

Nominal Inflection

14th lecture

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There remain three useful tests for number in the noun

1. A noun is singular if it can take one of these substitutes: he/him, she/her, it, this, or that. It is plural if it can take as a substitute they/them, these, or those.

Examples:

- The beach was covered with white **sand**. (= it)
- Have you studied **phonetics** ? (= it)
- Where did you hang my **trousers** ? (= them)

There remain three useful tests for number in the noun

2. The number of a noun may be signaled by a modifier such as several, many, this, that, these, those, fifteen, or by a pronoun reference such as his/her/its, their. Examples:

- We saw many **fish** swimming under the bridge.
- In returning to the fold, the **sheep** changed its direction.
- In returning to the fold the **sheep** changed their direction.

There remain three useful tests for number in the noun

3. When a noun functions as subject of a verb, its number is sometimes shown by the form of the verb. It is the singular noun that goes with the {-s 3d} form of the verb, as in:

- Measles is a contagious disease.
- The fish swims in the pond.

Contrast these with

The goods are on the way.

The fish swim in the pond.

Exercise

In the blanks of the first column provide it, they, or them as the appropriate pronoun substitute for the underlined word

1. Miss Shen is wearing panty hose today. -----

2. What did they do with the molasses? -----

3. The summons came in the mail -----

4. Why doesn't she call the police ? -----

5. Jack likes to fish for pike. -----

10. Does your brother eat soap? -----

Collective nouns

Some nouns, known as collective nouns, may be either singular or plural in meaning when they are singular in form. These are nouns that represent a collection or unit of individuals, such as:

tribe, family, team, committee, faculty, choir

Collective nouns

Speakers are likely to use singular forms (verbs, pronouns, determiners) in connection with such nouns when thinking of the unit as a single whole, but they will use plural forms when intending the separate individuals within the unit. Examples:




- **Singular**: The **family** (= it, the unit) is sitting at the dinner table.
- **Plural**: The **family** (= they, the individuals) have gathered from many parts of the country.

Indicate in the blanks by Sg or Pl whether the collective nouns are singular or plural.

1. The **band** is playing well today.
2. The **band** are playing well today.
3. The **choir** became dissatisfied with their robes.
4. The **choir** became dissatisfied with its singing.
5. The **staff** of the college paper was a high-quality group.
6. The **staff** of the college paper were assembled

Noun Possessive

A possessive noun is a person, place, or thing that shows ownership . They show ownership with an apostrophe '. Examples:

- **The baseball mitt of Johnny**  **Johnny's mitt**
- **The Gorilla of the Zoo**  **The zoo's gorilla**
- **Those socks of the sheep**  **The sheep's socks**

Three Rules of Noun Possessive

1. Add 's to the singular form of a word (even if it ends in –s):

the subject's response

Carlos's left arm

2. Add 's to plural forms of words that do not end in –s:

the children's toys

the People's cars

3. Add only ' to the end of plural nouns that end in –s:

boys + ' = boys' books

members + ' = members' report

Special Cases of Noun Possessive

1. If two or more people share ownership, only the last owner has an apostrophe +s.

Bob and Nancy's house.

2. If the two nouns possess separate things, then they each take an apostrophe +s:

We'll go in Sam's and Matt's cars to the movies.

3. In hyphenated words, only the last word takes an apostrophe +s:

My sister-in-law's dress is still in my closet.

4. With indefinite pronouns (everyone, anyone, everybody, one etc.) add 's.

- This is nobody's business but mine.

Exercise

- I want to pet the head of the dog. -----
- That is the hat of Jones. -----
- I need to go to the market of the town to buy milk. -----
- Did you not wash the car of Bill? -----
- We should not take the car of my father to the beach. -----

The semantic relationships between the possessive noun and the one that follows

There is semantic relationships can exist between the possessive noun and the one that follows:

1. **Possession or belongingness** --- John's hat
2. **Characterization or description**... a cowboy's walk
3. **Origin**.... Cary's novels
4. **Measure** (time, value, space) an hour's wait
5. **Subject of act**John's flight (John flew)
6. **Object of act** ... Eliot's critics were many.(They criticized Eliot.)

Indicate the relation shown between the possessive and its following noun

1. We missed the other car by a hair's breadth.
2. A wren's song floated through the window.
3. They were playing children's games.
4. The police provided for Richard's protection.
5. The boy's jump saved his life.

