

## Chapter Ten

### Creating images in the mind

**Grammar Focus.** Adjectives and adverbs

#### **Introduction.**

When we use language to describe what is going on around us we use verbs to tell the actions and nouns to indicate the objects that we see. However, the words *car*, *man*, and *building* could indicate multiple objects in a scene we are discussing. We could point or use “pointing words” or **demonstratives** such as *this* and *that* to indicate which one we are talking about. However, pointing to objects can be ineffective, especially if we are talking about objects that are not present. Instead we can use **adjectives** to indicate which car, which man, or which building we are talking about as in the *red* car, the *tall* man, or the *oriental* building. We could do something similar with the verbs by using **adverbs** to indicate such things as when, how, or where the action is taking place, as in *Yesterday* she played *cautiously outside*.

Adjectives and adverbs are common in all types of English, though they occur less frequently than nouns and verbs. Adjectives are much more common in journalism and academic writing than in conversation. Adverbs are more common in conversation and fiction. Let’s see how this difference works by comparing a passage from an academic text with one from fiction.

**Example 1. Academic Text:** In the following discussion of pragmatics, the words before nouns serving as adjectives are in *italics*, the nouns are

**bold** and adverbs and adverbials are marked with [ ]. We can tell which words are serving as adjectives because they tell the reader more about the following noun, answering the *questions which one? or what kind of?* Adverbs or adverbials tell *when, where, why, how, or under what condition* the action took place.

How, [given these *prototypical features*,] do the **participants** coordinate their *joint actions*? The **speaker** and the **listener** interact [with each **other**] [in a *dynamic manner*]; a *complicated adjacency pair* exemplifies this **notion**. (32 words)

**Example 2 Fiction:** Again the words serving as adjectives are in *italics*, the nouns and pronouns are **bold** and adverbs and adverbials are marked with [ ].

**They** went [back] [to the *topographical map*] and looked [closely] [at the *contour lines*.] The **roads** had been placed [oddly.] The *main road* ran [north-south,] [right through the *central hills* of the **island**.] One **section** of the *road* seemed to be [literally] cut [into the **side** of a **cliff**,] [above a **river**]. (52 words)

Did you notice that the academic passage used more adjectives (five versus four) even though the passage is only two thirds as long and that they tended to be polysyllabic with three or more syllables? Even though the fiction passage was considerably longer, it used fewer adjectives and had many more adverbs or adverbials, ten versus three. None of the adverbials in the academic passage

were single word adverbs, five in the fiction passage were. Before we look more closely at the grammar and pragmatics of adjectives and adverbs, let us do three awareness activities.

### **Awareness Activity 10.1. The form of adjectives.**

**Activity A. Adjective endings.** Adjectives don't have typical endings. Many, if not most adjectives have no ending at all. However, there are some derivational endings that typically change nouns and verbs into adjectives. What ending would you have to put on the following words so they could be used in the following context? Note that sometimes the spelling of the original part of the word changes to reflect the new pronunciation.

We want a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ plan.

commend

danger

spectacle

dirt

base

hope

specify

attract

origin

**Activity B. Present and past participles as adjectives.** The most common way to make a verb into an adjective is to make it into the present

participle by adding *-ing* or by making it into the past participle by adding an *-en* or *-ed* ending. As we saw in Chapter Five when we looked at tenses, the labels *present* and *past* are misleading for English language learners. They are simply names for the verb form, not the time of the action. What do the endings really signal? As a reminder of the pattern we saw in Chapter Five read through the following pairs to see if you recall the rule of thumb that will help English language learners to not say *I am so boring* when they mean *I am so bored*.

The alarming dog *versus* the alarmed dog

The embarrassing waiter *versus* the embarrassed waiter

The frightening mob *versus* the frightened mob

The confusing customer *versus* the confused customer

The intriguing stranger *versus* the intrigued stranger

The surprising guest *versus* the surprised guest

**Activity C. Nouns as adjectives.** Increasingly nouns are being used as adjectives without adding any derivational endings to change them into adjectives. The results look like compounds. However, sometimes there are simple adjustments that have to be made. Put the following nouns into the adjective position and see if you can figure out the change.

brick            the \_\_\_\_\_ wall

economy        the \_\_\_\_\_ size

car              the \_\_\_\_\_ fender

ten gallons    the \_\_\_\_\_ hat

holidays        the \_\_\_\_\_ season

scissors      the \_\_\_\_\_ blade  
 six years      the \_\_\_\_\_ limit  
 two syllables the \_\_\_\_\_ adjectives

For activity A did you get the following?

