5 Study Guide

Word Classes: Evidence from Grammatical Behavior

Terminology

You should be able to simply define or explain the following terms and concepts.

Adjective	Numeral
Adposition (postposition/preposition)	Open versus closed class
Adverb	Paradigm
Agreement	Particle
Article (definite/indefinite)	Person
Copula	Pronoun
Demonstrative (proximal/distal)	(demonstrative/interrogative/personal)
Head/Dependent	Quantifier
Lexical versus grammatical class	Verb
Noun	Word

Important Points and Concepts

- In each language, words can be categorized into distinct classes.
- Word classes are determined by their morphological and syntactic behavior, not by their meanings.
- Languages differ in their inventory of word classes, the size of word classes, and in the criteria that differentiate particular classes (for examples, nouns may be identified by one set of criteria in language X and by a different set in language Y).
- Lexical word classes signal a vast array of meanings and can be open; grammatical word classes are more limited in the range of meanings they express and are always closed.

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Skills
On completion of this chapter, you should be able to perform the following tasks:

- Identify the word class of every word in an English sentence
- Identify the most common morphosyntactic properties that differentiate word classes in the world's languages (see Table 5.4)
- Conduct basic syntactic analysis on a linguistic data set and determine the class of each word on the basis of morphological and syntactic criteria
- Given a data set, provide clear argumentation that a particular set of words constitutes a word class in the language illustrated; be able to describe that class in terms of open/closed and lexical/grammatical

Study Questions
- Why should lexical categories be determined on the basis of morphosyntactic evidence rather than semantics? Provide at least three reasons.
- What is the difference between lexical and grammatical word classes? Frame your response by referring to one lexical word class and one grammatical word class in English.
- Are words that translate into adjectives in English, such as red or old, necessarily adjectives in other languages? How would you decide?