

Parts of Speech: Adjectives

Description of the Lecture This lecture is about adjectives. It provides the conceptual as well as technical frameworks of adjectives to identify their classification and uses in English sentence. The emphasis is put on the definitions, kinds, examples and exercise. Objectives of the Lecture When students have successfully finished this lecture, they should be able, among other things, to; 1. Define the part of speech known as adjective.

2. List the main kinds of adjectives. 3. Recognize how adjectives function in sentences. 4. Show the relationship between adjective and other related words in a sentence. 5. Compose correct, meaningful and functional sentences through adjectives.

Introduction

Pretend that you are going to the airport to meet a man you have never seen before. You are talking to him on the telephone. You are describing yourself to him so that he will recognize you in the crowd. In order to give him a clear mental picture of what you look like, you must use adjectives. Are you tall, short, or medium-sized? Are you thin, heavy-set, or average in build? Is your hair black, brown, red, blond, or gray? Here you add descriptions to yourself that give your recipient a full and clearer picture about you. So the "detail or descriptor" words you add in front of the noun like short, tall, thin, heavy, blacks are words called adjectives.

1. Definition of Adjective

Adjectives are words that are used to describe or "modify, qualify, identify, quantify; restrict, alters or limits the meaning of" nouns or pronouns or they restrict the application of the noun or noun and add descriptive details. In other words, they fulfill this role by describing, identifying or quantifying nouns and pronouns. They present details about a noun or pronoun often by telling and answering the following questions: What kind? How many? How much? Which one? And so on. Examples:

☒ Colored birds flew by. (Colored is an adjective word describes and specifies birds from others?) ☒ Boys are happy today. (Happy is an adjective words describes the state of children as happy from other states) ☒ Small, independent companies are becoming more interesting. (What kind of companies?) ☒ We have six boxes in four states. (How many boxes?) (How many states?) ☒ That chain of health clubs started as a small operation. (Which chain?) (What kind of operation?) ☒ He is energetic and forceful, while she is personal and deliberate.

☒ Adjective = ads to noun or pronoun " they add to the meaning of a noun or pronoun ☒ Adjective = Advertises "advertises details about a noun or pronoun by telling

what kind, which one, how many" about a noun.

2. A Useful Way to Fix Adjectives

Imagine that you are in a large meeting room full of people. Your director tells you this order "Give this piece of paper to the woman". The only problem is that there are twenty-three women in the room. To which one should you give the paper? Here you could not decide about the woman unless your boss might have said "the tall woman". The word tall is an adjective and somewhat helpful, as only six of the women are tall. To which tall women should you give the paper? Here you could not again decide unless your director perhaps said to you, "the tall, blond woman with the black dress". The words tall and blond are adjectives that help you pick out a specific woman from a large group. Furthermore, the group of words "with the black dress" is also a form of adjective words that help limit the meaning to one particular woman among the twenty three women in the meeting. In other words, these adjectives limit the noun woman to one specific person. Examine the sample sentences below for a better understanding of adjectives.

☐ I have a cup. ☐ I have a red cup. ☐ I have a big dark red cup.

The first sentence does not tell anything about my cup, only that I have one cup. The second adds the adjective red. This descriptive word makes the sentence more interesting and helping the reader to see your cup in his/her mind's eye as red by excluding all other colors except red. The meaning of the word cup has been more limited from all the cups in the world to only those that are red. The third sentence adds even more details. Consequently, one of the secrets of good writing is to include lots of details (adjectives).

Complementation Modification When one element in an expression creates the grammatical expectation that another expression will also occur, the expected element complements the expecting element. For example, transitive verbs create the expectation of an object, as in: ☐ Ann fractured [her ankle]. ☐ John sends [me a letter]. Modification occurs in a construction in which an expression is accompanied by an element not grammatically required by it. For example, because nouns do not typically require adjectives, beautiful modifies weather in beautiful weather. Verbs and adjectives do not typically require that they be accompanied by adverbials, so violently modifies swore

☐ Sally gave [her] [a shot of morphine]

in swore violently

3. Position of the Adjective

In English, the normal position of the adjective is before the noun or pronoun it modifies. In order to avoid confusion, try to place adjectives as close as possible to the nouns or pronouns they modify. Most one-word adjectives come right before the nouns they modify. Examples: ☐ The broken window let in the cold air. ☐ The cold war imposed plenty of danger on nations. ☐ The main street is very active. ☐ She prepared a delicious meal. Occasionally, to draw attention and special effect to the adjective, it may be misplaced after the noun they describe, especially when used with linking verbs, since anything out of its ordinary place is noticed and stressed. Examples: ☐ A child, busy and dynamic, is the best thing in him. ☐ He is energetic and forceful. ☐ She is personal and deliberate. ☐ The window, broken, let in the cold air.

