

The nature of parts of speech

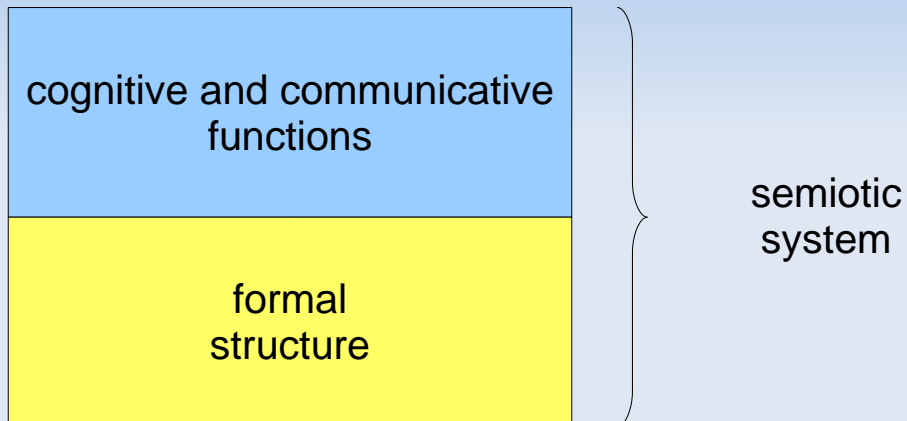
Christian Lehmann

Universität Erfurt

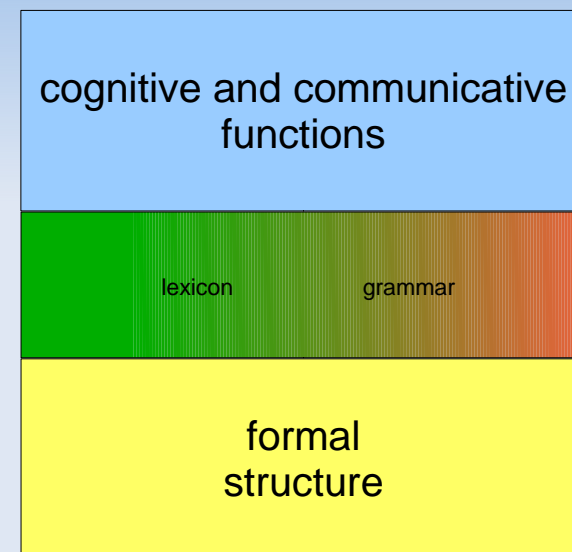
Structure

1. Introduction
2. Parts of speech and the levels of grammatical structure
3. Formal analysis
4. Functional analysis
5. Major and minor parts of speech
6. Parts-of-speech systems
7. Conclusion

1. Introduction: semiotic system

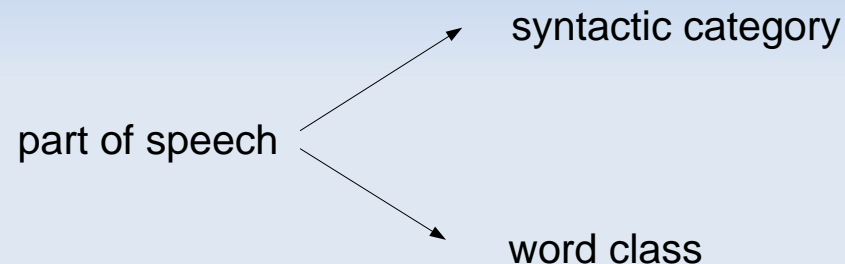


1. Introduction: lexicon and grammar



Signs form part-of-speech categories

- because these are the logical condition for the possibility of rules governing their use;
- because the problems of communication and cognition that they solve have an inherent structure that human beings react to in their categorization.



level	category	nominal	verbal	adverbial
syntactic category		noun phrase	verb phrase	adverbial phrase
word class		proper noun	intransitive verb	adverb

Reciprocal relation:

- The syntagm is an expansion of its head. Since the head is an item of the inventory, its category is given, and an endocentric expansion aims at a syntagm that conserves the head's combinatory potential.
- The head is a condensation of the syntagm. The category of the syntagm is determined by syntactic principles. If the syntagm reduces to a stem, the latter inherits the syntactic category, so that it becomes a lexeme category.

