Introduction

What we know about adverbs and variation from earlier historical stages of English (Tagliamonte and Ito 2002).

- Adverbial of manner, the largest group of adverbs, are generally marked with the suffix -ly. Although, the zero form is also possible.
- Intensifier use of adverbs that modify adjectives or adverbs are generally zero marked.
- If "zero adverb perfect, you might get a C." 
- Sentential adverbs are generally marked with -ly.
- "Honorably, they did."

We focus on manner adverbs, where the allomorphs between -ly and zero generally exist (Opsahl 2000), and for which there is no difference in meaning (Tagliamonte and Ito 2002). The zero adverb is widespread in American English (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1990) and is no difference in meaning (Tagliamonte and Ito 2002).

- The zero adverb is geographically and socially diffused (Mencken 1961).
- Nonetheless, the adverbial of manner is also used in speech of earlier historical stages of English.
- To date, there are no studies of American English that correlate the variation of the dual forms of adverbs with social factors.
- This raises the question, are African American or AAE speakers using adverbial -ly less than other speakers of American English?

Methods

The Study

THE SURVEY (2008)

The survey (see handout) consists of 20 sentences with the last word of each sentence missing. The survey is presented to each interviewee orally, and the participants are asked to fill in each missing word with the first word that comes to mind. There are 9 content sentences, designed to elicit tokens of the three target adverbs that were easiest to construct elicitation sentences for: slowly, badly, and loudly. In three different environments: after the verb, very and directly after the verb. Two additional elicited adverbs are included in data analysis: quickly and poorly.

Right wing and right eye are also not apparent in American English. Hence, 2003 pilot study elicited the following sentence: 

Figure 1 below gives examples of sentences that were part of the survey:

The social variables of age, education, race/ethnicity, sex, and linguistic background are recorded. In addition, occupation and birthplace are recorded, and will be categorized and coded during another research phase.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Linguistic Background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-25</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Monolingual English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Bilingual English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>Graduate School</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Non-native speaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-55</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Monolingual English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56+</td>
<td>No College</td>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Bilingual English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data collected in this analysis were collected in 2008 by an undergraduate linguistics class consisting of approximately 30 students. Each student was trained to survey 10 people, and was assigned a quota of age, sex, and race in order to insure a corpus balanced for those demographics. Students were instructed to have the majority of surveys conducted with native speakers of English. This resulted in approximately 900 speakers, and a total of 6,625 instructed to have the majority of surveys conducted with native speakers of English in order to insure a corpus balanced for those demographics. Students were trained to survey 18 people, and was assigned a quota for age, sex, and race.

Integrating socio-linguistic theory in American English, the research is limited by the fact that the questionnaire is designed to elicit certain forms. In the future more adverbials will be added for further clarity; nonetheless, lexical distribution of adverbs and lexical environment play a role in the rate of the zero adverb use.

Results

The sociolinguistic data is analyzed for education, such that those with no college education strongly disfavor adverbial -ly (0.28), those who had attended college slightly favored adverbial -ly (0.52), and those with a post-college education strongly favored adverbial -ly (0.70).

LINGUISTIC BACKGROUND

The data set is divided into monolingual English speakers (comprising about 75% of the data), bilinguals with English as a primary language, and a group of individuals for whom English is their second language/Monolingual English speakers favored (0.52) adverbial -ly the most. Bilingual and ESL individuals disfavor (47, 32 respectively) adverbial -ly, with the latter group disfavoring the most.

Race/Ethnicity

Students were given this category as an open question. Responses were categorized into larger categories in which predominant classifications fit.

Figure 1: Goldvarb Results for adverbial -ly: Reanalysis

- The results held when individuals identified as Black are compared to all other race/ethnic groups, with the the Black group disfavoring adverbial -ly (0.39), and all others favoring it (0.56).

Sex

There is no difference in adverbial usage by the two sexes.

Race Matters: Recording and Raciality

Black Group

With the Black group isolated, only 3 of the 6 factor groups are significant:

- Root words generally pattern the same, with -bad, now slightly favoring adverbial -ly (0.33).
- The effect of Education is similar to the larger dataset
- For Linguistic Background, it is the monolingual English speakers that slightly disfavor (-0.49) and the ESL speakers that disfavor adverbial -ly (0.34), whereas the bilingual speakers favor it (0.65). We should use caution here, since 92% of the tokens are from monolinguals.

White Group

- In the isolated White group, Sex becomes significant compared to the larger dataset
- In the sex category, White women slightly favor adverbial -ly usage (0.52) and White men disfavor it (0.48)
- The pattern among White speakers with regards to Age is more similar to the overall dataset than the Black group, except for Group E (54-65 years old), which has switched from disfavoring to slightly favoring adverbial -ly (use it 0.52)

Discussion

- According to Tagliamonte and Ito (2002), zero adverbs are more frequent in North America than in Britain due to the fact that it started as robust, was sanctioned by Noah Webster, and was allowed to continue to "develop unchecked by social pressure in a receptive environment."
- However, there have been no variationist studies on North American English to address whether zero adverbs are undergoing linguistic change towards an increase in frequency.
- Our findings confirm that based on the adverbs examined, zero adverbs ARE more frequent in North American English. Tagliamonte and Ito (2002) found the -ly form to represent 83% of their data. For American English, we find the -ly form representing 63.6% of our data. This high frequency of -ly implies perspective to claims of high or disfavoring zero adverb in North American English (cf., Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1990).
- As noted by Opsahl (2000a, 2000b), our results confirm that lexical items are factors that affect the rate of adverbial use. However, the research is limited by the fact that the questionnaire is designed to elicit certain forms. In the future more adverbials will be added for further clarity; nonetheless, lexical distribution of adverbs and lexical environment play a role in the rate of the zero adverb use.

*For References: See Handout

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Sociolinguistic Variation in American English Adverbial –ly