

QUANTITATIVE APPROACH TO ADJECTIVES IN THE NOVEL “THE GREAT GATSBY”



Linguistics

Keywords: adjectives, The Great Gatsby, frequency, morphology, syntax.

Remzije Nuhju

University of Tetova. Department of English Language and Literature.
Republic of North Macedonia

Abstract

In this paper I attempt to examine the adjectives that are used in *The Great Gatsby*, a novel by Francis Scott Fitzgerald. This paper analyses adjectives in morphological context and syntactic context. The findings and results indicate the total number of adjectives, the percentage of the most frequent adjectives used in the novel, types of adjectives in morphological aspect, the position of adjectives (attributive and predicative), and adjectives with and without an adverb as a pre-modifier. Firstly, the total number of adjectives which is 2.701, 950 adjectives are of its own type and appear at least once and other 1751 adjectives appear from twice to 80 times in the *The Great Gatsby*. Secondly, from the total of 950 types of adjectives in the novel there are 410 adjectives that are repeated more than twice and 540 appear once. Then, the most frequent adjective which is used 80 times in the novel is the adjective *old* following: old young – 45 times, little – 38 times, white - 36 times, small – 33 times, and good -31 times. Moreover, from the morphological aspect, out of the total of 950 adjectives, the largest type of adjectives are with suffixes, on the other hand from the syntactic aspect 2060 are attributive adjectives and 641 are predicative from the total of 2701 adjectives used in the novel. Finally, out of total number of adjectives (2701), 174 have an adverb as a pre-head modifier, while 2527 and 94% does not have an adverb as a pre modifier. To sum up, based on the results, I can conclude that F. Scott Fitzgerald used rich language in terms of modifying things, places, events, people and so on in *The Great Gatsby*.

Introduction

Each language is consisted of different words and every language has a number of words that are always different compared to another language. But all words in different languages have one thing in common. Words in all languages have grammatical categories studied in the field of grammar. So the area in which our research will be conducted is the area of grammar. Grammar (oxford dictionary) is defined as *the rules in a language for changing the form of words and joining them into sentences* which means the whole system and structure of a language or languages in general, usually consisting of syntax and morphology (including inflections) and sometimes phonology and semantics. This paper will be focused in the field of grammar, especially in the morphological and the syntactic aspect. Moreover, a part of speech that will be studied is going to be the adjective as an important part in the word group. The noun *beauty* and the suffix *-ful* form a new word that is an adjective *beautiful*.

It is very important using adjectives in different types of writings. Through description, adjectives help a reader to create a whole picture in his mind about a given situation, person or thing. *The Great Gatsby* has a great number of adjectives available. Francis Scott Fitzgerald has advantages from a lexical aspect that uses adjectives, sometimes rare words, to describe various

things and events in his novel. Liu¹ believes that the figurative use of Fitzgerald's language is "appealing to all senses" and that he attains this style of his frequent uses of adjectives.

For example, in *The Great Gatsby* describing the Gatsby car, he uses interesting and different adjectives:

„It was a rich cream color, bright with nickel, swollen here and there in its monstrous length with triumphant hatboxes and supper-boxes and tool-boxes, and terraced with a labyrinth of windshields that mirrored a dozen suns.“ (p. 68)

The rich language and the wide variety of different adjectives raised the need to answer the following questions: how many adjectives are in the novel, how many adjectives are repeated and not repeated, what is the number of the most frequent adjectives used in the novel, the total number of adjectives, how do adjectives word in morphological and syntactic context.

Methodology

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the adjectives that are used from the one of the most famous American authors of the 20th Century - Francis Scott Fitzgerald. This work will include the following issues that discuss some aspects of the adjectives in *The Great Gatsby* such as:

- a) the total number of adjectives,
- b) the adjectives that are repeated and not repeated,
- c) the most frequent adjectives used in the novel,
- d) types of adjectives in morphological aspect,
- e) position of adjectives (attributive or predicative), and
- f) adjectives *with* and *without* an adverb as a pre-modifier.

This paper uses the quantitative approach to analyze the use of adjectives in *The Great Gatsby*. This approach enabled gathering quantifiable data, on one hand, and on the other hand, performing statistical and mathematical techniques to draw conclusions. The results of each point will be represented in graphics, including numbers and percentages.

