

8 Adjuncts

[Draft chapter to be added to the 2nd edition of *A Student's Introduction to English Grammar*.]

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Introduction

In this chapter we provide a brief overview of the kinds of optional modifying and embellishing constituents in clause structure that we call **adjuncts**.

One difficulty with attempting a comprehensive survey of all the kinds of adjuncts is that the boundary between adjuncts and complements is somewhat elusive. In the previous chapter we explained that complements are closely associated with heads that determine whether their presence is required or permitted, while adjuncts convey more loosely connected meaning modifications and are always optional. But we will note here that some constituents that can serve as adjuncts can also function as complements, while making a very similar semantic contribution.

A second difficulty is that the task of listing all the different kinds of modifications to the meaning of a clause there could be turns out to be almost unending. To a large extent the key differences between types of adjuncts lies in their meanings, which means that there is no clear limit to how many we can identify, because there is no clear limit to how fine-grained a semantic classification could be.

And a third problem is that the different kinds of adjuncts sometimes actually overlap: a single constituent can function as two different kinds of adjunct simultaneously. For example, we shall see below that a conditional adjunct or a reason adjunct can simultaneously be a speech-act adjunct.

This chapter therefore does not try to be comprehensive. It merely aims to identify some of the most central and important semantic types of adjunct, concentrating on cases where there are generalizations about their syntax, not merely fine differences in shades of meaning. We will classify adjuncts under these headings:

| | | | |
|-----|------|------------------------------|---|
| [1] | i | manner and means adjuncts | <i>He played his hand <u>foolishly</u>.</i> |
| | ii | act-related adjuncts | <i><u>Foolishly</u>, I opened the door.</i> |
| | iii | locational adjuncts | <i>Put it <u>near the window</u> now.</i> |
| | iv | temporal adjuncts | <i>Put it near the window <u>now</u>.</i> |
| | v | degree adjuncts | <i>It was <u>totally</u> unintelligible.</i> |
| | vi | adjuncts of cause and result | <i>It's there <u>to be used</u>.</i> |
| | vii | concessive adjuncts | <i>It's outside, although it doesn't get much sun.</i> |
| | viii | conditional adjuncts | <i>It'll do better <u>if it gets some sun</u>.</i> |
| | ix | domain adjuncts | <i><u>Artistically</u>, it was a real success.</i> |
| | x | modal adjuncts | <i><u>In all probability</u> you don't want to hear this.</i> |
| | xi | evaluative adjuncts | <i><u>Fortunately</u> no one was hurt.</i> |
| | xii | speech act-related adjuncts | <i><u>Frankly</u>, my dear, I don't give a damn.</i> |
| | xiii | connective adjuncts | <i>This, <u>however</u>, would turn out to be bad advice.</i> |

Degrees of integration

The order in which the types are listed in [1] corresponds very roughly to the typical degree of syntactic integration. That is, the types of adjunct shown earlier in the list, such as manner adjuncts, will generally be found to be more tightly integrated into the structure of the clause: they are less likely to be set off by commas or pauses. Those later in the list, like connective adjuncts, are considerably more likely to function as what we call **supplements**, and thus be flanked by commas in writing, and by slight pauses in speech.

Wh-words for adjuncts

At least five common adjunct types can be the basis for questions with an open range of answers, expressed with the specialized words *how*, *where*, *when*, and *why*:

| | | |
|-----|---|--|
| [2] | <i>how</i> for ways, manners, means, or instruments | <i><u>How</u> did you break it?</i> |
| | <i>how much</i> for degrees and extents | <i><u>How much</u> did it hurt?</i> |
| | <i>where</i> for locations in space | <i><u>Where</u> did the crime occur?</i> |
| | <i>when</i> for locations in time | <i><u>When</u> did all this happen?</i> |
| | <i>why</i> for certain purposes, reasons, or causes | <i><u>Why</u> did you do all this?</i> |

Manner, means, and instrument adjuncts

Manner adjuncts generally take the form of AdvPs or PPs. For PPs, heads like *in* or *by* or *with* are tightly integrated with the VP and semantically associated very clearly with the verb. The usual place for them is at or toward the end of the VP. It is relatively uncommon or even unacceptable to prepose them:

- [3]
- i *A choir of schoolchildren sang the national anthem enthusiastically.*
 - ii *[?]Enthusiastically a choir of schoolchildren sang the national anthem.*

Act-related adjuncts

Some adjuncts modify the whole act described by a clause, not the action or state identified by the verb. We call these **act-related** adjuncts.

