Addition, Restriction, Iteration: Focus Particles in Dutch conditionals[1]

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Conditional clauses in Dutch can be accompanied by focus particles, as in *zelfs als* 'even if' and *alleen als* 'only if'. The literature focuses on these additive and restrictive particles, because they may influence the truth-conditional meaning of the sentence, which is uncommon for particles. Most of these studies are not based on empirical language data, or draw largely from formal written texts in English. This study investigates which focus particles occur in Dutch conditionals, and to which extent their uses are associated with spoken and written modes and with formal and informal registers. It is shown that restrictive and additive particles are most frequent in formal written texts, and that a third type of particle exists, which adds iterative meaning to the conditional, as in *telkens als* 'evertime if [when]'. The results show this type of particles to be associated with informal spoken texts.

Keywords: conditionals, focus particles, semantics, corpus, Dutch

1. Introduction

In English, the conditional conjunction *if* can be used in combination with focus particles (also called *focus adverbs*; see e.g., Hoeksema & Zwarts 1991), most notably *even* and *only*, as in (1) and (2).

> (1)   *Even if* nobody helps me, I'll manage. (König 1985: 3)
> (2)   *Only if* the sun shines will we play soccer on Sunday. (von Fintel 1994: 140)

These two particles have received more attention than other particles. This is because particles are often defined as having no bearing on truth-conditions (see e.g., Levinson 1983; Foolen 1993: 13–23; van der Wouden & Caspers 2010: 54), while *even* seems to render the condition irrelevant (cf. König 1991: 3), and *only* directly impacts the semantics of *if*. These and other 'adverb-like' words (cf. van der Wouden 2000: 241) express additional meaning with respect to their appendix, which, in case of conditionals, is the antecedent (the '*if*-clause'). The Dutch equivalents of the aforementioned particles are *zelfs* 'even' and *alleen* 'only', as in (3) and (4).

> (3)   *Alleen als* hij meer dan 95 procent heeft kan hij het bouwbedrijf van de beurs halen […].
>   (WR-P-P-G-0000102546)

Only if *he has more than 95% he can remove the construction company from the stock market [...]*.

(4)   Vrijheid wordt vergroot door opties, *zelfs als* die opties niet bijzonder aantrekkelijk zijn [...]. (WR-X-A-A-journals-001)

Freedom is enhanced by options, even if *those options are not particularly attractive.*

While the literature on conditionals focuses mainly on these two particles, no comprehensive corpus-based accounts of their use are available. Previous studies were predominantly targeted at English, and to the extent that they were informed by corpus data, these data were largely taken from formal written discourse. As other features of conditionals, such as clause order and syntactic integration, were shown to be associated with mode and register (see e.g., Ford & Thompson 1986; Reuneker 2020), as were connections between antecedents and consequents (see e.g., Dancygier & Sweetser 2005; Reuneker 2022), it may be expected that the distributions of other features of conditionals vary systematically between modes and registers too. This study aims to test the hypothesis that focus particles are one such feature by addressing the following questions: which focus particles are used in conditionals in spoken and written Dutch from formal and informal registers, and what are their contributions to meaning? By answering these questions, this study aims to fill a void in existing literature on conditionals and focus particles, and to extend our knowledge of the grammar and use of conditionals.

To offer a detailed analysis of focus particles, the definitions proposed in the literature are discussed in Section 2. In Section 3, types of particles are discussed, and in section 4, an overview of the data selection and methods is provided. In Section 5, the results are presented and discussed, after which section 6 offers a conclusion and discussion.

2.   *Focus particles in conditionals*

As the first research question aims at identifying focus particles in conditionals, a definition of focus particles is needed. Precise definitions of focus particles are, however, not available or agreed upon (cf. van der Wouden & Caspers 2010: 56). König (1991: 10–16) does propose a number of characteristics, of which I will discuss those relevant to conditionals.

