Challenging not-at-issue content:
Evidence from Bavarian *fei* and German *doch*

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Statements made by interlocutors in discourse are routinely accepted or rejected. Languages even employ dedicated discourse expressions such as *response particles* and *discourse particles* that explicitly encode correction or disagreement. Response particles such as German '*nein*' or expressions like '*that's not right*' have been analyzed as anaphoric to the at-issue (AI) content of their targets, i.e., the main propositional contribution of an utterance (cf. Krifka, 2013, a.o.). Other particles like the German discourse particle '*doch*' can reject both asserted content and information conveyed as not-at-issue (NAI), including non-restrictive relative clauses and presuppositions. Bavarian '*fei*' appears even to be specialized for challenging NAI material and is systematically infelicitous when used to contradict asserted, AI content, as demonstrated by the following examples (adapted from Hinterwimmer and Ebert 2018). (1) shows that '*fei*' cannot be used to challenge AI content, while (2) and (3) demonstrate that it is licensed when targeting NAI information contributed by non-restrictive relative clauses and presuppositions, respectively.

(1) a. Paula: *S'is goa ned koit drauß'n.*
            It's not cold outside at all.
     b. Tom: *S'is (*fei) saukoit drauß'n.*
            It's (*fei) terribly cold outside.

(2) a. Paula: *Da Chomsky, a berühmta Soziologe, is a Anarchist.*
            Chomsky, a famous sociologist, is an anarchist.
     b. Tom: *Da Chomsky is (fei) koa Soziologe.*
            Chomsky is (fei) no sociologist.

(3) a. Paula: *Da Kini von Fronkreich is a Depp.*
            The king of France is an idiot.
     b. Tom: *In Fronkreich gibts (fei) koan Kini nemma.*
            There is (fei) no king in France anymore.

These differences in the felicity conditions of discourse expressions provide evidence that both AI and NAI contents are negotiated in discourse, even if NAI contents have to be picked up in their own special way (von Fintel, 2004; Koev, 2013, a.o.). Following the view that asserted content is *proposed* rather than automatically added to the common ground (Stalnaker, 1978, a.o.), we argue that NAI content should be analyzed in similar fashion, based on the restricted distribution of '*fei*'. Treating NAI content as proposed in its own way allows us to analyze the challenging use of '*fei*' as operating on parts of preceding utterances in discourse. Building on the Table model of discourse (Farkas and Bruce, 2010), we propose that both AI and NAI contents are placed on the conversational table, but on distinct areas, subject to different rules and accessible to different expressions. While AI content requires explicit acceptance by other interlocutors, NAI content must be addressed or challenged before it is silently accommodated. Our analysis thus captures the systematic contrast between these discourse expressions while providing a unified account of how different content types are negotiated.

References

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