Chapter 6
The epistemic certainty adverbs certainly, definitely, indeed: Syntagmatic and paradigmatic dimensions

6.1. Introduction

In this and the next chapters we shall try to define the meanings of the adverbs of certainty. Starting from a general subclassification which is based on their coded meanings our aim is to arrive at a more fine-grained description of their contextual meanings and functions and to point out which items from the group are more closely together than others in what contexts. In the following sections we first explain what we mean by the 'syntagmatic' and 'paradigmatic' dimensions in this context and then on what basis the adverbs are subclassified in the way they are. In the descriptive sections we have opted for dealing with each adverb separately. This allows for a detailed analysis of the individual adverbs. The similarities and differences, as they appear from the analyses, are pointed out and are summed up at the end of the discussion of each subgroup.

6.2. A note on frequencies

Statements about relative frequencies are based on the ICE-GB data. Exact figures are given in the tables (Chapter 5, Table 1 and Appendix 1) and can be checked there. In the description we opt for 'vague' quantifiers to point at tendencies, for two reasons. First, given the relatively small size of the corpus, exact frequencies are unlikely to give a more realistic picture than the vague descriptions. Secondly, exact figures would detract from the purpose of focusing on the essence, which is the possibility of the adverbs to function in different contexts with varying meanings and the extent to which we can see patterns of greater or lesser consequence for the overall picture of the polysemy of the adverbs concerned. The exact number of attested examples in each of these contexts is of less relevance.

There may be various reasons why one adverb is less frequent than another one. These reasons have to do with the semantics, the pragmatics or the stylistics. It is possible that the semantic meaning of an item is one
which speakers frequently choose to express. For example, when we compare certainly with inevitably, the much higher frequency of the former can be said to be due to the more specific meaning that inevitably has (see Chapter 8, Section 8.2.4). Pragmatic factors have to do with the development of rhetorical functions which some adverbs have. For instance, the expression of concession seems to be a frequent option in argumentation, whether in institutional discourse (such as debates or interviews) or in everyday interaction. Now some adverbs, particularly of course, frequently occur in this context (see Chapter 9, Section 9.3). The development of some adverbs into discourse markers is another example of a pragmatic development accounting for frequency. For instance, certainly is used to express compliance with a request (see Chapter 11, Section 11.5.6). The more functions an adverb has developed, the more polysemous it is, the more likely it is to have a high frequency of occurrence. The third factor is stylistics. Some adverbs are more stylistically marked than others. In general, the more formal an item the lower its frequency. For instance, the ‘speech act adverbs’ admittedly, undeniably, unquestionably belong to the more formal registers and their low frequency is related to that (see Chapter 9, Section 9.2).

6.3. A syntagmatic approach

The meanings and functions of the adverbs need to be examined in the contexts in which they are used. Contextualization involves looking at all possible clues which provide information on what the adverbs do in the particular utterances in which speakers have chosen to use them. This means looking at factors which tell us something about the interpersonal and textual (information structuring) values of the adverbs in addition to their ideational meanings. In speech, one crucial clue to both interpersonal and textual functions is prosody, and it is obvious that the study of the prosodic realizations of the adverbs would be rewarding as a means of getting at a subtle description. In the absence of this type of information from our data we have to restrict ourselves to other clues. These include various syntactic and lexical factors which provide information on the speaker’s motivations and intentions, both interpersonal and textual.

The study of syntagmatic behaviour involves looking at the adverbs at different levels, i.e. at the level of the group, and within, above and beyond the clause. We adopt a ‘bottom-up’ approach, starting from the lowest level
of the group, to end at the level beyond the clause, i.e. the larger co-text in which the adverbs occur. At group level we can examine to what extent the adverbs can take modifiers. The (im)possibility of being preceded by degree modifiers subclassifies adverbs as gradable or non-gradable and gives information on their nature as modal adverbs.

Within the clause we look at the position and scope of the adverb, in order to see to what extent the different positions correlate with different meanings. In discussing position we have made a distinction between initial position, medial, final and ‘other’. The distinction between initial, medial and final (or end) is based on Quirk et al. (1985: 8.14). Initial and final refer to the positions respectively preceding and following the other clausal elements. Medial position means that the adverb either precedes (pre-finite) or follows (post-finite) the finite verb directly. We have found it necessary, however, to include a category ‘other’ to refer to other positions in the clause.

A second aspect which is brought into the picture is mood. Mood is here used in the Hallidayan sense of the term (Halliday 2004:111-115), i.e. to refer to clause type as realized by the position of subject and finite verb. This involves looking at clause type (declarative, interrogative, imperative), at the presence of modal auxiliaries, at negation and at the subject. In some cases the choice of first and second person subjects appears to have an impact on the pragmatic interpretation of adverbs.

At the next higher level, above the clause, the occurrence of the adverbs within the sentence or clause-complex is looked at. This means examining patterns of co-occurrence with certain connectors, and types of sub-clauses in which they tend to occur.

Finally, examining the syntagmatic behaviour of the adverbs beyond the clause involves looking at the larger co-text, preceding and following utterances. This means that we have to go beyond the sentence to look for clues regarding interpersonal relations and information structuring factors which have prompted the use of the adverbs. Logical and rhetorical relations which are expressed within the sentence in one case may indeed be expressed between sentences in other cases.

