Speech–act adverbs as manner adverbs

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1 Introduction

In the generative tradition, Jackendoff (1972, chap. 3) is one of the first to argue explicitly for a non-transformational account of adverbs. He distinguished several classes of adverbs, one of which is *speaker-oriented adverbs*:

(1) a. happily, unfortunately, evidently, probably, frankly, truthfully

  b. $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Truthfully(,)} \\ \text{Frankly(,)} \end{array} \right\}$ John lied to Bill.   (Jackendoff's (3.47))

Speaker-oriented adverbs appear most naturally in sentence-initial position and are followed by a slight intonational break.

Bellert (1977) argues that Jackendoff's class of speaker-oriented adverbs actually includes five distinct subclasses, among which are *evaluative adverbs*, *modal adverbs*, and *pragmatic adverbs*. With respect to (1a), she would consider *happily* and *unfortunately* to be evaluative adverbs, *evidently* and *probably* to be modal adverbs, and *frankly* and *truthfully* to be pragmatic adverbs. She analyzes the class of pragmatic adverbs in turn as consisting of two further subclasses:

(2) a. frankly, sincerely, honestly, truthfully, etc.
  b. briefly, precisely, roughly, approximately, etc.

(3) a. Sincerely, I apologize for being so rude.   (Bellert's (55))
  b. Briefly, I promise you to finish my work today.   (Bellert's (56))

In another, more descriptive tradition, Greenbaum 1969, chap. 4 takes Bellert's pragmatic adverbs as corresponding to what he calls *style disjuncts*,[1] for which Leech 1974, p. 356 proposes the more transparent name *speech-act adverbials*. I

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[1]Greenbaum (p. 93) also clearly recognizes the two subclasses identified by Bellert in (2). Curiously, neither Jackendoff nor Bellert seems to be aware of Greenbaum's work.

will basically adopt Leech's term but will speak rather of *speech-act adverbs* for this class. Since it is useful to have names for Bellert's two subclasses in (2) as well, I propose *content-oriented speech-act adverbs* for those in (2a) and *form-oriented speech-act adverbs* for those in (2b). Two further illustrations of each subclass are in (4) and (5), respectively:

(4) a. Frankly, Facebook is overrated.   (content-oriented)
     b. Honestly, Amazon doesn't pay many taxes.

(5) a. Briefly, Chomsky's analysis doesn't work.   (form-oriented)
     b. Roughly, these two smartphones cost the same.

At the same time, the difference these two subclasses may not be particularly sharp.

2   Three properties

There are at least three properties that an analysis of speech–act adverbs should account for.

The first property is that sentences with a speech–act adverb are performative and not constative. For example, a hearer could not object to a speaker's utterance of (4a) as a whole by saying "No, that's not true" – this objection could only be understood as applying to the (unmodified) proposition that Facebook is overrated.

The second property is that speech–act adverbs are "factive" in the sense that if a speaker utters a sentence containing a speech–act adverb together with a declarative clause, it follows that the speaker is taken to assert the proposition expressed by the corresponding unmodified clause. Thus, for example, if Rebecca utters (4a), it follows that she is taken to assert that Facebook is overrated, which is why a hearer may object to this proposition (cf. the first property).[2]

Observe that since speech–act adverbs may also appear in interrogative sentences, the "factivity" just described doesn't always concern declaratives:

(6) a. Frankly, is Facebook overrated?
     b. Briefly, does Chomsky's analysis work?

Nevertheless, an analogous effect holds: if, for instance, Rebecca utters (6a), it follows that she is taken to ask whether Facebook is overrated, thus a yes/no–answer will apply to the question expressed by the unmodified interrogative clause.

Finally, the third property is that speech–act adverbs appear to create opaque contexts:

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[2]Factivity is usually defined as a relation between propositions (such that the truth of one proposition entails the truth of another), but this notion may be less appropriate in the case of speech–act adverbs, because a sentence with a speech–act adverb and a declarative clause may not have a truth value in the same way that an ordinary declarative sentence has a truth value. My formulation in the text is simply meant to be cautious in this respect.

(7) a. Frankly, everyone likes Juliette.
    b. Juliette = the spy
    c. $\not\to$ Frankly, everyone likes the spy.

