Discourse Particles, Discourse Relations and Information Structure: The Case of Nämlich*

Elena Karagjosova
University of Stuttgart, Germany
elena.karagjosova@ling.uni-stuttgart.de

Abstract
The paper presents an analysis of the meaning and discourse effects of the German discourse particle *nämlich* that unifies its different readings and explains its distributional properties. I suggest that *nämlich* is most adequately analysed in terms of it indicating a specificalational relation between its host and the preceding sentence, which in a question-based framework can be implemented as indicating an answer to a "specifying question", a discourse question requiring an answer that provides a more detailed description of some aspect of the preceding utterance. The analysis represents a refinement and extension of the question-based analysis of *nämlich* developed in Onea and Volodina (2009) where *nämlich* is analysed in terms of indicating that its host is a short answer to an implicit constituent question or a *Why*-discourse question. The approach I provide suggests solutions to several puzzles related to the distributional properties of *nämlich*.

Keywords
specification, causality, event coreference, discourse questions, discourse particle

1. Introduction

A typical and puzzling property of discourse particles is that depending on their syntactic position they display different semantic and pragmatic properties. The particle *nämlich* is a case in point. It has been argued that
depending on the particular syntactic environment in which it is used, *nämliech* may receive one of the following readings: a “specifying” reading, a “causal” reading, and a “topic shift” reading.

In the following, I present an analysis of the semantic and pragmatic properties of *nämliech* which unifies its alleged different readings and provides a natural explanation of the topic shift effect it displays in certain environments. The account presented here is informed by considerations concerning the interplay between discourse structure and discourse coherence on the one hand and information structure on the other and suggests that the nature of discourse particles can only be adequately captured from such an integrated research perspective.

The approach I present is based on the analysis of *nämliech* suggested in Onea and Volodina (2009), which I introduce in Section 2 and take as a point of departure for the more elaborate and empirically adequate account that I present in sections 3 and 4. Section 5 provides conclusions and some open questions.

### 2. Onea and Volodina (2009)

In a recent paper, Onea and Volodina (2009) provide an analysis of the German discourse particle *nämliech* that differs from earlier analyses of the particle (Hartmann, 1977; Granito, 1984; Vinckel, 2008) in its considerable degree of detail and complexity. It is moreover cast in a question based model of discourse, such as the ones developed by Roberts (1996) and Beaver and Clark (2008) and which has been successfully used as a framework for analysing discourse connectors such as *but* and *and* in several languages (Umbach, 2005; Jasinskaja und Zeevat, 2008). This is why I take this analysis as a point of departure for my own analysis and present it briefly in what follows.

Onea and Volodina (2009) provide a unified analysis of the various readings of *nämliech* that have been attested in previous research. As they point out, *nämliech* is usually analysed as having two distinct readings. On its first reading, illustrated in (1), *nämliech* has a specifying meaning and is used in elliptical or parenthetical sentences.

(1) Peter hat ein Buch gekauft, *nämliech* ”Krieg und Frieden”.

“Peter bought a book, namely ‘War and Peace’.”

In the second case, *nämliech* may have a causal/explanatory reading and is syntactically an adverb positioned in the middle field (MF) of the German sentence ((2)) or in the so-called *post-initial position* as in (3).
The unitary semantics for *nämlich* that Onea and Volodina (2009) suggest is that: (i) *nämlich* marks the existence of an implicit question about the preceding utterance; (ii) the *nämlich*-sentence provides a (short) answer to this implicit question; (iii) crucially, constituents are good short answers to constituent-questions (*Who?*), while whole clauses are only good short answers to “sentence”-questions like *Why p?*

This is how the analysis works. In the case of the specifying *nämlich*, the question that the *nämlich*-host answers is a constituent question whose answer specifies a less specific constituent in the preceding sentence, cf. (4).

(4) Peter hat ein Buch gekauft, *nämlich* “Krieg und Frieden”.
   “Peter bought a book, namely ‘War and Peace’”.
   
   *Question*: Which book did Peter buy?
   *Answer*: “Krieg und Frieden”

In the case of the causal *nämlich*, the *nämlich*-host can only be seen as representing a short answer to an implicit question of the type *Why*? or *How come?*, cf (5).

(5) Peter hat ein Buch gekauft, er wollte *nämlich* was lesen.
   “Peter bought a book, he wanted *nämlich* to read something”.
   
   *Question*: Why did Peter buy a book?
   *Answer*: He wanted to read something

Onea and Volodina argue that the host of an MF-*nämlich* can answer no other types of questions other than *Why*-questions, which are assumed to be the most salient type of question that a sentence in a discourse may answer. This amounts to assuming that *nämlich* cannot participate in other types of discourse relations other than causal explanation, an assumption that will be falsified in the next section.

In the post-initial position, *nämlich* is also traditionally assumed to have a causal meaning. In this position, it additionally exhibits a particular discourse effect that has been described in Breindl (2008) in terms of *topic shift*. This effect is responsible for the contrast between (6a) and (6b) in terms of the acceptability of *nämlich* in the post-initial position.
Onea and Volodina try to capture the topic shift effect of *nämlich* in post-initial position in their analysis with a tentative solution along the following lines: in reconstructing the implicit question to which the *nämlich* host gives an answer, the topic to which *nämlich* is attached is being lifted out of the utterance and represents a kind of *hanging topic* (à la Frey, 2004). The implicit question that the *nämlich*-sentence answers is then for a sentence like (7) Why, with respect to yesterday, *p?*, where *p* represents the preceding utterance.

(7) Gestern *nämlich* hat es geregnet.
“Yesterday *nämlich* it rained”.

In Onea and Volodina (2011), the analysis of *nämlich* is refined in a way that I will address in the next section. The basic assumptions however remain the same as in Onea and Volodina (2009).

While I believe the question-based solution proposed in Onea and Volodina goes in the right direction, there are several aspects of the analysis that need further exploration and adjustment, among which the most important is the issue concerning the exact nature of the question that the *nämlich*-host can be assumed to answer. Related to this issue is the question of the discourse relations established between the *nämlich*-host and its predecessor in discourse, as well as the role of information structure in reconstructing the appropriate implicit question.

Further, the rather poorly understood post-initial use of *nämlich* and its alleged topic-shifting effect needs to be further explored, the more so since topic shift is not a necessary condition for the use of *nämlich* in this position as there are cases where no topic shift is involved.

