English Language and Linguistics 5.1: 1–16. © Cambridge University Press 2001.

Actually, there's more to it than meets the eye[1]

JOSEF TAGLICHT
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
(Received 2 May 2000; revised 20 June 2000)

This article presents a reanalysis of the syntax, semantics, pragmatics, and phonology of the word *actually*. It endeavours to show, among other things, that in addition to the distinction between Greenbaum's 'disjunct' and his 'adjunct', we seem to require here a distinction between two kinds of 'disjunct': (i) a 'propositional modifier' and (ii) a 'discourse modifier' (or 'discourse transition marker'). An examination of constraints on the use of *actually* as a propositional modifier suggests the need for a feature 'assertive/nonassertive', not just on root sentences but on all structures that denote propositions, whatever their syntactic form.

1 *Actually*$_1$ and *actually*$_2$

This article is about the word *actually*, considered from the point of view of syntax, semantics, pragmatics, and phonology. I hope to show that the word is interesting both in itself and in a broader perspective.

Actually is much more frequent in speech than in writing. The proportion is 10.3:1 in the corpora of British English compared by Aijmer (1986), and 3.4:1 in the corpora of American English compared by Oh (2000). It is also considerably more frequent in British speech than in American speech (2.4:1 according to Aijmer's figures and 2.2:1 according to Oh's), though a little less frequent in British writing than in American writing. The entry for *actually* in the first edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (which dates from the 1880s) does not have a single example of the word either in sentence-initial or in sentence-final position; and Partridge 1947 gives a quotation from Ronald Knox which suggests that the great popularity of *actually* in English speech was something new even in the second quarter of the twentieth century: 'They found Victor Lethaby a tornado of well-bred apologies, all punctuated with an irritating repetition of the word "actually" – a habit of modern youth, particularly when he is lying.' Taken together, these facts suggest the possibility that some uses of *actually*, more specifically of what will here be called *actually*$_1$, represent a fairly recent innovation originating in Britain.

The first to distinguish two kinds of *actually* seems to have been Sidney Greenbaum. He distinguished between *actually* as what he called an 'attitudinal disjunct'

[1] I am grateful to Jonathan Ginzburg, Eddie Levenston, Anita Mittwoch, and Yael Ziv for their comments on earlier versions of this article, to Eliza Kitis for the reference to Hickey 1991, to Larry Horn for the reference to Schwenter and Traugott, and to Bas Aarts and two anonymous reviewers for helpful criticisms.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1360674301000119 Published online by Cambridge University Press

and *actually* as an 'intensifying adjunct'.[2] I shall refer to them provisionally as *actually*$_1$ and *actually*$_2$. They are instantiated in examples (1) and (2) below:

(1) A: How was the bus ride? – B: **Actually**$_1$, we went by train.
(2) This isn't (just) hearsay, you know; I [**actually**$_2$ saw it with my own eyes].

As regards the syntax, we can start by saying that *actually*$_1$ can serve as adjunct to a sentence, but not as Immediate Constituent (IC) of a verb phrase, and that conversely, *actually*$_2$ can serve as IC of a verb phrase, but not as adjunct to a sentence. ('Adjunct to a sentence' is here used in a sense akin to that of Greenbaum's (and Quirk et al.'s) 'disjunct'. But it is defined more narrowly than their 'disjunct' in one dimension, since medial occurrences are excluded (see 2.1 below), and more broadly in another, since it subsumes their 'conjunct'.) As for the meaning, both items mark the utterance or the part of the utterance with which they are associated as in some way corrective,[3] and both are nontruthconditional. However, *actually*$_2$, can be described as 'strong', as opposed to *actually*$_1$, which is 'mild'. For *actually*$_2$, it is possible to distinguish two principal uses, (a) 'scalar' and (b) 'truth-insistent.[4] When the speaker uses 'scalar' *actually*$_2$ in some phrase (as in (2) above), he is envisaging a scale of properties with the content of that phrase at the top, and implying that any property below it on the scale would make the expression too weak. The 'truth-insistent' use of *actually*$_2$ serves to contrast what is really so with what is only pretended or imagined, and seems to be most typically found occurring within the scope of relativization or negation. Here is a corpus example of 'truth-insistent' *actually*$_2$:[5]

(3) Speaker A: what's happened to your finger
Speaker B: well |I've t\/old a 'lot of people· that I |dropped an |Anglo-'Saxon cr\oss on it· but |what I **actually** d/id· was sl\/am it· in a |car d\oor· (*CEC* 1.9, TUs 199–204)

As for *actually*$_1$, this merely indicates that the speaker is asserting something that is incompatible with some other proposition which has been expressed or implied.[6] It can be called 'mild' (or conciliatory), because if the speaker uses it in correcting

[2] Greenbaum, 1969: 127–8, 141–4. See also Quirk et al., 1972: 439 ff, 511, 666, 674 f. Quirk et al., 1985: 583 ff, 62 f. In Quirk et al., 1985, the term 'attitudinal disjunct' has been replaced by 'content disjunct', and intensifiers have been placed under the new heading of 'subjuncts'.

[3] Except in the use of *actually*$_1$ as a discourse transition marker (see 4.2 below).

[4] For an additional use, see 2.2 below.