4. Order of the Adjectives

A single noun can be described by a list of adjectives. When more than one adjective is used to modify a noun, it is important to consider the order in which the adjectives appear. Generally, the adjectives most important in completing the meaning of the noun are placed closest to the noun. Normally we don't use more than three adjectives with the same noun. Notice that when we use adjectives from different categories we don't use commas or "and". Following is the usual order of adjectives in a series: 1. Determiners: articles (a, the), demonstratives (this, those), and possessives (his, our, Mary's, everybody's), amounts (one, five, many, few), order (first, next last) 2. Coordinate adjectives and opinions (subjective evaluations or personal opinions): nice, nasty, packed, pitiful 3. Adjectives describing size and Dimension: big, huge, little, tiny 4. Adjectives describing shape: long, short, round, square 5. Adjectives describing age: young, old, modern, ancient 6. Adjectives describing color: blue, green, red, white 7. Adjectives describing nationality and origin: Italian, French, Japanese

8. Adjectives describing architectural style or religion: Greek, Gothic, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim 9. Adjectives describing material status: cardboard, plastic, silver, gold 10. Adjectives describing purpose: 11. Nouns functioning as adjectives: soccer ball, cardboard box, history class: ☐ I have a big brick house (article, size, and material) ☐ Put your articles in these old brown cardboard boxes (demonstrative, age, color, material) ☐ My friend is a beautiful young Italian woman (article, personal opinion, age, nationality)

Adjectival Phrases and Clauses Nouns and adjectives can be modified not only by adjectives, but also by adjectival phrases and clauses. Examples: ☐ The table near the door is made of oak. ☐ The chair, which was placed in front of the window, was an heirloom. ☐ Those who decide to come will not be disappointed.

5. Kinds of Adjectives

5. 1. Proper Adjectives

Proper adjectives are adjectives derived from proper nouns, particularly from names of geographical places (continents, countries, states). Adjectives like these describe origin or source. Proper adjectives must begin with a capital letter as opposed to French language.

☐ The French town has an interesting history. ☐ Many of my friends are Americans. ☐ This house is a fine example of Victorian architecture. ☐ The Elizabethan era was very special to the nation. ☐ The Roman Empire was the largest in the history.

5. 2. Attributive Adjectives

Adjectives can be divided into two categories based on their position in a sentence. Adjectives can occur both before and after a noun. Adjectives which precede the noun they modify are usually referred to as attributive adjectives. Therefore, the main difference between attributive and predicative adjectives is that attributive adjectives occur before the noun whereas predicative adjectives occur after the noun. Examples:

☐ Heavy rain is expected. (Heavy is an attributive adjective preceding the noun.) ☐ We saw white swans in the river. ☐ Two large red cardboard milk cartons.

5. 3. Predicate Adjectives

An adjective which is separated from the noun or pronoun it modifies by a verb is often referred to as a predicate adjective. The term predicative gives a description of the subject in the sentence. Students must pay special attention to adjectives that follow verbs. Sometimes, the adjective follows a verb, but it describes a noun or pronoun that comes before the verb. It is worth to mention that speakers prefer to place the adjectives after the noun to get a special effect and adjectives used in this way take a linking verb before. The words: “tall, green, black, long. Narrow, heavy, large and awkward” are all predicate adjectives. They are placed after the linking verb and give more information about the person or thing which comes before the verb. Examples:

☐ The trees were tall and green. (Tall and green is a predicative adjective following the noun horse.) ☐ The horse is black. ☐ The streets are long and narrow. ☐ It is heavy, large and awkward.

5. 4. Participles used as Adjectives

As has already mentioned with the use of verbs, present and past participles of verbs can be used as adjectives. Participles as adjectives are used in following way:

5. 4. 1. Present Participles

Present participle is used as adjectives when they refer to actions being performed by the things being described. Generally speaking, a present participle when used as adjective usually donates the characteristics of the modified noun rather than its verbal action. It is to be noted that when the present participle is used to premodify a noun, it has the meaning of active voice while the past participle has the meaning of passive voice. Examples:

☐ The falling star ☐ The barking dog ☐ The exploiting class is rich. From this example, the exploiting class means the class exploits people. ☐ Nigeria is a developing country.