[4] *Foolishly, I opened the door when I smelled smoke.*

What is foolish here is not the exact manner in which the door was opened. It's a fairly easy operation, and it's not clear what it would mean to do it in a foolish way. What's being identified as foolish is the act of opening a door behind which there may be a fire.

Act-related adjuncts may be positioned at the beginning of the clause, or between the subject and verb (I foolishly opened the door), or at the end of the clause, usually as a supplement (I opened the door, foolishly).

The reason [3ii] cannot be understood as act-related is that enthusiasm is inherently an attribute of activities or attitudes, but not of acts. So the clause-initial position of the adjunct just makes the sentence odd rather than forcing an act-related interpretation. Some adverbs, however, have a meaning that can easily be interpreted in either way:

- [5] i *They spoke rudely only to him, not to her.*
 ii *Rudely, they spoke only to him, not to her.*

The difference is that [5i] says that they spoke in a rude way (though only to the man); but [5ii] says something very different: that it was a rude act to limit their (possibly very polite) conversation to the man and ignore the woman.

Act-related adjuncts typically have the form of adverbs. Some of them have a specific semantic connection to the subject of the clause, expressing volition (some kind of deliberate act of will) on the part of whoever the subject refers to:

- [6] i *The mayor reluctantly preceded the marching band.* [reluctant mayor]
 ii *The marching band reluctantly followed the mayor.* [reluctant band]

For the mayor to precede the band is the same thing as for the band to follow the mayor, but [6i] and [6ii] do not have the same meaning.

Space and time

It is very common for sentences to contain adjuncts identifying spatiotemporal information: locations, directions, and sources or goals or paths of movement in either space or time.

- [7] i *They used to meet secretly in the library.* [location]
 ii *After a while they drifted off toward town.* [direction]
 iii *There was a strange sound coming from the boiler.* [source]
 iv *I'm going on a trip to Antarctica.* [goal]
 v *The rat ran right along the bottom of the fence.* [path]

- vi *The ship was almost out of sight.* [Adv modifier in PP]
vii *They shouted enough to wake the baby.* [AdvP modifier in VP]

Purpose, reason, and result

Events sometimes have purposes: I can do something with a view to making something else happen. They also sometimes have reasons: I can do something as a consequence of some earlier event or circumstance encouraging me or impelling me to do it. And events also have results: I can do something that causes something else to happen. There are adjuncts of various forms to express all three of these relations between events.

Purpose is usually expressed by means of either a PP or a finite or infinitival clause. The most common constructions are the ones shown in [13]. All are possible other ways of saying roughly the same thing.

- [13] i *Open the wine to let it breathe.* infinitival clause
ii *Open the wine in order to let it breathe.* PP: *in + order + infinitival clause*
iii *Open the wine in order that it can breathe.* PP: *in + order + finite clause*
iv *Open the wine so that it can breathe.* PP: *so + finite clause*
v *Open the wine so as to let it breathe.* PP: *so + as + infinitival clause*

The content of the subordinate clause is not entailed: Marcel may have opened the wine to let it breathe, but that does not imply that it did breathe (perhaps he fell backwards into the pool while still holding the bottle).

Reason is generally expressed with PPs headed by words like *because* or *since*, as in [14i–ii], or in formal style *as* or *for*, as in [14iii–iv].

- [14] i *I can't play, because I've got to work.*
ii *Since you're an expert, take a look at this.*
iii *As high winds are forecast, the road is closed.*
iv *Algernon wore black, for he was in mourning.*

Reason adjuncts differ from purpose adjuncts in that the content of a subordinate clause complement in the PP is entailed: if I say truthfully that I can't play because I've got to work, then it must be true that I've got to work.

Both purposes and reasons can be queried using the word *why*:

- [15] i *Why did you open the wine?* purpose is queried
ii *Why can't you play?* reason is queried

Result is expressed by PP adjuncts of the form *so + clause* or *with the result that + clause*:

- [16] i *He was very frail, so that operating on him was judged to be unsafe.*
ii *He dropped it, with the result that it stopped working.*

Unlike purpose adjuncts with *so that*, result adjuncts cannot be preposed to the beginning of the clause; they are limited to the end of the clause. Putting the underlined adjunct of [16i] at the beginning would force a very strange purpose meaning (that in order to get operating on him to be judged unsafe, he deliberately became frail).

