

Lecture 4

English 3318: Studies in English Grammar

Form-class Words Adjectives and Adverbs

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Objectives

- Differentiate between
 - attributive
 - predicative adjectives
- Differentiate between subclasses of adverbs
- Give supporting criteria of
 - form (morphology)
 - function (sentence position)

to justify the assignment of a word to a given form class

Adjectives

- In terms of form, adjectives are not as easily identifiable in isolation as nouns or verbs.
 - We need either meaning or context or clues
 - Adjective Frame Sentence: The _____ noun is very _____
 - only adjectives will fit in the both slots
 - Adjective Derivational Suffixes
 - the form of the word can also provide clues
 - Adjective Inflectional Affixes
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Adjective Derivational Suffixes

- The most reliable derivational suffix identifying a word as an adjective is
 - **-ous** – gorgeous, famous, courageous, contagious
 - There are some other adjective forming suffixes
 - merry, funny
 - beautiful, wonderful
 - terrific, ascetic
 - fortunate, temperate
 - childish, reddish
 - fragmentary, complimentary
 - punitive, active
 - variable, amenable
 - As clues to adjectives, these suffixes are not as reliable as -ous,
 - they occasionally show up on other form classes too:
handful (noun); panic (noun, verb), punish (verb)
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Adjective Inflectional Suffixes

- The inflectional suffixes that pattern with adjectives are
- - **er**, the sign for comparative form
- - **est**, the superlative form
- Positive **big** **young** **smart**
- Comparative **bigger** **younger** **smarter**
- Superlative **biggest** **youngest** **smartest**

Comparative and Superlative Degree

- The **-er** form is used in the comparison of two nouns – that's why it is called the comparative degree:
 - Pat is younger than Phyllis
 - Phyllis is the better student of the two
 - The comparative degree with *than* can also be followed by a clause rather than a noun phrase
 - Pat is younger than I suspected
 - The **-est** form, the superlative degree, is used when singling out one of more than two nouns
 - Tom was the oldest person in the room
 - Of the three candidates, Sarah is the best campaigner
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Additional Cases

- For many adjectives the comparative and superlative degrees are not formed with **-er** and **-est**, but with **more** and **most**, which we can think of as alternative forms or allomorphs
 - adjectives with more than 2 syllables are patterns with **more** and **most**
 - Exceptions are: two syllable adjectives ending in
 - **-y** or **-ly** (prettiest, friendlier, lovelier)
 - **-le** (nobler, noblest)
 - **-ow** (narrower, narrowest)
 - **-er** (tenderest)
 - Some adjectives have no comparative and superlative form: **former, main, principal**
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Adjectives or Adverbs

- More and most are not exclusive for adjectives
 - **-ly** adverbs, those derived from adjectives, have comparative and superlative versions: **more quickly, most frequently**
- Small group of words that have comparative and superlative forms can serve as adjectives or adverbs
 - inflectional test is not very reliable

– early	fast	late	high
– earlier	faster	later	higher
– earliest	fastest	latest	highest
– hard	long	low	deep
– harder	longer	lower	deeper
– hardest	longest	lowest	deepest

Exceptions

- **Near** (*nearer, nearest*) – can serve not only as adjective and adverb, but also as a preposition, the only preposition that takes inflection
 - **Our seats were near the fifty-yard line**
 - Exceptions to regular comparative and superlative forms

– good	bad	far	far
– better	worse	farther	further
– best	worst	farthest	furthest
 - Adjectives can also be compared in a negative sense with *as*, *less*, and *least*
 - This picnic is not **as** enjoyable **as** I thought it would be
 - This picnic is **less** enjoyable than I thought it would be
 - This is the **least** enjoyable picnic I've ever attended
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Rules of Thumb

Tests for Adjectives

Formal Proof

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|---|--|
| 1. Has adjective-making morpheme | happy, lo vable , fool ish |
| 2a. Takes comparative or superlative morpheme | so fter , so ftest |

Functional Proof

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|--|--|
| 2b. Can be made comparative or superlative by using more or most | more sensitive, most sensitive |
| 3. Can be qualified | rather soft |
| 4. Can fit both slots in the frame sentence | The ___ noun seems very ___ |
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Exercise 1

1. Create a comparative and superlative forms for the adjectives listed
friendly, helpful, wise, awful, rich, mellow, expensive, valid, pure, able
 2. Test each of the words below with the test for adjectives given above. Which words are adjectives? How many of the criteria are valid for each adjective?
alluring, eating, skinny, pale, diet, tall, controlled, hungry
 - Example: selfish (adjective – 4 criteria)
 - Applicable: has adjective-making morpheme {-ish}, can be made comparative/superlative with *more*, *most*, can be qualified – *very selfish*, fits the frame
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Subclasses of Adjectives

- The adjective test frame The ___ noun is very _____
 - is useful in identifying adjectives
 - is useful in helping distinguish subclasses of adjectives:
 - those that are limited to the prenoun slots
 - those that are limited to the complement slots
 - Most adjectives can fill three slots in the sentence patterns:
 - predicative adjectives
 - as subject complement (as in the test frame)
 - as object complement
 - attributive adjectives
 - as modifiers in the noun phrase (as in the test frame)
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Attributive Only Adjectives

- A small number of of adjectives will not fill the complement slot - attributive only adjectives:
 - main, principal, former, mere, potential, atomic, late (meaning “dead”) and technical adjectives: sulfuric, hydrochloric
 - these do not serve as either subject or object complements in the verb phrase, nor do they take qualifiers:
 - He is the former president *The president is former
 - My reason is main *My main reason is very main
 - She is a mere child *The child is mere
- There are a few other adjectives that rarely appear in an attributive position in reference to animate nouns:
 - fond, ready, ill, well
 - “ill omen” but rarely *“ill person” - we will use sick instead

