

VIEWPOINT AND COMMENT ADVERBS IN P.G. WODEHOUSE AND THEIR TRANSLATION INTO ROMANIAN

DARIA PROTOPODESCU

University of Bucharest

Abstract: *Viewpoint and comment adverbs are a class of Sentence Adverbs (SA) that take the whole sentence into their scope. The only distinction between viewpoint and comment adverbs is related to their placement in the sentence. This paper investigates both the behaviour of these adverbs in Wodehouse's text 'Right ho, Jeeves!' and the translation strategies employed by the Romanian translator in rendering these adverbs.*

Keywords: *adverbs, equivalence, omission, prepositional phrase (PP) paraphrase, translation strategies*

1. Introduction

The translation of adverbs into Romanian always poses various problems that hinge on either the translator's ability to correctly identify their structure or on the heterogeneous nature of adverbs. More precisely, in the case of viewpoint and comment adverbs, it is not always easy to capture their correct interpretation when translating them: some of them may occur in a context where they have a manner reading rather than sentence or clausal reading. This happens because such adverbs evince different interpretations, depending on their placement in the sentence, so the positions in which they surface heavily influence their readings.

In this article, I explore in what way the placement and interpretation of a small class of sentence adverbs (i.e., viewpoint and comment adverbs) affect their translation into Romanian.

2. Theoretical background

There are some adverbs and adverbial expressions which tell us about the speaker's viewpoint or opinion about an action, or make some comment on the action. They are different from other adverbs because they do not tell us how an action has occurred. Comment and viewpoint adverbs modify entire clauses rather than single verbs, adverbs, or adjectives. There is no real distinction between comment adverbs and viewpoint adverbs, except in their sentence placement. Many adverbs that can be used as viewpoint adverbs can also be used as comment adverbs. However, there are also cases when an adverb is far more common as either one or the other.

2.1. On the rise of viewpoint and comment adverbs

The term “viewpoint adverbs” is adopted from Dalton-Puffer and Plag (2000). Adverb formations in *-wise* are variously labeled, as “viewpoint adverbials”, “domain adverbials” and “sentence adverbials” (Lenker 2002). They are denominal and take as their scope the clause rather than the Verb Phrase (VP). For Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik (1985: 568), their meaning is “if we consider what we are saying from an [adjective] point of view or if we consider what we are saying from the point of view of [noun phrase]”, and they belong to a larger set of constructions called “viewpoint subjuncts”, which includes: Adjective + *-ly* (speaking) (e.g., *frankly speaking*); *as regards* NP; *with respect to* NP; *as far as* NP is concerned. Such constructions are described as “topic restricting” by Rickford et al. (1995: 103). According to Quirk et al. (1985: 569), viewpoint subjuncts have the semantic role of respect in that the base of the adverb acts as a relevant point of reference for the clause. Lenker (2002: 163) claims that they share properties with Quirk et al.’s category of disjuncts, which convey the speaker’s evaluation of the communication e.g., *frankly speaking*, and are used by speakers “to indicate that the proposition of the whole sentence or clause is only true in the perspective chosen by the speaker, the given domain” (ibid.), as in *morally, he is wrong* (Bellert 1977, qtd. in Lenker 2002: 164). They differ from disjuncts, however, in that they are still “relatively integrated within the structure of the clause”, while disjuncts are more peripheral (Quirk et al. 1985: 440).

Shift in the adverbial scope from VP to the clause is well documented (Quirk et al. 1985), and accounts typically focus on “style disjuncts” involving certain high frequency lexemes, e.g., *hopefully, frankly*, rather than adverbial suffixes. Lenker (2002) argues that the evolution of *-wise* viewpoint adverbs, which, according to the Oxford English Dictionary (2013) make their first appearance in the American English of the 1940s, is bound up with the use of viewpoint adverbs in *-(c)ally*.

In Lenker’s account, viewpoint adverbs formed with the suffix *-wise* are seen to have emerged from a register which is “technical” (in the sense of specialist, professionalized) and “informational”, but not necessarily written. As such, we rarely expect them in literary contexts, and my investigation proves this, since no *-wise* viewpoint adverb was detected in my corpus.

The expansion of VPAdv *luckily* to sentence adverb (SA) *luckily* is in line with many other SA developments of *-ly* and other adverbs during the Modern English period (Swan 1997; Killie 2007, Protopopescu 2017), such as *sadly, surprisingly, curiously, happily, fortunately*, resulting in a set of speaker-oriented evaluative adverbs for the expression of attitude.

