

Orientation and Licensing of English Adverbs

Hidekazu Suzuki

1 . Speaker's Attitude and Adverbs*

We can use a variety of linguistic expressions to describe a speaker's attitude or mental state toward an event, such as an action or state. Most typical are adverbial expressions; for example, so-called evaluative adverbs, modal adverbs, performative adverbs, manner adverbs, and so on. These types of adverbs convey the speaker's evaluation or judgment regarding events or their descriptions.

Evaluative adverbs, such as *fortunately*, *happily* and *surprisingly*, which are also called factive adverbs, express the speaker's evaluation of an event described in a sentence when he/she presupposes that it is true (an that its description is true). Modal adverbs, such as *certainly*, *possibly* and *probably*, which are also called epistemic adverbs, express the speaker's estimation of probability or likelihood about the events described.¹ Performative adverbs, such as *bluntly*, *briefly* and *frankly*, which are also called manner-of-speaking adverbs, are used for the expression of the way a speaker describes events in sentences. Manner adverbs, such as *adequately*, *carefully* and *slowly* express how the speaker perceives actions in the past or present.²

Further, there are other kinds of adverbs, such as subject adverbs and viewpoint adverbs, which have rather *complicated functions*. Subject adverbs, such as *deliberately*, *intentionally* and *sadly*, express how the speaker feels about the subject's state of mind or intention in being in the state or doing the action which is described in the sentence. Viewpoint adverbs, such as *economically*, *politically* and *technically*, are used to state the point

of view from which the speaker describes the event in the sentence. Viewpoint is not necessarily involved in the speaker's evaluation on an event or its description, but it clearly comes from a certain kind of the speaker's attitude with which he/she describes an event. Some conjunctive adverbs, such as *accordingly*, *moreover* and *however*, can also be thought to be similar to these types of adverbs in a sense. They are used to connect the sentence in which they appear to the preceding sentence. Even a logical connection can be made, at least in some cases, by the speaker's judgment on how to describe an event or a series of events.

Those adverbs involved in the speaker's evaluation are found to have various kinds of functions in sentences, because the speaker can make an evaluation or judgment on various aspects of events or their descriptions. For example, a conjunctive adverb is used to relate a sentence in which it appears to the sentence that it follows. Performative, evaluative and modal adverbs are associated with the whole sentences or clauses, including embedded clauses, such as complement clauses and relative clauses, though the ways of association differ depending on the type of adverbs. Subject adverbs are clearly related with the subject of a sentence. Manner adverbs are associated with actions, but they are usually used to put a focus on processes (part of processes) and to describe them, so they are closely related with the verb phrase (VP). Thus, in order to explore the functions or characteristics of adverbs, it is necessary to determine what aspect of an event the speaker evaluates and which element the adverb is associated with in a sentence.

2. Kinds and Names of Adverbs

I have referred to several kinds of adverbs: factive adverbs, modal adverbs, performative adverbs, manner adverbs, subject adverbs, viewpoint adverbs and conjunctive adverbs. It is useful to ask what is meant by the names of the adverbs when we try to make clear their functions or properties, either syntactic or semantic. Some of the names come from the (lexical or intrinsic) meanings which they express (*e.g.* manner, tempo-

ral, locative adverbs and adverbs of means and instrument); some come from the roles which they perform in sentences (*e.g.* performative, viewpoint and conjunctive adverbs); others come from the names of the elements which they modify (*e.g.* subject adverbs).

Let us first compare manner adverbs with performative adverbs, which can be used as follows :

- (1) a. The students spoke to me *frankly*. (manner)
 b. *Frankly*, they are not working so hard. (performative)

The notion “manner” stands for the meaning which a word can express, in the same way as the notions of place, time, means and instrument. Manner means “a way of doing something or the way in which a thing is done or happens” (*American Heritage Dictionary*) and manner adverbs, as mentioned above, express how the speaker perceives an action. It is clear that performative adverbs also express a kind of manner.³ The difference between these two kinds of adverbs lies in their roles or functions; that is, in the elements they modify and how they do so. Manner adverbs modify the VP in which they appear, more specifically, “predicate verb + α (which can be null)”, while performative adverbs can be considered to modify a performative verb which is usually not expressed explicitly but implied in sentences. Performative adverbs have a sort of performative or illocutionary force in that they seem as if they modify unexpressed performative verbs and compose a higher performative predicate in a form of “performative verb + performative adverb”. Note here that performative adverbs look as if they modify unexpressed performative verbs as manner adverbs.

