

Information Structure of *schon*

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Abstract

This paper¹ examines the accent pattern of *schon* from the point of view of information structure. Like other German particles (like *selbst* ‘self, even’, *wieder* ‘again’ and *auch* ‘also’), *schon* has a different meaning according to its accented or unaccented status. However, it is not possible to assume two homophonous lexemes on the basis of accent, because German does not assign lexical pitch accent. It is proposed instead that the accent pattern depends on the information structural role carried by this word, and that the meaning is a consequence thereof. *Schon* can be a focus particle, and, in this case, it takes an associate focused element: it is then mostly unaccented. But it also can be a free focus, and, in this case, it is generally accented and does not take any associate element. The information structural properties are not lexical, but apply at the level of the sentence. The proposal implies that there is only one *schon*, and that its meaning as focus particle (or temporal adverb, or phase operator), and as a free focus (modal particle) have a common base, albeit a highly abstract one: it is defined as expressing a positive or affirmative zone on a scale, which is translated as taking place “earlier than expected” for the focus particle and as eliciting a “zone of penumbra” on a denial-affirmation scale for the free focus (modal particle). In the latter interpretation, the speaker expresses with choosing *schon* as the affirmative part of a sentence that s/he expects that hearer and speaker may not completely agree about the proposition (a mitigated affirmation).

1. Introduction

Two uses of *schon* have been identified in the literature. First, a temporal or phase adverb use which associates with a focus. Second a modal particle use, for which it is

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26 usually claimed that it does not have any influence on the truth-value of the sentence,
 27 but merely emphasizes its affirmative part and may have a concessive connotation.
 28 In this paper, it is proposed that the two uses of *schon* are two faces of the same
 29 coin: *schon* can be a focus particle or a free focus, depending on the information
 30 structure of the sentence as a whole.² As a focus particle, it associates with a focused
 31 constituent and is unstressed, but as a free focus, it is itself a focused constituent and
 32 thus, it does not associate and is usually accented. The meanings associated with
 33 the two variants appear to be very different, and, as a result, most authors writing on
 34 *schon* assume lexical separation. But then, the information structural facts and the
 35 associated accent pattern are unexplained and accidental. I propose in this paper that
 36 there is only one *schon*, and that the common interpretation of the two is to be found
 37 in their affirmative component.

38 Let us begin with a short review of the two roles of *schon* and a first sketch of their
 39 interpretation. First, *schon* can be used as a short answer, both in its role as a focus
 40 particle and as a free focus. In (1), an example from Klein (2007, p. 5), *schon* is used
 41 as a focus particle. It is elliptic for *Wir müssen schon gehen?* ‘We must already go?’
 42 In this answer, *schon* takes *müssen gehen* ‘must go’ as its associated focus. Klein
 43 (2007) comments that the answer *schon* cannot be taken as a denial of the fact that
 44 we must leave, and I fully agree with this judgment.

45 (1) A: *Wir müssen gehen.* B: *Schon?*
 46 A: ‘We must go.’ B: ‘Already?’

47 In (2), adapted from Klein (2007, p. 5), *schon* is used as a concessive affirmative
 48 word, a kind of *ja* ‘yes’. It is typical for such an answer to be continued by a sentence
 49 beginning with *aber* ‘but.’

50 (2) A: *Hättest du nicht anrufen können?* B: *Schon. Aber es war mir nicht danach.*
 51 A: ‘Couldn’t you have called?’ B: ‘Sure. But I did not feel like that.’

52 It is of course not an accident that only in (2), *schon* can be the (affirmative) answer of
 53 a yes-no question; it is a free focus. As a focus particle, as in (1) it needs an associate
 54 constituent, and cannot serve as a full answer. In (1) it is an elliptical question.

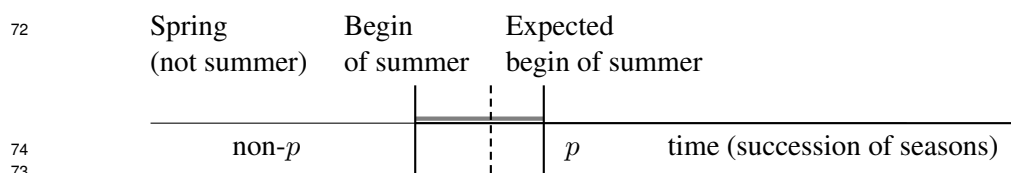
55 Compare another pair of examples in (3) and (5), in which the wordings are iden-
 56 tical, but the accent pattern differs. In (3-a), *schon* is a focus particle: the associate
 57 focused element *Sommer* ‘summer’ is accented, but *schon* is not.

² See Féry (2010) for a similar approach of the particles *selbst* ‘self, even’, *wieder* ‘again’ and *auch* ‘also.’

- 58 (3) a. *Es ist schon* SOMMER.
 it is already summer
 59 'It's already summer.'
 60 b. *Es ist Sommer*.

