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REPORT

Theme: Adjectives and their grammatical features

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Introduction

Definition of the Term Adjectives

An adjective is a word which acts to modify a noun in a sentence. While adjectives play a large role in many languages – such as English – many other languages have no adjectives at all. In English the set of adjectives is fairly well understood, though some people include other parts of speech – such as articles like the – in the class of adjectives.

There are two main roles an adjective may take in a sentence, and with a few exceptions each adjective is able to take either role just as easily. The first role is to act as a predicative adjective, in which the adjective modifies a preceding noun as a predicate, linked by a verb. An example of a predicative adjective can be found in the sentence: A zebra is striped in which the adjective striped is linked the subject of the sentence, zebra, by use of the copula verb to be in the is form.

The second role an adjective may take is as an attributive adjective, in which it modifies a noun by being linked directly to the noun as part of the noun phrase. An example of an attributive adjective may be seen in the sentence: “The striped zebra pranced” in which the adjective striped is directly connected to the subject of the sentence, zebra. In English, most attributive adjectives precede the noun they are going to modify, while in many Romance languages the adjective comes after the noun. So while in English we might say “The beautiful woman.” in French we would say “Le femme jolie.” which may be literally translated as “The woman beautiful.”

While most adjectives in English are able to be used just as easily either in an attributive or a predicative sense, there are some which are restricted to one role or the other. For example, the adjective sole can be used grammatically only as an attributive adjective, as can be seen in the sentence: This is the sole survivor. On the other hand, trying to use the adjective sole in the predicative role would result in the ungrammatical sentence: This survivor is sole. Other English adjectives, such as alone, may be used only as a predicative adjective, while attempts to use them attributively result in ungrammatical sentences.

Adjectives may be modified by adverbs or adverbial clauses, but not by other adjectives. Many adjectives, however, can easily translate into corresponding adverbs simply by adding the ending to them. This can be seen in pairs such as quick/quickly and happy/happily.

In English and many other languages, adjectives also have a correct and incorrect order, depending on the type of adjectives used. Most native speakers learn this order instinctively, and related mistakes are one of the most obvious signs of a non-native speaker. For example, using the adjectives red, little, and two with the noun books, most native English speakers would intuitively order the adjectives to form the sentence “The two little red books.” To non-native speakers, however, it might seem just as intuitive to say “The two red little books.” or even “The red two little books.” both of which are immediately obvious as incorrect to a native English speaker.

As mentioned earlier, not all languages use adjectives; some use other parts of speech instead to fill this role. Many Native American languages, for example, use verbs to fill the role that adjectives play in English, so that rather than “The woman is short.” we are faced with something like “The woman is shorting.” Languages that use nouns as adjectives are often more comprehensible to speakers of English, since our sentence formations can easily allow for metaphoric description using only nouns, with a verb perhaps to flavor it, such as “The sun was a blazing inferno.” instead of “The sun was hot.” English also uses abstract nouns, for example to turn “An important statement.” into “A statement of import.”

MAIN PART

1. The Adjective and its classification

The adjective is a word expressing a quality of a substance. Adjectives are characterized by the following typical features:

I. The lexico-grammatical meaning of attributes. It should be understood in this way such as their size (*large, small*), color (*red, blue*), position in space (*upper, inner*), material (*wooden, woolen*), psychic state of persons (*happy, furious*).

II. The morphological category of the degrees of comparison.

III. The characteristic combinability with nouns, (*a beautiful girl*) link verbs (*is clever*)

IV. Stem building affixes, *-full, -less, -ish, -ous, -ive, -ic, -un, pre-, in-, etc.*

V. Its functions of an attribute and a predicative complement.

Division of adjectives. According to the morphological composition adjectives are divided into *simple, derivative* and *compound*.

Simple adjectives are adjectives which have neither prefixes nor suffixes. E.g.: *good, red, black*.

Derivative adjectives are adjectives which have derivative elements, suffixes or prefixes or both: *beautiful, unkind*, etc. Affixes of adjectives are divided into productive and unproductive. Productive adjective-forming suffixes are: *-less*-friendless; *-like*-childlike; *-ed (-d)*-blue-eyed; *-ish*-childish. Unproductive adjective-forming suffixes are: *-ful*-careful; *-ible*-responsible; *-able*-reliable; *-ant*-important; *-ent*-dependent; *-en*-wooden; *-ous*-dangerous; *-some*-troublesome. Productive adjective-forming prefixes are: *-un* - unhappy; *-pre*-prewar. The unproductive prefix of the adjective is: *-in*-incorrect.

