

Adjectives and adverbs

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Word classes

- Groups of words that behave the same in the grammar of a language
- Main classes across languages are nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs
- All languages have nouns and verbs but lots of languages **don't** have adjectives or adverbs
- Our job when describing a language is to work out which classes the language has, and which words belong in them

How do we decide?

- Look at how the word behaves in the grammar
- Which endings can it occur with?
- Which other words can it combine with?
- Where does it go in the sentence?
- Don't decide based on the meaning!

Adjectives in English

- The **big** dog followed me
- That dog is **big**

Adjectives in English

- The **big** dog followed me
- That dog is **big**

- The **happy** dog followed me
- That dog is **happy**

Adjectives in English

- The **big** dog followed me
- That dog is **big**

- The **happy** dog followed me
- That dog is **happy**

- The **slow** dog followed me
- That dog is **slow**

Adjectives in English

- The **big** dog followed me
- That dog is **big**

- The **happy** dog followed me
- That dog is **happy**

- The **slow** dog followed me
- That dog is **slow**

- The **brown** dog followed me
- That dog is **brown**

Adjectives in English

- ✘ The **bite** dog followed me
- ✘ That dog is **bite**

Adjectives in English

- ✘ The **bite** dog followed me
- ✘ That dog is **bite**

- ✘ The **slowly** dog followed me
- ✘ That dog is **slowly**

Adjectives in English

- ✘ The **bite** dog followed me
- ✘ That dog is **bite**

- ✘ The **slowly** dog followed me
- ✘ That dog is **slowly**

- ✘ The **big** followed me

Adjectives in English

- big, bigger, biggest
- ✘ dog, dogger, doggest
- dog, dogs *biggs

Adverbs in English

- The dog ran **slowly**
- The fast dog ran **slowly**

Adverbs in English

- The dog ran **slowly**
- The fast dog ran **slowly**

- The dog ran **happily**
- The dog ran **angrily**

Adverbs in English

- The dog ran slowly
- The fast dog ran slowly
- The dog ran happily
- The dog ran angrily
- ✘ The dog ran happy
- ✘ The dog ran big

Australian languages

- Often work very differently to English in this respect
- Usually no class of adjectives (group with nouns)
- Adverbs are hard to identify, and often these group with nouns too
- Things can get confusing though because different researchers make different decisions about what to call things



Yankunytjatjara

- No separate adjectives class
- Most of the meanings that use adjectives in English, just use nouns
 - Take the same case endings
 - Can occur without a noun
 - Can do all the same things in the sentence that nouns can do

Yankunytjatjara (Goddard 1985)

papa **pulka-ngku** kuka kati-ngu
dog big-ERG meat take-PAST
'The big dog took the meat'

pulka-ngku kuka kati-ngu
big-ERG meat take-PAST
'The big one took the meat'

wati **tjilpi-ngku** kuka kati-ngu
man old.man-ERG meat take-PAST
'The old man took the meat'



Yankunytjatjara (Goddard 1985)

Wati-ngku **wala-ngku** kayi-nyi
'the man is bringing it quickly'

*wala-ngku kayi-nyi
'the quick one is bringing it'

- Takes case marker in agreement
- But doesn't seem to be in the same phrase
- Different to nouns but shares some endings

Yankunytjatjara (Goddard 1985)

- Nominals
 - Occur with case endings
 - Can be the head of the noun phrase, or describe something about the head of the noun phrase
 - Can occur together with just one case marker at the end
 - Includes words like *wati* 'man', *pulka* 'big (thing)', *tjilpi* 'old man'
- *wala* 'quickly'
 - Occurs with case endings (in agreement)
 - **Cannot** be the head of the noun phrase
 - **Cannot** occur together with the noun with one case marker at the end

Options

- *Wala* is a subtype of nominal (because it takes case endings)
 - *'active adjective', 'action nominal'*
- *Wala* is a different class, let's call it adverb
 - *Adverbs can take (some) case endings like nouns, but are different because they can't be the head of a noun phrase*

In your language

- How would you say:
- The **big** dog chased me
- The dog is **big**
- The **big** dog ran **quickly**
- The dog chased me **quickly**
- Can you say 'big (one) ran' or 'quick (one) ran'?



Things to remember

- Languages do not have to have the same word classes - it's OK if your language does it differently to English

Things to remember

- Don't base word classes on meaning, look at how the word behaves in the grammar
 - the endings that it can take
 - the other words that it can or must combine with
 - the jobs that it does in the sentence

Things to remember

- It is normal to find a few words that don't clearly fit into one class or another
 - You can consider them a subtype of one of the classes, or a different class if there are lots of differences

e.g. English adverbs can end in -ly, but what about 'he ran **fast**'

Things to remember

- It is also normal to find a few words that seem to belong to more than one class

The **fast** car drove **fast**

- 'fast' in English is both an adjective and an adverb

Things to remember

- Don't worry too much about what you call things, just:
 - describe clearly what they do and what they combine with
 - Use a term consistently and explain how you are using it