

A prosodically determined second-position clitic in German: The case of the clause-internal conjunction *aber*

Abstract

In this paper, I will discuss the curious properties of the clause-internal conjunction *aber* in German. I will argue that (i) *aber* is a proper conjunction even when it appears deeply embedded into its second conjunct and that alternative accounts according to which *aber* is a discourse particle, a conjunctive adverb or a functional topic-related head in the clausal spine cannot be maintained. In contrast, I argue that the placement possibilities of *aber* can be described most elegantly if we treat it as a proper second-position clitic that consistently appears after the first phonological phrase of its second conjunct. Not only does this account allow us to unify the different subtypes of clause-internal *aber* that the literature proposed (such as postinitial *aber* and middle-field *aber*), this account also straightforwardly explains many placement patterns that are completely unexpected in a syntactic account such as the appearance of *aber* inside complex noun phrases or inside strong syntactic islands such as adverbial clauses. Building on this account, I go on to show how the placement of *aber* can then help us refine the notion of the phonological phrase in German and I argue that the case study at hand adds another piece of evidence in favor of the existence of recursive phonological phrases.

1 Introduction

It has been known for quite a while that the German adversative conjunction *aber* exhibits an interesting property in that it can appear in various positions inside the second conjunct. Ross (1967) already observes that *aber* can either in the prototypical position between its two conjuncts as in (1a) or inside its second conjunct (1b). As Ross points out, it crucially can never occur inside its first conjunct (1c).¹

- (1) a. [Sie will tanzen] **aber** [ich will nach hause gehen].
 she wants dance but I want to home go
 ‘She wants to dance but I want to go home’

¹Glosses, bracketing and boldfacing are mine. Throughout this paper, the conjunction will be given as bold and the respective conjuncts are given in brackets.

- b. [Sie will tanzen] [ich will **aber** nach hause gehen].
 she wants dance I want but to home go
 ‘She wants to dance but I want to go home’
 - c. *[Sie will **aber** tanzen] [ich will nach hause gehen].
 she wants but dance I want to home go
 ‘She wants to dance but I want to go home’
- (Ross, 1967, 163f)

Ross does not present a concrete analysis for these facts but merely takes them to be a strong argument for a fundamental asymmetry of the two conjuncts inasmuch as the second conjunct forms a constituent with the conjunction to the exclusion of the first conjunct.

However, even though these facts have been around for quite a while now, it was only relatively recently that people have looked at the clause-internal placement patterns of *aber* in more detail and proposed actual analyses. As we will see in Section 3, not all of the proposed analyses actually maintain the underlying intuition given by Ross and some of the analyses actually cast doubt on the fact that *aber*, in its clause-internal position, is a proper conjunction and suggest that its behavior is in fact more like that of an adverb or of a discourse particle.

In this paper, I set out to propose a new approach to explaining the clause-internal placement possibilities of *aber*. In contrast to the approaches alluded to above, I will defend the claim that *aber* is, despite its unusual surface position, a proper conjunction and differs in crucial ways from elements such as adverbs or discourse particles. I will argue that, syntactically as well as semantically, *aber* functions as a conjunction and thus should be represented in the expected position in between the two conjuncts. The somewhat unusual surface position it can appear in will be derived by means of a late displacement rule that exhibits all the hallmark properties of a prosodically determined clitic dislocation. The main motivation for this approach will be that the surface positioning of *aber* seems to ignore virtually all strong syntactic islands of German and that its placement can be characterized much more easily in reference to prosodic phrases rather than in reference to syntactic constituency.

In doing so, I hope to convince the reader that not only will this approach be empirically more adequate than its predecessors, it will also be theoretically preferable. I will argue that treating the surface position of *aber* as a prosodically determined clitic-like phenomenon will allow us (i) to propose a coherent analysis of clause-external and clause-internal placement of *aber* as well as of the different subtypes of *aber* that the literature distinguishes; (ii) to do away with construction-specific assumptions about positions in which *aber* can and cannot occur and (iii) to locate the behavior *aber* in a broader typology about cliticizing coordinators crosslinguistically.

The paper is structured as follows: In Section 2, I will present the main empirical placement pattern of *aber* and introduce the relevant terminology people have used to describe its properties. In Section 3, I will discuss some of the previous approaches and in Section 4, I present some novel arguments that indicate that the previous approaches do not quite capture the properties of the phenomenon. Section 5 summarizes the previous discussion and highlights the main properties that we want to derive. In doing so, it paves the way for the actual analysis presented in Section 6. In Section 7, I will discuss the parallels of the proposed analysis to other instances of cliticizing coordinators from other languages. I

will briefly discuss a similar pattern of the Polish adversative coordinator *zaś*. Further I will show that the behavior of *aber* fills a predicted gap if typologies of clitics and clitic placement patterns are compared with known cases of shifting coordinators. Section 8 offers a short theoretical discussion that locates the proposed mechanism used in the analysis in the model of grammar adopted throughout this paper. Section 9 concludes.

2 The basic empirical pattern

In this section, I will present the basic empirical facts about the possible placement patterns of the adversative conjunction *aber* in German.

As we have seen in the example (1) in the previous section, the adversative conjunction *aber* can appear in the position in between the two conjuncts. This is the regular position for the canonical conjunction *und* ('and') or the disjunction *oder* ('or') as well. However, unlike *und* or *oder*, *aber* can appear in various positions inside the second conjunct as well:

- (2) a. [Sie will tanzen] (**aber**) [ich will (**aber**) nach hause].
 she wants dance but I want but to home
 'She wants to dance but I want to go home'
 b. [Sie will tanzen] (**und**) [ich will (***und**) nach hause].
 she wants dance and I want and to home
 'She wants to dance and I want to go home'
 c. [Sie will tanzen] (**oder**) [ich will (***oder**) nach hause].
 she wants dance or I want or to home
 'She wants to dance or I want to go home'

As a number of people have observed by now (see e.g. Sæbø 2003; Pasch et al. 2009; Büring and Hartmann 2015; Ferraresi 2018; Breitbarth 2019), *aber* has, at least descriptively, actually several clause-internal positions available. Apart from the clause-external position in (3a), which is called the *Nullposition* by Pasch et al. (2009), *aber* can either appear between the prefield and the finite verb (position 2 in (3b) below, sometimes called the postinitial position, see Catasso 2015) or it can appear in a position after the finite verb and light pronominal material in the middle field (position 3 in (3c)).

- (3) a. [Ich will nach hause,] **aber**₁ [sie will mir noch etwas zeigen].
 I want to home but she want me still sth show
 b. [Ich will nach hause,] [sie **aber**₂ will mir noch etwas zeigen].
 I want to home she but want me still sth show
 c. [Ich will nach hause,] [sie will mir **aber**₃ noch etwas zeigen].
 I want to home she want me but still sth show
 'I want to go home but she still wants to show me something'

Depending on how many actual phrases are actually part of the middle field, we might even get some more positions since *aber* is not restricted to a certain position with respect to phrases in the middle field. In (4) below, we see the same configuration as in (3) above, except that both the direct object as well as the indirect object are full noun phrases (rather than pronouns). In such configurations, *aber* can appear in various positions in the mid-

dle field. It should be noted however, that this does not necessarily have to be due to the different properties of *aber* since it might also be due to differences in position of the respective noun phrases (due to scrambling).

- (4) Ich will nach hause... ('I want to go home')
 sie will (**aber**) Peter (**aber**) das Plakat (**aber**) noch zeigen.
 she wants but Peter the poster but still show
 '... but she wants to still show the poster to Peter.'

Another point we can observe is that even though the positioning of *aber* is fairly unrestricted, it can never appear inside a verb phrase or after negation. In (5), we see that *aber* cannot appear after the nonspecific indefinite pronoun *etwas* ('something'), which, according to standard analyses, remains VP-internal. The example in (6) shows that *aber* cannot appear after the negation, which is typically assumed to be attached to the VP (see e.g. Jacobs 1982; Zeijlstra 2004; Penka 2011). The example in (7) shows that *aber* can also not appear after the clause-final lexical verb.

- (5) *[Ich will nach hause], [sie will mir etwas **aber** zeigen].
 I want to home she want me sth but show
 'I want to go home but she wants to show me something'
- (6) *[Ich will nach hause], [sie will mir das Plakat nicht **aber** zeigen].
 I want to home she want me the poster not but show
 'I want to go home but she doesn't want to show me the poster'
- (7) *[Ich will nach hause], [sie will mir das Plakat nicht zeigen **aber**].
 I want to home she want me the poster not show but
 'I want to go home but she doesn't want to show me the poster'

Note however, that *aber* is not generally excluded from appearing clause-finally. The clause-final position of *aber* is allowed when its middle field position is not followed by anything. In other words, when the VP is empty, *aber* can very well appear in clause-final position:

- (8) [Ich wollte ihn anrufen], [er schlief **aber**].
 I wanted him call he slept but
 'I wanted to call him but he was asleep.'

To summarize, descriptively speaking, the German adversative conjunction *aber* can appear inside the second conjunct either in between the preverbal position and the finite verb or in a position after the final verb and the weak pronouns. Its positioning with respect to scrambled noun phrases does not seem to be restricted but crucially, it cannot appear inside or after the verb phrase.

However, as quite a number of people have observed, the placement of *aber* interacts in interesting ways with the information-structure of the clause and the resulting prosodic intonation (see e.g. Breitbarth 2019 for discussion). The first thing we observe is that position 1 above (i.e. the position between the prefield and the finite verb) is much preferred when the constituent in the prefield is contrastive and prosodically prominent:

- (9) [DU bist vielleicht eingeladen,] [ICH **aber** habe (??**aber**) keine Einladung
 YOU are maybe invited I but have but no invitation
 bekommen.]
 received.
 ‘You might be invited but I haven’t received an invitation.’

On the other hand we note that a weak pronoun in the prefield does not allow for *aber* to appear in the preverbal position. This is shown most clearly with the so-called prefield-*es*, a dummy element that cannot receive stress.

- (10) [Du hoffst noch], (**aber**) [es (***aber**) scheint mir (**aber**) nicht machbar zu sein.]
 You hope still but it but seems me but not feasible to be.
 ‘You are still hoping but it doesn’t seem feasible to me.’

