Problems of adverbial placement in learner English and the British National Corpus

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A tricky problem for French learners of English is to know where to put adjuncts in relation to the verb, as can be seen in these examples[1] taken from undergraduate essays:

NNS11 Another strategy would be to change ?completely the distribution network.
NNS19 The Pronunciation Unit has ?as well an important diplomatic role.
NNS23 That's why the advertisers thought about putting ?in the centre a picture of a top model.

The primary aim of this paper is to explore the constraints on adjuncts which lead us to interpret these examples as awkward or ungrammatical. A second aim of this paper is to explore whether adjuncts occur in free combination in sentences or occur as chunks, parts of longer lexical patterns, on the basis of their behaviour in a corpus of texts, i.e. the *British National Corpus*. In this paper I use 'adjunct' to refer to lexical and grammatical adverbs (such as *completely, also*) as well as prepositional phrases and other expressions which function as adverbials (e.g. *as well, in the centre*).

The syntactic features of adjunct placement are well documented in the comprehensive grammars of English (Jacobson 1964, Quirk et al. 1985. Huddleston and Pullum 2002). Apart from the large number of studies in generative grammar, adjuncts are generally discussed in terms of their placement in the sentence according to such criteria as prosodic detachment and thematic structure (Moignet 1961, Nøjgaard 1968, Dulbecco 1999, Van Belle 2000, Carlson et al. 2001). Specific adverbs, such as the specifier *only* have also been widely studied, because they present problems of semantic scope (Ballert 1977, Risanen 1980, Viitanen 1992, Cairncross 1997, Clement 1998, Frosch 1997, Van Belle 2000). More recently, there have been a handful of studies on adjuncts from a phraseological point of view, for example van der Wouden (1997), who examines collocations of negative polarity, and Lysvåg (1999), who looks at the phraseology of *famously*, as in the expression *to get on famously*. As far as I know, there has been no comparative analysis of adjunct positions in English and French from a phraseological perspective, and there has been little or no analysis of adjuncts in terms of contrastive error analysis (Sylviane Granger, personal communication).

Part of the reason for the lack of phraseological research on adjuncts is that they are not considered to enter into any significant lexical patterns. For example, even some of the best-known proponents of the idiom principle, Hunston and Francis, rule out ad-

1 Examples taken from student essays are signalled as NNS (non-native speaker). Unacceptable features are symbolized by *. Questionable features are symbolized by ?. The hash symbol # (used later in this paper) indicates invented examples.

verbial modifiers in lexical patterns, stating that "On the whole […] patterns of adverbs are hard to capture…. [and since] there is no parallel to complementation patterns, adverbs can be better described in positional terms" (2000: 43). The perspective I wish to pursue here challenges this assumption. This paper is thus divided into two parts. In the first, I discuss the role of adjuncts in general. In the second, I examine problems of adjunct placement for intermediate level French students of English.

1. The Grammatical Features of Adjuncts

ADJUNCT is a functional term for any word or phrase which modifies a clause or another phrase in terms of quality or quantity. Adjuncts are generally said to have three basic properties. Firstly, they are categorically unrestricted and can be realized by grammatical adverbs, lexically derived adverbs, prepositional phrases, or even noun phrases and clauses, as in

#1 Next week, Jim can drive, if he's up to it.

Secondly, since there is no special restriction on the number of modifiers of any phrase or clause, some adjuncts give the impression of being optional as well as freely cumulative. Thus we can have

#2 Jules cooked the barbecue happily …on the patio …at three o'clock …in the dark.

Thirdly, adjuncts are claimed to be syntactically mobile.[2] A basic distinction is typically made between clause-level adjuncts, mobile at the level of the clause, as in

#3 Jim will drive <u>tomorrow</u> / <u>Tomorrow</u> Jim will drive

and VP-level adjuncts, mobile at the level of the verb phrase:

#4a Jules enjoyed his soup <u>enormously</u> / Jules <u>enormously</u> enjoyed his soup.

A test to distinguish between the two types is that clause-level adjuncts can be extracted by clefts, so we can have

#5a It's <u>tomorrow</u> that Jim will drive.

On the other hand, VP-adjuncts resist clefting, so we cannot say

#5b It's *<u>enormously</u> that Jules enjoyed his soup

(all examples from Huddleston and Pullum 2002).