For example, if Rebecca utters (7a) and is even aware that (7b) is the case, she would not necessarily be willing to utter (7c).

3 Previous approaches

To my knowledge, there are relatively few approaches to speech-act adverbs per se (as opposed to evaluative or modal adverbs).[3] Jackendoff (1972) proposes a single "projection rule" for speaker-oriented adverbs, which basically treats them as modifiers of propositions, but this proposal is not specific enough to say how speech-act adverbs differ from evaluative and modal adverbs.

Bellert (1977, p. 349) recognizes that speech-act adverbs (her pragmatic adverbs) occur in performative sentences, adding that they are the only adverbs "that are strictly speaking speaker-oriented, for one of the arguments is the speaker." According to her, in the case of content-oriented speech-act adverbs (see (2a)), the speaker expresses an attitude towards the content, whereas in the case of form-oriented speech-act adverbs (see (2b)), the speaker says something about the way in which the proposition is expressed. She claims that content-oriented speech-act adverbs are predicates with two arguments, the speaker and a proposition, whereas form-oriented speech-act adverbs are predicates with the speaker and the form of the sentence as arguments. Although these suggestions are promising, she does not develop her analysis further.

Greenbaum (1969, chap. 4) observes that speech-act adverbs (his style disjuncts) have revealing paraphrases or "correspondences." For example, he notes (p. 83) that the sentence in (8) has the correspondences in (9).

(8) Frankly, she isn't very stupid.

(9) a. If I may be frank, [I would say (that)] she isn't very stupid.
    b. To be frank, [I would say (that)] she isn't very stupid.

To the two correspondences in (9), we can quickly add two more:

(10) a. Frankly speaking, she isn't very stupid.
     b. I say (to you) frankly that she isn't very stupid.

Greenbaum considers correspondences to be suggestive of how an adverb may be analyzed in deep structure, but at the same time, he seems rather non-committal about the theoretical details.

The influential but controversial performative analysis of Ross (1970), according to which overtly nonperformative declarative sentences are viewed as having a

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[3]For example, although Ernst's (2009) paper is entitled "Speaker-oriented adverbs," it is really about evaluative and modal adverbs.

superordinate performative clause (e.g. *I tell you S*) in their deep structures, serves as the main inspiration for Schreiber (1972), who proposes to syntactically derive speech-act adverbs (he speaks of style disjuncts, following Greenbaum) from manner adverbs that modify the superordinate performative verb. He calls this view the *permanner analysis* of speech-act adverbs. For example, according to this analysis, the sentence in (11a) is derived from the one in (11b) via a slightly modified version of Ross's transformation of Performative Deletion, which essentially deletes the string *I tell you*.

(11)   a.   Frankly, Merlin is a genius.   (Schreiber's (1a))
         b.   I tell you frankly that Merlin is a genius.   (Schreiber's (2a))

Schreiber also attempts to extend the permanner analysis to interrogatives and imperatives (insofar as the latter are acceptable with speech-act adverbs).

Schreiber's idea is that speech-act adverbs are manner adverbs – indeed, there is no difference between speech-act adverbs and their corresponding manner adverbs, for the former are identical to the latter. But this view can be maintained only if the performative analysis can be maintained, and yet the performative analysis is highly suspect from the vantage point of 2013 and in fact was already suspect by the late 70s, as witnessed by Mittwoch (1977) and Bach and Harnish (1979, chap. 10.3). Nevertheless, even if Schreiber's permanner analysis is no longer viable, his intuition that speech-act adverbs are manner adverbs remains valuable.

Ernst (2002, chap. 2.4.2) attempts to update the permanner analysis, suggesting that Comp contains a covert verb *E roughly meaning 'express' which is modified by the speech-act adverb. For example, according to Ernst, the sentence in (12a) receives the formal analysis in (12b), which has the informal paraphrase in (12c). (P_1 corresponds to the unmodified proposition 'You shouldn't speak to Annette'.)

