Testing with reference to Adverb in Tamil

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Abstract

This paper makes an attempt to suggest ways and means for testing adverb in learning a language in the L_2 context. The text focuses on structure, nature, and other functional areas. These are illustrated by citing examples from Tamil.

Introduction

Learning a language in the L_2 context generally implies production of grammatical structures by using adverbs. Often errors are noticed at the level of adverb formation, occurrence position in a sentence, etc., Also we face problems while determining the nature of adverb whether it is basic or derived. Observation of such errors has motivated me to take up this work. Accordingly an attempt is made to present a model for identifying the adverbs and their dimensions in testing.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** **14:5 May 2014**
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Objective

To find out the dimensional areas of adverb and to provide tools for their testing.

Main Text

Adverb is a heterogeneous class of the part of speech categories which modifies and describes the verb. They form the class of words which cannot be declined for cases, number or conjugated. It will not take tense or cannot be inflected for tense. Generally, adverbs occur as attributes to verbs and tell us when, where, how often/many, why, how action is done. They express ideas such as time, place, number, purpose, and manner. Most adverbs (of manner) have a recognizable form. They end with –ly in English (for example, *quickly*). They modify the meaning of the verb, an adjective, or another adverb. For instance: *Manasa runs quickly*. Here *quickly* shows in what manner Manasa runs and modifies the verb 'runs'. *This is a very sweet mango*. Here *very* shows to what degree the mango is sweet and it modifies the adjective '*sweet*'. *Govinda reads quite clearly.* Here *quite* shows in what manner Govinda reads. *Quite* modifies the adverb '*clearly*'.

Adverbs play a role of adjuncts. An adjunct is a word (an optional part of a sentence, clause, or phrase). When removed from the sentence, it will not affect the remainder of the sentence except to discard from it some auxiliary information (Crystal David, 2008). Adjunct emphasizes its attribute as a modifying form. They may be nominal adjunct (for example, **before the game)** ; adjectival adjunct, (for example, **very** happy) and adverbial adjunct, (for example, **too** loudly).

At word level the adverbs are nothing but the forms of noun or verb (Rajendran, 2005). That is the reason why the adverbs are not dealt separately in the ancient Tamil grammar Tolkaapiyam. It has been seen as a modifier / attribute to a verb. But modern grammarians have treated adverbs as a separate entity. The Tamil grammarians treat the construction with suffix /*āka*/ or /*āy*/ as derived adverbs. An adverb may be a lexical item of the class simple adverb, for example, *mella* 'slowly'. There is no particular suffix / inflection meant only for adverbs. Only in sentence level, we can assume whether a particular form is an adverb or not. Hence most of the grammarians have listed the study of adverbs as a syntactic category, and not as a morphological category.

Based on the structure adverbs are classified into 2 types viz., Basic/Simple and Derived.

Basic/Simple Adverb consists of root forms. It does not have any derivation. It is also the uninflected and inflected noun and verb forms categorically reanalyzed to a closed set of adverbs (eg., *aṭikkaṭi* 'frequently, etc.,) (Lehman, 1989) . There is even overlap of word forms which are postpositions and adverbs. Inflected verb forms / composite word forms consist of a verb + clitic. The non-past and past participles of verbs are used extensively as adverbs.

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Based on the syntactic function, the word forms are analysed as adverbs. The possible structures of basic adverb forms on the basis of occurrences are:

- Adverb + ø   Eg., *aṅkē, iṅkē*
- Nominal root + clitic /um/   Eg., *in̲n̲um*
- Particle + Particle   Eg., *in̲imēl*
- Noun form + locative case   Eg., *naṭuvil*

- VP + clitic /um/   Eg., *mīn̲ṭum*
- Infinitive form + ø   Eg., *mella*
- VP + ø   Eg., *pārttu, pinti*
- Particle + ø   Eg., *pir̲aku*

Though analysis of adverbs takes place in so many ways, for L_2 teaching and learning purposes, the teachers generally emphasize the first one i.e Adverb + ø. However in the L_2 course in Tamil at SRLC, most of them are dealt with (Rajaram, 1979).

Derived adverb consists of noun and derivational suffix /-āka/ or /-āy/ (adverbializing suffix) which expresses manner, specify role, purpose, self-performance, quantity, gradualness, comparison, comitative, indefinite location, etc., They are formed from nouns by suffixing – *āka* (Pillai, 1992). The structure of derived form is Noun + *āka/āy* (Eg., *vēkam + āka/āy* 'quickly'). Adverbs are derived from nouns regularly and productively by suffixation. Only those adjectival nouns that can serve as predicate nominal can serve as base for derivation (eg., *al̲akān̲avan̲āka)*.

