

HE WAS ANGRY AWFUL: INTERTWINING PATHS OF DEVELOPMENT TO NEW DEGREE MODIFIER CONSTRUCTIONS IN AMERICAN ENGLISH

HÉLÈNE MARGERIE

Université Bordeaux Montaigne

ABSTRACT: While historical approaches to degree modifier constructions in English are often conducted in the light of grammaticalization theory, this study of two intensifying constructions in American English, <ADJ + *awful/terrible/horrible*> and <VB (+ Object) + *awful/terrible/horrible*> in which *awful/terrible/horrible* function as degree adverbs, as in *I was hungry awful* or *You are scaring me terrible*, offers a somewhat different diachronic picture. Although these constructions display unusual morpho-syntactic features, the interest here lies in the way(s) they emerged. Relying on data from historical corpora and the Internet, the author argues that the constructions embarked on intertwining pathways of development in which grammaticalization was not the only—and maybe also not the main—process of linguistic change at work. The study highlights a fundamental process of analogization that has strengthened a higher-level construction, <ADJ + degree adverb (homophonous with an adjective)>, the productivity of which as an instantiation of the degree modifier construction seems to be on the increase in American English.

THIS ARTICLE DEALS with degree modifier constructions in American English that have not yet been explored: Adjective + *awful/terrible/horrible* (henceforth <ADJ + *a/t/h*>) and Verb (+ Object) + *awful/terrible/horrible* (henceforth <VB (+ Object) + *a/t/h*>). Examples of what will hereafter be called the adjectival and the verbal patterns, respectively, are provided in (1).

1. a. Ordered food and sushi. Food was not very good and the sushi was just awful. Like worst I've ever had, couldn't even eat it even though I was hungry awful. [Kelly M., review of Great Chow, *Yelp*, Oct. 14, 2010, <http://www.yelp.com/biz/great-chow-abington>]
- b. I was dreaming that I had woken up from a dream scared shitless over a dream I had had. In the dream I was scared I woke John up muttering about how I had had this horrible dream and that it had scared me horrible and now I was scared to go back to sleep and of the dark. [grlinheadphones,

Rhythm to Your Heart and Soul: Beats to Live By (blog), Aug. 10, 2011, <http://grlinheadphones.livejournal.com/288942.html>]

In these constructions, *awful*, *terrible*, and *horrible* (henceforth *a/t/h*) are comparable to intensifiers which have a boosting effect (see Quirk et al. 1985, 590), that is, they express a high degree of the property denoted by the adjectival or verbal head. But the postposition of the degree adverb *awful* in (1a) is strikingly unusual. Compare (1a) to (2a) in which the postposition of the degree adverb *awfully* yields an ungrammatical pattern, while the suffixed adverb can premodify the adjectival head in (2b):

2. a. *I was hungry awfully.
- b. I was awfully hungry.

A/t/h will here be treated as a semiclosed set because the research conducted so far shows the use of just these three modifiers in the patterns under study. My investigation started out after coming across example (1a) above and one instantiation of *scared me awful* on Google. I then looked out for other adverbs which might fill the postmodifier slot occupied by *awful* above, such as *terrible*, *horrible*, and *dreadful*. These were selected because they are semantically close to *awful* as intensifying adverbs (see section 1.2) and their *-ly* suffixed forms developed into degree adverbs. The investigation included other zero-form degree adverbs like *real* or *bad*. *Terrible*, *horrible* and *bad*—to a certain extent (see section 1.2)—turned out to be the only three forms, alongside *awful*, occurring in the postmodifier position in the adjectival pattern under study. *A/t/h* will here be treated as a semiclosed set for two specific reasons.¹ First, the intensifying patterns <VB (+ Object) + *bad*> and—maybe to a lesser extent—<participial adjective + *bad*> (e.g., *worried bad*) are not unusual to English speakers, in contrast to the *a/t/h* patterns. Second, the pattern <ADJ + *bad*> is of more limited use than <ADJ + *a/t/h*>, restricted as it seems to be to participial adjectives only (see section 1.2).

In addition to the case study itself, which shows that the patterns—especially the adjectival one, which will thus be the main focus of this article—exhibit peculiar morphosyntactic properties that set them apart from a large part of the category of degree modifiers in English, the article also explores the historical evolution of the forms pertaining to this functional category. However, it takes a somewhat different direction from that adopted in much of the literature on the subject by questioning grammaticalization as the main type of linguistic change at work in the rise of the patterns <ADJ + *a/t/h*> and <VB (+ Object) + *a/t/h*>. The term GRAMMATICALIZATION has been used with a variety of meanings (see Traugott 2010 for an overview), and I shall rely on Traugott and Dasher's (2002, 81) statement that grammaticaliza-

tion should be “conceived as the change whereby lexical material in highly constrained pragmatic and morphosyntactic contexts is assigned functional category status.” The present article will put forward the assumption that the patterns under study embarked on intertwining pathways of development that, though they may involve a process of further grammaticalization consisting of “the increase in the range of a morpheme advancing from [...] a less grammatical to a more grammatical status” (Kuryłowicz 1965, 69), highlight the fundamental role of analogy in language change. In that respect this study lends support to a constructional view of language (see, e.g., Traugott 2008a, 2008b, 2012) by arguing that the type of linguistic change at work in the case of postmodifiers *a/t/h* is facilitated, if not driven, by the existence of a constructional network of degree modifiers with which the patterns <ADJ + *a/t/h*> and <VB (+ Object) + *a/t/h*> share morphosyntactic, semantic, and pragmatic features.

Section 1 of the present article focuses on intensifiers, both the degree modifier constructions under study here and the general set of intensifiers they belong to. It delves into the details of the patterns <ADJ + *a/t/h*> and <VB (+ Object) + *a/t/h*> by addressing the issue of their productivity and highlighting their specific morphosyntactic properties in comparison with other degree modifiers in English, especially zero-form adverbs.² After recalling the usual development of degree modifiers in English along grammaticalization clines and discussing a possible similar historical development for the patterns <ADJ + *a/t/h*> and <VB (+ Object) + *a/t/h*>, section 2 will offer a complex picture of their rise by showing that intertwining factors—including analogization—are involved in their development, which supports the view that language change should be examined in the light of the internal synchronic language system (Fischer 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010). It will thus be shown that, rather unexpectedly when compared to most other degree modifiers, the history of the constructions <ADJ + *a/t/h*> and <VB (+ Object) + *a/t/h*> is not merely—and maybe not fundamentally—couched in terms of grammaticalization. Section 3 offers some concluding remarks.

1. THE PATTERNS <ADJ + *A/T/H*> AND <VB (+ OBJECT) + *A/T/H*> WITHIN THE CATEGORY OF INTENSIFIERS IN PRESENT-DAY ENGLISH

This section provides some synchronic details about the characteristics of <ADJ + *a/t/h*> and <VB (+ Object) + *a/t/h*>, placing the study in the context of the wider category of degree modifiers in English, more particularly zero-form degree adverbs.

1.1. DIALECTAL USE AND PRODUCTIVITY. Let me first offer a few more examples of the patterns under study:

3. a. my teeth would uncontrollably chatter and i couldn't talk and my nipples would hurt- and i would shake something terrible.³ [...] it was really scaring me awful. [the whore, "Stones That Challenge Me," *dear old diary of a retarded whore* (blog), Feb. 12, 2001, http://deardiaryofaretardedwhore.blogspot.fr/2011_02_06_archive.html]
- b. KATE: I do worry awful about Billy when he's late returning home. [Martin McDonagh, *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, *Paris Review* 39.142 [Spring 1997]: 78 (Corpus of Contemporary American English [COCA; Davies 2008-])]
- c. In fact, Gaiman has certainly initially screamed plagiarism. Only when he had a movie contract, changed his comments. At first he was angry terrible. [quoting Nancy Stouffer in a *Washington Post* online discussion, Mar. 28, 2001; Old Crocodile, "Swollen Receding Gums," *Notes from the Bookseller* (blog), Apr. 24, 2008, <http://edilgaimanen.blogspot.com/2008/04/swollen-receding-gums.html>]
- d. I'll shut up, you are scaring me terrible now. My legs are shaking right now. [Is5oFast, "State Road Race Age Class Course Change," *Windermere Roadies* (forum), Oct. 8, 2009, <http://www.windermereoadies.com/phpBB/viewtopic.php?f=29&t=6935&start=30>]
- e. I couldn't forget the face that popped up for weeks. I wanted to go cry for hours after I saw the face. I was scared horrible for weeks and weeks before I forgot about it. [...] I can't even go into my own bathroom cause I am too afraid. [XYuriSanX, "Help Me Out?" *Deviant Art*, Nov. 22, 2011, <http://xyurisnx.deviantart.com/journal/?offset=5>]