(12)   a.   Frankly, you shouldn't speak to Annette.   (Ernst's (2.94))
         b. $[_E {}^*E(e) \mathbin{\&} \mathrm{Agt}(e, I) \mathbin{\&} \mathrm{Th}(e, P_1)] \mathbin{\&} \mathrm{FRANK}(e^*, \mathrm{Agent})$ (Ernst's (2.95))
         c.   I say that you shouldn't speak to Annette, and I say this frankly (i.e., this shows notable frankness on my part as compared to other attitudes I could have had in saying it).   (Ernst's (2.96))

As far as the formal development is concerned, Ernst's analysis leaves something to be desired, for it is not really clear how meanings such as the one represented in (12b) are compositionally derived. He alludes (p. 70) to a speech-act operator that introduces *E in Comp, but this operator is not represented. Moreover, it is not clear how e^* relates to e, which is the saying event. Finally, it is not evident how the formal analysis reflects the informal paraphrase concerning a comparison with other attitudes that the agent could have had, but then the real motivation for including such a comparison in the semantics of *frankly* and other speech-act adverbs is not apparent to begin with. These critical remarks aside and abstracting from differences in detail, Ernst may be seen as basically following Schreiber in taking speech-act adverbs to modify a covert higher performative verb.

Leech (1974, pp. 356–360) may be the first to say explicitly that speech-act adverbs are semantically (but not syntactically) derived from their manner adverb

counterparts. In this connection, he discusses and rejects the performative analysis, arguing that the relation between speech-act adverbs and their corresponding manner adverbs is semantic and not syntactic. He implements (p. 358) his analysis using a (from the present perspective somewhat unconventional) "lexical rule" defined on "predications" which would derive, for example, the speech act adverbs in (13) from the corresponding manner adverbs in (14), ensuring that the derived speech-act adverbs modify an implicit predicate 'tell'.

(13)   a.   Frankly, I was appalled.
       b.   Briefly, his domestic policy is a failure.

(14)   a.   I tell you frankly that I was appalled.
       b.   I tell you briefly that his domestic policy is a failure.

While the idea behind Leech's proposal is clear enough (speech-act adverbs are semantically derived from manner adverbs), instead of attempting to derive speech-act adverbs from manner adverbs, it may be more straightforward to simply regard speech-act adverbs as manner adverbs in their own right, which is the strategy that I pursue below.

Bach and Harnish (1979, chap. 10.3) propose an original approach to speech-act adverbs (which are among what they call *illocutionary adverbials*), according to which sentences such as the following are strictly speaking ungrammatical but nonetheless *useable*:

(15)   a.   Frankly, you bore me.   (Bach and Harnish's (30), p. 219)
       b.   Truthfully, you lied to me.   (Bach and Harnish's (38), p. 221)

Their idea is that *frankly* and *truthfully* in (15) are simply preposed ordinary manner adverbs but since manner adverbs cannot be syntactically preposed, such sentences are ungrammatical. Semantically, there is also nothing in these sentences for the preposed manner adverb to modify, which has the consequence that such sentences lack literal meanings. This triggers an attempt by a hearer (who presumes that the speaker is sincere) to find a suitable nonliteral meaning intended by the speaker, which would plausibly be "I tell you truthfully that you lied to me" in the case of (15b). As Bach and Harnish (p. 224) put it, "[T]he locus of explnation is not in the grammar but in the social psychology of the situation."

Bach and Harnish concede (p. 225) that their proposal is controversial – indeed, a proper evaluation would require an understanding of their overall framework. Even so, as intriguing as I find their account, it is difficult to accept their claim that sentences with a speech-act adverb are ungrammatical, which does not accord well with intuitions about (un)grammaticality, even if such intuitions are always completely reliable. But if, contrary to their claim, sentences with a speech-act adverb are grammatical after all, then it is reasonable to think that grammar plays a role in the matter (even if a much smaller role than the performative analysis would have us believe) and that speech-act adverbs are special-use manner adverbs instead of ordinary manner adverbs that are forced into a special use by sincere speakers who are inclined to utter ungrammatical sentences for the sake of brevity.