We want a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ plan.

commend	commendable
danger	dangerous
spectacle	spectacular
dirt	dirty
base	basic
hope	hopeful or hopeless
specify	specific
attract	attractive
origin	original

In other words, there is an unpredictable variety of derivational endings for creating adjectives. The most common derivational endings associated with adjectives are *-al* (*mental, special*), *-able/-ible* (*commendable, possible*), *-ar* (*particular, popular*), *-ful/-less* (*hopeful, hopeless*), *-ic* (*scientific, basic*), *-ive* (*attractive, expensive*), *-ous* (*dangerous, delicious*) and *-y* (*dirty, pretty*).

In activity B we looked at probably the most general and productive pattern for creating adjectives today: using the present or past participle of a verb. However, as we can see, there is one caveat. The *-ing* form indicates that

the noun being described is doing or causing the action. That is why some call this the action participle rather than the present participle. The *–ed/–en* form indicates that the noun being described is experiencing or feeling the action. For this reason some call this the passive participle rather than the past participle.

Activity C showed us that even the pattern of using nouns as adjectives without adding a derivational ending has a restriction. The noun must be in its singular form, even if logically it is plural because it follows a number as in the ten gallon hat, the holiday season, the scissor blade, the six year limit, and the two syllable adjectives.

**Rules of thumb.** Using participles as adjectives

1. Use the present participle form (-ing) if the noun being described is doing or causing the action or emotion (*the surprising event, the up-coming activity, the rolling car.*)
2. Use the past participle form (-ed/-en) if the action or feeling is happening to the noun being describes (*the depressed level, the related event, the eaten cake, the well-written essay.*)

**Awareness Activity 10.2. Comparisons**

The only inflectional endings for adjectives are the *–er* and *–est* that are used for comparisons and superlatives, as in the following:

My pencil is bigger than yours.

His pencil is the biggest.

The comparative and superlative can also be used with adverbs.

She swims slower than you.

They swim the slowest of all.

Try creating comparisons for the following adjectives and see if there are any surprises. Does the *-er* ending always work? If not, what seems to be a rule of thumb you could give English language learners?

That one seems much \_\_\_\_\_.

pretty

hard

noisy

tall

friendly

tender

stupid

beautiful

interesting

difficult

Did you find that one syllable adjectives add *-er*, two syllable adjectives add *-er* or use *more*, and three syllable or longer adjectives use *more*, as in the following:

That one seems much \_\_\_\_\_.

pretty          prettier

hard            harder

noisy          noisier or more noisy

tall            taller

friendly	friendlier or more friendly
tender	tenderer or more tender
stupid	stupider or more stupid
beautiful	more beautiful
interesting	more interesting
difficult	more difficult

**Rules of thumb.** Comparison of adjectives and adverbs

Count the syllables

One syllable words use *-er* and *-est* (*sadder*)

Two syllable words use *-er* and *-est* or *more* and *most* (*happier*, *more happy*)

Three syllable words use *more* and *most* (*more interesting*)

**Awareness Activity 10.3 Finding adverbs.**

In the following activity you will see that adverbs have the greatest variety of forms. The following sentences were taken from advertisements. Read them and mark the phrases that answer the questions *where*, *when*, *why*, *how*, and *under what conditions*.

- We are conveniently located in the heart of Lake City.
- Call today for your free personal tour.
- Free with qualifying purchase.
- New York City dining in Alachua.
- Valid only with coupon.
- Come to The Atrium.

- Get all this while receiving the best care.

Did you get the following results?

- We are conveniently located *in the heart of Lake City (where)*.
- Call *today (when) for your free personal tour (why)*.
- Free *with qualifying purchase (under what conditions)*.
- New York City dining *in Alachua (where)*.
- Valid *only with coupon (under what conditions)*.
- Come *to The Atrium (where)*.