61 As illustrated in (4), *schon* as a focus particle adds a dimension of earliness to a
 62 change or a state. The change expressed by the associated constituent of *schon*, here
 63 the passage to summer, has taken place earlier than expected. Without *schon*, the
 64 same sentence just indicates the season in which we are, see (3b). Both the change
 65 and the earliness of the change are absent from (3b). The dotted line in (4) shows
 66 the time of reference. As a first approximation, we can interpret (4) in the following
 67 way: the begin of summer has happened at the first full vertical line (a change from
 68 non-*p* to *p* in Löbner's 1989 terminology), but it was expected later, at the second full
 69 vertical line. Between the two full lines, there is a zone of penumbra, in which *schon*
 70 expresses affirmation + earliness. It always conveys the positive side of *p*.

71 (4) Affirmation + 'earliness' as part of the analysis of *schon*³

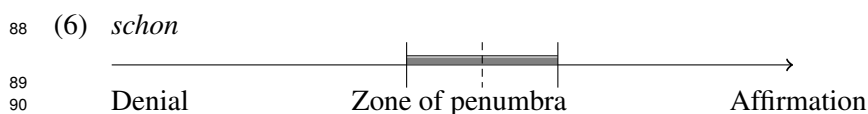


75 The same sentence can be uttered with an accent on *schon*. In this case, *schon* is a
 76 free focus (and a modal particle).

- 77 (5) *Es ist SCHON* Sommer
 it is sure summer
 78 'It's summer alright'

79 In this reading, *schon* expresses that on a scale of being in summer, we are in the
 80 positive part of it, but there is also some reservation. The scale stands for something
 81 completely different from the one in (4), namely for degrees of denial or affirmation
 82 (or of degrees of disagreement and agreement between the protagonists) about the
 83 topic of conversation. To the left of the first vertical line, speaker and hearer dis-
 84 agree, to the right of the second full line, they agree, but in between, in the zone of
 85 penumbra, the speaker expresses that she is not sure whether hearer and speaker fully
 86 agree on the topic at hand. It could be that we are in July and that martins are flying
 87 around, but that the temperature is too cold for summer.

³ See Löbner (1989) for this kind of graphic illustration.



91 A third example comparing the two information structural roles of *schon* appears
 92 in (7). This sentence is ambiguous and can be understood first with *schon* as a focus
 93 particle and second with *schon* as a free focus. In the former case, its use is equivalent
 94 to (1), see the translation in (7a): the time of departure is earlier than expected. In the
 95 latter case, when *schon* is a free focus, the sentence is best translated as in (7b). The
 96 speaker expresses with *schon* that she does not agree with the departure of the hearer
 97 (even if she affirms that it takes place). Since *schon* is located in the prenuclear part
 98 of the sentence, the difference in accenting may be difficult to perceive. The reason
 99 is that there is a tonal movement on the verb complex in both cases, in (7a) because it
 100 is accented, and in (7b) because of the boundary tone associated with the end of the
 101 embedded intonation phrase. Intended is an unaccented *schon* in the meaning of (7a)
 102 and an accented *schon* in the meaning of (7b).

- 103 (7) *Wenn Du schon gehen musst, nimm den Hund mit.*
 If you already go must take the dog with
- 104 a. 'If you must already go, take the dog with you.'
 105 b. 'It you really have to go, take the dog with you.'

106 The following sections elaborate on the two uses of *schon*, concentrating on the in-
 107 formation structure, and compare this approach with some proposals of the literature.
 108 Section 2 examines *schon* as a focus particle and section 3 as a free focus. Section 4
 109 contains a conclusion.

110 2. *Schon* as a focus particle

111 2.1 More examples

112 In its reading as a focus particle, *schon* can take all kinds of associated elements, as
 113 illustrated in (8) to (12). In this group of examples, *schon* expresses that something
 114 has definitely and positively changed and that the point attained so far is more (later)
 115 than could be expected, relatively to its associated element. This is called “early
 116 eventuation” by Michaelis (1996).⁴ The easiest cases are those in which passing

⁴ Michaelis rejects early-eventuation as part of the analysis of *schon*. I agree with Krifka (2000) who claims that words like *schon*, *noch* and *erst* induce “the interpretation that the sentences express a deviation from expected values in a particular direction”. Krifka posits that “these meaning components

117 of time implies a change that can take place early or late, but we will see in the
 118 next section that the passing of time – though very prominent in the interpretation of
 119 *schon* – is not compulsory. There are also cases where the scale induced by *schon*
 120 + associate element has no temporal connotation. In the following examples, time
 121 plays a role: a cow becomes heavier, a car drives faster, Peter will grow even taller,
 122 etc. *Schon* takes an associated constituent which is indicated with square brackets
 123 and a subscripted *F* (for focus) in the examples.

- 124 (8) *Die Kuh wiegt schon* [600 KG]_F
 the cow weighs already 600 kg
 125 ‘The cow already weighs 600 kg.’
- 126 (9) *Wir fahren schon* [160 KM/H]_F
 we drive already 160 km/h
 127 ‘We are already driving 160 km/h.’
- 128 (10) *Peter ist schon* [GRÖßER ALS SEIN VATER]_F
 Peter is already taller than his father
 129 ‘Peter is already taller than his father.’
- 130 (11) *Maria hat schon* [GETANZT]_F
 Mary has already danced
 131 ‘Mary has already danced.’
- 132 (12) *Maria ist schon* [MÜDE]_F
 Mary is already tired
 133 ‘Mary is already tired.’

