

Unit 6 (a)

Nominal groups

Below the clause (1)

Print version of the
Exploring English Grammar – the world of groups and phrases
 presentation given on
 23–30.v.2022

Robert Spence, LangSciTech, Saarland University

6 (a).1

The learning goals for today's session are:

1. To understand the difference between groups and phrases.
2. To become familiar with the various functional roles that words can have in nominal groups, in particular the many different roles that adjectives can have.
3. To learn to analyse the two dimensions of nominal group structure: experiential and logical.
4. To understand the mismatches between experiential and logical structure in nominal groups.
5. To understand some of the most important differences between nominal groups in English and German.

6 (a).2

Below the clause: groups and phrases

Consider the following clause:

Very gradually
the old man
has been growing
more forgetful
in recent years.

This is made up of the following groups and phrases:

nominal group: *the old man*
 verbal group: *has been growing*
 adverbial group: *very gradually*
 adjectival group: *more forgetful*
 prepositional phrase: *in recent years*

Note: inside *in recent years* is the nominal group *recent years*

You can also have the following:

preposition group: *right behind* (in: *right behind the door*)
 conjunction group: *just because* (in: *just because he came late*)

6 (a).3

Groups vs. phrases: internal structure

- A group is a “bloated word” – a word that is modified by other words:

trains
 electric trains
 old electric trains
 splendid old electric trains
 two splendid old electric trains
 those two splendid old electric trains

- A phrase is a “shrunk clause” – a clause that has lost its Subject, its Finite, its MOOD choices, etc; but it still has a remnant of TRANSITIVITY:
 He wrote out the formula. He used a piece of chalk.
- He wrote out the formula, using a piece of chalk.
- He wrote out the formula with a piece of chalk.

6 (a).4

Further examples of groups

grows
 was growing
 has been growing
 will have been growing

forgetful
 more forgetful
 much more forgetful
 very much more forgetful

gradually
 very gradually
 really very gradually

6 (a).5

Groups and phrases: functions in clauses

Table 6(1) Group and phrase classes in relation to clause function

		modal structure	experiential structure
groups	nominal	Vocative	–
		Subject, Complement	participant role (Medium, Agent, Range, Beneficiary)
	verbal	Finite + Predicator	Process
	adverbial	Adjunct (circumstantial)	circumstance role (primarily Manner: quality, Manner: degree)
		Adjunct (modal)	–
conjunction	Adjunct (textual)	–	
phrases	prepositional	Adjunct (circumstantial)	circumstance role (Location, Extent, Manner, Cause ...); participant role with special textual status
		Adjunct (modal)	–
		Adjunct (textual)	–

6 (a).6

Experiential structure of nominal group: functions and (word) classes

those	two	splendid	old	electric	trains
Deictic	Numerative	Epithet ₁	Epithet ₂	Classifier	Thing
determiner	numeral	adjective	adjective	adjective	noun

Fig. 6-1 Experiential structure of part of a nominal group

The nominal group system of DETERMINATION (a.k.a. DEIXIS)