Another place where we can see that prosody seems to play a role is that the relative position of *aber* with respect to the weak pronouns in the middle field. Unlike with full noun phrases illustrated above, *aber* obligatorily follows the weak pronouns in the middle field. It can never appear in between the verb and the weak pronouns such as the non-stressed first person singular pronoun in (11), nor the expletive *es* in (11b).

- (11) a. *[Ich will nach hause], [sie will **aber** mir noch etwas zeigen].
 I want to home she want but me still sth show
 ‘I want to go home but she still wants to show me something’
 b. *[Mir gefällt es], [dir scheint **aber** es nicht zu gefallen].
 Me likes it you seem but it not to like
 ‘I like it but you don’t seem to like it’

Examples like (11) already indicate in my view that the placement algorithm of *aber* is not purely based on syntactic considerations. Unlike in Romance or Slavic languages, weak pronouns in German do not really differ syntactically from their full NP counterparts. In the next section, we will see much stronger arguments that a purely syntactic placement approach is arguable untenable.

3 Previous approaches

In this section, I will first discuss some of the previous approaches to modelling and/or explaining the clause-internal placement possibilities of *aber*. I will not explain all the technical details of the approaches in question but rather try to highlight the most important notions and assumptions and the underlying intuitions of the respective approaches. As we will see, all previous approaches treat clause-internal instances of *aber* as a proper part of the second conjunct and typically stress the similarities of *aber* with either adverbs or treat it as some sort of information-structure related functional head in the extended clausal spine.

What this essentially means is that most of the approaches have very little to say about the relation between clause-internal and clause-external *aber*, and, in addition, also struggle to explain the formal identity between the *aber* appearing in the prefield and *aber* appearing in the German middle field.

Going from there, I will present a number of arguments that seem to indicate that this intuition is problematic. I will argue that *aber* cannot be treated as an adverb or as a base-generated functional head in the clausal spine. Rather, I argue, we find that *aber* is a conjunction even when it is located inside the second conjunct. What that means is that should take the formal identity of clause-internal and clause-external *aber* as face value and entertain the possibility that this is one and the same element.

Pasch et al. (2009) briefly discuss the behavior of *aber* and state that we need to distinguish between its use as a conjunction and as a clause-internal particle. In its use as a clause-internal particle *aber* is likened to adverbial connectors which establish a semantic and pragmatic relation between the conjuncts but not a syntactic one. They state that clauses that are combined by clause-internal instances of *aber* are in fact paratactic.

Pasch et al. (2009) note however, that instances of *aber* occurring in the prefield are problematic for a simple treatment as an adverb since *aber*, unlike typical adverbs does not occupy the prefield on its own but has to occur together with another constituent. In (12a), we see that an adverb like *allerdings* occupies the prefield whereas *aber* does not (12b).

(12) Die Verfügung bleibt in Kraft... ('The degree remains in effect...')

- a. *allerdings* soll jeder Einzelfall geprüft werden.
however shall every individual.case evaluated be
- b. **aber* soll jeder Einzelfall geprüft werden.
but shall every individual.case evaluated be
'... but every individual case should be evaluated.'

Pasch et al. (2009), gloss and translation mine

In a short paper, Buring and Hartmann (2015) discuss the behavior of clause-internal *aber* and, similarly to Pasch et al. (2009), they assign it a hybrid category, calling it a semantic coordinator but syntactically a particle/adverb. It is only in its clause-external use that *aber* is a coordinator syntactically and semantically. Buring and Hartmann (2015) stress that the position of clause-internal *aber* is the same as particles and adverbs in the German middle field but they do not offer any explanation for the prefield placement of *aber*.

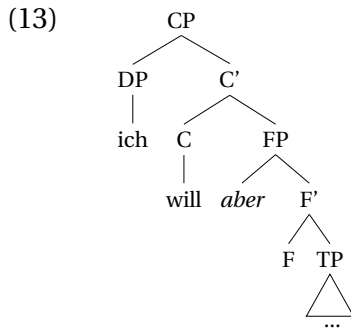
A slightly different approach is offered by Catasso (2015), who provides a treatment for *aber* and argues that we should not only distinguish between clause-internal and clause-external *aber* but also between prefield-*aber* and middle field-*aber*. He highlights that prefield-*aber* entails a topic shift and based on this discussion, he argues that prefield-*aber* is the realization of a functional head in the elaborate left periphery of German. This way, he can assign the topic shift-function to that syntactic head and since this functional head attracts a constituent to its specifier, it can also derive why *aber* cooccurs with another element in the prefield.

Ferraresi (2018) takes a different route and argues that *aber* cannot be a functional head but, in line with Pasch et al. (2009) and Buring and Hartmann (2015), it should be treated as an adverb. As for its middle field position, Ferraresi (2018) argues that *aber* adjoins to the Frey's (2005) topic projection. Crucially though, it adjoins below the specifier rather than to the entire projection. Interestingly, unlike all other accounts, Ferraresi (2018) makes an effort to unify the prefield occurrences of *aber* and the middle field oc-

currences. According to her proposal, prefield-*aber* is derived by moving the specifier of the topic phrase together with the adjoined adverb *aber*.

Breitbarth (2019), on the other hand, returns to treating prefield-*aber* and middle field-*aber* as distinct. While she acknowledges that a uniform analysis would in principle be preferable, she offers some arguments against Ferraresi’s movement account. One of the core arguments against the movement analysis of *aber* to the prefield is that Frey (2005) has argued in detail that contrastive topics, i.e. exactly the kind of topics that prefield-*aber* attaches to, do not make an intermediate stop-over in the middle field but rather move to the prefield in one fell swoop. As a result, prefield-*aber* cannot be picked up, so to speak, by the topic on its way to the prefield.

For middle field-*aber*, Breitbarth (2019) argues that it is the specifier of a functional head (rather than the functional head itself as in Catasso (2015)). Further, she argues, contra Ferraresi (2018), that this functional head cannot be the instantiation of a topic position but rather it should be a purely formal phrase FP (from Frey 2006) that can host phrases of various information-structural properties. The resulting structure for an example such as (1c) would thus look, somewhat simplified as follows:²



Since FP allows for scrambling above it, we can, in principle, model the different relative placement patterns of *aber* in the German middle field. In order to derive the obligatory precedence of weak pronouns, Breitbarth assumes a W(ackernagel)P above the FP, movement to which is obligatory for weak pronouns.³

Another ingredient of Breitbarth’s account is that middle field-*aber* interacts in interesting ways with the prosody. Since clause-internal *aber* introduces a prosodic phrase boundary, scrambling can take place in order to satisfy this requirement. Direct objects that want to precede *aber* need to scramble in order to precede *aber*. As a result, we find that the requirement of *aber* to appear at the right edge of a prosodic phrase is met in all

²The actual tree Breitbarth (2019) gives includes a moving operator that starts out below *aber* and moves above it in the course of the derivation. This is due to the fact that the paper mostly deals with *aber* appearing in clause-initial adjunct clauses, which are often assumed to exhibit such operator movement (see e.g. Bhatt and Pancheva (2007)). In the theory, Breitbarth sketches, this operator ends up being responsible for the fact that middle field-*aber* can take scope over the entire clause even though it is deeply embedded into it. This assumption strikes me as potentially problematic in case we want to extend the analysis to regular root clauses since middle field-*aber* takes scope above these as well and assuming operator movement is significantly less plausible. I will leave this issue aside for the purposes of this paper. For more discussion of the relative scope-taking properties of clause-internal *aber*, see Section 4.1.

³Again, this assumption strikes me as potentially problematic for root clauses where subjects in the middle field can potentially precede weak pronouns (Müller 1998). In such cases, scrambling to a position above WP must be possible but crucially restricted to subjects.

three positions that clause-internal *aber* can take:

- (14) a. (Das TOR **aber**)_φ (war gut beWACHT)_φ.
 the gate but was well guarded
 ‘...but the gate was well guarded.’
 b. (Er SCHAFFte es **aber**)_φ (NICHT)_φ.
 he made it but not
 ‘but he didn’t make it’ (Breitbarth, 2019, p.170)
 c. (Er SAH)_φ (die MAUER **aber**)_φ (NICHT)_φ.
 he saw the wall but not
 ‘but the WALL, he didn’t see.’

The analysis presented in Sections 5 and 6 will capitalize on this observation and based on this and other arguments, I will attempt to argue for a uniform analysis of (i) clause-external *aber*, prefield-*aber*, and middle field-*aber*. Before we get there, however, I want to present a number of arguments that speak against the different treatments sketched above.

4 Arguments against previous approaches

In this section, I will present some additional data that will show that previous approaches sketched above are not on the right track. First, I will argue that clause-internal *aber* behaves very differently from adverbs or discourse particles in terms of scope and placement. I will argue that it is not possible to find a uniform syntactic position for the clause-internal placement possibilities of *aber*, even if we make several subdivisions such as prefield-*aber* and middle field-*aber*. This, I think, rules out immediate treatments of *aber* in which *aber* is either a functional head that appears in a fixed position in the clause nor the specifier or and adjunct associated with a certain functional head with a fixed position. Building on that, I will present some arguments, that despite its unusual surface position, clause-internal *aber* still shows a number of properties indicating that it is in fact a syntactic coordinator even when it appears embedded into its second conjunct.

4.1 The scope and the distribution of *aber*

In this subsection I will show quite a number of additional, surprising positions in which clause-internal *aber* can appear. And the upshot of this discussion will be that in the light of these data, it is no longer plausible to assume that there is a uniform surface position of clause-internal *aber*.⁴

Let us start with the observation that the term *postinitial* position employed by Catasso (2015) and others is slightly misleading. The term is intended to refer to instances of *aber* appearing in the prefield. And while it is true that, in many cases, *aber* appears after the first constituent and right before the verb, it also often does not. In fact, we note that whenever the preverbal constituent is sufficiently heavy, *aber* tends to appear *inside* that constituent.

⁴As we will see in Section 5, I do in fact argue that there is a uniform syntactic position of all instances of *aber*; it is just that this position is not the surface position.

Consider for example the following example in (15) and (16). In both of these examples, we have two conjuncts (C1 and C2) that are connected in some adversative relation and C2 contains an adverbial clause (AdvCl) in its prefield. What we find here is that the *aber* connecting C1 and C2 appears inside the adverbial clause (AdvCl) that occupies the preverbal position of C2. (15) shows this for a conditional clause and (16) for a causal clause.

