

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE ENGLISH NOUN  
IN TWO GRAMMAR BOOKS: A PRACTICAL ENGLISH  
GRAMMAR and A UNIVERSITY GRAMMAR OF ENGLISH.

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RESUMEN

Estudio comparado del sustantivo Inglés en dos textos de Gramática: Thomson, A.J. and A.V. Martinet, **A PRACTICAL ENGLISH GRAMMAR** y Quirk, R. and S. Greenbaum, **A UNIVERSITY GRAMMAR OF ENGLISH**. Se analiza la descripción que se hace de este elemento gramatical (clase, género, número y caso) en ambos textos y después se compara para ver con que claridad y profundidad se realiza esta descripción.

El trabajo tiene como propósito guiar a los profesores de Inglés con respecto al uso, y/o adquisición de un texto de gramática pedagógico-práctico y que contenga el máximo de información.

ABSTRACT

This paper contains a comparative study of the English noun in two grammar books: Thomson, A.J. & A.V. Martinet, **A PRACTICAL ENGLISH GRAMMAR** and Quirk, R. & S. Greenbaum, **A UNIVERSITY GRAMMAR OF ENGLISH**.

The study is based upon the description made by both texts of this grammatical element, class, gender, number and case. It is analysed and compared in order to establish the depth, clarity and pedagogical approach of them.

The aim of this paper is to serve as a guide to teachers of English, in case they want to consult or purchase a sound, accurate and practical book.

However, before beginning the analysis of the topic, it seems appropriate to state the purpose, aim the authors of both books have in order to write them down.

T&M book is described in Oxford catalogue in the following way:

"It contains straightforward explanations , abundant practical advice, and up-to-date example sentences to illustrate how the grammatical forms are used." (p.45)

Q&G book is presented in Longman catalogue in the following way:

"It is a synchronic description of present-day educated English grammar. The authors concentrate on the common core of English,... Above all the present treatment has been adapted to the needs of students who require maximum comprehensiveness with maximum economy of presentation." (p.63)

From the above descriptions, one can say that both books attempt to a practical description of the English language of to day. Moreover the first book, T&M's book gives emphasis to the examples they have to illustrate grammatical points. Perhaps if the main difference between the two books is that T&M is intended for intermediate students while Q&G is for advanced students.

## INTRODUCTION

As the title of this paper implies, this research aims at a comparative analysis of the description of the English Noun in two Grammar books. The books and chapters involved are: Thomson, A.J. and A.V. Martinet, A PRACTICAL ENGLISH GRAMMAR, 2nd. edition, Oxford, 1977 - chapter II Nouns, and Quirk, R. and S. Greenbaum, A UNIVERSITY GRAMMAR OF ENGLISH, Longman, 1977 - chapter IV Nouns, Pronouns and the Basic Noun Phrase.

It is desirable and convenient that teachers of English as a Foreign Language have at hand a good Dictionary and a good Grammar book.

This paper seeks to provide them with a guide to help them to come to a decision about which grammar book to consult. The paper tries to prove that the first Grammar book T&M (T&M stands for Thomson and Martinet's book.) in spite of looking practical and not complex, is incomplete. There is an over simplification of the subject and because of that of not much use for teaching purposes. It merely lists some characteristics of the noun, and omits giving a full description of the main features of it.

Q&G (Q&G stands for Quirk and Greenbaum's book.), on the other hand, seems more complex and theoretical than it really is. It is fully descriptive, far more useful and pedagogic for teachers and teaching purposes. Perhaps the major defect of this Grammar book lies in the metalanguage and distribution of information.

The lay-out of this work is the following: firstly, a brief description of each section of both books is presented, namely: class, gender, number and case.

Secondly, a comparative analysis of both descriptions is given.

Finally, some conclusions are drawn. They sum up the main pro-and counter arguments discussed throughout the paper.

