

Cognitive Grammar OF 'VERY'

The present paper is focused on the polysemous and multifunctional language unit, which has not been fully investigated yet. Prescriptive and descriptive grammar defined its basic features in combination with a verb, an adverb, or an adjective and a noun. However, cognitive grammar and discourse-analysis stipulated its description as a multilateral constituent of the English language system and discourse structure. The definitional analysis of the meaning of the lexeme *very*, its lexical-grammatical and lexical-semantic combinability, text fragments and discourse analyses resulted in modeling the 'VERY' – semantic scale

Key words: adverb, adjective, combinability, synchrony, diachrony, cognitive grammar, discourse-analysis, definition analysis, component of meaning, semantic scale.

The lexical-grammatical class of adverbs has been always 'a waste-paper basket' for a linguist in case of any doubt to define a lexical-grammatical category of a word. An adverb is traditionally defined as a modifier verb (e.g. *work fast*), a preposition (e.g. *directly into the fire*), an adjective (e.g. *exceedingly handsome*), or another adverb (e.g. *almost excessively brilliant*). These are precisely the basic categories characterizes profiling relationships (processual and nonprocessual [6, p. 116]. Previous accounts of English adverbs such as Greenbaum (1969), Jackendoff (1972), Bellert (1977), Ernst (1984) assume that one only has to paraphrase the meanings of English adverbs as simply and formally as possible. These semantic-paraphrase analyses do not ask what underlies their paraphrases, much less what is a possible [7, p. 247 – 287].

The objective of the present paper is twofold: to reconsider the longstanding assumption that adverbs are too heterogeneous to be subject to a systematic investigation; to provide a cognitive-grammar approach [2, p. 430–434; 6, p. 93–103] to English adverbs; and to show that it contributes to constraining their range. It will be shown that English adverbs are much less idiosyncratic and heterogeneous than the previous analyses assume, with their semantic properties and syntactic behavior attributed to our ability to conceptualize a situation by means of alternate images. More specifically, adverbs will be defined as functions that map a verb (construed through sequential scanning) into some other mode of scanning or modal. Furthermore, it will be argued that the inventory of scanning and modal offers a natural way to constrain the range of English adverbs. All this strongly suggests that adverbs are no less amenable to a systematic treatment than nouns, verbs, and adjectives. The grammatical functions of adverbials mainly lie in adding something about circumstances – of an activity or state to the sentence, giving a speaker's comment about what a clause says, or serving a connective function. Moreover, adverbials are clause elements that can have several semantic meanings such as expressing *location, time, agency, or attitude*. Adverbials can occur in various positions within clauses: initial, medial, final and ultimately, we can have multiple adverbials within one clause, in contrast to other clause elements such as subject, predicate, or object. Whereas these elements represent a sense of grammatical completeness towards the internal structure of the sentence, most adverbials are optional, that is, most have no syntactic obligation. The sentence would still be syntactical correct if the adverbial were left out. Yet, the following illustration shows a case in which the verb takes an obligatory adverbial complementation: «Your toast is *on the table*» [5, p. 51]. The semantic classes of adverbs are well-established cross-linguistically too (Molinier and Levrier 2000, Bonami et al. 2004, for French): connectives (therefore); speech act adverbs (frankly); evaluatives (unfortunately); (perhaps); sentential agentives (intelligently). There is a syntactic and a semantic (scopal) correlate to the status of incidental adjuncts (Bonami and Godard 2003, Bonami et al. 2004).

The object of the present investigation is the adverb *very* in the language system and then verified in the author's discourse. We distinguish three (main) subtypes of degree adverbs, depending on the scale type: (i) completion adverbs; (ii) intensity adverbs; (iii) 'pure' degree adverbs [4].

Very originates from Middle English (as an adjective in the sense 'real, genuine'): from Old French *verai*, based on Latin *verus* 'true' [Cf.: 1, p. 86–90]. The Middle English Dictionary registers 614 cases of *very* functioning in the Middle English texts, e.g.: Aesop Trin-C R.3.19 819 *The wolffe made holle, of very froward pryde, Sofferyd the crane rewardles to abyde*. Mannyng Chron.Pt.2 Petyt 511 p.71 *He was ouer prest & egre to assaile*.

In Modern English its frequency is 119440 registered in The British National Corpus, the volume of which is 100 mln word forms. Now we shall have a definitional analysis of the meaning of the adverb very registered in the Cobuild Dictionary:

ADV (ADV adj/adv)

1. **Very** is used to give emphasis to an adjective or adverb. (emphasis) *The problem and the answer are very simple. It is very, very strong evidence indeed. I'm very sorry. They are getting the hang of it very quickly. Thank you very much. The men were very much like my father.*

2. **ADV** You use **very**

to give emphasis to a superlative adjective or an adverb. For example, if you say that something is **the very best**, you are emphasizing that it is the best. (emphasis) *They will be helped by the very latest in navigation aids. At the very least, the Government must offer some protection to mothers who fear domestic violence.*

3. to give emphasis to an adjective which would not normally vary in degree, e.g.:

She seemed very English to him.

