# *A MORPHO-SYNTACTICAL APPROACH TO THE ENGLISH PARTS OF SPEECH WITH ADVERBIAL FUNCTION*

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***Abstract****: In the present paper we propose ourselves to present some cases of overlapping between the adverb class and other word-classes. These cases include nouns, articles, adjectives, pronouns, numerals, prepositions and conjunctions functioning as adverbs or having an adverbial form.*
***Keywords****: adverb, word-classes, overlapping*

Like any other English part of speech, the adverb can be approached in almost all grammatical aspects: form, meaning, derivation, conversion, comparison and so on.

In what its historical development is concerned one can notice that there have been preserved the Old English adverb derivation from adjectives (with the help of the ***–ly*** suffix) and also its partial form. Although the boundary between adjectives and adverbs is very difficult to define, as the adverbial suffix ***–ly*** is insufficient as a criterion, since many words have the same form adjectivally and adverbially, a distinction can however be made between adverbs and adjectives by taking into consideration their meaning, position and function within a sentence or a context.

There are the following cases of overlapping between the adverb class and other word-classes.

**The noun** in some cases, may function as an adverb, or it may have an adverbial form. First we will exclude the following from the adverb category:

1-*yesterday, today, tomorrow, tonight* (nouns) = which in certain contexts and positions function as adverbs.

2-*the, this, that, all, any, a little, much, little, enough* (determinatives)

Traditional grammar takes the items in 1 to be nouns in examples like (1) and adverbs in (2, 3).

1. *Yesterday was the first day for weeks when it didn't rain*. (*yesterday*, a noun because it has the position of a subject and it does not determine or modify another part of speech)

2. *They arrived yesterday*. (*yesterday* modifies the verb *arrived*; as far as position is concerned, it bears the position of an adverb of time, after the verb)

3)*[Their behaviour yesterday] was quite embarrassing*. (*yesterday* determines a noun which is already determined by a pronoun) (Huddleston: 562)

As for (3), *yesterday* is here modifying the noun *behaviour*, which makes it unlike an adverb. Compare for example: *Their behaviour so badly was quite embarrassing.* To correct this we must replace the noun *behaviour* by a verb (*Their behaving so badly*) or the adverb *badly* by an adjective. (*Their bad behaviour*)

**The Adverbial noun of number**

Another situation when the noun acts adverbially is when a noun phrase denotes a number: *twenty-one thousand forty-six, sixteen score, a baker's dozen*; this noun phrase is



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used adverbially with a (usually understood) quantifying limiting adjective *many*. Note that an adverbial noun of number may include another adverbial noun of number: *three (many) score*. (http://userpages.burgoyne.com)

**The Definite Article**

*The* is a definite article only when it precedes a noun: when it accompanies an adjective or an adverb, in the superlative or comparative degree construction, especially when there are two correlated adjectives or adverbs, *the* is an adverb, e.g.

*The more, the merrier*!

*He has had a rest and feels the better (for it).*

There is, however, a case in which *the* is an article: when it precedes a relative superlative + an expressed or not expressed noun, in this case, the article determining the noun (Bădescu: 97), e.g.

*He was one of the most devoted fighters in the cause of the people.*

**Adverbial adjectives** show the state in which is an object or the place of that object functioning as some special kind of adjective-adverb. Their usual formal marker is the prefix ***a-***, e.g. *ajar, abed, alive, agape, asleep, astir, askew.*

These words beginning with ***a-*** have constituted a problem of classification for grammarians, some assigning them to the adjective class and others to the adverb class. These ***a-*** words function predicatively, but only a few can be freely used attributively. With respect to the adverb ability to be used predicatively with both BE and another intensive verb such as SEEM, we can therefore contrast the *a*-adjective *asleep* and the adjective *subject*, on the one hand, with the *a*- adverb *abroad* and the adverb *there*, on the other. E.g.

