

Postpositives in English: in search of *adjectives available*



Pavλίna Šaldová (Charles University, Prague)

ABSTRACT

Single postpositive adjectives as a minor type of noun postmodification in English are surveyed using a corpus sample to assess their retrievability, to provide an overview of the morphematic types, and their register distribution. Applying an ancillary test of positional mobility to characterize the postpositive occurrences, four broad groups are delimited. Postmodification by *a*-adjectives and adjectives in terminological compounds is infrequent, whereas the majority of the sample is constituted by adjectives in *-able/-ible* and in *-ed*, whose post-head position involves changes in semantic meaning, as well as occurrences which cannot be accounted for by the constraints stipulated in grammars. The frequency and patterning of *available*, *responsible* or *necessary* call for a re-evaluation of the function of postposition, encompassing all frequent forms and taking into account reference and other textual factors.

KEYWORDS

adjectives, corpus, English, noun phrase, postposition

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1 INTRODUCTION

Single postpositive adjectives in English are treated, in synchronic grammars, as an exception to the basic syntactic rule that adjectives precede nouns (*a black swan* ~ **a swan black*), and the postpositive use is described as subject to severe restrictions, such as the use of the superlative (*the best result possible*) or the temporal semantics of the head noun (*years past*) (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 445, 552). Fischer characterizes adjectival postposition in Present-Day English as “a mixed bag of remnants, with very little left in the way of general rules” (2006: 254), which leaves a number of questions unanswered as to the interpretative status of the position (iconicity), the degree of positional and functional variation (where both pre- and post-head positions are attested), or the representation of adjective types.

In literature, single postpositive adjectives have received varying degrees of attention focussing primarily on two (related) issues: the theoretical status of the postpositive placement and its relation to the attributive and predicative uses, i.e. whether pre-nominal adjectives are syntactically related to post-nominal adjectives, whether they are “both related to the postcopular adjectives ... [or whether they] are



simply variants of each other” (Alexiadou 2014: 90);¹ and the interpretative effects of the position.²

Although an adjective should, by default, be able to function in any of the attributive (*any intelligent person*), postpositive (*anyone intelligent*), and predicative (*anyone who is intelligent*) functions, many items are restricted (absolutely, in a given sense, or in various adjectival constructions) and classified accordingly into attributive-only and never-attributive adjectives (with a small subset of postpositive-only adjectives) (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 553).³

Given the intrinsic complexity combining the syntactic, semantic and interpretative aspects of the three positions (and functions) with the fact that not all adjectives have the same range of functions, it is felt that an approach to English postpositive adjectives using corpus data may stimulate a further inquiry into the matter, as in most accounts (stemming from approaches which rely on constructed examples) relatively few, identical and decontextualized examples are used throughout. A corpus-based survey may highlight some aspects which would otherwise remain unnoticed.

This study thus takes an exploratory corpus-based approach to probe into aspects of frequency, productivity, heterogeneity and, to a limited extent, variability of the position of English adjectives appearing in postposition. It aims 1. to tackle the question of searchability of the construction in a corpus (Section 3); 2. to survey the range and representation of adjectives attested as single postpositives in the sample (Section 4.1), and the range of written registers in which they appear (Section 4.2); 3. to use a heuristic criterion of positional fixedness/alternation to determine the proportion of various subtypes of postpositive constructions in the sample (Section 4.3); and 4. to outline an approach to postpositive adjectives integrating their other modifying uses (Section 5).

The main objective of this study is to determine the representation of the morphematic types of adjectives and their postpositive uses in a corpus sample. The results of this approach will serve to delineate areas for further inquiry, such as an account of why certain adjectives are frequent in this position and of instances where factors determining the post-head use are not easy to identify.

1 For the summary of the claims in favour of (‘reductionism’) and against (‘separationism’) derivationally relating the attributive and predicative use of adjectives, and other aspects under debate, see e.g. Alexiadou (2014).

2 There is a general agreement that “[w]hen two different positions are possible for adjective–noun combinations, the position the adjective occupies relative to the noun it modifies will have a reflex on the way it is interpreted” (Alexiadou 2014: 93). Cf. Bolinger’s (1967) interpretational difference between ‘permanent’ vs. ‘temporary’ (*navigable rivers* vs. *rivers navigable*) or Ferris (1993). For an overview of interpretative categories, see Cinque (2010).

3 Matthews (2014: 7–14) points out that this division assumes that postmodifiers are not attributive (i.e. function) and proposes a different hierarchy involving ‘position’, by dividing adjectives into ‘modifying-only’ (attributive-only vs. postpositive-only) and ‘bipositional’ (default vs. never-attributive). Cf. also Quirk et al. (1985: 403) for central and peripheral adjectives.

2 PRELIMINARIES

2.1 CONSTRAINTS AND CONDITIONS

In an English noun phrase, unlike in Romance languages,⁴ the default position of single adjectives and phrases without their own post-head dependents is before the head noun, “while others occur postpositively, i.e. after the head of the NP”⁵ (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 445), i.e. *a typical mistake* and *a mistake typical of beginners*, a light AP and a heavy AP, respectively. For the sake of simplicity, ‘pre-/post-head position’, or ‘pre-/postmodification’ are descriptors used in this study without any assumptions concerning the relation between position and function (i.e. whether the postpositive uses are more like attributive or predicative functions).

The post-head uses of adjectives are regarded as a “minor type of postmodification” (Quirk et al. 1985: 1293–96), subsuming heavy APs (where the adjective is complemented or modified, including comparative constructions or coordination: *a mistake typical of beginners*, *a mistake both typical and common*), fixed phrases (*the president elect*), and the so-called ‘postposed mode qualifier’ based on the French model (*Lobster Newburg*). Other postpositive occurrences are treated as an exception to the basic syntactic rule and as subject to severe restrictions, and can be summarized broadly as follows:

- (a) certain adjectives (*proper, absent, concerned, present, involved*) occur both in the pre- and post-head positions, but with a difference in sense: *a concerned face ~ the area concerned* (Quirk et al. 1985: 418–19);
- (b) certain adjectives (*appointed, desired, required; following, past, preceding; and positive*) can occur in either position: *at the appointed time ~ at the time appointed, in years past ~ in past years* (ibid: 419);
- (c) adjectives in *-able/-ible* can have postposition when the noun is modified by another adjective in the superlative, by *only*, or by the general ordinals *last, next*: *the best possible use ~ the best use possible, the only suitable actor ~ the only actor suitable* (ibid: 418);
- (d) temporary vs. permanent attributes: *the stars visible ~ the visible stars* (ibid: 419);
- (e) *a-* adjectives: *the house afloat, the boats afloat*;
- (f) institutionalized expressions, neoclassical style (cannot be modified): *heir apparent, attorney general, Asia Minor* (ibid: 418).

