Derived Adjectives in English Sentences: A Morphosyntactic Study of Cecelia Ahern's Novel *The Time of My Life*

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ABSTRACT
This study investigates the intersection between morphology and syntax, known as morphosyntax, focusing on the formation and syntactic roles of derived adjectives in the novel *The Time of My Life*. The objectives of this research are to identify the morphological types of derived adjectives and to analyze their syntactic functions within sentence structures. The study employs the theories proposed by Quirk et al. (1985), Plag (2002), and Brown & Miller (1994) as the analytical framework. The data were collected through a library research method and analyzed qualitatively using both formal and informal descriptive techniques. The findings reveal that thirteen suffixes are used to form derived adjectives in the novel, namely –ful, –able, –ish, –ous, –al, –ic, –less, –y, –ive, –ly, –ing, –ed, and –ary. These suffixes contribute to the creation of adjectives that serve three main syntactic functions, such are predicative, attributive, and postpositive. The study highlights the dynamic relationship between morphological processes and syntactic distribution, illustrating how derivational morphology contributes to syntactic variation in English literary texts.
Keywords: *morphosyntax, derived adjectives, syntactic functions, English morphology, literary linguistics*

 INTRODUCTION
        The English language presents a fascinating field of study due to its remarkable

flexibility and dynamism. As Rodman (1974) notes, language is inherently flexible and

dynamic, allowing endless possibilities for communication and expression. This linguistic flexibility is closely related to the existence and interaction of word classes, which form the foundation of syntactic construction. Hatch and Brown (1995) classify word classes into four major categories: nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Among these, adjectives hold a particularly intriguing position due to their essential role in modifying and specifying nouns within sentences.

Adjectives enrich meaning and add nuance to expression. For instance, the difference between *I have a house* and *I have a lovely house* lies in the adjective's contribution to imagery and emotional tone. Interestingly, adjectives can also be derived from other word classes—especially verbs and nouns—through morphological processes involving affixation. According to Quirk et al. (1985), in the example *This information is useful*, the adjective *useful* is derived from the verb *use* through the suffix *–ful*, illustrating a derivational process that shifts the word class while maintaining a semantic relationship between the base and the derived form. This morphological formation aligns with Plag's (2002) categorization of suffixes, particularly adjectival suffixes that contribute to lexical expansion and grammatical reclassification. The syntactic flexibility of adjectives, as observed in *This information is useful*, *That is useful information*, and *There is something useful*, exemplifies the range of syntactic positions —predicative, attributive, and postpositive —highlighted in Brown and Miller's (1994) framework. Integrating these theoretical perspectives allows a more comprehensive understanding of derived adjectives as linguistic units shaped by both morphological structure and syntactic distribution. Thus, the interaction between morphological derivation and syntactic function demonstrates the morphosyntactic nature of adjective formation, bridging the insight of Quirk et al. (1985), Plag (2002), and Brown and Miller (1994) into a coherent analytical framework.

The integration of morphology and syntax provides a comprehensive perspective for understanding how derived adjectives function within sentences. This study, therefore, focuses on analyzing the types and syntactic functions of derivational suffixes forming adjectives in *The Time of My Life*. The analysis employs tree diagrams to reveal the structural

relationships that illustrate how morphology and syntax work together in shaping meaning and grammatical organization.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design, aimed at providing an in-depth analysis of linguistic phenomena without relying on numerical data. Specifically, it focused on identifying and explaining the morphological processes and syntactic functions of derived adjectives in The Time of My Life by Cecelia Ahern. The qualitative approach was deemed appropriate since the analysis concentrated on linguistic forms—words, phrases, and sentence structures—rather than statistical computation. The analysis was grounded in the frameworks of Quirk et al. (1985), Plag (2002), and Brown & Miller (1994), integrating morphological and syntactic perspectives to construct a coherent morphosyntactic analysis.

The primary data were drawn from Cecelia Ahern's *The Time of My Life* (2011), selected for its rich lexical variety and stylistic clarity, which provide ample examples of derived adjectives from multiple word classes. Although this single novel does not encompass the full spectrum of adjective derivation patterns across English literature, it serves as a representative microcosm that captures productive morphological and syntactic tendencies in contemporary English prose. Consequently, while the findings are contextually specific, they offer valuable insights that may inform broader linguistic discussions on adjective derivation, with future studies encouraged to extend the corpus for comparative validation.

