The Peculiar Particle *Halt*: a Linguistic Analysis

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**Introduction:**

The problem with flavoring particles is that they are so difficult to pin down. They frequently lack lexical meaning, are syntactically flexible (in that they can occupy different positions in a sentence), and are pragmatically complex (their pragmatic value is a function of context: the speaker's intention and mood at the time of utterance, the listener's interpretation, and so on). They add flavor to a sentence and indirectly convey information about it. In this sense they express *meta-information* about a statement: they provide insight on the information conveyed by a sentence, but are not themselves part of the essential information revealed. An example explains this better.

The English *just* functions as a flavoring particle in some contexts. In the sentence, "It's just not true!" the *just* adds intensity and assertiveness to the sentence; the same sentence without the *just*--"It's not true"--could well be construed to be an uncertain one. However, the inclusion of *just* in the sentence does not allow for such an interpretation. The speaker of this sentence would be held to be certain about the truth-value of the sentence and could moreover be considered to express his/her claim with a certain vehemence and defensiveness. An exclamation mark, such as the one above, suits this sentence well, and is indeed almost to be expected. The sentence, "It's just not true!" being more categorical would also lend itself only awkwardly to a question format: thus, the question, "Is it just not true?" would sound bizarre. Qualifications to the sentence would similarly also sound a little deviant; thus, a sentence like “It’s just not true, but in some instances it could be” could definitely cause some bewilderment.

All this is implicit knowledge about *the nature* of the utterance that the listener
could gather: this information comments on the context and mood of the sentence but
does not directly influence its truth-value (ultimately, that the speaker does not believe
something or other to be true remains unchanged). Flavoring particles, thus, possess
variable syntactic roles and complex semantic and pragmatic functions. To make matters
more complicated, several particles—such as *like* in the sentence, "This like huge,
foaming crazy *mutt* of a dog came up, like, right up to me the other day!"—are used only
in oral speech, colloquially. As a consequence, flavoring particles often present special
challenges of acquisition to the non-native speaker of a language. The subtlety of the
particles means that only a thorough, intuitive knowledge of the language they occur in
ensures their grammatical usage and an accurate understanding of the secondary
information they convey.

The German word *halt* is especially interesting to analyze in this context. *Halt*
can be set into three different categories: as a noun (*der Halt*='stop' or 'hold' or 'support'),
as an irregular verb (infinitive verb: *halten*='to stop'), and as a flavoring particle (*halt*).
The focus of this thesis is the function and nature of the particle *halt*. However, the
nominal and verbal counterparts of this word are also addressed in some detail. This is
done not only as it might be a matter of intellectual interest but also in order to set the
three forms of *halt* clearly apart from each other by revealing their innate dissimilarities.

This thesis is divided into three broad segments. The first segment examines the
discourse contexts in which *halt* may legitimately occur. Several reasonably detailed
discourse-excerpts from the German magazine *Der Spiegel* are provided as primary
sources; each of these excerpts reveals *halt* as a part of natural discourse. Some of the
questions asked in this section are:
How is *halt* influenced by the discourse context it occurs in, and how does it, in turn, affect the context?

What kind of meta-information about a sentence does this particle provide?

In this context, the meanings of *halt* as a function of discourse and the role of *halt* as a mood-marker, are examined.

The second section looks at sentential and discourse contexts in which *halt* is not licensed. It is seen that *halt* is not licensed in questions. Five types of questions: affirmative yes-no questions, negated yes-no questions, wh-affirmative questions, wh-negated questions and tag questions are considered for their licensing properties of *halt*.

The English particle *just*, it is seen, is similar to *halt* in several ways: a comparative study of the respective patterns of *halt* and *just* in the five question-types mentioned above is made.

The rest of the paper attempts to understand the reasons, be they pragmatic, semantic or syntactic, for the restrictive occurrences of *halt* and *just*. Another class of items, that occur restrictively, called Negative Polarity Items (NPIs) are studied in an attempt to understand the behavior of *halt* and *just* through them. The thesis ends with some propositions about some pragmatic licensing conditions for *halt* and *just*.

The primary sources for this thesis were a group of seven to eight native German speakers, and several excerpts from the German magazine, *Der Spiegel*. 
The **halt** Issue

1.0 Three Syntactic Functions of **halt**: As mentioned earlier, **halt** can be classified under three different categories: as a noun, as a verb, and as a particle.

1.1 **halt** as a noun—*Der Halt*: Here, *der Halt* is straightforwardly used to mean, "stop", "stability", "support" or "hold". The phrasal construction: "Vor nichts **Halt** machen" means "To make a stop at nothing" or "To stop at nothing". A few more sentences taken from published articles in the German magazine *Der Spiegel* illustrate its meaning more clearly:

"Die Big-Brother-Gesellschaft macht vor dem Fußball nicht **Halt**.
**Gloss:** The Big-Brother society makes before the[dat.] soccer not **Halt**.

**Translation:** "The Big-Brother society does not even stop at soccer" (i.e.) "It does not even respect soccer".

It is useful to note that, in this particular example, the noun *der Halt* is used idiomatically, which leads to the somewhat figurative nature of its translation.

"Zudem scheine der Strompreisverfall zu einem **Halt** gekommen zu sein"
**Gloss:** Also seems the electricity-price-decay to a[dat.] **Halt** come[pres.part.] to be.

**Translation:** "The stormy price decline also seems to have come to a Halt/stop".

As can be seen from the above examples, this usage of *(der) Halt* is a fairly straightforward one and bears no resemblance to **Halt** as a flavoring or modal particle.
One of the main distinguishing features of *Halt* the noun, which differentiates it from its verbal and particle counterparts, is that *Halt*, like all German nouns, is capitalized.

1.2 Halt as a Verb: *Halt* is also used as a verb, with an infinitive form *halten* which means "to support", "to hold" or "to stop". It is, thus, semantically related to the noun *(der) Halt*. The following sentences are therefore conceivable:

a. 
   *Halte* meine Schlüssel, bitte!  
   Gloss: *Halte* [2sg. imper.] my [accus.] keys please!  
   Translation: "Hold my keys, please!"

b. 
   "*Halt*! Was machst du denn hier?" schrie der Polizist laut.  
   Gloss: "*Halt* [2sg. imper.]! What do/doing [2sg.] you then here” cried the policeman aloud.  
   Translation: "‘Stop! What are you doing here?’ cried the policeman aloud”.

   Sentence examples [a] and [b] above are especially interesting because they present the verb *halten* in its imperative mood. It will be seen later that the particle *halt*, which is the focus of this paper, can also be used in conjunction with a verb in the imperative mood (i.e.) in the discourse context of a command. Thus, the verbal *halten* and the particle *halt* are not only lexically equivalent but can also occur in similar discourse contexts. However, the verb *halten* and the particle *halt* perform quite different syntactic, semantic and pragmatic functions in the discourses they occur.

b. 
   Der weise Säufer *hält* seinen Mund.  
   Gloss: The [nom. masc.] wise drunk *hält* his [accus.] mouth.  
   Translation: "The wise drunk holds his tongue".

   *Halt* as a verb forms several compound verbs such as *sich unterhalten*—a reflexive verb meaning "to discuss with each other" or, "to entertain oneself" and *anhalten* ("to
The roles of *halt* as a noun and as a verb are interesting for their own sakes, but bear little resemblance to the particle *halt* outside that of the lexical (note, however, Pg. 5 for discourse context similarity). They are, thus, not studied further in this paper which focuses on the role of *halt* as a particle in German.

