Classifying Central and Peripheral Adjectives

-- from Quirk and Greenbaum (1985), pp. 403-04

[1] John is **hungry**.
[2] The universe is **infinite**.
[3] Susan is an **old** friend.
[4] The prisoners were **afraid**.
[5] Bob is an **utter** fool.
[6] The patient was **asleep**.
[7] The meeting is **soon**.
[8] Fred is **abroad**.

(a) = attributive use; as a premodifier ("the **tall** man")
(b) = predicative use after the copula *seem* ("the man seems **tall**")
(c) = premodification by *very*; intensification ('the very **tall** man")
(d) = comparison via *-er* or *more* ("the **taller** man")

		(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)		
[1]	hungry	+	+	+	+		
[2]	infinite	+	+	-	-	Central	
[3]	old	+	-	+	+		
[4]	afraid	?	+	+	+		Adjectives
[5]	utter	+	-	-	-	Peripheral	
[6]	asleep	-	+	-	-		
[7]	soon	-	-	+	+		
[8]	abroad	-	-	-	-	Adverbs	

The occurrence of either feature (a) or feature (b) is necessary and sufficient to define an adjective as distinct from an adverb.

The joint occurrence of features (a) and (b) is necessary and sufficient to define central adjectives, as distinct from peripheral adjectives.

Features (c) and (d) do not help distinguish between adjectives and adverbs.