. The data were collected through library research techniques combined with systematic note-taking methods to ensure accuracy and consistency. The analysis employed a descriptive qualitative approach grounded in the morphological and syntactic frameworks of Quirk et al. (1985), Plag (2002), and Brown & Miller (1994). To maintain methodological transparency, the analysis followed three structured stages: (1) morphological classification to identify and group derived adjectives based on their base forms and affixation patterns, (2) morphological decomposition to examine internal word structure and derivational processes, and (3) syntactic function analysis using tree diagram representations to visualize

constituent relations within sentences. The reliability of the analysis was reinforced through repeated cross-checking of data, consistent application of theoretical criteria, and reference triangulation across the selected frameworks to ensure coherent and replicable interpretations.

DISCUSSION

The discussions were separated into two sessions. The first session was about the types of derivational suffixes forming adjectives that were illustrated by using a diagram of the morphological process. The second session was about analysing the syntactic functions of derived adjectives by means of tree diagrams.
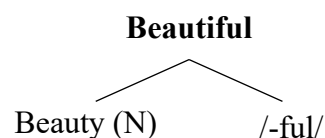
Derivational Suffixes Forming Adjectives

This discussion is based on the theories by Quirk et al (1985) and Plag (2002) regarding derivational suffixes of adjectives. Quirk et al (1985) mentioned that there are ten derivational suffixes can form adjectives, they are /-ful/ /-able/ /-ish/ /-ous/ /-al/ /-ic/ /-less/ /-y/ /-ive/ /-ly/ and Plag (2002) added four additional suffixes, they are /-ing/ /-ed/ /-esque/ /-ary/. However, the suffix /-esque/ was not included as there was no data found.

Suffix /-ful/

The attachment suffix /-ful/to some particular words can alter the word class, both a noun and a verb becoming an adjective. Quirk et al (1985) stated that the suffix /-ful/ means full of or providing.

Data 1: They are **beautiful** (Cecelia Ahern, 2011: 27)

Beautiful

Beauty (N)   /-ful/

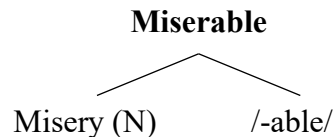Beauty (N) + Suffix /-ful/ = Beautiful (Adj)

The word *beautiful* belongs to a derived adjective as it undergoes a derivational process. The base word is *beauty* (N), and it is attached by the adjectival suffix /-ful/. It produces a new word which is *beautiful* (N). According to Oxford Learner's Dictionary, *beauty* means

quality or state of being beautiful. Whilst *beautiful* means very pretty or attractive. In addition, *beautiful* is categorized as a denominal adjective.

Suffix /-able/

The attachment suffix /-able/to some particular words can alter the word class, both a noun and a verb becoming an adjective. Quirk et al (1985) stated that the suffix /-able/ means something can be done or implies a passive voice.

Data 2: I am not **miserable** (Cecelia Ahern, 2011: 204)
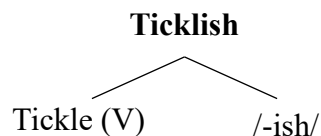
Miserable

Misery (N)   /-able/

Misery (N) + Suffix /-able/ = Miserable (Adj)

The word *miserable* can be determined as a derived adjective with a derivational process. The word *miserable* is derived from *misery* (N) with being attached by adjectival suffix /-able/. According to Oxford Learner's Dictionary, *misery* means great suffering or unhappiness. However, due to the suffix /-able/, *miserable* means very unhappy. Therefore, the alteration of word class and meaning is involved in this case. Lastly, *miserable* is categorized as a denominal adjective.

Suffix /-ish/

The attachment suffix /-ish/to some particular words can alter the word class, both a noun and a verb becoming an adjective. According to Quirk et al (1985), the suffix /-ish/ means somewhat like.