134 It has been noticed in the literature that temporal *schon* is ambiguous relatively to
 135 early or late time (see for example Kwon, 2005). In (13) something happened earlier
 136 than expected, and in this respect the example is comparable to the previous ones.
 137 But, at first sight, in (14), the perceived time is later than expected, see von Stechow’s
 138 (2006) “type-2 puzzle”, who uses Löbner’s (1989) terminology.

- 139 (13) *Earlier:*
- 140 *Maria ist schon* [um NEUN]_F *gekommen, obwohl wir sie erst um zehn*
 Mary is already at nine come although we her only at ten
 141 *erwartet haben.*
 awaited have
 142 ‘Mary already came at nine, although we only expected her at ten.’

are conversational **implicatures** that arise from the fact that only such alternatives are constructed that can plausibly be entertained.”

143 (14) *Later:*

144 *Es ist schon* [NEUN]_F, *wir sollten nach Hause gehen.*
 It is already nine, we should to home go
 145 ‘It is already nine, we should go home.’

146 The puzzle is only apparent, and depends on the context. There is only one tem-
 147 poral *schon* (like in many other languages with exactly the same ambiguity). The
 148 combination of *schon* and a time (9 o’clock) is interpreted in the same way as before.
 149 The speaker may have had the impression that it is eight, but looking at the clock, she
 150 realizes that nine o’clock has come earlier than (psychologically) expected.⁵

151 In sum, *schon* as a focus particle is often sensitive to time, or to events taking place
 152 in time, like moving faster, becoming heavier or older, becoming tired, changing
 153 shape or colour and so on. Some events are more obviously time-oriented than others.
 154 In (15), it becomes clear that *schon* is to be interpreted in relation to the reported time.
 155 The speaker communicates that at the topic time *t*, Maria’s meal will be located in
 156 the past.

157 (15) *Maria wird schon* [GEGESSEN]_F *haben.*
 Maria will already eaten have

158 2.2 Semantic approaches

159 Quite a few analyses of *schon* in the literature are concerned with its role as a “tem-
 160 poral” or “phase adverb”. Löbner (1989, 1999) proposed a “dual” analysis, in which
 161 *schon* and *noch*, *noch nicht* and *nicht mehr* have complementary temporal readings,
 162 defined relative to a prior state and under a certain perspective. Basic *schon* (type
 163 S, see below) can be paraphrased along the following lines: *schon*(*t_e*, *p*), where *t_e*
 164 refers to a certain time and *p* to a proposition, meaning “at a time *t_e*, it is true that
 165 *schon p*”. *Schon*(*t_e*, *p*) is equivalent to \neg *noch*(*t_e*, \neg *p*),⁶ which explains the term
 166 “duality” (because it needs both an “internal” and an “external” negation). I do not
 167 have much to say about the duality analysis, or negation in general (but see van der
 168 Auwera, 1993; Mittwoch, 1993; Michaelis, 1996; Krifka, 2000; Klein, 2007 for com-
 169 ments and criticisms).

⁵ This ambiguity is not limited to temporal *schon* but extends to all scalar uses of *schon*. The cow could have weighed 600 kg before one notices, or it could have already attained a weight too large for selling.

⁶ From Krifka (2000):

<i>already</i> (<i>t</i> , Φ):	assert:	Φ holds at <i>t</i>	$\Phi(t)$
	presup:	$\neg\Phi$ was true before <i>t</i>	$\exists t' \propto t[\neg\Phi(t')]$

170 Here I assume that the primary meaning of *schon* is to focus on the positive or
 171 affirmative part of a proposition.⁷ I rather concentrate on the elements of the analysis
 172 of *schon* having to do with information structure. To this aim, it is necessary to
 173 illustrate Löbner's typology with some examples.

174 Löbner opposes four types of *schon* on the basis of the kind of associate focus
 175 and perfectivity of the sentence (see Comrie, 1976 for perfective vs imperfective
 176 sentences). Type 1 or S ("operator on the sentence focus in an imperfective sentence"
 177 = basic use), type 2 or F ("operator on a narrow focus in an imperfective sentence"),
 178 type 3 or T_{pf} ("operator focusing on a temporal adverbial in a perfective sentence")
 179 and type 4 or T_{ipf} ("operator focusing on a temporal adverbial in an imperfective
 180 sentence").⁸

181 In basic type S, the particle is associated with the natural focus of the sentence. In
 182 other words, "the focus and the sentence accent are where they would be without the
 183 particle" (Löbner, 1999, p. 48). In (16) it is on an "on", but it also can be on *Licht*,
 184 or on *ist*, as far as I can see.⁹

185 (16) *Das Licht ist schon* [AN]_F.
 the light is already on
 186 'The light is already on.'

187 In type F, *schon* takes an adjective or numeral as associated narrow focus. This is
 188 illustrated in (17). *Fünf Kinder* is conceived as potentially increasing with time.