2.1   *Positional variability*

The first distinctive property argued for by König (1991: 13) is *positional variability*. One of the problems of finding focus particles in a corpus, is that they do not have to precede the conditional conjunction – contrary to what examples in the literature suggest. For instance, van der Auwera (1985) provides examples as in (5), but no examples in which *only* does not directly precede *if*, as in (6).

(5)   The match will light *only if* you strike it. (van der Auwera 1985: 71)

(6)   The match will *only* light *if* you strike it.

One could argue for scope ambiguity here (cf. Hoeksema & Zwarts 1991: 57– 58), as (6) has two possible readings, partly dependent on stress. The first is that only the act of striking the match will light it, and second is that the match will light, but will do nothing else, when you strike it. Whether or not one finds the first reading the most accessible, it is at least a possible reading, meaning that the focus particle does not have to directly precede the conjunction. In fact, von Fintel (1994) provides examples of positional variation of *only*, as in (7).

(7)   We will *only* play soccer *if* the sun shines. (von Fintel 1994: 140)

Again, two interpretations are available, namely 'only if the sun shines we will play soccer', and 'if the sun shines, the only thing we will do is play soccer'. In the former reading, *only* counts as focus particle for the antecedent, while in the latter it does not. As can be seen, the focus particle can also occur in the consequent, while interacting with what is focused on elsewhere in the sentence. Searching a corpus for the pattern *only* directly followed by *if*, or their Dutch equivalents, does thus not suffice, and searching for sentences with *only* and *if* in any position may result in many false positives, such as in the example in (8), taken from the corpus of this study.

(8)   *Als* er voor 1 mei geen manier is gevonden om de twee al sinds 1974 gescheiden levende gemeenschappen te herenigen, wordt *alleen* het Griekse deel lid. (WR-P-P-G-0000120574)
        If *no way is found before May 1 to reunite the two communities that have been separated since 1974,* only *the Greek part will become a member.*

In this case, *alleen* 'only' does not add meaning to the antecedent of the conditional, but merely to the noun phrase *het Griekse deel* 'the Greek part' in the consequent. To exclude such cases, we need another property of focus particles discussed by König (1991), namely their semantic scope, i.e., the part of the utterance a focus particle contributes meaning to.

2.2   Semantic scope

Hoeksema and Zwarts (1991: 52) distinguish between focus particles with phrasal scope and those with sentential scope. The scope of *zelfs* 'even' in Hoeksema and Zwarts's example in (9) is phrasal, as it is restricted to the noun phrase *Jaap* it is attached to. In (10), however, *even* scopes over the sentence, meaning that it expresses that even Dieter left East Germany, not that Dieter even left (while others only complained, for instance).

(9)   Zelfs JAAP vind ik leuk. [...]

        I find even JAAP nice. (Hoeksema & Zwarts 1991: 55)

(10)   DIETER has even left East Germany. (Hoeksema & Zwarts 1991: 55)

Returning to (8), *alleen* 'only' takes phrasal scope over a part of the consequent ('the Greek part'), and it does not modify the antecedent. For the two interpretations of (7), in the first interpretation ('only if the sun shines we will play soccer'), the particle takes wide scope over the conditional, whereas in the second interpretation ('if the sun shines, the only thing we will do is play soccer'), the particle takes narrow scope over the noun soccer.[2] A test to see whether a focus particle in a conditional has phrasal or sentential scope, is to formulate a question concerning the condition. If the answer, but not the question includes *alleen* 'only', this is an indication that the particle scopes over the antecedent. For (7), the relevant question is 'Will we play soccer?' and the answer is 'Only if the sun shines', while for (8) the relevant question is 'Will only the Greek part will become a member?' and the answer is 'If no way is found before May 1 […]'.

2.3   Conclusion

The working definition in terms of positional variability and semantic scope enables selecting only those particles of interest for answering the research questions of this study. In the next section, we will look at types of focus particles distinguished in the literature.