Notice that most of these adverbs are prepositional phrases (*in the heart of Lake City, for your free personal tour, with qualifying purchase, in Alachua, with coupon, to The Atrium*). Prepositional phrases are a common way to make nouns into adverbs. Grammarians generally call prepositional phrases and other structures that are functioning as adverbs in a sentence **adverbials**.

### **Grammar.**

Let's first take a quick look at the grammar of adjectives and then the grammar of adverbs before turning to some pragmatic and discourse issues:

#### **Adjectives:**

Here are some rules of thumb for identifying adjectives

- **Meaning:** Typically adjectives are defined as words that describe nouns.

We can use questions words to help identify adjectives. Find the nouns

and then as the questions “which (say *the noun*)?” or “what kind of (say *the noun*)?” as in the following examples:

- He pulled out a flattened bag. Which bag? or What kind of bag? a *flattened* bag
- She glanced at the icy water. Which water? or What kind of water? the *icy* water
- We provide an innovative network. Which network? or What kind of network? an *innovative* network.

▪ **Endings:**

- **Derivational:** As we saw in the awareness activities, a wide variety of *derivational* endings are used to make nouns and verbs into adjectives. Derived adjectives are by far most common in academic prose. The most common ending is *-al*, as in *final*, *functional*, and *categorical*. Moderately common are *-ent* (*different*, *violent*), *-ive* (*conducive*, *expensive*), and *-ous* (*victorious*, *nervous*). Relatively rare are *-ate* (*appropriate*, *intimate*), *-ful* (*fateful*, *prayerful*), *-less* (*restless*, *faceless*), *-like* (*lifelike*, *child-like*), and *-type* (*birthday-type*, *Hollywood-type*). Other derivational endings include *-y* (*dirty*, *muddy*), *-able/-ible* (*lovable*, *visible*) and *-ish* (*foolish*, *sheepish*). The participial ending *-ing* and *-ed* are added to verbs and sometimes nouns to create adjectives and adjective compounds (*glass-topped*, *free-spending*, *classroom-based*, *bow-legged*). The

most common adjectives, however, have no derivational endings  
(*big, little, new, old, black, white, good, nice, same, whole*)

- **Inflectional:** Many adjectives can be inflected to show **degree of comparison**. The inflectional endings that go with adjectives and many adverbs are the *-er* and *-est* of the comparative and the superlative: *softer*, *softest*. However, as we saw in the awareness activities, the inflectional ending usually only appears on one syllable and many two syllable adjectives and adverbs. Longer ones must use the **periphrastic** comparative or superlative using *more* or *most*: (*more reasonable, most reasonable*.)
- **Structural frames.** We have already seen the two frames for finding adjectives in sentences. The first *We are looking for a \_\_\_\_\_ man* identifies **attributive** adjectives, adjectives that appear before a noun. The second frame *That one seems so \_\_\_\_\_*. identifies **predicative** adjectives, adjectives that appear after a linking verb such as: *is, seems, turns, becomes*. Notice the position of the adjectives in the following examples of attributive and predicative adjectives:
  - **attributive or prenominal position.** The attributive position, sometimes called the prenominal position since it comes before the noun (nominal), is the expected position for an adjective.
    - the *funny* clown
    - a *perfect* match
    - the *legal* heir

- **predicative position.** Adjectives in this position appear after a linking or copular verb such as the perception copulas (*appear, seem, feel, look, smell, sound, taste*), state copulas (*lie, remain, rest, stand*), or change of state copulas (*become, come, fall, get, go, grow, run, turn*) rather than before the noun that they are describing.
  - The boy is *asleep*.
  - I feel *faint*.
  - That smells *funny*.
  - The plant grew so *tall*

Some adjectives are always in the predicate position, such as those that begin with the *a-* affix (*The boy is asleep. the boat is adrift*), and complex adjectives that are followed by prepositions or infinitives (*We are ready for work. The food is ready to eat.*) The most frequent predicative adjectives in conversation tend to be evaluative and emotive (*That's good, She's funny*) or expressions of agreement (*I'm sure. That's right*).