## I. NOUN CLASSES

Both books start with a classification of nouns. T&M (p.7) simply list four traditional noun categories. They are: common, proper, abstract and collective nouns. A list of three or four nouns, of each category, is given as an example. Q&G (pp.59-70), on the other hand, also attempt to set up a classification of nouns but giving reasons for it. They first identify proper and common nouns, then they classify common nouns into count and non-count nouns. An explanation for this classification is given:

"It will be noticed that the categorization count and non-count cuts across the traditional distinction between 'abstract'... and 'concrete'. But while abstract nouns may be count or non-count, there is a considerable degree of overlap between abstract and non-count". (p.60).

They also express that non-count nouns contain a number of nouns that are 'language specific'. That is to say, different languages use different criteria in grouping them. This is illustrated by a list of English non-count nouns.

The four categories of nouns are contrasted by their use of determiners and modifiers.

### ANALYSIS

With reference to T&M book:

1. In this text, nothing is said about the criterion used for the classification of nouns. Explanation or definition of the classes mentioned is not given either. It is also surprising that count and non-count nouns are not considered at all.

2. It becomes rather difficult to understand the meaning of abstract nouns unless they are contrasted with concrete nouns; on the other hand, abstract and collective nouns given as examples can also be classified as common nouns. They are: charity, beauty, swarm, team, etc...
3. From teaching and grammatical points of view it is more important to classify nouns into count and non-count rather than abstract and concrete. Nouns are rarely used in isolation and the occurrence of modifiers and determiners is established precisely by their classification into count and non-count. If some abstract nouns given by T&M are described into count and non-count nouns, the following conclusion is drawn:

- Charity:** (non-count) kindness in giving:  
Charity begins at home.  
(count) society or organization for helping the poor:  
He gives the money to charities.
- Beauty:** (non-count) combination of qualities that give pleasure to the senses:  
They admired her beauty.  
(count) person, thing, etc... that is beautiful or particularly good:  
She is a beauty.
- Fear:** (count and non-count) feeling caused by the possibility of danger, etc...:  
They stood there in fear.  
Grave fear are felt for the safety of the missing climbers.
- Joy:** (non-count) deep pleasure:  
I wish you joy.  
(count) something that gives pleasure:  
The joys and sorrows of life.

The above classification not only demonstrates that the same noun can be count and non-count, but it shows that in some cases the meaning can be different

as well.

It is also difficult to appreciate in what way a list of abstract nouns will assist the teacher with useful information, if it does not give any direction of number (singular/plural) or indicate the modifiers that can or cannot accompany them. Moreover, the grouping of nouns into abstract and concrete is thought of as a notional definition today. It is a semantic classification rather than a grammatical one.

4. The significance and importance of learning about collective nouns lies in their capacity of being used as singular and plural units. That is to say, it is important to know that some of them can be followed by the singular or plural form of the verb. When a collective noun is followed by a verb in its singular form, the non-individuality of the group is stressed, and when the verb takes its plural form the individuality within the group is stressed. The noun, family, for example, is a collective noun with the above characteristics.

The Frank family are hard working people. Mr. and Mrs. Frank run a shop. Their son goes to the university and works in a pub in the evening. Their daughter is a teacher.

David's family spends Christmas at home.

It is also important to mention that there are some collective nouns that can only occur with a plural verb copula keeping their singular form. They are: cattle, police, gentry, people, etc... However, the noun people means also race, tribe, nation and in that case it may be a singular and plural noun, it is a count noun, as in the following:

A people of Africa. The peoples of Africa.

It is rather strange to detect that all the examples of collective nouns are also concrete nouns.

Finally, through this analysis, one can appreciate

an overlapping of certain traditional categories which require a more delicate description and analysis.

With reference to Q&G book:

1. This text, on the other hand, is explicit, useful and pedagogic in its classification. The pedagogic aspect is evident in that:

"... the authors of such grammars (pedagogic) have already organized the description or presented the data in a form which the teacher can use more or less directly in presentation to his own pupils".  
(Corder: 1977).

