

# A Study of the Adverbial Complements

by Yoko ICHIMURA

## Preface

The aim of this paper is to study the adverbial complements, especially prepositional phrases, which are unfamiliar to those who learn school grammar in junior as well as senior high schools. School grammar deals chiefly with subjective and objective complements; and most of the prepositional phrases are classified as adverbial phrases. In fact, we have a lot of copulative and factitive verbs in English. So the patterns, S+V+C, and S+V+O+C, are regarded as those most frequently used in our daily communication. According to the statistics from Hook and Mathews,<sup>(1)</sup> about 20 percent of the clauses in an average text have a subject complement of some sort.

Human speech, as the expression of our feelings, ideas, thoughts and experiences is so complicated that it can not be put into five or 25 patterns. Moreover, speech is a creative phase in itself. It seems apparent that we speak English based upon somewhat traditionally inherited rules, not upon grammatically constructed ones. Since language usage acceptable to an educated native speaker is correct on a certain level, we have to pay much attention to the actual usage of the language. So the number of possible English sentences is infinite. Besides, the more civilized our life is, the more complex our speech becomes. We can analyse only a portion of the sentences used among native speakers today.

Transformational grammar plays an important role in teaching English, especially to foreigners, for it begins with the sentence arrangement of a native speaker, namely, syntax. A group of words, even if arranged in accordance with a grammatical structure rule, does not always make sense. The information about verbal patterns, eight parts of speech and mood are needed to help us make a good sentence. We will learn that a subjective complement consists of a noun and an adjective or their equivalents. For example, we say *Mary is a clever girl*. But we can not say, *Mary is a blue sky*. Nor can we say, *Mary is rainy*. Words have restrictions on their usage.

My object in this article is to do some research on adverbial complement; first of all, the difference between an adverbial complement and an adverbial modifier has to be examined. Adverbial modifiers are entirely optional, while adverbial complements are necessary elements in a sentence construction. According to C. T. Onions, prepositions were originally connected with a verb and not with a noun. But, in modern English,

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(1) Harold V. King: A Guide and Workbook in the Structure of English, P. 79.

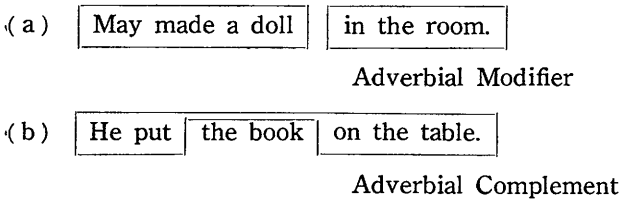
prepositions connected with nouns form prepositional phrases, which function as adverbial complements as well as adverbial modifiers. In case they are combined with verbs, they make prepositional object constructions such as, *look for*, *wait on* and *listen to*. The prepositional phrases that come immediately after the direct object in a sentence are not always adverbial complements. Quoting from Owen Thomas, "There may be a deep transformational relation between Pred (predicative) and all adverbs of Loc (location) and Tm (time)."<sup>(2)</sup>

Adverbs of time and location, which occur quite freely with many types of verb phrases (VP), can be derived from a Constituent Structure Rule that expands VP. Consequently they are not transformationally related to predicatives. On the other hand, prepositional phrases, taking the post position of the direct object and functioning as adverbial complements, are mostly derived from MV. Here we have two sentences:

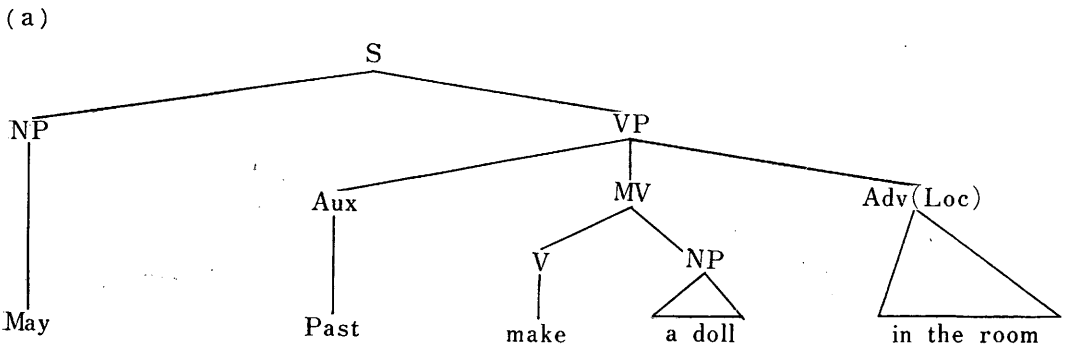
- (a) May made a doll *in the room*.
- (b) He put the book *on the table*.