In addition to these syntactic features, there are two fundamental notions which are crucial to understanding how adjuncts find their positions in the clause, namely scope and thematic structure. Scope is a restriction on the semantics of another phrase. Ac-

2 Some adjuncts do however appear to be obligatory (Goldberg and Ackerman 2001: their example is *this book reads well*). There also appears to be a pragmatic limit to the types of adjunct that can be stacked together (we cannot easily say **Jim also ?as well cooked the barbecue happily ?easily*).

cording to the generative school of syntax, a clause-adjunct is said to have scope over the finite or modal part of the clause (thereby expressing a speech act), while a VP-adjunct has scope over the predicate (expressing manner) (Jackendoff 1972, Kayne 1975, Ballert 1977, Pollock 1989, Müller and Riemer 1998, Alexiadou 1997, Ernst 2002, but this has been questioned by Cinque 1999). Furthermore, variable scope adverbs, such as frequentatives (*often, always*), have wide scope in pre-finite position, as in

#6a Medicine regularly wasn't available
('there was a constant lack of medicine')

and narrow scope in post-finite position as in

#6b Medicine wasn't regularly available
('there was an intermittent lack of medicine').

The notion of scope is used to explain why there is a preference for comments to come before mood adjuncts. Thus we have:

#7a They had luckily already left

but not

#7b They had *already *luckily left.

Finally, scope is used to explain what are known as 'bounding effects'. For example

#8a She ran for 10 minutes

is acceptable but not

#8b She ran *in 10 minutes,

because *in 10 minutes* is an unbounded duration which cannot be the scope for an unbounded event (*She ran*).

Functional linguistics examines similar phenomena, but from a different perspective. Halliday (1985: 81) points out that positional variation corresponds to major divisions in the clause, notably the Theme-Rheme boundary (a textual division) or the Mood-Residue boundary (a division of intonational units). In the following diagram, we can see that *however* does not have any significant difference in meaning in pre-finite or post-finite position, while *just* expresses variable scope at each boundary:

	Theme		Rheme
#9a	*Such men*	however just >	*don't make good husbands*
	Mood		Residue
#9b	*Such men don't*	however just >	*make good husbands*

Halliday concludes from this that conjunctive adjuncts such as *however, that is, surely*, operate at the textual (Thematic) level of the clause, outside the Mood-Residue system.

They can thus occur at any boundary (initially and finally, between Theme and Rheme, or between Mood and Residue). A similar analysis can be applied to prosodically detached items, such as non-restrictive relative clauses, continuatives (*yes* and *no*), vocatives (*Sir, Madam*) and comment adjuncts (*frankly, really* or *no doubt*).

It seems therefore that there are two major factors which account for the positional variation of a great number of adjuncts in English, namely scope and thematic structure. However, in the following section I examine the possibility that lexical factors may also have a part to play.

2. Adjuncts between Verb and Object

In general English grammar, it is often noted that adjuncts cannot occur in the sequence Verb + Adjunct + Object (henceforth V + A + O). As Ernst puts it:

> Any theory must account for a number of basic word order facts for English complements and post-verbal adjuncts. First, adjuncts do not occur between the verb and a nonheavy direct object [Noun Phrase] (Ernst 2002: 207).

In a similar vein, Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 102) stipulate that there is a ban on post-verbal adjuncts, and regularly use it as a diagnostic test. For example, they argue that the copular uses of *is* are auxiliary verbs, because only auxiliaries allow frequency and modality adjuncts in post-verbal position as shown in #11b:

Lexical verb	#10a	He <u>always</u> **looks** miserable
	#11a	They <u>probably</u> **go** by bus
Auxiliary verb	#10b	He **is** <u>always</u> miserable
	#11b	They **have** <u>probably</u> gone by bus

Generally speaking, adjunct position is explained either by a grammatical relationship to the clause (frequentative, modal etc.) or to the verb (auxiliary, modal etc.). This is after all a tried and tested way of doing things in traditional grammar, especially if we assume that an adverb is something which attaches to a verb (*ad* + *verb*). What is less clear from the traditional account is the extent to which adjunct placement may depend on the lexical interdependence of the adjunct with other parts of the clause. This perspective was succinctly expressed by Pawley and Syder:

> A *lexicalized sentence stem* is a unit of clause length or longer whose grammatical form or lexical context is wholly or largely fixed; its elements form a standard label for a culturally recognized concept, a term in the language. Although lexicalized in this sense, most such units are not true idioms but rather are regular form-meaning pairings (Pawley and Syder 1983: 191–192).

According to this phraseological perspective, we must expect to find at least some adverbials in lexicalized sentence stems. An examination of *briefly* in the *British National Corpus* appears to provide us with a phraseology of this sort:

BNC1	We now turn to **examine** <u>briefly</u> the influence of sex
BNC2	Finally, we **considered** <u>briefly</u> the meaning of an equilibrium in macroeconomics

BNC3 In the last chapter, I have **discussed** briefly the most general principles of individuation
BNC4 It might be helpful if I were to **outline** briefly the history of the STUCC
BNC5 It may help to **summarise** briefly the current positions

These concordance lines show us that *briefly* is used with a limited set of verbs, meaning roughly to 'restate in written form'. Although *briefly* could occur with any verb in theory, its use is restricted to VERBAL PROCESS + *briefly* as a lexical collocation. But it is also worth pointing out that these examples all occur at a very precise stylistic moment in a text, a "rhetorical move" to use Swales's (1990) term. The adverb *briefly* therefore has a very specific pragmatic function as a hedging device in academic writing. It is this stylistic dimension which distinguishes between *discuss briefly* as a recurrent lexical collocation and *discuss briefly* as a lexicalized sentence stem, or phraseological unit.