189 (17) *Sie hat schon* [FÜNF]_F *Kinder*.
 she has already five children
 190 'She already has five children.'

191 In type T, the focus lies on a time interval. Examples appear in (18). In (18a), the
 192 sentence is perfective (T_{pf}), and in (18b) it is imperfective (T_{ipf}).

193 (18) a. *Sie kommt schon* [MORGEN]_F *an*.
 she comes already tomorrow PART
 194 'She already arrives tomorrow'

⁷ The other types of *schon* are in a similar correspondence with *erst*. And the fact that there is no unique negative counterpart of *schon* may be a natural consequence of the intrinsic positive connotation of this word.

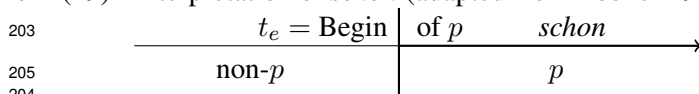
⁸ Types 1 to 4 are from Löbner (1989) and Types S, F and T from Löbner (1999).

⁹ If the sentence accent (primary focus) is not on an element with which *schon* can associate (as for instance *das Licht*), *schon + an* must be either a secondary focus or a Second Occurrence Focus (Partee, 1999).

- 195 b. *Ich war schon* [GESTERN]_F *da*.
 I was already yesterday there
 196 ‘I was already here yesterday.’

197 A graphic illustration of the basic use of *schon* appears in (19), where p = “the
 198 light is on”. According to Löbner, *schon* adds a “sense of temporal dynamics” to the
 199 sentence, since it presupposes that the light was not on before t_e , in a relevant time in-
 200 terval. Compared to (4), the second full vertical line, which showed that the reference
 201 time was earlier than expected is missing. This is thus a very simple analysis.¹⁰

202 (19) Interpretation of *schon* (adapted from Löbner 1989, p. 173)



206 Some authors (König, 1977; Hoepelman & Rohrer, 1981; van der Auwera, 1993)
 207 consider that, additionally to the change expressed by *schon*, expectations of the pro-
 208 tagonists should also be taken into consideration and should be part of the analysis.
 209 Not only prior non-instantiation of the state (which is present in all analyses, though
 210 in different guises), but also “earliness” of change is expressed by *schon*. In the ap-
 211 proach proposed here, shown in (4), this part of the analysis of *schon* is crucial –
 212 beside the positive or affirmative meaning component of *schon* – since it is the one
 213 binding the two roles of this word.

214 A further crucial aspect of Löbner’s analysis is that p is opposed to an adjacent
 215 previous non- p , (to the left of t_e), see (19). This aspect has been criticized by several
 216 authors who argue that neither a previous non- p nor adjacency of non- p is necessary.
 217 Consider examples of what Michaelis (1996) calls (non-)“priority to process” which
 218 are supposed to refute the necessity of a period of non- p . The most cited example,
 219 reproduced in (20), comes from Mittwoch (1993).

220 (20) “Person A tells person B that she has applied for American citizenship, and
 221 person B asks person A whether her husband has applied, too. Person A an-
 222 swers:”

- 223 *Er IST schon* [Amerikaner]_F, *denn er ist in Amerika geboren*.
 224 ‘He is already American, since he was born in America.’

225 It is conspicuous that the constituents *er* and *Amerikaner* have been mentioned
 226 previously and are thus given. But still, *schon* associates with *Amerikaner* as a sec-

¹⁰ The idea of interpreting *schon* as an adverb of phase quantification, as Löbner proposes, is that time defines phases on a scale and that by expressing *schon p*, one implies that t_e ranks high enough. Its opposite *noch nicht* “not yet” implies that t_e does not rank high enough.

227 onduary focus. The primary focus is on *ist* ‘is’ which provides a verum focus reading
 228 for the sentence (Höhle 1992), and cancels the presupposition that he is not American
 229 (see Löbner, 1989, p. 183).

230 In this example, it is clear that *schon* is a focus particle. It can be translated as
 231 *already* in English or *déjà* in French (which it cannot when it is a focus itself). Com-
 232 pare (20) with a continuation like (21), in which it is clear that *schon* associates with
 233 the nationality.¹¹ In this case, of course, *Brite* ‘British’ is new and gets the sentence
 234 accent.

235 (21) *Nee, er ist schon* [BRITE]_F.
 236 ‘No, he is already British.’

237 The interpretation that *schon* in (20) refers to a time at which A’s husband was
 238 not yet born cannot be maintained (see van der Auwera, 1993, p. 622, for this in-
 239 terpretation). I propose instead that it refers to a potential time at which a change of
 240 nationality could have taken place. Relatively to this potential event, A’s husband has
 241 previously acquired the property brought about by this event, which is earlier than
 242 expected by B.¹²

243 Another interesting case of ‘non-priority to process’ is reproduced in (22), adapted
 244 from Michaelis (1996, p. 481).

245 (22) The strawberry frappé has fewer calories. You don’t have to put sugar into it
 246 because the strawberries are already sweet.