In the characterization of adverbs, Conrad and Biber (2000: 58) identify three parameters: a) the semantic class, which relates to the meaning of the adverb; b) their grammatical realization, which relates to their form (adverb, adverbial phrase, noun phrase, prepositional phrase, etc.), and c) their placement in the clause (initial, pre-verbal, post-verbal and final). The characterization is made for English, but the parameter related to form works for Romanian just as well, as we are going to see in the analysis of the data in my corpus.

2.2. Sentence placement of viewpoint and comment adverbs

Viewpoint adverbs are placed at the beginning, or more rarely, at the end of the sentence. They are usually separated from the rest of the sentence by a comma.

Comment adverbs are placed before the main verb, unless the verb “to be” is used, in which case the placement can be either before or after the verb. In some cases, comment adverbs placed before the main verb may also be separated from the rest of the sentence by commas, although, in most cases, they will not. In the examples below, viewpoint and comment adverbs are shown in the correct sentence placements. When a sentence placement is unusual, stilted, or too formal for spoken language, it is marked with a question mark.

Viewpoint or commenting adverb	Initial position	Pre-verbal position	Final position
clearly	<i>Clearly</i> , they don't know whether they are coming or going.	They <i>clearly</i> don't know whether they are coming or going.	They don't know whether they are coming or going, <i>clearly</i> .
definitely	? <i>Definitely</i> , you are intelligent.	You <i>definitely</i> are intelligent. You are <i>definitely</i> intelligent.	?You are intelligent, <i>definitely</i> .
obviously	<i>Obviously</i> , you are doing something.	You are <i>obviously</i> doing something.	You are doing something, <i>obviously</i> .
personally	<i>Personally</i> , I'd rather read a good book.	I'd <i>personally</i> rather read a good book.	I'd rather read a good book, <i>personally</i> .
carelessly	<i>Carelessly</i> , she threw her book into the pond.	She <i>carelessly</i> threw her book into the pond.	?She threw her book into the pond, <i>carelessly</i> .

3. Corpus and analysis of the data

For my analysis of the translation of viewpoint and comment adverbs into Romanian, I have chosen the novel *Right ho, Jeeves!* by P.G. Wodehouse, and its Romanian translation by Carmen Toader, published in 2004 by the Polirom Publishing House.

The reason behind this choice lies in the fact that, unlike other authors who, as a rule, avoid the use of adverbs, Wodehouse employs a plethora of adverbs. Thus, I counted as many as 210 different instances of *-ly* adverbs in *Right ho, Jeeves!* Most of them are manner adverbs, but some of them are also used as intensifiers and as the larger class of sentence adverbs, which accommodates viewpoint and comment adverbs as well. No viewpoint *-wise* adverbs are employed, but we do have a few occurrences of *-ly* viewpoint adverbs and several more of what I label here ‘comment adverbs’. As I am going to show in my analysis, their translation poses problems of equivalence.

In my analysis of the corpus, I use the following abbreviations: (ST) for the source text, the original English version by P.G. Wodehouse, (TT) for the target text, the Romanian translation by Carmen Toader, and (BT) for the literal back translation I provide.

3.1. Translation strategies

As stated from the very beginning, due to the heterogeneous nature of adverbs and the different interpretations they may acquire depending on their

sentence placement, their translation poses quite a few problems. If we are to relate this to the features of Romanian and its relation to adverbs, we can spot even more problems ahead. The expectation is that as far as translation strategies go, equivalence is not going to be prevalent in the case of adverbs. This has to do with the fact that Romanian is a partly adverbial language, unlike English which is fully adverbial (Protopopescu 2011: 70, Protopopescu 2012: 69, Vişan and Protopopescu (forthcoming 2022)). It means that Romanian prefers PP paraphrases of English adverbs, rather than equivalence with a corresponding adverb. We also expect to find instances of translation loss where adverbs are omitted in the target text, possibly because the translator might find their rendering redundant.

3.1.1. Equivalence

I shall start my analysis by taking a close look at instances of equivalence. To this end, let us take a look at the following set of examples involving the adverb *personally*.

