The English Noun Phrase

English has an interesting variety of noun phrases, which differ greatly in structure. Examples are ‘binominal’ (two-noun) phrases (‘a beast of a party’); possessive constructions (‘the author’s opinion’); and discontinuous noun phrases (‘the review [came out yesterday] of his book’). How are these different noun phrases structured? How do we produce and understand them? These questions are central to this original study, which explores the interaction between the form of noun phrases, their meaning and their use. It shows how, despite the need in linguistic analysis for strict categories, many linguistic constructions in fact defy straightforward classification – and concludes that in order to fully explain the internal structure of utterances, we must first consider the communicative, pragmatic and cognitive factors that come into play. Drawing on a range of authentic examples, this book sheds new light not only on the noun phrase itself but also on the nature of linguistic classification.

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The English Noun Phrase
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Contents

Acknowledgements

Introduction

PART I: The structural approach: possibilities and limitations

2 Headedness within the NP
   2.1 Introduction
   2.2 Internal structure: headedness within the NP
      2.2.1 Semantic criteria
      2.2.2 (Morpho)syntactic criteria
      2.2.3 Discourse factors
   2.3 Conclusion

3 Close appositions
   3.1 Introduction
   3.2 Criteria from previous analyses
      3.2.1 Introduction
      3.2.2 Intonation and form of the elements
      3.2.3 Headedness and syntactic omissibility
      3.2.4 Reference and semantic omissibility
      3.2.5 Order of the elements
      3.2.6 Modified definition and preliminary analysis
   3.3 Further evidence
      3.3.1 Definiteness
      3.3.2 Anaphoric relations
      3.3.3 Headedness
      3.3.4 Summary: underlying representations
   3.4 Conclusion

4 Appositions with of
   4.1 Introduction
   4.2 of-constructions with referring embedded NPs
### 4.2 NPs with of-modifiers and of-complements
- 4.2.1 NPs with of-modifiers and of-complements
- 4.2.2 Partitive NPs

### 4.3 of-constructions with non-referring embedded NPs:
- 4.3.1 of-constructions qualifying of-constructions
- 4.3.2 of-appositions

### 4.4 of-appositions
- 4.4.1 The form of of-appositions
- 4.4.2 Headedness
- 4.4.3 Underlying representation

### 4.5 Conclusion

### 5 Binominals
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 General characterization
  - 5.2.1 Semantic features
  - 5.2.2 Syntactic and formal features
- 5.3 Headedness
  - 5.3.1 Introduction
  - 5.3.2 Semantic criteria
  - 5.3.3 Syntactic criteria
  - 5.3.4 Pragmatic criteria
  - 5.3.5 Additional evidence
- 5.4 Conclusion

### 6 Pseudo-partitive constructions
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 General characterization
- 6.3 Types of pseudo-partitive constructions
  - 6.3.1 Quantifier nouns
  - 6.3.2 Measure nouns
  - 6.3.3 Container nouns
  - 6.3.4 Part nouns
  - 6.3.5 Collection nouns
- 6.4 Headedness
- 6.4.1 Existing analyses
- 6.4.2 Semantic criteria
- 6.4.3 Syntactic criteria
- 6.4.4 Pragmatic criteria
- 6.4.5 Additional properties
- 6.5 Conclusion

### 7 Sort/kind/type-constructions
- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Analysis: preliminary characterization
  - 7.2.1 Type I: the referential SKT-construction
Contents

7.2.2 Type II: the qualifying construction 153
7.2.3 Type III: constructions of the third kind 154
7.3 Type I: the referential SKT-construction 155
  7.3.1 Semantic characterization 155
  7.3.2 Discourse properties 155
  7.3.3 Syntactic/formal properties 156
  7.3.4 Underlying representation 161
7.4 Type II: the qualifying construction 162
  7.4.1 Semantic characterization 162
  7.4.2 Discourse properties 163
  7.4.3 Syntactic/formal properties 165
  7.4.4 Underlying representation 169
7.5 Type III: constructions of the third kind 169
  7.5.1 The postdeterminer analysis 169
  7.5.2 Problematic cases: the sort/kind/type of + N\textsubscript{plur} 176
  7.5.3 Conventionalized referential constructions 181
7.6 Conclusion 183

8 Conclusion 185

PART II: The cognitive-pragmatic approach: some applications

9 The flexibility of language 189
  9.1 Introduction 189
  9.2 Pragmatics 190
    9.2.1 Information structure 190
    9.2.2 Given and new 191
    9.2.3 Topic: D-topic, S-topic and G-topic 194
    9.2.4 Focus 199
    9.2.5 Conclusion 201
  9.3 Cognition 202
    9.3.1 Introduction 202
    9.3.2 Prototype theory 203
    9.3.3 Activation 206
  9.4 Conclusion 216

10 Complements and modifiers 218
  10.1 Introduction 218
  10.2 Some existing proposals 219
    10.2.1 Introduction 219
    10.2.2 Relational versus non-relational nouns 221
    10.2.3 Complements versus modifiers 230
    10.2.4 Conclusion 244
### Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>A cognitive approach to noun frames</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.3.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.3.2</td>
<td>The ‘conceptual perspective’</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.3.3</td>
<td>The network approach</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.3.4</td>
<td>Prototype effects</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.3.5</td>
<td>Some examples</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.3.6</td>
<td>Relational nouns and definiteness revisited</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Discontinuous NPs</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>Theoretical background</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.2.1</td>
<td>Syntax and semantics: restrictions on extraposition</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.2.2</td>
<td>Processing and pragmatics: principles and preferences</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.2.3</td>
<td>Multifunctional theories of word order: interacting principles</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.2.4</td>
<td>The multifactor hypothesis</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>Some existing accounts of extraposition</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.3.1</td>
<td>Presentation versus predication: Guéron (1980)</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.3.2</td>
<td>Complexity: Hawkins (1994)</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>A multifunctional approach: examples from the corpus</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.4.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.4.2</td>
<td>Displacement from NP into clause-final position</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.4.3</td>
<td>Displacement within NP: complement-modifier switch</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Possessive constructions: the author’s opinion versus the opinion of the author</td>
<td>307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>Traditional accounts: interacting principles</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.2.1</td>
<td>Some absolute constraints</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.2.2</td>
<td>Preferences and tendencies</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.2.3</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>Theoretical and experimental approaches: the single-factor approach</td>
<td>314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.3.1</td>
<td>The single-factor approach</td>
<td>314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.3.2</td>
<td>Interactive principles: Rosenbach (2002)</td>
<td>327</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Contents

12.4 The present study 329
  12.4.1 The difference between prenominal and postnominal possessives 332
  12.4.2 Prenominal possessives 333
  12.4.3 Postnominal of-constructions 341
12.5 Conclusion 353

13 Conclusions 355

Bibliography 357
Author index 373
Subject index 376
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