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Peripheral versus non-peripheral optative particles

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Abstract: Discourse particles have been often associated with the sentence peripheries. However, considering for instance optative particles, we observe that their distribution can vary cross-linguistically, since some languages use middle-field particles, while other display left-peripheral particles. In addition, we observe further differences between these two groups, for instance, the grammaticalization process of optative left-peripheral particles is different from that of middle-field particles. Furthermore, the combination with the subjunctive mood does not seem to be sufficient in the case of middle-field particles. Based on these and other properties, we propose a syntactic analysis adopting current views assuming an Agree operation between the optative particles and the left periphery of the clause, in particular with two distinct heads encoding clause type and illocutionary force.

Keywords: optative particles; left periphery; grammaticalization; morphosyntax; modality

1 Introduction

Discourse particles are often syntactically linked to the clause peripheries due to the fact that they are frequently placed at the left or at the right edge of the sentence. However, considering optative particles, for instance, it becomes immediately clear that their distribution can vary among languages in a significant way.[1] Thus, e.g. German (and the Germanic languages in general) typically exhibits middle field

1 The different positions have been explored from various theoretical perspectives, including generative grammar (e.g., Cruschina and Cognola 2021) as well as functionalist and cognitive-functional frameworks (e.g., Degand and Crible 2021; Fraser 2009) (also cf. Waltereit and Detges 2007).

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particles, while, for example, Italian also has left peripheral particles; see (1) and (2):[2]

(1) *Hätte ich* ***nur*** *genug Geld!*
had.SBJV I PART enough money
'If only I had enough money!'

(2) ***Magari*** *avessi abbastanza soldi!*
PART I.had.SBJV enough money
'If only I had enough money!'

German *nur* in (1) has been analyzed as belonging to a special class of middle-field particles in German, namely *modal particles* (MPs) (cf. Thurmair 1989: 182), which occupy the typical middle-field position of MPs in German and in most Germanic languages (cf. Coniglio 2005, 2011: 79; Thurmair 1989: 29). However, optative particles are placed in the left periphery in the Romance languages and are often not ascribed a special status but they are treated as adverbs.[3]

Despite their similar distribution, optative particles distinguish themselves from MPs – beside the range of functions they can cover – on the interpretative level. The interpretation of MPs is known to vary depending on the clause type they appear in, while adverbs typically preserve their interpretation. Additionally, MPs are often challenging to interpret through paraphrasing, even in one and the same clause type, as their meaning can be subtle and context-dependent (Thurmair 1989: 97–98). In contrast, optative particles show no variable interpretation. They are linguistic elements that add the expression of wish, regret, hope, or desire to the sentence (Grosz 2011: 13).

In this paper, we intend to discuss the classification and syntactic properties of optative particles with special attention for their origin and syntactic distribution from a cross-linguistic perspective. In the next section, we will briefly introduce the classification of optatives following Grosz (2011: 185–190) to establish a framework for the discussion. Further, we will note a tendency for certain types of particles to occupy specific positions, so we will distinguish optative I-particles and C-particles regarding their sentential distribution. In Section 3, we will look into the origin of these elements, showing the possibility for two grammaticalization paths. The morphosyntactic properties of optative clauses will be discussed in Section 4, while a syntactic proposal for the licensing mechanism of optative particles will be offered in

2 If not otherwise indicated, the examples in this paper are not taken from corpora but created by the authors.

3 As pointed out by an anonymous reviewer, in many cases they have also properties of discourse markers, in particular when they operate in peripheries outside the syntactic structure of the clause (cf. Waltereit and Detges 2007).

Section 5. Our analysis will draw on previous work by Grosz (2011) and Coniglio and Zegrean (2012), integrating insights from generative studies on the syntax of discourse and modal particles. By employing a comparative approach, we will examine data from different languages to illustrate the universal and language-specific aspects of optative constructions. Section 6 will summarize our findings.