Other, more flexible, context-dependent and register-specific conditions apply in cases where the two positions alternate. Matthews points out instances of poetic li-

4 In Spanish, the pre-head position (explicative (nonrestrictive) function, subjective, inherent property) and the post-head position (specifying (determinative) function, objective, non-inherent property) are, to some extent, in a symmetric relation; e.g. *el fierro lobo* vs. *un lobo grande* (Zavadil and Čermák 2010: 444–45). For a comparison of Romance and Germanic languages, cf. Cinque (2010).

5 Postposition is obligatory with indefinite pronouns as NP heads (*someone young, something new*) and will be considered here only where relevant.



cence, such as a line from Tennyson *Of that great order of the Table Round*, where there is no implication “that there could be any reason, other than metrical convenience, why the adjective should be so used” (2014: 171).

Observing the effects of positional mobility of adverbs (*Why did you abruptly back away? vs. Why did you back away abruptly?*), Bolinger notices that “the stereotyped position of most English adjectives makes selective contrast impossible (except by means of contrastive stress)” (1952: 1122).⁶ However, “[w]e find an occasional adjective that does ... compare closely with the descriptive adverb in admitting two positions ... In *He belonged now to the world everlasting* we find a selective contrast, *everlasting* being opposed to *temporal*” (ibid: 1130). Selective contrast by postposition is achievable also in parallel constructions (“*In the body national as in the body natural ...*”, ibid.: 1131).

Bolinger’s (1967) distinction between relatively enduring ‘characteristic’ and ‘occasion’ use has been shown neither necessary nor sufficient for the account of the postpositive uses, e.g. by Ferris (1993: 48), who postulates different intensional patterns (*eligible students* = relation of ‘qualification’, *the students eligible* = relation of ‘assignment’ (ibid: 51)).⁷

James stipulates that “given an appropriate context, *the man happy* or *the man sick* can be perfectly acceptable” (1979: 687), on the condition that “the existence of a referent or referents describable by the NP [is] presupposed” (ibid.).

Blöhdorn presents the so-called ‘Attributive Postmodification Filter’ (2009: 161–162) combining three criteria which render a post-head light adjective grammatical: “the adjective receives a focus value within the phrase structure” (following Firbas (1964)); “the adjective is a ‘contextually-non-bound item’” (following James (1979) and Sgall et al. (1986));⁸ and “the determiner has to be ‘quantificational’ (Mil-sark 1977)”. The adjective thus receives a ‘focus semantic value’ (Blöhdorn 2009: ibid), which can be observed, with varying degrees, in the four types of postpositive uses discussed in Section 4.3.

2.2 MINOR TYPE OF POSTMODIFICATION

Postmodification by adjectives (both light and heavy APs) is regarded as “a minor type of postmodification” (Quirk et al. 1985: 1293–96), and ‘minor’ is likely to mean ‘infrequent’. In contrast to other forms of postmodification (finite and nonfinite clauses, PPs, or appositives), no quantification of APs as postmodifiers is attempted in Biber et al., the only mention being that “[c]ertain adjectives, such as *involved*, *available*, and *concerned*, tend to be postposed after a noun head” (1999: 519).

‘Minor’ also means that less attention is paid to this structure. The only two studies which use corpora and can provide some quantitative assessment seem to be Blöhdorn (2009) studying single postpositive adjectives in the Brown and Frown corpora,

6 Ferris (1993: 45): “No amount of determination to treat the adjectives as emphatic permits them to become postnominal ... **a child intelligent could do that in five minutes* or **the juggler skilful wanted a pay raise*.”

7 For the discussion of the the interpretative effects, see Cinque (2010).

8 Cf. also Svoboda (1970) and Svoboda (1987).

and Schönthal (2013) focussing on postmodification by adjectives (both light and heavy) in the BNC.⁹

Schönthal's (2013: 36) estimate based on extrapolation is that postmodifying adjectives (both light and heavy APs) represent 0.78% of all adjectives in the BNC. In his sample of 2,602 post-head adjectives,¹⁰ light APs constitute 8%. These numbers, however, include items such as *International* or *United* as highly frequent constituents of names of companies or sports clubs, and also indefinite compound pronouns as heads of NPs. Discarding pronominal heads, the proportion of single postpositive adjectives amounts to some 10% of the post-head adjectives.

Figures reported in Blöhdorn (2009: 9–21), the only study focusing specifically on single adjectives searching among all adjectives in the Brown and Frown corpora (1 million words each, the total of 153,895 adjectives), suggest that post-head adjectives (both light and heavy APs, including modifiers of indefinite pronouns) represent almost 2% of all adjective uses. Discarding pronominal heads, the light AP uses amount to 0.2% of all adjectives in the corpora and around some 17% of postmodifying uses.¹¹

These slightly disparate proportions reflect differences in methodologies and the scope of the two studies. Moreover, any generalizations will correlate with the frequency of adjectives in specific functions, which are register sensitive (cf. Biber et al. 1999: 506). The same applies to the occurrences of adjectives as types: Schönthal (2013: 41) indicates that five adjectives *concerned*, *available*, *present*, *possible*, *responsible* represent 82.7% of all single postpositives in his sample.¹² Blöhdorn (2009) identified 384 tokens and 145 types, the most frequent being *general*, *incorporated* and *available* (80, 27 and 26 instances).

As is evident, a more systematic description should be sought, which would take into account the heterogenous nature of the adjectives occurring postpositively.

9 Markus (1997) used the LOB corpus only to illustrate selected combinations.

10 Schönthal (2013) classifies the postpositive uses into eight categories. His examples include e.g. *attorney general*, *members present*, but also *something surprising*, *...handed a coconut fresh from the tree*, *an egalitarian sense of solidarity quite unlike the stratified society outside*, *her tendency to play parts older than herself*, *confronted with truths too horrible to face*, *the date so fixed* etc.

11 The percentages are not given in the study. The total of 438 single postpositives is reported. 54 tokens, however, can be discarded as they are not English NPs, and, in addition, it can be assumed that a number of items listed in Tables at pp. 18–20 do not represent instances of adjectival postposition (e.g. *wide*, *high*, *still* or *west*), so the number of instances can be expected to be lower.

12 Schönthal's (2013: 37) thirty most frequent post-head adjectives (both light and heavy APs): *available*, *concerned*, *United*, *International*, *involved*, *necessary*, *responsible*, *similar*, *different*, *full*, *new*, *wrong*, *likely*, *special*, *capable*, *interested*, *due*, *present*, *appropriate*, *possible*, *relevant*, *suitable*, *greater*, *inherent*, *payable*, *important*, *comparable*, *specific*, *common* and *equal*.



