

## B. Defining Modal Particles

### Handout 4: Defining Modal Particles: *denn*

#### a) Various meanings of *denn*:

1. Coordinating conjunction (= 'because')

**Example (email):**

Ich werde jetzt versuchen alle deine Fragen zu beantworten, *denn* es freut mich, dass du so neugierig bist.

2. Temporal adverb (=dann, 'then')

**Example (email):**

Nun *denn*, das war's für heute.

3. Modal particle:

- refers back to something previously stated or to the context of situation
- renders a question more natural and friendly
- emphasizes the interest of the speaker in the interlocutor's response

#### b) Types of sentences in which the MP *denn* can appear:

Only interrogatives, or questions (used to ask someone something):

**Examples (chat):**

Wie spät ist es *denn* jetzt bei euch?

#### c) Examples of native speaker usage of the MP *denn* with commentary:

**Example (email):**

na, wie geht es dir *denn* heute? [...]

Ah, du schwimmst. Wie oft machst du das *denn*?

**Commentary:** *In the first sentence, which is an email opening, **denn** refers back to a previous correspondence between Nina and Paula. In the second occurrence, **denn** refers back to the preceding sentence. **Denn** thus functions as a cohesive device, or connector. In both occurrences, **denn** also expresses friendliness and interest in the partner's response.*