

Premodification and Reduction in English

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This paper is about “reduction” in form often associated with premodification, i.e. about the premodifier tending to prefer the shorter of two equivalent cognate forms. Motivated by light(ened) semantic content, this reduction is effected by using the shorter of two equivalent cognate forms already available or by “clipping” a portion of a given form, normally the least significant part thereof such as a function word or an affix. The premodifier here is such that it may occur in front of nouns, adjectives or adverbs, or even verbs.

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1. Introduction

This paper deals with the phenomenon of structural depletion involved in premodification in English. The depletion in question here appears to stem from a semantic peripheralization typically associated with premodification. In other words, the depletion phenomenon here apparently has to do with the premodifier being semantically slim or lightweight relative to its head, i.e. relative to the word it premodifies. Incidentally, this perspective on the premodifier being semantically light of content relative to its head is discussed in some detail in Park (1992, 2002).

Let us begin our discussion here by turning to the history of the English language for some interesting evidence supportive of our argument here. Note that the first member of each possessive adjectival pair below ultimately derives from the second member of the same pair and that the former is shorter than the latter by one consonant, i.e. /n/.

- (1) a. my
- b. mine

- (2) a. *thy*
 b. *thine*

It may be observed that the possessive adjectivals here normally are semantically peripheral to the nouns they premodify. This arguably has helped motivate the original Old English forms *mine* and *thine* to get structurally depleted to their respective late Modern English counterparts, i.e. *my* and *thy*.

Parenthetically, we may account along similar lines for the derivation of the pre-nominal adjectival *no* in present-day English from *none*, its Old English counterpart. It is interesting that a similar rationalization seems to apply to the derivation of the definite article *the* and the indefinite article *a(n)* from their respective Old English sources, i.e. *that* and *one*.

The remainder of this paper will be devoted to a fairly detailed treatment of structural depletion of the kind just illustrated in its varied manifestations. We will be dealing with this premodification-induced structural depletion, especially as it figures in pre-nominal, pre-adjectival and pre-adverbial positions. Toward the end of the paper, we also will be suggesting that similarly motivated structural depletion may plausibly be posited for auxiliary verbs (in pre-verbal position) on the assumption that auxiliary verbs are premodifiers of sorts for the main verbs that follow.

2. Reduction in Premodifiers

2.1. From Premodifier to Prefix

Premodifiers are sometimes so lightweight semantically that they end up turning into mere prefixes, as can be seen from the recent formation of the prefix *e-* from the premodifier *electronic*, as illustrated by paraphrase pairs such as the following.

- (3) a. e-mail
 b. electronic mail
- (4) a. e-commerce
 b. electronic commerce

- (5) a. e-text
 b. electronic text

The premodifier *electronic* gets downgraded to the prefix *e-* here because its contribution to the meaning of the noun phrase in which it figures is on the peripheral side, that is, relative to the head noun that it modifies. Note that the three noun phrases listed above have *electronic* in common, their semantic contrasts being signaled only by their respective head nouns, so that *electronic* figures rather marginally in their respective semantic interpretations.

A similar line of rationalization is apparently applicable to the prefix-formation process illustrated by each of the following seven derivational pairs, where the parenthesized expression is the plausible underlying form.

- (6) a. B-29 (<=Bomber 29)
 b. B-1 (<=Bomber 1)
- (7) a. C-124 (<=Cargo Aircraft 124)
 b. C-54 (<=Cargo Aircraft 54)
- (8) a. F-1054 (<=Fighter 105)
 b. F-14 (<=Fighter 14)
- (9) a. L-19 (<=(Light) Liaison Aircraft 19)
 b. L-15 (<=(Light) Liaison Aircraft 15)
- (10) a. T-33 (<=Trainer 33)
 b. T-11 (<=Trainer 11)
- (11) a. M-16 (<=Military (Equipment) 16)
 b. M-1 (<=Military (Equipment) 1)
- (12) a. U-239 (<=Uranium 239)
 b. U-238 (<=Uranium 238)

Derivations such as those illustrated below also exemplify formal abbreviation of a similar nature resorted to in the formation of prefixes from

underlying premodifiers.