3 EXTRACTION OF THE SAMPLE

The written section of *The British National Corpus* (BNC)¹³ was used to retrieve a sample representing the range of adjectives used in the post-head position. Single post-positive adjectives are not only infrequent (cf. 2.2) but also inherently difficult to retrieve, as a sequence of positions tagged 'N(oun)' — 'A(djective)' without any further limitation is too general (210,055 hits in the subcorpus). To ensure manageability of the data in this first approximation, a third position was added to narrow the range of syntactic patterns retrieved. In this study a choice was made to restrict the N-A sequences by a following V(erb) in any form, yielding 6,301 hits.¹⁴

Potential false positives were further filtered out by constraining the adjective position to instances in lower case (to filter out parts of proper nouns, e.g. *South African, Ltd., Inc.*, titles, and block language), and by using a negative list of adjectives which are not plausible light postmodifiers (usually resultatives and expressions of measure).¹⁵

This query yielded 1.800 lines, out of which 30% had to be removed after manual checking, resulting in the final sample size of 1.247 concordances (cf. Table 1). The procedure included reading the lines and determining, with the help of *The Oxford English Dictionary Online* (OED), information on word-class status, whether the items could be regarded as adjectives and whether they could be interpreted as light postmodifiers.¹⁶

13 The search was limited to the written component as single postpositives (both adjectives and participles) generally occur in formal written styles (James 1979: 688). Furuta (2012: 515) reports that single past participles are six times more frequent in the written section (65.17/pmw) of the BNC than in the spoken component (9.66/pmw). In addition, instances of spoken language are notoriously difficult to analyse.

Text HPY (Ferris 1993) had to be removed from the search as its Chapter 5 focuses on single postpositives and contains a number of speculative and ungrammatical examples, which, unless discarded, appear among the concordances.

14 An alternative or simultaneous option (third position in the query) to prevent excess quantity of false positives can be to retrieve the N-A sequence followed by a punctuation mark (over 30,000 hits), should a larger sample be desired. The representation of adjective types thus obtained does not differ from the results of the query used herein.

15 The regular expressions in the query: [tag="N.*" & word!="term|word"][tag="AJO" & word="[a-z].*" & word!="old|young|senior|junior|long|high|wide|tall|thick|thin|deep|world-wide|billion-worth|metric|western|international|daily|weekly|great|full|right|alone|fresh|even|happy|safe|fine|stent|arid|special|freezing|entertaining|jnr|saline|sure|only|open|pregnant|clear|intensive|prone|slow|clean|good|dry"]

The list can be extended further, especially with short adjectives (resultatives) and items appearing in constructions such as *five months pregnant*, *two meters wide*, etc. Inversely, these adjectives can be used in additional searches to justify/problematize their inclusion in the list.

16 Some excluded instances represent potentially interesting recurring patterns, i.e. *This suggests (...) that the spectrum function E is independent of the energy production processes for all wave numbers large compared with those at which the production occurs.*



The retrieval of the target combination is complicated not only by interfering systemic factors inherent in an analytical type of language, both at the syntactic and word-formation levels, and the interface of the two (e.g. the word class status of some adverbs/adjectives, participles/adjectives, etc.), but also by the fact that the query is fully dependent on word-class labels determined by the tagger (the CLAWS system¹⁷ in our case). The query yields instances of inconsistent tagging or ambiguous (port-manteau) word class status, mainly of certain adverbs/adjectives and *-ing* and *-ed* participles/adjectives. Based on the exploratory character of this study, most *-ed* and *-ing* items yielded by the query were included in the sample so that areas of potential overlap remain visible and can motivate searches of analogous items (cf. also the discussion of example (3.b) below and in 4.1).

The interfering false positives are syntactic patterns with complex transitive verbs such as *keep*, *leave*, *make*, *find*, *hold*, etc. illustrated in (1a); absolute adverbial constructions (*with their mouths open*); instances of apposition (1b); or elliptical/fragmentary structures (1c):

- (1) a. *the number of observations necessary to render an inductive inference legitimate*
- b. *Some of the vowels ... are central and some are not; the feature central would identify...*
- c. *Atlantic event magnificent says PM*

Another complicating factor is the tagging of adjectives due to the highly productive pattern of conversion from adjectives to nouns, where lexicalized nouns are tagged incorrectly as adjectives (2a-b), including adjectives used as a fused modifier-head (partial conversion). Salient are *-ic(ical)* nouns as in (2c), but many other suffixed or simple results of conversion into nouns (2d) are also tagged incorrectly, including interesting cases not recognized as nouns by the OED (2e,f). Instances interesting from the typological point of view are given in (2g) where the first element is a plural modifier/gender marker to a zero-marked plural noun.

- (2) a. *The surface integral may be converted to a volume integral.*
- b. *party faithful; Dublin deaf; the Newry select*
- c. *the study of an inner city problematic; a bastard classical took over*
- d. *the Hacienda massive; raspberry cordial; Pisco sour; development on a Teesside common; forest fair; McCartney sound-a-like*
- e. *Unlike the novelistic of cinema ..., the television novelistic is ...*
- f. *outputs from the lower frequency bistable are ...;*¹⁸ *a simple CMOS astable*
- g. *the dilettanti rich followed limply behind; women religious*

Another complex issue is the discrimination between homonymous adjectives and adverbs (viewed either as an instance of conversion or a territory of functional over-

¹⁷ For the description and discussion, see *Reference Guide for the British National Corpus (XML Edition)* at <http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/docs/URG/posguide.html>.

¹⁸ *The 4013 i.c. contains two independent bistables so a 2-bit latch may be made using only one chip.*



lap). Thus *abreast* (3a) is tagged as an adjective on analogy with *asleep*; *country-wide* in (3b) is tagged as an adjective in contrast to *nation-wide* tagged as an adverb. (3c) shows one more example where a homonymous adverb is tagged as an adjective.

- (3) a. *where rocks ... came so near together that two horses abreast could hardly pass*
 b. *the sample of schools country-wide showed...*
 c. *the supply of alcoholic liquor ... to any private friends of the holder of the licence bona fide entertained by him at his own expense*

Compounds represent another systemic difficulty, especially the highly productive adjective-centred compound adjectives ‘noun +adjective’ (4a), or some ‘noun+noun’ compounds (4b):

- (4) a. *tax free, lead free, price sensitive, world famous, crystal clear, water soluble, cost effective, the most computer illiterate, H pylorus positive*
 b. *video nasty, DNA duplex*

Other instances of false positives involve phrases from languages other than English (5a), Latin-based binomial nomenclatures (5b), and excerpts representing older stages of English (5c).

- (5) a. *le français fundamental*
 b. *Nucellum lapillus, crocus biflorus*
 c. *cunnes wise; Shakespeare’s Sonnet 54: O, how much more doth beauty beauteous seem*

All other examples used in the discussion below that are not part of the main sample are also taken from the written section of the BNC, unless indicated otherwise. The same holds for any additional searches concerning the variability of the position (Sections 4 and 5).

4 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The sample of 1,247 postpositives contains 150 types of adjectives (Table 1), out of which 50 adjectives appear with a frequency higher than one (cf. the superscript figures in Column 3, Table 1). Ten most frequent adjectives represent 80% of the sample conforming to the Zipfian distribution (Table 6 in Section 5).

