

## ON SEMANTICS AND PRAGMATICS OF CONCESSIVE PARTICLES IN MODERN ENGLISH

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The present article focuses on the study of concessive particles in Modern English. Considering the linguistic research done, the need to further develop the theory of particles from the communicative-functional approach, to define their functions and determine semantic and pragmatic peculiarities in the text is evident. Particles are important means of both natural speech and indirect speech acts formation. Besides, they influence the utterance semantics. Understanding the peculiarities of particles' semantics and pragmatics will undoubtedly benefit the communication process. Hence this subject is most topical to the language teaching.

**Keywords:** concessive particles, implicit meaning, discourse, semantics, pragmatics.

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### Introduction

Particles bear the greatest responsibility for the felicity conditions of communication. However, these words have the vaguest semantics, unclear and somewhat ambiguous meaning and often no direct equivalent in translation. Particles are able to "express the full range of pragmatic meanings at the minimum price" (Volkova 2009: 327).

Despite the fact that particles have been the subject of many linguists' research (Greenbaum 1969; Stenstrom 1986; Апресян 1988; Булатникова 1973; Виноградов 1972; Волкова 1987; Гайдина 1979; Николаева 1985; Падучева 1982), the need for further development of the theory of particles in the light of communicative-functional approach, clarification of their semantic and pragmatic peculiarities in the text still exists.

The *aim* of the present article is the study of both semantic and pragmatic meaning of English concessive particles, peculiarities of

their functioning and also speech-act meaning of the statement with particles. According to classification suggested by L. Volkova (Волкова 1987), the following lexical units belong to the word class of concessive particles: really, actually, after all, anyway (anyhow), in fact.

The *methods* used in the present study include semantic, functional-pragmatic and discourse analyses.

The *topicality* of the present article is conditioned by the general focus of modern linguistic research on the study of parts of speech not only in the framework of a sentence, but also within both the text and discourse, the particles cognitive and communicative functions being taken into consideration.

The results of the present study may find *practical* application in the process of theory of grammar as well as in English language teaching. Active use of particles is one of the language proficiency markers and if a person

fails to master the particles meaning, her/his communication competence is going to be tragically incomplete (Николаева 1985: 7; Volkova 2009: 327).

Modern English and American fiction is the *study material* of the article as the speech acts found in fiction are in fact the same as in actual communication (Блох 1986: 123; Богова 1986: 29).

### Invariant meaning of the particles

The semantics of particles is directly related to the phenomenon of implicit meaning. Sign situation is not confined only to codified sign meaning. Being part of human activity, the sign situation undergoes causative-consecutive analysis and is the source of numerous implications, i.e. in addition to sign meaning it has various self-implicit meanings. Particles serve as covert implications markers in the utterances explicit sign meaning. These implications relate to explicit meaning as condition to consequence and are called presuppositions. Due to particle the hearer forms an idea that its nuclear element is not used in isolation, but is associated with other text components. In other words, particles' nuclear elements presuppose the existence of all counter-elements that constitute their main presupposition (Алексеева 2001).

Many linguists agree on the ambiguity of particles' semantics (Копыленко 1981: 19; Кривоносов 1974; Николаева 1985) which is realized only in the context, on the absence of particles lexical meaning, the latter being defined by the sentence. It is generally accepted that the meaning of the utterance with a particle is specified by the context.

In lexicography the meaning of the particle may be generalized; for example, concessive particle **really** may have an invariant meaning of opposition in the text: "despite something" or "regardless of something".

Compare the following examples:

*"It snowed! It **really** snowed for a change"* (Auel 1985: 152): it started snowing after all/

finally/ despite the fact that somebody had lost hope.

*"I'm not **really** heartless"* (Christie 1986: 152): regardless of the common opinion, she is not heartless.

*"It is so mad, my friend, that sometimes I'm haunted by the sensation that **really** it must be very simple"* (Christie 1980: 120): in fact it's rather simple, despite seeming difficult.

*"I'd like to know where the girl was **really** going"* (Christie 1983: 102): despite the explanations, she went to a totally different place.

The above examples give sufficient evidence to state that the particle **really** has the same meaning in all the utterances, though somewhat different shades of meaning are being manifested under the text influence. While sustaining the idea of the particles' invariant meaning idiosyncrasies, we come across the phenomenon that at first contradicts the earlier stated. Thus, for example, in a number of contexts the meanings of the particles **really** and **actually** coincide:

*"This celebration is **really** a means of preserving our Scottish heritage"* (Dailey 1981: 14).

"What time would that have been? Mrs. Kendal?" - asked Weston.

