

Formal and semantic variation in the sphere of morphology in the English language in the light of optionality

Albina Anvarovna Bilyalova and Jamilya Nasyhovna Mustafina

Kazan (Volga region) Federal University, Mira Avenue, 68/19, Naberezhnye Chelny, 423800, Russia

Abstract. The article explores the use of simple and derivative forms of adverbs in the English language from the angle of the problem of optionality. Modern English possesses numerous structures which are represented by two or more modifications having the same meaning. Variants here described are generally interchangeable, i.e. they can be used optionally. In the article an attempt has been made to introduce some differences in their usage which can bear the light to the present-day practice. Most definitions, or «rules», have been profusely illustrated to make it easier to see when and how the two structures can function as variants.

[Bilyalova A.A., Mustafina J.N. **Formal and semantic variation in the sphere of morphology in the English language in the light of optionality.** *Life Sci J* 2014;11(5):487-490] (ISSN:1097-8135). <http://www.lifesciencesite.com>. 71

Keywords: adverbs, variation, optionality, obligatory variant, optional variant.

Introduction

Language is a means of forming and storing ideas as reflections of reality and exchanging them in the process of human intercourse. Language is social by nature; it is inseparably connected with the people who are its creators and users; it grows and develops together with the development of society. For this reason functioning of language is of great interest from the sociolinguistic point of view. There are a lot of scientific papers devoted to the linguistic description of social variation in language [1-8]. But language variation has being observed not only as an indicator of social groups but it is closely connected with literary norm of language, with its grammar. Scholars belonging to this trend approach the problem of variation from the point of view of the development trends in language which reveal formation of new variants on different language levels (phonetics, morphology, grammar). They claim the statement about dynamic character of any alive language in the world [9-11]. The article explores the formal and semantic descriptions of variation in the morphology of the English language in the light of the problem of optionality.

Main part

The problem of optionality is one that causes great controversies both in general linguistic theory and in the analysis of separate languages. The phenomenon of optionality as the use of grammatical irregularity indicators was first noted in Chinese and holds a special place in grammar of the Chinese language and some other languages in East and Southeast Asia. Long ago in the 30-ies of the last century a French scientist A.Maspero introduced the idea based on the fact of the existence of the phenomenon of optionality in language. According to his views, all formal elements in language are used in

speech subjectively, it means that an optional use of formal parameters in the Chinese language is absolute [12]. However, further study of the patterns used as formal parameters in the Chinese language has not confirmed the correctness of A.Maspero's views regarding to the absolute nature of optionality. The term "optionality" can be widely found in European linguistic surveys of 50-ies XX century, which are devoted to the description of languages of isolating typology.

We should note that in Russian linguistics some experience of studying optionality can be observed but there is a great variety of views on that point. Briefly, the positions in this field maybe summarized as follows. Some scholars point out that optionality is closely connected with language redundancy and economy of language means. Others treat opportunity something like ellipses or nonobligatory co-occurrence. There are scholars who are even skeptical about optionality. They deny that it is possible to use language means optionally. Moreover, from their point of view the recognition of optionality in language will necessitate change and rebuilding the whole general theory of grammar.

What appears to be essential is a note about the fact that the problem of optionality is of great interest for linguists in the field of any language. Thus, G.Sanzheev, the researcher of the Mongolian language, introduces optionality as the possibility to replace one synonymous language device by another without any substantial change in the terms of the content. Taking into consideration data from the history of the Mongolian language the scholar concludes that it is extremely important to study the phenomena of optionality in close connection with diachrony. He writes: "To study the phenomenon of optionality or what is the same, synonymy, without referring to historicism means not always seek proper

scientific results "(translated by author) [13]. He believes that it is important in the study of optionality to find out what language units (phonemes, morphemes, words and grammatical devices) and in what cases can interchange each other, keeping in mind that even absolute synonyms (e.g. "спасибо" и "благодарю" in the Russian language) hardly always can be interchangeable, particular, in the circumstances of euphony or style.

T.Ya.Elizarenkova, the scientist who investigates language in diachrony, namely the history of the ancient Indian language, also addresses to the problem of optionality in her researches. In the article "Optionality and its features in the ancient Indian language" she states that optionality can be treated as a way to provide additional channels of language functioning; it is something like a reserve which can be the purely stylistic feature in a definite state of language development, but in the case of restructuring of language can also become a major variant. She writes: "In any given synchronous state the speaker and writer has a reasonable choice thanks to optionality. And it not only increases the informational power of language, but also gives you the opportunity to do intralinguistic transfer, metalinguistic operations, without which there can be no language at all" (translated by author) [14].