- (13) C-section (<=cesarean section)
- (14) H-bomb (<=hydrogen bomb)
- (15) A-bomb (<=atomic bomb)
- (16) V-Day (<=Victory Day / Valentine's Day)
- (17) T-storm (<=thunderstorm)

In each derivation above, the information conveyed by the underlying premodifier is apparently so familiar to most of the informed/educated public that it need not normally be fully specified. Thus this premodifier may arguably be depleted to the single consonant with which it begins.

It is interesting to observe in this connection that residents of Kansas often abbreviate *Kansas State University* to *K-State University*. To most Kansans, *Kansas* in the name of the university here is so familiar that it need not be specified in full and hence it often ends up getting shortened to the prefix *K-*.

We may argue at this point that *V-E* and *V-J*, as in the derivations illustrated below, also are similarly derived prefixes.

- (18) V-E Day (<=Victory-in-Europe) Day
- (19) V-J Day (<=Victory-over-Japan) Day

Note incidentally that there is no hyphen between the (two-letter) prefix and the stem here, arguably because it would violate the constraint on proximate repetition (Park 1977, 1982, 1984), i.e. because it would involve the use of two proximate hyphens and thus lead to overly heavy hyphenation.

2.2. Titles as Premodifiers

Titles that precede names are arguably prefixal in nature and thus often manifest structural depletion of the sort under discussion here. Let

us begin our discussion here by considering the complementary distribution between *Mrs.* and its source form *mistress*, as illustrated by the two pairs of paraphrase sentences given below.

- (20) a. ?*Mistress Smith* is a beautiful woman.
 b. *Mrs. Smith* is a beautiful woman.

- (21) a. She is *a beautiful mistress*.
 b. *?She is *a beautiful Mrs.*

We find *Mrs.* but not *mistress*, in premodifier position here, whereas it is the other way around in head-noun position. In other words, the underlying form *mistress* here apparently gets abbreviated to *Mrs.* in the premodifier slot, whereas it remains intact in the head-noun slot. The formal abbreviation observed here is evidently due to the relatively minor contribution of the title in question to the meaning of the noun phrase of which it is a (peripheral) constituent. Incidentally, there is historical justification for positing *mistress* as the underlying form for *Mrs.* because the former has indeed evolved into the latter.

Needless to say, we may offer an essentially identical account for the title *Mr.* originating in its historically justifiable underlying form *master*, as can be seen from an examination of paraphrase pairs such as the following .

- (22) a. ?*Master Smith* is not here today.
 b. *Mr. Smith* is not here today.

- (23) a. What do you want, *Master*?
 b. *What do you want, *Mr.*?

Incidentally, the written form *mister* arguably ranges halfway between *Mr.* and *master* in the light of examples such as the following paraphrase pairs.

- (24) a. *Mister Smith* is not here today.
 b. *Mr. Smith* is not here today.

- (25) a. What do you want, *Mister*?
 b. *What do you want, *Mr.*?

Note here that *Mister Smith*, although far more natural than *Master Smith*, appears to be a bit stilted and may not be quite as natural as *Mr. Smith*. Note also that *master* is phonetically heavier than *mister* in that the first-syllable nucleus is more prominent in the former than in the latter, so that the latter may be thought of as a formally downgraded version of the former. This may help explain why *mister* is more acceptable as a premodifying title here than is *master*.

It also should be pointed out here that *Mr.* is a reduced form of *mister* in orthographic terms only, and not in phonological terms, so that any comparison between the two has to be confined to written English. Incidentally, *Mister* is a rather formal (written) version of *Mr.*, which may help explain why the former is often felt to be more stilted than (and thus not quite as natural as) the latter. A point of relevance here may be that *Mister* is longer, albeit orthographically only, than is *Mr.*, which may help explain why the latter fits into the premodifying title slot less “effortlessly” than does the former.

Our explanation of the *Mister/Mr.* alternation given above appears to be applicable to the *doctor/Dr.* alternation as well. Let us take a look at the following paraphrase pairs.

- (26) a. He is *a medical doctor*.
 b. *He is *a medical Dr.*

- (27) a. *Doctor Kim* is my uncle.
 b. *Dr. Kim* is my uncle.

