

## THE MOST FREQUENT MEANINGS OF NOUN PHRASES WITH SIMPLE OR DERIVED PREMODIFYING ADJECTIVES

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**Maja M. Žarković**

Faculty of Philosophy, Pale, University of East Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Abstract.** *Contemporary linguistic practice usually compares the frequency of premodifying adjectives and premodifying nouns and concludes that premodifying adjectives are in most cases more frequent. Premodifying adjectives are also known as being efficient mechanisms for bringing additional information into the phrase structure. The aim of this paper is to show the most frequent meanings of noun phrases containing simple or derived premodifying adjectives, and also to present what sort of information is added to noun phrases when they have adjectives as premodifiers. Using analytic and descriptive methods, we analysed examples taken from the newspaper register and concluded that premodifying adjectives, simple or derived, brought typical, adjective specific information into the phrase structure. Their ability to leave little or no space for misinterpretation of the phrase meaning while bringing additional information makes them so frequent in English.*

**Key words:** *adjectives, simple premodifying adjectives, derived premodifying adjectives, semantic relation*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The frequency of premodifying adjectives in comparison to premodifying nouns, especially in American and British varieties, is just one of many interesting discussions in contemporary linguistic practice. These contemporary discussions usually conclude that premodifying adjectives are more frequent in the British variety than in the American (Biber, Grieve and Iberri-Shea 2009), but the growing frequency of premodifying nouns can quickly and easily change these conclusions. The frequency of adjectives in already existing analyses is not the only question that interests linguists. The meaning of adjectives is another area of great significance for many analyses and discussions (Biber *et al.* 1999; Đorđević 2007). These analyses usually classify adjectives into two major semantic groups: descriptors and classifiers (Biber *et al.* 1999: 508-509) and state that it is sometimes very

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**Corresponding author:** Maja M. Žarković

Faculty of Philosophy, Pale, University of East Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

E-mail: maja.zarkov@gmail.com

difficult to draw a clear dividing line between them since one adjective can belong to both categories.

We want to present the most frequent meanings that can be expressed by the use of premodifying adjectives as our aim in the paper, since adjectives are considered to be extremely frequent premodifiers of noun phrases and very efficient mechanisms for bringing additional information into the phrase structure. We also want to see how much the morphological structure of premodifying adjectives determines what sort of additional information the noun phrase gets. Morphological classification of adjectives recognizes four major groups: simple, derived, participle and compound adjectives (Blaganja and Konte 1979: 159). Our focus is on just simple<sup>1</sup> and derived adjectives<sup>2</sup>, since the detailed discussion of all four groups would definitely require more than one academic paper. We did not want to use the aforementioned semantic division of adjectives but instead established our own list of possible semantic relations between adjectives and phrase heads. The list had already been established by Biber *et al.* (1999) for premodifying nouns, but we modified and changed it to suit our needs, since adjectives and nouns bring sometimes specific information which is not interchangeable. Some subtypes of descriptors and classifiers gave us the necessary terms, the semantic concepts that we needed to complete the list, since those concepts cannot be expressed by nouns.

## 2. PREMODIFYING ADJECTIVES AND POSSIBLE SEMANTIC RELATIONS WITH NOUN PHRASE HEAD

The most frequent definition of adjectives is that they typically denote different properties (age, size, shape, weight, colour, merit/quality, etc.) of objects, people and places (Huddleston and Pullum 2005: 112). According to Quirk *et al.* (1985) there are four features commonly considered to be characteristic of adjectives (402-403):

- they can freely occur in attributive function
- they can freely occur in predicative function
- they can be premodified by the intensifier *very*
- they can take comparative and superlative forms.

However, we cannot say that all words classified as adjectives possess all these four features. For example, the features whereby adjectives can be premodified with *very* and take comparative and superlative forms are of no significance when distinguishing adjectives from adverbs. Not only do they not distinguish adjectives from adverbs, but they cannot be found in all adjectives, which is why the first two features are considered to be the most important ones (Quirk *et al.* 1985: 404; Greenbaum and Quirk 1990: 129). This paper will be analysing adjectives in attributive function, i.e. premodifying adjectives and their possible semantic relations with noun phrase heads.