3.   *Types of focus particles in conditionals*

In this section, a discussion of different types of focus particles is offered. I will mainly follow König (1991) in distinguishing two main types of focus particles: additive and restrictive focus particles. As the corpus data reveal uses of focus particles that do not fit this classification, I will propose a new type. After discussing the data and method in section 4, I will provide a discussion of the different particles used in Dutch conditionals in section 5.

3.1   *Additive focus particles*

The first type is the *inclusive* or *additive* focus particle (cf. König 1991: 60), of which the most prominent particle is *zelfs* 'even'. The particle focuses on the whole antecedent or on a part of it, but its scope 'is invariably the whole conditional in these cases' (König 1991: 79), as can be seen in the examples in (11) and (12).

(11)   The game will be on EVEN IF IT IS RAINING. (König 1991: 79)

(12)   I'll manage even if EVERYBODY is against me. (König 1991: 79)

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[2] For a related discussion of the scope of the additive particle *still* in conditionals, see Tellings (2017).

In these examples, *even* turns the conditional into an irrelevance (concessive) conditional, signalling an incompatibility between the antecedent and consequent, i.e., normally, the antecedent ('it is raining') would lead to the negated consequent ('the game will not be on'), but not now (cf. König 1991: 3). As Declerck and Reed (2001: 432) reflect on König's (1991) analysis, the '"if and only if" interpretation of *if* in *even if*-conditionals [...] is incompatible with the scalar meaning of *even* [...]'. *Even* is scalar in the sense that the relation between the antecedent and consequent holds even in the extreme or unexpected case presented, so it will hold for less unexpected cases too (cf. König 1991: 80; Kay 1990).

3.2 Restrictive focus particles

The second type is the *exclusive* or *restrictive* particle (cf. König 1991: 94; Declerck & Reed 2001: 26; van der Auwera 1985), of which the most frequently discussed particle is *only*, expressed by *alleen* 'only' in Dutch. It presupposes the conditional without the particle and entails that any alternative does not hold (cf. König 1991: 94), creating an exclusivity reading (i.e., a biconditional reading; see Dancygier & Sweetser 2005: 204-211). In the example in (13), *only* adds to the conditional meaning of 'if the allowance is more favourable [...], she will be paid that allowance' the aspect of presenting the antecedent as a necessary condition.

(13)   *(Only) If* the allowance is more favourable to a widow than the retirement pension, she will be paid that allowance.

Athanasiadou and Dirven (1997: 79-80) treat *only if* as a single complex conjunction with a 'reinforcing meaning'. They argue that *only* is compatible only with pure conditions, and not with their 'co-occurrence' and 'pragmatic' types of conditionals.

3.3 Iterative focus particles

Finally, there is a group of particles that is not explicitly discussed in the literature on English conditionals and does not contribute additive or restrictive meaning to the conditional it occurs with, but rather the notion of 'recurrence' or 'iteration'. The most frequent particle of this type is *altijd* 'always', as in (14).

(14)   *Altijd als* zij uit Kenya komt dan dan [sic] is ze depressief. (fn007979)
         Whenever she comes from Kenya (then) she is depressed.

Here, the particle marks the conditional as a recurrent, habitual or generic conditional. Dancygier and Sweetser (2005: 95) describe generic conditionals, which can also be expressed without a particle, as follows: 'if P is known to obtain, then the eventuality with respect to Q will be predictable'. It seems

that in English, these conditionals are expressed more often using the temporal conjunction *when* or *whenever*. These particles are not discussed in the literature on conditionals, and it could be questioned whether or they truly are focus particles – they could be viewed as temporal adverbs instead. However, as mentioned in section 2, particles are not easily defined, and they are described in the literature as, for instance, 'adverb-like' words (van der Wouden 2000: 241). They are included in this study, because, like other focus particles, 'iterative particles' most frequently occur directly before *als* 'if', and they modify the meaning of the whole conditional. Furthermore, they show comparable positional variability and semantic scope, as can be seen in (15).