4.1 MORPHOLOGY

Table 1 outlines a broad division of the postpositives in the sample based on their morphematic structure.¹⁹

¹⁹ The division is inevitably a simplification, not discriminating between un/productive suffixes (e.g. *payable* vs. *possible*, *extant*, etc.).



morphology		types	tokens
-able -ible	24	available ²⁵² payable ⁴⁵ receivable ⁴ imaginable ³ allowable ² applicable ² detectable ² recoverable ² acceptable achievable assessable attainable chargeable liable obtainable suitable unenforceable unimaginable unquestionable responsible ⁴⁴ possible ²³ visible ⁵ invisible permissible	397
(un-)-ed	36	concerned ⁴²⁸ interested ⁸ unemployed ⁵ unknown ³ excreted ² raised ² unallotted ² unseen ² appalled bereaved collected combined deferred designated detailed devoted driven excited listed machined missed selected stored tested textured unaddressed unbeaten unclothed undetected unionised unmounted unscathed unsecured unserved unspecified used	480
-ing	11	outstanding ²³ everlasting ² approaching deteriorating disappearing existing occurring paying pending prevailing remaining	34
-al	10	general ⁸ martial ⁶ fiscal ³ personal ³ royal ³ floral ² temporal ² digital financial spiritual	30
-ous	4	fuliginous gracious nervous previous	4
-ent	6	present ¹⁰⁵ apparent ⁴ adjacent ³ absent magnificent violent	115
-ic(al)	7	artistic economic ecclesiastical electronic exotic grammatical scientific	7
-ful	2	beautiful wonderful	2
other	20	corporate ¹⁸ necessary ¹⁴ rogatory ⁷ extant ⁴ absolute ² intact ² angry correct emeritus genteel golden guilty implicit designate morose opposite presumptive roman supreme utilitarian	61
a-	4	alive ⁷ asleep ⁴ afloat ³ awake ²	16
compounds	12	countrywide ⁶ post-xx ⁴ dark-ringed fitted-out left-right magneto-optical near-impossible par-excellence pre-1900 so- called upstream worthwhile	20
simple	14	proper ⁴⁹ due ⁶ galore ⁵ certain ⁴ simple ⁴ overt ³ new ² real ² barren dead dire free ill usual	81
types	150		1247

TABLE 1. Postpositive adjectives in the sample (superscript values = number of occurrences where $n > 1$)

The most numerous (and questionable in terms of the word class identification) are (un-)-ed forms (480). “Participles have always been considered as exhibiting features of two word classes, namely those of verbs and adjectives... it does not come as a surprise that constructions containing participles may have similar ambivalent nature.” (Schönefeld 2015: 424)

The traditional division of -ed forms into adjectival and verbal passives has been modified by Embick (2004) adding a resultative type, and by Sleeman (2011) adding a fourth type of ‘eventive property’ reading, and proposing several criteria along the scale between fully adjectival (stative) and fully eventive types of participles to distinguish among ‘adjectival’, ‘resultative’, ‘eventive property’ and ‘fully eventive’ types.



The application of a test consistent with the ‘more adjectival’ half of the scale, namely insertion of a copular verb *remain*, however, seems inadequate as it would equal to regarding the postpositive use as derived from the predicative use, which position has been avoided in this study (cf. note 1). In addition, this test is also not applicable to all adjectives occurring after the head (e.g. *proper* or *concerned*). Similarly, the presence of *un-* prefix in fourteen of our *-ed* instances would group participles containing this prefix as resultatives, which, nevertheless, are claimed to be “always prenominal” and as such excluded from the post-head position (Sleeman 2011: 1572). *Concerned*, regarded as an adjective in its post-head use by Quirk et al. (1985: 419), Biber et al. (1999), and Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 455), does not seem to comply with any of Sleeman’s (2011) criteria, whereas *involved* (also deemed as an adjective by all the grammars) could be regarded as fully eventive.

Conversely, all the *-ed* forms retrieved by the query can appear in the pre-head position, which is a criterion for their inclusion among the eventive property types (but not among the fully eventive cases). Although six *-ed* forms in our sample are forms of eventive verbs, they all express ‘the target state’, i.e. display ‘stativization’ associated with adjectival participles (i.e. cannot combine with the progressive, Embick (2004); Hallman (2021: 68)). Hallman also maintains that “any function or meaning the participle has in one usage but not the others cannot be attributed to *-EN* ... but must be attributed to the context it occurs in in that usage” (2021: 64). As the theoretical status of the post-head light uses is left out of account in this survey, the *-ed* forms yielded by the query were included.²⁰

If a decision is made to determine the type of reading of the *-ed* form in the post-head position, the same should be applied to present participles, as well as deverbal modifiers ending in *-able/-ible*, which also “present several readings, located on a spectrum from fully eventive to purely stative” (Sleeman 2011: 1570). Adopting this view would, however, require extending the assessment of the respective readings to *-able* adjectives as well, which is beyond the scope of the paper.

The same view is applied to *-ing* forms (which do not form a uniform category either, as some *-ing* forms may nowadays require an adverb in the pre-head position, e.g. *naturally occurring antihormones*, *OED*).²¹ The inclusion of the *-ed/-ing* forms in the sample serves, it is hoped, to create a useful intersection between the verbal and adjectival properties of the forms under investigation.

20 A non-discriminatory approach is also justified by the fact that the query did not retrieve the most frequent post-head item (*involved*), as it is tagged as a verb form. I would like to thank one of the reviewers for indicating another possible criterion, i.e. the consistency of tagging. As the following six forms (*collected*, *combined*, *listed*, *raised*, *selected*, and *tested*) in a sequence N-A-V are tagged prevalently as participles (not adjectives or ambiguous), they could have been discarded. On the other hand, a difference between *excreted*, tagged consistently as an adjective, or *detailed*, *devoted*, *excited*, *stored*, tagged as ambiguous, is hard to draw.

21 Cf. e.g. Meltzer-Asscher (2010).



As expected, the second most represented group, both in terms of types and tokens, are the *-able/-ible* adjectives (397). What is noticeable is the presence of *un-*forms²² as a feature shared with the *-ed* forms.

Considering the analytical character of English, it may tentatively be expected that in order for an adjective to be placed after the head some morphological marker is a requisite.

It is true that the majority of the types contain a distinctive adjectival suffix (or are perceived as adjectives even though not as results of some word-formation process in a present-day perspective, e.g. *absent*, *morose*). A complementary tendency, however, is observed with simplex adjectives (excluding those that are part of institutionalized combinations, e.g. *market overt*, *voire dire*) where a pattern is observed with a plural noun or a capitalized proper noun preceding the simplex adjective signalling the word class of the head noun unequivocally (*all things purple*, *pastures new*, *chattels real*, *angles left-right*, *George ill*).²³

All adjectives in *-ic* (*-ical*) follow general nouns *matters* and *things* (cf. 4.3, Group 4).

A specific group are compound adjectives of various types (*a job worthwhile*, *angles left-right*, cf. *left-right divisions*), which seem to be generally left out of descriptions of postposition and can be considered interesting examples at lexico-syntactic interface.

