CHAPTER 4

On the Function of the Epistemic Adverbs *Surely* and *No Doubt* at the Left and Right Peripheries of the Clause

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1 Introduction

My aim in this paper is to address Beeching and Detges’ research question “What are the respective roles of LP and RP for the rise of polyphonous items?” and their hypothesis that LP and RP are asymmetric. The hypotheses most relevant to this paper may be summarized as in Table 4.1. My prime focus is on testing the last hypothesis, that items at LP are likely to be subjective, those at RP intersubjective, but the other hypotheses are addressed as well.

Discussion is based on evidence from the development of two epistemic adverbs: *surely* and *no doubt* in English (see also Traugott 2012). Epistemic adverbs were chosen because epistemic modality in language use is well-known to be at least partially speaker-oriented and subjective. Like other epistemic adverbs such as *truly, surely* and *no doubt* came to be used at LP and RP positions as what Biber and Finegan (1988) call “stance adverbials”. As such

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<td>Link to previous discourse</td>
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* Many thanks to Sebastian Hoffmann for very helpful comments on a draft of this paper.
they comment on the discourse and therefore serve metadiscursive functions. They are particularly interesting for testing Beeching and Detges’ hypotheses because several authors have identified surely as seeking confirmation, an addressee-oriented, intersubjective use (e.g. Greenbaum 1969, Biber and Finegan 1988, Swan 1988, Downing 2001, Aijmer 2002). Furthermore, Simon-Vandenbergen (2007: 10) suggests that surely and no doubt share diachronic similarities and both should be accounted for in rhetorical terms rather than in logical terms of epistemic beliefs and modes of knowing.

For modal adverbs LP and RP are understood as preceding or following the argument structure of the clause, i.e. they are slots at the edge and “outside of” of the propositional core. They are not necessarily utterance initial or final, since they may in English and many others languages be preceded and followed by address terms,1 and preceded by connectives such as and and but, and interjections such as Oh! (initial) as in (1):2

(1) a. ‘But surely you hint at a very grave charge?’
   (1894 Hope, Prisoner of Zenda [CL 3])
   b. ‘Oh, surely there isn’t any danger of that?’
   (1891 Gissing, New Grub Street [CL 3])

Schematically the LP and RP positions can be represented as in (2), where X and Y are variables for material that may optionally precede or follow:

(2) (X) LP Argument Structure RP (Y)

Their particular range of uses raises questions about the generality of the correlations proposed by Beeching and Detges. I will call surely and no doubt used at LP and RP epistemic stance adverbials (EPAs), thereby side-stepping controversies concerning how to distinguish “discourse marker” and “pragmatic marker” (see e.g. Fischer 2006, Brems, Ghesquière, and Van de Velde 2012).

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1 Address terms may also appear within LP and RP, as in:
   (i) “Surely, sir, you would not kill him?”
       (1910 Brebner, The Brown Mask [CL 3])

2 Editions used in the corpora differ with respect to using single and double quotation marks. They are cited as in the corpora.