Concessives

Conceding a point means acknowledging (typically with some reluctance) that it is correct. English uses PPs headed by the historically related prepositions *though* and *although* as adjuncts expressing concessions:

- [17] i *He went to school in Paris, though his French isn't particularly good.*
 ii *Although I disapproved, I decided not to say anything.*

Although and *though* are both prepositions taking clause complements, and are identical in meaning, but they differ syntactically in one respect: *although* is solely a preposition, whereas *though* also belongs to the adverb category. As an adverb, *though* can occur as a supplementary connective adjunct (see the last section of this chapter) at any of a number of points in an independent clause, giving it roughly the same meaning as a concessive adjunct added to a preceding clause. Thus the two-sentence sequences in [18i–ii] convey the same meaning as the single sentence in [18iii]:

- [18] i *He went to school in Paris. His French, though, isn't very good.* [Adv]
 ii *He went to school in Paris. His French isn't very good, though.* [Adv]
 iii *He went to school in Paris, though his French isn't very good.* [Prep]

Conditionals

A particularly important and frequent class of adjuncts express conditions under which the main part of the clause holds. The central word here is *if*.

- [19] i *If you break it, you own it.*
 ii *I wouldn't do that if I were you.*
 iii *If I had been there, perhaps I could have done something.*

We treat this *if* as a preposition (though traditional grammars call it a 'subordinating conjunction'). Other relevant prepositions heading conditional adjunct PPs, include *given*, *provided*, *unless*, and the somewhat archaic *lest*.

- [20] i *Given that you're so opposed to it, I don't see how you can be unbiased.*
 ii *I'll go along with it provided there's a get-out clause in the contract.*
 iii *Don't say that unless you mean it.*
 iv *He dared not show his face lest he be recognized.*

Conditional adjuncts can be freely positioned at the end or the beginning of the main clause, and may also interrupt it as a supplement:

- [21] *You could, if you wanted, get a bus all the way there.*

The prepositions that head conditional adjuncts can take reduced clauses or just predicative constituents rather than full clauses:

- [22] i *I would like, if possible, to get out of here tonight.*
 ii *We'll have to agree, given the alternative.*

Exhaustive conditionals

There is a special kind of adjunct, related to conditionals, that we call the **exhaustive conditional**. It involves either a clause beginning with a *wh*-word ending in *ever*, or one of a small number of adverbs (*independently, irrespective, regardless*) or one or two idiomatic phrases such as *no matter*.

We illustrate in [23]. The construction may be either governed as in [23i] and [23iii] or ungoverned as in [23ii] and [23iv], and it comes in a closed variety, seen in [23i] and [23ii], and an open variety, seen in [23iii] and [23iv].

- | | | | |
|------|-----|---|----------------------|
| [23] | i | <i>We'll go ahead regardless of <u>whether you turn up</u>.</i> | [closed, governed] |
| | ii | <i>We'll go ahead, <u>whether you turn up or not</u>.</i> | [closed, ungoverned] |
| | iii | <i>We'll go ahead regardless of <u>whatever people say</u>.</i> | [open, governed] |
| | iv | <i>We'll go ahead <u>no matter what people say</u>.</i> | [open, ungoverned] |

In all these cases, the underlined constituent has the syntactic and semantic properties of a conditional adjunct. Semantically, it expresses a condition that covers all possibilities, hence the term ‘exhaustive conditional’: *whether you turn up or not* in [23ii] has the same meaning contribution as “if you do turn up or if you do not turn up” – two conditions that together exhaust all the possible situations. And in [23iv], *no matter what people say* covers an open range of possible things people might think. Suppose we call them p_1, p_2 , etc. Then [23iv] states, in effect, “If people say p_1 we’ll go ahead, and if people say p_2 we’ll go ahead, and if people say p_3 we’ll go ahead...” – and so on for all the things people might say. Together, p_1, p_2 , etc. exhaust all the possible conditions, so [23iv] entails that we’ll go ahead under all possible conditions.

Exhaustive conditionals have some similarities to interrogative clauses: *whether you turn up* is a subordinate interrogative clause in *I don’t know whether you’ll turn up* (see Chapter 11). They also have some similarity to fused relatives (see Chapter 12) in that phrases like *whatever people say* with the meaning “any choice from among the things people may say” occur as NPs in sentences like *Whatever people say makes politicians nervous* (meaning “Anything that people say makes politicians nervous”). But their syntactic positions are those where conditional adjuncts occur: either initial (*Whether you turn up or not, we’ll go ahead*) or final (*We’ll go ahead whether you turn up or not*) or sometimes in the middle of a clause (*All of us, whether you turn up or not, will go ahead*).

