

SEMINAR 2 B – DETERMINERS – INTRODUCTION (SGEL 5.3 – 5.10)

- **3 basic kinds of determiners: predeterminers (e.g. all, both, half)– central det. (e.g. the, a, zero article) – postdeterminers (e.g. many, few, little)**

- Nouns appear in **noun phrases** and the **kind of reference depends on the accompanying determiners** – they affect the meaning of the noun, i.e. make it clear which particular thing(s) we are referring to or how much of a substance we're talking about.

e.g. Have you seen *a* bicycle? – indefinite reference
 Have you seen *the* bicycle? – definite reference

- We distinguish **3 main classes of determiners** – depending on **their position in the noun phrase in relation to each other:**

- 1) predeterminers: e.g. *half, double, all* (as in *all the people*)
- 2) central determiners: e.g. *the, a, this*
- 3) postdeterminers: cardinal (e.g. *seven*) and ordinal (e.g. *first*) numerals, *few, many* (as in *the many passengers*)

- If there are **more determiners** in one noun phrase – the order is 1) 2) 3) e.g. *all the five boys, all their trouble, all these last few days*

- Some determiners help us to **classify or identify**, e.g. articles, demonstratives, possessives and some help to indicate **quantity**, e.g. numerals, quantifiers (*many, much*)

I. CENTRAL DETERMINERS

1) the, a, zero

- the definite and indefinite article are the most common determiners
- relating definiteness to number we have the following system for C and U common nouns

		countable	uncountable
singular	definite	the book	the music
	indefinite	a book	music (<i>zero art.</i>)
plural	definite	the books	/
	indefinite	books (<i>zero art.</i>)	/

- **singular countable nouns must normally have a determiner in front of them** (except e.g. ‘parallel constructions’ such as *Man or boy, I don’t like him.* Or ‘vocatives’ such as *Look here, man.*)
 - **coordinated noun phrase heads can share a determiner placed before the first head**, e.g. *the boys and (the) girls; a knife, (a) fork and (a) spoon*
 - the indefinite article *a/an* can be regarded as an unstressed numeral ‘one’:
e.g. *a pound or two = one or two pounds*
 - the pronunciation, not the spelling determines the form of the indefinite article *a / an* →
a bird – an owl / an hour, a UNESCO official, an MP, an RP accent, a European car
 - *the* → the same spelling, but two pronunciations - /ə/ or /i/
- !! when **the articles are stressed** for any reason (e.g. in slow speech and esp. in AmE), they are pronounced /ði/, /ei/ or /æn/ - **regardless of the 1st sound of the noun**
e.g. *He would be **the** /ði/ man for the job.*
- the indefinite article may mean ‘certain’, ‘a person giving his name as’, e.g. in *A Mr. Johnson came to see you last night.*

2) Other central determiners

- are **mutually exclusive**, i.e. there cannot be more than one occurring before the noun head, e.g. *a ~~the~~ boy, a ~~some~~ boy* but *all the many white houses*

a) demonstratives

- *this, that* – with singular C or U nouns – *this picture, that music*
- *these, those* – with plural C nouns – *these desks, those tables*

compare: What’s *that* thing over there? (a determiner)
That’s our computer. (a pronoun)

b) possessives – *my, our, your, his, her, its, their*

c) wh-determiners – *which, whose, whichever, whatever, whomever* as relatives, indefinite relatives or interrogatives

e.g. Please come at noon, by *which* time I shall be back in my office.
The woman *whose* book you reviewed is on TV tonight.
They will disapprove of *whatever* music is played.
Which house do you prefer? / *What* time is it?

d) **negative determiner *no***

e.g. He has *no* car / *no* children.

Some determiners co-occur only with **sg C nouns**:

a) universal determiners '**every**' and '**each**'

e.g. *Each student is* required to write two essays.

b) non-assertive dual det. '**either**'

e.g. There is no parking permitted on *either side* of the street.

You can park on *either side*.

c) negative dual det. '**neither**'

e.g. Parking is permitted on *neither* side of the street.

Can I come on Monday or Tuesday? – I'm afraid, *neither day is* possible.

Careful about '**neither of...**' – *Neither of my sisters is /are* married. (the *sg* is *fml*)

Some determiners co-occur only with **U and plural C nouns**:

a) general assertive det. *some*

e.g. I'd like *some bread / rolls*.

We haven't *any bookshops* here. (in the *sg*. We haven't *a bookshop* here.)

But: 1) '*some*' meaning '*a certain*' can also co-occur with *sg C nouns*, e.g. in:

Some old person asked for you on the phone.

2) stressed *some* + *sg C* (especially temporal), e.g. in: *Some day* he will get his scholarship.

b) general non-assertive det. *any*

e.g. We haven't *any bread / rolls* left.

c) quantitative *enough*

e.g. We have *enough* equipment / tools for the job.

Note: When stressed in some circumstances, *any* can occur with *sg. C nouns*, as in:

e.g. She will consider *any* offer – however small.

