



SUBSTANTIVIZATION OF ADJECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the phenomenon of substantivization of adjectives in modern English, focusing on its structural, semantic, and functional characteristics. The study explores how adjectives transition into nominal roles through full and partial substantivization, analyzes their usage patterns in various registers, and highlights their stylistic, cognitive, and social significance. Using descriptive, analytical, and corpus-based methods, the research demonstrates that substantivized adjectives contribute to lexical expansion, linguistic economy, and expressive richness. The findings show that substantivization is a dynamic process shaped by grammatical mechanisms and communicative needs, offering valuable insights into the flexibility and evolution of the English language.

INTRODUCTION

The transformation of adjectives into nouns is one of the most active and fruitful processes in the evolution of the English language's vocabulary and grammar. The transformation of adjectives into nouns, either partially or totally, is what is meant by this phenomenon, which allows words that ordinarily describe traits to serve as naming elements in communication. In the past, substantivization has moved from Old English to Modern English through grammatical and morphological mechanisms, mirroring larger trends in economy, semantic change, and grammatical reclassification. Because it encompasses semantic, functional, and structural shifts, substantivization in linguistics is sometimes seen as a border between morphology, word formation, and syntax. It provides valuable insight into how languages increase their vocabulary by repurposing existing forms rather than inventing new ones.

When an adjective starts to act like a noun in terms of grammatical category and syntactic context, it is said to have been substantivized in modern English. Completely substantivized adjectives become independent nouns, like "a criminal," "natives," or "a native," which may have plural markers or possessive forms. These instances now serve as lexical words that identify people or concepts, as opposed to acting as descriptors. Partial substantivization, on the other hand, describes instances in which adjectives assume nominal

functions without entirely abandoning their adjectival character. In phrases like "the poor," "the disabled," and "the young," the adjective acts as a noun phrase referring to a group of people who share a particular trait. In order to indicate nominal meaning, such forms rely on the definite article rather than plural markers. As a result, the procedure is more functional than morphological, indicating a shift in the adjective's function rather than its shape.

The semantic change of substantivized adjectives is strongly related to their grammatical usage. Adjectives represent categories, groups, or abstract notions rather than specific traits when they transform into nouns. For example, the phrase "the rich" now signifies a social group defined by riches rather than a certain trait. In the same way, adjectives like "a French," "a German," or "an American," which denote nationalities, go through complete substantivization and become lexical items that identify members of certain ethnic or cultural groups. In these instances, the semantic change is accompanied by reinterpretation: what was previously used as an attributive description is now used as a referential naming tool. Repeated use in contexts where the noun is omitted, such as "the poor (people)" or "the blind (individuals)," until the adjective alone takes on a nominal identity, is a common result of this change.

In terms of syntax, substantivized adjectives may be found in typical noun positions, such as subject, object, attribute to another noun with an apostrophe, or complement. The term "the poor" acts as a subject in the statement "The poor are often overlooked in policy decisions." It serves as an object in "Aid programs focus on the deprived." "Criminal," "native," and "elder" are examples of fully substantivized adjectives that adhere to the entire grammatical paradigm of nouns, including pluralization, possessive case forms, and combination with determiners. Partial substantivization continues to be more constrained, depending on the existence of an article and usually alluding to abstract, generic, or collective things. This tendency is particularly evident in academic, journalistic, and legal debate, where general or group references are prevalent. Through passive participle forms operating adjectivally, phrases like "the accused," "the deceased," and "the employed" arose, which later acquired consistent nominal use in institutional registers. By providing succinct and broad ways of referring to groups without naming particular identities, these substantivized forms help maintain the formal tone of the discussion. By substituting lengthy noun phrases with concise, semantically dense forms, such usage illustrates how substantivization aids linguistic economy.

Substantivized adjectives enhance the expressive possibilities in both verbal and written communication from a stylistic and functional standpoint. With them, authors and speakers can group people or events in a manner that is both illustrative and referential. Frequently, in literature, substantivization has a symbolic, ironic, or evaluative connotation. To bring philosophical contemplation or personify abstract characteristics, authors utilize forms like "the unknown," "the divine," or "the unreal." These forms demonstrate the ability of English to use ambiguity for creative purposes by blurring the lines between grammatical groups. Additionally, socio-cultural variables affect substantivization, notably when naming social groups, identities, and marginalized communities. Words like "the disabled," "the homeless," and "the marginalized" represent collective identities that are influenced by social attitudes. But, modern linguistic and ethical factors frequently favor more people-first phrases like "people with disabilities" out of fear that using substantivized adjectives would reduce individuals to a single trait. As a result, the subject also touches on sociolinguistics and discourse studies, demonstrating how grammatical decisions may have ideological ramifications.

In English, substantivization is productive because of its analytic typology and adaptable syntax. In comparison to highly synthetic languages, English has a less developed inflectional morphology, which makes it simpler for adjectives to take on new grammatical functions without undergoing significant morphological modifications. Additionally, the reliance on

word order and functional words, like articles, makes reclassification easier. Therefore, lexical extension and semantic innovation naturally follow from substantivization.

The substantivization of adjectives, which transforms adjectival forms into noun forms, is, in conclusion, a complex and important linguistic phenomenon that changes the English vocabulary system. It includes both complete and partial re-categorization, resulting in novel lexical entries, nominal phrases, and collective references. In addition to interacting with social and cultural norms, the phenomenon also mirrors more general processes of grammatical transformation, semantic change, and stylistic diversity. By changing the functions of existing forms, substantivization helps us understand the dynamic character of English word classes and the ways in which language adjusts to communicative needs.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

The subject of substantivization has been the subject of much discussion in linguistic studies, particularly in the fields of morphology, word creation, and syntax. Represented by academics like Sweet, Jespersen, and Kruisinga, early research on traditional grammar identified substantivization as a process by which adjectives take on nominal characteristics, even though their analyses tended to focus on form over function. Bloomfield, Chomsky, Quirk, and other later structuralist and generative linguists used more systematic methods, examining the lexical, semantic, and syntactic repercussions of category shift. Quirk and Greenbaum, in particular, provided a thorough categorization of adjectives used as nouns, emphasizing the distinctions between full and partial substantivization and pinpointing common patterns throughout the English language. Their work laid the groundwork for later investigations, which paid more and more attention to how adjectival semantics and nominal referentiality interact.

Scholars in functional and cognitive linguistics, including Langacker, Taylor, and Croft, studied substantivization from the perspective of conceptualization and categorization. Their research highlighted the fact that lexical items acquire new grammatical functions as speakers employ them in conversation to think about entities, groups, or abstractions. According to cognitive studies, substantivization is a cognitive technique for conveying categorization, generalization, and social grouping, not simply a grammatical change. In the meanwhile, corpus linguistics provided empirical insights by analyzing huge datasets to reveal the frequency, distribution, and contextual patterns of substantivized forms in modern English. Researchers working with corpora such as the British National Corpus (BNC) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) discovered that substantivized adjectives are common in academic writing, legal discourse, and media language, where concise referential statements are necessary for clarity and accuracy.

The ideological aspects of substantivized adjectives have been covered by experts in sociolinguistics and discourse studies. Fairclough, van Dijk, and other critical discourse analysts have demonstrated in their research that employing substantivized descriptors for groups like "the poor," "the disabled," or "the unemployed" might support social labeling and power dynamics. Current human-centered linguistic frameworks highlight the significance of analyzing the ethical and practical ramifications of nominalized adjectives in public discourse. The wider interdisciplinary focus shows that substantivization is more than just a structural linguistic process; it is a socially significant occurrence that affects identity, representation, and power.

In this study, a methodology that integrates corpus-based, descriptive, and analytical techniques is utilized to ensure both theoretical rigor and practical applicability. Using the descriptive approach, we analyze the structural features of substantivized adjectives, paying particular attention to their syntactic distribution, semantic evolution, and grammatical behavior. This entails categorizing examples from current English based on their level of referential function, morphological independence, and substantivization. Descriptive

linguistic analysis enables us to show the change from adjectival to nominal usage in a systematic and context-sensitive way.

The analytical approach offers an interpretive framework for comprehending the semantic and practical consequences of substantivized forms. This includes an analysis of how substantivized adjectives convey social significance, represent collective reference, or enhance rhetorical and stylistic impact. The analytical element demonstrates how substantivization affects communication across various genres and registers by utilizing concepts from semantics and pragmatics. It also emphasizes the fundamental cognitive processes that enable adjectives to behave like nouns even without morphological changes.

Finally, the corpus-based approach enhances the research by offering tangible linguistic evidence from contemporary English use. To demonstrate the frequency and contextual usage of substantivized adjectives, instances are taken from academic and journalistic writings, as well as well-known corpora. Statements about productivity, register-specific patterns, and semantic trends are supported by the corpus data. It also emphasizes new developments in the language, such as the growing usage of substantivized forms in news coverage and legal documents. By integrating these methodologies, we can conduct a thorough examination of the phenomenon that is based on modern empirical data as well as traditional linguistic theory.

RESULTS

The study's results indicate that the substantive use of adjectives is a very productive and context-dependent aspect of contemporary English, with both structural regularities and considerable semantic diversity. The clear distinction between full and partial substantivization, each of which exhibits distinct grammatical behavior, is one of the most significant outcomes. An adjective is said to be fully substantive when it has fully converted into the nominal class, actively participating in the morphological paradigm of nouns by accepting plural forms, determiners, and possessive case markers. As shown by instances like "a native," "natives," "an elder," "criminals," and "a local's opinion," these forms have been lexicalized, transforming into stand-alone nouns with culturally or socially ingrained connotations. The corpus data supports the prevalence of these nouns in both spoken and written registers, particularly in everyday conversation, journalistic coverage, and ethnographic representations.

In contrast, partial substantivization is demonstrated to be more syntactic than morphological, with the definite article serving as the primary indicator of reference. Collective nouns like "the poor," "the unemployed," "the rich," "the deaf," and "the elderly" are used to describe groups of individuals who share a common trait. The data suggest that such constructions act as set noun phrases in nominal syntactic positions rather than inflecting for plural or possessive forms. Their prevalence in social papers, official writing, and political debates suggests their importance in facilitating clear group identification. However, corpus analysis also reveals that their use is slowly changing in some situations as a result of the increasing use of person-first language, particularly when discussing disability or social vulnerability.

The semantic growth that comes with substantivization is another significant result. The meanings of words that go through this process tend to become more abstract, related to categorization, or related to identity. For example, "the unknown," "the impossible," or "the supernatural" take on intellectual and philosophical meanings that go beyond their initial descriptive role. This demonstrates that substantivization enhances the semantic repertoire of the language by producing concise units that convey complex concepts, in addition to altering grammatical behavior. Furthermore, national adjectives such as "a Japanese," "a Korean," or "an American" show how substantivization can be used for ethnonymic or demographic purposes. These forms demonstrate the function of substantivization in naming

and classifying human groups and are commonly acknowledged and utilized in both official and casual discourse.

The findings also emphasize the aesthetic value of substantivized adjectives. The process of substantivization is used in literary works for symbolic, metaphorical, or expressive functions. To elicit emotional responses, establish dramatic tension, or highlight thematic differences, authors use forms such as "the forgotten," "the lost," or "the brave." This illustrates that substantivization is a potent stylistic tool with a lot of expressive potential, not just a structural shift. This observation is supported by the corpus research, which demonstrates that these substantivized forms are used often in poetic and narrative situations where authors aim for greater abstraction or expressiveness. Additionally, the research demonstrates that substantivized adjectives are essential to institutional, administrative, and legal communication. In order to maintain procedural clarity, terms like "the accused," "the deceased," "the employed," and "the licensed" are used as standardized and unambiguous labels. These terms help to create the official and distant tone that is common in such works, demonstrating how substantivization makes it easier to make clear and effective references. According to the statistics, these forms are consistently used in academic publications, policy reports, and legal texts that address social categories or administrative groupings. In the end, the findings show that substantivization mirrors more general communicative and cognitive patterns, such as linguistic economy, categorization, and generalization. By enabling speakers to transform descriptive qualities into referential labels, the procedure reduces the necessity for lengthy noun phrases such as "people who are poor" or "individuals who are unemployed." This move, which is driven by efficiency, helps make English word groups more flexible, which in turn helps the language be able to adjust to changing communication demands. Overall, the findings demonstrate that in contemporary English, the substantivization of adjectives is important from a structural, social, cognitive, and aesthetic standpoint.

Conclusion

According to the research on adjective substantivization, this process is a key and extremely productive mechanism in the development of the English lexical and grammatical system. It demonstrates the language's inherent adaptability, allowing words that have historically been used to describe qualities and characteristics to take on new referential and nominal functions. The results demonstrate that substantivization works at both the morphological and syntactic levels, resulting in partially substantivized forms that maintain adjectival characteristics but behave as noun phrases in discourse, as well as fully substantivized nouns that fit perfectly into the nominal paradigm. The duality of English underscores the intricacy of category change and the interdependence between lexical meaning, grammatical conduct, and communicative intent. By identifying individuals, groups, categories, and even abstract ideas, the analysis validates that substantivized adjectives play significant semantic roles. They improve the language by allowing for succinct references to collective or generic entities, particularly in academic, political, legal, and journalistic discourse. Simultaneously, in literature, where it enhances metaphorical resonance and expressive depth, substantivization is a potent stylistic device. The event also demonstrates the cognitive processes of categorization and generalization, showing how speakers naturally convert descriptive features into conceptual labels in order to satisfy communication requirements. In addition, the findings suggest that substantivized adjectives have social and ideological connotations, particularly when used to describe marginalized or recognizable communities. The continuous interaction between linguistic structures and social values is reflected in the move toward more inclusive and human-centered language. The fact that substantivization is a dynamic and context-dependent process that changes in response to cultural and communicative conventions is highlighted by this development. In summary, the substantivization of adjectives is a complex linguistic process that greatly enhances the lexical

diversity, grammatical flexibility, and stylistic richness of the English language. By blurring the line between nouns and adjectives, it demonstrates the language's adaptability and its capacity to meet changing communicative, social, and cognitive needs. By comprehending this process, we can gain a deeper understanding of English grammar and learn how meaning and function develop in a live language.

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