1.3 *Halt* as a Particle: The third usage of *halt* is as a flavoring or modal particle. A complex word whose meaning and implications are difficult to pin down, it has an interesting linguistic history. It is said to have descended from the Middle-High German *halt* which was used as a comparative adverb to mean ‘more’ or ‘far more’; the Middle-High German itself can be traced back to the Old-High German *halto*, which meant ‘far’ [Schlieben-Lange 1979: 310]. Schlieben-Lange argues that *halt*, the particle, as it is currently used, has lost all connection in meaning to those of its historic counterparts. But it could be argued, perhaps, and not without controversy, that *halt* still retains some resemblance to its original meanings in the figurative sense. Thus, the Old-German *halto* could be construed as meaning ‘far’ in the sense of ‘out of reach,’ and, in extension, ‘unchangeable’. The modern *halt* conveys a strong mood of unchangeability, and could be semantically related to *halto* in this sense.

2.0 The Particle *halt*:

The particle *halt* occurs, as mentioned earlier, almost exclusively in oral language. There are two important consequences to this property. One is that there is no written grammar in German for the legitimate usage and description of *halt*. Another not
completely unrelated feature is that *halt* is very sensitive to discourse contexts such as tone of utterance, intonation, and sociolinguistic factors like regional and age variations—for its interpretation.

Nevertheless, *halt* is not a loose filler-word that can be used just about anywhere. Not all sentence constructions license the usage of *halt*: there appear to be definite syntactic and semantic surroundings in which *halt* may be allowed to occur. It is interesting to study different types of sentential constructions—Yes-No, Wh- or rhetorical questions, exclamations, antecedent-consequent clause constructions, negations, commands, topical sentences, focus sentences and so on—for their licensing or anti-licensing properties of *halt*. Within the sentence (i.e.) at the morphemic level, also, there seem to be restrictions on the placement of *halt*. There are some sentence positions—for example, the beginning of a sentence—that *halt* can never assume. While the licensing rules may vary according to discourse and sociolinguistic factors, they are, nevertheless, useful to study in order to learn about the linguistic nature of *halt*.

2.1 Discourse Analysis of the Particle *halt*:

This is perhaps best illustrated with examples. The following sentences, also taken from published articles of *Der Spiegel*, reveal *halt* in different contexts.

2.1.1 Article about Helsinki as a dubious tourist attraction, *Der Spiegel*, 20. October 2000

Discourse Context: This particular passage in the article deals with the communication problems, often amusing, that tourists in Finland face because of the difficulty of the

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1 The implicit/inferred meanings of *halt* are set in italics, in order to differentiate them from the rest of the text.
Finnish language; the speakers in this passage are two tourists at the opera in Helsinki who appear to have no idea they are at the opera-house, listening to music with a Finnish libretto!

Excerpt 1: "In Reihe sieben hat jemand schon eine Idee für die erste Pause: 'Ja, mit viel Peperoni, aber bitte kein Thunfisch...' Ein anderer in Reihe vier: 'Es ist zu laut, hier singen halt welche. Also, bis später'".

Sentence 1: Es ist zu laut, hier singen halt welche.
Gloss 1: It is too loud, here sing halt some.

There are two ways of paraphrasing this excerpt.

Rough Paraphrase 1 (moods of dissatisfaction and resignation): "In row seven, someone already has an idea for the first break: 'Yeah, with a lot, of pepperoni, but please, no tuna...' Another in row four: 'It's too loud, there are some who sing here, it is the unalterable if unwelcome fact that there are some who sing here. So, till later!'

The halt in Sentence 1 could, thus, be interpreted as communicating a dissatisfaction with a situation (here, that people are singing and causing a disturbance); however, this sense of discontent is also accompanied by an acceptance that the situation is unalterable. This might explain why this speaker leaves the hall of disturbance with a farewell to the addressee instead of attempting to quiet the singers (the speaker recognizes and accepts this as impossible).

This implied mood of (resigned) discontent associated with halt in this context brings up another interesting property of halt—its semantic role as pejorative mood-marker. Thus, even without the overt pejorative addendum "It is too loud," Sentence 1 could be construed as expressing dissatisfaction.

What happens when a halt sentence is combined with a positive implicatory
clause? A sentence similar to 1 but without the usage of *halt* could contain a positive implicatory clause with no complications whatsoever, as Sentence 2 reveals.

**Sentence 2:** Hier singen welche und es gefällt mir.
**Gloss 2:** Here sing some and it pleases[dat.] me.

This is a fairly straightforward sentence. The same sentence with *halt* included would, however, be a little more complicated because of the slightly negative flavor of *halt* and its immediate juxtaposition with an explicitly positive clause.

Thus, **Sentence 3:** Hier singen *halt* welche und es gefällt mir.
**Gloss 3:** Here sing *halt* some, and it pleases[dat.] me.

**Sentence 3,** unlike **Sentence 2,** does not have a straightforward meaning. This sentence could be considered well formed if it were considered a sarcastic statement or as a defensive retort to the possible question: Gefällt dir wirklich solche Musik?!

**Gloss:** Pleases[dat.] you really such music?

**Translation:** “Do you really like such music?”

The *halt* could also occur at the end of Sentence 3, to produce: Hier singen welche und es gefällt mir *halt.*” This sentence is also well formed in those discourse circumstances wherein defensiveness or sarcasm are employed. In these examples, it has been seen that although *halt* is a pejorative mood-marker it can be used in sentences with non-pejorative clauses. However, in these instances, the resulting sentences (**Sentence 3**, for example) do not have a straightforward meaning and are either sarcastic or defensive (thus, mildly and implicitly pejorative, even here).

In the sense of "after all", *halt* serves to convey a mildly defensive, superficial/trivial justification of a previous statement—in this example, the second
speaker's assertion that it is too loud. A possible paraphrasing of this statement might thus be:

Rough Paraphrase 1’ (mood of defensiveness): "It is too loud here; see/after all, there are some who are singing (and this proves that I am right in asserting that it is too loud here). So, till later!"

2.1.2. Article about Paul Simon and the release of his latest CD: Der Spiegel, 19. October 2000

Discourse Context: This is a laudatory article about Paul Simon and the release of his new album. “You’re the One”. In this particular passage Simon explains why he dismissed several members of his band before the release of his new album.

Excerpt 2: "Dass er mitten in der Arbeit kurzerhand fast seine komplette Band austauschte, erklärte Simon mit, “ein paar scheinbar nicht zu klärenden Differenzen”. Und für die Kunst müsse halt manchmal auch gelitten werden".

Sentence 4: Und für die Kunst müsse halt manchmal gelitten werden.
Gloss 4: And for the [accus.] art must [modal pres. subj.] halt sometimes suffered [pres. part.] be [with pass. modal].

Rough Paraphrase: "That he, without further ado, dismissed almost his entire band in the middle/course of his work, explained Simon as, 'a few seemingly irreconcilable differences'. And for (the sake of) art, one must after all sometimes also suffer and that's just the way it is!"

Once again, the sense of resigned acceptance comes through; also, the negative connotation of halt is clear. It is, thus, appropriate that halt should be used in the overt negative clause: "gelitten werden" ("be suffered"). As in the previous example, a
sentence with halt in an explicitly positive clause is not well formed, because of the implicit contradiction of truth-values. Thus:

Sentence 5: Und für die Kunst müsse halt manchmal auch gefeiert werden.
Gloss 5: And for the [accus.] art must [modal pres. subj. 2] halt sometimes also celebrated [pres. part.] werden [infin. aux. verb accompanying mod. pass.].

Again, halt can be interpreted as also conveying an implicit, superficial justification/excuse for a previous statement (in this case, of Paul Simon's dissolving his band in the course of his work). Interestingly enough, halt is also used a trifle facetiously or flippantly in this context. The author has not seriously researched the validity of his claim that matters must be endured for the high ideals of art. His final statement is only a casual justification of Simon's actions—albeit strengthened by the categorical halt.