The list of all possible semantic relations between premodifying adjectives and phrase heads was inspired by Biber *et al.*'s list of semantic relations for premodifying nouns (1999: 589-590). The main reason why we decided to change and modify this list so that

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<sup>1</sup> Our analysis will treat simple adjectives as simple root words which usually consist of one or two syllables and normally serve for further derivation (Jovanović 2012: 90). This is a suggestion supported by linguistic practice (Matthews 1974; Plag 2003; Đorđević 2007; Lieber 2009). This suggestion will be used as the most important criterion for classification of our examples.

<sup>2</sup> We will analyse only derived adjectives formed by adding different suffixes to nouns, adjectives or verbs.

it suits our analytic and descriptive needs is that the modified list is very concise and allows transparent analysis by showing the semantic relation between the premodifier and the head, but also the phrase meaning. The following list shows how different phrase meanings with premodifying adjectives can be expressed:

- *quality* (a premodifying adjective describes the quality/merit of the phrase head)
- *purpose* (a premodifying adjective describes the purpose for the phrase head)
- *objective type* (a phrase head is the object while a premodifying adjective describes that object in a process)
- *subjective type 1* (descriptive features of a premodifying adjective show who can be the subject in the process presented by a phrase head)
- *subjective type 2* (a phrase head is the subject while a premodifying adjective determines in what kind of process the subject participates)
- *location type 1* (a premodifying adjective describes the origin or gives the location for a phrase head)
- *location type 2* (a phrase head is the location while a premodifying adjective describes what can be found at that specific location)
- *time* (a premodifying adjective determines time-related properties like age, chronology, frequency, etc. for a phrase head)
- *institution* (a premodifying adjective describes or identifies what sort of institution a phrase head is)
- *specialization* (a premodifying adjective describes an area of specialization or occupation for a person presented by a phrase head)
- *quantity* (a premodifying adjective describes properties such as size, shape, weight or range of a phrase head)
- *colour* (a premodifying adjective presents the colour of a phrase head)

Noun phrases with noun premodifiers sometimes express more than one semantic relation and sometimes they cannot be fitted neatly into any of the given semantic relations, so we need to paraphrase noun phrases in order to understand the expressed meaning. Premodifying adjectives rarely express more than one semantic relation and their meaning is usually the one presented by this list of possible relations.

## 2.1. Corpus

The corpus comprises a compilation of noun phrases with premodifying adjectives found in different newspaper articles published in *The Times*, *The Guardian* and *The New York Times*.<sup>3</sup> The compilation of newspaper articles contains 1 781 920 words, although we analysed only the articles published within the *News* section because this section deals with different topics: politics, the economy, culture, celebrities, sports, food, etc.<sup>4</sup> Having different topics was of great significance for our analysis since we wanted to find as many different noun phrases as possible. Noun phrases with the same premodifying adjectives and phrase heads were not included in our research since we were not interested in the frequency of specific adjectives or phrase heads, only different combinations because they led us to different semantic relations. We, of course, included phrases with the same

<sup>3</sup> We will use abbreviated forms for the mentioned newspapers in the text, i.e. *TT* for *The Times*, *TG* for *The Guardian* and *NYT* for *The New York Times*.

<sup>4</sup> We analysed articles published in online editions of the mentioned newspapers. The analysis was carried out for articles published between April and July, 2010.

premodifying adjectives but different heads and vice versa, trying to prove an opinion that the most suitable way for determining the meaning is putting the meaning of one lexeme against another lexeme (Bilbija 2001: 55). In the end, we found 13 039 examples of noun phrases containing simple (7 114 examples) or derived adjectives (5 925 examples) as premodifiers.<sup>5</sup>

### 3. DATA ANALYSIS

Newspaper texts are known for using a wide range of different adjectives. Their main role in such texts is not just to give additional information but to clearly identify the referents of noun phrases and provide descriptive details about those referents (Biber *et al.* 1999: 514). We start our discussion with descriptive details about simple premodifying adjectives and later move on to the derived ones.