The Ambiguity in A noun possessive

A noun possessive is ambiguous when it expresses more than one of the above relationships at the same time. For example, **“His son’s loss grieved him”** has two possible meanings:

(1) He lost his son (object of underlying verb), and this grieved him.

Or

(2) His son (subject of underlying verb) lost something, perhaps a family heirloom, and this grieved him.

Indicate the relationships expressed by each ambiguous possessive

- 1- Dr. McCoy's examination was a long one. -----
- 2- That is my father's photograph. -----
- 3- He was carrying a woman's coat on his arm. -----
- 4- We bought one of Rutherford's paintings. -----
- 5- The case was about his wife's fatal shooting. -----

Animate Nouns versus Inanimate Nouns

In making a choice between the inflected possessive (student's) and the of structure (of the student), there is no hard-and-fast guideline, and often the form chosen depends on personal taste.

The tendency, however, is to use the inflected form with animate nouns and the of structure with inanimate nouns; thus:

- **the dog's leg**
- **the leg of the table**

Grammatical Person

1st, 2nd and 3rd Person

Grammatical person

Grammatical person shows the relationship between the speaker and other participants in an event.

More specifically, it is a reference to a participant in an event, such as the speaker, the addressee (recipient of the speaker's communication), or others.

Grammatical person usually defines the set of personal pronouns used by the speaker. It also frequently affects verbs, sometimes nouns, and possessive relationships as well.

There are three grammatical persons in English:

1) First person.. This is I when used to talk about yourself. I is always singular. This is we when used to talk about a group in which I is a member. We is plural.

2) Second person.. This is you. Second person is used when referring to the addressee. The addressee may be singular or plural, depending on how many individuals are being addressed.

3) Third person.. This is he, she, it, and they. Third person is used when referring to any person, place, or thing other than the speaker and the addressee.

The grammatical person of pronouns

- Here is a table outlining personal pronouns and their grammatical persons:

<u>Pronoun</u>	<u>Person</u>	<u>Plurality</u>	<u>Gender</u>
I	first person	singular	-
You	second person	singular / plural	-
He	third person	singular	masculine / neutral
She	third person	singular	feminine
It	third person	singular	neutral
We	first person	plural	-
They	third person	plural / singular	-
You all / you guys / y' all (<i>slang</i>)	second person	plural	-

**Write the grammatical person of the pronoun used
in each sentence in the space to the right**

1) I want to go shopping. _____

2) They were very tired. _____

3) We did not go to the park. _____

4) You can use my calculator. _____

5) Jane watched a movie last night. _____

Gender

In English gender is not a feature of nouns themselves, it rather relates directly to the meanings of nouns with particular reference to biological sex.

So a grammatical category of the noun, which reflects the biological category of sex of the noun referent.

The gender derivational suffixes

English has a small group of nouns with feminine derivational suffixes.

All but one of these feminizing suffixes (ster) are of foreign origin. They have been added to a masculine form or to a base morpheme.

Here is a list of most of them:

<i>Suffix</i>	<i>Masculine</i>	<i>Feminine</i>
1. -e	fiancé	fiancée
2. -enne	comedian	comédienne
3. -ess	patron	patroness
4. -etta	Henry	Henrietta
5. -ette	farmer	farmerette ⁴
6. -euse	masseur	masseuse
7. -ina	George	Georgina
8. -ine	hero	heroine
9. -ster	spinner	spinster
10. -stress	seamster	seamstress (= -ster + -ess)
11. -ix	aviator	aviatrix ⁵

Gender

According to their lexical semantics, nouns can be divided into **neuter, masculine and feminine**.

- 1. Neuter nouns** denote **lower animals, objects** or **abstract notions**. **Neuter nouns** can be substituted with the personal pronoun **it** and the relative pronoun **which**.
- 2. Masculine nouns** can be substituted with the personal pronoun **he** and the relative pronoun **who**.
- 3. Feminine nouns** can be substituted with the personal pronoun **she** and the relative pronoun **who**.

Gender

3. Some male / female pairs denoting family relationship have dual gender terms:

parent – father, mother sibling – brother, sister

In order to avoid sexual bias in language, there have been attempts (esp. in AmE) to introduce sex-neutral forms:

- s / he for both he and she
- wo / man for both man and woman

Write the feminine form of these words:

- Paul
- Carol
- chanteur
- emperor
- launderer
- czar
- songster
- proprietor
- major
- waiter
- heir
- tragedian

There is a rather complex pattern of gender classes in English