Compound adjectives are adjectives built from two or more stems. The main types of compound adjectives are as follows:

- a) Noun - stem + adjective - stem: *snow-white*.
- b) Noun - stem + participle - stem: *life-giving*.
- c) Adjective - stem + adjective - stem: *deaf-mute*.

- d) Adjective - stem + noun - stem + suffix -ed: *cold-hearted*.
- e) Noun - stem + noun - stem + suffix -ed: *lynx-eyed*.
- f) Numeral - stem + noun - stem + suffix -ed: *four-wheeled*.
- g) Adverb - stem + noun - stem + suffix -ed: *over-peopled*.

According to their meaning and grammatical characteristics adjectives fall under two classes: 1) Qualitative adjectives. 2) Relative adjectives.

Qualitative adjectives denote qualities of a substance directly, not through its relation to another substance, as size, shape, colour, physical and mental qualities, qualities of general estimation. E.g.: *Large house, Small bag* etc. Its grammatical characteristics are: (1) Most of them have degrees of comparison: E.g.: *bigger, (the) biggest*. (2) They have certain typical suffixes, such as *-ful, -less, -ous, -ent, -able, -y, -ish* etc. (3) From most of them adverbs can be formed by adding the suffix "ly": *graceful-gracefully, gay-gaily*. (4) Many of them can be used as an attribute and predicative. E.g.: *The young man is very handsome*. (Attribute) *Everybody knows that she is beautiful*. (Predicative)

Relative adjectives denote qualities of a substance through their relation to materials (*woolen, wooden*), to place (*Italian, Asian, American*), to time (*monthly, weekly*) to some action (*preparatory, rotatory*). Grammatical characteristics of relative adjectives are: (1) Relative adjectives have no degrees of comparison. (2) They do not form adverbs with the suffix "ly" (3) They have certain typical suffixes, such as "-en" wooden, "-an" Italian "-ist", socialist, "-ic" synthetic, "-ical" analytical. (4) Relative adjectives are chiefly used as attributes. E.g.: *She had noticed a pretty wooden chain upon Gretel's neck*. (Attribute)

Substantivized adjectives have acquired some or all of the characteristics of the noun, but their adjectival origin is still generally felt and they are divided into wholly substantivized and partially substantivized adjectives.

Wholly substantivized adjectives have all the characteristics of nouns, namely the plural form, the genitive case; they are associated with articles, i.e. they have become nouns: *a native, the natives, a natives' hut*. Some wholly substantivized adjectives have only the plural form: *ancients, sweets, greens*.

Partially substantivized adjectives acquire only some of the characteristics of the noun; they are used with the definite article. Partially substantivized adjectives denote a whole class: *the rich, the poor, the unemployed*. They may denote abstract notions: *the good, the evil, the beautiful, the plural*.

Substantivized adjectives denoting nationalities fall under wholly and partially substantivized adjectives. Wholly substantivized adjectives are: *a Russian-Russians, a German-Germans*. Partially substantivized adjectives are: *the English, The French, The Chinese*.

There are degrees of comparison of adjectives in the English language. The positive degree is not marked. We may speak of a zero morpheme. The comparative and superlative degrees are built up either synthetically or analytically, which in the main depends on the phonetic structure of the stem.

If the stem is monosyllabic or disyllabic with a stress on the second syllable or ending in "er", "y", "le", "ow". The comparative and superlative degrees are usually built up synthetically by adding the suffixes "-er" and "-est", respectively e.g. *bright-er (-est)*. In all other cases the comparative and superlative degrees are formed analytically with the help of the word-morphemes "more", "most". Suppletive opposemes are few in number but of very frequent occurrence. E.g. *good-better-the best; little-less-the least*.

Some authors treat *more beautiful* and the *most beautiful* not as analytical forms, but as free syntactical combinations of adverbs and adjectives. Let us compare *nicer* and *more beautiful*. In order to prove that *more beautiful* is an analytical form of the comparative degree, we have to prove that *more* is a grammatical word-morpheme, identical with the morpheme "-er" in spite of the utter difference in form. So *more beautiful* is analytical form but *less beautiful* is not analytical form because "less" is not a word morpheme. So "less" is an ordinary word and *less beautiful* is a combination of words. And *less* and *-er* have different, even opposite meanings. E.g. *prettier-less pretty*.