2.1.3: The “Aboutness” of halt Sentences:

So far, the role of halt as a mildly pejorative mood-marker of inalterability, resignation and slight defensiveness has been seen. Another important feature of halt that is well exemplified here is its nature as a context-succeeding particle. Sentence 4 follows in the wake of a previously established context: it even commences with a conjunction, and is, in fact, the concluding line of the article. However, even without the conjunction, this sentence could not be the opening line of an article. This relates to the fact that halt is often used in answers to questions (the context being pre-established in the question).

Brigitte Schlieben-Lange, a linguist from Frankfurt, classifies the lone sentence, “Ich bin halt krank” as ungrammatical.

2 The symbol “¿” is used here to indicate a sentence that is located in the gray area between bizarre (#) and ungrammatical (*). Thus, it indicates that the sentence is clearly odd-sounding, but that it is not clear if the
Sentence 6: Ich bin halt krank.
Gloss 6: I am halt sick.

[Schlieben-Lange, 1979: 312]

Thus, Sentence 6: *"Ich bin halt krank". However, as an answer to the question: "Warum bist du denn so fad?" ("Why are you then so dull/sleepy?") the same sentence is considered perfectly grammatical. Schlieben-Lange paraphrases the answer to the above question thus:

Rough Paraphrase: "Ich bin halt krank ('und kranke Menschen sind nicht besonders munter')--"I am just sick (and sick people aren't especially chirpy!)."

From this, it could be gathered that halt could never occur in a lone-sentence or in a sentence that commences a discourse. Can it be inferred from this behavior that halt occurs exclusively in discourse topics? From the definition of a discourse topic, it is seen that a topic sentence could itself never provide new information: it is a proposition about which new information is supplied or sought. However, it is seen that Sentence 6 above: "Ich bin halt krank" actually does present new information: it presents the new information that the speaker is sick. Thus, halt could not, by definition, actually be a part of a topic discourse.

This does not invalidate the "aboutness" of "halt" sentences, which is still valid. The halt in Sentence 6 is acceptable only if it refers back to, or is about, a subject that has been previously mentioned or has been somehow established as part of the discourse (such an establishment could even occur extra-linguistically, with gestures or other
actions, for instance). The *halt* sentence, thus, has to have a *context-precedent*; to put it more idiomatically, it cannot be an *out-of-the-blue* sentence.

This certainly does not mean, however, that the *halt* sentence itself cannot provide new information: it can merely not provide information about something that has no context-precedent in the discourse. The notions of *context-boundedness* and *aboutness* form a very significant role in determining the wellformedness of a *halt* sentence. This issue is addressed in greater detail later on in this paper.


Discourse Context: This article is about the comeback into the pop-music scene of the music group *The Go-Betweens*. Excerpt 3 refers to the incident in 1990 when the two members of the group, Robert Forster and Grant McLennan parted ways. McLennan elucidates the reasons behind this separation.

Excerpt 3: "Es gab damals keinen Streit zwischen uns," sagt McLennan. *Es war halt nur so, dass sich die Go-Betweens in den ersten zehn Jahren in einer irgendwie irrealen Welt befanden und keine Zeit hatten, wirklich erwachsen zu werden".*

Sentence 7: *Es war halt nur so, dass sich die Go-Betweens in den ersten zehn Jahren in einer irgendwie irrealen Welt befanden.*

Gloss 7: It was *halt* only so that themselves [*reflexive-verb marker*] the Go-Betweens in the first ten years in a somehow unreal world found.

Rough Paraphrase A: 'There was, at the time, no argument between us,' says McLennan. 'It was simply and that's just the way it was; nothing could have been done about it only that in the first ten years the Go-Betweens found themselves in a somehow unreal world and had no time to become really grown-up".'
The use of *halt* in a negative context, as well as its function as a marker of a resigned mood are seen here. McLennan's interviewer could have gathered from the latter's use of *halt* that McLennan was being dissatisfied with the situation, but accepts, nevertheless, its negative aspects without fighting them.

A slightly different interpretation of Sentence 7 might be to interpret *halt* as the marker of a defensive mood (as in the first excerpt). The interviewer might, thus, also interpret McLennan as being defensive; McLennan is then seen as categorically accepting the previous nature of the Go-Betweens as inevitable, and as refusing to be drawn into a further justification of things.

Rough Paraphrase B: ‘There was, at the time, no argument between us,’ says McLennan. “It was simply (implication: "That's just the way things were, and sorry, but I can't do anything about it now") only that in the first ten years the Go-Betweens found themselves in a somehow unreal world and had no time to become really grown-up”.

2.1.5 *Halt* as a Filler: Semantically Empty?

*Halt* can also occur as a filler. Thus, it could occur in a sentence like:

"Und dann sagte Obelix *halt*, 'Diese Römer sind wahnsinnig!' ".

**Sentence 8:** Und dann sagte Obelix *halt*, "Diese Römer sind wahnsinnig!"
**Gloss 8:** And then said Obelix *halt*, "These Romans are crazy!"

In Sentence 8, the *halt* could be considered semantically empty, and could, hence, be seen as serving only to add a colloquial flavor to the utterance. By this interpretation, if the *halt* were to be removed from the sentence, the semantic implications of the sentence would be completely unchanged. In this role as a filler, *halt* would resemble,
perhaps, the English filler "like". It is important to note, however, that it does not resemble "like" in the translation:

**Sentence 9:** And then Obelix was like, “These Romans are crazy!”

In Sentence 9, "like" together with its preceding verb "was" stands for the verb "said", "uttered" or any other synonym thereof. Unlike the filler *halt* in Sentence 9, the "like" in this sentence could not be removed from the sentence without any change to the sentence:

Compare **Sentence 10:** *And then Obelix was, “These Romans are crazy!”*

Syntactically, *halt* behaves, instead, like the “like” in:

**Sentence 11:** And then Obelix said; “These Romans are, like, crazy!”

In Sentence 11, the removal of the word “like” makes no semantic difference to the sentence, *just* as the removal of *halt* in Sentence 8 has no semantic impact on the sentence.

This usage of *halt*, however, does not seem to be very common and is, quite conceivably, *just* a regional characteristic.

It has, however, also been argued⁵ that *halt* in this context is not semantically empty after all, but has the subtle non-overt semantic meaning of ‘simply’ or ‘just’ (a previously discussed meaning of *halt*). It is not clear whether *halt* is semantically empty (and should, hence, be treated as different from the mood-marker *halt* hitherto seen) or full. Nevertheless, it is a significant point in the favor of the latter interpretation (*halt* as semantically non-empty) that *halt* cannot occur in questions (this feature of *halt* is discussed in great detail later on in this paper). If the *halt* is to be treated as semantically

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⁵ The interviewed native German speakers had different opinions about this and no unanimous conclusion was reached.
empty and as serving only to add colloquial flavor to the sentence, the question would naturally arise as to why this semantically empty halt could not occur in questions. No convincing argument has been found against this in this paper—which strongly suggest that as halt does, indeed, not occur in questions, it is probably not semantically empty, although conceivably having a very small semantic force.

2.1.6 halt in Imperative Contexts: Commands and Strong Requests:

Halt is also used in imperative constructions, such as “Komm halt!” and “Komm halt nicht!”.

Sentence 12: Komm halt!
Gloss 12: Come (2sg. imp.) halt!

Rough Paraphrase: “Oh, just come!”

Consider, Sentence 13: Komm!