- (1) ST: I have alluded earlier to the difficulty of staggering when you're sitting down, showing that it is a feat of which I, *personally*, am not capable. (p. 130)
 TT: Am pomenit mai devreme cât de dificil este să te bălăngăneş ti când stai jos, arătând că e o ispravă de care eu *personal* nu sunt în stare. (p. 148)
 BT: I have mentioned earlier how difficult it is to stagger when sitting down, showing that it is a feat of which I, *personally*, am not capable.
- (2) ST: *Personally*, I snuggled up against the chandler and let my attention wander. (p. 198)
 TT: Eu, *personal*, m-am cuibărit lângă negustor ş i mi-am lăsat mintea să zburde. (p. 232)
 BT: I, *personally*, have snuggled up next to the merchant and let my mind fly away.
- (3) ST: *Personally*, I think he would have played it safe. (p. 201)
 TT: Eu, *personal*, cred că ar fi mers la sigur. (p. 236)
 BT: I, *personally*, think that he would have gone for certainty.

Let us also see what happens with another comment adverb. In (4) we deal with a possible mistranslation of the adverb *definitely*.

- (4) ST: She *definitely* told me so. All he had to do was propose. (p. 133)
 TT: – *Chiar* ea mi-a spus-o. Tot ce avea de făcut era s-o ceară în căsătorie. (p. 152)
 BT: – She *herself* told me. All he had to do was propose marriage to her.

In this case, although we are dealing with an instance of equivalence, as the English adverb is rendered into Romanian by means of another adverb, the meaning and usage of the latter is different from its English counterpart. The English adverb *definitely*, means “*clearly*” here. It could be translated into the target language as *clar*, its semantic equivalent, or even as the elliptical Adj + *că*-Complementizer structure - *clar că* (*clear that*). However, the Romanian translator changes the focus of the whole structure with her choice of the adverb *chiar*, which emphasizes the meaning of the word or idea that follows it, in this case the subject of the sentence; hence the backtranslation of *chiar* as *herself*. The meaning of *chiar* is *precisely, exactly*. Therefore, this is a case of partial equivalence, as it is an instance of semantic mismatch.

3.1.2. Paraphrase

My first two examples of paraphrase, (5) and (6) below, involve the same adverb, *carelessly*.

- (5) ST: "I hear you're in London," I said *carelessly*. (p. 25)
 TT: – Am auzit că stai la Londra, am spus eu *cu nepăsare*. (p. 25)
 BT: – I've heard that you are staying in London, I said *with carelessness*.
- (6) ST: There was something about the thought of these people *carelessly* revelling at a time when, for all they knew, I was probably being dragged about the countryside by goats or chewed by elephants, that struck home at me like a poisoned dart. (p. 281)
 TT: Exista ceva în gândul la oamenii ăștia, care benchetuiiau *fără nici o grijă* în timp ce știau că eu aș fi putut fi târât de-a lungul și de-a latul satului de țapi sau mestecat de elefanți, care m-a izbit aidoma unei săgeți otrăvite. (p. 322)
 BT: There was something in the thought about these people, who were partying *without any care* while they knew that I could have been dragged across the village by goats or chewed on by elephants, that struck me like a poisoned arrow.

What is interesting here is that we are dealing with two instances of the same adverb, with the same meaning, *without care or concern*, yet their Romanian translation differs. In both cases we are dealing with a PP paraphrase, which is expected in the case of sentence adverbs, yet in (5) the translator opts for *cu nepăsare* (*with carelessness*), while in (6) for *fără nicio grijă* (*without any care*). *Carelessly* is a subject-oriented, viewpoint adverb in both instances. In (5) it occurs in the less likely final position for a subject-oriented adverb, without being isolated by a comma, while in (6) it occurs in a preverbal position, which is its preferred position. One might argue that the position in (5) renders itself to the manner interpretation, but the Romanian translation which uses a PP paraphrase clearly indicates the subject-oriented interpretation. The English adverb in (5) can have a manner interpretation due to its final position in the sentence, (*I said that in a careless manner*, rather than *I was careless in saying that*), but in the Romanian text (am spus eu *cu nepăsare* 'I said with carelessness'), the adverbial PP is unambiguously subject-oriented, hence the paraphrase (*I was careless in saying that*). This can be syntactically explained by its placement in the Romanian text, in combination with the placement of the subject, which appears in its unmarked post-verbal position in Romanian, with the PP paraphrase closely following it. So, this is why, although the adverb *carelessly* in (5) has a manner interpretation in the English source text, it acquires a subject-oriented interpretation, with a PP paraphrase in the Romanian target text.

In the case of the adverb *fortunately* and its negative counterpart *unfortunately*, we can notice more consistency on the part of the Romanian translator in (7), (8), and (9) below.