2 Classification of optative particles

Grosz (2011: 13) points out that optative particles possess the following specific properties that distinguish them from other linguistic expressions. First, they convey a wish, regret, hope or desire without containing a (bouletic) modal or another overt lexeme expressing such feelings. This means that the expression of hope, desire, etc. is implicit in the particle itself, rather than being explicitly stated through other categories, e.g., by means of predicates such as '(I) wish'. Second, optative particles are uttered by a speaker who lacks control over the truth of the proposition being expressed. In other words, the speaker cannot influence or change the truth value of the proposition to make it true (cf. Grosz 2014: 89–90):

(3) *I wish I could fly (but I cannot).*

Furthermore, Grosz (2011: 185) distinguishes between two types of optative clauses, EX-Optatives and Adv-Optatives, the first ones involving an EX-operator, the second ones "bring[ing] about optativity by means of some idiosyncratic speech act adverbial." These types of sentences thus differ according to the type of particles/adverbs used in them (Grosz 2011: 262). Based on his classification of optatives, we will distinguish two types of particles: (a) particles introducing EX-Optatives, such as English *only*, Italian *solo* 'only' or German *nur* 'only' and *wenigstens* 'at least'; and, (b) particles in Adv-Optatives, such as Basque *agian*, Italian *magari*, or Spanish *ojalá*.

Grosz (2011: 263) defines the former as truth-conditionally vacuous elements that function as modulator of the exclamative property or expressiveness, which can be paraphrased as 'I wish' or 'I hope'. In this paper, we will refer to this type as *vacuous optative particles*.

Also, we see that these usually appear in combination with other syntactic means, for instance, in combination with the conditional complementizer *if*. Since *if*-clauses are mainly conditionals, optative clauses and conditional ones are ambiguous; vacuous optative particles are a way to disambiguate them favoring the optative reading:

(4) a. *# If I'd listened to my parents!*
b. *If I'd only listened to my parents!*
(Grosz 2011: 15)

In addition to those particles, Grosz (2011: 185) mentions that some speech act adverbs can also mark optative clauses in some languages. In contrast to vacuous optative particles, these adverbs seem to have specialized in conveying desirability (Grosz 2011: 187) and share similar semantics with the EX-operator (see Section 5) proposed for the analysis of EX-Optatives, even if they operate at the propositional level (Grosz 2011: 188). Thus – unlike English *only*, Italian *solo* or German *nur* – Basque *agian*, Italian *magari*, or Spanish *ojalá* are closely related to the marking of optative clauses and have in themselves a semantic nuance signaling optativity. We will call them *optative markers* in this paper.

As in the case of vacuous optative particles, some of these are used in combination with other morphosyntactic means such as the subjunctive mood. Consequently, optative markers can be optional or obligatory since the other morphosyntactic means would be sufficient to mark desirability. For example, in Italian, the optative marker *magari* can – under certain circumstances – be elided without altering the interpretation of the optative sentence; see (5). This does not happen with Basque *agian* and Spanish *ojalá*. In the case of Basque *agian*, this particle is not used in combination with other morphosyntactic means, although it can combine with the epistemic marker *ahal* usually interpreted as 'I hope' (de Rijk 2008: 163); see (6):[4]

(5) ***(Magari)*** *leggesse* *quel* *libro!*
PART s/he.read.SBJV that book
'I wish s/he would read that book!'

(6) a. ***Agian*** *lorea* *du* *kausitu* *zeruan!*
PART flower.ABS AUX find sky.LOC
'Hopefully, s/he found a flower in the sky!'
(Euskaltzaindia 2024)

b. ***Agian*** *etorriko* ***ahal*** *zaik* *aita!*
PART come.FUT PART AUX father
'I wish your father will come to you!'
(Euskaltzaindia 2024)

A further differentiation of optative particles can be made based on their distribution within the clause. Specifically, some particles appear in the middle field, while others occur in the left periphery. The term *I-particles* (inflection-phrase-internal particles) will be used to refer to those particles that occupy a position in the middle field, while we will use the term *C-particles* (complementizer-phrase-internal particles) to refer

4 An anonymous reviewer points out that the elision of *magari* would alter the interpretation of the sentence and make it sound awkward. This is not our impression, but maybe the sentence requires a particular prosody. Furthermore, there may be some variation among speakers.

to those located in the left periphery, as exemplified by (1) and (2), repeated here as (7) and (8).

(7) *Hätte ich **nur** genug Geld!*
had.SBJV I PART enough money
'If only I had enough money.'

(8) ***Magari** avessi abbastanza soldi!*
PART I.had.SBJV enough money
'If only I had enough money.'

When we compare the two groups of optative particles – I-particles and C-particles – we observe a tendency for a correlation between their type and their distribution within the sentence structure. Specifically, while exceptions can be found, we observe in general that particles located in the middle field are prototypically vacuous optative particles, while those situated in the left periphery are usually optative markers; see (7) and (8), respectively.

