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“TILLARNI O'RGANISH” kafedrası

R E F E R A T

Mavzu: Adjective

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Samarqand 2012

Adjective

Plan:

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The adjective expresses the categorial semantics of property of a substance. It means that each adjective used in the text presupposes relation to some noun the property of whose referent it denotes, such as its material, colour, dimensions, position, state, and other characteristics both permanent and temporary. It follows from this that, unlike nouns, adjectives do not possess a full nominative value. Indeed, words like *long*, *hospitable*, *fragrant* cannot effect any self-dependent nominations; as units of informative sequences they exist only in collocations showing what is long, who is hospitable, what is fragrant.

The semantically bound character of the adjective is emphasized in English by the use of the prop-substitute *one* in the absence of the notional head-noun of the phrase. *E.g.*:

I don't want *a yellow balloon*, let me have *the green one* over there.

On the other hand, if the adjective is placed in a nominatively self-dependent position, this leads to its substantivization. *E.g.*: Outside it was a beautiful day, and the sun tinged the snow with red. *Cf.*: The sun tinged the snow with the *red colour*.

Adjectives are distinguished by a specific combinability with nouns, which they modify, if not accompanied by adjuncts, usually in pre-position, and occasionally in post-position; by a combinability with link-verbs, both functional and notional; by a combinability with modifying adverbs.

In the sentence the adjective performs the functions of *an attribute and a predicative*. Of the two, the more specific function of the adjective is that of an attribute, since the function of a predicative can be performed by the noun as well. There is, though, a profound difference between the predicative uses of the adjective and the noun which is determined by their native categorial features. Namely, the predicative adjective expresses some attributive property of its noun-referent, whereas the predicative noun expresses various substantival characteristics of its referent, such as its identification or classification of different types. This can be shown on examples analysed by definitional and transformational procedures. *Cf.*:

You talk to people as if they *were a group*. —> You talk to people as if they *formed a group*. Quite obviously, he *was a friend*. —> His behaviour *was like that of a friend*.

Cf., as against the above:

I will be *silent as a grave*. —> I will be like *a silent grave*. Walker felt *healthy*. —> Walker felt *a healthy man*. It was *sensational*. —> That fact was *a sensational fact*.

When used as predicatives or post-positional attributes, a considerable number of adjectives, in addition to the general combinability characteristics of the whole class, are distinguished by a complementive combinability with nouns. The complement-expansions of adjectives are effected by means of prepositions. *E.g.* *fond of*, *jealous of*, *curious of*, *suspicious of*; *angry with*, *sick with*, *serious about*, *certain about*, *happy about*; *grateful to*, *thankful to*, etc. Many such adjectival collocations render essentially verbal meanings and some of them have direct or indirect parallels among verbs. *Cf.*: *be fond of*—love, like; *be envious of*—envy; *be angry with*—resent; *be mad for*, *about*—covet; *be thankful to*—thank.

Alongside of other complementive relations expressed with the help of prepositions and corresponding to direct and prepositional object-relations of verbs, some

of these adjectives may render relations of addressee. Cf.: *grateful to, indebted to, partial to, useful for*.

To the derivational features of adjectives belong a number of suffixes and prefixes of which the most important are:

-ful (hopeful), *-less* (flawless), *-ish* (bluish), *-ous* (famous), *-ive* (decorative), *-ic* (basic); *un-* (unprecedented), *in-* (inaccurate), *pre-* (premature).

Among the adjectival affixes should also be named the prefix *a-*, constitutive for the stative sub-class which is to be discussed below.

As for the variable (demutative) morphological features, the English adjective, having lost in the course of the history of English all its forms of grammatical agreement with the noun, is distinguished only by the hybrid category of comparison.

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; colour — *coloured* postcards;

surgery — *surgical* treatment; the Middle Ages — *mediaeval* rites.

The nature of this "relationship" in adjectives is best revealed by definitional correlations. Cf.: 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. Cf.: 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 relative adjective which is understood as incapable of forming degrees of comparison by definition. Cf.: 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. Cf.: 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 properly 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 nounal 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.

