



# The grammatical status of manner units within the English adverb class

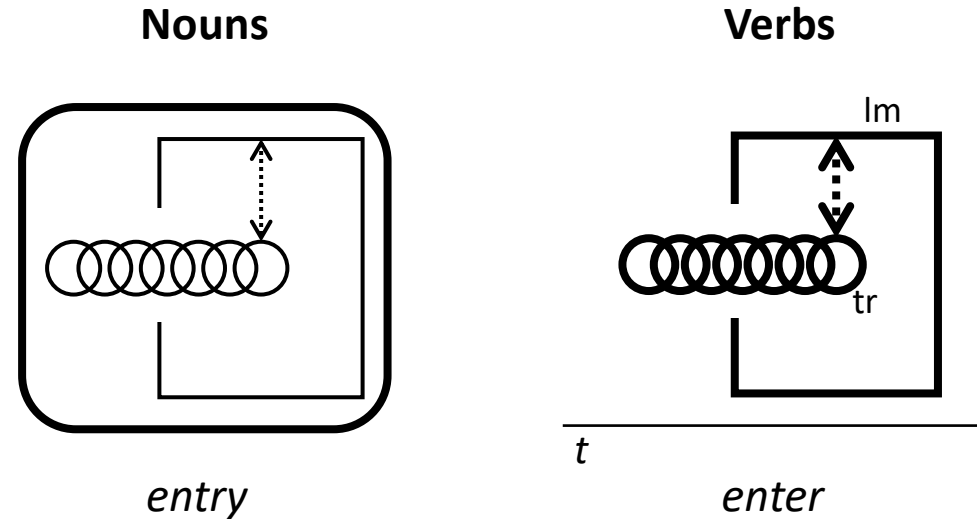


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# Introduction

Langacker (2008: 95): basic grammatical classes can be defined conceptually



Langacker (2008: 128): grammatical properties of subclasses are symptomatic of conceptual oppositions

**Manner adverbs:** convenient semantic label or real morphosyntactic coherence?

- Similar grammatical behavior in English?
- Grammatical properties exclusive to them?

# Defining manner adverbs

## manner adverbs

“how an action is performed” (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 670; Biber et al. 2002: 209), “how something happens” (Carter & McCarthy 2006: 244)

questioned with *how*?  
(Tesnière 1959: 79; Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 670; Biber et al. 2002: 364)

rephrasable: NP with *way/manner*  
(Quirk et al. 1985: 557)

“a set of substitution lists that have identical or broadly similar members” (Allerton 1979: 133)

residual category (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 563)

sometimes stripped of **place** units (Huddleston & Pullum 2002) or **degree** units (Fries 1952)

# Methodology

- Selection of the 200 most frequent adverbs (COCA) + words from other categories
  - 271 units (adjectives, adverbs, determiners, interjections, numerals, pronouns)
- Analysis of their phonological, morphological and syntactical properties (132)

Number of syllables (5)

Stress pattern (11)

Weak form (1)

Morphological complexity (4)

Possible inflectional suffixes (8)

Derivational affixes (4)

Possible complements (29)

Possible modifiers (16)

Syntactic distribution (36)

