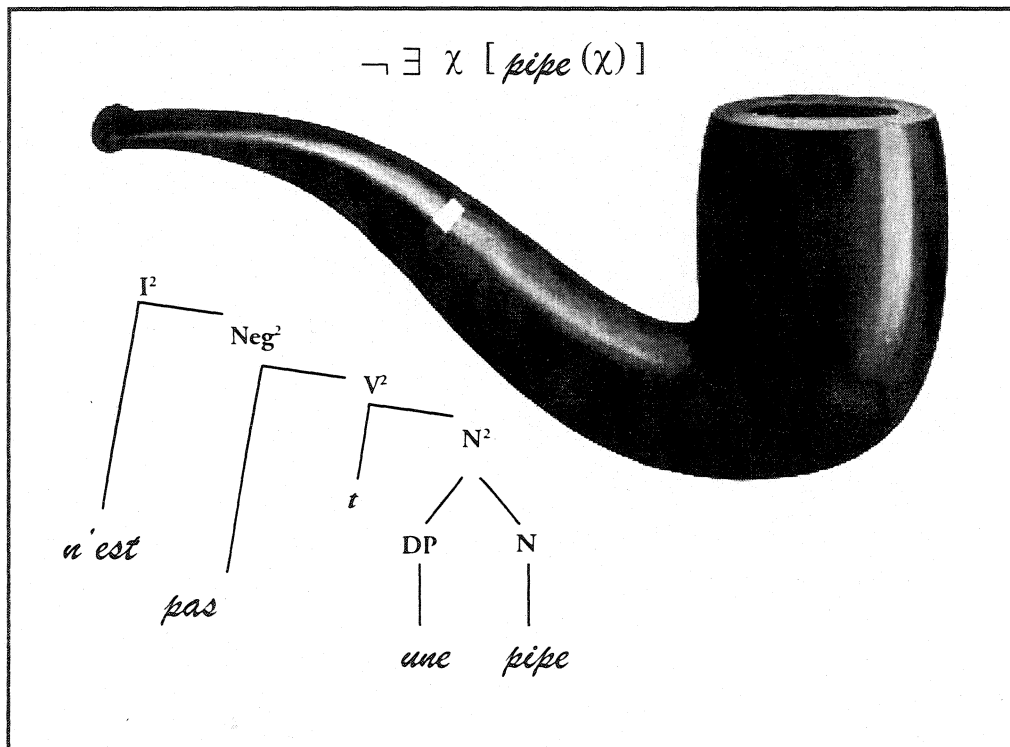


DIALANGUE

BULLETIN DE LINGUISTIQUE
volumes 8 et 9, avril 1998

Unité d'enseignement
en linguistique et en langues modernes
Université du Québec à Chicoutimi

QUESTIONS DE SENS SYNTAXE, SÉMANTIQUE, LEXICOGRAPHIE



Mais, au fait, qu'est-ce qu'une pipe?

- ARTICLES
- COMPTE RENDU
- ACTUALITÉS LINGUISTIQUES
- PROJETS DE MÉMOIRES DE DEUXIÈME CYCLE

THE MEANING OF THE ADVERBIAL SUFFIX *-LY*

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1. THE PROBLEM

The suffix *-ly* is generally considered an adverbial suffix even though it is used to form other types of words, adjectives and nouns. The suffix apparently has many uses which would endow it with many functions and meanings. Yet, the three *-ly* suffixes have a common etymological root, thus a semantic definition that could be generalized to all uses of *-ly* may exist. If such a link existed, *-ly* would do far more than simply generate adverbs.

A second aspect of the problem is the inability for linguists to agree on the precise status of *-ly*, whether it constitutes an inflection, a derivational suffix, or a lexical suffix. If *-ly* is determined to be a lexical suffix, it must then be established whether it represents a modification of the meaning of the word base itself or a treatment of the word base meaning as a whole.

