

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study has been to delimit the category of English deverbal adjectives, both participial and non-participial, and to investigate their use, as they are presented in the Lancaster - Oslo/Bergen Corpus. An attempt has been made to characterise them in relation to non-deverbal adjectives.

The point of departure in this investigation has been that any single word or compound, hyphenated or open, with an adjectival suffix, that occurs in a position/function typical of adjectives is considered a potential adjective.

The investigation proper includes analyses of the distribution of the position/function of the adjectives, of the modification of adjectives, of their derivational origin, of the influence of the *un-* prefix, as well as comparisons between informative prose and imaginative prose as to the use of the adjectives.

A general conclusion is that there is, with the exception of the *-ing* adjectives, very little difference between the participial and the non-participial adjectives when it comes to position/function and modification. The *-ing* adjectives, however, deviate markedly from the general picture. The *-ing* form is readily accepted as an adjective by grammarians in general when it occurs in pre- or post-nominal position, but in the post-verbal position the *-ing* suffix is frequently regarded as an inflectional suffix and consequently the *-ing* form is seen as belonging to the verb paradigm. A comparison between the uses of *un-* (= the negative *un-*) + *-ing* type adjectives and the *-ing* type adjectives without the *un-* prefix suggests, however, that the latter is often mistakenly classified as a verb form.

There is a crucial difference between deverbal and non-deverbal adjectives: the latter prefer attributive position/function to predicative and they are also more reluctant to take modifiers than are the deverbal ones. This difference can probably be ascribed to the distinction noun/verb, i.e. subject/predication.

It has been shown that the adjectival character of the *-ed* and *-ing* forms is very largely influenced by their position/function in each particular context. It is argued that the present taxonomic system, with pigeon-holes labelled noun, verb, adjective, etc., is compatible with the notion of gradient or scale only if we restrict ourselves to a particular pigeon-hole, in this case, the adjective. This study has shown that it is quite possible to rank the adjectives inside that pigeon-hole according to their "adjectivehood" with the help of the number and type of criteria fulfilled, thereby creating a kind of gradient. It has also been shown that it is possible to establish a boundary between the adjectival and the verbal categories.

Key words: deverbal adjectives, non-deverbal adjectives, participial adjectives, non-participial adjectives, potential adjectives, criteria for and against adjectivehood, position/function, modification, derivation, dynamic passive, stative passive, copular verbs, *un-* prefix, informative prose, imaginative prose.