Data 3: He knew I was **ticklish** (Cecelia Ahern, 2011: 383)
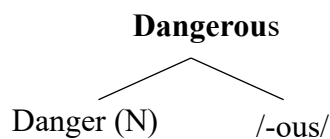
Ticklish

Tickle (V)   /-ish/

Tickle (V) + Suffix /-ish/ = Ticklish (Adj)

The derived adjective *ticklish* is derived from *tickle* (V) and the adjectival suffix /-ish/ is involved. It produces a new word from *tickle* (V) into *ticklish* (Adj). According to Oxford Learner's Dictionary, *tickle* is defined have or cause an itching feeling in a part of the body. Meanwhile, *ticklish* means sensitive to being tickled. As the word class and meaning are altered, the word *ticklish* is related to the derivational process and it refers to a deverbal adjective.

Suffix /-ous/

The attachment suffix /-ous/to some particular words can alter the word class, both a noun and a verb, becoming an adjective. According to Quirk et al (1985), the suffix /-ous/ means having the properties of or having a relation to.

Data 4: It is **dangerous** (Cecelia Ahern, 2011: 240)
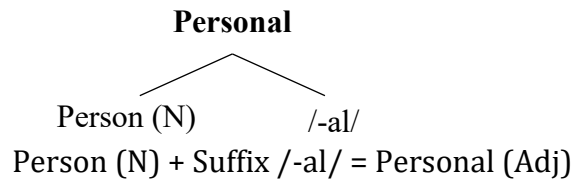
Dangerous

Danger (N)   /-ous/

Danger (V) + Suffix /-ous/ = Dangerous (Adj)

The word *dangerous* is categorized as a derived adjective with respect to a denominal adjective. It is because of a denominal adjective in which the base word of *dangerous* is *danger* (N), and it is attached by the suffix /-ous/. According to Oxford Learner's Dictionary, *danger* is defined possibility of being hurt or killed. Meanwhile, *dangerous* means are likely to cause danger. As a result, the alteration of word class and meaning is proved in this case on the basis of the derivational process.

Suffix /-al/

The attachment suffix /-al/to some particular words can alter the word class, both a noun and a verb becoming an adjective. Quirk et al (1985) stated that the suffix /-ous/ means having the properties of or having a relation to.

Data 5: She must be having a **personal** issue (Cecelia Ahern, 2011: 100)

Personal

Person (N)   /-al/
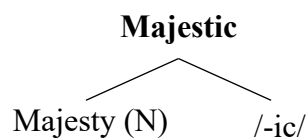
Person (N) + Suffix /-al/ = Personal (Adj)

The word *personal* is assumed as a derived adjective as it undergoes a derivational process that deals with word class and meaning alteration. The word base of *personal* is *person,* which is a noun, and it is attached by the adjectival suffix /-al/. It produces a new word from *person* (N) becoming *personal* (Adj). According to Oxford Learner's Dictionary, a *person* is defined human being. On the other hand, *personal* means not of your professional life or private. As it is derived from a noun, *personal* is classified as a denominal adjective.

Suffix /-ic/

The attachment suffix /-ic/to some particular words can alter the word class, both a noun and a verb becoming an adjective. Quirk et al (1985) stated that the suffix /-ous/ means having the properties of or having a relation to.

Data 6: I had told a **majestic** lie (Cecelia Ahern, 2011: 327)
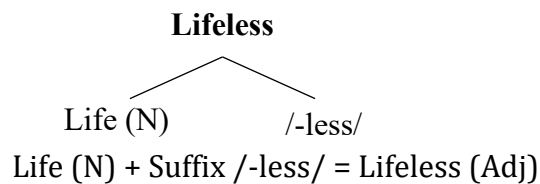
Majestic

Majesty (N)   /-ic/

Majesty (N) + Suffix /-ic/ = Majestic (Adj)

The word *majestic* refers to a derived adjective as a derivational process is undergone. Derivational process deals with the word class and meaning alteration. The adjective *majestic* is derived from *majesty* (N) and attached by adjectival suffix /-ic/. It yields a new word class, which is an *adjective*. According to Oxford Learner's Dictionary, *majesty* means an impressive and attractive quality that something has. On the other hand, *majestic* is defined as impressive because of size or beauty. Furthermore, *majestic* is assumed as a denominal adjective.

