

THE ADVERBIAL STRUCTURE IN NIGER-CONGO AND INDO-EUROPEAN LANGUAGES

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Abstract: Adverbs (or adverbials) are only observable in the human communication system, that is, they represent one of the intrinsic properties of natural languages. Adverbs are usually defined as representing a lexical category in languages, just like N(ouns), Pro(nouns), Adj(ectives), and Prep(ositions) (Radford 2009). It is then paradoxical to notice that, in spite of the increasing number of research on the description of African languages, the topic of adverbial structure has barely been tackled in those studies. Nevertheless, research on the cartography of syntactic structures have been heavily based on the ordering of adverbs (Bobaljik 1999; Cinque 1999; Beijer 2001; Rizzi & Cinque 2016). According to the Minimalist Program (Chomsky 1995), languages are uniform and their variation is actually restrained to predictable properties. In this respect, it is worth showing how the uniformity of adverbial structures in Niger-Congo and Indo-European languages can be verified despite their parametric variation: this is what this paper is intended to.

Keywords: Adverb(ial) – Niger-Congo languages – Indo-European languages – Cartography – Minimalist Program.

LA STRUCTURE ADVERBIALE DANS LES LANGUES NIGÉRO-CONGOLAISES ET INDO-EUROPÉENNES

Resumé: Les adverbes (ou adverbiaux) sont observables uniquement dans le système de communication humain; ils représentent donc l'une des propriétés intrinsèques des langues naturelles. Généralement, on définit les adverbes comme constituant une catégorie lexicale dans les langues, au même titre que les N(oms), Pro(noms), Adj(ectifs), et Prép(ositions) (Radford 2009). Il est alors paradoxal d'observer que, malgré le nombre croissant de recherches sur la description des langues africaines, le thème de la structure adverbiale ait été à peine abordé. Toutefois, la recherche dans le cadre de la cartographie des structures syntaxiques s'est beaucoup focalisée sur l'ordonnement des adverbes (Bobaljik 1999; Cinque 1999; Beijer 2001; Rizzi & Cinque 2016). Selon le Programme Minimaliste (Chomsky 1995), les langues sont uniformes et leur variation se limite en réalité à des propriétés prédictibles. En ce sens, il devient important de montrer comment l'uniformité des structures adverbiales dans les langues Niger-Congo et indo-européennes peut être vérifiée en dépit de leur variation paramétrique: ceci est l'objectif visé par cette étude.

Mots-clés: Adverb(ial) – Langues Niger-Congo– Langues indo-européennes– Cartographie – Programme Minimaliste.

Introduction : The study of adverbs as forming a lexical category in natural languages is part of research topics linguists have been interested in these last years (Bobaljik 1999; Cinque 1999; Beijer 2001; Creissels 2004; Chircu 2008). That topic is generally dealt with

regarding the researcher's perception and/or the language under study. If the adverbial structure is an intrinsic part of natural languages, then its structuring will obey the universal architecture of natural languages, even though parametrizations are different from one language to the other, as stipulated by the cartographic approach. The observation of adverbs in natural languages, namely in Akye and Mòdzúkrù (Niger-Congo languages) and in English and French (Indo-European languages), shows that AdjPs, PPs, NPs, and even DPs sometimes ensure the adverbial function. By way of consequence, it becomes worth wondering whether what is referred to as adverb or adverbial is part of a lexical category in languages, in the sense that an adverb seems to be a phrase fulfilling a linguistic function instead. That is why, this paper is intended to uncover the structure of adverbs showing that they do not constitute a lexical category in languages, inasmuch as they are simply merged to check or satisfy a functional head feature. So, the hypothesis being put forward by this paper is that there is no lexical category of adverbs in Niger-Congo and Indo-European languages. The paper is divided into four (04) main sections. First of all, after the introduction, there is the section dealing with both the methodological and theoretical frameworks; it exposes how the data have been collected and how they will be analyzed so as to reach the paper's objective and verify the hypothesis put forward. Secondly, the section about the parametrization of adverbial phrases shows the encoding of those phrases in the Niger-Congo and Indo-European languages. The next section is to both uncover the adverbial markers in the languages under study and explain why this adverbial marking leads to categorization issue. Finally, before the conclusion, the outcomes from the different analyses will be interpreted and discussed in order to draw some reliable conclusions.

