressee from talking to the boss. The very same effect is observed in the recommendation in (37) since it has the same illocutionary force of encouraging the addressee to carry out the action denoted by the verb. This makes a recommendation incompatible with AG. However, a recommendation containing AG is felicitous in a reported context as in (36), since AG is attributed to the reporting speaker and not to the figure issuing the recommendation.

Potts (2005, 31) criterion for determining speaker-orientation is the ability of an expressive judgement to occur in a *believe*-context while still being attributed to the speaker and not to the figure holding the belief. In (39) the speaker reports on what Sue believes about the person Conner. The expressive *jerk* is attributed to the speaker, not to Sue as the continuations illustrate.

(39) a. Sue wrongly believes that that jerk Conner got promoted. (Potts 2005, 31, ex. 2.36)  
 b. Sue wrongly believes, that that jerk Conner got promoted. Sue thinks Conner is a great guy.

<sup>28</sup> Trotzke (ms.) also mentions “insincere” imperatives not intended to be understood as imperatives at all.

(3) Geh ausgerechnet zum Chef! Tolle Idee!  
 go AG to.the boss great Idea  
 ‘Do go to the boss of all people. Great Idea!’

c. #Sue wrongly believes, that that jerk Conner got promoted. I think Conner is a great guy.

Judgements are subtle as far as AG is concerned, but AG seems to behave like the expressive *jerk* in embedded *believe*-contexts. AG is understood to express the attitude of the speaker rather than that of the believer. This is the reason why (40a) is infelicitous. AG is embedded in a *believe*-context, but it is the speaker who is surprised that Ute should be qualified for the position, not *Dieter*. At the same time this very same speaker claims to find Ute qualified. This contradiction does not arise in (40b) where the speaker explicitly considers Ute unqualified.

(40) a. #Dieter ist der Ansicht, dass ausgerechnet Ute für die Stelle qualifiziert ist.

Dieter is the opinion that AG Ute for the position qualified is

Ich halte sie auch für qualifiziert.

I consider her also PREP qualified

‘In Dieter’s opinion Ute of all people is qualified for the position. I also think she is qualified.’

b. Dieter ist der Ansicht, dass ausgerechnet Ute für die Stelle qualifiziert ist.

Dieter is the opinion that AG Ute for the position qualified is

Ich halte sie nicht für qualifiziert.

I consider her not PREP qualified

‘In Dieter’s opinion Ute of all people is qualified for the position. I don’t think she is qualified.’

So AG is an expressive, but there is also another semantic property of AG that motivates its use as an exclamation: unlike many other focus particles AG is not quantificational. It does not say whether the proposition is satisfied by other candidates or not. Inclusive particles such as *auch* ‘too’ in (1) above mean that the proposition also applies to other candidates (Peter got other things besides the shirt), while exclusive particles such as *allein* ‘only’ in (2) mean that the proposition does not apply to other candidates (Peter got nothing but a shirt). Trotzke (2017, 336-337) and Pożlewicz (2006, 179) suggest that AG is exclusive in its prototypical use, while König (1991b, 20) and Sudhoff (2012, 211) assume that AG is only evaluative, i.e. neither inclusive, nor exclusive. I adopt this latter view and analyse AG as only evaluative because AG can occur in the context of both an inclusive and an exclusive focus particle.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Trotzke (ms., footnote 16) observes that AG can cooccur with *auch* ‘also’ in some contexts. Furthermore, the ability for exclusive or inclusive focus particles to cooccur is not evidence in itself. Zimmermann (2011, 2036) shows that different kinds of focus particles co-occur subject to poorly understood word order restrictions. For this reason, example (41a) and (41b) are intended to show that AG is possible in both an exclusive and an inclusive context.

- (41) a. Peter bekam nur ein Hemd. Ausgerechnet ein Hemd!  
 Peter became only a shirt AG a shirt  
 ‘Peter only got a shirt. A shirt of all things.’
- b. Peter bekam nicht nur Schuhe, sondern auch ein Hemd. Ausgerechnet ein Hemd!  
 Peter got not only shoes but also a shirt AG a shirt  
 ‘Peter not only got shoes, he also got a shirt. A shirt of all things.’