Notional words signifying states and specifically used as predicatives were first identified as a separate part of speech in the Russian language by L. V. Shcherba and V. V. Vinogradov. The two scholars called the newly identified part of speech the "category of state" (and, correspondingly, separate words making up this category, "words of the

category of state"). Here belong the Russian words mostly ending in *-o*, but also having other suffixes: *тепло, зябко, одиноко, радостно, жаль, лень*, etc. Traditionally the Russian words of the category of state were considered as constituents of (the class of) adverbs, and they are still considered as such by many Russian scholars.

On the analogy of the Russian "category of state", the English qualifying *a*-words of the corresponding meanings were subjected to a lexico-grammatical analysis and given the part-of-speech heading "category of state". This analysis was first conducted by B. A. Ilyish and later continued by other linguists. The term "words of the category of state", being rather cumbersome from the technical point of view, was later changed into "stative words", or "statives".

The part-of-speech interpretation of the statives is not shared by all linguists working in the domain of English, and has found both its proponents and opponents. Probably the most consistent and explicit exposition of the part-of-speech interpretation of statives has been given by B. S. Khaimovich and B. I. Rogovskaya. Their theses supporting the view in question can be summarized as follows.

First, the statives, called by the quoted authors "adlinks" (by virtue of their connection with link-verbs and on the analogy of the term "adverbs"), are allegedly opposed to adjectives on a purely semantic basis, since adjectives denote "qualities", and statives-adlinks denote "states". Second, as different from adjectives, statives-adlinks are characterized by the specific prefix *a*-. Third, they allegedly do not possess the category of the degrees of comparison. Fourth, the combinability of statives-adlinks is different from that of adjectives in so far as they are not used in the pre-positional attributive function, i.e. are characterized by the absence of the right-hand combinability with nouns.

The advanced reasons, presupposing many-sided categorial estimation of statives, are undoubtedly serious and worthy of note. Still, a closer consideration of the properties of the analysed lexemic set cannot but show that, on the whole, the said reasons are hardly instrumental in proving the main idea, i.e. in establishing the English stative as a separate part of speech. The re-consideration of the stative on the basis of comparison with the classical adjective inevitably discloses (the) fundamental relationship between the two, — such relationship as should be interpreted in no other terms than identity on the part-of-speech level, though, naturally, providing for their distinct differentiation on the subclass level.

The first scholar who undertook this kind of re-consideration of the lexemic status of English statives was L. S. Barkhudarov, and in our estimation of them we essentially follow his principles, pointing out some additional criteria of argument.

First, considering the basic meaning expressed by the stative, we formulate it as "stative property", i.e. a kind of property of a nounal referent. As we already know, the adjective as a whole signifies not "quality" in the narrow sense, but "property", which is categorially divided into "substantive quality as such" and "substantive relation". In this respect, statives do not fundamentally differ from classical adjectives. Moreover, common adjectives and participles in adjective-type functions can express the same, or, more specifically, typologically the same properties (or "qualities" in a broader sense) as are expressed by statives.

Indeed, the main meaning types conveyed by statives are: the psychic state of a person (*afraid, ashamed, aware*); the physical state of a person (*astir, afoot*); the physical state of an object (*afire, ablaze, aglow*); the state of an object in space (*askew, awry, aslant*). Meanings of the same order are rendered by pre-positional adjectives. Cf.:

the *living* predecessor — the predecessor *alive*; *eager* curiosity — curiosity *agog*; the *burning* house — the house *afire*; a *floating* raft — a raft *afloat*; a half-open door — a door *adjar*; *slanting* ropes — ropes *aslant*; a *vigilant* man — a man *awake*; *similar* cases — cases *alike*; an *excited* crowd — a crowd *astir*.

It goes without saying that many other adjectives and participles convey the meanings of various states irrespective of their analogy with statives. Cf. such words of the order of psychic state as *despondent*, *curious*, *happy*, *joyful*; such words of the order of human physical state as *sound*, *refreshed*, *healthy*, *hungry*; such words of the order of activity state as *busy*, *functioning*, *active*, *employed*, etc.