[5] This and the other corpus examples are from Svartvik & Quirk, 1980: *A corpus of English conversation* (*CEC*), which represents part of the London–Lund Corpus, which is a simplified version of the spoken texts of the Survey of English Usage at University College London. TU stands for Tone Unit, 'the basic prosodic unit' in the analysis on which the *CEC* transcription is based. The symbol '·' marks the end of a tone unit, and nuclear pitch movements are marked by '\'(fall), '/' (rise), or '\/' (fall-rise) before the nuclear vowel. The prosodic notation of *CEC* has been simplified by the use of the symbol '|' to represent both onsets and boosters on nonnuclear syllables. (The 'onset' is on the first syllable in a tone unit that is made prominent by pitch or stress, and a 'booster' marks a stressed syllable other than an onset that derives additional prominence from its pitch level.) Onsets and boosters that coincide with nuclear syllables have been omitted. Stressed syllables without additional prominence are marked by ''.

[6] No scale of properties is envisaged. In its nonscalarity, *actually*$_1$ differs not only from *actually*$_{2a}$ but also

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1360674301000119 Published online by Cambridge University Press

someone else, it serves to make the correction less calculated to offend, and if he is correcting something said or implied by himself, an element of apology seems to be involved. *Actually*$_1$ has been described by Ilson (in Greenbaum, 1985: 179) as being used for 'modestly polite contradiction or amplification'. According to Hickey (1991: 369), the key notion is 'surprise: *actually* [i.e. *actually*$_1$ – JT] both marks what is said as surprising and mitigates the surprise either by warning the addressee beforehand or apologising to him immediately afterwards'. In addition, Hickey suggests (p. 371) that 'some surprise markers (notably 'Actually')' serve 'also as signals (sincere or not) that the contradiction involved is only a partial or unimportant one'. Similarly, according to Oh (2000: 24), '[w]hen used with . . . face-threatening acts, *actually* functions as a pragmatic softener (i.e., as a face-saving strategy)'.

Levinson (1983: 87f) places *actually*, together with *but*, *therefore*, *in conclusion*, *on the contrary*, *still*, *however*, *anyway*, etc. under the heading of markers of what he calls 'discourse deixis', which 'indicate, often in very complex ways, just how the utterance that contains them is a response to, or a continuation of, some portion of the prior discourse'. Levinson suggests that such items can be accounted for in terms of the Gricean notion of 'conventional implicatures', i.e. 'non-truthconditional inferences not derived from superordinate pragmatic principles' (p. 127). However, a non-Gricean approach, based on a different theory of implicatures, is adumbrated in Smith & Wilson (1979: 180), according to which *actually* is one of a group of items (also including *anyway*, *after all*, *still*, and *well*) which the speaker may use to indicate to the hearer how the speaker's utterance is intended to be relevant. This idea has been more fully developed in Blakemore (1987), which treats such items (now generally referred to as discourse markers) within Relevance Theory as expressions that have procedural (i.e. nonconceptual) meaning and indicate constraints on the inferential phase of utterance understanding.[7] It is not part of the aim of the present paper, however, to discuss the relative merits of different theories of pragmatics.

2 Syntactic-semantic properties

2.1 Actually$_1$: *a marginal element in sentence structure*

From the point of view of syntactic-semantic structure, *actually*$_1$ may be called a MARGINAL element.[8] In addition to functioning as adjunct in the sentence, either initially or finally, it may be instantiated as a PARENTHETICAL, i.e. a syntactic node that does not function as head, complement, specifier, adjunct, filler, extraposition – or anything else that the grammar may provide for – in the phrase of which it is an immediate constituent.

from *in fact*. See Schwenter & Traugott (2000) on the scalar properties of *in fact* 'as an additive discourse marker'.

[7] See also Wilson & Sperber, 1993 and the references there.

[8] 'Marginal' is equivalent to the union of Quirk et al.'s 'disjunct' with their 'conjunct'.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1360674301000119 Published online by Cambridge University Press

'Parenthetical' has been defined in this sense, within the framework of HPSG (Head-driven Phrase Structure Grammar), in Taglicht (1998). 'Filler' is used in this framework to designate the nonhead node in unbounded dependency structures: structures of topicalization, relative clauses and WH-interrogatives (see Pollard & Sag, 1994). 'Extraposition' has been set up as an additional type of node in HPSG in Keller (1995) and Taglicht (1998). [9]

From a semantic point of view, a parenthetical relates to the sentence in which it is included like an adjunct to its head. Compare the different but equivalent versions of (4)–(6) with *actually*$_1$ as parenthetical and as (pre- or post-) adjunct in different sorts of headed structure:[10]

(4) you've |gone 'over the 'M thr/ee· –·
  (a) you |**actually** go \under it· (*CEC* 1.11, TU 1059)
  (b) \/**actually**· you go \under it·
  (c) you go \under it /**actually**·

In (4a), *actually*$_1$ is a Parenthetical node interposed between the Subject node (*you*) and its Head node (the VP *go under it*). In (4b) and (4c), it is an Adjunct node whose Head is the S (NP+VP) node *you go under it*, the order being Adjunct–Head in (4b) and Head–Adjunct in (4c). The present paper will not deal with the significance of the choice between the two placements of *actually*$_1$ as adjunct to the sentence. (This matter has been studied by Clift (1999), using the methods of Conversation Analysis.)

(5) (a) This one, **actually**, I rather like.
  (b) This one I rather like, **actually**.

In (5a), we see the Parenthetical *actually*$_1$ interposed between Filler (*This one*) and Head (*I rather like*) in a topicalization structure, and in (5b) it is the Adjunct following the sentential Head.

