



A Morphological Analysis of Compound Adjectives in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*

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Abstract

This study analyzes morphology by classifying compound adjectives contained in the novel *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* from J.K. Rowling using a qualitative descriptive method used to analyze the structural patterns of compound words and explain their linguistic role in the text so that in the data collection process, the morphological framework from Carstairs-McCarthy (2017) is applied to analyze and classify the whole in form compound properties that appear where as many as 48 data are successfully identified and then grouped into three main types, namely Adjective + Adjective (AA), Noun + Adjective (NA), and Preposition + Adjective (PA). In type AA, which is often found with the number is 28 data (58.3%), then in NA there are 18 data (37.5%), and PA only 2 data (4.2%). For example, "ice-cold" includes the Noun + Adjective (NA) pattern which indicates that nouns can clarify the meaning of adjectives more specifically while the combination of Adjective + Adjective (AA) such as "golden-brown" is used to improve the accuracy of descriptions so that overall this study indicates that compound adjectives have an important role in showing productivity in the morphological process of English so that by analyzing structure and distribution, so that the understanding of the determination of morphological theory in literary data becomes clearer and at the same time indicates that the pluralization process can enrich the expressive power of English vocabulary.

Keywords: compound adjectives; Harry Potter; morphology; word formation

Introduction

Language plays such an important role in human daily life, more specifically as a tool to communicate, share reasons, and express feelings effectively (Fedorenko et al., 2024). More than that, language not only has a function as a communication medium but also as a powerful means to be able to foster creativity and freedom of expression. In literature itself, language plays a role as a bridge for writers, especially fiction writers, to create an imaginative world, character development, and emotional reader involvement (Calafato, 2023). Through the selection of interesting words and writing techniques, the writer is able to shape the reader's perception and move their emotions through the story. Therefore, studying how language is used and operates in literary works is important to provide valuable insights into the relationship between linguistic elements in literary texts.

Apart from that, in the study of language, linguistics has a scientific approach to understanding how language is structured and used. One of the core branches is morphology. Morphology focuses on the internal structure of words and the processes through which new words are formed (Carstairs-McCarthy, 2017; Bauer, 2017). Morphological study not only helps explain grammatical rules and lexical organization but also shows how speakers and writers expand language creatively (Körtvélyessy, 2025). One of the most important things in morphological processes is compounding, where two or more words are combined to form a new lexical unit that creates a new meaning (Carstairs-McCarthy,

2017). Compounding can be shaped in several patterns; there are compound nouns (e.g., toothbrush), compound verbs (e.g., break down), and compound adjectives (e.g., open-minded), with each pattern contributing to increasing English subject morphology (Carstairs-McCarthy, 2017).

Compound adjectives are an important morphological term in literary writing. They function as two or more words to describe a noun (Carstairs-McCarthy, 2017). Examples are the expressions "bright green eyes" and "world-famous wizard," which are considered more detailed and livelier when compared to single adjectives, for example, "green" or "famous." Characters, settings, and actions can be analyzed in detail on the use of compound adjectives so that the image of the story with its clarity becomes increasingly strengthened (Afna, 2024). According to research revealed by Carstairs-McCarthy (2017), it is revealed that compound adjectives are grouped in several patterns, namely Noun + Adjective (NA) such as "world-famous", Adjective + Adjective (AA) such as "bittersweet", and Preposition + Adjective (PA) such as "underdeveloped", therefore with the flexibility and creativity in the morphology of the English language, especially in compound adjectives with complex meanings that can be conveyed become more effective in literary texts.

However, compound adjectives are often overlooked in linguistic and literary studies, where many readers and even language learners simply see them as a combination of ordinary words without realizing the importance of their structural and stylistic functions (Wang, Liu, & Lahlou, 2024). This lack of awareness also influences complex language patterns and the various ways in which they are formed (Wang, Liu, & Lahlou, 2024). Therefore, understanding compound adjectives is so important to be able to assess how morphology plays a role in literary texts and linguistic richness. In the literary work itself, its presence can be a clue to how writers use language innovatively to enrich the emotional value, plot, and precision of their prose (Wang, Azam, & Lahlou, 2025).