The data available for the present study show that the patterns <ADJ + a/t/h> and <VB (+ Object) + a/t/h> are used mainly in colloquial American English—they may even be characteristic of some more specific regional varieties—thus lending support to the view that “communities [do] have different ‘layers’ of intensifiers” (Ito and Tagliamonte 2003, 277; see also Fries 1940). While the patterns were not found in the British National Corpus (100 million words of modern British spoken and written English) or the London-Lund Corpus of Spoken English (one million words), the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA [Davies 2008-]) did return a few hits. More importantly, many of the data were extracted from blogs or forums on the Internet that indicated the American origin of the speaker/writer and sometimes even made it possible to identify more precisely a dialectal use, as in (4) from Canadian English:⁴

4. “Lord knows,” said Mrs. Conover candidly. “Min worried awful over that before she died. [...]” [Lucy Maud Montgomery, *Rilla of Ingleside* (New York: Stokes, 1921), 84]

The Internet data also offered one example (5) of the verbal pattern in Manx English—the declining English dialect spoken on the Isle of Man—of a construction equivalent to <ADJ + *awful*>, as shown by the translation provided:

5. *Ta, t'eh skee agglagh*. So Tom is not just tired, *T'eh skee, T'eh skee agglagh*, which means he's tired awful, which is the Gaelic way of expressing it which came into Manx English as well and can still be heard. [¶] We can use *agglagh* to intensify some of the other words as well. *Ta mee feayr agglagh*. I'm cold awful, I'm dreadfully cold. [...] *Veh corree agglagh*. He was angry awful, he was really angry. ["Lesson 16: Ennaghtyn - Feelings," *Ynsee Gaelg: Learn Conversational Manx*, Culture Vannin, accessed Nov. 23, 2011, http://www.learnmanx.com/cms/inter_lesson_detail_1085.html; italics added to distinguish the Manx English phrases from the translation or comments provided by the blog writer]

Although it cannot be ascertained at this stage whether the constructions under study arose in American English, it will be assumed from the evidence at hand that they are typical of this variety of English. More research is needed to investigate this issue. Let us just observe that Kortmann and Schneider's (2006) general survey of varieties of English shows colloquial American English as one of the varieties that favor use of zero forms—like *a/t/h*—as degree modifiers of adjectival heads, though, as the evidence above proves, the pattern is structurally and historically available in English and thus finds at least occasional use in other varieties.

The research conducted so far does not permit definite claims as to the productivity of the patterns. Indeed, the search in COCA returned very few hits, and, as I said earlier, British English databases provide no evidence of the two constructions. However, a Google search did provide more examples that should not be overlooked, not only because of interest in the constructions themselves, but also because of the changes they may reflect in the functional category concerned, both at a synchronic and a diachronic level.

1.2. MORPHOSYNTACTIC FEATURES. However rare the patterns may seem to be at this stage, especially in comparison with other, more productive degree modifier constructions, the data available do suggest that they merit careful examination for two reasons. The first, their morphosyntactic features, is addressed in the present section.

From a morphological point of view, the use of *a/t/h* in the constructions under study could be analyzed in the light of dual adverbs, that is, adverbs with both suffixed and suffixless forms. These have long existed in English: the pattern of zero-formation dates back to Middle English (Nevalainen 2004, 23) and accounts for adverbial pairs like *excellent/excellently*, *extreme/*

extremely, *devilish/devilishly*, *damnable/damnably*, and *mortal/mortally* (see, e.g., Nevalainen 2008; Stoffel 1901, 123–24).

Nevalainen (2004, 20) observes that “the number of dual adverbs [...] was reduced in the course of the Early Modern English period” and “[i]n Late Modern English, the use of zero-forms was typically condemned by prescriptive grammarians [see Lowth 1775, 136; Sundby, Bjørge, and Haugland 1991, 201], particularly when it occurred in intensifiers” (see also Nevalainen 1997, 2008; Pounder 2004, 208). Nevalainen and Rissanen (2002, 378) even claim that suffixless adverbials, such as *slow* (vs. *slowly*) or *clean* (vs. *cleanly*), “constitute an unproductive relic category in present-day Standard English [that is] much more alive in regional varieties and in colloquial speech” (see also Beal and Corrigan [2011] for a study of dual-form adverbs as sociolinguistic markers in the British northern cities of York, Sheffield, and Newcastle). The present study, however, questions the supposed unproductivity of zero-form adverbs in some varieties of English (see Nevalainen and Rissanen 2002, 378), at least those functioning as degree adverbs.

The study of these constructions also sheds light on the possible emergence, or rather strengthening, of a new kind of intensifying pattern in English: *a/t/h* postmodifying an adjectival head, as in (1) and (3c) above, where degree modifiers like *very*, *awfully*, and *really* usually premodify it.⁵

There are other forms in present-day English (PDE)—with varying frequency rates—in the set of zero-form intensifying adverbs, such as *real*, *bad*, *pure*, *flat*, and *plain* (see Bolinger 1972, 151, for further items; see also Stoffel 1894, 210). These are illustrated in (6a)–(6c):

6. a. “Your hair looks real nice today,” I say to Shawna. [Tina Kuzminski, “The Goddamned Tooth Fairy,” *Fantasy and Science Fiction* 117.1/2 (Aug./Sept. 2009): 97 (COCA)]
- b. She’s too ignorant, stubborn and plain stupid and someone needs to make the decision for her. [Walter Ohlemutz, letter to editor, *San Francisco Chronicle*, Sept. 17, 1995, 8 (COCA)]
- c. But I think Ross Perot is flat wrong on this issue.⁶ [Bob Dole, *Face the Nation*, CBS News, Aug. 22, 1993 (COCA)]

Even the items under study here, *awful*, *terrible*, and *horrible*, grammaticalized into degree modifiers of an adjectival head before PDE—*horrible* and *terrible* in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and *awful* in the eighteenth century—as illustrated in (7a)–(7c).⁷ They are still used as such in PDE,⁸ as shown in (7d)–(7f), although the *-ly* suffixed forms are “considered better usage by those who recognize that an adverbial form normally modifies adjectives, other adverbs, and verbs” (Benzinger 1971, 59; see also Fries 1940, 204; Pounder 2004, 208).⁹

7. a. Ye oughte to know that, after that bayarde was cast in the ryver of meuze / he wente to the botom, as ye have herde / and myghte not come vp for by cause of the grete stone that was at his necke, whiche was horryble hevy. [William Caxton, trans., *The Right Plesaunt and Goodly Historie of the Foure Sonnes of Aymon* (1490); reprint, ed. Octavia Richardson (London: Trübner, 1885), 496 (*OED*, s.v. HORRIBLE C *adv.*)]
- b. The season was then so terrible cold, that all the way we had but Snowe and sleete in oure faces, with suche a winde and blustering storme, as many dyed by the way. [Thomas Churchyard, *A Lamentable, and Pitifull Description, of the Wofull Warres in Flaunders* (London: Hevberie, 1578), 12 (*OED*, s.v. TERRIBLE B *adv.*)]
- c. Thus we not unfrequently hear such expressions as “an *awful* cold day.” [John Russell Bartlett, *Dictionary of Americanisms: A Glossary of Words and Phrases Usually Regarded as Peculiar to the United States* (New York: Bartlett and Welford, 1848), s.v. AWFUL (*OED*, s.v. AWFUL 4b)]
- d. “It was horrible bad. We didn’t learn anything.” This year, he [Eric Darko] says, things are better. [Amanda Paulson, “How to Fix America’s Worst Schools,” *Christian Science Monitor*, Mar. 26, 2011 (COCA)]
- e. I did something bad, terrible bad. [Charles Coleman Finlay, “The Minutemen’s Witch,” *Fantasy and Science Fiction* 116.1 (Jan. 2009): 41 (COCA)]
- f. Sounds awful good, it really does. [Roger Welsch, *Sunday Morning*, CBS News, July 27, 1997 (COCA)]

But, except for *bad* (see below), these zero-form degree adverbs all started out in—and are still limited to—the adjectival premodifier construction, specifically <degree adverb + ADJ>. Recall the ungrammaticality of the postposition of *awfully* in (2a). This is in sharp contrast with the postmodifier pattern in which *a/t/h* started to occur in the late twentieth century (see section 2.2): <ADJ + *a/t/h*>. Their final slot position in this adjectival pattern makes them stand out in comparison with the premodifier position of both more prototypical boosting intensifiers (e.g., *very* or *really*—see the translation in [5] above in which *really angry* echoes *angry awful* at a semantic-pragmatic level but contrasts with it at a syntactic level) and less central, more dialectal degree modifiers (e.g., *plain* [6b], *awful* [7f]).