(15) En hij was *altijd* erg blij *als* iemand goed ging en zulk soort dingen. (fn008663)
And he was always *very happy {*if/when*} someone did well and things like that.*

Here, *altijd* occurs in the consequent and scopes over the antecedent: 'whenever someone did well, he was very happy'.

3.4   Conclusion

In this section, three types of focus particles were distinguished. Their distributions and associations with mode and register will be presented and discussed in section 5. First, however, the data and methods are discussed.

4.   Data and method

Most studies of focus particles in conditionals are not corpus-based, or are based predominantly on formal written language data. As the use of conditionals in general has been shown to differ significantly between modes and registers (see Ford & Thompson 1986; Carter-Thomas & Rowley-Jolivet 2008; Ferguson 2001; Reuneker 2020), it may be expected that certain uses have been overlooked. Therefore, a balanced corpus of conditionals was constructed to investigate the aforementioned associations between focus particles, mode and register.

The corpus includes spoken and written texts from the *Corpus Gesproken Nederlands* (Oostdijk 2000), and *SoNaR-500* (Oostdijk et al. 2013) respectively. As Biber & Conrad (2009: 88) argue, even within modes, language use differs between registers. Therefore, balanced samples for both modes were collected and labelled as either formal (e.g., newspapers, political debate) or informal (e.g., conversations, discussion lists) based on Biber's dimensions (1995: 142, 155-7). For each of the mode-register combinations, approximately 1,250 conditionals were collected. After analysis, a number of

conditionals were discarded because of incompleteness or ambiguity. The final sample included 4,868 *als*-conditionals.[3]

For the annotation of focus particles, a number of particles was indexed using a Python-script. These annotations were checked manually and annotated for focus particle type, based on an annotation manual (see Reuneker 2022: 469-470). Because all conditionals were annotated for other features relevant to a larger project on conditionals, a number of particles that were not found in the literature were attested during manual annotation phases. Consequently, they were added to the list of focus particles. A sample of approximately 10% of the corpus was annotated independently by a second researcher to assess reliability. There was substantial agreement between the two annotators (Cohen's κ=0.65; AC1=0.95). [4] Insights from discussions concerning disagreements were applied to the larger corpus.

As the dataset may involve associations and interactions between more than two categorical variables (mode × register × focus particle), log-linear analysis was used, and backward elimination was carried out in case of significant higher-order associations. Effects were broken down using separate chi-square tests and standardized residuals, which are comparable to *z*-scores (see Agresti 2007: chapter 7).

5. *Results*
In section 5.1, I will discuss the distribution of types of focus particles in Dutch conditionals, and I will analyse the meaning contributions of each type in section 5.2. In section 5.3 a brief conclusion is offered.

5.1 *Distribution of types of focus particles in Dutch conditionals*
In this section, I address the first research question, which concerns the use of various focus particles in different text modes and registers, by inspecting their distributions. All focus particles were grouped into restrictive, additive and iterative particles. The distribution of types of focus particles by mode and register are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. *Distribution of types of focus particles by mode and register*

Mode	Register	Additive (%)	Restrictive (%)	Iterative (%)	No particle (%)	Total
Spoken	Formal	43 (3.63)	35 (2.95)	4 (0.34)	1104 (93.09)	1186
	Informal	26 (2.13)	18 (1.48)	33 (2.70)	1143 (93.69)	1220
	Total	69 (2.87)	53 (2.20)	37 (1.54)	2247 (93.39)	2406
Written	Formal	89 (7.18)	74 (5.97)	8 (0.65)	1069 (86.21)	1240
	Informal	21 (1.72)	42 (3.44)	13 (1.06)	1146 (93.78)	1222
	Total	110 (4.47)	116 (4.71)	21 (0.85)	2215 (89.97)	2462
Total		**179 (3.68)**	**169 (3.47)**	**58 (1.19)**	**4462 (91.66)**	**4868**

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[3] For data and scripts, see Reuneker (2022: appendix F).
[4] See Gwet (2014) for correction of trait prevalence in AC1.