- (15) [C1 Maria mag ihren Job eigentlich] [C2 [_{AdvCl} wenn sie **aber** im Lotto
Maria likes her job actually if she BUT in.the lottery
gewinnt] dann kündigt sie sofort].
wins then quits she at.once
'Maria actually likes her job but if she wins the lottery, she will quit immediately.'
- (16) [C1 Die Arbeiter waren eigentlich alle auf Lebenszeit angestellt]
the workers were actually all for lifetime employed
[C2 [_{AdvCl} weil (**aber**) die Fabrik (**aber**) dicht gemacht wird,] wurde jeder
because BUT the factory BUT tight made PASS] PASS.PAST every
der Arbeiter entlassen].
the worker fired
'The workers all had lifetime contracts but because the factory shuts down, every
worker was fired.'
cf. Zimmermann (2004)

Breitbarth (2019) gives quite a number of instances of *aber* appearing in adverbial clauses that occupy the prefield of the matrix clause and she shows in detail that the positioning inside the adverbial clause is in many ways similar to the positioning in matrix clauses. Further, she notes that the scope of *aber* extends over the entire adverbial clause in the default case. I would, however, claim that the scope of *aber* is actually even higher than that. In (16), it is very evident that the adversative contrast expressed by *aber* is between the first conjunct (i.e. the workers having lifetime contracts) and between the second conjunct as a whole (i.e. everyone being fired). What that means is that *aber* scopes not only above the adverbial clause as a whole but also above the entire second conjunct. In other words, even though *aber* is deeply embedded inside an adverbial clause inside the second conjunct, it still takes scope over the entire second conjunct as if it were in its clause-external position.

This kind of scopal behavior is very suggestive I think because it differs fundamentally from particles or adverbs in German. The scope of adverbs and particles is always clause-bound in German, especially for adverbial clauses. Even high adverbs like *wahrscheinlich* ('probably') or discourse particles like *wohl* (roughly also 'probably') can never take scope outside the clause that they actually appear in. If we construe a minimal pair with the second conjunct in (16) above and replace *aber* with an adverb or a discourse particle, the scope of this element is very clearly restricted to the adverbial clause. As with *probably* in the English translation, the uncertainty expressed by *wahrscheinlich* or *wohl* extends only to the factory being shut down. The fact that every worker has been fired is established and not uncertain at all.

- (17) [C2 [*AdvCl* Weil die Fabrik **wohl/wahrscheinlich** dicht gemacht wird,]
because the factory probably tight made PASS]
wurde jeder der Arbeiter entlassen].
PASS.PAST every the worker fired
‘Because the factory is probably shut down, every worker was fired.’

But it is not only with adverbial clauses that *aber* can appear on the inside of a prefield-constituent. If a nominal constituent is heavy enough as it is being modified by a relative clause, we see that *aber* is perfectly fine appearing either in between the head noun and the relative clause or even inside the relative clause. In (18) we see *aber* appearing in between a head noun and a non-restrictive relative clause and in (19), we see *aber* appearing inside a restrictive relative clause.⁵

- (18) [Maria lade ich ein] [den Peter **aber** der sich immer nur beschwert, lade
I invite Maria PTCL the Peter but REL SELF always just complains, invite
ich nicht ein.
I not PTCL
‘I’ll invite Maria but Peter who constantly complains, I will not invite.’
- (19) [Nahezu alle wussten die Antwort] [der Student, der sich **aber** für ein Genie
Almost all knew the answer the student who SELF BUT for a genius
hält, nicht].
considers, not
‘Almost everyone knew the answer but the student who considers himself a genius,
did not.’

What these examples show very clearly in my view is that it is very unlikely to define a uniform syntactic position in which *aber* can surface. We know that the noun phrase that occupies the preverbal position is one nominal constituent (otherwise it could not appear in the preverbal position) but still *aber* appears in between its parts. Such a placement would thus be completely unexpected if *aber* were a topic-related functional head in the clausal spine. The same holds for an analysis according to which *aber* is treated as an adverb that attaches to a fixed position or a element that appears in the specifier of a fixed XP. As with the examples of adverbial clauses above, we can show straightforwardly that neither adverbs nor discourse particles can appear inside of a complex noun phrase.

- (20) a. Den Peter (***wohl**), der sich immer nur beschwert, lade ich nicht ein.
the Peter probably REL SELF always just complains, invite I not PTCL
‘Peter, who constantly complains, I will not invite.’

⁵As a weak tendency, I have the impression that these two examples represent the more unmarked placement. With non-restrictive relative clauses, I think the preferred position is in between the head noun and the relative clause and with restrictive ones, *aber* tends to appear more often inside of the relative clause. But it must be noted that these are only very weak tendencies and reversed examples (e.g. with *aber* appearing inside a non-restrictive relative clause or with *aber* appearing before a restrictive relative clause) are completely grammatical as well.

- b. Der Student, der sich **wohl** für ein Genie hält, wusste die Antwort
 the student who SELF probably for a genius considers, knew the answer
 nicht.
 not
 #‘The student who considers himself a genius probably didn’t know the answer.’⁶

We have seen that so-called postinitial *aber* does not simply appear after the first constituent. Whenever the first constituent is sufficiently heavy, it appears in various places inside of it. Crucially, when it does, it still contrasts the two matrix clause conjuncts (or rather the two clauses it would appear in between if it were in its null position). What I take this to mean is that clause-internal *aber* takes high scope, that is scope above the entire matrix clause (i.e. the second conjunct of *aber*) just like its clause-external counterpart or its English equivalent *but*. All of this would be completely unexpected if *aber* is either a functional head of the clausal spine or a specifier or an adverb associated with a particular position. In fact, certain positions such as the position between the head noun of a noun phrase and a relative clause are not accessible by adverbs, discourse particles or specifiers altogether.

But, given that previous literature treated so-called postinitial *aber* and middle field-*aber* as fundamentally different, we might still wonder whether middle field-*aber* can at least be analyzed as a functional head or a specifier/adverb. But it turns out that it cannot as the exact same problems arise. Due to the structure of the German middle field and its tendency to extrapose heavy constituents to the postfield, unusual placement of *aber* inside heavy NPs is clearly not as frequent and might be perceived as slightly marked but they are clearly grammatical and do occur. In (21), we see a complex noun phrase with a relative clause located in the middle field and, as in the example above, *aber* appears in between the head noun and the relative clause.

- (21) [Die Klausur war sehr schwer] [trotzdem sind [75% der Studenten **aber**, die
 the exam was very hard still are 75% the students but who
 immer im Tutorium waren] durchgekommen.]
 always in.the tutorial were passed
 ‘The exam was very hard but nonetheless 75% of the students who always went to
 the tutorial passed.’

Note that in (21), the contrast expressed by *aber* is again the contrast between the two conjuncts. The contrast is between the exam being hard and the students nonetheless passing it.

What this suggests is that, even though prefield-*aber* and middle field-*aber* have slightly different information-structural contexts in which they are used, their distribution and their scopal behavior is more or less the same. Independent factors, such as center-embedded adverbial clauses being marked or the tendency to extrapose relative clauses in the middle field of course can have an impact on where *aber* can appear in both contexts but overall, its distributional properties are the same.

⁶This example is of course grammatical under the reading where *wohl* (engl. *probably*) takes scope over the embedded clause, i.e. ‘The student who probably considers himself a genius...’

In this subsection, I hope to have shown that it is not possible to give a coherent syntactic position to clause-internal *aber* that is compatible with (i) the placement possibilities in which it can occur and (ii) the scope of the contrast it expresses. Neither is it possible to say that *aber* is an element that appears in a fixed syntactic position nor is it possible to say that *aber* is an adverb that can freely adjoin to various categories. Even such a treatment cannot explain why it cannot scope out of an adverbial clause or why it can appear in between a relative clause and its head noun.

Crucially, I want to stress that this holds both for prefield-*aber* and middle field-*aber* which share most of its distributional and scopal properties. As I have indicated in Section 2, the literature (e.g. Catasso 2015; Breitbarth 2019) has shown convincingly that prefield-*aber* and middle field-*aber* occur in different information-structural configurations but in terms of scope and their distribution, I would like to argue that they are at least very similar.

Against the background of this discussion and the arguments that *aber* is not an adverb nor a discourse particle, we might wonder what kind of element clause-internal *aber* actually is. Buring and Hartmann (2015) have argued that *aber* is semantically a coordination and syntactically an adverb-like element and while that runs short of explaining some of its properties illustrated in the previous section (see e.g. the fact that the scope of *aber* is not clause-bound), it points into the right direction. In the next section, I will argue that if we actually take a closer look at the syntax, we find that *aber* behaves like a syntactic conjunction even when it is deeply embedded into the second conjunct.

4.2 Clause-internal *aber* is also syntactically a conjunction

The main goal of this subsection is to convince the reader that clause-internal *aber* is in fact a conjunction. In the light of its unusual surface position, that is of course a rather radical claim. At least in the better-studied languages, conjunctions are not known to be subject to word order variation. They almost exclusively appear in between the two elements they conjoin. In Section 7, I will show that, upon closer inspection, the pattern is not actually as unusual as we think it is and that the kind of coordinator-displacement phenomena that we find in the world's languages fit very well with current placement typologies of functional head clitics. But for now, I will restrict myself to providing two arguments that even clause-internal *aber* is syntactically a conjunction.

The first simple argument is that it seems to be in complementary distribution with other conjunctions. If clause-external *aber* and clause-internal *aber* are fundamentally different things, we would expect them to be compatible. Examples such as (22a) are completely out. And as Buring and Hartmann (2015) have observed, clause-internal *aber* is also incompatible with the neutral conjunction *und*.⁷

- (22) a. Sie ist reich (*?und) arbeitet **aber** an einer Tankstelle.
 she is rich and works but at a gas.station
 ‘She is rich but works at a gas station.’

⁷We certainly do find occasional examples where *aber* and *und* cooccur in corpora (see e.g. the example (ii) in footnote 6 in Zhang (2006) but overall, these examples strike me as fairly marked and I agree with the judgments in Buring and Hartmann (2015).