4. You use **very** with certain nouns in order to specify an extreme position or extreme point in time, e.g.:

At the very back of the yard, several feet from Lenny, was a wooden shack. I turned to the very end of the book, to read the final words. He was wrong from the very beginning. We still do not have enough women at the very top.

5. with nouns to emphasize that something is exactly the right one or the, e.g.:

The very man I was looking for.

6. with nouns to emphasize the importance or seriousness of what you are saying, e.g.: *Respect for the law is the very foundation of civilization.*

7. The expression **very much so** is an emphatic way of answering 'yes' to something or saying that it is true or correct, e.g.:

'Are you enjoying your holiday?'—'Very much so'.

8. **Very well** is used to say that you agree to do something or you accept someone's answer, even though you might not be completely satisfied with it, e.g.:

'We need proof, sir.' Another pause. Then, 'Very well.' Very well, please yourself.

9. **Very good** is used to tell someone in authority that you agree to carry out a suggestion or an order, e.g.:

'That will be all, nurse'

'Very good, doctor.'

10. If you cannot very well do something, you mean that it would not be the right thing to do, e.g.:

I can't very well drag him out of the meeting.

11. **Not very** is used with an adjective or adverb to say that something is not at all true, or that it is true only to a small degree, e.g.:

She's not very impressed with them. It's obviously not used very much. 'How well do you know her?'—'Not very' [8, p. 1622].

Let's compare the constituents of the definition in the Cobuild with that given in the Collins English Dictionary: *very* as an adverb: (intensifier) used to add emphasis to adjectives that are able to be graded: *very good, very tall, very intelligent*. In strict usage adverbs of degree such as *very, too, quite, really*, and *extremely* are used only to qualify adjectives: *he is very happy; she is too sad*. By this rule, these words should not be used to qualify past participles that follow the verb *to be*, since they would then be technically qualifying verbs. With the exception of certain participles, such as *tired* or *disappointed*, that have come to be regarded as adjectives, all other past participles are qualified by adverbs such as *much, greatly, seriously, or excessively: He has been much inconvenienced; She has been excessively criticized*.

Adverbs of degree stress the intensity or degree of an action, an adjective or another adverb. We can differentiate such degree adverbs in Modern English: *actual, appropriate, authentic, bare, bona fide, correct, especial, express, genuine, ideal, identical, indubitable, mere, model, perfect, plain, precise, pure, right, same, selfsame, sheer, simple, special, sure-enough, true, undoubted, unqualified, unquestionable, veritable, very same*.

The very-adverb can take the bottom position and the top position on the semantic scale: *very loudly* → *very slowly* [3, p. 61–64].

Thus *very* can be used in the following ways: as an adverb (before adjectives and adverbs), e.g.:

It had been a long day and he was very tired.

I always walk very quickly.

She writes very well.

Very is used as an adjective only before a noun, e.g.:

They went down to the very bottom of the sea [1, p. 66–69].

The car exploded before my very eyes.

The very-adjective can build up its own LSD: *actual, appropriate, authentic, bare, bona fide, correct, especial, express, genuine, ideal, identical, indubitable, mere, model, perfect, plain, precise, pure, right, same, selfsame, sheer, simple, special, sure-enough, true, undoubted, unqualified, unquestionable, veritable, very same.*

There are 50 samples of very-combinability in the text fragments selected from The British National Corpus:

Very + Adj (=25), e.g.: 1. *The provisions are very wide.*

Very + Adj + N (=8), e.g.: 2. *It is a very emotional song made famous by the popular popstar, Cui Jian.*

Very + Adv (=6), e.g.: 3. *She pulled herself upright very grandly. It is used for emphasis in a high degree*

Very + N (=2), e.g.: 4. *And the very fact that the experience will never ever be repeated will make the remembrance burn for her a hundred times as bright.*

Very + Num + N (=2), e.g.: 5. *It's no good to produce neatly cut panels then spoil them with distorted sewing, so the very first concern must be to understand the adjustments for thread tension.*

Very + Few + N (=2), e.g.: 6. *I remember reading a bit in the paper saying there were very few situation comedies written for women.*

Very + much more + Adj (=1), e.g.: 7. *Their attraction to concrete reality is very much more radical.*