- (28) a. Am I okay, *Doctor*?
 b. *Am I okay, *Dr.*?

Needless to say, *Dr.* is a reduced form of *doctor* in spelling only, so that they are identical in pronunciation. Note that an expression of the form *Doctor Kim* is generally felt to be more stilted than (and thus not quite as natural as) is an expression of the form *Dr. Kim* (except in very formal written English).

What we have said about the *doctor/Dr.* alternation seems to apply to

most other status-marking title nouns and their depleted alternants. Thus the alternation between *major* and *Maj.*, for one, may be accounted for along identical lines, as can be seen from an examination of the following paraphrase pairs.

- (29) a. He is *a major* in the U.S. Air Force.
 b. *He is *a Maj.* in the U.S. Air Force.
- (30) a. *Major Smith* is a fighter pilot.
 b. *Maj. Smith* is a fighter pilot.
- (31) a. Good morning, *Major*.
 b. *Good morning, *Maj.*

We may follow an essentially identical line of reasoning in explaining why the second member of the paraphrase pair below is often favored over the first member of the same pair in day-to-day English.

- (32) a. *The United States Ship* Arizona
 b. *The USS* Arizona

The USS is shorter and thus apparently more natural than *The United States Ship* here, arguably because the former fits more snugly into the space-strapped premodifier slot here than does the latter. We are assuming here that *The USS* (or equivalently *The United States Ship*) is a title of sorts.

Apparently explainable along exactly identical lines is why *HMS* arguably fits into the premodifier slot more naturally than does *Her Majesty's Ship*, at least in everyday British English.

- (33) a. *Her Majesty's Ship* Warrior
 b. *HMS* Warrior

It is interesting that our discussion here should be instrumental in providing a principled explanation for the alternation between *mountain* and its abbreviated by-form *Mount* (or equivalently *Mt.*), as illustrated in the following sets of paraphrase sentences.

- (34) a. Everest is *a high mountain*.
 b. *Everest is *a high Mt.* / *Everest is *a high Mount*.
- (35) a. *I like *Mountain Everest*.
 b. I like *Mt. Everest.* / I like *Mount Everest*.

Focusing upon the italicized noun phrases here, we can see that *mountain* may occur only in head-noun position and *Mount* (or equivalently *Mt.*), only in premodifier position. Note that the head of a noun phrase is inherently more central, i.e. less peripheral, and thus heavier than its premodifier, both semantically and syntactically. Thus it is only fitting for the more central head noun *mountain* here to assume a longer/heavier form than the less central, premodifying by-form *Mount* (or equivalently *Mt.*).

2.3. Adjectivals as Premodifiers

Let us examine the following two paraphrase pairs, which illustrate the obligatory use in prenominal position of the adjective *Nicene* in pre-emption of its longer version, i.e. *Nicaean*.

- (36) a. the *Nicene* Council
 b. ??the *Nicaean* Council
- (37) a. the *Nicene* Creed
 b. ??the *Nicaean* Creed

The shorter by-form *Nicene* here evidently fits more snugly into the peripheral premodifier slot than would the longer form *Nicaean*. For the association of *Nicaea* with *the Council* and *Creed* in question here is so well established that the adjective from the noun *Nicaea* arguably gets to be rather lightweight informationally in the current context. This is arguably the main reason the shorter *Nicene* is favored over the longer *Nicaean* here.

It is interesting that an essentially identical explanation applies to why the shorter *gas* is preferred to the longer *gasoline* in the following paraphrase pairs.

- (38) a. (?)How far is *the next gasoline station*?
 b. How far is *the next gas station*?
- (39) a. (?)Take your foot off *the gasoline pedal*.
 b. Take your foot off *the gas pedal*.
- (40) a. (?)The service station had five *gasoline pumps*.
 b. The service station had five *gas pumps*.
- (41) a. (?)Most SUVs are *gasoline guzzlers*.
 b. Most SUVs are *gas guzzlers*.

Gas, but normally not *gasoline*, may comfortably occur in premodifier position here in each pair above, so that the first member of each pair seems to be not quite as natural as the second member of the same pair.