247 Here, too, there is no time when the strawberries are not sweet. I agree with
 248 Michaelis who claims that in such a dialogue the speaker does not refer to the time at
 249 which the strawberries are not yet ripe. Again, the strawberries already possess the
 250 sweet quality that a (potential) sugaring of the frappé would bring.

251 Turning now to the necessity for non-*p* and *p* to be adjacent, Klein (2007) argues
 252 with example (23), referring to the year 1797 (Schubert’s birth), that no adjacency of
 253 events is necessary.¹³ He claims that the sentence does not presuppose that Mozart
 254 lived up to 1797 or short before. However, I think it does induce adjacency, on its
 255 own scale. This sentence would be odd if Mozart was replaced by Cleopatra or the
 256 dinosaurs.

¹¹ Thanks to Gerrit Kentner who discussed these examples with me.

¹² I do not think that a change of perspective from one speaker to the other, as postulated by Mittwoch (1993); Löbner (1989) is necessary.

¹³ Mozart died in 1791, Haydn in 1809.

- 257 (23) *Mozart war schon* [TOT]_F, *Haydn lebte noch*.
 Mozart was already dead Haydn lived still
 258 ‘Mozart was already dead, Haydn still lived.’

259 Löbner’s typology is based on a very restricted distribution of focus relative to
 260 *schon*. Type S allows all kinds of focus (the scope of *schon* is always the entire
 261 sentence), but Types F and T require a narrow focus. Moreover, Types F and T
 262 require a certain class of associated element, namely those with a scalar interpretation
 263 (Löbner, 1989, p. 184ff.)¹⁴ like a numeral, an adjective or a time.

264 In my view, the distinction in types is dependent on the kind of sentence and on
 265 the context, and is not intrinsic to *schon*. In (16), no scalarity is possible, regardless
 266 of the focus: the light maybe on or off. But in (17) for a person with x children,
 267 it is possible to have $x + 1$ children. It is however easy to think of a context in
 268 which having 5 children may be interpreted in a non-scalar way. Imagine a society in
 269 which women climb the social ladder in steps like the following: they have to learn 3
 270 languages, to dye their hair blue, to have 5 children, and to be good swimmers, in that
 271 order. In such a case, to have 5 children is just a step in this social scale. The sentence
 272 (17) itself is now non-scalar. Furthermore, the direction of the scale is also a matter
 273 of convention: depending on the perspective, it can be that the number of children is
 274 high (*schon* 5) or low (*erst* 5 “only 5 so far”). To make the same point more clearly,
 275 consider the example from van der Auwera (1993, p. 691) reproduced in (24). The
 276 sentence can be interpreted as non-scalar (the woman can not marry anymore as she
 277 is already married) or scalar (she has married at a young age, say 16). In both cases,
 278 the relevant factor is that *schon* is a focus particle and married is the associated focus.
 279 Whether it is scalar or not depends on the context of interpretation, but is not part of
 280 a type of *schon*. In both interpretations, *schon* expresses that she is now married, that
 281 she was not married before, and that this state has taken place earlier than expected.

- 282 (24) *Sie ist schon* [VERHEIRATET]_F.
 she is already married
 283 ‘She is already married.’

284 Löbner’s second distinction entering the types of *schon* is perfectivity vs. imper-
 285 fectivity of the sentence. According to him, only Type T_{pf} (‘operator focusing on
 286 a temporal adverbial in a perfective sentence’) can appear in a perfective sentence,
 287 all other types only take imperfective sentences. But as shown by Klein (2007), this
 288 distinction is not necessary either. First perfective verbs can appear with other types

¹⁴ In Löbner (1989), the terminology scalar vs. non-scalar is rejected, but in Löbner (1989) it is part of the definition of the types.

289 of *schon*, as in the following example from Klein with a perfective verb but no time
290 adverbial.

- 291 (25) *Der Ballon war schon* [GEPLATZT]_F.
The balloon was already burst
292 ‘The balloon has already burst.’

293 Furthermore, there does not seem to be any necessary relation between perfective
294 sentences and focus on the time adverbial (see Klein for such sentences).

- 295 (26) *Sie kam gestern schon* [in FRANKFURT]_F *an*.
she came yesterday already in Frankfurt PART
296 ‘She arrived in Frankfurt already yesterday.’

297 And there are also imperfective sentences with a focus on the time adverbial (see
298 below).

299 2.3 The role of information structure

300 In this section, it is shown that *schon* is a well-behaved focus particle which takes an
301 associated element and adds a special meaning, exactly as other focus particles. The
302 proposed meaning of *schon* is “it is affirmative and early relative to a scale”. The
303 accent on its associated element elicits a set of alternatives.

304 Consider the variants in (27), where the sentence has different interpretations de-
305 pending on the associated element.