- (7) ST: *Fortunately*, however, the settled gloom of those round him exercised a restraining effect upon him at the table. (p. 283)
 TT: Însă *din fericire*, deprimarea statornicită a celor din juru-i a exercitat un efect de temperare asupra lui la masă. (p. 222)
 BT: But, *fortunately*, the constant depression of those around him exercised a calming effect upon him at the table.

- (8) ST: **Fortunately**, before embarrassment could do much more supervening, Angela came in, and this broke up the meeting. (p. 380)
 TT: **Din fericire**, înainte ca stânjeneala să se înfiripe prea zdravăn, Angela a intrat și a pus capăt întrevederii. (p. 298)
 BT: **Fortunately**, before embarrassment would take over too badly, Angela entered and cut the meeting short.
- (9) ST: At that, however, I think he would have got by, had he not, at this juncture, **unfortunately** stirred Gussie up again. (p. 298)
 TT: Însă cred că ar fi scăpat și de data asta, dacă în acest moment nu l-ar fi stârmit, **din nefericire**, iarăși pe Gussie. (p. 234)
 BT: But I think he would have got away with it this time as well, if at that moment he had not, **unfortunately**, stirred up Gussie again.

Unlike the inconsistency shown with **carelessly** in (5) and (6) above, in two instances, (7) and (8), the TT resorts to a PP paraphrase, a combination of the preposition **din** (*from, out of*) and the noun (**ne**)**fericire** (*(un)happiness*). Both the adverb in the ST and its Romanian counterpart occur in initial position and are separated from the rest of the text by means of commas.

As already stated, adverbs, in general, pose difficulties in their rendering into Romanian. If we consider the adverb **fundamentally** in (10), and its translation into the TT, with its relevant BT, there is a mismatch from a semantic point of view.

- (10) ST: “And you can’t get away from it that, **fundamentally**, Jeeves’s idea is sound. (p. 30)
 TT: – Și n-ai cum s-o negi, **de fapt**, ideea lui Jeeves e solidă. (p. 31)
 BT: “And you can’t deny it, **in fact**, Jeeves’ idea is solid.”

The meaning of **fundamentally** in Romanian is usually translated as *esențial, esențialmente, la bază, (essentially)*. **Essentially** is actually suggested by thesaurus online as the first synonym for **fundamentally**. The choice for **de fapt** (*in fact*) by the Romanian translator appears to slightly change the interpretation of the structure. However, any of the Romanian counterparts of **fundamentally** mentioned above would sound quite awkward in the context, so this is probably why the TT chose a more natural sounding paraphrase in spite of the slight change in meaning.

3.1.3. Omission

Omission in translation obviously leads to translation loss, since part of the source text is lost to the target reader.

- (11) ST: I mean to say, Gussie might have lowered the existing Worcestershire record for goofiness and **definitely** forfeited all chance of becoming Market Snodsbury’s favourite son ... (p. 213)
 TT: Adică Gussie poate că a doborât recordul existent în Worcester la nerozie și și-a ratat **Ø** orice șansă de a deveni fiul favorit al orașelului Market Snodsbury, ... (p. 251-252)
 BT: That is to say, maybe Gussie broke the existing record for foolishness in Worcester and **Ø** he missed any chance of becoming the favourite son of the small town of Market Snodsbury, ...

The adverb **definitely** adds not only something related to the attitude of the speaker, but it also reinforces the idea conveyed by the clause (*forfeited all*

chance...). **Definitely** takes the sentence in its scope, emphasizing the total lack of opportunity caused by the action of forfeiting. The omission of **definitely** in the TT could be explained by the translator's choice of rendering the epistemic verb *might* with the help of another sentence adverb, the epistemic adverb **poate**. Since the clause containing **definitely** is coordinated with that containing *might*, the presence of two SAs belonging to two different word classes may have seemed awkward to the Romanian translator. However, a second SA would definitely not sound awkward if the TT had preserved it, translating the sentence as ... **poate** că a doborât recordul existent ... și **clar** și-a ratat orice șansă... (my own version).

3.2. Analysis of the sentence placement of adverbs in the corpus

In the treatment of adverbs, it is always of great relevance to take a close look at their sentence placement. Given their evolution over time, and the fact that some manner adverbs have developed clausal readings and some have a manner interpretation when placed lower in the clause, but develop a subject-oriented interpretation if placed higher in the clause, a brief look at their sentence placement is necessary.

