

Focus-Linked Adverbs

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1. Introduction

This paper is an attempt to clarify the distribution and semantic interpretation of a set of adverbs which are associated with the focused constituent of the sentence. It should also be noted that here I will not be concerned with any rigid formulations of the rules and constraints to characterize this set of adverbs. I am going to deal with these theoretical issues in a separate paper. In this article, I will heavily depend on the Brown Corpus,¹ which is one of the full-fledged machine-readable corpora of present-day American English available for linguistic research and will try a descriptive study of the distribution and semantics of this set of adverbs.

2. Association with Focus

As is shown by the following examples,² the class of adverbs under consideration may comprise adverbs like even, just, only, also, and too.

- (1) a. I will write a letter even to MARY.
- b. I will write a letter just to MARY.
- c. I will write a letter only to MARY.
- d. I will also write a letter to MARY.
- e. I will write a letter to MARY too.

The corresponding paraphrases in (2) indicate that these adverbs are somehow associated with the focused constituent, MARY in (1).

- (2) a. I will write a letter to MARY, let alone another specific person.
b. I will write a letter exactly to MARY not to anyone else.
c. I will write a letter to MARY but not to anyone else.
d. I will write a letter to MARY in addition to another specific person.
e. I will write a letter to MARY in addition to another specific person.

The syntactic positions of these adverbs are varied and each of those shown in (1) is just one of the natural and common positions of these adverbs. Ross (1979) tries to characterize syntactic properties of this class of adverbs in terms of the then-current theory of syntactic structure. Let me summarize some of the main points of his discussion that will turn out to be indispensable to the discussion to be presented below.

For practical reasons, I will tentatively fix the focus marked with a contrastive stress³ at a sentence-internal position and will see how these adverbs, as Ross (op. cit.) argues, vary their syntactic positions.

(3=Ross's 74) "EVEN"

- a. *Even they are sending EGGS to Marie.
b. They even are sending EGGS to Marie.
c. They are even sending EGGS to Marie.
d. They are sending even EGGS to Marie.
e. *They are sending EGGS even to Marie.
f. *They are sending EGGS Marie even.

To recapitulate what Ross (op. cit.) observes about the syntactic properties of even, its salient syntactic properties can be stated as in (4).

- (4) a. 'even' can occur neither sentence-initially nor sentence-finally.
- b. 'even' can precede the focus but cannot follow it.

The comparison of (5) with (3) will show that adverbs like just and only parallel the behavior of even, as far as these basic patterns are concerned.

(5=Ross's 76 and 77) "JUST and ONLY"

- a. *Just/*Only they are sending EGGS to Marie.
- b. They just/only are sending EGGS to Marie.
- c. They are just/only sending EGGS to Marie.
- d. They are sending just/only EGGS to Marie.
- e. *They are sending EGGS just/only to Marie.
- f. *They are sending EGGS Marie just/only.

Ross (op. cit. p.367) observes, however, that discrepancy between just and only emerges when they are located sentence-initially followed by a pause. Only can appear sentence initially, meaning roughly "There's only one thing: X," but just can not.

(6=Ross's 100)

- a. *Just/Only, he wasn't in his room last night.
- b. *Just/Only, be careful where you put the H_2SO_4 .
- c. *Just/Only, where can we get some Kool-aid to mix with it?

This discrimination will be interesting in the following two points; (1) this discrepancy can be seen when these adverbs occur sentence-initially with a pause and (2) there is no marked focus to be indicated by contrastive stress in the sentence. In the next section, I will discuss a similar point at length that can be made with respect to also and too.

Next compare the following examples with also/too.

(7=Ross's 113) "ALSO" and "TOO"

- a. ?Also/*Too they are sending EGGS to Marie.
- b. They also/*too are sending EGGS to Marie.
- c. They are also/*too sending EGGS to Marie.
- d. They are sending ?also/*too EGGS to Marie.
- e. They are sending EGGS ?also/too to Marie.
- f. They are sending EGGS to Marie also/too.

Distribution of grammaticalities in sentences like (7) suggests the following syntactic properties of also and too.

- (8) a. 'also' can occur sentence-initially but 'too' can not.
- b. Both 'also' and 'too' can occur sentence-finally.
- c. 'also' can both precede and follow the focus, while 'too' can only follow the focus.

The preceding discussion about the five focus-bound adverbs suggests the relative freedom that the occurrence of also can enjoy. Of these five adverbs, only also can occur sentence-initially, sentence-finally, or in the Aux(iliary) position, and can both precede and follow the focused element. It seems to be plausible to argue that also extends its scope throughout the whole sentence when it occurs sentence-initially, sentence-finally or in the Auxiliary position and toward the adjacent

focus before or after the adverb. All other adverbs have just a relatively local scope when compared with also. An illustration like (9) will help clarify the points. In each example, the broken line shows how far the scope of also presumably extends. I will also assume that a focused constituent can be associated with the adverb only when the focused constituent stays in its scope.⁴

- (9) a. ?Also they are sending EGGS to Marie.

 b. They also are sending EGGS to Marie.

 c. They are also sending EGGS to Marie.

 d. They are sending ?also EGGS to Marie.

 e. They are sending EGGS ?also to Marie.

 f. They are sending EGGS to Marie also.

Compare (9) with (10), which represents the possible extensions of the scope of too.

- (10) a. *Too they are sending EGGS to Marie.
 b. They *too are sending EGGS to Marie.

 c. They are *too sending EGGS to Marie.

 d. They are sending *too EGGS to Marie.

 e. They are sending EGGS too to Marie.

 f. They are sending EGGS to Marie too.

3. Too and Also

So far, we have restricted ourselves to sentences that have

a sentence-internal marked focus, with (6) as the only exception. Thus almost all sentences have been treated in such a way as they are responses or answers to a particular utterance as is shown in (11).