- **Post-nominal position.** Another position is also fairly common, the **post-nominal**, the position immediately following the noun.

Adjectives are found in the post-nominal position in the following cases:

- **causative constructions.** with verbs such as *keep, get, turn, make*. *He drives me crazy. It keeps people healthy.*  
These are sometimes called **object complements**.
- **preference verbs** such as *consider, like, think, prefer, report, believe, hold, call*. *He calls me crazy. I prefer oysters raw. They reported the dog missing. I found the test hard.* These too are sometimes called **object complements**.
- **measurements:** *six feet tall, twelve feet deep*
- **indefinite pronouns:** *Someone tall is outside. Is anyone new here?*
- **complex adjectives**, usually with prepositional phrases. *The man in the garden is picking flowers. The strawberries dipped in chocolate are my favorites. The meeting to decide our fate convened at eight.* Noticed that each of these complex adjectives or adjectives indicate *which one* or *what kind of* man, strawberry or meeting we are talking about.

There are other structural frames that may be used to identify adjectives. One is related to the inflectional ending for the comparative. As we saw earlier, the inflectional endings *-er* and *-est* are used primarily with one-syllable adjectives. Adjectives with two or more syllables tend to use the periphrastic *more* and *most*, as in *more lovable, most foolish*. Adjectives can also be intensified. In other words they can appear after **intensifiers** such as *very, awfully, quite, extremely* (*That shirt is quite dirty. She seems awfully quiet.)*

However, these last two frames can be ambiguous. Both can also be used with adverbs, (*No one sings more beautifully. He works awfully hard.*) More can also be used with nouns. (*He is more man than I am. I'd like more spaghetti, please.*)

**Adverbs:** Adverbs are a grab bag category for things that don't fit into the noun, verb, or adjective categories. Typically they are the words that tell the listener or reader the manner (how: *carefully, slowly*), the frequency or time (when: *always, often, now, soon, recently*), or the place (where: *here, outside*) something was done. They have other uses too. They can be used as **intensifiers** or **downtoners** with adjectives or adverbs (*slightly* overwhelmed, *so* tired, *somewhat* ready, *quite* hot, *kind of* strange). As such they resemble modals in that they can indicate the stance of the speaker to show levels of certainty or doubt (*I really like that. That's mainly true. Generally, you can count on it.*)

Here are some rules of thumb for identifying adverbs.

- **Meaning.** As we saw above, adverbs tell us *when, where, why, how,* and *under what conditions* the action takes place.
- **Form.**
  - **Derivational endings.** The most common derivational ending for creating adverbs out of adjectives is *-ly* (*certainly, rapidly, approximately*). Many adverbs are compounds (*crosswise, homeward, maybe, everywhere*). However, many adverbs are simple adverbs that have no derivational affixes and are not compounds. (*fast, rather, soon, here*) Some can also be used as

prepositions (*the limb is down* (adverb) versus *down the road* (preposition)) or nouns (*I'll come tomorrow* (adv) versus *Tomorrow would be a good day to do that* (noun)).

- **Inflectional endings.** The same inflectional endings for comparative and superlatives that apply to adjectives apply to adverbs. (*faster, fastest*)
- **Structural frames.** There are fewer structural frames that identify the simple adverbials. As noted earlier in our look at adjectives, they can follow *more* or *most* to create the comparative and the superlative (*more suddenly, most definitely*). They can also be intensified and downtoned (*rather suddenly, less accurately*). In fact many simple adverbs and adjectives have merged in form, especially in conversation, dropping the expected *-ly* affix (*It happened rather sudden. He drew that accurate enough. Hold tight.*)

Even the placement of adverbials in the sentence is rather flexible. Whereas nouns and verbs are expected in the SVO positions in the sentence and the adjectives are expected in the prenominal position or in the predicative position after a linking verb, adverbials have a variety of positions. They can be placed at the beginning or the end of the sentence or before the verb. (*Suddenly the door opened. The door opened suddenly. The door suddenly opened.*) However the most common placement for adverbs is at the end of the clause although frequency adverbials such as *sometimes, usually, often, and always* usually appear

before the verb. Although there is considerable freedom in where adverbs can be placed, they usually cannot come between a verb and its object (*\*He hit yesterday the ball.*).

