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METHODOLOGICAL JOURNAL****MENTAL ENLIGHTENMENT SCIENTIFIC –  
METHODOLOGICAL JOURNAL**<http://mentaljournal-jspu.uz/index.php/mesmj/index>**THE STUDY OF PROTOTYPICAL FEATURES OF ADJECTIVES****Avazbek Mirzayev***PhD student of JSPU*[avazbekmirzayev94@gmail.com](mailto:avazbekmirzayev94@gmail.com)*Jizzakh, Uzbekistan***ABOUT ARTICLE**

**Key words:** adjective, prototype, prototypical feature, cognitive linguistics, semantics, grammar, attributive function, predicative function, central member, peripheral member, lexical category, English language, parts of speech, functional analysis.

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**Abstract:** This article analyzes the prototypical features of adjectives from the perspective of cognitive linguistics. The study examines the central and peripheral characteristics of adjectives, as well as their semantic, grammatical, and functional features. Adjectives appear in language as important lexical-grammatical units that express the qualities, states, colors, quantities, evaluations, and properties of objects and phenomena. Based on prototype theory, the article emphasizes that not all members of the adjective category belong to this category to the same degree. Some adjectives function as central or typical members of the category, while others acquire peripheral or borderline characteristics. In the research process, the gradability of adjectives, their use in attributive and predicative functions, their semantic groups, and their activity in context are analyzed. Using examples from the English language, the prototypical features of adjectives are revealed through such characteristics as “gradable”, “descriptive”, “attributive”, “predicative”, and “semantically independent”. In addition, the borderline cases between adjectives and nouns, adverbs, and participles are also discussed. The results of the article show the necessity of studying adjectives not only from the traditional grammatical approach but also from cognitive and functional

perspectives. The study contributes to understanding parts of speech in linguistics not as fixed categories, but as graded and prototypical categories. This approach makes it possible to understand more deeply how adjectives appear at different levels in terms of meaning, form, and function.

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**Introduction.** Adjectives are one of the most important lexical and grammatical categories in language because they describe the qualities, properties, states, colors, sizes, values, and conditions of objects, people, events, and abstract phenomena. In traditional grammar, adjectives are usually defined as words that modify nouns or express a quality of a noun (Quirk et al., 1985). For example, in phrases such as a beautiful flower, a large house, an intelligent student, and a difficult problem, the words beautiful, large, intelligent, and difficult function as adjectives because they give additional information about nouns.

However, modern linguistics, especially cognitive linguistics, shows that word classes are not always fixed and homogeneous categories. Not all adjectives behave in the same way. Some adjectives clearly represent the category because they have typical adjectival features, while others are less typical and may share features with nouns, verbs, participles, or adverbs (Lakoff, 1987). This situation makes the study of prototypical features of adjectives highly relevant.

The concept of prototype was developed within cognitive linguistics and category theory. According to the prototype approach, categories are not always organized by strict boundaries. Instead, they often have central and peripheral members (Rosch, 1975). A central member has the most typical characteristics of a category, while a peripheral member has only some of them. For instance, in the category “bird”, a sparrow or pigeon is more prototypical than a penguin or ostrich because sparrows and pigeons can fly and have common bird-like features. Similarly, in the category of adjectives, words such as big, small, good, bad, beautiful, old, and young are more prototypical than words such as asleep, main, former, wooden, or participial forms like broken and interesting.

The study of adjectives from the point of view of prototypicality allows researchers to understand the internal structure of this word class more deeply. It also helps explain why some adjectives can be graded, compared, used both before and after nouns, and modified by adverbs, while others cannot. For example, the adjective beautiful can be used in different grammatical environments: a beautiful girl, the girl is beautiful, very beautiful, more beautiful, and the most beautiful. This adjective is highly prototypical because it has many central adjectival features. On the other hand, the adjective former can be used only before a noun, as in a former president,

but it cannot normally be used predicatively: the president is former is not acceptable. Therefore, former is less prototypical (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002).

The relevance of this topic is connected with the need to study grammatical categories not only as formal structures but also as cognitive and functional systems. In many traditional grammar books, adjectives are described through their syntactic role and morphological features. Nevertheless, such a description is not always enough to explain the diversity of adjective behavior in real communication. A prototypical approach gives a broader explanation because it considers meaning, function, context, gradability, and category membership at the same time.

The aim of this article is to investigate the prototypical features of adjectives and to identify the main criteria that distinguish central adjectives from peripheral ones. The article focuses mainly on English adjectives, but the theoretical conclusions may also be applied to other languages because prototypicality is a general cognitive principle.

