

# Demonstration of Multi Statutory of the Adjective “Just” in Modern Adjectival English Lexicon<sup>1</sup>

*Marina N. Klochkova<sup>2</sup>, Ksenia A. Strakhova<sup>3</sup>, Natalya L. Gusakova<sup>3</sup>, Irina V. Sagalaeva<sup>3</sup>, & Oksana P. Riadinskaia<sup>3</sup>*

## Abstract

This article concerns the general functional features of an adjective in modern English, and in particular multistate lexical item “just”, which carries different meanings in different variants of combinatorics. The authors analyze the combinations used with the adjectival lexeme item “just” and reveal the categories that determine the degree of semantic content of each given statement. The need for a detailed study of multistate is due to insufficient knowledge of the categorization features and the functioning of multistate lexical item “just” in English language which has the feature of eurysemy (polysemy) that defines its broad compatibility in syntagmatic aspect.

**Keywords:** English Adjective; Multifunctionality; Multistate; Polysemy; Multistate Lexical Item; Lexical Item “just”.

## 1. Introduction

Language is a living organism. Like any other phenomenon of the reality, language may develop and change over time. Language is flexible and is greatly influenced by the environment. Every year, there appear new language units and word forms, which may “roam” from one language environment to another, forming borrowings in languages.

For thousands of years, classifications of significant and service parts of speech have been changing and improving. Now morphological characteristics of words play the most important role.

An adjective existed in all Indo-European languages and was considered a significant unit of a language.

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<sup>2</sup> Corresponding author. Belgorod State University, Belgorod, Russia.

<sup>3</sup> Belgorod State University, Belgorod, Russia.

Afanasieva (1991, 1992) dealt with adjectives and adjectival vocabulary in her study. She devoted her research to the principles of organization and boundaries of one of the main word classes in modern English - adjectives, as well as to the study of linguistic forms of representation of adjectives in modern English (Afanasjeva, 1992; Afanasjeva, 1991). Many Russian and foreign linguists in their studies made attempts to define general features of adjectives (Arakin, 1979; Fillmore, 1977), as well as to classify the adjective vocabulary (Gorelik, 1967; Shramm, 1979; Arakin, 1979; Blokh, 1983; Pocheptsov, 1987; Givon, 1970).

## **2. Methods**

In linguistics, there are three main criteria for distinguishing significant parts of speech: semantic criteria, morphological criteria and syntactic criteria. Methods of analysis are determined by the purpose of study, theoretical and practical concept and the type of analyzed information. Here, we have applied different types of analysis: contextual analysis (influence of other words on the lexical item “just” in typical context); semantic analysis (study of the semantic structure and assignment of the basic semes of analyzed lexical units); distributional analysis (identification of the set of contexts, in which the lexical item “just” appears), and syntax analysis (study of syntactic structures, which contain lexical item “just”).

## **3. Main Part**

In the English and Russian languages there are different forms of sequence between parts of speech. Morphological characteristics of adjectives in English are indistinct. Therefore, they should be studied only by syntactic and semantic characteristics.

In the English language, adjectives differ primarily by their semantic and syntactic characteristics. The concept of quality is considered the main semantic feature of an adjective. Quality feature is predominant for adjectives that may easily develop semes quality.

An adjective signifies the feature of an object. Therefore, it is a definitive of a noun. An object always possesses a feature, and thus, an object is a carrier of the feature.

In semantics, adjectives are extremely diverse. They have various classifications and rely on their own features or on the features of denotations. They may also rely on the possibility of intensification and compatibility with different types of adverbs, etc.

It is known that nouns and adjectives are closely related to each other by their origin. Adjectives can function as subjects or objective complements; this is peculiar for nouns.

If you compare adjectives and adverbs, you will see that their functions are very similar. Both, adjectives and adverbs denote features of objects. Therefore, very often, adjectives can function as adverbs, as well as adverbs can function as adjectives.

Speaking about functions of adjectives, it is necessary to mention that adjectives may be multi-functional (multivalued). Today, this phenomenon has not been studied carefully and, to our point of view, requires greater attention.

