

Derivation of English and Romanian Adjectives. A Contrastive Approach*

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Abstract:

The study tackles the issue of Adjective derivation from a contrastive perspective. We have noticed that for Romanian learners of English as a Foreign Language, contrastive studies are a useful manner of understanding the similarities and the differences between the two languages. Therefore, we have presented the issue of derivation in Romanian and English and tried to point out the aspects that are common but also the ones that are different. We believe that connections between suffixation and prefixation in Romanian and English can be of real help for learners of any of these two languages. Making connections with the mother tongue has always been a manner of enhancing grammar rules. The examples selected from literary pieces of writing are meant to awaken the learners' interest for reading.

Keywords: adjective, derivation, prefixes, suffixes, contrastive studies

The Adjective plays an important role in the grammar of both languages under our attention. The numerous possibilities of word formation in English and Romanian have determined us to undergo this study about the similarities and differences between the two languages, in what formation through derivation is concerned. We will present the manner of derivation in English, followed by Romanian and make some remarks on the way they are used.

The derivation of the English adjective

In English through derivation we form adjectives from other adjectives or from other parts of speech by adding a prefix or a suffix. Among the prefixes and the suffixes that are most commonly met in English we mention the following:

A. Adjectives formed with positive prefixes

In English there are two types of positive prefixes:

a) Germanic prefixes:

- *a-*: alike, alive, alone, asleep, amoral etc.

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- *out* -: outdoor, outgoing, outlying, outspoken, outstanding etc.
- *over* -: overcast, overconfident, oversea, overnight, over-polite, overpopulated etc.
- *hyper* -: hypersensitive, hyperactive etc.

Ex:

-*out*: “(Ben appears in the light just outside the kitchen)

Ben: Yes, **outstanding**, with twenty thousand behind him.

Linda (sensing the racing of his mind, fearfully, carefully): Now come to bed, Willy. It’s all settled, now.”

(Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman*)

b) Latin prefixes:

- *a-*, *ab-*, *abs-*: achromatic, adamant, absent, abstemious etc.
- *ante* -: antecedent, antemeridian, ante-war etc.
- *bi* -: bifurcate, bigamous, bilingual, bimonthly etc .
- *circum* -: circumflex, circumpolar, circumspect, circumstantial.
- *col-*, *com-*, *con-*, *cor-*: collateral, compassionate, concave, corrupt etc.
- *contra* - : contradictory, contrapuntal, contrary, contrasty etc.
- *ex-*, *ef-*, *e-* : expensive, expert, efficient, egregious etc.
- *extra* -: extraordinary, extravagant etc.
- *inter* -: interchangeable, intercollegiate, international etc.
- *per-*, *pel-*: permanent, perpetual, pellucid etc.
- *pre* -: premature, present, previous, pre-war, pre-Victorian etc.
- *retro* -: retroactive, retroflex, retrograde, retrospective etc.
- *sub-*, *suc-*: subordinate, subsequent, subterranean, succinct etc.
- *super-*, *sur-*: superficial, superfluous, surrealist etc.
- *trans* -: transatlantic, transitive, translucent, transoceanic etc.
- *ultra* -: ultra-fashionable, ultramarine, ultramontane, ultra-short, ultraviolet etc.

B. Adjectives formed with positive suffixes

In English, there are two types of positive suffixes, too:

a) German suffixes:

- *en*: ashen, earthen, golden, leaden, silken, woolen etc.
- *ern*: eastern, northern, southern, western etc.
- *ful*: resentful, peaceful, beautiful, grateful, thankful etc .
- *ing*: amusing, exciting, loving, obliging etc.
- *ish*: babyish, biggish, foolish, oldish, redish, whitish etc.
- *ish*(having the bad qualities of): childish, amateurish etc.
- *le*: brittle, fickle, idle, nimble etc.
- *like*: bell-like, childlike, godlike, homelike, lifelike, warlike etc.
- *y*: stony, dirty, angry, funny, rainy, catchy etc.
- *ly* (having the quality of): friendly, manly, bodily, homely, likely, weekly, fatherly, deadly etc.
- *som(e)*: handsome, wholesome, quarrelsome, troublesome etc.
- *ward*: backward, homeward, inward etc.