It might be argued that instances of Verb + Adjunct + Object (V + A + O) occur in order to avoid stylistic heaviness, where the adjunct precedes a long or complex complement. However, if we accept that adverbs such as *briefly* have lexical patterns, we must ask whether this is the case in other V + A + O patterns. In order to do this, I examined a sample of 750 sequences of the pattern V + A + O using *Wordsmith* (limited to grammatical and lexical adverbs and not all types of adjunct). The most frequent adverbs to emerge from this search appear in Table 1.

Table 5.1 The ten most frequent adverbs in Verb + Adjunct + Object position

only	150	*directly*	23
exactly	87	*briefly*	17
precisely	40	*probably*	14
accurately	20	*merely*	13
seriously	27	*almost*	13

It is not surprising to find *only, exactly* and *precisely* at the top of the list, since they are specifiers. Specifiers regularly occur in V + A + O position as pre-modifiers of the noun group complement, as in *they won only one game*. More significantly, Table 1 shows that grammatical adverbs[3] occur in V + A + O position, but not very frequently. This is probably because conjunctive adjuncts (such as *also, as well*) or mood-oriented adjuncts (such as *already, sometimes*) are attracted to other positions in the clause. Thus

3 Grammatical adjuncts, sometimes known as 'intensifiers' or 'degree adverbs', are a class of adverbials which signal abstract information, such as proximity, intensity, or comparison (*almost, more, very*). They do not usually form phrases, but instead principally function as specifiers in adverbial or and adjective phrases.

the only grammatical adverbs to be frequently used in V + A + O position appear to be modal comments (*only, almost*).

3. 'The Three Fs': Figures, Formulae and Phrases

In this section I argue that all of the adverbs in Table 1 are involved in various forms of collocational pattern, ranging from metaphorical figures of speech, to more fixed types of lexical formulae and phrases (this three-part typology was first presented in Gledhill 2000). In order to do this; let us look a little more closely at some of the most frequently encountered adverbs in Verb + Adjunct + Object position in the *British National Corpus*. Firstly, several adverbs contribute to figures of speech where the adverbial expresses the typical way in which the language encodes the speaker's attitude towards quantification, as in *broaden considerably*, *strengthen modestly, reduce significantly*:

BNC6 It is extremely difficult to **gauge** accurately the dimensions of the shroud...
BNC7 Smoking by women appears to **reduce** significantly the chances of successful pregnancy.

The basic role of these adverbials is to provide semantic reinforcement for the predicate in question. In other cases, the adverbial and complement form a rather more fixed form of lexical formula, where the adverbs in V + A + O are all necessary components of the expression. This is the case of *precisely* in the expression *do precisely the opposite*:

BNC8 The technique sets out to **do** precisely the opposite.

Here the verb is semantically light and the weight of lexical meaning is effectively carried by both the adjunct and complement. A similar case involves the expression *take seriously* in the sense of 'consider':

BNC9 They have **taken** seriously the aspirations of the masses.

I would claim that *take seriously* is a complex verb group. The reasoning for this follows Halliday's (1985) analysis of separable phrasal verbs, such as *put down,* where the adverbial is treated as part of the predicator in a complex verb group. In this case, the particle contributes to the predicational content of the clause. A comparable analysis has been proposed by Allerton (2002), who describes the adverbials in *live abroad, last long* as "adverbial elaborators". The expression is not a stretched verb (in Allerton's terms), since there is no single equivalent lexical verb. But the adverb in *take seriously* contributes more than the adverbs in the expressions *gauge accurately* or *reduce significantly*: it contributes to the predication of the verb and cannot be omitted. In other words, the verb is semantically light and the adverbial is an obligatory part of a fixed lexical expression.

Needless to say, there are a number of examples where there appears to be no lexical or phraseological link between the verb and adverb, as in:

BNC10 We **saw** probably a total of 24 different young men from a professional model agency.

On first inspection this looks like a classic case of an adverb preceding a 'heavy' NP complement. However, if we look a little more closely at the corpus data, the adverb *probably* frequently occurs in V + A + O position, especially with verbs of identity:

BNC11 Britain **became** probably the most open market in the world.
BNC12 The increased metabolism of glutamine by the distal colon in ulcerative colitis **seems** probably a response to inflammation and consequent hyperplasia . . .

or with *to have* and relational verbs denoting possession or attribution:

BNC13 He **had** probably the nicest nature of any dog I ever owned, and possessed the loveliest eyes, brown in colour, and he was my dog definitely.
BNC14 Cloke (1977b, p. 19) **provides** probably the most useful definition:...