1. Methodological and theoretical frameworks

1.1 Methodological framework

This paper relies on factual data. Those data come from a field investigation based on some native speakers of the languages under study. Mòdzúkrù and Akye languages have been selected as the sample for Niger-Congo languages and English and French languages as the sample for Indo-European languages. The choices for these languages have been motivated not only by the easy access to their native speakers, but also by their quality to represent the language family they belong to. This representative status comes from the fact that languages of the same linguistic family are subject to the same syntactic and semantic constraints. The purpose in this paper is to compare so-called adverbial phrases across those languages so as to account for both their grammatical status and their functioning in the relevant languages.

1.2 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework underlying this paper is the Minimalist Program (Chomsky 1995) which is the latest version of Generative Grammar. It is a theory stipulating that natural language is an optimal solution to the legibility (or interpretation) conditions imposed by both the Conceptual-Intentional (CI) and Sensorimotor (SM) interfaces. That research theory will be used in this paper within the perspective of the Cartography of Syntactic Structures (Rizzi 1997); the latter, whose objective is to provide maps describing natural languages as precisely as possible, is a dimension of the former.

2. Parametrization of adverbial phrases

An adverbial phrase is generally used in languages to refer to some idea of manner, time, place, or even modality. Even though the ideas or notions underlying adverbial phrases are universal, each language displays those phrases differently, due to parametric variations. Consequently, it can be observed from (1) to (4) that adverbial phrases of manner, time, place,

and modality in Niger-Congo languages (represented by Akye and Mòdžúkrù) and Indo-European languages (represented by English and French) are differently structured from one language to the other.

1) **The adverbial encoding of manner**

Akye	Mòdžúkrù	English	French
brèbrè	jòjò	Gently	Doucement
pètèpètè	bètèbètè	Slowly	Lentement
ḿā	ḿim-ḿim	Directly	Directement
fāfā (~ wàwà)	fāfā	Quickly	Rapidement
sēhà-lá	kpé kpé kpé	Firmly	Carrément
mīmī-lá	kpé kpé kpé	Completely/Integrally	Intégralement

2) **The adverbial encoding of time**

Akye	Mòdžúkrù	English	French
frà	kprú	Suddenly	Soudainement
nāsē-ká	fāfā	Barely/Just now	A l'instant
fā	efi	Yesterday, tomorrow	Hier, demain
nē	jefena	Today	Aujourd'hui
fā-ká-á-lí	efi djam	The day before yesterday	Avant-hier
ánáná(-gòdògòdò)	segɲ feɲ	Always	Toujours
lō-tē	segɲ beb	Often/Sometimes	Souvent
ánáná-lí (pī-lí)	aɲema	Long ago/In the past	Autrefois
é-kyēkyē-lí	godogodo	Before/Previously	Auparavant
nāsē-ká	kpekɲ	Immediately/Right away	Immédiatement
àkpòbā-mí	gbəm em	Rarely/Seldom	Rarement

3) **The adverbial encoding of place**

Akye	Mòdžúkrù	English	French
mùbò-fī	lidr	(On the) left	A gauche
bōgbā-fī	nemn	(On the) right	A droite
nāsē-ká	saw	Next to/Nearby	À côté
ló (~ lí)	jogɲ	(Over) there	Là-bas
ébè	aɲa	Here	Ici
pī	aɲm	In front (of)	Devant
nú (~ ká-á)	djam	Behind	Derrière

4) **The adverbial encoding of modality**

Akye	Mòdžúkrù	English	French
é-lé-nā	sebra	Fortunately/Luckily	Heureusement
mīmjà-mí	letf- em	Compulsorily/Obligatorily	Obligatoirement
ànùmàwē-lá	tasj em	Truly/Really	Véritablement

Regarding the way adverbial phrases are structured or formed in Niger-Congo and Indo-European languages, it is worth inquiring about those phrases allegedly said to belong to a lexical category called “adverbs” in order to verify whether they belong to such a grammatical category.