Adverbs cannot easily be recognized by their form because they do not have any suffix (eg. now). It is even more confusing that there is great flexibility and a speaker may place the adverb in various positions in a sentence without changing the meaning. As Chris Gledhill (2005), rightly points that where to put adverb in relation to verb is the complicated problem for learners. Also the students make a great number of mistakes when the grammatical structure contains one or more adverbs.

Learning a language with reference to Adverb is considered as knowing the structural elements as well as the dimensional factors associated with them. For the purpose of testing, here, Adverb is considered as the test content. Content samples should be randomly selected and dimensions identified. *Dimension* is a term used to denote a geometric magnitude measured in a specified direction such as length, width, etc. In other words, it refers to any measurable extent or magnitude or characteristics by which an object or event can be positioned in a quantitative series (Subbiah, Pon 2002). It is also defined as the nature and relationship of units entering into some physical quantity. The constituents of the dimension form a basis for developing a continuum of graded syllabi as well as tests for teaching a language at different levels of education (Subbiah, Pon 2009)

The dimensional factors cause problems to the students and they commit errors. Students have to be tested on the assumption that knowing the problem is knowing the language (Lado, 1960).

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For the purpose of testing, the quantitative and qualitative factors of adverbial dimensions are to be identified and listed under 1.Form 2. Function 3. Structure 4.Boundary and 5. Meaning. (Subbiah, Pon 2009). These dimensions are explained below in detail with examples and question items with explanation.

1. Form

Form is perceived as combination of 'shape' and 'organised units'. Form refers to the *shape or external appearance* of an object as it exists. e.g., Triangle (Δ). It also refers to an integrated whole with its components *organized* in a particular way. When the components are organised in different ways the resultant will be in different shapes, e.g., when a cluster of dots is organised horizontally, they will form a straight line (—); when placed in gradual bending, they will form a circle (◯).

In language, the external appearance of a language unit Eg., '*mīnṭum*' (basic form); also refers to an 'integral whole' with its components organised in a particular way. e.g '*vēkam + āka*' (derived adverb form). The definition based problems are 1. Name of the adverb form (basic or derived) 2. Factors that are causing the derived adverb form (suffix – *āka or āy*). This is being illustrated with question items for the purpose of testing form of both basic and derived adverb. Accordingly, the problem factors that are associated with the structural (quantitative) and dimensional (qualitative) aspects of language are identified and incorporated as part of the process of framing question items under any one of the 3 operating contexts viz., identification, production and suitability level (Subbiah, Pon 2003).

Example 1

Which of the following is in the basic adverb form
a. *cuvaiyāka*   b. *mīnṭum*
Ans. b

This question tries to test the form of basic adverb at the identification level. The learner is expected to know the related problem about one of the possible structures of basic adverb as Adverb + ø or VP + clitic /-*um*/. In this case 'form' refers to the external appearance of adverb. The definition based problem is the name of the basic adverb form.

Example 2

Give the Adverb form of the following
a. *nimiṣam*   - _____
Ans. *nimiṣamāka*

This question tries to test the form of derived adverb at production level. The learner is expected to know the related problem about the structure of derived adverb as Noun + /-*āka*/ (adverbial suffix). In this case 'form' refers to the components organized in a particular way. The definition based problem is the factor that is the cause for getting the derived adverb form.

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Example 3

Fill up the blank by choosing an appropriate adverb form

Wimbeldon tennis pōṭṭiyil Vijay Amritaraj _____ viḻaiyāṭiṉār.

 a. *cuvaiyāka* b. *kōpamāka* c. *naṉṟāka* d. *kuṉamāka*
 Ans. c.

 This question tries to test the form of derived adverb at suitability level. The learner is expected to know the related problem about the structure Noun + /-āka/ (adverbial suffix) according to the suitability in the sentence. Here the adverb '*naṉṟāka* ' qualifys the verb '*viḻaiyāṭu*'. In this case 'form' refers to the components organized in a particular way. The definition based problem is the factor that is the cause for getting the derived adverb form.