Let us next consider a pair of manner adverbs and subject adverbs, which can be used in (2) :

- (2) a. Jim didn't accept the award *proudly*. (manner)
 b. *Proudly*, Jim wouldn't accept the award. (subject)

Subject adverbs are, as mentioned above, adverbs that express the subject's state of mind or intention in being in the state or doing the action which is described in the sentence. There is some similarity between manner and subject adverbs, because the subject's state of mind or intention is

easily reflected on how actions will be done or are being done. However, these two types of adverbs are different from each other in that manner adverbs express how the actions are being done while subject adverbs convey the subject's state of mind or intention when the action is being done.

The difference lies in the fact that manner adverbs modify the VP in which they appear while subject adverbs modify the subject of the sentence. It is sometimes claimed that there is also a difference in scope; manner adverbs have narrow scope (over VP) and subject adverbs wide scope (over the subject or both the subject and the VP).⁴ Notice here that almost all subject adverbs can be used as manner adverbs, but not vice versa (that is, it is not the case that all of the manner adverbs can be used as subject adverbs). It may be that some adverbs are ambiguous and that they can serve both subject adverbs and manner adverbs, but it is important to know which adverbs have such ambiguity.

A similar observation can be made on a pair of evaluative and manner adverbs, which appear in the sentences below :

- (3) a. *Naturally*, he wouldn't talk back to his father. (evaluative)
 b. He couldn't speak to his father *naturally*. (manner)

As mentioned above, evaluative adverbs, which are also called factive adverbs, can be used to express how the speaker evaluates the events described in a sentence, with the presupposition that they actually happened or will happen. Then, these two kinds of adverbs are similar in that they express states of events in some cases. It is important to note, however, that only some evaluative adverbs can be used as manner adverbs, which is different from the case of manner and performative adverbs as well as manner and subject adverbs. It should be noticed here that "evaluation" represents some kind of notion, not functions of linguistic expressions, just like manner, place, time, instrument and others, and that the term of evaluative adverb does not show how these adverbs work in sentences. The class of evaluative adverbs usually consists of adverbs which convey the speaker's evaluation of an event and have scope over the whole clause while manner adverbs have scope over VP. Hence evaluative adverbs are classified as sentence adverbs.⁵

Finally consider the case of modal adverbs, which can be used as follows:

- (4) a. *Probably* that is a nice decision.
 b. *Clearly* there is a change of approach here.

Modal adverbs are quite similar to evaluative adverbs in some respects, especially in that the name given to these adverbs is based on meaning, not on function. The notion of “modal” conveys the speaker’s comment or judgement on the degree of possibility of the content of what he/she is saying. The term “modal adverb” is used more specifically; modal adverbs are adverbs that express the meaning just mentioned and have scope over the whole sentence, hence they are called sentence adverbs as well as evaluative adverbs. Notice that the speaker’s comment on the modality of possibility can be given not only to the whole sentence but also to parts of a sentence. Actually, modal adverbs can be used as a modifier of adjectives and noun phrases (NPs), as shown in (5), which is also true of other kinds of adverbs:⁶

- (5) a. This option is *clearly* preferable.⁷
 b. This is a *clearly* preferable option.

To sum up the above discussion, the names of adverbs do not necessarily represent their uses. In fact, among the kinds of adverbs discussed above, only the name “subject adverb” has to do with the way adverbs of this class are used in a sentence, while the names of the other kinds of adverbs essentially have to do with their lexical meaning. Then, in order to make clear the characteristics of adverbs, it is essential to know the functions of adverbs in sentences, *i.e.*, how adverbs can be used in sentences.

