

Sentential adverb *frankly* as modifier of a deleted speech verb

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1. The question

- In (1a) *frankly* is related to the low-VP; in (1b) *frankly* modifies the following sentence (IP):
 - (1) a. I spoke *frankly* in the court. [→ *frankly* as VP-Adv]
b. *Frankly*, I didn't like the movie. [→ *frankly* as S(entential)-Adv]
- In both VP-Adv and S-Adv, *frankly* has the same meaning, i.e., it is one and the same lexical unit in both cases.
- How can one and the same lexical unit modify two different kinds of syntactic units, namely, VP and IP?

2. The proposal

- Background from Pragmatics (“Theory of Relevance”): “Illocutionary adverbs [...] are understood as modifying an *implicit illocutionary verb*” (IFANTIDOU-TROUKI 1993: 194, italics are mine.)
- Main structural claim: *frankly* is always related to a verb, in both VP-Adv and S-Adv uses. In consequence, S-Advs of the type of *frankly* are better described as clauses in which the verb (in gerundive form) has been deleted.
- Two differences between those two uses: (1) different hosts: VP or vP for VP-Adv and IP or TP for S-Adv, and (2) in VP-Adv, the verb appears inflected and is not omissible, while in S-Adv the verb appears in a non-inflected form, and can be—and usually is—*deleted* in PF.

3. *frankly* as S-Adv

- The highest class of sentential adverbials in Cinque’s Universal Hierarchy (CINQUE 1999) is illustrated with *frankly*.
- This class of adverbs has been labeled as “pragmatic adverbs”, “illocutionary adverbs” or “speech act adverbs.”¹ They are related to the attitude of some participant in the dialogue,

¹ Other adverbs of this class could be honestly, *truthfully*, *sincerely*, etc. There are, however, some differences between them. For instance *frankly* and *honestly* have different combinatorial possibilities: *John has always acted honestly* vs. ?*John has always acted frankly*. I propose that *frankly* is exclusively—or at least primarily—related to speech verbs.

usually the speaker, towards his/her own utterances.² JACKENDOFF (1972): This class belongs to the group of “Speaker Oriented Adverbs” (SOA).

- Main observation: sentences (2a) and (2b) have exactly the same interpretation:

- (2) a. *Frankly*, my dear, I don't give a damn.
b. *Frankly speaking*, my dear, I don't give a damn.

4. The Gerundive Clause (GC)

- Following ZAGONA 2002, *frankly speaking* is a gerundive clause (GC).
- A GC contains a VP:

- (3) [GC [VP Frankly speak] -ing], IP

- When deletion of *speaking* applies, only *frankly* is spelled-out in PF. This adverb still modifies a verb in LF:

- (4) [GC [VP Frankly ~~speak~~ -ing], IP

5. Constraints on the deletion of speech verbs in GCs

- A basic pragmatic presupposition: every sentence is necessarily produced by one speaker, who is the source of speech.³
- *Frankly* is clearly felicitous only as a modifier of a speech verb (SV). This close relation between *frankly* and the SV makes possible to recover the meaning of the latter via the former. Only if this is the case, deletion may apply. See the ungrammaticality of (5), where the adverb is related to the non-speech verb *reacting*:

(5) a. ? John reacted to her new book *frankly*.
b. ? *Frankly reacting*, her new book is boring.
c. * *Frankly reacting*, her new book is boring.⁴
- The “orientation to the speaker” of the adverb in the sense of JACKENDOFF (1972) is also necessary for the deletion to apply. In (6a), the Manner Adverb *loudly* is related to the verb *spoke*, but the fronting (6b) and the deletion (6c) of the verb are ungrammatical:

² KOVACCI (1999: 765) illustrates the case when the Spanish sentential adverb like *francamente* ‘frankly’ may be used as referred to the attitude of the hearer: *Francamente, ¿te vas a la Polinesia?* ‘Frankly, are you going to Polynesia?’ In the most common case, the person who posits the question tries to induce sincerity in the hearer.

³ The special pragmatic status of speech verbs, which allows their eventual deletion, is also visible in some kind of peripheral conditionals, in the sense of HAGEMAN (2003), for example: *If I don't see you before you leave campus, have a wonderful holiday break.* The right interpretation of this conditional necessarily involves an implicit speech verb: ‘If [= In case] I don't see you before you leave campus, [I say this now], have a wonderful holiday break.’