The only material process verbs followed by *probably* have a quantity as their complement, as in:

BNC15 Erm I just **moved** probably a half a pace so PC would get exactly the same view as myself.
BNC16 Er in the good old days when we used to go to shows we **spent** probably a hundred and thirty to two hundred pounds a year….

It is noticeable that the complement in each of these examples, even the material verbs, is not quite the same as the traditional notion of direct object. At this point we need to appeal to Halliday's distinction between two types of complement: Goal and Range[4]. A Goal corresponds to the traditional notion of object complement, which is an affected participant of a material process verb (as in *take an umbrella*). Range on the other hand expresses the extent of application of the verb, but is not materially affected by the process (as in *take a bath*). Halliday gives the following definition of Range:

> The Range is […] the scope, type, extent, quality or quantity of the process or simply a restatement of the process itself in a nominal form (Halliday 1985: 149).

In other words, the Range can re-express a circumstantial (as in *climb up the mountain*) as a direct object complement (*climb the mountain*). Or the Range can re-express a process (as in *to curtsey*) as a direct object complement (*drop me a curtsey*). Returning to our examples with *probably*, in each case the adjunct is not interrupting Verb + Goal but Verb + Range. In example BNC10 above we are dealing with a Mental Process verb; such verbs always take Phenomenon (i.e. Mental Goal) as their complement. Likewise, the complements of the relational process verbs we saw in BNC11–14 are not materially affected Goals either, but either re-express the subject (*became the most open market*) or re-express the process itself (*provide a definition*). Similarly the apparent exceptions BNC15–16 are not Material Goals but express the scope of the process

4 Initial capitals are used in Hallidayan grammar to signal functions.

(*to spend a hundred and thirty pounds, to move a half a pace*), in other words they are Range items. It seems therefore that modal adjuncts such as *probably* can occur between Predicator + Range, but not between Predicator + Goal.

To summarize, I have argued in this section that many common uses of adjuncts in V + A + O position can be explained in terms of their role in a phraseological unit, i.e. as a lexical phrase, figure, or formula. In more complex cases, as with *probably,* there is a more general process at work which allows comment adjuncts to intervene between a verb and its complement (usually a complement with the grammatical role of Range rather than the traditional object complement). In the next section, I compare these lexical properties of adjuncts with the difficulties of adjunct placement experienced by French students of English.

4. Adjunct Problems in Student Essays

The initial aim of this study was to establish a typology of errors in English produced by undergraduate students at the Université Marc Bloch, Strasbourg. To find a sample, I selected four pass-graded exam essays from three groups of Francophone students (two second-year language groups and one first-year language group). These twelve essays answered comprehension questions about three newspaper articles. The results are summarized in Appendix 1, where each category of error is accompanied by some prototypical examples. The composition of each category is more important than its relative weight in this small sample, but it is interesting to note that the students made more errors of a phraseological nature than grammatical errors in such traditional categories as morphology and modals. However, what really caught my eye was the smaller category of syntax, which is dominated by problems of adjunct position. All of the syntactic errors of adjunct placement are given in the Appendix 2. There are several reasons why adjunct placement may pose such a problem for learners. Firstly adjunct placement is not widely taught and so there is virtually no awareness of the problem. Secondly French can very freely place adjuncts in post-verbal position, and this happens to be one of the most identifiable differences between English and French word order, a feature which is well-documented in the literature of generative syntax (as discussed in Roberts 1997: 30–40, Ouhalla 1994: 303–310, Jones 1996: 339–347, Cook and Newson 1996: 213–214 and Gledhill 2003: 81–86).

Most of the adjuncts that my students had problems with were functional or grammatical adjuncts, and only three of the 30 errors involved circumstantials. Dividing the list of 30 into Halliday's main adjunct categories (see Appendix 2), I selected one modal comment adjunct (*above all* NNS9–10), one modal mood (*always* NNS2–4), one conjunctive (*also* NNS17–18) and one circumstantial (*in the centre* NNS23–25). These were then compared in turn with occurrences in the *British National Corpus.* The main question to be asked was: does the typical phraseology of these adjuncts in the corpus help us to explain why errors NNS1–30 are felt to be wrong?

4.1 Modal comment adjunct: *above all…*

As a comment adjunct, *above all* frequently occurs in clause-initial Theme position (675 instances out of a total of 2230), as in

BNC17 Above all, it strengthens bones and prevents brittle bone disease.

Although placement between verb and complement is infrequent, it does occur and there is therefore no general reason to reject the following student errors:

NNS9 when they do *above all everything,
NNS10 … to accept *above all students from public schools.