Four other clause-modifying adjuncts

There are four other distinguishable kinds of adjunct that modify clauses, very often positioned at the beginning of the clause. They are referred to traditionally as ‘sentence adverbs’, but we don’t use that term, for two reasons: (i) they modify clauses rather than sentences, and (ii) they are not all adverbs (some are PPs or NPs). The four types are:

- **domain** adjuncts, which limit the domain within which the main part of the clause applies;
- **modal** adjuncts, which express modalities somewhat like the contributions of modal verbs;
- **evaluative** adjuncts, which apply a subjective evaluation to the main part of the clause; and
- **speech-act** adjuncts, which qualify the nature or intent of the act of uttering the sentence.

The differences between these abstract characterizations will be much easier to grasp in the light of some specific examples.

Domain adjuncts

Johnny B. Goode, in Chuck Berry’s song, ‘never ever learned to read or write so well,’ so it would be misleading to call him brilliant in every respect; and yet ‘he could play the guitar just

like ringing a bell.’ An adverb or PP adjunct can be used to limit a statement about his talent to the musical domain:

- [24] i *Musically, Johnny was brilliant.*
ii *As far as guitar-playing is concerned, Johnny was a genius.*

Semantically, adjuncts of this sort limit the domain within which the rest of the clause is to be understood. They mostly occur at the beginning of the clause they modify, though they can come at the end as an afterthought (*You have a strong case, legally*) and they can be internal in some kinds of clause (*It was in film rather than in literature that her true talent emerged*).

Modal adjuncts

Some adjuncts express modality, as introduced in Chapter 3 sec. 3.2, and determine ways in which the content of a clause holds in a situation relative to all other situations. These are called **modal** adjuncts. They may be in initial position, or between the subject and predicate, or at the end as an afterthought.

Modality expressions qualify the ways in which the main part of the content of a clause relates to the situations it talks about. The most basic and familiar modalities are necessity, where the main part of the clause expresses something said to hold in all relevant situations (adverbs like */necessarily/* and */certainly/* express this) and possibility, where it holds in at least some relevant situations (adverbs like */possibly/* and */maybe/* express this). Sometimes there are rough parallels between sentences with modal auxiliaries and sentences with modal adjuncts:

- | | | |
|------|--|---|
| [25] | WITH MODAL VERB | WITH MODAL ADJUNCT |
| | i <i>Darth <u>must</u> be Luke's father.</i> | <i>Darth is <u>obviously</u> Luke's father.</i> |
| | ii <i>It <u>could</u> be poisonous.</i> | <i><u>Maybe</u> it's poisonous.</i> |
| | iii <i>He <u>should</u> be there by now.</i> | <i>He's <u>probably</u> there by now.</i> |

There are many other items conveying modality of various strengths:

- | | | |
|------|--|--|
| [26] | i <i>It's <u>certainly</u> unfair.</i> | [unfairness is absolutely certain] |
| | ii <i>It is <u>presumably</u> unfair.</i> | [unfairness can be presumed] |
| | iii <i>It is <u>probably</u> unfair.</i> | [better than 50% chance of unfairness] |
| | iv <i>It is <u>conceivably</u> unfair.</i> | [non-zero chance of unfairness] |

Prescriptive grammar note

The adverb *hopefully* means “in a hopeful way” when it is a manner adjunct, and it is common with verbs of saying or looking: *‘Maybe it will all work out,’ she said hopefully.* But the word also has a use as a modal adjunct, meaning roughly “it is to be hoped that”: *Hopefully this means we don't have to be there.* The modal adjunct use is at least a century old, but around 1960 it started increasing significantly in frequency, which brought it attention, and denunciation, from various newspapers and prescriptive grammarians. The controversy was fairly short-lived: by the 1980s even quite conservative usage experts were conceding that the modal adjunct use was acceptable. The style authorities at the Associated Press organization cautiously waited twenty or thirty years more, but finally acknowledged the modal use in 2012. Some still disapprove of it, but there is no possible motivation. Their disapproval apparently serves as a cherished symbol of their concern for standards in general. Meanwhile it is the manner adjunct use that is now declining in frequency: in academic writing only about 3% of the occurrences of *hopefully* are manner adjuncts, and in spoken conversation the manner use is now very rare.

