

Lesson 8

Adverbials – grammatical functions

In terms of their grammatical functions, adverbials fall into 4 main categories:

adjuncts subjuncts disjuncts conjuncts

Please remember:

POSITION influences FUNCTION!!! POSITION is important to indicate MEANING!!!

Compare:

I didn't know her personally. = adjunct (adverbial of manner)

He personally wants to see you. = subjunct

Personally, I think it's nonsense. = disjunct (style disjunct)

Please, explain this problem simply. = adjunct (adverbial of manner)

You're simply the best. / Please, simply explain this problem. = subjunct

Simply, I can't stand him. = disjunct (style disjunct)

ADJUNCTS

- clause element = adverbial (A), mostly of space, time, manner (e.g. *I put it carelessly / on the bed / yesterday.* – *carelessly* = adverbial of manner; *on the bed* = adverbial of space; *yesterday* = adverbial of time)

- more than other adverbials, adjuncts have grammatical properties resembling the sentence elements S, C, and O, i.e., only adverbials functioning as an element of clause structure (represented as A) are adjuncts => *clearly* is an adjunct in the first sentence below, but not in the second:

*He spoke **clearly** and to the point.*

***Clearly**, I could be wrong.*

- generally come in E position; typically occur in SVA and SVOA clause types (thus, they usually refer to space, time, or manner – see above); however, other positions are also possible, e.g. frequency adjuncts usually come in M position – *They **usually** come on time.*

Adjuncts are sometimes divided on more functional grounds into **predication** and **sentence** adjuncts:

Sentence adjunct: an adjunct that is not structurally essential and relates to the sentence as a whole. Sentence adjuncts are more marginal than predication adjuncts, are optional, and can come in I position (as well as E position):

In Oxford, you can visit the colleges. (sentence adjunct)

Predication adjunct: usually obligatory, normally comes in E position. An adjunct applying to the predication (the post-operator section):

She lives in Oxford. (predication adjunct, obligatory here)

Predication adjuncts can be either **obligatory** or **optional**:

She put the letter on the kitchen table. – obligatory

She found the letter on the kitchen table. – optional (You can only say: *She found the letter.* – the sentence is grammatically correct even without the adjunct)

In many cases, it is convenient to see **predication adjuncts** as ‘**object-related**’ and **sentence adjuncts** as ‘**subject-related**’:

We foresaw a disaster in June. = predication adjunct relating to the date of the disaster, which is an object in this sentence

In June, we foresaw a disaster. = sentence adjunct relating to the subject and therefore to the time of the foreseeing

John kissed his mother on the cheek. (1) = predication adjunct, normally in E position

John kissed his mother on the platform. (2) = sentence adjunct, movement to I position possible:

On the platform, John kissed his mother. – the movement to I position demonstrates the relatively ‘peripheral’ relationship of sentence adjuncts to the rest of the sentence as compared with the relatively ‘central’ relationship of the predication adjunct in (1).

In both sentences above the adjunct is optional as we can utter *John kissed his mother.* without having to add an adjunct.

SUBJUNCTS

- have a subordinate and parenthetical role in comparison with adjuncts, cannot be compared to other clause elements

- usually related to the predication or to its part only (not to the whole sentence)

- largely appear at iM and M position

- *emphasizers: just, really, simply, certainly, indeed, sure(ly), certainly not*

- *intensifiers: fully, completely, badly, rather, sort of, only, in the least*

- *focusing: merely, only, also, even, too, as well*

E.g. *I just / simply / really can't believe a word he says!*

She was badly in need of help.

He has completely ignored my question.

In spite of his manners, I rather like him.

I was only joking.

- they can frequently occur as responses, e.g. *(Yes) certainly. Sure(ly). (Yes) indeed.*

DISJUNCTS

- have a superior role to sentence elements, being somewhat detached from and superordinate to the rest of the sentence.

- most disjuncts appear at I position (some of them also often at M position)

- two broad types:

a) style disjuncts (relatively small class) – how the speaker is speaking; they claim that the statement is being made in a particular way, e.g.: *honestly, frankly, to be frank, crudely, truthfully, (to put it) briefly, generally, literally, (speaking) personally, strictly, privately, ...*

- !!! many style disjuncts can be seen as abbreviated clauses in which the adverbial would have the role of manner adjunct: e.g. *frankly = I tell you frankly*

b) content disjuncts – comment on the content of an utterance; express the speaker's or writer's attitude to the content of an utterance: *undoubtedly, apparently, perhaps, in essence, certainly, foolishly, quite rightly, justly, stupidly, cunningly, correctly, naturally, curiously, funnily (enough), strangely, unexpectedly, predictably, understandably, disturbingly, pleasingly, regrettably, fortunately, happily, luckily, sadly, amusingly, hopefully, significantly, to my regret, to my surprise, what is especially fortunate, ...*

CONJUNCTS

- they connect two parts of a sentence, or even two sentences, by expressing a meaning (semantic) relationship between them; sometimes also called **connectors**

- appear usually at I position, but their connective role is often achieved more smoothly when they are placed at M position

- they have a variety of meanings, e.g.:

listing: *in the first place, secondly, thirdly, next, then, finally, ...*

summative: *to sum up, in sum, altogether, overall, ...*

resultive: *as a result, therefore, accordingly, in consequence, of course, ...*

concessive: *however, nevertheless, yet, all the same, though (used at E), ...*

contrastive: *on the contrary, by contrast, on the other hand, ...*

Compare:

*We were at school together. I haven't seen him for ages, **though**.* = conjunct

X

*He hasn't phoned, **though** he said he would.* = conjunction

References:

Greenbaum, S. and R. Quirk (1990) *A Student's Grammar of the English Language*. Harlow: Longman. (Chapter 8, Sections 8.12-8.45 = pp. 162-187)

Chalker, S. (1992) *A Student's English Grammar. Workbook*. Harlow: Longman. (Exercises 81-84)