II. PREDETERMINERS

- precede those determiners with which they can co-occur
- are mutually exclusive (e.g. all ~~both~~ girls)
- have to do with quantification

We can distinguish the following sets:

- a) *all, both, half*
- b) the multipliers (*double, twice, three times*)
- c) fractions (*one third, one fifth*)
- d) *such, what* (as in *Such a surprise.* or *What a fine day.*)

Note the exception to the rule: ‘*such*’ and ‘*what*’ refer rather to quality than quantity, it’s possible to combine, e.g. *all such problems*

Predeterminers in detail

a) **All, both, half**

- can occur before the articles (*all the time, half a day*), demonstratives (*all this time*) and possessives (*all my time*)
- as they are themselves quantifiers, they **do not occur with quantitative determiners**: *every, each, (n)either, some, any, no, enough*
- they can be used pronominally – as independent pronouns (on their own)
e.g. All / Both the students sat for their exam *all / both* passed.
- can be followed by ‘*an of-phrase*’ which is optional with nouns but obligatory with pronouns!!

e.g. *All / Both / Half (of) the students passed the test.*
All of them / Both of them / Half of them failed.

+

all – occurs with pl. C nouns and U nouns

e.g. *all the books / all books; all the music / all music*

both – occurs only with pl. C nouns

e.g. *both the books / both books*

(*both*, and also *either* and *neither* are **dual** – i.e. they can refer to only **two entities**)

half – occurs with sg. and pl. C nouns and U nouns

e.g. *half the book(s) / half a book; half the music* but not ~~*half music*~~

- *half an hour* = *a half hour* (little difference in meaning)

but: *half a bottle of wine* (= half of the contents)

a half bottle of wine (= a small bottle holding half the contents of an ordinary bottle)

! **all** and **both**, but **not half** – can appear after the operator:

e.g. The students were *all / both* sitting for the exam.

Note: ‘Half’ and articles

Normally we do not put ‘a’ or ‘the’ before ‘half’ (but there are exceptions)

e.g. He spends *half (of)* his time playing football.

Half (of) my students don’t understand this.

He works *half a mile* from the village.

How much is *half a loaf* of bread?

I’ve bought some chocolate. You can have *half*.

But: Would you like *the big half* or *the small half*? (=a particular half)

Could I have *half a pound / a half pound* of oranges? (with measurement)

I’ve been waiting for *an hour and a half / one and a half hours*.

All v. whole

- all + noun with no article usually has generic reference

e.g. *All men* are created equal. but *All the men* in the mine wore helmets. (=specific)

but not always! : I will see *all students* at 11 a.m. (this can’t be generic ref.)

- *all (the) day / morning / week* = *the whole day / morning / week*

But: 1) in the negative- I haven’t seen him *all day*. (= zero article)

2) with the indef. article only ‘whole’ can be used – I spent *a whole morning* studying.
(not ‘~~an~~ *all morning*’)

- with abstract nouns *the whole* is often preferable to *all the*

e.g. *the whole truth / distance*

- with proper nouns without the definite article

e.g. *all (of) Finland / London* but *the whole of Finland / London*

b) Multipliers

- 1) multipliers + def. article (*double the amount*), demonstrative (*three times this amount*) or possessive (*twice her age*) – the multiplier applies to the noun so determined (**quantity**)

e.g. *twice / double the length* (= a length twice as great)
three times her salary (= a salary three times as large)

- 2) multiplier + indef. art., each, every – the multiplier applies to a measure (**frequency**)

e.g. *once a day*
four times every year
three times each year

also with every: We stopped *once every mile*.
once every three months
twice every hundred miles

c) Fractions (other than half)

- are usually followed by an *of-phrase* and are normally preceded by a numeral or the indefinite article

e.g. She read *half the book*. / She read *a quarter of the book*.
She read *two quarters of the book*.

He did the work in *one / a third (of) the time* it took me.

III. POSTDETERMINERS

- are used immediately after central determiners, if such determiners are present
e.g. The *two* young women were successful.

We distinguish the following classes:

- a) cardinal numerals– e.g. my *three* children, the *two* books
- b) ordinals –ordinal numerals e.g. *first, fourth*; and the so-called **general ordinals**: *last, other, another, additional*
- c) quantifiers – e.g. *many, few, plenty of, little, a lot of*

Where they co-occur, **items from b) usually precede items from c)** – e.g. *last few days, my last few possessions*

When there are more numerals in a noun phrase – **ordinals precede cardinals!** – e.g. *first three days, the first two poems, another three weeks*

Quantifiers

- (*a*) *few, many, several* + pl. C nouns
- (*a*) *little, much* + U nouns
- comparatives – *fewer / the fewest*; + *less / the least*

Note: In an *informal* style ‘less’ is often used instead of ‘fewer’ with C nouns
eg. I make *less mistakes* now than I used to make. Some people consider this incorrect.

few v. little

- with *a* they have a positive meaning – e.g. I play *a few* games. (=several)
She ate *a little* bread (=some)
- without *a* they have a negative meaning – e.g. I play *few* games. (=hardly any)
She ate *little* bread. (*hardly any*)

Note: ‘*quite a few*’ is similar in meaning to ‘rather a lot’
e.g. He speaks *quite a few* languages.

Other quantifiers

- *plenty of, a lot of, lots of* + **C or U nouns** – *a lot of friends / time*
- *a great deal of, a large quantity of, a small amount of* + **U nouns** – *a great deal of time*
not: *a great deal of students*
- *a great / large number of* + **C nouns** – *a large number of students*

Assertive v. non-assertive

- some items are predominantly assertive – *plenty of, a few, a little*
- some items are predominantly non-assertive – *much, many*