Second, turning to the combinability characteristics of statives, we see that, though differing from those of the common adjectives in one point negatively, they basically coincide with them in the other points. As a matter of fact, statives are not used in attributive pre-position. but, like adjectives, they are distinguished by the left-hand categorial combinability both with nouns and link-verbs. Cf.:

The household was nil *astir*.—The household was all excited — It was strange to see (the household *active* at this hour of the day.— It was strange to see the household active at this hour of the day.

Third, analysing the functions of the stative corresponding to its combinability patterns, we see that essentially they do not differ from the functions of the common adjective. Namely, the two basic functions of the stative are the predicative and the attribute. The similarity of functions leads to the possibility of the use of a stative and a common adjective in a homogeneous group. E.g.: Launches and barges moored to the dock were *ablaze* and *loud* with wild sound.

True, the predominant function of the stative, as different from the common adjective, is that of the predicative. But then, the important structural and functional peculiarities of statives uniting them in a distinctly separate set of lexemes cannot be disputed. What is disputed is the status of this set in relation to the notional parts of speech, not its existence or identification as such.

Fourth, from our point of view, it would not be quite consistent with the actual lingual data to place the stative strictly out of the category of comparison. As we have shown above, the category of comparison is connected with the functional division of adjectives into evaluative and specificative. Like common adjectives, statives are subject to this flexible division, and so in principle they are included into the expression of the quantitative estimation of the corresponding properties conveyed by them. True, statives do not take the synthetical forms of the degrees of comparison, but they are capable of expressing comparison analytically, in cases where it is to be expressed.

Cf.: Of us all, Jack was the one *most aware* of the delicate situation in which we found ourselves. I saw that the adjusting lever stood *far more askew* than was allowed by the directions.

Fifth, quantitative considerations, though being a subsidiary factor of reasoning, tend to support the conjoint part-of-speech interpretation of statives and common adjectives. Indeed, the total number of statives does not exceed several dozen (a couple of dozen basic, "stable" units and, probably, thrice as many "unstable" words of the nature of coinages for the nonce). This number is negligible in comparison with the number of words of the otherwise identified notional parts of speech, each of them counting thousands of units. Why, then, an honour of the part-of-speech status to be

granted to a small group of words not differing in their fundamental lexico-grammatical features from one of the established large word-classes?

As for the set-forming prefix *a-*, it hardly deserves a serious consideration as a formal basis of the part-of-speech identification of statives simply because formal features cannot be taken in isolation from functional features. Moreover, as is known, there are words of property not distinguished by this prefix, which display essential functional characteristics inherent in the stative set. In particular, here belong such adjectives as *ill*, *well*, *glad*, *sorry*, *worth (while)*, *subject (to)*, *due (to)*, *underway*, and some others. On the other hand, among the basic statives we find such as can hardly be analysed into a genuine combination of the type "prefix + root", because their morphemic parts have become fused into one indivisible unit in the course of language history, *e.g. aware*, *afraid*, *aloof*.

Thus, the undertaken semantic and functional analysis shows that statives, though forming a unified set of words, do not constitute a separate lexemic class existing in language on exactly the same footing as the noun, the verb, the adjective, the adverb; rather it should be looked upon as a subclass within the general class of adjectives. It is essentially an adjectival subclass, because, due to their peculiar features, statives are not directly opposed to the notional parts of speech taken together, but are quite particularly opposed to the rest of adjectives. It means that the general subcategorization of the class of adjectives should be effected on the two levels: on the upper level the class will be divided into the subclass of stative adjectives and common adjectives; on the lower level the common adjectives fall into qualitative and relative, which division has been discussed in the foregoing paragraph.

As we see, our final conclusion about the lexico-grammatical nature of statives appears to have returned them into the lexemic domain in which they were placed by traditional grammar and from which they were alienated in the course of subsequent linguistic investigations. A question then arises, whether these investigations, as well as the discussions accompanying them, have served any rational purpose at all.

The answer to this question, though, can only be given in the energetic affirmative. Indeed, all the detailed studies of statives undertaken by quite a few scholars, all the discussions concerning their systemic location and other related matters have produced very useful results, both theoretical and practical.