2. Structuring adverbials and categorization issue

2.1 The marker of adverbs

In this subsection, the adverbial marking in Niger-Congo and Indo-European languages is discussed. In fact, the adverbial nature in those languages seems to be borne, not by items forming a lexical category, but by functional elements instead. That view is supported by empirical data from both Niger-Congo languages such as Akye and Mòdžúkrù and Indo-European languages like English and French, as observed through (5). Indeed, in Akye, the adverbial nature is generally encoded by a bound morpheme which can be *-lá* or *-mĩ* attached at the end of a lexical item. This fact is unfolded by examples like *dʒãtã-lá* (happily) and *àkpòbã-mĩ* (rarely). On the other hand, in Mòdžúkrù, the adverbial feature is translated through a bound morpheme as well, namely *-ém*. Items like *méwl-ém* (skillfully) and *gbòm-ém* (rarely) are examples in this respect. Next, the same phenomenon is observed when considering English and French languages. In English, all the adverbs in (5) are given that name because they end in *-ly*, a suffix, a bound morpheme. It is no more talked of adverbs if that *-ly* is removed from the relevant lexical items. If *currently* and *sadly* are turned into *current* and *sad*, they simply stop being adverbs. The same observation is true for French. As a matter of fact, the equivalent for *-ly* in English is *-ment* in French, which means that items like *considérablement* or *véritablement* are not adverbs anymore when they are devoid of the suffix *-ment*. In a word, the data from (5) suggest that the adverbial feature in Niger-Congo and Indo-European languages are not borne or ensured by some lexical items. Rather, lexical words are granted an adverbial nature or function by specific functional elements being bound morphemes. Reason why adverbial markings are ensured by *-lá* or *-mĩ* in Akye, *-ém* in Mòdžúkrù, *-ly* in English, and *-ment* in French. These functional elements are the ones deserving the labeling “adverbs” because they are the true adverb-feature-bearing elements in those languages.

5)

Adverbial markers

Akye	Mòdžúkrù	English	French
nāsě	wãŋĩ nà -ém	Current-ly	Actuelle-ment
Wàà	sòs ùfŋ -ém	Hurried-ly	Précipitam-ment
dʒãtã-lá	sòsèm íŋŋ-ém	Happi-ly	Joyeuse-ment
é-kábú-lá	sòs usr-ém	Considerabl-y	Considérable-ment
píprè-lá	méwl-ém	Skillful-ly	Habile-ment
l̄s-tsū-lá	sòs es ow-ém	Sad-ly	Triste-ment
ànùmàwê-lá	tásj-ém	Tru-ly	Véritable-ment
mĩmjã-mĩ	léŋf-ém	Compulsori-ly	Obligatoire-ment
àkpòbã-mĩ	gbòm-ém	Rare-ly	Rare-ment

2.2 Cooccurrence of adverbial phrases with definiteness morphemes

Remind that an adverbial phrase is usually used in languages to express ideas of manner, time, place, and modality. Adverbs, being considered as a lexical category just like nouns or adjectives, are generally defined as single words. In this section, however, the focus is put on what are referred to as “adverbs of manner” and “adverbs of place” in order to show that adverbs are neither single words nor do they constitute a lexical category.

