

## The German Discourse Particles *Ruhig* and *JA*

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**Distribution.** The German discourse particles *ruhig* and stressed *JA* are licensed in similar but different modal contexts. The examples in (1) report on the common patterns. Both particles can appear in imperatives, but the meaning conveyed by the imperative is different (1a). The imperative including *ruhig* conveys a permission or a concession, while the imperative including *JA* conveys a command-like reading. Both particles also occur with modal verbs expressing priority modality in the sense of Portner (2007). Epistemic and reportative modals cannot license *ruhig* or *JA*. Crucially, *ruhig* appears with possibility modals, while *JA* only appears with necessity modals (1b).

- (1) a. Iss JA/ruhig den Spinat!  
‘Eat JA/RUHIG the spinach!’  
b. Du kannst/darfst \*JA/ruhig  
den Spinat essen.  
‘You can/may \*JA/RUHIG eat  
the spinach’ (Grosz 2011)

But *ruhig* appears to be more flexible than that. It also appears with the necessity modal *soll* (and the subjunctive form *sollte*  $\approx$  “should”), the meaning of which is closely linked to the imperative (Hinterwimmer, Matthewson, and Truckenbrodt 2019). It also exhibits the same kind of variability when it comes to licensing *JA* and *ruhig*.

- (2) a. Er soll ihn JA verklagen. Er  
muss es unbedingt tun.  
‘He shall JA sue him. He absolutely has to’  
b. Er soll ihn ruhig verklagen. Ist  
mir egal.  
‘He shall RUHIG sue him. I don’t  
mind.’

**New data.** What has not been discussed before is that some priority attitude verbs admit both *ruhig* and *JA* in their complement. This is most notably the case for *(auf)fordern* ‘to prompt so. to do sth.’, *empfehlen* ‘to recommend’, *raten* ‘to advise’, *verlangen* ‘to demand’ (3a). *Ruhig* is furthermore considerably worse in complements of *hoffen* ‘to hope’ (3b).

- (3) a. *Er forderte sie auf/empfohl ihr/riet ihr/verlangte (von ihr),*  
he prompted her up/recommended her/advised her/demanded (from her),  
*ruhig mal mit der Faust auf den Tisch zu hauen.*  
RUHIG MAL with the fist on the table to hit  
‘He prompted her/recommended her/advised her/demanded (from her) to  
RUHIG MAL take a hard line.’  
b. *Er hoffte, dass sie ??ruhig mal mit der Faust auf den Tisch haut.*  
he hoped that she RUHIG MAL with the fist on the table hits  
‘He hoped that she would ??RUHIG MAL take a hard line.’

On the basis of the data in (1), Grosz (2010, 2011) developed an account of *ruhig* and *JA* as modal concord items: *JA* requires a universal and *ruhig* requires an existential priority modal, and the imperative is flexible wrt its force. I argue that the reliance on existential force makes it hard to account for the data in (3). Even if an existential semantics for *soll* and attitude verbs turned out to be viable, we would still need to explain why *to prompt* can be existential, but *to hope* cannot.

**Proposal.** Like Grosz (2010), I treat *ruhig* as a modifier of modals. But unlike Grosz, I propose that *ruhig* imposes three conditions on its context of use and has no at-issue meaning. I assume that modals and attitudes project their domain from an event (Hacquard 2006).

- (4)  $\llbracket \text{ruhig} \rrbracket = \lambda M \lambda p \lambda e. M(e, p)$
- a. **Speech event:**  $e$  is a communicative event and projects a normative domain
  - b. **Desire:**  $Sp(e)$  believes that  $\exists x [\forall w' \in O(f, g_{sp-boul}) [p(w')]]$
  - c. **Non-optimality:**  $Ad(e)$  believes that  $\forall w' \in O(f, g_i) [\neg p(w')]$  relative to some contextual ordering  $g_i$
  - d. **Indifference:**  $\exists w' \in O(f, g_{sp-boul}, Sp(e)) [p(w')] \wedge \exists w'' \in O(f, g_{sp-boul}, Sp(e)) [\neg p(w'')]$

*Ruhig* requires the modified modal event to project its domain from a normative **Speech event**, crucially involving an addressee. It is licensed in attitudes that can be understood as reporting on a particular speech event directed at an addressee (*recommend, advise...*) (3a). *Hope* is mainly used to report on a mental state rather than on a communication event, leading to a degraded judgment (3b). **Desire** states that the speaker believes that  $p$  is wanted by someone. The requirement can be seen at work in (5).

- (5) a. A: Tom called, he wants to come over:  
B: Er kann ruhig rüberkommen.  
'He can RUHIG come over.'
- b. A: Tom called, he wants to come over.  
B: Er kann #ruhig zuhause bleiben.  
'He can RUHIG stay at home.'
- c. A: Tom called, he first said that he didn't want to come over, but now he said he would.  
B: Er kann ruhig zuhause bleiben/rüberkommen.  
'He can RUHIG stay at home/come over.'

As stated in **Non-optimality**, *ruhig* presupposes that the addressee believes that the modal prejacent might not be optimal, where non-optimality could result from the violation of rules or otherwise bad consequences for either the addressee, the speaker or a third party (e.g. the subject of the complement clause). In (3a), it is intuitively the implied addressee who believes that taking a hard line might not be universally welcomed. Finally, **Indifference** conveys that the speaker is neither biased towards nor against  $p$ . This allows existential bouletic modals and universal modals that are not purely speaker/attitude holder bouletic (like *recommend*). Together with **Desire**, it ensures that we get permission readings with the imperative rather than command readings.

**Comparison with JA.** Grosz has treated *JA* and *ruhig* as duals. I have argued that *ruhig* does not depend on existential force. Furthermore, the use conditions for *JA* and *ruhig* differ significantly. While *ruhig* involves assumptions about what other contextual participants think about  $p$ , *JA* only takes into account whether  $\neg p$  is a salient alternative for the attitude holder. I argue that there are two possible licensing conditions for *JA*: either  $\neg p$  is very likely to happen (6a), or  $\neg p$ , though not very likely, has very bad consequences (6b). If neither is the case, the use of *JA* is inadequate (6c).

- (6) a. *A is super lazy in the morning and oversleeps alot. Usually, their mother wakes them up, but tomorrow she isn't home. Before going to bed, A's mother*

utters:

Steh JA pünktlich auf morgen!

‘Get JA up on time tomorrow!’

- b. *A is usually never late to school. Tomorrow is a very important exam in the morning. Before going to bed, A’s mother utters:*

Steh JA pünktlich auf morgen!

- c. *A is usually never late to school. Tomorrow is a normal day of school. Before going to bed, A’s mother utters:*

Steh #JA pünktlich auf morgen!

We can combine these two cases using the notion of expected utility. The attitude holder of *JA*(*p*) (in imperatives: the speaker) believes that  $\neg p$  has an expected utility below some threshold; either because it is very probable that it will happen or because its utility value is very low in the first place (7).

$$(7) \llbracket \text{JA} \rrbracket = \lambda M \lambda p \lambda e. M(e, p)$$

- a. **Normative event:** *e* projects a normative domain

- b. **Non-optimality:** *Ah*(*e*) believes that  $\text{EU}(\neg p) < \text{some threshold}$

To sum up, I argue that *JA* and *ruhig* are modality sensitive particles in German with different use conditions. *Ruhig* depends on a communicative event, with the attitude holder taking into account the projected beliefs of an addressee and the desires of a contextually relevant person. By contrast, *JA* only depends the attitude holder considering it a good probability that the opposite of the host proposition could happen.

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