

Tallerman: Chapter 2.1-2.2

# Lexical Categories

# How can we tell what class a word belongs to?

- Three types of criteria:
  - Distributional: Where does it occur?
    - I was happy to \_\_\_\_.
    - The \_\_\_\_\_ became extinct in the eighteenth century.
    - He seems very \_\_\_\_.
  - Morphological: What forms can it have?
    - Some *officials* \*Our *officials* policies
    - I *escaped*. \*The *escaped* went badly.
  - Functional: What work does it perform?
    - He *always* comes late.

- Jabberwocky (Lewis Caroll)

Twas brillig, and the slithy toves  
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;  
All mimsy were the borogoves,  
And the mome raths outgrabe.

brillig  
toves  
gimble  
mimsy  
mome  
outgrabe

slithy  
gyre  
wabe  
borogoves  
raths

# Some ways to identify word classes

- Notional definitions (insufficient)
  - A noun is the name of a person, place or thing.
  - A verb expresses an action, process or state.
  - An adjective is a describing word which modifies a noun.
- Compare:
  - They are fools.
  - They are foolish.

## – Modification by degree adverb vs. adjective

They are utter fools.

\*They are very fools.

\*They are utter foolish.

They are very foolish.

## – Inflection for number

fool

fools

foolish

\*foolishes

## – Comparative form

fool

\*fooler/\*more fool

foolish

more foolish

## – Occurrence as subject of a clause

Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.

\*Foolish rush in where angels fear to tread.

Paul Kroeber, 2005, Analyzing Grammar: An Introduction

# Syntax of the major word classes

- Transitive verbs (two arguments)
  - Carl rejected my generous assistance.
  - Kim avoided the man who'd shouted at her.
  - Bhris        sí # an chathaoir. (Irish)  
Break:PAST she the chair  
‘She broke the chair.’
- Ditransitive verbs (three arguments)
  - Lee handed the letter # to Kim.
  - Lee handed Kim # the letter.
  - Jack bought some flowers # for Lee
  - Ta   gei wo #zhe-ben-shu (Mandarin Chinese)  
S/he give I this-CLASS-book  
‘S/he gave me this book.’

- **The noun phrase**
  - Nouns and the closed class of determiners
    - **The** paper, **a** problem, **those** feelings, **which** car, **my** fault, **both** children, **all** examples
    - Determiners only occur with nouns:
      - Her singing bothers me.
  - Determiners have a different distribution from adjectives:

– soft furry cats	furry soft cats
– the soft cats	*soft the cats
– soft furry clean cats	*which this the cat
– BUT: all my many friends	

- Crosslinguistically, determiners are typically either initial or final in the noun phrase
  - Nmea nkeiewa no (Akan)  
women PLURAL:small the  
'the small women'
- Many languages have no DEFINITE or INDEFINITE ARTICLE (e.g. Russian), but sometimes word order can distinguish definiteness:
  - Ta mai pingguo le (Mandarin Chinese)  
he buy apple ASPECT  
'He bought an apple'
  - Pingguo, ta mai le  
apple, he buy ASPECT  
'He bought the apple.'

- Determiners often AGREE with various properties of the noun they co-occur with:
  - French
    - Le livre, le garçon, le chat, le lit  
‘the book’, ‘the boy’, ‘the cat’, ‘the bed’
    - La table, la fille, la fleur, la langue  
‘the table’, ‘the girl’, ‘the flower’, ‘the language’
    - Les livres, les garçons, les tables, les filles  
‘the books’, ‘the boys’, ‘the tables’, ‘the girls’
  - German
    - der Mann, die Frau, das Mädchen  
‘the man’, ‘the woman’, ‘the girl’

- NPs most typically function as arguments of predicates
  - Syntactic functions (grammatical relations)
    - Kim kissed Lee.  
SUBJECT DIRECT OBJECT
    - Lee was kissed by Kim.  
SUBJECT OBJECT OF PREPOSITION
    - Pears, she doesn't like  
DIRECT OBJECT SUBJECT
    - Kim handed the letter to Lee  
SUBJECT DIRECT OBJECT INDIRECT OBJECT
    - Kim handed Lee the letter.  
SUBJECT INDIRECT OBJECT DIRECT OBJECT  
*or*  
SUBJECT DIRECT OBJECT OBJECT2



