

**ANNE ASCHENBRENNER,
ADJECTIVES AS NOUNS, MAINLY AS ATTESTED IN BOETHIUS TRANSLATIONS
FROM OLD TO MODERN ENGLISH AND IN MODERN GERMAN**

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The book focuses on the use of adjectives as nouns from two perspectives. The author, who studied English and German at the University of Munich, firstly investigates the problem from the diachronic perspective by examining the use of adjectives as nouns in translations of Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae* into Old, Middle, Early Modern and Modern English. Secondly, she focuses on the synchronic aspect of this problem by investigating Modern German and Modern English translations. The book thus makes a noteworthy contribution to the study of conversion.

The first part of the monograph presents a detailed overview of the relevant literature and theoretical basis of the research work described in the second part. The volume closes with several appendices listing all the examples collected during the research work.

The first chapter gives an overview of the contents and describes how the organization of the research and the theoretical part are handled. The following chapter focuses on the studies of adjectives as nouns that have been published so far. By analyzing the different approaches to describing adjectives used as nouns the author shows that there is no consensus concerning this phenomenon. Some writers claim that it is a case of conversion with the adjective acquiring all the important features of nouns. In this conception conversion is mostly regarded as a gradual process in which individual stages can be distinguished. Other writers claim that the change is immediate. Moreover, there are also claims that adjectives used as nouns are in fact a case of ellipsis. Although there are quite a large number of studies concerning this question, Aschenbrenner points out that none of the positions is supported by an extensive data analysis.

Chapter 3 focuses on the characteristic features of adjectives in Old, Middle and Modern English and in Modern German. The author does not include a description of adjectives in Latin because in Latin grammars they are often not presented as a separate category but are included into nouns. However, she does not provide any characteristic features of Latin nouns. Apart from listing typical features of nouns, Aschenbrenner also concentrates on the typological differences between the languages analyzed. The focus on language typology is important for her research insofar as different typological characteristics can influence the possibility of using an adjective as a noun. The chapter therefore discusses these characteristics further, focusing mostly on adjectives in German and English. Attention is also paid to the possible influences that can lead to the conversion of adjectives into nouns (word formation, syntax or semantic change).

Since in the author's view adjectives used as nouns are probably a case of conversion, Chapter 5 is devoted solely to conversion, describing different theoretical approaches to it. According to Aschenbrenner, there are two key theoretical concepts: conversion and zero derivation which both describe a situation in which a member of a certain word class is used as a different word class and gradually acquires all the



grammatical properties of the new word class. The zero derivation assumes that there is a derivational morpheme added to the original word. Since the terms conversion and zero derivation are used in a different theoretical approach, Aschenbrenner gives a detailed description. She also argues that it has not been proved whether the use of an adjective as a noun is a derivational or non-derivational (purely syntactic) process. She argues that in the case of adjectives used as nouns, it is difficult to decide because, for her, an argument for a derivational process would be the use of inflectional endings. To provide a full overview of approaches to conversion, she describes conversion from the diachronic and cognitive perspectives. From the cognitive perspective, certain types of conversion can be analyzed as metonymy, which would mean that conversion is in fact a semantic process with word formation and syntax playing no role in it.

The next chapter describes conversion in the individual stages of the development of English. Based on the reviewed literature, conversion seems to be much more frequent in Middle and Modern English due to the fact that during the Middle English period many endings were lost, and typologically the language shifted from the inflectional to the analytical type. In analytical languages, conversion is much easier insofar as word classes often lack distinctive word endings. Of other phenomena relating to adjectives as nouns the author first describes the possible problems in defining the word-class membership: she shows that there is a scale between individual word classes, not a clear-cut boundary. This claim is illustrated by partial conversion of adjectives and other word classes. Since the use of adjectives as nouns is closely linked with nominalization, nominalization is also briefly described and defined. Among the word formation processes that lead to nominalization attention is paid to derivation, compounding and conversion, and on the basis of this description the characteristic features of nouns are specified. In connection with the claim that conversion can be a process linked to grammaticalization, several theories of grammaticalization are analyzed. Aschenbrenner argues that adjectives as nouns are not a case of grammaticalization since one of the basic criteria for recognizing grammaticalized words is at least a partial loss of their lexical meaning. This is clearly not the case with converted adjectives, hence it is argued that in this case conversion is a lexical process rather than a grammatical one which would lead to full grammaticalization. The last concept mentioned is ellipsis; the author focuses on exophoric ellipsis, while textual ellipsis is left aside.

The text used in the analysis, *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, is briefly described in the second part of the monograph. The main reason for choosing the text is the existence of a large number of translations into various languages. The text is philosophical, which involves the use of many abstract concepts. Therefore, it is particularly suitable for analysing the use of adjectives as nouns. Of the translations of the text into Old, Middle and Early Modern English, the author chose, respectively, the translation by King Alfred, based on Latin, Chaucer, who used both Latin and French versions of the text, and Queen Elizabeth. The translations are provided with a historical background. As for the Modern English and Modern German translations, detailed information is given only in the bibliography section.

The analysis itself is divided into two parts. The first largely quantitative part is based on a detailed analysis of the texts and gives the percentages of the individual



categories of both adjectives and nouns as defined by the author. Four syntactic/semantic categories are distinguished: adjectives used as nouns denoting an abstract concept, adjectives used as nouns denoting human beings (further divided according to the number into singular and plural), noun phrases (with the same semantic distinction), and simple and derived nouns. The analysis shows that in Latin, adjectives denoting human beings are the most frequent category, followed by simple/derived nouns and adjectives denoting abstract concepts. In all three historical stages of English, adjectives denoting abstract concepts are the most frequent category. This category is the second most frequent in Modern German, where simple/derived nouns rank highest. Unfortunately, a comparison of the translations is not provided. The author deals with the absolute figures and percentages without considering parallel examples that might show which concepts tend to be translated as adjectives and which are used differently in different translations or whether there is any influence of the Latin original text.

The second part of the analysis is qualitative; the author tries to determine what type of phenomenon conversion is, whether it is purely syntactic, semantic, inflectional, derivational or a combination of these. In Old English, it seems to be a combination of factors, with a notable role of inflection, which is for example used to distinguish abstract concepts and human beings. In Middle English, inflection is no longer the main factor, conversion is mainly a syntactic phenomenon. Due to the shift to analytical structure, in Early Modern and Modern English syntax becomes the main and almost only influence. Modern German is in many aspects similar to Old English because inflection plays a role there as well.

Aschenbrenner also investigates the occurrence of adjectives used as nouns in other text types. The samples are taken from a Middle English Dictionary and an Old English Dictionary but the methodology of obtaining these samples is not provided. Based on these samples, the assumption that philosophical texts will contain more examples of converted adjectives was thus not verified.

To summarize, the publication is a worthwhile contribution to the study of conversion both from the synchronic and diachronic perspectives. It also takes into account different typological features of different languages. The author extracted a large number of examples manually and provided a detailed description of the relevant literature. The theoretical part is significantly longer than the analysis (excluding the appendices). Overall, the analysis reveals some interesting findings as well as possibilities for further research. It would be useful to investigate the possible influence of the source text on the translations by looking at particular examples in all the texts examined. Another important step would be looking at other text types in a more systematic way.

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