

A Note on Manner Adverbs

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Assuming as basic George Lakoff's proposal that manner adverbs are derived from adjectival constructions, I would like to further examine the selectional restrictions on manner adverbs and the paraphrasal relationships among the more basic adjectival constructions.

I. It is obvious that manner adverbs take human subjects and cannot take inanimate subjects.

(1) Mary carefully typed the letter.

(2) \*The rock carefully rolled down the hill.

However, it is not quite so obvious that manner adverbs can also take animate, non-human subjects.

(3) The cat meticulously buried its feces.

It has been suggested that this restriction may be related to a volitional feature of the adverb. The following sentences would then have to have animate subjects and a feature of volition in the adverb.

(4) The dog deliberately chewed up my shoe.

(5) The horse intentionally stepped on my foot.

But consider sentences such as

(6) The cat obnoxiously kneaded the blanket.

(7) The dog heroically saved the child.

(8) The mule reluctantly moved.

(9) The anteater eagerly ate the ants.

(10) The horse wisely chose the right road.

(The adverbs in 6-10 will be further discussed in section II.)

In each of the above sentences the acceptability depends on the volitional nature of the adverb. Thus, sentences (11) through (15) are strange:

(11) The beetle obnoxiously climbed up my leg.

(12) The cat heroically hissed.

(13) The dog reluctantly ate the fish.

(14) The moth eagerly flew toward the light.

(15) The cat wisely retracted its claws.

Although these sentences are grammatical, they are odd either because the acts involved are not completely and consciously acts of will, or because non-human animals do not do things reluctantly or wisely.

One solution to this problem would be to subcategorize adverbs into volitional or non-volitional categories, and allow animacy to be the only subject selectional restriction. In this way +human subjects would correspond to +animate subject and +volitional adverb. However, with non-human subjects the problem still exists of determining what can be volitional for a cat, a dog or a beetle. The fact that sentences (11) through (15) are not completely unacceptable, but only odd, indicates another solution. There are situations in which the sentences of (11)-(15) would be perfectly suitable; for example, my intense dislike for beetles could lead me to say The beetle obnoxiously climbed up my leg, or even,

(16) The beetle { maliciously  
deliberately } climbed up my leg.

(i.e., I attribute a volitional act—that of trying to frighten me—to the beetle, although I know in fact that the beetle had no such purpose in mind.) This would be similar to saying:

(17) Cats { cruelly  
ruthlessly } kill rodents.

although most people would acknowledge the cruelty with which cats kill mice is a human, not feline, attitude.

What I propose then, is that the adverb ascribed to an action can either be the speaker's description of how the act is being committed, or the subject's attitude toward the act. This would be the source of many ambiguities with human subjects as well as non-human subjects. The sentences

(18) John wisely decided to study linguistics.

may be Professor Glump's opinion of John's decision and John may think it was a dumb thing to do.

II. This brings us to the problem of what adverbs have this ambiguity; I think that in fact all adverbs can be ambiguous in this way, but that some have a much more likely reading as the subject's opinion of how the act was performed. There are manner adverbs derived from both stative and active adjectives; those derived from active verbs and having human subjects are much less likely to be read as the speaker's opinion. Sentence (20) is less likely to be denied than (21):

(20) John deliberately tore up the notice.

(21) The cat deliberately ruined my couch.

It seems to me that there are actually three types of manner adverbs: (a) those derived from active adjectives which are also volitional, (b) those derived from active adjectives which can be volitional or non-volitional, and (c) those derived from stative adjectives which are non-volitional. Examples follow.

ACTIVE		STATIVE
+volitional	+volitional	-volitional
masterfully industriously meticulously carefully deliberately ruthlessly cleverly	heroically obnoxiously	reluctantly eagerly wisely

Whether or not heroic and obnoxious are active can also be challenged. They both meet the test for stativity:

(22) He seems to be { obnoxious.  
heroic. }

And there is a definite strangeness in some of the active interpretations:

(23) ?What he did was be { obnoxious.  
heroic. }

(24) Bill was deliberately { obnoxious.  
heroic. }

(25) ?\*John was careful in being { obnoxious.  
heroic. }

but

(26) Max acted { obnoxiously  
heroically } and Sam did so too.

- (27) Herkimer was { obnoxious  
heroic } in order to win Larry's  
respect.
- (28) Paul eats bugs because he wants to be { obnoxious.  
heroic. }
- (29) Be { obnoxious!  
heroic! }
- (30) ?Dick is stupid instead of { obnoxious.  
heroic. }
- (31) You are { heroic  
obnoxious } for my sake.
- (32) Portia is being { obnoxious.  
heroic. }
- (33) \*I saw him being { obnoxious.  
heroic. }
- (34) Giulia persuaded Hilda to be { obnoxious.  
heroic. }
- (35) ?Cassius will be { obnoxious.  
heroic. }
- (36) ?\*We used masks to be { obnoxious.  
heroic. }
- (37) He was { obnoxious  
heroic } with a gun.
- (38) ?She was { obnoxious  
heroic } by (means of) taking LSD.
- (39) They are { obnoxious  
heroic } together.
- (40) Henry is { obnoxious  
heroic } with Zelda.
- (41) #Sue was { obnoxious  
heroic } and was { obnoxious.  
heroic. }
- (42) Sue kept on being { obnoxious.  
heroic. }
- (43) ?Laura happened to be { obnoxious  
heroic. }

but

(44) ?Amy is { obnoxious  
heroic } in the park.

This lack of agreement indicates that perhaps there is a further subcategorization of verbs needed. Although I have no definite proposal at the present, I suggest it be in terms of volitional acts, since both heroic and obnoxious have the property of being either intentional or unintentional.