*"Well, I don't **really** know - we don't go much by the time"*.

"The steel band was still playing?"

*"Yes - at least - I think so - I can't **really** remember"* (Christie 2000: 121–122).

*"My younger brother, Rory, is **actually** my half-brother"* (Dailey 1981: 17).

The adduced examples demonstrate that the particles **really** and **actually** are interchangeable; similar overlaps are numerous.

Thus, a conclusion may be drawn that the particles' wide synonymy does not exclude their invariant character, as the invariant meaning is not depleted but it rather acquires a new shade under overlapping.

The particles' meaning is to a large extent defined by the context; at the same time it is the particle that prompts the definite context surrounding.

## Concessive particles in discourse

### Communicative functions of concessive particles

Three major types of meaning that constitute the semantics of a linguistic sign (referential, pragmatic and inner linguistic meaning) are defined in linguistic literature. They correspond to three basic principles of semiotics – semantics, pragmatics and syntax (Бархударов 1975: 65–69; Моррис 1983: 41–43).

Pragmatic meaning of a linguistic sign is either the relation between these signs and their interpreters (Моррис 1983: 42), or the relation between the linguistic sign and a person using this language (Степанов 1985).

It should be noted that basic parts of speech bear essential meaning in the sentence and a smaller extent of pure pragmatics, whereas peripheral word classes, the particles in particular, convey the main pragmatic message (Апресян 1988: 16). Any particle has a definite intonation pattern of an utterance or a set of such patterns (Баранов, Кобозева 1988: 49). **Complex interaction rules** between an intonation pattern of an utterance and particles trigger the resultative pragmatic meaning.

Particles specify the relation to reality (Иванова 1970: 29), supplementing some meaning content, “additional semantic series” (Николаева 1985: 33). Hence a particle enables an utterance to unite the world of reality with the world of complementary hidden semantics.

Due to particles in the utterance structure we learn about some extra details of events.

A: “He’s made passes at you, hasn’t he,” – said Edward. “Answer me – I know he has.”

B: “Oh yes,” – said Evelyn, carelessly, – “but he makes passes at everyone. That’s just Greg. It doesn’t ever really mean much, I imagine. It’s just part of the Greg human act.”

A: “Do you care for him, Evelyn? I’d rather know the truth.”

B: “Greg? I’m quite fond of him – he amuses me. He’s a good friend.”

A: “And that’s all? I wish I could believe you.”

B: “I can’t **really** see how it can possibly matter you,” – said Evelyn dryly.

A: “I suppose I deserve it...” (Christie 2000: 98).

The particle **really** appears in the utterances of the same speaker in the above examples. It is evident that the person’s status or role dictates certain behavior pattern including speech strategies. In this particular case the particle **really** realizes the “defense” strategy: the speaker can’t but answer unpleasant, provocative questions having no chance to escape the subject.

One of the major functions of the particles in the utterance is to transfuse feelings, emotions, attitude to the reality, addressee, and message content.

A: “Are you **really** so sure?”: the speaker doubts the veracity of the subject under discussion.

B: “**Really!** I will not permit this” (Hailey 1978: 31): the speaker attempts to express his indignation by using the particle.

The particles’ sphere of use is correlated with the speaker’s wish to express her/his own attitude, concealing it under the veil of objectivity, common standards, and accepted values paradigm. The listener is supposed to share the speaker’s opinion. If it is not the case, the listener somehow gets the message that it’s senseless to contradict.

“**After all people die every day**” (Christie 1980: 107): in fact people die every day. Compare: “People die every day.” There are by far more chances to hear objections to the last statement.

Thus, the use of particles allows the speaker to conduct a “hidden dialogue” (Апресян 1988: 11) trying to influence the listener in a mild and ethical way, to ascribe her/him certain actions, convince her/him in the veracity and reliability of the statement and to assuage potential doubts. Hence the particles are instrumental in creating indirect “speech acts” (Почепцов 1985: 271–278; Конрад 1985: 376–380), respecting the “principles of politeness” (Грайс 1985: 223).

While establishing better contact between the speakers according to the “principles of

politeness”, the particles correspondingly “eliminate an important group of obstacles in the message channel” (Арнольд и др. 1990: 48).

Stylistically the particles introduce an emphatic element to the utterance, thus adding up an emotional coloring, facilitating the creation of a speaker’s “speech portrait” (Апресян 1988: 15), making the speech more expressive and vivid.