Most qualitative adjectives build up opposemes of comparison, but some do not: Adjectives that in themselves express the highest degree of a quality. E.g.

Supreme, extreme. Those having the suffix *-ish* which indicates the degree of a quality. E.g. *reddish, whitish*. Those denoting qualities which are not compatible with the idea of comparison. E.g. *deaf, dead, lame*, etc. All the adjectives which have no comparative and superlative opposites are outside the category of comparison, but they are united by the oblique or lexicogrammatical meaning of the positive degree.

Without referring to the traditional definition of adjectives you can find in any dictionary, Let's make our way into talking about the standard role of adjectives in language. In English the adjective is multifunctional. It is used essentially to describe an object but, in general, it is meant to enrich and clarify ideas and lead the interlocutors to communicate eloquently.

Standing on such ground, I would like to point out tasks and aims of my work

1. The first task of my work is to give definition to term «adjective».
2. The second task is to describe the role of adjectives in our speech.
3. The last task of my work is to characterize adjectives from grammatical point of view.

In our opinion the practical significance of our work is hard to be overvalued. This work reflects modern trends in linguistics and we hope it would serve as a good manual for those who wants to master modern English language. Also this work can be used by teachers of English language for teaching English grammar.

The present work might find a good way of implying in the following spheres:

1. In High Schools and scientific circles of linguistic kind it can be successfully used by teachers and philologists as modern material for writing research works dealing with English adjectives.
2. It can be used by teachers of schools, lyceums and colleges by teachers of English as a practical manual for teaching English grammar.

3. It can be useful for everyone who wants to enlarge his/her knowledge in English.

After having proved the actuality of our work, I would like to describe the composition of it:

My work consists of four parts: introduction, the main part, conclusion and bibliography. Within the introduction part we gave the brief description of our course paper. The main part of the work includes several items. There we discussed such problems as main features of English adjectives, described their role in English language, and gave grammatical characteristics of them. In the conclusion to our work we tried to draw some results from the scientific investigations made within the present course paper. In bibliography part we mentioned some sources which were used while compiling the present work. It includes linguistic books and articles dealing with the theme, a number of used dictionaries and encyclopedias and also some internet sources.

2. Grammatical overview of English Adjectives

There is not much to be said about the English adjective from the grammatical point of view. As is well known, it has neither number, nor case, nor gender distinctions. Some adjectives have, however, degrees of comparison, which make part of the morphological system of a language. Thus, the English adjective differs materially not only from such highly inflected languages as Russian, Latin, and German, where the adjectives have a rather complicated system of forms, but even from Modern French, which has preserved number and gender distinctions to the present day (cf. masculine singular *grand*, masculine plural *grands*, feminine singular *grande*, feminine plural *grandes* 'large').

By what signs do we then, recognize an adjective as such in Modern English? In most cases this can be done only by taking into account semantic and syntactical phenomena. But in some cases, that is for certain adjectives, derivative suffixes are significant, too. Among these are the suffix – less (as in *useless*), the suffix – like (as in *ghostlike*), and a few others. Occasionally, however, though a

suffix often appears in adjectives, it cannot be taken as a certain proof of the word being an adjective, because the suffix may also make part of a word belonging to another part of speech. Thus, the suffix – full would seem to be typically adjectival, as is its antonym – less. In fact we find the suffix – full in adjectives often enough, as in beautiful, useful, purposeful, meaningful, etc. But alongside of these we also find spoonful, mouthful, handful, etc., which are nouns.

On the whole, the number of adjectives which can be recognized, as such by their suffix seems to be insignificant as compared with the mass of English adjectives.¹ All the adjectives are traditionally divided into two large subclasses: qualitative and relative.

Relative adjectives express such properties of a substance as are determined by the direct relation of the substance to some other substance.

E.g.: wood – a wooden hut; mathematics – mathematical precision; history – a historical event;

table – tabular presentation; colors – colored postcards;

surgery – surgical treatment; the Middle Ages – mediaeval rites.

The nature of this «relationship» in adjectives is best revealed by definitional correlations. Ex.: a wooden hut – a hut made of wood; a historical event – an event referring to a certain period of history; surgical treatment – treatment consisting in the implementation of surgery; etc.