#### 3.1. Simple premodifying adjectives and semantic relations with a noun phrase head

According to our research, simple premodifying adjectives proved to be very frequent premodifiers, even more frequent than derived premodifying adjectives. They were able to achieve six semantic relations with noun phrase heads: *time*, *quantity*, *quality*, *location type 1*, *colour* and *subjective type 1*.

The most frequent meaning of all was *time*, where premodifying adjectives determined the time-related properties of phrase heads. We found 2 790 examples of phrases with this meaning. Some of the examples found are<sup>6</sup>:

- (1) *New mining* in Zimbabwe has quickly yielded millions of carats of diamonds and could help catapult the nation ... (NYT 21/6<sup>7</sup>)
- (2) The chess world has a *new king*, and he is the same as the *old king*. (NYT 11/5)
- (3) The *fresh estimate* from a US government panel ... (TT 11/6)
- (4) Osborne added that the *former chairman* of the Office of Fair Trading, Sir John Vickers, would head a *new commission* ... (TG 16/6)

The semantic relation of *time* is not the most frequent relation just because the users of English need to express different time-related properties with premodifying adjectives more than any other properties for phrase heads. This semantic relation is frequent because these premodifying, time-related adjectives express age, chronology, frequency and similar for phrase heads differently in our corpus, because the time span they manage to establish for phrase heads tells us how old or new something or someone is, and also who or what is recent or former, frequent and so on. The most frequent meanings are those

<sup>5</sup> We used antcon 3.2.4. for analysis of the articles, i.e. finding noun phrases. Antcon is a freeware concordance program developed by Prof. Laurence Anthony, Director of the Centre for English Language Education, Waseda University (Japan). The program can be downloaded at the following page <http://www.antlab.sci.waseda.ac.jp/software.html>. We found this program very useful, but our analyses had to be, in some cases, manually done since the program listed adjectives with different functions and we were primarily interested in adjectives functioning as noun phrase premodifiers.

<sup>6</sup> We will state a few examples for every semantic relation, since a detailed presentation of all the examples found would require space we do not have here.

<sup>7</sup> The dates used are those when the newspaper article containing the stated example was published online.

concerning age and chronology. For example, *new commission* (4) is the phrase where we learn about the age of the commission while in *old king* (2), the king is not old but the king who ruled in the past, the previous king, which is chronology. The interchangeability of these properties makes *time* much broader and therefore frequent.

The meanings of *quantity*, *quality* and *colour* proved to be the meanings which are usually expressed by premodifying adjectives and Biber *et al.*'s list for premodifying nouns does not state that nouns are capable of forming such semantic relations with phrase heads. We did not find any examples of noun phrases with noun premodifiers expressing the aforementioned semantic relations in our corpus, so we accepted Biber *et al.*'s opinion, and that is why we were not surprised to find many noun phrases with these three meanings.

The *quantity* meaning relationship determines different quantity-related properties like size, shape, weight or range/scope for the phrase head and is the second most frequent meaning after *time* with 1 754 examples found, some of which are:

- (5) The result is that he has a *vast network* of experts, including Mr. Parker and Mr. Stiglitz, ... (NYT 15/6)
- (6) "It's a *long journey*," the song went, "and in it, I'm a stranger." (NYT 19/6)
- (7) ... agencies offered their first *broad estimate* of the scope of the crisis, saying ... (NYT 18/6)
- (8) But aides say he shows a *deep understanding* of his homeland — and an uncanny knack for navigating its politics. (NYT 15/6)

*Quality* is the third most frequent meaning we found in our corpus with 1 090 examples. When premodifying adjectives express this semantic relation with phrase heads then we learn something more about the quality or merit of those phrase heads because premodifying adjectives by describing the heads add that information into the phrase structure. Such examples are:

