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Studies in English Adverbial Usage

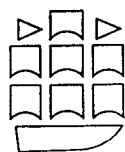
Sidney Greenbaum

Studies in English Adverbial Usage

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Preface

This book is a revised version of a thesis accepted by the University of London for the degree of Ph.D. and prepared at the Survey of English Usage during 1964-1967. The work was supported in part by a grant to the Survey of English Usage by H. M. Department of Education and Science. I am grateful to Professor Randolph Quirk as Director of the Survey for making available the Survey corpus and providing facilities for research, in particular facilities for experiments with informants. I am also deeply indebted to Professor Quirk in his personal capacity for his supervision of the research and for constant advice and practical assistance.

My research has gained immensely through being conducted in the congenial atmosphere of the Survey research room. From Jan Svartvik, whose last year at the Survey coincided with my first, I learned a great deal about methods of analysing a corpus. I have also benefited from discussions with other Survey colleagues: Valerie Adams, Caroline Bott, Judith Carvell, Henry Carvell, Derek Davy, Norman Fairclough, Joan Huddleston and Ruth Kempson. They all deserve my gratitude for willingly and patiently acting as informants. In addition, my thanks are due to Derek Davy for helping in the recording of material for experiments and in the administration of experiments, and to Valerie Adams, Norman Fairclough, and Joan Huddleston for their practical assistance in connection with the experiments. My work has also benefited from discussions with Eugene Winter on his research into clause connection. I owe a special debt to Geoffrey Leech, who gave a careful reading to a preliminary version of this study and commented extensively on it.

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University College London
July 1968

S.G.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 The scope of the study

This book is concerned with some of the functions of the 'Adjunct' in Contemporary English, that is, with some of the functions of those constituents of a clause that are not Subject, Verb, or Complement.¹

Various form-classes may be Adjunct:

- [1] the class of items traditionally termed 'adverbs', e.g.:

David plays chess *well*.

Here they fought their last battle.

David *frequently* gave William money.²

- [2] prepositional phrases, e.g.:

David plays chess *with great skill*.

On this hill they fought their last battle.

David gave William money *on many occasions*.

- [3] finite verb clauses, e.g.:

David plays chess *as his father taught him*.

¹ For an instance of the recent use of the term 'Adjunct' in this sense, see Hudson 1967. The term 'adjunct' for the function of adverbs may be found in the works of traditional grammarians such as Poutsma 1926, 29ff., 691ff., 1928, 320ff. and Kruisinga 1932a, 123.

² I have included among adverbs only items that are represented orthographically as single words. There are some marginal cases. For example, *nonetheless* is sometimes written as three separate words and sometimes, like *nevertheless*, as one word. A case could be made for including among adverbs constructions such as *of course* and *at all*, even though they are always spelt as two words, on the ground that they do not allow expansion. By contrast, *in fact* and *at least* would then have to be excluded, since they can be expanded to *in actual fact* and *at the very least*. Both in this respect and also in present spelling practice *in fact* may be contrasted with *indeed*.

They fought their last battle *where the college now stands*.

David gave William money *whenever he needed it*.

- [4] non-finite verb clauses, in which the verb is:

[i] *to*-infinitive, e.g.:

David plays chess *to please his father*.

[ii] *-ing* participle, e.g.:

Standing on this hill, they fought their last battle.

[iii] *-ed* participle, e.g.:

Whenever approached by him, David gave William money.

- [5] verbless clauses, e.g.:

David plays chess *when on holiday*.

Fearless, they fought their last battle.

Though indignant at his threats, David gave William money.

This book deals in particular with some of the functions of the Adjunct that are realised by adverbs.¹ The functions that have been isolated for detailed investigation are realised by adverbs that have been called by writers on English grammar 'sentence modifiers' or 'sentence adverbs'.² Many writers appear to include among these the adverbs that are felt to link sentences, such as *therefore* and *nevertheless*, but some treat linking adverbs as a separate class.³ Grammarians are not in general agreement on what to include among 'sentence modifiers' or 'sentence adverbs'. Moreover, they either fail to be precise about the criteria to be employed in assigning adverbs to this class or fail to provide any criteria.⁴

Since the terms 'sentence modifier' and 'sentence adverb' have been used imprecisely and in various ways, I shall not make use of them in this book. However, the adverbs on which I am concentrating would probably be designated as such or as linking adverbs by those who employ the terms, though many others would be included as well. I give

¹ Adverbs may, of course, have functions other than those of Adjunct. For example, an adverb may modify an adjective, as *surprisingly* in *His proposals had a surprisingly great effect*.