*The patient **was** asleep/subject to fits/abroad/there.*

*The patient **seemed** asleep/subject to fits/*abroad/*there.*

Notice the contrast between the *a*- adverbs in:

*He went aboard/around/away.* (Adverbs)

and the *a*- adjectives in the same sentence-frame:

*He went *afraid/*alert/*asleep/*awake.*

*A*-adjectives are unacceptable as part of the predication after verbs of motion. *A*-adverbs, however, are acceptable and denote direction after such verbs. Notice the contrast between the *a*- adjective in

*They looked asleep.*

and the *a*-adverb in

*They looked away.*

With *asleep, looked* is an intensive verb, synonymous with *seemed.* With *away*, it is an intransitive verb, similar in meaning and use with *glanced.* (Quirk: 234-235)

*Observation:* Adverbial adjectives are almost always used predicatively and from a syntactical point of view they discharge the function of a predicative in the sentence (Clonțea: 61), e.g.

*The door was ajar.*

*The hostages were all alive before the explosion.*

A special category is that of **adverbal and postverbal adjectives**, e.g.

*Ellen shook the keys loose.* (1)

*The mixture will turn metal buttons soft.* (2)



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*Peter drives them mad.* (3)

An easy way to detect the presence of a distinct type of adjectival structure is to consider an appropriate question for a question. For none of these cases would be appropriate a question beginning with "how?" Observe the ungrammaticality of (2), and while (3) is acceptable, it is only acceptable with an interpretation that bears no systemic relation to the sentence in (1) (Ferris: 81)

(2) * *How does Peter drive them?*

(3) * *How will the mixture turn the buttons?*

There is no monomorphemic means of enquiry for these adjectives in English; the simplest corresponding question has some such form as "what …do to..?" as in:

(1) *What did Ellen do to the keys?*

(2) *What will the mixture do to metal buttons?*

(3) *What does Muzak do to them?*

We will call the adjectives in this structure adverbal adjectives. There may be a temptation to put them down as merely predicate qualifiers with the addition of a resultative nuance. It is true enough that there is often such a nuance, but the proposal will not turn out to be satisfactory. (ibid.: 82) There is a semantic variation to be observed. We can see a type of ambiguity in:

(4) *Helen ran the engine dry.*

The adverbal adjective version of (4) corresponding to the question "what did Helen do to the engine?" tells us that Helen reduced the engine to a certain unsatisfactory state (though he may at least have had the sense to stop at that point). But when we understand the adjective to be a predicate qualifier, so that the sentence is the counterpart to "how did Helen run the engine?" then it describes a different situation, in which he forces the engine to operate when it is already dry.

It is very common to find that the combination of the adverbal adjective and its preceding verb can be matched by a single verb, without any change at all in the overall syntactic pattern or in the meaning. In this construction, as in the case of the predicate qualifier, there is no doubt but that the adjective is to be sharply distinguished from an adverb, as such, even though it qualifies a structure centred on a verb. Observe the completely different effect produced by replacing the adjectives by the corresponding adverbs, as in: (ibid.: 83)

*?Ellen shook the keys loosely.*

**Peter drives them madly.*

**The Pronoun**

Occasionally almost any word can shift class. For instance, the **demonstrative pronouns** *that* or *this* are informal adverbs in colloquial speech, when accompanied by adjectives, (Schibsbye: 251) e.g.

*It was that bad!*

*The box was this wide.*

Also used adverbially, *that* and *this* are to be found in received English before *much* and *many* with a value of something more exact than *so,* (ibid.: 206) e.g.

*this much courtesy*



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*The chapter-heading SOUNDS is used to cover that much of phonetics which concerns the student of language.*

*There aren't that many pleasures around these days.*

The dimensions represented by *that* and *this* in the above cases appear from the context or are indicated by a gesture. In uneducated speech *this* and *that* are found as adverbs without the value 'a certain size', merely as intensive adverbs, e.g. (ibid.: 207)

*I was that pleased!* (here received English uses *so*)

The indefinite adjective and pronoun **some** may be used as an adverb, preceding a numeral, in order to show approximation (Bădescu: 225), e.g.

*The "23 August" stadium in Bucharest can seat 80,000 people plus some 20,000 standing room.*

**Something** can have an adverbial function in phrases expressing comparison, e.g.

*This happened something more than a month ago.*

Otherwise *something* as an adverb is found only in dialect, (Schibsbye: 263) e.g.

*The Major used to suffer from rheumatism something terrible.*

**Any** as an indefinite adjective and pronoun can act adverbially before a comparative with or without the definite article, and before *too*, e.g.