- 306 (27) a. *Maria hat gestern schon* [DREI ÄPFEL]_F *geschält*.
Maria has yesterday already three apples peeled
307 ‘Mary has already peeled three apples yesterday.’
308 b. *Maria hat gestern schon* [DREI]_F (*Äpfel*) *geschält*.
Maria has yesterday already three apples peeled
309 ‘Mary has already peeled three apples yesterday.’
310 c. *Maria hat gestern schon drei Äpfel* [GESCHÄLT]_F.
311 ‘Mary has already peeled three apples yesterday.’
312 d. *Maria hat schon* [GESTERN]_F *drei Äpfel geschält*.
313 ‘Mary has already peeled three apples yesterday.’
314 e. *Schon* [MARIA]_F *hat gestern drei Äpfel geschält*.
315 ‘Even Mary has peeled three apples yesterday.’

316 In (27a), the accent on the object is the default sentence accent, and, as a result,
317 it can elicit alternatives on different constituents, as for example on the kind and

318 number of fruit, or on the whole VP, including *gestern* ‘yesterday’ or not. In each of
 319 these readings, the set of alternatives differs from the other ones. If *schon* associates
 320 with the direct object plus verb, the set of alternatives may include actions like the
 321 following ones, which are ranked on a scale: {sweep the kitchen, peel three apples,
 322 peel two pears, read a book}. At the same time, *schon* implies that the peeling of
 323 apples has taken place earlier than expected relative to this scale.

324 In (27b), *schon* only associates with the numeral and the set of alternatives is {one
 325 apple, two apples, three apples ...}. The speaker comments with *schon* that the
 326 action of peeling three of them has taken place earlier than expected.

327 In (27c), the accent on the verb does not project further than itself (at least if the
 328 whole VP is new), in the same way as in (27b). The set of alternative may be {to buy,
 329 to peel, to bake, to eat}. *Schon* associates with the verb, and creates a scale of these
 330 acts. It says that the action of peeling has taken place earlier than expected.

331 The narrow accent on the temporal adverb *gestern* plus *schon* in (27d) creates
 332 a scale like {yesterday, today, tomorrow} and asserts that the peeling took place
 333 yesterday, and that this day is early on the scale.

334 Finally, in (27e), the scale contains persons, for instance {Johannes, Maria, Peter},
 335 and it is asserted that as the person who did the peeling, Maria is early on this scale,
 336 maybe even unexpected. It is again the case that the accent on *Maria* cannot project
 337 further than itself. It could be that Maria is really clumsy and that Peter is not as
 338 clumsy, but he has only managed to peel two apples. In uttering (27e), the speaker
 339 may express that the number of apples peeled by Peter is small, as compared to the
 340 number managed by Maria. In this context *schon* resembles the scalar particle *sogar*,
 341 to the difference that *sogar* can be used in negative sentences. *Schon Maria* is a
 342 primary focus. It is left open whether the remainder of the sentence contains another
 343 focus, for example on *drei* ‘three’.

344 Since *schon* is a focus particle, it associates with a focus, and not with a topic. A
 345 sentence like (28a) in which the subject is clearly a topic, and the focus is further in
 346 the sentence, is not well-formed. However, as soon as the topic contains a focused
 347 part, as in (28b), *schon* is possible again. In this case, the associate focus constituent
 348 of *schon* is embedded into the topic.

- 349 (28) a. **Schon* [MARIA]_T hat [DREI ÄPFEL]_F geschält.
 350 b. [*Schon die* [JÜNGSTE]_F Tochter]_T konnte [*drei Äpfel pro TAG*
 Already the youngest daughter could three apples per day
 351 *schälen*]_F.
 peel
 352 ‘Even the youngest daughter could peel three apples a day.’

353 And, of course, *schon* can associate with a constituent as a Second Occurrence
 354 Focus. We already saw such cases in (20) and also in the discussion of the alterna-
 355 tive accent patterns of (16). In this case, there is no pitch accent on the associate
 356 constituent (at least when it is in the postnuclear position).

357 To sum up so far, in its reading as a focus particle, *schon* emphasizes the affirmative
 358 part of the sentence and denotes earliness on a scale. It takes all sorts of focused
 359 associate elements, which elicit scales relatively to which the sentence is interpreted.
 360 We have given an interpretation of the particle which is close to the one found in the
 361 literature. In line with Löbner's analysis, *schon p* may imply a dynamic temporal
 362 sense: there is then a preceding phase non-*p*, which may be only virtual (see (20)
 363 and (22)). Additionally (and in contrast to Löbner's proposal), there is an addition
 364 of earliness: "the change is early relative to a scale". And, also in contradistinction
 365 to Löbner, there is only a single type of *schon*. The different readings identified by
 366 Löbner, as well as their associated perfectivity are a consequence of the context, at
 367 least as far as the information structure is concerned. Another difference is that the
 368 notion of change (the dynamic temporal sense) is not obligatory. In other words, I
 369 do not think that the temporal aspect, albeit pervasive, is an obligatory part of the
 370 interpretation of *schon*, see (27e).

371 3. Modal particle: *schon* as a free focus

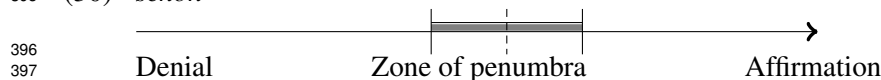
372 Let us now turn to the "modal particle" use of *schon* (see for instance König, 1977;
 373 Jacobs, 1991). Löbner (1989, p. 167; 1999, p. 48) and Klein (2007) for instance
 374 consider it an entirely different word.¹⁵ By contrast, I propose that the difference in
 375 meaning comes from the use of this word as a focus particle or as a free focus. In
 376 the latter reading it is usually accented and has no associate element. It can stand by
 377 itself, as in (29), see also (1).