 2. *Function*

 Function is perceived as a combination of 'use' and 'usage' of an entity / object. 'Use' refers to an Inbuilt / inherent quality of an object i.e., basic use (in isolation). Eg., basic use of a cutter/knife is 'cutting' of an object. 'Usage' is the manner of handling an object, i.e., how an object is being put into use for different purposes. For example, using a cutter/knife for different purposes such as chopping, cutting, stabbing, etc.,

 In language, 'use' refers to the basic role of an element in language operation, for example, role of basic adverb '*eṅkē*' as predicate modifier. 'Usage' refers to the manner in which the language units are handled in different context to achieve different purposes like communicating, stating, emphasizing, etc., for example, '*eṅkē*'' – used as predicate modifier in '*eṅkē pōṉāṉ*' which is also used in exclamatory context as '*eṅkēyo*' resulting in different usage in different context.

Example 1

Indicate the role of underlined unit by choosing it from among those given below.

Rāman paḷḷikku <u>mella</u> naṭaṉtu vaṉtāṉ

 a. subject modifier b. predicate modifier
Ans. b

 This question tries to test the function of basic adverb at identification level. The learner is expected to know the basic function (use) of the adverb as modifier to the predicate in a sentence. Here the underlined unit '*mella*' is used as a modifier to the predicate. The definition based problem is naming the general use of the adverb and its role in a sentence.

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Example 2

In the given sentence, which unit is used as predicate modifier?

ni aḻakāka eḻutukirāy

Ans. *aḻakāka*

This question tries to test the function of a derived adverb at suitability level. The learner is expected to know the basic function (use) of the adverb as modifier to the predicate in a sentence. Here the adverb *aḻakāka* modifies the predicate (verb) *eḻutu*. The definition based problem is naming the general use of the adverb and its role in a sentence.

Example 3

Make use of the predicate modifier of the sentence '*eṅkē pōṉāṉ*?' in exclamatory context

Model : Ans. *eṅkēyo pōṉāṉ* !

This question tries to test the function of adverb at production level. The learner is expected to know the usage of adverb as modifier to predicate in the exclamatory context by adding the /-o/ to the adverb. Here function refers to the manner of handing the adverb in context. The definition based problem is how an adverb is used.

3. *Structure*

Structure is perceived as a combination of '<u>sequence</u>' and '<u>pattern</u>' of an object. It refers to the sequence or way in which the components / individual parts are organized / arranged as an integral whole on certain logics, for example, number series [1,2,3….], etc. ; also refers to a <u>pattern</u>, i.e., a predetermined model or set frame; a particular / regular way the individual units are grouped together, for example, numbering pattern [2,4,6….. multiples of 2].

In Language, structure refers to the sequence in which the syllables / elements are arranged to form a meaningful unit, for example, *uṭaṉaṭi, āka - 'uṭaṉaṭiyāka'*. Also it refers to a predetermined model or set framework i.e., regular / particular way the language units are grouped together, for example, 'Noun + Adverb marker' pattern of a adverb Eg., '*aḻakāka*'.

Example 1

Rearrange the following jumbled syllables to form basic adverb.

ī n m ṭ m u – _____

Ans. *mīṉṭum*

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This question tries to test the structure of basic adverb at production level. The learner is expected to know the structure as Adverb + ø [or VP + clitic /–um/] and the arrangement of syllables. Here structure refers to the sequence in which syllables are arranged on certain logic meaningfully to form basic adverb. The dimension based problem is sequence of arrangement of syllables.

Example 2

Rearrange the following jumbled syllables to form derived adverb.

a ṇ ṭ p i k a p ā k – _____

Ans. *kaṇ ṭippāka*

This question tries to test the structure of derived adverb at production level. The learner is expected to know the structure (sequence) as Noun + /-āka/ (adverbial marker) and the arrangement of syllables. In this case 'structure' refers to the sequence in which syllables are arranged on certain logic meaningfully to form derived adverb. The dimension based problem is sequence of arrangement of syllables.

Example 3

Which of the two groups has its elements arranged in the sequence to form adverb?

a. *āka, uṭaṉaṭi*

b. *uṭaṉaṭi, āka*

Ans. b

This question tries to test the structure of derived adverb at identification level. The learner is expected to know the structure (sequence) as Noun + /-āka/ (adverbial marker). In this case 'structure' refers to the pattern in which elements are arranged on certain logic to form a meaningful unit. Here the dimensional based problem is the sequence of arrangement of the unit.

Example 4

Give an example of an adverb in the pattern of 'Noun + adv. Marker'.

Model: Ans. *cuvaiyāka*

This question tries to test the structure of derived adverb at production level. The learner is expected to know the pattern of an adverb. Here structure refers to the pattern / set frame of language units. The dimensional based problem is name of the elements arranged in a pattern.