We can offer a basically identical account for the derivation of *cell*, *teen* and *prep* from their respective underlying forms, i.e. from *cellular*, *teenage(d)* and *preparatory*, as illustrated in the paraphrase pairs below.

- (42) a. John got a *cellular* phone for his seventeenth birthday.
 b. John got a *cell* phone for his seventeenth birthday.
- (43) a. The majority of *teenage(d)* mothers today are on the dole.
 b. The majority of *teen* mothers today are on the dole.
- (44) a. I want to send my son to a good *preparatory* school.
 b. I want to send my son to a good *prep* school.

It is worth observing here that today *cell phone* is more common (and thus more natural) than is *cellular phone* in everyday English. If correct, this may be due to the spatial pressure for reduction exerted on the premodifier position in question here.

It is interesting to note in this connection that “*Osama bin Laden is a Saudi native*” seems to be more natural than “*Osama bin Laden is a Saudi Arabian native*.” The apparent preference of the shorter form *Saudi* over the longer form *Saudi Arabian* here is still another reflex of the general tendency for the premodifier slot to favor shorter forms over longer ones.

We can similarly rationalize why *low-technology*, *high-technology*, *bio-technology* and *information-technology* in attributive position often get downsized to *low-tech*, *high-tech*, *bio-tech* and *infotech* respectively, as illustrated in the paraphrase pairs given below.

- (45) a. They use a simple form of *low-technology* electric propulsion.
 b. They use a simple form of *low-tech* electric propulsion.
- (46) a. The hospital is equipped with the latest *high-technology* medical gadgetry.
 b. The hospital is equipped with the latest *high-tech* medical gadgetry.
- (47) a. Genetic engineering is a *biotechnology* industry.
 b. Genetic engineering is a *biotech* industry.
- (48) a. He has just founded an *information-technology* company.
 b. He has just founded an *infotech* company.

It is interesting that the premodifier *United States* appears to be not quite as natural as its shorter by-form *U.S.* in the following paraphrase pair of sentences.

- (49) a. (?)He is a *United States*-educated scientist.
 b. He is a *U.S.*-educated scientist.

Note here that the underlined premodifier *United States-* (or equivalently *U.S.-*) is a doubly embedded premodifier in that it is itself embedded in the higher-level premodifier *United States-educated* (or equivalently *U.S.-educated*). Thus this doubly embedded premodifier may be under double pressure for depletion, which may be why *United States-* is definitely not quite as natural as its shorter by-form *U.S.-* in the paraphrase pair above.

Our discussion here provides an interesting historical perspective on the derivation of the second member of the following paraphrase pair from the first member of the same pair.

- (50) a. *within (the) door*
 b. *indoor*

We may speculate that *within the door* here got reduced to *within-door* and then to *indoor*, ultimately turning the underlying form *within (the)* into its shorter by-form *in-* so as to render it slim enough to ease into the space-strapped premodifier slot. Note that *with* in the original premodifier *within the door* (or *within-door*) may itself have been a “premodifier” of sorts, i.e. a premodifier for *in*, and thus may have been under double pressure for de(p)letion.

Explainable along basically identical lines is the reduction of *withdrawing* to *drawing* involved in the historical derivation of the second member of the following pair from the first member of the same pair.

- (51) a. *withdrawing* room
 b. *drawing* room

Also rationalizable along essentially identical lines is the derivation of *another* from *one other*. We may contend that a similar spatial constraint on the premodifier slot has figured in the derivation of, say, the second member of the following paraphrase pair from the first member of the same pair.

- (52) a. I bought *one other* book.
 b. I bought *another* book.

The original numeral *one* here has apparently been downgraded to *an* (giving rise to the interim form *an other*), which was further downgraded to the prefixal *an-* (giving rise to the eventual form *another*). The reduction of *one other* to *another* here is, in our terms, designed to make the expression in question slim enough to fit into the inherently confined pre-nominal modifier slot.

