

SEMINAR 10B – ADJECTIVES and ADVERBS (1)

Characteristics of the adjective

Four features are considered to be characteristic of adjectives (but not all adjectives share all four features!)

- a) they can occur in **ATTRIBUTIVE** function – they **premodify a noun** as in: an *ugly* painting, the *round* table, *dirty* linen
- b) they can occur in **PREDICATIVE** function – they function as **subject complement** (e.g. The painting is *ugly*.) or **object complement** (e.g. He thought the painting *ugly*.)

!! Some adjectives have **both attributive and predicative** function – these are called **CENTRAL** (e.g. *happy*, *infinite*).

Some adjectives can be **only attributive** (e.g. *utter*) or **only predicative** (e.g. *afraid*) – these are called **PERIPHERAL**

- c) they can be premodified by ‘*very*’, e.g. The children are *very happy*.
- d) they can take **comparative** and **superlative** forms – either by means of inflections (*-er*, *-est*) or by adding premodifiers (*more* and *most*)

!! **Features c) and d)** depend on a semantic feature – the so called **GRADABILITY** (some adjectives are gradable, others are non-gradable)

i.e. if the adjective is **non-gradable** – ‘*very*’ and *comparative* and *superlative* forms **are not possible!!**

e.g. *an atomic scientist* - ~~*very atomic scientist*~~, ~~*more atomic scientist*~~

Note:

Some **suffixes** are found only, or typically with adjectives, but many adjectives have no identifying form:

adj. suffixes: <i>-able (comfortable)</i>	<i>-al (seasonal)</i>
<i>-ful (playful)</i>	<i>-ic (scientific)</i>
<i>-ish (greyish)</i>	<i>-less (useless)</i>
<i>-ous (dangerous)</i>	<i>-y (dirty)</i>

The adjective and other word classes

A) Adjectives and adverbs

Normally, there is a regular difference between an adjective (a *rapid* car) and adverb (He drove *rapidly*.)

But:

- a) there are words which have **the same form** in **adjective** and **adverb** functions

e.g. Bill drove a *fast* car. (adj.) v. Bill drove *fast*. (adv.)
She arrived in the *late* afternoon. v. She arrived *late* in the afternoon.

- b) sometimes there is also an **-ly adverb with a different meaning**

e.g. Have you seen her *lately*? (=recently)

- c) sometimes there are **two forms**:

Take a *deep* breath. (adj)
Breathe *deep*. (esp. informal) (adv)
Breathe *deeply*. (adv)

- d) there are some words in **-ly** that can function both as **adjectives** and **adverbs!**

e.g. I caught an *early* train. v. We finished *early* today.
That was a *kindly* gesture. v. Will you *kindly* refrain from smoking?
(*kind* is also possible)

+ other words denoting time: *monthly, daily, hourly, weekly*

e.g. Exercise has become part of my *daily* routine. v. She gets paid *daily*.

Note:

- words '*daily*' and '*monthly*' are also nouns:

e.g. The story was covered in all the national dailies.

- if the adjective ends in **-ly** (*friendly, lively, masterly, lonely, cowardly*), we normally form the adverb meaning using an adjective construction:

e.g. She received us *in a friendly way*. (not: ~~friendlily~~)

B) Adjectives and adverbs beginning with a-

- some words beginning with **a-** are **adjectives** – they can be used **predicatively** with 'be' and other *copular (linking) verbs*

- **adverbs** beginning with **a-** can be used only with 'be' (out of the copular verbs)

e.g. The patient was *asleep* / *hungry*. (adj)

The patient was *abroad* / *there*. (adv)

The patient seemed *asleep* / *hungry*. **But not!** The patient seemed ~~*abroad* / *there*~~.

- **a- adjectives** refer to **temporary states** – they **cannot** be used after **verbs of motion!**

- **a- adverbs** denote **direction** after such verbs:

e.g. Jane went ~~*asleep*~~. - Jane went *abroad* / *away*. (adv)

Common a- adjectives include: *ablaze, alive, alike, afloat, afraid, alone, ashamed, asleep, aware, awake* → they are used **predicatively**:

e.g. The children were *asleep*. **Not!** The ~~*asleep*~~ children → *The sleeping children*

The girl was *afraid*. Not! The ~~*afraid*~~ girl... → *The frightened girl*....