Q&G give explanations and reasons why they have divided the noun into the classes they propose and, at the same time, give plenty of examples. These examples are phrases, sentences or lists which illustrate the previous description and explanation. In some cases, such as the classification of nouns into the four categories, the examples are given in a multiple-choice list to show the accepted and non-accepted forms. The list of nouns given corresponds to those nouns that are non-count in English but count in other languages. This seems to be a better and more simple way to show this cross-cultural characteristic. They also make reference to other sections in the book where there is more information about nouns.

2. There is one sentence at the beginning of the section that could be confusing. It says:

"It is necessary for grammatical and semantic reasons to see nouns as falling into different subclasses". (p-59).

The question is: What do they mean by grammatical reasons?

Grammar has different meanings and includes

different aspects of language study. Some linguists include Morphology and Syntax under grammar, other include Phonology and Semantics. For others, grammar is only the study of structures, Syntax. It seems that grammar and grammatical reasons mean Morphology and Syntax in the context of this book, and as such, considered as part of the three main areas in the study of language: Phonology, Grammar and Semantics. It is not clear either when they are using a semantic criterion and when a grammatical one. Are nouns defined by a semantic criterion?

And when they refer to the occurrence of nouns with their determiners,

are they using a grammatical classification?

Are the semantic reasons the ones given when they say that some non-count nouns can behave as count nouns?

Does the change of class (from count into non-count nouns) produce a difference in meaning?

Some count nouns have a sort of non-count synonym which, being a different word, expresses the same concept:

bread/loaf; sheep/mutton; etc...

Are these semantic and/or grammatical reasons?

It is not clear. It seems that an explanation to clarify these concepts should follow that statement.

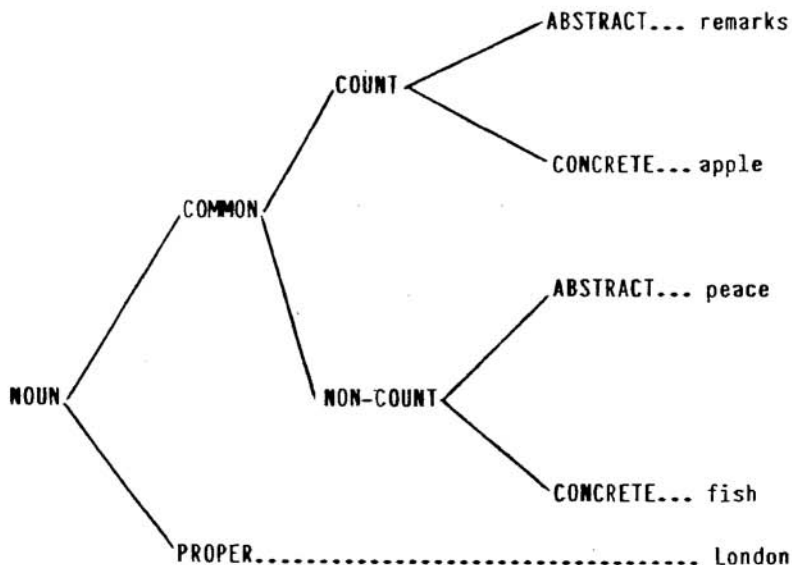
For this purpose, there is a quotation from Allerton (1979), that could clarify this situation,

"A fundamental unit in both grammar and semantics is the morpheme. Morphemes can be seen either directly or through composite words, as the ultimate constituents of sentences. The patterning of morphemes to make up sentences is generally described as the Grammar of the language, or in a



broader sense the Syntax of the language. Semantics is the study of the meaning, embracing both meaning of individual lexical items and the meaning conveyed by grammatical morphemes and grammatical patterns. The area of overlap between semantics and grammar (or syntax) is thus evidently in the question of grammatical patterns and their meanings" (Allerton, 1979).

