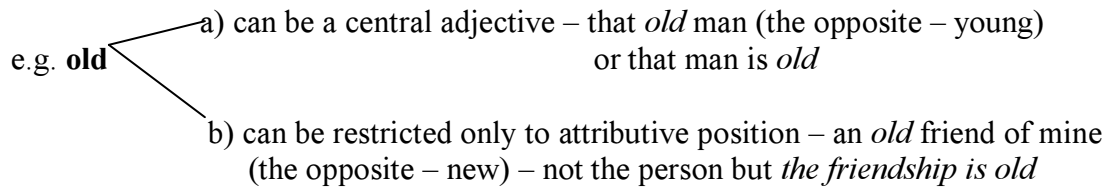


SEMINAR 11B – ADJECTIVES and ADVERBS (2)

SYNTACTIC SUBCLASSIFICATION OF ADJECTIVES

I. ATTRIBUTIVE ONLY

- in general, adjectives that are restricted to attributive position (or that occur predominantly in attributive position) do not characterize the referent of the noun directly



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- a) adjectives that characterize the referent of the noun directly are termed **INHERENT**
- b) adjectives that do not characterize it directly are termed **NONINHERENT**

Intensifying adjectives

- some adjectives have a **heightening effect** on the noun they modify, or the reverse – a **lowering effect**
- we can distinguish three main semantic subclasses:
 - a) emphasers
 - b) amplifiers
 - c) downtoners

↓

- a) emphasers – have a general heightening effect and are generally attributive only:

e.g. a *true* scholar a *sure* sign
a *clear* failure the *simple* truth
a *certain* (= *sure*) winner *pure* fabrication
plain nonsense *sheer* madness
sheer arrogance

- b) amplifiers – scale upwards from an assumed norm, and are **central** adjectives if they are inherent and denote a high or extreme degree

e.g. a *complete* victory v. The victory was *complete*.
 great destruction v. The destruction was *great*.

- when they are noninherent, amplifiers are attributive only

e.g. a *complete* fool but not! The fool was ~~complete~~.
 a *firm* friend but not! The friend is ~~firm~~.
 a *close* friend
 an *extreme* enemy
 a *great* supporter

Compare:

total nonsense – not! The nonsense was ~~total~~. = emphaser
total destruction or The destruction was *total*. = amplifier
(= destruction of everything)

- c) downtoners – have a lowering effect, usually scaling downwards from an assumed norm. They are relatively few (*slight, feeble*), generally they are central adjectives

e.g. a *slight* effort
a *feeble* joke

Restrictive adjectives

- restrict the reference of the noun exclusively, particularly or chiefly

e.g. a *certain* person (=particular) x a *certain* winner (sure) – intensifier!
a *particular* child
the *same* student
the *only* occasion
the *chief* excuse
the *exact* answer
the *sole* argument
the *specific* point

Adjectives related to adverbs

- some noninherent adjectives that are only attributive can be related to adverbs, even though they are not intensifying or restrictive

e.g. my *former* friend (= formerly my friend)
past students (= students in the past)
a *possible* friend (= possibly a friend)
the *present* king (= the king at present)
an *occasional* visitor (= occasionally a visitor)

Compare:

the *late* president (=a person who was formerly the president and now is dead) –
attributive only

v. the *late* bus – a central adjective

- if the adjectives premodify agentive nouns, the noun suggests a relationship to an associated verb:

e.g. a *big eater* (=someone who eats a lot)
a *clever liar* (= someone who lies cleverly)
a *hard worker* (= someone who works hard)
a *heavy smoker* (= someone who smokes heavily)
a *sound sleeper* (=someone who sleeps soundly)
a *fast car* (= a car that can go fast)
a *fast road* (=a road on which one can drive fast)

Adjectives related to nouns

- adjectives derived from nouns (=denominal adj.) by means of suffixes tend to be restricted to attributive position

e.g. an *atomic* scientist
a *criminal* court (= a court dealing with crime)
a *polar* bear (= a bear living near the pole)
a *medical* school (= a school for students of medicine)

musical comedy (=a comedy accompanied by music)
a *tidal* wave (=a wave produced by the tide)

II. PREDICATIVE ONLY

- adjectives that are restricted, or virtually restricted, to predicative position are most like verbs and adverbs
- they tend to refer to a (possibly temporary) condition rather than a characteristic
- the most common are those referring to the health (or lack of health) of an animate being
e.g. He felt *ill* / poorly.