Suffix /-less/

The attachment suffix /-less/to some particular words can alter the word class, both a noun and a verb, becoming an adjective. Quirk et al (1985) stated that the suffix /-less/ means without.

Data 7: I was **lifeless** (Cecelia Ahern, 2011: 415)

Lifeless

Life (N)   /-less/

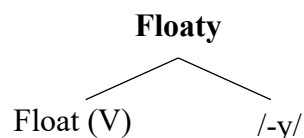Life (N) + Suffix /-less/ = Lifeless (Adj)

The word *lifeless* belongs to a derived adjective because it is derived through a derivational process. As the word *lifeless* pertains to the derivational process, it deals with word class and meaning alteration. The adjective *lifeless* is derived from the word *life* (N) and attached by the adjectival suffix /-less/. Thus, it yields a new word from a noun into an adjective. According to Oxford Learner's Dictionary, *life* is defined state of being alive as a human being. Whereas, *lifeless* means dead or not lively. This elaboration proves the process of derivation. In addition, *lifeless* is considered a denominal adjective.

Suffix /-y/

The attachment suffix /-y/to some particular words can alter the word class, both a noun and a verb becoming an adjective. According to Quirk et al (1985), the suffix /-y/ means somewhat like or characterized by.

Data 8: I would wear a **floaty** dress (Cecelia Ahern, 2011: 30)

Floaty

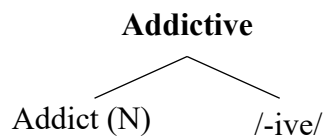Float (V)   /-y/

Float (V) + Suffix /-y/ = Floaty (Adj)

The word *floaty* is considered as a derived adjective with dealing with a derivational process. The word *floaty* is derived from float (V) with being attached by adjectival suffix /-y/. According to Oxford Learner's Dictionary, *float* is defined stay on the surface of a liquid

or up in the air. However, due to suffix /-y/, *floaty* means very thin and light. Therefore, the word class and meaning are involved in this case. Lastly, *floaty* is categorized as a deverbal adjective.

Suffix /-ive/

The attachment suffix /-ive/to some particular words can alter the word class, both a noun and a verb, becoming an adjective. Quirk et al (1985) stated that the suffix /-ive/ is fundamentally related to the active of a kind that can do.

Data 9: He is **addictive** (Cecelia Ahern, 2011: 263)
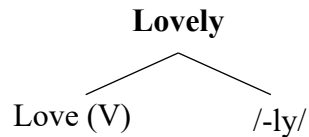
Addictive

Addict (N)   /-ive/

Addict (N) + Suffix /-ive/ = Addictive (Adj)

The word *addictive* is presumed a derived adjective as it undergoes a derivational process that deals with word class and meaning alteration. The word base of *addictive* is *addict,* which is a noun, and it is attached by the adjectival suffix /-ive/. It produces a new word from *addict* (N), becoming *addictive* (Adj). According to Oxford Learner's Dictionary, *addict* means a person strongly interested in something. On the other hand, *addictive* means unable to stop taking or using something. As it is derived from a noun, *addictive* is classified as a denominal adjective.

Suffix /-ly/

The attachment suffix /-ly/to some particular words can alter the word class, both a noun and a verb becoming an adjective. According to Quirk et al (1985), the suffix /-ly/ means having the qualities of.

Data (10): You have a **lovely** home (Cecelia Ahern, 2011: 325)
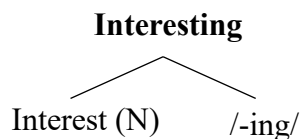
Lovely

Love (V) /-ly/

Love (V) + Suffix /-ly/ = Lovely (Adj)

The word *lovely* is categorized as a derived adjective based on a denominal adjective. It is because of a derivational process in which the base word of *lovely* is *love* (V), and it is attached by the suffix /-ly/. According to Oxford Learner's Dictionary, *love* is defined as having very strong feelings of affection for somebody. Meanwhile, *lovely* means beautiful, attractive. As a result, the alteration of word class and meaning is proved in this case.