Based on previous research where analysis of compound adjectives has been carried out from several studies in several contexts, but special attention to their morphological structure has been mostly given. Research conducted by Dewi, Sedeng, & Indriani (2020), who researched compound adjectives, especially in the novel *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, by identifying the type and its meaning. However, the research was carried out at the level of money is still common and discusses the types of compound words thoroughly, which does not specifically focus on compound adjectives. In addition, the morphological composition of the compound form has not been analyzed in depth in their research.

Similarly, Sisvinda (2022) investigated compound words in The Jakarta Post health columns. Her study analyzed compounds in journalistic writing, not in literary texts, and therefore focused more on general word formation in news discourse rather than on morphological analysis in creative or narrative language. Meanwhile, Wibowo and Handayani (2023) conducted a compound word analysis in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, but their research still focused on classic stories, not modern English fiction. Furthermore, Yulianto et al. (2024) examined *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* from a morphological and statistical point of view, but their focus was on compound words in general, not specifically on compound adjectives.

From these various studies, it can be concluded that previous studies that specifically provide morphological analysis of compound adjectives in modern fantasy novels are still very limited. To close this gap, the research focuses on the morphological structure of compound adjectives found in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* by J.K. Rowling. The novel was chosen because it is an authentic work of English literature written by native speakers, rich in descriptive language, and contains compound adjectives that effectively provide a description of characters, settings, and magical events.

Therefore, this study has the objective of (1) identifying by classifying compound adjectives, especially in the novel *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* which is based on their morphological patterns (Adj + Adj, Noun + Adj, and Prep + Adj); and (2) analyzing how the morphological process has a role in the creation of language richness with creative expressions in the novel so that the results of this research are expected to be enriches understanding of the morphology of English and at the same time indicates that the process of word pluralization can produce productive word forms in literary works.

Research Methodology

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach, which was chosen because the purpose of the research is to analyze and interpret how compound adjectives are formed and used in the novel *Harry*

Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone (Rowling, 1998). In a qualitative descriptive design, information related to linguistic characteristics is presented clearly and accurately without having to rely on numbers (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). With this design, the structural and functional characteristics of compound adjectives in literary texts are to be done descriptively and interpretively in the use of compound adjectives based on the morphological theory put forward by Carstairs-McCarthy (2017).

The research data comes from the novel *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* by J. K. Rowling (Rowling, 1998) where all chapters of the novel are analyzed to provide a comprehensive picture of how compound adjectives play a role in the narrative context by including character descriptions, settings, and events. Literary texts were chosen as a data source because they create examples of authentic and creative word formation (Bauer, 2017). Data collection was carried out through a documentation method supported by the principles of morphological identification proposed by Carstairs-McCarthy (2017). The researcher reads the novel and marks each phrase that functions as a compound adjective based on the following selection criteria:

1. Two words used simultaneously become one explanatory before the noun
2. In this structure, a single meaning of adjectives has been formed, which is not two separate descriptions
3. According to Carstairs-McCarthy (2017) compound adjective patterns are grouped into the following types:
 - a) *Noun + Adjective* (e.g., *sky-high, coal-black*),
 - b) *Adjective + Adjective* (e.g., *grey-green, red-hot*),
 - c) *Preposition + Adjective* (e.g., *underfull, overactive*).
4. Unclear terms are analyzed based on the pattern of formation of compound adjectives, based on Carstairs-McCarthy (2017).
5. Each word that has been grouped is then recorded on the data sheet.

Furthermore, the researcher examined the available data by applying morphological analysis techniques in accordance with Carstairs-McCarthy (2017). The evaluation process is carried out through four main stages:

1. Identification: Each compound adjective collected from the book is checked to ensure its fit with the theory by Carstairs-McCarthy (2017).
2. Classification: Each compound adjective is then classified based on its morphological structure (N + Adj, Adj + Adj, Prep + Adj) using the structured framework from Carstairs-McCarthy (2017).
3. Their meanings and grammatical functions were examined within their textual contexts. Carstairs-McCarthy's (2017) analysis of morphological meaning and alteration served as the basis for this view to clarify how the compound adjectives contribute to Rowling's descriptive and stylistic choices.
4. Tabulation and description: The researcher used tables to display the structural kinds, frequency, and contextual examples of compound adjectives that were created from the analytical data. After that, the tables were qualitatively described in order to find trends and patterns in the author's linguistics.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