- b. Sie ist reich (*aber) arbeitet **aber** an einer Tankstelle.
 she is rich but works but at a gas.station
 ‘She is rich but works at a gas station.’ (Büring and Hartmann, 2015, 50)

If the coordination *aber* and the adverb-like element *aber* had nothing to do with each other, such a cooccurrence restriction would be unexpected. This becomes apparent when the examples in (22) are contrasted with actual contrastive adverbials like *dennoch* or *trotzdem* (both: ‘still, nevertheless’), which are perfectly fine in that configuration:

- (23) Sie ist reich und arbeitet **dennoch/trotzdem** an einer Tankstelle.
 she is rich and works still at a gas.station
 ‘She is rich but works at a gas station.’ (Büring and Hartmann, 2015, 50)

In fact, contrasts such as (23) and (22) are the main reason why Büring and Hartmann (2015) argue that *aber* is hybrid in terms of its category. Syntactically, it is an adverb but semantically it is a coordinator. As a result, they argue that the cooccurrence restriction of clause-external and clause-internal *aber* is because of its semantic redundancy. And while this is certainly a possible explanation, it strikes me as more straightforward to assume that the complementary distribution is accounted for in syntactic terms and follows from the fact that these elements are one and the same thing.

This becomes even more apparent in light of the second argument I will present now. Büring and Hartmann (2015) assume that, syntactically speaking, there is no syntactic coordinator in cases where *aber* appears inside the second conjunct. According to them, cases of this sort are asyndetic, merely juxtaposed.

However, this makes quite a number of wrong syntactic predictions. Many coordination-specific processes such as ATB-movement, Gapping or the infamous German cases of asymmetric SLF-coordination construction are ungrammatical (or at least significantly degraded) without an overt coordinator.⁸

In (24), we see a coordination of two sub-clausal constituents (possibly TPs) with the direct object being ATB-moved to a position outside of each of the conjuncts. This requires the presence of a coordinator such as *aber*. The same goes for the example of gapping in (25). In (26), we see an example of SLF-coordination, which becomes significantly degraded and unnatural without the coordinator.

- (24) Was_i hat [sich Peter t_i zum Geburtstag gewünscht], *(aber) [Susi ihm t_i nicht
 What has SELF Peter to.the birthday wished but Susi him not
 gekauft]?
 bought
 ‘What did Peter wish for for his birthday but Susi didn’t buy him?’ ATB
- (25) Peter [spielt Tennis] *(aber) [Tischtennis nicht]
 Peter plays tennis but table.tennis not
 ‘Peter plays tennis but not table tennis.’ Gapping

⁸See Höhle (1983, 1990); Büring and Hartmann (1998); Johnson (2002); Reich (2008); Weisser (2019) for a discussion of the syntactic properties of SLF-coordination and different views on the status of the coordinator in these constructions.

- (26) Seine Bücher verkaufte er, ??(aber) wandte sich der Malerei zu.
 His books sold he but turned SELF the painting to
 ‘He sold his books but turned to the arts of painting.’ SLF-Coordination
 (Höhle, 1990, 234), slightly modified

Crucially, we see that all of these coordination-specific processes that are ungrammatical in asyndetic coordination are licensed in the presence of conjunct-internal *aber*.

- (27) Was_i hat [sich Peter t_i zum Geburtstag gewünscht], [Susi ihm **aber** t_i nicht
 What has SELF Peter to.the birthday wished Susi him but not
 gekauft]?
 bought
 ‘What did Peter wish for for his birthday and Susi didn’t buy him?’ ATB
- (28) Peter [spielt Tennis], [Tischtennis **aber** nicht]
 Peter plays tennis table.tennis but not
 ‘Peter plays tennis but not table tennis.’ Gapping
- (29) Seine Bücher verkaufte er, wandte sich **aber** der Malerei zu.
 His books sold he turned SELF but the painting to
 ‘He sold his books but turned to the arts of painting.’ SLF-Coordination
 (Höhle, 1990, 234), slightly modified

This, in my view, is highly problematic for virtually all the theories that we have seen so far. A theory according to which clause-internal *aber* is a topicality-related functional head or the specifier of such a head has, as far as I can tell, nothing to say about why coordination-specific properties such as ATB-movement crucially rely on it being present. The same holds for an analysis according to which clause-internal *aber* is simply an adverb. Adverbs typically do not interfere with syntactic movement, etc. Even a theory like Buring and Hartmann (2015), which calls clause-internal *aber* a semantic coordinator, seems to be forced to assume that genuinely syntactic processes such as ATB-movement are licensed by the semantic properties of the element in question. I take this to be quite implausible.

What these examples suggest, I think, is that Ross’ original interpretation of these data was correct after all and that despite its unusual surface position, clause-internal *aber* is a proper adversative coordinator, both syntactically and semantically. Before I will propose my own analysis, which follows exactly this line of argumentation in Section 6, the next Section will take stock and gather the main empirical observations that we have seen in the previous sections.

5 Towards an analysis

The previous sections have presented quite a number of empirical observations about the different placement possibilities of clause-internal *aber*. The main goal of this section is to bring some structure into these observations and, in doing so, pave the way for my proposal that will be introduced in Section 6.

We start with the final observation from the last section. Clause-internal *aber* shows a number of properties that we expect from a regular conjunction: (i) It is in complementary distribution with other conjunctions and (ii) it licenses coordination-specific processes

such as ATB-movement, gapping or SLF-coordination. I took this to mean that it *is* a proper syntactic conjunction and the only property it does not share with regular conjunctions in German is that it can surface in an unusual position.

The assumption that, syntactically speaking, clause-internal *aber* is actually a conjunction also patterns nicely with the observation made in Section 3 that that is also the position where the adversative component that *aber* introduces takes scope. In example (16), we saw that even when *aber* is deeply embedded inside an adverbial clause in the prefield of the second conjunct, it still expresses adversativity between the first and the second conjunct as a whole. In other words, not only is it the case that *aber* behaves syntactically like a conjunction but also that it takes scope in the position where regular conjunctions are.

The second main take-away from the previous sections was that it seems impossible to find a syntactically defined position that would translate into all the clause-internal instances of *aber*. We have seen that *aber* appears inside of adverbial clauses, inside of relative clauses and inside of noun phrases. In the case of adverbial clauses and relative clauses, it remains mysterious how placement inside of the adjunct clauses can actually result in high scope above the entire conjunct. In the case where *aber* appears in between a head noun and the relative clause that modifies it (see (18)), it is very clear that it is completely impossible to unify this with an approach where *aber* occupies a fixed position in the clausal spine.

Importantly, this cannot be resolved by assuming different subtypes of clause-internal *aber*. Even if we adopt the dichotomy in postinitial *aber* and middle field-*aber* as most of the approaches discussed above do, then this does not help us at all. As we have seen in example (21), middle field-*aber* is just as fine in between a relative clause and its host noun as so-called postinitial *aber* (18). In other words, both types of *aber* suffer from the same problems in terms of placement and scope, which in turn suggests that the dichotomy was problematic to begin with.

In very much the same way, it seems impossible to assume that *aber* is an adverb that simply adjoins to various syntactic categories. We have seen many examples that show that the behavior of clause-internal *aber* does not match the behavior of adverbs both in terms of their placement and in terms of their scopal behavior. Unlike adverbs, clause-internal *aber* (i) cannot appear alone in the prefield, (ii) can appear alongside another constituent inside the prefield, (iii) can appear in between the head noun and its relative clause and (iv) can scope out of embedded clauses such as relative clauses and adverbial clauses.

So, all in all, it seems impossible to find a syntactically defined position that can be mapped onto a surface position for *aber*. This of course does not mean that we should stop trying to find an explanation but rather that we might want to widen our view about possible explanations a bit.

And in fact, we already have seen a positional generalization about all instances of clause-internal *aber* in the previous section. As noted in Breitbarth (2019); Weisser (2020), instances of clause-internal *aber* share the property that they seem to right-attach to a prosodic phrase. Quite strikingly, despite the large variety of surface positions we have observed, this generalization is without exception. Below, I have illustrated the respective second conjuncts of some of the examples discussed in the previous sections and indicated the plausible prosodic phrasing.

The first thing we notice is that we can get the alternation between prefield-*aber* and middle-field-*aber* for free in many cases. Consider the minimal pair in (30) and (31). In (30), we see that the pronoun in the prefield is a weak pronoun as it is not a contrastive topic. It will thus be included in the prosodic phrase of the verb. As a result, *aber* cannot attach to a weak pronoun in the prefield.⁹ If however, the pronoun in the prefield is contrastive, then it will receive its own prosodic phrase (or possibly even its own intonation phrase (see Féry and Truckenbrodt 2005; Féry and Skopeteas 2006; Wagner 2012)) and as a result, *aber* will only be able to attach to the prefield.

- (30) ... {ich will **aber**} {nach hause gehen.}
 ... I want but to home go
 ‘... but I want to go home’
- (31) ... {ICH **aber**} {will} {nach hause gehen.}
 ... I but want to home go
 ‘... but I want to go home’

The second thing we notice is that, if it is *prosodic* constituency that is responsible for the placement of clause-internal *aber*, then the curious facts of *aber* appearing inside syntactic islands become less problematic. Adverbial clauses in the prefield for example are typically analysed as prosodically integrated (see e.g. König and van der Auwera 1988; Truckenbrodt 2002, 2005; Frey and Truckenbrodt 2015) into the main clause, and as such should be accessible to hosting clause-internal *aber*. As we have seen above, this is borne out.

- (32) ... {weil die Fabrik **aber**} {dicht gemacht wird,} {wurde} {jeder der Arbeiter
 ... because the factory BUT tight made PASS] PASS.PAST every the worker
 entlassen}.
 fired
 ‘... but because the factory shuts down, every worker was fired.’

The same goes for the structures in (33) and (34), where *aber* appears inside a complex noun phrase. In (33), we see a prefield-constituent being modified by a non-restrictive relative clause. Non-restrictive relative clauses are typically analysed as prosodically non-integrated (see e.g. Holler (2008); Frey (2011); Frey and Truckenbrodt (2015)) and as such there is necessarily a prosodic break between the head noun and the relative clause. This prosodic break then explains where *aber* attaches.

- (33) ... {den Peter **aber**} {der sich} {immer nur beschwert,} {lade ich} {nicht ein}.
 ... the Peter but REL SELF always just complains, invite I not PTCL
 ‘... but Peter who constantly complains, I will not invite.’