- (9) ... These records are a *stark reminder* of the atrocities of a conflict that is often eclipsed by wars that took place closer to home. (TG 24/6)
- (10) ..., has been obscuring the *true ownership* of its vessels in a web of shell companies stretching across Europe and Asia, ... (NYT 7/6)
- (11) In theory, the illegals should expect *profuse support*. (TG 8/7)
- (12) She had a *clear explanation* for the extensive damage in ... (NYT 19/6)

We cannot say that *colour*, as a meaning relationship, is very frequent because we found only 380 examples, which is not even close to the high frequencies of the aforementioned semantic relations, but it is expressed only by the use of premodifying adjectives and is therefore worth mentioning and enumerating. Some typical examples are:

- (13) The *bright eyes* of Ayuba Suleiman Diallo who had been a slave-owner and trader, are mesmerising gallery visitors, ... (TG 7/7)
- (14) ... *blue uniforms* and rather silly spiked helmets, an aristocracy with long, complicated titles, and a horse-drawn royal coach that ... (TT 23/5).

- (15) ... *black dress* with her blonde hair in its trademark peasant-style braid, looked relaxed and confident despite the evident pressures on her. (TT 19/5)
- (16) Jews were forced to wear *yellow stars* and more than 5,000 were sent to forced labour camps, where at least 46 died. (TG 10/5)

The fact that some premodifying colour adjectives do not form the meaning of *colour* with phrase heads is the reason why we did not find many examples of noun phrases with the meaning of *colour*. Instead, their descriptive details managed to establish other semantic relations. Typical illustrations of this can be seen in the following examples where we have colour adjectives but the phrase meaning is *quality* (*black magic/black economy* - kind of magic/economy not the colour of these phrase heads):

- (17) ... *black magic* is showing signs of increasing worldwide, especially through the persecution of women accused of being witches. (TT 22/4)
- (18) Every Greek has a story to tell about the *black economy*, particularly the need to pay doctors in cash. (TT 17/5)

We also managed to find two very frequent semantic relations in our corpus that can be expressed mostly by noun premodifiers. Our corpus showed that these two semantic relations are possible when simple premodifying adjectives are used. We cannot say that *location type 1* is a minor meaning since we found 900 examples, while *subjective type 1* is less frequent with only 200 examples. Some typical examples where premodifying adjectives describe the origin (20) or give a location (19) for phrase heads or where the descriptive features of premodifying adjectives present who the subject can be in the process presented by phrase heads are (21):

- (19) Any *public showdown* between the general and the vice president is likely to wait until the end of the year, ... (NYT 24/6)
- (20) ... said Mr. Gnarr, whose *foreign relations* experience includes a radio show in which he regularly crank-called the White House, ... (NYT 25/6)
- (21) ..., with only 2 per cent due to equipment failure or *human error*. (NYT 16/6.)

### 3.2. Derived premodifying adjectives and semantic relations with the noun phrase head

Many linguists argue that the existing lists of suffixes are not always complete so we decided to make our own list for analysis by combining different authors and their lists (Bauer 1983; Biber *et al.* 1999; Plag 2003; Đorđević 2007). In the end, we included 26 suffixes in the research, but found examples for 23 of them that when combined with noun, adjective or verb bases formed adjectives functioning as premodifiers. Before we start analysing semantic relations, we present a table containing all the suffixes and bases they were attached to in our research. The table shows that noun bases are far more productive than adjective and verb bases<sup>8</sup>:

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<sup>8</sup> Noun phrases containing derived premodifying adjectives formed by means of less frequent suffixes and therefore producing few examples will not be included in our discussion. These noun phrases usually contained the same premodifying adjectives but different phrase heads and the semantic relations were different. We decided to concentrate on more frequent bases and suffixes because the linguistic diversity was more obvious there and we had more examples to present and analyse.