It should be noted, however, that these aspects are not discussed (in equal detail) in all cases. Only when the factors appeared to be relevant are they brought into the picture.
6.4. A paradigmatic approach: the use of translation paradigms

By using data from translation corpora we arrive at a refined analysis of the meanings or functions of adverbs which appear in different co-texts and contexts in monolingual corpora. Thus translations into other languages are a valuable complement to the syntagmatic analysis. Moreover, translations in as many languages as possible provide a more detailed picture of the lexical fields to which the adverbs belong than if only one language is brought into the analysis. Finally, we can get new insights into the epistemic and the evidential modal subsystems on the basis of translation correspondences and of how they are used for rhetorical purposes.

In this and the following chapters we use translation data from Dutch, Swedish, German and French. In each of these languages the adverbs were found to have been translated in various ways. The correspondences (to be found in the Tables in Appendices 2–11) include translations from and into English. This means, for example, that the Dutch correspondences of certainly include words which were translations of certainly as well as words which were translated by certainly. The correspondences in each separate language form a paradigm in the sense that the lexical items are linked to each other by meaning elements which are present in the source item. The cross-linguistic correspondences thus throw light on the multifunctionality of the adverbs under discussion and are a useful additional tool in the semantic and pragmatic profiling of the adverbs.

6.5. Subclassification of the adverbs of certainty

In the discussion adverbs will be dealt with in larger subgroups in which they belong on the basis of their coded meanings. It is important to emphasize, however, that at this point we are using the classification as a starting-point for the description. Adverbs will be shown to be multifunctional, which makes it necessary to put them into several classes. Further, such terms as ‘expectation marker’ will turn out to be ambiguous as well: different adverbs can be said to express ‘according to expectations’ in different ways. But for now the classification provides a rough framework for treating the adverbs in clusters. The more subtle picture which comes out of the description is discussed in Chapters 10 and 11.

Four groups are distinguished, which we refer to as the epistemic, the evidential, expectation and speech act groups. This subclassification largely
The epistemic certainty adverbs certainly, definitely, indeed corresponds with Chafe’s (1986) classification of evidentials on the basis of degrees of reliability, source of knowledge, mode of knowing and knowledge matched against verbal resources or expectations (see also Chapter 3).

The group of epistemic certainty adverbs includes adverbs defined positively as expressing a high degree of speaker commitment to the truth of the proposition, and negatively as not specifically referring to modes, sources and matches of that knowledge. In other words, the adverbs in this group do not have the core meanings of expectation, evidence or speech act grounding which characterize the other groups. This group includes certainly, definitely, undoubtedly, no doubt, indeed, surely, decidedly, for sure, for certain, assuredly, indubitably.

The second group of adverbs express certainty as following from evidence. The group includes obviously, clearly, plainly, evidently, manifestly, patently. This is basically a group of adverbs which refer to the ‘mode of knowing’ in Chafe’s terms, i.e. which express that the certainty is arrived at on the basis of induction from available evidence.

The third group is the expectation group and includes of course, naturally, inevitably, necessarily. These adverbs share the characteristic that their core meaning of certainty is based on the fact that the state of affairs is in accordance with expectations. In Chafe’s terms they match the speaker’s knowledge against expectations.

The fourth group is the speech act group and includes the infrequent adverbs avowedly, admittedly, arguably, incontestably, indisputably, unarguably, undeniably, unquestionably, incontrovertibly. Adverbs in this group express certainty through conveying explicitly that the speaker’s viewpoint is to be seen in the light of alternative voices which are either subscribed to or countered.

As shown in Table 1 (Chapter 5), there are a few adverbs which are particularly frequent in the corpus and these will be given most attention in the following sections. The discussion in this and the following chapters will focus on the following adverbs: of course, certainly, obviously, indeed, clearly, no doubt, definitely, surely, naturally, evidently. The last one in this list, evidently, is less frequent but is nevertheless included in the discussion because of its interesting evidential nature. Some less frequent adverbs (plainly, necessarily, inevitably, arguably, admittedly, unarguably, unquestionably) will be treated in less detail, while some of the adverbs included in the lists above (such as assuredly, manifestly) did not occur at all in the ICE-GB corpus, and only one example was found of patently. These will not be dealt with.
6.6. Certainly

6.6.1. General remarks

Certainly is the second most frequent adverb, following of course (see Chapter 5, Table 1). Its earlier meaning is defined in the OED as follows: “1. in a manner that is certain; in a way that may be surely depended on; with certainty”.

Thus like other adverbs of certainty it originated as a manner adverb which developed into a sentence adverb. It seems to be the prototypical adverb in the field of modal certainty, not only because it is a derivation of the adjective certain and thus belongs in the formal paradigm which also has the noun certainty, but also because it does not have the obvious extra semantic features which other adverbs in the field have, such as reference to shared knowledge (in the case of of course, see Chapter 8, Section 8.2.2) or reference to the source of certainty (in the case of clearly, see Chapter 8, Section 8.1.2). Its relatively high frequency raises the question what functions it performs in present-day English. This question is examined by looking at its syntagmatic behaviour and at its translation paradigms.