Potts (2005, chap. 4.7.3) views speech-act adverbs as having conventional implicatures and treats them as modifiers of a predicate **utter**, which is a two-place relation between individuals and sentences. For example, according to him (p. 149), the meaning of *Frankly, Ed fled* has the asserted content that Ed fled and the conventional implicature that the speaker utters this sentence frankly. In his formal approach, asserted content and conventional implicatures are separated into two "dimensions," which allows each meaning component to be independently manipulated.

It is admittedly not Potts's concern to say how speech-act adverbs are related to the corresponding manner adverbs, but it is also not evident how they are related in his approach, for manner adverbs presumably contribute to asserted content, unlike what he claims for speech-act adverbs. He also leaves implicit how the modified predicate **frankly(utter)** differs semantically from **utter**. In this connection, a subtle question is whether it is really the *utterance act* that is modified by a speech-act adverb (as Potts would have it) or rather the *locutionary act*, which seems to be the main intuition of previous authors, as witnessed by the frequent paraphrases with *tell* (or, for that matter, even the *illocutionary act*). Utterance acts are very close to the "bare metal," as it were, and it is arguably difficult to think of the meaning of *frankly* or *truthfully* as modifying the utterence of a sentence (a linguistic expression) with no reference to the meaning of the sentence uttered (the content of what is uttered). Finally, Potts's technical implementation has the consequence (p. 149) that speech-acts adverbs are not part either syntactically or semantically of the sentences that they modify, which he finds desirable, but which may be less-than-desirable if it turns out that speech-act adverbs do not modify utterance acts after all.

4 Manners of speaking

The leading idea of the present conception is that there are individual *manners* of speaking and that speech-act adverbs make reference to these.[4] Accordingly, we begin with speaking events, which may be more precisely viewed as "saying events" e that have an agent x, a recipient y, and a proposition p communicated:

(16)　$\lambda p \lambda y \lambda x \lambda e.\textbf{say}(e, p) \wedge \textbf{agent}(e, x) \wedge \textbf{recipient}(e, y)$
　　　　'x says p to y in e'

In fact, the predicate in (16) may be used as an analysis of *say*. For example, the sentence in (17a) may be analyzed (ignoring tense) as corresponding to the event predicate in (17b) with an existentially quantified recipient. (The predicate **overrated** is taken to have a state argument, but nothing crucially depends on this.)

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[4]For some background on the present approach to manner adverbs and manners, see Piñón (2007).

(17) a. Rebecca said that Facebook is overrated.
  b. Event predicate for (17a):
    $\lambda e.\exists y(\textbf{say}(e, \exists s(\textbf{overrated}(s, \textbf{facebook}))) \wedge \textbf{agent}(e, \textbf{rebecca}) \wedge$
    $\textbf{recipient}(e, y))$

Evidently, the sentence in (17a) includes a constative use of *say*.

Consider now the ordinary manner adverb *frankly* (*frankly$_m$*), which can modify a verb of saying:

(18) Rebecca said frankly that Facebook is overrated.

The intuition is that the way in which Rebecca said that Facebook is overrated was frank. The "way" in this case is her choice of expression, which may be considered a manner of speaking. Individual manners may be analyzed as the outputs of functions that apply to events. In the case of 'expression', we postulate a function (of type $\langle e, e \rangle$) from events to manners:

(19) **expression**(e) 'the expression-manner of e'

Many events do not have expression-manners, but saying events do:

(20) $\forall e(\exists p(\textbf{say}(e, p)) \rightarrow \exists m(m = \textbf{expression}(e)))$
    'an expression-manner is the expression-manner of a saying event'

Naturally, saying events have other manners as well, such as rate and intensity.

Manners may have *projections.* A projection of a manner may be thought of as a "static correlate" of the manner. In the case of an expression-manner, the projection is the linguistic expression (typically, a sentence) whose content is the proposition said. (In (21), r is a variable for linguistic expressions.)