The prepositional phrase, *in the room* is an adverbial modifier, *on the table*, an adverbial complement. Sentence (a) *May made a doll* is complete without the prepositional phrase, while *He put the book* is not. In other words, the prepositional phrase in Sentence (a) is optional, but in Sentence (b), the prepositional phrase, *on the table* is obligatory. The action, *putting the book*, can be ended only *on the table*.

According to structural grammar, we can diagram thus:

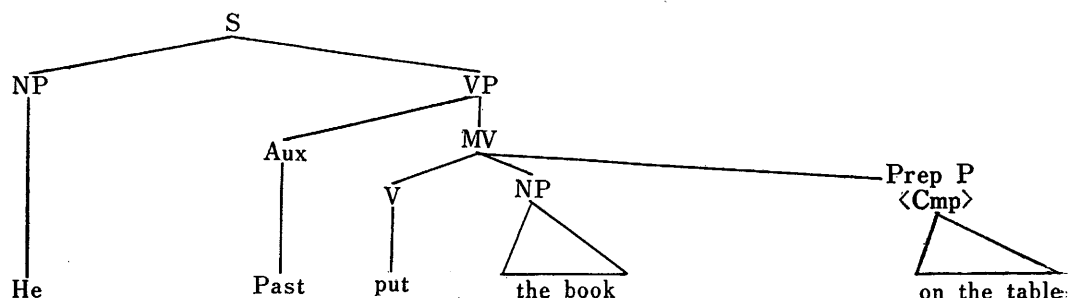


In a transformational grammar, the deep structures of these two sentences will reveal the different functions of the prepositional phrases more clearly. The Constituent Structure Rules permit us to derive two branching trees:



(2) Owen Thomas: Transformational Grammar and the Teacher of English, P. 168.

(b)



Transformational grammar can, therefore, provide us with a logical way of defining such terms as modifier and complement.

The prepositional phrases following some adjectives function as adverbial complement. We have, e. g. *I am glad of your success.* | *He is good at skiing.* | *She is very fond of playing the guitar.* | *Health is essential to happiness.* | *I am thankful to you for your kind advice.*

Adverbial complements also occur in the type of sentence such as Copulative+Predicative+Adverbial Complement. Examples: *The book is worth reading.* | *She is not like you.* | *Father is fifty years old.* | *He is younger than you.* | *Western European nations could also fall victims to the Soviet Union's imperialism.*

Here are three kinds of adverbial complements. They are: (1) Adverbial Complements of Location, Duration, Direction and Frequency, (2) Adverbial Complements convertible into Indirect Objects and Others and (3) Prepositional Phrase Construction.

In a pedagogical grammar of English, a sentence is mostly analysed based upon the five patterns, such as S+V, S+V+C, S+V+O, S+V+O+O, and S+V+O+C. The Prepositional Phrase Construction might be classified as the third pattern, S+V+O+(Adverbial Phrase) in a school grammar. For example, in such sentences, *We congratulated her on her success.* and *She sang a folk song in the park,* both sentences may be analysed as the third pattern, S+V+O, and the prepositional phrases, *on her success,* and *in the park,* adverbial phrases. But the function of each prepositional phrase in these two sentences is not identical. The prepositional phrase, *on her success,* is a complement of the verb *congratulate,* not a mere modifier. On the other hand, the prepositional phrase, *in the park,* in *She sang a folk song in the park* is an adverbial modifier which may be substituted with any other adverbs or adverbial phrases. The phrase could be replaced by *there,* | *on the lawn,* | *under the tree* etc.

The important point is not that students should learn these grammatical terminologies (adverbial complement and adverbial modifier), but that they should familiarize themselves with the verb phrases such as *thank for,* *remind of,* *excuse for* etc. Moreover,.

it is not enough only to know the meaning of verb phrases. We have to learn how to use them just in the way a native speaker does. The knowledge of verb phrases will be of great help to us. We will be able to use them more freely only through practice.

I am indebted to Professor Masako Issiki and Assistant Professor Akiko Ueda, both of Tsuda College, who gave me kind suggestions and advice.

### Outline of Adverbial Complement

- (1) Adverbial Complements of Location, Duration, Direction and Frequency.
- (2) Adverbial Complements Convertible into Indirect Objects and Others.
- (3) Prepositional Phrase Constructions.