3 Diachronic paths

So far, we have dealt with two types of grammatical elements that mark optative clauses, and we have distinguished two types regarding their function and their distribution in the sentence. If we now look into their diachronic development, we can also identify two distinct major paths of grammaticalization (cf. Axel-Tober and Müller 2017; Axel-Tober et al. to appear; Coniglio 2022).

When examining the diachronic evolution of optative I-particles, it becomes evident that they predominantly originate from lower adverbs or particles (cf. Coniglio 2022; Grosz 2011). We notice such a development in the case of English *only* or German *doch* 'however'. Also, for German *nur* 'only', Coniglio (2022: 27–28) argues that the MP – and thus also the optative particle – does not grammaticalize from the homophonous focus particle but possibly from an earlier adverbial element. In fact, the adverbial *nur* can still occur in the middle field as well as in the specifier position of CP; see (9). However, the particle counterpart seems to be restricted to the middle field; see (7):

(9) *Er ist sehr intelligent.*
he is very intelligent
a. ***Nur** kann er sich nicht konzentrieren.*
PART can he himself not concentrate
b. *Er kann sich **nur** nicht konzentrieren.*
he can himself PART not concentrate
'He is very intelligent. He just cannot concentrate.'
(Coniglio 2022: 28)

Yet, not all optative I-particles seem to follow this grammaticalization process. Even though Italian *solo* and *solamente* 'only' are possible in a sentence internal position following the finite verb (see (10a)), they mostly occur in the C-domain (or at least in a position immediately following *if*) (see (10b)) and thus do not conform to the general trend, possibly indicating a grammaticalization process for these elements, which, starting from a lower position, ended up occupying a position in the left periphery of the clause:

(10) a. *Se avessi* ***solo*** *abbastanza soldi!*
if I.had.SBJV PART enough money
b. *Se* ***solo*** *avessi abbastanza soldi!*
if PART I.had.SBJV enough money
'If only I had enough money.'

Optative C-particles primarily emerge from sentences with a specific meaning such as '(it) may be', 'I wish', 'who knows', etc. For instance, Italian *magari* traces its roots back to Byzantine Greek *makari*, denoting 'happy or blessed' (D'Antuono 2020: 72), whereas expressions like Italian *chissà che* lit. 'who-knows that' (Greco 2022: 13) and Spanish *quizás* (< *quiçab(e)* 'who knows', RAE 2014) further exemplify this trend, as they evolved from sentences expressing uncertainty or possibility.

Additionally, in Basque, *agian* seems to stem from ***agi* 'appearance' (Euskaltzaindia 2024) a noun not attested in any written Basque texts but found in the sentence (?)*agi danean*, which translates to 'when it seems/looks like', a sentential expression conveying epistemicity. Indeed, *agian* has two readings: (a) 'perhaps' and (b) an optative reading similar to 'I wish' (Euskaltzaindia 2024).

Beyond the aforementioned origins, other linguistic sources may contribute to the emergence of optative particles. As Alcázar (2016) points out, Basque and Spanish examples like *aber*/*a ver* 'to see' demonstrate how expressions related to inquiry contribute to the development of optative particles. Similarly, in Basque, *ea* functions as a marker of embedded questions, and current Spanish-Basque speakers can use it to mark sentences with optative reading:[5]

(11) a. *A ver si llueve!*
PART if it.rains
'I wish it would rain!'

5 As stated, this use seems to be restricted to speakers of the varieties spoken in Spain; in contrast, speakers of the varieties spoken in France employ the same structure but to express a challenge rather than a wish. In fact, we have consulted speakers from both areas, and they have confirmed this hypothesis.

b. *Ea ez dagoen arazorik!*
PART not there.is.C problem.PTV
'I wish there were no problem!'

As can be noted, optative particles derive from different sources either of adverbial or of clausal nature. This is in line with the observation in Axel-Tober and Müller (2017), Axel-Tober et al. (to appear), and Coniglio (2022) about the grammaticalization of sentence adverbs and MPs, in general. Below, after examining the morpho-syntactic properties of the clauses hosting them, we will proceed to analyze their syntax.

4 Optative particles and morphosyntactic properties of the clause

In this section, we will discuss three properties of optative clauses: (a) their distribution in the sentence and their different interpretation; (b) their typical marking by means of the subjunctive mood; (c) the activation of CP by means of verb movement or special complementizers.