- 378 (29) A: *Treibt Stella denn keinen Sport?*
 does Stella then no sport
 379 'Doesn't Stella do any sport?'
 380 B: (*Doch*) SCHON!
 381 Sure, she does

¹⁵ Ormelius-Sandblom (1997a,b) relates the two uses of *schon* with a process of grammaticalization. According to her, the modal particle has developed from the temporal adverb. But she does not show how the two meanings are related.

382 Here is my proposal in more detail. In its function as a free focus, there is no
 383 associated element to *schon*. As a result, the meaning component induced by *schon*
 384 + associate element is only partially present. The part asserting P: “it is true that P”
 385 is present both in the focus particle and in the free focus. And the reference to a
 386 scale is present as well. But in the focus particle reading, the interpretation of the
 387 scale comes from the associate element, as was illustrated in (27). Without associate
 388 element, the scale only comes from *schon* itself. As a result, the scale is always the
 389 same. In (6), reproduced in (30), it was shown that it stands for denial to affirmation
 390 (or disagreement to agreement). *Schon* elicits a zone of penumbra located between
 391 a region of denial or disagreement and a region of affirmation or agreement. The
 392 uncertainty expressed by *schon* can have different sources. In this use, *schon* has
 393 very often a concessive reading, as in a possible continuation of (29B) “... but only
 394 once in a month”.

395 (30) *schon*



398 Let us examine further examples. In (31), speaker B probably expects that speaker
 399 A thinks that B does not like natto beans. The zone of penumbra corresponds to a
 400 domain in which the expectations of A and B concerning B’s liking of natto beans do
 401 not fit.

402 (31) A: *Do you like natto beans?*

403 B: *Ja, die mag ich SCHON.*
 yes, them like I all-right
 404 ‘Yes, I do like them.’

405 In (32), B is contradicting A. The contradiction goes through the addition of *schon*,
 406 rendering the contradiction softer than a simple denial or a simple verum focus as in
 407 B’, which sounds a bit rude in all variants. In a direct denial such as B’, there is no
 408 zone of penumbra, but just *p* and non-*p*. By contrast, the first part of B calls for a
 409 continuation like one of those offered in parentheses.

410 (32) A: *I thought that Mary is a vegetarian.*

411 B: *Sie isst SCHON Fleisch*
 she eats alright meat
 412 ‘she eats meat alright’ (but only little / but she does not like steakhouses /
 413 in fact she eats everything)

414 B':?Sie ISST *Fleisch* / Doch, sie ISST *Fleisch* / Nein, sie ist KEINE
 she eats meat / Sure she eats meat / no she is no
 415 *Vegetarierin*.
 vegetarian

416 In (33), speaker B may be unsure, and expresses a cautious affirmation. In (33B')
 417 the speaker expresses that until now she believed (or that she still believes) that Anna
 418 is married. In (33B), the speaker is little bit more sure. In fact (33b) is often used
 419 when speakers are dead sure of what they say. The addition of *schon* (and of a zone
 420 of penumbra) may be inserted for politeness. By answering A as in B, the speaker
 421 leaves open to A the possibility of disagreement.

422 (33) A: *Is Anna married?*
 423 B: *Das glaube ich SCHON*
 that believe I alright
 424 'I think so.'
 425 B': *Das GLAUBE ich*
 that believe I
 426 'I think she is.'

427 In (34), the role of *schon* is illustrated further. On a scale consisting of disagree-
 428 ment (A believes that Mary was not there, and B believes that she was there), agree-
 429 ment (A and B believe that she was not there), and zone of penumbra (B believes
 430 that Mary was there and lets open whether A believes that Mary was there), speaker
 431 B chooses the zone of penumbra. By contrast, B' and B'' are more direct, and elicit
 432 only non-*p* as a reaction to *p*. Observe that C is ill-formed as a reply to A. The reason
 433 is that a given element (*da* 'there' is anaphoric to *auf der Party*) is accented. In B,
 434 only *schon* (affirmation + scale) is new and accented.

435 (34) A: *A pity that Mary was not at the party.*
 436 B: *Aber Maria war SCHON da.*
 But Maria was already there
 437 'But Mary was there.'
 438 B': *Aber Maria WAR da.*
 439 B'': *Aber Maria war DA.*
 440 C: **Aber Maria war schon DA.*

441 In (35) and (36), the difference between focus particle and free focus *schon* is
 442 illustrated with pairs. In the B versions, the focus particle use of *schon* is used, and

443 in the C versions, the free focus version.¹⁶

444 (35) A: *Mary did not come yet.*

445 B: *Doch sie ist schon* [DA]_F
yes she is already there

446 C: *Doch, sie ist SCHON gekommen (aber sie ist gleich gegangen).*
yes she is alright come but she is immediately gone
447 ‘Well, she was there (but she left immediately).’