To complicate matters further, some *-ly* adjectives and adverbs have bare counterparts, and they form adjectival and adverbial pairs. The adverbial pairs are made up of two adverbs derived from the same adjectival root: one adverb is characterized by the *-ly* suffix, and the other adverb is bare, meaning that it is identical in form to the root. Here is an example:

(1a) *He thought deeply about religious matters.*

(1b) *He plunged deep into the ocean.*

Interestingly, in a good number of pairs, the *-ly* form and the bare form are not interchangeable, as is the case for *deep* and *deeply* above. This suggests that there is a semantic difference between the two types of adverbs, and that this difference could probably be explained by the presence of the suffix.

2. THE STATUS OF *-LY*

The adverbial suffix *-ly* seem to be a derivational marker since, as suggested by Hewson (1975), its use generally causes a shift in the grammatical categorizing of the word. Indeed, most *-ly* adverbs

modify the word base by way of restriction. Because of that, he explains that linguists attempting to study *-ly* as a meaningful lexical suffix are moving in the right direction. This is confirmed by our observations of the behaviour of *-ly*. The problem is to determine the type of meaning conveyed by *-ly*, the manner in which it interacts with the meaning of the word base, and why it should show such a remarkable affinity with the adverb.

3. THE THEORY

Our study of the adverbial suffix *-ly* was done using a Guillaumian approach. We therefore considered the various expressive effects of *-ly* adverbs in discourse in order to determine the nature of the potential underlying meaning of the *-ly* suffix in tongue. We thus hypothesize that *-ly* possesses in fact one single potential meaning in tongue which would explain its various uses in discourse.

4. THE EVIDENCE

We first noticed that *-ly* adverbs are often used as adverbs of manner, a meaning that bare adverbs do not seem to have. This is probably due to the fact that the suffix is derived from a word which was dematerialized very early on and came to evoke 'likeness' in appearance and in action, hence 'manner,' as shown in example (1a) above. Thus, the use of an adverb of manner presupposes the speaker's ability to imagine more than one way of doing something and to select a single option.

It was also observed that the notional content of adverbs of manner in *-ly* would not seem to include all the semantic traits present in the bare form. In example (1b), the bare adverb *deep* seems to include a greater number of the characteristics that make up the notional content of the notion «depth» than *deeply* in (1a). For one, the depth implied in *deeply* cannot be measured definitively, whereas that of the bare form *deep* can. Moreover, *deep* is applied to the end of the event *plunge*, whereas *deeply* is said more of the process of *think*, the manner in which it was done, and thereby excludes all result-related traits. If an *-ly* adverb does not include all of the semantic traits of its notional root, this would suggest that the operation of ideogenesis is not pushed to full particularization. The lexical content of *-ly* adverbs would therefore not be particularized as much as it could be.

A study of *-ly* sentence adverbs produced similar findings. Indeed, *-ly* sentence adverbs would seem to be a form of speaker treatment of the following sentence. In other words, they would seem to represent the same sort of filtering of information by the speaker and selection of one possibility from a range of two or more, as was found in adverbs of manner. These sentence adverbs could be classified as *situational sentence adverbs*. For example, in the utterance *Unfortunately, we never saw them again*, the adverb *unfortunately* represents a certain degree of speaker commentary or mediation with regard to the proposition *we never saw them again*. The speaker filtered the information he had gathered with regard to the situation, evaluated it, and selected the adverb that best describes his impression of the situation.

On the other hand, bare sentence adverbs, or connectors, were found to behave differently. They establish definite, objective links between syntactic elements by indicating unequivocal positions in the argumentation. These connectors are associated with resultative and positional types of events,

and could be called *positional sentence adverbs*. In the example *Therefore, I can't help you*, the bare adverbs *therefore* gives an unequivocal position in the argumentation to the sentence *I can't help you* by arranging it with regard to time before presenting it to the listener. A position in time is quite precise and can be evaluated in a reasonably objective manner by a speaker.

