

### 3. Word classes

In this section we will discuss the major word classes of English. These are nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs.

#### 3.1. Nouns

Prototypical nouns in English are words that refer to concrete, bounded entities and have the following morphosyntactic properties: 1) plural marking, 2) articles, and 3) possession. These properties will be illustrated in the following examples.

Plurality. Most nouns in English take the suffix *-(e)s* when they refer to plural items:

(8)	dog	'perro'	dog-s	'perros'
	cat	'gato'	cat-s	'gatos'
	house	'casa'	houses	'casas'
	drum	'tambor'	drums	'tambores'
	box	'caja'	boxes	'cajas'
	bush	'arbusto'	bushes	'arbustos'
	etc.			

Some nouns that refer to animal species use the same form in the singular and plural:

(9)	deer	'venado'/'venados'
	sheep	'oveja'/'ovejas'
	fish	'pez'/'peces'

A few nouns take the irregular suffix *-(r)en* in the plural:

(10)	child	'niño'/'niña'	children	'niños'/'niñas'
	ox	'buey'	oxen	'bueyes'

Genitive case. Most nouns in English can appear in the genitive case. For full nouns, this case is expressed via the suffix *-'s*:<sup>2</sup>

(11)	the child- <b>s</b> toy	'El juguete del niño'
	ART niño-GEN juguete	

Possession. Prototypical nouns may head a noun phrase that contains a genitive case noun or pronoun as a modifier. The prototypical semantic role of the item expressed by the genitive element is a possessor of the head noun:

- (12) a. **my** car                      b. **her** success  
1SG:GEN auto                      3SG:F:GEN éxito  
'mi auto'                              'su éxito (de ella)'
- c. **his** chair                      d. **our** weakness-es  
3SG:M:GEN silla                      1PL:GEN debilidad-PL  
'su silla (de él)'                      'nuestras debilidades'

Although the prototypical semantic role for the genitive element is possessor, a wide range of semantic roles may obtain between the genitive and the head noun:

- (13) a. our professor                      'nuestro profesor (el profesor que nos enseña)'  
1PL:GEN profesor
- b. their country                      'su país (de ellos) (el país de donde vienen)'  
3PL:GEN país
- c. your seat                              'la silla donde estás sentado'  
2:GEN silla

Articles. Prototypical nouns in English can take one of two articles, a or the, in the singular, some or the in the plural:

- (14) the cow                      'la vaca'                      a cow                      'una vaca'  
the cats                      'los gatos'                      some cats                      'unos gatos'

### 3.1.1. Types of nouns

Proper names. Nouns that refer uniquely to individually salient items lack many of the properties of prototypical nouns in their normal usage. Following Quirk, *et al* (1989), we will term this class of nouns 'proper names':

- (15) a. Milton                      'Milton'  
\*Miltons<sup>3</sup>  
\*the Milton  
\*a Milton  
\*her Milton

- b. Canada        'Canadá'
- \*Canadas<sup>4</sup>
- \*the Canada
- \*a Canada
- \*our Canada

Mass nouns. Prototypical nouns refer to individually salient concrete items. Such nouns are sometimes referred to as 'count nouns' because their individual saliency allows them to be counted. Entities that cannot normally be counted include those that refer to amorphous quantities or abstract concepts. Nouns that refer to such items are often called 'mass nouns.' They have different morphosyntactic properties in English than do count nouns. They do not normally take plural marking, and they take a different set of quantifying elements. Unlike proper names, however, mass nouns often do take the articles (see above). For example:

(16) Amorphous quantities:

- water            'agua'
- the water        'el agua'
- some water      'un poco de agua' (cf. \*some table)
- \*waters         (\*aguas)
- \*many water(s) (cf. many tables, 'muchas mesas')
- sand             'arena'
- the sand         'la arena'
- \*sands
- some sand       'un poco de arena'

(17) Abstract concepts:

- sincerity        'sinceridad'
- the sincerity    'la sinceridad'
- a lot of sincerity 'mucho sinceridad' (cf. \*a lot of cow)
- \*sincerities
- \*many sincerity/sincerities (cf. many cows, 'muchas vacas')
- beauty           'belleza'
- the beauty      'la belleza'
- a lot of beauty   'mucho belleza'
- \*beauties (acceptable only in the non-abstract sense of 'beautiful things')
- \*many beauties 'muchas personas/cosas bonitas'

As illustrated for the word *beauty* 'belleza' in 17, abstract nouns can be used in the plural, but in so doing they lose their abstract quality. The word *beauty* can refer to a concrete thing that has the quality of beauty.