#### (1) Adverbial Complements of Location, Direction and Frequency

##### (A) Adverbial Complement of Location

The chief difference in the preface between adverbial complements and adverbial modifiers is, as mentioned before, that the adverbial complement is necessary to construct a sentence, while the adverbial modifier is not. An adverbial modifier of location indicates the place where the action takes place. For example, *We saw an Indian dance in the park/ on the hill/ by the lake.* The main idea, seeing an Indian dance, is clear in itself. On the other hand, the adverbial complement has a deep relation to the verb. It is something like a predicative. The adverbial complement that may come after the direct object in this pattern changes the entire meaning of a sentence, that is, it shows where the action ends. Let us see the following two sentences.

(a) The council dropped him *from the list.*

(b) Please drop these letters *in the pillar-box.*

Sentence (a) is incomplete without the prepositional phrase, *from the list*, and so is Sentence (b). These prepositional phrases function like predicatives. Here are some examples, *We put the boat in the water./ He made two holes in the door./ He hid himself among the trees./ We set it behind the kitchen range./ They carved the outlines of animals in the rock./ I left my friend alongside the rapids.*

##### (B) Adverbial Complement of Duration

To the sentences in this pattern, the question transformation to introduce *when* can not be applied but the one to introduce *how long* is used instead. For example, we can say, "How long have you been in Kyoto?" But we cannot say, "When have you been in Kyoto?" The answer may be like this, "I have been in Kyoto for three weeks." Thus we may have, *I haven't seen you for ages./ Very soon we have winter vacation for two weeks./ I have known her from a child./ He has taken the children and himself away for a few days. I have eaten nothing since morning./ I will finish it in a*

*week.* | *For years*, the Red Chinese have been building a network of military roads. | Alpine songs have been sung in their own land *for hundreds and hundreds of years*.

### (C) Adverbial Complement of Direction

This pattern shows us the direction where the action is directed. Here are some examples: I take the car *to the gas station.* | He poured the water *into the jug.* | I ordered new books *from England.* | Someone was carrying him *toward a boat.* | We threw him *into it.* | It was tied *to a small jutting rock of the canyon wall.* | Breznev would lead the Soviet delegation *to Bucharest.* | The Soviet threat has also forced Huang to shift massive forces *from the south to the north.*

### (D) Adverbial Complement of Frequency

This complement is used in answering the question, How often.....? e.g. He has been to Paris *three times.* | Mary has music lessons *twice a week.* | She comes *every day.* | Milk is delivered *every other day.*

### (2) Adverbial Complements convertible into Indirect Objects and Others

Such transitive verbs as *give, buy* etc. generally have two objects, an Indirect Object followed by a Direct Object. According to Dr. Fries, "Indirect Object" is the special term usually applied to the meaning, "that to or for which an action is performed."<sup>(3)</sup> Some prepositional phrases are convertible into Indirect Object, but not all of them. By replacing an adverbial complement, an Indirect Object is introduced into a position immediately after the verb. Here are examples of verbs with the preposition *to, for* and *of*:

to:

Grandmother used to tell a story *to us.* (Grandmother used to tell us a story.)

Please bring a cup of coffee *to me.* (Please bring me a cup of coffee.)

Miss Green teaches English *to us.* (Miss Green teaches us English.)

I have sent a telegram *to her.* (I have sent her a telegram.)

for:

Mother bought a dress *for me.* (Mother bought me a dress.)

She made a beautiful cake *for him.* (She made him a beautiful cake.)

He will get a new car *for her.* (He will get her a new car.)

of:

May I ask a favor *of you?* (May I ask you a favor?)

There are also a certain number of verbs used with prepositional phrases. Verbs of saying such as *say, communicate* and *confide* are included. Some verbs, chiefly of Latin origin, are almost always used with *to*, e.g. *attribute, dedicate* and *refer*. Here are some examples combined with *to* as well as *for*.