We then examined one-word answers to information and yes/no questions. The very nature of yes/no questions calls for definite answers such as the bare adverbs *yes* and *no*. However, when the speaker cannot provide a definite answer, he often uses *-ly* sentence adverbs which have an attenuating effect in comparison to *yes* and *no*, offering intermediate rather than polarized positions and conveying a subjective response, as shown below:

- (2) A: *Is he coming tonight?*
B: *Possibly.*

As for information questions, only some types of information questions accept one-word adverbial answers. Information questions with *how* call for the description of the «manner» in which something is done and require non-unipositional types of answers usually provided by *-ly* adverbs of manner. In contrast, information questions with *when* and *where* require definite answers in the identification of precise, unequivocal positions in time or space. As the subjectivity of the response declines, so do the chances of finding an *-ly* adverbial response. This explains why bare adverbs are mostly used to answer such straightforward information questions. Next, the study of negative sentences and questions revealed that such sentences transform an event or verb into a potential because the speaker denies or questions the existence of the event. The event thus becomes virtual. We noticed that in affirmative statements, examples (3a) and (3b) below, both *-ly* adverbs and bare adverbs could easily be used. However, negative sentences and questions generally called for *-ly* adverbs, as exemplified here:

- (3a) *It's awfully busy around here.*
(3b) *It's awful busy around here.*
(3c) *It's not awfully busy around here.*
(3d) *Is it awfully busy around here?*
(3e) *?It's not awful busy around here.*
(3f) *?Is it awful busy around here?*

Bare forms seem to occur when the adverb is incident in an unequivocal, closed manner, as in an affirmative sentences, while *-ly* forms occur when the incidence is in any way hypothetical or open to interpretation, as in negative sentences and questions.

A study of intensifiers and degree adverbs showed that it was necessary to distinguish clearly between the two, although many linguists lump them together. It was found that intensifiers refer to a very precise position, the highest degree on a scale, such as *flat* in *I am flat broke*. On the contrary, degree adverbs indicate various degrees on a scale, low, middle, and high degrees, but not the highest, such as *fully* in *I am fully satisfied*. We were led to conclude that only bare adverbs function as true intensifiers.

The dematerialization of bare adverbs used as intensifiers has reduced them to a minimum quantity of lexical content in the idea of an extreme limit. This explains why they are highly objective and positional, just like most bare adverbs, and do not suggest the presence of alternative manners as *flat* in the example above. As for *-ly* adverbs, they never seem to be dematerialized to the point of being reduced to a pure limit; they provide only an approximation of a position on a scale, not a precise one, as *fully* in the example provided above. Consequently, degree adverbs mostly have an *-ly* form.

In fact, it could be argued that even when bare adverbs appear to be functioning as approximators, as in the case of *part* and *half*, they indicate a fixed, albeit partial, quantity and therefore do not really approximate anything. For example, in the utterance *She is part French*, the adjective *French* refers to the genetic heritage of an individual, thus to a fixed state. This fixed state is characterized by the bare adverb *part*, which specifies that the person is not totally French but that only a portion of her is. More importantly, the portion that the adverb *part* refers to is necessarily fixed and invariable. In other words, however big or small the part of her that is French is, it will never increase or decrease. Therefore, the adverb *part* qualifies an unequivocal position, as do most bare adverbs, since it does not allow for degrees of interpretation of the concept of *French*. Consequently, *part* does not constitute an approximator.

In short, careful research has shown that the two adverbial forms are generally used in different situations and do not convey the same information. Adverbs in *-ly* convey the speaker's subjective opinion or uncertainty, and bare adverbs seem to provide a more objective, positional assessment of a situation.

5. CONCLUSION

Our findings have led us to believe that semantic differences exist between *-ly* adverbs and bare adverbs and that *-ly* is therefore consistently meaningful. It would seem that *-ly* is present only when the value attributed to the adverb is perceived to be subjective and open to change or to an alternative interpretation. For this to occur, it would seem that at least one or more lexical traits of the word base must go unused and that an *-ly* form can never include full lexical particularization.

REFERENCE

HEWSON, John. "Derivation and Inflection in English" *Studies in English Grammar*. Joly, André and Thomas Fraser. ed. Paris : Editions Universitaires, 1975. 77-104