*He couldn't bear to speak of it, any more than I could.*

*I can't see you any longer.*

*She didn't feel any the better for your medicine.*

*I am not any too sure.* (ibid.: 264)

**No** as an indefinite adjective may function also as an adverb when it determines a verb (or when it doesn't), an adjective or another adverb. In general, *no* functioning as an adverb is used before a comparative form, expressing an emphatic denial (Bădescu: 227), e.g.

*She is no shorter than I/me.*

*Whether you like it or no(t), you must speak to him now.* (*or no(t)* the phrase that can from the negation of a verb)

**None** has an adverbial function before *the* + comparative and before *so* and *too* + adjective or adverb, (Schibsbye: 261) e.g.

*It's none so pleasant.*

*You come none too soon.*

*There are, none the less, some candies left.*

Formerly the indefinite pronoun **nothing** was used with an adverbial function; this survives in certain phrases, e.g.

*Nothing much was done about it.*

*He looked nothing the less sad.*

Colloquially the adverbial use is frequent in the phrase: *nothing like so* (or *as*), (ibid.: 262) e.g.

*It is nothing like so fast as it used to be.*

**All** may be adverbial, e.g.

*Stretched all across the horizon was the sea.*

In written contexts *all* can often be understood in more than one way, e.g.



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*Were the dates all wrong?*

A particular interest is attached to the type *He was all smiles*, where *all* is best regarded as an adverb qualifying the concept of quality contained in *smiles*. In this usage *all* is not placed before a determinative (as the adjectival *all* would be), (ibid.: 272) e.g.

*From a traffic point of view the all bell expected has not been let loose.*

**Other** can be adverbial before *than*, e.g.

*The editor never put pressure on me to write other than as I wished.*

Apart from this, the usual adverbial form is *otherwise*, (ibid.: 274-275) e.g.

*This must be quite otherwise.*

T**he Numeral**

The adverbial numeral (functioning as an adverb) shows:

- the frequency and periodicity of an action: *once, twice, three times (thrice), ten times, a hundred times; bis, once more, once again, twice as fast (as quick).*

*Observation: once, twice, three times, etc.* are also multiplicative numerals. The difference between the multiplicative numerals and the adverbial ones lies in their meaning, e.g.

*Once bitten, twice shy.*

*Once* is an adverbial numeral because it shows the frequency of the action, while *twice* is a multiplicative numeral as it shows the degree in which the prudence increased.

- the place occupied in a string/series of elements (Bădescu: 242): *first, firstly, secondly, thirdly, eighthly, in the first (or second, third, fifth) place*, e.g.

*Ladies first! Safety first!*

**The Adverbial Numeral**

In light of the above mention can be made that a number of traditional grammars (A. Bădescu, 1984; L. Levițchi, 1970) still mention the adverbial numeral as a distinct type of numeral. However, P. Clonțea considers it but a particular case of either the ordinal or multiplicative numeral when used adverbially. (Clonțea: 111)

Another approach is that ordinal numerals may be used as adverbs. For instance, the ordinals act adverbially (Zdrenghea: 235):

- as the qualification of a superlative, e.g.

*John was the second youngest son.*

*Which is the third largest city in the world?*

- in enumerations, e.g.

*I have attempted to answer the questions. First: what do we want to become? Second: what are we? Third? How do we propose to pass from our present condition to the condition we desire to reach?*

*Observation*: The adverbial form in ***–ly*** is more common in the case of **second, third, fourth.** Only **first** is still most often used without the suffix (ibid.: 235). This can be used adverbially in the following ways, e.g.

- *Speak to me first, before you do anything.*
- as a sentence adverb (making a comment on the whole sentence or clause), e.g. *First, I want to explain the purpose of this meeting.* (Macmillan English Dictionary: 526)



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**Preposition, conjunction or adverb**

Prepositions, conjunctions and adverbs are often subject of confusion, especially because some of these parts of speech have the same form. In order to make a clear distinction between them, we have to analyse their role within the sentence. (Bădescu: 491) E.g.

*They met before the door.* (preposition)
*We met before I went on my holiday.* (conjunction)
*We have met before.* (adverb)

The **preposition** shows the relation between two terms of the sentence which don not have the same syntactical function (a noun and its attribute, an adjective or an adverb and its object respectively, a verb and its object, etc.)

The **conjunction** links two similar parts of speech, or two clauses.