We are then led to qualify Benzinger’s (1971, 40) claim that “intensive qualifiers [i.e., intensifiers] homophonous with adjectives do not pattern differently from intensive qualifiers homophonous with adverbs.” Let us say that they do not necessarily pattern differently but they sometimes do, as shown by the peculiar syntactic behavior of *a/t/h* in the postmodifier pattern <ADJ + *a/t/h*>.

As intensifiers, *a/t/h* also appear in final slot position in the verbal pattern <VB (+ Object) + *a/t/h*>. At first sight, this pattern is not as unexpected as the adjectival one. Indeed, *a/t/h* are not exceptional as degree adverbs

supposedly derived through the process of zero-conversion and capable of postmodifying a verbal head in colloquial English. *Bad*, for instance, is similar to *a/t/h* in that respect, as shown in (8).

8. “I hate it so bad she had to die the way she did.” [Margaret Maron, *Last Lessons of Summer* (New York: Warner, 2003), 103 (COCA)]

It will, however, be argued that the verbal pattern <VB (+ Object) + *a/t/h*>, though reminiscent of similar morphosyntactic patterns that make it apparently less unsettling than the adjectival one, does stand out in PDE when examined in the light of the latter. Indeed, while *a/t/h* and other degree adverbs like *bad* can occur in postverbal position, as in (8), and in preadjectival position, as in (9), it is not common for boosters—degree modifiers which have a boosting effect (Quirk et al. 1985, 590–91)—of this form to postmodify an adjectival head. Degree adverb *bad* does occur in post-adjectival position when it modifies a participial adjective, as in (10).

9. I had a bad upset stomach in Dubai after eating from some street vendor. [Vagabonde, comment on “The Best Meal for an Upset Stomach,” by Joumana, *Taste of Beirut* (blog), June 18, 2011, <http://www.tasteofbeirut.com/2011/06/the-best-meal-for-an-upset-stomach/#comment-59461>]
10. a. Yes, the very first time I watched *The Exorcist* was by myself when I was 23 or so. I was scared bad, but made it thru it somehow. [Klippity Kloo Kla, response to “Ever been too scared to watch scary movies alone?” posed by Kyle, *SodaHead*, Oct. 15, 2013, <http://www.sodahead.com/fun/ever-been-too-scared-to-watch-scary-moviesalone/question-3992149/comment-117389213/>]
- b. Son Goku was worried. He was worried bad. [Teekoness, “When Hearts Clash,” *FanFiction*, Jan. 27, 2002, <https://www.fanfiction.net/s/572091/1/When-Hearts-Clash>]

But the investigation did not reveal its use in postadjectival position with any of the nonparticipial adjectives (e.g., *angry*, *upset*) tested as potential collocates of postmodifiers *a/t/h* (see section 2.3).¹⁰ By contrast, table 1 in section 2.3 does show that *a/t/h* can postmodify nonparticipial adjectives.

If we consider the verbal pattern <VB (+ Object) + *a/t/h*> independently from the adjectival pattern <ADJ + *a/t/h*>, the former might be explained as another instantiation of the schema <VB (+ Object) + degree modifier> in which the degree modifier is a zero adverb like *bad* in (8) above—or as a phonologically reduced form of <VB (+ Object) + *awfully/terribly/horribly*>. However, the fact that the pattern <ADJ + *a/t/h*> exists alongside <VB (+ Object) + *a/t/h*>, while the pattern <ADJ + *bad*>, for instance, shows a more restricted use (with participial adjectives only), leads me to question

whether <VB (+ Object) + *a/t/h*> is simply another instantiation of an existing template, <VB (+ Object) + *bad*>. (See section 2.3, however, for *bad* as one potential analogical model for *a/t/h* in the constructions under study.) This is why both patterns are taken into consideration in this article, although it is quite clear from the previous discussion that the pattern <ADJ + *a/t/h*> is the more challenging of the two because of the syntactic shift from pre- to postmodifier position that it illustrates.

Despite the relative paucity of data (see section 1.1), these constructions merit investigation because their historical development is atypical of degree modifiers in English. Indeed, in much of the literature on the subject, the discussion is couched in the framework of grammaticalization. The next section will show that other mechanisms are likely to be also at play in the development of the patterns <ADJ + *a/t/h*> and <VB (+ Object) + *a/t/h*>.

2. PATHWAYS OF DEVELOPMENT

2.1. COMMON PATHWAYS OF DEVELOPMENT FOR DEGREE MODIFIERS IN ENGLISH.

The literature on the history of degree modifiers (Peters 1992; Klein 1998; Adamson 2000; Paradis 2000; Lorenz 2002; Méndez-Naya 2003; Macauley 2006; Traugott 2008a, 2008b; Margerie 2011) usually describes the diachronic evolution of these function words as cases of grammaticalization. Méndez-Naya (2003, 372), for instance, observes that “[i]ntensifiers can be said to undergo a process of grammaticalization, since they are lexical items which lose some of their lexical characteristics and develop a more grammatical function, with a concomitant restriction in syntactic scope and generalization of meaning.” Lorenz (2002, 144–46) also discusses the progressive delexicalization and grammaticalization of intensifiers and offers the example of “the most prominent case of grammaticalization” (145): *very* < ME *verray* (< Old French *verai*) ‘tru(ly), truthful(ly)’.

11. But for he was verray repentaunt he was exciled for þe fey. [John Trevisa, trans., *Polychronicon*, by Ranulf Higden (1387); reprint, St. John’s Cambridge MS, ed. Joseph Rawson Lumby (London: Longman, 1874), 5: 329 (*OED*, s.v. *VERY* B *adv.* 1b); see Lorenz 2002, 146]

Very has now grammaticalized into a booster in PDE, that is, it scales an adjectival or adverbial quality upward and has shed the original modal, truth-emphasizing meaning illustrated in (11).

Lorenz (2002, 147–48) mentions *terribly* as part of one of the five sets of intensifiers he delineates. If, as he claims, *terribly* has undergone delexicalization, or semantic bleaching, which is considered to be the driving force

in grammaticalization (Lehmann 1995; Hopper and Traugott 2003), and if *terribly*, and by extension *awfully* and *horribly*, can be considered to have grammaticalized into degree modifiers from their use as evaluative/qualitative adverbs ('that inspires terror/awe/horror'), why not consider postmodifiers *a/t/h* also the outcome of a process of grammaticalization or at least the result of further micro-changes in the grammaticalization of *awfully/terribly/horribly*?¹¹ This assumption will be put to the test in section 2.2, where two potential sources of grammaticalization will be examined: the *-ly* suffixed adverbs *awfully/terribly/horribly* and the zero-form intensifiers *awful/terrible/horrible* as they are still used as premodifiers in PDE.

2.2. <ADJ + A/T/H> AND <VB (+ OBJECT) + A/T/H>: A CASE OF GRAMMATICALIZATION? In section 1.2, *a/t/h* in the postmodifier patterns were considered to derive from a morphological process of zero conversion, just like *a/t/h* in the premodifier pattern. There is, however, no reason why the suffixless forms could not be derived from the suffixed ones through a process of phonological attrition (Lehmann 1995), which would be indicative of further grammaticalization of these degree adverbs (Traugott 2011, 2012). As a result, I now posit a possible connection between *a/t/h* in the postmodifier pattern and the suffixed degree adverbs *awfully/terribly/horribly*.

This scenario cannot account for *a/t/h* used in the adjectival pattern: we observed above (see 2a) that the pattern <ADJ + *awfully/terribly/horribly*> is ungrammatical and thus cannot be a source of grammaticalization for <ADJ + *a/t/h*> through phonological attrition, indicating the higher degree of grammaticalization of *a/t/h* than that of the suffixed adverbs.

But the situation is different in the case of *a/t/h* postmodifying a verbal head because the pattern <VB (+ Object) + *awfully/terribly/horribly*> is fully grammatical, which makes it plausible for the suffixless degree adverb to derive from the suffixed one through phonological erosion. This type of change would constitute a further micro-step in the grammaticalization of the suffixed degree adverbs *awfully/terribly/horribly* (Traugott 2011, 2012).