- Subjects control subject/verb agreement in English
  - The woman is happy;
  - \*The woman are happy.
  - The women are happy.
  - \*The women is happy
- Subject pronouns occur in nominative case in English; whereas objects occur in accusative case:
  - She gave her a letter.
  - \*Her gave she a letter.
- Nominative pronouns: *I, you, he, she, it, we, they*
- Accusative pronouns: *me, you, him, her, it, us, them*
- Genitive determiners: *my, your, his, her, its, our, their*

- Distributional test:
  - Typically only NPs can be subjects or objects:
    - \_\_\_\_\_ became extinct in the eighteenth century.
    - I like \_\_\_\_\_.
  - However, some verbs allow clausal subjects or objects:
    - That Kim was late surprised me.
    - I saw that Kim was late.
- Noun phrases can be predicates instead of arguments:
  - Malay Russian
  - Zainal guru saya Marija rebëk
  - Zainal teacher my Mary child
  - ‘Zainai is my teacher.’ “Mary is a child.”
  - English has linking verb ‘to be’ (‘copula’) connecting subject with predicate NP.

- **The adjective phrase**
  - Adjectives and the closed class of degree modifiers
    - French
      - tres belle trop lourd presque gentil  
very beautiful too heavy almost nice
    - Breton
      - klañv kaer  
sick very ‘very sick’
  - Positions and functions of APs
    - Attributive AP's modify a noun:
      - Hungarian   Greek   Breton  
A piros autó i omorfi jineka an ti kozh tre  
the red car the beautiful woman the house old very

- Predicative adjectives function as predicates:
  - He felt \_\_\_\_\_. She is/seemed \_\_\_\_\_.  
I find it \_\_\_\_\_ to think she's forty.
  - Some languages don't have a copula:
    - » Ali marah (Malay)  
Ali angry  
'Ali is angry'
- The man was awake/\*the awake man  
\*the failure seems utter/an utter failure



- **The prepositional phrase**
  - Prepositions can occur transitively:
    - under the table, beside the road, for Judy
  - They can also occur intransitively:
    - The student was here before.
    - Put your clothes underneath.
  - Prepositions pair up with their own modifiers
    - She put the book right on the table.
    - The weight is well inside the limit.
    - Put your clothes right underneath.

- Some traditional ‘adverbs’ occur with ‘right’ and are thus prepositions:
  - She lives right upstairs/downstairs
  - The plane flew right overhead.
- Traditional verbal ‘particles’ are also prepositions:
  - She called me right up.
  - Put those chocolates right back.
- Malay has prepositional modifier *terus* ‘right’:
  - Dia berarii terus ke ayahaya  
he ran right to father:his  
‘He ran right to his father.’
  - Tolong masuk terus ke dalam  
please come right to in  
‘Please come right in.’



- **Adverbs**

- Form

- Adjective + *ly* ending: slowly, suddenly  
French ‘-*ment*’ (*sagement* ‘wisely’)
    - She works fast(\*-ly)/hard(\*ly).
    - An ungodly hour/\*He speaks ungodly.

- Adjectives and adverbs are in **complementary distribution**:

- An unusual [<sub>N</sub> song].  
An unusually [<sub>A</sub> happy] song  
She speaks unusually [<sub>Adv</sub> quickly]  
She [<sub>V</sub> spoke] unusually.

- Linguists thus consider adverbs and adjectives as subclasses of the same word class: ‘adjectives’ (since these are more basic in form)
- Evidence:
  - Share modifiers:
    - He is very happy                    He worked very happily
  - Can occur in the *as* \_\_\_\_\_ *as* comparative construction:
    - He is miserable as Kim.  
He draws as miserably as Kim.
  - Comparative suffix (*-er*) and superlative suffix (*-est*) can occur on both:
    - Nice, nicer, nicest                    Soon, sooner, soonest
  - There are some differences:
    - He seems uncertain whether she left or not.
    - \*He spoke uncertainly whether she left or not.

- In many languages there is no formal distinction
  - Er ist schön (German)  
he is nice  
'He is nice'.
  - Er singt schön  
he sings nice  
'He sings nicely'
- 'today', 'tomorrow', 'yesterday' and 'tonight' can function adverbially but are nouns since they have the distribution of NPs:
  - Tonight/tomorrow/today seems fine.
  - I planned tomorrow/tonight very carefully
  - I'll finish it by tonight.
- Words like 'still', 'already', 'sometimes' don't take degree modifiers, but do modify verbs and adjectives, so linguists count them as adverbs.