

DIALANGUE

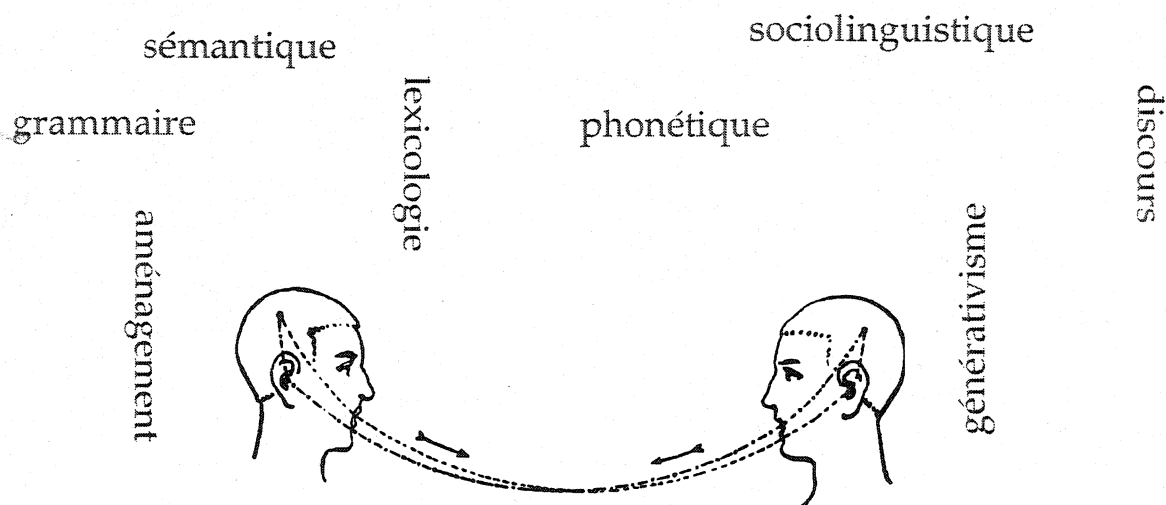
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LA LINGUISTIQUE AUJOURD'HUI ET DEMAIN



« Circuit de la parole » dans *CLG* de F. de Saussure (1916)

- ARTICLES ■ MÉMOIRES DE DEUXIÈME CYCLE
- TRAVAUX DE PREMIER CYCLE
- COMPTES RENDUS ■ ACTUALITÉS LINGUISTIQUES

THE NOTION OF INCLUSION IN THE ADVERBS «TOO» AND «ALSO»

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At first glance the adverbs «too» and «also» seem to show a tremendous amount of overlap when they are used to express the notion of inclusion. For example, the following sentences are almost indistinguishable in terms of the expressive effects they achieve:

(1a) Take this one too.

(1b) Take this one also.

(2a) It also has the effect of causing the temperature to drop.

(2b) It, too, has the effect of causing the temperature to drop.

This overlapping of meanings is not without consequences. While a native speaker of English would not have a problem using these adverbs correctly in all circumstances, such is not the case for somebody learning English as a second language. Because of the closeness in meaning of *too* and *also* when these adverbs are used to express inclusion, the non-native speaker is liable to substitute one for the other at random. As will be shown here, this type of free substitution is not possible because *too* and *also* represent two distinct solutions to the problem of representing the notion of inclusion.

As illustrated in (3a) and (3b) the two adverbs show different syntactic properties in certain expressions of inclusion:

(3a) I shall call and also write.

(3b) I shall call and write too.

There is a very strong tendency to add inclusive *too* to the end of an utterance and to use inclusive *also* before a lexical verb. Roggero (234) argues that the two words remain synonymous in spite of their syntactic parting of the ways, but evidence can be found to show that this is not the case. (3b) presents an ambiguity which is not present in (3a). Without access to a phonetic realization of (3b), it is not clear whether the speaker will call and then write, or imitate the person he is addressing by calling and writing in the same manner that that person will call and write. There is no way of construing (3a) to get any notion of the speaker imitating the actions of his listener.

Roggero (234) also argues for the synonymy of (4a) and (4b):

(4a) I also have a bike.

(4b) I, too, have a bike.

His claim is a weak one, however, as (4a) clearly offers more possible interpretations than (4b). Depending on the stress pattern of the phonetic realization, the speaker could be either adding himself to a list of bike owners, claiming that he has a bike in addition to other things, or calling attention to his actual possession of a bike. The speaker in (4b), on the other hand, is only claiming that he has a bike, just like someone else.