Concerning this issue, it is noteworthy that the earliest examples of postmodifier *awful* that could be retrieved instantiate the verbal, not the adjectival pattern, i.e., <VB (+ Object) + *awful*>:¹²

12. a. He was so nice and easy that they took all his clothes off and now he won't let them put them back on him again and he's playing Indian with them and scaring them awful, ma'am. ["They Found Out," *Pine Plains* (N.Y.) *Weekly Register*, Apr. 11, 1902, 1]
- b. "Well, what of it?" [¶] "Nothing, if he'd stood still. But it scared him awful, and when he's afraid he goes a-humping for Aunt Margaret. [...]" [Gene

Stratton-Porter, *A Girl of the Limberlost* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1909), 371]

One might then surmise that *awful* first occurred in the verbal pattern, as a nonstandard use of *awfully*, before it extended to the adjectival pattern, and *terrible/horrible* then followed suit. If so, the syntactic reanalysis of *a/t/h* from pre- to postmodifiers of an adjective would still need explaining, since the pattern <ADJ + *a/t/h*> clashes with the well-entrenched schema <degree modifier + ADJ> in which the degree modifier is homophonous with an adjective.

It should be noted that (12a) and (12b) are separated from the rest of the data examined by a time gap: both date back to the turn of the twentieth century, while the rest illustrate later uses, most from the late twentieth century. As mentioned before, most of these data were retrieved from the Internet (blogs or forums), therefore none date back earlier than the 1980s. The verbal construction may have been around in the spoken language for some time without being recorded, but the fact that the *OED* quotations database and four corpora of American English (the Brown Corpus [1964], the Frown Corpus [2007], Google Books: American English [Davies 2011–], and the Corpus of Historical American English [Davies 2010–]) offer no evidence of <VB (+ Object) + *a/t/h*> (or <ADJ + *a/t/h*> for that matter)—though they do show the use of *awful* (at least) as premodifier—casts some doubts on this assumption.¹³ One might suggest that, though it showed the first signs of development in the early twentieth century—maybe as the result of phonological erosion for purposes of linguistic economy—the construction <VB (+ Object) + *a/t/h*> did not gain traction till the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, with the verbal and the adjectival patterns thus developing side by side. If so, the possibility of phonological attrition does not adequately explain why this process would be central in the rise of the verbal pattern but not, as demonstrated above, in the rise of the adjectival one. A preliminary conclusion, therefore, is that it might have played a role in the development of postmodifiers *a/t/h* in the verbal pattern, but this is probably not the only explanation, as will be argued in section 2.3.

Still, there is one particular context in which the pathway from *awfully/terribly/horribly* as degree adverbs to *awful/terrible/horrible* as postmodifiers could, perhaps more seriously, be regarded as one of the potential sources of development of postmodifiers *a/t/h*. As I will show in section 2.3, *a/t/h* often postmodify items like *scared* or *worried*. A straightforward interpretation of <*scared/worried* + *a/t/h*> would be that it is a passive verb phrase and that *a/t/h* are degree modifiers of that phrase, as in (13):

13. She was scared terrible by her dream. [cristixe, "Mini Titan Gett," *FanFiction*, Nov. 17, 2013, <http://www.fanfiction.net/s/8710714/5/Mini-Titan-Gett>]

Another interpretation would be that *scared/worried* are participial adjectives, as is most likely in (14):

14. My mother has been diagnosed with Klatskin's Tumor that has invaded both lobes of her liver. [...] This is such a horrible cancer[:]; I am scared awful for my mother. [melody539, "My Wife Was Cured of Bile Duct Cancer," *Cancer Compass* (forum), Oct. 9, 2007, <http://www.cancercompass.com/messageboard/message/all,16805,0.htm?mid=125224#125224>]

The pattern <passive verb phrase + *a/t/h*>, which could be seen as the outcome of a process of phonological reduction of the suffixed degree adverbs in the string <passive verb phrase + *awfully/terribly/horribly*>, would thus have been reanalyzed into <participial adjective + *a/t/h*>. Note that reanalysis might have been easier in certain ambiguous contexts, that is, in the absence of a *by*-agent, as in (15):

15. Everyone was so perturbed about the fireworks law. The large booms were going until all hours. I have dogs, and they just shook and shook. They were scared awful. Please change the fireworks law back to where it was. [Ann Lairson, letter to editor, *Lexington* (Ky.) *Herald-Leader*, July 10, 2011, <http://www.kentucky.com/2011/07/10/1806638/letters-to-editor-july-10.html>]

In turn, *a/t/h* would have been reanalyzed into postmodifiers of an adjectival head. The final step would be the extension of the use of *a/t/h* to patterns in which the adjectival head is not a participial adjective (e.g., *hungry, angry*). This would illustrate a major characteristic of grammaticalization: HOST-CLASS EXPANSION (Himmelman 2004, 32), the expansion of the class of items a particular form is in construction with.

But this argument has limited explanatory power because expansion from verbal to adjectival postmodification, as mentioned above, hardly solves the puzzle of adjectival postmodification in the pattern <ADJ + *a/t/h*>. Though the participial form of adjectival heads like *scared* or *worried* might be thought to facilitate the extension of the use of postmodifiers *a/t/h* to nonparticipial forms of adjectives, what undermines the above-stated scenario is the lack of a productive template <ADJ + degree modifier/booster> in English on which <ADJ + *a/t/h*> could be modeled.

To conclude, grammaticalization of postmodifiers *a/t/h* from the suffixed degree adverbs *awfully/terribly/horribly* remains doubtful at this stage. We could at best assume that phonological erosion only gives part of the picture.

Before examining other pathways of development, there remains a second potential source of grammaticalization: the degree adverbs *a/t/h* themselves. Here again, two possible scenarios spring up.

First, are PDE postmodifiers *a/t/h* diachronically related to premodifiers *a/t/h*? It is likely that the premodifier pattern <*a/t/h* + ADJ> was helpful in shaping the use of *a/t/h* in the postmodifier pattern <ADJ + *a/t/h*> because of the common semantics-pragmatics of *a/t/h* as degree modifiers. But SYNTACTIC CONTEXT EXPANSION—held as another major characteristic of grammaticalization (Himmelman 2004, 32)—that is, the expansion of the use of an item (in this case, *a/t/h* in preadjectival position) to new syntactic contexts (*a/t/h* in postadjectival position), fails in itself to account for the rise of *a/t/h* as postmodifiers in the unexpected pattern <ADJ + *a/t/h*>. At best, premodifiers *a/t/h* can then have had a limited impact on the rise of postmodifiers *a/t/h*.

Second, did the postmodifier (adjectival and verbal) patterns themselves grammaticalize into degree modifier constructions? Scholars have repeatedly insisted on the importance of a construction-based approach to grammaticalization (see Givón 1979; Bybee, Perkins, and Pagliuca 1994; Heine 2003; Hopper and Traugott 2003; Traugott 2003, 2008a; Himmelman 2004). How the term *construction* is defined actually differs in these works. In the early literature, *construction* does not mean much more than ‘syntactic string’ occurring in specific contexts. Recall that grammaticalization is defined as “that part of the study of language change that is concerned with such questions as how lexical items and constructions come in certain linguistic contexts to serve grammatical functions or how grammatical items develop new grammatical functions” (Hopper and Traugott 2003, 1). More recently, the multilayeredness of grammaticalization as concerned not only with the morphosyntactic, but also with the semantic-pragmatic contexts of a grammaticalizing construction (Traugott and König 1991; Bybee, Perkins, and Pagliuca 1994; Lehmann 1995; Heine 2003; Himmelman 2004), has led some linguists (e.g., Traugott 2008a, 2008b, 2011, 2012; Trousdale 2008a, 2008b, 2010) to refine grammaticalization theory in light of construction grammar approaches to language (see, among others, Goldberg 1995, 2006; Croft 2001).

Traugott’s (2008a, 2008b) taxonomy of constructions will prove a useful tool for the rest of the discussion. In recent work on grammaticalization and diachronic construction grammar, Traugott (2008a, 2008b) claims that constructions operate in a network that involves inheritance from the more abstract to the less schematic constructions. The network shows the following constructional hierarchy, with different degrees of schematicity at each level:

- a. macro-constructions: highly abstract, schematic constructions
- b. meso-constructions: groups of related construction types
- c. micro-constructions: individual construction types
- d. constructs: instances of micro-constructions.