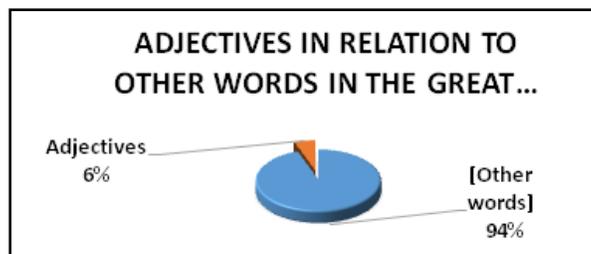
Results and Discussion

The total number of adjectives used in the novel

The novel *The Great Gatsby* has in total 45.876 words. From all of these words 2.701 are adjectives. So, from 100% words that are used in the novel 94% are other various words such as: nouns, pronouns, adverbs, determiners, articles and so on, and 6% are adjectives. Taking into consideration all parts of speech that represent different words in the novel, my supposition that

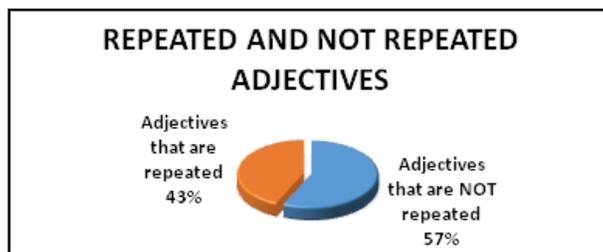
¹ Xiangqi Liu, (2010), Stylistic Analysis of The Great Gatsby from Lexical and Grammatical Category, Journal of Language Teaching and Research, Vol. 1, No. 5, стр. 662-667, ISSN 1798-4769, Accessed on 25.2.2006 <http://www.academypublication.com/issues/past/jltr/vol01/05/18.pdf>

the novel have a great number of adjectives is true. Moreover, from the total number of 2.701 adjectives, 950 adjectives are of its own type and appear at least once and other 1751 adjectives appear twice to 80 times in the *The Great Gatsby*.



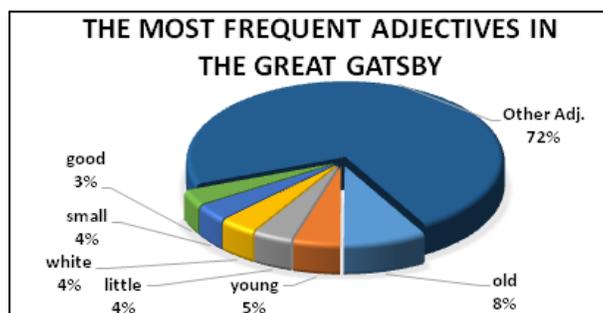
The adjectives which are repeated and not repeated

In *The Great Gatsby* 950 types of adjectives are used out of which 540 adjectives appear once and 410 adjectives are repeated. This result indicates that from 100% types of adjectives, 57% are adjectives that do not appear twice and 43% are adjectives that are repeated. Some adjectives are repeated twice, some 7 or 10 times and some of them even appear 79 times like the adjective *old*, 44 times the adjective *young* and 37 times appear the adjective *little*.



The most frequent adjectives used in the novel

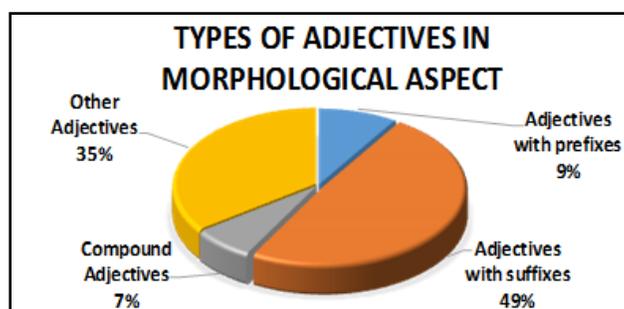
I already mentioned that 410 adjectives or 43 % of the adjectives are repeated which means they are used twice, ten times, 40 times and up to 80 times. Table three displays the most frequent adjectives that the author used in the novel. The most used adjectives are the following: old – 80 times or 8%, young – 45 times or 5%, little – 38 times or 4%, white - 36 times or 4%, small – 33 times or 4%, and good -31 times or 3%. Except the above mentioned adjectives used many times, there are other adjectives that are repeated less are 687 respectively 72%.



Types of adjectives in morphological aspect

The ways in which more words are formed in English by Eastwood² are suffixes, prefixes, and compound adjectives. So, in this part of work will be analyzed adjectives in the morphological aspect:

- The suffixes that are used to form the most common adjectives in the novel
- The prefixes that are used to form the adjectives in *The Great Gatsby*, and
- Compound adjectives used in the novel mentioned above



The graph above provides a quantitative distribution of the three types of adjectives founded in *The Great Gatsby* in relation to other adjectives. This graph clarifies that out of the total of 950 adjectives, the largest type of adjectives are with suffixes. The suffixes include a number of 466 or 49%, followed by 86 or 9% adjectives with a prefix, then there are 66 or 7% that are compound adjectives and 332 or 35% other (different) adjectives. Repeated adjectives are not included in the analysis of this part.