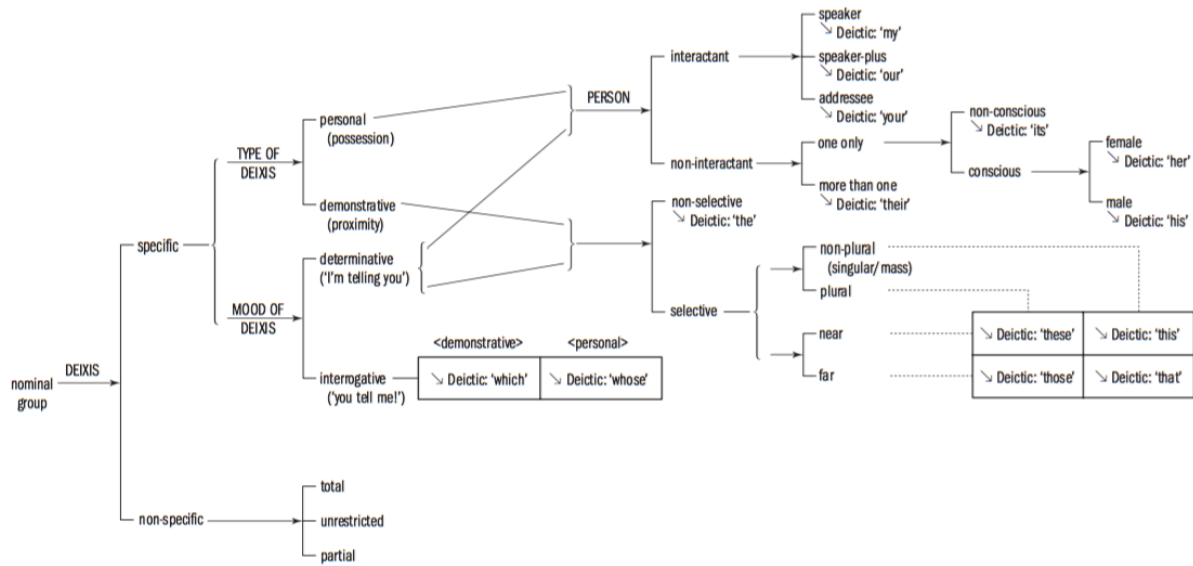


Fig. 6-2 The nominal group system network: DETERMINATION

Determiners or [embedded] ngps functioning as specific Deictic

Table 6(2) Items (determiners, or [embedded] nominal groups) functioning as specific Deictic

	Determinative			Interrogative
Demonstrative	this	that		which(ever)
	these	those		what(ever)
			the	
Possessive	my	your	our	
	his	her	its	whose(ever)
	their			
	one's			
	[John's]			[which person's], etc.
	[my father's], etc.			

Determiners functioning as non-specific Deictic

Table 6(3) Determiners functioning as non-specific Deictic

		singular		non-singular		unmarked
				Dual	Mass/plural	
total	positive	each every		both	all	
	negative		neither (not either)			no (not any)
partial	selective	one	either			some [sΛm] any
	non-selective	a(n)			some [sɪn]	
		'one'	'two'		'not one'	(unrestricted)

Note:

1) /sm/ is quite different from /sΛm/, because (unlike /sm/) /sΛm/ can be used with a singular count(able) noun:

'In three weeks England will have her neck wrung like a chicken.' Some chicken! Some neck! – Churchill

2) As an alternative to /sm/ you can have the zero article: *some trains vs. trains; some electricity vs. electricity.*

6 (a).10

Parallel between specific and non-specific determiners

Table 6(4) Parallel between specific and non-specific determiners

	'weak' determiner [cannot be Head]	'full' determiner [may be Head]	non-personal pronoun [Head]
specific	the	that	it
non-specific	a(n)	one	there

6 (a).11

There are two different systems of NUMBER in English

Table 6(5) Number in specific nominal groups

Non-plural		Plural
Singular	Mass	
this train	this electricity	these trains

Table 6(6) Number in non-specific nominal groups

singular	non-singular	
	mass	plural
a train	(some) electricity	(some) trains

Table 6-7 Nominal groups referring to members of a class ('particular') or to the class itself ('general')

		Singular	Mass	Plural	
non-specific [Table 6-6]		singular [a(n)]	non-singular [(some)]		
specific [Table 6-5]		non-plural [this]		plural [these]	
(i) particular (members)	non-specific	<i>there was an elephant in the glade</i>	<i>there were (some) elephants in the glade / there was (some) water in the river</i>		
	specific	<i>the/this elephant charged / the/this water was brownish</i>		<i>the/these elephants charged</i>	
(ii) general (class)	as Attribute	non-specific	<i>this is an elephant</i>	<i>these are elephants / this is water</i>	
		specific	--- ---	--- --- --- ---	
	as other than Attribute	non-specific	[1] <i>an elephant lives long</i>	[2] <i>elephants live long / water consists of hydrogen and oxygen</i>	
		specific	[3] <i>the elephant lives long</i>	---	---