4.2 REGISTERS

The distribution of the instances across the domains (registers) corresponds with the encompassing nature of our data set. As can be expected, postpositives are most represented (according to their frequency per one million words) in informative registers of 'commerce & finance' and sciences. The lowest frequencies are observed in 'imaginative' writing, as shown in Table 2.²⁴

A more detailed break-down into Lee's genre specification²⁵ shows that 43 genres (out of 46 written genres) are represented, with the i.p.m frequency ranging from 'tabloid newspapers' (2.1 i.p.m), 'broadsheet newspapers sports sections' (2.9 i.p.m) and fiction (3.03) at the bottom of the scale, to administrative texts, academic texts on law, politics, education and commerce with frequencies over 30 i.p.m.

22 "Many adjectives in *-able* suffix have negative counterparts in *un-* prefix, and some of these are attested much earlier than their positive counterparts, the chronological difference being especially great in the case of *unthinkable* adj." (OED)

23 Cf. the relatively rare examples of false positives in (2g) *the diletanti rich* or *women religious*, where the head nouns have the zero plural form.

24 These frequencies represent only cases of postpositive uses in sequences N-A followed by a verb form. The overall frequencies in the corpus are, accordingly, higher.

25 Cf. *Reference Guide for the British National Corpus (XML Edition)* <http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/docs/URG.xml?ID=codes#classcodes>



Domain in the written section of the BNC	frequency	i.p.m.
Informative: commerce & finance	222	27.36
Informative: social science	345	22.04
Informative: natural & pure science	71	16.68
Informative: applied science	128	16.11
Informative: world affairs	209	10.86
Informative: belief & thought	35	10.3
Informative: leisure	120	8.68
Informative: arts	56	7.49
Imaginative	61	3.1
total	1247	

TABLE 2. Relative frequencies of postpositive adjectives in registers

4.3 ADJECTIVE MOBILITY

The patent heterogeneity of the sample can be scaled down using a criterion of positional mobility, i.e. by focussing on fixedness of a given postpositive adjective to the post-head position (and a particular head noun).²⁶

The following four-member grid can be established according to whether specific adjectives can or must appear postpositively:²⁷ the adjective is altogether excluded from the pre-head position (Group 1); fixed phrases with no pre-head alternant (Group 2); the adjectives occur both attributively and postpositively, but with a difference in sense (Group 3); the examples can be seen as alternating with the pre-head position and the postpositive use being subject to severe restrictions (Group 4).

Group	prototypical examples (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 455)	tokens
1	<i>the house [currently ablaze], all people [now alive], the ones asleep</i>	21 1.7%
2	<i>the heir apparent, the devil incarnate, the poet laureate</i>	35 2.8%
3	<i>the people present, the cars involved, the students concerned, the city proper</i>	582 46.7%
4	<i>the only day suitable, years past, proof positive, matters financial, all things Irish</i>	609 48.8%
total		1247 100%

TABLE 3. Groups according to positional fixedness

²⁶ This criterion is used in classification of postpositives by Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 455) and is preferred as heuristics at this point as some constraints given in 2.1 may overlap, as in *the only river navigable* (the temporary duration and the presence of *only*).

²⁷ These groups are numbered in an inverse order in Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 455). In this section they are ordered according to the proportion of the instances they represent in the sample, from the least to the most represented (Table 3).



To assess variability of the position, examples of pre-head uses were searched in the written component of the BNC. With the exception of Table 6, quantification of the pre-head uses is not provided, and the respective instances serve only to provide counterexamples to post-head uses. It must be borne in mind, however, that the division into the four groups is only ancillary and instances in our sample can be seen as a gradient, observable also within the subgroups.

Group 1 ('house ablaze type', 1.7% of the sample), characterized as "altogether excluded from attributive position" (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 446), subsumes adjectives which are deemed as 'never-attributive' (i.e. cannot occur in the pre-head position unless modified, e.g. **their awake children ~ their still awake children*, *ibid.*: 559–60), and involves namely adjectives with a prefix *a-* originating in the Old English preposition *on*,²⁸ and a postpositive-only adjective *galore* (of foreign origin), which are bordering on adverbs.

The sample contains *alive*, *asleep*, *afloat*, *awake* and *galore*. The most represented adjective *alive* is found to postmodify either the head noun *man* (6a) or a proper name (6b). As (6b) shows, its post-head use correlates with a productive pattern observed when postpositive adjectives follow proper names (cf. Group 4), i.e. in cases with the selective contrast achieved via ancillary or coordinated antonymy (Jones 2002).

The contrastive parallel construction operates inversely in (6c), where *alive* is used in the pre-head position, with the constraints on *a-*adjectives overridden by their participation in a larger construction (coordination in premodification and syntagmatic antonymic relations). It functions as a premodifier in contrast with another premodifier expressed by a noun (*object*), which cannot be used postpositively. Such overarching syntactic (rhetoric) devices seem to override the constraints on the respective *a-*adjectives (hand in hand with the semantic type of the head noun, as *alive* here differs also in meaning from (6a,b)).

- (6) a. *How many brave men had been murdered for this? Perhaps no man alive could tell.*
 b. *Kirillov alive has proved nothing, and Kirillov dead will himself be nothing.*
 c. *Barthes seems to be evoking the flowing character of the text, suggesting its dynamic, alive nature rather than its stolid, object nature as a text.*

The pattern observed in all three occurrences of *afloat* (7a), as well as with *alive* (7b) and *awake* (7c), highlights the indeterminate status of these adjectives, as the relations within the NP are rather complex (specific temporal semantics of the head noun and the (possessive) determiner expressing the 'subject' of the potentially predicative reading of *afloat* or *alive*).

28 Schlüter (2008) shows that the respective *a-*adjectives differ highly in their ability to be used in the pre-head position, correlating with the presence of premodifiers, coordination, and semantic and phonological factors to varying degrees. Their pre-head uses "are a relatively recent phenomenon ... [that] hinges upon the more general increase in the grammatical complexity of attributive structure ... progressively available since the nineteenth century." (*ibid.*: 176)



- (7) a. *my spells afloat were few; your first experiences afloat; your first attempts afloat will be controlled by the instructor*
 b. *Our brief little bit of time alive is everything we will ever experience or know.*
 c. *during her times awake*

Group 2 ('*heir apparent* type', 2.8% of the sample) contains fixed phrases with no pre-head alternative in a given N-A combination. As phraseological units, they display grammatical and lexical inflexibility and semantic unity,²⁹ and "are restricted to the nomenclatures and classificational paradigms of administration, cultural and social norms, or technically regulated fields ... irrespective of their etymological background" (Markus 1997: 491), but undoubtedly under French or Latin influence (cf. Aristotelian *genus proximum et differentia specifica*).

