

College of Education  
University for Humanities Department of English  
Post-Graduate Studies



**A Course in Morphology and Syntax**

**M.A. Methodology**

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**The Structure of Noun Phrases**

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## ***Noun Phrases (NPs)***

that are made up of just a pronoun (like they) or just a name (like Daisy). These are examples of full NPs that consist of a single word. In such cases, the NP is described as non-branching—meaning it goes straight down to one element without splitting into smaller parts.

Only pronouns and names are considered non-branching NPs. All other NPs are branching, which means they split into two parts. In the most basic structure, an NP is made of two main parts: a determiner (DET), such as the or a, and a nominal (NOM), which is the main noun or group of words built around the noun

In the structure of a Noun Phrase (NP), the Determiner (DET) always appears alongside its sister element, the Nominal (NOM). The DET gives information about the NOM—it determines it. NOM itself is a middle level in the NP structure, found between the larger phrasal level (NP) and the smaller word level (N for noun).

## ***Determiners***

Determiners are a specific group of grammar words that give important information in a Noun Phrase (NP). They help show whether something is definite (known to both speaker and listener) or indefinite (not known), and they also give details about quantity or amount. The most basic determiners are the articles (ART):

The definite article: the

The indefinite article: a (n)

These articles are called basic because they help define what a determiner is. Any word that takes the same place in the NP as an article is considered a determiner

***There are other words that function as determiners. These include:***

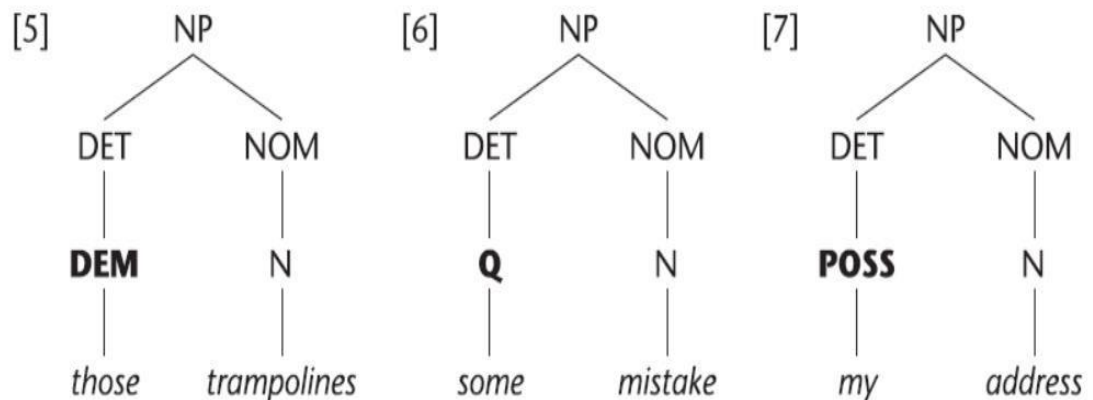
Demonstratives (DEM): this, that, these, those

Quantifiers (Q): some, any, no, each, every, either, neither

Possessives (POSS): my, your, its, her, his, our, their, and names like John's

None of these can co-occur in sequence with an article in an NP (for example: \*this the clown, \*the this clown, \*a some clown, \*some a clown, \*the my shoe, \*your the shoe, \*any a day). So they are determiners themselves.

[5], [6], and [7] are the phrase marker representations of those trampolines, some mistake, and my address



The analysis of the 'empty determiner' focuses on two main points. First, both NPs can take a determiner, such as "the" or "some." This means an empty determiner slot is necessary, as it influences the NP's meaning, giving it a more indefinite or general interpretation. For instance, the NP in example [8] is indefinite compared to "the smoke." Only plural count nouns and mass nouns can use an empty determiner. Additionally, names and pronouns do not take determiners because they