5. Finally, Q&G in spite of having plenty of diagrams and tables throughout the text, do not present any to show the noun and its different classes. Perhaps, a simple diagram like this one should have been added to summarize and complete the section.



Note: this diagram is taken from A Grammar of Contemporary English.

## II. GENDER OF NOUNS

T&M referring to gender express,

"English genders are extremely simple, and in any case the gender of the noun affects its pronoun and possessive adjective" (p.7)

They give examples of masculine, feminine and neuter (things) nouns. All of them are in their plural form. Then, they say that there are exceptions:

"Ships are considered feminine and so are countries when referred to by name" (p.7)

and they continue saying,

"Most nouns have the same form for masculine and feminine"

"Some have different forms"

"Some form the feminine from the masculine by adding-ess" (p.7)

Q&G give a very clear and complete classification of nouns according to gender, pointing out that in English gender is more closely related to the biological category "sex" rather than the grammatical category "gender".

Finally, they relate the three types of gender that occur with the noun and the possible pronoun substitutions (personal, relative and indefinite). These relations are illustrated in a diagram.

There are also lists of nouns and sentences to exemplify this classification.

## ANALYSIS

With reference to T&M book:

1. T&M say that the gender of the noun only affects its pronoun and possessive adjective.

What do they mean by affect?

They do not provide any example. There is only a list of masculine, feminine and neuter nouns, such as: women, girls, men, boy, etc...

Is there any difference in the use of pronouns and possessive adjectives when nouns are in their plural form?

Is that what they mean by affect?

The following examples illustrate this situation:

Women attended the meeting yesterday. They protested against the new bill. The committee asked them to leave the precinct. Their action was condemned by the TUC.

A group of men are working on the project. If they finish their work before noon the award will be for them.

The dogs were so hungry that they ran out in search of food. Their ferocity have frightened the villagers. Policemen are searching them in the vicinity.

Through the above examples (it was also included the objective pronoun) it is shown that if one wants to lay out the different realizations of these nouns with the pronouns and possessive adjectives, examples should be provided in the singular rather than in the plural form. Moreover, the examples should be given in sentences, and not merely in a list.

2. The exceptions are neither explicit nor clear. Not only **ships** are considered feminine but **cars** as well. **Countries** are referred to as feminine only when they are considered as economic and political units. As geographical entities, **countries** are inanimate, so they take the pronoun "it" in singular. In sports, **countries** are considered collective nouns and take the pronoun "they" in its plural form.
3. Nouns that have different forms, and those which form the feminine from the masculine are also presented in a rather obscure way. The following examples illustrate that. The pair **duke-~~duchess~~** are considered nouns of a different form, while in **conductor-~~conductress~~** the feminine is formed by adding **-ess** to the masculine form.

It is difficult to understand the difference between both examples. There is a phonological rule that explains the variations, but, in fact, in both cases the suffix **-ess** has been added to the masculine form.

Among other examples they present **manager-~~manageress~~**. Although perfectly correct, it is not frequently used today. The common expression is **woman-manager**. The same happens with **conductress**, today people prefer to say **woman-conductor**.

Finally, instead of giving less frequent words, they should have provided more common and currently used words like: **host - hostess ; waiter - waitress; god - goddess;**, etc.

With reference to Q&G book:

1. Q&G's description of gender is clear and explicit. It does not require any further explanation. They do not refer to gender in itself, but they show the way in which this feature affects other parts of speech, mainly pronouns.

Finally, and with reference to this matter, it is important to quote Palmer when he talks about gender.

He says that in English there is no grammatical gender as it happens in Spanish, French, Italian, and other languages.

"We have words that refer to male and female creatures (bull/cow; ram/ewe; boar/sow; etc...) but this is not a matter of grammar and should be dealt with the lexicon or dictionary." (Palmer 1978).

### III. NUMBER OF NOUNS

T&M say that the plural of a noun is usually formed by adding "s" to the singular form. They give three examples: **dog-dogs; day-days; house-houses.**

After this short explanation they list a series of exceptions.