The most common frame that identifies an adverb arises from the fact that most adverbs in a sentence are not true adverbs but adverbials. In other words, they are nouns and even sentences functioning as adverbs, indicating when, where, why, how, or under what conditions the action is taking place. When nouns are used as adverbs, they usually are introduced by a preposition (*in the morning, after school, on the lawn, or by hand*). When sentences are used as adverbs, they are introduced by a conjunction, usually called a **subordinating conjunction** (*after we went to town*). Even participles with their *-ing* or *-ed/-en* affixes can be used as adverbials (*Having studied all night, John fell asleep in the test--tells why. Bruised and broken, the horse stumbled into the corral--tells how or under what condition*) In Chapter 12 when we look at information focus, we'll examine why adverbs sometimes are placed at the beginning of the sentence.

### **Pragmatics and Discourse.**

There are three areas of interest as we look at how pragmatics and discourse affect adjectives and adverbs. The first deals with the frequency of usage in different kinds of writing. The second deals with a hidden surprise for children because of polarity. The last looks at how fiction writers use adjectives and adverbs to create pictures in the mind.

**Adjectives and adverbs in use.** In earlier chapters we've seen the importance of verbs and nouns and their associated grammatical frames in communication ideas. Where do adjectives and adverbs fit in? Corpus studies comparing conversation, fiction, news, and academic writing find that in conversation, all adjectives are relatively rare. Predicative and attributive adjectives are about even in frequency. On the other hand attributive adjectives are fairly common in academic writing. Compare the following from a conversation and a textbook. The adjectives are in italics.

A. Hey, bro. How's the *new* class?

It's *great*.

B. *Unmotivated* changes in the *tense* sequence are not *felicitous* and, if made, may produce a *less coherent* piece of discourse.

Notice that academic writing has longer sentences filled with nouns. Closely associated with the nouns are adjectives giving more information. In conversation, the sentences are shorter with a more frequent use of pronouns in the chain of reference as we saw in the last chapter. Since there are fewer nouns used in conversation, there are fewer slots or frames in the sentence for placing adjectives, hence fewer adjectives. As we saw in the introduction to this chapter, not only does fiction follow this conversational pattern of using fewer adjectives, it also uses more adverbs than academic writing does.

**Polarity issues.** Many adjectives come in pairs, called antonyms. Some of these antonyms are absolute. For example, something is either *dead* or *alive*.

However, most antonyms represent opposite points or grades on a scale, with one end positive and the other negative. For example, with the antonyms *old* and *young*, *hot* and *cold*, *wide* and *narrow*, and *tall* and *short*, there are various degrees of age, warmth, width, and height with one end of the scale being older, hotter, wider, and taller and the other end being younger, colder, narrower, and shorter. Thus these are called **gradable adjectives** since the difference can be graded or measured.

In Chapter Eight we saw that sometimes we have hidden negatives in English. One type of hidden negative that we did not talk about concerns the implied negatives associated with these gradable adjectives. What surprises English language learners and native speakers alike is that one end of the continuum represented by these pairs has a negative connotation and the other positive. The adjectives representing the positive end of the continuum are used more frequently and generally are learned first by children. The negative end of the polarity is used only for special contexts.

Look at the following sets of antonyms. Which one do you think represents the positive end of the scale and which one the negative? Here is a clue. The positive one is the one most likely to appear in the question frame *How \_\_\_ is it?* when there is no other context. They are also the most likely adjective to be used in answers.

big            little, small

old            young

old            new

long	short
good	bad
hard	soft
fast	slow
tall	short
wide	narrow
high	low
loud	quiet

The adjectives in column 1 are the positive ones, in the sense that they indicate an increase of the quality being described. Column 2 indicates less of that quality. The positive one can be used in any question. The negative can only be used in questions concerning the lack of the quality. In other words they are inherently negative and are reserved for unusual contexts. Notice the following, taking note of the answers.

- How tall are you?

\*I'm 5 feet short.

I'm 5 feet tall.

- How short are you?