The first property under investigation concerns the distribution of optative particles in the sentence. Upon close investigation, it becomes evident that the position of these particles in a sentence is linked to their interpretation. Let us consider the distribution of the optative marker *magari* in (12):

(12) <***magari***> *avessi* <***??magari***> *abbastanza soldi* <****magari***>
PART I.had.SBJV PART enough money PART
'If only I had enough money.'

When *magari* appears at the beginning of a sentence, i.e., in the left periphery, it conveys an optative reading. In the other positions, such as following the verb or in the right periphery, the optative interpretation seems to be more difficult or impossible. However, if *magari* is interpreted epistemically in the sense of 'maybe', it seems more flexible in terms of its positioning:

(13) <***magari***> *avevo* <***magari***> *abbastanza soldi* <***magari***>
PART I.had.IND PART enough money PART
'Maybe, I had enough money.'

Similarly, we observe a comparable distribution for the Basque particle *agian*. It conveys an optative reading when situated in the left periphery, but if it appears in an inner position, it can only be understood as 'maybe':

(14) <***agian*$_1$**> *zu negarrez ekusteak* <***agian*$_2$**> *biginduko du.*
PART you crying see.NMLZ.ERG PART soften.FUT AUX

– ***agian*$_1$** = 'I hope seeing you crying will soften her/him.'
– ***agian*$_2$** = 'Seeing you crying will perhaps soften her/him.'

Hence, at least for optative markers, there appears to be a correlation between the sentential position of these elements and their interpretation, as optative readings are mainly conveyed when particles are located in the left periphery, whereas epistemic readings are preferred when these particles occur in the middle field.

In addition to the presence and distribution of these obligatory or optional particles, the subjunctive mood plays a crucial role in optative clauses. In particular, the subjunctive mood appears to be a necessary and sufficient condition for licensing certain C-particles like *magari* in Italian and *quizás* in Spanish.[6]

(15) ***Magari*** *avessi abbastanza soldi!*
PART I.had.SBJV enough money
'If only I had enough money.'

(16) ***Quizás*** *tuviera suficiente dinero.*
PART s/he.had.SBJV enough money
'Maybe, s/he had enough money.'

In fact, if we used the indicative mood in combination with *magari*, the sentence would be ungrammatical, at least in Standard Italian.

Regarding Spanish, Houle and Martínez-Gómez (2011) investigate the combination of *quizás* and the subjunctive, asserting that the use of the subjunctive mood in *quizás*-clauses has increased over time. Therefore, it appears to have become a necessary property.

However, not all languages require the presence of the subjunctive mood in optatives. In the case of Basque, the indicative mood alone is sufficient to license the optative reading of *agian*:

6 As an anonymous reviewer points out, the use of the indicative is not excluded in (15), but only if *magari* is interpreted as the adverb meaning 'maybe'. However, this interpretation – which is also dependent on a specific prosody – is not the relevant one here.

Regarding *quizás*, it is worth noting that its grammaticalization has shifted in favour of the subjunctive over time. While the indicative is still considered acceptable by some speakers, studies like Houle and Martínez-Gómez (2011) demonstrate that the subjunctive has established itself during the last centuries.

(17) a. ***Agian*** *bethi Laphurdiko gazteriak pilotaren trebetasuna*
PART always Lapurdi.GEN youngsters.ERG ball.GEN ability.ABS
atxikiren du.
keep.FUT AUX.IND
'I wish Lapurdian youngsters keep the ability to play pelota.'

b. ****Agian*** *bethi Laphurdiko gazteriak pilotaren*
PART always Lapurdi.GEN youngsters.ERG ball.GEN
trebetasuna atxiki dezala.
ability.ABS keep AUX.SBJV
'I hope that hopefully Lapurdian youngsters keep the ability to play pelota.'

c. *Espero dut* (****agian***) *bethi Laphurdiko gazteriak*
hope AUX PART always Lapurdi.GEN youngsters.ERG
pilotaren trebetasuna atxiki dezala.
ball.GEN ability.ABS keep **AUX.SBJV**

As can be seen in the previous examples, the use of *agian* with the non-indicative auxiliary verb ***ezan* renders the sentence ungrammatical, even when the context allows the use of ***ezan*, as in (17c).