Note. Percentages are row-based.

The overwhelming majority of conditionals (91.66%) is not accompanied by any focus particle. The frequency of conditionals with a focus particle is 8.34%, and around 7% in all mode-register combinations except written formal texts (13.79%). A further general observation is that iterative focus particles are least frequent overall. They seem to be used most in spoken, informal texts.

A three-way loglinear analysis was performed on the data, which produced a final model that retained all effects, indicating that the highest order interaction (mode × register × focus particle) was significant (χ^2=13.73, df =3, p=0.003). Comparing the two-way interactions against the model without the three-way interaction showed that the mode × focus particle interaction (χ^2=36.88, *df*=3, *p*<0.001, *Cramér's V*=0.07, *Cramér's V*=0.09; χ^2=37.04, *df*=2, *p*<0.001) and the register × focus particle interaction (χ^2=77.47, *df*=3, *p*<0.001, *Cramér's V*=0.13; χ^2=80.12, *df*=3, *p*<0.001) were significant, but constituted only weak associations. Inspecting the residuals for the mode × focus particle association we see that additive particles occur more often than expected in written texts as compared to spoken texts (*z*=2.05, *p*<0.05; *z*=-2.07, *p*<0.05 respectively), which is also the case for restrictive particles (*z*=3.30, *p*<0.001; *z*=-3.34, *p*<0.001 respectively). The residuals for the mode × focus particle association show that formal texts feature more additive particles in comparison with informal texts (*z*=4.53, *p*<0.001; *z*=-4.52, *p*<0.001), and more restrictive particles (*z*=2.70, *p*<0.01; *z*=-2.69, *p*<0.01), but less iterative particles (*z*=-3.14, *p*<0.01; *z*=3.13, *p*<0.01).

With respect to the first research question, the results show that focus particles are used in 8.34% of conditionals in the corpus. The majority of particles are additive or restrictive, and these particles are associated with written formal texts. Iterative particles, on the other hand, make up for a minority and are associated with spoken informal texts.[5]

5.2 *Contributions to meaning of conditionals*

In this section, I address the second research question, which concerns the meaning contributions of focus particles to conditionals, by analysing the types of particles from section 3 in detail. Before doing so, it is important to remember that focus particles were only analysed as used in conditionals, which means that the results may reflect general distributions, because most focus particles can occur together with other conjunctions too, such as *alleen omdat* 'only because' and *zelfs voordat* 'even before'.

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[5] Note that frequencies of focus particles are low overall, and as a result, associations must be interpreted with caution.

For additive focus particles, the most frequent particle is *zelfs* 'even', which was already discussed above. The particle *ook* 'also', as in (16), seems to have a similar meaning, because it too cancels any necessity implicature, although it does not express the scalar 'extremity value' of *even* 'zelfs'.

(16)   Bepaalde aspecten vereisen een hoge accuratesse en concentratie, *ook als* er sprake is van tijddwang. (WR-P-P-F-legal-texts-1000)
Certain aspects require high accuracy and concentration, even if *there is a time constraint.*

The use of these focus particles entails 'the corresponding sentence without particle' and presupposes that there is at least one other condition that would be satisfactory for the consequent (cf. König 1991: 60). This holds true too for *bijvoorbeeld* 'for example', which marks the antecedent as an example of a condition for the consequent.[6] In (17), the antecedent is one of the possible causes of how a municipality can sustain damage from a bankruptcy.

(17)   Maar ook de gemeente kan de dupe worden van een faillissement, *bijvoorbeeld als* ze nog leningen heeft uitstaan. (WR-P-P-G-newspapers-16000)
But the municipality can also be the victim of a bankruptcy, for example if *it still has loans.*

The question is whether or not this is indeed a focus particle, because 'positional variability' seems limited. Moving *bijvoorbeeld* 'for example' to the consequent removes its scope from the antecedent, as can be seen in (18). Moving it to another position in the antecedent seems possible, however, as can be seen in (19).