\*I'm 5 feet short.

I'm 5 feet tall.

- Is it the right length?

No, it's 5 feet short. (i.e. some length is missing)

- How shallow is the kiddie pool?

\*It's 4 inches shallow.

It's 4 inches deep.

Young elementary school children often think that these pairs of adjectives are synonyms rather than antonyms since the answer is the same no matter which one is used in the question, as you can see in the following:

- How tall/short are you?

I'm 4 feet tall.

- How deep/shallow is this end of the pool?

It's 2 feet deep.

- How old/young are you?

I'm 4 years old.

Since many children see them as synonyms, the comparative *-er* should indicate *more* rather than *less* of the quality under consideration. However, with adjectives from the negative end of the polarity, *-er* means *less* of the quality. For example look at these two examples concerning depth and length.

- Which pool is shallower? Which is deeper?

- Which is longer? Which is shorter?

As adults, this seems to be no problem at all. However, it causes confusion for some children, especially in math and science classes since in the first, shallow and deep may be seen as synonyms denoting depth and the long and short in the second both denote length. Thus linguists advise science and math teachers

who are working with elementary school children to be sure to always ask questions on exams using the positive adjective.

Some international students learning English also have problems with these gradable adjectives since in many languages these antonyms do not exist. The opposite is simply expressed by using a negative. Thus shallow is not deep or undeep.

### **Creating pictures in the mind.**

Since adjectives are defined as words that describe, teachers often think that they can help their students be more descriptive in their writing if they develop their use of adjectives. Read the following two paragraphs written by a native speaker of Arabic. The first was written after an exercise on using adjectives to describe a fellow classmate. The second was free writing about the same person. Which creates a better picture?

- A. I am going to describe a girl who is walking before me face to face. She is five feet tall, her face is white, and her hair is long. She is not thin and she is not fat. She has a normal body.
- B. She is very beautiful, her hair dark and her eyes black in color. Her face looks like a moon in the middle of the sky. She walks smoothly. When she walks, you think that she is dancing. When she talks, you think she is singing. When she smiles, you think the light of the sun is coming.

Would you agree that the use of verbs in the second passage creates more of a picture in the mind than all the adjectives in the first?

Notice how Mark Twain in *Life on the Mississippi* also uses verbs rather than merely adjectives to create a picture in the mind. The verbs are in italics, the adjectives underlined. Note that some of the verbs are used as adjectives and some as nouns.

After all these I can still *picture* that old time to myself now, just as it was then: the town *drowsing* in the sunshine on a summer's morning; the streets empty, or pretty nearly so; one or two clerks *sitting* in front of the Water Street stores with their *splint bottomed* chairs *tilted* back against the walls, chins on breasts, hats *slouched* over their faces, asleep; two or three wood flats at the end of the wharf, but nobody to *listen* to the peaceful lapping of the wavelets against them; the great Mississippi *rolling* its mile wide tide along, point above the town and point below, *bounding* the river glimpse and *burning* it into a sort of sea, and withal a very still and brilliant and lonely one.

Thus if we are teaching creative writing to our students, we need to focus on developing their use of verbs in order to create pictures in the mind.

### **Reflections.**

#### **Some concepts.**

- Adjectives help the listener to match the nouns in the chain of reference with the visual or oral context of the conversation.
- Adverbs give background information about the actions expressed in the conversation, indicating such things as where, when, why, or how the action took place.

- Academic writing differs from fiction and conversation in its use of adjectives and adverbs: academic writing using more adjectives, fiction and conversation using more adverbs and adverbials.
- Fiction focuses on using verbs rather than adjectives for creating images in the mind.

