Fundamentals of Grammar

Nouns

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today

content

- semantics of nouns
  - classes

- morphology of nouns
  - inflectional
  - derivational
semantic classes

- common vs proper
- abstract vs concrete
- count vs mass
common nouns

common nouns:
Refer to sets or classes of things.

Example

- president
- country
- college
proper nouns:
Refer to (a) specific member(s) of some set or class of things (ie, proper nouns are definite).

Example

- Barack Obama
- Australia
- UW
**common nouns**

**common nouns:**
Usually can be introduced syntactically by grammatical modifiers (eg Det, Q, Num)

**Example**

- the fog
- some limousines
- two dumplings
proper nouns:
Usually are not introduced syntactically by grammatical modifiers.

Example

- *The Barack Obama
- *Some Australia
- *These five UW

...unless it is part of the name

Example

- The President of the USA
- The Who
- The Seven Wonders of the World
common vs proper nouns

proper nouns

Are capitalized;
Includes days of the week, months, countries, languages, brand names, etc.
The emperor of Rome in 20 BCE was Augustus.
- common

Emperor Palpatine is my favorite character in *The Return of the Jedi*
- proper

My uncle has a red beard
- common

Uncle Murray has a red beard
- proper
concrete vs abstract nouns

**concrete nouns:**
Refer to ‘tangibles’, or physical entities, that we can (in principle) experience with one of the 5 senses.

**Example**

- sushi
- clouds
- buzzer
- unicorn
- Barack Obama
abstract nouns:
Refer to ‘intangibles’; things that we cannot experience with one of the 5 senses (eg: concepts, traits, qualities).

Example

▶ bravery
▶ justice
▶ excellence
▶ happiness
Nouns with the following suffixes are often abstract.
- -ism
- -ity
- -ment
- -ness
- -ance/-ence
- -ship
- -ability
- -acy
count vs mass nouns

count nouns:
Refer to things that are separate, individual units that can be counted.

Example

- car
- child
- goose
- deer
count vs mass nouns

count nouns:
Usually can be made morphologically plural; can be introduced by numerals or indefinite article (a/an)

Example

- cars
- children
- geese
- deer
Count vs mass nouns

Mass nouns:
Refer to things of unbounded mass that cannot be counted or made plural

Example
- furniture
- dough
- integrity
**count vs mass nouns**

**mass nouns:**

- often include liquids (*milk, juice*), powders (*sugar, flour*), substances (*wood, smoke, butter*)
- cannot occur with *a/an, many ...*
  *a furniture, *many money*
- ...but can occur with *much*
  *too much wood/furniture (mass)*
  *too many logs/chairs (count)*
practice: classifying nouns

There was so much love in the room.

abstract or concrete?

common or proper?

count or mass?
practice: classifying nouns

Let’s meet on Wednesday.

abstract or concrete?

common or proper?

count or mass?
practice: classifying nouns

*His skill with a *jigsaw* was legendary.*

abstract or *concrete*?

*common* or proper?

*count* or *mass*?
practice: classifying nouns

His *skill* with a jigsaw was legendary.

*abstract* or *concrete*?

*common* or *proper*?

*count* or *mass*?
morphology of nouns

inflectional morphology

- number inflection
  - plural: whales, children, feet, women

- case inflection
  - personal pronouns
    subj  obj
    I     me
    we    us
    he/she him/her
    they  them
  - possessive -s
    Attaches to the rightmost word of a possessive NP
    \[[NP \ [PossNP \ The \ Queen’s \ ] \ crown \ ]\]
    \[[NP \ [PossNP \ The \ Queen \ of \ England’s \ ] \ crown \ ]\]
    *\[[NP \ [PossNP \ The \ Queen’s \ of \ England \ ] \ crown \ ]\]
morphology of nouns

derivational morphology

- new nouns can be derived from other nouns
  - friend (n.) + -ship → friendship (n.)
  - child (n.) + -hood → childhood (n.)
  - king (n.) + -dom → kingdom (n.)

- or from other syntactic categories
  - serene (adj.) + -ity → serenity (n.)
  - happy (adj.) + -ness → happiness (n.)
  - act (v.) + -ion → action (n.)
  - enjoy (v.) + -ment → enjoyment (n.)
  - ride (v.) + -er → rider (n.)
morphology of nouns

deriviational morphology

- compounding (combining two words into one):
  - dish + washer, dog + house, pick + pocket
- other methods
  - blending, clipping, acronyms ...
summary so far

- nouns can be **semantically** classed as
  - concrete vs abstract
  - common vs proper (!)
  - count vs mass (!)

- nouns have certain **morphological** properties of inflection (eg, number and case marking, possessive -’s) and derivation (nominalizing affixes, compounding, etc)
syntax of noun phrases

introducers of N
Grammatical categories that occur prenominally in NPs:

- Determiners (D)
- Numerals (NUM)
- Quantifiers (Q)
- PossNP

These elements encode grammatical information, such as definiteness, number, and case
determiners

can encode *definiteness, number, proximity*

Example

- a/an
- the
- this, that
- these, those
- (which, whose, what)
- (my, your, his/her)
determiners
definiteness vs indefiniteness

▶ definite:
  ▶ known to the speaker and/or hearer

Example
(Sandra walks in and says to Omar)
S: “So, I saw the movie.”
O: “What did you think?”

▶ indefinite:
  ▶ not known to the speaker and/or hearer

Example
(Sandra walks in and says to Omar)
S: “So, I saw a movie.”
O: “Which one?”
indefinite determiners on the moon

One small step for __ man, one giant leap for mankind.
Determiners in English have different forms according to grammatical number.

