

## Foreword

This volume grew out of a workshop on formal and experimental approaches to discourse particles and modal adverbs, held at the European Summer School in Logic, Language and Information (ESLLI) 2008 in Hamburg. The workshop has been the third in a series of workshops starting at ESLLI 2003 in Vienna and continuing in Barcelona in 2005. Since 2003, formal and experimental approaches to particles have become a flourishing area of research. For the right reason: particles provide challenges for the formal and experimental methods currently available, both in the kind of content they express and in the way they (seem to) do so. The papers in this volume provide many examples.

It is fitting to make a methodological remark which we hope will be carried over to the next call for proposals. What is a formal treatment of a particle? Firstly, it seems that a formal treatment should comprise an analysis of the syntactic and intonational patterns in which the particle is involved, it should be able to predict the effect of the particle on the interpretation of its hosts, and it should be able to predict when the particle can be or even has to be inserted in a host. *Formal* means *computational*: a formal treatment should be able to guide a generator to the right form and intonation, and an interpreter to the right analysis of the hosts. Secondly, a formal treatment should shed light on grammaticalisation and acquisition. It should shed light on how the evolution of language can have formed the particle from its often transparent lexical source and how the usage of the particle can be learned (at least make clear *that* the usage can be learned). Again, *formal* means *computational*, insofar that formation and learning should be reproducible by simulation. For all areas, but especially for grammaticalisation and acquisition, it holds that intense empirical investigation is required (more than is customary) and that corpus-based methods as well as interpretation experiments and elicitation experiments are necessary.

The papers collected in this volume impressively follow this demanding methodological account. Thus, research goes, from our perspective, in the right direction. Next, it would be very useful to have full treatments of really simple particles – if there are any. And it is also clear that it is still a way to go for the more nasty ones that are being studied in this volume.

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