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SHES 12
Manchester
17-18 May 2014

David Denison

Introduction

Reviewing draft revisions of *long* for *OED*

Research questions

1. Are the PoS labels for *long* in *OED* correct?
 2. If not, what should labels be?
 3. If some are underdetermined (vague), what are the consequences?
- Slides of talk available on <http://tinyurl.com/UMan-DD>
 - comments welcome
 - Thanks to Matthew Bladen of *OED* for drawing my attention to problematic PoS labels for *long*.

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Headwords for *long* in *OED*

<i>long</i> adj. ¹ and n.	'great in measurement from end to end', etc.
<i>long</i> adj. ²	= <i>long/along</i> (of) 'attributable to'
<i>long</i> v. ¹	'lengthen', 'yearn'
<i>long</i> v. ²	'to be appropriate to'
<i>long</i> adv. ¹	'for a long time'
<i>long</i> adv. ²	= <i>along</i>
<i>long</i> prep.	= <i>along</i>
- <i>long</i> suffix	<i>endlong</i> , <i>headlong</i> , etc.
† <i>length</i> n.	'length'

The OE noun *leng(o)*, *lengu* (26× in YCOE) survives to 17th century. *OED* has a brief entry but does not bring it into the history of *long*. Will ignore.

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Headwords for *long* in *OED*

<i>long</i> adj. ¹ and n.	
<i>long</i> adj. ²	
<i>long</i> v. ¹	[entries first published 1903, not yet fully updated]
<i>long</i> v. ²	
<i>long</i> adv. ¹	
<i>long</i> adv. ²	
<i>long</i> prep.	
- <i>long</i> suffix	
† <i>length</i> n.	'length'

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Adjective and Adverb

long adj. in OED – selected senses

1. Great in spatial measurement OE-
long low rowing boats
2. Having a certain spatial extension OE-
about a quarter of an inch long
5. Great in serial extent or duration (OE) ME-
long letters
6. Having a great extent or duration OE-
her long twilight of decrepitude and decay
9. Too long, lengthy, tedious ME-
He is apt to be long in his descriptions.

All found
in OE

lang-/long-_ADJ occurs 357× in YCOE (incl. cp and spl) 7

long adv. in OED – selected senses

1. For or during a long time OE-
3et ic mei longe libben; We have long been expecting a packet.

4. At/from/to a far distant time a1400-
long since; long after (X); but he cut his teeth long before me
6. Throughout the period specified (ME) eModE-
the whole summer long; all day long

lange/longe_ADV occurs 608× in YCOE (incl. cp and spl) 8

Adverb > Adjective?

long adv. in OED – selected senses

1. For or during a long time OE-
3et ic mei longe libben; We have long been expecting a packet.
2. a. The suppression of the qualified adj., adv., or phrase, in expressions like *to be long about one's work*, causes the adv. *long* to assume the character of an adj. compl. = 'occupying a long time', 'delaying long'. C1290-
b. *not to be long for this world* 1822-
4. At/from/to a far distant time a1400-
long since; long after (X); but he cut his teeth long before me
6. Throughout the period specified
the whole summer long; all day long

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Problem 1

c1275 Þe king sende his sonde after Brien þa wes to longe.

c1300 Sumdel þe pope was anuyd þat he hadde i-beo so longe [rhyme *onder-fonge*].

a1425 Lunet þare stode in þe thrang, Until Sir Ywayne thoght hir lang.

2008 I have to go out, · · but I won't be very long.

- OED currently places this pattern s.v. *long* adv.¹ 2a because of explicit morphology of earliest two.
- Editors proposed (Mar 2014) moving all but first two to *long* adj.¹, with a cross-reference between the entries.

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Penn Treebank

- The Penn Parsed Corpora from ME onwards tag *long* as Adjective regardless of context, sometimes within NP-MSR brackets:

LONG is always treated as an adjective. See NP measure phrases for the conventions concerning adjectives used as measure phrases.

a long_ADJ story_N

five_NUM feet_NS long_ADJ

not_NEG long_ADJ behind_ADV

to_TO have_HV dwelled_VBN here_ADV the_D longest_ADJS
(Santorini 2010)

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Adj, 'function' = measure NP

((IP-MAT (CONJ but)
(NP-SBJ *con*)
(DOD did)
(NEG not)
(VB last)
(NP-MSR (ADJ long)) (. .)
(ID AUSTEN-18oX,175-333))

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Why Adj in Penn Parsed corpora?

- (My speculation)
- Most measure phrases of time are NPs (*all night*) or PPs (*for ten years*), but function of PPs not labelled.
- *Long* in measure NPs varies with the NP (*a long time*), therefore treat as elliptical with missing Noun head, whether the actual noun *time* or an abstract placeholder noun with that general meaning. [???
- But e.g. *briefly* is parsed as (ADVP (ADV briefly))

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Adj or Adv?