Finally, they refer to compound nouns and classify them according to the combination of words. They identify four types and they are the following:

- normally the last word is made plural.
- compound nouns formed with prepositions or adverbs make only the first word plural.
- compound nouns with an adjective as the last word, the first word is usually made plural.
- words in-ful usually make their plural in the ordinary way.

Q&G under the heading Number describe the plural of nouns. They divide nouns into variable and invariable. They call Variable Nouns those which have two forms, singular and plural. Invariable Nouns are those which have only one form. Variable Nouns are classified into the following types:

- regular plurals and irregular plurals.

Invariable Nouns include two main types:

- singular invariables and plural invariables.

The above classification is first illustrated in a diagram on page 81 then followed by a description of each type which contains plenty of examples.

They also include rules of spelling and pronunciation.

## ANALYSIS

With reference to T&M book:

1. T&M do not give rules of pronunciation of regular nouns, basic piece of information if the learner wants to speak the language. However, the list of Greek and Latin words contains some phonetic transcriptions.
2. With reference to irregular plurals, the following information is omitted. There is no reference to some nouns which have a singular form but are plural in use, such as: **police**, **people** (**people** have also a plural form, See page 7) etc. There is no reference to some nouns which have a plural form but are singular in use, such as: **news**, **Statistics**, etc... There is no reference to some nouns which are always plural, in form and use, such as: **scissors**, **pliers**, etc....
3. They include compound nouns among the group, but they do not give any explanation or description about their formation. Some spelling rules are given, but they omit compound nouns formed with a verb or adjective and a preposition, such as: **check-ups**, **grown-ups**, etc...
4. They mention child-children as a unique plural case. Are **ox-oxen**, and **brother-brethren** different?

It seems that these three nouns can be considered similar and included in one group, which form their plural by adding the suffix **-en**. Then the following nouns: **man**, **woman**, **foot**, **mouse**, **louse**, **tooth**, which form their plural by vowel changes can be described and studied together. But in fact, there is not only a vowel change in **louse** and **mouse**. The **ou** is changed to **i**, and the **s** to **c**, which is good for their pronunciation.

The case of **woman-women** also presents a change in pronunciation. This pair includes a change in spelling and pronunciation: **woman**-(wuman); **women**-(wimin).

- 5.- They say that Greek and Latin words change according to

their rules.

Wich are those rules?

There are many foreign words in use today and not only Greek and Latin which form their plural following the rules of regular English nouns. That is to say, adding the suffix **-s** or **-es** to the singular form.

There are, however, some foreign words which take only one form of plurality, either the **-s** form or the foreign one, such as: **chorus-choruses**; **criterion-criteria**.

6. Finally, they refer to words ending in the suffix **-ful**. They do not mention an exception to the rule in a common compound word: **spoonful**. This word may form the plural by either **spoonfuls** or **spoonsful**.

With reference to Q&G book:

1. Q&G grouped some plural invariable nouns under the following name: summation plurals and other "**Pluralia Tantum**" in **-s**. These names are confusing and difficult to understand, but the explanation and description plus the examples given make the reader grasp the meaning at once.

Summation plurals refer to tools and articles of dress consisting of two equal parts which are joined, such as: **pliers**, **trousers**, etc...

Other "pluralia tantum" in **-s** refer to nouns that only occur in their plural form, that is to say, nouns ending in **-s**, such as: **Middle Ages**, **stairs**, etc...

There are, however, some nouns which may have the **-s** ending or not, and this produces a change in meaning, such as: **brain** = the human organ; **brains** = intellect.

2. They also include compound nouns under the heading Number, but do not give any further explanation about the way they can be formed. They just inform that some compound nouns form the plural in first element, others



in first and last element, and finally, a third group in last element. In spite of including a section of compound nouns in the appendix, there is no other reference to it in the section. The appendix also includes a section for the rules of pronunciation of these nouns.