Relationship is not symmetric:

- Word classes exist and are such as they are because they come about through lexicalization of syntactic constructions and word-formations.
- Syntactic categories have a functional motivation. Propositional operations such as reference, predication and modification are situated at the level of the sentence.

- E1 a. lebu qel=ki
 KHARIA man come=MED.PAST
 'the/a man came'
- b. bhagwan lebu= ki ro qel=ki
 god man=MED.PAST and come=MED.PAST
 'god became man and came [to earth]'
- E2 a. a ?ghrom
 KHARIA 'Aghrom' [a town]
- b. a ?ghrom=ki
 Aghrom=MED.PAST
 'became / came to be called "Aghrom"'
- c. a ?ghrom=o?
 Aghrom=ACT.PAST
 'he/she made/named it "Aghrom"'
- E3 a. am i karay= o?b ?
 KHARIA 2SG what do=ACT.PAST.2SG
 'what did you do?'
- b. am i= yo?b ?
 2SG what=ACT.PAST.2SG
 'what did you do?'

- E1 a. Así formamos lo que es el barro.
 SPAN 'Thus we form what is the clay.' (utterance recorded in Guaitil, Costa Rica, 24/02/2010)
- b. Así formamos el barro.
 'Thus we form the clay.'
- E2 a. Lo que pasa es que la otra habitación está ocupada.
 SPAN 'What is happening is that the other room is occupied.'
 (utterance recorded in Heredia, Costa Rica, 08/02/2010)
- b. La otra habitación está ocupada.
 'The other room is occupied.'

The principal *raison d'être* of parts of speech is to combine with each other in the formation of sentences.

Thus, the question of a semantic contrast among them does not even arise in most cases.

T2. Dependency relations and word classes

category	syntagmatic relation	instantiations
[X Y] _X	Y modifies X	X = noun, Y = adjective X = verb, Y = adverb
[X Y] _{X'}	X governs Y	X = verb, Y = noun

(X' is a category differing from X in its distribution only by not combining with Y.)

Communicative functions

- E6 a. Gosh!
b. whoosh

- The **interjection** involves a proposition about the speaker as he is in the current speech situation.
- The **ideophone** involves a proposition on any other referent, including somebody else in the speech situation or any referent, including the speaker, in a different situation.

→ holophrastic words

Communicative functions

level	manifestations
semantics	reference vs. predication
information structure	topic vs. comment
syntax	subject vs. predicate
	nominal group vs. verbal group
lexicon	noun vs. verb

Communicative functions

Modification

- E7 a. Linda works heavily
b. Linda's heavy work

Communicative functions – System-internal functions

Governing relationality

T3. Subclassification according to governing relationality

verb	intransitive verb	=	transitive verb	} complement
adverb	adverb	=	adposition	
adjective	absolute adjective	=	relational adjective	

Cognitive functions

meaning of word = concept ?

word classes ≈ concept classes ?

- E8 a. He moved astonishingly fast.
- b. He astonished us by the rapidity of his movements.

Parts of speech are syntactic categories in the first place.

Exception: numerals

Cognitive functions

Time stability and relationality

- The most time-stable concepts are those of the lowest degree of relationality, thus representations of objects (in the widest sense of the word).
- The least time-stable concepts are those of the highest degree of relationality, thus representations of events.
- Concepts of an intermediate degree of relationality also display an intermediate degree of time-stability; they represent properties.

T4. Functional bases of major parts of speech

propositional function	reference	modification	predication
relationality	minimal ←	→ maximal	
type of concept	object	property	event
time stability	maximal ←	→ minimal	
syntactic category	nominal	adjectival	verbal
word class	noun	adjective	verb

Categorial meaning

- E9. a. vous êtes impertinent
 'you are impertinent'
 FRENCH b. vous êtes un impertinent
 'you are an impertinent guy'

- E10. a. c'est rose
 'it's pink'
 FRENCH b. c'est une rose
 'it's a rose'

E11. Having been a Conservative Liberal in politics till well past sixty, it was not until Disraeli's time that he became a Liberal Conservative. (Jespersen 1924:78)