(18)   Maar ook *bijvoorbeeld* de gemeente kan de dupe worden van een faillissement, *als* ze nog leningen heeft uitstaan. (WR-P-P-G-newspapers-16000)
But for example *the municipality can also be the victim of a bankruptcy,* if *it still has loans.*
(19)   Maar ook de gemeente kan de dupe worden van een faillissement, *als* ze *bijvoorbeeld* nog leningen heeft uitstaan.
But the municipality can also be the victim of a bankruptcy, if for example *it still has loans.*

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[6] One anonymous reviewer expressed the view that *bijvoorbeeld* 'for example' is not properly speaking *additive*, as it focuses on, but does not *add* an exemplar 'to an already given set'. Although König seems to use the terms *additive* and *inclusive particles* (1991: 60, 66) interchangeably, for this particle, the term *inclusive* seems more suitable. This also holds for comparable particles discussed below.

Next to these particles, *vooral* 'especially', *zeker* 'especially, certainly' (see van der Wouden 2000; for English Declerck & Reed 2001: 433), *helemaal* 'completely', *met name* 'in particular', *precies* 'precisely', and *juist* 'exactly', add focus to a value in the antecedent on a contextually provided scale. They contribute to the meaning that there are other situations that may function as condition, but that the value in the antecedent is a particularly well-suited candidate, as in (20).

(20)   Het is voor mensen die slechtziend of blind zijn niet altijd even eenvoudig om een goede muziekleraar te vinden, *vooral als* je niet weet waar je moet zoeken. (WR-P-P-D-newsletters-006)
        It is not always easy for people who are visually impaired or blind to find a good music teacher, especially if *you do not know where to look.*

It may be the case that these focus particles, in contrast to *zelfs* 'even' and *ook* 'also', constitute a different type of focus particle, or a subtype of additive focus particles, because they single out one particular condition amongst conceivable alternatives. Due to the scope of this contribution, such a more fine-grained classification will be left for future research.[7]

For restrictive particles, we already discussed the most frequent particle in Dutch, *alleen* 'only'. Next to this particle, the temporal adverb *pas* 'only {if/when}', as in (21), is of this type, as it adds the meaning that the consequent can only occur after the moment the antecedent has been realised. As such, *pas als* 'only {if/when}' is on par with *alleen als* 'only if', because it marks the antecedent as a necessary condition for the consequent, while adding temporal information to this necessity.

(21)   *Pas als* dat probleem overwonnen is, komt de herschrijfbare dvd met dubbele capaciteit op de markt. (WR-P-P-G-newspapers-30000)
        Only {if/when} *that problem has been overcome, the double-capacity rewritable DVD will be available.*

Another restrictive particle is *behalve* 'except', which adds to the conditional the exceptive meaning that the antecedent is the opposite of a condition, just like *tenzij* 'unless', i.e., '"Q unless P" is equivalent to "Q except if P"' (Declerck & Reed 2001: 21, 447-448). The last restrictive particle is *tenminste* 'at least', as in (22).

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[7] See the section on focus particles and especially the parameter of *uniciteit* ('unicity') in Haeseryn et al. (2019). Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for this suggestion.

(22)   Gelukkig mag ik wel knuffelbeesten uit de speelgoedwinkel, *als* ze *tenminste* niet te stoffig zijn. (WR-P-P-G-0000032058)

Fortunately, I can get stuffed animals from the toy store, at least if *they are not too dusty.*

The English counterpart 'at least' is mentioned by Quirk et al. (1985: 604) in the set of 'restrictive particularizers'. Like *al* 'already' (for English, see Declerck 1994), *tenminste* 'at least' does not occur frequently directly before *als* 'if'. It can be placed directly before *als* 'if', it seems to scope over the conditional, and the question test does seem to work here, as in 'Are you allowed to have stuffed animals from the play store? At least if they are not too dusty', although it is questionable to which extent the answer is acceptable without the addition of an affirmative *yes*, i.e., 'Yes, at least if they are not too dusty'. A possible explanation for this is that *tenminste* 'at least' seems to occur with sentence-final antecedents mostly, in which the sentence-final antecedent 'restricts the validity of Q "a posteriori"' (Declerck and Reed 2001: 367).