In what follows, I explore the kinds of implicit discourse questions to which the *nämlich*-host may be seen to provide an answer, as well as which discourse relations are compatible with the use of *nämlich*. I also take a closer look at the procedure by which an implicit discourse question (also called *quaestio*) is reconstructed. It is in the very nature of a quaestio that it is reconstructed from a sentence in a discourse that has a particular information structure (cf. e.g. Umbach, 2005). I.e., a quaestio should always reflect the information structure of the respective sentence in its surrounding discourse. In their attempt to explain the topic shift effect related to post-initial *nämlich*, Onea
and Volodina (2009) follow this principle in reconstructing the quaestio for this use of nämlich. There, the quaestio for the post-initial nämlich is reconstructed on the basis of the assumption that the constituent before the particle is topical. However, this principle has been ignored in the other relevant use of nämlich, the middle-field-nämlich, the quaestio for which is assumed to be a general Why-question. As I attempt to show, however, handling the quaestio issue with more care may open up a way for refining the semantic analysis of nämlich and improve the understanding of its discourse effects, especially when it comes to the post-initial nämlich.

3. Nämlich, Implicit Questions and Discourse Relations

In this section I take a closer look at the type of discourse question that a nämlich-sentence may answer in its so-called “causal” use. Onea and Volodina take the stance that a Why- or How come-question is the only plausible one for nämlich. A more thorough look at the data reveals however that while this often is the case, there are equally frequent, clearly non-causal uses of nämlich in the MF and post-initial position that cannot be treated within the account of Onea and Volodina. A further observation that can be made on the basis of corpus data is that post-initial nämlich may also have a specification reading, and that nämlich is compatible with certain kinds of causal relations and incompatible with others. These findings cast some doubts both on the adequacy of the traditional view on adverbial nämlich as having a causal reading and on the analysis presented in Onea and Volodina. A further look at the data reveals that there are also certain restrictions with respect to the quaestio of a nämlich-sentence. Thus, a nämlich-sentence cannot answer a What happened then? or a yes/no question. Restrictions of this kind are important to explore since they could allow deeper insights into the meaning and discourse function of nämlich.

Since discourse questions as a means for investigating discourse structure correlate with the discourse relations that obtain between sentences in discourse (e.g. Why (Explanation) What happened then? (Narration)), a closely related issue that will be pursued here is the question of which discourse relations nämlich may mark.

I consider first the MF-nämlich. This use of nämlich is capable of indicating answers to not only Why-questions, but also to questions that ask for specifying various aspects of the state of affairs or event described by the sentence, as well as more abstract aspects of the utterance such as its speech act. While this specifying function of nämlich is already a recognized fact for the elliptic uses of nämlich, it seems not to have been observed for the so-called “causal” uses
of *nämlich* in the MF (and neither for the post-initial *nämlich*). Consider (8), a corpus example\(^1\) where MF-*nämlich* is used in the same specificalional function as the elliptic *nämlich* in (4).

(8) und da hat die Gruyten was ganz Großartiges geschrieben: sie hat *nämlich* eine flämende Verteidigung des Grafen F... geschrieben

“and the Gruyten girl wrote something really splendid: what she wrote was an ardent defence of Count F”. (OMC)

Here, the *nämlich*-clause provides a specification of the non-specific phrase “etwas ganz Großartiges”, thus answering the same question as the preceding clause “What did Gruyten do/write”. While the example in (8) is less interesting since it represents so to speak an expanded version of the elliptic *nämlich*, the example in (9) clearly makes the point, since here the *nämlich*-sentence provides a specification of the VP *entsprechende Vorkehrungen treffen* in the preceding sentence.\(^2\)

(9) Vielleicht spukt es im Schloß Mespelbrunn nur deshalb nicht, weil die Vorfahren der Ingelheims entsprechende Vorkehrungen getroffen haben: In der Decke des Himmelbetts, das im Fürstenzimmer steht und aus dem 17. Jahrhundert stammt, sind *nämlich* Fratzen geschnitzt. (IDS)

“Maybe there are no ghosts in the Mespelbrunn castle only because the ancestors of the Ingelheims took the respective measures: in the ceiling of the 17th century canopy bed in the room of the prince they carved grotesque faces”.

In (9), *nämlich* may also be associated with a causal reading, but this seems to be due to the fact that the VP for which the *nämlich*-clause provides a further specification is embedded in a causal sentence. But also in (10) which lacks a causal reading, the *nämlich*-sentence provides a specification of the “interesting consequences” that the enforcement of the bill could have.

(10) Man werde die Vorlage notfalls mit Hilfe einer Sonderverordnung durchsetzen, was interessante Konsequenzen haben könnte. Prinz Charles hatte *nämlich* angekündigt, er werde auswandern und für den Rest des Lebens Ski fahren, falls man seine geliebte Fuchsjagd verbiete. (IDS)

“They would enforce the submission if necessary with the help of a special regulation, which could have interesting consequences. Prince Charles had announced that he would emigrate and go skiing for the rest of his life, if they forbid his beloved fox hunting”.

\(^1\) From the Oslo Multilingual Corpus (OMC), a parallel corpus of German, English and Norwegian texts and their translations developed at the University Oslo. The English glosses are taken from the original translations.

\(^2\) This example is from the IDS Corpus. The English glosses are mine.
These examples show two things: (i) that MF-\textit{nämlich} not always has a causal interpretation and (ii) that the specificational reading of \textit{nämlich} is not reserved for its elliptic uses. They further show that \textit{nämlich} may introduce a specification of various less specific constituents of the preceding sentence, including NPs and VPs. What is common to these examples is that the \textit{nämlich}-sentence introduces an entity or event that represents a more specific version of an entity or event that is introduced in the preceding sentence and that is rather general and non-specific. This non-specific item can often be characterized in terms of a cataphora, especially in the elliptic cases. Consider e.g. (8), where the cataphoric indefinite pronoun \textit{was} is used in the preceding sentence, as well as (11), where the anaphoric indefinite pronoun \textit{eines} is used.\footnote{Note that \textit{eines} here is exhaustive, whereas \textit{was} in (8) is not, which is related to the nature of the specification provided by \textit{nämlich} that was noted in Onea and Volodina (2011) in relation to their example (21). I will however not dwell upon the exact nature of the specification provided by \textit{nämlich}, leaving this issue for further research.}

(11) Von Afrikanern, die diesen Trick durchschaut haben, kann man unterdessen hören, daß es nur eines gebe, was schlimmer sei, als von Multis ausgebeutet zu werden, \textit{nämlich}: nicht von ihnen ausgebeutet zu werden.

"Africans who have seen through this trick have said that there is only one thing worse than being exploited by the multinationals, and that is not being exploited by them". (OMC)

But we also find cases where the item that the \textit{nämlich}-sentence specifies is not explicitly non-specific or cataphoric, as in (12), which indicates a certain freedom of the speaker in deciding on which elements of the utterance need further specification. I will return to this issue towards the end of this section.