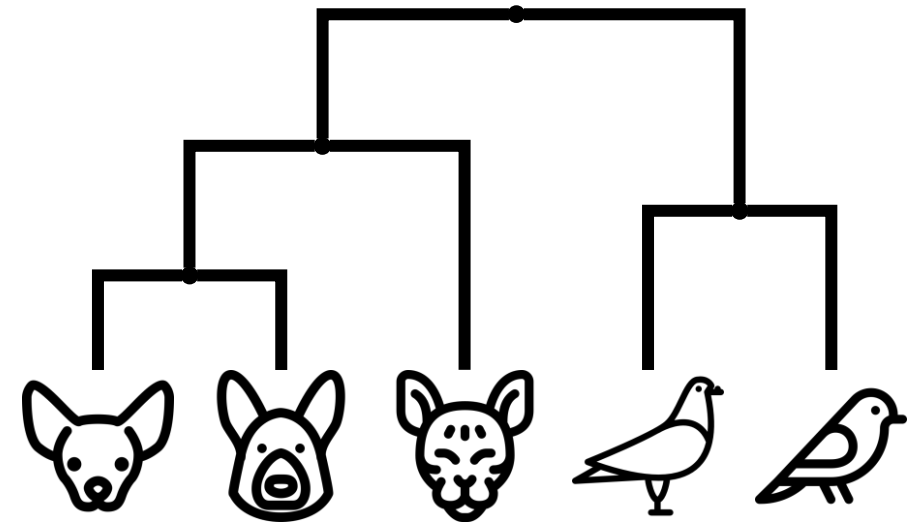
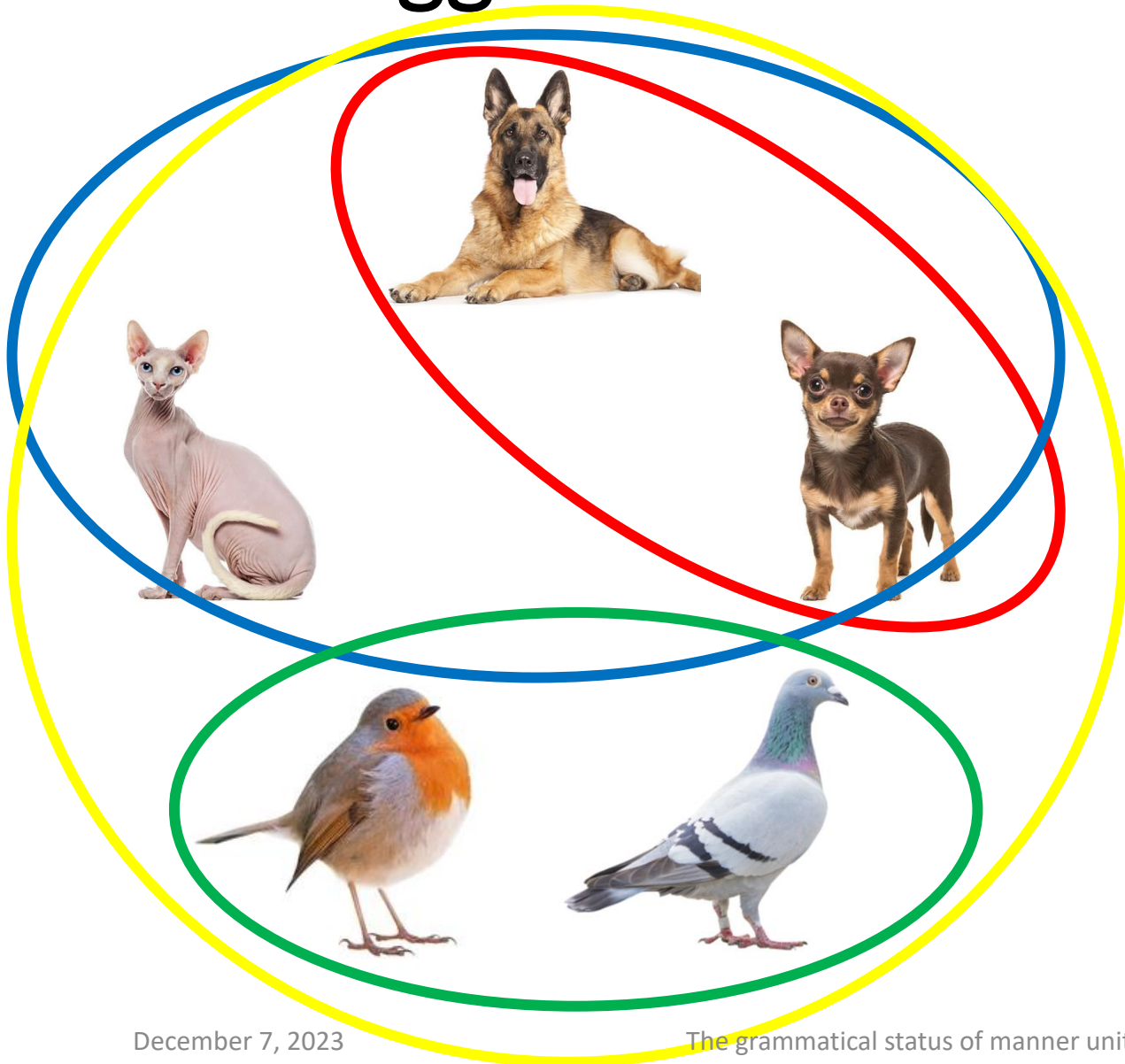
Pronominalization (5)

Sensitivity to polarity (2)

Coordination (11)

- Calculation of the distance between each unit
- Agglomerative hierarchical clustering of units based on their mutual distance

# Agglomerative hierarchical clustering





# Intermediate discussion

- Most traditional adverbs cluster together, except...