Position of adjectives (attributive or predicative)

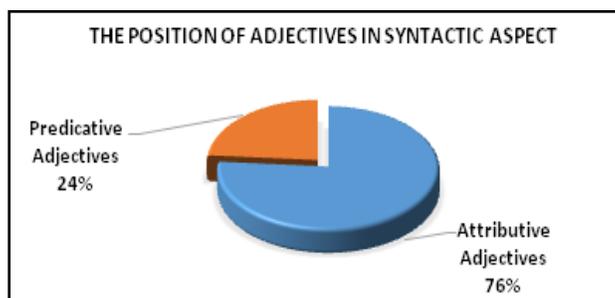
There are many researchers that wrote about adjectives in English (Quirk et al, Huddleston and Pullum, Biber et al, Eastwood, J., Dixon R.M.W, etc.). Among them, it is worth to mention Huddleston and Pullum who claim that the category of adjectives in English has the following syntactic traits such as: Function, Grade and Modification.

So, this part of analysis will be carried out according to the first (function) and third (modification) properties of adjectives.

The first feature, that is, the function of the adjectives, deals with the position of the adjectives in relation to the noun. Two main functions of adjectives are attributive adjectives (*attributive adjectives function as internal pre-head modifier to a following noun*) and predicative adjectives (*predicative adjectives function mainly as predicative complement in clause structure*).

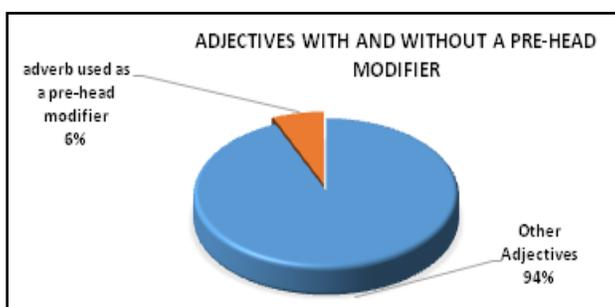
² Eastwood, J. (1994) *Oxford Guide to English Grammar*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

From the total of 2701 adjectives 2060 or 76% are attributive adjectives and 641 or 24% are predicative adjectives. This graph basically has the total number of adjectives in *The Great Gatsby*.



Adjectives *with* and *without* an adverb as a pre-modifier

The third property which is modification, adjectives can be modified usually by adverbs, as in the example: [*extremely*_{adv.}, *cold*_{adj.}], [*amazingly*_{adv.}, *intelligent*_{adj.}]. From the total number of adjectives (2701), 174 or 6% have an adverb as a pre-head modifier, while 2527 and 94% does not have an adverb as a pre modifier.



Conclusions

Based on the results and analysis of the adjectives in *The Great Gatsby* I can conclude that F. Scott Fitzgerald used rich language in terms of modifying things, places, events, people and so on. Speaking of adjectives, I can state that the author use a wide range of adjectives. It is true that a considerable number of adjectives are repeated up to 80 times, and at the same time, the number of adjectives used once only is huge as well.

The irony is in the title of the novel with regard to adjectives. As someone being engaged with adjectives in Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, I really hoped that the adjective "great" is used many times in its title meaning, which is an important and distinguished person. To my surprise the adjective great is used only 23 times. Oddly enough is the frequency that the adjective little is used, 37 times in total. The later, among other definitions bears the meaning of a person relatively unimportant, which is the opposite of the former (t.e. great).

References

- Biber, D., Johansson, S. Leech, G., Conrad, S., Finegan, E, Quirk, R., (1999) *Longman Grammar of Spoken and written English*. England: Pearson Education Limited.
- Carnie, A. (2011) *Modern Syntax*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Dixon, W. M. R. & Aikhenvald, Y. A. (2004) *Adjective Classes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Eastwood, J. (1994) *Oxford Guide to English Grammar*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Huddleston, R., Pullum, K. G., (2002) *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fitzgerald, F. S. (1980) *The Great Gatsby*. New York: Charles Scribener's Sons.
- Lieber, R. (2009) *Introducing Morphology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mathews, H. P. (1974) *Morphology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Quirk, R., Greenbaum, S., Leech, G., Svartvik, J. (1985) *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*. England: Pearson Education Limited.