Clearly, the type of inclusion evoked by *too* is not the same as that evoked by *also*. The problem is now to determine exactly how the two representations of inclusion differ. Some clues can be found in a brief study of the etymology of the two words. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, *too* is a stressed form of the preposition *to* which, in the sixteenth century, began to be spelt with a double 'o'. The semantic evolution of *too* over time can be outlined as follows. The word originally meant «in addition, furthermore, moreover, besides». It then came to mean «in excess, more than enough, superfluously, superabundant» and then «excessively, extremely, exceedingly». In contrast, *also* was originally an emphasized expansion of *so*, which meant to such an extent, or to the extent implied, as previously mentioned or described, with the word *all* added on. The combined form, *also*, resulted in the following series of meanings: «all one, all the same, altogether, all to such an extent or all to the extent implied».

It would thus seem that *too* has, from the outset, expressed inclusion as a process of addition, a process of something being tacked on in excess of what is already there. When this notion of addition – his transcendence of what is originally there – was dematerialized over time, the result was, logically enough, the use of *too* as an intensifier, a role that *also* can never play! *Also*, on the other hand, would seem to express inclusion as a process of inserting something in an existing set of things. Whatever is to be included is absorbed into an existing grouping, not added on in addition to what is already there. While the final result of the inclusion process is essentially the same thing – i.e. membership in a set – the actual acts of including evoked by *too* and *also* would seem to be quite distinct.

This hypothesis can be put to the test by examining how well it accounts for observable syntactic and semantic of *too* and *also*. As has already been mentioned, *too* is most frequently found at the end of an utterance. If, in fact, the role of *too* is to include something extra through a process of addition, it would seem logical to place the adverb in a position which implies a tacking on has occurred.

(5) I have a bike too.

What is more, if *too* is moved out of its usual phrase or sentence final position, it is almost always set off from the rest of the sentence by commas, thus retaining its «added on-ness».

(6) I, too, want a bike.

Cases of *too* occurring in initial position are extremely rare, apparently being confined to a very limited number of dialects of English.

In contrast, *also* is more at home in a sentence internal position, not offset by commas. It is only very rarely found in sentence final position, and is even rejected in this position by some native speakers of English. Prescription grammars often outlaw the use of *also* at the end of a sentence (Tothill et al., 580). Unlike *too*, which seems to be appended to the original syntactic structure of a sentence, *also* is fully integrated in terms of both syntax and punctuation.

Another piece of syntactic evidence is found in the fact that *also* can be used in initial position in a sentence as a type of connector in conversation when someone wishes to continue a train of thought:

(7) Also, I wanted to tell you that I need the car tonight.

Significantly, *too* rarely plays a similar connecting role and is not generally used to extend a train of thought. It is used instead to tack on afterthoughts.

(8) By the way, your car was stolen too.

Once again the syntactic evidence supports the argument holding that *too* evokes inclusion by addition on to something while *also* evokes addition through assimilation.

Semantic evidence can also be presented to support the hypothesis being put forward in this article. It has already been mentioned that *too* can be used as an intensifier while *also* cannot. The following examples illustrate this point:

- (9a) It is too hot.
- (9b) It is also hot.

In (9a) the use of *too* intensifies the adjective that follows it, giving one the sense that it is hot beyond or in excess of what is considered normal hotness. (9b), on the other hand, gives a completely different semantic meaning. It suggests that hotness is one of two or more qualities modifying a single object. The object then in question has both the quality of being something other than hot and the quality of hotness. There is no suggestion of the hotness being excessive.

The role of an intensifier is to add to the quality of the adjective or adverb, to extend it beyond the normal range of the quality, hence making it more intense. This increasing intensity is easily achieved through the adverb *too*. *Also* cannot add on in this way, so it cannot fill the role of an intensifier. Instead, *also* seeks, through assimilation, to lend the object being evoked another quality.

The hypothesis being put forth here also leads to a better understanding of why *too* is more common than *also* in short answers.

- (10a) I have, too
- (10b) I have also.

- (11a) I can, too.
- (11b) I can also.

The reason becomes clearer when these sentences are put in context.

- (12) You don't have any money! Have, too!
- (13) You can't sing like us! Can, too!

In (12) and (13), the subjects are contesting exclusion from a particular group of people and expressing the desire to be added to the set. In other words, a situation of exclusion is set up and any additions are seen as being in excess of the original amount or number of members. Since *too* evokes that which is in excess, it is perfectly suited to this type of short contestation.

Also is rarely used in such circumstances because it does not evoke an addition in excess of an original amount. Inclusion with *also* is the product of an act of comparison and is only possible when objects to be grouped together all share a common quality. *Also* tells us that something can be included in a set because of the sameness it shares with the other members of the set. *Also* is a sign of assimilation, not an imposed addition. The end result is essentially the same – an extra member is included in a set – but the way in which the inclusion occurs differs according to the adverb.

Clearly, more work is required on the problems posed by the inclusive process evoked by *too* and *also*, but the preliminary semantic and syntactic evidence presented here would seem to support the hypothesis that *too* evokes an addition made by transcending a certain point or limit, while *also* evokes an act of inclusion through assimilation.

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