

## Criteria for adverbhood

VP modification may be expressed by NP, PP, or AdvP:

Modifier type	NP	PP	AdvP
LOCATIVE	<i>next door</i>	<i>in the USA</i>	<i>locally</i>
TEMPORAL	<i>(next) Monday</i>	<i>on Monday</i>	<i>soon</i>
DURATIVE	<i>a long time</i>	<i>for ages</i>	<i>lengthily</i>
MANNER	<i>the same way</i>	<i>in haste</i>	<i>hastily</i>

‘Modifying a verb’ is therefore **virtually useless** as a criterion for membership in the Adverb category. Yet it is the **sole** criterion traditional grammars generally give.

## Criteria for adverbhood

Adverb is a heterogeneous category in the languages that have it. The adverbs include expressions for

- additive and restrictive focusing (*also, even, only*),
- degree (*very, really, nearly*),
- aspectuality (*still, already, yet*),
- seriality (*again*),
- connection (*however, therefore, thus*),
- frequency (*always, never, often*),
- modality (*perhaps, probably, certainly*),
- time (*later, soon, recently*),
- manner (*quickly, easily, better*),

and other semantic categories.

## Criteria for adverbhood

English has a modest number of basic, underived adverbs:

*again, almost, already, also, always, anyway, as, even, ever, how, however, indeed, just, long, maybe, never, often, only, otherwise, perhaps, please, quite, rather, sometimes, soon, still, therefore, though, thus, too, very, well, yet*

A few (*early, hard, ill, late, right, well, . . .*) are formed from adjectives by zero derivation (sometimes with a meaning change). But the vast majority — simply thousands of others — are derived by suffixation of *·ly* to what is almost always an adjective base.

## Criteria for adverbhood

But being derived by the *·ly* suffix is **not** a criterion for adverbhood. Many adjectives are derived from nouns by means of the same suffix:

*beast·ly, brother·ly, coward·ly, curmudgeon·ly, death·ly, father·ly, friend·ly, king·ly, mother·ly, musician·ly, painter·ly, prince·ly, queen·ly, sister·ly, spright·ly*

And there are other *·ly* adjectives like *kind·ly* and *live·ly*.

## Criteria for adverbhood

Jackendoff, in  $\bar{X}$  *Syntax* (1977), suggested a key distinction between adjectives and adverbs:

### **Jackendoff's complementability criterion**

**Adjectives take complements; adverbs do not.**

Jackendoff's claim is **not true**.

Jackendoff may have been misled by the small size of the classes of complement-taking adverbs.

There are several of such classes. They take the same complements as the related adjectives.

## Criteria for adverbhood

A few examples of complement-taking adverbs (from the *WSJ* corpus)

*operates* [AdvP *quite* [Adv *separately*] [PP *from the rest of the company*]]

*the lower portion could move* [AdvP [Adv *independently*] [PP *of the upper part*]]

[AdvP [Adv *luckily*] [PP *for them,*]] *Mr. Keswick decided not to call their bluff*

*it will be treated* [AdvP *no* [Adv *differently*] [PP *from more permanent trade developments*]]

*an unregulated concern that operated* [AdvP [Adv *similarly to*] [PP *a bank trust department*]]

## A note on non-standard zero-derived adverbs

Many non-standard dialects use words with adjectival form in modifier function as if they were adverbs. A few from pop songs:

! *Love Me Tender*

[Ken Darby, but attributed to  
Elvis Presley & Vera Matson]

! *Treat Me Nice*

[Leiber & Stoller]

! *Hurts So Bad*

[Randazzo, Wilding, & Hart]

! *... my love does it good*

[McCartney]

It is commonly thought that this indicates confusion of adjectives and adverbs. **Not true**, I believe.

## A note on non-standard zero-derived adverbs

What is involved seems to be merely a slight broadening of the class of zero-derived adverbs in English mentioned above: *early*, *hard*, *right*, etc.

And, I believe, even in the dialects that have a broader class of such adverbs, the zero-derived ones are not used as pre-head modifiers:

! *Drive real carefully now!*      ~      ! *Drive real careful now!*  
! *She carefully drug it outside.*      ~      \*! *She careful drug it outside.*

(Research question: Is this claim correct? Can it be verified from actual records of non-standard English conversation?)

# The categorial exclusivity claim

There is a long history of traditional grammarians and modern linguists stating this generalization for Standard English:

## **The categorial exclusivity claim**

**Adjectives modify nouns; adverbs modify non-nouns.**

Almost any reference work at random — any English grammar, dictionary, or terminology guide — will repeat this statement.

## The categorial exclusivity claim

On this view, adjectives and adverbs (in Standard English) **do not overlap in function**:

	adjective modifier	adverb modifier
modifying a noun	<i>a nice man</i>	* <i>a nicely man</i>
modifying a verb	* <i>she sings nice</i>	<i>she sings nicely</i>

# The Adjective–Adverb identity thesis

Given the exclusivity claim, an obvious hypothesis arises.

John Lyons proposed it in 1966: that adverbs are merely ‘**positional variants**’ of the corresponding adjectives.