Considering that *a/t/h* are not to be examined in isolation from the rest of the constructions they fit in, let us now take a holistic view of the postmodifier patterns themselves. As mentioned above, the constructions <ADJ + *a/t/h*> and <VB (+ Object) + *a/t/h*> are fairly recent. Notably, the whole set of data available for the present study, including the two early-twentieth-century examples given above in (12), suggests that the micro-constructions <ADJ + *a/t/h*> and <VB (+ Object) + *a/t/h*> instantiate one single macro-construction, the degree modifier construction. In other words, the constructions have always been monosemous. They can therefore not be the result of a process of semantic bleaching or desemanticization that is usually involved when a construction is grammaticalizing (Lehmann 1995; Hopper and Traugott 2003), as in the grammaticalization of another degree modifier construction, <ADJ + *to death*> // <VB (+ Object) + *to death*>, the degree meaning of which is derived from the resultative meaning that the pattern <VB (+ Object) + *to death*> originally expresses (see Margerie 2011). A related conclusion is that if there has been no semantic-pragmatic reanalysis of an original meaning into the present-day degree meaning, there has been no syntactic rebracketing of the constituents of the constructions <ADJ + *a/t/h*> and <VB (+ Object) + *a/t/h*> typical of reanalysis, another fundamental parameter of grammaticalization (Hopper and Traugott 2003; Traugott 2012) that “involves new structural configurations for old material” (Traugott 2008a, 225).

To summarize this section, the constructions <ADJ + *a/t/h*> and <VB (+ Object) + *a/t/h*> may be said, in some respects, to have gone down the cline of grammaticalization, but grammaticalization is not the only mechanism at work, maybe even not the main one. It will be argued in section 2.3 that the constructions were also shaped by a process of analogization based on similar syntactic and semantic-pragmatic constructions. Another pathway of development, involving the pattern <*something a/t/h*>, will also be discussed in section 2.4.

2.3. ANALOGIZATION. Recent research in grammaticalization (Fischer 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010; Traugott 2011, 2012) has put analogical thinking and ANALOGIZATION—defined as the mechanism of analogy (Traugott 2011, 2012)—at the heart of the debate about mechanisms of language change.

My hypothesis is that <ADJ + *a/t/h*> and <VB (+ Object) + *a/t/h*>—which, as assumed in section 2.2, are fairly recent (late twentieth century)—developed in part by analogy with earlier syntactically and semantically-pragmatically

similar micro-constructions used in American English, especially <ADJ + *sick/silly/stiff/rigid*> and <VB (+ Object) + *sick/silly/stiff/rigid*> (see Margerie 2013 for further details about these constructions). A few examples are provided in (16):

16. a. “People are worried more. They’re worried sick,” says Amitai Etzioni, a sociologist at George Washington University. [Jill Smolowe, “Danger in the Safety Zone,” *TIME*, Aug. 23, 1993, 28 (*TIME Magazine Corpus* [Davies 2007–])]
 - b. And it scares me. It scares me sick. It worries me more than anything. [“I need to get my love of music back,” *Yahoo! Answers*, Aug. 18, 2010, <http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20100818192842AAXOjpS>]
 - c. And on June 8, Gremlins will arrive, looking to scare you silly. This is no idle threat. [Richard Corliss, “Creature Comforts and Discomforts,” *TIME*, June 4, 1984, 66 (*TIME Magazine Corpus*)]
 - d. “[...] Why didn’t you ever tell me before? Go on! Go on!” [¶] “I can’t, Elnora! I’m scared silly. [...]” [Gene Stratton-Porter, *A Girl of the Limberlost* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1909), 168]
 - e. “[...] I think I ought to tell you that you’re boring Durdlebury stiff.” [William J. Locke, *The Rough Road* (London: J. Lane, 1918), 107 (*OED*, s.v. *STIFF A adj.* 11b)]
 - f. It’s no tourist place, I assure you. [...] You’d be bored rigid. [Karen Campbell, *Thunder on Sunday* (London: Collins, 1972), 58 (*OED*, s.v. *RIGID A adj.* 1d)]

There are several reasons for considering the *sick/silly/stiff/rigid* constructions as analogical models. First, the patterns <ADJ + *a/t/h*> and <VB (+ Object) + *a/t/h*> share morphosyntactic features with the *sick/silly/stiff/rigid* constructions, which date back to the early to mid-twentieth century, as shown in (16d) and (16f) (see also Margerie 2013, 97). In both cases, the adjective and the verb are postmodified by an item functioning as a degree modifier homophonous with an adjective, *a/t/h*, *sick*, or *silly*. However, in contrast to *a/t/h*, *sick/silly/stiff/rigid* are probably not considered as degree adverbs in their own right because their degree meaning is only licensed by the constructions <ADJ + *sick/silly/stiff/rigid*> and <VB (+ Object) + *sick/silly/stiff/rigid*>. ¹⁴

Another commonality is found at the semantic-pragmatic level: both sets of constructions express a high-degree meaning—they fit into the vast paradigm of boosters (Quirk et al. 1985, 590–91)—and they even often receive a hyperbolic interpretation. Note that the pattern <VB (+ Object) + *sick/silly/stiff/rigid*> can also receive a resultative interpretation, specifically ‘x VB (y) and as a result y becomes sick/silly/stiff/rigid’ (see Margerie 2013),

but I will leave this interpretation aside because the resultative interpretation does not concern the patterns under study. As mentioned in section 2.2, the patterns <ADJ + *a/t/h*> // <VB (+ Object) + *a/t/h*> only instantiate the degree modifier construction.

One striking feature is that <ADJ + *a/t/h*> // <VB (+ Object) + *a/t/h*>, and the degree modifier constructions <ADJ + *sick*> // <VB (+ Object) + *sick*> in particular show a similar restricted collocational profile. In other words, their type frequency is fairly low. Let us first examine the collocates of *a/t/h* in the adjectival and the verbal constructions.

The methodology adopted here may not, admittedly, allow for definite conclusions on this issue. The occurrences of the constructions in corpora like COCA were too scarce to enable an investigation of their collocates. Internet data obtained through the Google search engine had to be relied upon, which did not facilitate the task. Thirty verbs and adjectives were chosen as potential collocates of postmodifiers *a/t/h* based on a COCA search that revealed that most of the adjectives are also collocates of premodifiers *a/t/h*: *scare**, *worry**, *frighten**, *angry*, *long*, *hungry*, *hard*, *sad*, *boring*, *nice*, *good*, *tough*, *tired*, *cold*, *mad*, *sorry*, *difficult*, *happy*, *funny*, *bad*, *hot*, *small*, *strong*, *glad*, *easy*, *bright*, *complicated*, *stupid*, *weak*, *lonely* (asterisks indicate lemmatized forms).¹⁵ *Scared*, *worried*, and *frightened*—as well as verbal *scare**, *worry**, and *frighten**—were selected because of their frequent collocation with *sick* in the degree modifier constructions <ADJ + *sick*> and <VB (+ Object) + *sick*>, which is here considered as a major analogical model for the *a/t/h* constructions under study. Both short strings like <ADJ + *a/t/h*> and more lexically filled patterns like <*it's* + ADJ + *awful*>, <VB_{-ED} + *terrible*>, and <VB_{-ING} + *me* + *horrible*> were searched for. The search was carried out in the first five pages of results returned by Google, which yielded about 50 hits. If none of these 50 hits showed relevant examples of the constructions, then the search in question was ended. Otherwise, the search continued to the next five pages to obtain further evidence of the collocations concerned—thus yielding 100 hits for each string. For reasons to appear hereafter, a more extensive search was carried out of the verbal pattern <*scare*/worry** + NP_{PRON} + *a/t/h*>, as in *scared me awful*, *worries them terrible*, and *scaring her horrible*. For a fair comparison, the pattern <*frighten** + NP_{PRON} + *a/t/h*> was also more thoroughly investigated. The results are summarized in table 1.

Table 1 shows only the forms that were found to co-occur with *a/t/h*. The most frequent collocates of postmodifiers *a/t/h* in the data set are the verbal forms *scare*/worry*/frighten** and the (participial) adjectives *scared/worried/frightened*, with *scare*/scared* showing a preference for postmodifiers *awful* and *terrible* and *worry*/worried* and *frighten*/frightened* for *terrible*.¹⁶ Nine items other than *scare*/scared* collocate with *awful* in <ADJ + *awful*> and <VB

TABLE 1
 Absolute Number of Verbal and Adjectival Collocates
 of Postmodifiers *a/t/h* in the Google Data Set

	<i>scare*</i>	<i>worry*</i> ^a	<i>frighten*</i>	<i>angry</i>	<i>upset</i>	<i>hungry/sorry/ cold/tired/boring</i>	TOTAL
<i>awful</i>	48	9	5	3	1	1	71
<i>terrible</i>	48	29	23	1	2	0	103
<i>horrible</i>	8	1	2	1	1	0	13

a. Figures reflect only transitive uses of *worry**; intransitive uses were excluded to provide a more accurate comparison with *scare** and *frighten**.