Conceivable Discourse Context: One might conceive a situation wherein the speaker is trying to persuade the reluctant addressee(s) to accompany him/her to a destination. The halt in Sentence 12 adds a mood of persuasion to what would otherwise be an imperative command (ref. Sentence 12). The halt, thus, tones down the imperious/authoritative mood of Sentence 12.

The negation of sentences 12 and 13 are interesting to examine in this context.

Consider, Sentence 14: Komm halt nicht!
Gloss 14: Come (2 informal sg. imper.) halt not!

Sentence 15: Komm nicht!

Rough Paraphrase of Sentence 15: “Then just don’t come!”
Conceivable Discourse Context for Sentence 14: A plausible discourse context for Sentence 14 would be one wherein the speaker, after trying several times, in vain, to persuade the addressee(s) to accompany him/her to a destination (in a sentence such as 12), finally exclaims in vexation and resignation, “Fine, then just don’t come!”

Two interesting aspects of *halt* are evidenced in this discourse. One is the role of *halt* as a mood-marker of frustration and resignation (which has already been discussed in Sub-division 1 of this summary, Ref. Page 10). Another, is the use of *halt* to set the bottom-line—to end a discourse (also mentioned earlier, Ref. Page 10).

In all the examples above, *halt* occurs in the wake of a pre-established discourse context, and never introduces discourse. This refers back to the “aboutness” of *halt* that has been introduced in Section 2.1.3.

2.1.7 Discourse Analysis of *halt*: a Summary:

From the above examples, it is seen that *halt*:

1) expresses two slightly varying moods.

a] It expresses the speaker's dissatisfaction with a situation but implies, nevertheless, that the speaker understands the situation as being unalterable and accepts it, and looks for other ways of getting out of the situation; it assigns, therefore, a negative mood to the utterance (ref. Rough Paraphrases 1, 2, 3).

b) It is used defensively as a justification of previous statement/action (Ref. Rough Paraphrases 1', 2, 3'). This justification is only superficial: it derives its strength not from careful research or strength of argument, but from the very categorical nature assigned it by *halt*, wherein the speaker implicitly conveys that he/she is not willing to
draw out the matter further (which is why *halt* is also frequently used in concluding sentences), and thereby immunizes himself/herself from further argument.

2) It occurs within a pre-established discourse context (i.e.) in a topical context. It is not well formed in a clause that introduces a new idea i.e. without a pre-established context (ref. Sentence 6 under Excerpt 2). For this reason:

--It occurs seldom at the beginning of paragraphs --occurs frequently in answers to questions –is reactionary in nature; this particular aspect of *halt* also fits in with its role as defensive/dissatisfied mood-marker (both reactionary moods).

3) It can be used as a filler-word, much like the English word like in the sentence, “This *like* huge, big do came up, *like*, right up to me!” This usage of *halt* might, however, be a regional characteristic. It has also been seen how the notion that *halt* is semantically empty is a controversial one: one that is, further, not supported by the fact that *halt* is not licensed in questions.

4) *Halt* is used in sentences that have an imperative mood: in commands and strong requests, for instance, as in the sentence “Mach’s *halt!*” (Translation: “Just do it!”). In such contexts, the presence of the *halt* tones down the strength of the command, and makes it less authoritative in nature.

---

*Seven to eight native German speakers were interviewed about this usage of *halt*; not everyone agreed that this was a valid usage of the particle. As the native speakers come from different parts of Germany, Austria and Switzerland, it was concluded that regional variations may be, at least partly, responsible for this selective usage of *halt.*
2.2 Contexts in which *halt* is not Licensed—a Comparison of *halt* and *just*:

So far, the sentential and discourse contexts in which *halt* may legitimately occur have been examined. However, despite the subtle and often nebulous meanings of the particle, there appear to be definite syntactic, semantic and pragmatic restrictions that curtail the usage of *halt* in sentences. It has, for example, already been seen that *halt* cannot introduce a discourse, but must always follow in the wake of a pre-established context. Below is an analysis of the linguistic contexts in which *halt* may not occur.

2.2.1 The Behavior of *halt* and *just* in Questions:

*Halt* is frequently (almost always) not licensed in the context of question. This section examines the behavior of *halt* with respect to the following different types of questions: affirmative yes-no questions, negated yes-no questions (which are really rhetorical questions), affirmative wh-questions, negated wh-questions, and tag questions.

The English particle, *just*, has a similar meaning to *halt* in some contexts. It is helpful to examine *just* for its behavior in these different question-types in order to understand the behavior of the German *halt* better. The following sections offer an overview of the behavior of *halt* and *just* in the different question-types listed above. In reading the question-examples provided below, it is important to keep in mind that the occurrence of *halt* and *just* in these contexts is always contingent on there being a discourse context for their occurrence. Please note that the data for this analysis has been attained from interviews conducted with native German speakers as well as from secondary literature, mostly articles, on the issue.
2.2.1.1 Affirmative Yes-No Questions:

The Behavior of *halt*: *halt* is not licensed in affirmative yes-no questions. Consider the sentence:

Sentence 15: Das Leben ist *halt* schrecklich.
Gloss 15: The [nom. 3sg. neut.] life is *halt* horrible.

Rough Paraphrase: "Life is *just* simply terrible". Sentence 15 is a perfectly grammatical sentence but the same sentence as a question is ungrammatical or bizarre:

Thus, Sentence 16: Ist das Leben *halt* schrecklich?
Gloss 16: Is the [nom. 3sg. neut.] life *halt* horrible?

Now, consider the minimal pairs:

Sentence 16: Ist das Leben *halt* schrecklich?
Sentence 17: Ist das Leben schrecklich?

The only difference between the minimal pair is the presence or absence of *halt*.

This leads one to assume that the presence of *halt* in these sentences is directly responsible for their bizarreness/ungrammaticality.

Why does the inclusion of *halt* in Sentence 16 make it ill formed?

Perhaps the categorical, absolute quality of the modal particle does not allow it to be easily set in an interrogative context (since a question does not categorically presume the validity of its answer).

The Behavior of *Just*: It has already been seen (Ref. Introduction, Pg.1) how, in the case of *just* as a flavoring particle, the sentence reads awkwardly. The question, "Is life *just* horrible?" is not well formed. Thus: Sentence 18: Ist life *just* horrible?

Now, consider the minimal pair:

Sentence 18: Ist life *just* horrible?
Sentence 19: Is life horrible?

The above sentences are direct translations of English Sentences 16 and 17 respectively. Sentence 19 is a perfectly grammatical sentence and, further, does not sound bizarre. In contrast, Sentence 18, like Sentence 16, might be considered to sound strange or, even, ungrammatical.

Thus, Sentence 18: ¿Is life just horrible?

It could, and has been, argued that the reason for the bizarreness or ungrammaticality of sentences like 18 is that just is a categorical adverb and, as such, serves to make the sentence more definitive. Such categoricity does, however, fits oddly or ungrammatically with the tentative interrogative structure of sentences such as 18 (also ref. Introduction, pp. 1-2).

Thus, neither halt nor just can occur in the context of affirmative yes-no questions.

2.2.1.2 Negated Yes-No Questions or Rhetorical Questions:

In this section, the example-questions in the previous section are negated.

The Behavior of just: Consider the minimal pairs:

Sentence 18: ¿Is life just horrible?
Sentence 20: Isn’t life just horrible?

Sentence 18 is, as determined in the previous section, not well formed. However, Sentence 20 which is a negated version of Sentence 18 and is a rhetorical question, is
well formed. From the minimal pair above, it is understood that negation makes the presence of *just* in a yes-no question acceptable.