- *ed*: (forms obtained through conversion from the past participles of the regular verbs or imitating the past participles through the derivation of nouns): travelled = calatorit; expressed = exprimat; windowed = cu ferestre; treed = cu pomi etc. Other adjectives which are formed with the suffix *-ed* are: jaundiced, wretched, moneyed etc.

Of the suffixes mentioned above, *-ed* and *-ing* deserve special attention since they are often misused by the learners of the English. In fact, they are Past Participles and Present Participles, respectively, the former having passive meaning “*affected in this way*”, while the latter has an active meaning “*having this effect*”. Some pairs of such adjectives are the following: *amazed-amazing*; *charmed – charming*; *insulted – insulting*

e.g.:

- *en*: “ And ridden into battle , no man than more,
As well in Christian as in **heathen** places
As ever honoured for his noble graces.”

(Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*)

- *y*: “Biff crying broken : Will you let me go ? Will you take that **phony** dream and burn it before something happens? He pulls away and moves to the stairs. I’ll go in the morning. Put him – put him to bed.”

(Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman*)

- *ly*: “You all did see that on the Lupercal
I thrice presented him a **kingly** crown,
Which he did thrice refuse: was this ambition? “

(William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*)

- *ed*: “**Exhausted**, Bill moves up the stairs to his room.

Willy, after a long pause, **astonished, elevated**: Isn’t that – isn’t that **remarkable**? Biff – he likes me!

Linda: He loves you, Willy!”

(Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman*)

a) Latin suffixes:

- *able*, - *ible*: agreeable, drinkable, navigable, remarkable, returnable, forcible, credible, inaudible, terrible etc.

- *ic (al)*: comic(al), geographic(al), heroic(al), historic(al) etc.

In some cases *-ic* alternates with *-ical*, with a difference in meaning:

- a classic performance (great , memorable) - classical languages

(Latin, Greek)

- a comic masterpiece (of comedy) - a comical behaviour (funny, less usual)

- *al*: autumnal, constitutional, cordial, colossal, legal, official etc.

- *an, -ian*: Elizabethan, European, Georgian, Russian etc.

- *ant*: discordant, distant, ignorant, malignant, pliant etc.
- *ate*: delicate, desperate etc.
- *ent*: affluent, confident, diligent, innocent, permanent, silent etc.
- *ial*: celestial, dictatorial, fluvial etc.
- *ic*: Byronic, classic, dogmatic, heroic, public, sulphuric, etc.
- *ive*: active, effective, conclusive, illusive, fugitive, pensive etc.
- *le*: brittle, gentle, humble etc.
- *ous*: courageous, ferocious, fabulous, obvious, precious, etc.
- *worthy*: praiseworthy, trustworthy etc.

Ex:

- *able*: “Swindon: You are aware, I presume, Mr. Andreson. of your obligations as a subject of His Majesty King George the Third.

Richard: I am aware, sir, that His Majesty King George the third is about to hang me because I object to Lord North’s robbing me.

Swindon: That is a **treasonable** speech, sir.

Richard (briefly): Yes, I meant it to be.”

(G.B.Shaw, *The Devil ’s Disciple*)

“He was my friend, faithful and just to me:

But Brutus says he was **ambitious**;

And Brutus is an **honourable** man.”

(William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*)

- *ical*: “Burgoyne: ...Any **political** views, Mr. Anderson?

Richard: I understand that that is just what we are to find out.”

(George Bernard Shaw, *The Devil’s Disciple*)

- *an*, - *ian*: “Americans from different immigrant backgrounds do mix together in time. It has been estimated, for example, that about 80 percent of the great-grandchildren of early-twentieth-century **European** immigrants marry outside their own ethnic group.”

(*An Illustrated History of the USA.*)

“He wore a **fustian** tunic stained and dark

With smudges where his armour had left mark.”

(Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*)

- *ent*: “Willy : Oh, Biff! (starting wildly): He cried! Cried to me. (He is choking with his love, and now cries out his promise): That boy – that boy is going to be **magnificent!**”

(Arthur Miller *Death of a Salesman*)

- *ial*: “But black pride and **racial** awareness showed itself in more than dress and appearance.”