The objectives of the study are as follows: to define the concept of prototype in relation to adjectives; to describe the major semantic and grammatical features of prototypical adjectives; to analyze the difference between central and peripheral adjectives; to examine the attributive and predicative functions of adjectives; to discuss the role of gradability and comparison; and to show how adjectives interact with other word classes.

The object of the research is the adjective as a lexical and grammatical category. The subject of the research is the prototypical features of adjectives in English. The theoretical significance of the study lies in its contribution to the understanding of adjective category structure. The practical significance of the study is that its results can be used in grammar teaching, linguistic analysis, translation studies, and English language learning.

In English, adjectives are especially interesting because they have a wide range of semantic and syntactic possibilities. They can express physical qualities, such as hot, cold, round, and soft; psychological qualities, such as happy, sad, angry, and calm; evaluative meanings, such as good, bad, excellent, and terrible; color, such as red, blue, green, and black; age, such as young, old, new, and ancient; and relational meanings, such as medical, political, economic, and national (Dixon, 2004). These groups do not have identical grammatical behavior. For this reason, the adjective category should be studied as a structured system with more typical and less typical members.

**Materials and methods.** The research is based on the theoretical principles of cognitive linguistics, functional grammar, and semantic analysis. The main methodological foundation of the article is the prototype theory, which explains categories as structures with central and

peripheral members (Rosch, 1975). In this study, adjectives are not treated as a completely uniform word class. Instead, they are analyzed as a category whose members differ according to their degree of typicality.

The materials of the study include examples of English adjectives taken from general language use, grammar descriptions, and common syntactic patterns. The selected examples represent various semantic groups of adjectives, including qualitative adjectives, color adjectives, size adjectives, age adjectives, evaluative adjectives, relational adjectives, participial adjectives, and limit adjectives. The examples are used to demonstrate how adjectives function in different contexts and how they reveal prototypical or non-prototypical features.

The study uses a descriptive method to explain the general nature of adjectives and their grammatical behavior. This method helps describe the forms, meanings, and functions of adjectives in a clear and systematic way. For example, adjectives are described according to their ability to modify nouns, appear after linking verbs, form degrees of comparison, and be modified by intensifiers such as *very*, *quite*, *rather*, and *extremely* (Quirk et al., 1985).

A comparative method is also used in the article. It is applied to compare central adjectives with peripheral adjectives. For instance, the adjective *big* is compared with the adjective *former*. The adjective *big* can be used attributively and predicatively, can be graded, and can form comparative and superlative forms: *big*, *bigger*, *the biggest*. In contrast, *former* is restricted mainly to attributive position and does not accept degree modification in ordinary usage. Such comparison shows that *big* is more prototypical than *former*.

The semantic analysis method is used to study the meanings expressed by adjectives. This method helps classify adjectives into semantic groups and determine which semantic types are more prototypical. Qualitative adjectives, such as *beautiful*, *strong*, *weak*, *clever*, and *dangerous*, are usually more prototypical because they express inherent or observable qualities. Relational adjectives, such as *medical*, *legal*, *industrial*, and *national*, are less prototypical because they often indicate relation rather than quality (Dixon, 2004).

The functional analysis method is used to examine adjectives in speech and context. In actual language use, the function of an adjective may change depending on its position and relation to other words. For example, a sleeping child contains a participial adjective derived from a verb. It functions like an adjective, but it also keeps a connection with verbal meaning. Such forms are important because they show the boundary between adjectives and other word classes.

The research also relies on the principle of gradience. Gradience means that language categories may have degrees rather than sharp boundaries. In the adjective category, gradience

is seen in the difference between highly typical adjectives and less typical adjectives. For example, good and bad are central adjectives, while wooden and atomic are less central because they are relational or material adjectives. The method of gradience helps avoid an overly rigid classification of word classes (Taylor, 2003).

The following criteria are used in the analysis of adjectival prototypicality:

First, semantic independence is considered. A prototypical adjective usually expresses a clear quality or property. For example, red, soft, large, and kind express qualities that can be understood independently.

Second, gradability is analyzed. A prototypical adjective can often be modified by degree adverbs and can form comparative and superlative degrees. For example, very tall, taller, and the tallest show gradability.

Third, syntactic flexibility is examined. A prototypical adjective can be used both attributively and predicatively. For example, a happy child and the child is happy are both grammatical.

Fourth, compatibility with intensifiers is studied. Prototypical adjectives can be modified by words such as very, extremely, rather, and quite. For example, very interesting and extremely cold are natural expressions.