"The graduating classes of the schools Graf-von-Oberndorff and Pestalozzi can now refer to their ‘family tree’ that is, an ash".

Cases like (8), (9) and (10), as well as (11) and (12) are reminiscent of examples of a special kind of Elaboration called Particularization that has been extensively studied by Danlos (e.g. 1999, 2001, 2003) and that involves event coreference, as exemplified in (13).

(13) Fred damaged a garment. He stained a shirt.

Danlos (2003) argues that examples like that involve event coreference and distinguishes between two types of discourse that involve event coreference: particularizing and generalizing discourses. Event coreference refers to the case
where both sentences refer to the same event and where each element in
the second sentence S2 stands in a lexico-semantic relation (hyponymy,
hyperonymy, anaphor or identity)\(^4\) with a corresponding element in the first
sentence.

It seems that *nämlich* in (8)-(12) marks precisely this relation of Particu-
larization. Consider also (14) which I borrow from Danlos (2003) and trans-
late into German using *nämlich*. Here also, the *nämlich*-sentence is clearly not
in a causal relation to the preceding one. Rather, the question that the *nämlich-
clause answers concerns the way in which the action described by the preced-
ing clause was performed.

(14) Fred hat ein Kleidungsstück beschädigt. Er hat *nämlich* ein Hemd bekleckert.
“Fred damaged a garment. He stained *nämlich* a shirt”.

\# *Why did Fred do that?*

\# *What did Fred more specifically do?*

Danlos argues further that Particularization and Generalization are more
special cases of the Elaboration relation, which have to be distinguished
from other cases of Elaboration that do not involve event coreference. Such
instances of Elaboration are cases where the second sentence introduces
further attributes of some object introduced in the first sentence, as in (15),\(^5\)
or where the event in S2 contributes to the culmination of the event in S1 as
in (16).\(^6\)

(15) Knox is en route and [this ship] is a tanker.
(16) The council built the bridge. The architect drew up the plans.

Translating these examples into German, it can be observed that *nämlich* is
either not appropriate or changes the original reading of the sentence. Consider
(17a) where the second sentence adds to the known attributes of the ship
Knox the property of it being a tanker. Danlos treats cases like that in terms of
a relation called List. Thus the second sentence in (17a) adds a new item to the
list of properties of Knox.


\(^4\) Danlos (1999) distinguishes further between event coreference on lexical grounds, as in
(13), and event coreference based on extralinguistic knowledge.

\(^5\) From Hovy (1990).

The situation is different in (17b) where obviously due to the presence of *nämlich* the List interpretation is replaced by a causal one. The discourse is awkward since there is no plausible causal relation between being en route and being a tanker. What this example shows is, however, that we can't use *nämlich* to add further properties of an entity on a list, i.e. that this kind of Elaboration relation is not among the ones compatible with *nämlich*. But it also raises the question of why the interpretation of the discourse with *nämlich* is causal and not specificational? This fact suggests that the freedom of the speaker I mentioned above to specify items of the preceding discourse is constrained by certain principles whose nature I address towards the end of this section.

Turning to the type of Elaboration relation found in (16), we observe that it is not compatible with *nämlich* either. As (18b) suggests, *nämlich* changes the interpretation, compared to (18a), towards a causal one, forcing a reinterpretation towards a causal Enablement relation: due to the architect, the council *was able* to build the bridge.

(18) a. Der Gemeinderat hat die Brücke gebaut. Der Architekt hat die Pläne entworfen.
    b. Der Gemeinderat hat die Brücke gebaut. Der Architekt hat nämlich die Pläne entworfen.

The Elaboration relation in (18a) can also be seen as a List-type relation: it concerns the things that are needed to build the bridge, the steps involved, one of them being the drawing of the plans.

The discussion so far seems to suggest that discourses like Particularization that involve event coreference are a natural environment for *nämlich* both in its elliptic use and its use in MF. In such cases the *nämlich* sentence answers the same implicit question as the preceding sentence but provides a more specific answer to it. We also were able to detect a discourse type, involving the List relation, which is not compatible with *nämlich*. Another such discourse is Danlos’ Generalizaton relation. Consider (19a) which represents such a case of “generalizing restatement discourses“ involving event coreference and suggesting that staining a shirt is a more specific way in which one may damage a garment in general, or that staining a shirt amounts to damaging a garment. König (1995) calls this type of relation between sentences or phrases *interpretative*, and Jasinskaia (2007) treats cases like this in terms of the more general notion of Restatement. *Nämlich* is not appropriate in this context, as (19b) shows. Here, the particles *also* (“consequently”) and *somit* (“thus”) are more appropriately used, since they indicate a relation of generalizing logical consequence and an interpretative relation between the two sentences respectively.
Another example of Restatement is (20), where \textit{nämlich} is not appropriate either. In (20), the relation between the two sentences is not one of the second specifying aspects of the proposition expressed by the first. Rather, the second sentence provides a more general interpretation of the state of affairs described by the first sentence: what it means for Aljona to have lost her skis. This is also indicated by the adverb \textit{somit} (“thus”) that is appropriately used instead.

\begin{align}
\text{(20) } \text{Aljona hat ihre Schier gebrochen. Sie hat } & \textit{nämlich} / \textit{somit} \text{ ihr Hauptverkehrsmittel verloren.} \\
\text{“Aljona broke her skis. She lost her main means for transportation” (from Jasinskaja, 2007)}
\end{align}

In cases of Generalizing Restatement, the two sentences address the same implicit question, but the information provided by the second relatum is more general than that provided by the first.

So far we have identified two types of discourses which are incompatible with \textit{nämlich}, List and Generalization Restatement. A further such discourse is Narration, as in (21a), where the two sentences are related by means of a temporal succession between the events described by them. The question that the second sentence answers is different from the first and can be formulated as \textit{What happened next}?

\begin{align}
\text{(21) a. } \text{Der einsame Reiter stieg auf das Pferd. Er ritt in den Sonnenuntergang.} \\
\text{“The lone rider jumped on the horse. He rode into the sunset”.} \\
\text{b. } \text{Der einsame Reiter stieg auf das Pferd. Er ritt } \textit{nämlich} \text{ in den Sonnenuntergang.} \\
\text{“The lone rider jumped on the horse. He rode } \textit{nämlich} \text{ into the sunset”}
\end{align}

Looking at the restrictions for \textit{nämlich} that we have observed so far, one may conclude that \textit{nämlich} is restricted to cases involving either event or object coreference and where the \textit{nämlich}-sentence provides a specification of the event or an entity described by the first sentence. This would suggest an analysis of \textit{nämlich} in terms of Danlos’ (2003) relation of Particularization. Unfortunately, the picture becomes more complex when one integrates the causal uses of \textit{nämlich}. Danlos (2001) considers cases of causal discourses involving event coreference, such as the ones in (22), where a “direct causation” is involved: “the result is a physical change of state for an object Y, the

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\textsuperscript{7} The original Danlos (1999) example is “Therefore, he damaged a garment”.

cause is an action performed by a human agent X, the action is the direct cause of the change of state” (Danlos, 2001: 216).