The Behavior of *halt*: However, in the case of *halt* even the negated sentence as a question would be considered ill formed. Thus,

Sentence 21: Ist das Leben *halt* nicht schrecklich?
Gloss 21: Is the [nom. 3sg. neut.] life *halt* not horrible?

Now, consider the minimal pairs:

Sentence 21: Ist das Leben *halt* nicht schrecklich?
Sentence 22: Ist das Leben nicht schrecklich?

The only difference between sentences 21 and 22 is the presence or absence of *halt*. This leads to the supposition that the presence of *halt* is directly responsible for the illformedness of Sentence 21.

This is an interesting deviation of the German from its English equivalent. The hitherto seen parallel between *halt* and *just* seems to apply only in the cases of affirmative questions; in negated questions, *halt* continues to be ungrammatical or bizarre, but the corresponding question with *just* becomes perfectly grammatical.

2.2.1.3: Tag-Questions:

The Behavior of Halt: *Halt* can occur in tag questions. Thus:

Sentence 23: Das Leben ist *halt* schrecklich, oder?
Gloss 23: The [nom. 3sg. neuter article] life is *halt* horrible, or?
Rough Paraphrase: "Life is *just* horrible, right?"

The Behavior of Just: Sentence 24 is a translation of Sentence 23.

Sentence 24: Life is *just* horrible, right?

This sentence, like Sentence 23, is grammatical.
2.2.1.4: Wh-Affirmative (Non-rhetorical) Questions:

The Behavior of *halt* does not sound well-formed in affirmative wh-questions. Thus, Sentence 25 below is ill-formed:

**Sentence 25:** Warum hast du mich *halt* gefragt?
**Gloss 25:** Why have[2sg, Informal] you me[acc.] *halt* asked?
**Rough Translation:** “Why did you just ask me?”

Consider the minimal pair below:

**Sentence 25:** Warum hast du mich *halt* gefragt?
**Sentence 26:** Warum hast du mich gefragt?

Sentence 25 is ill-formed while Sentence 26, which is the same as Sentence 25, except for the omission of the *halt* is fully grammatical. This shows, again, that the presence of the *halt* is directly responsible for the oddness of Sentence 25.

The Behavior of *just*: *Just* also does not sound wellformed in affirmative interrogative constructions. Thus, Sentence 27 below is not well-formed:

**Sentence 27:** Why did you *just* ask me?

Once again, the same sentence without the *just* (“Why did you ask me?”) is completely grammatical, which leads to the supposition that *just* is the cause of the illformedness of Sentence 27.

2.2.1.5 Wh-Negated/ Rhetorical Questions: Once again, in the case of negated questions, an interesting deviation of the behavior of *halt* from that of *just* presents itself.

---

7 This usage of the word *just* must be differentiated from the use of *just* as a temporal adverb (see Pg. 37 for details). *Just* used in this temporal sense in Sentence 28 would be well-formed (sentence implication: “Why did you ask me *just* now?”). However, *just* is not used in the temporal sense here.
The Behavior of *halt*: The occurrence of *halt* in Wh-negated questions does not appear to be legitimized. Consider the ill-formed Sentence 28 (which is the negated version of Sentence 25) below:

Sentence 28: Warum hast du mich *halt* nicht gefragt?
Gloss 28: Why have[2sg. informal] you me[acc.] *halt* not asked?
Rough Translation: “Why didn’t you just ask me?”

Once again, a look at the minimal pairs:
Sentence 28: Warum hast du mich *halt* nicht gefragt?
Sentence 29: Warum hast du mich gefragt?

reveals that the presence of the *halt* causes the oddness of Sentence 28.

The Behavior of *just*: *Just*, in contrast to *halt*, can legitimately occur in negated/rhetorical questions. Thus, the sentence:

Sentence 30: “Why didn’t you just ask me?” which is the negated version of the ill-formed Sentence 29, above, is completely grammatical. Once again, it appears that the presence of negation has allowed the *just* to appear in this context.

These trends seen above are tabulated below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><em>halt</em></th>
<th><em>just</em></th>
<th><em>halt</em> and <em>just</em>: parallel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Affirmative Yes-No Questions</strong></td>
<td>Ill-formed</td>
<td>Ill-formed</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Negated Yes-No Questions</strong></td>
<td>Ill-formed</td>
<td>Well-formed</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wh-Affirmative Questions</strong></td>
<td>Ill-formed</td>
<td>Ill-formed</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wh-Negated Questions</strong></td>
<td>Ill-formed</td>
<td>Well-formed</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tag-Questions</strong></td>
<td>Well-formed</td>
<td>Well-formed</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is seen from the table above that *halt* and *just* parallel each other in both types (Wh- and yes-no) of affirmative questions, but diverge from each other in both kinds of negated questions. In the case of tag-questions (which could be either affirmative or negated) they parallel each other; however, tag-questions are really statements with a separate interrogatory clause and are, therefore, not studied further in this paper in analyzing the behavior of these particles in the context of questions. To investigate this matter further, the behavior of questions such as those presented above in German and English and of the negation of these questions are considered in further detail.

**2.2.2 Hypothesis I:** This thesis proposes that *halt* and *just* have special *licensing properties* that do not allow certain syntactic constructions. These special licensing conditions could be analyzed as being similar to the licensing conditions in *negative polarity* questions and statements.

An example of a negative polarity question is, *Sentence 31:* "Have you ever eaten mangoes?"

*Sentence 31* is grammatical. However, the same sentence as a statement is definitely ungrammatical.

Consider, *Sentence 32:* *I have ever eaten mangoes.*

The question arises why *Sentence 31* is grammatical, while *Sentence 32* is not. This is the reverse pattern of what has been seen in sentences 15 and 16; in these latter sentences, the question is ungrammatical while the statement is grammatical.

Notice, however, that sentences 31 and 32 negated are both grammatical:

Consider, *Sentence 33:* *Have you never eaten mangoes?*
Sentence 34: I have never eaten mangoes.

Sentences 33 and 34 are both perfectly grammatical. Some of the questions that arise from these trends are:

--Why is "ever" licensed in questions but not in statements?
--Why is "never" licensed in both questions and statements?
--How does negation contribute to the grammaticality of sentences like 34?

Ultimate Question: How could negative polarity be used to explain the behavior of halt and just in the examples seen so far?

2.3 Negative Polarity Items: an Overview

2.3.1 Introduction: Before formally defining NPIs, it is important to understand the concept of affective contexts. "Affective contexts are negative contexts and nonnegative ones that presumably can be reduced to negation" (Giannakidou, 1997: 3). A nonnegative context that can be reduced to negation, should be understood as a context that has a negative implicature built into it. Thus in the sentences:

Sentence 35: Jacob is surprised that Ruth has any friends
Sentence 36: Jacob expected that Ruth does not have any friends.  (Giannakidou: 6)

Sentence 35 has no overt negation but has, however, the implicit negation expressed by sentence 36; it can, therefore, be reduced to negation.

Giannakidou (1997) explains that, "the term negative polarity items (NPIs) has come to be used to refer to those expressions whose distribution is restricted to affective environments". Thus, the occurrence of ever in sentence 32 above:

*I have ever eaten mangoes.
results in an ungrammatical sentence because *ever* does not here occur in a licensing, affective environment. In contrast:

Sentence 34: I have never eaten mangoes = I have not ever eaten mangoes.

is grammatical. This is because *ever*, in sentence 34, occurs in the presence of *not* (a negation) which seems to license its occurrence: in this case, negation would be the affective environment that would license the usage of *ever*. *Ever* is, thus, seen as occurring only in a restricted, polarized (negated) environment and is, hence, a polarity (sensitive) item.