(6) (a) |I think the \awful thing /**actually**· a|bout 'getting eng/aged· is |having all your 'married fr\/iends a'round· who |tell you about 'married l\ife·. (*CEC* 2.10, TUs 1106–1109)
  (b) |I think \/**actually**· the \awful thing a'bout 'getting eng/aged· is |having all your 'married fr\/iends a'round· who |tell you about 'married l\ife·

In (6a), there is an example of the Parenthetical between Head and Extraposition in NP structure, and in (6b) we have *actually*$_1$ as Adjunct before its Head (the embedded clause *the awful thing . . . married life*).[11] A comparison of the sentences in (4)–(6) shows that the parenthetical placement of *actually*$_1$ does not affect its

[9] In a theory that allows discontinuous constituents (McCawley, 1982, 1989), marginal *actually* would be a sentence adjunct everywhere. On discontinuity in GPSG (Generalized Phrase Structure Grammar), see Borsley (1996: 230–4).

[10] In the *CEC* prosodic transcription , '–' denotes a 'unit pause' (of one stress unit or 'foot') and '·' a 'brief pause' (of one light syllable), so that the sequence '– ·' indicates something slightly longer than one unit pause.

[11] The same words in the same order could also be interpreted with *actually*$_1$ in the matrix clause, but this would require *actually* to be prosodically subordinated to its Head (*I think*).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1360674301000119 Published online by Cambridge University Press

interpretation in relation to the sentence, though of course there are differences between the alternatives in terms of information structure and in terms of the relation of the sentence to the wider context.

The marginality of *actually*$_1$ is also reflected in its necessary exclusion from the scope of negation. Compare the three variants of (7):

(7) (a) **Actually**, no one had any objection.
(b) No one had any objection, **actually**.
(c) No one, **actually**, had any objection.

The relationship between *actually*$_1$ and negation is the same in a, b, and c.

It is worth noting here that the parenthetical status of *actually*$_1$ (as of parentheticals in general, in the sense here intended) does not depend on its being separated by intonation boundaries from what precedes or follows it. This is exemplified by (4a) and (6a) above. In (4a) there is no boundary either before or after the parenthetical, while in (6a) the parenthetical is prosodically attached to what precedes it and separated from what follows.

2.2 Actually$_2$: *an integral element in sentence structure*

Actually$_2$ is an INTEGRAL element in sentence structure. It is never a sentence adjunct or a parenthetical, but is always the initial element of a sentence constituent. For example:

(8) This isn't just hearsay; I [**actually**$_2$ saw it with my own eyes]. (VP) (=(2) above)
(9) All these substances are harmful, and some of them are [**actually**$_2$ poisonous]. (AP)
(10) All these substances are harmful, and one is [**actually**$_2$ a poison]. (NP)
(11) Of course what he's doing is scandalous, but is it [**actually**$_2$ against the law]? (PP)
(12) The ointment was even found to contain some [**actually**$_2$ poisonous] substances. (AP)

It seems that any major phrasal category can be host to *actually*$_2$, provided that it is semantically appropriate. A phrase is appropriate as a host for *actually*$_2$ only if it represents a SEMANTIC PREDICATE. APs qualify regardless of whether their syntactic function is syntactically 'predicative', as in (9), or 'nonpredicative', in the sense of being 'attributive', as in (12). NPs and PPs, on the other hand, are predicates in their syntactically 'predicative' functions, but not otherwise. Contrast (10) and (11) above with (13) and (14):

(13) *He hadn't committed [**actually**$_2$ a crime].
(14) *He wasn't accused [**actually**$_2$ of a crime].

Any attempt to place *actually*$_2$ at the end of its phrase produces a sentence that English speakers will either treat as ill-formed or interpret as containing *actually*$_1$. For example:

(15) (a) You can be sure of one thing: if he [**actually**$_2$ promises], he'll do it.
(b) *You can be sure of one thing: if he [promises **actually**], he'll do it.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1360674301000119 Published online by Cambridge University Press

(16) (a) Naturally, the people [**actually**$_2$ at risk] are taking a different view.
(b) *Naturally, the people [at risk **actually**] are taking a different view.

Here the reading with *actually*$_1$ is not an option for the (b) sentences, and they are accordingly ill-formed. We may compare

(17) (a) He should have cut out the parts [not [**actually**$_2$ essential to his argument]].
(b) He should have cut out the parts not essential to his argument **actually**.
(18) A: I don't expect he said that. You can't believe everything you see in the papers.
B: (a) I'm not going by the press reports. I [**actually**$_2$ heard the speech myself].
(b) I'm not going by the press reports. I heard the speech myself **actually**.

Sentence (17a), with scalar *actually*$_2$, might be a reply to the question 'With so little time, what do you think he should have done?', while (17b) might be a response to 'Of course it was hard to follow, but with so little time, he had to speak quickly, didn't he?' *Actually* in (17b) in such a context would be understood as *actually*$_1$, and it would imply 'I'm afraid I disagree with you.' In (18), too, we get a clear change in meaning. In B: a, *actually* is the scalar *actually*$_2$ ('I heard the speech myself, and you can't do better than that!'), whereas in B: b it could be intended to forestall some other interpretation of the speaker's own preceding sentence, such as the inference that B did not have to rely on the press reports because he had access to a transcript of the recording. Here too *actually* would taken as *actually*$_1$. On the readings suggested, it would of course be natural for an editor to insert commas after *argument* in (17b) and after *myself* in (18b).