6.6.2. Syntagmatic description

At group level it appears that certainly is sometimes preceded by a degree modifier. There are only two degree adverbs, however, which occurred in front of certainly, namely most and almost. These two modifiers seem to work in opposite directions, pushing up and lowering the degree of certainty that the speaker has. Examples are the following:

(1) But to the extent that it is a facility uhm I would most certainly not hesitate to use it i uh in aid of deception as was the case in my judgement by General Schwarzkopf in the preparation of his splendid deception programme (ICE-GB:S1B-031/81)

(2) Uh may have been on a stone base the real building as it were that this is a version of but almost certainly the walls made of probably mud brick (ICE-GB:S2A-024/79)
If certainly is seen as an adverb at the top of the epistemic scale which has possibly at the bottom and probably somewhere in-between, then almost certainly is lower on that scale than certainly, while most certainly merely emphasizes the meaning of certainty rather than pushing it up. The use of most certainly seems to serve a rhetorical function of emphasizing commitment.

With regard to position in the clause, certainly appears to be flexible. Table 1 (Appendix I) shows that medial position in the clause is by far the most frequent one for certainly. Initial position is also frequent, and end position as well as ‘other’ positions likewise occur. In addition, certainly is used as a response. We shall look more closely at these different positions.

Medial position can be said to be unmarked. In this position the adverb either precedes or follows the finite verb immediately. Consider:

(3) No I think I would certainly want to live with someone that could understand one’s own angst and anxieties (ICE-GB:S1A-020/269).

(4) I fear the truth probably lies somewhere in-between and is certainly very much less colourful (ICE-GB:S2A-045/27).

Unless there is evidence to the contrary this position entails that the adverb has the whole of the proposition within its scope. This follows from the fact that it is situated around the finite, which is the hub of the proposition in the sense that it grounds the proposition by means of tense, aspect and modality (Halliday 2004: 115). In this position the adverb is firmly integrated within the clause. However, context and/or intonation may override the neutral scope. In comparison, if the adverb occurs before the finite where post-finite would have been possible, it occupies a more marked position. This is the case when it precedes an auxiliary or the verb be. The adverb is then even more likely to emphasize the truth of the proposition as a whole in focusing on its turning point, the finite. The more to the left, away from the core of the clause, the more marked the position. In the case of responses which consist of (subject and) finite only, pre-finite position is normal to emphasize that something is or is not the case. This is the only possible position in negative clauses to convey that the negation is within the scope of the adverb. Here are two examples:

(5) Certainly wasn’t (ICE-GB:S1A-084/107)
Certainly wasn’t finished (ICE-GB:S1A-056/244)

In discussing the position of adverbs in the clause it is useful to keep in mind the distinction made by Auer (1996) between the middle, front, pre-front and end field. As Auer points out, the pre-front field is of particular interest because “it is a preferred locus for processes of grammaticalization” (1996: 297), i.e. processes whereby adverbs turn into discourse markers. Auer describes the function of the pre-front field as follows: “ [...] to frame the subsequent utterance, i.e. to provide some information which is important for its understanding. This framing function includes metalinguistic comments, but also many other functions” (Auer 1996: 310).

It is important to distinguish between front and pre-front field. Pre-front field is a more peripheral position in the sentence than the front, middle or end ones. Auer argues that this initial, peripheral and syntactically loosely connected place “allows dealing with framing matters and reserves the front field for referential continuity” (1996: 312). In English it is the position occupied by loosely attached elements such as discourse markers (see e.g. Brinton 1996; Traugott and Dasher 2002). In the classification of corpus examples according to position we have used the term ‘initial position’ to include both front and pre-front field positions. However, in the discussion a distinction will be made between different types of relationship with the following clausal elements.

Certainly is frequent in initial position. Example (7) illustrates this:

(7) Uh certainly they are more complex (ICE-GB:S1B-006/226)

Initial certainly can have different functions, depending on its scope. In speech, loosely connected elements are typically separated from the rest by a pause, in writing a comma is a typographical indication of loose connection. However, there are no instances in the data of initial certainly separated from the rest of the clause by a comma. Such a use would be unambiguously that of a discourse marker which has the whole of the following clause in its scope. That certainly can occur in such an unambiguous pre-front position is, however, shown by a search through the BNC (cf. Chapter 11, Section 11.3). On the other hand there are more cases in which certainly does not have scope over the whole of the following clause, but only over the following element. The scoped element is then typically the subject, but it may also be a marked theme, such as an adverbial. We shall refer to this use of certainly as its focalizing use and to the adverb in this function as a ‘focalizer’.
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In the positions which were classified as ‘other’, i.e. somewhere within the clause but not in the typical medial positions, certainly has this focalizing function most unambiguously. Consider the following examples:

(8) So they are setting a better example for the many school children that we have here in the crowd certainly at uh this stage (ICE-GB:S2A-010/138)

(9) It did because we didn’t really want to go to Holland and certainly not to northern Holland which is not near all the famous places (ICE-GB:S1A-021/224)

