

ADJECTIVES INSIDE NOUN PHRASES

by Seda Sürel

INTRODUCTION

1. Function

In Turkish, adjectives inside noun phrases do more than describe qualities. They interact with determiners, possession, and compound structures to control reference.

Adjective placement determines:

- whether the reference is general or specific
- which element is being modified
- how information is packaged in daily, professional, and academic discourse

2. Forms

A) Basic Adjective Structures

Adjective + Noun

Examples:

mavi araba
the blue car

kapsamlı rapor
the comprehensive report

In bare form, this structure typically refers to a specific or contextually identifiable entity.

B) Adjective + "bir" + Noun (Indefinite Reference)

Adjective + bir + Noun

Examples:

mavi bir araba
a blue car

önemli bir karar
an important decision

The adjective precedes bir.
This structure introduces a new, non-specific reference.

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3. Morphology

A) Adjectives with Possessives (Hierarchical Placement)

In possessive noun phrases, adjectives appear between the owner and the owned entity.

Owner + Adjective + Owned

Examples:

annem-in mavi araba-sı
my mother's blue car

şirket-in yeni politika-sı
the company's new policy

The adjective modifies the owned noun, not the owner.

B) Determiners and Adjectives (Order Constraint)

Determiners appear before adjectives.

They establish the reference frame for the entire noun phrase.

Determiner + Adjective + Noun

Examples:

bu stratejik karar
this strategic decision

bazı önemli karar-lar
some important decisions

In bazı önemli kararlar, bazı determines the entire group, not just the adjective.

C) Compound Adjectives (-li / -slz)

Indefinite compounds can form complete adjectival units.

[Noun + Noun]-li / -slz + Noun

Examples:

[düşük maliyet]-li proje-ler
low-cost projects

[yüksek risk]-li yatırım-lar
high-risk investments

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[Faiz]-siz kredi imkanı
interest-free loan opportunity

[Risk]-siz yatırım araçları
Risk-free investment vehicles

The compound functions as one adjective, not two separate modifiers.

D) Pronominal n (Morphological Continuity)

Adjectives do not interrupt possessive morphology.

Examples:

annem-in mavi araba-sı-n-da
in my mother's blue car

şirket-in yeni politika-sı-n-ın sonuç-lar-ı
the results of the company's new policy

politika-sı-n-dan
from its policy

The pronominal -n- appears after possessive suffixes before any case marker, regardless of whether the case suffix begins with a vowel or a consonant.

4. Structural Guide

A) Adjectives and Indefinite Compounds (The Split Rule)

Indefinite compounds form inseparable conceptual units.
An adjective cannot appear between the two nouns.

Ungrammatical:

yatırım yeni stratejisi ×

Grammatical:

yeni [yatırım stratejisi]
new investment strategy

The adjective must modify the entire compound, not one of its internal parts.

B) Scope Ambiguity in Complex Phrases

Adjective placement may create ambiguity due to scope.

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Example:

küresel ekonomi politikası

Possible interpretations:

küresel [ekonomi politikası]

global economic policy

[küresel ekonomi] politikası

the policy of the global economy

The ambiguity results from which unit the adjective attaches to, not from incorrect grammar.

5. Usage

Adjectives inside noun phrases are used to:

- introduce or narrow reference
- manage informational focus
- avoid ambiguity in speech and writing
- structure both everyday and professional discourse

Such structures are common in daily conversation, media language, and formal texts.

6. Examples

A) Daily Life

annem-in eski çantası

my mother's old bag

yeni telefon modeli

new phone model

küçük bir kafe

a small café

B) Media & Informational Context

küresel ekonomik kriz

global economic crisis

şehir ulaşım planı

city transportation plan

önemli bir gelişme

an important development

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C) Professional & Academic Context

şirket-in uzun vadeli yatırım planı
the company's long-term investment plan

uygulanan çevre politika-ları
implemented environmental policies

yüksek risk-li finansal araç-lar
high-risk financial instruments

beklenen yapısal reform-lar
expected structural reforms

Notes

- Adjectives precede the nouns they modify.
- Determiners precede adjectives.
- In possessive phrases, adjectives appear between owner and entity.
- Indefinite compounds cannot be split by adjectives.
- Compound-based adjectives function as single modifiers.
- Pronominal -n- remains intact regardless of adjective insertion.
- Ambiguity results from scope, not incorrect form.