Evaluative adjuncts

Some adjuncts convey a subjective evaluation about the favourableness or unfavourableness of the situation described by the content of the clause:

- [27] i *Luckily for you, I've got another one.*
ii *Ironically, his favourite course was the one that he failed.*
iii *Happily we don't have to worry about that now.*
iv *Fortunately enough, companies were quick to notice this.*
v *Sadly, the reality has been quite the opposite.*
vi *Ominously, interest rates were on the rise.*

These always take scope over negation (*He's not, luckily, a vindictive man* means it's lucky he's not vindictive; it can't mean it's not lucky that he's vindictive). They don't occur in interrogatives, imperatives, or presupposed clauses (you can't add *luckily* to *Is he vindictive?*). When they occur in reports of what people said, the evaluation is attributed to the subject of the relevant clause (If I say *Susan told me that luckily she won't have to be at the meeting*, the evaluation of the situation as lucky is understood to be Susan's, not mine).

Speech-act adjuncts

In a climactic scene at the end of the famous film 'Gone With the Wind,' Rhett Butler is about to leave Scarlett O'Hara, who asks him what she will do if he goes. He answers with a line that is perhaps the most famous in any movie:

- [28] *Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn.*

The adjunct *frankly* definitely does not modify the verb *give* here; but neither does it modify the content of the *give* clause with a domain restriction, or a modality, or an evaluation. What it does instead is to offer a side comment on the character of the speech act of making the utterance in which it appears. Rhett is saying that in uttering this sentence he is speaking candidly. This is our fourth additional kind of adjunct: a speech-act adjunct.¹

A fair number of adverbs that can function as manner adjuncts modifying verbs of saying have alternate uses as speech-act adjuncts:

- | | | |
|------|---|--|
| [29] | MANNER ADJUNCT | SPEECH-ACT ADJUNCT |
| | i <i>He spoke <u>frankly</u> about his addiction.</i> | <i><u>Frankly</u>, he said very little about it.</i> |
| | ii <i>I'll speak <u>briefly</u> about the campaign.</i> | <i><u>Briefly</u>, my talk is about adjuncts.</i> |
| | iii <i>I hope we can talk <u>confidentially</u>.</i> | <i><u>Confidentially</u>, I'm also a candidate.</i> |

In a question, a speech-act adjunct can relate either to the question or to the answer: *Frankly, who cares?* suggests the speaker intends to be frank in asking that rhetorical question, but *Frankly, what do you think are our chances?* suggests the speaker wants the addressee to be frank in answering.

Some adjuncts of other types can also be interpreted as being partially oriented toward the speech act:

1 CGEL calls them 'speech act-related', but the standard rule for hyphenating compounds unfortunately makes this phrase look *act-related* modified by *speech*, when instead it is supposed to be a compound with *speech act* as its first element. So we shorten the term here.

- [30] i *I'm an income tax inspector, if you must know.*
 ii *Since you ask, I'm an income tax inspector.*

The constituent after the comma [30i] is a conditional adjunct, and [30ii] begins with a reason adjunct. But both adjuncts are interpreted in a way that refers to the speech act. In [30i] the condition restricts not what my profession is but what makes me agree to make an utterance admitting to it, and in [30ii] the *since* phrase isn't giving my reason for being a tax inspector, it's giving my reason for telling you.

Connective adjuncts

A final class of adjuncts to be considered is the class of **connective** adjuncts. These connect clauses together in terms of their semantic and information-packaging properties (see Chapter 16), making explicit certain links between them, such as whether they contrast with preceding sentences or can be inferred from them, and so on. They may be single words or multi-word phrases, and they may be AdvPs or PPs or NPs. A few common adverbs commonly used as connective adjuncts are listed in [www]. Several are much more likely to occur in writing than in speech.

- | | | | | |
|------|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| [31] | <i>also</i> | <i>alternatively</i> | <i>besides</i> | <i>conversely</i> |
| | <i>either</i> | <i>finally</i> | <i>firstly</i> | <i>however</i> |
| | <i>instead</i> | <i>meanwhile</i> | <i>moreover</i> | <i>rather</i> |
| | <i>secondly</i> | <i>similarly</i> | <i>thus</i> | <i>too</i> |

Many PPs function similarly: *by contrast, for example, for instance, in addition, in comparison, in conclusion, in other words, on the contrary, on the other hand, etc.*

Some adverbs can be used as connective adjuncts while simultaneously expressing meanings characteristic of other classes of adjuncts: concessive (*nevertheless, nonetheless, still, though, yet*), conditional (*anyway, otherwise, then*), reason (*accordingly, consequently, hence, therefore*), or result (*so, thus*).