Finally, a number of particles was found that did not fit the characterization as either an additive or restrictive particle (see section 3.3). The particles *altijd* 'always', *elke/iedere keer* 'everytime', *telkens* 'everytime', and *meestal* 'usually' seem to add a similar type of meaning to conditionals, namely that of a recurrence of both the situations in the antecedent and consequent, as in (23) and (24).

(23)   *Elke keer als* van een client de follow-up tijd eindigt, wordt hij statistisch gezien uit de onderzoeksgroep gehaald (gecensored). (WR-X-A-Ajournals- 001)

Every time a client's follow-up time ends, he is statistically speaking removed from the research group (censored).

(24)   *Meestal als* hij een spel wilde spelen vertelde ik bij voorbaat al dat hij ook kan verliezen. (WR-P-E-A-discussion-lists-492000)

Usually {if/when} *he wanted to play a game I told in advance that he could lose.*

The focus particles *elke/iedere keer* 'everytime' and *meestal* 'usually' highlight the recurrent, generic or habitual nature of the connection between antecedent and consequent. In (23), the method of dealing with participants in a study is explained by using a conditional to express that every time the follow-up time ends, the participant is removed from the group.[8] In contrast to *altijd* 'always', *elke/iedere keer* 'everytime' and *telkens* 'everytime', *meestal* 'usually' does not mark the conditional connection as a certain, but as a frequent co-occurrence.

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[8] The frequent use of conditionals to express recurrent situations in research articles was also observed by Carter-Thomas (2007), who calls such conditionals 'factuals'.

With respect to the second research question, the results show that particles can be grouped into three types of meaning contribution: additive, restrictive and iterative, of which the last type is not commonly discussed in the literature. Furthermore, it was suggested that in future research, the group of additive focus particles may be split into additive particles and those that single out one particular or unique condition.

5.3 Conclusion

Three types of focus particles were found in the corpus of Dutch conditionals. They can appear directly before the conjunction *als* 'if', but they do not have to. In most cases, they are used to add additive or restrictive meaning. Another, iterative type of focus particles was found, which is predominantly used in spoken, informal texts.

6. Conclusion and discussion

This study addressed the questions which focus particles are used in Dutch conditionals in spoken and written texts from formal and informal registers, and what their contributions to meaning are. The results show that focus particles are found in 8.34% of Dutch conditionals. In most cases, they contribute additive or restrictive meaning to conditionals, although another, iterative type of focus particle was found too, which adds the notion of co-occurrence of the situations in the antecedent and consequent.

The lack of discussion of 'iterative focus particles' in the literature on conditionals may be due to a focus on formal, written discourse. However, it may also suggest a difference between conditional conjunctions in Dutch and English. If we were to propose a continuum from conditional to temporal meaning, in English, *if* can be used for the conditional part of the continuum, whereas *when* can be used only for the temporal part. Therefore, it may be the case that iterative particles, dealing with the temporal part of the continuum, are not or less frequently found with *if*. In Dutch, however, *als* 'if' can be used for the complete continuum, including those cases in which a strictly temporal meaning is intended, which is compatible with iterative particles. Such an account should, however, be developed in more detail to be of use (see Reuneker 2022: 304, chapter 7).

As previous studies on focus particles and conditionals were based predominantly on formal written texts in English, the results of this study fill a gap in our knowledge of the grammar and use of Dutch conditionals and focus particles. These findings are part of a larger project which addresses the extent to which grammatical features provide clues for implicatures licensed by conditionals in Dutch (Reuneker 2022).

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