Qualitative adjectives, as different from relative ones, denote various qualities of substances which admit of a quantitative estimation, i.e. of establishing their correlative quantitative measure. The measure of a quality can be estimated as high or low, adequate or inadequate, sufficient or insufficient, optimal or excessive. Ex.: an awkward situation – a very awkward situation; a difficult task – too difficult a task; an enthusiastic reception – rather an enthusiastic reception; a hearty welcome – not a very hearty welcome; etc.

In this connection, the ability of an adjective to form degrees of comparison is usually taken as a formal sign of its qualitative character, in opposition to a

¹ B. Ilyish, *The Structure of Modern English*, p.58

relative adjective which is understood as incapable of forming degrees of comparison by definition. Ex.: a pretty girl – a prettier girl; a quick look – a quicker look; a hearty welcome – the heartiest of welcomes; a bombastic speech – the most bombastic speech.

However, in actual speech the described principle of distinction is not at all strictly observed, which is noted in the very grammar treatises putting it forward. Two typical cases of contradiction should be pointed out here.

In the first place, substances can possess such qualities as are incompatible with the idea of degrees of comparison. Accordingly, adjectives denoting these qualities, while belonging to the qualitative subclass, are in the ordinary use incapable of forming degrees of comparison. Here refer adjectives like extinct, immobile, deaf, final, fixed, etc.

In the second place, many adjectives considered under the heading of relative still can form degrees of comparison, thereby, as it were, transforming the denoted relative property of a substance into such as can be graded quantitatively. Ex.: a mediaeval approach—rather a mediaeval approach – a far more mediaeval approach; of a military design – of a less military design – of a more military design;

a grammatical topic a purely grammatical topic – the most grammatical of the suggested topics.

In order to overcome the demonstrated lack of rigour in the definitions in question, we may introduce an additional linguistic distinction which is more adaptable to the chances of usage. The suggested distinction is based on the evaluative function of adjectives. According as they actually give some qualitative evaluation to the substance referent or only point out its corresponding native property, all the adjective functions may be grammatically divided into «evaluative» and «specificative». In particular, one and the same adjective, irrespective of its being basically (i.e. in the sense of the fundamental semantic property of its root constituent) «relative» or «qualitative», can be used either in the evaluative function or in the specificative function.

For instance, the adjective good is basically qualitative. On the other hand, when employed as a grading term in teaching, i.e. a term forming part of the marking scale together with the grading terms bad, satisfactory, excellent, it acquires the said specificative value; in other words, it becomes a specificative, not an evaluative unit in the grammatical sense (though, dialectically, it does signify in this case a lexical evaluation of the pupil's progress). Conversely, the adjective wooden is basically relative, but when used in the broader meaning «expressionless» or «awkward» it acquires an evaluative force and, consequently, can presuppose a greater or lesser degree («amount») of the denoted property in the corresponding referent. E.g.:

Bundle found herself looking into the expressionless, wooden face of Superintendent Battle (A. Christie). The superintendent was sitting behind a table and looking more wooden than ever.

The degrees of comparison are essentially evaluative formulas, therefore any adjective used in a higher comparison degree (comparative, superlative) is thereby made into an evaluative adjective, if only for the nonce (see the examples above).

Thus, the introduced distinction between the evaluative and specificative uses of adjectives, in the long run, emphasizes the fact that the morphological category of comparison (comparison degrees) is potentially represented in the whole class of adjectives and is constitutive for it.

Among the words signifying properties of a neural referent there is a lexemic set which claims to be recognized as a separate part of speech, i.e. as a class of words different from the adjectives in its class-forming features. These are words built up by the prefix a – and denoting different states, mostly of temporary duration. Here belong lexemes like afraid, agog, adrift, ablaze. In traditional grammar these words were generally considered under the heading of «predicative adjectives» (some of them also under the heading of adverbs), since their most typical position in the sentence is that of a predicative and they are but occasionally used as pre-positional attributes to nouns.