(*The Illustrated History of the USA*)

- *ous*: “The evil that men do lives after them;

The good is oftinterred with their bones;

So let it be with Caesar. The noble Brutus

Hath told you Caesar was **ambitious**;
If it were so 't was a **grievous** fault,
And grievously hath Caesar answer'd it.
Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest, -
For Brutus is an honourable man."

(William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*)

C. Adjectives formed with negative prefixes and suffixes:

a) negative prefixes:

German prefixes:

- *un* -: unhappy, unpleasant, unprintable, unprofessional, unwise etc.
- *under-* (not enough): underdone, underdeveloped etc.

Ex: "Feeling sideways they encountered another tower-like pillar, square and **uncompromising** as the first; beyond it another and another."

(Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*)

"For certainly, as you all know as well,
He who repeats a tale after a man
Is bound to say, as nearly as he can,
Each single word, if he remembers it,
However rudely spoken or **unfit**,
Or else the tale he tells will be **untrue**
The things invented and phrases new
He may not flinch although it were his brother,
If he says one word he must say the other."

(Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*)

Latin prefixes:

- *dis* -: disagreeable, dishonest, dishonourable, displeased, disconsolate etc.

- *ig*-, *il*-, *im*-, *in*- (also for the negative), *ir*: ignoble, illegal, immovable, indefinite, inaccurate, inaccessible, irrational etc.

The prefix *in*-:

-becomes *im*- before *b*, *m* and *p*: impracticable, impossible.

-becomes *il*- before *l*: illegible, illogical.

- becomes *ir*- before *r*: irrelevant, irresistible.

-*mis* -: mischievous, miscreant, mistrustful, misinformed etc.

-*non* -: non-British, non-edible, nonmoral, non-smoking, nonstop etc.

-*pre* - (before): pre-war, pre-school etc.

-*post* -: postelection.

-*pseudo* - (false , imitation): pseudo-intellectual .

Ex: “Brgoyne (to Judith, with studied courtesy): Believe me, Madam, your husband is placing us under the greatest obligation by taking this very **disagreeable** business in the spirit of a gentleman.”

(George Bernard Shaw, *The Devil’s Disciple*, Act. III)

b) negative suffixes

The negative suffixes are only German:

-less: careless, ceaseless, hopeless, penniless, pitiless, tireless, useless

Up to a certain point the prefixes un-, in-, im-, non-, ultra-, etc. are too formal indices/clues of the qualitative adjective (because these prefixes appear in the construction of some adverbs, nouns and verbs): unjust = nedrept.

Remarks on the use of affixes to form adjectives

1. *a* – may be prefixed to the stem of monosyllabic intransitive verbs, and of disyllabic intransitive verbs ending in unstressed *-er* or *-le*, to form predicative adjectives denoting a state: *adrift, asleep, atremble*. Many of them are literary rather than colloquial.

2. *a* – may also be a negative prefix, denoting the mere absence of a quality: *amoral, asexual*.

3. *ante* – (=before) is used chiefly to form adjectives or attributive nouns referring to \me: *antediluvian*.

4. *dis* – gives a negative meaning to the adjective to which it is prefixed: *disobedient, disreputable*.

5. *extra* – (=outside) is mainly used to form adjectives and attributive nouns; *extraordinary*

6. *hyper* – (excessively) is used to form adjectives and nouns derived from them: *hypercritical, hypersensitive*.

7. *non* – expresses the same idea as negative *a*-, but is more widely used: *non-existent, nonconformist*.

8. *post* – refers to time or order. It is chiefly used to form adjectives and attributive nouns: *post-diluvian*

9. *pro* – is used to form adjectives and adjectival nouns: *pro-German*

10. *trans* – (=across) is used in geographical terms: *transatlantic*

11. *ultra* – (=excessively) is used to form adjectives and nouns derived from them: *ultraconservative*.

12. *un* – is the commonest negative prefix: *unhappy, unimportant*.

13. In words of Latin and French origin the negative prefix is usually *in-*, assimilated to *im-* before a labial, to *il-* before *l*, and to *ir-* before *r*: *inaudible, impolite, illegible, irresponsible*.