This conclusion is important since the lack of an inclusive or exclusive interpretation means that AG can be used as an expressive utterance without contextual restrictions.

The preceding discussion has shown that the focus particle AG is an expressive item: it contributes the speaker's (negative) evaluation of a particular choice of referent. Moreover, AG is contextually unrestricted in the sense that it is non-quantificational unlike many other focus particles. Figure 1 depicts a simplified (lexical) construction for the expressive focus particle AG.

Figure 1: Lexical construction for “ausgerechnet”.

<p>PHON <i>ausgerechnet</i>          SYN FOCUSPART          SEM <i>S expresses emotional attitude tw FOCUSREF:          FOCUSREF is considered to be &lt;the least appropriate choice&gt; in context</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Constr-ausgerechnet</i></p>
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The analysis of AG as an expressive illustrates how the grammaticalisation of the past participle *ausgerechnet* into a focus particle is accompanied with subjectification whereby a grammatical element becomes an expression of speaker attitude (Traugott 1995, 32). The original meaning of the past participle of the verb *ausrechnen* ‘to calculate’: “to arrive at a specific result or value through cognitive activity”, undergoes bleaching where the meaning component “through cognitive activity” is lost. AG points to one specific value (out of a set of candidates), and it acquires the subjective meaning that the speaker considers this particular value the least appropriate choice.

## 6 From Focus Particle to Utterance

AG is an expressive, albeit of a special kind, namely a focus particle. This section shows how the expressive semantics of AG motivates its use as an expressive exclamation.

### 6.1 Independent AG is not an Ellipsis

Independent AG has been analysed as an utterance in itself until now and not as an ellipsis, where a complete clause is reconstructed on the basis of the target clause as illustrated in (42).

- (42) Anna arbeitet in einem Kurhaus. Pflegt Patienten. ~~Anna pflegt~~ ausgerechnet  
Anna works in a sanatorium cares.for patients Anna cares.for AG  
~~Patienten.~~  
patients

The reason is that independent AG has different properties than a full clausal structure. The examples in (43a) and (43b) (modelled over the example in (9)) show the difference between a version with an independent use of AG as in (43a) and one where an ellipsis has been reconstructed as a whole clause (43b).

- (43) a. Anna pflegt Patienten. Ausgerechnet. Denn in ihr brennt ein Hass.  
Anna cares.for patients AG because in her burns a hatred  
'Anna cares for patients. Of all things. Because a hatred is burning within her.'
- b.# Anna pflegt Patienten. Anna pflegt ausgerechnet Patienten. Denn in  
Anna cares.for patients Anna cares.for AG patients because in  
ihr brennt ein Hass.  
her burns a hatred  
'Anna cares for patients. Anna cares for patients of all things. Because a hatred is  
burning within her.'

In (43a) AG occurs independently and the following causal *denn* 'because'-clause explains why the speaker says AG: Anna caring for patients is inappropriate in view of her personal disposition as hateful. Example (43b) has a different interpretation: the causal *denn*-clause explains why Anna takes care of patients: she does so because she is filled with hatred. This does not make sense in the context, where Anna takes care of patients DESPITE being filled with hatred. Independent AG as in (43a) can be the target of a causal *denn*-clause, but AG with an associated focus constituent as in (43b) cannot. Therefore (43a) cannot have the same (underlying) structure as (43b). Otherwise they should have the same interpretation.

Also the prospective use of AG as in (44) argues against an analysis as an ellipsis. The hearer has nothing to go by for a re-construction of a focus constituent. Note also that *glücklicherweise* 'luckily' and *auch* 'too' are degraded when preceding their target clause. This suggests that AG is different from other adverbs used in isolation.

