

# Understanding English Grammar: A Linguistic Introduction

## *Additional Exercises for Chapter 5: Participant reference*

### 1. English and Swahili Noun Phrases

Consider the following noun phrases in English and Swahili, the major Bantu language of East Africa. Based on these data:

A. Fill in the blanks with the probable Swahili translations.

B. Describe the order of elements in Swahili noun phrases, and compare this to the order of elements in English noun phrases.

English (singular)	Swahili (singular)	English (plural)	Swahili (Plural)
my tree	mti wangu	my trees	miti yangu
this tree	mti huu	these trees	miti hii
new tree	mti mpya	new trees	miti mipya
one tree	mti mmoja	three trees	miti mitatu
my new tree	mti wangu mpya	my new trees	_____
my one tree	mti mmoja wangu	my three trees	miti mitatu yangu
this new tree	_____	these new trees	miti hii mipya
this one tree	mti huu mmoja	these three trees	miti hii mitatu
my one new tree		my three new trees	
_____		_____	
this one new tree		these three new trees	
_____		_____	

## 2. Collective nouns

Give collective nouns for collections of each of the following things. For some of the items, there may be more than one collective noun, all with different connotations:

- a. birds
- b. cows
- c. people watching or listening to a performance
- d. ships
- e. people hired by a business
- f. people who run a country
- g. lords and ladies
- h. people singing together
- i. people playing musical instruments together
- j. monkeys
- k. lions
- l. wolves
- m. people who are related to each other
- n. quail
- o. whales
- p. papers
- q. people acting together in a play

### 3. Shiftiness of noun sub-classes

Each of the following sentences contains one or more nouns used in a way that seems (to me at least) to be "unusual" in that they are treated grammatically as though they are in a different sub-class than what one normally thinks of for those nouns. For example, a basically count noun may be used as a non-count noun, an abstract noun used as a concrete noun, etc. Identify the nouns that are used in unusual ways, and explain why you think these usages are unusual (some examples from Radden & Dirven 2007:86).

- a. Last term I had three Emmas in my class.
- b. Northern Ireland will have a little sunshine, a little cloud, and a number of showers.
- c. Evangelist directed Christian to go to a shining light.
- d. Is that the Paul Bunyan who wrote Pilgrim's Progress?
- e. He has a detailed knowledge of London and its inhabitants.
- f. Heineken refreshes the parts other beers cannot reach.
- g. The Dodge Viper is really a lot of car.
- h. His devious sincerities began to get on my nerves.
- i. The buffet was stocked with all manner of meats and cheeses from the heart of Europe.
- j. I am campaigning against early retirement for married men. It appears to me that it means twice as much husband on half as much money.

#### 4. *Every, each and either*

Think about the difference in meaning among the quantifiers *every*, *each* and *either*. In the following sentences, decide whether *every*, *each* or *either* is most likely, and explain your decision (they are probably all "grammatical" strictly speaking, but the question is which one is more reasonable, natural or likely). In some cases more than one may be reasonable, in which case try to explain the difference in terms of meaning, or different contexts in which one vs. the other would be appropriate.

- a. \_\_\_\_\_ sow produces about six piglets.
- b. \_\_\_\_\_ player gets three cards.
- c. There is an avenue of trees on \_\_\_\_\_ side of the little path.
- d. They're entitled to twenty days training \_\_\_\_\_ year.
- e. So there's a few planted on \_\_\_\_\_ side of the estate.
- f. We learn something \_\_\_\_\_ day
- g. The tax code reaches into \_\_\_\_\_ aspect of our personal lives.
- h. Mary Ann insisted on hearing \_\_\_\_\_ detail of the auction over tea.
- i. \_\_\_\_\_ child likes ice cream.
- j. \_\_\_\_\_ theory is open to criticism.
- k. The thug held a gun in \_\_\_\_\_ hand.
- l. We do not permit debates in \_\_\_\_\_ house of Parliament to be cited.

## 5. Properties of derived nouns

Based on the data below, and any other data you can think of, identify the noun-like and verb-like properties of the derived nouns acceptance and accepting. Overall, which of these is more verb-like and which is more noun-like? What does this mean in terms of the definitions of 'noun' and 'verb'?

Our accepting his offer would be a mistake.

Their acceptance of the offer was received this morning.

?Our accepting of his offer.

\*Their acceptance his offer.

We've had four acceptances so far.

\*acceptings

Everyone craves acceptance from others.

\*accepting

I don't like accepting the offer so quickly.

\*acceptance (of)

Acceptance of the offer by all parties is certain.

\*Accepting (of) the offer by all parties is certain.

Their rapid acceptance of the offer was a big surprise.

\*rapidly

Their \*rapid accepting the offer was a big surprise.

rapidly