Least ambiguous with regard to scope are cases where the adverb occurs in such very marked positions as between a preposition and its complement noun, as in example (10):

(10) As I understood it Mr Sainsbury hadn’t had a discussion with certainly Harvest Vack and Field to arrange the necessary finance for R C Ward to continue with the purchase (ICE-GB:S1B-061/123)

End position of certainly signals the addition of the adverb as an after-thought, and the scope is the whole of the proposition. In example (11) below, for instance, certainly seems to have been added to comment on the whole proposition and has the function of reassuring the previous speaker:

(11) A: I I mean
    I don’t know whether
    what can we do
    hopefully they’ll ring me up <> and say <,>
    we’ll give you a call get in touch with you <,>
    do you think the letter addresses the issue
B: no <> yeah yeah
   yeah yeah I think it does
A: yeah
B: it does
   I mean that I think if you <> send that to him he’s got to
   address the issue <> this time certainly (ICE-GB:S1A-078/159)
Certainly

The mood of the clause in which certainly occurs is normally declarative. There are no instances of interrogative clauses, as is to be expected since epistemic adverbs are incompatible with questions: speakers cannot at the same time express their assessment of the truth value of a proposition and question that proposition (see e.g. Nuyts 2001: 76). For the same reason modal adverbs are not compatible with imperatives, which express the speaker’s wish to bring about a state of affairs and by definition have no truth value. Hence such sentences as the following seem anomalous:

(12) *Probably go to the station directly.

Interestingly, there was one instance of an imperative with certainly in the data:

(13) Oh and certainly use the time to visit schools different sorts of schools (ICE-GB:S1A-033/196)

How can we explain this case? The explanation lies in the development of the adverb into an emphasizer. Quirk et al. (1985: 583–584) point out that a number of modal adverbs commonly function as emphasizers. The list given by Quirk et al. includes certainly. On p. 587 Quirk et al. claim that “[i]n general, the emphasers do not appear with imperatives, but some people use actually, definitely, and really with imperatives”. In other words, they do not mention the possibility of certainly with an imperative, but it appears from our data that it does occur. This may be a sign of its continuing development towards an emphasizer, and of its closeness to definitely in this respect (cf. Quirk et al.’s example Definitely buy one now). In fact, any modal adverb which can be used to modify the strength of the illocutionary act rather than the speaker’s assessment in terms of probability can combine with an imperative or question. Compare:

(14) Where could you have lost your keys? Try the hotel perhaps.

This seems perfectly acceptable as perhaps turns an order into a suggestion, and hence functions as a modifier of the illocutionary strength.9

When we look at collocations of certainly with modal auxiliaries, we see that it co-occurs with a modal in about one in five cases. Most frequent is would, followed by will. Both of these can be used epistemically as well as dynamically (volition). Example (15) illustrates the epistemic use:
(15) That would certainly improve the situation substantially on what exists at present (ICE-GB:S1B-033/120)

In (15) the speaker conveys epistemic commitment to the hypothetical state of affairs. In contrast, there is only one instance of (epistemic) must as a collocate. The improbability of co-occurrence must lie in the nature of must and certainly. With regard to must Palmer (1990: 12) points out that “epistemic must usually not merely makes a judgement, but also bases that judgement upon the evidence available, and to that extent is evidential”. Hoye (1997: 105) follows up on this, saying: “The range of adverb collocates epistemic MUST attracts, such as APPARENTLY, CLEARLY, EVIDENTLY, INEVITABLY and OBVIOUSLY, supports Palmer’s argument”.

There seems to be no reason, however, why must and certainly should be incompatible. The reason for the rarity of occurrence may simply be a desire to avoid redundancy, as both items express strong commitment to the proposition.

Negation occurs in certainly clauses in one in five instances. This points to the fact that certainly tends to occur in contexts where speakers negotiate the truth value of a proposition, explicitly or implicitly, since a negative always presupposes an alternative positive viewpoint.

As pointed out above, certainly frequently has one specific element in its focus rather than the whole of the proposition. When certainly is focalizing, the implicature is that the certainty applies to the focused part only. For example:

(16) It seems to me that for instance certainly within the Jewish tradition it’s very difficult to identify a concept of the secular in the sense of that which is outside the realm of religion (ICE-GB:S1B-028/40).

The certainty applies here to ‘the Jewish tradition’, and by implicature less so to ‘other traditions’. This tendency for certainly to single out what is certain in contrast with what is not, is confirmed when one looks at elements above the clause in which certainly occurs. Speakers often use certainly to express that they are sure about one thing and by implication they express less certainty about another proposition in a clause-complex. The less certain element may be explicit in the sentence or may be implicitly everything that is not qualified by certainly. Example (9), repeated here as (17), illustrates a case where the less certain element is explicit:
Certainly

(17) It did because we didn’t really want to go to Holland and certainly not to northern Holland which is not near all the famous places (ICE-GB:S1A-021/224)

The contrast is here between the weaker ‘not really’ and the stronger ‘certainly not’. This type of certainly is considered by some to be non-epistemic in that it means ‘particularly’. Byloo et al. (2007) refer to it as the ‘scalar use’, in contrast with the epistemic one. The adverb is said to ‘situate an ‘element’ on a scale or in a range of related ‘elements’ given or implied in the context (i.e. typically what scalar particles do – cf. for instance even, still, etc.)’ (Byloo et al. 2007)

However, it is very difficult and in our view not very fruitful to separate this type from epistemic certainly. For instance, in the following instance we have a similar contrast between what is less and more certain but replacement by particularly is not possible.