2.2.1 The adverbial marker of manner and definiteness morphemes

(6) displays some so-called adverbs of manner in Niger-Congo and Indo-European languages. But, as can be observed, adverbs of manner may be represented by both a PP or DP and may also cooccur with a definiteness morpheme. Indeed, PPs like *with regard* and *in a hurry* in English and PPs such as *en vérité* (in truth) and *dans la joie* (joyfully) in French can ensure the status of an adverb of manner. If more than one word can function like an adverb of

manner, then an adverb is not tantamount to a single word nor is it part of a lexical category simply because it can be formed out of many words. The examples from Mòdžúkrù are even more persuasive. What this means is that the so-called adverbs of manner in Mòdžúkrù may cooccur with a definiteness morpheme. Thus, if an “adverb” cooccurs with a definite morpheme, then this item is not an adverb (given the definition of adverbs), it is rather a nominal, inasmuch as only nominals do cooccur with definite articles. Therefore, a phrase like *sòs usr- ém à* (with regard) is actually a DP due to the presence of the definite morpheme *à*.

6) **Adverbial markers of manner and definiteness**

Akye	Mòdžúkrù	English	French
é-wàwà-lá	sòs ùfɛ - ém à	In a hurry	Dans la précipitation
džātā-lá	sòsem iɲn- ém à	With joy/Joyfully	Dans la joie
hīfɔ̄-mí	sòs usr- ém à	With regard	Dans la considération
lō-tsū-lá	sòs es ɔw- ém à	In sadness	Dans la tristesse
ànùmàwē-lá	tási- ém à	In truth	En vérité
mīmjà-lá	léf- ém à	In the obligation	Dans l’obligation
àkpòbā-mí	gbóm- ém à	In scarcity	Dans la rareté

2.2.2. **The adverbial marker of place and definiteness morphemes**

The same observation about the status of adverbs is true as far as so-called adverbs of place are concerned. From (7), it is noted that the definite morpheme *à* cooccurs with all alleged adverbs of place in Mòdžúkrù, which tells us about the real grammatical status of items like *nèmn* (left), *áná* (here), *džàm* (back), or *saw* (side). In addition, the data from English and French show that that type of adverbs grammatically cooccurs with definite articles. Needless to argue that this situation urges to reconsider the labeling “adverbs” (lexical category) given to those items in these languages.

7) **Adverbial markers of place and definiteness**

Akye	Mòdžúkrù	English	French
bōgbā	lídɾ à	The right	La Droite
mùbò	nèmn à	The left	La Gauche
é-džī	sàw à	The side	Le côté
ló (~ ló)	jógɲ à	(Over) there	Là-bas
ébè	áná à	Here	Ici
é-pí	áɲm à	The front	Le devant
é-ká-á	džàm à	The back	Le derrière (dos)

2.3 **The cartography of some adverbial phrases**

The cartography of adverbial syntactic structures developed by Cinque & Rizzi (2008) has considerably worked for the hierarchization of constituents in the IP and CP domains. Nonetheless, this ordering relies on the subcategorization of adverbial phrases. So, Cinque (1999) notes that adverbs are specifiers of functional categories such as ModP (modal adverbs), MoodP (speaker-oriented adverbs), TP (adverbs of time), VoiceP (adverbs of manner), and AspP (adverbs of frequency, quantification). For Laenzlinger (2006), those adverbial phrases categories are subject to the hierarchy or order in (8).

8)

- MoodP**speech-act : frankly
- ModP**epistemic : probably
- ModP**volitional : spontaneously
- NegP**negation : not
- TP**anterior : recently

AspPrequentative : often

AspProximate : barely

MannPverb-oriented: hardly (our translation into English)
(Laenzlinger 2006 :77)

The head Mood occupies the highest position and the head Mann lies in the lowest position. As for Indo-European languages, two classes of adverbs are distinguished: the so-called “high adverbs” and “low adverbs”. This distinction is illustrated from French by Canel (2012:79).