Significant contribution to the explanation of optionality was introduced by L.Kisileva. In her article "Some remarks on optionality" she drew attention to the fact that we should speak about optionality in connection with the variants of linguistic units (phonemes, morphemes, words, language constructions), which frequently appear in speech [15]. Thus, the scientist closely links optionality with variation.

The problem of optionality in Russian linguistics is described thoroughly in the works of a prominent researcher of isolating languages V.M. Solntsev. Definition which V.M. Solntsev gives to the phenomenon of optionality is probably the most complete and expanded. He writes: «Under the optional character can be understood the freedom or opportunity to make the omission of some linguistic element (or, conversely, we mean the use of a linguistic element, its modifications) or to make change in the sequence of linguistic elements under two circumstances: a) if there is absence of any changes in grammatical relationships between linguistic elements in the speech pattern, and b) if there is absence of significant change in the expressed value, or meaning» (translated by the author) [16]. We fully agree with this definition, but we'd like to add that optionality can occur only if we can observe the variation, which is in fact can be considered as the source of obligatory and optional language variants.

We've studied some English grammar variants which can be considered as optional variants opposed to coexisting obligatory forms reflected in the speech of native speakers. Speaking about optional variant we mean "a speech modification that functions in a language along with the normal variant in certain linguistic and extra-linguistic conditions" [17].

Modern English possesses numerous structures which are represented by two or more modifications having the same meaning and which can for this reason be used indifferently or optional. Actually these parallel modes of expression, or variants, form an integral part of English grammar. Variants here described can be generally interchangeable (sometimes in any circumstances, which is rare), but mostly they can replace each other in certain syntactic positions or lexical contexts or in certain of their senses. These conditions which favour or, on the contrary, hinder interchangeability have been defined with a degree of accuracy that available data permits. In the article an attempt has been made to introduce differences in their usage which can bear the light to the present-day practice. Most definitions, or «rules», have been profusely illustrated to make it easier for the reader to see when and how the two structures can function as variants.

In the article variant use of simple and derivative forms of adverbs is described. It is important to note that the optional variants often occur in the process of communication in different speech situations, and are normally classified as conventional norms. We have attempted to analyze some examples where it is possible to determine the obligatory and optional form of language versions, which function in a speech. Some examples of formal and semantic variation in the morphology of English, which causes the optional grammar form at this aspect, were examined. The examples were taken from literary works of English writers.

Let's start with looking at a few adverbs of manner which have variant forms – one simple and one ending in -ly. In certain cases they can be used interchangeably. These forms will be described further.

1) *Cheap*. The simple form *cheap* is interchangeable with the derivative *cheaply* mostly when used with the verbs *buy* and *sell*. The use of the variants is optional here:

a) ...he was in a position to buy *cheap*. (T. White).

b) "But I bought some of them quite *cheaply*." (P. P. Read).

In this connection, it should be noted that in the figurative sense *cheaply* is the obligatory variant, as in "lie got off *cheaply*".

2) *Close*. The parallel forms are used indiscriminately (optionally) with the verbs *cling*, *hold*, *hug*, *pull* and sometimes with a few others:

a) "Why do they think they must be without real faith, and then cling too *close*, as if they are afraid" (T. Bowen).

b) But in the general disintegration of all things he had clung very *closely* to those two women (R. Aldington).

A further remark is necessary here: there is no optional variant when the adverb is used in the figurative meaning of "attentively". In this case the form *closely* is the only obligatory form, as in "She had not been listening very *closely*".

3) *Deep*. Really it is difficult to give any definite "rules" as to when *deep* and *deeply* can be used interchangeably: it seems easier to define when they cannot be so used. Thus, in structures such as *deep dawn*, *deep inside*, etc. and in compound participles such as *deep-set*, *deep-rooted* there are no any optional variants, only obligatory variant *deep* is found. Conversely, *deeply* is obligatory with the verbs *breathe* and *sleep*, and also when a high degree of some emotion is to be expressed, e.g.: At that moment site hated him *deeply*. In the following examples, however, there seems to be little or even no difference between the parallel forms. These are cases in Contemporary English where a boundary line between *deep* and *deeply* is hard to draw:

a) The Brigadier gave a large and astonished gasp, drank *deep* of his whisky and then gasped again (H. E. Bates). ...she said it, staring *deep* into Uncle Mort's startled eyes (P. Tinniswood).

b) The Brigadier drank *deeply* of his whisky (H. E. Bates). We stopped talking for a moment, staring *deeply* into Nealis's eyes (J. Carrick).