In (34), we see a restrictive relative clause. Such clauses are typically prosodically integrated and often parsed into the same prosodic phrase as the head noun. Unsurprisingly then, clause-internal *aber* then appears inside of the relative clause as this is the first prosodic phrase boundary.

⁹See also the ungrammatical example of *aber* attaching to a dummy expletive *es* in the prefield in (10) above.

- (34) ... {der Student, der sich **aber**} {für ein Genie hält} {nicht}.
 ... the student who SELF BUT for a genius takes, not
 ‘... but the student who considers himself a genius, did not.’

In all of these examples, the distribution of clause-internal *aber* can straightforwardly be described as appearing after the first prosodic phrase of the second conjunct. I take this to be more than a mere coincidence, especially in light of the futile attempts to find a syntactic description that explains the surface positions of *aber*. Of course, this generalization does not explain all the data at this point but it is a good start.

In the next section, I will build on this generalization to propose a coherent theory that seeks to explain (a) the syntactic and semantic properties of *aber* and (b) its placement pattern.

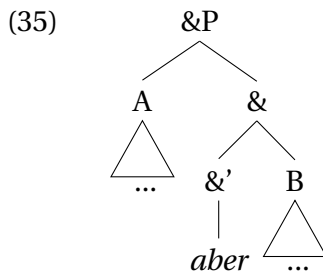
6 A displacement analysis for *aber*

6.1 The basic model and the prosodic displacement rule

In the previous section, we made two observations:

- ① Clause-internal *aber* shows syntactic *and* semantic properties of a conjunction.
- ② Clause-internal *aber* typically appears after the first prosodic phrase of the second conjunct.

In what follows, I will take these observations at face value and propose that we should try to model the properties of *aber* as closely and surface-oriented as possible. Accordingly, I will translate these observations into a theoretical account as follows. First, I will make the assumption that clause-internal *aber* is a conjunction for all syntactic and semantic purposes. That means that is syntactically base-generated exactly in the position where regular conjunctions (i.e. German *und* or its English counterpart *but*) are generated, namely in between the two conjuncts. In line with the standard accounts of coordination, I will assume that the conjunction and the second conjunct form a constituent to the exclusion of the first one.¹⁰



¹⁰See amongst many others Munn (1993); Zoerner (1995); Johannessen (1998); Zhang (2010); Weisser (2015); Nevins and Weisser (2019); Neeleman et al. (2022). Note also that, even though I illustrate the conjunction as a functional head that takes both conjuncts as its arguments for the sake of concreteness, nothing about this approach hinges on that. The first conjunct may also be adjoined as in Munn (1993); Zhang (2010) or the conjuncts may be adjoined to each other with the conjunction being part of the second conjunct as in Neeleman et al. (2022).

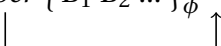
In this position, it can select for its conjuncts and it can license coordination-specific processes and it also comes as no surprise that it is in complementary distribution with other conjunctions. As we will see below, this is also the position that *aber* takes scope in, thereby straightforwardly explaining why it takes such high scope above even when it is deeply embedded inside an adverbial clause in the second conjunct.

The obvious question that arises is of course now, how the mapping between the assumed underlying syntactic position depicted in (35) and the various surface positions is modelled. It clearly cannot be syntactic movement of some sort because either *aber* would have to move downward to a position lower in the tree or a number of elements would have to move upward to a position higher in the tree.¹¹ We have seen that clause-internal *aber* can follow complementizers or the finite verb in German and these elements would all have to move across it, which seems unlikely. In addition, we have seen that *aber* can appear inside strong syntactic islands (such as relative clauses and adverbial clauses) and hence syntactic movement would have to cross these kinds of islands as well. This seems highly implausible.

In contrast to a syntactic movement approach, I would like to propose that the positioning of *aber* is the result of a late postsyntactic displacement rule. As we will see below in Section 7, this rule patterns in a with cliticization rules in other languages, and in particular with the kind that can be shown to be insensitive to syntactic structure and constituency. Accordingly, it makes sense to attempt to treat German *aber* in a similar fashion. I will therefore assume that there is an optional process that dislocates German *aber* from its syntactic base-position to a position after the first prosodic phrase.

- (36) German *aber* can be optionally dislocated to the right edge of its immediately following prosodic phrase.

We can abstractly represent this kind of dislocation as follows: Given a structure where *aber* conjoins to complex phrases A and B, both of which contain several elements (called A_1, A_2 , etc. and B_1, B_2 , etc.)

$$(37) \quad \dots \{ A_{n-1} A_n \}_\phi \text{ aber } \{ B_1 B_2 \dots \}_\phi \{ B_m B_{m+1} \dots \}_\phi \dots$$


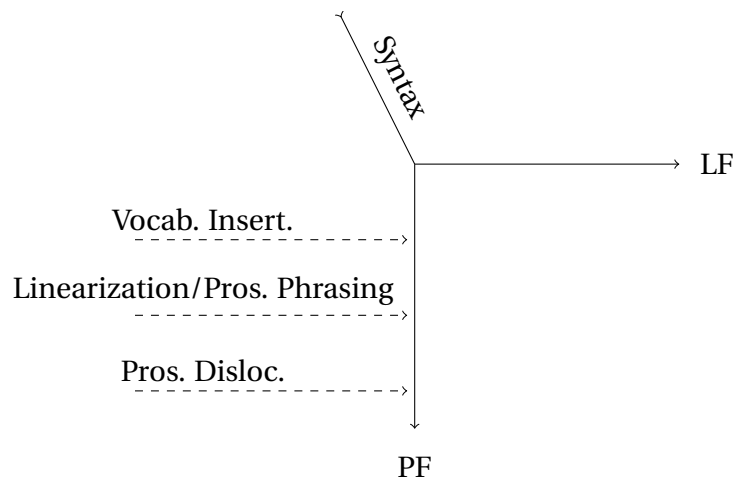
The model of grammar that I am adopting is a Y-model with an elaborated PF-branch that hosts a number of sequential processes that successively map syntax to phonology.¹² These processes include *Vocabulary Insertion*, a process which supplies the abstract syntactic nodes with phonological feature content and, subsequently, a set of rules that map syntactic structure to phonological phrases. I will largely stay agnostic as to whether this mapping from syntax to proceeds by means of a set of Optimality-Theoretic constraints (à la Truckenbrodt 1995, 1999 et seq. or Selkirk 2011 et seq.) or by means of a sequential set of mapping operations (see e.g. Embick and Noyer 2001; Embick 2010; Shwayder 2015;

¹¹See Zhang (2006) for a proposal of a syntactic movement analysis of this type for the Mandarin adversative coordinator *keshi*.

¹²This is essentially the architecture of Distributed Morphology see Halle and Marantz (1994); Embick and Noyer (2001); Embick (2010); Bobaljik (2012); Arregi and Nevins (2012) but the approach here is also compatible with any model that allows for late displacement of clitics in a postsyntactic component (see e.g. Halpern (1995))

Fenger 2020) that can manipulate the syntactic output on its way to the prosody.¹³ Vocabulary Insertion and the mapping from syntax to prosody are both followed by the prosodic dislocation process that displaces *aber* from its syntactic base position in between the two conjuncts to its surface position after the first phonological phrase of the second conjunct. The prosodic structure is created on the basis of the syntactic output plus phonological information of the individual terminals and only then can the clitic displacement actually apply.

(38)



It follows that the displacement of *aber* has no bearing on the scopal interpretation of it. The adversative nature of *aber* will always contrast the two conjuncts it conjoins, regardless of its actual surface position. That of course, does not mean that the placement of *aber* does not interact with information-structure. As we have seen, *aber* is very much sensitive to the topic or focus relations of the second conjunct. Note however, that in the proposal at hand the relation is indirect. A contrastive topic for example will (at least) receive its own phonological phrase for example and it is this phonological phrase boundary that *aber* is sensitive to. In this sense, *aber* is not a topic marker (as in Sæbø 2003) or a topic-related functional head (as in Breitbarth 2019) but merely a prosody-sensitive clitic.

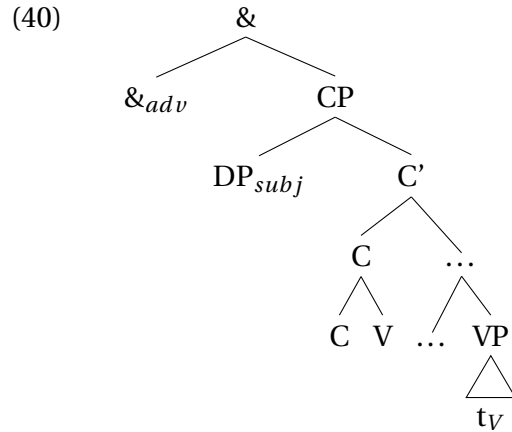
Let me briefly illustrate with a basic example in (39) how the derivation proceeds. I will not indicate the first conjunct of the adversative conjunction as it does not play a role for the derivation.

- (39) ... ich will **aber** nach hause gehen.
 ... I want but to home go
 '... but I want to go home'

The syntax of such an example works as usual and we do not need to commit here to specific syntactic implementations of information-structural notions such as topic and or

¹³But note that Section 6.2 and 6.3 will argue that the mapping from syntax to prosody cannot apply in one fell swoop as adopted by many proponents of the constraint-based mapping theory. Rather than that, the mapping from syntax to prosody will have to apply in a cyclic way in order to account for some of the above-mentioned facts about the placement of *aber*. The cyclic nature of the syntax-prosody mapping is typically stressed in the operation-based approaches couched in Distributed Morphology but recently also a number of constraint-based approaches have started to incorporate these views and opted for a cyclic optimization approach.

focus as well as the left periphery of the German clause. I will thus adopt a simple tree as in (40) for ease of exposition.



After Vocabulary Insertion supplements the tree with phonological information, it is linearized and mapped onto prosodic phrases yielding a structure as in (41).

(41) ... **aber** {ich will } {nach hause gehen}

This is the moment when we can finally apply the Prosodic Dislocation rule which shifts *aber* to the right edge of its right-adjacent phonological phrase yielding the correct result.

(42) ... **aber** {ich will } {nach hause gehen}

If the pronominal subject would be interpreted as contrastive, it would have received its own phonological phrase, leading to a situation where *aber* lands immediately preverbally.