3. Some people (EFL diploma and M.A. students, London University, 1978-1980) criticize their use of technical words. The Voicing + -s Plural contains the following terms: voiceless fricatives, voiced fricatives and voicing. They are technical terms (metalanguage) in fact, but it seems evident that this terminology should be part of the basic knowledge of Phonetics which every language teacher should have. And, if the book is meant for teachers of English and teacher trainers the terms used are accurate and appropriate. If the book, on the other hand, is for university students, in general, it should be advisable to include some more reference and/or explanation of those concepts.

#### IV CASE OF NOUNS

T&M start the section saying:

"English nouns have no case ending except in the possessive case. We say, however, that they are in the nominative, accusative, or dative case according to the work that they do in the sentence" (p.9).

This is followed by a list of nouns which are in the nominative; accusative and dative case. The dative case is illustrated by the indirect object of the verb. Referring to the dative case they also say:

"A noun is in the dative case when it stands for **to+noun** or **for+noun**" (p.10).

The possessive case is presented in a separate section. It contains the following subsections:

- the case endings for the possessive case. The use of 's or just apostrophe (').
- use of the possessive case. They illustrate the following case:

"Possession, when the possessor is a person or animal, is normally indicated by putting the possessor in the possessive case, not by using the preposition **of**".(p.10)

"Note that when the possessive case is used, the article before the person or thing, possessed disappears". (p.10)

"When the possessor is a thing **of** is normally used".(p.10)

"The possessive form is used with expressions of

time such as: second, minute, etc.: a day's work, etc... (p.10)

Q&G describe the Case of Nouns by saying that the English noun has a two-case system, the common and the marked genitive case.

The common case is realized in the syntactic relations of the noun phrase (subject, object, complement, etc...) After this explanation, they describe the marked genitive case. They provide the spelling and pronunciation rules that govern this case, and a semantic classification of both forms, the 's and the **of genitive phrase**. Then, they explain the possibility of choosing the 's or **of genitive phrase** in some cases.

They finish the section by describing the group genitive, the genitive with ellipsis, and the double genitive. There are phrases and sentences to illustrate each case, and there are also diagrams and some notes for the unusual and complex cases.

## ANALYSIS

With reference to T&M book:

1. In general, this is the most confusing section in the text. No explanation at all would have been better rather than the one given on page 9 "Cases of Nouns".

What is the usefulness of introducing nominative, accusative and dative concepts?

It is much more sensible and easier to understand, say, that nouns function in the sentence as subject, object, complement, etc... And it is surprising that being so fond of Latin terms, they refer to the possessive case, when this is the only concept which modern grammars still maintain from the traditional Latin

grammar as genitive case. However, many grammar books use both terms indistinctly.

2. Is a noun in the accusative case when it is the object of a preposition?  
and, is this knowledge of any importance?

It seems to be much more important to know that nouns fulfil the function of objects of prepositions like other parts of speech, such as: adverbs, pronouns, (till then, by him).

3. The information given about the dative case is completely incomprehensible. The explanation of the **to+noun** and **for+noun** is rather confusing. They illustrate the case with these examples:

I gave Mary a book.  
I bought the child a top.

They analyse the first sentence saying that Mary is the indirect object, and book is the direct object. If one follows the first part of the explanation given, one can say that school and year are in the dative case, in the following example:

I went to school.  
I have not seen him for years.

The first sentence contains a **to+noun**, and the second one a **for+noun**. But in both cases they are prepositional phrases acting as adverbials or adjuncts. The first one is an adverbial of place and the second one is an adverbial of time.

It should have been more accurate to say that some of these constructions (verb+indirect object-direct object) can be transformed into a sentence containing a direct object plus a **to/for phrase**. Thus the example included should have shown the other possibility:

I gave a book to Mary.  
I bought a top for the child.

