Nouns and determiners

• Characteristics of nouns
  – morphological:
    • inflected for number and case (with exceptions e.g. uncountable nouns; case inflection is restricted)
    • complex morphological structure e.g. compound and derived nouns - *bombshell, brightness*
  – Syntactic:
    • occur as head of noun phrase e.g. the new *book* about Chemnitz
    • NPs function as subject, object or complement of a clause.
  - Semantic:
    • refer to concrete entities in the external world
    • can denote qualities and states
    • function as agent or recipient in clauses

Types of nouns

• Differences in meaning and grammatical behaviour
• Common v. proper
• common: countable or uncountable
  – concrete (accessible to the senses, observable, measurable)
  – abstract (non-observable, non-measurable)
• proper: unique reference, no determiner or number contrast
  – include personal names, geographical names, institutions
• Collective nouns: refer to groups of single entities e.g. *audience, army*
• Partitive constructions/unit nouns
  – quantity partition
    • of noncount nouns e.g. *a piece of cake*
    • of plural count nouns e.g. *a flock of sheep*
    • of singular count nouns e.g. *a page of a book*
  – quality partition: expressed with kind/sort e.g. *a new kind of computer, a delicious kind of bread*

Determiners

• Function words used to specify the reference of a noun
• Types of determiners
  – central determiners
  – predeterminers
  – postdeterminers
• Central determiners
  – articles: *the, a, zero*
  – demonstratives: *this/that* (noncount and singular count nouns); *these/those* (plural count nouns)
– possessives: *my, our, your, his, her*
– *wh*-determiners: *which, whose, whichever*
– negative determiner *no*

• Pre-determiners: *all, both, half, multipliers (double, once, twice)*
• Post-determiners:
  – ordinal numerals and semi-determiners (*same, other, former, latter, last, next*)
  – Cardinal numerals and quantifying determiners (*much, many, any, every, few*)

**Specific v. generic reference**

• Specific reference
  – the definite article - reference to that which can be identified uniquely in the context (situational reference) or general knowledge of speaker and hearer e.g. *the Pope, the President, the stars*
    • Anaphoric reference: reference is established earlier in discourse, directly (direct anaphoric reference) or indirectly (indirect anaphoric reference) - reference inferred from general knowledge
    • Cataphoric reference: reference is established by something following later in the text e.g. modifiers
  – the indefinite article
    • reference is not uniquely identifiable from shared knowledge of speaker and addressee
    • narrows down reference to a single member of a class
    • used to introduce a new specific entry in discourse
    • subsequent references made with anaphoric *the*
  – the zero article
    • used with uncountable and plural countable nouns
    • expresses generic or non-specific reference - used in reference to e.g. meals, institutions, means of transport and communication, times of the day, days, months and seasons,

• Generic reference: a noun refers to a whole class rather than to an individual person or thing
  – all articles can be used for generic reference
  – zero article most common in generic reference

**Nouns: Number**

• Number - marked by
  – inflection
  – concord between subject and verb
  – co-occurrence patterns between determiner and noun
  – Variable nouns - have singular and plural forms
  – Invariable nouns - have no number contrast

**Regular v. irregular plurals**

• Regular plurals - adding an *-s*
• irregular plurals:
  – voicing/consonant change e.g. knife - knives
  – vowel change e.g. man - men, foot - feet
  – adding -en e.g. child - children, ox - oxen
  – zero plural:
    - words for some animals e.g. sheep, deer,
    - some quantifying nouns e.g. pound, dozen, hundred (have plural forms when not preceded by numerals)
• Foreign plurals (Latin and Greek plurals) e.g. nucleus – nuclei, millenium – millennia, hypothesis – hypotheses
• Plural-only nouns:
  - Binary nouns – entities comprising two parts e.g. scissors, trousers, binoculars
  - Aggregate nouns – entities comprising an indefinite number of parts e.g. data, goods, media, outskirts
• Singular-only nouns:
  - proper nouns e.g. London
  - non-count nouns e.g. cheese, solidarity
  - nouns in –ics e.g. physics, mathematics
  - names of diseases e.g. mumps, measles
  - words for games e.g. billiards
  - collective nouns e.g. committee, government, team (diff. btn BrE and AmE)
  - others e.g. news and nouns ending in -s

Gender: grammatical v. natural gender
- Grammatical gender e.g. in German – may or may not reflect the biological sex of the entities involved
- Natural gender: reflects the sex of entities
- English – no grammatical gender but natural gender
- not feature of nouns as in German
- related to meanings of nouns with reference to biological sex
- makes use of pronouns which correlate with nouns
- relevance to grammar: determines the selection of reference pronouns: wh-, personal & reflexive

Gender classes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Animate</th>
<th>Inanimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>Non-personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boy</td>
<td>girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who, he</td>
<td>Who, she</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Case
- formal category of the noun which defines its relations to other units
- Old English – four cases distinguished by inflections:
  - nominative
  - genitive
  - dative
  - accusative
- Modern English – two cases
  - common case – the noun has no ending at all
  - genitive – formed by adding an -s to the singular form of the noun –
    - the apostrophe ‘s in writing;
    - plural forms ending in –s add the sign alone (’) e.g. cows’ tails “zero genitive” –
      used with names that end in /z/ and foreign names e.g. Socrates’ doctrines
  - same functions as the of-construction (the of-genitive)
  - choice based on gender and style: genitive ending - personal nouns & familiar
    animals; of-genitive - inanimate nouns, titles
  - the double genitive – a friend of Deborah’s

Meanings of the genitive case
- Possession e.g. The child’s coat
- Origin e.g. the traveller’s story
- Attribution e.g. the victim’s courage
- Partition e.g. the brain’s two hemispheres
- Subjective e.g. the hostage’s application
- Objective e.g. the hostage’s release
- Description e.g. children’s shoes

Pronouns: Case
- personal pronouns
- objective case (accusative)– when used as object of a clause e.g. he saw me
- subjective case (nominative) – when used as subject of a clause e.g. I saw him
- genitive case (possessive) – my/mine; our(s), his, hers