448 (36) A: *I’ll do some shopping. Do we need milk?*

449 B: *Nein, Maria hat schon* [drei LITER]_F *gekauft.*
no Mary has already three liters bought

450 C: *Ja, SCHON.*
yes sure

451 In the examples with *schon* as a free focus discussed so far, nothing new or high-
452 lighted is introduced into the B sentences, containing *schon*. All constituents have
453 been already mentioned in the previous sentences. There is thus no word which can
454 carry the accent by default, except for *schon*. Since this word focuses the affirma-
455 tive part of the scale (albeit the penumbrious one), it has an evident verum focus
456 component.

457 But this is not necessarily so. The next example shows that it is also possible to
458 have another (primary) focus beside the one associated with *schon*, which is now a
459 secondary focus (compare (37) with (28)). Due to the deaccenting of the postnuclear
460 part of the sentence, which includes everything after *Mary*, it is difficult to get the
461 reading of *schon* as a focus particle. But it is not impossible. The context could be a
462 situation in which person A asks whether Peter and Maria already peeled three apples
463 each, as planned. Person P may utter (37) as an answer. In fact, as already discussed
464 above, *nur Maria* cannot be a topic, which means that the preferred reading of this
465 sentence is one in which it is the primary focus.

466 (37) *Nur MARIA hat schon drei Äpfel geschält.*

467 only Mary has schon three apples peeled
‘Only Mary peeled three apples.’

468 In the following examples, the difference between the two uses is also not evident.
469 In (38), the adjective *merkwürdig* ‘strange’ is accented if new, but *schon* is easier to
470 interpret as a free focus than as a focus particle taking the adjective in its scope. The
471 latter is not impossible but implies that a scale is created. Being strange is then a

¹⁶ True minimal pairs were introduced in (3) and (7).

472 position on this scale. I assume that the strong preference for the reading of *schon*
 473 in (38) as a free focus is due to the absence of such a scale. This example shows
 474 that to be a free focus does not necessarily means being accented. In fact, a stronger
 475 adjacent accent suppresses the one on *schon* (see Féry (2010) with such cases with
 476 other particles).

477 (38) *Es ist schon* [MERKWÜRDIG]_F
 it is schon strange
 478 'It is sure strange'

479 In both (39) and (40), the verb is accented and *schon* is not or less so, but still *schon*
 480 may be interpreted in its free focus role. The example (40) serves as an illustration
 481 of what may have happened in a grammaticalisation process from a focus particle
 482 reading to a free focus reading of *schon*. The preverbal position of *schon* is the default
 483 syntactic position for this word (see for instance Ormelius-Sandblom (1997b); Klein
 484 (2007)). If it takes the verb as an associate element, it says that the event has taken
 485 place, and that it took place earlier than expected. As shown in this paper, *schon*
 486 focuses on the affirmative part of the sentence. In its free focus reading, *schon* does
 487 exactly the same, except that it does not include in its meaning the part 'earlier than
 488 expected'. Thus both the focus particle reading and the free focus reading emphasize
 489 the affirmative part of the sentence. As a result, the free focus reading is a subset of
 490 the focus particle reading, and this latter reading (with the early component) needs an
 491 associate element to arise. It is easy to imagine situations where the scale is intended
 492 by the speaker (like not taken place, begun, taken place), but not understood by the
 493 hearer. In such a case, the free focus reading is created and only the affirmative part
 494 is perceived as focused.

495 (39) *Das schaffe ich schon.*
 that manage I schon
 496 'I can do that'

497 (40) *Schon passiert*
 schon taken-place
 498 'too late'

499 Before closing this chapter, a last remark is in order. It has often been observed in
 500 the literature that *schon* as a focus particle can occupy more syntactic positions than
 501 as a free focus. The reason for this difference is that when it associates it has to show
 502 the element it associates with by adjacency, whereas as a free focus it is a sentence
 503 adverb, without much freedom in its location (see Ormelius-Sandblom (1997b,a) for
 504 a survey). A more complete survey should review the syntactic aspects in more detail.

505 The relationship between information structure, prosody and syntax is left for future
506 research.

507 4. Conclusion

508 This paper has proposed that there is only one lexical item *schon* and that its two
509 meanings is a consequence of the fact that it can be used as a focus particle or as
510 a free focus. Both uses of *schon* emphasize the assertive or affirmative part of a
511 sentence, and both introduce a scale. In its use as a focus particle (as a temporal
512 adverb or phase adverb or aspectual particle), *schon* takes an associate focus element.
513 The combination of *schon* and its associate element elicits a scale and conveys that
514 the change/event/state expressed by the associate element is earlier on this scale than
515 expected. In its use as a modal particle, *schon* is a free focus. It also asserts the
516 sentence, and has thus as before a strong affirmative or verum component. In this
517 case, there is no associate element, but still a scale is elicited by *schon*. This scale
518 goes from denial (disagreement between the protagonists) to affirmation (agreement
519 between them). *Schon* adds a zone of penumbra, leaving place for disagreement
520 between speaker and hearer. The added nuance is often concessive or just polite.

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