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Example 5

   Name the pattern in which '*aɻakāy*' is organized.

Ans. Noun + *-āy* marker

   This question tries to test the structure of derived adverb at identification level. The learner is expected to know the pattern Noun + /*-āy*/ (allomorph of *āka* adverbial marker) as adverb. In this case 'structure' refers to the pattern in which elements are arranged on certain logic to form a meaningful unit. The dimension based problem is name of the pattern.

4. Boundary

   Boundary is perceived as a combination of 'boundary marks' and 'bounded unit' of an object. It refers to a notion, used to distinguish one thing from the other, for example, Fence/ ridge of a land, etc.; also indicate the nature of the bounded area, for example, fence/ ridge implies agricultural land.

   In Language, it refers to a space and punctuation marks used to separate one unit of a language from the other, for example, space ' 'between *vēkamāka* and *ōṭiṉāṉ* in '*vēkamāka ōṭiṉāṉ*'; symbol '!' in '*aiyō*''; symbol '!' in '*aiyō*' ; also refers to the nature of language unit bounded by space or other marks, for example, Question mark (?) implies the preceding unit bounded is in interrogative form '*cirittāṉa* ?'

Example 1

   Give boundary (preceding and following) marks of the underlined adverb.

Rāman uṉṉai eppaṭi naṭattiṉār naṉṟāka āṉāl eṉakkō piṭikkavillai

Ans. Preceding mark (space ?) and following mark (.)

   This question tries to test the boundary of adverb at identification level. The learner is expected to know the preceding and following boundary marks of adverb as preceded by space and interrogation (question) and followed by space and full stop (completion). Here boundary refers to space and punctuation marks used to separate one unit of a language from the other. Dimension based problem is name of the boundary marker.

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5. Meaning

Meaning is perceived as a combination of 'Mental image' and 'sense' of an object. ('Mental image' of an entity (physical or conceptual), for example, Flower- ♣; human experience, 'thought content' (relation between object and experience) that formed as mental image in different contexts).

In language, it refers to the meaning that a language unit or group of units convey in isolation (lexical meaning, direct meaning, etc.), for example, '*paṭi*' (verb) -'*vāci*'; also refers to the 'sense' i.e a language unit or group of words purported to convey in different contexts (grammatical, idiomatic, connotative, metaphorical etc.,) Eg., *'paṭi' -'maṉatai paṭittāḷ'* [observed]

Example 1

Which one of the following has the meaning of '*niṟaiya*'?
a. *paḻaya* b. *kūṭutalāka*

Ans. b.

This question tries to test the meaning of adverb at suitability level. The learner is expected to know the mental image of adverb. Here mental image refers to the meaning that a language unit or group of units convey in isolation (lexical meaning, direct meaning, etc.). Here the dimension based problem is the word meaning.

Example 2

Choose the antonyms of '*nalla*' from among those given below.

a. *keṭṭa* b. *niṟaiya*

Ans. a

This question tries to test the meaning of adverb at identification level. The learner is expected to know the mental image of adverb. Here mental image refers to the opposite meaning that a language unit or group of units convey in isolation (lexical meaning, direct meaning, etc.). Here the dimension based problem is the word & opposite meaning relations.

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Example 3

Give the meaning of ‘*tinacari*’ as adverb implied from the 2 sentences

    a. *nāṉ tiṉacari pū vāṅkuvēṉ.*

    b. *Rāmaṉukku tiṉantōrum tiṉacari eḻutuvatu paḻakkam*

Ans. a. Adverb (contextual meaning)

       This question tries to test the meaning of basic adverb at identification level according to context. The learner is expected to know the sense of a language unit conveyed in different context. Here the dimension based problem is the Contextual meaning.

Example 4

Which one of the following has the meaning of adverb?

    a. *Rāmu aḻakāṉa paiyaṉ.*

    b. *Sita aḻakāka pāṭuvāḷ.*

Ans. b. *aḻakāka* - Adverb (contextual meaning)

       This question tries to test the meaning of derived adverb at identification level according to context. The learner must know the sense of a language unit conveyed in different context. Here the dimension based problem is the Contextual meaning.

Conclusion

       This paper describes ways to instruct the learner to have a clear idea about the adverb and its problem areas for testing and teaching as well. The development of question items aims to test the learner's ability of identification, production and the appropriate use of adverbs in L_2 context. However, this is not an end list of problematic areas of adverbs. It is an open research topic which can be modified or revised with the help of empirical data and further innovative research. Suggestions if any are always welcome.

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