Even though this chapter deals with Nouns and with their description on syntactic grounds (subject, object, complement) it would have been of the greatest importance to have mentioned verbs as well. The type of verb used will define the type of object that can follow and the possibility of transformation into a **to/for phrase**. Even more, today verbs are not only classified into transitive and intransitive, but the former has been divided into mono-, di-, and complex transitive as well.

Monotransitives are those which take direct objects only. Ditransitives take indirect and direct objects, and complex transitives take direct object and object complements.

There is no reference to the verbs that occur with indirect and direct objects; those that occur with direct objects and object complements, and those that cannot accept the transformation into direct objects plus **to/for phrase**. The following examples show a similar pattern, yet number 2, and number 3 cannot be transformed as number 1:

1. I gave **Mary** the book.
2. I asked **Mary** the question.
3. I elected **Mary** the secretary.

Examples number 1 and 2 contain an indirect object Mary, and a direct object book, question. Example number 3, although it looks alike, contains a direct object Mary and an object complement secretary.

Furthermore, although example number 1 and 2 contain the two objects, sentences number 2 cannot be transformed into a direct object plus **to/for phrase**. It is ungrammatical to say:

I asked a question to **Mary**. (incorrect)

One can say, on the other hand,

I will explain the problem to my tutor.

That sentence is correct and similar to,

I gave the book to **Mary**.

But, one cannot say:

**I will explain my tutor the problem. (Incorrect)**

The examples reflect the importance of learning not just that nouns can behave as direct and indirect objects, but that there are certain verbs which can be followed by these objects and do not accept the transformation into a **to/for phrase**. Studying the sentence patterns and elements of the sentence means to explain all the relations, combinations and restrictions as well.

T&M do not mention the difference between the use of the **to/for phrase** which replaces the indirect object. Can both **to** and **for** be used indistinctly?

The **to phrase** is generally used when the person has got the object. In the example given, Mary has the book. The **for phrase** is used when the object is intended for a person, but the receiver has not got it yet. In the example given, the top is for the child.

4. There are no rules of pronunciation for the possessive case, either.
5. Compound nouns are under the subheading of **without-s**; however, the example given is:

**mother-in-law's house.**

6. They name the preposition **of**, however they never explain or show the relation it has with the **-s genitive**.
7. There is no reference to the genitive with ellipsis, such as:

**My car is faster than David's.  
I shall be at the dentist's.**

8. Neither is the double genitive mentioned, as in:

**What about an opera of Verdi's.**

9. The possessive case for T&M means only possession. There is no reference to a semantic classification. If one analyses the following example different meanings

can be obtained,

**The girl's school.**

Does it mean the girls are the owners of the school?

It seems that the genitive case here describes that this is a school for girls or it can also mean that this is the school where the girls study.

10. Neither do they mention that collective nouns also take the 's genitive. The example illustrates this:

**The nation's social security.**

As well as other nouns like geographical and institutional names, such as:

**Africa's future.**

**The University's Bloomsbury site.**

11. Next, they say that when the possessor is a thing, of is normally used:

"But with many well-known combinations it is usual to put the two nouns together using the first noun as a sort of adjective. This is often done to indicate the position of something" (p.11)

NOTE: it is quite interesting to read here that the relation is of position and not possession. The examples given are: hall door; dining-room table; street lamp; kitchen sink. It is difficult to see the relation of the 's and of genitive phrase with these examples. Paraphrasing them one gets the following:

hall door = the door in the hall.

dining-room table = the table of the dining-room,  
or in the dining-room.

street lamp = the lamp in the street, or a lamp  
for the street.

kitchen sink = the sink in the kitchen, the  
kitchen has a sink, or the sink  
for the kitchen.

These are nouns modified by other nouns. It seems that these examples cannot be taken as illustrative examples of possessive relations.

A similar situation is presented with names of towns, time expressions, use of clothes and kinds of stories. The examples given are: **London transport**; but what about **London's transport**? ; then follows **summer holidays**; but if one paraphrases that, it becomes: **holidays in summer**.