(11) A: Are they sending APPLES to Marie?

B: No. they are sending EGGS to Marie.

Next I will turn to examples that have an unmarked focus rather than a marked one. Note that when a sentence has an unmarked focus around the sentence-final position, the focused constituent does not necessarily fall on a particular part of the sentence but on the whole sentence. The point can be demonstrated by the fact that sentences like the following can be used to initiate a discourse.

(12) a. My father has a ranch.

b. A boy was walking along the Fifth Avenue.

It should also be remembered that the scope of also covers the whole sentence as I have noted above regarding (9).

Below I will cite two pertinent examples from the running text in the Brown Corpus.⁵ In (13) the sentence beginning with also adds to the description of the writer's surroundings, by providing an entirely new piece of information.

(13) This light did not penetrate very far back into the hall, and my eyes were hindered rather than aided by the dim daylight entering through the fan vents when I tried to pick out whatever might be lying, or squatting, on the floor below. #Also# the clerk appeared to disapprove of my frequent curious glances back over my shoulder.[N06 0770]

In the second example (14), it would be appropriate to argue that

the entire sentence beginning with also carries new information, if we ignore the repeated adverbial phrase 'because of the storm' which may carry old information.

- (14) It was dark early, because of the storm. #Also#
because of the storm, the streets of Rockfork were
deserted.[N10 0970]

In examples like (13) and (14) the scope of the focus-bound adverb covers the whole sentence and the focus constituent falls on the whole sentence rather than a particular part of it.

We have already noted a similar point with respect to sentences like (6), which are repeated here for convenience, where only but not just, when used as a pause-bound adverb, can be followed by sentences that have an unmarked focus.

- (15=6=Ross's 100)

- a. Only, he wasn't in his room last night.
- b. Only, be careful where you put the H_2SO_4 .
- c. Only, where can we get some Kool-aid to mix with it?

It is not difficult to find out similar examples with pause-bound also in the sentence-initial position. Thus consider cases like (16) and (17) again taken from the Brown Corpus.

- (16) Most women, in this age of freezers, shop for the entire week on week-ends, when prices are lower. #Also# , many working wives have children or husbands who take over the shopping chores for them.[B16 0700]
- (17) The dictionary is a form dictionary, at least in the sense that complete forms are used as the basis for matching text occurrences with dictionary entries. #Also# , the dictionary is divided into at least two parts: the list of dictionary forms and the file of information that pertains to these forms. [J32 0350]

In (16) the sentence introduced by also provides a reader with an

additional piece of information about current custom about shopping. In (17) another feature of the dictionary is described by the sentence beginning with pause-bound also.

Returning to pauseless cases like (13) and (14), it seems that also is the only focus-bound adverb that extends its scope quite freely all over the sentence and can be associated with the whole sentence as the focused element. Only can serve in this way only when accompanied by a pause. And although too can extend its scope throughout the whole sentence when it occurs sentence-initially (cf.(10.f)), it is unlikely that the whole sentence can be taken as the focused element. The latter point can be made when we consider instances like (18), which is formed by substituting also in (13) with too and locating it in the sentence-final position. The continuation like (18) sounds unnatural for the very reason that I have mentioned just above.

- (18) This light did not penetrate very far back into the hall, and my eyes were hindered rather than aided by the dim daylight entering through the fan vents when I tried to pick out whatever might be lying, or squatting, on the floor below. ??The clerk appeared to disapprove of my frequent curious glances back over my shoulder too.

I have argued that when the scope of a focus-bound adverb also spreads over the whole sentence, the focus-element can fall on the whole sentence rather than a particular part of it but that this is not the case with too. It seems to be interesting to call our attention to an observation of Kaplan (1984, p.511). He makes the following remark in the footnote.

Ellen F. Prince points out (pc) that too is different from also in that only the latter can be used to say that what is predicated about the focused constituent of the first clause is also predicated about that of the second clause:

- (a) Jo had fish and Mo had soup also.

(b) *Jo had fish and Mo had soup too.

Ex.(a) is grammatical, and implicates that Mo had both fish and soup. Ex.(b) doesn't seem to permit this reading.

When we compare the unacceptable sentence (b) in his footnote with (19), it is quite easy to see why the acceptability varies as it does.

(19) a. Jo had fish and he had soup too.

b. Jo had fish and Mo had fish too.

In the acceptable cases a particular focused element stays within the scope of too. But the case (b) above misses it. Though things are still not quite clear to me, it seems to be possible to argue that in the case (a) above also is associated with the whole right conjunct Mo had soup as its focus, which is not feasible with too.

4. Conclusion

In this article I have discussed the scope of focus-bound adverbs and the extension of focused element. The discussion has made clear the fact that also is unique in that of the five focus-bound adverbs only also can extend its scope quite freely and take the whole sentence as its focus. All other focus-bound adverbs can spread its scope locally and can not take the whole sentence as its focused element when used without pauses.

NOTES

1. For the details of the organization of Brown Corpus and the retrieval program designed for the corpus, see Tachi(1988). And for the source of a particular example in the text collected and compiled, See Francis and Kucera(1964).
2. In accordance to the notational convention, capitalization will mark the focused constituent of sentence. I will follow this convention hereinafter. I will return to a technical discussion of focus below.
3. The marked stress differs from the unmarked stress in that the former indicates that the focused constituent is in contrast with the other object in the discourse while that latter simply comes at the sentence-final position and marks the normal stress pattern of English sentences.
4. I am going to deal with this theoretical issue about scope in a separate paper. Here I will not go into this problem any further.
5. Examples taken from the Brown Corpus will be followed by the line number preceded and followed by square brackets. The line number indicates where the word under consideration preceded and followed by double cross, '#' is found.

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