Looking at the BNC, however, we can see that all the corpus examples involve relational verbs, or the lexical phrase *require above all* + complement:

BNC18 To clean up dirty land efficiently and cheaply will **need**, above all, pragmatism and moderation.
BNC19 But the fact that they did not impose formal constraints upon royal power **reflected** above all their overriding interest in the maintenance of a strong central state
BNC20 This **required**, above all, substantial tax cuts to foster hard work, enterprise and saving.
BNC21 To be able to take action ahead of time **requires** above all the freedom to do so, unfettered by exchange-rate restrictions.
BNC22 Hence the teaching of adults **requires**, above all, an understanding of adults as learners....

So the essential problem with NNS9–10 is that *above all* is incompatible with the semantics of *accept* and *do*, which are respectively mental and material events, while *be, have, require, need, depend on* express relational states. The typical patterns of the verbs *do* and *accept* also seem to militate against my students' errors. As a lexical verb, *do* does allow adjuncts in V + A + O position in lexical formulae such as *do precisely that, do just that*, as well as in 'extended adverbials' such as *do nicely, do badly*. Similarly, over a third of the uses of *accept* are with circumstantials of the type *accept + for the time being, temporarily,* or with emphatic modal adjuncts *accept + unquestioningly, without question*. Thus *accept* is used with adjuncts which express temporal, mental or verbal modality rather than the quantificational modality expressed by *above all*.

4.2 Mood adjunct: *always…*

Always is a mood adjunct of usuality, and as such is associated with the finite element of the clause. Using *Wordsmith*, we find that of 44,432 instances of *always* in the BNC, there are only a tiny handful of examples of *always* in V + A + O, namely with the verbs *seem* (49), *provided* (9, as a complex subordinator: *provided always that*), *remember* (5, in imperatives) and *remain* (3 instances). As we saw with *probably,* the small set of verbs which express relational or mental processes readily allow V + A + O position. For example:

BNC23 Conrad **remains** always the European observer of the tropics, the white man's eye contemplating the Congo and its black gods.
BNC24 Wilcox **remained** always the showman, often directing his movies even though, like Saville in the same role, he was always more competent than gifted.
BNC25 … Frederick II **remained** always the executor of Frederick William I.

This pattern contrasts with our two student errors, where the verbs express material processes: *get* **always* *cheap food* and **do* **always* *higher profits*. The second expression is particularly awkward because of the collocational error with *do.* Even if we correct this to *make ?always higher profits*, there still appears to be a problem. In fact there is only one example of *make* + *always* + Object in the corpus, and it happens to be a quote from a well-known non-native speaker of English:

BNC26 'Very interesting' says [Jean-Paul] Gaultier, 'I make always the same thing'.

It is this type of usage which contributes to what might be called the "phraseological accent" displayed by French speakers of English, and it is ironic that it should crop up in a corpus which was originally designed to exclude non-British forms of English!

The grammatical rule therefore seems to be that *always* is prohibited from intervening between a material process and its complement, and this is valid for both Goal and Range complements. The explanation for this may be that if the adjunct itself expresses the scope of the verbal process, it clashes with any Range complement. Halliday himself states that adjuncts which themselves express material scope, such as *steadily*, cannot readily intervene between verb and Range, as in

#14a She climbed ?steadily the mountain.
#14b She climbed steadily up the mountain.

This can only be repaired by repositioning the adverb or by re-expressing the Range item as a prepositional adjunct.

Our third error with *always*

NNS4 Students have not *always the most obvious abilities

is more complex, since *have* is a relational process verb and should freely allow adjuncts in V + A + O position. I only found seven examples of *have* + *always* + Object in the corpus, including:

BNC27 Though I **haven't** always enough to do
BNC28 The symphonies are full of difficulties and in those days the orchestras **had not** always the resources we have today.
BNC29 The noble owner has built of brick, …so that he **has** always a dry walk, …

These examples appear to be stylistically marked, or come from archaic or literary sources. However, BNC27 sounds perfectly normal, and there appears to be no other natural place for the adjunct in this example. If we compare these with *always* + *have* + Object in the corpus, we generally find a large number of light verb constructions

with Range complements, as in *always + have the chance to, have the opportunity to, have the time to* or figurative stretched verbs such as *always have the last laugh*. Examples of the sequence *have + always +* Object are less frequent and tend to express possession of material items rather than attributes (*has always a dry walk* (= a dry walkway), *haven't always enough to do*). Thus it appears that the awkward status of student error NNS4 is due to the fact that the post-verbal use of *always* is restricted to *have* as an auxiliary verb. This restriction applies to mood adjuncts like *often* and *sometimes,* but not to comment and conjunctive adjuncts, as we have seen for *probably* and *also* (see sections 2 and 3.3).