The only morphological problem concerning adjectives is, then, that of degrees of comparison. The first question which arises here is, how many degrees of comparison has the English adjective (and, for that matter, the adjective in other languages, such as Russian, Latin, or German)? If we take, for example, the three forms of an English adjective: large, larger, (the) largest, shall we say that they are all three of them, degrees of comparison? In that case we ought to term them positive, comparative, and superlative. Or shall we say that only the latter two are degrees of comparison (comparative, and superlative), whereas the first (large) does not express any idea of comparison and is therefore not a degree of comparison at all? Both views have found their advocates in grammatical theory. Now, if we define a degree of comparison as a form expressing comparison of one object or objects with another in respect of a certain property, it would seem that the first of the three forms (large) should not be included, as it does not express any comparison. Then we should have only two degrees of comparison larger, (the) largest, and a form standing apart, coinciding with the stem from which the degrees of comparison are formed, and which may be described as the basic form.²

3. Degrees of Comparison of Adjectives

The category is constituted by the opposition of the three forms known under the heading of degrees of comparison: the basic form (positive degree), having no features of comparison; the comparative degree form, having the feature of restricted superiority (which limits the comparison to two elements only); the superlative degree form, having the feature of unrestricted superiority.

It should be noted that the meaning of unrestricted superiority is in-built in the superlative degree as such, though in practice this form is used in collocations imposing certain restrictions on the effected comparison; thus, the form in question may be used to signify restricted superiority, namely, in cases where a limited number of referents are compared. Ex.: Johnny was the strongest boy in the company.

² B. Ilyish, *The Structure of Modern English*, p.59

As is evident from the example, superiority restriction is shown here not by the native meaning of the superlative, but by the particular contextual construction of comparison where the physical strength of one boy is estimated in relation to that of his companions.

Some linguists approach the number of the degrees of comparison as problematic on the grounds that the basic form of the adjective does not express any comparison by itself and therefore should be excluded from the category. This exclusion would reduce the category to two members only, i.e. the comparative and superlative degrees.

However, the oppositional interpretation of grammatical categories underlying our considerations does not admit of such an exclusion; on the contrary, the non-expression of superiority by the basic form is understood in the oppositional presentation of comparison as a pre-requisite for the expression of the category as such. In this expression of the category the basic form is the unmarked member, not distinguished by any comparison suffix or comparison auxiliary, while the superiority forms (i.e. the comparative and superlative) are the marked members, distinguished by the comparison suffixes or comparison auxiliaries.

That the basic form as the positive degree of comparison does express this categorical idea, being included in one and the same allegorical series with the superiority degrees, is clearly shown by its actual uses in comparative syntactic constructions of equality, as well as comparative syntactic constructions of negated equality. Ex.: The remark was as bitter as could be. The Rockies are not so high as the Caucasus.

These constructions are directly correlative with comparative constructions of inequality built around the comparative and superlative degree forms. Ex.: That was the bitterest remark I have ever heard from the man. The Caucasus is higher than the Rockies.

Thus, both formally and semantically, the oppositional basis of the category of comparison displays a binary nature. In terms of the three degrees of comparison, on the upper level of presentation the superiority degrees as the

marked member of the opposition are contrasted against the positive degree as its unmarked member. The superiority degrees, in their turn, form the opposition of the lower level of presentation, where the comparative degree features the functionally weak member, and the superlative degree, respectively, the strong member. The whole of the double oppositional unity, considered from the semantic angle, constitutes a gradual ternary opposition.

The synthetical forms of comparison in – er and – (e) st coexist with the analytical forms of comparison effected by the auxiliaries more and most. The analytical forms of comparison perform a double function. On the one hand, they are used with the evaluative adjectives that, due to their phonemic structure (two-syllable words with the stress on the first syllable ending in other grapho-phonemic complexes than – er, – y, – le, – ow or words of more than two-syllable composition) cannot normally take the synthetical forms of comparison. In this respect, the analytical comparison forms are in categorial complementary distribution with the synthetical comparison forms. On the other hand, the analytical forms of comparison, as different from the synthetical forms, are used to express emphasis, thus complementing the synthetical forms in the sphere of this important stylistic connotation. Ex.: The audience became more and more noisy, and soon the speaker's words were drowned in the general hum of voices.

The structure of the analytical degrees of comparison is meaningfully overt; these forms are devoid of the feature of «semantic idiomatism» characteristic of some other categorial analytical forms, such as, for instance, the forms of the verbal perfect. For this reason the analytical degrees of comparison invite some linguists to call in question their claim to a categorial status in English grammar.

In particular, scholars point out the following two factors in support of the view that the combinations of more/most with the basic form of the adjective are not the analytical expressions of the morphological category of comparison, but free syntactic constructions: first, the more/most-combinations are semantically analogous to combinations of less/least with the adjective which, in the general opinion, are syntactic combinations of notional words; second, the most-

combination, unlike the synthetic superlative, can take the indefinite article, expressing not the superlative, but the relative meaning (i.e. a high, not the highest degree of the respective quality).