**Table 1** Numbers of examples found per suffix and per base  
(S - suffix, N - noun, A - adjective, V - verb and T - total number)

S	-al	-an	-ary	-arian	-able	-ant	-atory	-esque	-en	-ese	-ent	-ic
N	1605	1287	66	47	0	4	0	9	37	73	0	481
A	52	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
V	0	0	0	0	178	11	8	0	0	0	102	0
T	1657	1287	66	47	178	15	8	10	37	73	102	481

  

S	-less	-ly	-ful	-ous	-ian	-ish	-ical	-ive	-ory	-worthy	-some
N	47	27	119	356	285	610	33	61	0	2	2
A	5	3	2	0	0	0	0	26	0	0	0
V	17	0	2	62	67	0	0	206	32	0	0
T	69	30	123	418	352	610	33	293	32	2	2

The two most frequent suffixes in our corpus were *-al* and *-an* and while *-al* was able to form adjectives using noun and adjective bases (usually Greco-Latin bases (Biber *et al.* 1999:532)), *-an* used only noun bases. Adjectives ending in *-al* formed various semantic relations with phrase heads, but the most frequent one was *quality* (22, 23, 24, 25, 26)

- (22) ..., *logistical issues* and security fears have played a part but England's will still be the second largest traveling base, ... (TG 1/6)
- (23) "The *herbal garden* is a symbol of healing and place," said Maganias (TG 9/6)
- (24) It started at around 10.30 pm local time when an *electrical transformer* exploded soon after a rainstorm ... (TT 2/6)
- (25) When he failed to obtain a receipt for the transaction, he lodged a *formal complaint* with NDS and ... (TT 20/6)
- (26) "As conditions improve," it added, Israel would consider "*additional ways* to facilitate the movement of people to and from Gaza." (NYT 20/6)

Premodifying adjectives ending in *-al* were also found forming different semantic relations with phrase heads such as the *objective type* where premodifying adjectives describe the action in which the phrase head is the main object (27), *purpose* where phrase heads describe the purpose for premodifying adjectives (28), the aforementioned *location type I* (29) and *subjective type I* (30) and *specialization* where premodifying adjectives describe an area of specialization or occupation for people presented by phrase heads (31):

- (27) ... al-Qaida in Iraq and other militants are trying to exploit the *political deadlock* to foment unrest and derail security gains ... (NYT 3/7)
- (28) Nadia was given a *nutritional shake*, an apple and some water and taken to a ... (TT 14/4)
- (29) Each *regional minister* has an office and a car. (TT 20/6)

(30) *Parental permission* is required. (NYT 26/6)

(31) A *mayoral spokesman* said the planning decisions were independent of other considerations. (NYT 21/6)

Adjectives ending in *-al* are extremely common and familiar in everyday conversation (Biber *et al.* 1999: 532). The suffix itself is relational without having a general meaning that can be expressed after being added to bases, especially noun bases. Sometimes, premodifying adjectives ending in *-al* can change places with their noun bases without being in danger of changing the meaning of the phrase (Bauer 1983: 223). This, however, should not be taken as a general rule for *-al* or any other semantically neutral suffixes. Our analysis of the examples we found proved that premodifying adjectives ending in *-al*, as a semantically neutral suffix, are able to form various semantic relations with phrase heads.

Unlike *-al* adjectives and their various semantic relations with phrase heads, *-an* adjectives form only one semantic relation with phrase heads and that is *location type 1* describing the origin or location for heads. This is also the case for *-ian*, *-ish* and *-ese* adjectives that are not as frequent as the previous two groups, but are usually analysed together with *-an* adjectives because they only form one meaning. Their bases are usually nouns in our corpus, except for *-ian* adjectives which also used adjective bases. The reason why they are usually analysed together is that they are not semantically neutral suffixes and premodifying adjectives ending in these suffixes designate a national, regional or religious group to which a referent belongs. That is why the semantic relation of *location type 1* as the only meaning in our examples comes as no surprise, since it is largely influenced by the general meaning of these suffixes.<sup>9</sup> Some typical examples are:

(32) But precisely how this *suburban father* and financial analyst came to join a terrorist network in the mountains of Waziristan ... (NYT 22/6)

(33) The only distinction Mr Hague could add was the promise to pressure “our *European allies*” to adopt the same kind ... (TT 16/5)

(34) The *Palestinian residents* have rejected the plan. (NYT 21/6)