Place adverbs (e.g. *beyond, down, inside, through*)

Prepositions

(*intransitive prepositions*: Lee 1998; Huddleston & Pullum 2002)

*today, tonight, yesterday, tomorrow*

Pronouns

(Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 564–565)

*where, when, why, how*

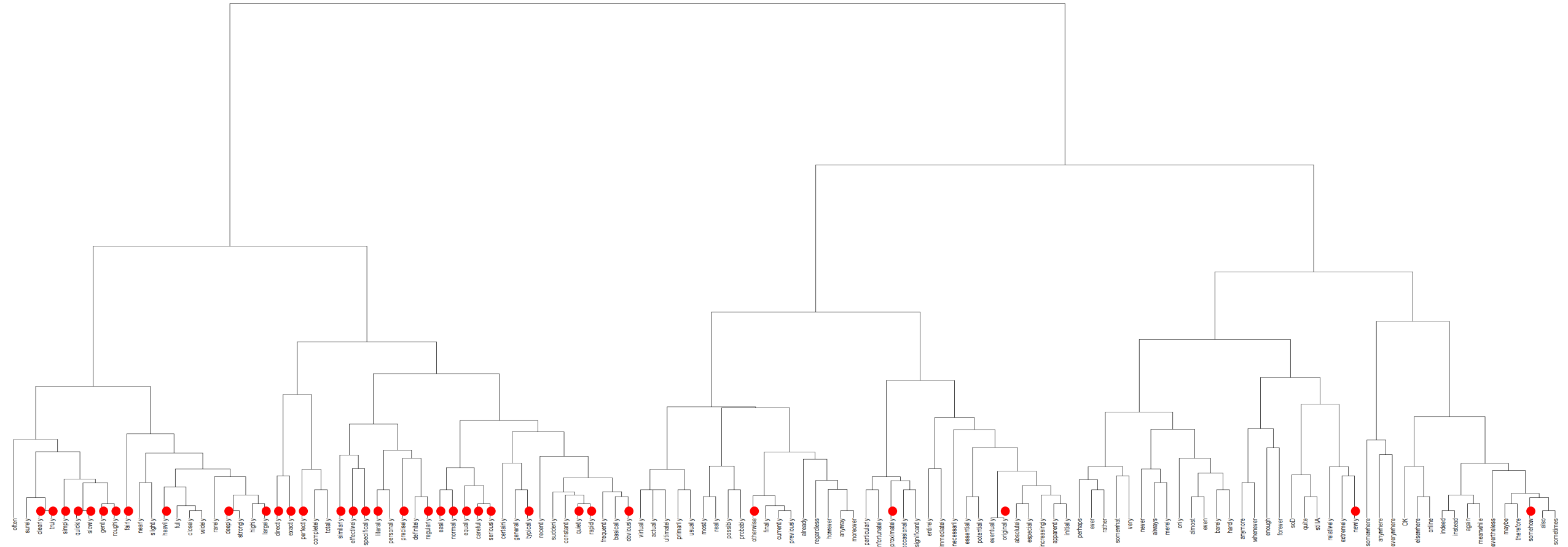
“Flat” adverbs (e.g. *early, fast, hard, straight*)

Adjectives / “general modifiers”

(Hallonsten Halling 2020; Delhem 2022)

- The first three categories are very coherent semantically

# The adverb cluster





# Manner adverbs: a subclass?

- Not a *completely* coherent morphosyntactic category (not a class excluding other units)
- Interesting common properties:
  - Stress on the first syllable (80%)
  - Formation through <ADJECTIVE + /y> pattern (94%)
  - Gradability: compatible with *very* and the comparative structure (89%)
  - Adjuncts within the clause in front (77%), central (91%) and end (97%) position
  - Modifier of adjectives (71%)
  - Complement of *behave* (41%) and *treat* (48%)  
(only property exclusive to manner adverbs)

# Conclusions and perspectives

- To some extent, some minor word classes are semantically coherent (prepositions, interrogatives, ‘modernials’)
- Typical adverbs: complex form (esp. *-ly*), no possible suffixes, no possible complements, adjuncts (esp. central), modifiers of adjectives
- Manner adverbs: consistent morphosyntactic properties, but not a subclass to the exclusion of other adverbs
- Possible explanation: adverbs are often polysemous (e.g. *truly*: manner, degree, modality, illocution)
- Other kinds of clustering: density-based clustering, fuzzy clustering (see the notions of *subsective* and *intersective gradience*, Aarts 2007)

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