### Pragmatics of concessive particles

Linguistic studies of recent years demonstrate an ever-growing interest to the study of linguistic means in pragmatics due to intensive development of communicative linguistics. According to the definition given by Y. Апресян (Апресян 1988: 8), the pragmatics of the particles is understood as a fixed speaker’s attitude to: a) a reality, b) utterance content, c) an addressee.

Thus, within the framework of the present article the problem of the speaker in wording the utterance is being the focus.

Particles are “communication” elements signaling the speaker’s “involvement” in the communication (Kramsch 1996: 116). Regular realization of such units is observed in linguistic reality, their role being to establish the subject’s contact with information interpretation of the utterance.

The statement with a particle turns out to be formed on the principle of contrast typology: the leading typological principle is used to create its primary (neutral information) basis, whereas interference of a particle (this basic intellectual or emotional “processing” overplus) is a reaction to the leading grammar tendency.

Consequently particles rather discuss than inform. The concepts “modality”, “expressiveness”, “emotivity” and “evaluation” prove to be essential in the study of particles (Алексеева 2001; Беляева 1985: 94–103; Дункель 1992: 15; Маслова 1991: 183–184; Мороховская 1975; Quirk *et al.* 1972).

Given the constant expressiveness of the utterances with particles, this part of speech

pragmatic function consists in phrasing evocative subjective modality, realizing the particles ability to emphasize the basic element.

Allowing for all the definitions given in the dictionaries, we hold that the particle *anyway* conditions the existence of contrast in the text. Information that we get from the sentence part preceding the particle *anyway* contradicts the information that follows it. Thus, the particle *anyway* has the meaning of contrast and holds both parts of the sentence within some boundaries. Implicit information introduced by this particle contrasts the preceding sentence. It should be noted that the implicit part of information evident to the listener or reader both opposes and unites information in the text. Hence it links the text acquiring the meaning “nevertheless, nonetheless, though”, for example:

*“You’re just lucky you don’t have that Alzheimer’s disease, Paulie,”- was what he said. I hate him calling me that, Paulie, but he goes on doing it, anyway”* (Seal 1986: 79).

*“The heavy hickory baton passed over its head and spine close enough so its fur ruffled (that’s what Dean said, anyway, and so I pass it on, although I’m not sure I really believe it)”* (Seal 1986: 85).

Besides, the particle *anyway* has the function of adding the meaning of concession to the information we get from the context.

*“Dorothy said, with hesitation, “You are very kind, but there must be some mistake. I have not killed anything.” “Your house did, anyway,”- replied the little old woman, with a laugh”* (Dunne 1986: 2).

*“Anyway, when I sat down to eat, he crawled slowly and reluctantly out of his box and, head down, ambled to my chair and leaned against my foot”* (Coffman 1991: 32)

*“He can’t do anything about it anyway”* (Crichton 1987: 39)

The particle in the above sentences has a full implicit meaning of concession. Hence one may infer that this particle is used to contrast two parts of information in the sentence. It gives extra binding to the text, organizing and uniting ideas, making them more logical.

Other different shades of meaning are often introduced to the meaning of contrast. The particle *anyway* is used in the meaning “despite the circumstances” or “in any case”:

“*She would have done so anyway if she hadn’t heard a placating quality in his voice.*” (Dailey 1981: 105).

“*They’d have to go anyway...*” (Christie 1986: 17).

“*Stout women oughtn’t to be allowed to bathe anyway; they look so revolting in bathing dresses.*” (Christie 1986: 26).

The below example seems to arouse special interest:

“*Anyway, I haven’t helped myself to anyone’s wife or fiancés yet.*” (Christie 1987: 24).

The particle *anyway* in this case has the following implications: 1) others act this way; 2) despite the fact that I have never taken the liberty of acting this way. This utterance meaning may be interpreted as: “At least I never act this way”.

The particle *anyway* may introduce additional information to the sentence. Its use signals that the fact mentioned is not important:

“*Anyway, it’s going to be so interesting for me to see it afresh through your daughter’s eyes.*” (Godwin 1995: 234).

“*Anyway, she wasn’t frowning exactly, but her mouth made the shape of a frown in its natural state.*” (Golden 2005: 20).

“*Anyway, she’s rather pretty, don’t you think?*” - *Mother added.*” (Golden 2005: 21).

“*It’s Richetti – not Ridgeway – and anyway of course my name isn’t Ridgeway now.*” (Christie 1987: 110).

The main function of the particle in this case is to add the information of the first part of the sentence to that of the following. It should be noted that *anyway* has the function of concluding. Consider the following examples:

“*If I’m not invited to the party, I come. Anyway, I had to come and say goodbye to the Bridesons.*” (Dunne 1986: 27).