This probably indicates that also C-particles alone are able to activate the left periphery of the clause and of marking the sentence as optative.

Turning our attention to I-particles, we find that the subjunctive mood alone is not sufficient for their licensing; instead, the activation of the C-domain seems to play a crucial role (also in this case). We observe that, in addition to employing the subjunctive mood, either the fronting of the verb to C or the use of complementizers is necessary; see (18) and (19) respectively:

(18) ***Hätte*** *ich* ***nur*** *genug Geld!*
had.SBJV I PART enough money
'If only I had enough money.'

(19) ***Wenn*** *ich* ***nur*** *genug Geld hätte!*
if I PART enough money had.SBJV
'If only I had enough money.'

In such cases, this additional fronting of the finite verb or the use of conditional complementizers (such as German *wenn* 'if' or Italian *se* 'if', etc.) are assumed to activate the left periphery of the clause, thereby licensing those I-particles. Table 1 illustrates the properties aforementioned.

These three fundamental syntactic properties are relevant for both types of optative particles, i.e., I-particles and C-particles have shown that syntax plays a role not only in the licensing of optative particles but also in their interpretation,

Table 1: Properties of some optative particles and markers.

	Distribution in the sentence	Subjunctive mood	Activation of CP (verb fronting or complementizers)
Agian	CP	–	–
Magari	CP	+	+
Ojalá	CP	+	+
Solo	CP/IP	+	+
Nur	IP	+	+

particularly in cases where they also have an epistemic counterpart. With these considerations in mind, we will present our analysis for their syntactic licensing in the following section.

5 Syntactic licensing of optative particles and markers

So far, we have looked into the types and grammar properties of optative particles and markers. Now, we will sketch an analysis to explain how these elements (and optative clauses in general) are licensed in syntax. In order to do this, we will first introduce the works by Grosz (2011) and by Coniglio and Zegrean (2012), which serve as the starting point for our analysis.

5.1 Previous proposals on the licensing of (optative) particles

As mentioned above, Grosz (2011: 185) claims that there are two types of optative clauses. On the one hand, he argues for the existence of 'EX-optative' clauses whose optative reading is achieved through a covert scalar EX operator – which Grosz suggests to be in an Exclamative Phrase (ExclP) above CP – and in some cases, through overt particles like *only* (Grosz 2011: 141). While maintaining that the optative reading remains independent from the presence of specific particles, he proposes that the apparent obligatoriness of these particles comes from their semantic alignment with optative expressions (Grosz 2011: 14). Moreover, due to their ability to disambiguate between an exclamative or optative interpretation, particles like *only* and *nur* eventually become reliable means of marking optative clauses (Grosz 2011: 390).

On the other hand, *adverb-optatives* are clauses marked by speech-act adverbs like *magari* or *ojalá* (Grosz 2011: 185–187; also cf. D'Antuono 2020).

However, Grosz (2011: 77–80) argues that two syntactic heads are responsible for the licensing of optative constructions. He proposes that the heads Mood and C interact by checking features and that this accounts for the use of the subjunctive mood or of specific complementizers in different languages (Grosz 2011: 216–217; also cf. Artiagoitia and Elordieta 2016). In particular, the interpretable feature [iMood] of Mood enters an Agree relation with the uninterpretable feature [uMood] of C. Further, this agreement may result in the movement of the finite verb to C, although this is not always necessary (Grosz 2011: 217).

Considering the licensing of particles, Coniglio and Zegrean (2012: 245–247) argue for the necessity to split ForceP divide into two distinct projections CT and ILL, the first being responsible for clause typing, the second one for encoding the illocutionary force of the utterance (cf. Haegeman and Hill 2013; Speas and Tenny 2003; a.o. for similar proposals).

The reason behind the ForceP split proposed by Coniglio and Zegrean (2012) becomes clear when considering the necessity for particles to be compatible with CT rather than ILL. For instance, in (20), the particle *bloß* appears in an imperative clause with directive illocutionary force. One may wonder whether the particle is licensed by the directive force rather than by the imperative clause type. However, if we consider an indirect speech act such as (21), which features a declarative clause with the same directive force, this utterance is ungrammatical. The sentence would be perfectly grammatical in the absence of the particle *bloß*, but it becomes ungrammatical in its presence. Only the imperative clause type, and not the directive illocutionary force, can license the particle *bloß* in these examples:

(20) *Mach* ***bloß*** *das Fenster zu!*
make PART the window close
'Close the window!'
clause type: imperative
illocutionary force: directive

(21) **Du machst* ***bloß*** *das Fenster zu!*
you make PART the window close
'You close the window!'
clause type: *declarative
illocutionary force: directive
(Coniglio to appear; also cf. Coniglio 2014: 115)

This observation shows that particles like *bloß* must align with the clause type (CT) rather than the illocutionary force (ILL).[7] Consequently, Coniglio and Zegrean (2012) conclude that particles are licensed by their compatibility with CT (cf. Thurmair 1993).