(43) ... **aber** {ICH } {will} {nach hause gehen}

As we have seen in the previous section, the simple prosodic dislocation account can actually give us a fair amount of empirical coverage and has many of the basic patterns (see (30)) all fall out straightforwardly. Even some of the examples that previous theories struggled with such as the placement of *aber* in adverbial clauses or relative clauses do not require us to say anything more (34).

In addition, the informal derivation with *aber* being base-generated in its clause-external position and dislocated exactly one phonological phrase to the right also explains another striking asymmetry. As we have seen above, *aber* can appear in an adverbial clause that precedes its matrix clause. Given the derivation above, we predict that they should not be able to occur in the very same position if the same adverbial clause follows its matrix clause. This is borne out. Consider the following minimal pair:

- (44) a. [C₁ Maria mag ihren Job eigentlich] [C₂ [AdvCl wenn sie aber im Lotto
 Maria likes her job actually if she BUT in.the lottery
 gewinnt] dann kündigt sie sofort].
 wins then quits she at.once
 ‘Maria actually likes her job but if she wins the lottery, she will quit immedi-
 ately.’
- b. *[C₁ Maria mag ihren Job eigentlich] [C₂ sie kündigt sofort [AdvCl wenn sie
 Maria likes her job actually she quits at.once if she
 aber im Lotto gewinnt]].
 BUT in.the lottery wins
 ‘Maria actually likes her job but she will quit immediately if she wins the lot-
 tery.’

What we observe here is some sort of a proximity effect predicted by the dislocation of *aber*. We know that adverbial clauses can appear before or after their matrix clause, we note that dislocation of *aber* into an postponed adverbial clause is impossible as it would have to cross several phonological phrases and a VP. Note that a base-generation account like the ones we discussed above, does not have anything to say about the matter. The position which *aber* is in in (44a) and (44b) is completely identical and so these sentences should not differ in their grammaticality. I take this as another strong argument for the present approach and against the approaches discussed above.

In the next two subsections, I will briefly discuss some more intricate cases that help us refine the general approach.

6.2 Non-second positions of *aber*

In the previous section, we have seen how a simple placement rule can give us a fair amount of empirical coverage. We have seen that the difference between prefield-*aber* and middle field-*aber* mostly reduces to the question of whether the prefield is interpreted as contrastive. If it is, then it will receive its own independent phonological phrase (or even its own intonation phrase) and then displacement of *aber* is necessarily limited to the preverbal position.

However when the prefield is not interpreted as contrastive, then displacement of *aber* can also target positions in the middle field and, then we can possibly encounter some cases where it seems that *aber* is optionally displaced not only one phonological phrase to the right but maybe two or even three. This applies in particular when the middle field is occupied by several noun phrases. Consider example (4), repeated in (45):

- (45) Ich will nach hause... (‘I want to go home’)
 sie will (**aber**) Peter (**aber**) das Plakat (**aber**) noch zeigen.
 she wants but Peter the poster but still show
 ‘... but she wants to still show the poster to Peter.’

In a derivation, where the direct object (‘das Plakat’) is interpreted as specific definite and thus has scrambled out of the VP, it seems that we have three potential positions for *aber*. In this case, it thus seems that our displacement rule does not predict all the possibilities.

The obvious question that we can ask ourselves now in the light of these data is whether

the displacement rule must be modified or whether the indeterminacies in examples like (45) are actually due to orthogonal differences in prosodic phrasing. Following the former strategy, we could, for example, hypothesize that the formulation of the dislocation rule is slightly wrong and it should say that *aber* can be dislocated to the right edge of any phonological phrase to the right of its base position.

This however, would create several problems. First, we saw that in the case of contrastively interpreted prefields, the dislocation to a position after the verb is strongly dispreferred (see example (9) repeated below):¹⁴

- (46) [DU bist vielleicht eingeladen,] [ICH **aber** habe (??**aber**) keine Einladung
 YOU are maybe invited I but have but no invitation
 bekommen.]
 received.
 ‘You might be invited but I haven’t received an invitation.’

Similarly, we might even expect to find cases such as (47) where *aber* appears immediately preverbally but skips the entire noun phrase including relative clause that is located in the prefield.

- (47) *[Nahezu alle wussten die Antwort] [der Student, der sich für ein Genie
 Almost all knew the answer the student who SELF for a genius
 hält **aber**, nicht].
 considers BUT, not
 ‘Almost everyone knew the answer but the student who considers himself a genius,
 did not.’

In the light of these data, we might want to opt for a slightly more restrictive displacement rule¹⁵ and investigate the possibility that the rule itself remains constant (and only allows dislocation to the next phonological phrase) but the prosodic phrasing differs in cases where we seem to have optionality.

In fact, there are quite a number of accounts that note that phenomena relating to phonological phrase boundaries often exhibit a certain amount of indeterminacy. For example, Bennett et al. (2016) have recently looked into the placement properties of weak pronouns in Irish and concluded that they are also dislocated to the right of a phonological phrase. Crucially, however, they also find that the exact landing site of this dislocation exhibits some amount of flexibility. In (48), we see that the object pronoun (boxed) can dislocate to the right edge of every phonological phrase that follows it. In (48a), the baseline example, it appears in its base position right next to the subject. But it can also dislocate

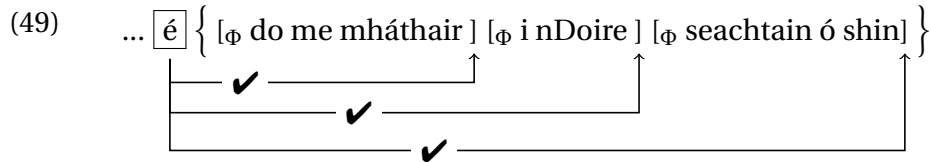
¹⁴As noted above, it is sometimes claimed that contrastive phrases in the prefield even receive their own intonation phrase, in which case this would not be a counterargument against the hypothetical approach discussed here.

¹⁵Another conceptual argument against the possibility that displacement can skip several prosodic phrases comes from the crosslinguistic comparison with other instances of coordinator shift (or clitic placement more generally, see Section 7). While we have observed many cases, where a clitic must be positioned after the first phonological word of a given domain, no case to date has been reported (at least not to my knowledge), where the clitic can right-attach to any phonological word in a given domain. Thus, it strikes me as favorable to maintain the stricter version of the prosodic dislocation approach according to which we can also skip exactly one phonological phrase.

to the right, either to the right of the goal-PP (48b), the locative PP (48)c or the temporal adverb (48d).

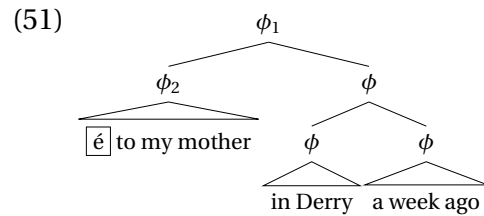
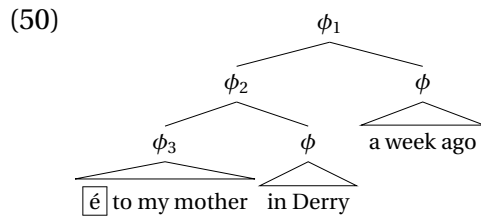
- (48) a. Thaispeán siad é do mo mháthair i nDoire seachtain ó shin.
 show.PST they it to my mother in Derry week ago.
 ‘They showed it to my mother in Derry a week ago.’
 b. Thaispeán siad do mo mháthair é i nDoire seachtain ó shin.
 c. Thaispeán siad do mo mháthair i nDoire é seachtain ó shin.
 d. Thaispeán siad do mo mháthair i nDoire seachtain ó shin é.

The illustration in (49) summarizes the empirical pattern according to Bennett et al. (2016). The weak object pronoun can appear in its base position or dislocate to the right edge of every phonological phrase there is.



However, similarly to what we noted above, Bennett et al. (2016) want to maintain the assumption that the dislocation itself is constant and that it is the prosodic phrasing that changes in each of these examples. Building on a growing body of research in recent years, they argue that prosodic phrasing can be recursive and that prosodic phrases can be grouped in various ways (in a given domain).

The (slightly simplified) prosodic structures in (50) and (51) illustrate the intuition behind the account. The weak pronoun *é* (boxed) can optionally dislocate to a position to the right of a prosodic phrase it is contained in. Since prosodic phrases can be recursive, this is not necessarily a determinate process. In (50), for example, it can dislocate to ϕ_3 , ϕ_2 or ϕ_1 . In (51), it can only dislocate to ϕ_2 or ϕ_1 .



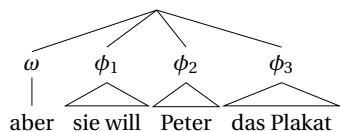
Such an approach seems attractive for German as well. While there have been various approaches to prosodic phrasing in the German clause, the concrete structures that the different proposals assume differ to a varying degrees. Féry (2017) develops a model of prosody for i.a. German that builds on a large body of work arguing that the category of the prosodic phrase can be recursive (in German).¹⁶

I would thus like to pursue the general line of argumentation pushed in Elfner (2015) and Bennett et al. (2016) and assume that phonological phrases can be potentially recursive and thus grouped in various ways and thereby give rise to the optionality in clitic-

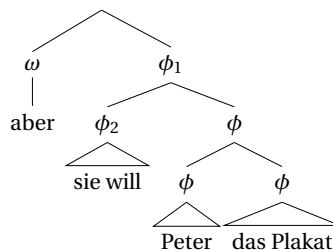
¹⁶See amongst many others Ladd (1986, 2008); Wagner (2005); Féry and Truckenbrodt (2005); Myrberg (2010, 2013); Ishihara (2009); Féry and Schubö (2010); Ito and Mester (2012); Féry and Kentner (2013); Elfner (2015).

placement. In the case of *aber*, the phonological phrases that make up the prefield and the middle field can thus be grouped in various ways as indicated in the structures below:

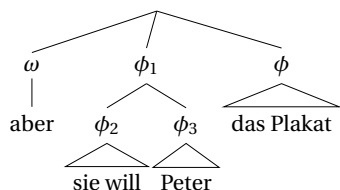
(52)



(54)



(53)



In a flat prosodic structure as in (52), the simple rule of postposting *aber* to the edge of the right-adjacent prosodic phrase will yield the pattern where *aber* appears immediately postverbally. In (53), where the first two prosodic phrases ϕ_2 and ϕ_3 are grouped together to form another prosodic phrase (ϕ_1), the dislocation will target ϕ_1 and therefore place *aber* in between the indirect object (*Peter*) and the direct object (*das Plakat*). Finally, a completely recursive structure of the noun phrases in the German middle field as in (54) will lead to a placement of *aber* after all noun phrases as the rule then targets ϕ_1 .