- **Singular**
  - a letter
  - this letter
  - that letter
  - *a/this/that letters*

- **Plural**
  - some letters
  - these letters
  - those letters
  - *those letter*

**NB:** *the* can occur with both singular and plural nouns (e.g., *the letter/letters*).
grammatical number in other languages

- Proto-Indo-European is thought to have contained a tripartite number system, contrasting singular, dual and plural (reflexes of this are found in Sanskrit, Ancient Greek, Modern Scotch Gaelic, cf. English *none* $\sim$ *both* $\sim$ *all*)

- Tolomako [tlm] (Oceanic, Vanuatu) contains a four way contrast in grammatical number in its pronoun system!
So called “demonstrative” determiners of English encode “proximity” at two levels (termed *proxal* and *distal*). This property cross factors with number.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>prox</th>
<th>dist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sg</td>
<td>this</td>
<td>that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pl</td>
<td>these</td>
<td>those</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(cf Spanish [spa], with three levels of proximity)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>prox</th>
<th>med</th>
<th>dist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sg</td>
<td>este</td>
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<tr>
<td>pl</td>
<td>estes</td>
<td>eses</td>
<td>aquellos</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
determiners

phrase structure

NP → (Det) N

NP

Det

N

da/the/this/that/these/those...

dog(s)
introducers of NPs

Numerals Num

- Num can encode *number, sequence, indefiniteness*

Example

one, two, three, ...
first, second, third ...
numbers in English come in two flavors (cardinal and ordinal)

one rabbit  the first rabbit
two rabbits  a second rabbit
three rabbits  a third rabbit
numerals

phrase structure

- the first rabbit
- the one rabbit
- *one the rabbit
- *first the rabbit

\[ \text{NP} \rightarrow \text{Det Num} \text{ Num} \text{ N} \]
Plain numerals indicate indefiniteness

Example

- one frog jumped into the pond (which one?)
- two frogs jumped into the pond (which ones?)
- those two frogs jumped into the pond (definiteness indicated by those)
Phrase structure: NP → (Det) (Num) N

NP
  └── Det
      └── those
  └── Num
      └── two
  └── N
      └── frogs
Definition
Quantifiers pick out members of a set in ways other than by counting them.

- each, every student
- all, both students
- some, several students
- few, many, no students
quantifiers
interaction with determiners

- a few tomatoes fell off the vine
- the many miles she walked were tiring
- NP → (Det) (Q) N
- all three sandwiches ...
- NP → (Q) (Num) N
- the few horses
- *few the horses
- *the all horses
- all the horses

Order with determiners varies depending on choice of quantifier
quantifiers
interaction with determiners

Phrase structure:  NP → (Det) (Q) (Num) N

NP
   /   \
  /     \   
Det   Q    N
    /  \
   /    
 the many cars

NP
   /   \
  /     \   
 Q  Num  N
    /  \
   /    
 all eight kids
more on determiners

possesive det

Words that introduce nouns and express genitive (possesive) case
my, your, his/her, its, their, our

Example
  my journal  (*the my journal)
  his two combs  (*his those combs)
  her few combs  (*her a combs)

These words are in complementary distribution with determiners!
more on determiners

**wh- det**
Interrogative (question) determiners *whose, which, what*

**Example**
- Jerry brought [that DVD] what DVD did he buy?
- I like [those four cats] which four cats do you like?
Why are these wh words determiners and not pronouns? Because they *behave* like Det.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NP</th>
<th>(Det)</th>
<th>(Q)</th>
<th>(Num)</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>my</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>two</td>
<td>cents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>her</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>many</td>
<td>quirks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>which</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>three</td>
<td>books</td>
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<tr>
<td>what</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ten</td>
<td>movies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>the his</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>moustache</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>which those</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>magazines</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
introducers of N

- determiners
  - a, the, this/that, these/those
  - my, your, his, her, our, their
  - whose, which, what

- quantifiers
  - all, each, every, several, some, few, many

- numerals
  - cardinal: one, two, three ...
  - ordinal: first, second, third ...
NP \rightarrow (\text{Det}) \ (\text{Q}) \ (\text{Num}) \ N

Which of the following are generated by the above PSR?

- yes! his many fingers
- yes! those three mice
- no! all this time
- no! which one of those keys
- yes! their few reasons
- yes! several first picks
- no! certain good decisions
Possessive NPs

Definition
NPs that precede nouns and express genitive (possessive case) with (’s)

Example
- \([NP_{NP} \text{ Obama’s}] \text{ teleprompter}\]
- \([NP_{NP} \text{ the president’s}] \text{ teleprompter}\]
- \([NP_{NP} \text{ the president of the United States’}] \text{ teleprompter}\]
The possessive 's is a special sort of inflection which attaches to the right edge of the entire phrase (not the head noun it’s interpreted with!).
PossNP
PossNP and Det

NP → (Det) (Q) (Num) N
How do PossNP and Det interact?
  ▶ [President Obama’s] many ties
  ▶ [President Obama’s] two cars
  ▶ *[President Obama’s] the policy

Is PossNP a kind of Det?
No, Det is a word-level element (from a grammatical category),
PossNP is a phrase (headed by a lexical category, N) that occurs in the same position as Det in NP.
what’s wrong with this tree?

PossNP cannot cooccur with Det!
introducers of N are: Det, Q, and Num, as well as PossNP
these categories encode grammatical information about the head noun such as number, case, definiteness, proximity
PossNP cannot cooccur with Det
Phrase Structure:
\[ NP \rightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{c}
(Det) \\
(PossNP)
\end{array} \right\} (Q)(Num)N \]