(+ Object) + *awful*>, but apart from the examples with *worry*/worried* in (17d) and (17e) (see also [4] above), *frighten*/frightened* in (17f), and *angry* (see [5] in section 1.1), each of the collocations occurs only once at best. Examples are provided in (17a)–(17c) (see also [1a] above):

17. a. i'm sorry awful it just seems it would be nice to talk to a loved one again. ["Celebrity Buzz," *Jokers Update* (forum), Dec. 22, 2010, <http://forums.jokersupdates.com/ubbthreads/showthreaded.php?Cat=&Board=CelebrityBuzz&Number=14956506>]
- b. He was upset awful. ["Collectibles," *SuperForum.org*, Nov. 22, 2006, <http://www.superforum.org/index.php?showtopic=135083>]
- c. I have a friend that don't [*sic*] like to go to school. He said that it's boring awful. [bangchi, "My Friend's School Time," *What the...* (blog), May 25, 2009, <http://ssimonn.edublogs.org/2009/05/>]
- d. Proclaims Lucius. "Snow, dagnab it, snow IS coming and I am worried awful about that!" [Laurence Boomer, "Beast of the Rockies," *Yahoo! Voices*, Oct. 19, 2011, <http://voices.yahoo.com/beast-rockies-10240721.html>]
- e. He sat back in his chair and rested, Kelly was worried awful about him. [FaMiLy, "The Meeting," *Star Wars Legacies* (forum), July 13, 2009, <http://www.thestarwarsrp.com/forum/showthread.php?18206-quot-The-Meetingquot-%28Sontrebren-Crew-Only%29/page6>]
- f. "I *swear*, sir, 'e was dead as stone when I drew him out and 'e was resurrected in my hand. Like as to raise the dead, it were, and it frightened me awful!" [Cornelius Quick, "Chapter Three - Paradise Lost," *Tarpaulin Cove*, Sept. 17, 2007, <http://www.tarpaulincove.blogspot.fr/>]

The data concerning *terrible* show its most frequent collocation with *scare*/scared* and, to a lesser extent, *worry*/worried* and *frighten*/frightened*. *Terrible* is found to collocate once with *angry* and twice with *upset*—also twice with *mad* but as the latter is more likely to premodify *terrible* in these two examples,

these occurrences were not taken into consideration. Finally, *horrible* shows the lowest number of collocations but *scare*/scared* still rank first.

To sum up, two types of items, the verbal forms *scare*/worry*/frighten** and the participial adjectives *scared/worried/frightened*, are by far the most frequent collocates of postmodifiers *a/t/h* among those selected for the present investigation. Interestingly, *scare*/scared* and *worry*/worried* are also the most frequent collocates of *sick* in the degree modifier constructions <ADJ + *sick*> and <VB (+ Object) + *sick*>, as shown in Margerie (2013). The latter therefore show several features that make them likely to have served as some of the models for the analogical development of <ADJ + *a/t/h*> and <VB (+ Object) + *a/t/h*>.

Though I have not addressed the issue of the collocates of *silly/stiff/rigid* in the degree modifier constructions <ADJ + *silly/stiff/rigid*> and <VB (+ Object) + *silly/stiff/rigid*> thoroughly enough to draw similar—or maybe divergent—conclusions, it is still remarkable that (16d) above, which instantiates <ADJ + *silly*>, is from the same novel from which one of the two early-twentieth-century examples of <VB (+ Object) + *awful*> was extracted (see [12b] in section 2.2). A possible conclusion is that while <ADJ + *silly*> was conventionalized at the time, the author was able to coin the pattern <VB (+ Object) + *awful*> illustrated in (17d) thanks to the model offered by the *silly* construction, which showed a similar use of a degree adverb that is homophonous with an adjective.

The patterns <VB (+ Object) + *bad*> and <participial ADJ + *bad*> were also briefly discussed in section 1.2 as part of the patterns that closely resemble the *a/t/h* patterns under study here. Could these patterns have also served as models of development for the *a/t/h* constructions? As one reviewer suggested, the patterns <passive verb phrase + *bad*_{degree modifier}> // <participial adjective + *bad*_{degree modifier}> instantiated by such strings as <*scared bad*> could indeed be other potential templates, especially in light of the ambiguous contexts of use of participial forms like *scared/worried* (see section 2.2). To serve as a model, however, a pattern has to be fairly well entrenched in the language. This is not obvious in the case of the pattern <participial ADJ + *bad*>. A Google search did return some hits, such as *scared bad* and *worried bad*, but there were no occurrences of these strings in COCA. By contrast, COCA shows 117 occurrences of *worried sick*, 50 of *scared stiff*, and 16 of *scared silly*, for instance. Recall that *scare*/scared* and *worry*/worried* are the most frequent collocates of *sick* in the degree modifier constructions <ADJ + *sick*> and <VB (+ Object) + *sick*>. Again, since *worried* and *scared* are the most frequent collocates of *a/t/h* in postmodifier position, one might conclude that the *sick/silly/stiff* patterns probably offered a more attractive model for

the *a/t/h* constructions than <ADJ + *bad*>. On the other hand, the possible influence of the latter cannot be totally dismissed considering that the two patterns share obvious syntactic and semantic-pragmatic features.

To sum up, analogization is rendered possible here because <ADJ + *a/t/h*> and <VB (+ Object) + *a/t/h*> belong to the same constructional network as <ADJ + *sick/silly/stiff/rigid*> // <VB (+ Object) + *sick/silly/stiff/rigid/bad*>—and, to a lesser extent, <participial ADJ + *bad*>. As Traugott and Trousdale (2013, 38) put it, “A constructional perspective on change strongly supports the idea that pattern matching is an important factor in change, because construction grammar highlights membership of sets.”

If analogization is at work here, it is admittedly also driven in this particular case by the high degree meaning of both *a/t/h* as premodifiers and *awfully/terribly/horribly* as degree adverbs. It is indeed most likely that the ability of *a/t/h* to fill the degree modifier slot of the schematic degree modifier constructions <ADJ + degree modifier> and <VB (+ Object) + degree modifier> was enhanced by the degree meaning they already expressed as premodifiers in the string <*a/t/h* + ADJ> and by the similar function of the *-ly* suffixed adverbs, which made it much easier for hearers to process the semantics-pragmatics of the new postmodifier constructions.

It is moreover noteworthy that *a/t/h* are highly emotional terms expressing extreme feelings. More particularly, as emotive intensifiers, they are “one of the most obvious linguistic categories in which we can expect reflections of the pervasive cognitive-affective pattern known as the negativity bias” (Jing-Schmidt 2007, 426), defined as “an automatic tendency to pay significantly more attention to unpleasant than pleasant information” (418). This obviously makes them favorite candidates for the expression of intensification (Peters 1992, 535; Méndez Naya 2003, 378; Paradis 2011, 79).

2.4. *SOMETHING AWFUL/TERRIBLE/HORRIBLE*: INVESTIGATING ANOTHER PATHWAY OF DEVELOPMENT. Analogization and grammaticalization (see section 2.2) may not be the only mechanisms of change involved in the development of the postmodifier constructions <ADJ + *a/t/h*> and <VB (+ Object) + *a/t/h*>. Another pattern deserves careful attention, <*something a/t/h*>. It shows close resemblance to the postmodifier constructions under study except that it is the whole phrase <*something a/t/h*> that functions as degree modifier in postmodifier position, more precisely as a booster or an emphaser (depending on its collocates).¹⁷ The pattern is found to postmodify an adjective essentially. Further research is needed to investigate its modifier function in the verbal construction. Most of the following examples therefore instantiate the pattern <ADJ + *something a/t/h*>. Again, they were retrieved with the Google

search engine; COCA and the *TIME* Magazine Corpus offered no evidence of the phrase either in the adjectival or the verbal constructions—<VB (+ Object) + *something a/t/h*>. ¹⁸