4.3 Conjunctive adjunct: *also…*

There are over 123,000 instances of the conjunctive adjunct *also* in the BNC. The concordancer shows that the only verbs with significant instances of *also* to their immediate right are *be* and *have,* modals such as *will* and *can,* and verbs such as *seem* (39), *report* (16) and *find* (6 instances). As with modal comments such as *probably,* conjunctive adjuncts can be freely placed between a verb and its complement:

BNC30 That approach has also the **benefit** of introducing several British names
BNC31 Mary… is very domesticated but has also a **capacity** for managing other people's affairs
BNC32 A Ministry Centre has also the **opportunity** to establish far closer links by his staff and
BNC33 … has also the **responsibility** for providing an environment in which each individual is able to fulfil his obligations.
BNC34 The tradesmen had also the **satisfaction** of knowing that they had saved the cricket club

It is noticeable that in each instance we have a Range complement followed by a post-modifying clause (in fact the Range item is a nominalized process, usually expressing the subject's 'potential for action'). But how do we explain error

NNS18 the BBC plays *also an important role?

This appears to be a problem of lexical collocation. Of 1220 instances of *play + role* in the corpus, the only adjuncts which [occur between verb and object] are *only* (in eleven examples of *play only a minor role*), *even* and *exactly* (with one example each). As mentioned before, these are specifying adjuncts relating to the following noun group:

BNC35 Evolutionism **played** only a minor **role** ….
BNC36 … neutrality would be preferable to them to a series of regional alliances in which the Western powers **play** even a marginal **role**.
BNC37 It is only fair to add that some lawyers **play** exactly the opposite **role**, …

In contrast, the *BNC* has nine examples of the expression *also have an important role* and 18 of *also play an important role*, with no examples of *have *also an important role* or *play *also an important role*. What explanation can we offer for this restriction? One reason may be that we are dealing with what Halliday calls 'Entity Range'.

An Entity Range does not express the verbal process (as in *have a bath*), but expresses its scope (*climb a mountain*). Thus the main difference is that expressions such as *have the benefit of... have the responsibility for* (BNC30–34) involve a Process Range, whereas *have / play a role* (BNC35–37) involve an Entity Range. A further difference is that in each Process Range (BNC30–34), the complement is post-modified by an embedded clause which carries the subject of the main clause. But the Entity Range in *have / play a (significant) role* involves modification of the noun with no further embedding. Generally speaking then, as we saw above for *climb* ?*steadily a mountain*, we cannot place adjuncts between a verb and its Entity Range. On the other hand, it seems that adjunct placement between verb + Process Range is possible because the adjunct is not interrupting the process and a complement as such. Furthermore, it seems that the first ('light') verb in Process Range cases functions more like a Finite element than a full lexical Predicator.

Turning to

NNS17 But we soon notice that the customer gets *also in this situation,

the strangeness of this expression lies with the collocation of ?*get + in a situation* rather than with the adverbial *also*. The BNC shows two possible phraseologies with *get.* The first is *get + into a situation* + relative clause (*You will rapidly get into a situation where you cannot cope*). The second more productive phraseology involves *get + in a situation* with an obligatory reflexive pronoun, i.e. *gets oneself into* (105 instances) or *gets oneself in* (33 instances) + a negative situation (*trouble / a mess / a difficult situation*):

BNC38 you 'll **get yourself** in all sorts of difficulties
BNC39 How could she have **got herself** into a mess like this?
BNC40 If you have **got yourself** in this situation and cannot get back…
BNC41 … had no intention of telling his brother how he'd **got himself** into this situation.
BNC42 Kate would never **get herself** into this sort of situation.

In either phraseology, it could be argued that the prepositional phrase *into a (difficult) situation* is the Entity Range of the verb, i.e. a lexical expansion of a material process verb, where *get oneself* is the finite element of a complex verb group. As we saw with *play a role*, our student's problem comes from the fact that the adverb *also* cannot be used between the main verb Predicator and its Entity Range, even when the verb seems 'light' and looks like it might allow an adverbial expression to be inserted between V + O.

4.4 Circumstantial adjunct: *in the centre…*

Prepositional phrases such as *in the centre, in the 60's* and *in the university,* as we have in errors NNS23–25, are prototypical circumstantial adjuncts:

NNS23 That's why the advertisers thought about putting *in the centre a picture of a top model.
NNS24 De Gaulle vetoed *in the 60's the entry of the UK in the Common Market.
NNS25 Actually the dons don't want *in the university weaker students.

In French, circumstantials occur relatively freely between verb and complement, including all the major types of verbal process, as in the following example:

CF4 Déjà, il pense à **créer** dans toutes les facultés économiques une section de management
"Already, he is thinking of creating in all Economics departments a management section."