The traditional view of the stative was not supported by any special analysis, it was formed on the grounds of mere surface analogies and outer correlations. The later study of statives resulted in the exposition of their inner properties, in the discovery of their historical productivity as a subclass, in their systemic description on the lines of competent inter-class and inter-level comparisons. And it is due to the undertaken investigations (which certainly will be continued) that we are now in a position, though having rejected the fundamental separation of the stative from the adjective, to name the subclass of statives as one of the peculiar, idiomatic lexemic features of Modern English.

As is widely known, adjectives display the ability to be easily substantivized by conversion, i.e. by zero-derivation. Among the noun-converted adjectives we find both old units, well-established in the system of lexicon, and also new ones, whose adjectival etymology conveys to the lexeme the vivid colouring of a new coinage.

For instance, the words *a relative* or *a white* or *a dear* bear an unquestionable mark of established tradition, while such a noun as *a sensitive* used in the following sentence features a distinct flavour of purposeful conversion: He was a regional man, a

man who wrote about *sensitives* who live away from the places where things happen.

Compare this with the noun *a high* in the following example: The weather report promises *a new high* in heat and humidity.

From the purely categorial point of view, however, there is no difference between the adjectives cited in the examples and the ones given in the foregoing enumeration, since both groups equally express constitutive categories of the noun, i.e. the number, the case, the gender, the article determination, and they likewise equally perform normal nounal functions.

On the other hand, among the substantivized adjectives there is a set characterized by hybrid lexico-grammatical features, as in the following examples:

The new bill concerning the wage-freeze introduced by the Labour Government cannot satisfy either *the poor*, or *the rich* (Radio Broadcast). A monster. The word conveyed *the ultimate* in infamy and debasement inconceivable to one not native to the times (J. Vance). The train, indulging all his English nostalgia for the plushy and *the genteel*, seemed to him a deceit (M. Bradbury).

The mixed categorial nature of the exemplified words is evident from their incomplete presentation of the part-of speech characteristics of either nouns or adjectives. Like nouns, the words are used in the article form; like nouns, they express the category of number (in a relational way); but their article and number forms are rigid, being no subject to the regular structural change inherent in the normal expression of these categories. Moreover, being categorially unchangeable, the words convey the mixed adjectival-nounal semantics of property.

The adjectival-nounal words in question are very specific. They are distinguished by a high productivity and, like statives, are idiomatically characteristic of Modern English.

On the analogy of verbids these words might be called "adjectivids", since they are rather nounal forms of adjectives than nouns as such.

The adjectivids fall into two main grammatical subgroups, namely, the subgroup *pluralia tantum* (*the English, the rich, the unemployed, the uninitiated*, etc.), and the subgroup *singularia tantum* (*the invisible, the abstract, the tangible*, etc.). Semantically, the words of the first subgroup express sets of people (personal multitudes), while the words of the second group express abstract ideas of various types and connotations.

The category of adjectival comparison expresses the quantitative characteristic of the quality of a nounal referent, i.e. it gives a relative evaluation of the quantity of a quality. The purely relative nature of the categorial semantics of comparison is reflected in its name.

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. Cf.: Johnny *was the strongest boy* in the company.

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 categorial idea, being included in one and the same categorial 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. Cf.: 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. Cf.: 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. Cf.: 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 elative 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*-combination with the indefinite article.

This combination is a common means of expressing elative evaluations of substance properties. The function of the elative *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 elative, with its *most*-constituent turned from the superlative auxiliary into a kind of a lexical intensifier.

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

Cf.:

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 honour. 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. *Cf.:* 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 (Ganshina, Vasilevskaya, 85). *Cf.:* 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. *Cf.:* слушали с *живейшим* интересом; повторялась *скупнейшая* история; попал в *глубейшее* 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" [Ilyish, 60]. 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 analysed 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 rivalled 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 sememic 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 nounal combinations, exactly similar to the definite

article used with regular collocations of the superlative degree. Cf.: *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.

LITERATURE

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