(22) a. Fred cracked the carafe. He hit it against the sink.
   b. Fred hit the carafe against the sink. He cracked it.

According to Danlos, (22a) involves a relation of Explanation, whereas (22b) a relation of Result. She argues that causal discourses which involve direct causation differ from other causal discourses in that they express event coreference. Examples for causal discourses that do not involve direct causation and hence event coreference are (23a) and (23b), which express respectively Motivation and Motivation/Narration.

(23) a. Fred broke the carafe. He was angry with Mary.
   b. John cracked the carafe. Fred hit it against the sink.

Looking at corpus data, it is hard to find examples of direct causation in which *nämlich* occurs. The majority of the causal discourses that contain *nämlich* are either Motivation\(^8\) discourses, such as (5), where the *nämlich*-sentence provides a motive for Peter for his buying a book, Justification discourses such as (24a) where the *nämlich*-sentence provides a justification for the assertion in the preceding sentence, or Reason-discourses such as (24b) in which the *nämlich* sentence provides the cause or reason for the necessity of explaining the notion of priority.\(^9\)

(24) a. Diese Form der inneren Notwehr ist nicht nur verständlich; sie ist unvermeidlich. Wie eine “richtige” Reaktion auf den täglichen Massenmord aussehen sollte, weiß *nämlich* niemand zu sagen.
   “This form of internal self-defence is not only understandable, it is unavoidable; who can prescribe the ‘correct’ response to the daily slaughter?”. (OMC)
   b. Vielleicht ist es nötig, zu erklären, was eine Priorität ist. Es gibt *nämlich* genügend Leute, die sich dümmer stellen als sie sind, sobald ein Argument nicht in ihr Weltbild paßt.
   “Perhaps we ought to explain what a priority is. Some people pretend to be more stupid than they really are as soon as they encounter an argument that doesn’t fit their view of the world”. (OMC)

\(^8\) These include also speech-act motivating examples such as (i):
   (i) Bleibst du noch eine Minute? Ich wollte dich *nämlich* fragen.
   “Could you stay a minute longer? I want *nämlich* to ask you something”.

\(^9\) I assume that Motivation is a type of causal relation that obtains between a fact or event and a causing attitudinal state of an intentional agent, in analogy to the reason-relation in Solstad (2010), where however a fact causes an attitudinal state. I use the term Reason for the type of causal relation that Solstad refers to as “plain cause”, which is defined as a relation between a causing fact and a caused event.
Such Motivation, Justification or Reason-discourses do not satisfy Danlos’ narrow definition of direct causation and hence Explanation since they do not involve event coreference: in (5), as well as in (24a) and (24b), the *nämlich* sentence and its predecessor describe two separate events. Moreover, *nämlich* does not seem quite appropriate in causal Explanation contexts like (22a).\(^{10}\) Consider (25) which is a translation of (22a). Here the use of *nämlich* changes the original direct causation interpretation towards one in which the *nämlich*-sentence is a specification of the way in which Fred broke the carafe, i.e. a Particularization relation that also involves event coreference. The direct causation interpretation is in contrast achieved when *indem* (“by”) instead of *nämlich* is used (cf. (25b)).

\[(25) \text{ a. } \text{Fred hat die Karaffe zerbrochen. Er hat sie } \text{nämlich } \text{gegen die Spüle gestoßen.} \\
\text{“Fred broke the carafe. He hit it } \text{nämlich } \text{against the sink”}.
\text{ b. } \text{Fred hat die Karaffe zerbrochen, indem er sie gegen die Spüle gestoßen hat.} \\
\text{“Fred broke the carafe by hitting it against the sink”}.
\]

On the other hand, Result-discourses are completely inappropriate with *nämlich*, as (26) shows, which is not unexpected, since Result discourses are the causal pendant of Generalization discourses, as argued in Danlos (2001).

\[(26) \text{Fred hat die Karaffe gegen die Spüle gestoßen. Er hat sie } \text{#nämlich zerbrochen.} \\
\text{“Fred hit the carafe against the sink. He } \text{nämlich } \text{broke it”}.
\]

Summing up, a more thorough examination of corpus data suggests that *nämlich* is compatible with (i) either non-causal Particularization discourses that involve event coreference or (ii) causal discourses that do not involve event coreference. It also suggests that not only elliptic but also MF-*nämlich* may participate in non-causal Particularization discourses. These findings give a more refined picture of the empirical data compared to the one presented in Onea and Volodina (2009) and Onea and Volodina (2011), where the analysis accounts for MF-*nämlich* as indicating a short answer to *Why*-questions only and rules out “discourse subordinating but at the same time topic changing questions such as elaborative questions”. This is a bit unfortunate since, as I have attempted to show, not all cases of Elaboration involve the type of questions envisaged by Onea and Volodina (2011), e.g. those in (17) and (18), and since the cases of Elaboration compatible with *nämlich* are exactly the cases in which the question is not a “topic changing” one but one that is identical with the implicit question of the preceding sentence.

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\(^{10}\) I owe this remark to an anonymous reviewer of an earlier draft of this article.
This means that examples like (10) would be treated by Onea and Volodina as causal, which contradicts the intuitions.

In spite of these empirical issues, Onea and Volodina arrive at a unified specificational meaning of *nämlich*, which is compatible with the general proposal that this article makes. Onea and Volodina capture the meaning of *nämlich* in terms of it indicating a short answer (and thus specification) of an implicit question about the preceding sentence, assuming that the causal readings arise in the process of pragmatic interpretation. The lexical entry assumed in Onea and Volodina (2011) improves the one in Onea and Volodina (2009) by replacing the problematic assumption of a salience hierarchy of questions: Why is a *Why*-question more salient than a *What happened next*-question? Usually, Narration is taken to be the default discourse relation by a QUD-(question under discussion) mechanism, which ensures that the *nämlich*-sentence provides a complete answer to a salient implicit question about the preceding utterance. This account presupposes that the question about the preceding utterance that the *nämlich*-sentence answers is already on the QUD-stack, that is, that the speaker has a complete strategy consisting of questions and subquestions to be addressed in the course of the conversation. Thus the felicitous use of *nämlich* in (12) would be accounted for by the fact that the constituent introduced by *nämlich* represents a short answer to the question “What kind of tree is that?” that the speaker has on his QUD-stack. After providing the necessary information, namely the complete answer to this question, the question is removed from the stack. This is argued to capture the intuition that the speaker “is specifying what he meant by his own previous utterance” and that this is in “his sole competence”.