Rogatory in (8a) is the only adjective in the sample confined to the post-head position and to only one head noun. Other adjectival constituents of terminological compounds function in pre-head uses with other head nouns, and their post-head position co-determines the terminological status of the compound, as in (8b). Their restricted combinatory potential is shown in (8c), where few alternating adjectives function as differentiae; inversely, in (8d) the adjective is postpositive only with a limited range of head nouns. With some other legal terms (e.g. *body corporate*) the position of the adjective in the compound alternates (and may be included in Group 4).³⁰

- (8) a. *letters rogatory*
 b. *court martial (~ martial law, art), market overt (~ overt acts)*
 c. *chattels personal/real, heir apparent/presumptive*
 d. *battle/princess royal, peers/lords temporal, procurator/depute fiscal (~ fiscal policy), day/year/term/sum certain*

The various combinations of *absolute* are comparatively interesting, as in (9a) the adjective follows a compound noun with an adjectival element at the end. In (9b) *absolute* is a part of a term without any alternative adjective position. (9c) and (9d) illustrate two different senses which the adjective has in the post-head position, with the latter ('complete') pertaining to Group 4.

- (9) a. *fee simple (fee simple absolute/conditional)*
 b. *term of years absolute*
 c. *decree absolute (opposed to decree nisi, 'taking effect immediately')*
 d. *darkness absolute (~ absolute darkness)*

The sample contains other minor cases of adjectives confined to an invariable position, namely exclamations (10a), and one instance of a hapax (10b).

²⁹ Markus calls these items instances of 'historical deep-freeze' (1997: 490).

³⁰ Instances in (8c,d) are included in this group due to their terminological classificatory nature. Data from Google Books N-gram Viewer indicate, however, that the degree of variation is relatively high even in these instances.

- (10) a. *goodness gracious*
 b. *the treatment of anorexia nervous must still be considered unsatisfactory* (cf. *anorexia nervosa*)



Group 3 ('people present type', 46.7% of the sample) consists of three frequent adjectives³¹ which occur both as premodifiers and postmodifiers, but with a difference in sense. "Postpositive *present* (or *absent*) denotes a temporary state of affairs ... The same applies to *involved* and *concerned*, though here the attributive sense differs more. ... Postpositive *proper* means "in the strict/proper sense of the term" (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 445).

The degree of sense differentiation can be observed in the differing strong collocates correlating with each position (Table 4). In this sense, observations valid for Group 2, where the relation between the position and meaning is lexicalized to an absolute degree, lexical selectional preferences are at play in these instances as well, albeit to a lesser degree.

<i>present</i>	<i>day, case, time, system, study, value, state, government, form, situation, position</i> <i>people, member, others, man, woman, cell, species, staff</i>
<i>concerned</i>	<i>people, citizen, party, face, voice, look, neighbour</i> <i>person, people, country, party, company, area, individual, authority, child, case</i>
<i>proper</i>	<i>place, way, job, person, procedure, training, time, use, understanding, role</i> <i>round, Serbia, tournament, cup, city, conference, Francia, competition, embryo</i>

TABLE 4. Collocates of *present*, *concerned*, *proper* in the BNC (pre-head collocates in italics)

Applying these criteria (sense differentiation in the positional alternates and preference for one of the positions with respect to particular head nouns), other adjectives could potentially be included in this group (e.g. *responsible* or *outstanding*), cf. Section 5 for a discussion.

Group 4 (48.8% of the sample) is delimited by Huddleston and Pullum as examples which "alternate with the attributive construction: compare *the only suitable day* [~*the only day suitable*], etc. The postpositive use of these adjectives is subject to severe restrictions." (2002: 445) Examples given therein are: i. *matters financial* and *all things Irish*, ii. *proof positive* and *years past*, and iii. *the only day suitable*.

This group thus contains examples where alternation of the position of given adjectives is attested, although its source (function) can vary and remains to be determined.

As for (i), the sample contains eight adjectives following the general head nouns *things* (11a) and *matters* (11b).³² As general nouns border semantically on indefinite

³¹ An additional 810 instances of *involved* could, potentially, be added here, had they been tagged as an adjective in the corpus.

³² Other general nouns, albeit more specific nouns such as *questions* or *issues*, do not seem to participate in this construction.



pronouns (with a zero article expressing indefinite reference in all our instances), the resemblance may be said to translate to the position of the modifier (restrictor). In addition, adjectives attested in this position are morphologically complex.³³ All need not be present in all instances, as shown in (11c), probably due to the presence of other quantifiers (*some*).

- (11) a. (*all*) things artistic, digital, electronic, existing, exotic, scientific, unseen, wonderful; her taste in all things artistic was polished
 b. matters ecclesiastical, economic, grammatical; whatever part of the brain it is that deals with matters grammatical can be regarded as...
 c. some idea of the basics of processors and things digital will help

Moving the adjective before the noun seems more plausible with *matters* due to its abstract sense, as *things* following an adjective imply ‘things in the physical sense’ (*~electronic things*). The pre-head position thus seems constrained by the meaning of the whole construction.

(ii) Postpositive *past*³⁴ occurs with temporal nouns (cf. **approaches past*), and *positive* only with *proof*. As the adjective in *proof positive* can occupy both positions, the choice is motivated stylistically (to match other legal terms). To this category a number of adjectives illustrated in (12a,b,c), of French and Latin provenance, can be subsumed, with stylistic preferences for each position as they appear with a restricted terminological set of head nouns.³⁵ Example (12d) illustrates two postpositive adjectives, with *general director designate* also attested (Google).

- (12) a. body corporate (cf. body politic) ~ corporate body
 b. Dr E. Ramey, professor emeritus of physiology at ... ~ Mr A. Chandler, emeritus professor of business history at ...
 c. entente floral ~ floral entente
 d. the new director general designate's previous work ~ the general director designate

Relying on analogy with the examples above, we may tentatively add to this group those instances displaying varying effects of alternation, which can be regarded historically as relics. They testify to the stages of development where single postmodifiers were more common, pertaining to the poetic style (hyperbaton) as in (13a,b), or resulting from analogies with Latin sources (13f).

33 Simplex adjectives appear in coordination: *Seduced by all things fine and feudal...* or are rare (*all things purple*). Adjectives denoting nationalities are frequent, but they have been filtered out by the query using lower case adjectives only.

34 Not attested in the sample as *past* in *days past* or *years past* is tagged as an adverb by CLAWS tagging.

35 In Google Books N-gram Viewer, *body corporate*, *professor emeritus*, *director general* and their alternants display converging tendencies.



Example (13c) shows a now lexicalized combination *pastures new* ('a field or area of thought or activity'), alternating with *new pastures* in (13d). A slightly different degree of lexicalization is displayed by *body beautiful* (13e),³⁶ and possibly also in *life everlasting* in (13f). It is evident that changing the position in instances (13c,e,f) results in the loss of allusion to their sources (as in, to a certain degree, *body corporate*), representing adjustment to the regular pattern of modification.

