A. Noticing Modal Particle Usage

Answer Key 2: Noticing Modal Particle Usage

1. What word category (part of speech) do the words marked in bold belong to in these excerpts?

modal / flavoring particles (Modalpartikeln, Abtönungspartikeln)

2. Can you list other words belonging to this category?

The full list that most researchers agree on contains 15 modal particles (although some scholars add more): **aber, auch, bloß, denn, eben, eigentlich, etwa, doch, halt, ja, mal, nur, schon, vielleicht, wohl**

3. What meanings do the bold faced words express in these examples (check all that are appropriate and add more if you wish)?

- **+ -** Create friendly atmosphere
    Most of the time. In some contexts, however, they may become too personal and even impudent. For example, it would be inappropriate for you to use a lot of modal particles during a job interview with a potential employer.
- **+** Make communication more natural
- **+** Make the speech stretches more coherent
- **+ -** Make communication more polite
    Yes, if politeness is understood as a willingness to cooperate with the communication partner.
- **+** Indicate colloquial/informal communication
- **-** Indicate formal communication
- **-** Are characteristic of written texts
- **+** Give a spoken quality to written texts
    This is why they often appear in computer-mediated communication which is considered a hybrid between spoken and written genres.
- **-** Emphasize other particular words
    No. They refer to the whole sentence or stretches of a text larger than a sentence or even to situations beyond the text.
- **+** Mitigate interpersonal threats

4. Which of the bold faced words do you use when you are speaking German to express the meanings you checked above?

Commentary: Most likely, you have used many of these words before. However, you may have used homonyms of these modal particles, i.e. words that sound the same and are spelled the same but have a different meaning and syntactic function. For example, **ja** *can function as an answering particle ('yes'),* **denn** *as a conjunction ('because'), and* **mal** *as a temporal adverb ('once'). Note that in Answer Key #1, these words fulfill different functions as modal particles.*