Suffix /-ing/

The attachment suffix /-ing/to some particular words can alter the word class, both a noun and a verb becoming an adjective. Plag (2002) stated that the suffix /-ing/ usually refers to the present participle.

Data 11: Nothing **interesting** happens (Cecelia Ahern, 2011: 113)
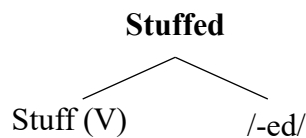
Interesting

Interest (N) /-ing/

Interest (N) + Suffix /-ing/ = Interesting (Adj)

The derived adjective *interesting* is derived from *interest* (N) and the adjectival suffix /-ing/ is involved. It produces a new word from *interest* (N) into *interesting* (Adj). According to Oxford Learner's Dictionary, *interest* means the desire to learn or know about somebody or something. Meanwhile, *interesting* means holding your attention. As the word class and meaning are altered, the word *interesting* is related to the derivational process and it refers to a denominal adjective.

Suffix /-ed/

The attachment suffix /-ed/to some particular words can alter the word class, both a noun and a verb becoming an adjective. According to Plag (2002), the suffix /-ed/ has the meaning of having or being provided with.

Data 12: I said with a **stuffed** mouth (Cecelia Ahern, 2011: 12)
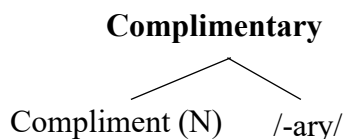
Stuffed

Stuff (V) /-ed/

Stuff (V) + Suffix /-ed/ = Stuffed (Adj)

The word *stuffed* belongs to a derived adjective as it undergoes a derivational process. The base word is *stuff* (V), and it is attached by adjectival suffix /-ed/. It produces a new word which is *stuffed* (Adj). According to Oxford Learner's Dictionary, *stuff* is defined fill something tightly with something. Whilst *stuffed* means having eaten so much that you can not eat anything else. In addition, *stuffed* is categorized as a deverbal adjective.

Suffix /-ary/

The attachment suffix /-ary/to some particular words can alter the word class, both a noun and a verb becoming an adjective. According to Plag (2002), the suffix /-ary/is usually attached to a noun along with the meaning of relating to quality or place.

Data 13: Here it is a **complimentary** two-bean salad (Cecelia Ahern, 2011: 298)

Complimentary

Compliment (N) /-ary/

Compliment (N) + Suffix /-ary/ = Complimentary (Adj)

The word *complimentary* belongs to a derived adjective because it is derived through a derivational process. As the word *complimentary* pertains to the derivational process, it deals with word class and meaning alteration. The adjective *complimentary* is derived from word *compliment* (N) and attached by adjectival suffix /-ary/. Thus, it yields a new word

from a noun into an adjective. According to Oxford Learner's Dictionary, a *compliment* is defined remark that expresses praise, admiration. Whereas, *complimentary* means expressing admiration. This elaboration proves the process of derivation. In addition, *complimentary* is assumed as a denominal adjective.
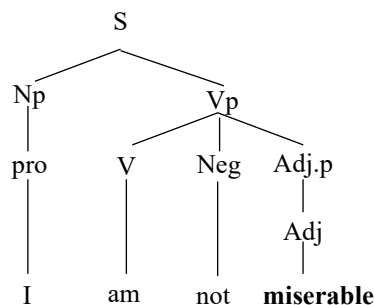
Syntactic Functions of Derived Adjectives

According to Quirk et al (1985), the functions of an adjective can be divided into three they are predicative, attributive, and postpositive. In order to represent the functions of the adjectives, the use of a tree diagram is very effective, as it has been proposed by Brown & Miller (1994). In this study, there are three functions of an adjective represented by means of tree diagrams.

Predicative

An adjective can be predicative when it comes after a linking verb, and it usually modifies the subject of a particular sentence. In addition, according to Quirk et al (1985) adjectives are predicative when they have a function as subject complement.

