

Adverbs ending in *-(l)ig* ‘-ly’ and *-(l)igt* ‘-ly’ in Danish

In Modern Standard Danish, adverbs based on adjectives typically end in a *-t*, cf. *gør det omhyggeligt!* ‘do it carefully’, where the adverb *omhyggeligt* ‘carefully’ is based on the adjective *omhyggelig* ‘careful’. In the 19th century, this was not so; back then, adverbs based on adjectives would typically occur without such a *-t*, e.g. *hun indøvede stykket omhyggelig* ‘she practiced the play carefully’.

On the expression side, the adverbs without a final *-t* as well as the ones ending in a *-t* coincide with adjectival gender forms (e.g. *omhyggelig-Ø* ‘careful-C’ vs. *omhyggelig-t* ‘careful-N’). Therefore, they have often been analyzed as adjectives used as adverbs (e.g. Mikkelsen 1911; Diderichsen 1946). However, following Skautrup (1947, 1953) and Brink (2018), we consider them adverbs derived from adjectives (Schack & Jensen, *subm.*; Jensen & Schack, *subm.*). Historically, adjective-based adverbs with and without final *-t* are preceded by other derivational forms, most notably ones with the suffix *-e* (e.g. *listige* ‘cunningly’, *grumme* ‘badly, ugly’) and – if the adjective itself ends with the derivational suffix *-(l)ig* – by forms with the suffix *-(l)igen* (e.g. *retteligen* ‘properly’, *lystigen* ‘merrily’).

During the 17th and 18th centuries, adverbs ending in *-e* and in *-(l)igen* recede and give way to adverbial forms with no particular expression marker (e.g. *omhyggelig*) and later still to the adverbial forms ending in *-t* (e.g. *omhyggeligt*).

This diachronic outline concerns all adverbs based on adjectives, e.g. derived adjectives with the suffixes *-bar*, *-som*, (*mærkbar* ‘tangible’, *langsom* ‘slow’), compositional adjectives with the highly productive elements *-fuld*, *-løs* (*sorgfuld* ‘mournful’, *tankeløs* ‘thoughtless’), as well as simplex adjectives without a suffix (*smuk* ‘beautiful’, *streng* ‘strict’). However, in the literature on Danish, most attention has been devoted to adverbs ending in *-(l)ig*.

The adjectival suffix *-lig* is a cognate to the English adverbial suffix *-ly*. In the course of history, a number of adjectives historically with other endings have joined the adverbs ending in *-lig* (cf. Falk & Torp 1900; Skautrup 1947, 1953). In grammars of Modern Danish, adverbs ending in *-lig(t)* and *-igt* are traditionally treated as one issue, and we follow this tradition.

In this paper, we present a study of the change from *-(l)ig* to *-(l)igt* in recent history. The study is based on two corpora, both representing written language. One corpus consists of literature and letters from the 19th century; the other of texts from the year 2017.

The study documents how forms without *-t* are replaced by forms with a final *-t*. The study also reveals that the replacement does not take place at an even pace in all adverbial functions. Manner adverbs without *-t* are significantly more frequent in the 19th century than forms without *-t*; in 2017, manner adverbs exclusively occur with *-t*. Temporal adverbs change from forms with *-t* being much more frequent than forms without *-t* in the 19th century to the opposite situation in 2017. As regards adverbs of degree, in the 19th century, they almost exclusively occur without *-t*; in 2017, the ratio of forms with and without *-t* is fifty-fifty.

This pattern supports ideas of adverbs being a morpho-syntactic more diverse lexical class than traditionally assumed.

References

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