### 3.1.2. Pronouns

There are several distinct types of pronouns in English. In this section we will illustrate the personal pronouns. These are pronouns that refer to people, and can appear in any position that a full noun phrase may appear. Relative pronouns are discussed in section 16.

The following is a chart of all the personal pronouns:

The personal pronouns of English				
	Nominative	Non-nominative	Genitive 1	Genitive 2
1 singular	I	me	my	mine
1 plural	we	us	our	ours
2 sing./pl.	you	you	your	yours
3 sing. m.	he	him	his	his
e sing. f.	she	her	her	hers
3 pl. (m.f.)	they	them	their	theirs

The two genitive constructions are discussed in section 4.3.2. A non-personal pronoun occurs in only two case forms, the standard form *it* (18a-c) and the genitive 1 *its* (18d). This pronoun may not be used in the genitive 2 construction (18e):

- (18) a. It is a dog. 'Es un perro.'  
 NH ser:PRES ART perro
- b. They saw it. 'Lo vieron.'  
 3PL ver:PAS NH
- c. We flew over it. 'Volamos sobre esto.'  
 1PL volar:PAS sobre NH
- d. Its door is open. 'Su puerta está abierta.'  
 NH:GEN puerta ser:PRES abierto
- e. \*The door of it/its is open. (Genitive 2 not allowed)

English has a set of demonstrative pronouns that are distinct from the personal and non-personal pronouns. These are identical to the demonstrative adjectives (see section 3.3):

The demonstrative pronouns/adjectives of English		
	Near speaker (DEMO1)	Away from speaker (DEMO2)
Singular	this	that
Plural	these	those

### 3.2. Verbs

Prototypical verbs in English express concepts involving action or change. Such verbs have the following morphological properties: 1) they appear in either a 'past tense' or 'non-past tense' form, and 2) the non-past tense form takes a suffix -s when the subject is third person singular. Other forms of verbs do exist (e.g., participles and infinitives) but these can be considered to be deverbalizations. Various modes, aspects and the future tense are expressed analytically rather than morphologically (see section 8). The following chart lists some prototypical verbs in their three morphologically distinct forms. Examples of various forms in context are found in section 8. The order of elements in the verb phrase is found in section 4.4:

The inflections of English verbs				
	Gloss	Past tense	Non-past tense 3rd pers. singular	Other
Regular verbs:	andar	walked	walks	walk
	toser	coughed	coughs	cough
	saludar	greeted	greet	greet
	vivir	lived	lives	live
Some irregular verbs:	comer	ate	eats	eat
	cantar	sang	sings	sing
	hablar	spoke	speaks	speak
	pensar	thought	thinks	think
	saber/conocer	knew	knows	know
	caerse	fell	falls	fall
	cortar	cut	cuts	cut

#### 3.2.1. Infinitives

The bare form of the verb preceded by the particle *to* is one type of non-finite, or infinitive, verb form in English. This infinitive is used in certain kinds of complement and adverbial clauses (see sections 16.3.2 and section 16.4).

#### 3.3.2. Nominalizations

In this section we will describe a few of the many devices available in English to change a verb stem into a noun. Collectively, these constructions can be referred to as 'nominalizations'.