Predicative Only Adjectives

- Many so-called A-adjectives are predicative only:
 - ablaze, afraid, aghast, alone, awake
 - The house was ablaze
 - *The ablaze house burned down in an hour
 - The children were awake
 - *The awake children were noisy
 - Incidentally not all predicative adjectives take *very*, the sample qualifier in the test frame
 - we do not usually say:
 - “very afraid” or “very awake”
 - we would rather say:
 - “very much afraid” and “very much awake”
 - although they do combine with the other qualifiers:
 - quite afraid, extremely afraid, completely awake, wide awake
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Adjectives Followed by Clauses

- A number of adjectives in predicative position appear frequently with complements in the form of phrases or clauses
 - some adjectives: *fond* and *aware*, are rarely used without them:
 - The children were afraid that the dog would bite
 - The children were aware that the dog would bite
 - The dog was fond of biting children
 - We were conscious of the problem
 - Our team is certain to win
 - these cases are called 'complements' rather than modifiers or qualifiers because they complement the idea expressed by the adjective = direct objects are complements of verbs
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Ability to Combine with Qualifiers

- Another subclassification of adjectives relates to their ability to combine with qualifiers
 - most adjectives can be intensified, qualified: **somewhat late, rather late, quite early, very happy** - gradable
 - certain adjectives denote meanings that are considered absolute: **unique, square, round, perfect, single, double, fatal, empty, right, wrong, impossible**
 - these can fill both the attributive and predicate slots, but they can not be qualified or compared – nongradable
 - we can say “**almost perfect**” and “**nearly square**”, but will avoid “**more perfect**” and “**very perfect**”
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Adverbs

- Adverbs modify
 - verbs: Sue swims quickly
 - adjectives: Bill's car is mechanically sound
 - other adverbs: Andrew drove incredibly fast
 - whole sentences: Obviously, someone ate the rest of the pizza
 - are the most difficult of the four form classes to identify and understand
 - Adverbs overlap with adjectives (*fast, slow*)
 - The horse likes a fast track (adjective)
 - Don't drive so fast (adverb)
 - They are slow learners (adjective)
 - He drives too slow (slowly) (adverbs)
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Derivational Suffixes

- One common indicator of form is suffix – **ly**, which we use to derive adverbs of manner from adjectives
 - tell *how* or in *what way* about the verb:
 - **He walked slowly**
 - **She answered correctly**
 - It is not completely reliable signaler, since – **ly** occurs on nouns (**folly**), adjectives (**lovely, ugly**)
 - There are many adjectives that we can turn to adverb with morpheme **{-ly}**
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Restrictions

- Not all adjectives can become manner adverbs, these restrictions are related to
 - meaning
 - describe a state – tall, old
 - fixed or inherit characteristic – Norwegian
 - characteristic that change – weak, active, industrious
 - objective characteristics – tall and old
 - subjective characteristics – nice and splendid
 - The adjectives that refer to objective or stative or inherent qualities rarely become manner adverbs:
 - tall, old, fat, short, thick, large, flat, round, red
 - if they do – they have metaphorical, specialized meaning – hardly, widely, squarely, shortly, flatly
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Other Derivational Suffixes

- Besides **-ly**, two other derivational suffixes produce adverbs: **-ward** and **-wise**
 - words ending in *-ward* signal direction: **homeward, forward, backward, upward, downward**
 - words ending in *-wise*, which indicate manner, include both
 - old usage: **otherwise, lengthwise, crosswise**
 - jargon: **budgetwise, weatherwise, moneywise, profitwise**
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Inflectional Suffixes

- Comparative and superlative inflections: **-er, -est**
 - the comparative form of **-ly** adverbs, usually formed by adding **more** rather than **-er**
 - except for: **soon, often** – the only that take **-er, -est**
 - the superlative degree - **most suddenly, most favorably**
 - is rare in both speech and writing – calls attention
 - **The committee was most favorably impressed with the proposal**
 - **The crime was planned most ingeniously**
 - Flat adverbs – made from adjectives without the addition of **-ly**:
 - **early, late, hard, fast, long, high, low, deep**
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Adverb Subclasses

- Adverbs are often categorized on the basis of the kind of information they provide
 - manner (how) – quickly, slowly, reluctantly, well:
 - The horses ran steadily
 - time (when) – yesterday, then, immediately
 - Our guest arrived yesterday
 - place (where) – here, somewhere, around, outside
 - Your boss called here
 - degree – strikingly, incredibly, amazingly
 - He is amazingly beautiful
 - frequency and number – often, twice, seldom
 - They met frequently
 - duration – always, still, briefly
 - He always bragged about it

Rules of Thumb

Tests for Adverbs

Formal Proof

1. Has adverb-making morpheme

suddenly, crosswise, homeward

2a. Takes comparative
superlative morphemes

She ran faster

She ran fastest

Function Proof

2b. Can be made comparative or
superlative with more or most

more suddenly, most suddenly

3. Can be qualified

rather suddenly

4. Can be moved within a sentence

The door opened suddenly

The door suddenly opened

Suddenly the door opened

5. Can fit in the frame sentence

The man told his story _____.

Exercise 2

1. There are two – **ly** morphemes: one to create adjectives, another to create adverbs. To understand the differences sort the following words into two groups: adjectives and adverbs
 - lovely, foolishly, absolutely, maniacally, timely, paternally, worldly, ghostly
 2. Decide whether each of the examples below is an adverb of time, place, manner, degree, frequency and number or duration
 - soon, anxiously, somewhere, utterly, often, carelessly, once, eternally
 - Can any be used more than once?
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