

Noun or quantifier?

Examining the semi-lexicity of Polish and English quantificational expressions

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Languages use many expressions to indicate quantity in the nominal domain. Numerals and quantifiers fall among the more well-known and well-studied quantificational expressions, but languages are also capable of using seemingly non-quantificational elements in a quantificational way, e.g. *a wealth of examples*. In studying the morphosyntax of quantificational elements, a question that repeatedly arises is the nature of their category. Slavic numerals, for instance, are notorious for their simultaneously noun-like and adjective-like nature (Corbett, 1978, a.m.o.). English numerals are no exception either, as can be seen in the need of the higher numerals to co-occur with an indefinite article (*a hundred, a thousand*), a noun-like property. Quantifiers like *a lot, a ton, and a bunch* seem even more noun-like, in requiring the element *of* to mediate between the quantifier and quantified noun (*a lot of people*). These examples highlight the similarity that quantificational elements can have to lexical categories, and with it, the problem of their category. What category do these elements have, and how and why do they show such similarities to lexical categories?

In this talk, I focus on two case studies: Polish simplex numerals and English noun-like quantifiers (*a lot, a ton, a bunch*). What these elements have in common is that (a) they show a surface similarity to lexical categories like noun and adjective, and (b) they do not form a coherent class morphosyntactically. Polish numerals, for example, form four classes, according to their morphosyntactic properties: numeral 1, numerals 2-4, numerals 5-10 and 100 and numerals 1000 and higher. Likewise, the English noun-like quantifiers show subtle differences in distribution. In this talk, I discuss the morphosyntactic and distributional properties of Polish numerals and English noun-like quantifiers, illustrating their similarities to, and differences from, lexical categories. I adopt an exoskeletal approach to categories (Borer 2005; de Belder 2011), and classify these elements as semi-lexical, i.e. both lexical and functional (Corver and van Riemsdijk 2001; Klockmann 2017). I present a theory of semi-lexicity and show how their semi-lexicity can account for their mixed behavior; in doing so, I am able to provide the beginning of answer to the larger question of why quantifiers might resemble lexical categories.