This assumption gives us a handle on the optionality that was noted also in Breitbarth (2019) and that we have identified in the previous sections. I want to note however that this account does not necessarily rule out the option that the different prosodic groupings in (52)-(54) might actually be conditioned or influenced by other factors. In very much the same way that information structural features influence the formation of prosodic structure, other factors may influence the choice between the different structures as well. In other words, future research on the placement of *aber* may find additional factors that play a role for its positioning but that does not necessarily mean that the approach at hand is wrong. It may just be that the indeterminacy of *aber*-placement is conditioned by additional processes (see e.g. Ishihara (2009) for discussion of factors influencing prosodic grouping).

At this point, we have introduced a simple, straightforward rule that can account for what I claim to be all the positions that *aber* can occur in. In the vast majority of the cases, *aber* simply appears after the first phonological phrase of its second conjunct. In some cases, we have seen that *aber* seems to occur further to the right, namely after the second or third phonological phrase. This, I have argued, is not a counterargument to the dislocation rule I have proposed but rather indicates that the prosodic phrasing is potentially recursive leading to a situation where the phonological phrase adjacent to *aber*.

6.3 The opacity of vP/VP

In the preceding subsections, we established (i) that the placement of *aber* is after the first prosodic phrase in the vast majority of the cases and that (ii) in cases where this generalization seems to be violated, we might envisage a structure which involves recursive instances of phonological phrases.

We saw that the assumption that the assumption of recursive phonological phrases can explain cases where it seems that, on the surface, *aber* was displaced to a position further to the right than the first phonological phrase. In other words, the assumption of recursive phonological phrases allowed us to maintain the simple generalization that *aber* dislocates exactly one phonological phrase to the right.

This approach nicely derives the placement patterns of *aber* that we have seen in Sections 2–4 but there is one observation that it cannot account for. In Section 2, we have seen that *aber* can under no circumstances float into or across a vP/VP.¹⁷

We see that for example from the fact that it can never follow an indefinite pronoun nor the negation (See examples in (5) and (6) as well as the examples below). Note also, that it cannot follow the vP/VP as a whole.

- (55) **[Ich will nach hause], [sie will mir etwas (aber) zeigen (aber)].*
 I want to home she want me sth but show but
 ‘I want to go home but she wants to show me something’
- (56) **[Ich will nach hause], [sie will mir das Plakat nicht (aber) zeigen (aber)].*
 I want to home she want me the poster not but show but
 ‘I want to go home but she doesn’t want to show me the poster’

For all we have said above, we would expect to be able to include the prosodic phrase that is the vP/VP into the recursive structure of prosodic phrases of the German clause and float *aber* across the entire recursive prosodic phrase.¹⁸ So far, nothing tells us why we cannot create a prosodic structure as in (57) for the example in (55) and then float *aber* across ϕ_1 .

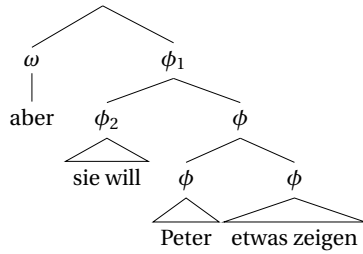
¹⁷Whether the exact barrier for the displacement of *aber* is the vP or the VP is not easy to tell. One potential diagnostic for the relevant edges would be the placement of *aber* wrt. to the discourse particles such as *ja* or *eben*, which are often taken to mark the vP-edge (see e.g. Diesing (1992); Ormelius-Sandblom (1997); Bayer (2018)). Unfortunately, the data are not entirely clear. It seems to me that *aber* can always follow these particles and the acceptability of examples with *aber* preceding them varies from particle to particle:

- (i) a. ... Peter will ja **aber** nach hause.
 ... Peter wants DISC.PRT but to home
 b. ... Peter will ?**aber** ja nach hause
 ... Peter wants but DISC.PRT to home
 ‘... but Peter wants to go home.’

I want to stress however that these are very subtle judgments and since the issue is somewhat orthogonal to the question at hand, I will leave it for future research. In what follows, I will thus refer to the opaque constituent as a vP/VP. As will become clear from the discussion below, I do not assume that it is the syntactic constituent vP/VP that is opaque but rather the prosodic constituent that corresponds to it.

¹⁸Cf. example (54) where the structure was similar except that the direct object was a scrambled noun phrase rather than a non-scramblable indefinite pronoun

(57)



Proponents of a direct mapping approach, in which prosodic structure is a direct descendant of syntactic structure (see e.g. Pak 2008; Newell 2008; Embick 2010; Newell and Pig-gott 2014; Shwayder 2015; Fenger 2020; Harðarsson 2021) might argue that the inaccessibility of vP/VPs might follow from a cyclic, phase-based architecture (see especially Pak’s (2008) account of tonal domains in San Mateo Huave). vPs are often assumed to be phases and therefore should potentially be inaccessible because their linearization and prosodi-fication was accomplished in an earlier cycle. While I agree that this is a very nice observa-tion, it creates some problems in the case at hand. The first problem is that *aber* can also conjoin vPs/VPs and still cannot float into or across its second conjunct:

- (58) Er hat mich [_{VP1} gesehen] (**aber**) [_{VP2} nicht (***aber**) erkannt] (***aber**)
 He has me seen but not but recognized but
 ‘He saw me but did not recognize me.’

If *aber* coordinating two CPs can float into the second CP, we would also expect *aber* co-ordinating two VPs to float into a VP if the ability to float or not were merely an effect of cyclicity.

The second problem is that we have seen above that *aber* can also float into adverbial clauses CPs or relative clauses, which arguably also count as phases of an earlier cycle. Both adverbial clauses and relative clauses contain C-elements and should therefore count as CPs and thus count as phases. Nonetheless, *aber* freely floats into them. That means that the property of vP being a phase cannot solely be responsible for the inacces-sibility of *aber*-floating in or across it. We therefore need another explanation for why *aber* cannot float into the prosodic constituent that corresponds to the vP/VP.

It has been known for quite a while that the vP/VP boundary plays a special role for the information-structural properties as well as for the prosodic properties of the Ger-man clause. The idea that the German clause is separated into two information-structural “packages”. Although there are many different terms and definitions for these two “pack-ages” in the literature, I will simply follow von Heusinger (1999) in using the terms *Back-ground* and *Focus*. The vP/VP boundary that proved essential for the placement patterns of *aber* in the previous chapters is usually taken to map onto the prosodic categories that mark the separation between background and focus (see e.g. Diesing 1992):

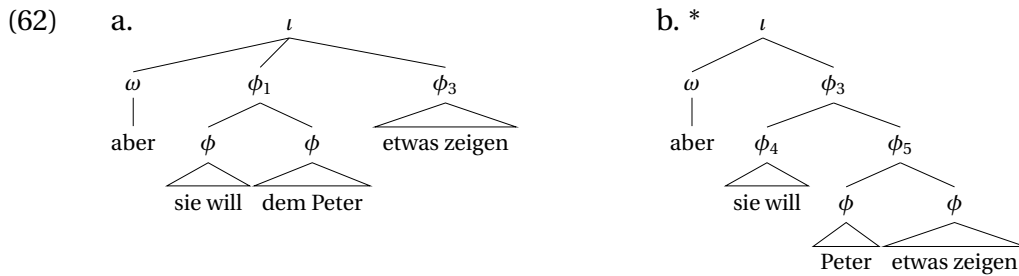
- (59) sie will dem Peter **aber** [_{vP/VP} etwas zeigen].
Background *Focus*

Building on the discussion of Section 6.2 above, I would thus like to propose the following restriction on recursivity of phonological phrases in German:

- (60) SEPARATE BACKGROUND & FOCUS:
Background and Focus are not part of the same phonological phrase.

This restriction prohibits recursive phonological phrasing that combines phonological phrases belonging to the focus domain with those belonging to the background domain of the clause. In doing so, it rules out exactly those configurations that would give rise to floating of *aber* all the way into or across a vP/VP. Consider again the problematic example discussed above (repeated in (61)) and the corresponding prosodic structures in (62):

- (61) ... aber sie will dem Peter etwas zeigen.
... but she wants the Peter sth show
'...but she wants to show something to Peter.'



The prosodic structure in (62a) is grammatical and allows floating of *aber* to the position after ϕ_1 , which is in accordance with the data. The prosodic structure in (62b), which would allow for floating of *aber* across the VP (i.e. across ϕ_3) violates the restriction in (60) as it combines part of the background domain with a part of the focus domain in one prosodic phrase (i.e. ϕ_3 and ϕ_5). In other words the constraint in (60) requires the prosodic phrases that correspond to the background and to the focus domain to always be immediate daughters of the intonation phrase node in the prosodic structure. Thus, we can never even create a prosodic structure where floating of *aber* into or across a vP/VP would be an option.

This is the last puzzle piece that our theory requires. The adversative conjunction *aber* optionally floats to a position that immediately follows the first prosodic phrase of the second conjunct. The prosodic constituent that qualifies as the first phonological phrase might potentially be understood as recursive in that it itself consists of several phonological phrases. Crucially however, there is a constraint in German that disallows recursive prosodic phrasing combining material belonging to the background and the focus domain. This gives rise to the empirical generalization that *aber* can never float to a position that follows any vP/VP-internal material.

In the following section, I will briefly widen the view and argue that the unusual placement pattern of *aber* is actually not that uncommon from a crosslinguistic view and that it can actually be likened to other instances of second position clitics in Slavic and other languages of the world. Towards the end of Section 7, I will also offer some discussion about the exact nature of the dislocation process that I have proposed.

7 Beyond German

The main take-away from the previous discussion is that we can make sense of the puzzling placement pattern of clause-internal *aber* in German by reference to prosodic phrasing. *Aber* can optionally be dislocated to the right edge of the first phonological phrase of its second conjunct. And while this placement rule might seem a bit unusual from a German or a Germanic point of view, this section argues that, if we widen the viewpoint a little bit, we do find a fair amount of parallels with other languages.

