**Attributive Relations in the English-Language Grammar Books**

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Attributive relations are for long the focus of scholarly interest and have been extensively studied at this Department. The theory of the ‘attributive bond’, the closest syntactic bond in the English language, has been developed in the works of A.I. Smirnitsky (1957) and O.S. Akhmanova (1969, 1979) and continued by their disciples. Singling out attributive complexes on the lexical and the syntactic levels, we divide them, with respect to E.B. Yakovleva’s approach to attributive syntagmatics (1976), into descriptive and limiting ones, based on the type of modification introduced with the dependent element.

The present work, taking the theory of attributive relations, as the premise, examines how these relations are viewed in authentic grammars of the English language. As the material for the research, we have chosen two of the most authoritative corpus-based grammar books that are addressed at anglophones and lay stress on the standard British and American uses, namely S. Greenbaum’s *The Oxford English Grammar* (1996) and *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (2007) by D. Biber et al. They have been compared according to several parameters: what metalanguage is used; how attributive structures are described (objects investigated, coverage of levels and their contents, order of appearance, the treatment of ambiguous cases, objectiveness); what conclusions are made.

The most significant aspects of the materials’ metalanguage are as follows. Both grammars restrict the use of the term ‘attributive’ – the key term in our analysis – to the level of word combination: it denotes premodifiers of nouns, mainly represented by adjectives. Words kept apart from word combinations, the former are referred to as ‘words’ (‘compounds’ being one of their types), and the latter – as ‘phrases’, mainly ‘noun phrases’. The terminology adopted is not always consistent: in Greenbaum’s grammar the terms ‘word’, ‘base’ and ‘compound’ become almost interchangeable. While both sources divide clauses into finite, non-finite and verbless, Greenbaum treats participles as foremost morphological units; Biber’s grammar, by contrast, is more specific about structures and patterns, and distinguishes between *ed*-clause, *ed*-participle, participial adjectives, *ing*-participle, *ing*-clause, etc. What we call attributive clauses, features prominently as relative clauses (hence, the one-to-one correspondence between attributive word combinations and clauses is lost) and is split into restrictive and non-restrictive ones.

Both grammars are descriptive and tend to arrange linguistic material formally, from the smaller to the larger and to the more complex units, although the whole picture remains rather vague and the approach not consistently holistic. Greenbaum goes from *Word Classes* (Ch. 3) to *The Grammar of Phrases* (Ch. 4), straight from lexicology to minor syntax, and then proceeds to *Sentences and Clauses* (Ch. 5), major syntax. Compounds are discussed in Chapter 9 (*The Formation of Words*), while punctuation is presented as a separate entity in the eponymous, one-but-last chapter. Biber’s grammar has sections with rather self-explanatory names, such as *Basic Grammar* comprising *Word and phrase grammar* (the interrelation of lexicology and minor syntax is thus highlighted) and *Clause grammar*; *Key word classes and their phrases* (where attributive adjectives feature at some point); *More complex structures* (where in *Complex noun phrases*, confirming the relation of the dependent attributive clauses to one word or word combination in the main clause, restrictive vs non-restrictive modification and types of relative clauses are found). It is quite evident from these entries that because the criterion of the attributive bond is not recognised by British and American linguists, constructions created with its help are to be arduously searched for on different levels, and examples may be found at whichever point (the disadvantage of descriptivism), seriously hampering our analysis.

There are features specific to only one of the grammars; we would like to adduce an example from each. *Longman Grammar* provides corpus-based statistics on the use of certain words and patterns in the graphic form: one good example is how relativisers (relative pronouns) are distributed across registers, in different types of modification. *Oxford Grammar* does no such thing; besides, it is more subjective. For instance, all the names of streets are regarded as compounds, despite only names with *street* having a unifying stress on the first base, because doing otherwise “seems odd”. Such reasoning becomes normal, “There are numerous exceptions to the typical stress pattern of compounds for which no generalizations or explanations can be offered” [Greenbaum: 459-460].

With regard to our subject, we have identified and addressed the main traits of similarity and difference between the two grammars, as well as the points of strength and, occasionally, of weakness. As for their treatment of attributivity, which for us is the central notion, we may conclude that nearly all the structural types of attributive constructions are recognised in both grammar books analysed, without however being brought together on the basis of the attributive bond.

**References**

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