14. *-able* is chiefly added to transitive verbs to form adjectives meaning that can or deserves to be *-ed*: *breakable, readable, reliable*. It is often used in combination with the prefix *un-* : *unforgettable, unsuitable*.

15. *-al* is added to nouns to form adjectives meaning “*of the nature of, belonging to*”: *brutal, cultural, fictional*.

16. *-an* is used to derive adjectives from geographical names ending in *-a*, the vowel being dropped before the suffix: *American, Indian, Russian*. It may also be added to personal names: *Lutheran, Elizabethan*.

17. *-ed* is added to nouns to form adjectives meaning “*having, provided with*”: *cultured, talented*. It is especially common in compounds consisting of adjective, noun or numeral + noun + *ed*: *blue-eyed, pig-headed, one-eyed*.

18. *-en* is used as suffix in a few adjectives derived from names of materials: *wooden, golden, leaden*.

19. *-ese* is used to form adjectives from some names of foreign countries and towns: *Chinese, Portuguese, Milanese*.

20. *-esque* is added to names of artists to express “*after the manner of*”: *Dantesque, Grotesque* etc.

21. *-ian* is added to surnames and to Christian names of kings and queens: *Dickensian, Georgian*. The suffix is also added to geographical names: *Bostonian, Canadian*.

22. *-ic/-ical* -from a modern English point of view, adjectives in *-ic* have a more scientific, those in *-ical* a more popular signification, as *economics* subjects (=that have to do with the science of economics), but: *We shall have to be more economical* (=less wasteful).

23. The form in *-ing* derived from a verb may have the function and meaning of an adjective: *an amusing story*.

24. *-ish* occurs in adjectives denoting nationalities or languages: *Kentish, British*. It can also be added to other personal nouns: *boyish, girlish* (=proper to the nature of), and to a few non-personal nouns: *feverish*. “*When* added to a noun denoting something objectionable, the derivative naturally has an unfavourable meaning: *brutish, devilish*”. This is also the case in some derivatives from personal nouns: *childish* (as against *childlike*), *popish* (as against *papal*), etc. The suffix may be added to adjectives of one or (less often) two syllables, especially those denoting colour, in the sense of “*rather*”: *greenish, reddish*.

25. *-less* (=without) may be freely added to nouns: *fearless, restless, penniless*. *-less* is the negative counterpart of *-ful*; hence such pairs as *faithless-unfaithful, merciless-unmerciful*.

26. *-ly* is added to personal nouns to form adjectives meaning “*having the qualities of*”: *cowardly, kingly*, and to non-personal nouns: *heavenly, lovely*.

27. *-some* forms adjectives from nouns with the sense “*productive of*”: *quarrelsome, troublesome*. It is also added to some verbs, in the sense of “*apt to*”: *tiresome*.

28. -y is added to nouns to form adjectives meaning “full of, composed” of, having the character of: *fiery, noisy, rainy*.

The derivation of the Romanian adjective

As in English, the Romanian adjective can be formed by derivation from other parts of speech with prefixes and suffixes.

The derivation with prefixes is a less productive way of forming the adjectives than the derivation with suffixes. Through this type of derivation, the adjectives are formed only from other adjectives. Semantically the prefixes can be:

- a) negative prefixes:
 - *in-, im-*: imperceptibil, incalificabil, intraductibil.
 - *an-, a-*: anaerob, anorganic, amoral
 - *ne-*: neîndemanatic, nelegitim, nemuritor, nesigur.
 - *dez-*: dezagreabil, dezavantajos.
 - *de-*: defavorabil, decolorat.
 - *anti-*: antiepidemic, antiimperialist, antistatal.
 - *contra-*: contraindicat.
- b) prefixes which express the degree of maximum intensity of the quality:
 - *arhi-*: arhicunoscut, arhiplin, arhipopulat.
 - *extra-*: extradur, extraprecis.
 - *hiper-*: hipercorect.
 - *supra-*: supraabundent, suprealist, suprapopulat.
 - *super-*: superieftin, superluxos.
 - *ultra-*: ultramodern, ultrascurt.
 - *prea-*: preacurat, prealuminat, preaputernic.
 - *stră-*: străbun, străvechi, strălimpede.
- c) prefixes which express temporal and spatial relations:
 - *ante-*: antebelic
 - *post-*: postbelic, postliceal, postuniversitar.
 - *pre-*: preelectoral, preșcolar, precapitalist.
 - *inter-*: interjudețean, interstatal.
 - *extra-*: extragalactic, extrașcolar, extraurban.
 - *sub-*: subacvatic, subcarpatic, subpământean.
 - *supra-*: supranatural, supraomenesc, suprarenal.
 - *trans-*: transatlantic, transcarpatic.

