Yě, yě, yě
On the syntax and semantics of Mandarin yě

This dissertation presents a description and analysis of the Mandarin particle yě ‘also’. It provides a comprehensive syntactic and semantic treatment of three different manifestations of yě, namely, Additive yě, which is similar to English also, Parametric/Scalar yě, which we find in ‘no matter’ and ‘even/even if’ contexts, and, finally, Modal yě, basically a concessivity marker.

Additive, Parametric/Scalar and Modal yě are different in interpretation and require different licensing conditions. Additive yě can only be licensed if an antecedent can be retrieved from the context; the antecedent must be explicitly asserted or otherwise present in the active context and it must have the same argumentative orientation as the host sentence. Parametric/Scalar yě can only be licensed if scalarity is marked in the sentence. Finally, as a concessivity marker, Modal yě presupposes the existence of a concessive proposition as an alternative. Pragmatically, the use of Modal yě results in a polite, indirect, tactful or less absolute reading of the host sentence. The syntactic properties of the different manifestations of yě are explored vis-à-vis Butler’s modal hierarchy and Cinque’s adverb hierarchy. We conclude that there are two positions of yě in the syntactic structure, one in CP and the other in IP.