While this seems to be a plausible argument, the data I discussed suggests that at least in some cases, a different question-based analysis may be suggesting itself, especially in the cases involving coreference, where intuitively the implicit discourse question that the *nämlich*-sentence answers is the same as the one that the preceding sentence answers, rather than “about the preceding utterance”: consider again (12) where the question that both the sentence and the elliptic *nämlich*-construction answer is “What can the graduating classes refer to?”, the answer provided by the elliptic *nämlich* being more specific than the one provided by the matrix sentence.

I would therefore like to take a different approach and suggest that *nämlich* signals a specificational relation between a sentence constituent or a sentence and the preceding sentence in discourse. I suggest further that the causal cases can be reconciled with the specificational ones by viewing causes as specifications of their effects. Asserting only the result of some causal process is less specific than asserting also the cause for this result. On the other hand, the mere
temporal succession of two events or the mere listing of states or events cannot be seen as a case of specification of the event described by the preceding sentence. In Narration or List discourses, the second sentence does not specify the first in any respect. In the case of causal relations such as Motivation and Reason, the cause can be seen as a specification of the result. This intuition can be captured by assuming a covert contextual cause-variable associated with each utterance (including its speech act), which may be instantiated, by the *nämlich*-sentence. That this account may be on the right track is suggested by the following observation. While other contextual variables such as time, place, and degree are not appropriate arguments of specificational *nämlich*, as noted by Onea and Volodina (2011) and attested by (27a), cases like (27b) are quite natural.

(27) a. Peter küsst Maria. #Nämlich in der Küche.
    b. Peter küsst Maria. Nämlich weil er sie liebt. /Weil er sie nämlich liebt.

Further, naturally occurring examples are given in (28).

(28) a. den passiert es eben, dass die Patientin das Behandlungskonzept nicht zur Gänze durchführt, nämlich weil sie es von vornherein so nie wollte und weil sie sich am Anfang nicht genügend ausgekannt hatte! (Google)
   "it just happens that the patient does not carry out the treatment concept in its entirety, namely because she didn't wanted that from the outset and because she wasn't sufficiently informed in the beginning!"
   b. Wie Sie sagen, ein Schweigen aushalten, das, glaube ich, ist hier eher die Problematic von Frauen, nämlich weil sie glauben, sie müssten die Pausen füllen. (Google)
   "As you say, to endure silence, this I think is more a women's issue, namely because they think they have to fill the pauses".

Taking the cause of a state or fact (or speech act) to be a further specifiable contextual variable of each utterance fits nicely with the specificational uses of *nämlich* where the *nämlich*-sentence often provides the material that binds an explicit variable such as a cataphoric expression. On the other hand, the implicit cause-variable needs not be instantiated or bound, whereas the cataphors do need to be specified, otherwise the discourse is infelicitous since it leaves information open that the previous discourse promises to supply. The cases of Particularization based on a hyponymy-hyperonymy relation are similar to the causal ones in this respect, since, although they involve rather non-specific concepts, their specification is not necessary for the appropriateness of the discourse. But we saw that also in the elliptic cases, the preceding context may not require specification, since the concepts involved are of a satisfactory granularity. This line of thought may also be suggesting an answer to the question I put forward earlier in this section about what constrains the
freedom of the speaker to specify elements of the utterance. On the background of the data I presented, a possible ranking emerges according to which the nämlich-sentence is preferably interpreted as providing a specification of explicitly marked non-specific aspects of the utterance, and a causal interpretation arises only if no such elements are available. This would explain why the discourse in (17b) gets a causal interpretation with nämlich: it does not contain other specifiable elements.

Cast in a question-based framework, the above conclusions would imply that an appropriate generalisation of the question that a nämlich-sentence answers is a question that asks for specifying one of 3 possible non-specific aspects of the utterance mentioned above. In other words, the meaning of nämlich is more adequately captured in terms of indicating an answer to a discourse question that asks for more detailed information about some aspect of the state of affairs described by the preceding sentence, rather than a Why-question as suggested by Onea and Volodina. I call the discourse question that a nämlich-sentence answers a specifying question and define it as a question that addresses an aspect of the utterance that is further specifiable in the given context, including non-specific expressions such as cataphors and (nonspecific) indefinites or plurals, implicit causes, and hyperonyms. This list, as well as the assumptions put forward here has to be further refined by more extensive corpus studies. Since I argued that both the nämlich-sentence and the preceding utterance answer one and the same question, the “specifying question” I envisage here should be seen as a subquestion of this common superquestion. The details of the analysis have yet to be worked out and cast in a formal framework.

Concerning the exact nature of this specification relation, Onea and Volodina (2011) provide a more fine-grained overview of further constraints on the specification that nämlich-sentences provide. Thus they observe that the specifications that nämlich-sentences provide have to be complete, although there are cases in which this requirement does not fully apply, suggesting that more work is needed to reveal the exact nature of this specificational relation. Further evidence for the nature of the specificational relation contributed by nämlich may be provided by examining its behaviour in relative and adverbial subordinate clauses, as well as by examining the way nämlich combines with other discourse particles that signal discourse relations of their own.11 These issues however have to be postponed for future work.

I now turn to the case of post-initial nämlich and try to find out whether it obeys the same restrictions as the MF-nämlich with respect to the discourse

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11 Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.
relation that the *nämlich*-sentence is compatible with. At first glance, this *nämlich* does not seem appropriate in cases of Particularization discourses such as (29a), while it is appropriately used in cases of Reason-discourses such as (29b).

   “Fred has damaged a garment. He *nämlich* has stained a shirt”.
   b. Der Dieb konnte nicht fliehen. Der Inspektor *nämlich* war schneller.
   “The thief couldn’t escape. The Inspector *nämlich* was faster”.

However, a more thorough look reveals that the reason for the ill-formedness of (29a) is not the obtaining relation of Particularization but rather the way the *nämlich*-sentence is informationally structured. With a different structuring, *nämlich* is perfectly acceptable.\(^\text{12}\)

   “A garment was damaged. A shirt was stained”.