Nevertheless, Coniglio and Zegrean (2012) as well as Coniglio (2014, to appear) acknowledge that particles modify ILL, following previous claims made in the literature (cf. Abraham 1991; Coniglio 2011; Jacobs 1986, 1991; Thurmair 1989, 1993; a.o.). This is evident in example (22), where the imperative clause can acquire various, more nuanced interpretations depending on the particle used:

(22) *Mach die Tür auf!*
make the door open
'Open the door!'

a.	*Mach **mal** die Tür auf!*	suggestion
b.	*Mach **halt** die Tür auf!*	suggestion with resignation
c.	*Mach **doch** die Tür auf!*	suggestion with correction
d.	*Mach **JA** die Tür auf!*	cogent order
e.	*Mach **bloß/nur** die Tür auf!*	cogent order/menace

(Coniglio to appear)

In summary, Coniglio and Zegrean (2012) as well as Coniglio (2014, to appear) argue that both CT and ILL are essential for licensing particles and explaining their syntactic distribution and pragmatic behavior. According to their proposal, I-particles in German and C-particles in Italian and Romanian undergo an agreement operation with these CT and ILL heads to be licensed.

Coniglio and Zegrean (2012) argue that particles have two uninterpretable features: one related to clause type and the other to intentionality/illocution. Additionally, the head CT carries an interpretable feature for clause type, while ILL has an interpretable feature for INTENTIONALITY – which represents the specific speaker's intention, i.e. the illocutionary force of the utterance – and an uninterpretable feature for clause type. CT gets its value via Agree with morphosyntactic elements in the clause, among other MPs.[8] ILL also gets a value via agreement with MPs and other illocutionary markers that are present in the utterance. Through this Agree operation the interpretable features of CT and ILL get valued (also) by the presence of particles:

7 Note, however, that the clause type and the illocutionary force must also be compatible with each other, as is also accounted for by the Agree operation between CT and ILL in Coniglio and Zegrean (2012: 248–249).

8 Note that, in their proposal, the feature valuation mechanism in Pesetsky and Torrego (2007) is adopted.

(23) a. ILL [*u*type] [ ] / [*ï*intent] [ ]
> CT [*i*type] [ ]
> Prt [*u*type] [val] / [*u*intent][val]
AGREE →
b. ILL [~~*u*~~type] [val] / [*ï*intent] [val] ← intentionality valued
> CT [*i*type] [val] ← clause type valued
> Prt [~~*u*~~type] [val] / [~~*u*~~intent][val]
(adapted from Coniglio and Zegrean 2012: 248–249)

5.2 A unifying syntactic analysis for optative clauses

Let us now apply the proposal by Coniglio and Zegrean (2012) to Grosz' (2011) analysis. First, deviating from Grosz (2011), we assume that the exclamative/expressive operator EX is realized in ILL, without any need to resort to an *ad hoc* assumed Exclamative Phrase. Furthermore, ILL is claimed to be realized in all types of optative clauses. Grosz' CP would thus roughly correspond to CT in Coniglio and Zegrean's (2012) analysis. Based on this assumption, we claim that the optative particles are licensed either in the C-layer or in the I-layer in a similar configuration.