(35) The *Turkish authorities* have the absolute right to assert that their criminal justice system ... (TG 2/6)

(36) *Chinese workers* are much more willing these days to defend their rights ... (NYT 20/6)

Suffixes that are mostly attached to verb bases are *-able*, *-ent*, *-ive* and *-less* although we found some *-ive* and *-less* adjectives formed out of adjective and verb bases. Adjectives ending in *-able* formed only an *objective type* semantic relation with phrase heads (37, 38), which is not a surprise since the *-able* suffix generally conveys two meanings: “capable of being Xed” and “liable or disposed to X” (Plag 2003: 119). It, therefore, contributes to the overall phrase meaning where certain capabilities or dispositions are presented by descriptive features of adjectives as processes in which phrase heads participate as objects. Adjectives ending in *-ent*, *-ive* and *-less* formed mostly semantic relations of *quality* (39, 40, 41, 42), *quality* and *purpose* in the same phrase (43) but also *quantity* (44). The suffix *-less* is the only one among these three that is not semantically neutral with its general meaning being “without X” (Plag 2003: 122), i.e. without certain quality in our example (42):

<sup>9</sup> The suffix *-ish* does not always designate national, regional or religious group to which referents of noun phrases belong but conveys meanings such as “somewhat X, vaguely X” or when attached to nouns referring to human beings “of the character of X, like X” (Plag 2003: 121).



- (37) Attempts to measure intelligence around the world are fraught with difficulty and many researchers doubt that IQ tests are a *suitable tool* for the job. (TG 30/6)
- (38) It was a *remarkable achievement*: Hess was barely talking even to his ... (TT 5/6)
- (39) ... names at the Yad Vashem memorial, there are many *different nationalities*. (TG 11/4)
- (40) China's decision to increase the flexibility of its exchange rate is a *constructive step* that can help safeguard the recovery and contribute to a more ... (NYT 19/6)
- (41) Henry let off by 'powerless' Fifa. (TT 22/4)
- (42) While so much of Somalia is plagued by *relentless violence*, ... (NYT 25.6)
- (43) For these reasons, *legislative measures* should be taken throughout Europe against the marketing ... (TG 20/6)
- (44) Even with the Americans gone, a green zone bombing would still be a *massive blow*. (TT 2/6)

Suffixes mostly attached to noun bases are *-ful*, *-ous*, *-ic* and *-ary* although we did find *-ful* adjectives with adjective and verb bases and *-ous* adjectives with verb bases. While *-ful*, *-ic* and *-ary* premodifying adjectives formed only one meaning with phrase heads in our corpus (*quality* for *-ful* and *-ic* adjectives and *purpose* for *-ary* adjectives), we cannot say that for *-ous* adjectives. Typical examples are:

- (45) At least 100 other lawsuits seek damages from Toyota for personal injury or *wrongful death* attributed to sudden acceleration. (TT 10/5)
- (46) "It's a *disgraceful scandal*. It would be disastrous for the climate," ... (TG 8/6)
- (47) "There is a theory saying a military crackdown can spread resentment and these *resentful people* will become guerrillas," said Thaskin... (TG 19/5)
- (48) "There is enough dividing Arabs and Israelis already without this *historic baggage*." (TG 11/4)
- (49) Protestant church leaders will today make a *symbolic visit* into the ... (TG 16/6)
- (50) ... to take *disciplinary action* but that time will come very soon. (TG 21/6)
- (51) During the 1980s Daniel Ortega, the *revolutionary leader* and current President, gave Pablo Escobar, the head of Colombia's Medellín cartel ... (TT 1/6)

Premodifying adjectives formed by means of *-ous* suffix formed different semantic relations with the phrase head: *quality* (50, 51) or *quantity* (52):

- (52) For people to make such a *ridiculous attack* is outrageous. (TT 12/5)
- (53) The restaurant, he worried rightfully, was a *hazardous adventure*, but he said it was worth trying. (NYT 19/6)
- (54) Mr. Gandhi is using his *enormous popularity* to broaden the party's political base, steering clear ... (NYT 4/6)