Adjectives frequently occurring as post-Deictic ("postdeterminers")

Table 6(7) Adjectives frequently occurring as post-Deictic

type	sub-type		examples
expansion	elaborating	identity	identical, same; different ('non-identical'), other [note a + other, another]; respective
		exemplification	certain, particular, given; various, different ('various'), odd; famous, well-known, infamous, notorious; special
	extending		complete, entire, whole
projection	enhancing	space-time	above, aforementioned, earlier, preceding; subsequent, future
		comparison	similar, different ('non-similar'), comparable
	modality: modalization	probability	certain, possible, probable
		usuality	customary, habitual, normal, ordinary, typical, usual, regular
	modality: modulation	obligation	necessary, required
		readiness	intended, desired
report	locution	alleged, so-called, self-styled	
	idea	hypothetical, purported, expected, evident, obvious	

NB: Now you can easily have up to four different (types of) adjectives in a nominal group, without needing a single comma to separate them!:

the usual two splendid old electric trains

Achtung! *another two splendid old electric trains*
 Achtung! *our own beautiful new home* →
unser schönes neues Eigenheim

Numerals or [embedded] nominal groups functioning as Numerative

Table 6(8) Items (numerals, or [embedded] nominal groups) functioning as Numerative

	definite	indefinite
quantitative	one two three, etc. [a couple of], etc., [a quarter of], etc.	few little [a bit of], etc., several [a number of], etc., many much [a lot of], etc. fewer less more [the same amount of], etc.
ordinative	first second third, etc., next last	preceding subsequent, etc.

Translate into French, Spanish, and German:

1) *the next ten days*

2) *the last ten days*

Verbs as Epithets or as Classifiers (IFG3 p321)

Verb as Epithet

- (i) a galloping horse ('a horse which is galloping')
- a bleeding nose ('a nose which is bleeding')

If however the verb is one which does not normally take the 'present in present' tense *be* . . . *ing* (i.e. a verb expressing a mental or relational process), the distinction between 'which . . . s' and 'which is . . . ing' is neutralized; the next pair of examples are also Epithets:

- the resulting confusion ('the confusion which results')
- a knowing smile ('a smile which [suggests that the smiler] knows')
- (ii) a wrecked car ('a car which has been wrecked')
- a fallen idol ('an idol which has fallen')

Verb as Classifier

- (i) a stopping train ('a train which stops')
- a travelling salesman ('a salesman who travels')
- (ii) a tied note ('a note which is tied')
- spoken language ('language which is spoken')

The Qualifier is usually an embedded higher-rank unit (phrase / clause)

(a)

the	children	[in [blue hats]]
Deictic	Thing	Qualifier
determiner	noun	prepositional phrase

(b)

the	children	[[wearing blue hats]]
Deictic	Thing	Qualifier
determiner	noun	clause, non-finite

(c)

the	children	[[who are wearing blue hats]]
Deictic	Thing	Qualifier
determiner	noun	clause, finite

Fig. 6-3 Nominal group with (a) prepositional phrase, (b) non-finite clause and (c) finite clause as Qualifier

The Qualifier exemplifies the principle of END WEIGHT – if it's long and/or complicated, put it at the end.

6 (a).17

Pre-Modification or “Post-Modification”?

Pre-Modification: fixed, standard classification (dem **WESEN** nach)

Post-Modification: one-off, ad hoc classification (den **ZUSTÄNDEN** nach)

A common problem in an English-language scientific article written by a German-speaker:

[Denglish:] *the used mixtures*: ‘die angewendeten Mischungen’ (‘the mixtures **that were used**; the mixtures **used**’)

[English:] *the used mixtures*: ‘die verbrauchten/aufgebrauchten Mischungen’ (‘the now **useless** mixtures’)

IN GERMAN YOU CAN EMBED A NON-FINITE CLAUSE IN THE PRE-MODIFIER:

1) *die erst kürzlich entdeckte Iriomote-Katze*

2) *die von Forschern erst kürzlich entdeckte Iriomote-Katze*

(i.e. participle *entdeckt* is like verb, and has TRANSITIVITY (valence))