The **adverb** determines a single term, that is, a verb, an adjective or another adverb, e.g.

*I had not been there since the spring*.(preposition)
*I must go since you are sleepy*. (conjunction)
*They have never heard of her since.* (adverb)

- **Adverbial conjunctions**

*Where, when, why, how, however, nevertheless* operate as conjunctions and as adverbs, and can be called adverbial conjunctions or conjunctive adverbs. (Aitchinson: 11)

A few adverbs, *so, yet* resemble coordinators (coordinating conjunctions) both in being connectives and in certain syntactic features. In particular, these adverbs cannot be transposed with their clause in front of the preceding clause. Thus, the order of the following two clauses is fixed, e.g.

*We paid him a very large sum. So he kept quiet about what he saw.*

If we invert the order of the clauses, the relationship between the two clauses is changed and *so* must now refer to some preceding clause, e.g.

*So he kept quiet about what he saw. We paid him a large sum.*

However, the adverbs differ from coordinators in that they can be preceded by a coordinator, e.g.

*We paid him a large sum, and so he kept quiet about what he saw*. (Quirk: 304)

- **Prepositions and prepositional adverbs**

A prepositional adverb is a particle which shares the form, but not the syntactic status, of a preposition. It is capable of standing alone with the addition of a prepositional complement, e.g.

*A car drove past the door*. (preposition)
*A car drove past*. (prepositional adverb)

Other (simple) prepositional adverbs are: *aboard, about, above, across, apart, before, besides, between, by, down, notwithstanding, off, opposite, since, throughout, up, without.*

Both prepositions and adverbs commonly appear in idiomatic combinations with a preceding verb: *make for*, *make up*. Adverbs normally receive stress, whereas simple prepositions (especially monosyllables) normally do not: *He thrust 'in his hand* (in =adverb) is thus distinct from *He swam in the lake* (in=unstressed preposition) (ibid.: 305)

In many cases a prepositional expression replaces an adverb, e.g.



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*He still walks with difficulty.*

Expressions with *in a …way* or *…manner* are also particularly common, e.g.

*Do it in a different way.* / *He acted in a strange manner.* (Schibsbye: 150)

In *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* by Rodney Huddleston, Geoffrey K. Pullum the main difference between their analysis and traditional grammar with respect to the adverb category concerns the boundary between adverbs and prepositions. They count as prepositions words that take another kind of complement than noun phrases, and they also include in the prepositions category some words that occur without any complement, e.g.

*The basket is outside*. (preposition)

*Outside* is a complement of the verb *be*, a function that does not admit **-ly** adverbs; *outside* cannot plausibly be said to be modifying the verb, and there are thus good grounds for removing it and similar words from the adverb category. (Huddleston: 565)

Observation: But if we replace *outside* with the adverbial phrase *in the courtyard* the meaning is not lost, *in the courtyard* showing the exact position of the basket, e.g.

*The basket is in the courtyard.*

**The infinitive** can be also used as an adverb (gerundial infinitive), e.g.

*I called on her only to learn she was away*. (infinitive of result)

*We went into the restaurant to get some food.* (adverbial of purpose)

*I was sorry to go.* (adverbial of cause) (Bădescu: 312)

**Participles** either function as verbal adjectives, or operate as verbs in non-finite clauses (very commonly the equivalent of adjectival or adverbial clauses), (Graver: 161) e.g.

*Having received their final medical check, the astronauts boarded their spacecraft.* (Adverbial clause of time – compare: 'When they had received their final medical check…')

Where the non-finite clauses are adverbial, the two clauses in each sentence may be reversible, (ibid.: 163) e.g.

*While flying over the Channel, the pilot saw what he thought to be a meteorite. – The pilot saw what he thought to be a meteorite while flying over the Channel.*

In many cases, the participial clauses is the equivalent of an adverbial clause of reason, and words or phrases like *therefore* or *as a result* should be omitted. Participial clauses can, of course, also have a temporal function, and in some cases both implications are intended, (ibid.: 164) e.g.

*Having finished the painting, he gave a sigh of relief.*

To end with, we could point out that the English adverb may be approached as overlapping with different word-classes, from which one could mention the noun, the article, the adjective, the pronoun and the numeral, all this pointing out the adverb's peculiarity within the English language system.

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