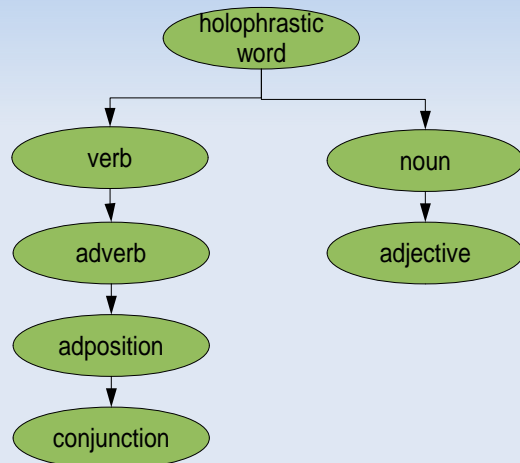
Categorial meaning

T5. Verb and adjective in Latin

verb		adjective	
form	meaning	form	meaning
umere	be wet	umidus	wet
valere	be strong	validus	strong
livere	be blue	lividus	blue
frigere	be cold	frigidus	cold

- E12 a. braccia livent
 'the arms are blue'
 LATIN b. braccia livida sunt
 'the arms are blue'

T6. Development of part-of-speech systems, part I



T9. Major and minor parts of speech (Lyons 1968)

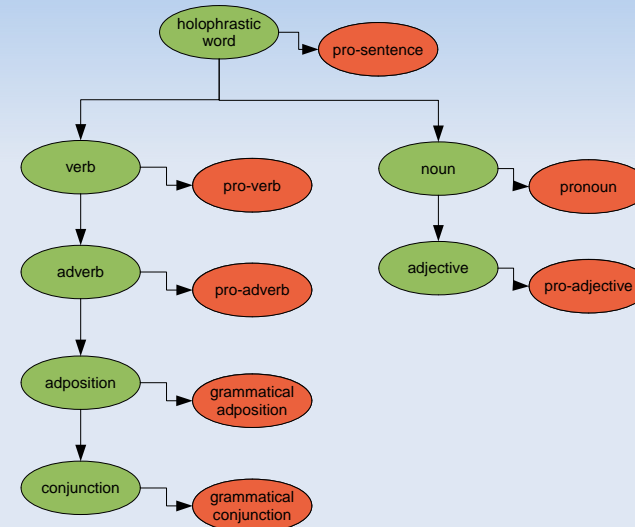
major class = lexical class = open class
 minor class = grammatical class = closed class

A **major class** is one that may be enriched by word-formation; a **minor class** is one that cannot.

T10. Lexical and grammatical subclasses of English word classes

category	lexical example	grammatical category	example
noun	<i>person</i>	pronoun	<i>one</i>
adjective	<i>red</i>	pro-adjective	<i>such</i>
verb	<i>exist</i>	auxiliary	<i>be</i>
adverb	<i>behind</i>	pro-adverb	<i>there</i>
preposition	<i>notwithstanding</i>	grammatical preposition	<i>of</i>
conjunction	<i>supposing (that)</i>	grammatical conjunction	<i>that</i>
interjection	<i>gosh!</i>	grammatical interjection	<i>yes</i>

T7. Development of part-of-speech systems, part II



- Apart from other operations of enrichment of the lexicon, the major classes are fed by lexicalization of syntactic constructions,
- the minor classes are fed by grammaticalization of members of the major classes.

					demonstrative	there
					link finite	somewhere
					interrogative	where
		ad-adjectival		incredibly		that
		ad-sentential		unfortunately		thus
			coordinative conjunction	nonetheless		and, either - or
		governing	adposition	in the face of		of
			subordinative conjunction	provided		that
			governing a class			
nominal	substantival	proper noun		Linda	pronoun	
					personal	she
					demonstrative	this
					link finite	someone
					interrogative	who
		common noun		girl		one
			governing	shoulder		sake
	adjectival	adjective		old	pro-adjective	
					demonstrative	such, the
					interrogative	which
			governing	devoid		.
	numeral	substantival		thousand		all
		adjectival		three		some, any, a
verb				live, make	pro-verb	be, do
				turn	copula	be
					auxiliary	be
				write		have
			bivalent verb	write		have

1. Word classes are not universal; the principles underlying their development are universal.
2. Word classes are significant categories and therefore have both a formal and a functional motivation.
3. The functional motivation concerns more the communicative than the cognitive functions of language.
4. It applies more to the syntactic categories than the word classes.

5. It applies more to the primary than to the secondary word classes.
6. Both secondary word classes and minor classes have a system-internal motivation.
7. Therefore, the nature of parts of speech is not uniform.