In English, adjuncts in the sequence V + A + O are restricted to complex (or 'heavy') complements after a form of the verb *to be*. The only exception to this involves the verbs *find* and *keep.* Most senses of *find* involve location and time circumstantials, with a large number relating to passages in a text, and a smaller number with *find* as an appreciative mental process. An example of each of these uses is given here:

BNC43 I **found** in the bottom of the freezer some pork that I didn't know we had.
BNC44 the Romanian people can be confident that it will always **find** in the Soviet people a reliable ally, a useful partner, and a true friend.

The verb *keep* also allows for prepositional phrases, where the adjunct expresses a complex verb or 'Process Range' as opposed to a circumstantial function, as can be seen in the following:

BNC45 The Right will clearly expect Mr Hamilton to **keep** in check some of Mr Heseltine's more interventionist policies.
BNC46 children below the age of seven years did not structure their stories or explanations coherently, nor did they **keep** in mind the extent of the listener's ignorance.

5. Adjuncts in English and French

If nothing else, the data I have presented so far cast doubt on the notion that adjuncts do not occur in English in the structure (lexical) Verb + Adjunct + Object. The corpus data demonstrate that post-verbal placement of an adjunct is possible, although subject to certain lexical restrictions. Consequently, not a single one of the student errors I have examined are contraventions of any 'rule' which might ban Verb + Adjunct + Object in English. Instead, my students' errors are essentially lexico-grammatical, in that they contravene the general patterns of transitivity associated with various verbs and their complements.

In this final section, I examine why students transfer what is essentially a French syntactic pattern to English and I attempt a generalization about the restriction of word orders in both languages. In current generative theory, it is assumed that complements accompany verbs in what is known as the "VP-shell". This structure works for English, but not for French which allows adjuncts freely in post-verbal position, as in example

#15a Je mange souvent des pommes (cf. I eat *often apples).

Discussing the wayward behaviour of this adjunct in French, Carnie says that "in this sentence the adjunct **surprisingly** appears between the head of VP and its complement." (2002: 192, my emphasis). This is echoed by Roberts who in his introduction to generative theory states that:

> We certainly don't want to say that X'-theory allows French to have a different hierarchical structure inside VP as compared with English. Whatever the final verdict is on parameters of linear order, everyone agrees that hierarchical structure should not differ across languages … (Roberts 1997: 32).

This stipulation is a generally adopted one in generative theory, but there are several reasons why we need to question it. Firstly, there is considerable evidence to suggest that complements and adjuncts exist on a continuum and therefore differences in linear order cannot be due to simple differences between complement-adjunct order. Various intermediate categories have been proposed, as we have seen with Halliday's (1985) notion of Range, Goldberg and Ackerman's (2001) obligatory adjuncts, or Gisborne's (2002) predicative complements. Secondly, it is generally agreed in typological studies that grammatical items and (especially) adjuncts are highly contingent features of language (Croft 1991). In most of these studies, adverbials and adjuncts are considered to be the least 'universal' of any of the traditional parts of speech. It is strange then to see that in standard generative accounts of adjunct placement, it is assumed that adjuncts and complements form wholly distinct categories. For example, Ernst considers that the following examples are ungrammatical because of the restriction that (to re-quote him) "adjuncts do not occur between the verb and a nonheavy object" (2002: 207):

#16 The shakers made *skilfully boxes.
#17 The city council blocked *frequently their proposals.

The transitivity roles in each of these examples are not mentioned in the analysis proposed by Ernst, although it is clear that in #16–17 the adjunct is interrupting a Process + Goal. So while not inaccurate, Ernst has not quite given us the whole picture: he ought to have pointed out that (non-scopal) adjuncts can interrupt a Process + Range. Since the generative description of English is so incomplete, it would be more useful to establish what the differences are between English and French word order rather than stipulating a single basic parameter.

One explanation may be that post-verbal position is a grammaticalized zone in English, a feature which would be compatible with Harris's (1978) treatment of the corresponding pre-finite position in French. It is well-documented that the pre-finite position in French is the preferred zone for the accumulation of clitics (i.e. morphological pronouns and negatives, as in #18 *Je ne le lui en parlerai pas*). As a consequence, it is not normally possible for adjuncts to be positioned in this zone, especially between the subject pronoun and verb (as discussed by Jones 1996, Korzen 1996, Gledhill 2003). This means that in French, the post-verbal or V + A + O zone is freed up, and we therefore find a variety of different structures which would be more marked in English, for example indirect objects:

#19 Il donna à Jean une grande gifle [He gave to John a great slap]

manner adverbs:

#20 Jospin a tancé vertement son Ministre
[Jospin criticized strongly his Minister]

adverbs of time:

#21 Je mange toujours des pommes [I eat always apples]

grammatical negatives:

#22 Il ne prendra jamais sa retraite [He will take never his retirement]

and so on.