- (13) a. *thy rocks, and streams, Slumbers! — while tribes fuliginous invade The soft, romantic, consecrated scenes*
 b. *shady the cedars around that place; the ripe fruit golden grows there*
 c. *A good run in pastures new would do you a world of good.*
 d. *It is now time to move on to new pastures. My ambition now is to move into film.*
 e. *This is a culture which glorifies the body beautiful, placing great emphasis on physical fitness, sexuality and youth. (OED)*
 f. *How can an infinite intelligence and life everlasting³⁷ exist within finite bounds?*

Another discernible pattern, illustrated already in (6b), is the contrastive use of adjectives based on employing antonymic relations syntagmatically for comparison. Such comparison can be marked morphologically (*more* in (14a)), lexically (*preferable* in (14b)), syntactically via contrastive coordination (14c) or via a combination of synonymic and antonymic relations in the text, as in (14d). Adjectives following proper names express some temporary aspect of the otherwise definite entity, and when not explicitly in an antonymic contrastive relation, they can be preceded by the indefinite article (14e).³⁸

- (14) a. *I fear the world invisible is more visible to him than to the rest of us.*
 b. *Francis decided that Lacuna angry was almost preferable to Lacuna gloating.*
 c. *The last few days he had been getting on her nerves. George fit and well could get you down, but George ill was a nightmare.*
 d. *She couldn't remember ever seeing Lydia so cast down. [intervening 16 clauses] If the presence of Beuno was all that would cheer up Lydia then Betty felt that he should be here. Lydia morose seemed a painfully unnatural phenomenon.*

36 "originally used for emphasis; now used to imply the obsessive pursuit of an idealized form or vision" (OED, "beautiful", adj1c)

37 Possibly a calque of *vitam aeternam* in the Apostolic Creed. All quotations in OED provide instances of *everlasting* in the pre-head position only: ("everlasting", adj1) e.g. 1500 *for-gyuenes of synnes ayen rysynge of flesshe, & euerlastynge lyf*. 1554 *Tyll Ioy and euirlestand lyfe*. This combination is lexicalized into a plant name for *Anaphalis margaritacea*: *Southern folk medicine employed the use of life-everlasting or everlasting root to induce sweating...* (OED), cf. also other plant names: *mountain everlasting*, *mouse-ear everlasting*, etc. Cf. also *world everlasting*.

38 This use is different from the use of proper names as a common noun, as *a Hercules*, *a Mary*, etc. Overall, proper names represent a specific group with respect to modification.



- e. *Tenacious tackling and a great display from Peter Canavan at full forward ... Then just on half time the Ranch landed the blow from which UCG never recovered. A Canavan free was floated into the square, where corner forward Stephen Ramsey rose to fist the ball to the net.*

Examples pertaining to iii. *the only day suitable* in Group 4 are characterized as adjectives in *-able* or *-ible* which require an attributive superlative or *only* (*the best result possible* and **the result possible*) (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 445), or the general ordinals *last*, *next* (Quirk et al. 1985: 418–19). Our sample is, however, more varied, and only some of the instances can be explained by the constraints suggested above.

The remaining 519 instances can be divided broadly into six sets based on their morphematic structure: *-able/-ible* (397); *-ed* (52); *-ing* (34); Latin and French participial *extant* and *adjacent* (cf. *present*) (2); *necessary* (14); and compounds (20).

The 397 *-able/-ible* instances display a noticeable dominance of *available* (63%), followed by *payable* and *responsible* (11% each). As these three adjectives are clearly very different in terms of their usage, a more detailed discussion is deferred to Section 5.

Another striking observation is that not all instances of the post-head uses of these adjectives are limited by the constraints stipulated above. Thus instances in (15a,b) contain *only* and the superlative, whereas instances in (15c,d,e) do not. The same applies to the other morphematic groups described below.

- (15) a. *The only kind of central heating possible would be solid fuel.*
 b. *thousands of gallons of water at the highest pressure possible were pumped through the channels*
 c. *enough staff available would achieve training aims*
 d. *in the short-term the finance available would not necessarily allow all desirable changes...*
 e. *The use of UHF rather than VHF will further restrict the coverage possible.*
 f. *the rent achievable does not cover the outgoings*

Among the 52 *-ed* adjectives, the most represented is *interested* (15%). As examples in (16) indicate, the constraints are not identifiable in these instances either. In addition, *interested* could be seen as patterning with *concerned*, as the pre-head uses can vary in meaning ('in a position to gain from a situation or be affected by it'), though the senses may overlap (16a). (16b) and (16c) illustrate the variable position without a semantic difference.³⁹

- (16) a. *Any committee interested is invited to send a representative. (~As an interested party, I was not allowed to vote.)*
 b. *Another issue unaddressed is the meaning of certainty. (~all the unresolved and unaddressed issues of the time)*
 c. *the spies were about and a Dominican in some way unknown secured a copy (~a priest of some unknown religion)*

³⁹ Other factors involved, which may be related to the NP complexity, are disregarded.



The pre-head position of some *-ed* forms is notoriously restricted and needs to be surveyed in more detail, as well as the constraints on the single posthead *-ed* forms. Similar patterns are observed with other ‘participial’ modifiers, *-ing* (17a,b), *extant* and *adjacent* (17c-e).

- (17) a. *the only giants remaining being the crocodiles, alligators and caymans*
 b. *The wet and windy conditions prevailing were not conducive to good hockey.*
 c. *among the best Roman versions extant are the Temple of Fortuna Virilis*
 d. *most of the work extant is in Palermo*
 e. *the people of the country adjacent will not pay*

Compound postmodifiers, the last morphematically distinct type, also call for further inquiry, representing an area overlapping with adverbs where a word-class distinction may be hard to draw, as examples of *post-* and *pre-* (18a), *countrywide*, *upstream*, or *par excellence* attest. In (18b) the post-head use may be motivated by contrast, in (18c) by immediate analogy.

- (18) a. *English and European works of art pre-1900; Darwinism post-Fisher is called neo-Darwinism.*
 b. *all the angles left-right have been turns from left to right looking from the base line*
 c. *Let Madrid and a mission near-impossible⁴⁰ bring what it may.*

A brief survey in Group 4 indicates that postpositive uses of adjectives may be constrained or motivated by a range of factors. Type (i) *things artistic* represents a construction where *things* has abstract meaning (similar to *some-/anything*). With Type (ii) *entente floral ~ floral entente* the postpositive use reflects classificatory systems and older patterns/sources with the adjective receiving ‘a focus value’. This value is also present in patterns of contrastive antonymic relations, which allow simplex adjectives (*ill*, *free*) to appear in the post-head position. Type (iii) *the only day possible* subsumes *-able/-ible* adjectives and ‘participial’ forms (*-ing*, *-ed*, *extant*) with the superlative and other ordinals, but it has been shown in (15c-f), (16), (17b,d,e) that not all instances are determined by this constraint. Overall, they represent adjectives with a distinct morphemic structure where the factors stipulated in literature cannot be resorted to in all instances and as such should be submitted to further scrutiny.

5 TEN MOST REPRESENTED ADJECTIVES

Comparison of the ten most featured adjectives (80% of the sample) given in Table 5 offers another heuristic,⁴¹ as these adjectives display several different tendencies of use (Table 6).

⁴⁰ After the name of a U.S. television series *Mission: Impossible*.

⁴¹ This approach can only be hinted at here due to a different focus of this paper.