Multifunctionality (polyfunctionality) is a complex linguistic phenomenon, which may manifest itself on different linguistic levels, interacting with different elements of a language. Multifunctionality in grammatical and semantic aspects appears due to the complicated semantic structure of a word or any other language unit. Therefore, translators may have difficulties with various meanings of certain language units. In these cases, we should always take into account the multifunctionality of lexical items in the English language and pay special attention to it. But sometimes context can give more than one meaning of a word and all of them can fit into the context (Ermetova & Masharipov, 2016; Nakhaee & Nasrabadi, 2019; Hopper & Thompson, 1984; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Fillmore, 1977; Gorelik, 1967; Parvizian et al., 2015).

One of the main components of polyfunctionality is ambiguity. Ambiguity (polysemy) is the phenomenon when the language symbol has two or more meanings. Ambiguity can be shown if different language concepts have similar or identical names.

In modern linguistics there is a set of examples of emergence of a phenomenon of polysemy within various language systems and each language separately. The polysemy is very widespread in English. It is possible to face this phenomenon almost everywhere. In translation of texts from English into Russian it is often quite difficult to pick up a suitable equivalent. By right it is possible to call polysemy of words one of the most common causes of translation mistakes and incorrect treatments. For example, adjectives *just*, *right* are polysemic, multifunctional and polystatutic. It means that their conceptual basis is wider, than at monostatute, and in different contexts they can actualize different meaning and change their functional status.

In our research we have tried to give special attention to polystatutic and polysemic lexeme and to investigate it in more detailed way as it treats lexemes with

several functional and categorical statuses, i.e. being words with functional and categorial variation. At such functional modification the words coincide in a form, but reveal various statuses. Such functional modification is characteristic either for notional parts of speech (for example, head, to head, headway) or for official ones (for example, come in, income). It originates because of specifics of English where the analytical way of word change and word formation prevails. At the same time its status as a part of speech often depends on a word position in the sentence.

Multistatutory is word ability to variation at which, depending on semantics and structure of an environment, signs of the word status change, but their semantic meaning remains the same and it is especially typical for syntactic words. These lexemes are characterized by wide semantic variability, high versatile functional loading (meaning) and contextual environment or position.

Many lexemes have got more than one status. For example, the lexeme of back can mean “the part of the body”, “the direction of movement”, “behind”. But each meaning can arise only in combination with certain lexical units and in a different contextual environment or position.

Interest in research of this sort of lexemes is attracted by need of general-theoretical understanding of their polycategorial character, identification and description of the mechanism determining change of the categorial and functional statuses. However, separate functional and semantic features of polystatutic lexemes of a certain part of speech without other categorial statuses are studied in most cases now (Merkibayev et al., 2018; Varghese, 2016).

Thus, need for a detailed research of multistatutory is caused by insufficient study of features of a categorization and functioning of a polystatutic lexeme “just” in English having property of having eurysemy (polysemy) that defines its broad compatibility in the syntagmatic plan, a specification and differentiation of conceptual contents and need in the complex linguistic description of this lexeme.

We will consider the English lexeme “just” which has a number of meanings in more detail. In the sentence it can be both as an adverb and an adjective. In various combinatory options different standard structures of phrases are observed. It depends on the function of “just” which is carried out in the sentence.

First of all, we will note that as an adjective the lexeme “just” expresses properties (Gardenfors, 2014; Sokolovskaya, 1981; Shramm, 1979; Ermetova & Masharipov, 2016; Gardenfors, 2014; Jabbari et al., 2019) and transfers meaning honest, true, exact, fair, impartial, reasonable, having the basis, deserved. As a rule, in similar combinations it is possible to observe the adjective structural type just + a noun, for example:

- It wasn't enough to create just society. In this case *just* means "fair".
- He won a just reward – *a well-deserved* reward.
- In a phrase *just proportion* – It means the correct proportion – "Mix them in just proportion".

The adverb can gain temporary meaning and be used with verbs for the description of various actions, for example, just occurred. In this case the adjectival structural type just + a verb is used:

- My grandmother has just cooked dinner for us. – In this case "just" means "not long ago".
- We'd just left home when he called us. – "As soon as".
- The boss came back just as (= at the same moment as) phone was ringing. – "at the time".

"Just" can be also used for the description of actions which have to happen in the nearest future or occur at present. "Just" can be combined with different parts of speech, and adjectival structural types - just + gerund, just + preposition + verb, just + verb, for example:

- "Where is my dictionary?" – "Bill is just going to bring it". – "at this time".
- I am just about to meet my sister. – "I am going to".
- She will come in just a minute (= very soon). – "literally in a minute".