- What is the evidence for Adj vs. Adv, and has the PoS changed over time?
- *OED* implies that original Adv *long* was adjunct modifying such constructions as *be about one's work*, *be at a task*.
- Ellipsis of (usually) a PP left *long* as complement of *be*.
- This slot is more often filled by AdjP than by AdvP.
- If *long* is here an Adj, it is a predicative-only Adj.
 - Predicate-only adjectives recognised in English linguistics as a subclass, though in Hengeveld's typological classification (1992, etc.), only attributive use is criterial for a class of adjectives.

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Adj or Adv?

- Adv?
And many oþere londes þer ben , þat it were to long to telle or to nombren CMMANDEV,96.2317
Mony oþer myracles he dyd þat wer to long to tell ; CMMIRK,8.203
- Adj?
and yn mony oþer myscheves þat he suffurd , þat wern to long to tell . CMMIRK,70.1895

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Semantics

- *Long* ≈ *a long time*, but the latter is less a predicative complement than an adverbial. The sentence
Person X will be a long time (at this task)
doesn't mean that X **is** itself a period of time: it means that X will be at the task **for** a long time.
- Rough semantic equivalence may suggest a similar grammatical function but needn't mean the same word class (cf. *He's miserable/a misery*).
- On those grounds, both *long* and *a long time* would be adverbials in clause structure, and hence *long* (by itself) an Adv.

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Vagueness in PoS assignment

- I have argued (Denison 2013) that there are now dozens of former nouns which **in some contexts and for some speakers** cannot be assigned a unique word class.
- For speakers who have both N and Adj entries in their lexicon for the underlined words,
a powerhouse song
This is rubbish.
the word classes here are underdetermined.
- Neither speaker/writer nor hearer/reader needs to worry, and the linguist cannot decide in non-arbitrary way.

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Adj ~ Adv vagueness with *long*?

- The morphology doesn't help.
- In some cases it is a moot point whether *long* is predicated of an NP (like Adj) or modifies the verb (like Adv).
- Because relevant uses of *long* are post-verbal, word class of *long* affects the phrasal projection but arguably not the tree structure (of non-abstract H & P type).

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Other Adj ~ Adv interchange

- Two *OED* senses s.v. *look* v.
 - 9a. *intr.* To have the appearance of being; to seem to the sight. [...] Const. a predicative n. or adj., or a predicative adv. (as *well*, *ill* = 'in good, bad health').
 - b. with adv. of manner (†or adv. phr.): to have a certain look or appearance.
Things had, by that time, begun to look badly for all concerned. (1891)
- Perhaps cf. German *wütend* 'angry/angrily' in *Die Frau kam wütend näher.* (ex. Eva Schultze-Berndt)
- Probably not a sufficient reason to abandon the Adv-Adj distinction in English (cf. Giegerich 2012) if conventional PoS are maintained at all.

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Noun? Pronoun?

long n. (s.v. Adj.¹ headword)

1. Phrases with prepositions variously OE/ME/ModE-
umbe long; before long; for long; at the longest
 2. a
b. *It was/is/will be long before/until/etc.* (OE) ME-
As it was long before he could be persuaded to
- 4-8. *long* 'long note, long syllable, long block' (masonry), etc. – routine elliptical formations

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Problem 2

- The following patterns are treated by *OED* s.v. *long* n.
B.1-2:
before long
for long
this/that long
it will be long before
- Why label them as nouns?

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Against a noun analysis

- Morphology is like Adj/Adv and unlike N
 - Inflects for comparison in these constructions, but not for plural:
before any/much longer
at the longest
it will be longer before
- Syntax is like Adj/Adv and unlike N
 - Allows premodification by *so*, *how*, *very*, *too*, *this/that* 'very':
before very long
after too long
How long will it be?

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Against a noun analysis

- *Long* doesn't have normal noun distribution.
- Complements of a preposition can be any XP, even if NP is the default expectation:

<i>before the game</i>	NP
<i>for real; as new</i>	AdjP
<i>before now; until very recently</i>	AdvP
<i>from beyond the grave</i>	PP
<i>by trying harder</i>	VP

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Against a noun analysis

- *Long* doesn't have either morphology or syntax of a noun.
- (nor the semantics)
- Most parsimonious analysis of *before long* is as PP containing AdvP:
 - [_{PP} before_P [_{AdvP} long_{Adv}]
 - with *long* as Adverb.
- So also Huddleston & Pullum (2002: 569).

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Against a pronoun analysis

- Note at beginning of draft *OED* entry for *long* n. says: It may perhaps be analysable as a pronoun which always stands for the noun phrase 'a long time'; cf. similar constructions at *more* pron.
- But *more* can be a Determiner.
 - All D (except *a, the, every*) have predictable alternative role as head of NP (traditionally, Pronoun).
- And *long* is **never** a Determiner.
- NP *a long time* is functionally an adverbial. Sharing a function (if true) doesn't imply sharing same word class.