Very + PI + N (=1), e.g.: 8. *'I do take risks but very calculated risks,' he says.*

Very + Well (=1), e.g.: 9. *'Very well, Mr Nadirpur'.*

Very + Adj + PI (=1), e.g.: 10. *Heavily wooded, in pleasing contrast to the moors, it's an important and protected haven for wildlife – and provides some very impressive walking.*

Very + PI (=1), e.g.: 11. *She thought vaguely that they must look very striking, like a shot from a new-wave British film.*

There are 115 cases of Very-combinability selected from the author's discourse represented by the novel "A Time to Kill" after John Grisham. Now let's compare the common features of Very-combinability and their quantitative characteristics in the author's discourse, e.g.:

VERY + Adj (=57), e.g.: 12. *But I believe in tears in the jury box. It's very effective.*

VERY + Adj + N (=27), e.g.: 13. *Bass wore them, and the very sane defendant went to Parchman.*

VERY + N (=9), e.g.: 14. *Those days must return, and it was up to this very group of dedicated men to take a stand for white people.*

VERY + Adv (=8), e.g.: 15. *I jumped on the bus too, and the driver very carefully took my hand and made me get off.*

VERY + MUCH (=4), e.g.: 16. *«I know for a fact he went to Noose's house with a couple of sidekicks and suggested very strongly that Noose leave the trial here. Buckley put them up to it».*

VERY + FEW (2), e.g.: 17. *A year later Lucien was disbarred. It was a tragedy for those very few who liked him.*

VERY + SORRY (2), e.g.: 18. *I'm very sorry, «Buckley offered. «No further questions», he added, eyeing Jake carefully.*

Very well/ very good is used for saying that you agree with or accept what someone says, even when you might not really agree with them. The phrase Very + Adj is used in the function of the predicative and characterizes a non-living-being.

The common adverbs are used like «VERY» and «NOT-VERY», and they can be listed in order of strength, from positive to negative: *extremely, especially, particularly, pretty, rather, quite, fairly, rather, not especially, not particularly.* It gives us a possibility to model a semantic scale which on the top position can actualize the highest degree and on the bottom position it can actualize the lowest degree.

To verify the above-mentioned thesis one can involve various registers of discourse to define the typological features of the semantic scale and further on to reveal the specific features of the author's discourse.

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Михайленко Валерій. Когнітивна граматика «*very*». У фокусі дослідження – полісемантична та мультифункціональна одиниця, яка не отримала свого об'єктивного опису. Прескриптивна та дескриптивна граматики наводять її базові характеристики як прислівника та прикметника у сполученні з дієсловом, прислівником або прикметником та іменником. Проте когнітивна семантика та дискурс-аналіз дав змогу представити *very* як багатовимірний складник системи англійської мови та структури дискурсу. У результаті дефініційного аналізу значення лексеми *very*, її лексико-граматичної та лексико-семантичної сполучуваності, аналізу текстових фрагментів та дискурсу отримано модель семантичної шкали 'VERY'.

Ключові слова: прислівник, прикметник, сполучуваність, діахронія, синхронія когнітивна граматика, дискурс-аналіз, дефініційний аналіз, компонент значення, семантична шкала.

Михайленко Валерій. Когнитивная грамматика «*very*». В фокусе исследования – полисемантическая и мультифункциональная единица, которая не получила своего объективного описания. Прескриптивная и дескриптивная грамматики установили её базовые характеристики в сочетании с глаголом, наречием или прилагательным и существительным. Однако когнитивная семантика и дискурс-анализ даёт возможность представить *very* как многомерную составляющую системы английского языка и структуры дискурса. Дефиниционный анализ значения лексемы *very*, её лексико-грамматическая и лексико-семантическая сочетаемость, анализ текстовых фрагментов и дискурса привели к моделированию семантической шкалы 'VERY'.

Ключевые слова: наречие, прилагательное, сочетаемость, диахрония, синхрония, когнитивная грамматика, дискурс-анализ, дефиниционный анализ, компонент значения, семантическая шкала.

The article acted to the editorial board
11.03.2013

УДК 811.111'42

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Актуалізація еталонного змісту матримоніальних ролей перших леді в американському газетному дискурсі

У статті встановлено ознаки концепту-еталона ПЕРША ЛЕДІ, актуалізовано засобами мовного втілення матримоніальних ролей перших леді США в американському газетному дискурсі. Матримоніальні ролі розглянуто як вияви МАТРИМОНІАЛЬНОЇ МОДЕЛІ, що є конституюнтом кластера ідеалізованих когнітивних моделей, які становлять частину складеного прототипу радіальної категорії ПЕРША ЛЕДІ / FIRST LADY.

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