If we meet the expression "just now" in the text, then it is necessary to pay attention to the grammar tense in which the characterized verbs are used, as it can have such meanings as "now", "currently", "at the present time", "just", "at the moment" etc., for example:

- Can you wait a little bit? He is busy just now.
- She has to give a call just now.
- Who was that girl at the entrance just now?
- Tom is at work just now – can you call him later?

"Just" can be used instead of such expressions as "only", "no more than", which, in fact, is a synonym with "only", for example:

- We can purchase this cell phone for just \$ 100.
- It is just a cup of coffee.
- “I suggest you having a look at the last apartment”, – “OK, just only one”.
- It was just the first attempt.
- Just because he is younger than you doesn’t mean that you can speak to him so rudely.
- We’ll just have to (= the only thing we can do is) wait and hope.

Quite often in a certain context the adverb “just” acquires the meaning “almost” – “almost” or “hardly”, and quite often the adjectival structural type is just + verb, for example:

- They just caught the bus.
- Ann just made a mistake.
- Jane's just about cleaned the bedroom.

To strengthen the semantic meaning of the adverb “just”, you can combine it with “only”, for example:

- Daniel had only just enough money for a cup of coffee.
- Have you only just opened it?

The considered adverb can act as a synonym for “exactly”, “equally”, “precisely”, “the same”, for example:

- It was just eight o`clock when they came back.
- That's just what he is.
- Just then he realized his mistake.
- These pictures would be just right for our living room.
- The two cats are just like each other.
- Everything turned out just as I expected.
- She's passed her exam just as good as her friend.
- He gave me so great present! It's just what I was looking for so long!
- I can’t reply to you just now.

“Just” is also used in the sentence to strengthen the semantic meaning of the entire statement. In such cases you can observe the typical structure of the phrase *just + verb*:

- We didn’t expect the politician just would do as he’d promised.
- You just drive me crazy!
- Just let me go! I can’t stay anymore!

Sometimes “just” is used to achieve a completely opposite effect that is to reduce the semantic force of a statement, thus, it is emphasized that a certain detail is not very important. Here you can observe the adjectival structural types – *just + verb* or *just + noun*:

- Can I just ask a little question?
- I’m just the ordinary man.
- I just thought that you had made a decision.
- Could you just tell me the way?
- I was just sitting and waiting for you.

In the presence of the adverb “just” in the sentence, verbs can be used in various temporary forms. When “just” is used in abstract meaning “recently”, the British version of English typically uses a temporary form of Present Perfect Tense, for example:

- John has just had dinner.
- Can you imagine? I’ve just met Ben at the bus station.
- She has just finished washing up.
- I’ve just told him.

In the same meaning, the American version of English is characterized by the use of temporary forms of Past Simple Tense, for example:

- John just had dinner.
- Can you imagine? I just met Ben at the bus station.

When the expression “just now” is used in the abstract meaning “recently”, “after a short period of time”, both language versions use Past Simple Tense form and the typical adjectival structural type in this case – *verb + noun + just now*, for example:

- They drank tea just now.

- Parents came home just now.

Sometimes in a certain context the adverb “just” acquires the meaning “very”, for example:

- It's just awful what he told me! (= too awful)

As it was mentioned above, “just” as an adjective can be used to describe fair, morally correct decisions, for example:

- The judge's sentence was perfectly just in the circumstances.
- I don't really think he had just cause to complain.

Lexeme “just” can often be found in idioms:

- Just my luck!
- Isn't it/aren't they just?
- Just a minute/moment/second, please.
- (It's) just as well (that)...
- Might just as well.
- Just like that.
- (I'm) just saying.
- It's just one of those things...

#### **4. Results**

The authors identified and analyzed various combinatorial variants with different typical structures of word combinations. We came to the conclusion that it is very important to take into account the phenomenon of multifunctionality or polysemy in the conveying of the statement meaning from English into Russian and vice versa.

#### **5. Conclusion**

There is no doubt that the English adjective can acquire various functions in combination with other lexemes, and the lexeme “just” has such option like multifunctionality or polysemy, which undoubtedly requires special attention of linguists. During our research with the help of demonstrative practical material it was possible to prove that “just” can carry both a large semantic meaning in various versions of combinatorics and a completely opposite effect, namely, a decrease in the semantic force of utterance.



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