² For the term 'sentence modifier', see, for example, Sweet 1891, 125-7; Poutsma 1926, 692-3, 1928, 434-51; Francis 1958, 399, 403-4, 408; Strang 1962, 166-7; Jacobson 1964, 28-33, 48, 51. For the term 'sentence adverb', see Curme 1935, 73-4; H. Palmer 1939, 171, 179, 180; Zandvoort 1962, 204, 249-50. The term 'sentence adverbial' has been used by linguists who write within the framework of transformational grammar, cf. Katz and Postal 1964, 77; and Chomsky 1965, 102.

³ They are separately treated in Sweet 1891, 143-4 as 'half-conjunctions' and in Curme 1935, 74-5 as 'conjunctive adverbs'.

⁴ See Jacobson 1964, 29-32 for an account of some views on the 'division of adverbials into sentence-modifiers and word or word-group modifiers'. Jacobson finds it difficult to apply the criteria that have been proposed and decides against utilising the distinction consistently in his description and explanation of the position of adverbs.

some examples of adverbs with the functions that I shall be considering in detail in this book:

Strangely, he answered the questions.

Frankly, he is not very clever.

David *probably* plays chess.

He *wisely* refrained from smoking.

They enjoyed the film, *though*.

Moreover, they refused to reply to our letter.

He is *therefore* rather unhappy.

Still, he did not charge us for it.

Yet no one has heard of him.

Before we go any further two points need to be made clear. First, by the 'function' of an item I mean the sum of its syntactic features. Syntactic features comprise both those that are present for a particular item in the clause that is being considered and also those that are potential. Furthermore, potential features include both positive and negative features.¹ Some examples will help to make these distinctions clear.

In the sentence *David plays chess very well*, we observe as syntactic features of the adverb *well*:

[1] its ability to appear after the Complement.

[2] its ability to accept *very* as premodifier.

Positive potential features of *well* include:

[1] its ability to serve as response to an interrogative transformation of the sentence introduced by *How*: *How does David play chess?* (*Very*) *well*.

[2] its ability to be the focus of clause comparison with the correlatives as . . . as: *David plays chess as well as William does*.

Negative potential features include:

[1] its inability to be moved elsewhere in the sentence. By contrast, *usually*, for example, can occupy several positions: *Usually David plays chess*, *David usually plays chess*, and *David plays chess usually*.

[2] its inability to be the focus of *only* in initial position in respect of allowing Verb-Subject inversion: **Only well does David play chess*. In this respect it can be contrasted with, for example, *occasionally*. Thus, for *occasionally* in *David plays chess occasionally* we have *Only occasionally does David play chess*.

¹ Cf. Crystal 1967, 45 (note): 'There is no reason why carefully selected negative criteria could not be introduced into the definition of a word class, though these will usually be the corollary of positive criteria used for the definition of other classes.'

The second point I wish to make raises the difficulty of drawing a line between homonymy and polysemy. Homonyms are items that have the same written and spoken form but differ in meaning. *Bear* (denoting an animal species) and *bear* (signifying 'carry') are therefore homonyms, since there does not appear to be any connection between the two meanings. In contrast, *hand* (of a human being) and *hand* (of a clock) can be considered instances of polysemy or multiple meaning. We can see a semantic relationship between the two uses of *hand*, the meaning of *hand* of a clock being a metaphorical extension of the meaning of *hand* of a human being. For some purposes we are justified in regarding these as essentially the same lexical item. In many cases the semantic relationship is tenuous. For example, an etymological connection can be traced between *board* ('long thin piece of sawn timber') and *board* ('committee'), but for present-day speakers of English the two items are probably not connected in meaning. Finally, items may have a semantic affinity while differing syntactically. Thus, there is an obvious semantic affinity between the noun *hand* (of a human being) and the verb *hand* (meaning 'deliver by hand') although there is a syntactic difference between the two items.¹

Let us see how all this applies to the functions of adverbs. As one of the syntactic features of *well* in the sentence *David plays chess very well*, I have mentioned its inability to be moved elsewhere in the sentence. But let us look at these sentences:

- [1] *Well*, David may play chess.
- [2] David may *well* play chess.
- [3] David may play chess *well*.

For convenience, I shall assign to *well* in each of the sentences a corresponding subscript, so that I shall refer to *well*₁, *well*₂, and *well*₃. The three sentences do not, of course represent a contradiction of what I have just said about the immobility of *well*. The sentences exemplify three different functions. Each item is restricted in its particular function to a particular syntactic position. I shall mention a few of the features that distinguish these three occurrences of *well*:

[i] *Well*₁ and *well*₃ may accompany any form of the verb group, but this is not true for *well*₂. Thus, we can say *Well*, *David plays chess* and *David plays chess well*, but not **David well plays chess*. *Well*₂ collocates (i.e. co-occurs) obligatorily with certain auxiliaries. For the lexical verb *play* the auxiliaries are restricted to *may* and *might*.

[ii] *Well*₃ can serve as a response to an interrogative transformation

¹ For a recent discussion of homonymy and polysemy, see Waldron 1967, 47f., 63ff.