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SEMANTIC DETERMINATION OF THE NOUN

Abstract: *Semantically, countable noun implies a dialectical unity of class and individual. In the text, it may be actualized as a representative of the class or a subclass as a whole or as an individual member of the class or a subclass. The distinction between indefiniteness and definiteness, which we expounded for individualizing reference, also applies to generic reference, albeit less strictly. As in individualizing reference, indefinite generic referents are mainly used to open a mental space for an instance, while definite generic referents are used for instances for which a space has already been opened. In generic reference, however, indefinite and definite referring expressions are often interchangeable.*

Key words: *Semantic determination, noun, clause, subclass, uncountable nouns, conceptual distinction, countable nouns.*

Language: *English*

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Introduction

English nouns are classified two main groups, such as countable and uncountable nouns. So expressing semantic determination of countable nouns distinguishes from uncountable nouns.

Semantically, countable noun implies a dialectical unity of class and individual. In the text, it may be actualized as a representative of the class or a subclass as a whole or as an individual member of the class or a subclass.

For example

1. The rose is a flower.
2. A rose is a flower.
3. Any rose is a flower.
4. Roses are flowers.
5. All roses are flowers.
6. She bought a rose yesterday.
7. The rose presented her is so beautiful.

In the following sentences determiners such as, *the, a, any* express different types of semantic determination which gives the sentences different semantic meaning: in the first sentence to fifth one the noun "*rose"* refers to the subclass as a whole; in the other two sentences the noun *"rose"* refers to an individual member of the subclass.

Analysis

According to the 'subclass' function, the sentences express different subtypes of determination, for instance, in the first sentence the subclass is demonstrated as an indiscrete unit, which reminds us of mass nouns (abstract or material); in the second and third sentences the subclass is presented by a typical individual member; in the fourth and fifth sentences the subclass is demonstrated through individual members. These following sentences illustrate a generalized situation, the nouns in them do not refer to a specific member or specific members of the subclass; they only denote a specific subclass. However in the sixth and seventh sentences refer to a specific member. Specificity is of two types: particular and non-particular, or to put it in traditional terms, definite and indefinite.

Uncountable nouns do not much differ from countable nouns as concerns the realization of the category of determination: in the text they may be actualized as representatives of the entities as a whole or an individual manifestation of the entities. Consider:

1. Beauty is rare.
2. They had a courage that no defeats would crush.
3. Mary's beauty simply paralyses him.

In the first sentence the noun *beauty* stands for the entity as a whole; in the other sentences the nouns *courage* and *beauty* refer to an individual manifestation of entities: courage denotes a non-particular, specific aspect and *beauty*, a particular, specific manifestation of the notion[1].

How important is the article as a semantic determiner? The definite article generally needs the support of the co-text: off the context nouns determined by the definite article are semantically ambiguous. For example: *the cat, the robbery of old people.*

Does *the cat* mean a specific particular cat or a particular class? Does the noun *robbery* mean a specific or a particular aspect of the entity? We cannot answer the question without recourse to the context. Only the indefinite article is an unambiguous marker: it marks the noun as an individual representative or an individual aspect of the entity. However, it cannot tell us whether the noun means a specific or a non-specific individual.

There are various possibilities of generalizing about a class from individual elements. However, languages don't have specifically generic determiners but use the same referring expressions for generic reference that are used for individualize reference. Thus the same indefinite and definite determiners are used for generic reference:

a. *A tiger has a life-span of about 11 years. [indefinite generic]*

b. The tiger hunts at night. [definite generic]

The distinction between indefiniteness and definiteness, which we expounded for individualizing reference, also applies to generic reference, albeit less strictly. As in individualizing reference, indefinite generic referents are mainly used to open a mental space for an instance, while definite generic referents are used for instances for which a space has already been opened. In generic reference, however, indefinite and definite referring expressions are often interchangeable. Thus, we can express roughly the same idea by saying *The tiger hunts by night* or *A tiger hunts at night*. Moreover, we may generalize by using either a singular noun as in these examples or a plural noun as in *Tigers hunt by night*.

