

# STATIVE AND DYNAMIC ADJECTIVES IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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**Abstract:** *it explains the differences between adjectives and other word-classes and also the functions these adjectives can fulfil depending on their position in the clause and within the noun phrase. It also explores both semantic and syntactic taxonomies, some of which will be applied later in the analysis. This article concludes with an approach to adjectives in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as treated by contemporary grammarians. As our main concern in this work is to investigate the role of the adjective in scientific texts, this article will deal with how scientific texts were written over the two centuries analysed in my work, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries*

**Keywords:** *stativity, dynamic and stative adjectives, imperative or causative constructions, attributive position,*

## СТАТИВНЫЕ И ДИНАМИЧЕСКИЕ ПРИЛАГАТЕЛЬНЫЕ В АНГЛИЙСКОМ ЯЗЫКЕ

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**Аннотация:** *в данной статье описываются различия между прилагательными и другими классами слов, а также функции, которые эти прилагательные могут выполнять в зависимости от их положения в предложении и внутри именной группы. В нем также исследуются семантические и синтаксические таксономии, некоторые из которых будут применяться позже в ходе анализа. Статья также описывает точки зрения современных грамматиков на прилагательные в восемнадцатом и девятнадцатом веках. Поскольку нашей главной задачей в этой работе является исследование роли прилагательного в научных текстах, здесь речь пойдет о проанализированных научных текстах на протяжении двух столетий - восемнадцатого и девятнадцатого веков.*

**Ключевые слова:** *стативность, динамические и стативные прилагательные, императивные или каузативные конструкции, атрибутивная позиция.*

Scientific English is generally credited to be devoid of ornaments and, therefore, probably not to use many adjectives in their attributive position. When found, these would rather be placed in a predicative position as they serve the purpose of describing objects or processes. Lakoff defines stativity an inherent property of adjectives [2]. Hale and Keyser add that stativity must be indicated in the semantic composition of meaningful elements [1]. Although the opposition between stative and non-stative or dynamic is mainly a semantic one, it has some syntactic implications. Semantically speaking, stative adjectives denote a state or condition which could be considered to be permanent [3] as in example and, as a consequence, these adjectives have the semantic property of being non-active [2]. Dynamic adjectives, on the contrary, denote qualities that are thought to be under the control of the possessor. This is the reason why they can be temporally restricted [3]. Therefore, dynamic adjectives can be said to have the semantic property of activity. As regards the syntactic implications I mentioned above, the syntactic differences between stative and dynamic adjectives can be seen in the fact that stative adjectives cannot be used with progressive, imperative or causative constructions. Contrariwise, dynamic adjectives can be accompanied by such structures [2; 3]. An example of each can be seen in the following table:

*Table 1. Structures of adjectives*

	STATIVE	DYNAMIC
Progressive form	*She's being tall	She's being good
Imperative	*Be tall	Be good
Causative constructions	*I persuaded her to be tall	I persuaded her to be good

Although, in principle, adjectives are characteristically stative, many of them can also have a dynamic use. Some examples of dynamic adjectives are shown in careful, clever, generous, helpful, naughty, brave The Cambridge Dictionary Online defines these words as follows: careful as “giving a lot of attention to what you are

doing so that you do not have an accident, make a mistake, or damage something”; clever as “having or showing the ability to learn and understand things quickly and easily”. Generous has been define as “willing to give money, help, kindness, etc., especially more than is usual or expected”; and helpful as “willing to help, or useful”. According to this dictionary “when children are naughty, or their behaviour is naughty, they behave badly or do not do what they are told to do”. Finally, brave is defined as “showing no fear of dangerous or difficult things”. Paying attention to the definitions given, all these adjectives imply an action, which is one of the characteristics of dynamic adjectives [3]. All these adjectives are dynamic because all of them can be used in the imperative form (Be careful!, Be clever!, Be generous!, Be helpful!, Don’t be naughty!, Be brave!), they can be used in a progressive form (She’s being careful, You’re being clever in this situation, He’s not being generous now, I’m being very helpful, The boy is being naughty, The whole army is being brave), they can be used in causative constructions (I persuaded her to be careful, I persuaded her to be clever, I persuaded her to be generous, I persuaded her to be helpful, I persuaded her not to be naughty, I persuaded her to be brave); and, finally, all of them denote qualities that are thought to be subject to control by the possessor and denote an attribute which may not always be in evidence.

The group of adjectives more frequently used during the nineteenth century belonged mainly to two categories: that of age and mental state. On the other hand, the less frequent group included the categories of ability, nationality, and physical state. Still, I can confirm that it was a hard task for women to write freely and escape from standard writing mainly due to the social pressure of the time. The less frequent use of attributive adjectives by women could be, precisely, a reflection of this fact. Another reason for this not so frequent use of attributive adjectives in female texts might be that they had less access to education. Considering the etymological origin of the attributive adjectives to know if somehow it influences their position within the noun phrase would also be a good research. It might also be useful to study in depth the frequency and use of postpositive adjectives, as well as those in predicative position and the ones functioning as head of a noun phrase, in order to be able to make a more detailed account of the use of adjectives.

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