

(the opposite of *that young man*), *old* is a central adjective, and can thus also be predicative: *That man is old*. On the other hand, in the usual sense of *an old friend of mine* ['a friend of old, a long-standing friend'], *old* is restricted to attributive position and cannot be related to *My friend is old*. In this case, *old* is the opposite of *new* ['recently acquired']. The person referred to is not being identified as old; it is his friendship that is old.

When adjectives characterize the referent of the noun directly (*that old man*, *My friend is old*) they are termed **INHERENT**, when they do not (*an old friend of mine*) they are termed **NONINHERENT** (cf 7.25).

NOTE A few adjectives with strongly emotive value are restricted to attributive position, though the scope of the adjective clearly extends to the person referred to by the noun, eg: *you poor man*, *my dear lady*, *that wretched woman*.

Intensifying adjectives

7.18 Some adjectives have a heightening effect on the noun they modify, or the reverse, a lowering effect. At least three semantic subclasses of intensifying adjectives can be distinguished:

- (a) **emphasizers**
- (b) **amplifiers**
- (c) **downtoners**

(a) **EMPHASIZERS** have a general heightening effect and are generally attributive only, eg:

a true scholar	plain nonsense
a clear failure	the simple truth
pure ['sheer'] fabrication	an outright lie
a real ['undoubted'] hero	sheer arrogance
a certain winner	a sure sign

(b) **AMPLIFIERS** scale upwards from an assumed norm, and are central adjectives if they are inherent and denote a high or extreme degree:

a complete victory ~ The victory was *complete*.
great destruction ~ The destruction was *great*.

On the other hand, when they are noninherent, amplifiers are attributive only:

a complete fool ~ *The fool is *complete*.
a firm friend ~ *The friend is *firm*.

Complete refers to the completeness of the folly, and *firm* to the firmness of the friendship (in which sense it is asterisked here).

In addition, amplifiers are only attributive when they are used as **emphasizers**, conveying principally emphasis rather than degree. For example, *total* in *total nonsense* is an **emphasizer**, while in *total destruction* it is an **amplifier** and has a literal application ('the destruction of everything'). Hence the contrast:

total nonsense ~ *The nonsense was *total*.
total destruction ~ The destruction was *total*.

Further examples of adjectives as amplifiers that are attributive only:

utter folly	the absolute limit
a close friend	a complete stranger
an extreme enemy	his entire salary
a great supporter	a perfect stranger
a strong opponent	total irresponsibility

(c) **DOWNTONERS** have a lowering effect, usually scaling downwards from an assumed norm. They are relatively few (eg: *slight* in *a slight effort*, *feeble* in *a feeble joke*) and can be ignored for our present purpose, since they are generally central adjectives.

Restrictive adjectives

7.19 Restrictive adjectives restrict the reference of the noun exclusively, particularly, or chiefly. Examples, within noun phrases, include:

a certain person	his chief excuse
the principal objection	the exact answer
the same student	the sole argument
the only occasion	the specific point
a particular child	the very man

Again, some of these have homonyms. For example, *certain* in *a certain person* is a restrictive (equivalent to 'a particular person'), while in *a certain winner* it is an intensifier (equivalent to 'a sure winner').

NOTE Notice the use of *very* as a restrictive adjective:

You are *the very man* I want.

Adjectives related to adverbs

Some noninherent adjectives that are only attributive can be related to adverbs, even though they are not intensifying or restrictive. They include:

my former friend	['formerly my friend']
an old friend	['a friend of old']
past students	['students in the past']
a possible friend	['possibly a friend']
the present king	['the king at present']
an occasional visitor	['occasionally a visitor']

Some adjectives require implications additional to the adverbial:

the late president ['the person who was formerly the president (but is now dead)']

If the adjectives premodify agentive nouns, the latter also suggest a relationship to an associated verb: