

THE USE OF ADJECTIVES IN ENGLISH FICTION

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Abstract: The article investigates the use of adjectives in the English fiction. It explains the peculiarities of the English adjectives; analyzes the usage of adjectives in the books of English authors.

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There is not much to be said about the English adjective from the morphological point of view. As it is well known, it has neither number, nor case, nor gender distinctions. Some adjectives have, however, degrees of comparison, which make part of the morphological system of a language. Thus, the English adjective differs materially not only from such highly inflected languages as Russian, Latin, and German, where the adjectives have a rather complicated system of forms, but even from Modern French, which has preserved number and gender distinctions to the present day.

English adjectives have three morphological forms: base (or simple), derivative and compound.

Base adjectives exhibit the following formal qualities: they may take inflections *-er* and *-est* or have some morphophonemic changes in cases of the suppletion, such as, for instance, in *good* — *better* — *the best*; *bad* — *worse* — *the worst*. Base adjectives are also distinguished formally by the fact that they serve as stems from which nouns and adverbs are formed by the derivational suffixes *-ness* and *-ly*.

Base adjectives are mostly of one syllable, and none have more than two syllables except a few that begin with a derivational prefix *un-* or *in-*, e. g.: *uncommon*, *inhuman*, etc. They have no derivational suffixes and usually form their comparative and superlative degrees by means of the inflectional suffixes *-er* and *-est*. Quite a number of based adjectives form verbs by adding the derivational suffix *-en*, the prefix *en-* or both: *blacken*, *brighten*, *cheapen*, *sweeten*, *widen*, *enrich*, *enlarge*, *embitter*, *enlighten*, *enliven*, etc. (Blokh, 2000).

Derived adjectives are formed by the addition of derivational suffixes to free or bound stems. They usually form analytical comparatives and superlatives by means of the qualifiers *more* and *most*. Some of the more important suffixes which form derived adjectives are:

-able added to verbs and bound stems, denoting quality with implication of capacity, fitness or worthiness to be acted upon; *-able* is often used in the sense of "tending to", "given to", "favouring", "causing", "able to" or "liable to". This very common suffix is a live one which can be added to virtually any verb thus giving rise to many new coinages. As it is the descendant of an active derivational suffix in Latin, it also appears as a part of many words borrowed from Latin and French. Examples formed from verbs: *remarkable*, *adaptable*, *conceivable*, *drinkable*, *eatable*, *regrettable*, *understandable*, etc.; examples formed from bound stems: *capable*, *portable*, *viable*. The unproductive variant of the suffix *-able* is the suffix *-ible* (Latin *-ibilis*, *-bilis*), which we find in adjectives Latin in origin: *visible*, *forcible*, *comprehensible*, etc.; *-ible* is no longer used in the formation of new words.

-al, *-ial* (Lat. *-alls*, French *-al*, *-el*) denoting quality "belonging to", "pertaining to", "having the character of", "appropriate to", e. g.: *elemental*, *bacterial*, *autumnal*, *fundamental*, etc.

The suffix *-al* added to nouns and bound stems (*fatal*, *local*, *natural*, *national*, *traditional*, etc.) is often found in combination with *-ic*, e. g.: *biological*, *botanical*, *juridical*, *typical*, etc.

-ish — Germanic in origin, denoting nationality, quality with the meaning "of the nature of", "belonging to", "resembling" also with the sense "somewhat like", often implying contempt, derogatory in force, e. g.: *Turkish*, *bogish*, *outlandish*, *whitish*, *wolfish*.

-y — Germanic in origin, denoting quality "pertaining to", "abounding in", "tending or inclined to", e.g.: *rocky*, *watery*, *bushy*, *milky*, *sunny*, etc.

Among the other adjectival affixes should also be named the suffixes: *-ful* (hopeful), *-less* (flawless), *-ous* (famous), *-ive* (decorative), the prefix *a-*, constitutive for the stative subclass which is to be discussed below (Ilyish, 1971).

Compound adjectives consist of two or more morphemes of which the left-hand component limits or changes the modification of the right-hand one, as in "the dark-green dress": *dark* limits the *green* that modifies *dress*.

The hyphen is unneeded when capitalization or italicization makes grouping clear: "Old English scholar" (an old person who is English and a scholar, or an old scholar who studies English) and "Old English scholar" (a scholar of Old English).