Giannakidou explains how NPIs may be atomic, like *ever* in Sentence 34, but can also be complex, like *lift a finger* in:

Sentence 37: Ruth did not *lift a finger* to help me.

contrast, Sentence 38: *Ruth lifted a finger* to help me. (1997)

The type of affective environments that license NPIs are various. Ladusaw (1979) offers a diverse array of such affective environments, some of which are reproduced below (note: NPIs are italicized):

a. **Determiners**: No one/ At most three people/ Few students who had *ever* read *anything* about phrenology attended *any* of the lectures.

b. **Quantification Adverbs**: I never/ rarely/ seldom *ever* eat *anything* for breakfast anymore.

c. **Prepositions**: John finished his homework without *any* help.

d. **Adverbial Conjunctions**: John will replace the money before/ if *anyone ever* misses it.

e. **Verbs**: John refused/forgot to return *any* of the money.

f. **Adjectives**: It's hard/difficult to find anyone who has *ever* read *anything* much about phrenology. (Ladusaw, 1979)
The issue of negative polarity items has been researched at some length by Klima (1964), Horn (1972), Ladusaw (1979), and others. Two main approaches to the analysis of NPIs have emerged.

2.3.2 The Syntactic Approach:
Klima (1964) and others have approached the issue of NPIs syntactically, and have come up with a formal syntactic licensing condition for NPIs. Klima's licensing condition for NPIs has been paraphrased (Ladusaw, 1979) as below:

"A sentence which contains negative-polarity items will be acceptable only if they are c-commanded by an affective expression".

In other words, the relationship between the licensor of the affective environment and the licensee (NPI) must be local. Such a hypothesis has, however, been discovered to be inadequate because not all NPI licensors c-command their NPIs.

Consider the following examples from Ladusaw 1979 (NPIs are italicized):

Sentence 39: No student who had ever read anything about phrenology attended the lecture.

Here, the NPIs ever and anything are c-commanded by the negative licensor no, which corresponds to Klima's hypothesis. Now consider:

Sentence 40: No student who attended the lecture had ever read anything about phrenology.

In this sentence, NPIs ever and anything are still licensed; they are, however, not c-commanded by no, as in Sentence 39. Thus, Klima's theory is not satisfied.

8 A node a c-commands a node b iff the first branching node dominating a also dominates b (Giannakidou, 1997).
A more comprehensive explanation of legitimized NPIs is the semantic approach of Ladusaw (1979), Hoeksema (1983), Zwarts (1986) and others.

2.3.3 The Semantic Approach: Affective as Downward Entailing:

Before discussing the relevance of downward entailing contexts to NPI, the concept of downward entailment itself is addressed in greater detail.

"A function is downward entailing iff for every arbitrary elements $X, Y$ it holds that: $X \subseteq Y \Rightarrow f(Y) \subseteq f(X)$" (Giannakidou).

The following sentences (Ladusaw) express, thus, a downward entailing context:

Sentence 41: John isn't a man = $f(Y)$
Father ($X$) $\subseteq$ Man ($Y$)
Sentence 42: John isn't a father = $f(X)$
John isn't a man $\subseteq$ John isn't a father. Thus, $f(Y) \subseteq f(X)$.
Thus: $X \subseteq Y$ and $f(Y) \subseteq f(X)$. Hence, downward entailing (DE).

Ladusaw and others have proposed a semantic connection between NPIs and DE contexts by stating that: "a is a trigger for NPIs in its scope iff a is downward entailing" (Giannakidou). By this theory, NPIs are sensitive to those semantic contexts which reverse the direction of entailment and are only licensed in these contexts. This rule, unlike Klima's syntactic rule, accounts for the grammaticality of Sentence 40 above. The sentence is reproduced below to show this better:

Sentence 40: No student who attended the lectures had ever read anything about phrenology = $f(Y)$
Linguistics student ($X$) $\subseteq$ Student ($Y$)
$f(X)$ = No linguistics student who attended the lectures had ever read anything about phrenology.
Thus: $f(Y)$ entails $f(X)$ or $f(Y) \subseteq f(X)$, and $X \subseteq Y$
NPIs *ever* and *anything* are, thus, in a DE semantic environment which licenses their occurrence in Sentence 40. Sentence 40 is, thus, grammatical.

An important concept in this theory is the notion of semantic scope\(^9\). By this theory, a NPI is acceptable in a context iff it is in the semantic scope of a downward entailing expression (which is understood as the semantic licensor or trigger of the NPI). One of the most important aspects of the DE expression is that it does not have to be overt/syntactic. Giannakidou talks about "triggerless licensing" wherein the entire sentence construction rather than a single, isolated expression acts as a trigger.

Ultimately, however, neither theory--semantic nor syntactic-- has been found to be completely successful in comprehensively explaining the nature of NPIs. Questions of the sort exemplified by Sentence 31: Have you ever eaten mangoes? cannot be explained either by Klima's c-commanding rule or by Ladusaw's DE theory.

Nevertheless, the concept of an affective environment (overt or non-overt) that licenses the occurrence of a particular expression is an interesting one, and may be used to explain, at least in part, the restrictive occurrences of *halt* and *just* seen in Section 2.2.1 above.

### 2.3.4 The Relevance of NPIs to *halt* and *just*:

The idea that *halt* and *just* may be subjected to a similar kind of restriction such as those imposed on NPIs is an attractive one and is explored further here. Given below is a comparative chart of some licensed and unlicensed environments for *halt*, *just* and NPIs.

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\(^9\)An expression \(a\) is in the semantic scope of an expression \(b\) iff the interpretation of \(a\) is affected by the semantic contribution of \(b\) (Giannakidou, 1997).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NPIs</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affirmative Declaratives</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negated Declaratives</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes/No Nonrhetorical Question</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhetorical Question</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wh-nonrhetorical (-Neg) Question</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wh-rhetorical (+Neg) Question</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generic Declaratives</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antecedent-Consequent</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Yes¹ = Mostly in the antecedent clause

The table above shows that *halt* is licensed in the same kinds of environments, (i.e.) in negated and imperative statements, in antecedent-consequent constructions and in generic declaratives, that NPIs are licensed in, except in the context of questions and affirmative declaratives. *Halt* is not licensed in any kinds of questions, while NPIs are licensed in all questions-types. In contrast, *just* is licensed in all question-types that have the [+neg] attribute: thus, *just* may occur in Wh- and Yes/No rhetorical questions but not in Wh- and Yes/No nonrhetorical questions. In contexts other than questions and affirmative declaratives, *just* behaves similarly to *halt* and NPIs. From this, it could possibly be inferred that *just* is sensitive to negation in the sentence-types above. The behavior of *just* is first investigated followed by a similar analysis of the behavior of *halt*, based on the chart above.
2.3.4.1 *Just* in Questions: The following rule could be constructed regarding the behavior of *halt* and *just* in interrogative statements:

**Inference 1:** *Just* normally does not occur in questions unless the questions have a +Neg attribute built into them.

The following sections analyze these inferences for their validity and ultimately show that the inferences are too general and do not encompass the complexity and nebulousness of these two particles. Can it be further inferred from this that *just* is polarity sensitive in questions and that negation provides an affective environment for *just* in interrogative constructions?