9)

a. « Adverbes hauts » :

Franchement < *heureusement* < *évidemment* < *probablement* < *maintenant* < *peut-être* < *intelligemment*

b. « Adverbes bas » :

Généralement < *pas* < *déjà* < *plus* < *toujours* < *complètement* < *tout* < *bien*

(Canel 2012:79)

The classification of adverbial phrases has always been an issue regarding the cartography of syntactic structures inasmuch as the ordering is subject to the principle of barriers. Furthermore, considering the examples highlights the differences of adverbial syntactic structures between these language families under study.

10)

➤ Indo-European languages

a. Heureusement, j’ai récemment souvent travaillé rigoureusement. [French]

b. Fortunately, I have recently often worked rigorously. [English]

➤ Niger-Congo languages

a. sébrá, ségɲ àmwá ségɲ béb mí kók dzùma ʃéʃé [Módzúkrù]
Mode day Dem-Pl day when 1Sg do work Adv

b. è lē-é lá, jāà bè, m̀è lè jìmā̀à cécé, lō tē. [Akye]
3SG.-AN suit-3SG.Poss LOC, these days, 1SG do.ACC work blameless, days some

The analysis of these syntactic structures shows different positions for adverbial phrases. In Indo-European and Niger-Congo languages, the adverbial phrase of Mode is realized at the beginning of the utterance, thereby respecting the cartography of syntactic structures proposed by Cinque & Rizzi (2008).

3. Discussion

Let us recall that cartography of adverbial syntactic structures suggested by Cinque & Rizzi (2008) has worked for the hierarchization of constituents in the IP and CP domains. And yet, this hierarchy is underlined by the subcategorization property of adverbs expressing ideas of place, manner, time, etc. The rewording of the syntactic structures in (11) and (12) sketches the issue of the legitimacy of adverbs as forming a lexical category.

11)

a. Heureusement, j’ai récemment souvent travaillé rigoureusement. [French]

b. Fortunately, I have recently often worked rigorously. [English]

12)

a. De manière heureuse, j’ai dans ces jours-ci par moment travaillé de façon rigoureuse. [French]

b. In a merry way, I have sometimes worked these days in a rigorous manner.

[English]

This rewording shows other possibilities to realize adverbial phrases. In spite of the semantic match of the structures in (11) and (12), so-called adverbs are not eligible for the label “lexical category of adverbs”; for adverbs are traditionally defined as constituting a lexical category, just like nouns and verbs. As a matter of fact, it is when focusing on that defining feature that the issue of adverbs as a lexical category in natural languages raises. In the family of Niger-Congo languages in general, and Kwa languages in particular, empirical data allow to verify the inexistence of an adverbial lexical category. The adverbial function is ensured by DPs. Data from English and French do not contradict this hypothesis. In fact, in these Indo-European languages, the so-called adverbs are formed out of nouns or adjectives to which bound morphemes like *-ly* in English and *-ment* in French are added. This situation corroborates the assumption that adverbs represent a functional category in languages. Moreover, that assumption seems to be on the right track in that so-called adverbs do cooccur with definite morphemes. That cooccurrence indicates that DPs are the locus of the adverbial feature. This idea supports the assumption by Bogny (2023) who suggests that lexical units called adverbs are in reality DPs ensuring the adverbial function. That function may manifest itself either through an inflection or an incorporation with a lexical unit which is generally a DP. That is why, the cartography of adverbial features is subject to a variation in natural languages depending on whether the relevant features are located in a DP or are bound morphemes.

Conclusion: All in all, the analyses undertaken in this paper have uncovered the mechanisms that natural languages, namely Niger-Congo and Indo-European languages, resort to for the expression or structuring of adverbial phrases. Empirical data from these two families of languages suggest that adverbs are not single words, they do not constitute a lexical category; more importantly, the adverbial feature may be satisfied by any phrase like a DP, PP or even by a bound morpheme because it is borne by a functional head. By way of consequence, the notion of adverb in Niger-Congo languages should be grasped with care not to fall into some concordism which could lead researchers to biased results. Also, adverbs, be it in Niger-Congo or Indo-European languages, represent bound morphemes or phrases adverbialized for grammatical or discursive purposes.

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