- (44) Meinen Mann fragte ich: Ausgerechnet! Wie konnte ich mich nur in dich  
my husband asked I AG how could I REFL only in you

verlieben?<sup>30</sup>

fall.in.love

‘I asked my husband: Of all the men in the world! Why did I have to fall in love with you?’

(45) ?# Glücklicherweise/ #Auch. Peter hat ein Auto.

luckily                      too ‘Peter has a car.’

In (44) the hearer still has to figure out what the “offending” referent is, but this is no different from other expressive utterances preceding their target clause as in (46) where the hearer has to figure out that the following clause is the reason for the speaker to be surprised. A forward-looking ellipsis as in (47) does not seem to be possible.

(46) Donnerwetter! Anna arbeitet als Krankenschwester.

Oh dear!              ‘Anna is a nurse.’

(47) \*Pflegt      Patienten. Anna arbeitet als Krankenschwester.

cares.for    patients      ‘Anna is a nurse.’

Other focus particles with independent uses have been analysed as ellipsis. The focus particles *genau* ‘exactly’ and *eben* ‘exactly’ occur as response particles to express consent with the interlocutor (Altmann 1978, 45; König 1991a, 130-131, 1991b, 52; Duden 2006, 1227; Fiehler 2015).

(48) A: Peter kommt heute.      B: Genau!

‘Peter is coming today’      exactly

König (1991b, 52) considers *genau* and *eben* as in (48) elliptical answers without stating exactly what has been omitted though. Altmann (1978, 45) suggests that this is a strong ellipsis (“starke Ellipse”) where the target clause itself is not used to reconstruct a full answer. Instead, the reconstructed clause contains a propositional anaphor such as *so* ‘so’ or *dieses* ‘this’ as in (49).

(49) Genau    so ist es! /    Eben    dieses! (Altmann 1978, 45, ex. 2-168)

exactly so is it              exactly this

‘That’s exactly the way it is!’ / ‘Just that!’

This paraphrase does not work for AG, not for all uses at least, e.g. for AG as used in (44):

(50) # Ausgerechnet so ist es! Wie konnte ich mich nur in dich verlieben?

AG                      so is it    how could I    REFL only in you    fall.in.love

‘Of all things it is like this! Why did I have to fall in love with you?’

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<sup>30</sup> U98/JUN.41604 Süddeutsche Zeitung, 13.06.1998, S. 8, Ressort: LETZTE; Fett in Strapsen

There are other differences between AG and these response particles. While *genau* in (48) confirms the whole preceding target proposition, AG targets a particular constituent, and it can be syntactically integrated in its target clause with the same semantic contribution. As shown in example (33) above, two occurrences of AG (as an exclamation and as a focus particle) reinforce each other. *Genau* ‘exactly’ cannot be integrated in its target clause as an expression of consent. The two occurrences of *genau* in (51) make different contributions: the first *genau* is an expression of consent, and the second contributes the focus particle reading “exactly on this day”.

(51) Genau. Peter kommt genau heute.  
 exactly Peter comes exactly today  
 ‘Exactly! Peter will be here on this very day.’

While AG is indeed a focus particle which can be used as an exclamation, *genau/eben* ‘exactly’ have developed distinct uses as response particles beside their use as focus particles.

## 6.2 Independent AG as an Exclamative Construction

When the focus particle AG is used as an utterance, a new construction is created. As argued above, independent AG behaves semantically just like the focus particle. The syntax, however, is new: AG no longer adjoins to its focus constituent within the clause. It is an utterance, and the focus element is identified at discourse level (or in the extra-linguistic context) by contextual resolution. Fischer (2007, 124) and Nikolaeva (2020, 28) argue that language change can be based on a recognized similarity with an already existing structure. In this case, already existing structures are other expressives used as exclamations (see e.g. Fiehler [2015, 32]).

(52) A: Peter hat ein neues Hemd bekommen.  
 ‘Peter has got a new shirt.’  
 B: Echt? / Hurra! / Donnerwetter! / Mirakel!  
 Really? / Hooray! / Oh dear! / Miracle!