Such an inference, however, appears weak simply because it does not make any absolute generalizations about the sensitivity of *just* to negation: *just* appears to have a different level of dependency to negation than do NPIs. First, NPIs are sensitive to what could be termed an abstract [+interrogative] licensor: thus, they can occur in all question-types; in contrast, *just*, as seen from the table above, cannot. Indeed, *just* appears to be *allergic* to questions, unless this allergy reaction is *cured* by the presence of negation; NPIs are, however, partial to questions and appear to be indifferent to negation in the context of questions. The reverse pattern is seen in the case of declaratives. Here, *just* is indifferent to negation and can occur in affirmative and declarative sentences alike; NPIs are, however, sensitive to negation in the case of declarative statements, as has been shown in the previous section. *Just*, thus, appears to demonstrate a *selective* polarity sensitivity. It is also not clear what influences *just* is subject to, in the context of questions. Some of the questions that arise, and that the inference above does not answer
are:

- how sensitive (that is, how universally sensitive) is just to negation?
- how allergic is it to the abstract [+interrogative] in questions?
- why is just not allergic to [-neg] in the context of declarative sentences?

Factors other than those of negation appear to be at play in the case of just, so that a simple inference of polarity sensitivity does not seem to encompass the range of contexts just can and cannot occur in.

Second, just, unlike NPls, seems indifferent to the downward or upward entailment of sentences: thus, the downward or upward entailment of sentences appears to have no licensing power over the presence or absence of just in these sentences. The above inference would, thus, draw a similarity between NPIs and just that the behavior of just does not justify.

Third, and perhaps most important, just seems dependent on discourse to a degree that NPIs are not. The grammaticality of just is more a function of pragmatics than one of syntax alone. Thus, even in the chart above, the behavior of just in the various contexts is not unequivocal but is, ultimately, dependent on discourse for its well-formedness in a sentence. An example explains this better:

10 To see this, consider the DE sentence: "No dog ever eats pizza". Here, the NPI ever is licensed by the presence of No in the sentence. However, the same DE sentence with just -- "No dog just eats pizza" -- does not seem well-formed. (Note: the just is not used in its temporal or spatial senses here). Or rather, for it to be well-formed, the sentence might have to have a special stress on the eats. Thus, the sentence: No dog just eats pizza (possible implication: "it wolfes it down") might be well-formed given an appropriate discourse context. Thus, just seems to depend on completely different factors from NPIs such as stress-patterns for its occurrence.

In contrast, the upward entailing (UE) sentence: **A dog ever eats pizza" is ungrammatical because the presence of the NPI ever is not licensed in a UE sentence. However, the UE sentence: "A dog just eats pizza" is grammatical given, again, a stress on eats (with the possible implication: "And that's what dogs do") and an appropriate discourse context. These examples show that just behaves differently from NPIs, and is sensitive to factors other than UE or DE for its legitimate usage.
In the table above, *just* is listed as occurring grammatically in affirmative declaratives. This means the *just* in an affirmative declarative sentence such as:

**Sentence 43**: The sky is *just* blue

should always be well-formed. However, it is seen that this is not unequivocally true. *Sentence 43* does not sound well-formed (it sounds abrupt or bizarre) unless it is preceded by a discourse context. That this bizarreness is directly due to the presence of *just* rather than due to some other word in the sentence or due to the semantic quirkiness of the sentence as a whole, is seen when the *just* is removed from the sentence. The resulting sentence:

**Sentence 44**: The sky is blue

is completely well-formed and does not need to be preceded by a discourse context in order for it to be well-formed. It can also occur as the first sentence in a written passage or in a conversation, without sounding bizarre. This shows that the ill-formedness of *Sentence 43* must be due to the presence of the *just* in it. *Just*, it is seen, has to be *embedded* in a discourse context: it cannot occur outside of one, and, further, it cannot introduce one (although it could, conceivable, end one). This means that the affective contexts of *just* are far more complex and nebulous than those that NPls are sensitive to, which an inference such as *Inference 1* above does not encompass.

### 2.3.4.2 Halt in Questions

The reasons why *just* cannot be treated as equivalent to a NPI have been set out in detail above. An analysis of *halt* reveals that *halt* behaves in much the same way as *just* does in these circumstances and that it also cannot, for similar reasons, be considered equivalent to NPIs.
Thus, an inference such as:

**Inference 2: halt behaves like NPIs except in the context of questions and affirmative declaratives**

is undesirable for the following reasons.

First, this inference, like the previous one, does not make any unequivocal statements about the nature of *halt*. The several exceptions to the rule above make the inference weak and prevents one from drawing a coherent similarity between NPIs and *halt*.

Second, it is seen that *halt* behaves differently with respect to negation than either *just* or NPIs. *Just*, is selectively sensitive to negation: it is sensitive to negation in the context of questions, but not anywhere else. Thus, in the context of questions, *just* occurs only in the context of negated questions and not in affirmative questions. NPIs are even more strongly sensitive to negation, so much so, that this dependency is a defining characteristic of NPIs. This has been shown in Sections 2.3.1-2.3.3. *Halt*, on the other hand, appears indifferent to negation: it is neither sensitive nor allergic to it. Unlike *just*, it occurs in neither affirmative nor negated questions; unlike NPIs, it occurs in affirmative as well as negated declaratives.

Third, *halt*, like *just*, is also indifferent to downward entailing contexts: it occurs in downward as well as upward entailing contexts and is not partial to either of them. This also differentiates *halt* from NPIs and suggests that *halt* is inherently different from NPIs.

Finally, *halt* is, like *just*, also extremely discourse-dependent. It depends on various pragmatic variables such as intonation and stress patterns in a sentence for its
meaning and grammaticality. An example explains this better:

Sentence 45: Der Himmel ist halt grau.
Gloss 45: The sky is *halt* grey.
Translation: The sky is just grey.

Sentence 45 as a lone sentence or as the introductory statement in a discourse is not well-formed. However, it is completely well-formed in the context of a discourse. This sentence would, thus, be well-formed in specific discourse-contexts: in a weekly weather report, for instance (although, again, never as the opening line), or as a brusque answer to the quibbling question, “Sag mal, ist der Himmel schwarz-grau oder blau-grau?” (Translation: “Tell me, is the sky a greyish black or a greyish blue?”). NPIs, on the other hand, are not as sensitive to discourse contexts—a NPI, for instance, is ungrammatical in an affirmative declarative statement regardless of the discourse context the statement occurs in. Put another way, there is no single discourse context that would license the presence of a NPI in an affirmative declarative statement.

2.4 The Behavior of Halt and Just in Affective Terms:

Giannakidou (1997) writes: “Generally, it is believed that all the contexts allowing for NPIs can be understood as forming a natural class in terms of some formal property…” The arguments above strongly suggest that neither *halt* nor *just* belongs to the same natural class of terms as NPIs (i.e.) that *halt* and *just* are inherently different from NPIs. The above section has shown that NPIs take different affective environments from the particles and that drawing an equivalency relationship between them to explain the behavior of *halt* and *just* is, thus, not valid.

This is not to say, however, that NPIs have no relevance to the study of the
particles *halt* and *just*. The concept of affective environments is itself an interesting one and could be helpful in studying the behavior patterns of *halt* and *just*. The difference lies not merely in the fact that the two particles and NPIs take different affective environments (see chart above) but also that they take different kinds of affective environments (the affective environments of NPIs are syntactico-semantic, those of *halt* and *just* are more pragmatic in nature).