I am not **miserable** (Cecelia Ahern, 2011: 204)

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                    S
           ┌────────┴────────┐
          Np                 Vp
           │         ┌────────┼────────┐
          pro        V       Neg     Adj.p
           │         │        │        │
           │         │        │       Adj
           │         │        │        │
           I         am      not   miserable
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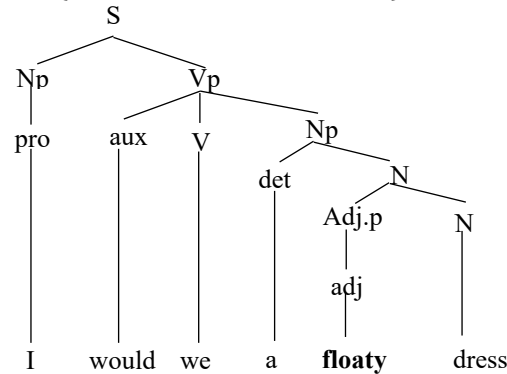
The derived adjective *miserable* is categorized as predicative. This case is supported by the elaboration that *miserable* comes after the linking verb *am* and it functions as a subject complement. As it functions as a subject complement, the derived adjective *miserable* modifies the subject *I*. Therefore, the adjective *miserable* describes the subject as someone very happy. The appearing description of the subject is also supported by the structure of the sentence in the form of a negative.

Attributive

According to Quirk et al (1985) adjective can be attributive when it pre-modifies the head of a noun phrase. The adjective usually appears before the noun and comes after an article including zero article.
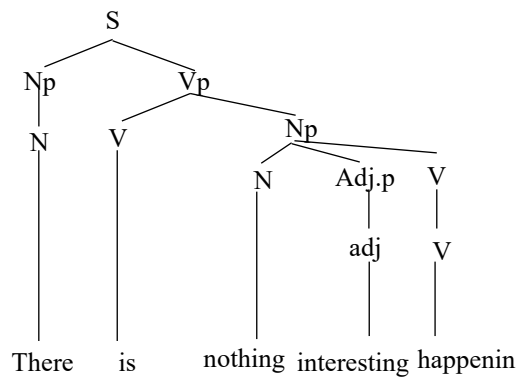
I would wear a **floaty** dress (Cecelia Ahern, 2011: 30)

The derived adjective *floaty* is classified as attributive. It is very obvious that it appears before the noun that is modified, and it comes before the article *a*. As a noun modifier, the derived adjective *floaty* depicts the noun as a dress that is very light and thin.

Postpositive

An adjective can be postpositive when it modifies the noun, and it usually appears after the noun that is modified. This explanation is based on the theory by Quirk et al (1985).

The derived adjective *interesting* is classified as post-positive. This case is supported by the elaboration that the derived adjective *interesting* appears after the noun that is modified,

which is *nothing*. Therefore, the derived adjective *interesting* describes the noun as nothing holds your attention.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that adjectives can be derived from other word classes—particularly nouns and verbs—through the addition of adjectival suffixes as classified by Quirk et al. (1985) and Plag (2002). The analysis identified fourteen productive suffixes, including *-ful, -able, -ish, -ous, -al, -ic, -less, -y, -ive, -ly, -ing, -ed, -esque,* and *ary*, which contribute to the formation of denominal and deverbal adjectives. Beyond confirming these established derivational patterns, this study extends the understanding of morphosyntax by illustrating how morphological derivation interacts dynamically with syntactic variation in literary discourse. The findings reveal that suffix-driven adjective formation not only alters grammatical category but also influences syntactic placement and semantic nuance within narrative structures. Thus, this research provides empirical evidence of the interdependence between morphological creativity and syntactic flexibility, offering new insights into the realization of morphosyntactic patterns in contemporary English literary contexts.

The analysis revealed that morphological derivation influences syntactic distribution, as certain suffixes tend to occur more frequently in specific syntactic positions. For instance, adjectives with *-able* and *-ful* commonly appear in predicative and attributive positions, reflecting how morphological formation constrains syntactic realization. This interaction demonstrates that morphology and syntax operate interdependently within adjective construction, thereby reinforcing the morphosyntactic nature of English grammar. Beyond theoretical relevance, such findings also hold pedagogical implications, particularly for teaching adjective usage and word formation in English language learning contexts.

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