### Tips for finding adjectives.

- **Meaning.** Answers the question *which one?* Or *what kind of?* (*the green car*—which one? *The humble circumstances*—what kind of?)
- **Endings.**
  - **Derivational.** A variety of unpredictable endings. Most common *–al*, (*functional*). Moderately common *–ent* (*different*), *–ive* (*conductive*), and *–ous* (*victorious*). Relatively rare *–ate* (*appropriate*), *–ful* (*fateful*), *–less* (*restless*), *–like* (*lifelike*), and *–type* (*birthday-type*). Others include *–y* (*dirty*), *–able/–ible* (*lovable*) and *–ish* (*foolish*). The participial ending *–ing* and *–ed* are added to verbs and sometimes nouns to create adjectives and adjective compounds (*glass-topped*, *classroom-based*).
  - **Inflectional.** *–er* and *–est* of the comparative and the superlative: (*softer*, *softest*). Works only on one and two syllable adjectives. Others use *more* and *most* (*more intelligent*, *most intelligent*)
- **Frames.** The frame *the \_\_\_ thing* identifies **attributive adjectives** (*The intelligent thing*). The frame *It seems so \_\_\_* identifies **predicative adjectives** (*It seems so intelligent.*)

### Tips for Finding Adverbs.

- **Meaning.** Answers the questions *when, where, why, how, under what conditions?* Since adverbs have such a variety of forms, these question words are the best bet for finding words, phrases, or clauses functioning as adverbs or adverbials in a sentence. (*The car started instantly (how) in the morning (when)*)
- **Endings.**
  - **Derivational.** *-ly (certainly, rapidly, approximately)*
  - **Inflectional.** the *-er* and *-est* of the comparative and the superlative on one syllable adverbs (*faster, fastest*, but *more quickly, most quickly*)
- **Frames.** Adverbs are found in a variety of locations (Adv SVO *Sometimes we hoe the garden*, S Adv VO *We sometimes hoe the garden*, SVO Adv *We hoe the garden sometimes*) However, since they take a variety of forms (e.g. nouns *We went home* and prepositional phrases *We are eating at home*) the best test to make sure that something is an adverb is to use the meaning approach.

### Some key terminology.

- **attributive or prenominal adjective**—an adjective found before a noun (*the sad story*)
- **gradable adjectives**—adjectives which can vary in their intensity or quality so they can be measured. *Long, heavy, wide*
- **intensifiers**—a function word used with adverbs and adjectives to indicate the degree or amount (*very, quite, extremely. It is extremely hot*)

- **linking verb**—also called a **copula**. A variety of verb that can be followed by adjectives. (e.g. be, seem, look—*He looks/seems/looks happy.*)
- **object complement**—an adjective appearing after what looks like the object in the sentence. (*He drives me crazy. He reported the dog missing.*)
- **polarity**—gradable adjectives come in pairs (long-short, heavy-light, wide-narrow) representing a scale with one representing the positive end of the scale and the other the negative. The positive one is the one expected when asking the question *How \_\_\_ is it?* It is also the one expected in the answer with the measurement. (*How wide is it? It's 4 feet wide. How narrow is it? It's 4 feet wide.*)
- **postnominal adjective**—an adjective attached immediately after a noun, usually because it is an adverbial phrase specifying *what kind of* or *which one* rather than a single word (*The man in the garden wants to see you.* i.e. which one?)
- **predicative adjective**—an adjective not found before the noun it is describing but later in the sentence after a linking verb (*The story seems so sad.*)
- **subordinating conjunction**—a conjunction that can be added to the beginning of a sentence to make it function as an adverbial on another sentence. Its adverbial status can be identified by asking the adverb questions *why, when, where, how, and under what conditions*. *Since you are so happy, come help us.*(why) *After we came home, we studied.* (when)

### Some reflective activities.

1. What went wrong? What rule of thumb was broken in the following sentences?

\*?I'm 90 years young.

\*The man amazing didn't know what to do.

\*This is the interestingest lesson so far.

\*That comes in 40 years cycles.

\*He hits always the target.

\*The in the bag balls couldn't be found.

2. Adjective order. Usually we only use one or two adjectives at a time.

However, when more than one are used, they tend to come in a certain order between the determiner and the head noun. Here are some possible semantic categories for adjectives :

- a. opinion : ugly, nice, sweet, wonderful, awesome
- b. color: red, blue, green, pink, light
- c. shape: round, square, oblong
- d. size: big, small, gigantic, tiny
- e. origin: American, foreign, native, Mexican
- f. condition: dirty, rough, clean, ragged
- g. material: woolen, cotton, plastic

Using the following frame as a guide

My \_\_\_\_\_ box is over there.

insert two adjectives at a time, each from a different category, to test out what order seems to be best, e.g. *\*My foreign tiny box is over there.*

Once you have decided what seems to be the preferred order when two are used, see if this order holds true when four or even all seven categories are used at the same time. Compare your result with your classmates.