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Further claims of nounhood

long n. in *OED*

1. Phrases with prepositions variously OE/ME/ModE-umbe long; before long; for long; at the longest
 2. a. Without prep. 'much time' 1488-
Der sone, this lang quhar has thow beyne?
I do not think it will take long to ...
 - b. *It was/is/will be long before/until/etc.* (OE) ME-
As it was long before he could be perswaded to
- The verb *take* is normally transitive, with NP object. Does this make *long* a noun in *won't take long*?

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Against a noun analysis

- **No**, though more troubling than PP data, and also found with ?transitive *have, need, spend* and *give* (H&P 2002: 569).
- Morphology is like Adj/Adv and unlike N
 - Inflects for comparison in these constructions, but not for plural: *This won't take any longer; The form-filling took (the) longest.*
- Syntax is like Adj/Adv and unlike N
 - Allows premodification by *so, how, very, too, this/that* 'very': *It didn't need very long; We won't spend that long. How long do we have?*
- Verb *take* not **always** transitive (*take against, take off, take sick*).

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But ...

- Some V + *long* idioms do marginally allow a passive:
?Longest was taken by the form-filling.
How long was spent filling in forms?
- *how long* = AdvP internally but behaving a bit like NP externally
- Because this only occurs in relation to these idioms, probably no need to argue for a mixed category.
- Cf. also
Tomorrow never comes;
When shall we meet? Tomorrow should be OK
- Functional slot of subject most often and readily filled by NPs, but can sometimes be filled by another class.

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Further evidence of PoS

- PPs can occur in the same slot as the alleged NP:
Will it take long?
It should only take until next Thursday.
This too argues against a noun analysis of *long*.
- Parallel Danish data suggests that *long* is an adverb:
Hvor længe tog det at komme igennem det?
how long took it to come through it
Umlauted *længe* adv. is clearly distinct from *lang* adj.
- (Thanks to Sten Vikner, in comments at SHES and later communication.)

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Analogical spread by construction

Tentative explanation

- Most likely origin of *It won't take long* and similar patterns is a gradual analogical spread, always in post-verbal position, from one construction type to another.
- Not really helpful to try to pin down the PoS at every stage, but if a single label is insisted on, Adv is still probably closest.
- Some of the possible steps are illustrated in following slides, with sample illustrations.
- Relative chronology needs checking, though corpus data may be sparse.

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Verb *be* + *long*_{Adv}

- (Examples and definitions from *OED* draft.)
- 'As complement of impersonal uses of the verb *to be*, expressing the notion of the passage of a long period of time' OE-
It was not long afterwards, that ... (1656)
- 'As complement of the verb *to be*, expressing the notion of protracted occupation in some task, or of absence or delay' c1275-
Goe, Ile not be long. (1612)

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Verb *be* + *long*_{Adj}

- (Examples and definitions from *OED* draft.)
- 'With implication of excessive duration: continuing too long; tediously lengthy; (of a speech, a literary work, etc.)' OE-
The sad catastrophe were long to tell (1738)
- 'Hence, of a speaker or writer: prolix, long-winded.' a1586-
He is apt to be long in his descriptions. (1717)

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'Intransitive' verb + *long*_{Adv}

Pe dom sal ben some idon, ne last hit nowiht longe.
(a1200, *OED*)

Pe maumates ne mi3hte no leng duyre (c1300, *MED*)
as long as I live (c1450, *MED*)

- Associated with non-affirmative contexts
- Post-verbal *long* in PDE is explicitly called an NPI (negatively-oriented polarity-sensitive item) by Huddleston & Pullum (2002: 823, 825).

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'Transitive' verb + *long*

Pe member · · nedeb longe or it be souded. (?a1425 *MED*)
too little for us to spend long upon (1694 *OED* draft)

How long will it take to be full in this case? (1763 *OED* draft)

What there she did, took me full thrice as long To ravel out. (1832, *OED*)

which did not take long (1834, *OED*)

They didn't spend long over it. (1922 COHA)

But I don't have long to stay in Chicago. (1953, COHA)

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Danish going the same way?

- Both trans. and intr. verbs occur with period of time as NP:
Det vil ikke vare/tage lang tid 'It won't last/take a long time'
- Intr. verb also fine + *længe* adv.[†] :
*Det vil ikke vare længe/*lang* 'It won't last long'
- Trans vb. with inanimate subjects starting to appear + *længe*, but odd:
?**Det vil ikke tage længe* 'It won't take long'
- Corpus examples all show reduced salience of adverb as 'object', either through fronting of *hvor længe* 'how long' or by indirect object intervening. (Cf. English data on previous slide; corpus work needed!)
- Only *tage* 'take' found so far in corpus, and never with human subject., but *bruge* 'use' (i.e. 'spend time') with human subject sounds possible.
- Many thanks to Sten Vikner (pers. comm., 19 May 2014)
[†]Native unlauded form of adv., but Ger. *Länge* n. ??secondary source.

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Thank you

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comments welcome