Only *-ful* is not a semantically neutral suffix with its general meaning “having X, being characterized by X” (Plag 2003: 120) and the meaning found for *quality* is very expected according to its meaning. The *quality* meaning relationship presents what values or qualities phrase heads have if *-ful* adjectives function as premodifiers and these adjectives usually express certain qualities or values. All the other suffixes do not help us to foresee the semantic relation between premodifying adjectives and phrase heads because their meaning can guide adjectives toward many different semantic relations with phrase heads.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Simple adjectives, in our research, were very frequent premodifiers when forming the meanings of *time* (*new mining, old king*), *quality* (*stark reminder, true ownership*) or *quantity* (*vast network, long journey*), and also quite regular when forming the meanings of *location type 1* (*public showdown, foreign relations*), *colour* (*blue uniforms, black dress*) or *subjective type 1* (*human error*). The results of our research show that simple premodifying adjectives are more frequent than derived ones are and these results are understandable and expected. We say this because, as we can see in many examples, they bring typical descriptions into the phrase structure and leave little or no space for misinterpretation of the phrase meaning.

The analysis of derived premodifying adjectives included 23 suffixes that when combined with noun, adjective or verb bases formed premodifiers whose semantic relations with noun phrase heads were discussed. Noun bases were by far the most frequent bases for making combinations. The most frequent meaning was *quality* (*additional ways, constructive step, powerless Fifa, wrongful death, historic baggage*) and adjectives with certain suffixes could form only this semantic relation with the phrase heads in our corpus (like *-ful* or *-ic* adjectives). We also found suffixes that were able to lead the adjective toward one certain semantic relation with the phrase head using their own semantic features. That was the case with *-an*, *-ian*, *-ish* and *-ese* adjectives because they formed only the meaning of *location type 1* with phrase heads (*suburban father, Chinese workers*), *-able* adjectives that formed only the meaning of *objective type* (*suitable tool*) or *-ary* adjectives that formed only the meaning of *purpose* in our corpus (*disciplinary action*). These examples show certain relationship between the morphological structure of premodifying adjectives and the phrase meaning containing them which is very rare when nouns function as premodifiers. All the other suffixes show that different meanings are possible with the same suffixes, for example, *electrical goods* = *quality* while *parental permission* = *subjective type 1* or *mayoral spokesman* = *specialization*; *legislative measures* = *quality* and *purpose* while *massive blow* = *quantity* or *hazardous adventure* = *quality* while *enormous popularity* = *quantity*, etc. We found that semantically neutral suffixes were mostly responsible for various semantic relations of noun phrases while suffixes that are not semantically neutral somehow, in many examples, guided phrase meanings toward certain semantic relations using the meaning of the derived adjectives that were formed by means of these suffixes. This shows that suffixes that are not semantically neutral influence the phrase meanings by their semantic characteristics. The examples with such suffixes proved that a relationship exists between the morphological structure of premodifying adjectives and noun phrase meanings.

The aim of the paper was to show the most frequent meanings of noun phrases with simple or derived adjectives as premodifiers. After our analysis of many examples found

in the corpus we can conclude that premodifying adjectives, simple or derived, formed typical and adjective specific semantic relations with phrase heads in the majority of examples found. Semantic relations which can be expressed only by the use of premodifying adjectives leave little or no room for misinterpretation of the phrase meaning, which is not the case with premodifying nouns. We realised that phrases with premodifying adjectives ending in suffixes that are not semantically neutral almost always expressed certain semantic relations under the influence of the semantic characteristics of these suffixes. This just proved the existence of a relationship between the morphological structure of certain premodifying adjectives and noun phrase meanings which, together with the other results of our research, answered the question of why premodifying adjectives are more frequent than premodifying nouns in many contemporary analyses and discussions. Premodifying nouns are known for expressing a wide range of different semantic relations without establishing a relationship between their morphological structure and phrase meanings and, as already said, there is much room for misinterpreting the phrase meanings.

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