6. Conclusion

There are of course very many syntactic or stylistic reasons why adjuncts may sometimes be placed in post-verbal position, not least of which are semantic scope, prosodic detachment and thematic structure. However, I have argued here that the transitivity relationship between verb and its complement and between the verb and the adjunct are also important factors. Furthermore, the analysis conducted here suggests that there are collocational restrictions in the use of adjuncts, and that a number of adjuncts appear in Verb + Adjunct + Object position because they form a phraseological unit in which the adjunct is effectively part of the predicate structure of a complex verb group. This appears to be the case with lexical phrases of the type *take seriously, do precisely that*. The phraseological approach adopted here challenges the generative assumption that adjuncts are modifiers, simply inserted after the creation of a core clause or VP-shell. In other words, this approach contradicts the commonly held belief that adjuncts are optional and unrestricted.

The purpose of this paper has been to re-evaluate the rule of thumb which states that adjuncts and prepositional phrases in English cannot interrupt the verb and its complement. By using corpus data as opposed to relying on invented examples, it is possible to establish that examples of Verb + Adjunct + Object occur in English. It has also been possible to use standard corpus methodology to explain a little more objectively why certain learners' errors appear to be awkward. Indeed, this is the kind of approach that Granger (1993) has long campaigned for in research on learner corpora.

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Appendix 1

ERROR ANALYSIS: TWELVE ADVANCED LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

Error Type	Typical example	Marginal example	Quantity	%
Lexical phraseology	V+N They want to *do a profit	They are interested in this issue *in a political view	138	38.5
Morphology	N+V The United Kingdom *want to have their *propers laws	one must have excellent *result throughout *his life	57	15.9
Syntax	V+ADV they mix *sometimes two words together	it's all easier for them	54	15.1
Lexico-grammar	UNC These studies aim to show that *the social background isn't linked *with *a wide knowledge	They don't have *so much subsidies *than in France	48	13.4
Lexical choice	*the Speakeasy system has the obvious advantage *to be a first *help device	*it is not world-wide spread	29	8.1
Auxiliary / Modal	The antagonism *has been lasting since Azincourt	All that a user *should do is click *to a button	12	3.4
Anaphor / Cohesion	The problem is that as *it has been explained in this text	*They are 22% also receive the classification	10	2.8
Spelling	*british Universities	People can climb in the *hierarchia and *is able to succeed	10	2.8
			358	100%

Appendix 2

ERRORS OF PREDICATE – ADJUNCT SEQUENCE

Modal: mood

1. NNS1 This would allow customers to get *already accustomed to the local gastronomy.
2. NNS2 This allows customers to get *always cheap food.
3. NNS3 The wish of a great deal of supermarket chains to *do *always higher profits can explain the difference…
4. NNS4 Some students have not *always the most obvious abilities,…
5. NNS5 So much that they finally aren't able *anymore to buy anything.
6. NNS6 they mix *sometimes two words together.
7. NNS7 British leaders seem *often involved in a struggle.
8. NNS8 seems to be very *often involved in a deadly hunt.

Modal: comment

1. NNS9 when they do *above all everything
2. NNS10 There is a tendency for Oxford University to accept *above all students from public schools
3. NNS11 Another strategy would be to change *completely the distribution network.
4. NNS12 The role of the BBC's pronunciation unit *allows presenters and commentators to pronounce *correctly foreign words.
5. NNS13 it seems *even to be the contrary.
6. NNS14 We *impossibly can use English spelling to represent *fairly names.
7. NNS15 Most of the time, there are *only not so relevant *faultes,
8. NNS16 If you're looking for the city *'Lyon' and ask *it in *the *english way, you could be *perhaps *set to the zoo.

Conjunctive

1. NNS17 But we soon notice that the customer gets *also in this situation.
2. NNS18 the BBC plays *also an important role.
3. NNS19 The Pronunciation Unit has *as well an important diplomatic role.
4. NNS20 They think that the prices should be able to attract *as well customers.
5. NNS21 There is *here a new weapon to take against the government.
6. NNS22 the Speakeasy system is *for those reasons an advantage.

Circumstantial

1. NNS23 That's why the advertisers thought about putting *in the centre a picture of a top model.
2. NNS24 De Gaulle vetoed *in the 60's the entry of the UK in the Common Market.
3. NNS25 Actually the dons don't want *in the university weaker students.

Other Adjunct Errors

1. NNS26 a 'watchdog' is an organization which has *for goal to verify Supermarket's behaviour.
2. NNS27 the watchdog is an organization who has *for assignment to defend consumers.
3. NNS28 a policy of integration that was *for the British difficult to accept
4. NNS29 They are supposed to train pupils *better to compete university entrance
5. NNS30 They keep *up-to-date a database which allows presenters to see the current word pronunciation.