IN ENGLISH:

1) *the only recently discovered Iriomote cat*

(δ): *the* (γ): *[[*(γ): *only* (β): *recently* (α): *discovered]* (β): *Iriomote* (α): *cat*

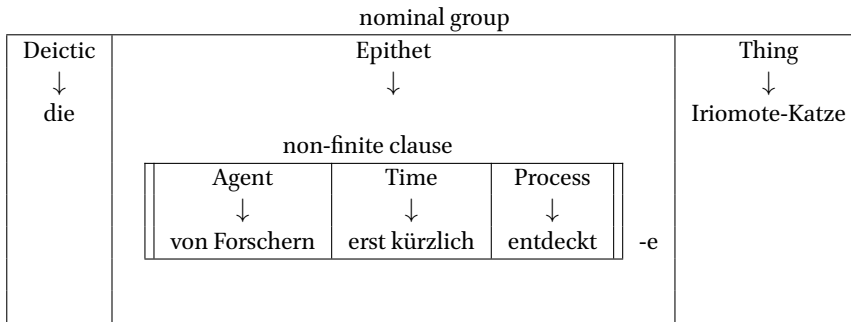
i.e. participle *discovered* is like adjective, can be modified by adverb

The only way to do 2) in English is:

2) *the Iriomote cat [[*(*which was*) *only recently discovered by scientists]*]

6 (a).18

That Iriomote Cat again



6 (a).19

Epithet or Classifier? – order of adjectives in more detail



Matthew Anderson
@MattAndersonBBC

Follow

Things native English speakers know, but don't know we know:

adjectives in English absolutely have to be in this order: opinion-size-age-shape-colour-origin-material-purpose Noun. So you can have a lovely little old rectangular green French silver whittling knife. But if you mess with that word order in the slightest you'll sound like a maniac. It's an odd thing that every English speaker uses that list, but almost none of us could write it out. And as size comes before colour, green great dragons can't exist.

RETWEETS 45,836 LIKES 65,443



2:26 AM - 3 Sep 2016

46K 65K

<http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20160908-the-language-rules-we-know-but-dont-know-we-know>

6 (a).20

The English person categories

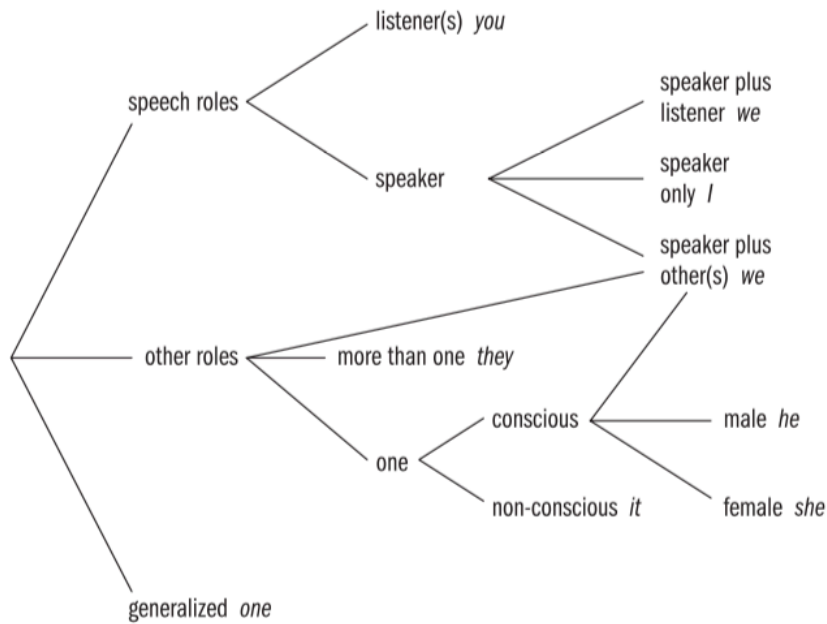


Fig. 6-4 The English person categories

6 (a).21

(Multivariate) experiential structure of the nominal group

those	two	splendid	old	electric	trains	with	pantographs
Deictic	Numerative	Epithet		Classifier	Thing	Qualifier	
		Attitude	Quality				
determiner	numeral	adjective	adjective	adjective	noun	prepositional phrase	
						'Process'	'Range'
						preposition	nominal
						group	group
						Head	Thing