While the marginal item *actually*$_1$ is always outside the scope of negation, regardless of linear order, the integral item *actually*$_2$ is always inside the scope of a preceding negator. For example:

(19) \no one· had |**actually**$_2$ 'disob\eyed any 'order. (scalar *actually*$_2$)
(20) well I |don't **actually**$_2$ 'do it like th/is· (*CEC* 1.4, TU 713) ('truth-insistent' *actually*$_2$)

Though integral *actually* (*actually*$_2$), like its marginal counterpart, is defined in syntactic-semantic terms, the distinction between type 2a (scalar) and 2b ('truth-insistent') correlates with a prosodic difference. Type 2a is always less prominent prosodically than its head, while 2b is typically more prominent (as exemplified in (19) and (20)).[12]

There is a third use of integral *actually* (*actually*$_2$), which occurs only in WH-interrogatives. We shall classify it as type 2c and call it 'WH-insistent'. It is prosodically similar to 2a (the scalar use), in that here, as in 2a, *actually*$_2$ is less prominent than its head, but its meaning is different. Though syntactically integral, like 2a and 2b, it relates semantically to the content of the question, insisting on the need for the information sought and rejecting the inference that might be drawn from the preceding discourse that the relevant information has already been given. For example:

[12] Type 2a, unlike 2b, can be totally lacking in intonational prominence, as in (i):

(i) 573 <A> and the |first f\/our·
574 <A> are the |only 'people who are '**actually** 'going to m\ake it· – (*CEC* 2.9)

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1360674301000119 Published online by Cambridge University Press

(21) A: What kind of job has he got? – B: He works for IBM. – A: Yes, but what does he **actually**$_2$ do?
(22) The reason that your work was not cited in the paper . . . probably has to do with the fact you never (correct me if I'm wrong) ever explain in detail how this wonderful parser you have **actually**$_2$ *works*. (Internet discussion, 8 Oct 1998)[13]

The syntactically integral status of 2c is clear from its inability to stand in initial or final position like marginal *actually*. Consider the inappropriateness in the above contexts of

(23) . . . A: Yes, but **actually**, what does he do?
(24) . . . how this wonderful parser *works*, **actually**.

3 Syntactic structure and intonation

The syntactic difference between *actually*$_1$ and *actually*$_2$ has consequences for the intonational phrasing options. Compare the following two sentences (with '·', as before, marking the end of an Intonational Phrase):

(25) the \house /**actually**$_1$· be|longed to her \parents· (not to her)
(26) the \/house· |**actually**$_2$ be\longed to her 'parents· (they weren't just renting it)

The attachment of *actually*$_1$ to *the house* on the level of intonational phrasing in (25) above is in accordance with a general option for parentheticals to be prosodically attached in this way to the preceding, though not to the following node. Consider the following examples, with parenthetical *however* and *you see*:[14]

(27) (a) the \house how/ever· be|longed to her \parents· (not to her)
(b) *the house· however belonged to her parents· (not to her)
(c) the \house you /see· be|longed to her \parents· (not to her)
(d) the house· you see belonged to her parents· (not to her)

We may contrast this with the intonational phrasing of adverbs that are syntactically dependent on the following VP. For example, with *rather* and *completely* as VP-initial adverbs:

(28) (a) \/some of them· rather \liked the 'speech·
(b) but |nearly \/all of them· com|pletely |misunder\stood what he 'said·

However, utterances containing medial *actually* are not necessarily disambiguated by the prosody. Thus (4a), repeated here as (29),

(29) you |**actually** go \under it·

can only be read as containing *actually*$_1$ in the context in which it occurs (see above); but an identical utterance occurring in a different context could be interpreted as containing scalar *actually*$_2$.

[13] If we substitute a yes/no interrogative, the *actually*$_2$ will be interpreted as type 2a (scalar):

(i) . . . it is not clear whether this wonderful parser you have **actually**$_2$ works.

[14] The rule that parentheticals can be grouped with the preceding but not with the following node follows from a more general rule that applies to all medial nodes in nonbinary syntactic phrases. See Taglicht, 1998.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1360674301000119 Published online by Cambridge University Press

4 Two uses of marginal *actually* (*actually*$_1$): propositional modifier and discourse modifier

4.1 Actually$_1$ *in questions*

We have assumed so far that marginal *actually* always points to the rejection of some proposition previously expressed or implied in favour of the one asserted by the sentence to which it belongs. So we might not expect this item to occur in questions, as it is not the function of questions to make assertions. Yet we have sentences like

(30) (a) Was he **actually**$_1$ Canadian, then (and not American)?
(b) Was he Canadian, then, **actually**$_1$ (and not American)?

These can be paraphrased as in (31):

(31) (a) Am I right in inferring that **actually**$_1$ he was Canadian (and not American)?
(b) Am I right in inferring that he was Canadian, **actually**$_1$ (and not American)?

The primary illocutionary force of the sentences in (30) is interrogative, but they contain an implicit tentative assertion (or suggestion); and this, it seems, is sufficient to make it a suitable host for *actually*$_1$ in the sense we have considered so far. The implicit tentative assertion is signalled in (30) by the presence of *then*, which indicates that the speaker's question is prompted by something he has inferred. The same effect can be produced by the use of initial *so* instead of final *then*:

(32) (a) So was he **actually**$_1$ Canadian (and not American)?
(b) So was he Canadian, **actually**$_1$ (and not American)?