Note here that *an* in the interim form *an other* may have been considerably more lightweight than the ordinary indefinite article of the same form, i.e. *an* as in *an apple*. For this *an* (preceding *other*) must have always been part of the higher-level and predominantly pre-nominal modifier *an other*, while the indefinite article *an* have typically been a pre-nominal modifier all by itself. Thus being too slim to stand by itself as an independent word, this *an* must have become a sublexical clitic and thus gotten seamlessly prefixed to the word that follows, i.e. *other*.

Our discussion here appears to throw serendipitous light on the divergence

of one and the same adjective into two separate forms given in each of the following cognate pairs.

- (53) a. older
b. elder

- (54) a. later
b. latter

As an adjectival, the first member of each pair here can be either predicative or attributive, while the second member of the same pair can only be attributive. As a result, pressure for deletion arguably has weighed more heavily on the second member than on the first, which may be why the originally diphthongal nucleus of the first syllable has been reduced to a monophthongal one in the second member, but not in the first.

Our discussion here also casts interesting light on when deletion of the sound segment represented by the letter *l* in *polka* is more or less obligatory in American English. Let us compare the two tokens of *polka* in the sentence pair below with respect to the letter *l* and the sound that it represents.

- (55) a. *The polka* is a fast lively dance.
b. She wore a bikini with *polka dots*.

Note that the letter *l* is only optionally silent in *The polka* here and (almost) obligatorily silent in *polka dots*. Note further that *polka* is the head of a noun phrase in *The polka* and a mere premodifier in *polka dots*. Thus *polka* is arguably under greater pressure to get somehow downgraded in *polka dots* than in *The polka*. This is apparently why the letter *l* here gets silenced far more obligatorily in *polka dots* than in *The polka*. Incidentally, Park (1984) presents a detailed discussion of why /l/ often gets silent in front of /k/ in words such as *folk* and *talk*.

2.4. Function-word Suppression in Premodifiers

Function words that figure in postmodification often get suppressed in premodification, as can be seen from an examination of the following

paraphrase pair.

- (56) a. He is an announcer with five years of *on-air experience*.
 b. He is an announcer with five years of *experience on the air*.

The definite article *the* gets suppressed in the derivation of the *on-air experience* from *experience on the air* here, so that the modifier in question may get slim enough for the inherently space-strapped premodifier slot. Note in this connection that the hyphen, as in *on-air experience*, serves to orthographically mark the kind of depletion under discussion here. Note also that the hyphenation involved here is an orthographic signal that the premodifier in question is lexical, not phrasal, which is still another surface reflex of the premodification-induced structural depletion in question.

Needless to say, not just articles but also other function words such as prepositions and conjunctions may get deleted in the derivation of premodifiers from their postmodifier equivalents, as can be seen from the following paraphrase pairs.

- (57) a. He is a *Korean-language teacher*.
 b. He is a *teacher of the Korean language*.

- (58) a. The program is designed to foster *Korea-China friendship*.
 b. The program is designed to foster *friendship between Korea and China*.

Given our discussion here, we can easily account for the deletion of the definite article *the* and the preposition *of* in the derivation of the second member of each pair below from the first member of the same pair.

- (59) a. The first shipment heads to Kosovo by *the end of the month*.
 b. The first shipment heads to Kosovo by *month's end*.
- (60) a. Demand for cash surged toward *the end of the year*.
 b. Demand for cash surged toward *year's end*.
- (61) a. Everything was back to normal by *the end of the winter*.
 b. Everything was back to normal by *winter's end*.

- (62) a. The fires of nationalism are taking central global stage once again at *the end of the century*.
 b. The fires of nationalism are taking central global stage once again at *century's end*.
- (63) a. *The end of the war* brought vast change in many areas of life.
 b. *War's end* brought vast change in many areas of life.
- (64) a. By *the end of the story*, the dog was safely back with his master.
 b. By *story's end*, the dog was safely back with his master.

It may be noted parenthetically that the suffix -s in the second member of each pair here is arguably a compensatory trace for the deleted *of*.

Sometimes the premodification-induced structural depletion of the sort under discussion here seems to take a more subtle form, as can be seen from the following paraphrase pair.

- (65) a. That sort of thing is an *everyday occurrence*.
 b. That sort of thing *occurs every day*.