3. Determining the Licensing Domain of Adverbs

I have shown in Section 1 that the speaker’s attitude or evaluation can be attributed to many aspects of an event described in a sentence and that a variety of expressions conveying the speaker’s attitude can be used in sentences. Thus various kinds of adverbs involved with the speaker’s

attitude or evaluation can be used in different ways in sentences. I have also discussed in Section 2 the fact that the names of most adverbs⁸ do not indicate their use, hence we have to know how particular adverbs are used in sentences. Moreover, adverbs are often ambiguous in function, and therefore it is necessary but not sufficient to specify that an adverb at issue is assigned to more than one class of adverbs if it has a multiple function; we have further to determine how it is actually used in a particular sentence. The uses or functions of adverbs have been explained in terms of “orientation” in Jackendoff (1972) and “scope” in Travis (1988) and Ernst (1998).

Jackendoff (1972) suggests that some adverbs, such as performative, evaluative and modal adverbs, are speaker-oriented adverbs and others are subject-oriented adverbs. The notion of orientation is very useful but it must be modified slightly (Suzuki, 1979) and it can be extended further to cover other kinds of adverbs: agentive-oriented adverbs, verbal-oriented adverbs, experiencer-oriented adverbs, result-oriented adverbs, complement-oriented adverbs, etc. (Platt-Platt 1972, Lehrer 1975). Extension of this notion seems promising in that it can account for how adverbs work in sentences, in particular, which element an adverb “modifies” in a sentence. It is important to specify the association between adverbs and the elements which they modify in order to capture co-occurrence restriction and to account for the licensing of adverbs in sentences.

The notion of scope has long been used in the study of adverbs, as mentioned above. Sentence adverbs and VP adverbs are considered to have scope over the whole sentence and VP, respectively. Given the wide variety of functions of adverbs, it will be useful and helpful to extend and elaborate this notion along the lines suggested by Travis (1988) and Ernst (1998), to specify rigidly where (or in what phrase) particular adverbs work in sentence structures; the more rigidly the scope of a particular adverb is specified, the more specifically its function in the sentence can be determined. Such extension and elaboration of the notion scope will be needed to distinguish two uses of the adverb *quite*, for example, in the expressions such as *a quite difficult problem* and *quite a difficult problem*; in

the former case, the scope of *quite* is an adjective (but not an adjective phrase (AP), as suggested by Travis) while in the latter case, the scope of *quite* is an NP. This distinction will also be helpful for capturing (lexical) properties of the adverb, such as the fact that it can be used in such an expression as *quite a party* but not in **a quite party*. Similar cases can be found in larger phrases or even entire sentences. Both the notions of orientation and scope are important and useful for a study of adverbs. But orientation can be used to specify the association between adverbs and the elements which they modify (or are related to) while scope can be used to determine the region or phrase (in any size, *i.e.*, from a single word to an entire clause).

Among the most important problems in explaining the properties of adverbs is to account for the occurrence of adverbs in sentences including co-occurrence restrictions. The first task for licensing adverbs is to determine a scope of a particular occurrence of an adverb in a sentence. It will delimit the region in which the adverb works properly, where its orientation and co-occurrence restrictions can be captured. The second task is to specify the orientation of the adverb and the relation with between it and the element it is oriented to. Based on this relation, relevant co-occurrence restrictions will be checked.

Finally, let us consider the sentences in (6), where the adverb *sadly* is used, to see how these tasks can be done (Suzuki, 1997).

- (6) a. The old man was sitting on the bench *sadly*.
 b. *Sadly*, they were walking down the street.
 c. *Sadly*, our offer was rejected by the committee.

The scope of *sadly* is the VP in (6 a) but not the entire clause, which is determined by the structure and position in which it occurs. It follows that the determination of the scope of adverbs is subject to certain conditions (Suzuki, 1995). Then, it will be decided that *sadly* is oriented to the VP *was sitting on the bench*. The relevant co-occurrence restrictions are satisfied between *sadly* and the VP. Hence, this occurrence of *sadly* can be licensed. It is interesting to note that the scope of *sadly* can be both the subject and the entire clause in (6 b) and (6 c), owing to the position in

which it appears. In the case of (6c), *sadly* can be licensed when it has scope over the entire clause, because it is compatible with the properties of the clause. However, it cannot be licensed when it has scope over the subject, because in this case it is oriented to the subject and it does not satisfy the co-occurrence restriction to the effect that adverbs of this kind (*i.e.*, subject adverbs) require an animate subject NP. On the other hand, in the case of (6b), *sadly* can be licensed when it is oriented either to the entire clause or the subject, satisfying every relevant requirement, although it seems preferable to interpret it as a subject-oriented adverb.