(18) I wonder who supplies them at the moment because uh uh certainly none of the locals do (ICE-GB:S1A-027/34)

Here the uncertain element is ‘who’, the certain one ‘none of the locals’. The contrast between certain and less certain is also explicit in the following, through the juxtaposition of certainly and probably:

(19) Uh certainly the Secretary General will come out and as I said earlier John McCarthy will probably come out as well (ICE-GB:S2A-008/174).

In the following examples, certainly occurs in a clause introduced by but, contrasting information which is certain with uncertainty in the preceding clause:

(20) Well we don’t know the nature of the disease but it certainly produces attacks of ascending infection, and it in any case produces hardening of the glands and indeed if it doesn’t swell it becomes palpable (ICE-GB:S1B-010/87)

(21) I don’t know that she really speaks for the cabinet but she certainly speaks for herself and doesn’t I don’t think on this occasion uh reflect the mood of the British people (ICE-GB:S1B-035/22)
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The clause containing certainly may also be followed by a but-clause instead of occurring within it. In such cases speakers contrast what is certain with a proposition which is more foregrounded. Backgrounding a proposition which is qualified as certain and then contrasting it with another proposition has the effect of indicating concession. Consider the following example:

(22) And I put forward the argument which could certainly be contested uh but which I have some faith in that some residue remains... (ICE-GB:S1B-028/30)

The contrast between possible contestation and personal belief indicates that certainly expresses less than full commitment on the part of the speaker. The speaker presents alternative views as acknowledged in order to strengthen his or her own view in the but-clause. This heteroglossic strategy can be exploited in argumentative prose where the writer builds in agreement with hypothetical other voices to defend his or her own argument:

(23) ...only half understood and mysterious certainly but out there somewhere nonetheless (ICE-GB:S2B-028/90)

When we look at the wider co-text, the preceding and following discourse of sentences containing certainly, we find the same motivation as within the sentence, namely to contrast the proposition in question with earlier propositions. Compare the following instance:

(24) it certainly tasted strong enough (ICE-GB:S1A-009/161)

The motivation for expressing certainty in this case is to contrast it with lack of certainty about something else in the discourse. The context tells us that there is a contrast with ‘Maybe she did something to it’. The speaker is uncertain about the cause but certain about the effect, namely that it tasted strong enough.

In responses, certainly functions as a signal of emphatic agreement. The following passage illustrates this (even though, interestingly, certainly is immediately contradicted by what follows, a contradiction patched up by the next speaker):
Certainly 93

(25) B: W what what what you do in in high Victorian ti in empire Uhm you try to you build Hyde Park in Calcutta little realising you don’t get quite as much sort of rain Well you do there’s a lot of rain in Calcutta but not at the same time as you do in Hyde Park so for about all year round about ten months of the year uhm the the equivalent of Hyde Park the <unclear-word> in Calcutta looks exactly this colour <laughter> and very wonderful too The other two months it looks not unlike Hyde Park <„> <laughter> on a hill Uh but but uh i it it’s a very good colour <>like nothing else is <„>Thank you
A: MmYeah And the people still play cricket on it
B: Oh yes certainly
Well actually no Mostly people live on it now <>
A: Really
B: Mhm <>
A: I suppose they live on it as well but they still play cricket on it (ICE-GB:S1A-056/163)

6.6.3. Semantic-pragmatic description supported by translation paradigms

The syntagmatic facts show that certainly as the ‘prototypical’ adverb of certainty has several more specific uses and functions. While it retains its core meaning in all these cases, it acquires specific overtones in some of them which it does not have in other contexts. The translation paradigms in French, German, Dutch and Swedish (see Appendix 2) provide further insight into these different functions. It appears that in all four languages there are prototypical equivalents which are as polysemous and multifunctional as certainly (or even more so), while there are also translation equivalents which are appropriate in some contextual uses but not in others. For example, Dutch zeker is by far the most frequent correspondence of certainly, and it is at least as flexible and multifunctional as certainly.10 Prototypical equivalents in the other languages are Swedish säkert, French certainement. The following instances show zeker as an equivalent in a clause followed by a but-clause (26) and in a focalizing function (27).11

(26) I certainly believe in it, but I do not believe that means purchasers of time-shares in Member States other than their own should be systematically cheated while the criminal authorities stand by just watching. (TRIPTIC:DBEE:009:001)
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‘Ik geloof daar zeker in, maar ik geloof niet dat dit betekent dat...’

Yet we do not trust our own Member States to control the humane transport of animals which is being properly controlled in Member States – certainly in Ireland at the moment. (TRIP-TIC:DCEG:007:001)

‘Toch vertrouwen wij onze eigen lidstaten niet wanneer het er om gaat toe te zien op humaan vervoer van dieren terwijl dit in de lidstaten – zeer zeker in Ierland – naar behoren wordt gedaan.’