⁴ With the meaning of *reacting* intended

- (6) a. John spoke *loudly*.
 b. * *Loudly speaking*, her new book is boring.
 c. * *Loudly speaking*, her new book is boring.

- Pragmatically, the S-Adv *frankly* is an explicit statement made by the speaker about the truth of his own speech. In that sense, only “positive” adverbs are allowed as S-Adv. For instance, the adverb *untruthfully*—antonymous of *frankly*— can appear grammatically as VP-Adv (7), but would be infelicitous as S-Adv (8):

(7) I spoke *untruthfully* in the court.

- (8) a. # *Untruthfully speaking*, her new book is boring.
 b. # *Untruthfully speaking*, her new book is boring.

- These S-Adv. are associated with the emotive function of language, “The so-called EMOTIVE or “expressive” function, focused on the addresser, aims a direct expression of the speaker’s attitude toward what he is speaking about.” (JAKOBSON 1960: 350). Thus these S-Adv. are not felicitous with generic universal sentences (see example from KOVACCI for Spanish adverb *francamente* ‘frankly’ in (9)), but are compatible instead with exclamations (10):

(9) #*Francamente*, los elefantes son herbívoros.
 #‘*Frankly*, [the] elephants are herbivorous.’ (KOVACCI 1999: 765)

(10) ✓ *Frankly*, what a waste of time!

6. Possible extensions of the proposal

- Seriously* is also a SOA, since it expresses an evaluation of the attitude of one participant in the dialogue with respect to the seriousness of his/her own statements.⁵ It can appear as S-Adv, as in (11a,b,d), or as a VP-Adv, as in (11c):

- (11) a. *Seriously*, your argument is fallacious. (IFANTIDOU-TROUKI 1993:194)
 b. *Seriously speaking*, your argument is fallacious.
 c. John works *seriously*.
 d. *Seriously studying*, John approved his courses.

- A comparison between (11a) and (11b) reveals that both sentences have the same interpretation and are also constructed around a SV. Hence, it is possible to extend the analysis presented in previous sections:

⁵ This participant can be either the speaker or the hearer. This latter case occurs generally in questions: *Seriously, will you quit the company?* Indeed, this question is ambiguous. Who posits it may be looking for a serious attitude from the hearer, or alternatively, he/she may be focusing on the seriousness of his/her own question.

- (12) a. [GC [VP Seriously speak] -ing], your argument is fallacious. [SV Deletion →]
 b. [GC [VP Seriously ~~speak~~-ing], your argument is fallacious.

- Unlike *frankly*, the adverb *seriously* is not “specialized” in SVs, and then it can be easily combined with other kind of verbs. In those cases, however, deletion cannot apply:

- (13) a. ✓ *Seriously studying*, John approved his courses.
 b. * *Seriously ~~studying~~*, John approved his courses.⁶

- The adverb *cleverly* (and the like) evaluates the actions or thoughts of the subject:

- (14) a. *Cleverly*, John drives with care under the rain.
 b. *Cleverly acting/thinking*, John drives with care under the rain.

- Sentences (14a) and (14b) have the same interpretation. Thus these adverbs combine with verbs of action or thinking (ATV). In that case, verb deletion is possible:

- (15) a. [GC [VP Cleverly act/think] -ing], John drives with care... [ATV Deletion →]
 b. [GC [VP Cleverly ~~act/think~~-ing], John drives with care...

- Deletion cannot apply when *cleverly* combines with a non-ATV:

- (16) a. ✓ *Cleverly speaking*, John convinced Mary.
 b. * *Cleverly ~~speaking~~*, John convinced Mary.

- On the other hand, Modal S-Advs, like *probably*, *possible*, *likely*, etc., are to be considered “real” sentential adverbs. They never modify a verb, but always a whole sentence. They are then “Sentential Adverbs proper.”

References

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⁶ The GC in (13) can be seen as a simple circumstantial of manner (i.e., with no pragmatic implications) moved to the left periphery of the sentence, where it obtains its sentential scope.