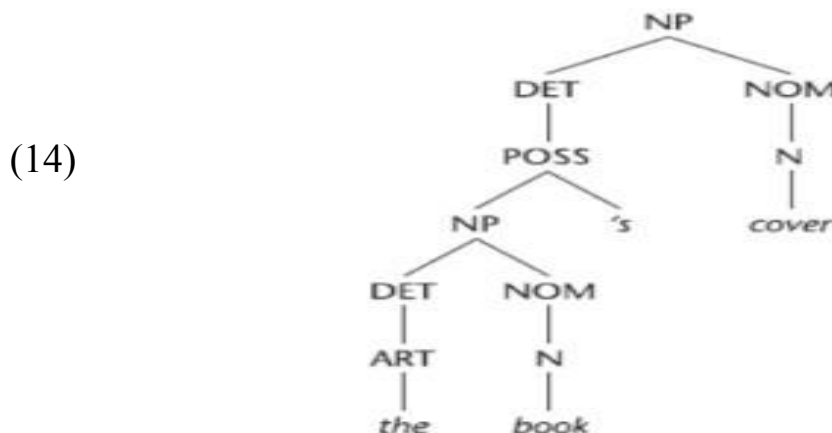
are inherently definite or indefinite. The NP in [9] illustrates that possessive determiners can be simple or derived from a full NP with the addition of -s, resulting in "John's father." [8] *Smoke gets in your eyes*

[9] *John's father*

More generally, the addition of -s to any NP makes for a possessive determiner.

There's nothing to prevent the NP within possessive determiners displaying all the structure that other NPs do, including DET + NOM. It is given as [14] below. In fact, a possessive NP can itself be determined by another possessive NP, as in [13]:

[13] *Hieronimo's brother's behaviour.*



***Pre-  
determi  
ners***

Consider the words all, both, and half. They seem similar to the determiners we have discussed but come before and with determiners, like in "all the men", "both those trampolines", and "half Jim's money". Thus, they are not determiners but are called predetermines. Other expressions like double and treble also fall under this category. When analyzing how predetermines fit into noun phrases (NPs), think about what they determine. In "all the men", it resembles a familiar part, which raises the question of how to analyze "all the men".

Now look at [19] and [20]:

[19] *all men*

[20] *both men*

The syntactic function of "all" and "both" in noun phrases (NPs). Despite not appearing before a determiner, "all" and "both" are analyzed as predeterminers. The text suggests that "all" in "all men" might be more plausibly associated with an empty determiner compared to "both" in "both men." The analysis maintains that "both" in "both men" still functions as a pre-determiner, as it can co-occur with articles. The passage concludes by noting that most determiners and pre-determiners can also function as pronouns.

Among the determiners that cannot function as pronouns, there are some that correspond to forms that can. For example, the quantifier *no* cannot function as a pronoun (\*I want *no*) but it corresponds to *none*, which can (I want *none*). And with the possessives, we find the following alternations:

DETERMINER: *my, your, her, his, our, their*

PRONOUN: *mine, yours, hers, his, ours, theirs*

It is predictable that pre-determiners, which pre-determine full NPs, should be able to co-occur with pronouns

### ***Pre-modifiers in NOM***

is any part before the main noun in a noun phrase that adds description or detail.

It identifies APs as the most common pre-modifiers and explains that the Adjective (A) is the main part of the AP, providing the core meaning. The whole Adjective Phrase (AP) modifies the noun phrase.

It notes that APs are not just for noun phrases; they can also function as subject predicatives (sP) and object predicatives (oP) in verb phrases (VPs).

## *Quantifying adjectives*

Much, many, few, and little are quantifying adjectives (QA). As adjectives, they come under NOM in NPs. Here are my reasons for treating them as adjectives (rather than determiners).

(a) Like adjectives, they co-occur with and follow determiners (those many books, the little butter that I have, some few successes), including an empty determiner: many books (= DET many books), much garlic (= DET much garlic).

(b) Like adjectives, they may occur in the VP, functioning as subjectpredicatives. His mistakes were many, It wasn't much, It was little enough.

(c) Like adjectives, they are gradable: very many books, too much garlic, so few ideas, very little tact, where they are modified by DEG. The comparative and superlative forms of many and much are more and most; of little, less and least; of few, fewer, and fewest.

numerals (the cardinal numerals one, two, three . . . and the ordinal numerals first, second, third ...) should also be treated as quantifying adjectives within NOM, since they follow DET, including empty DET.

Quantifying adjectives (QAs) are head of AP. APs with a QA as head always precede other APs in NOM. Here are phrase markers for very many mistakes and the one mistake.