The reasons advanced, though claiming to be based on an analysis of actual lingual data, can hardly be called convincing as regards their immediate negative purpose.

Let us first consider the use of the most-compilation with the indefinite article.

This combination is a common means of expressing relative evaluations of substance properties. The function of the relative most-construction in distinction to the function of the superlative most-'construction will be seen from the following examples:

The speaker launched a most significant personal attack on the Prime Minister. The most significant of the arguments in a dispute is not necessarily the most spectacular one.

While the phrase «a most significant (personal) attack» in the first of the two examples gives the idea of rather a high degree of the quality expressed irrespective of any directly introduced or implied comparison with other attacks on the Prime Minister, the phrase «the most significant of the arguments» expresses exactly the superlative degree of the quality in relation to the immediately introduced comparison with all the rest of the arguments in a dispute; the same holds true of the phrase «the most spectacular one». It is this exclusion of the outwardly superlative adjective from a comparison that makes it into a simple relative, with its most-constituent turned from the superlative auxiliary into a kind of a lexical intensifier.

The definite article with the relative most-construction is also possible, if leaving the relative function less distinctly recognizable (in oral speech the relative most is commonly left unstressed, the absence of stress serving as a negative mark of the relative).

Ex.: I found myself in the most awkward situation, for I couldn't give a satisfactory answer to any question asked by the visitors.

Now, the synthetically superlative degree, as is known, can be used in the elative function as well, the distinguishing feature of the latter being its exclusion from a comparison.

Ex.: Unfortunately, our cooperation with Danny proved the worst experience for both of us. No doubt Mr. Snider will show you his collection of minerals with the greatest pleasure.

And this fact gives us a clue for understanding the expressive nature of the elative superlative as such – the nature that provides it with a permanent grammatico-stylistic status in the language. Indeed, the expressive peculiarity of the form consists exactly in the immediate combination of the two features which outwardly contradict each other: The categorial form of the superlative on the one hand, and the absence of a comparison on the other.

That the categorial form of the superlative (i.e. the superlative with its general functional specification) is essential also for the expression of the elative semantics can, however paradoxical it might appear, be very well illustrated by the elative use of the comparative degree. Indeed, the comparative combination featuring the dative comparative degree is constructed in such a way as to place it in the functional position of unrestricted superiority, i.e. in the position specifically characteristic of the superlative.

E.g.: Nothing gives me greater pleasure than to greet you as our guest of honors. There is nothing more refreshing than a good swim.

The parallelism of functions between the two forms of comparison (the comparative degree and the superlative degree) in such and like examples is unquestionable.

As we see, the elative superlative, though it is not the regular superlative in the grammatical sense, is still a kind of a specific, grammatically featured construction. This grammatical specification distinguishes it from common elative

constructions which may be generally defined as syntactic combinations of an intensely high estimation.

E.g.: an extremely important amendment; a matter of exceeding urgency; quite an unparalleled beauty; etc.

Thus, from a grammatical point of view, the elative superlative, though semantically it is «elevated», is nothing else but a degraded superlative, and its distinct featuring mark with the analytical superlative degree is the indefinite article: the two forms of the superlative of different functional purposes receive the two different marks (if not quite rigorously separated in actual uses) by the article determination treatment.

It follows from the above that the possibility of the most-combination to be used with the indefinite article cannot in any way be demonstrative of its non-grammatical character, since the functions of the two superlative combinations in question, the elative superlative and the genuine superlative, are different.

Moreover, the use of the indefinite article with the synthetical superlative in the degraded, dative function is not altogether impossible, though somehow such a possibility is bluntly denied by certain grammatical manuals.

Ex.: He made a last lame effort to delay the experiment; but Basil was impervious to suggestion.

But there is one more possibility to formally differentiate the direct and dative functions of the synthetical superlative, namely, by using the zero article with the superlative. This latter possibility is noted in some grammar books. Ex.: Suddenly I was seized with a sensation of deepest regret.

However, the general tendency of expressing the superlative dative meaning is by using the analytical form. Incidentally, in the Russian language the tendency of usage is reverse: it is the synthetical form of the Russian superlative that is preferred in rendering the dative function. Ex.: слушали с живейшим интересом; повторялась скучнейшая история; попал в глупейшее положение и т.д.