But the presence of an implicit tentative assertion can also be indicated in other ways. Compare (33) and (34):

(33) Did you (**actually**$_1$) want something else?
(34) Did you (***actually**$_1$) want anything else?

The positive bias of (33) (due to the presence of *some*) allows it to accommodate this use of *actually*, whereas the neutrality of the question in (34) (signalled by *any*) makes the *actually* sound odd. (34) is overtly marked by *any* as lacking the sense of tentative assertion (or suggestion, or supposition) without which a question is not a suitable host for this use of *actually*$_1$.[15]

But there is also the possibility of using *actually*$_1$ in a different sense. We can have, for example,

(35) **Actually**$_1$, was he Canadian?

Here we are not concerned with any assertion, implicit or explicit. Here the speaker indicates that he has only just realized that the question is relevant, and that he is

[15] There is no such constraint on *actually*$_2$. See

(i) Of course what he's doing is scandalous, but is it [**actually**$_2$ against the law]? (=[11] in 2.2 above.).
(ii) . . . but is any of it [**actually**$_2$ against the law]?

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1360674301000119 Published online by Cambridge University Press

now about to go ahead and ask it. We may say that here *actually*$_1$ serves as a DISCOURSE MODIFIER ('discourse transition marker' would be more precise but clumsier), whereas what we had in previous instances may be called a PROPOSITIONAL MODIFIER. If we compare (35) above with (36) below, we have a minimal pair:

(36) Was he **actually**$_1$ Canadian?

with *actually*$_1$ as a discourse modifier in (35), as against *actually*$_1$ as a propositional modifier in (36).

4.2 The discourse modifier in statements

The distinction between propositional modifier and discourse modifier can also be made in statements. When *actually* is used to show that the speaker is 'going off at a tangent', that a thought has just come into his head which changes the direction of the discourse, at least momentarily, we have the discourse modifier. So the mention of a person, say John, may prompt an utterance like (37):[16]

(37) ACTUALLY$_1$, we must have a TALK about John. (discourse modifier)

The same sentence, differently accented, may occur without any previous mention of John, or of the need for any kind of talk (more of less 'out of the blue'):

(38) ACTUALLY$_1$, we must have a TALK about JOHN.

Such changes in direction may also be signalled by the use of items like *incidentally*, *by the way*, or (when prompted by the preceding discourse) *that reminds me*. The last of these is not infrequently combined with *actually*, as in (39):

(39) ACTUALLY$_1$, that REMINDS me, we must have a TALK about John.

The following extract from a surreptitiously recorded *CEC* text (2.5, TUs 557–580) has two instances of *actually* marking a change in the direction of the discourse:[17]

(40)

<a> opts [m] opts opt as a verb has been – – around – in my life as long as I remember
<C> |h/\as it·
<C> +|/\oh·+
<B> +it's |been+ a'round in m\y life·
<B> but [@m] · I |think I'm a'ware of it as a com'parative n\ovelty·
<B> [@m] |ie I |don't think it was a'round in my p\/arents' 'life· ·
<C> well |opt \/out·

[16] In (37)–(39), capitalization of a word indicates that it bears an intonational nucleus.

[17] In accordance with the practice of the UCL Survey of English Usage, the words of Speaker <a> have been left without prosodic transcription, because he (unlike <B> and <C>) knew that the conversation was being recorded.

There are a few symbols here that have not previously been encountered in the examples: '@' stands for schwa, '"' for heavy stress, and '***yes***' or '+yes+' for simultaneous talk. '{yes}' marks a subordinate TU.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1360674301000119 Published online by Cambridge University Press

<C> |must be a a |very pe'culiar c\/oinage '**actually**·
<C> |meaning *|not to take \/any 'of [dhi**:**]·
<a> *«the optative 5 to 6 sylls»*
<C> |normal \options·*
<B> |y\es· – ·
<C> +to do |nothing ex'cept z\ero·+
<a> +«the optative syll»+
<B> |I sus{p\ect to 'opt is a} b\ack-for|mation· – –
<B> *|[\m]·*
<C> |**actually** *a a*n\other thing I've |learnt most |interestingly from this |Open University I've been |following this |spr/ing·
<B> |[/m]· – –
<C> "|th\/is 'letter·
<C> which |stands for 'us for – – z/ero· –
<B> |y\es· .
<C> |now '"\I've 'always |taken th/at as a· ·
<C> |Gr\eek letter·
<C> but it |\isn't·

This part of the conversation begins by addressing the question how long the verb *opt* has been in use. When Speaker C decides not to go on with this or with the previous topic – the derivation of the verb *opt* – and to revert to something mentioned just before that, namely the phrasal verb *opt out*, he uses sentence-final *actually* (*well |opt \/out· |must be a a |very pe'culiar c\/oinage '**actually**·*). When Speaker B returns to his view (already expressed earlier) on the derivation of *opt*, C ignores B's utterance and broaches a totally unconnected topic, the linguistic symbol for zero. This time he uses initial *actually* (*|**actually** *a a*n\other thing I've |learnt most |interestingly from this |Open University I've been |following this |spr/ing·*). An additional instance of *actually* as a discourse modifier occurs in *CEC* 2.10, TUs 1106–1109, given as example (6a) above, and repeated here as (41):

(41) |I think the \awful thing /**actually**· a|bout 'getting eng/aged· is |having all your 'married fr\/iends a'round who |tell you about 'married l\ife·

Here the speaker has just been entertaining the company by talking about an embarrassing but funny mistake she made some time ago in a conversation, in the presence of her future husband, at a time when they were engaged. She now drops this incident and takes up the topic of engagements.