Action nominalizations. English employs many devices of varying degrees of productivity to change a verb into a noun that refers to the action described by the verb. The following examples are organized in order from most to least productive:

- (19) a. Let-'s go for a **walk**. 'Vamos a caminar.'  
permitir-1PL ir a INDEF caminar (Zero derivation)
- b. **Walk-ing** is good for you. 'Caminar es bueno para Ud.'  
caminar-NOM ser:PRES bueno para 2 (derivation with *-ing*)
- c. I-'m look-ing for **employ-ment**. 'Estoy buscando trabajo.'  
1SG-ser buscar-PPRES para emplear-NOM (< *employ*)
- d. He work-ed in **construc-tion**. 'El trabajaba en la construcción.'  
3SG:M trabajar-PAS en construir-NOM (< *construct*)
- e. That-'s a new **proced-ure**. 'Eso es un proceso nuevo.'  
DEMO2-ser INDEF nuevo proceder-NOM (< *proceed*)

All of the morphological strategies are lexically restricted. For example, even a strategy as productive as *-ing* is not normally used with some verbs:

- (20) \*The **employ-ing**. ('El emplear')  
\*The **spew-ing**. ('El arrojar de líquido')

Agent nominalizations. An agent nominalization forms a noun that refers to the agent of the verb. The most productive agent nominalization construction in English is a suffix *-er*. This suffix forms a noun that refers to a person or thing who characteristically engages in the activity expressed by the verb:

- (21) a. the driv-er b. a can open-er  
DEF manejar-NOM INDEF lata abrir-NOM  
'el chófer.' 'una abrelatas.'

### 3.3. Adjectives

Adjectives in English are defined by the lack of grammatical properties of nouns or verbs. They take neither plural marking, articles nor possessors (except in certain very limited contexts — see below). Neither do they take TAM marking or auxiliaries. Distributionally, they can function to modify noun phrases, or as attributive predicates with the copular verb *be* (see section 6). Semantically, adjectives express property concepts, such as color, quality, propensity, etc. The following examples illustrate a few

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English adjectives functioning as descriptive modifiers (example 119), and as attributive predicates (example 23):

(22) a. red house 'Casa roja'                      b. good house 'Casa buena'  
          roja casa    buena casa

(23) a. The house is red.                      'La casa es roja.'  
          DEF casa ser:PRES roja  
      b. The house is good.                      'La casa es buena.'  
          DEF casa ser:PRES buena

Normally adjectives do not have verbal properties (example 24) or nominal properties (example 25):

(24) \*It reds  
      \*It redded.  
      \*It can red.

(25) \*The red. (Though see below.)  
      \*My red.  
      \*Three reds.

Very occasionally an adjective can be used as a noun, but only in very specific contexts:

(26) Would you prefer the white or the red?  
      prefiere 2 querer DEF blanco o DEF tinto  
      'Prefiere Ud. el tinto o el blanco?' (Hablando de vinos.)

### 3.4. Adverbs

Adverbs in English do not have any consistent morphological properties. They are defined negatively as the class of content words that have none of the morpho-syntactic or distributional properties of nouns, verbs or adjectives. Semantically, adverbs express manner, time, location, and a few other notions. Many adverbs can be identified by a suffix *-ly*, but not all. The ungrammatical examples in (27), (28), and (29) show that adverbs, in this case the adverb, *quickly*, have none of the properties of nouns, verbs and adjectives, respectively:

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- (27) \*The quickly. (el rápidamente)  
\*My quickly. (mi rápidamente)  
\*Three quicklies. (tres rápidamentees)
- (28) \*It quicklies (se rápidamente)  
\*It quicklied. (se 'rápidamentó')  
\*It can quickly. (se puede 'rápidamentar')
- (29) \*The quickly car. (el carro rápidamente)  
\*It is quickly. (es rápidamente)

In terms of distribution, adverbs can appear almost anywhere in a clause. Manner adverbials seem to have the greatest freedom of position, followed by time and then location:

- (30) Manner:  
Quickly she got up and left. 'Se levantó y salió rápidamente.  
rápidamente ella levantarse y salió  
She quickly got up and left.  
She got quickly up and left.  
She got up and quickly left.  
She got up and left quickly.
- (31) Time:  
Immediately she got up and left. 'Inmediatamente se levantó y salió .'  
She immediately got up and left.  
?She got immediately up and left.  
She got up immediately and left.  
She got up and left immediately.



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(32) Location: Nearby she can buy the book.

cerca ella puede comprar DEF libro

'Ella puede comprar el libro cerca de aquí'

\*She nearby can buy the book.

\*She can nearby buy the book.

?She can buy nearby the book.

She can buy the book nearby.