Let us examine now the combinations of less/least with the basic form of the adjective.

As is well known, the general view of these combinations definitely excludes them from any connection with categorial analytical forms. Strangely enough, this rejectionist view of the «negative degrees of comparison» is even taken to support, not to reject the morphological interpretation of the more/most-combinations.

The corresponding argument in favour of the rejectionist interpretation consists in pointing out the functional parallelism existing between the synthetical degrees of comparison and the more/most-combinations accompanied by their complementary distribution, if not rigorously pronounced (the different choice of the forms by different syllabo-phonetical forms of adjectives). The less/least-combinations, according to this view, are absolutely incompatible with the synthetical degrees of comparison, since they express not only different, but opposite meanings.

Now, it does not require a profound analysis to see that, from the grammatical point of view, the formula «opposite meaning» amounts to ascertaining the categorial equality of the forms compared. Indeed, if two forms express the opposite meanings, then they can only belong to units of the same general order. And we cannot but agree with B.A. Ilyish's thesis that «there seems to be no sufficient reason for treating the two sets of phrases in different ways, saying that 'more difficult' is an analytical form, while 'less difficult' is not». True, the cited author takes this fact rather as demonstration that both types of constructions should equally be excluded from the domain of analytical forms, but the problem of the categorial status of the more/most-combinations has been analyzed above.

Thus, the less/least-combinations, similar to the more/most-combinations, constitute specific forms of comparison, which may be called forms of «reverse comparison». The two types of forms cannot be syntagmatically combined in one and the same form of the word, which shows the unity of the category of comparison. The whole category includes not three, but five different forms, making up the two series – respectively, direct and reverse. Of these, the reverse

series of comparison (the reverse superiority degrees) is of far lesser importance than the direct one, which evidently can be explained by semantic reasons. As a matter of fact, it is more natural to follow the direct model of comparison based on the principle of addition of qualitative quantities than on the reverse model of comparison based on the principle of subtraction of qualitative quantities, since subtraction in general is a far more abstract process of mental activity than addition. And, probably, exactly for the same reason the reverse comparatives and superlatives are rivaled in speech by the corresponding negative syntactic constructions.

Having considered the characteristics of the category of comparison, we can see more clearly the relation to this category of some usually non-comparable evaluative adjectives.

Outside the immediate comparative grammatical change of the adjective stand such evaluative adjectives as contain certain comparative Semitic elements in their semantic structures. In particular, as we have mentioned above, here belong adjectives that are themselves grading marks of evaluation. Another group of evaluative non-comparables is formed by adjectives of indefinitely moderated quality, or, tentatively, «moderating qualifiers», such as whitish, tepid, half-ironical, semi-detached, etc. But the most peculiar lexemic group of non-comparables is made up by adjectives expressing the highest degree of a respective quality, which words can tentatively be called «adjectives of extreme quality», or «extreme qualifiers», or simply «extremals».

The inherent superlative semantics of extremals is emphasized by the definite article normally introducing their neural combinations, exactly similar to the definite article used with regular collocations of the superlative degree. Ex.: The ultimate outcome of the talks was encouraging. The final decision has not yet been made public.

On the other hand, due to the tendency of colloquial speech to contrastive variation, such extreme qualifiers can sometimes be modified by intensifying elements. Thus, «the final decision» becomes «a very final decision»; «the ultimate

rejection» turns into «rather an ultimate rejection»; «the crucial role» is made into «quite a crucial role», etc.

As a result of this kind of modification, the highest grade evaluative force of these words is not strengthened, but, on the contrary, weakened; the outwardly extreme qualifiers become degraded extreme qualifiers, even in this status similar to the regular categorial superlatives degraded in their relative use.

CONCLUSION

In the conclusion of my course paper, I would like to say some words according to the done investigation.

The main part of my work consists of following items:

- « **The Adjective and its classification** », as it is seen from the title in this part I gave the definition to the term adjective.

- **Grammatical overview of English Adjectives.** This part contains description of adjectives from the grammatical point of view, and classification of adjectives from the same point.

- In the last paragraph «**Degrees of Comparison of Adjectives**» I described the only grammatical category of English adjectives.

Standing on such ground I will add that investigation in the questions dealt with English adjectives is not finished yet, so we will continue it while writing our qualification work.

I hope that my course paper will arise the sincere interest of students and teachers to the problem of adjectives in contemporary English.

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