If, however, there is no risk of ambiguities, it may be written without a hyphen: *Sunday morning walk*. Hyphenated compound adjectives may have been formed originally by an adjective preceding a noun:

"Round table" → "round-table discussion", "Four wheels" → "four-wheel drive" (the singular, not the plural, is used). Others may have originated with a verb preceding an adjective or adverb: "Feel good" → "feel-good factor",

"Buy now, pay later" → "buy-now pay-later purchase". Yet others are created with an original verb preceding a preposition: "Stick on" → "stick-on label",

"Walk on" → "walk-on part", "Stand by" → "stand-by fare", "Roll on, roll off" → "roll-on roll-off ferry"

The following compound adjectives are *always* hyphenated when they are not written as one word:

– An adjective preceding a noun to which *-d* or *-ed* has been added as a past-participle construction: "loud-mouthed hooligan", "middle-aged lady", "rose-tinted glasses"

– A noun, adjective, or adverb preceding a present participle: "an awe-inspiring personality", "a long-lasting affair", "a far-reaching decision"

– Numbers spelled out or as numeric: "seven-year itch", "five-sided polygon", "20th-century poem", "30-piece band", "tenth-story window"

– A numeric with the affix *-fold* has a hyphen (*15-fold*), but when spelled out takes a solid construction (*fifteen fold*) (Khaimovich, Rogovskaya, 1967).

Degrees of Comparison. The only morphological problem concerning adjectives is, then, that of degrees of comparison. The first question which arises here is, how many degrees of comparison has the English adjective (and, for that matter, the adjective in other languages, such as Russian, Latin, or German)? If we take, for example, the three forms of an English adjective: *large*, *larger*, (*the*) *largest*, shall we say that they are, all three of them, degrees of comparison? In that case we ought to term them positive, comparative, and superlative. Or shall we say that only the latter two are degrees of comparison (comparative and superlative), whereas the first (*large*), does not express any idea of comparison and is therefore not a degree of comparison at all? Both views have found their advocates in grammatical theory. Now, if we define a degree of comparison as a form expressing comparison of one object or objects with another in respect of a certain property, it would seem that the first of the three forms (*large*) should not be included, as it does not express any comparison. Then we should have only two degrees of comparison *larger*, (*the*) *largest*, and a form standing apart, coinciding with the stem from which the degrees of comparison are formed, and which may be described as the basic form.

However, in a very few adjectives the basic form differs from the stem in sound. This difference is of some importance, though it is not reflected in the spelling.

This applies to two adjectives in *-ng*, namely *long* and *young*; their stems are [lɒŋ-] and [jʌŋg-] and the degrees of comparison formed from these stems are, *longer* ['lɒŋgə], *longest* ['lɒŋgɪst] and *younger* [jʌŋgə], *youngest* [jʌŋgɪst]. The basic forms, on the other hand, are *long* [lɒŋ] and *young* [jʌŋ], without the final [-g] which is impossible after [-ŋ] in modern literary English.

A somewhat similar phenomenon is found in adjectives ending in *-r* or *-re*, such as *poor*, *pure*, *rare*, *sure*. Their stems are [puər-], [pjʊər-], [reər-], [Suər-] and the suffixes of the degrees of comparison are added on to these stems, whereas the basic form loses its final [-r], unless it is followed without pause by a word beginning with a vowel, as in the phrases *poor idea*, *rare image*, and the like.

Now it is well known that not every adjective has degrees of comparison. This may depend on two factors. One of these is not grammatical, but semantic. Since degrees of comparison express a difference of degree in the same property, only those adjectives admit of degrees of comparison which denote properties capable of appearing in different degrees. Thus, it is obvious that, for example, the adjective *middle* has no degrees of comparison. The same might be said about many other adjectives, such as *blind*, *deaf*, *dead*, etc. However, this should not be taken too absolutely. Occasionally we may meet with such a sentence as this: *You cannot be deader than dead*. In a novel by E. Hemingway the hero compares the ways one and the same word sounds in different languages: *Take* dead, mort, muerto, and todt. *Todt was the deadest of them all* (Rayevskaya, 1976).

While making the present investigation we have found out that the English fiction, especially the analyzed book "A Prisoner in Fairyland" written by Algernon Blackwood mostly had simple adjectives, expressing attribute of any subject; the most frequently used degree of comparison is the positive one; derived adjectives prevail.

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