

## 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.*