Fifth, morphological behavior is considered. Some adjectives can take comparative suffixes, such as -er and -est, while others use more and most. This feature is not universal for all adjectives, but it is important in determining typicality.

Sixth, contextual use is analyzed. Some adjectives are limited to certain contexts, while others are widely used. A prototypical adjective is usually flexible and productive in different types of speech.

The methods used in the study are qualitative rather than quantitative. The aim is not to count the number of adjectives in a corpus but to explain their internal category structure. Nevertheless, the analysis is systematic because it is based on clear linguistic criteria.

**Result and discussion.** The analysis shows that adjectives form a complex category with different levels of prototypicality. Some adjectives have almost all central adjectival features, while others have only a limited number of them. Therefore, it is more accurate to speak about a scale of adjectival typicality rather than a strict division between adjectives and non-adjectives (Rosch, 1975).

A prototypical adjective usually has several important features. It expresses a quality, can modify a noun, can appear after a linking verb, can be graded, can form comparative and superlative forms, and can be modified by intensifiers. For example, the adjective beautiful has

all these features: a beautiful view, the view is beautiful, very beautiful, more beautiful, and the most beautiful. Because of this, beautiful can be considered a central member of the adjective category (Quirk et al., 1985).

Similarly, adjectives such as large, small, good, bad, young, old, happy, sad, strong, weak, hot, and cold are prototypical adjectives. They express qualities that are easily understood, they can be used in different syntactic positions, and they can participate in degree comparison. For example, a cold day, the day is cold, very cold, colder, and the coldest show the typical behavior of an adjective.

One of the most important prototypical features of adjectives is gradability. Gradability means that a quality can exist in different degrees. For example, a person can be tall, very tall, rather tall, taller than another person, or the tallest in the group. This feature is highly characteristic of qualitative adjectives. Gradability shows that adjectives often express scalar meanings. A scalar meaning is a meaning that can be placed on a scale, such as size, temperature, age, quality, beauty, or difficulty (Paradis, 2001).

However, not all adjectives are gradable. Some adjectives express absolute or classifying meanings. For example, dead, perfect, unique, and complete are often considered non-gradable in their basic meanings. A person is either dead or alive; something is either complete or not complete. Nevertheless, in actual speech, such adjectives may sometimes be used with intensifiers for expressive purposes, as in absolutely perfect or almost complete. This shows that language use can be flexible, but the prototypical status of such adjectives is still different from that of clearly gradable adjectives like big or beautiful.

Another important feature is the ability of adjectives to function both attributively and predicatively. Attributive adjectives appear before nouns, as in a clever student. Predicative adjectives appear after linking verbs, as in the student is clever. A central adjective can usually occur in both positions. For example, an interesting book and the book is interesting are both correct. This syntactic flexibility is a strong sign of prototypicality (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002).

Nevertheless, some adjectives are restricted to one position. For example, former is mainly attributive: a former teacher, a former president, a former student. It is not normally used predicatively: the teacher is former is incorrect. In contrast, adjectives like asleep, afraid, and alive are mainly predicative: the child is asleep, the man is afraid, the fish is alive. They are not usually used before nouns in ordinary patterns: an asleep child is less natural than a sleeping child. Such adjectives belong to the periphery of the adjective category because they do not show full syntactic flexibility.

The semantic nature of adjectives also affects their prototypical status. Qualitative adjectives are the most prototypical because they express properties that can be directly attributed to nouns. Examples include kind, brave, soft, hard, bright, dark, clean, and dirty. These adjectives describe qualities and can usually be graded.

Color adjectives are also relatively prototypical because they describe visible properties. Words such as red, green, blue, black, and white function clearly as adjectives: a red apple, the apple is red. However, color adjectives are not always gradable in the same way as qualitative adjectives. Expressions such as very red or darker red are possible, but the degree depends on context. Therefore, color adjectives are central but slightly different from evaluative or size adjectives.

Evaluative adjectives are also central because they express judgment or assessment. Examples include good, bad, excellent, terrible, wonderful, and poor. These adjectives are common in everyday communication and are highly productive. They can be modified by intensifiers and used in comparison: very good, better, the best. Evaluative adjectives are important because they show the subjective side of adjectival meaning.

Relational adjectives are less prototypical. They do not usually express a quality in the same way as qualitative adjectives. Instead, they express a relation to a noun or concept. For example, medical research means research related to medicine; legal advice means advice related to law; industrial development means development related to industry. These adjectives are usually not gradable. Expressions such as very medical or more legal are possible only in special contexts. Relational adjectives are therefore peripheral members of the adjective category (Dixon, 2004).

