What particle syntax can teach us about the particularities of syntax

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In this talk, I explore the interaction between internal and external syntax on the basis of particles. Particles are characterized by the absence of formal (grammatical) features as evidenced by two properties:

i) **Particles cannot be inflected** which suggests that there are no grammatical features to be spelled out.
ii) **Particles are multi-functional** which suggests that there are no grammatical features to be interpreted.

This suggests that particles are minimal lexical entries consisting of sound (π) and meaning (Σ) only, as in (1).

(1) $<\pi,\Sigma>$

If particles indeed lack grammatical features and hence lack internal syntax, then this raises the question as to how they interact with the external syntax.

I suggest that particles teach us that syntax can interact with one of their basic ingredients, namely their meaning (Σ). In particular, I argue that particles value unvalued syntactic features by means of their core interpretation (Σ) (cf. Ritter & Wiltschko's 2014 notion of m-valuation; cf. also Wiltschko 2014).

My empirical domain will focus on particles that interact with speech-act structure in the sense of Speas and Tenny 2003 among others. These include response particles (*yes* and *no)*, sentence-final particles of the Chinese type, as well as discourse particles of the German type.

In addition, I show that – as predicted by the analysis – languages can also make use of forms which interact with syntax with the other one of their basic ingredients, namely their sound (π). Evidence for this type of interaction comes from Japanese telicity marking. As shown in Fujimori 2011, the vowel quality of Yamato Japanese verbs serves as an unambiguous predictor of their telicity value in both existing and nonce verbs.

I conclude with a discussion of the implications of these findings for the architecture of grammar.