

ly-Adverbs and the Acceptability of the *it*-Cleft Construction

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One of the questions about the *it*-Cleft construction is *ly*-adverbs standing in the focal position as in (1). Matsuyama (2001) shows that *ly*-adverbs don't usually occur in this position as in (1a), but emphatic words, negative and interrogative sentences make them acceptable as in (1b) and (1c).

- (1) a. *It was carefully that John cut the cake.
b. It was {very / quite/ not} carefully that John cut the cake.
c. Was it carefully that John cut the cake?

Amano (1976) notes that (i) some manner adverbs and degree adverbs are accepted with emphatic words such as *so*, *very* as in (1b) or in negative and interrogative sentences as in (1b) and (1c), (ii) some adverbs of *time*, *place* and *ways* can fall into the place without any assistance as shown in (2), and (iii) conjunct adverbs and sentential adverbs aren't available as in (3).

(2) It's frequently that he loses money.

(3) *It was {certainly, frankly, thus, therefore} that they left early. Amano (1976: 69, 79)

He explains that the *ly*-adverbs accepted above act as important units in the sentences. It is with the additional information conveyed by negative and interrogative sentences and the additional phrases that the unaccepted sentences can become acceptable. He also indicates contrastive contexts enhance the acceptability strongly; for example, *it is not ... that ...*; *it is ... that ...*

However, the linguistic phenomena should be treated more carefully, and we need to look deeply into the conditions allowing *ly*-adverbs to be accepted. First of all, adverb phrases including *ly*-adverbs in the focal position show low frequency. Among corpus based approaches, Colins (1991: 201) shows that the number of adverb phrases is 44 out of 752 (5.8 %) and Calude (2009: 181) indicates 3 out of 113 (2.6%). If so, the occurrences including *ly*-adverbs will become less than their numbers. It is no doubt that *ly*-adverbs in the focal position are quite rare, and need some special contexts. The conditions proposed by Amano are sure related to the factors, but other factors do exist. Interestingly, in COCA, or Corpus of Contemporary English, Amano's contexts don't show higher type frequencies than affirmative contexts as shown in the following chart; namely, if the contexts are crucial, the type frequencies are expected to show a wider variety of types. The brackets mean raw frequencies.

	It is *ly that	It was *ly that	It's *ly that	type (total)
Positive	15(67)	13(82)	12(107)	27(261)

Negative	6(66)	7(68)	9(85)	12(219)
Interrogative	3(23)	4(12)	-	5(35)
with a degree adverb	1(3)	0(0)	2(4)	2(7)

I don't intend that Amano's analysis is not accurate, but there exist other factors. The high type frequency in affirmative sentences indirectly means other possibilities because the context has difficulty accepting *ly*-adverbs as in (1), according to Amano (1976).

Next, I asked some native speakers various *ly*-adverbs in the focal position and in contrastive contexts as shown in (4), and questioned the acceptability. They agreed with Amano's observation that conjunct adverbs and sentential adverbs were not accepted basically, but didn't accept *ly*-adverbs both in negative and interrogative contexts and with additional phrases. Rather, repeating the *ly*-adverbs was more effective than the ones as shown in (5). Therefore, repetitions seem to be more crucial rather than negative and interrogative contexts, additional phrases and contrastive contexts. Moreover, considering the fact that (4b) also repeats *quickly*, but cannot be accepted, the *ly*-adverbs in the focal position should be repeated without any contrast as in (5); namely, it seems to be important that they are used anaphorically.

(4) a. How did he do it → *It was quickly that John did it.

b. Among carefully, slowly and quickly, how did he do it? → *It was quickly that John did it.

c. *It's not slowly, but it's quickly that John did it.

(5) John did it quickly. In fact, it was really quickly that John did it.

The last point to be noticed is that most of the *ly*-adverbs observed in COCA occur in the inferential construction, or *it be that* construction, named by Delahunt (1995). I will explain the detail in the presentation.

In summary, *ly*-adverbs in the focal positions are quite rare, if any, and they need very restricted contexts. The conditions proposed by Amano raise the acceptability, but repetitive contexts boost the acceptability more than the contrastive contexts.

References

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