However, other equivalents are much more context-bound and are indications that particular functions of certainly are lexicalized in the target language. These target language equivalents are then within the same translation paradigm and are confirmations of the existence of the multifunctionality and polysemy of certainly. For example, the emphasizing function of certainly can be made explicit in the translations in all languages concerned. In Swedish it is marked by the translation verkligen (‘really’).

Well, we’ve certainly got to hear that one, haven’t we? (ESPC:RD1)

‘Ja, den måste vi verkligen få höra, eller hur?’

Other translations functioning in the same way as verkligen are definitivt (‘definitely’), absolut (‘absolutely’). German uses wirklich and bestimmt for the emphatic use.

You certainly look ahead. (OMC:AH1)

Du planst wirklich weit voraus.

Not today or tomorrow, certainly not, but in a year’s time, in five years, in twenty, as one grew older and began to feel, perhaps, more out of place, to yearn back for “one’s own”, whatever that might be. (OMC:ABR1)
Certainly he had a strong streak of solipsism in him, but surely not so strong that he would have failed to notice a riot going on around him. (ESPC:RF1)

Det fanns visserligen ett starkt solipsistiskt drag i Millers karaktär, men det kan knappast ha varit så starkt att han inte märkte att han befann sig mitt i ett upplopp.

There does seem to be if not European Community law, certainly European Community consensus on this issue, but of course it is one that needs careful watching. (TRIPTIC:DXEG:018:001)

Er schijnt terzake, zo geen communautair recht, dan in elk geval communautaire consensus over deze kwestie te zijn, maar een en
ander moet natuurlijk wel nauwkeurig in de gaten worden gehouden.

Il semble donc qu’il existe, si pas une législation communautaire, du moins un consensus au niveau de la Communauté européenne à propos de cette question...

Dutch in elk geval (‘in any case’) restricts what is certain to a specific case. In (32), European Community consensus is contrasted with European community law. Swedish has equivalents such as framför allt (‘above all’), i alla fall (‘in any case’), i varje fall (‘in any case’), i vilket fall som helst (‘in any case’).

A focalizing function is also illustrated by the French expression du moins meaning ‘at least’, Swedish åtminstone and German am wenigsten. The translation in this case makes explicit the aspect ‘even if x is not certain then (at least) y’:

(33) Most of these, and certainly the most important ones, have now been fulfilled. (ESPC:EADA1)

De flesta av dessa villkor har nu uppfyllts, åtminstone de viktigaste av dem.

(34) No one knew, not even Dorothy — certainly not Dorothy — that Harriet was pregnant again. (OMC:DL1)

Niemand wußte, nicht einmal Dorothy — die am wenigsten —, daß Harriet schon wieder schwanger war.

Summing up, both the syntagmatic findings and the translations show that certainly often functions in a context of contrast with uncertainty. Even when it is emphasizing, emphasis takes place against a background of doubt or non-belief. Of particular interest are the focalizing uses where certainly restricts the certainty to a special case, where the contrast is with a larger universe.
6.7. Definitely

6.7.1. General remarks

Definitely seems to be close to certainly. Dictionaries often define them in terms of each other or by means of the same set of vocabulary items. For instance, in the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1995) the adverb certainly is defined as ‘without any doubt’, while definitely is defined as ‘with no chance of being wrong; certainly’. Macmillan English Dictionary (2002) defines definitely as “without any doubt”. The OED gives as the earlier meaning of definitely “a. In a definite manner, determinately, precisely”.

In the following sections we shall examine how definitely compares with certainly.

6.7.2. Syntagmatic description

It appears that definitely is modified in the data by very, absolutely, quite.

(35) Oh yes very definitely (ICE-GB:S1A-095/233)

(36) Absolutely definitely (ICE-GB:S1A-080/191)

(37) It’s quite large quite definitely children too yes (ICE-GB:S1B-072/129)

These modifying words are intensifiers, strengthening the force of definitely and thereby of the illocutionary act. In the case of absolutely definitely each of the adverbs could have been used on its own and the combination conveys strong commitment. In comparison, certainly was found with most and almost. While most fits into the set of ‘boosters’ found with definitely, almost weakens the commitment to a lesser degree of certainty (see Section 6.6.2). The data do not contain instances of weakened definitely, which seems to be reserved for emphatic commitment. In order to check to what extent the collocations in the ICE-GB are indeed representative the COBUILD corpus was consulted for premodifiers of definitely and certainly. It appears that the premodifiers of certainly are in practically
all cases almost and most (there is one example of absolutely and one of quite), while the premodifiers of definitely are overwhelmingly most, quite and very (with two cases of absolutely and three of almost). Although the two adverbs thus seem to admit similar modification, the preferences are clearly different: definitely opts for strengtheners, while certainly opts for either the strengtheners most or the weakener almost. This points to the fact that definitely is a word which has the primary function of emphasizing one’s commitment, while certainly primarily expresses epistemic certainty but in addition has an emphasizing function.