5. 4. 2. Past Participles

Past participle used as adjectives when they refer to actions which have been performed on "over" the things being described. A past participle when used as adjective indicates the state of the modified noun with passive meaning. From the examples above, we can see that a present participle or a past participle is used as an adjective to pre-modify a noun or a noun phrase. It is to be noted that when the present participle is used to pre-modify a noun, it has the meaning of active voice while the past participle has the meaning of passive voice. Examples:

☐ The scattered leaves ☐ The broken heart ☐ The exploited class is poor. From this example, the exploited class means the class is exploited. ☐ UK is a developed country.

Adjectives may be divided into two main classes: (1) descriptive adjectives, and (2) limiting adjectives. The first type tells about a noun by describing some quality that belongs to it. While limiting adjective tells something about a noun by limiting it rather than describing its qualities. There are three major classes of limiting adjectives: (a) articles, (b) numerals, and (c) pronominal adjectives.

5. 5. Absolute Adjectives

Still other words cannot be used in comparisons, because of their meaning. These words are called absolute adjectives - words such as, correct and dead. An answer on a test is either correct, or not correct. It cannot be more correct, or correcter. If something is dead, it is dead. It cannot be less dead or more dead. Example of absolute adjectives are "complete, conclusive, eternal, final, immaculate, level, perfect, perpendicular, perpetual, right, round, spotless, square, supreme, unanimous, unique

6. Comparison of Adjectives A significant formal feature of attributive adjectives is that they can be graded. This is known as degrees of comparison. This is a property adjectives share with adverbs. There are three degrees of comparison: positive, comparative and superlative as they are shown in the table below.

Positive adjective	Comparative adjective	Superlative Adjective	Adjective
They describe one thing and offer no comparison	It compares two things only with "er", "more" or	It compares more than two things with "most" or	

with as + adjective + as to indicate equality between two people or things. Example: She is as tall as him.

“less”. Examples: John is smaller than John. He is older than me. This bag is more beautiful than that of mine.

“least”. Examples: This is the best offer of all. This is the oldest mosque in India.

7. Determiners

A determiner signals the coming of a noun in a sentence. Determiners are words like the, an, my, some. They are grammatically similar. They all come at the beginning of noun phrases, and usually you cannot use more than one determiner in the same noun phrase. (Dra, 2009: 18) Determiners fall into the following categories: a. Articles “a, an, the” (See the chapters of articles) b. Possessives Adjectives are used to show who owns or possesses something. The possessive adjectives are: my, our, your, his, her, their, its, whose” c. Each, every, some and any “Each and every” have similar but not always identical meanings. Each = every one separately while every = each, all Each expresses the idea of 'one by one'. It emphasizes individuality. Every means halfway between each and all. It sees things or people as singular, but in a group or in general. Furthermore, some = a little, a few or a small number or Amount while any = one, some or all. Usually, some is used in positive (+) sentences and any in negative (-) and question (?) sentences. In general, something/anything and somebody/anybody are used in the same way as some/any. d. Possessive case when you want to show that something belongs to somebody or something, you usually add “s” to a singular noun and an apostrophe ' to a plural noun. See the unit of nouns for more details about possessives. For examples: ☐ the girl's clothes (one girl) ☐ the girls' clothes (two or more girls) e. Demonstratives which are used to point out people or things “this, that, these, those” ☐ This car is red. ☐ This girl is tall. f. Distributives which refer to each member of a class separately: “each, every, either, neither” g. Number expressions such as “another, many, several, some, any, no, few, enough, a number of, a lot of, lots of, plenty of, some of, many of, one, two, three ... (cardinal numbers) ”

h. Quantifiers such as “much, some, no, any, little, enough, a lot of, lots of, plenty of, much of, some of” i. Interrogatives They combine with nouns to form interrogative expressions used in questions: such as “what, which” ☐ What color is the sky? ☐ Which girl is the tallest? Summary

☐ Adjectives in English are invariable; they have the same form for singular and plural, feminine and masculine nouns. Adjectives in English are not affected by number or gender or case because they do not have to agree with the noun they modify. Examples: ☐ A good boy = good boys ☐ A good girl = good girls ☐ The only exceptions are the demonstrative adjectives this and that, which change to these and those before plural nouns. ☐ This cat = these cats ☐ That man = those men ☐ However, adjectives of quality can be placed after the verbs as. "Be, look, seem, appear, smell, taste, sound," ☐ I am hungry. Can I have something to eat? It smells good. ☐ Adjectives can have both attributive and predicative use. ☐ This book, which boy, my dog = attributive use ☐ He made her happy, tom felt cold = predicative use ☐ Within the predicative use of adjectives, verbs used in this way are called link verbs or copulas. Examples: ☐ This idea sounds interesting. ☐ He made her happy.