Let us consider C-particles, such as Italian *solo* and *magari*, first. The particle *solo* located in the left periphery has two uninterpretable features. One feature is clause-type-related and has the value *optative* [*u*type: opt]. It values the interpretable clause-type feature in CT [*i*type:], realized by the complementizer *se* in (24a). The other uninterpretable feature on the particle is [*u*intent: EX]. This exclamative/expressive value of the intentionality feature values the interpretable feature [*u*intent] in ILL. In the case of *magari* (24b), we see a similar valuation mechanism. However, in this case, the head in CT is not phonetically realized by a complementizer and *magari* appears to be enough to mark the clause as optative (but see D'Antuono 2020 for a different opinion):

(24) Licensing of **C-particles**:
a. [$_{ILL}$ ∅$_{[u\text{type: opt; } ï\text{intent: EX}]}$ [$_{CT}$ ***se***$_{[i\text{type: opt}]}$ ***solo***$_{[u\text{type: opt; } u\text{intent: EX}]}$ [$_{TP}$ *(Mario) avesse letto il libro*]]]
b. [$_{ILL}$ ∅$_{[u\text{type: opt; } ï\text{intent: EX}]}$ [$_{CT}$ ∅$_{[i\text{type: opt}]}$ ***magari***$_{[u\text{type: opt; } u\text{intent: EX}]}$ [$_{TP}$ *(Mario) avesse letto il libro*]]]
'If only Mario had read the book!'

As an alternative, the subjunctive verb moves to the head CT, thus occupying (and possibly activating) the position typical for clause-typing complementizers, while *magari* may remain in a lower position:

(25) [ILL ∅[*u*type: opt; ïintent: EX] [CT ***avesse***+CT[*i*type: opt] [TP *(Mario)* ***magari***[*u*type: opt; *u*intent: EX] ~~*avesse*~~ *letto il libro*]]]
'If only Mario had read the book.'

For reasons of space, we omitted the feature realized on the subjunctive verb, but it is reasonable to assume that also the finite verb has an uninterpretable feature [*u*type: opt].[9] This would explain how the interpretable feature of the CT head gets valued even in the absence of an optative marker.

Considering the licensing of I-particles, the analysis is quite similar, as illustrated by means of German *nur* in example (26). Here, the particle has the same two uninterpretable feature, but the agree operation takes place from the middle field rather than in the left periphery:

(26) Licensing of **I-particles**:
[ILL ∅[*u*type: opt; ïintent: EX] [CT ***wenn***[*i*type: opt] [TP *Mario das Buch* ***nur*** [*u*type: opt; *u*intent: EX] *gelesen hätte*]]]
'If only Mario had read the book!'

Also in German, an alternative option is available in which the subjunctive verb is moved to CT:

(27) [ILL ∅[*u*type: opt; ïintent: EX] [CT ***hätte***+CT[*i*type: opt] [TP *Mario das Buch* ***nur*** [*u*type: opt; *u*intent: EX] *gelesen*]]]
'If only Mario had read the book.'

In contrast to some optative markers, vacuous particles are obligatory and this is possibly due to their function of disambiguating between an exclamative or optative interpretation (Grosz 2011: 390).

This licensing mechanism thus allows to explain 1) the kind of morphosyntactic and semantic features that are realized on optative particles and on other elements in the clause, but also 2) how clause marking takes place syntactically and 3) how the speaker's attitude comes about in the utterance.

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9 As stated earlier, Basque does not use the subjunctive mood in optative cases; however, interestingly, it can use an epistemic morpheme/modal particle attached to the finite verb in combination with *agian*. For instance:

(i) *Agian* *basa* *ahuntz* *bat* *hilen* *ahal* *duzu.*
PART wild goat one kill.FUT PART AUX
'If only you'd kill a wild goat!'
(Larzabal 1991)

Therefore, we could hypothesize that the subjunctive mood and this morpheme occupy similar positions in the TP-field.

6 Conclusions

To sum up, we observed two tendencies from a descriptive point of view. First, those optative particles that grammaticalized from adverbs usually stay in the middle field, but sometimes also in the left periphery (vacuous optative particles), whereas those derived from sentences are almost exclusively located in the left periphery (optative markers).

From a theoretical perspective, we proposed that vacuous optative particles, such as *nur*, as well as optative markers, such as *magari* or *agian*, enter the derivation with two uninterpretable features, one for the optative clause type [*u*type: optative] and the other for illocution/intentionality [*u*intent: EX]:

1. The feature [utype: optative] is checked against the interpretable feature on the head CT [*i*type:], which, as a consequence, gets valued for optativity. In particular, we assume that the use of complementizers (such as Italian *se*, German *wenn* or English *if*, etc.), or alternatively the fronting of the subjunctive verbs or use of optative markers may activate the head CT and, therefore, the left periphery.
2. The feature [*u*intent: EX] is checked against the interpretable counterpart on ILL [*i*intent:], which – in return – gets valued by the optative particle (and other illocutionary elements in the utterance).

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