B. Defining Modal Particles

Handout 2: Defining Modal Particles: *ja*

a) Various meanings of *ja*:
   1. Answering particle (= ‘yes’)
      **Example (chat):**
      Nils: reden wir heute im großen Kreise?
      Laura: ja
      Alma-Lora: ja wegen dem projekt.
   2. Discourse particle (= ‘yeah’, ‘yes’)
      **Example (email):**
      Wir sehen uns später im Chat. Ach ja, und grüß wieder Deine Familie und Deine Freunde.
   3. Modal particle: an intensifier, strengthening:
      - evidence of shared knowledge (something is assumed to be already known by both partners)
      - presupposed agreement with the partner, willingness to cooperate
      - appraisal

b) Types of sentences in which the MP *ja* can appear:
   1. Declaratives, or statements (used to tell someone something):
      **Example (email):**
      Kinder sind *ja* natürliche und unschuldige Geschöpfe.
   2. Exclamations (a subtype of declaratives used to express an appraisal of something that you telling):
      **Example (chat):**
      Das ist *ja* cool!!

c) Examples of native speaker usage of the MP *ja* with commentary:
   1. **Example (email):**
      Nils: Nächste Woche haben wir einen Feiertag am Dienstag und werden wohl keinen
      Chat mit euch haben können. […] Aber dafür haben wir *ja* die mails.

   **Commentary:** Nils expresses regret that he could not have a chat session with his American partners because of a German holiday. However, he thinks that the fact that they can still email each other makes up for their missed chat session. He uses the MP *ja* to refer to common knowledge among the partners that they have an alternative means of communication (email).

   2. **Example (chat):**
      Carine: Did your professor say[] somethi[n]g about the webpage yet? […]
      Jeremy: um, meine Professor[in] hat [gesagt,] es ist gut […]
      Sonja: Echt? Das ist *ja* super.

   **Commentary:** The modal particle *ja* intensifies a positive appraisal of a fact discussed by the partners.