Expressive particle verbs as a distinct grammatical class

In this talk, I propose a new distinction between expressive and non-expressive particle verbs in German. The basis for my proposal is that these two classes behave differently in the domains of degree modification and topicalization. Expressive particle verbs, in my analysis, show strong parallels to extreme adjectives in their compatibility with extreme degree modification; and a subclass of them can topicalize their particle in isolation, even when the particle is non-contrastable. My claims are supported by rating studies probing people’s intuition about the likelihood of the occurrence of an utterance, without relying on acceptability judgments. I connect these new findings to other forms of non-information-structural topicalization patterns that endow utterances with a mirative flavor.