

CALL FOR PAPERS

International Conference - Nicosia, Cyprus, May 18-19, 2023

Adverbs and Adverbials: Issues in semantic and functional ambiguity

The Department of French and European Studies of the University of Cyprus and its open and interdisciplinary laboratory *MÉTHODAL* is organizing an international colloquium to be held in Nicosia on May 18 and 19, 2023 in collaboration with the Faculty of Humanities at Sorbonne University and the *Linguistic Research Center - Corpora, Discourses and Societies* at the University of Lyon 3 Jean Moulin. The conference will be devoted to the problems raised by semantic and functional ambiguity in the adverbial domain.

Adverbs have long been the target of many debates among grammarians and linguists: this notion encompasses a very broad and heterogeneous range of items which are subsumed under the same umbrella on the basis of intuition (Blumenthal 1990: 41). However, important differences have to be made according to their internal structure and to their behaviour in discourse. Nølke (1990a: 3) claims that “for lexicographers, translators, grammarians or teachers, systematization attempts [in the area of adverbial meaning] are constantly jeopardized by the bewildering and often subtle diversity of properties.”

Nølke (1990b: 117-127) distinguished several kinds of studies devoted to the functional diversity of adverbials: beyond traditional grammars, some linguists try to isolate groups of shared properties within the adverbial class (Vet 1994; Ernst 2007; Blumenthal 1990; Grellson 1981); some establish classifications of adverbs based on tests, following the footsteps of Chomsky (1965), Greenbaum (1969) or Jackendoff (1972). In this type of approach, some semantic families or (attempted) functional classes have received peculiar attention. This is the case for the opposition between circumstantial adjuncts vs. framesetters (or “cadratives”, Charolles 1997); for manner adverbs oriented towards the agent vs. those oriented towards the predicate (Jackendoff, 1972; see also Molinier & Lévrier, 2000; Ernst, 2002); for the very concept of “domain adverb” (see for example Ernst 2004, De Cesare et al. 2020); for subdivision of “sentence adverb”, which can go as far as a micro-typology, be it in a functionalist fashion (see for example Nølke, 1993) and in a formalist framework (see especially the cartographic approach going back to Cinque 1999). Finally, the functional relationship between “adverbs” and “discourse markers” is a recurring point of contention in the study of so-called “high adverbs” (Paillard 2021). The aim of the conference is to

address cases of semantic and functional ambiguity in the adverbial domain. According to Fuchs (2009: 1), "ambiguity will be defined as (i) a case of missing bi-univocity between forms and meanings, (ii) which gives rise to a necessary and impossible choice, and (iii) which constitutes a case of duplicated univocity". The relationship between underdetermination, heterosemy and ambiguity in the narrow sense may also be investigated through the example of adverbs and adverbials.

How does the functional ambiguity of adverbs and adverbials manifest itself? What are the factors influencing it? Questions of *scope*, *incidence* and *orientation* should receive particular attention, both for lexical adverbs and for adverbial phrases: how can we distinguish a subject-oriented manner adverb from a predicate-oriented manner adverb? Do domain adverbs form a functional class or is it a syntactic position in the sentence hierarchy? Or should we abandon this opposition? Is the difference between circumstantial adjuncts and framesetters unequivocally embedded in the syntax? Can and should we systematically distinguish between incidence and scope in the case of focus adverbs? How can we articulate the concepts of discourse markers and sentence adverb, whose borders seem to be fuzzy and partly framework-dependent?

These questions have many implications that go beyond the field of adverb research: Can functional meaning be derived from syntax alone? Can we draw a radical line between functional categories? How should we distinguish between functional polysemy, heterosemy and semantic under-determination? Are there polysemous adverbs? These are all questions that deserve careful examination, whether in the context of the study of a given language or in a contrastive or typological framework.

Submission of proposals

Papers should not exceed 20 minutes in length and should be submitted in English or French. Abstracts of no more than 300 words, accompanied by a bio-bibliographical note on the speaker, should be sent to adverbs2023@gmail.com before November 30, 2022.

Proposals should present the initial problem, the research hypotheses, the methodology, a theoretical framework (if any), provisional results and some indicative bibliographic references.

The conference will be held at the University of Cyprus, Nicosia and participants will have the option of attending either in person or online.

Working languages

English and French

Keynote speakers

Anna-Maria De Cesare Greenwald (Technische Universität, Dresden)

Corinne Rossari (Université de Neuchâtel)

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Fryni Kakoyianni-Doa (Université de Chypre, Nicosie)

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