As the following mentioned the category of determination of nouns are expressed by using quantifiers. We may visualize a full set in different ways: we may focus on the collection of its elements, on each individual element, or on selected elements that are representative of the full set. The English full-set quantifiers *all*, *every*, *each* and *any* permit us to accept these three conceptual strategies. Let us consider the following examples:

1. *All doctors have taken the Hippocratic oath.*
2. *Every doctor uses a different method.*
3. *Each doctor believes in his or her own method of treatment.*
4. *Any doctor will confirm that influenza is contagious.*

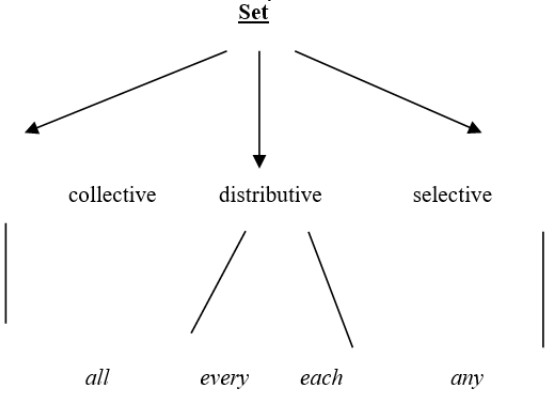
In using the quantifier *all* as in the first sentence, we conceive of a collection of individuals which is equivalent to the full set. We will therefore refer to the quantifier *all* as a collective quantifier. *All* combines the notions of collectivity and distributiveness of its individual elements.

Distributiveness differs from collectivity in that it picks out, and focuses on, the individual elements of a set. The use of *all* with a plural noun *doctors* and its plural agreement *have* in the first sentence show that the notion of collectivity outweighs that of distributiveness.

In using *every* and *each* in the second and third sentences, we focus on the individual elements in relation to the full set. For that reason the quantifiers *every* and *each* are identified as **distributive quantifiers**. *Every* and *each* make us see each of the elements of a set individually, which accounts for the singular form of their nouns (*doctor*).

In using *any* as in the last sentence, we suppose that any individual element from the set could potentially be chosen as representative of the full set. The quantifier *any* will therefore be referred to as a **selective quantifier**. In the last sentence the determiner any means that 'no matter which doctor we choose, he or she will *confirm that influenza is contagious*, implying that all doctors will confirm this. It would therefore be contradictory to say **Any doctor will confirm this but not all of them will.*

We can now classify the specific conceptual niches of the four full-set quantifiers[2]:



In this section on set quantifiers we tacitly assume that speakers behave according to the "logic" of quantification. In every-day speech, however, set

[1] Valeika L. An Introductory course in theoretical English grammar. V.: Pedagogical university, 2003. -57 p.

[2] Radden G., Dirven R. Cognitive English Grammar. Amsterdam: University of Hamburg, 2007. -137 p.

quantifiers are often not used to designate all elements of a set exhaustively but much rather to express the speaker's emotional assessment in a hyperbolic way. If we hear somebody say things like *He'll eat anything* or *I have seen every church in Italy*, we will automatically take a "loose interpretation" of the set quantifiers for granted.

Number quantification applies to multiplex instances, i.e. to count nouns. Quantifying instances of an object means adding up discrete, individual elements of the same kind along a scale. Thus, *many bees* describes a number of "added up" individual bees which is higher on a scale of quantity than, for instance, *some bees*.

Amount quantification, on the other hand, applies to substance instances, i.e. to mass nouns. Quantifying an instance of a substance means extending or reducing the same kind of substance by a given amount along a scale. Thus, *a lot of garbage* specifies an amount of the same, indivisible substance.

The conceptual distinction between number and amount quantification is reflected in English in two clearly distinguished groups of scalar quantifiers: number quantifiers and amount quantifiers. The most common quantifiers are used with count nouns, mass nouns and both count and mass nouns.

In the following table scalar quantifiers are listed:[3]

Number quantifiers	Both	Amount quantifiers
a huge number of	Lots of	*a huge amount of*
Many	A lot of	Much a large amount of
a great many, four		*a great deal of*
a few, several, a number of		*a little* *a bit of*
	Some	*a certain amount of*
Not many		Not much
Few		Little

Scalar quantifiers are ranked with respect to each other and with respect to an implicit norm. For example, *a few*, *several*, *a little*, and *a bit of* are assumed to denote quantities lightly above an implicit norm, while *some* and *a certain amount of* denote quantities slightly below an implicit norm.[4]

As we know, the quantifier *much* is freely used in questions and negative contexts. In affirmative contexts, however, the use of *much* is restricted to formal or academic registers. For example:

How much money did you spend for a holiday?
Hurry up! We don't have much time.
Much money had been lost for this business.

Discussion.

In everyday speech, sentences such as *"I waste much time "*would not be said. Why shouldn't the quantifier *much*, just like the quantifier *many*, be used in everyday affirmative contexts? An explanation might be found in the iconic principle of quantity. Unlike the two-syllabic form *many*, the short, one-syllabic phonetic form *much* does not adequately reflect the meaning of a large quantity; longer expressions such as *a lot of*, *a large amount of*, etc. are much better suited to render this meaning. *Much* is, however, compatible with non-affirmative contexts, i.e. questions and negations, because here it does not convey the sense of "a large amount of "but that of "an unknown or small quantity".