The responses in (52) express the speaker’s (emotional or evaluative) attitude towards A’s assertion. These expressive exclamations are single-word utterances in the sense of Culicover and Jackendoff (2005): they are utterances but with no verb and with no obvious underlying sentential structure. The lexical material in the expressive exclamations in (52) belong to different parts of speech: adverbs (*echt*<sup>31</sup>), nouns (*Mirakel*) or interjections (*Hurra!*, *Donnerwetter!*) (cf. Nübling 2004, 29).

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<sup>31</sup> I follow Duden (2006, 595-596) in analysing *echt* ‘really’ as an intensifying adverb like *sehr* ‘very’, but the exact analysis is subject to debate. Meinunger (2009) analyses *echt* in (4) as an adjective in a peripheral position.

The exclamations in (52) are also related to utterances consisting of adjectives or nouns expressing an evaluation of an assertion or an extralinguistic event (Nübling 2004, Günthner 2009).

(53) A: Peter hat ein neues Hemd bekommen.

‘Peter has got a new shirt.’

B: Toll! / Klasse!

great.ADJ / peach.N

The difference between AG and the evaluative adjectives and nouns in (53) is that the latter predicate a property of their target clause. They can be paraphrased as copular clauses of the form *Das ist ADJ/N* ‘that is ADJ/N’. This is not possible for AG.

(54) A: Peter hat ein neues Hemd bekommen.

‘Peter has got a new shirt.’

B: (Das ist)toll! / (Das ist) Klasse! / (\* Das ist) ausgerechnet!

that is great that is a peach that is AG

Also AG and evaluative expressions such as *toll* and *Klasse* differ in expressing an (evaluative) attitude and an evaluation respectively. It is possible to agree or disagree with an evaluation but not with an attitude. Therefore evaluative adjectives and nouns license the tag-question *nicht wahr?* ‘isn’t it’ while AG as an expression of an attitude is marked with a tag-question. Also evaluative adjectives/nouns allow for the degree word *wie* ‘how’, AG does not.

(55) a. Peter hat ein neues Hemd. Toll, nicht wahr? / Wie toll!  
 ‘Peter has a new shirt.’ ‘Great,isn’t it?’ ‘How great!’

b. Peter hat ein neues Hemd. ?# Ausgerechnet, nicht wahr? / # Wie ausgerechnet!  
 ‘Peter has a new shirt.’ AG isn’t it how AG

Expressive exclamations seem to form a family of constructions which can be further subdivided according to distinct properties. These constructions can be related to each other in a hierarchy which brings out the similarities and differences, but here I will concentrate on the non-predicational, attitudinal exclamations in (52).

The (simplified) representation in Figure 2 shows a schematic construction for expressive exclamations such as the ones in (52). It represents a generalisation over existing constructions by showing what they have in common. Syntactically they are UTTERANCES consisting of one

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(4) Echt der Wahnsinn!  
 really the frenzy  
 ‘Really awesome!’

word with the category INTERJECTION (INTJ), NOUN (N) or ADVERB (ADV), while FOCUSPART is not yet established as a possible category. As UTTERANCES they cannot be embedded under other predicates (Culicover and Jackendoff 2005, 237).

(56) \* Peter sagte, dass Donnerwetter / echt.  
 Peter said that Oh Dear / really

Semantically they contribute CIs as defined in Potts (2005) where the speaker expresses an attitude towards a DISCOURSE REF which is a variable for an element to be identified in the immediate linguistic or non-linguistic context. In (52) DISCOURSE REF is A's assertion (*Peter got a new shirt*) that triggers the response *Hooray!* or *Oh dear!* The index [1] says that the semantics of the whole exclamative construction is shared with the semantics of the lexical item instantiating the construction (e.g. the interjection *Hurra* 'Hooray!'). This means that the construction only allows for lexical items contributing CIs expressing a speaker attitude towards a given referent. The idiosyncratic information provided by the lexical item (whether the speaker's attitude is based on an evaluation as good (*Hurra!*) or surprising (*Donnerwetter!* etc.) is indicated with the variable <EVAL>.