The analysis of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* found 48 compound adjectives. Each was classified according to its morphological structure following Carstairs-McCarthy's framework (2017): Noun + Adjective (NA), Adjective + Adjective (AA), and Preposition + Adjective (PA). The frequency and representative examples are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Frequency of Compound Adjectives

Type	Frequency	Percentage
Noun + Adjective (NA)	18	37.5%
Adjective + Adjective (AA)	28	58.3%

Preposition + Adjective (PA)	2	4.2%
Total	48	100%

Table 1 shows that the Adjective + Adjective (AA) pattern dominates with a frequency of 28 data, followed by Noun + Adjective (NA) with a frequency of 18 data and Preposition + Adjective (PA) with a frequency of 2 data. The results of the analysis were able to show that Rowling made use of various combinations of adjectives to be able to create a rich visual image as well as a concise description presentation.

Discussion

Noun + Adjective (NA) Compounds

The NA pattern has appeared 18 times and is formed from the combination of nouns and adjectives. Examples include *owl-free*, *blood-red*, *ice-cold*, and *needle-sharp*. In this merger, the meaning of adjectives has been clarified and strengthened with nouns that support it.

According to Carstairs-McCarthy (2017), the NA pattern is able to produce special meanings because nouns help to overcome or focus the meaning of adjectives. Bauer (2017) and Plag (2018) also emphasized that noun-based combinations are able to present richer descriptions by associating physical features and emotional nuances. These findings are in line with the research of Cahyani, Istinara, & Damayanti (2023), which is a clue that compound words in literary texts can expand stylistic variations while making descriptions more vivid.

In the novel *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, the combination of NA, for example, *blood-red stone* and *needle-sharp pain*, is used in the creation of an atmosphere that becomes more tense and dramatic. In addition, where additional symbolic meaning is also seen through this combination, for example, the *blood-red* color has been interpreted as a symbol that represents danger or courage, while in *the owl-free morning*, it indicates a strange atmosphere full of mystery. Overall, this is supported by the opinion made by Körtvélyessy (2025), which indicates that compound words not only have a grammatical function but are also used to build emotions and styles in literary works. In this case, the use of compound adjectives has been used creatively by writers to form the atmosphere and tone of the story.

Adjective + Adjective (AA) Compounds

The AA pattern that appears 28 times is the most common type encountered in novels, where this pattern seems to give a combination of two adjectives or adjectives with a participle so as to produce clear details and meanings. For example, *golden brown*, *Shimmering Black*, and *Pearl White* Describe certain colors, textures, and visual appearances. In addition, it is also a form such as *redhead*, *Round Face*, and *cross-legged*. In the novel, the physical characteristics of the characters are clearly displayed and easily recalled.

According to Carstairs-McCarthy (2017), it indicates that compound adjectives with type AA are included in the type of unity of meaning where there are two descriptive elements that are combined into one adjective concept. The next one, where the research conducted by Bauer (2017) has the opinion that with the process of pluralization, the complex properties that can be formed become more concise. Meanwhile, Plag's research (2018) has indicated that this form has produced a "dense unit of meaning" that can enhance the descriptive image and strengthen the emotional nuances of the text. This indicates that with this form, it has produced a "dense unit of meaning" that can make an improvement in the descriptive image and reinforce the emotional nuances in the text. This is in line with research conducted by Körtvélyessy (2025), which has indicated that the morphological productivity of the pluralization process has a strong relationship with creativity in literary language.

It is in Rowling's text that compound adjectives play an important role in creating visual depictions and interesting characterizations. Terms such as *golden brown beans* and *sparkling black beetle eyes* focus on contrast and magical atmosphere, so that they stimulate the reader's imagination. These findings are in line with the research of Cahyani, Istinara, & Damayanti (2023), which indicates that compound adjectives in literary texts strengthen descriptive clarity and deepen writing styles. In

addition, Afna (2024) also found that the application of compound adjectives in fiction creates an increase in the tone and rhythm of the text to strengthen the creative intentions of the writer.