18. a. This factoid not only makes me long for the days back at the cattle ranch, but also makes me hungry something awful for a double double at In and Out Burger. [Yellowstone Ritter, “How Many Baseballs Are Used in a Game?” *RolliesBaseballFollies.com*, accessed June 16, 2012, <http://rolliesbaseballfollies.com/?paged=2>]
- b. He’s real tall and imposing, and he can get mad something awful, but he’s a softie at heart, never can stay mad for long. [Sense of Peace, “That Fateful Night,” *FanFiction*, Apr. 14, 2012, <http://www.fanfiction.net/s/8024906/1/That-Fateful-Night>]
- c. The respondent will likely be angry something awful because it was forced to pay for a lawyer which is not cheap for a respondent at the HRT0. [anonymous comment to “Complaints to OHRT Subject to Absolute Privilege,” by James C. Morton, *Morton’s Musings* (blog), June 2, 2010, <http://jmortonmusings.blogspot.fr/2010/05/complaints-to-ohrt-subject-toabsolute.html>]
- d. I’m hungry something terrible. [...] All I want to do is dance and eat. Which is strange because usually I don’t eat much at lunch at all. And now I want some food very badly. [Amanda, *Bibliomaniac* (blog), Mar. 21, 2003, http://mandamouse.blogspot.fr/2003_03_16_archive.html]
- e. I’m tired something terrible. How are you? [*Phone Scoop* (forum), accessed June 16, 2012, <http://www.phonescoop.com/forums/forum.php?fm=m&ff=5&fi=3098561>]
- f. He was pissed something horrible that I had vanished for three days. [Everybeast, “Okami,” *FanFiction*, Oct. 8, 2007, <http://www.fanfiction.net/s/3826484/2/Okami>]
- g. i would shake something terrible. [...] it was really scaring me awful. [the whore, “Stones That Challenge Me,” *dear old diary of a retarded whore* (blog), Feb. 12, 2011, http://deardiaryofaretardedwhore.blogspot.fr/2011_02_06_archive.html]
- h. I started getting more migraines than usual and my hands started to tremble and shake something horrible. [Geek Out, “BFS Adventuring Installment the Fifth: #76 Kick the Caffeine Addiction,” *Will Write for Food* (Tumblr feed), Apr. 30, 2011, <http://will-write-for-food.tumblr.com/post/5087318796/bfs-adventuring-installment-the-fifth-76-kick-the>]

The pattern seems to be more frequent with *awful*, and the one involving *horrible* is apparently even rarer than the one involving *terrible*.

The *OED* does not mention the phrase <*something a/t/h*> as such in the entries for *something* or *awful/terrible/horrible*. However, the *OED* quotations database offers some evidence of the patterns <ADJ + *something a/t/h*> and <VB

(+ Object) + *something a/t/h*>, a few of which instantiate the degree modifier construction, as in (19), or could at least be said to occur in bridging contexts (Heine 2002, 84), that is, contexts in which the booster or emphasizer meaning is contextually inferred from the original (compositional) meaning of the phrase <*something a/t/h*_{manner adv}> ‘very awfully/terribly/horribly’, as illustrated in (20).

19. Fedink’s speed got bunk’s nanny something awful. [*N.Y. Evening Journal* Dec. 8, 1909, 16 (*OED*, s.v. NANNY n.² 2)]
20. a. It really screws up my sex life something awful. [J.D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye* (London: H. Hamilton, 1951), 176 (*OED*, s.v. SCREW v. IV.12c)]
 - b. I was taken into the assembly hall. And beat up something terrible. [W. Hugh Missildine, *Your Inner Child of the Past* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963), 221 (*OED*, s.v. SOMETHING B *adv.* 2c)]

The *OED* entry for *something* treating its degree meaning ‘rather, a little’—which is said to be archaic—suggests that it functions as a compromiser (‘rather’) or diminisher (‘a little’) (see Quirk et al. 1985, 439). In (21), *something* expresses a higher degree on a scale of intensity, which makes it tantamount to a booster or an emphasizer. These examples thus illustrate the dialectal and colloquial use of *something* with some specific adjectives, such as *dreadful* and *cruel* (see *OED*, s.v. SOMETHING B *adv.*; see also Stoffel 1901, 143).

21. a. ‘These paths are something dreadful, Emmie,’ said Mrs. Horne, as the three of them scrambled up through the garden. [Compton Mackenzie, *The Early Life and Adventures of Sylvia Scarlett* (London: M. Secker, 1918), 208 (*OED*, s.v. SOMETHING B *adv.* 2a)]
 - b. The way the razor trembled now and again was something cruel. [Louis Golding, *Magnolia Steet* (Hamburg: Albatross, 1932), 299 (*OED*, s.v. SOMETHING B *adv.* 2a)]

The assumption is that the constructions <ADJ + *a/t/h*> and <VB (+ Object) + *a/t/h*> could be related to <ADJ + *something a/t/h*> and <VB (+ Object) + *something a/t/h*> because they show striking morphosyntactic and semantic-pragmatic similarities. If the former are indeed partly shaped by the latter, there remains to explain how—and why—the phrase <*something a/t/h*> was shortened to *a/t/h*. More research is needed in this area, but a few tentative explanations can be put forward at this stage.

Linguistic economy and communicative efficacy may have driven the change. In Langacker’s (1977, 106) terms, ‘It would not be entirely inappropriate to regard languages in their diachronic aspect as gigantic expression-

compacting machines.” In the constructions <ADJ + *something a/t/h*> and <VB (+ Object) + *something a/t/h*>, the intensive and expressive meaning of the two components of the phrase *something a/t/h* (as in 21) may have been felt as slightly redundant and the full intensive/expressive meaning therefore transferred entirely onto *a/t/h* on economical grounds, hence the deletion of one of the components, *something*, and the concomitant shortening of the intensive phrase.

Other incentives for the change might include: (1) the compositional processing of the phrase *something a/t/h*_{degree adv} ‘very awfully/terribly/horribly’—when both elements have a boosting effect—instead of treating it holistically, which may bring the manner semantics of *awfully/terribly/horribly* back to the surface; (2) the fact that *something* as an intensive is felt to be archaic (see *OED*, s.v. *something B adv.*); (3) the already intensive function assumed by *a/t/h* (as premodifiers) and the *-ly* suffixed adverbs *awfully/terribly/horribly* that speakers and hearers were well familiar with when the constructions <ADJ + *a/t/h*> and <VB (+ Object) + *a/t/h*> arose; and (4), as argued in section 2.3, analogical thinking based on micro-constructions of the type <ADJ + *sick/silly/stiff/rigid*> and <VB (+ Object) + *sick/silly/stiff/rigid*>.

To sum up, it has been demonstrated that the historical evolution of the postmodifier constructions <ADJ + *a/t/h*> and <VB (+ Object) + *a/t/h*> cannot be couched in terms of grammaticalization only. It was assumed that the constructions are also the result of analogical change and that they may equally have been shaped by the intensifying phrase *something a/t/h*, which might itself be partially driven by this very process of analogization, thus leading to the intertwining of these two processes. Grammaticalization might enter the picture if it turns out that phonological attrition did interweave with the other pathways of development in the case of the verbal pattern <VB (+ Object) + *a/t/h*>. In that respect it was argued that grammaticalization might have been particularly favored in certain contexts by the ambiguity between a passive verb phrase and a participial adjective when forms like *scared* or *worried* are involved. The question is now also raised as to whether the grammaticalization of *a/t/h* can be said to progress further due to their syntactic expansion from pre- to postmodifiers and their host-class expansion, that is, the increase in the range of collocations—verbal as well as adjectival heads—though the premodifier pattern <*a/t/h* + ADJ> is not the main driving force in the rise of the postmodifier patterns.

3. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study has shown that the patterns <*a/t/h* + ADJ> and <VB (+ Object) + *a/t/h*> stand out in the paradigm of degree modifier constructions in English on different levels, especially from the perspective of their historical development. While grammaticalization theory is traditionally called upon to explain the rise of intensifiers in English, I have argued that the degree modifier constructions <*a/t/h* + ADJ> and <VB (+ Object) + *a/t/h*> are the outcome of several intertwining pathways of development that do not solely, or even primarily, involve processes of grammaticalization. Rather, this article has emphasized the central role of analogy in language change, especially in the area of intensifiers, and argued that not “each analogical change is after all a reanalysis of the former string,” contra Traugott (2008a, 225).

The present article has wider theoretical implications in that it also supports fundamental arguments in constructionalization theory (Traugott 2008a, 2008b, 2011, 2012; Traugott and Trousdale 2010; Trousdale 2008a, 2008b, 2010). Recent research has been concerned with a redefinition of grammaticalization in the light of constructionalization. As has just been argued, the constructions <ADJ + *a/t/h*> and <VB (+ Object) + *a/t/h*> are not (solely or even primarily) the outcome of grammaticalization. But their history still highlights fundamental principles that have been laid out in constructionalization theory. Indeed, the development of these constructions and their analogical alignment with, for example, <ADJ + *sick*> and <VB (+ Object) + *sick*> reinforces a higher-level construction, <ADJ + degree modifier> and <VB (+ Object) + degree modifier>, in which the degree adverb is homophonous with an adjective. It leads to an increase in American English in the productivity of this meso-construction, that is, “the likelihood that [the] constructional schema will be activated for constructing a novel expression” (Langacker 2000, 26), which in turn strengthens the macro-construction in the relevant taxonomy, that is to say the degree modifier construction.