Fig. 6-5 Nominal group, showing multivariate experiential structure

6 (a).22

(Linear) logical structure of nominal group

those	two	splendid	old	electric	trains
Modifier					Head
ζ	ϵ	δ	γ	β	α

Fig. 6-6 Head and Modifier

Until at least as far left as the epsilon element here, you can represent this with Venn diagrams (intersections): 'What kind of trains?' *Electric trains* ('intersection of things that are trains and things that are powered by electricity') 'What kind of electric trains?' *Old electric trains* (etc.)

6 (a).23

Modification and sub-modification (nested bracketting)

a	magnificent	ornamental	eighteenth-century	carved	mohogany	mantelpiece
Modifier						Head
η	ζ	ϵ	δ	γ	β	α

Fig. 6-7 Modification: a further example

a	rather	more	impressive	figure
Modifier				Head
γ	β			α
	Sub-Modifier		Sub-Head	
	$\beta\gamma$	$\beta\beta$	$\beta\alpha$	

Fig. 6-8 Sub-modification

6 (a).24

Other elements besides Thing can be Head

(a) (look at)	those	two	(b) (look at)	those	(c)	which?
	Deictic	Numerative		Deictic		Deictic
	Modifier	Head		Head		Head
	β	α		α		α

Fig. 6-9 Nominal group with (a) Numerative as Head, (b) and (c) Deictic as Head

6 (a).25

Substitute 'one' (substitution = non-zero ellipsis)

(we want)	some	very	small	wooden	ones
	Deictic	Epithet		Classifier	Thing
	δ	γ		β	α
		Sub-Mod.	Sub-Head		
		$\gamma\beta$	$\gamma\alpha$		
	determiner	adverb	adjective	adjective	substitute

Fig. 6-10 Nominal group with substitute one

6 (a).26

Mismatch between experiential and logical structure (1)

a	cup	of	tea
Numerative			Thing
Premodifier	Head	Postmodifier	
β	α		

Fig. 6-11 Internal structure of the measure expression (or other embedded Numerative)

6 (a).27

Mismatch between experiential and logical structure (2)

Table 6-10 Nominal groups with Head dissociated from Thing and conflated with one of the Premodifiers

	Deictic [determiner: non-specific]	Numerative [numeral]	Epithet [noun]	Classifier [noun]
Head /	<i>one/some/all/none of my friends</i>	<i>two/many/ of my friends; the second/last of my friends</i>	<i>my hero/monster of a friend</i>	<i>the concept of friendship, the city of Rome</i>
relationship between Head and Thing	(1) extending		(2) elaborating	

NB:

GB: *too close a friend* → *too close a friend* [[to ever lose]]

US: *too close of a friend* → *too close of a friend* [[to ever lose]]

6 (a).28

Mismatch between experiential and logical structure (3)

Table 6(9) Extended Numeratives

	measure (quantity)	type (quality)
Head > Thing collective	aggregate a pack of cards such a crowd of people	variety a kind of owl my dialect of English
Head < Thing partitive	portion a slice of cake the fragment of a novel	facet the front of the house three sides of a square
Head = Thing quantitative	quantum a cup of coffee some area of land	make-up a drink of water their sense of insecurity

6 (a).29

Mismatch between experiential and logical structure (4)

[there was snow on] the tops of the hills

experiential

Facet			Deictic	Thing
Deictic	Thing			

logical

(Modifier)	Head	Qualifier		
$\beta \leftarrow$	α		(Modifier)	Head
			$\beta \leftarrow$	α

Fig. 6-12 Nominal group with facet expression

6 (a).30

Sources

Most of the material in these slides is from:

M.A.K. HALLIDAY & C.M.I.M. MATTHIESSEN, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. London: Edward Arnold, 2004. ("IFG3").