Preposition + Adjective (PA) Compounds

In the novel *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, only two compound adjective forms are found in the PA type, namely *overshadowed* and *Overgrown*. Although the number is small, the stylistic function is still quite important from both, so that in this form, the prefix "over-" has been used as an element in the preposition used to indicate the expansion of space, so that the meaning of adjectives becomes literal and figurative. Examples are *Overgrown bat* has been interpreted as a picture of something that is neglected and aging, while *overshadowed* indicates that the feeling is depressed or dominated by something else.

According to Carstairs-McCarthy (2017), the prepositional element in the formation of words gives a relational meaning that is able to expand the meaning of adjectives so that prefixes such as "over-" can strengthen the basic meaning of adjectives. In addition, Plag (2018) also noted that although PA-type compound words rarely appear, these words still have high stylistic value because they provide a combination of word formation with a rich metaphorical richness that allows the writer to express complex ideas efficiently.

In the novels of J.K. Rowling's work, where only a few compound adjectives on the PA type are used, it is not surprising in this case because the pattern is indeed less productive in English (Carstairs-McCarthy, 2017). Moreover, where the choice in limited use indicates that the form has been selectively chosen by the writers only at the right time, it is able to give force of style in the description. Therefore, with the ability of the writer to summarize the concepts of space and emotions that are rhythmic in the form of short adjectives, it can be seen by using the compound word PA. This is in line with the view of Afna (2024) that morphological creativity has an important role in creating clarity and the power of imagination in a narrative.

Furthermore, these findings focus on the morphological process, with more specifically the use of compound adjectives, directly enriching the richness of language and creative expression in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. By combining two words of her own, J.K. Rowling created innovative and expressive adjectives by making her descriptions feel alive and imaginative. This not only provides an expansion of vocabulary in the story but also helps him create a more detailed, specific, and interesting picture of an object or atmosphere. For example, the term "*Cold Ice*" is used to be able to create a tense or disturbing atmosphere, while "*Sharp Needle*" gives an accurate picture of character traits. Colors like emerald green and shimmering black provide powerful visualization that makes magical scenes more imaginative, while *blood red* and *Shadow-covered* focusing emotional intensity, adding depth and dramatization of the story. These few examples are clues to how Rowling uses morphology to convey ideas and feelings accurately without the need for lengthy explanations.

The compound adjective pattern, such as the combination of adjectives + adjectives, is an indication of Rowling's preference for short, expressive, and visually rich forms of words. These findings are able to strengthen the view of Carstairs-McCarthy (2017) that morphology creates increased efficiency of expression, as well as confirming the statements of Bauer (2017) and Plag (2018) that the incorporation of words expands lexical and stylistic diversity. Overall, the creative use of morphology in this novel is evidence that the formation of the word is not just a grammatical process but an artistic strategy that forms the unique linguistic style of the novel.

Conclusion and Suggestion

This study identified and classified 48 compound adjectives based on the Carstairs-McCarthy morphological framework (2017). The adjective + adjective (AA) pattern appears the most dominant, where it is followed by noun + adjective (NA) and preposition + adjective (PA) in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. These findings hint at Rowling's preference for using adjective-based combined to create creative and imaginative literary texts with precise descriptions. Although the compound adjective PA appears less frequently, it still makes a significant creative contribution by being a sign of Rowling using it deliberately for certain narrative effects. Overall, these findings focus on how combining several descriptive elements into a single lexical form allows for clearer, richer, and more expressive descriptions.

As some recommendations, these findings can be applied and useful in EFL teaching by providing authentic examples of how compound adjectives can enrich and improve descriptive writing. These findings can help learners in understanding how morphological processes with more specific word combinations play a role in the formation of meaning in literary texts, as well as increasing the effectiveness of written expression. In addition, it is also hoped that future research can expand this analysis by researching other novels, different genres, or other types of word combinations for further exploration of the role of morphological creativity in shaping literary language at any time.

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