With regard to position in the clause, definitely has a strong preference for medial position, more so than certainly (see Appendix 1). Like certainly it is also used alone in responses. End position is also an option. On the other hand, Table 1 (Appendix 1) shows that initial and ‘other’ positions, which are frequent for certainly, are (practically) absent for definitely. This means that in the data definitely does not occupy the discourse marker slot (pre-front field) and does not function as a focalizer to the extent certainly does.

The following examples illustrate medial position, before the finite lexical verb and after copular be:

(38) I definitely want to perform with a group and also do some choreography for my final assessment uhm (ICE-GB:S1A-002/139)

(39) Total Recall is definitely a film to watch (ICE-GB:S1A-049/331)

When definitely occurs in end position it has the whole of the proposition in its scope:

(40) Oh really want it finished by February definitely (ICE-GB:S1A-084/224)

(41) If I wrote this uhm a week later I would’ve remembered the time better than I do now definitely (ICE-GB:S1B-066/3)

However, definitely in medial, initial end (after the VP but before another obligatory element) or end position is not always modal but can be a man-
ner adverb with the meaning ‘in a definite way’. Examples are the following:

(42) And the British board have said quite definitely that they will not allow athletes to double (ICE-GB:S2A-007/135)

(43) It’s the only thing people can’t prove anything definitely about (ICE-GB:S1A-084/109)

(44) I didn’t say anything you know definitely (ICE-GB:S1B-071/14)

(45) Has this definitely been decided or is this just pure speculation? (ICE-GB:S1B-007/188)

This meaning of definitely plays a role in differentiating its modal meaning from the modal meaning of certainly (see further below).

In terms of mood there is one example in the corpus of an imperative with definitely (which is also the only example of initial position):

(46) Definitely go ahead (ICE-GB:S1B-071/16)

The occurrence of definitely in an imperative clause is comparable to that of certainly: it strengthens the force of the command or advice. Its function is also that of an emphasizer.

There is one instance of definitely in an interrogative clause, although it is a clear example of a manner adverb:

(47) Has this definitely been decided or is this just pure speculation? (ICE-GB:S1B-007/188)

While certainly was found to collocate quite frequently with modal auxiliaries, definitely rarely does so. This indicates that definitely occurs more typically in factual unmodalized clauses. Hoye points out that definitely “remains too lexically loaded to occur in the environment of epistemic MUST, where certainly may be a more natural choice” (1997: 163). However, while the collocation is not frequent, it is not impossible, since the ICE-GB data do contain an instance of definitely with epistemic must.
The epistemic certainty adverbs certainly, definitely, indeed

(48) It must definitely must have been on ninety (ICE-GB:S1B-080/36)

In contrast with Hoye’s intuitions, this combination seems to us harmonious, in that both auxiliary and adverb express high speaker commitment. It could equally well combine with deontic must: You must definitely give it another try. In combination with will the adverb definitely emphasizes the speaker’s certainty about the predicted state of affairs or commitment to saying so:

(49) And he kept saying well you’ll definitely be really good you know (ICE-GB:S1A-090/215)

An interesting finding is that in medial pre-finite position definitely occurs with a first person subject in 11 cases out of a total of 19 such cases. Here are some examples:

(50) I definitely want to perform with a group (ICE-GB:S1A-002/139)

(51) I definitely like Americans (ICE-GB:S1A-080/55)

(52) So many people come along because they’ve seen what’s been going on in the back of What’s On, and I definitely think that that should be carried on because people do read it they do respond to it they do take action on it (ICE-GB:S1B-078/79)

In these examples the verbs are mental processes (want, like, think) and definitely emphasizes the strength of the speaker’s volition, liking and conviction respectively. In such cases the meanings ‘I am certain that’ and ‘very much’ merge: ‘I’m certain that I want to perform with a group’ equals ‘I very much want to perform with a group’.

How does definitely compare with certainly? In the case of definitely the ‘lack of doubt’ arises from the fact that some decision has been taken which is somehow permanent. The state of affairs is certain in the sense that it is ‘decided’, ‘not to be changed’, rather than that it would be based on the speaker’s subjective evaluation (as is the case with certainly). The link with the manner adverb is quite clear in some examples and such cases give a glimpse of the emergent modal meaning:
(53) Well it's now definite uhm and I definitely want to go to Japan uhm until I uh (ICE-GB:S1A-097/240)

(54) So Chris and Marilla are definitely coming down (ICE-GB:S1A-100/120)

The modal meaning ‘it is certain’ is clearly linked with ‘it has been decided definitely’. The emergence of the modal meaning of definitely seems to be explicable as follows: when it occurs as a manner adverb with such verbs as say, prove, decide (which it frequently does), it signals that the results of these processes are to be taken as permanent, not to be detracted from. If something is definite, it is not to be changed. If you can say/prove/decide something definitely (manner) then it is definitely the case (epistemic). We see a movement of definitely from objective to subjective certitude.

