

Linguistic concepts across languages: the category of adverbs in English and Polish

Agata Rozumko
University of Bialystok
arozumko@gmail.com

Contrastive research is an area where defining linguistic categories seems particularly important. In order to compare a given category across languages, one needs it to be clearly delimited in the languages compared. This paper focuses on adverbs, a class which most grammar books describe as heterogeneous. Because of its heterogeneous character, the class is defined differently in different grammatical traditions. In English linguistics, the term *adverb* is usually understood quite broadly to refer to those items which modify verbs, adjectives, other adverbs, and clauses (e.g. Huddleston and Pullum 2002), while in Polish grammars, the lexemes modifying clauses tend to be excluded from the category of adverbs and classified as particles (Bańko 2012) – a category which in Polish linguistics is as heterogeneous as adverbs are in English. Both approaches pose some problems in the description of adverbs. Recent publications on epistemic markers in Polish suggest that it may be more appropriate to reclassify some modal particles as adverbs (Danielewiczowa 2012), while Wierzbicka (2006) argues that some items classified as epistemic adverbs, such as *surely*, should be treated as particles. The aim of this paper is to compare the ways in which Anglophone and Polish grammars deal with the categories of adverbs and particles. It argues that such a comparison of linguistic traditions, combined with a contrastive analysis of data from the two languages, offers important insights into the properties of epistemic adverbs (and other linguistic categories), and helps to classify them in both languages.

References:

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