Material adjectives also have a special status. Words such as wooden, metal, plastic, and golden may describe what something is made of. For example, a wooden table means a table made of wood. Such adjectives are often attributive and less commonly predicative. We can say the table is wooden, but the meaning is closer to classification than quality. They are less prototypical than adjectives such as large or beautiful because they are less gradable and more closely connected with nouns.

Participial adjectives are another important group. They are derived from verbs but function as adjectives. Examples include interesting, interested, boring, bored, broken, written, exciting, and excited. These words show the boundary between adjectives and verbs. For example, in an interesting story, the word interesting describes the story and functions as an adjective. In the story is interesting, it is also predicative. However, it is historically and

semantically related to a verb. Participial adjectives can be highly adjectival when they express stable qualities, but they may remain close to verbal meaning in some contexts.

The difference between interesting and interested also shows the semantic complexity of adjectives. Interesting usually describes the source of interest, while interested describes the person who experiences the feeling. For example, an interesting lecture means that the lecture causes interest, while an interested student means that the student feels interest. This distinction shows that adjectives can encode different semantic roles.

Another prototypical feature of adjectives is their ability to be modified by adverbs of degree. Words such as very, extremely, quite, rather, too, and so are commonly used with adjectives. For example, very happy, extremely dangerous, quite difficult, and too expensive are natural expressions. The possibility of degree modification is closely related to gradability. If an adjective cannot be graded, it usually cannot be freely modified by such adverbs. For example, very former or extremely main are not acceptable in standard use (Quirk et al., 1985).

The comparative and superlative forms of adjectives are also important. Many short adjectives form comparison with -er and -est: small – smaller – the smallest, tall – taller – the tallest, old – older – the oldest. Longer adjectives usually form comparison with more and most: beautiful – more beautiful – the most beautiful, important – more important – the most important. This morphological behavior is one of the typical signs of adjectives. However, not all adjectives can be compared. Relational adjectives such as atomic, medical, and annual usually do not form normal comparative degrees. This again confirms their peripheral status.

The results also show that adjectives have a strong connection with nouns because their main function is to describe or specify nouns. In the phrase a difficult task, the adjective difficult gives information about the noun task. Without the adjective, the noun has a more general meaning. The adjective narrows, evaluates, or characterizes the noun. This modifying function is one of the central functions of adjectives.

At the same time, adjectives have a connection with verbs when they appear in predicative position. In the sentence The task is difficult, the adjective is linked to the subject through the verb be. Other linking verbs include seem, become, feel, look, sound, and remain. For example, She looks tired, The weather became cold, and The problem seems simple. In such cases, adjectives function as subject complements. This predicative function shows that adjectives are not limited to noun phrases but also play an important role in sentence structure.

The analysis of adjective order in English also contributes to the discussion of prototypicality. When several adjectives appear before a noun, they usually follow a certain order: opinion, size, age, shape, color, origin, material, and purpose. For example, a beautiful

small old round black Italian wooden table. Although such long sequences are rare in natural speech, the order shows that adjectives are semantically organized. Opinion adjectives, such as beautiful or nice, often come before more objective adjectives, such as color or material. This suggests that adjectives differ not only in grammatical behavior but also in cognitive and semantic hierarchy.

From a cognitive point of view, prototypical adjectives are often based on human perception and experience. Words such as big, small, hot, cold, bright, dark, heavy, and light are connected with physical experience. They describe qualities that humans can see, feel, compare, or evaluate. This makes them cognitively basic and easy to recognize as adjectives. More abstract adjectives, such as legal, economic, national, or theoretical, require conceptual knowledge and are less directly perceptual. Therefore, they are less prototypical (Lakoff, 1987).

The boundary between adjectives and nouns is also important. Some words can function both as nouns and adjectives. For example, stone is a noun in a stone on the ground, but it can function adjectivally in a stone wall. In such cases, the word modifies a noun but does not have all typical adjective features. We cannot normally say the wall is very stone or stoner wall in the same way as the wall is very high or a higher wall. Such examples show that noun modifiers may perform an adjective-like function but remain outside the central adjective category.

The boundary between adjectives and adverbs can also be complex. Some words have the same form as adjectives and adverbs, such as fast, hard, and late. For example, in a fast car, fast is an adjective; in he runs fast, it is an adverb. This multifunctionality shows that word classes are partly determined by syntactic position and function. A prototypical adjective modifies a noun or appears after a linking verb, while a prototypical adverb modifies a verb, adjective, or another adverb.

