

GRAMMATICAL FUNCTIONS OF PARTICLE IN MODERN ENGLISH

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Abstract. The problem of parts of speech caused much difficulty both in general linguistics and in the analysis of separate languages. Though it has been studied for more than 200 years, the criteria for defining parts of speech have not been worked out yet. That is why we chose the topic and tried to analyze the problem.

Key words: Parts of speech, particle. Semantic function, grammatical features.

The words of language, depending on various formal and semantic features, are divided into grammatically relevant classes. The traditional grammatical classes of words are called "parts of speech" [2. P.33].

Traditionally grammar gave a semantic definition of parts of speech, taking into account only meaning. However, only meaning cannot be a reliable criterion for defining parts of speech because different parts of speech may have the same meaning and vice versa. E.g. the nouns "books", "tables", "students", denote objects and there are nouns as "flight", "movement", "arrival", which do not denote objects but belong to nouns.

We see that meaning cannot be the only criterion for defining parts of speech. The structural school of linguistics does not take into account meaning only but only form.

Form alone cannot be a reliable criterion either because many parts of speech especially in English may have the same form, e.g. water-to water, silk (adj.) - to silk. Moreover, if we take into account only form, then such unchangeable words as article, particle should be referred to only part of speech.

We see that the criterion of form is not sufficient. The grammatical criterion should be taken into account to give an adequate definition of any part of speech. By grammatical features we mean:

- a) morphological
- b) syntactical

By morphological features different categories are meant. The morphological categories of noun are the categories of number and case. By morphological categories of adjectives we mean the category of quality (degrees of comparison). By syntactical features of the part of speech the syntactical functions of it are meant. The syntactical function is the most reliable criterion. Thus, the modern conception and amended definition of part of speech should take into account all the above mentioned criteria in complex [4. P.13].

The notion of dividing words into discrete parts of speech is generally credited to

the ancient Greek grammarian Dionysius Thrax. For a long time, the idea was pretty much universally accepted. Eventually, grand claims were made for it. The anonymous author of the 1733 book "The English Accidence" called the parts of speech "the foundation upon which the beautiful fabrick of the language stands." John Stuart Mill felt they represented universal categories of human thought.

One problem with such reverence is that different languages are set up differently. For example, Latin, Russian and Japanese all lack articles. Even in our own tradition, the roster keeps shifting. Thrax counted eight parts: adverbs, articles, conjunctions, nouns, participles, prepositions, pronouns and verbs. The Latin-speaking Romans obviously had to drop articles. Perhaps to keep the eight-part scheme, they added — golly! — interjections. Early formulations of English grammar adopted the Latin list. This presented problems, since English does have articles. There was a lot of shuffling around, until Joseph Priestley's 1761 "Rudiments of English Grammar" finally established the baseball-size lineup that included adjectives and booted out participles.

This slate has been generally accepted for the last quarter-millennium and is familiar to the population at large from "Schoolhouse Rock" and the italicized abbreviations (adj., etc.) after words in the dictionary. But for some time there have been rumblings of discontent in the higher reaches of the linguistics community. In the 1920's, Edward Sapir wrote that "no logical scheme of the parts of speech — their number, nature and necessary confines — is of the slightest interest to the linguist." The fact is, any parts-of-speech scheme leaves gaping holes. In the term baseball player, is the word baseball a noun or an adjective? Reasonable people differ on this point. What about the word to in an infinitive like to see? What about the there in there are?

Current-day grammarians don't even like to use "parts of speech," preferring "word classes" or "lexical categories." A recent trend has been to accept some fuzziness. Nouns, for example, are often defined by having some or all of a list of capabilities, including being the subject of a sentence or clause, having a plural form or displaying a suffix like "-tion" or "-hood." A word like mother, which does all three, is a very "nouny" noun. Paris, which satisfies only the first, is on the fringes.

Linguists have also done some major fiddling. Rodney Huddleston and Geoffrey Pullum's magisterial 2002 "Cambridge Grammar of the English Language" counts pronouns as a subset of nouns, replaces articles with a new category called "determinatives" (which also includes words like this, some and every) and divides conjunctions into "coordinators" (and, but and or) and "subordinators" (like whether) [20. P.13].

But regardless of name, lexical categories are quite useful. They make possible not only Mad Libs but also the rhetorical device anthimeria — using a word as a noncustomary part of speech — which is the reigning figure of speech of the present

moment.

That's not to say it's a new thing. In Middle English, the nouns duke and lord started to be used as verbs, and the verbs cut and rule shifted to nouns. Shakespeare was a pro at this; his characters coined verbs — "season your admiration," "dog them at the heels" — and such nouns as design, scuffle and shudder. Less common shifts are noun to adjective (S.J. Perelman's "Beauty Part"), adjective to noun (the Wicked Witch's "I'll get you, my pretty") and adverb to verb (to down a drink).

This "functional shifting," as grammarians call it, is a favorite target of language mavens, whose eyebrows rise several inches when nouns like impact and access are verbed. Nor do companies like it when their trade names get shifted. In his book "Word Spy," Paul McFedries writes that Google's attorneys send journalists who use google as a verb a stern letter that cites examples of appropriate ("I used Google to check out that guy I met at the party") and inappropriate ("I googled that hottie") uses.

It's beyond obvious that Google's lawyers are fighting a losing battle. And they should relax. Not only is "I googled that hottie" great publicity for the company, but it's fresh and funny and an excellent example of how anthimeria gives English an invigorating slap upside the head.

At this very moment, the language is being regenerated with phrases like my bad, verbs like dumb down and weird out and guilt ("Don't guilt me") and even the doubly anthimeric "Pimp My Ride," an MTV series in which a posse of artisans take a run-down jalopy and sleek it up into a studly vehicle containing many square yards of plush velvet and an astonishing number of LCD screens.

The word chill showed up more than 500 years ago as a noun meaning "cold" — as in "winter's chill." In short order, it turned into a verb referring to the process of making someone or something cold and then into an adjective. (Eventually chilly became more common.) Fast-forward to 1979, when the song "Rapper's Delight" worked a variation on Ecclesiastes, explaining that "There's. . . a time to break and a time to chill/To act civilized or act real ill." That intransitive verb, meaning roughly "to relax," was expanded to chill out in 1983, according to The Oxford English Dictionary.

The most recent variation in chill can be seen in the basketball player Chamique Holdsclaw's comment about her adoptive city of Los Angeles: "Everything is pretty chill."

Some more rococo anthimerian endeavors have clear meanings, but are more or less im-parse-able. Thus a line from the novel "Afterburn," by Zane: "No matter how hoochie I tried to be, she out-hoochied me every single time.

And function words (postpositions, conjunctions, particles, etc) are grammatical categories, standing between vocabulary and grammar. In this case, auxiliary verbs, postpositions - names, postpositions - adverbs, adverbs - particles,

allied words and others, by some of their properties are close to significant words on the other properties to the function words.

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