Finally the example **coffee cup** is very confusing because if one wants to say: **a cup of coffee** it does not mean a **coffee cup**. A **coffee cup** means a **cup for coffee**.

12. In fact, the section contains such a mixture of different syntactic features which are interpreted like the possessive case, that it produces a complete confusion in the reader, in spite of the explanation and examples provided.

With reference to Q&G book:

1. Q&G do not consider the noun functioning as subject, object, complement, etc... in this section. They refer to them in section seven where the simple sentence is described.
2. When they describe the **group genitive**, they give the following example: **the teacher's room; the teacher of music's (room)**. What is the difference between the last example and the one given for the double genitive: **an opera of Verdi's**? It seems that both sentences contain the **of genitive phrase** and the **'s**. On the surface structure (using Chomsky's terms) they look the same. But the case is that **the teacher of music's (room)** contains a post modified noun phrase. The prepositional phrase: **of music** is modifying the noun, **teacher**; whereas, **an opera of Verdi's** can be paraphrased into a **Verdi's opera**.
3. Q&G used the concepts 'marked' and 'unmarked' when they refer to the common case and the genitive case. Although



they do not define these terms, they are understood through the general description given. They refer to a marked case when there is a visible indication. The noun, **boy** in a sentence can be subject, object, complement, etc... The only way to identify its function is by analysis and position:

The boy jumped over the fence. (Subject)

He is a boy. (Complement)

She gave the boy a book. (Object)

- 4.- Apart from the ambiguous situation posed in number 2, the genitive case is fully described. The examples given in sentences and phrases are clear. Some of them are paraphrased so that the reader can follow and understand the exact meaning.

## CONCLUSION

The following conclusions can be drawn from this study. Firstly, T&M in spite of the title **A Practical English Grammar**, is not a very practical and pedagogic text. The explanations, descriptions and examples are not very clear or illustrative. Important and basic information is missing, such as: rules of pronunciation, other uses of the genitive case, formation of nouns by affixation, and the vocative. T&M seem to take language to pieces in order to analyse it without showing language as whole, a system where all pieces and parts are connected and related, as Pit Corder (1977) says:

"... the structure of a language is a 'system of systems', or a 'network' of interrelated categories no part of which is wholly independent or wholly dependent upon another" (Corder: 1977).

It is also difficult to understand the popularity and demand of this text among teachers of English. One reason could be the inclusion of a set of booklets with exercises which are commonly used to drill and prepare grammatical exercises for classes.

T&M grammar text-book looks easy and practical, but as soon as one goes into the explanations and examples it becomes utterly confusing.

Q&G grammar text-book, on the other hand, looks far more complicated than it really is. The way explanations and some terms are used could make the reader feel puzzled, but the examples and diagrams clarify and illustrate all those aspects.

This grammar book follows the traditional model of description, but it includes new information taken from other models of linguistic description, such as: Transformational Generative grammar, Systemic grammar, Semantics and Sociolinguistic studies.

Q&G text-book is a simplified version of **A Grammar**

of Contemporary English, which is considered as one of the best and more complete description of modern English (Bolinger, 1978). Definitions are avoided in general. Definitions require a criterion to frame and to establish the aspects and conditions of the term to be defined.

A noun, for example, can be defined under a morphological syntactic and semantic criterion. The noun, in this book, is described rather than defined by contrasting it with other class words, and by the syntagmatic relations with functional words.

There are references throughout the book that relate the different sections of it to each other. This is a positive aspect which shows the network of the system, but sometimes it makes it a little difficult to handle. When readers want to consult the book, they should first learn how to use it and use the references. This enables them to go from one section to another or others, in order to collect the information required.

In conclusion, it can be generally stated that Q&G grammar text-book is a pedagogical sound text. It contains explicit, accurate information which is appropriate to the needs of its potential readers. A workbook written by Close has been published. It provides the reader with plenty of exercises to complete and fully understand the subject matter.

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