From the ‘above the clause’ perspective, too, there are differences between certainly and definitely. In contrast with the former, the latter does not evoke a contrast with something less definite or certain, it does not occur in unambiguous focalizing positions and does not create expectations of a following but. On the other hand, if we go beyond the clause-complex to look at the larger discourse context, we do find similarities. It appears that definitely occurs in very similar contexts. Compare:

(55) The mechanisms responsible for such adaptation are not always clear, and they may be due to change in the receptors themselves or in some other part of the receptor – response system. Nor is it clear to what extent this phenomenon is generally involved in the tropic responses of higher plants. However, it is definitely a feature of the phototropic behaviour of Phycomyces sporangiophore, which can respond over a range of light intensities covering nine orders of magnitude (ICE-GB:W2A-025/72).

Here also there is a clear contrast between what is not certain and that which the speaker qualifies as ‘definitely true’. In such contexts the difference between certainly and definitely is not obvious, and the two adverbs come very close and overlap.
The epistemic certainty adverbs certainly, definitely, indeed

Another context in which they are very close is in responses. Consider example (56), in which definitely confirms the previous speaker’s statement:

(56) A: have your attitudes changed toward towards disabled people since both of you come becoming involved in this Have you consciously been aware  
B: I think it’s it’s uh more of an increase in awareness  
C: uhm uhm  
B: Yeah definitely  
C: definitely uhm (ICE-GB:S1A-002/53)

6.7.3. Semantic-pragmatic description supported by translation paradigms

The contextual facts reveal that definitely functions as a marker of commitment to the proposition, as an emphasizer with often a strong emotional force. It tends to be strengthened rather than weakened, probably as a result of speakers’ wish to be even more convincing, since it is a common process for frequently used intensifiers to lose force and hence to be in need of further intensification. The translation paradigms confirm these findings, in that definitely has cross-linguistic equivalents which are also intensifiers (see Appendix 4). For example, the cognate definitivt is by far the most frequent correspondence in Swedish (see Appendix 4, Table 4a), as in example (57):

(57) Behind the policemen was a middle-aged woman who looked definitely flustered. (ESPC:DF1)  
Bakom poliserna stod en medelålders kvinna som definitivt såg hysterisk ut.

Other equivalents have in common that they express epistemic certainty which is very strong. In the following instance the French original has à coup sûr, which is translated by Dutch het staat vast (‘it is certain’) and by English definitely. All three expressions convey the highest degree of certainty:
(58) il eut été plus judicieux dans une première étape d’interdire formellement les hormones de synthèse, à coup sûr dangereuses (...) (TRIPTIC:DBFM:010:001)

(...) want daar staat van vast dat ze gevaarlijk zijn

it would have been wiser first of all to ban formally synthetic hormones, quite definitely dangerous (...)

In German also the same tendency towards using expressions of high certainty as equivalents was found, and stronger expressions than the simple sicher are used, as shown in (59):

(59) “Come on, mum”. “They’re definitely in the dining-room,” Matilda whispered. (OMC:RD1)

“Los, Mami”. “Sie sind totensicher im Eßzimmer”, wisperte Matilda, “ganz bestimmt”.

It is also clear from the translations, however, that the boundary between evidentials and non-evidentials is not a sharp one. Swedish klart, German ganz klar, Dutch duidelijk, which all mean ‘clearly’ occur as equivalents of definitely, as does French évidemment. If something is clear or self-evident it is also absolutely certain:

(60) But the women of twenty years ago were definitely saying that they preferred the softer receptive male. (OMC:ROB1)

Doch vor zwanzig Jahren sagten die Frauen ganz klar, daß sie den weicheren, rezeptiven Mann bevorzugten.

Compare also the following example where the Dutch original duidelijk (the prototypical equivalent of clearly) is translated by the French evidential à l’évidence, but by English very definitely:

(61) In Groot-Brittannië en Duitsland komt het veel voor, maar men ziet wel dat er duidelijk een algemene groei is in de Gemeenschap op dit terrein. (TRIPTIC:DBND:016:001)

It is very common in Great Britain and Germany, but very definitely on the increase in the Community generally.
6.8. Indeed

6.8.1. General remarks

The historical development of indeed has been described by Traugott and Dasher (2002: 159–165). Indeed has developed from a prepositional phrase ‘in action/in practice’ with adverbial function to an epistemic modal adverb expressing the speaker’s /writer’s commitment to the truth of the proposition. By the end of the 16th century it changed further to an adverbial with the discourse marker function of signalling addition. In present-day English indeed is relatively frequent, coming after of course and certainly (see Chapter 5, Table 1). It is multifunctional and in some of its uses at least its modal meaning is not evident. In the following sections we examine these various uses in order to establish what if anything they share semantically.

6.8.2. Syntagmatic description

In contrast with certainly or definitely, indeed cannot be modified by a degree word: it does not refer to a gradable evaluation. What does happen, though, is that its meaning is reinforced by other adverbs with closely related meanings. Consider the following:

(62) It’s been suggested even indeed by some of my right honourable friends, that I decided to resign solely because of questions of style and not on matters of substance at all (ICE-GB:S2B-050/1)

The word even strengthens the meaning conveyed by indeed, namely that the state of affairs was contrary to what the speaker was able to expect. Consider also:

(63) And what you can see is it’s it’s merely a kind of flat-backed shed which has been erected uhm the sort of thing that’s really very simple indeed to build (ICE-GB:S2A-024/77)