It is proposed, therefore, that *halt* and *just* are like NPIs insofar as they also possess sensitivity features and are grammatical only in affective environments. Sensitivity features need not be semantic or syntactic, as in the case of NPIs; they can also be pragmatic. Giannakidou (1997: 16-17) brings up the idea of “triggerless licensing”\textsuperscript{11} or licensing by a pragmatic implicature.

\[2.4.1 \textbf{Proposition:} \textit{halt} \textit{and} \textit{just} \textit{are sensitive to triggerless discourse-pragmatic licensing.}\]

The licensors of these particles are often difficult to isolate (and, therefore, triggerless) because the licensors are often variables such as stress-patterns, topic-context, intonation and so on. That the licensors occupy the discourse-pragmatic rather than the semantico-syntactic realms, has already been shown in the previous section in the comparison between NPIs and the particles under consideration.

\[2.4.2 \textbf{The Behavior of} \textit{halt}: \text{The question as to why} \textit{halt} \text{cannot occur in questions can now be answered on the basis of this proposition. It has earlier been mentioned that the tentative nature of interrogative statements, in general, is not compatible with the}\]

\textsuperscript{11} Giannakidou: “There are ... cases of ‘triggerless’ licensing... where it is impossible to isolate a single expression as the trigger, but, rather, the whole construction seems to act as the licensor”.
categorical, bottom-line nature of halt. This assumption can now be stated in a more formal manner, thus:

Interrogative statements (tag-questions excluding) cannot act as an affective environment for halt because their tentative nature (exhibited, conceivably, by intonation of speech, stress patterns and other parameters) clashes with the discourse function of halt as a categorical, pejorative mood-marker and provides a triggerless anti-licensing discourse environment for this particle.

A different paraphrase of this would be that halt is sensitive to a triggerless, abstract, [-interrogative] discourse-item that restricts its occurrence to declarative statements\(^\text{12}\).

2.4.3 The Behavior of just: The behavior of just in questions also lends itself to analysis within this proposed model. That just does not occur in affirmative questions can be explained in the same manner as the behavior of halt, above. The occurrence of just in negated/rhetorical questions is another matter. The question arises why just is licensed in negated questions while halt is not. A detailed analysis of this is beyond the scope of this paper, but some tentative proposals are set forth here:

1) Perhaps just has a less categorical force than halt does. This would explain, at least in part, why just cannot occur in affirmative/non-rhetorical questions. Such questions are more tentative than their rhetorical counterparts; rhetorical questions, by definition, assume their answer (always a negation of the question)\(^\text{13}\), while non-rhetorical questions

\(^{12}\)This [-interrogative] discourse-item is not the only licensor of halt. It is seen in Section 2.5 that the right discourse context is also necessary in order to license the occurrence of halt.

\(^{13}\)Consider the rhetorical question: “Doesn’t thesis-writing sap your very soul?” This question already assumes its answer to be: “It saps my very soul,” or a variation thereof. Notice how
leave the answers open-ended. Thus, it is not inconceivable that just is too categorical to
be used in the more tentative nonrhetorical questions but is compatible, instead, with the
more categorical rhetorical question.

2) Just appears to have a wider range of meanings than halt does. Consider the
examples below:

a) Temporal just:

   Sentence 46: Mary left for school just now.
   Sentence 47: Wait for me! I’ll be just two seconds!

This use of just to convey the sense of a recent past or a near future finds no equivalent in
the case of halt, which cannot be used in this temporal sense. Thus, the following
sentences, which are direct translations of sentences 46 and 47, are ungrammatical:

   Sentence 48: *Mary ist halt jetzt zur Schule gegangen.
   Sentence 49: *Warte auf mich! Ich bin halt zwei Sekunden!

Interesting to note, in this regard, is that the just could conceivably receive
primary stress for emphasis in sentences 46 and 47 for emphasis. In contrast, halt
can almost never (if ever) receive primary stress in a sentence.

b) Spatial just:

   Sentence 50: The ATM is just ‘round the corner.

Just conveys, in this example, a sense of spatial proximity. Halt could, again, never be
used in this sense. Thus, Sentence 51, which is a translation of Sentence 50, is
ungrammatical.

Sentence 51: *Das Geldautomat ist halt um die Ecke.

There are other uses of just that find no equivalent in halt but these are not investigated in further detail here. The purpose of the above example-sentences has been to show that halt is not the German synonym of just, and that the two words are not cross-linguistic equivalents of each other. Thus, it is, perhaps, not so strange after all that just should be able to appear in sentential contexts (such as rhetorical questions) in which halt is not licensed. Significantly enough, sentences 46, 47 and 50—which express just in its temporal and spatial senses, respectively—can all be set into rhetorical questions.

2.5 Discourse Context as a Triggerless Licensor:

One of the strongest sensitivity features halt and just exhibit is to discourse context. As has been shown several times, elsewhere in this paper, halt and just cannot occur in lone sentences, and cannot even introduce a discourse. Thus, they must always be backed up by some form of discourse. This can be stated more formally, like this:

*Discourse context acts as one of the most significant triggerless, abstract, pragmatic licensors of the particles halt and just. In other words, halt and just are strongly sensitive to an abstract [+discourse] feature, and can, consequently, never occur in lone sentences or in sentences that introduce a discourse.*

The partiality of halt to context-referential surroundings, discussed elsewhere, is understandable by this proposition. Halt and just could, thus, be seen as context-words:

1: The sentence, “Just Sam and I went to the movies”, where just is used in the sense of “only” does not find a parallel in halt. Thus, the German translation of the above sentence: “Halt Sam und ich sind ins Kino gegangen” is ungrammatical. Significantly enough, and as has been stated elsewhere in this paper,
they need to occur in sentences that co-refer (the term is not used syntactically, here) to a discourse context in order to be grammatical.

*halt* cannot occur as the first word in a sentence.
Conclusion

In this thesis, I have attempted to look at the nature of the particle halt at the pragmatic, semantic and, to a lesser degree, the syntactic levels. At the pragmatic level, halt has been located as a slightly pejorative mood-marker conveying, for the most part, a mood of positive resignation. I have also addressed other roles of halt: as a particle that tones down the imperative nature of a command and as a semantically empty filler. At the semantic level, a detailed comparison between the English just and halt has been made in order to understand the behavior of halt, especially in the context of questions (where halt is, almost always, not well-formed) better. The relationship between NPls and the particles halt and just is an interesting one: relationships of equivalency cannot be drawn between the particles and NPls, because they have been recognized as two inherently different groups of items: NPls are far less discourse-dependent than the particles halt and just are.

Nevertheless, the study of NPls has proved very helpful in analyzing the licensing properties of halt and just. I have proposed, here, that these particles have affective environments that occupy the pragmatic-discourse realm rather than merely the syntactic or the semantic (which is, however, not to underrate the relevance of the syntactic and semantic realms to halt and just). Thus, halt and just are extremely versatile discourse particles: they are affected by factors that are too nebulous to set into a syntactic tree or to draw a hard and fast semantic rule about.

I would like to conclude my thesis with a final note about some of these factors. Variable parameters such as stress patterns in a sentence and intonation affect the positions of halt and just in a sentence. Thus, in the sentence:
“Ich mag halt Max”

Gloss: I like halt Max

the *halt* occurs directly before the Object NP *Max* which receives primary stress in this sentence, thereby producing: “Ich mag *halt Max*” (the word that has primary stress is here set in bold). The same sentence with the primary stress on *mag*: “Ich *mag halt Max*” could sound odd to the native speaker, given the position of the *halt* in the sentence. If the *mag* is to receive primary stress in a sentence, the *halt* would fit far better at the end of the sentence, producing: “Ich *mag Max halt*”.

While these are, ultimately, nebulous details and difficult to format into a standard rule, it is fairly clear that there is a strong relationship between the position of *halt* and the patterns of stress in the sentence it occurs in. This raises interesting questions at the syntactic and semantic levels, one of the main questions being about scope. If *halt* generally occurs (and the term “generally” is used very loosely in this context) directly before the word that receives primary stress in a sentence (unless that word happens to be the first word in a sentence, in which case *halt* would occur elsewhere, because it can never commence a sentence) what does this say about the semantic and syntactic scopes of *halt* in that sentence?

This is definitely a very interesting issue to consider in the study of the syntactic and semantic properties of *halt*. 
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