He was *ill*. But not! ~~The ill man~~ (= *the sick man*)

- the adjectives restricted to predicative position also comprise those which can take complementation:

| | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| e.g. <i>able</i> (to+inf) | <i>fond</i> (of) |
| <i>afraid</i> (that, of, about) | <i>glad</i> (that, to) |
| <i>answerable</i> (to) | <i>happy</i> (that, to, with, about) |
| <i>aware</i> (of) | <i>subject</i> (to) |
| <i>conscious</i> (that, of) | |

SEMANTIC SUBCLASSIFICATION OF ADJECTIVES

a) stative v. dynamic

- adjectives are characteristically stative
- some adjectives, however, can be seen as dynamic

e.g. stative - **tall** - it cannot be used with progressive aspect or imperative)
dynamic – **funny** – e.g. I didn't realize he was being funny.

Adjectives that can be used dynamically: *brave, calm, careful, cheerful, conceited, cruel, foolish, friendly, funny, good, greedy, helpful, jealous, naughty, noisy, stupid, tidy, witty*

b) gradable v. nongradable (ungradable)

- most adjectives are gradable, i.e. they can take comparisons and can be modified by intensifiers

e.g. tall taller tallest
beautiful more beautiful most beautiful
very tall (but not: ~~very impossible~~ - nongradable)
so beautiful
extremely useful

- all dynamic and most stative adjectives are gradable
- some stative adjectives + denominal adj. are nongradable – e.g. an *atomic* scientist, *hydrochloric* acid) + adjectives denoting provenance (*British*)

Gradability also influences what kind of **adverbs** we may use to modify adjectives:

1) gradable adjectives – e.g. *angry, big, busy, quiet, rich, strong, important*, etc. – can go with the following adverbs (although not all the adverbs given go with all the adjectives given):

extremely, deeply, fairly, hugely, immensely, pretty (inf.), rather, really, reasonably, slightly, very

2) nongradable adjectives – e.g. *amazed, awful, terrible, furious, huge, impossible, wonderful*, etc. – can go with these adverbs:

absolutely, completely, entirely, pretty, really, simply, totally, utterly but not: ~~very~~

note: *really* and *pretty* are universal – they can go with both types of adj.

c) inherent v. noninherent

- most adjectives are inherent

e.g. a *wooden* cross (the adj. applies to the referent of the object directly - material)

but! a *wooden* actor – noninherent – the actor is not made of wood, we describe his acting

other examples:

| <i>inherent</i> | <i>noninherent</i> |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| a <i>firm</i> handshake | a <i>firm</i> friend |
| a <i>perfect</i> alibi | a <i>perfect</i> stranger |
| a <i>certain</i> result | a <i>certain</i> winner |
| a <i>true</i> report | a <i>true</i> scholar |

Ordering of adjectives in premodification

- adjectives are placed between the determiners and the head of the noun phrase, we can distinguish four zones:
 - a) precentral (after determiners) – peripheral, nongradable adjectives, esp. intensifying adj., e.g. *certain, definite, sheer, complete, slight*
 - b) central – e.g. *hungry, ugly, funny, stupid, silent, rich, empty*
 - c) postcentral – participles – e.g. *retired, sleeping, + colours*
 - d) prehead – denominal adjectives denoting nationality, ethnic background (*Austrian*), and denominal adjectives with the meaning of consisting, involving, relating to, e.g. *experimental, statistical, political*

The usual order of adjectives

quality size age shape colour origin participle NOUN
(opinion)

beautiful *big* *new* *round* *brown* *Spanish* *wooden* *table*