

SUBSTANTIVATION OF ADJECTIVES

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Abstract: The article deals with the problems of the process of substantivation of adjectives in Modern English. The study of derivation without a derivative morpheme and the information provided in the literature on this theme is analyzed in the article.

Key words: derivation, morpheme, noun, adjective, verb, term, function, basic, conversion.

Derivation without a derivative morpheme has been variously treated by grammarians. It has been customary to speak of the conversion of nouns, adjectives and verbs. The term conversion has been used for various things. A. Kruisinga, for instance, makes reference to conversion whenever a word takes on a function which is not its basic one, as the use of an adjective as a primary (the poor, the British, shreds of pink, at his best). He includes here quotation words (his" I don't know 's" and nouns used as pre-adjuncts like stone wall and this does not seem justified. Distinction must naturally be made between wholly and partly substantivised adjectives.

Modern English adjectives may be either wholly or partly substantivised. By wholly substantivised adjectives we mean adjectives wholly converted into nouns. Such adjectives may be preceded by the article, take the plural inflection and may be used in the possessive case, e. g.: a native, the native, two natives, a native's character, etc.

Adjectives only partly converted into nouns take the definite article (as regular nouns do) but are neither inflected for the plural nor can be used in the possessive case. The definite article has also a different function from that it would have when

used with a noun: the happy means "happy people" in general. Such substantivised adjectives keep much of their adjectival nature, which we see in the possibility of qualifying them by means of adverbs: e. g. the really happy.

Substantivation of abstract adjectives intensifies the word meaning and often serves stylistic purposes as a colourful means of emphasis in literary style. Converted nouns of this kind are generally used in singular constructions, as in:

Steel-blue of the fallen evening, bare plane-trees, wide river, frosty year! He turned toward home.

The fine, the large, the florid — all off! (Galsworthy)

He drove slowly, enjoying the quiet of the evening. (Cronin).

In that moment of emotion he betrayed the Forsyte in him — forgot himself, his interests, his property — was capable of almost anything; was lifted into the pure ether of the selfless and unpractical. (Galsworthy)

The impossible was not on her side and she knew it, sensed rightly that it never would be. (Sillitoe)

Substantivation of adjectives of colour for stylistic purposes is also rather a frequent occurrence.

A few typical examples are:

What you have on — that flax-blue — is admirable for colour; background of sky — through that window — yes, not too blue — an English white in it. (Galsworthy)

So young, the little leaves of brownish gold; so old, the white-grey-green of its thick rough trunk. (Galsworthy)

There was a scent of honey from the lime trees in flower, and in the sky the blue was beautiful, with a few white clouds which looked and perhaps tasted like lemon ice. (Galsworthy)

Transposition of adjectives into the class of appellative nouns has its own expressive value. In colloquial English this is rather a frequent occurrence. Examples are:

What have you done, my little silly. Come on, my sweet. Wait a couple of minutes, lovely!" Listen, my dear.

It will be of interest to note that the meaning of substance can find its expression in occasional substantivation of other parts of speech such as, for instance, infinitives, participles, pronouns. Such uses are naturally essentially different and illustrate nothing but syntactic patterns.

Here's a pretty go! Let's have a go at it! That was a great find, a quiet read after supper!

The desire for a more inward light had found expression at last, the unseen had inspected on the seen. (Forster)

Every hour the kaleidoscope of human affairs threw a new lustre upon something, and therewith it became for her the desired — the all. (Dreiser)

...He's rather like me. We've got a lot in common. I had heard other 'we's' from her, taunting my jealousy, but not in such a tone as this. She dwelt on it with a soft and girlish pleasure. I was chained there. I fell again into silence. Then I asked peremptorily who he was. (Snow)

Anyone else would have gone to a doctor months ago, she said. That would have spared you a lot of worry — and some of your friends, too, I may say. I'm very glad I made you go. I could hear those it's, a little stressed, assertive in the middle of her yearning of heal and soothe and cherish. (Snow)

Occasional substantivation of sentence-fragments is also a syntactic matter, an effective linguistic device used for stylistic purposes. Substantivised fragments are generally modified by the article as an overt part-of-speech marker or other noun-determiners. Examples are: A cup o'cocoa, a copy of the Bible and a five-bob watch to time out the days of idleness left to them. Not ever that though: I'm making it up. They're lucky to get a thank you and become hot and bothered with gratitude if they do, or only spit the smell of thank you out when it's too late to do much else about it, such as drop a nub-end on a heap of paraffin rags, or trip one of the gaffern into a manhole. (Sillitoe)

"Oh, weren't they though," laughed Clyde who had not failed to catch the "Your set" also the "where you have money and position". (Dreiser)

He's mad, right enough. So what shall I say? His "wheer yer bin?" turned the first spoke of the same old wheel with every question and answer foreordained towards some violent erratic blow. (Sillitoe)

To his surprise, Mr. Ford leaped into the air with a "You don't say so!" and the next moment, with both hands, was shaking Martin's head effusively. (London)

Substantivation of adjectives of colour for stylistic purposes is also rather a frequent occurrence. A few typical examples are: And almost unconsciously he rose and moved nearer; he wanted to see the expression on her face. Her eyes met his unflinching. Heavens! How clear they were, and what a dark brown against that white skin, and that burnt-amber hair! (Galsworthy). Transposition of adjectives into the class of appellative nouns has its own expressive value. In colloquial English this is rather a frequent occurrence. Examples are: What have you done, my little silly. Come on, my sweet. Wait a couple of minutes, lovely!" Listen, my dear. It will be of interest to note that the meaning of substance can find its expression in occasional substantivation of other parts of speech such as, for instance, infinitives, participles, pronouns. Such uses are naturally essentially different and illustrate nothing but syntactic patterns: Here's a pretty go! Let's have a go at it! That was a great find, a quiet read after supper!

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