

## Contrast via information structure: On topic progression with German *aber* in post-initial position

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In order to distinguish different relations of contrast, research on German *aber* ('but') also takes into account its syntactic position. In post-initial position, i.e. between prefield-constituent and finite verb ('Forefield particle' in Sæbø 2003) which is generally associated with signaling a topic shift (cf. Breindl 2011), *aber* is said to express one of the relations defined via information structural properties: 'contrastive comparison' involving contrastive topics in Büring's (1997) sense, or 'weak contrast' involving shifting topics in the sense of Daneš's (1970) linear progression (cf. Breindl et al. 2014).

As corpus data reveal, however, post-initial *aber* may also 'formally isolate' (cf. Breindl 2011) non-topical constituents such as predicatives or comparative constructions (e.g. *noch weniger* ('even less')) and even sentential adverbs such as *tatsächlich* ('indeed/in reality') in (1).

- (1) "Girl-Power" sollte ein konsumierbarer Feminismus sein, der endlich gut aussieht und niemandem zu nahe tritt. [...] Tatsächlich **aber** bremste die "Girl-Power" die Gleichberechtigung. ("Girl power" was meant to be a consumable form of feminism that, finally, looks attractive and doesn't offend anyone. [...] In reality CONN, "girl power" curbed equality.)

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Interestingly, such divergences from potential topicality also involve different contrastive relations commonly analyzed in terms of inferences instead of information structural properties. While the inference remains the pivotal characteristic for the 'denial-of-expectation' contrast in cases such as in (1) (see e.g. König 1991), post-initial *aber* adds a formal means to recognize this contrastive relation (in addition to the modal verb *sollte* ('should have/was meant to be')).

The goal of this paper is to analyze corpus data in order to investigate the topic potential of constituents formally isolated by post-initial *aber* as a formal means to distinguish different relations of contrast.

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