The adjectives, in Romanian, can be also formed through derivation with suffixes, just like the English adjectives. The derivation with suffixes is the most productive derivation. Through derivation with suffixes there can be formed adjectives from other parts of speech as:

- a) adjectives formed from nouns with suffixes like:
 - *os*: apos, deluros, muntos, noduros, omenos, răcoros.
 - *(ic)esc*: frățesc, lumesc, omenesc, țăranesc, unguresc, actoricesc, scriitoricesc

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- (*el*)*nic*: dornic, falnic, jalnic, puternic, vremelnic
 - *iu*: argintiu, brumăriu, fumuriu, liliachiu, sângeriu, timpuriu, vișiniu
 - (*u*)*al*: annual, epocal, catastrofal, mintal, săptămânal, vama
 - (*ul*)*ar*: aluvionar, inelar, fugar, unghiular
 - (*a/u*)*t*: buzat, dungat, gulerat, gușat, țintat, vârgat, limbut
 - *aș*: buclucaș, codaș, lautarăș, nărăvaș, nevoiaș
 - *eș*: chipeș, gureș, leneș, trupeș
 - *atic*: iernatic, primăvărat, vărat, tomnatic
 - (*ar*)*eț*: băltăreț, mălăieț, pădureț
 - (*e/i*)*an*: apusean, câmpean, răsăritean, eminescian
- b) adjectives formed from verbs with suffixes like:
- *tor*: ascultător, atrăgător, insultător, înțelegător, plictisitor
 - *bil*: controlabil, lăudabil, vindecabil
 - (*ar*)*eț*: certăreț, plimbăreț, plângăreț, săltăreț, vorbăreț, citeț, îndrăzneț
 - (*a/e*)*lnic*: prădalnic, zburdalnic, prielnic, sfielnic, șovăielnic
 - (*ar*)*os*: arătos, fumegos, întunecos, lăudaros, lunecos
 - *atic*: flușturistic, îndemanatic
 - *uș*: bătauș, jucăuș
 - *iu*: străveziu
- c) adjectives formed from other adjectives with suffixes like:
- *el*: cumițel, frumușel, mărunțel, ușurel
 - *uț*: călduț, drăguț, micuț, negruț, nouț
 - (*i*)*or*: bălăior, bolnăvior, limpejor, rotunjor
 - (*i/î*)*u*: acriu, dulciu, negriu, suriu, amărâu
 - *ui*: albui, amărui, galbui, verzui
 - (*ul*)*ean*: grăsuțean, greulean
 - (*al*)*aș*: dragălaș, golaș
 - (*i/u*)*șor*: lungușor, mărișor, albușor
 - *os*: albicios, bolnăvicios, negricios, sărăcăcios
 - *oi*: greoi.

Conclusions

As one can notice, both languages are rich in what derivation is concerned. Similarities between languages can be noticed in terms of classification on prefixes, i.e. both English and Romanian have negative prefixes. Their form is, however, different, although some of them are common to both languages (e.g. in-im-). Similarities are to be noticed also with prefixes which express temporal and spatial relations (ante-, post-, inter-) as well as quantity (hyper, spelled hiper in Romanian).

Derivation through Latin prefixes has also certain similarities in both languages, as Romanian is a language of Latin origin.

The other aspects related to derivation do not share similarities and therefore, contrastive studies are of no help for language learners.

The aim of contrastive studies is to help learners enhance a foreign language but also to point out to linguists the common areas of two or more different languages.

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