“*Anyway, when you decide to come to your senses let us know.*”

*Felix Leiter tapped out another cigarette. ‘Anyway, all’s well that ends well.’* (Fleming 2002: 22).

In the first example the particle unites two sentences in the text. It also opposes the wife’s intention to go to the party to that of her husband to stay home. Besides, the meaning of completion is added to concessive one. The woman indicates the reasons to be present at the party and the particle *anyway* generalizes the aforesaid. The third example also proves the above-mentioned fact. The man concludes that all is well that ends well and the particle *anyway* emphasizes the idea. The particle meaning may be interpreted as “thus, finally, nonetheless, still”.

The particle *anyway* may also have the function of specifying the information, for example:

*I’m not satisfied with you. I’m not satisfied with you anyway.*

“*She looks like a fool to me,*” - *Granny said. “We don’t need another monkey anyway.”* (Golden 2005: 21).

The first example expresses dissatisfaction without any additional implicit meaning. The second example specifies the information, making it clear that the results were unsatisfactory. To support the point, consider the following examples:

“*Are you sure that’s the one they want?*”

“*For now anyway.*” (Dunne 1986: 40).

“*Oil*”, says Bill, never explodes. *It’s the gas that forms it that explodes. But I will shake hands with him, anyway.*” (Seal 1986: 2).

“*Without hesitation Coleman said, “I’m sorry. I owe you an apology – about that anyway.”*” (Hailey 1978: 133).

Coleman apologizes for some definite situation. In this utterance the particle has the meaning “in any case”. When *anyway* is used in the beginning of the sentence it may change the subject, for example:

“*Maybe you’re just too pretty yourself to be able to see it elsewhere,*” “*Anyway, let’s register the girl. Now ... Chiyo, is it?*” (Golden 2005: 29).

“*When do you think Kanako last washed her hair? Anyway, her okiya is right next to*

yours. Take them for me, would you? (Golden 2005: 55).

In the above examples *anyway* is used in the beginning of the sentence and in both cases changes the subject. It also unites the sentences.

## Conclusions

1. Particles realize their meanings and functions only in discourse. They serve as means of binding while opening up more “space” than was overtly expressed. Particles enable the listener to reconstitute the missing structures. When particles function as stylistic means for indicating the major text component, binding is also achieved.
2. Particles don't denote anything, though they are considered to be lexical items, their meaning being conditioned. Their semantic meaning comprises existing mental processes connected to the communication situation. It is these conditionally definite mental process signals (as the subject change) that are contextually determined to refer to certain communication zone on the basis of communication tasks the speaker appeals to.
3. The particle allows the statement depicting a situation to link the real world with the world of additional hidden semantics.

Due to particles, utterance constituents, information on some additional event details is received. One of the particles' major functions in the utterance is to transfuse feelings, emotions, attitude to the reality, addressee and message content. The use of particles allows the speaker to conduct a “hidden dialogue” trying to influence the listener in a mild and socially accepted form, to ascribe her/him certain actions, convince her/him in the veracity and reliability of the statement and to assuage potential doubts. Hence the particles are instrumental in creating indirect speech acts giving the clues to interpret the utterance content, especially the implied, not overtly expressed one.

4. Particles' discourse functions are connected with discourse organization and influencing the listener psychologically. These tasks may be realized by specifying explicitly unexpressed components that result in the speakers' breaking the information boundaries (given explicitly) while using both common facts and information provided by the situation.

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## ŠIUOLAIKINĖS ANGLŲ KALBOS NUOLAIDOS DALEYČIŲ SEMANTINĖS IR PRAGMATINĖS SAVYBĖS

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Straipsnio tikslas – ištyrinėti šiuolaikinės anglų kalbos nuolaidos dalelytes. Apibendrinus lingvistinius tyrimus, galima daryti prielaidą, kad nuolaidos dalelytės teorija reikalauja tolesnių mokslinių tyrinėjimų ir gilesnės komunikacinės funkcinės šios teorijos analizės. Akivaizdu, kad būtina apibrėžti semantines ir pragmatines šių kalbos dalių ypatybes tekste, o tai padėtų tobulinti komunikacijos procesą. Nuolaidos dalelytės yra reikšminga tiesioginė ir netiesioginė kalbos formavimo priemonė, veikianti kalbėsenos semantiką. Todėl galima daryti išvadą, kad šių kalbos dalių tyrimai turi ypatingą reikšmę kalbų mokymo procese.

**Reikšminiai žodžiai:** nuolaidos dalelytės, numanoma reikšmė, diskursas, semantika, pragmatika.

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