III. There is yet another problem with adverbs; if we assume they are paraphrases of adjectival constructions as Lakoff (1965) proposed, we get

(45) Mort cleverly reads tea leaves.

coming from

(46) Mort is clever in reading tea leaves.

For me, this sentence is ambiguous; it can mean either (48) or (49):

(47) Mort reads tea leaves in a clever manner.

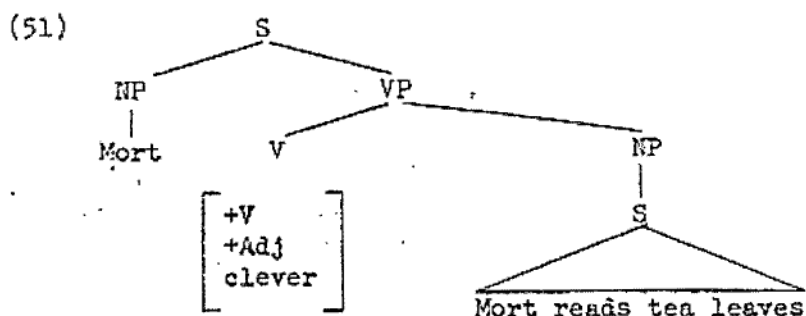
(48) Mort is clever in that he reads tea leaves (i.e.,  
he makes a lot of money doing it.)

Since this ambiguity exists, the deep structures of (47) and (48) must be different. Specifically, the deep structure of (48) must be sensitive to for-to and Poss-ing complementation (as described by Rosenbaum, 1967)-since sentence (49) and (50) are paraphrases of (48):

(49) For Mort to read tea leaves is clever.

(50) Mort's reading of tea leaves is clever.

A deep structure such as (51) would allow the transformational derivation of (49) and (50).



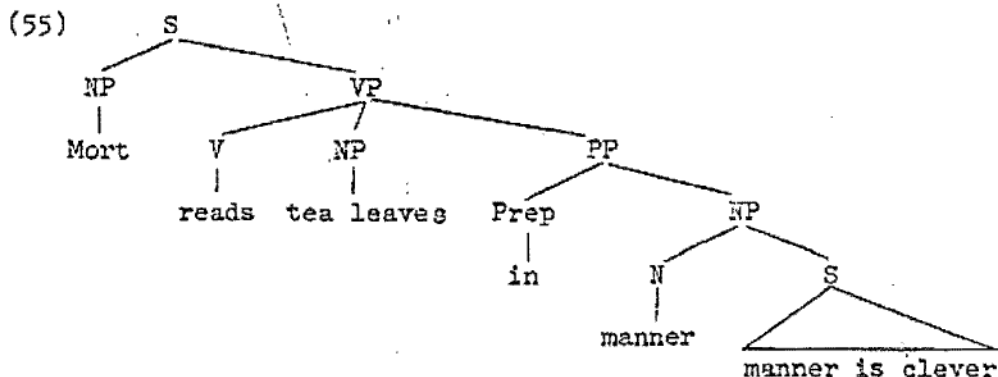
Such a deep structure would also permit the derivation of the related sentences:

(52) It is clever of Mort to read tea leaves.

(53) That Mort reads tea leaves is clever.

(54) Mort is clever to read tea leaves.

The fact that transformational rules of complementation and extra-position apply to the deep structure (51) indicates that it is not exceptional, and the main problem was to differentiate that structure from the one underlying sentence (47) (Mort reads tea leaves in a clever manner.). Since sentence (47) obviously cannot be sensitive to the rules mentioned above, and, since these rules appear to have a wide range of application in English, the deep structure of sentence (47) is actually the exceptional (and problematic) case. For sentence (47), I propose a deep structure on the order of (55):





Whether or not the phrase containing the adverbial element is in fact a prepositional phrase is debatable.

However, a structure like (55) eliminates the need for a special adverb node (if the prepositional phrase can be accepted) and in addition provides a means of distinguishing the two uses of cleverly-type adverbs. Unfortunately I can find no overwhelming syntactic arguments in favor of (55); however, the semantic function of cleverly in *Mort reads tea leaves cleverly* is definitely related to the verb phrase of the sentence rather than the sentence as a whole or the main noun phrase. So, although the specifics of (55) may be in doubt, the general structure is probably correct.

Finally, there are two adjectival paraphrases of manner adverbials:

(56) John was careful in playing roulette.

(57) John was careful at playing roulette.

As far as I know, the difference between in and at in these cases has not been discussed. The first fact to be noticed is that at cannot occur with the non-volitional or  $\pm$ volitional adjectives:

(58) \*Marvin was heroic at saving the child.

(59) \*Lilly was obnoxious at making faces.

(60) \*Winnie was reluctant at leaving.

(61) \*Winnie was eager at leaving.

(62) \*Phil was wise at deciding to stay.

However, the sentences (58) through (62) are all okay with in (with the possible exception of (65) and (66)):

(63) Marvin was heroic in saving the child.

(64) Lilly was obnoxious in making faces.

(65) ?Winnie was reluctant in leaving.

(66) ?Winnie was eager in leaving.

(67) Phil was wise in deciding to stay.

The active, volitional adjectives can take either in or at:

(68) Jim was { masterful  
industrious  
meticulous  
careful  
clever  
deliberate  
ruthless } { in  
at } playing chess.

There does, however, seem to be a difference in meaning between sentences with at and sentences with in, and the difference seems to be related to the habitual or regular manner in which the subject performed the action. So, although

(69) Jim is careful at playing chess.

is all right,

(70) \*Jim was careful at playing that game of chess.

is strange.

Admittedly there are many unsolved problems in manner adverbs, but I think further research centered around the notions of volition, reference or attribution, and habitual or regular action will provide some answers.

References

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