Perhaps we should recognize the propositional modifier and the discourse modifier as distinct lexical items. At any rate, the one points to an incompatibility between the proposition asserted and some other proposition, stated or taken to be understood, while the other is a signal given by the speaker that he is initiating a distinct move, which deflects the discourse from the path it was following.[18] While the term 'corrective' may be appropriately used to characterize the meaning of *actually*$_1$, as a

[18] As pointed out by Bas Aarts, *actually*$_1$ as discourse modifier, unlike *actually*$_1$ as propositional modifier, cannot be replaced by *in actual fact*. The latter is quite rare in conversation (only two instances in *CEC*), and is typically contentious in tone, rather than mild or apologetic, but it resembles *actually*$_1$ as propositional modifier in pointing to an incompatibility between propositions.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1360674301000119 Published online by Cambridge University Press

propositional modifier, this will hardly do for the discourse modifier, and it may be better to follow Clift (1999) in calling the latter a marker of 'topic movement'.[19]

4.3 Assertiveness

Sentence (33) above, repeated here as

(42) Did you **actually**$_1$ want something else?

is an example of what Bolinger (1977: 31) calls a conducive question. Such questions he considers to be 'subtypes of suppositions'. Quirk et al. (1985: 808) similarly distinguish between conducive questions and questions with 'neutral polarity'. Conducive questions may have positive or negative orientation (or bias), and positive bias is marked by what they call assertive forms (*some*, *some-*, *always*, *already*, *still*, etc.), which are distinguished both from corresponding nonassertive forms (*any* etc.) and from negative ones (*no* etc.). I suggest that we need to set up a pragmatic feature 'assertive/nonassertive', such that only in the presence of the feature value 'assertive' will it be natural to use *actually*$_1$ as a propositional modifier, but that this requirement does not hold good for *actually*$_1$ as a discourse modifier, or of course for *actually*$_2$. Assertiveness is not just the property inherent in assertions, in the sense of the term assertion as used in speech act theory. Sentence (42) has the feature value 'assertive' without being an 'assertion', and the same is true of

(43) Was he **actually**$_1$ Canadian, then (and not American)? (=(30a) above)

Neither (42) nor (43) are 'indirect speech acts' as this term is usually understood, though there is a similarity. In 'indirect speech acts', we typically have the use of a grammatical structure primarily associated with one kind of illocutionary force, e.g. a yes/no question, for the purpose of conveying a different kind of force, e.g. a request. For example in a sentence like

(44) Would you mind closing the door?

we might say that 'question' is the direct or overt speech act, or literal illocutionary force, and that there is, in addition, an indirect or covert speech act, an illocutionary

[19] See also Oh (2000): '*Actually* can . . . introduc[e] a new topic, or . . . shift . . . the focus or perspective on the current topic (Tognini-Bonelli, 1993: 205; Lenk, 1998: 174–82)'. Clift (1999) distinguishes between 'topic shift', associated with initial *actually*, and 'topic change', associated with final *actually*. The former is said to mark 'movement within a topic', and the latter 'movement from one topic to another' (p. 43). However, this 'is intended to be neither predictive nor prescriptive' (p. 44), and in fact the instances in example (40) above do not accord with the generalization.

In Clift's analysis, position is described in relation to TCUs (Turn Construction Units), not sentences, but 'sentence-initial' and 'sentence-final' seem to entail 'TCU-initial' and 'TCU-final' respectively.

Halliday & Hasan (1976: 239ff.) distinguish between 'internal' and 'external' conjunctive relations, where 'internal' means 'inherent in the communication process, in the forms of interaction between speaker and hearer', and 'external' means 'inherent in the phenomena that language is used to talk about'. But Halliday & Hasan make no distinction that would separate the 'discourse modifier' from the 'propositional modifier'. Both are 'internal' in their scheme.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1360674301000119 Published online by Cambridge University Press

force that has to be inferred by the hearer, namely 'request'. The indirect speech act represents the speaker's real intention and the direct serves as a disguise. An appropriate reaction, therefore, must include a response to the indirect illocutionary force. It's not sufficient to answer

(45) I wouldn't mind at all

and leave the door open. With a sentence like (46) (=(43))

(46) Was he **actually**$_1$ Canadian, then (and not American)?

a response to the literal illocutionary force alone is adequate:

(47) Yes, he was.

But it is also possible to say

(48) You're right, he was

which comments on the supposition implicit in (43) before answering the overt question.[20]

So far, we have been concerned with the relationship between propositional *actually*$_1$ and the feature 'assertive/nonassertive' in root sentences. In what follows, we shall see the same relationship in embedded structures.

5 Propositional *actually*$_1$ in embedded structures

The option of using *actually*$_1$ as a propositional modifier is also available in a variety of embedded structures, provided they have the feature value 'assertive'. This applies most obviously to embedded clauses that contain propositions presented or accepted (perhaps only tentatively) as true, either by the speaker of the sentence, or (in indirect speech) by some person whose utterance (or thought) is reported. This category includes nonrestrictive relative clauses, concessive clauses, and clauses of result:

(49) They evacuated even the houses on the higher ground, which were **actually**$_1$ quite safe.
(50) They were very frightened, though **actually**$_1$ there was no danger.
(51) The floods were already subsiding, so that they were **actually**$_1$ quite safe.