Note, however, that the likelihood that the category of intensifying zero forms will gain new ground is questionable, at least if we consider their post-modifier function in the constructions under study. *Dreadful*, for instance, could be a legitimate candidate. As an adjective, it is semantically on a par with *awful*, *terrible*, and *horrible*, and it “highlights an extreme point on a scale” (Paradis 2011, 79). Like *a/t/h*, *dreadful* can function as an intensifier in premodifier position. Semantically and pragmatically speaking, it therefore has the potential to be attracted to the existing structure of postmodifier intensification on analogy with *a/t/h*.¹⁹ But its lower frequency rate as a degree adverb in premodifier position compared to, for example, *awful*, and the presumably lesser degree of grammaticalization of the *-ly* suffixed adverb

dreadfully make the generalization of <ADJ + degree modifier> and <VB (+ Object) + degree modifier> to *dreadful* rather unlikely, just as the patterns <ADJ + *horrible*> // <VB (+ Object) + *horrible*> are presumably less frequent than <ADJ + *awful/terrible*> // <VB (+ Object) + *awful/terrible*>, at least when co-occurring with the adjectives and verbs chosen as potential collocates for the present investigation.²⁰

Moreover, despite the increase in the productivity of the meso-constructions <ADJ + degree modifier> and <VB (+ Object) + degree modifier>, in which the degree adverb is homophonous with an adjective, it is still questionable whether the constructional schema is highly entrenched. Very little work has been conducted on the development of this schema into a degree modifier pattern (but see Margerie 2013). This in itself might be suggestive of the fairly low likelihood for English speakers to activate the constructional schema for constructing a novel expression.

On the other hand, expansion of the schema would be consistent with the “fevered invention” (Bolinger 1972, 18) to which speakers are prone in the field of intensifier change, as demonstrated yet again by the postmodifier constructions examined in this article.

NOTES

1. Although they will be part of the discussion, items like *sick*, *silly*, *stiff*, and *rigid* which are involved in the degree modifier constructions <ADJ + *sick/silly/stiff/rigid*> and <VB (+ Object) + *sick/silly/stiff/rigid*> are not included in this semiclosed set for reasons presented in section 2.3.
2. A terminological difference is sometimes established in the literature between degree modifiers that modify an adjective or an adverb and those that modify a verb phrase and are thus classified as subjuncts (Quirk et al. 1985). Though relevant, this distinction will not be picked up here and the phrase DEGREE MODIFIER will be used whether the forms concerned modify an adjective or a verb phrase. This indeed enables me to refer to one high-level construction, the degree modifier construction (see section 2.2). The term INTENSIFIER is also sometimes used in a broad sense to apply to function words that express degree (Bolinger 1972, 17; Quirk et al. 1985, 445–49, 589–91). The labels *intensifier* and *degree modifier* will therefore be used interchangeably in this article.
3. The string *something terrible* is noteworthy here as it will be assumed to be involved in the rise of the constructions <ADJ + *a/t/h*> and <VB (+ Object) + *a/t/h*> (see section 2.4).
4. Only in a few cases was the origin of the speaker/writer indeterminable.
5. *Enough* and *a little* are the main degree modifiers that can postmodify an adjective, according to Quirk et al. (1985, 441). But note that they are not boosters like *a/t/h*.

6. The category of intensifiers can be broken down into several subcategories (see Quirk et al. 1985, 590). *Real* in (6a), *horrible* in (7a), *terrible* in (7b), *awful* in (7c), and the constructions <ADJ + *a/t/h*> and <VB (+ Object) + *a/t/h*> function as boosters, that is, they denote “a high degree, a high point on the scale,” while *plain* and *flat* in (6b) and (6c) belong to the category of maximizers, that is, they denote the “upper extreme of the scale” (Quirk et al. 1985, 590).
7. Note that while Bolinger (1972, 23, 151) lists *awful(ly)* and *terribly* among the (“less grammaticized”) intensifiers in English, no mention is made of *terrible* and *horrible* as intensifiers of an adjectival head. Bolinger (1972, 151) only mentions their intensifying meaning as premodifiers of nominal heads (e.g., *a terrible fool*).
8. It is beyond the scope of the present article to discuss the origins of *a/t/h* as intensifiers in preadjectival position. Note briefly, however, that the pattern in which they are already used intensively as premodifiers of a nominal head, as in, *an awful fool*, is likely to have influenced the later grammaticalization of *a/t/h* into preadjectival intensifiers (see Benzinger 1971, 60). See Paradis (2011, 80) for an explanation of the metonymic relation between the contentful side of *terrible* ‘terror-causing’—and also *awful*, *dreadful*, *horrible*—and the degree meaning of the intensifier when it combines with nominal heads.
9. As Benzinger (1971, 152) observes, particular intensifiers may signal dialect differences and/or a speaker’s social or class position. See Nevalainen (2008) for a more thorough discussion of the sociological aspect of the issue.
10. See section 2.3 for details of the search for potential adjectival collocates of *a/t/h* on Google. The same methodology was applied to potential adjectival collocates of postmodifier *bad*.
11. Lorenz (2002) does not draw such a conclusion from the delexicalization of *terribly*. He defines intensifiers as a “lexico-grammatical category” that includes both closed-class items like *very* and open-class ones like *terribly* (143–44). *Terribly* is thus probably not considered to have GRAMMATICALIZED into a degree modifier in his view. Traugott (2007, 542), however, points out that “closed class membership is not criterial for grammaticalization,” that is, grammaticalization is not limited to the development of closed-class items. *Terribly* could then be a case of grammaticalization in her view.
12. The *OED* does not report on the constructions under study, which makes it difficult to trace them back to a specific time period. A full-text search in the *OED* quotations database from 1400 to the present day did not return any postmodifier constructions either.
13. De Smet’s (2005) Corpus of Late Modern English Texts, which spans about two centuries through the early twentieth century (1710–1920), was also investigated. The fact that no occurrence was found of the patterns <ADJ + *a/t/h*> and <VB (+ Object) + *a/t/h*> may be due to the British English nature of the texts compiled in this corpus.
14. One might argue that this is also true of *a/t/h* in <ADJ + *a/t/h*> and <VB (+ Object) + *a/t/h*>, but the difference is that *a/t/h* can also appear in preadjectival position

- as degree modifiers, which is not the case for *sick/silly/stiff/rigid* (see Margerie 2013, 85). The more restricted use of *sick/silly/stiff/rigid* in intensive contexts probably accounts for the fact that they are not part of the usual classifications of degree adverbs in the relevant literature.
15. Most of the collocates I chose were negatively oriented because I could easily outline the collocational profile of the postmodifier constructions as the search was going on. Note that this contrasts with the semantic prosody of, for example, *awful* in premodifier position. Indeed, beside collocations with negative polarity items, COCA offers examples of collocations with positive polarity items, such as *awful nice* or *awful good*.
 16. Note that the list of the 100 most frequent adjectives premodified by degree adverbs *awful*, *terrible* and *horrible* in COCA does not include *scared*, *worried* or *frightened*.
 17. Interestingly, French has a similar construction (involving the preposition *de*), with *bien* ('good') filling the degree modifier slot, <*quelque chose* ('something') *de bien*>, as in, e.g., *ça m'énervé quelque chose de bien* 'it upsets me something awful'.
 18. The search was primarily carried out in American English corpora since the constructions <ADJ + *a/t/h*> and <VB (+ Object) + *a/t/h*> seemed to be specific to this variety. It was then extended to the British National Corpus but the phrase *something awful* was not found in postmodifier position either.
 19. In opposition to Fischer (2007), I assume that analogical change does not usually occur in form without attention to meaning.
 20. A COCA search of *dreadful*_{adverb} and *awful*_{adverb} in preadjectival position returned 114 and 515 hits, respectively. Likewise a COCA search of *dreadfully* and *awfully* yielded 244 and 2,299 hits, respectively. The results were not examined carefully to sort out the exact number of occurrences of *dreadful/awful* as intensifiers from their use as adjectives. Nor was a complete quantitative study carried out of the uses of the intensifiers versus the manner adverbs *dreadfully/awfully*. Nevertheless, the huge difference in the overall frequency rates of *awful/awfully* versus *dreadful/dreadfully* may reveal a significant difference in the more specific frequency rates of the degree adverbs *awful/awfully* versus *dreadful/dreadfully*. This is, at least, a preliminary conclusion that can be drawn from a quick look at the results.

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HÉLÈNE MARGERIE is a senior lecturer in English linguistics at the Université Bordeaux Montaigne, France. Her research interests include language variation and language change, especially in the light of grammaticalization theory and, more recently, constructionalization theory. Her recent publications address the role of analogy and analogization in the rise of peripheral degree modifier constructions. E-mail: helene.margerie@u-bordeaux-montaigne.fr.