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(3) Fries: The Structure of English, P. 185.

to:

Can you describe it *to me?* Mr. White explained the problem *to us.* Let me introduce my brother *to you.* I was too young to have learned to say no *to women.*  
for:

He opened the door *for the lady.* Will you cash a check *for me?* He answered the question *for me.* The teacher pronounced the words *for her pupils.* The cashier changed a \$10 bill *for me.* The doctor prescribed medicine *for her.*

There are some verbs that have two objects which cannot easily be distinguished as direct or indirect of the verbs. They are sometimes called double objects. Each object can function as a Direct Object. Therefore, it is impossible to choose one as the indirect object and replace it by a prepositional phrase. Thus we have: They envy *him his intelligence.* May God forgive *us our sins.* He struck *me a violent blow.*

### (3) Prepositional Phrase Constructions

This final section deals with a large class of verbs used with a Direct Object plus a Prepositional Phrase, Adverbial Complement. The prepositional phrase construction has two types, namely, Verb+Direct Object (replaceable)+Adverbial Complement, or Verb Object (not replaceable)+Adverbial Complement. We call the former pattern Construction (A), the latter, Construction (B) here.

First of all, we will take up Construction (A). In the sentence *He took the lady by the arm, the lady* is a variable direct object of the verb, *took*. We could replace it *by the man, the child,* etc. without changing the main idea, taking someone by the arm. We may transform this sentence into a question, like this, Who (Whom) did he take by the arm? Here we have some examples of Construction (A): I will help you *with your homework.* We do not wish to impose a particular form of government *on any people in the world.* I informed her *of the accident.* We make milk *into butter and cheese.* Can you tell wheat *from barley?* We should not spend our money *on useless things.* I prefer honesty *to deceit.* They exchange cloth *for rubber.* He divided the money *among his three children.* How could you possibly mistake me *for an American?* Will you save it *for me* till tomorrow? Please charge it *to my account.* The United States may seek more secret exchanges *with the Hanoi Government.* Thank you *for your present.* We shared our supper *with the cat and hens.* The words seemed to turn themselves *into a song.* I was supposed to match the piano, in some way, *with my voice.* He patted me *on the shoulder.* You've filled your stomach *with a lot of meat.* It reminds me *of the story* that for Tito, Winston Churchill was a closer friend than Josef Stalin during World War II.

Secondly, we have to deal with Construction (B) where the object is not replaceable. For example, in the sentence *He took care of himself,* we cannot replace the direct object, *care,* with other words such as *greatness* or *frequency,* without changing the main idea. As seen from the above example, a direct object is not replaceable in an English

idiom. For example, *make a difference to*, *give evidence of*, *get hold of*, *catch sight of*, *pay attention to* etc.

Then, which kind of noun could be an object in this construction? An abstract noun as well as singular and plural common nouns can function as this kind of object, see, e. g. *His wife gave birth to a son.* *You should not make a friend of any one who is not fit to be your friend.* *Monkeys make faces at visitors to the Zoo.*

It is not possible to transform the sentence *He took care of himself* into a what-question. We can not say, *What did he take of himself?* because the relationship between a verb and a noun is so close that we may analyse the noun as a complement of the verb, as we do in the case of a Copulative Verb, e. g. *She became a lady doctor at long last.* Here we have some examples: I recently *made a deal with* the European Common Market./ He had been *familiarizing himself with* the places where he was supposed to have lived and worked./ He *paid a visit to* his friend./ Its mysterious music *gave place to* a hungry roar./ The immortal gods *take a hand in* the matter./ You *made a good choice in* your book./ We *kept our eyes on* the boat./ Let's *take a vote on* it, shall we?/ She could not *keep her mind on* buying anything./ The passing of this old and respectable giant *made a profound impression upon* my young mind.

Thus we must learn not only the verb with the preposition e. g. *suspect of*, *prevent from*, *excuse for*, but also idioms such as *place reliance on*, *have belief in*, and *give rise to*.

### Reference Books

- Noam Chomsky: Aspects of the Theory of Syntax
- A. S. Hornby: A Guide to Patterns and Usage in English
- Owen Thomas: Transformational Grammar and the Teacher of English
- Charles C. Fries: The Structure of English
- Lado & Fries: English Sentence Patterns
- Harold V. King: A Guide and Workbook in the Structure of English
- C. T. Onions: An Advanced English Syntax
- Otto Jespersen: Essentials of English Grammar
- Kenkyusha: Modern English Education 6, English Grammar
- Sanseido's Dictionary of English Grammar
- Kaitakusha's Idiomatic and Syntactic English Dictionary
- Kenkyusha's New Dictionary of English Collocations

### Materials

- Kairyudo's Revised New Shorter English Readers I, II, and III.
- James Kirkup: American Themes and Scenes

Tetsuo Yasuda, Shozo Tokunaga, Gerald Morrey : Basic Expressions in Spoken English

The New York Times

The Japan Times

Newsweek

Reader's Digest