<i>concerned</i>	428	34%
<i>available</i>	252	20%
<i>present</i>	105	8%
<i>proper</i>	49	4%
<i>payable</i>	45	4%
<i>responsible</i>	44	4%
<i>outstanding</i>	23	2%
<i>possible</i>	23	2%
<i>corporate</i>	18	1%
<i>necessary</i>	14	1%
of the total 1.247	1001	80%

TABLE 5. Ten most frequent adjectives in the sample

Drawing on Matthew's suggestion that "[w]e must look for wider similarities, with modifiers that either can or have to be postpositive" (2014: 169), adjectives from Table 5 (mainly Groups 3 and 4 above) can be assessed from the point of view of their pre-head and post-head uses, including a comparison of both light APs and heavy APs (19a), (19b) and (19c) respectively. *Corporate* can be left out of this account as it takes no dependents.

- (19) a. *necessary skill*
 b. *do the work necessary*
 c. *the food necessary for his diabetic diet*

BNC written	A N	N A heavy	N A light	light AP of posthead uses
<i>concerned</i>	310	767	1.808	70%
<i>proper</i>	4.116	28	319	92%
<i>present</i>	8.295	247	464	65%
<i>outstanding</i>	1852	57	149	72%
<i>possible</i>	7.903	73	392	84%
<i>available</i>	1.945	3.161	2.640	46%
<i>responsible</i>	655	1.033	122	11%
<i>necessary</i>	3.348	993	166	14%
<i>payable</i>	1	490	135	22%

TABLE 6. Comparison of the nine most represented adjectives⁴²

The following brief observations can be made:

After the head noun, 1. *concerned*, *proper*, *present*, *possible*, and *outstanding* are used prevalingly as light APs; 2. on the contrary, *responsible*, *necessary*, and *payable* are used prevalingly in heavy APs; 3. interestingly, *available*, the most frequently used

⁴² These figures represent sequences A-N and N-A, disregarding any additional modification.



single adjective and without a lexicalized difference, shows no clear pattern (n=5.801, 54% heavy vs 46% light APs).

As for the first group (prevalence of light APs), *light concerned* and *proper* contrast with the heavy APs in meaning (*a detective concerned with a recent case; clinical societies concerned about brain damage; W. continued in a tone proper for instructing young ordinands*) showing a clear difference between the two post-head uses. *Outstanding* is also used dominantly as a light AP, and its strong collocates indicate that the post-head occurrences display a narrower, specialized meaning than the pre-head uses, as it takes financial terms as head nouns only.⁴³

In the second group (prevalence of heavy APs: *responsible*, *necessary*, and *payable*⁴⁴), *responsible* instantiates the sense difference in pre- and post-head positions, but the light uses in the post-head position are related to the heavy uses of this adjective (as is the case of *outstanding* or *present* above). These two uses can, tentatively, be perceived as related, due to the strong prevalence of the heavy pattern with *for* (89%). What these adjectives appearing dominantly in heavy APs seem to share is that in light uses, the 'missing' dependent is identifiable in the context, as shown in (20). As *necessary* (among other adjectives) has been shown to have developed a secondary post-determiner deictic meaning indicating relations in the textual situation (Davidse et al. 2008), a similar mechanism can be hypothesized to apply in the post-head light uses of some adjectives.

- (20) *The most negative aspects of American policing ... came together in the beating of Rodney King in ..., which was followed by rioting when the white policemen responsible were acquitted in April 1992. [i.e. responsible for the beating]*

Available as the most frequent postpositive adjective without a difference in meaning is unique in the relatively equal proportion between the post-head positions, contrasting sharply with other adjectives, where one of the post-head patterns dominates. The fact that *available* is so pervasive in comparison with other adjectives which appear in the post-head position mainly due to the lexicalized difference in meaning calls for further scrutiny.

6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The paper has surveyed possibilities of extracting postpositive adjectives in a corpus. The main difficulties in the retrieval stem from interfering syntactic patterns (e.g. complex transitive verbs) and a functional overlap between certain adjectives

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- 43 The pre-head collocates of *outstanding*, not found with the adjective in postpositive use, are *example*, *success*, *performance*, *achievement*. The head nouns shared in both uses include *bill*, *balance*, *loan*, *debt*, *amount*, *bond*, *share*, *mortgage*.
- 44 *Payable* seems to be constrained to the post-head position, patterning with *outstanding* in that its strong collocates are *amount*, *interest*, *tax*, *sum*, *fee*, *rent*. Only one pre-head occurrence is attested in the BNC (*the payable insurance money*).



and adverbs (e.g. *nation-wide*, cf. Section 3). Overlapping of adjectival/verbal functions of *-ed/-ing* forms is reflected in inconsistent tagging of their word-class status. Given the fact that the definition and tagging of an adjective is inherently problematic, retention of participial forms in the sample serves the purpose of highlighting the similarities with *-able/-ible* forms. Our results will allow to refine corpus searches using specific adjectives or specific morphematic structure (e.g. a survey of *un-*forms shared by the two frequent forms) to inform further research on postposition.

The dominant types of adjectives in the post-head position are *-able/-ible* forms and forms relatable to participial uses,⁴⁵ indicating that adjectives with this morphematic make-up represent the productive type of postpositives. Other adjectives (apart from Latinate compounds and *a-*adjectives) are attested mainly as instances of older poetic use and in antonymic contrastive patterns. As such they are found in environments providing the ‘focus value’, in which even a simplex adjective can appear postpositively. In terminological compounds, the ‘focus value’ correlates with the adjective function as *differentiae*, and it would be interesting to survey the developmental tendencies of this alternation.

It has become clear that in order to explain the function and the range of related morphematic types of adjectives in post-head position, textual examples of *-able/-ible* adjectives, *-ed* and *-ing* forms, in relation to adverbs, should be studied further to account for occurrences that cannot be explained by the presence of the superlative or ordinals. The fact that *available* is used so widely without a lexicalized difference and without displaying a preference for either light or heavy uses, or the fact that *necessary* is also quite prominent may point in the direction of some secondary textual meaning, in a sense tentatively parallel to the deictification of certain post-determiner adjectival uses (Davidse et al. 2008). More detailed analysis is needed to determine whether and how the post-head uses of adjectives (subsumed under Group 4 (iii) above) correlate with the use of determiners and collocate with expressions of quantity (James’s (1979) presupposition constraint).

The deliberately broad perspective adopted in this study, rummaging through Fischer’s “mixed bag of remnants” (2006: 254) and Bolinger’s “scraps and left-overs” (1952: 1132), hopes to have sustained implicit relations of a pattern in *all things artistic* as an intermediary between the placement of adjectives after indefinite compound pronouns and productive patterns which make the placement of certain morphematic types of adjectives after nouns available.

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⁴⁵ Cf. Haspelmath (1994: 167) on analogy in formation of passive participles and *-able/-ible* adjectives, or Sleeman (2011).

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Pavλίna Šaldová

Department of English Language and ELT Methodology
Faculty of Arts, Charles University
Nám. Jana Palacha 2, 11638 Praha
ORCID ID: 0000-0003-0043-7520
pavlina.saldova@ff.cuni.cz