7.1 The case of the Polish coordinator *zaś*

The first of these parallels that I want to point out is that some Slavic languages such as Polish or Slovenian seem to have elements that behave strikingly similar to German *aber*. Polish, for example, has a coordinator *zaś* that shifts to a position inside the second conjunct as well. And like German *aber*, it is in complementary distribution with the regular non-shifting adversative coordinators *a* and *ale*.

- (63) [Piotr chce zostać na imprezie] (*a/*ale) [ja **zaś** chcę już iść do domu.]
 Piotr wants stay at party and/but I but want already go to home
 ‘Piotr wants to stay at the party but I want to leave.’

J.Zaleska, J.Błaszczak (p.c.)

Further, we see that *zaś* licenses genuine coordination-specific processes such as ATB-movement, which strongly suggests that it is a coordinator and not some sort of conjunctive adverb.¹⁹

- (64) Co Kasia sprzedała, [Piotr *(**zaś**) kupił]?
 What Kate sold Piotr but buy?
 ‘What did Kate sell but Piotr buy?’

J.Zaleska, J.Błaszczak (p.c.)

And like German *aber*, we find that Polish *zaś* can ignore syntactic islands such as adverbial clauses if they appear clause-initially:

- (65) Piotr chce zostać na imprezie, (‘Piotr wants stay at the party’)
 [[ponieważ (**zaś**) ja (**zaś**) muszę wstać rano], chcę już iść do domu.]
 because but I but must get.up tomorrow, want already go to home
 ‘... but because I need to get up tomorrow, I want to leave.’

J.Zaleska, J.Błaszczak (p.c.)

Of course, there are a few differences between the behavior of *aber* and *zaś* as the displacement of the latter is obligatory and not optional and that *zaś* requires a contrastive topic reading whereas *aber* is compatible with a wider range of semantic relations between the clauses (see e.g. Sæbø 2003). But with respect to the placement pattern, these two elements behave strikingly similar.²⁰

¹⁹Polish *zaś* shows other properties of coordinators as well in that it cannot host the so-called mobile inflections (see e.g. Borsley and Rivero (1994); Embick (1998) unlike adverbs that appear linearly in the same position.

²⁰The same seems to hold for the Slovenian conjunction *pa* (see e.g. Marušič et al. (2011); Mitrović (2014)),

Thus, we can assess for the moment that the German pattern that was discussed throughout this paper is not just an isolated outlier.

7.2 Other cases of shifting coordinators and the relation to typologies of clitic placement

The second point that I want to make in this section is that, upon closer inspection, we find that the German pattern actually falls neatly into the broader typology of clitics overall.

Although coordinators arguably appear in between the phrases they conjoin in the vast majority of the cases, the phenomenon of shifting coordinators is not unheard of. The most prominently discussed case involves the Latin clitic conjunction *-que*. As the literature has demonstrated (see a.o. Marantz 1988; Embick and Noyer 2001; Embick 2007; Agbayani and Golston 2010; Mitrović 2014), the conjunction appears inside the second conjunct and exactly appears after the first phonological word of its second conjunct. In (66a), we see that *-que* appears inside a conjunct-initial PP, in between the preposition and its complement. In (66b), we see that *que* appears after the conjunct initial PP because in this case, the preposition is monosyllabic and bisyllabicity is the minimum requirement for phonological wordhood.

- (66) a. ... [sine scut-is] [sine=**que** ferr-o] fu-erint
 without shield-ABL.PL without=AND iron-ABL be-SUBJ.PERF.3PL
 ‘... that they were without shields and without swords’
 Embick and Noyer (2001)
- b. [Is istum reliqui-t] [de provincia=**que** decess-it]
 he it leave.PERF-3SG from province=AND depart.PERF-3SG
 ‘He left it and departed from the province.’ Cicero, Against Verres 2.2.48

Again the parallelism to the placement of German *aber* is striking. The only difference being the size of the prosodic constituent. The German conjunction is placed after the first prosodic phrase of the second conjunct and the Latin one after the first prosodic word. In other words, the placement of the coordinator in Latin and German only differs in the reference to the prosodic hierarchy.

Moreover, it is noteworthy that just like in the case of German *aber*, Latin *-que* can freely float into syntactic islands. In (65), we see that *-que* appears inside a PP, which counts as a strong island in Latin (see Vincent 1999; Hewson and Bubenik 2006; Ledge-way 2012).

Cases of coordinators appearing after the first phonological word of their second conjunct are more well-known in the literature. Anderson (2005) briefly discusses the case of Kalaallisut (West Greenlandic) and Agbayani and Golston (2010); Mitrović (2014) discuss cases similar to Latin from Ancient Greek, Hittite and other European languages of that

which also licenses ATB-movement (see (i)) and which can also float into strong syntactic islands; F. Marušić (p.c.).

- (i) Koga Suzana gleda, Liza **pa** tepe?
 Who Susan watch Liza PA beats
 ‘Who does Susan watch and Liza beat?’
 Marušić et al. (2011)

time period.

Overall, it is not surprising that we find variation with respect to the clitic placement patterns of shifting coordinators since the literature on clitics in general has documented that second-position clitics can vary as to how they define the constituent they attach to. Clitics that appear after the first morphosyntactic constituent of a domain are well attested and so are clitics that appear after the first phonological word. But recently more and more cases have been documented where a second position clitic appears after a phonological phrase. In Section 6.2, we briefly discussed the case of Irish pronouns from Bennett et al. (2016), another case comes from Chung (2003) who discusses the placement of second position clitics in Chamorro and concludes that the weak pronominal elements (*italic in (67) below*) in Chamorro appear after the first prosodic phrase of their intonation phrase:

- (67) {Más yă-hu }_φ hao na taotao.
 most WH(OBJ).like-AGR you L person
 ‘You’re the person I like most.’ (Chung, 2003, 559), bracketing mine

So, what I want to suggest is that the pattern we find in German or Polish is not an odd outlier but rather an expected puzzle piece in an already established typology. We know from languages like Latin that cases of cliticizing, shifted coordinators exist and we know from cases like Irish or Chamorro that second-position clitics can appear after the first phonological phrase of a given domain. Thus, in a sense, the German case is only expected.

8 The nature of the dislocation operation

Before I conclude, I briefly want to discuss the nature of the dislocation operation that I made use of in the analysis in Section 6. The idea was that the coordinator is syntactically merged in the usual position where regular coordinators are merged. It is only much later in the derivation, that the coordinator is shifted to its surface position after the first phonological phrase of its syntactic complement.

Throughout the discussion in Section 6.1 as well as in the discussion in Section 7, it became clear that I envisage this displacement process as some sort of late cliticization process. The architecture of Distributed Morphology (DM) that I mostly adopted in these sections, does, so far, however not provide for a dislocation process that can skip entire prosodic phrases. In the toolbox of DM, a process called *Local Dislocation* can lead to prosody-sensitive clitics skipping the equivalent of prosodic words. Embick and Noyer (2001) briefly entertain the possibility of having the same or a similar process (see their footnote 6), which skips larger chunks of structure but leave this for future research. However, against the background of more recent work on (a) clitic placement discussed in the previous section and (b) other processes affecting structures equivalent of phonological phrases (see e.g. Chung 2003; Pak 2008; Harðarsson 2021), I would like to submit that we have by now enough empirical evidence to admit that a process that displaces clitics across phonological phrases is required.

Whether this process is an instance of Local Dislocation (i.e the dislocation process which skips a prosodic word) and just differs in its specification or whether this process is a different one altogether is a difficult question. In the system envisaged by e.g. Embick and Noyer (2007); Pak (2008); Embick (2010); Shwayder (2015), a single operation

called *Merger* (Marantz 1988) can apply at various points of the postsyntactic derivation. Depending on the exact point in the derivation (i.e. before or after Vocabulary Insertion and/or Linearization), its effects differ inasmuch as it is then sensitive to morphosyntactic or phonological features as well as syntactic hierarchical structure or linearized structure. *Merger* is, at this point, usually referred to as *Lowering* when it precedes Linearization and as *Local Dislocation* if it follows it. As Embick and Noyer (2001) note in footnote 6, a third variant of *Merger*, which we might dub Prosodic Inversion (a term from Halpern (1995)), is easily incorporated into the theory and, given the overall architecture of the system, might even be expected to exist.

I take the evidence I have presented throughout this paper as a strong piece of evidence that this variant of *Merger* is actually called for. As we have seen, other attempts to explain the curious placement pattern of clause-internal *aber* fail to explain the wide variety of syntactic environments as well as its syntactic and semantic properties. In that sense, we see that *aber* presents us with a clear case that indicates the derivational history in a fairly straightforward manner. We see that for syntactic reasons as well as for reasons of scope, we want *aber* to be present in the position where regular conjunctions are merged. Only at a late point in the derivation, namely when prosodic phrasing is actually computed, *aber* will be displaced to its surface position.

9 Conclusion

In this paper, I tried to develop an approach that adequately describes and, to a certain extent, explains the various placement possibilities that the German clause-internal conjunction *aber* can appear in. I argued in depth that Ross' (1967) original interpretation of the facts was correct and that *aber* is, syntactically and semantically, a proper coordinator and alternative explanations as a discourse particle or a conjunctive adverb or a functional head in the clausal spine cannot be maintained. *Aber* appears in various configurations, in which purely syntactic treatments cannot plausibly account for it.

In stark contrast to the previous approaches, the approach pursued here proposes that the surface position of *aber* is due to a very late displacement rule that does not make reference to syntactic structure but rather to prosodic constituency. This capitalizes on observations by Breitbarth (2019) and Weisser (2020) that clause-internal *aber* consistently appears after the first prosodic phrase of its second conjunct. This approach straightforwardly accounts for the vast majority of placement possibilities including some that were highly problematic for syntactic accounts (such as the appearance of *aber* inside complex noun phrases or adverbial islands).

I then went on to discuss some minor cases in which the generalization above seems to be violated on the surface. I showed that we may be able to maintain the generalization if we adopt a recursive definition of the concept of the phonological phrase.

In the last section of this paper, I then argued that even though the placement of *aber* is surprising from a language-internal point of view, it is actually not that uncommon crosslinguistically and that we find several patterns that resemble the German pattern in one way or another in other languages. This shows that the displacement rule I made use of in the course of my analysis can actually be likened to other instances of cliticizing coordinators and falls within the overall typology of clitic placement in general.

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