

The Daylight between Adjectives and Adverbs

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1. Claim. Adjectives and adverbs are traditionally treated as two distinct categories. Drawing on data from English, French, German, and Russian, we argue instead for a tripartite distinction between attributive adjectives, predicative adjectives, and adverbs. In English, these can show an AAA (1a), an AAB (1b) or an ABB (1c) pattern.

(1)

	ATTRIBUTIVE	PREDICATIVE	ADVERB
a.	fast	fast	fast
b.	easy	easy	easi-ly
c.	good	well	well

Following Fábregas (2024), we argue that attributive adjectives have an extra JOIN head on top of the agreement. Different from him, we assume that these agreement projections are repeated above the JOIN head.

2. Data. *2.1 French.* Regular French adverbs are derived by attaching the suffix *-ment* to the adjective, as in (2a). It also has three suppletive adverbs, (2b)-(2d), showing an ABB pattern.

(2)

	ATTRIBUTIVE	PREDICATIVE	ADVERB	
a.	facile	facile	facile-ment	‘easy’
b.	bon	bien	bien	‘good’
c.	meilleur	mieux	mieux	‘better’
d.	mauvais	mal	mal	‘bad’

These suppletive adverbs show the peculiar distributional property that they may occur in predicative position, as shown in (3a) for *bien* (Abeillé & Godard 2021:902), but cannot appear in attributive position (3b). The regular adjectives show agreement in both the predicative and attributive position, and the agreement marking is the same in both cases.

- (3) a. La nouvelle proposition de Paul est très bonne / bien.
 the new proposal of Paul is very good.F.SG / good.ADV
 ‘Paul’s new proposal is very good.’
 b. une bonne / *bien proposition
 a good.F.SG / good.ADV proposal
 ‘a good proposal’

2.2 Russian. Russian shows an ABC pattern, with three different forms for each of the three columns of the paradigm. The attributive column contains the so-called long form (LF) adjectives, which morphologically contain the short form (SF) adjectives in the predicative column. Adverbs are syncretic with the neuter SG form of the SF adjective.

(4)

		ATTRIBUTIVE	PREDICATIVE	ADVERB	
NOM	MASC	krasiv-Ø-yj	krasiv-Ø		‘beautiful’
	FEM	krasiv-a-ja	krasiv-a		
	NEUT	krasiv-o-je	krasiv-o	krasiv-o	
	PL	krasiv-y-je	krasiv-y		

The LF adjectives can also occur predicatively, but we follow Matushansky (2008) in assuming that LF adjectives in Russian are always attributive, i.e. they are followed by an empty noun when they appear in predicative position:

- (5) Eta devuška krasiv- a- ja Ø_N
 this.F.SG girl.F.SG beautiful NOM.F.SG NOM.F.SG
 ‘This girl is beautiful.’ (Lit. ‘This girl is a beautiful one’)

2.3 *German*. Attributive adjectives show agreement, whereas predicative ones do not, as shown in (6). Like in Russian, the attributive adjective morphologically contains the predicative one, with the attributive adjective adding an extra agreement morpheme on top of the predicative one.

(6)

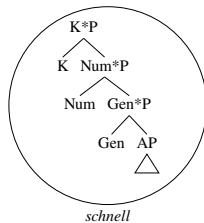
		ATTRIBUTIVE	PREDICATIVE	ADVERB	
NOM	MASC	schnell-er	schnell	schnell	'fast'
	FEM	schnell-e	schnell		
	NEUT	schnell-es	schnell		
	PL	schnell-e	schnell		

3. Analysis. We adopt and adapt the proposal by Fábregas (2024), who argues that attributive adjectives differ from predicative ones in that they have a feature *JOIN*, which type-shifts a predicate into a modifier. Agreement projections can occur on top of both types of adjectives.

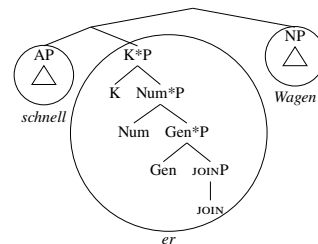
- (7) a. [AGR [AP]] (PREDICATIVE)
b. [AGR [JOIN [AP]]] (ATTRIBUTIVE)

The German predicative adjective lacks visible agreement because the root lexicalises the agreement projections (8). In the attributive adjective, the head *JOIN* blocks the root from lexicalising the agreement projections, so that a separate suffix is needed. This is shown in (9) for NOM.M.SG *schnell-er Wagen* ‘fast car’ (based on Fábregas 2024).

(8)

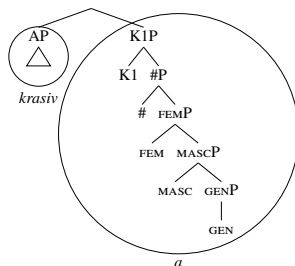


(9)

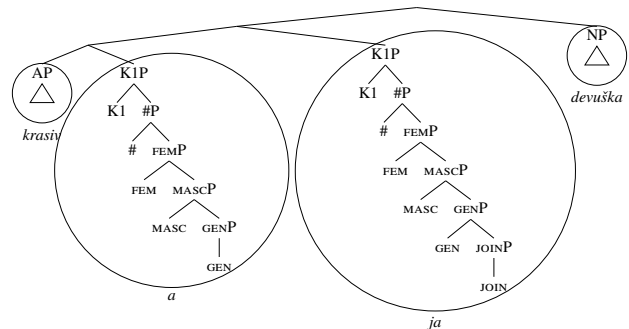


The Russian LF adjectives, with their two agreement morphemes, suggest that the agreement projections can occur twice. We modify Fábregas’ proposal to the effect that the agreement projections can occur both above and below the *JOIN* head. The NOM.F.SG SF *krasiv-a* ‘beautiful’ is shown in (10), the corresponding LF *krasiv-a-ja devuška* ‘beautiful girl’ in (11).

(10)



(11)



This approach explains why the LF adjectives have two agreement suffixes (there are two agreement projections), why the SF and the LF suffixes are different (they have different lexical entries), and why the SF is restricted to the nominative forms (no lexical entries for the other cases exist). We explain the syncretism between the NOM.N.SG and the adverb by assuming that the adverb contains an underspecified nominal core. This solution extends to the French suppletive adverbs.

Abeillé, Anne & Danièle Godard (eds.). 2021. *La grande grammaire du Français*. Arles: Actes Sud.

Fábregas, Antonio. 2024. Towards a predictive theory of concord across categories. Paper presented at BCGL17.

Matushansky, Ora. 2008. On the attributive nature of superlatives. *Syntax* 11(1). 26–90.