The analysis revealed that with the verbs *look* and *stare* the variants *deep* and *deeply* are used optionally rather regularly.

4) *Loud*. Variants *loud* and *loudly* are sometimes used optionally with the verbs *cry*, *laugh*, *play*, *say*, *shout*, *speak*, and a few others.

a) One had to speak fairly *loud* to make oneself heard (J. Aiken).) Dr. Balder threw back his head and laughed *loud* (E. Raymond).

b) He spoke very *loudly* to his friend (D. Jewell). Pybus said *loudly*, with vulgar virtue, "I've been very frank with you..." (J. Barlow).

The simple form is more suited for informal speech, thus it is defined as an optional variant. This is why it is regularly found in imperative sentences such as "Don't talk so *loud*". Sometimes the choice of obligatory or optional variant is dictated by the construction in which it is used. Thus, the simple form is regular (respectively obligatory) when it is preceded and followed by *as*, e.g.: He shouted *as loud* as he

could. In a figurative sense, i.e. when it is said of dress or colour, the derivative grammar form is obligatory, as in "She dressed *loudly*".

5) *Direct*. The simple and derivative forms of this adverb are used optionally in the following senses: 1) straight, not round about (of direction); 2) personally, not by proxy; 3) frankly; 4) at once, without delay.

1. a) She had tried to go *direct* to the ultimate security of her street door (B. Kops).

b) She went *directly* into the bedroom... (T. Broat).

2. a) Calgary addressed the girl *direct* (A. Christie).

b) The characters on the stage were addressing him *directly*, he felt (A. Hamilton).

3. a) "I can just as well tell your mother *direct*," she said (E. Taylor).

b) "He'll be far less hurt once you've told him *directly*" (J. Hunter).

4. a) I answered *direct*: "I think it means that I shall go blind in that eye" (C. P. Snow).

b) The Professor looked at her curiously and did not answer *directly* (M. Allingham).

It ought to be noted here that the derivative form *directly* can be used as the only obligatory variant in the following cases:

a) with the local meaning of "right, just, immediately", as in "I sat *directly* behind him";

b) with the temporal meaning of "soon, presently", e.g. He'll be in *directly*;

c) conjunctively, with the meaning of "as soon as", as in "I recognized the girl *directly* I saw her";

d) in the position preceding the main verb, e.g. She was going, which I was delighted to hear, though I didn't *directly* say so.

6) *Quick*. Variants *quick* and *quickly* are used optionally in imperative sentences.

a) «Come *quick*,» pleaded Rita in a panic-stricken voice (F. Norman). «The police should know about it as *quick* as possible» (V. Canning).

b) "Come down *quickly*," stammered Molly. "He wanted to get rid of me as quickly as possible" (D. Eden).

The derivative form *quickly* is common in the function of a detached adverbial modifier preceded by *and*, as in "His immediate impulse was to drive out there, and *quickly*", and it is obligatory when placed before the main verb, as in "She had *quickly* fallen asleep". Of the two variants, *quick* seems to be the more vigorous, *quickly* is more polite and, therefore, more suited to formal style. Respectively, *quickly* is an obligatory variant, *quick* is an optional variant.

7) *Wrong*. *Wrong* and *wrongly* are sometimes used optionally, though it rather difficult to

give definite rules as to when variation is possible. The analysis revealed that with some verbs variation is more optional than with others. For instance, the choice is generally optional in the following phrases: *do something wrong(ly)*, *guess wrong(ly)*, *count wrong(ly)*, *spell (or pronounce) a word wrong(ly)*, and there may be a few others.

a) Suddenly I was doing everything *wrong* (K. Royce). She was delighted when I spelt a word *wrong* (P. Haines).

b) ...he had, so far, done things *wrongly* (J. Wainwright). He had spelt 'gauge' *wrongly* (M. Danby).

When the adverb precedes the main verb, *wrongly* is almost invariably used, as in "He was *wrongly* imagining that it was into these new Victorian pews that the jolly smugglers rolled their casks".

Conclusion

Change is a part of the nature of human language. Existence of variation in language proves the statement about its dynamic character. The language that is not gradually varying is one on the verge of extinction. Speaking about obligatory and optional variants in language it is extremely important to emphasize that optional variants in the system of language should be viewed not as an argument, showing the inadequacy and incorrectness of their use, but as an indicator of language flexibility and its continual development in certain linguistic and extralinguistic conditions.

Corresponding Author:

Dr. Bilyalova Albina Anvarovna
Kazan (Volga region) Federal University
Mira Avenue, 68/19, Naberezhnye Chelny, 423800,
Russia

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4/24/2014