

Some Adjectives Are Nouns, Some Nouns Are Adjectives

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This presentation discusses two types of adnominal adjectives; one type is attributive nouns that have the adjectival morphology, and the other type is attributive adjectives that seem to be morphologically nouns.

First, I propose that relational adjectives, such as *Japanese* and *wooden*, are formally nouns on the basis of the fact that relational adjectives are realized as nouns in Japanese. There are two types of adjectives in Japanese; inflectional and nominal adjectives. Nominal adjectives can be further divided into three types; one type ends with the linking morpheme *no*, another with the morpheme *na*, and the other with both *na* and *no*. It has been suggested that prenominal modifiers that combine only with the morpheme *no* are not adjectives but nouns (Nishio 1994, Uehara 1998, Backhouse 2004). I demonstrate that relational adjectives are always realized as the modifiers with *no*.

In some languages such as English and Spanish, however, relational adjectives exhibit the adjectival morphology, although they behave semantically like nouns (Levi 1978, Fábregas 2009). I propose that relational adjectives are not only semantically but also morphologically nouns even in these languages. Within the framework of Distributed Morphology (Marantz 1997, 2001), the lexical category of a root is determined by combining a category-neutral root with the functional heads *n*, *v*, or *a* to form a noun, verb or adjective, respectively. I claim that relational adjectives are not derived by combination of the root with the *a* head; they are derived by combining an *nP* with the functional head Attr(ributive), which makes it possible for a noun to be an attributive modifier. I propose that the overt realization of the Attr head is the same as adjectival suffixes in these languages. I further propose that it is the Attr head that exhibits the same agreement morphology as adjectives; it has phi-features to agree in number and gender with the modified noun. It is not surprising that a linking element exhibit agreement with the modified noun. In some languages such as Modern Persian, Kurdish and Zazaki, a nominal modifier requires a linking element, referred to as *Ezafe*. Larson and Yamakido (2008) demonstrate that the *Ezafe* element in Zazaki inflects according to the number and the gender of the modified noun. I suppose that the *Ezafe* is also the realization of the Attr head.

Second, I claim that gradable adjectives are formally adjectives even if they are morphologically realized as nouns. In English, some “nouns” can function as attributive modifiers without a linking element: *a dress (of) that size / that color / that length / that price*. The nouns such as *material*, *design* and *origin*, on the other hand, cannot be attributive modifiers (Partee 1987). These observations suggest that only the nouns related to gradable adjectives have the attributive use. I propose that attributive nouns that are related to gradable adjectives are not nouns but adjectives. This proposal is based on Watanabe’s (to appear) claim that some adjectives in Japanese look like the nominalization of adjectives with the suffix *-sa*. He proposes that attachment of *-sa* is not the nominalization of adjectives, but a result of agreement with the Dim head, which encodes information about dimension of measurement; *sa*-attachment takes place when AP moves to Spec of DimP. Following Watanabe, I propose that attributive modifiers such as *size*, *color*, *length*, *price*, *age* and *weight* in English are syntactically adjectives; they are overtly “nominalized” by agreement with the Dim head. Recall that nouns such as *material*, *design* and *origin* cannot have the attributive use. Notice that these nouns are related to relational “adjectives.” I suppose that the inability of the nouns related to relational adjectives to modify nouns without a linking element is due to the fact that relational adjectives are nouns and thus their internal structure does not include DimP.

Last, I demonstrate that relational “adjectives” (i.e., nongradable attributive nouns) and attributive “nouns” (i.e., gradable adjectives) have different syntactic positions. Cinque (2010) claims that adjectives enter the structure of DPs in two different ways; one is a direct adnominal modification source, and the other is a (reduced) relative clause source. He claims that the Merge position of APs with direct modification is below the Merge position of (reduced) relative clauses. I propose that there are two distinct positions for adjectives with direct adnominal modification; one position is for attributive nouns, and the other for gradable adjectives. I suppose that the position for

gradable adjectives is higher than the one for attributive nouns, based on the fact that only gradable adjectives are ambiguous in direct and indirect modification; gradable adjectives can merge either to the position of direct modification APs or to the position of (reduced) relative clauses. This claim is also supported by the observation that attributive “nominal” modifiers such as *size*, *color* and *length* can also appear preminally (Wilkinson 1995).

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