(30) shows that post-initial *nämlich* cannot be treated in terms of addressing a *Why*-question either, contrary to what Onea and Volodina (2009) suggest. It also suggests that restrictions of the use of *nämlich* in post-initial position compared to the other uses of *nämlich* are not semantic but merely due to information structure. This means that since post-initial *nämlich* is compatible with the discourse relation of Particularization, an analysis of *nämlich* in terms of specificity should be capable of integrating also its post-initial use.

What remains to be seen is how an analysis of *nämlich* in terms of specificity can capture the additional topic-shift effect attested in cases of post-initial *nämlich*. I will next show that taking into account the information structure of the *nämlich*-sentence in trying to reconstruct the discourse question that it answers opens up a possibility of accounting for the difference between MF- and postinitial-*nämlich* in terms of the topic-shift effect observed in connection with the latter.

4. *Nämlich* and the Information Structure of the Host

In the previous section it was suggested that a discourse question analysis of *nämlich* in terms of indicating the answer to a *Why*-question is not adequate. Such an approach is not helpful in accounting for the difference between

\(^{12}\) Another possible structuring that licenses postinitial *nämlich* is *Fred hat ein Kleidungsstück beschädigt. Ein Hemd *nämlich hat er bekleckert*. 
MF- and postinitial-\textit{nämlch} either. This difference is illustrated by (31) and referred to as the topic-shift effect of post-initial \textit{nämlch}. On such an account, the question addressed by the \textit{nämlch} sentences would be identical in the two cases.

(31) a. Die Besprechung wird wegen des Direktors vertagt. Der Direktor \textit{nämlch} ist krank.
   “The meeting is postponed because of the director. The director \textit{nämlch} is ill”.
   \textit{Why is the meeting postponed?}

b. Die Besprechung wird wegen des Direktors vertagt. Der Direktor ist \textit{nämlch} krank.
   “The meeting is postponed because of the director. The director is \textit{nämlch} ill”.
   \textit{Why is the meeting postponed?}

This is why Onea and Volodina (2009) suggest an analysis of postinitial-\textit{nämlch} in terms of a different quaestio that reflects the association of \textit{nämlch} with the sentence topic. Taking the information structure of the sentence into account is a general principle when it comes to reconstructing the discourse question that a sentence can be seen as an answer to in the particular discourse. It is therefore essential that this principle is applied also in the cases of MF-\textit{nämlch}. This is what I will do in what follows, since neither Onea and Volodina (2009) or Onea and Volodina (2011) dwell on this issue. This approach will take us eventually to an integrated analysis of \textit{nämlch} in terms of specification.

In what follows, I argue that MF-\textit{nämlch} and post-initial \textit{nämlch} answer a different specifying question depending on the constituent \textit{nämlch} associates with and its information-structural property. Consider (32). Here, MF-\textit{nämlch} associates with the focus.\textsuperscript{13} The discourse question that the \textit{nämlch}-host answers is a question that requires specification of the event of damaging a garment introduced by the preceding sentence. This specification is given by the VP-focus of the \textit{nämlch}-host, which is also the unit to which \textit{nämlch} syntactically attaches.

(32) Fred hat ein Kleidungsstück beschädigt. \textit{[Er] \textit{nämlch} hat ein Hemd bekleckert}_\textit{F}.
   “Fred damaged a garment. He has \textit{nämlch} stained a shirt”.
   \textit{What did Fred specifically do to damage a garment?}

The illformedness of the same sentence with post-initial \textit{nämlch} can be explained along the following lines: In “Er \textit{nämlch} hat ein Hemd bekleckert”, \textit{nämlch} associates with the topic \textit{Er} and thus identifies \textit{Er} as a more specific

\textsuperscript{13} The bracketing that represents the focus domains in this and the following examples is only very rough and leaves open the question of whether \textit{nämlch} must be seen as part of the focus e.g. in cases like (31).
description of some aspect of the preceding sentence. I.e., the question that the nämlich-sentence answers is *Who specifically damaged a garment?*. This question however does not license a natural continuation of the discourse, since it is already answered by the preceding sentence “Fred hat ein Kleidungsstück beschädigt”. In other words, an information structuring like this is not licensed by the context.

(33) Fred hat ein Kleidungsstück beschädigt. [Er], nämlich [hat ein Hemd bekleckert],

“Fred damaged a garment. He nämlich stained a shirt”.

# Who specifically damaged a garment?

In contrast, in (34) post-initial nämlich identifies the topic Hemd as the element that represents a more specific description of some aspect of the preceding sentence. The corresponding discourse question *What garment was more specifically damaged?* leads to a coherent continuation of the discourse.

(34) Ein Kleidungsstück wurde beschädigt. [Ein Hemd], nämlich [wurde bekleckert],

“A garment was damaged. A shirt nämlich was stained”.

What garment was more specifically damaged (and how)?

Note that here, ein Hemd is a contrastive topic: a shirt is an element of the set of garments. Note also that in (34), no topic shift is involved. What is involved here can be rather called “topic specification”.

A more intricate case is (35). The solution to this and similar cases that I suggest below within the specificational analysis of nämlich provided in the previous section is only tentative and needs further elaboration.

(35) a. Die Besprechung wird wegen des Direktors vertagt. [Der Direktor], nämlich [ist krank],

“The meeting is postponed because of the director. The director nämlich is ill”.

Who specifically is the reason for the meeting to be postponed?

b. Die Besprechung wird wegen des Direktors vertagt. [Der Direktor], ist nämlich [krank],

“The meeting is postponed because of the director. The director is nämlich ill”.

What specifically is the reason for the meeting to be postponed?

c. Der Direktor hat die Besprechung vertagt. [Der Direktor], nämlich ist [krank],

“The director has postponed the meeting. The director nämlich is ill”.

# What specifically is the reason for the meeting to be postponed?

In (35a), the post-initial nämlich marks intuitively the director as the underspecified reason for the postponement of the meeting. This structuring is licensed by the preceding sentence in which the causal wegen-PP already identifies the director as the underspecified reason for the postponement of
the meeting. Here, the PP instantiates the implicit cause-variable that I argued is related to each utterance. However, the individual that instantiates this variable represents an incomplete, underspecified reason, since reasons are normally propositions or facts. The wegen-PP indicates therefore that the reason is related to an underspecified property of the director. The “missing” part of the causing proposition is provided by the rest of the nämliche-sentence: the property of the director being ill. Thus, post-initial nämliche indicates that the reason is related to an underspecified property of the director. The “missing” part of the causing proposition is provided by the rest of the nämliche-sentence: the property of the director being ill. Thus, post-initial nämliche plays a twofold role: it indicates that the nämliche-sentence represents a specification of some parameter/aspect of the preceding sentence that is left unspecified, and it identifies the entity denoted by the initial field constituent as the entity that has the necessary properties for providing this specification. The specification that nämliche seems to provide here can be paraphrased as “The director with his underspecified property is the reason for the postponement”.