(21) $\forall p \forall m(\exists e(\textbf{say}(e, p) \wedge \textbf{expression}(e) = m) \rightarrow$
    $\exists r(\textbf{projection}(m) = r \wedge \textbf{content}(r) = p))$
    'the expression-manner of a saying event has a projection that is a linguistic expression whose content is the proposition said'

The lexical core of *frankly$_m$* may be treated as a predicate of expression-manners:

(22) frankly$_m \rightsquigarrow \lambda P \lambda e.P(e) \wedge \textbf{frank}(\textbf{expression}(e))$

Applying *frankly$_m$* to the event predicate in (17b), we obtain the following event predicate for (18) (again, ignoring tense):

(23) Event predicate for (18):
    $\lambda e.\exists y(\textbf{say}(e, \exists s(\textbf{overrated}(s, \textbf{facebook}))) \wedge \textbf{agent}(e, \textbf{rebecca}) \wedge$
    $\textbf{recipient}(e, y)) \wedge \textbf{frank}(\textbf{expression}(e))$

To paraphrase, the events in which Rebecca says that Facebook is overrated have a frank expression.

Turning to the speech–act adverb *frankly* (*frankly$_s$*), the proposal is that its meaning implicitly introduces the utterance of a context C, the speaker and the hearer of C, identifies the utterance with a saying event e that includes the present time (designated by **now**), identifies the speaker and the hearer with the agent x and the recipient y, respectively, of e, and requires the expression of e to be frank:

(24) frankly$_s$ $\rightsquigarrow$
$$\lambda p.\textbf{utterance}(C) = e \wedge \textbf{speaker}(C) = x \wedge \textbf{hearer}(C) = y \wedge$$
$$\textbf{say}(e, p) \wedge \textbf{now} \subseteq \tau(e) \wedge \textbf{agent}(e, x) \wedge \textbf{recipient}(e, y) \wedge$$
$$\textbf{frank}(\textbf{expression}(e)))$$

Observe that the result of applying the meaning of *frankly$_s$* to a proposition p is a propositional function for a context C, whose value determines the utterance, the speaker, and the hearer of C, which in turn determine the values of the saying event e, the agent x, and the recipient y.

Recall the example in (4a), repeated here as (25a), which receives the analysis in (25c) via the application of the meaning of *frankly$_s$* to the proposition in (25b).

(25) a. Frankly, Facebook is overrated.   (= (4a))
      b. Facebook is overrated $\rightsquigarrow \exists s(\textbf{overrated}(s, \textbf{facebook}))$
      c. (25a) $\rightsquigarrow$
$$\textbf{utterance}(C) = e \wedge \textbf{speaker}(C) = x \wedge \textbf{hearer}(C) = y \wedge$$
$$\textbf{say}(e, \exists s(\textbf{overrated}(s, \textbf{facebook})) \wedge \textbf{now} \subseteq \tau(e) \wedge \textbf{agent}(e, x) \wedge$$
$$\textbf{recipient}(e, y) \wedge \textbf{frank}(\textbf{expression}(e)))$$

Note, crucially, that the meaning of (25a) as given in (25c) self–describes the utterance of the context C as a saying event, which is the source of its performative character.[5] This contrasts with the meaning of (18), whose event predicate is given in (23), which describes saying events but which does not self–describe the utterance as a saying event.

It is possible (if stylistically awkward) for both *frankly$_m$* and *frankly$_s$* to appear in a single sentence:

(26) Frankly$_s$, Rebecca said frankly$_m$ that Facebook is overrated.

In the present approach, the analysis of this sentence describes the utterance of the context C as a saying event with the speaker and hearer as the agent and recipient, respectively, also reports about a saying event with Rebecca as the agent, and qualifies the expression of both of these saying events as frank.

In sum, although the focus here has been on *frankly*, the claim is that speech–act adverbs are usefully analyzed as manner adverbs, but with the difference that they qualify the expression–manner of an implicit saying event that is identified with

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[5]To quote Bach and Harnish (1979, p. 203): "To utter a performative sentence is to do what one is stating one is doing; indeed, that is what makes the statement true." See also Condoravdi and Lauer (2011) for the notion of a performative as a self–verifying assertion.

the utterance of the context. It remains to look more closely at the whole range of speech–act adverbs to determine whether they can all be treated in this way.

Of the previous approaches reviewed in section 3, the present account is probably closest in spirit to Leech's in spite of the many differences in implementation. Most importantly, though, unlike in Leech's approach, there is no attempt here to derive speech–act adverbs from manner adverbs. Rather, speech–act adverbs simply are special-use manner adverbs.

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