Notes

* This is a part of my research in progress under the Special Research Project of the Typological Investigation of Languages and Cultures of the East and West at University of Tsukuba. This work is also supported in part by the 1998 Grant of University of Tsukuba Research Projects (Head: Shosuke Haraguchi). My deepest thanks go to Nobuhiro Kaga for his encouragement, and Shosuke Haraguchi, Hiromi Onozuka, Roger Martin and Takashi Yoshida for their valuable comments.

¹ Quirk *et al.* (1972, pp.511–520) call evaluative and modal adverbs as attitudinal disjuncts, which “convey the speaker’s comment on the content of what he is saying”, as clear from the name.

² *Cobuild Grammar* gives the following definition: You often want to say something about the manner or circumstances of an event or situation. The most common way of doing this is by using adverbs of manner. Adverbs of manner give more information about the way in which an event or action takes place.

³ It is probably for this reason that adverbs of this kind are also called manner -of-speaking adverbs.

⁴ For example, Travis (1988) makes such a claim; she says that subject adverbs have scope over the subject, which is wider than that of manner adverbs. As discussed in detail in Suzuki (1979), subject adverbs modify not only the subject but also the VP; importantly, some of them have co-occurrence restrictions with the VP. Then they are said to have scope

over the subject and the VP.

It is interesting to note here that some adverbs can be used as manner, subject and performative adverbs, but they are different from one another in scope. Manner adverbs have the narrowest scope over the VP, subject adverbs a wider scope over the subject and the VP, and performative adverbs the widest scope over the whole sentence.

⁵ Quirk *et al.* (1985, pp.612-631) call evaluative adverbs content disjuncts from the point of view of the function which they perform in sentences, this is different from Quirk *et al.* (1972), who call them attitudinal disjuncts, as mentioned above.

⁶ For example, consider (i), where *exactly* works as a modifier of the NP.

(i) This is *exactly* the same option that I would like to take.

⁷ The occurrence of *clearly* in (5 a) can be ambiguous in that it can be interpreted either as a modifier of the adjective *preferable* or as a sentence adverb.

⁸ Except subject adverbs which modify the subject of a sentence and possibly performative adverbs which modify an unexpressed performative verb or clause.

References

- Ernst, T. 1998. "The Scopal Basis of Adverb Licensing," *NELS* 28, pp.127-142.
- Jackendoff, R. 1972. *Semantic Interpretation in Generative Grammar*. Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press.
- Lehrer, A. 1975. "Complement-oriented adverbs," *Linguistic Inquiry* 6, pp.489-94.
- Platt, J. and H. Platt. 1972. "Orientation of manner adverbials," *Papers in Linguistics* 5, pp.227-49.
- Quirk, R., S. Greenbaum, G. Leech, and J. Svartvik. 1972. *A Grammar of Contemporary English*. London: Longman.
- _____. 1985. *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*. London: Longman.
- Suzuki, H. 1979. "Properties of subject adverbs," (in Japanese) *Studies in*

Languages and Cultures 6, pp.15-39.

_____. 1983. "Modification and orientation of adverbs," *Tsukuba Review of English Studies* 2, pp.69-81.

_____. 1995. "Toward an explanation of adverbs," *Tsukuba Review of English Studies*, 14 pp.33-47.

_____. 1997. "A note on adverbial-licensing mechanism," ms. University of Tsukuba & MIT. [a slightly different Japanese version in *Tsukuba Review of English Studies* 16, pp.37-48.]

Travis, L. 1988. "The syntax of adverbs," *McGill Working Papers in Linguistics: Special Issue on Comparative Germanic Syntax*. pp.280-310.