These clauses are necessarily assertive, and therefore unproblematic.

Under the heading of *that*-clauses (with or without the complementizer), we can distinguish between assertive clauses, which are natural hosts for propositional *actually*$_1$, and nonassertive clauses, which are not. Compare (52) and (53):

[20] See Levinson (1983: 263ff.) on indirect speech acts as a problem for linguistic theory. For adherents of Relevance Theory, the indirect speech act is merely one of many kinds of inferences that are a necessary part of utterance understanding.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1360674301000119 Published online by Cambridge University Press

(52) They think that (**actually**$_1$)
  (a) he was informed.
  (b) he is being informed.
  (c) he should be informed.
(53) They demand that (***actually**$_1$)
  (a) he should be informed.
  (b) he be informed.
  (c) he is informed.

where the clauses embedded under *think* are declarative and therefore assertive, and the ones under *demand* are what Huddleston (1984: 351) calls subordinate 'jussive' clauses and therefore nonassertive. Embedded declarative clauses have free choice of time reference and modality and correspondingly free choice of verb forms (as illustrated in (52)), whereas in jussive clauses there is no choice of time reference or modality, and the choice of verb forms, in so far as it is not determined by the governing predicate, depends purely on style and variety (as shown in (53)). What looks like two instances of the same modal *should* (in (52c) and (53a) respectively) must be analysed as two distinct items, one freely chosen, and one governed by the superordinate predicate.[21] The verb *suggest* can resemble *think*, and govern an assertive clause (as in *I suggest you took it*), or be like *demand*, and govern a nonassertive clause (as in *I suggest you take it*). The difference between the assertive and the nonassertive clause is similar but more subtle with *hope*:

(54) I hope that **actually**$_1$
  (a) he won the game.
  (b) he's winning the game.
  (c) he's going to win the game.
(55) I hope that (***actually**$_1$**)** he wins the game.

The pattern in (55) is an optative construction: it expresses the speaker's wish for the occurrence of some event. There is no choice of time reference, and the verb form must be present simple. In terms of illocutionary force, it is similar to the imperative in sentences like *Sleep well* or *Have a good time*. It follows that the embedded clause in such sentences is nonassertive and not a suitable host for propositional *actually*$_1$. But *I hope* can also be used, as in (54), to express a wish for the truthful assertability of some proposition, roughly 'I'll be glad if it turns out that . . .', and there is an implicit positive bias regarding the truth-value of the assertion. The time referred to may be past, present, or future, and the choice of verb form depends in the usual way on the time reference intended. The embedded clause is accordingly assertive and it can accommodate propositional *actually*$_1$.

Conditional clauses exhibit a similar duality. On the one hand, normal clauses of condition lack positive bias, like yes/no questions with neutral polarity, and so they are not appropriate hosts for propositional *actually*$_1$:

(56) (He may stay on, but) if (***actually**$_1$**)** he leaves, we'll have to replace him.

[21] 'Jussives' may be governed by verbs like *demand*, or by adjectives like *essential*, or by nouns like *requirement*.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1360674301000119 Published online by Cambridge University Press

On the other hand, there is also a kind of conditional clause that can be interpreted as implying a provisional supposition that the proposition expressed in it is true. Clauses of this kind are appropriate hosts. Consider, for example, a sequence like (57):

(57) Of course I always thought he'd stay on; but if **actually**$_1$ he's decided to leave, we must think about a replacement.

Here the conditional clause may be regarded as assertive. It could be paraphrased as *If it is true (and it seems to be true) that actually*$_1$ *he's decided to leave*. So here *actually*$_1$ modifies a proposition that is provisionally accepted by the speaker as true. The same holds good for the examples in (58a–c):

(58) (a) If **actually**$_1$ he won't be here next week, . . .
(b) If **actually**$_1$ he's not going to be here next week, . . .
(c) If **actually**$_1$ he's leaving us at the end of the week, . . .

These examples show that when 'assertive' conditional clauses refer to the future, they use *will* or *be going to* or the present continuous form, just like independent or embedded declaratives. Conditional clauses like those in (57) and (58) resemble the polar interrogatives in (30), (32), and (33) above, in that although they do not go so far as to assert the propositions contained in them, they do indicate that the speaker is inclined to accept them as true, and they are therefore 'assertive' in the relevant sense.[22]

A similar distinction can be found in nonfinite clauses. In (59) and (60), we see propositional *actually*$_1$ in an *-ing* clause and an infinitive clause respectively:

(59) His **actually**$_1$ being an impostor and not the Harvard graduate we took him for does not alter the fact that he's very good at his job.
(60) He is thought to have **actually**$_1$ been an impostor and not the Harvard graduate they took him for.

In these examples the nonfinite clauses are semantically similar to embedded declaratives in that they imply corresponding statements ('He is/was an impostor'). Nonfinite clauses that are semantically analogous to 'jussives', and so do not imply statements, are not suitable hosts:

(61) Mary was in favour of our (***actually**$_1$**)** going by bus (not by train).
(62) Mary advised us to (***actually**$_1$**)** go by bus (not by train).

Finally, assertiveness may or may not be present in the representation of a proposition by a restrictive relative clause or by an attributive adjectival phrase:

(63) He told us something that **actually**$_1$ we'd heard before.
(64) He told us nothing that (***actually**$_1$) we'd heard before.
(65) We gave him this **actually**$_1$ not too difficult problem.
(66) Give him an (***actually**$_1$**)** not too difficult problem.