3.2.1. Auxiliary position

The auxiliary position refers to the position of an adverb between an auxiliary verb and the lexical verb in English. In the case of manner adverbs it usually offers the most ambiguous contexts, to the extent that they could be interpreted as having either a subject-oriented or a manner reading. I have selected two contexts for the current discussion. In (12), the SA **obviously** is translated by a PP paraphrase. What makes this context slightly unusual, setting it apart from other instances of PP paraphrase, is that, while in other contexts of PP paraphrase the structure of the PP is Preposition + NP, here the structure of the PP is made up of a preposition and the coordinated structure of two adverbs, **doar** (*only*) and **poate** (*maybe*). The meaning of this PP is **without a doubt**, which clearly indicates some sort of idiomaticization of the PP.

- (12) ST: The situation **obviously** cries out for Jeeves. (p. 101)
 TT: Situația **fără doar și poate** că țipă după Jeeves. (p. 80)
 BT: The situation **without a trace of a doubt** is crying out for Jeeves.

The adverb in (12) is placed in preverbal position, so to get a clearer picture of the auxiliary position of the adverb, let us take a look at the context in (13), where another instance of **obviously** occurs. Here, the TT places the adverb in initial position in a structure which appears to be favoured in Romanian in the case of SAs.

- (13) ST: She must **obviously** be properly ticked off and made to return him to store. (p. 338)
 TT: **Evident că** trebuia trasă cum se cuvine la răspundere și convinsă să îl trimită la plimbare. (p. 265)
 BT: **It is obvious that** she had to be properly held accountable and persuaded to send him off.

Romanian has developed a strategy of rendering epistemic adverbs (those expressing degrees of possibility) with a structure made up of ADV +

complementizer *că* (that), (*desigur că, evident că, clar că, sigur că*). While some might argue that these are in fact elliptical structures of the type *It is ADJ + that (că)*, the presence of **desigur** among them is a clear indication that these are in fact adverbs, not adjectives derived via ellipsis of the copula verb (Dinică 2008: 594).

3.2.2. Preverbal position

The preverbal position expresses the speaker's point of view with respect to the rest of the clause. This is evident in (14).

- (14) ST: And the thought of being engaged to a girl who talked openly about fairies being born because stars blew their noses, or whatever it was, **frankly** appalled me. (p. 166)
 TT: Iar gândul de a mă logodi cu o fată care discuta fățiș despre zânele care se nasc pentru că stelele își suflă nasul, sau cum fusese chestia, mă înspăimânta **sincer**. (p. 130)
 BT: And the thought of getting engaged to a girl who openly talked about fairies who are born because the stars blow their noses, or how the thing had been, frightened me **honestly**.

The target text, however, does not retain the preverbal position of the adverb and places it instead in final position, without a comma. The point of view of the speaker is retained, so we are not faced here with translation loss; however, Romanian also allows for preverbal position as well, which would have placed more focus on the adverb.

3.2.3. Final position

In what follows, I am going to briefly discuss what happens in the case of these adverbs in final position in my corpus. I could identify only one such occurrence for the adverb **mentally**. Interestingly, although it is a viewpoint adverb and it occurs in final position in the sentence, as can be seen in (15) below, the adverb is not separated from the rest of the sentence by means of a comma, as one might expect, considering their behaviour.

- (15) ST: "Tell me **frankly**, Jeeves, are you in pretty good shape **mentally**?" p. 255
 TT: – Spune-mi **sincer**, Jeeves, ești într-o formă **mentală** bună? p. 300
 BT: "Tell me **honestly**, Jeeves, are you in a good **mental** shape?"

In this case, the Romanian translator opts for a transposition strategy, the adverb **mentally** being substituted by a corresponding adjective (**mentală**, feminine, singular). The Romanian text therefore loses the viewpoint interpretation of the adverb. The Romanian translator achieves a form of compensation by retaining the adverb as a corresponding adjective. However, the adjective modifies the noun *shape* and no longer expresses a viewpoint as in the ST.

4. Conclusion

Having looked at the corpus under investigation and bearing in mind the syntactic (sentence placement) and semantic (reading/interpretation) features of

adverbs, we can safely conclude that viewpoint and comment adverbs can be rendered into Romanian mostly by means of PP paraphrase and equivalence.

I have identified instances of translation loss due to either a) omission or semantic mismatching of the TT, b) adverb substitution by a semantically corresponding adjective, which changes the focus and interpretation of the adverb in the clause, and c) paraphrase by means of an idiomatic phrase.

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