Note:

- 'alert' and 'aloof' can occur attributively: 'an *alert* mind'; '*aloof* character' (=reserved)

- most other a- adjectives can occur attributively **only when modified**:

e.g. a somewhat *afraid* soldier

the fast *asleep* children

a really *alive* student (*lively*)

C) Adjectives and nouns

- nouns commonly function as **premodifiers of other nouns**: the *bus* station, a *business* friend, *student* grants

- unlike adjectives, nouns:

a) have no corresponding predicative function. (~~The station was *bus*.~~)

b) cannot be modified by 'very'

c) cannot take comparison

Nouns have other features that distinguish them from adjectives: article contrast, number contrast, genitive inflection, etc.

!Some items can be both adjectives and nouns (=conversion)

e.g. *criminal* (adj) v. noun

- a) attributive adj – a *criminal* attack
- b) predicative adj – The attack seemed *criminal* to us. (=very bad or morally wrong)
- c) noun – The *criminal* pleaded guilty.

Other examples of **conversion from adjective to noun**:

Adj.	Noun
a <i>black</i> student	There was only one <i>black</i> in my class.
a <i>classic</i> book	You won't find many <i>classics</i> in our library.
<i>intellectual</i> interests	She considers herself an <i>intellectual</i> .
a <i>noble</i> family	The king greeted his <i>nobles</i> .
a <i>six-year-old</i> boy	Our <i>six-year-old</i> is at school.

Note:

- like adjectives, nouns can function as **subject complement after copular verbs**:

e.g. That man is *a fool*. / She became *a nurse*.

- some nouns can also be used 'as **subject complement after seem**':

e.g. He seems *a fool*.
Your remark seems (complete) *nonsense* to me.
His friend seems very much *an Englishman*. (=very English)

D) Adjectives and participles

- there are many adjectives that have the same suffixes as participles - *-ing* or *-ed* – these are called participial adjectives:

e.g. His views were *surprising*. (predicative use)
His *surprising* views were..... (attributive use)
The man seemed very *offended*. (predicative use)
The *offended* man refused (attributive use)

- they include forms in **-ed** that have **no corresponding verbs** (e.g. to ~~unexpected~~, to ~~talent~~)

e.g. The results were *unexpected*. v. the *unexpected* results
All his friends are *talented*. v. his *talented* friends...

Since there are no corresponding verbs, the forms are obviously not participles!

- when there is a corresponding verb, **attributively used -ed forms usually have a passive meaning (but not always!)**

e.g. *lost* property = property that has been lost (passive)
the *escaped* prisoner = the prisoner who has escaped (active)

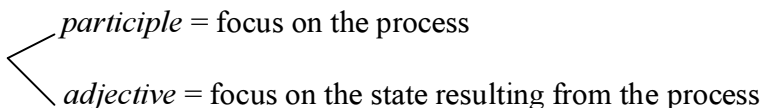
Adjective or participle?

Often the difference between the adj. and participle is not clear-cut, but the grammatical context distinguishes the **verbal** and **adjectival** use:

Compare:

- a) His views were *alarming* the audience. (since '*alarming*' is followed by an object – it is **participle**)
- b) His views were very *alarming*. (intensifier '*very*' – '*alarming*' is an **adjective**)
- c) The man was *offended* by the policeman. ('*by*' indicates there is a corresponding active form – '*offended*' is participle)
- d) The man was very *offended*. ('*very*' – '*offended*' is an adjective)

However, without any such indicators (*very*, *by*, '*objects*'), the meaning is not clear – the sentence can be interpreted in two ways:

e.g. The man was *offended*. 

Note: Some verbs have **different participle forms for verbal and adjectival use:**

e.g. You have *drunk* too much. v. *drunk / drunken* driver
Have you *shaved*? v. a *clean-shaven* man
This shirt has *shrunk*. v. a *shrunk* shirt

SYNTACTIC FUNCTIONS OF ADJECTIVES

1) Attributive v. predicative

- adj. are **attributive** when they premodify the head of a noun phrase: e.g. a *small* garden, *popular* ballads

- adj. are **predicative** when they function as subject or object complement:

e.g. He seems *careless*. (subj. compl.) v. I find him *careless*. (obj. compl)

- adj. are **subject complement** to **noun phrase**, and also to **finite** clauses (see a) below) and **non-finite** clauses (see b) below):

a) That you need a car is *obvious*.
Whether she will resign is *uncertain*.

b) To complain may be *dangerous*.
Playing chess can be *enjoyable*.

- adj. can also be **object complement to clauses**:

e.g. I consider what he did *foolish*.
I consider taking such risks *foolish*.