3. Prepositions and time. Prepositions play an important role in changing nouns into adverbials. Probably most common is to locate objects in space (*on the riverbank, under the car, over the table*). Many language do not have prepositions. It is hard enough for English language learners to the many prepositions we use to indicate where an object is located, something that we can use visuals as an aide. How would you help these learners remember how these same prepositions of location can be used with time words? Here is a sampling to work with:

*at, around, before, between, from, in, over, through, to, under*

4. Problems with comparisons. The rule of thumb for comparisons says to use –er with one syllable adjectives. Does the rule work with the following adjectives? If not, why not? *Fun (We had a fun time.) Beige (I don't like the beige walls.)*
5. Polarity in adjectives. How long is something that is 4 inches short? How old is someone who is 75 years young? How does the answer change is you add *too* before the adjective?

### Grammar detective 10. Checking on description.

Let's check how writers of fiction do descriptions.

#### Instructions:

1. Find a book of fiction.
2. Find a section that has no conversation and count out a 60 word passage.  
Xerox the page so you can mark it up.
3. Circle the verbs, including those serving as the main verb of the sentence and those serving as nouns, adjectives, and adverbs. The latter will probably have the *-ing* or *-ed/-en* ending of the present or past participle.
4. Underline the adjectives, both those just before the noun in the *the\_\_\_Noun* frame and those after a linking verb such as *be*, *seem*, or *appear*, as in the frame *The boy seems so\_\_\_\_\_*.
5. Read through your results and report on whether verbs acting as various parts of speech or adjectives were most effective in creating a picture in the mind of the reader. What are the implications for teachers who want to help their students be more effective in their descriptive writing?

#### Teaching Ideas.

1. **Shocking or shocked?** We can use verbs of emotion as adjectives either in the present participle (*-ing*) or the past participle (*-ed/-en*) form. However the choice depends on whether the person being described is causing the emotion (*-ing*) or feeling it (*-ed/-en*). Find picture of people doing different kinds of activities and displaying various emotions. Write various emotion verbs (e.g. *bore*, *excite*, *embarrass*, *disgust*, *surprise*,

- shock, confuse.*) on 3x5 cards. Distribute them to the students. Then when you show the picture to the class, ask the students to check if their verb can be used to describe an emotion being demonstrated in the picture, making sure to have the appropriate ending.
2. **Preposition boxing.** Prepositions make nouns into adverbials. There are so many that sometimes the students can't remember the meaning. The basic meaning of prepositions is based on location, i.e. telling where the action is taking place. Put a box with a lid on a table in the front of the room. Give the students small toys or objects that might fit into the box. On separate 3x5 cards write the following prepositions or preposition pairs that mean the same.:
- Onto, on, off/off of, into, in, out of, over, above, under, below, towards, to, from/away from, before, after, near, by/next to, by/past, through, (a)round.
- Have the students draw a preposition card then demonstrate what it means as they say *I put/take my toy \_\_\_ the box.* using whichever verb is most appropriate for the preposition they are using in the sentence.
3. **Get it fixed.** To help students get used to using the object complements that are causatives, show them pictures of things that need to be repaired or cleaned up. Have them make a list of things that the class needs to get done, such as *We need to have the windows washed, get the oil changed. etc.*
4. **A verb poem.** To help students develop their use of verbs for descriptions, create a verb poem. First model the activity. Show the class

a picture. Have them choose someone or something in the picture to describe. As the title and first line of the poem name the person or object and write that on the board. Then under the name, write five things that we can see or can imagine about the person or object using participial phrases rather than sentences. For example, we might have a picture of a young boy in an oversized cowboy hat holding a rifle. We might write:

Cowboy Bob,  
carrying a gun,  
hiding under his hat,  
looking for a target,  
waiting for his mom,  
thinking about home.

Give pairs of students their own pictures and have them write their own verb poems to read to the class.