Note here that the two words in the adverbial phrase *every day* in (65b) morph into the “seamlessly” conjoined premodifying adjective *everyday* in (65a), erasing in the process the original word boundary between *every* and *day*.

2.5. Affix Suppression in Adjectival Premodifiers

Based on what we have said so far, we can offer a highly plausible explanation for the suppression of the plural suffix -s in premodifier position in the derivation of the second member of the paraphrase pair below from the first member of the same pair.

- (66) a. They want a house *with three rooms*.
 b. They want a *three-room* house.

The postmodifier *with three rooms* here gets reduced to the premodifier *three-room* in the derivation of *a three-room house* from *a house with*

three rooms. Involving the suppression of the plural suffix *-s*, this reduction (along with the deletion of the preposition *with*) may be designed to get the modifier in question a more comfortable accommodation in the rather cramped space of the premodifier slot here.

An identical explanation apparently applies to the downsizing of *billiards* to *billiard* in attributive position, as can be seen from the following paraphrase pair.

- (67) a. a table for *billiards*
 b. a *billiard* table

It is interesting that we can explain in essentially the same way the reduction of *hundreds* to *hundred* in pre-head position as in the second sentence below, as opposed to the first.

- (68) a. *hundreds* of years
 b. *three hundred* years

Note that the plural numeral preceding *years* in (68b) is a premodifier, while the plural numeral preceding *of* in (68a) is (not a premodifier but) the head of a noun phrase. Thus we may say that the numeral in question here dispenses with the normal plural suffix *-s* in (68b) so as to get slim enough to fit into its confined space as a premodifier.

A similar phenomenon of *-s* suppression is observable in the paraphrase pairs below, where *-s* is not a plural suffix.

- (69) a. games that are played *indoors*
 b. *indoor* games

- (70) a. activities that are performed *outdoors*
 b. *outdoor* activities

We may note here that historically *indoor* and *outdoor* are known to have first come into the English language several decades before *indoors* and *outdoors* did. Thus it would be historically correct to say that we have a case of *-s*-replenishment here, rather than one of *-s*-de(p)letion. From the synchronic point of view, however, it would not be too much out of line to say that what we have here is a case of de(p)letion, rather

than one of replenishment. At any rate, it would be safe to say that *indoors* and *outdoors* were pre-empted in premodifier position by their respective shorter by-forms, i.e. *indoor* and *outdoor*.

It is interesting that the suppression of the adjective suffix *-ly* illustrated in the examples below is very much like the suppression of the suffix *-s* we have thus far discussed.

- (71) a. *Care for the elderly* is a major social issue these days.
 b. *Elder care* is a major social issue these days.
- (72) a. *Abuse of the elderly* was not a problem in those days.
 b. *Elder abuse* was not a problem in those days.

The suffix *-ly* appears to get suppressed in the derivation of the second member of either pair above from the first member of the same pair to help the adjectival in question ease into the inherently cramped premodifier slot.

Our discussion here appears to afford us a principled explanation for the complementary distribution between *alive* and its shorter by-form *live*, as illustrated in the following paraphrase pair.

- (73) a. a snake that is *alive*
 d. a *live* snake

The prefix *a-* gets deleted in the derivation of the second member of the above paraphrase pair from the first member of the same pair, so that the modifier in question may get slim enough to fit into the confined space of the premodifier slot.

Additional paraphrase pairs such as the following may be cited in further support of our contention here.

- (74) a. a person that travels *alone*
 b. a *lone* traveler
- (75) a. a dog that has gone *astray*
 b. a *stray* dog

- (76) a. a wind that blows from *ahead*
 b. a *head* wind

Identical in nature is the deletion of the prefix *a-* in the derivation of the second member of each paraphrase pair below from the first member of the same pair.

- (77) a. The rebels *raided across the border* into Uganda.
 b. The rebels *waged cross-border raids* into Uganda.

- (78) a. It was *a wonderful flight across the country*.
 b. It was *a wonderful cross-country flight*.

- (79) a. They were looking for *jobs (done) along the shore*.
 b. They were looking for *longshore jobs*.

- (80) a. They air *weather reports around the clock*.
 b. They air *round-the-clock weather reports*.