Figure 2: Construction for expressive single-word exclamation

SYN [INTJ;N;ADV: SEM [1]] UTTERANCE SEM [1] <i>S expresses emotional attitude tw</i> DISCREF: DISCREF is considered to be <EVAL> in context  <i>Constr-expressive-excl</i>
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The similarity between the semantics of AG as given in Figure 1 and the semantics of the construction in Figure 2 is apparent. AG contributes the CI that the speaker expresses an emotional attitude towards some element which is considered inappropriate in the context. Given its semantic contribution AG can be used as an utterance by analogical assimilation with the construction in Figure 2, and the variable <EVAL> is instantiated to <the least appropriate choice>.

The advantage of this analysis is that AG does not have to be analysed as an interjection even though it is used as an (emotional) response to the contribution of an interlocutor, i.e. with the semantic import of interjections (Nübling 2004, 18). If AG were re-analysed as an interjection, there would have to be two lexical constructions for AG: as a focus particle and as an interjection. This would miss the generalization that the two constructions make similar semantic contributions. A separate lexical construction is needed for an interjection such as *Donnerwetter* 'Oh dear' which is semantically completely different from the noun *Donnerwetter*



'thunderstorm'. AG as a focus particle is licensed as an exclamation through analogical assimilation with other expressives used as exclamations (cf. (52)).

The account predicts that all expressive items can potentially be used as exclamations by analogical assimilation. This prediction may be too strong. AG is particularly suitable as an exclamation since it requires no specific context for its use as an exclamation (it is neither restrictive, nor inclusive and shown in section 5). Also, even if all expressives can be used as exclamations, it does not mean that they are indeed used as such. Other factors can influence whether an expressive establishes itself as an exclamation, e.g. influence from other languages. This could be the case for AG whose English equivalent, the PP *of all X*, is also found as an exclamation.

(57) She read a poem called I am not good at love, written by Noel Coward. Of all people!<sup>32</sup>

## 7 Conclusion

The analysis of AG as an expressive and the discussion of AG as an exclamation has uncovered some further properties of the focus particle as well as documented a use which appears not to have been discussed before. Furthermore, it has shown that even a member of a closed - grammaticalised - word class can gain syntactic autonomy and occur alone as an utterance. I have suggested that the semantics of AG motivates its use as an exclamation. A framework such as CG where constructions of arbitrary size are stored with their syntactic and semantic properties, actually predicts such novel uses to be possible by semantic assimilation.

The analysis also highlights the heterogeneity of expressive exclamations. Members of different word classes are found as exclamations, even focus particles as shown here. Fiehler (2015, 32) posits a separate category of evaluative particles ("Bewertungspartikeln") as a subgroup of dialogue particles. However, this means that many (evaluative) lexical items are categorially ambiguous. This ambiguity is avoided if exclamations are analysed as a construction defined by its semantic contribution as suggested in section 6.2. Any lexical item has the potential to occur as an exclamation provided it makes a suitable semantic contribution. Still, this is a strong empirical claim which needs to be tested.

The analysis finally emphasises the need to see core and periphery as two sides of the same coin. Expressive exclamations are peripheral phenomena: they are verbless utterances with a specialised use associated with a colloquial register. Fiehler (2015, 30) even claims that what he calls evaluative particles are restricted to spoken language. Yet the present analysis shows

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<sup>32</sup> BNC: *I believe in angels*. Cooper, Fiona. London: Serpent's Tail, 1993, pp. 1-128. 3268 s-units.

that core and peripheral constructions interact. Focus particles belong to the core phenomena as members of a closed word class. At the same time they are used as exclamations belonging to the periphery while they retain their (core) semantic contribution and focus-sensitivity. This kind of interaction is possible if there is no strict separation between core and periphery.

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