Interestingly, *much* is more readily used with abstract mass nouns in affirmative contexts and in fairly high registers, as in:

There has been much discussion recently about the value of the Euro compared to the dollar.

In this example the determiner much doesn't refer to a large amount of substance, however *much discussion* describes repetitions and varieties of extreme episodic events. For such ideas, the quantifier *much* seems that not felt to be counter-iconic. Look at the following sentences and compare the semantic determiners of nouns:

1. There is little money in his pocket. [non-specific]

2. She has few friends in this city because she has moved here recently. [non-specific]

3. There is (still) a little money in his pocket. [specific]

[3] Azar B. Understanding and using English grammar. Library of Congress, 2002. -119p.

[4] Radden G., Dirven R. Cognitive English Grammar. Amsterdam: University of Hamburg, 2007. -131 p.

4. She has a few friends although she has moved here recently. [specific]

In these examples determination are expressed by using scalar quantifiers, such as: *little, few, a few, a little*. In the first and second sentences the quantifiers *few* and *little* mean 'a small number' and 'a small amount', correspondingly. We tend to associate these quantified non-specific referents with negative expectations; they are therefore not compatible with adverbs such as *still, at least* and *already*, which indicate positive expectations:

There are at least few people who believe that;

There is at least little risk in the project.

In the third and fourth sentences the quantifiers *a few* and *a little* mean "quantities slightly above the implicit norm".

Why should their combination with the indefinite article come to express larger quantities than the simple quantifiers *few* and *little*? Because the article *a(n)* applies to a bounded, uniplex instance of an object. Its conceptual contribution here is to make us see the unbounded referents as bounded: *a few friends* in the fourth following sentence is seen as a collective group, and *a little money* in third sentence is seen as a delimited portion. Being clearly defined by their boundaries, these entities now qualify to be used as actual, specific referents. The quantifiers *a few* and *a little* also tend to be associated with positive expectations, as can be seen from their compatibility with the positive-oriented adverbs *still, at least* and *already*. The quantity they describe is seen as "sufficient enough for a given purpose"[5]. Therefore, the fourth sentence might be understood in the sense that she has still friends although she has moved here recently. It is this positive orientation in conjunction with the specific reference that implicates a larger quantity of *a few* and *a little*.

The range of scalar quantifications is unlimited. If the speaker wants to make finer grained distinctions about a scalar quantity than provided for by the quantifiers she may make use of adverbs such as *quite, very, about, rather, fairly, roughly* and so on.

Conclusion.

Determination is a category which is implied in the grammar of any language. The definition of determiners according to Quirk is that "they are closed-class items, which occur before the noun acting as head of the noun ". Determiners can be divided into these classes:

1) predeterminers,

2) central determiners,

3) postdeterminers.

Determination consists of the opposition of definite and indefinite meanings. When the expression of definiteness depends on other grammatical categories (like countability and number), it is called a grammatical category. When definiteness is not expressed systematically and is not grammatically conditioned, we distinguish a semantic category of definiteness.

According to these following theories we classified two main types of determination of nouns:

1) Grammatical determination

2) Semantic determination

Grammatically, there are many ways of signalling determination in the languages. The following division deals with three basic ways of expressing determination:

- *expressing determination by using articles*
- *expressing determination by using pronouns*
- *expressing determination by using quantifiers*

One of the most essential ways of expressing determination in English is using articles, such as *a, an* and *the*. Besides the article, the noun can be determined by pronouns such as all, *any, some, another, each, every, either, neither, no; this/that, these/those; my, your,his, her, its; our, their; much /many; little /a little; few /a few; several*; numerals: *one, two; first, second*, etc., and a genitive noun *John's coat*.

The article can be attributed to grammatical determiners on the ground that its meaning is the least specific. Determiners expressed by pronouns are semi-grammatical determiners, for, apart from the function of individualization, they express other functions.

As we know English nouns are classified two main groups, such as countable and uncountable nouns. So expressing semantic determination of countable nouns distinguishes from uncountable nouns.

Semantically, countable noun implies a dialectical unity of class and individual. In the text, it may be actualized as a representative of the class or a subclass as a whole or as an individual member of the class or a subclass while uncountable nouns in the text may be actualized as representatives of the entities as a whole or an individual manifestation of the entities.

The conclusion that we can draw from this analysis is that language often needs more than one signal to realize its meanings, the most powerful signal being the context.

[5] Radden G., Dirven R. Cognitive English Grammar. Amsterdam: University of Hamburg, 2007. -131 p.

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