2.6. Affix Suppression in Adverbial Premodifiers

An adverbial premodifier, which serves to intensify the adjective or adverb that follows, often takes the form of an adverb ending in the suffix *-ly*. Being part of a premodifier, however, the suffix *-ly* here sometimes gets suppressed in informal English. Thus the full form with *-ly* here is in “free variation” with its shorter *by-*form that dispenses with the suffix, as can be seen from paraphrase pairs such as the following.

- (81) a. He's *real* good.
 b. He's *really* good.
- (82) a. He works *real* hard.
 b. He works *really* hard.
- (83) a. He's *awful* good.
 b. He's *awfully* good.

- (84) a. He works *awful* hard.
 b. He works awfully hard.

It may be in order to point out that the shorter form here is more conducive to eurhythmy than is its longer counterpart. Thus *awful good*, for one, is more eurhythmic than *awfully good*, which may be part of the reason that the former tends to be preferred to the latter in informal English.

The paraphrase pair below affords us still another example of the *-ly*-less short form of a pre-intensifier being in “free variation” with the long form of the same pre-intensifier ending in *-ly*.

- (85) a. I know it *full* well.
 b. I know it *fully* well.

Incidentally, the rhythm argument presented above in connection with the pairs *real/really* and *awful/awfully* does not seem to apply here.

This tendency for pre-intensifiers to slim down (or lighten up) seems to shed light on why some frequently used pre-intensifiers tend to do without the adverbial suffix *-ly* in the first place. Let us examine the following near paraphrase pairs, focusing on the intensifiers in italics.

- (86) a. He's *very* good.
 b. ??He's *verily* good.

- (87) a. I know him *very* well
 b. ??I know him *verily* well.

The intensifier *very* here may be regarded as something of an exception in that a typical pre-adjectival or pre-adverbial intensifier is manifested by adverbs ending in *-ly*, as in *He is truly good*. Thus *very* occurs here in a position where we would normally expect an *-ly* adverb such as *verily*.

Note, however, that *verily* is definitely odd at best and seems to be out of place in the pre-intensifier slot here. We may resolve this apparent anomaly by arguing that *verily* is disallowed in favor of its shorter cognate form *very*, so as for the pre-intensifier in question to better fit into its spatially confined slot.

Admittedly, spatial pressure may not be the sole factor responsible for the phenomenon under observation here. Rhythm may very well play a role here. Note that *(He's) very good* and *(I know him) very well* are more rhythmical than *(??He's) verily good* and *(??I know him) verily well*, respectively. This may be another reason why only *very* is allowed here to the exclusion of *verily*.

Still another factor of relevance here may be the constraint on proximate repetition (Park 1977, 1982, 1984). If *verily* were allowed as an intensifier, it would often have to intensify adverbs and adjectives in *-ly*. This would result in such expressions as *verily freely* and *verily sickly*, which would violate, albeit not too seriously, the constraint on proximate repetition and thus be stylistically less than perfectly natural.

Parenthetically, it would not be historically correct to say that *verily* has been downgraded to *very* here. For the intensifier *very* seems to have been *very* all along so that it did not really originate in *verily*. Admittedly, it could make some synchronic sense to posit *verily* as the underlying source for *very*, especially in light of such bona fide paraphrase pairs as *real/really*, *awful/awfully* and *full/fully* already dealt with. However, such an underlying form should probably be rejected for lack of historical justification. These remarks appear to be relevant to a discussion of most intensifiers of the same type such as those to be discussed in the paragraphs that follow.

We can explain in exactly the same way why *mighty*, but not normally *mightily*, may be used as a (pre-)intensifier, as can be seen from the following near paraphrase pairs.

- (88) a. We're *mighty* proud of you.
 b. ??We're *mightily* proud of you.

- (89) a. He hit me *mighty* hard.
 b. ??He hit me *mightily* hard.

An essentially identical rationalization applies to why *pretty* and *jolly*, but not **prettily* and **jollily*, may occur as pre-intensifiers, as can be seen from an examination of the following near paraphrase pairs.

- (90) a. He's *pretty* good.
 b. *He's *prettily* good.