Two slides are based on the fourth edition ("IFG4").

6 (a).31

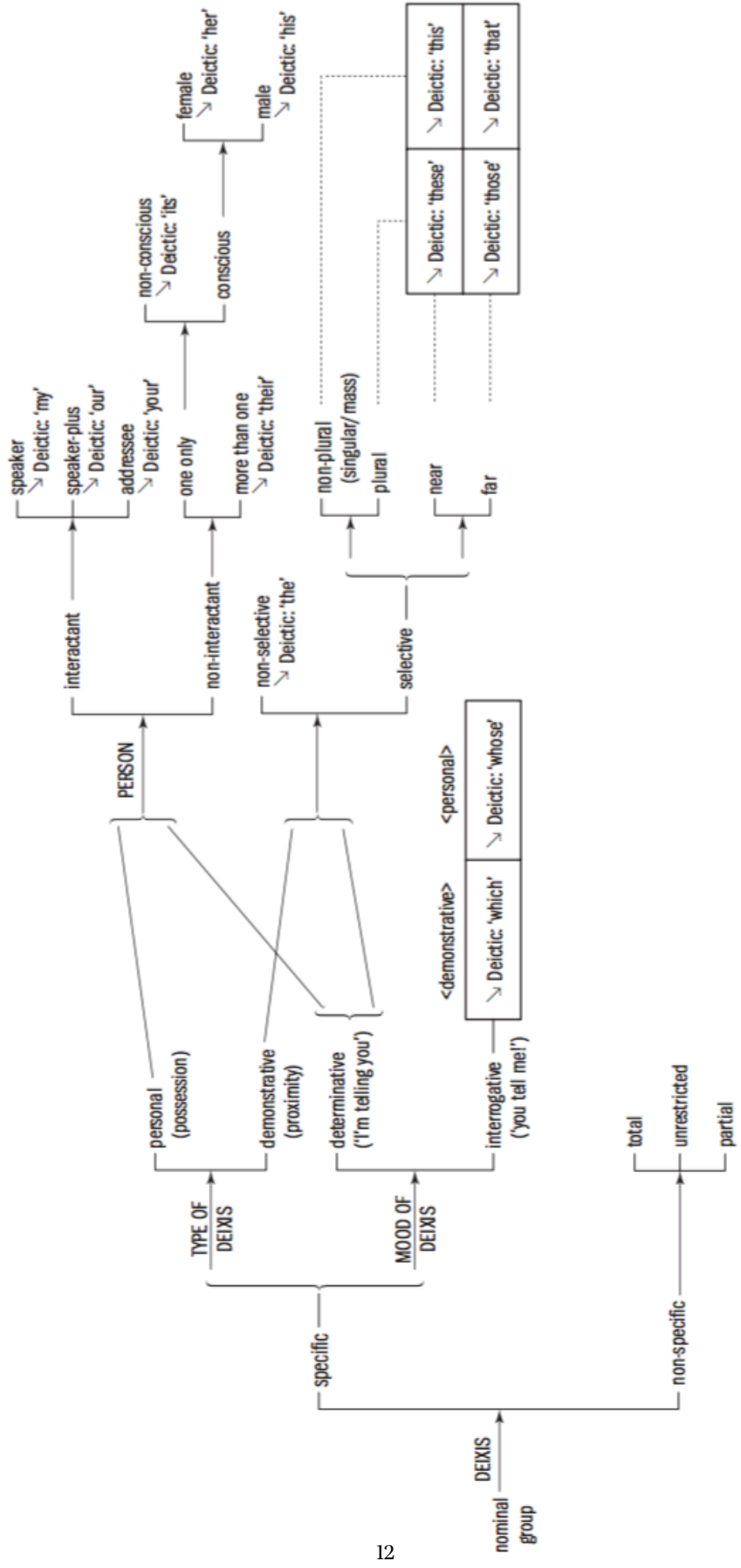


Fig. 6-2 The nominal group system network: DETERMINATION