

# Parts of Speech

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## Parts of Speech (POSs)

Part of speech is a formal property of word-types that determines their acceptable uses in syntax

Parts of speech (*syntactic categories*) can be regarded as classes of words. Examples:

- nouns
- verbs
- adjectives
- adverbs

POS does *not* define how a word participates in the semantic interpretation of a sentence (although not entirely independent).

A word-type can have more than one POS, but a word-token has exactly one, e.g.:

I can<sub>Aux</sub> kick the can<sub>N</sub>.

## Parts of Speech

### Content categories

- large classes
- new (*neologisms*) and archaic/extinct words
- semantically rich and independent
- examples: nouns, verbs, adjectives

### Function(al) categories

- small classes
- conservative — few words lost or gained over time
- semantically dependent on content words
- examples: determiners, prepositions, conjunctions

## Nouns

Nouns refer to *varieties*: entities and concepts in the world

Examples: cat, hat, Fred, life, philosophy, him

Properties:

- case (language specific)
- person
- number (language specific)
- gender (language specific)
  - grammatical gender and/or
  - natural gender

## Nouns

Nouns refer to *varieties*: entities and concepts in the world

Examples: cat, hat, Fred, life, philosophy, him

Properties:

- case (language specific)
  - nominative
  - genitive/possessive
  - accusative
  - vestiges of others, e.g., *-ward*
  - pronominal clitic forms
- person
- number (language specific)
- gender (language specific)

## Nouns

Nouns refer to *varieties*: entities and concepts in the world

Examples: cat, hat, Fred, life, philosophy, him

Properties:

- case (language specific)
- person
  - first: speaker/author
    - \* inclusive (of hearer/reader)
    - \* exclusive
  - second: hearer/reader
  - third: everyone else
- number (language specific)
- gender (language specific)

## Nouns

Nouns refer to *varieties*: entities and concepts in the world

Examples: cat, hat, Fred, life, philosophy, him

Properties:

- case (language specific)
- person
- number (language specific)
  - singular: one (or less)
  - plural: two/three or more
  - dual: exactly two
- gender (language specific)

## Nouns

Nouns refer to *varieties*: entities and concepts in the world

Examples: cat, hat, Fred, life, philosophy, him

Properties:

- case (language specific)
- person
- number (language specific)
- gender (language specific)

Verbs agree with their *subjects* in person, number (and gender)

In the English present tense, only third-singular is overtly inflected

## Nouns

Nouns refer to *varieties*: entities and concepts in the world

Examples: cat, hat, Fred, life, philosophy, him

Other distinctions

- proper vs. common noun
- pronouns: like proper nouns, but with *anaphoric reference*
  - discourse
  - reflexive
  - reciprocal
- mass vs. count noun

## Nouns

Nouns refer to *varieties*: entities and concepts in the world

Examples: cat, hat, Fred, life, philosophy, him

Nouns bear *grammatical functions*:

- subject: *John* gave Mary the book
- (direct) object: John gave Mary *the book*
- indirect object: John gave *Mary* the book
- object of preposition: John gave the book to *Mary*

and *thematic roles*: agent, patient, theme, location in, location to, instrument, recipient, beneficiary, . . .

# Adjectives

Adjectives qualify or describe varieties

Examples: good, tall, red, thorough, clever, former

Properties:

- case (agrees with noun)
- number (agrees with noun)
- gender (agrees with noun)
- degree
  - positive: *happy*
  - comparative: *happier*
  - superlative: *happiest*

## Adjectives

Adjectives qualify or describe varieties

Examples: good, tall, red, thorough, clever, former

Other distinctions:

- colour, size, ...
  - *big red* vs. *red big*
- intensionality
  - *former*, *alleged*
- attributive vs. predicative
  - *mine*, (arch.) *thine*
  - *ours*, *yours*, *theirs*

## Prepositions

“anywhere a mouse can go:”

- *over, under, in, out, ...*

but also:

- *by*

- alongside: a cottage *by* the lake
- agentive: ... given to Mary *by* John

- *for*

- benefactive: a newspaper *for* your father
- purpose: reserve a room *for* a lecture

- *of*

- possessive: office *of* a professor
- partitive: leg *of* a table
- measure: three cups *of* sugar
- appositive: the province *of* Ontario
- objective: destruction *of* the aircraft

## Prepositions

“anywhere a mouse can go:”

- *over, under, in, out, ...*

but also:

- *with*
  - sociative: watch a film *with* a friend
  - instrumental: hit a nail *with* a hammer
- others ...

Most of the exceptions are uses of prepositions where other languages would use case.

## Determiners

Semantically, these are quantifiers (as in logic)

Syntactically, they are the leftmost modifiers of nouns in a *noun phrase*

Kinds:

- articles: *a, the*
- quantificational: *every, some, most*
- demonstrative: *this, that*
- numerical: *one, two, three*

Determiners typically agree in case, number, and gender with their nouns (like adjectives).

## Verbs

Verbs *predicate* events or states of being

Properties:

- person (agrees with subject)
- number (agrees with subject)
- often gender (agrees with subject)
- tense: present, past, future, ...
- aspect: durative, iterative, progressive
- voice: active, passive, (middle)
- mood
  - infinitive: *to go*
  - indicative: *he goes/went*
  - imperative: *(you) go!*
  - interrogative: *Did he go?*
  - subjunctive: *if he were to go ...*
  - optative: *... then she would go too*

## Verbs

### Other distinctions

- transitive vs. intransitive
- auxiliaries and modals
- stative: *become, feel*
- copular: *be*

## Adverbs

Modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs:

- run *quickly*
- *very* happy, *much* more
- *very* quickly, *very* much

Adverbs indicate:

- time: *soon, now, yesterday, ...*
- place: *here, far, ...*
- manner: *quickly, angrily, ...*
- degree: *very, much*