[22] See also Quirk et al. (1985: 1008–9) on the contrast, in conditional clauses with future reference, between *will* or the present progressive form on the one hand and the simple present on the other.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1360674301000119 Published online by Cambridge University Press

What seems to be crucial here is the specificity or nonspecificity of the matrix NP. The oddity of *actually* in (64) and (66) derives from the fact that the nonspecificity of the NPs makes it hard to take the propositions embedded in them as assertive.

We have seen that there is one particular use of *actually*$_1$ which is sensitive to what looks like a variety of things in its environment, including negative polarity items, particular governing verbs and VP forms, and specificity in NPs; and it is suggested that the facts can best be accounted for by positing a pragmatic feature, 'assertive/nonassertive', which is required to inhere in any structure, regardless of its syntactic form, that expresses a proposition. It remains to be seen how exactly this feature can best be integrated in the overall feature structure required for pragmatics.

6 Conclusion

We can sum up as follows:

1. We have distinguished between a 'mild' *actually* (*actually*$_1$), which is marginal in sentence structure, and is always outside the scope of negation, and a 'strong' *actually* (*actually*$_2$), which is integral in sentence structure, and is always included in the scope of negation if it follows the negator.
2. The 'strong', 'integral' *actually* may be (a) scalar, (b) truth-insistent, or (c) WH-insistent.
3. The 'mild', 'marginal' *actually* may function syntactically either as a sentence adjunct (in sentence-initial or sentence-final position) or as a parenthetical. Parenthetical *actually* may be distinguished from integral *actually* by the way the utterance is divided into Intonational Phrases, but some utterances are prosodically ambiguous and depend on the context for disambiguation.
4. Marginal *actually* may be
   (a) a propositional modifier, which points to an incompatibility between the proposition it is associated with and some proposition in the context, expressed or implied,
   (b) a discourse modifier, which points to a change in discourse topic.
5. The appropriateness of the propositional modifier is contingent on the presence of a pragmatic feature value 'assertive' in the host structure. The feature 'assertive/nonassertive' inheres in all structures that express propositions, not only in root sentences but also in embedded clauses, both finite and nonfinite, and in attributive adjectival phrases.

Author's address:
Department of English
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Mount Scopus
Jerusalem 91905
msjosef@mscc.huji.ac.il

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1360674301000119 Published online by Cambridge University Press

References

Aijmer, K. (1986). Why is *actually* so popular in spoken English? In Tottie, G. & I. Bäcklund (eds.), *English in speech and writing*. Studia Anglistica Upsaliensia **60**: 119–29.

Blakemore, D. (1987). *Semantic constraints on relevance*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Bolinger, D. (1977). *Meaning and form*. London: Longman.

Borsley, R. D. (1996). *Modern phrase structure grammar*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Clift, R. (1999). Grammar in interaction: the case of 'actually'. *Essex Research Projects in Linguistics* **26**: 1–53.

Greenbaum, S. (1969). *Studies in English adverbial usage*. London: Longman.

Halliday, M. A. K. & R. Hasan (1976). *Cohesion in English*. London: Longman.

Hickey, L. (1991). Surprise, surprise, but do so politely. *Journal of Pragmatics* **15**: 367–72.

Huddleston, R. (1984) *Introduction to the grammar of English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Keller, F. (1995). Towards an account of extraposition in HPSG. In *Proceedings of the Seventh Meeting of the European ACL*. 301–6.

Lenk, U. (1998). *Marking discourse coherence: functions of discourse markers in spoken English*. Tübingen: Günter Narr.

Levinson, S. C. (1983). *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McCawley, J. (1982). Parentheticals and discontinuous constituent structure. *Linguistic Inquiry* **13**: 91–106.

McCawley, J. (1989). Individuation in and of syntactic structures. In Baltin, M. R. & A. S. Kroch (eds.), *Alternative conceptions of phrase structure*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 117–38.

Oh, S.-Y. (2000). *Actually* and *in fact* in American English: a data-based analysis. *English Language and Linguistics* **4**: 243–68.

Partridge, E. (1947). *Usage and abusage*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin.

Pollard, C. & I. A. Sag (1994). *Head-driven phrase structure grammar*. Chicago: CSLI.

Quirk, R., S. Greenbaum, G. Leech & J. Svartvik (1972). *A grammar of contemporary English*. London: Longman.

Quirk, R., S. Greenbaum, G. Leech & J. Svartvik (1985). *A comprehensive grammar of the English language*. London: Longman.

Schwenter, S. A. & E. C. Traugott (2000). Invoking scalarity: the development of *in fact*. *Journal of Historical Pragmatics* **1**: 7–25.

Searle, J. R. (1969). *Speech acts: an essay in the philosophy of language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Smith, N. & D. Wilson (1979). *Modern linguistics: the results of Chomsky's revolution*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Svartvik, J. & R. Quirk (1980). *A corpus of English conversation*. Lund: Gleerup.

Taglicht, J. (1998). Constraints on intonational phrasing in English. *Journal of Linguistics* **34**: 181–211.

Tognini-Bonelli, E. (1993). Interpretative nodes in discourse: *actual* and *actually*. In Baker, M., G. Francis & E. Tognini-Bonelli (eds.), *Text and technology: in honour of John Sinclair*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 193–212.

Wilson, D. & D. Sperber (1993). Linguistic form and relevance. *Lingua* **90**: 1–25.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1360674301000119 Published online by Cambridge University Press