2) Postpositive

- adj. can sometimes be **postpositive** = they can **immediately follow the noun or pronoun** they modify

- we many have 3 positions of adjectives:

- a) *predicative* – The information is *useful*.
- b) *attributive* – *useful* information
- c) *postpositive* - something *useful*

→ a **postpositive adj.** can usually be regarded as a **reduced relative clause**:

e.g. something useful = something *that is useful*

- **compound indefinite pronouns** and **adverbs** ending in *-body*, *-one*, *-thing*, *-where* can be modified **only postpositively!**

e.g. *Anyone* (who is) *intelligent* can do it.
I want to try on *something* (that is) *larger*.
We're not going *anywhere exciting*.

Obviously, adj. that can occur only attributively cannot be used in this way:

e.g. ~~something (that is) main~~

Note:

- there are several **institutionalized expressions** (mostly in official designations) where **the adjective is postpositive**:

e.g. *the president elect, heir apparent, attorney general, notary public, proof positive*

- adjectives in **-able** and **-ible** can be **postpositive** or **attributive** when they are modified by another adjective in the superlative degree or by certain other modifiers (e.g. *first, last, next, only*)

e.g. The *best use possible* is to (also: the best possible use)
The *greatest insult imaginable*....

The *only actor suitable* was Henry. Or The *only suitable actor* was Henry.
(but: The *only actor suitable for the part* was....)

The choice of attributive or postpositive position can involve an important difference in meaning!!

e.g. the stars *visible* (= stars visible at a time specified, now, etc. = **temporary!**)
the *visible* stars (= stars that can generally be seen)

the members *present* (= the members who were at the meeting)
the *present* members (= those are members now)

!Postposition is usual for: 'absent, present, concerned, involved'- when they refer to temporary attributes!!

3) Adjectives with complementation

- normally, these adjectives cannot have attributive position – they require postposition:

e.g. an actor *suitable for the part* **Not!** a *suitable for the part* actor

- the complementation can be a **prepositional phrase** or **infinitive**:

e.g. They have a house *larger than yours*. (or: They have a *larger* house *than yours*.)
The boys *easiest to teach* were in my class. (or: The *easiest* boys *to teach* were...)

4) Adjectives as heads of noun phrases (e.g. 'the poor')

- can be subject, complement, object, prepositional complement
- do not have plural inflection or genitive case
- refer to certain well-established classes of persons: '*the brave, the innocent, the elderly, the weak, etc.*'

- we can distinguish 3 types:

- a) **adj. which can premodify personal nouns** (e.g. *the young people – the young*) – have plural and generic reference:

e.g. *The poor* are causing the nation's leaders great concern.
The extremely old need a great deal of attention.
The young in spirit enjoy life.

- instead of '*the*', which is the most common, possessives are also possible:
e.g. It is the duty of the Government to care for *our poor, our unemployed*.

- b) **adj. denoting nationalities** ending in **-ish** (e.g. British, Spanish, Welsh), **-ch** (Dutch, French), **-ese** (Chinese, Japanese) and the adj. **Swiss**

e.g. *The industrious Dutch* are admired by their neighbours.
You French and *we British* ought to be allies.

- c) **adj. with abstract reference** (unlike a) and b), these have singular concord!)

e.g. *The best* is yet to come.

- this category is restricted to certain fixed expressions: *the unknown, the unreal, the exotic, the supernatural*

Note:

- there are some set expressions in which the adj. with abstract reference is the complement of a preposition:

e.g. He left *for good*. (= for ever)
in short
in common
out of the ordinary
He enjoyed it *to the full*.

5) Verbless clauses

- adjectives can function as the **sole realization of a verbless clause**:

e.g. The man, *quietly assertive*, spoke to the assembled workers.
Unhappy with the result, she returned to work.
Long and untidy, his hair played in the breeze.
Anxious for a quick decision, the chairman called for a vote.

- the clause is mobile:

e.g. The chairman called for a vote, *anxious for a quick decision*.

- sometimes the adjective phrase can be replaced by an adverb phrase with little change of meaning:

e.g. *Rather nervous*, the man opened the letter.
Rather nervously, the man opened the letter.

- the adjective clause can be **dependent** – such verbless clauses express circumstance or condition under which what is said in the superordinate clause applies:

e.g. *When fit*, the Labrador is an excellent retriever.
If wet, these shoes should never be placed too close to the heat.
(Whether) right or wrong, he always fails to communicate his ideas.

- or it can be in final position:

e.g. You must eat it *when fresh*.

6) Exclamatory adjective clauses

- adjectives can be **exclamations**, with or without the initial *wh-element*:

e.g. *Excellent!* *(How) wonderful!* *(How) good of you!*