A decade later Joseph Emonds (1976, 12–13) suggested the same thing: that the adverbs formed with *.ly* are simply ‘**adjectives in a verb-modifying rather than a noun-modifying function**’.

## The Adjective–Adverb identity thesis

Andrew Radford (1988) suggests the term ‘adjective’ for the **A** category.

And Ingo Plag (2003, p. 196) explicitly asserts that *·ly* is an inflectional suffix occurring on just those occurrences of adjectives that do not modify nouns.

Mark Baker (2003, 230–257) makes the radical proposal that there are only three universal categories: N, V, and A. N must refer; V must assign thematic roles to N; and A must occur only where neither N or V can.

## The Adjective–Adverb identity thesis

But it is not in fact true that an adverb can act as Modifier of a category if and only if an adjective cannot.

We begin by setting aside two distractors.

- First, ignore *the sky above*, *the weather outside*, *the room downstairs*.

Traditionally these would be adverbs modifying nouns. (Henry Sweet noted this.)

But in fact overwhelming evidence shows that the underlined words are prepositions (claim to be justified later).

## The Adjective–Adverb identity thesis

- Second, ignore *hardly anyone*, *precisely nothing*, *almost everybody*.

These would appear to have adverbs modifying nouns if

- (i) pronouns are a special kind of noun, and
- (ii) *anyone*, *nothing*, and *everybody* are pronouns.

But *CGEL* rejects (ii).

*CGEL* holds that *anyone*, *nothing*, *everybody*, etc., are **compound determinatives**.

And it is normal for determinatives to take adverbs as modifiers.

## The Adjective–Adverb identity thesis

Harder to set aside are cases that appear to have **adjectives modifying other adjectives**, where modification by the related adverbs either expresses a different sense or is unacceptable.

ADJECTIVE MODIFIER

*cold sober*

*plain stupid*

*bloody good*

*silky smooth*

≠

≠

≠

≠

SEMANTICALLY DISTINCT ADVERB

*coldly sober*

*plainly stupid*

*bloodily good*

*silky smooth*

# The Adjective–Adverb identity thesis

And here the adverb versions seem outright unacceptable:

ADJECTIVE MODIFIER

*blind drunk*

*filthy rich*

*pretty cruel*

*black British*

≠

≠

≠

≠

UNACCEPTABLE ADVERB

? *blindly drunk*

? *filthily rich*

? *prettily cruel*

? *blackly British*

## The Adjective–Adverb identity thesis

Another context in which both adjectives and adverbs occur is in the complement of the copula:

ASCRIPTIVE COMPLEMENT:

*The way she dressed was elegant.*

(≈ “She elegantly performed the act of dressing herself.”)

SPECIFYING COMPLEMENT

*The way she dressed was elegantly.*

(≈ “Her dress was elegant in style.”)

# The Adjective–Adverb identity thesis

## ASCRIPTIVE COMPLEMENT

*It was rude that she spoke to me.*

(≈ “The fact of her speaking to me constituted rudeness.”)

## SPECIFYING COMPLEMENT

*It was rudely that she spoke to me.*

(≈ “She spoke to me in a rude manner.”)

# The Adjective–Adverb identity thesis

## ASCRIPTIVE COMPLEMENT

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*It was rudely that she spoke to me.*

(≈ “She spoke to me in a rude manner.”)

## ASCRIPTIVE COMPLEMENT

*It was clever that they used flashbacks.*

(≈ “Using flashbacks was a clever idea.”)

## SPECIFYING COMPLEMENT

*It was cleverly that they used flashbacks.*

(≈ “They used flashbacks in a clever way.”)

## The Adjective–Adverb identity thesis

But the really convincing evidence comes from a construction mentioned briefly in Huddleston & Pullum, *A Student's Introduction to English Grammar* (2005, 123n — not covered in *CGEL*).

**Adverbs (or AdvPs) can postmodify nouns in NPs:**

*I express my profound disappointment at [NP the government's refusal yet again to take the high road and bring forth a motion to allow parliament to sit in committee of the whole.]*

*Yet again* isn't modifying *take the high road*; it's modifying the noun *refusal*: the government has yet again refused. This is an AdvP modifying a noun.

# The Adjective–Adverb identity thesis

## Other examples:

[<sub>NP</sub> *The NHS and other health organisations internationally clearly need methodologies to support benefit analysis of merging healthcare organisations.*

[<sub>NP</sub> *The unique role globally of the Australian Health Promoting Schools Association, as a non-government organization specifically established to promote the concept of the health promoting school,] is described.*

# The Adjective–Adverb identity thesis

## Other attested examples:

- *the winner recently of both a Gramophone award and the Royal Philharmonic Society Award for Best Chamber Ensemble*
- *the people locally*
- *the weather recently*
- *the centerpiece visually of the film*

# The Adjective–Adverb identity thesis

The bottom line:

- **Adjective–Adverb Identity is false**

It is impossible to sustain the categorial identity claim for the Adjective and Adverb categories.

- **Categorial Exclusivity is false**

Not even the claim that the sets of modified constituents are mutually exclusive for Adjective and Adverb can be sustained.

Whatever the facts may be for some other languages, Adj and Adv are two quite distinct categories in Standard English.