The study also reveals that context plays a major role in determining the function and prototypicality of adjectives. A word may be more adjective-like in one context and less adjective-like in another. For example, running in running water functions like an adjective, but in He is running, it is part of a verb phrase. Therefore, grammatical classification should consider actual usage rather than only dictionary labels.

The prototypical approach is useful in language teaching. Students often learn adjectives as simple describing words, but they may face difficulties with adjectives that do not behave typically. For example, learners may try to say the president is former because they know that adjectives can be used after be. A prototypical explanation helps them understand that some adjectives are attributive-only. Similarly, learners may incorrectly say very unique or more dead because they do not understand the difference between gradable and non-gradable

adjectives. Therefore, teaching adjectives through prototypical and peripheral features can improve grammatical accuracy.

The findings of this study can be summarized in the following way. The most prototypical adjectives are qualitative, gradable, semantically independent, syntactically flexible, and compatible with intensifiers and comparison. Less prototypical adjectives are relational, non-gradable, positionally restricted, derived from other word classes, or context-dependent. The adjective category is therefore not a closed and uniform class but a dynamic and internally structured category.

A simplified classification of adjectives according to prototypicality may be presented as follows:

Central adjectives include qualitative adjectives such as big, small, good, bad, beautiful, strong, weak, happy, and cold. They have many typical adjectival features.

Intermediate adjectives include color adjectives, evaluative adjectives, and some participial adjectives such as red, blue, excellent, interesting, and tired. They are adjective-like but may have certain semantic or functional restrictions.

Peripheral adjectives include relational adjectives, attributive-only adjectives, predicative-only adjectives, and noun-like modifiers such as medical, former, asleep, wooden, and stone in stone wall. They have limited adjectival behavior.

This classification does not mean that peripheral adjectives are not adjectives. Rather, it means that their membership in the category is less typical. They belong to the adjective category, but they do not represent its central model. This is the main idea of prototypicality: category membership is a matter of degree (Taylor, 2003).

The result and discussion section confirms that the prototype theory provides a productive framework for studying adjectives. It allows linguists to describe not only what adjectives are but also how different adjectives vary in their degree of typicality. This approach is more flexible and realistic than a strict traditional classification because it reflects the actual complexity of language.

**Conclusion.** The study of prototypical features of adjectives shows that adjectives are not a completely homogeneous word class. Although traditional grammar defines adjectives as words that describe or modify nouns, cognitive and functional analysis demonstrates that adjectives have different degrees of typicality. Some adjectives are central members of the category, while others are peripheral or transitional.

The most prototypical adjectives express clear qualities or properties. They are semantically independent, gradable, syntactically flexible, and compatible with intensifiers and

comparison. Examples such as big, small, beautiful, good, bad, young, old, hot, and cold represent the central area of the adjective category. These adjectives can be used both attributively and predicatively, as in a beautiful picture and the picture is beautiful. They can also be modified by degree adverbs, as in very beautiful, and form comparative structures, as in more beautiful.

Less prototypical adjectives have certain restrictions. Relational adjectives such as medical, legal, and industrial usually express relation rather than quality and are often not gradable. Attributive-only adjectives such as former cannot normally appear after linking verbs. Predicative-only adjectives such as asleep and afraid are limited in attributive position. Participial adjectives such as interesting, broken, and tired show the connection between adjectives and verbs. Noun modifiers such as stone in stone wall show the boundary between adjectives and nouns.

The analysis proves that adjective prototypicality depends on several linguistic criteria: semantic meaning, gradability, syntactic position, compatibility with intensifiers, comparison, morphological behavior, and contextual use. No single criterion is enough to define all adjectives. A more complete understanding is possible only when these criteria are considered together.

The prototypical approach is important because it reflects the natural organization of language categories. Human cognition often organizes categories around typical examples rather than strict definitions. In the adjective category, words like good, bad, big, and beautiful serve as central examples, while words like former, asleep, medical, and wooden occupy more peripheral positions.

The practical value of this study is connected with grammar teaching, language learning, translation, and linguistic analysis. Learners of English can better understand why some adjectives can be used in many grammatical patterns while others are restricted. Teachers can explain adjectives not only through rules but also through degrees of typicality. Translators can pay attention to the semantic and functional differences between central and peripheral adjectives.

In conclusion, adjectives should be studied as a dynamic, graded, and cognitively structured category. The prototype theory provides an effective theoretical framework for understanding the diversity of adjectival behavior. It shows that the adjective category has a center and a periphery, and that each adjective may be placed on a scale according to its semantic and grammatical properties. Therefore, the study of prototypical features of adjectives contributes to a deeper understanding of language structure, meaning, and use.

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