In contrast, in (35b), where nämliche is attached to the VP, it provides the direct specification of the underspecified property of the director that leads to the postponement of the meeting. I.e. nämliche in this position identifies the property of the director being ill as the implicit underspecified property in the preceding sentence, and thus as the constituent that specifies this underspecified property.

But why is (35c) not felicitous? Here the situation is different from (35a) in that in (35a) the director is explicitly identified as the reason for the postponement of the meeting. The wegen-PP in the preceding utterance indicates that the reason for the postponement is related to an underspecified property of the director. No such indication is involved in (35c) where the reason for the postponement is open: it may be the director, but also his assistant, or a fire alarm. It seems that post-initial nämliche indicates a question about an entity rather than a question about a property. And, in the absence of explicit non-specific elements of the preceding discourse, it is a question about a reason: Who/What entity is the reason for p?, where p is the preceding clause. Intuitively, the nämliche-sentence in (35c) is not an appropriate answer to this question, since the answer it would be providing could be paraphrased as “The director is the reason why the director has postponed the meeting”. Such an answer is not specific enough, and thus contradicts the semantics of nämliche, namely the indication of the rendering of a more specific version of some proposition. In contrast, in (35a) where the director is already identified as the reason for the postponement, nämliche provides a different and, albeit minimally, more informative specification that I paraphrased as “The director with his underspecified property is the reason for the postponement”. In fact, a crucial aspect of the problem with (35a,c) seems to be the fact that the structuring of (35a) is licensed by the fact that the director is already known
to be the reason for the postponement, which makes the constituent denoting this entity an appropriate topical expression. It seems that a combination of factors is at work here, the exact interaction of which is a question that requires more thorough consideration than can be provided here.

A more simple case is (3), repeated below as (3’a), where nämlich marks the inspector as the immediate reason for the fact that the thief couldn’t escape. The rest of the sentence then completes the causing proposition. The structuring is licensed by the context, since both the thief and the inspector belong to a knowledge frame, in which inspectors (with their particular properties) are plausible reasons for preventing thieves from escaping. The inspector counts thus as a given entity, which is usually taken as a property of topics.

(3’) a. Der Dieb konnte nicht fliehen. Der Inspektor nämlich war schneller.
   “The thief couldn’t get away. The inspector NÄMLICH was faster”.
b. Der Dieb konnte nicht fliehen. Der Dieb/Er nämlich war zu langsam.
   “The thief couldn’t get away. The thief/He NÄMLICH was too slow”.
c. Der Dieb konnte nicht fliehen. Der Dieb/Er war nämlich zu langsam.
   “The thief couldn’t get away. The thief/He was NÄMLICH too slow”.

Again, a discourse like (3’b) with the thief as a topic is not acceptable, since the entity marked as the reason for the fact that the thief was not able to escape is not specific enough. On the other hand, (3’c) is felicitous, since the property of the thief being too slow is a plausible and specific enough reason for him being not able to escape.

Also cases like (36) with post-initial nämlich (from Onea and Volodina, 2009) can be treated along these lines. Here, the anaphoric ambiguity involved is resolved in favour of the object “the son” rather than the subject (and topic) “the father”, which suggests that at least in cases like that, nämlich clearly requires a topic shift.

(36) a. Der Vater geht zu seinem Sohn. Er (Der Sohn) nämlich ist krank.
   “The father goes to his son. He (The son) NÄMLICH is ill.”
b. Der Vater geht zu seinem Sohn. Er (#der Vater) nämlich ist krank.
   “The father goes to his son. He (The father) NÄMLICH is ill.”

An attempt to explain this case draws an analogy between (36) and (3’). In (3’), der Dieb is not a sufficiently specific reason for the thief not being able to escape, but his being too slow is. Similarly, “the father” in (36b) is not a sufficiently specific or informative reason for the father going to the son, whereas “the son” is more informative and can be seen as a more specific reason for the father going to his son.
This means that post-initial *nämlich* is licensed in contexts in which the subject of the *nämlich*-sentence can be seen as a plausible, underspecified reason for the eventuality described in the preceding sentence, or if the subject is already identified as the reason, as in (35a). This is however a tentative hypothesis that needs to be verified in further research.

The observations made so far suggest that *nämlich* is neither a focussing nor a topic particle (contra Breindl 2008) but that it merely is capable of attaching to or associating with a constituent that is identified as a more specific description of some aspect of the preceding sentence in discourse. Its function can be thus described in terms of marking or identifying the constituent that represents a more specific version of an element of the preceding sentence. This suggests in turn that topic shift is not a necessary effect related to the post-initial position of *nämlich* but that whether *nämlich* may be used in this position or not depends on the properties of the preceding context and more closely on the aspects of the sentence that are further specifiable. If this happens to be a constituent that may occupy the initial position, then *nämlich* can be appropriately attached to it and thus used in the post-initial position. In what follows I show how the specification analysis of *nämlich* may deal with cases of post-initial *nämlich* that do not involve topic shift.

I already considered one such example earlier, (34), which I argued does not involve topic shift but rather what can be called a topic specification. Another case with post-initial *nämlich* that does not involve topic shift is (37), where *Er* in the *nämlich*-sentence is not a topic in the sense of an aboutness topic, but rather a contrastive topic (CT) involving exhaustivity, since the implicit topic alternatives are denied. The sentence is most appropriately realised with a contrastive accent on *Er*, rather than with no accent. This is also suggested by the salience of a set of persons triggered by the expression “the only one” in the preceding sentence that licenses a contrastive reading on which “*Er*” is contrasted with the rest of the set of salient persons.

(37) Peter ist der einzige, der nett ist. [*Er*] *nämlich* [bringt immer Schokolade mit].

“Peter is the only one who is nice. He *NÄMLICH* always brings chocolate”.

Intuitively, (37) provides a definition of what it means to be nice according to the speaker. It says that only Peter is nice because he is the only one who brings chocolate. This reading is not available in the case of MF-*nämlich*: (38) suggests a Motivation interpretation in terms of the reason for calling Peter the only one who is nice.

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14 The example is due to Cornelia Ebert.
(38) Peter ist der einzige, der nett ist. Er bringt nämlich immer Schokolade mit.

"Peter is the only one who is nice. He always brings nämlich chocolate".

It seems that the “definitional” reading in (37) is achieved by identifying Peter and his unique, not yet specified property, (where the uniqueness is suggested by the contrastive accent and the property is specified by the remaining sentence), as the reason for calling Peter “the only one who is nice”. The suggestion that Peter’s property or habit of bringing chocolate is unique is the crucial ingredient that leads to the definitional reading: the only one who is nice is identified with the only one who brings chocolate, and this is Peter. The answer that the nämlich-sentence in (37) provides is thus “Peter with his unique property is the reason for calling him P, and this property is Q”. The definitional reading involved in (37) is also licensed when the uniqueness or exhaustivity is indicated by other means, as in (39).  

(39) Peter ist der einzige der nett ist. Er ist nämlich der einzige, der immer Schokolade mitbringt.

"Peter is the only one who is nice. He is nämlich the only one who always brings chocolate".

This analysis of (37) is similar to the one I suggested for (35a), where the wegen-PP licenses an interpretation on which the entity that the topical expression denotes is identified as the reason for the resulting event, due to an underspecified causing property. In (37), the same effect is achieved by exhaustivity due to contrastive accent: exhaustivity licenses an interpretation on which the entity that the topical expression denotes is identified as the reason for the speech act, due to an underspecified, unique motivating property of the topical subject.

In contrast, on an analysis in which Er is an aboutness topic, no unique causing property of the topical entity would be suggested and the implicit question would be reconstructed as Who specifically is the one who is nice?, which would be inappropriate in this context since this question is already answered by the first sentence. I.e., Peter as a sentence topic is not further specifiable in this context: without the contrastive context the post-initial nämlich is not appropriate since it signals that the sentence answers a question that leads to a non-coherent continuation of the discourse. Consider also (40) where compared to (37) the contrast with the rest of the salient set of persons is lacking and where Er cannot be interpreted as contrastive topic. Here, post-initial

15 Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for this remark.
nämlich is not appropriate since also here no unique causing property of the topical entity is suggested and the discourse question that corresponds to the nämlich-sentence with such a structuring is not licensed by the context.

(40) Peter ist nett. Er \textit{nämlich} bringt immer Schokolade mit.
   “Peter is nice. He \textit{nämlich} always brings chocolate”.
   
   #Who specifically is nice?

Similarly, in (41), which lacks the contrast to the set of salient persons, MF-\textit{nämlich} is interpreted along the same lines as an indication that the sentence answers the discourse question \textit{What is the specific reason for calling Peter nice?}. In both (38) and (41), nämlich is attached to the VP and this identifies or specifies the act of “bringing chocolate” as doing something nice.

(41) Peter ist nett. Er bringt \textit{nämlich} immer Schokolade mit.
   “Peter is nice. He \textit{nämlich} always brings chocolate”.

Another case with post-initial nämlich that does not involve topic shift is (42).\textsuperscript{16} On my analysis, post-initial nämlich is appropriately used here because it marks that the constituent it associates with, Peter (which is not an aboutness topic), is the specific reason for the speaker not wanting to go to the university.

(42) Ich gehe heute gar nicht an die Uni. [Peter] \textit{nämlich} möchte ich auf keinen Fall treffen.
   \textit{What is the specific reason for not wanting to go to the university?}

Summing up, I argued that whether nämlich is appropriately used in post-initial position depends on whether the first constituent that nämlich associates with is an entity that represents a more specific aspect of the state of affairs described by the preceding sentence or not. Depending on the particular context, this may be accompanied by a topic shift, but topic shift is not a requirement for using nämlich in this position, nor does it seem to be an effect of the specific position. This explains why post-initial nämlich is not always accompanied by topic shift, as well as why the first constituent may be not only aboutness topic (which is usually associated with the process of topic shifting) but also a contrastive topic or not a topic at all.

The contribution of nämlich can be specified in terms of explicitly marking a relation of specification between its host and the sentence that precedes it. It indicates that its host provides a more specific description of some (type

\textsuperscript{16} Also due to C. Ebert.
compatible) entity introduced in the first sentence or some implicit “specifiable” aspect of it (or the speech act it realises), such as the reason for the state of affairs described by it. The position of the particle identifies the entity that represents this more detailed description: an entity (postinitial), or property (MF). The details of the analysis presented here are yet to be spelled out in more precise terms.

A problem for this analysis that remains to be addressed is related to the object type of the entity denoted by the constituent with which post-initial nämlich is associated. As was pointed out by an anonymous reviewer, these may be constituents that denote not only individuals but also times. A corpus search revealed that this position may be occupied by spatial and temporal pronouns such as Dort (“there”) and dann (“then”), demonstrative pronouns such as das (“this”), time specifications such as Minuten später (“minutes later”) and conditional conjunctions such as dann (“then”). While this data poses a problem for an analysis in terms of reasons, there is some indication that such cases may be analysed in terms of noncausal Particularization. This issue has to be, however, postponed for further work.

5. Summary and Conclusions

I have argued that the meaning of the German discourse particle nämlich is best captured in terms of a relation of specification between two sentences. More specifically, I have argued that its second argument is a specification of some (type compatible) entity in its first argument or the reason of the state of affairs described by the first sentence, and that the position of the particle identifies the element of the preceding sentence that is specified by the nämlich-sentence. I have also argued that the discourse relations that nämlich is compatible with are relations that not simply involve event coreference but that involve some specification of some underspecified aspects of the utterance, such as certain types of elaboration and causal relations. The discourse effects of post-initial nämlich seem to be related to the ability of nämlich to associate with different constituents belonging to different information-structural units and thus to address different discourse questions. The relation between the meaning of nämlich and discourse effects like topic shift/continuity depends on the aspects of the preceding utterance that are further specifiable in the particular context. The fact that nämlich, in contrast to other discourse particles such as deshalb (“hence”) and somit (“thus”) is capable of occupying the post-initial position is related to its ability to specify aspects of the preceding utterance that can be realized in the topic position.
The account presented here is rather informal and needs to be made considerably more precise, which is an enterprise that will be pursued in further research. It also remains to be seen how the presented analysis of *nämlich* relates to other discourse particles capable of occupying the post-initial position, such as *aber*, *hingegen* and *schließlich*, especially with respect to the question of how their distribution is related to their meaning. A further important question that remains to be answered is whether the topic shift effect that has been observed with other particles in the post-initial position can also be seen as a side effect, or whether this effect is a property of the syntactic position and the case of *nämlich* should be seen as an exception. These are however questions that need to be postponed for future work.

References