- (91) a. He'll do it *pretty* soon.
 b. *He'll do it *prettily* soon.
- (92) a. She was *jolly* good at jigsaws.
 b. *She was *jollily* good at jigsaws.
- (93) a. She was back *jolly* soon.
 b. *She was back *jollily* soon.

Incidentally, *jollily* should also normally be avoided here and in other contexts as well for being something of a stylistic monster on account of *-lily* not being in compliance with the constraint on proximate repetition.

It goes without saying that we can resort to a similar line of reasoning in explaining why the short form of the intensifier without *-ly* has effectively usurped the role of the longer form in *-ly* in each of the following paraphrase pairs.

- (94) a. It's *scalding* hot.
 b. *?It's *scaldingly* hot.
- (95) a. It's *freezing* cold.
 b. *?It's *freezingly* cold.
- (96) a. It's *icy* cold.
 b. *?It's *icily* cold.
- (97) a. It was a *roasting* hot day.
 b. *?It was a *roastingly* hot day.

Our discussion here may be able to help explain why the second member of each paraphrase pair below is normally favored over the first member of the same pair.

- (98) a. ?*fully-blown* roses
 b. *full-blown* roses
- (99) a. ?a *newly-born* child
 b. a *newborn* child

- (100) a. ?a *softly-spoken* man
 b. a *soft-spoken* man

The pre-nominal modifier here appears to be far more natural without the *-ly* prefix than with it, probably because the slot it occupies is strapped for space. Note further that the portion preceding the hyphen here premodifies the post-hyphen (de-participial) adjective and is thus doubly attributive, so that it gets double pressure for reduction, as it were.

It should also be noted that positing the form containing *-ly* as underlying its *-ly-less* by-form here may not be historically justifiable. For there is no evidence that the longer *-ly* form here existed preceding (or, for that matter, following) the appearance of its shorter counterpart. Thus it may make more sense to say that the pre-noun modifier containing *-ly* here has all along been blocked so as not to “overcrowd” the attributive modifier slot in question.

Still another example of downsizing of relevance here involves the derivation of *way* from *away* (via deletion of the prefix *a-*) when it pre-intensifies an adverbial, as can be seen from paraphrase pairs such as the following.

- (101) a. *?He’s *away* ahead of me.
 b. He’s *way* ahead of me.
- (102) a. *?*Away* back then, the two continents were connected.
 b. *Way* back then, the two continents were connected.

The downsizing here also is apparently designed to help the intensifier fit into the rather confined premodifier slot.

An especially interesting case of the pre-intensifying adverbial modifier getting downsized in attributive position is provided by the following paraphrase pair.

- (103) a. I’ll be down *right away*.
 b. I’ll be *right* down.

Assuming that the second sentence here derives from the first, we can see that the adverbial *down* is intensified by *right away* predicatively in

(103a) and by *right* attributively in (103b). Thus the predicative *right away* is arguably depleted to the attributive *right*, so as to be more comfortably accommodated in the premodifier slot here. Incidentally, *away* in *right away*, though not an affix itself, is something of a clitic in that it is always bound to *right* as part of the idiom *right away*, which may legitimize our discussing its suppression here along with cases of affix suppression we have dealt with in the current section.

3. Closing Remarks

We have shown that the premodifier slot is normally strapped for space with the result that a longer form often gets pre-empted or displaced by a shorter by-form. The premodifier in question here can be pre-nominal, pre-adjectival or pre-adverbial. The pre-emption or displacement here is often effected by a “clipped” form of one sort or another with the clipping affecting lightweight elements such as function words, affixes, phonological segments or less significant portions of content words.

Our discussion here is highly exploratory in nature and nowhere near complete, leaving numerous holes to be plugged in future research. One of those holes may have to do with the issue of whether or not auxiliary verbs qualify as premodifiers (of main verbs). It is tempting to think of an English auxiliary verb as something of a premodifier, which may be why it has such a limited range of conjugation (vis-a-vis main verbs). That is, this limited range of conjugation may be motivated, at least in part, to make it slim enough to fit into its pre-verbal modifying slot. We may note in this connection that an auxiliary verb is like a normal premodifier from the semantic point of view as well in that it serves to semantically qualify or modulate the main verb that follows.

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