CHAPTER II

NOMINAL MODIFICATION ACCORDING TO STRUCTURAL GRAMMAR

Structural grammar by definition looks at a language as it really is, not as it should be according to the rules of proper usage as defined by traditional grammarians. Some of the most influential figures of structural linguistics are Bloomfield, Fries, Pike, Francis, Sledd, Hill, Hockett, Gleason, and Trager and Smith. They describe languages from the point of view of an objective observer, noting how the language is employed in reality, unprejudiced by notions of propriety. To our understanding of English, structural grammar appears to be more thorough than the traditional ones. For example, it replaces the vague notional definitions of parts-of-speech by very precise definitions of word classes.

In The Structure of English (1952)[5] Charles C. Fries gives a definition of a noun modifier as the part of the construction that narrows down the meaning of the headnoun but does not 'change the relation of the headword to the rest of the basic patterns. Nominal modifier here is explained as a functioning unit. It is not only one kind of word as in simplistic school grammar, but all the sorts of words which can occur as noun modifiers. Fries tries to explain what each nominal construction is composed of, including

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[5] Charles C. Fries, The Structure of English. (Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., 1952) pp. 202-227.

the meaning it conveys. He says that the structure of modification
is just the relationship between a noun and other kinds of words.
Modification is a structure of connection, and he tries to charac-
terize features of the particular way of connection of modifiers to
the headnoun.

The position of modifying words, according to Fries, is
very important. The most significant position of the noun modifier
is between the determiner and the headnoun, e.g., an _old_ man.
Another position is the position immediately after the headnoun,
e.g., the man _in the room._ Eighty percent of the single-word noun
modifiers in Fries' recorded spoken English material occur in the
first type of positioning. Fries explains various types of words
and groups of words that can occur in the position of noun modifiers
as follows:

1. Class 2 words (Words occurring in the position of verbs
   that end with -ing or -ed forms) as noun modifiers

   a _barking_ dog   (The noun represents the "performer
   the _burning_ fire   of the action" indicated in the
                             "modifier")

   a _sealed_ envelope   (The noun represents the "undergoer
   the _dismissed_ employee   of the action" indicated in
                             the "modifier")

2. Class 3 words (Words occurring in the position of
   adjective) as noun modifiers

an <u>excellent</u> address

the <u>coastal</u> plain   (The meaning is that of quality")

a <u>longer</u> vacation

a <u>continuous</u> worker   (The meaning is that of "manner

                              of action" because the noun is

                              derived from a Class 2 word)

a <u>perfect</u> stranger   (The meaning is that of "degree

                              of substance" because the noun

                              is derived from a Class 3 word)

3. <u>Class 1 word (Words occurring in the position of noun</u>

  <u>modifiers)</u>

a <u>bath</u> robe

a <u>lady's</u> handkerchief (The meaning is that of

the <u>health</u> service   "identification")

<u>Wednesday</u> evening

a <u>truck</u> driver   (The class 1 word head derive

the <u>milk</u> delivery   from class 2 words; the meaning

                              is that of "undergoer of action")

4. <u>Class 4 words (Word occurring in the position of adverb)</u>

  <u>as noun modifiers</u>

the work <u>thereafter</u>

his study <u>abroad</u>

the discussion <u>afterward</u>

5. A word-group having a function word of Group F (so-called "preposition") as noun modifier

a period of being away

a luncheon at twelve-thirty

the examination in the morning

(The meaning is that of "identification")

6. An included sentence usually with one of the function words of Group F (who, which, that, etc.)

the man who came early

the day after you left

the time when you can do it best

(The meaning is that of "identification" or description")

Many structuralists prefer to use the traditional terms in their explanation of word classes rather than the numbers and letters Fries uses.

Various types of noun modifiers are explained by structuralists as consisting of two main forms: modifiers before the noun and modifiers after the noun (prenominal and postnominal modifiers).

The modifiers that come before the headnoun mostly are determiners, adjectives, single verbs in present or past participle form, and nouns.

The modifiers that come after the headnoun are adverbs (mostly adverbs of place and time), prepositional phrases, verb phrases, and relative or subordinating clauses.

1. Determiners as Noun Modifiers

Bloomfield (1933)[6] classifies noun determiners as a kind of adjective called a limiting adjective. The position is before a noun. The meaning is that of identification, number, or quality. Many words are classified as noun determiners. Common types of determiners are:

> articles: <u>a</u> man, <u>an</u> orange, <u>the</u> house
>
> possessive adjectives: <u>my</u> house, <u>his</u> shoes

Some people also classify the noun possessive (<u>John's</u> house) in this group because it can be substituted for the "<u>my</u> house" position. Other people, for example Francis, classify it in the group of nouns that act as modifiers of another noun.

> demonstratives: <u>this</u> man, <u>those</u> girls
>
> others: any, either, every, neither, no, one, some, what, which, whichever, all, both, few, much, four, twenty, thirty-one, more, each.

Sledd in <u>A Short Introduction to English Grammar</u> (1959)[7] explains that the determiner provides a center for a helpful outline: all the nominal phrases which we are first to consider

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[6] Leonard Bloomfield, <u>Language.</u> (Henry Holt and Company, Inc., 1933) pp. 184 - 206.

[7] James Sledd, <u>A Short Introduction to English Syntax.</u> (Scott, Foresman and Company, 1959) p. 115.

fit into the pattern,

Predeterminer / Determiner / Postdeterminer / Noun,

which is represented by the phrase

all   /   the   /   good   /   men

The predeterminers are words that come before determiners.
The predeterminers are rather various but limited in number.
Examples are:

many a man,   such a man,   what a man

all the men,   both the men

almost all the men,   nearly all the men

not quite all the men

The postdeterminers according to Sledd are adjectival
(any words that can occur in the adjective position) in that they
can stand under second stress before a following noun which has
strongest stress, and their relative order is fixed.

The order of modifiers before noun may be stated more fully
as   1. predeterminer, 2. determiner, 3. limiting adjective,
4. adverbial of degree, 5. descriptive adjectival, 6. noun adjunct,
7. nominal (here a noun).

1   2   3   4   5   6   7
all / the / seven / very / fine / stone / walls
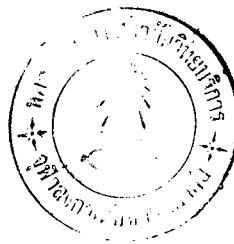
2. Adjectives as Noun Modifiers

In general an adjective comes before the headnoun and after the determiner, and the meaning is that of quality of substance.

a <u>small</u> house   his <u>intense</u> concentration

his <u>dirty</u> hands   <u>handsome</u> lad

<u>serious</u> troubles   a <u>longer</u> vacation

<u>greedy</u> pigs   both <u>remarkable</u> tales

the <u>gloomy</u> room   these <u>ripe</u> tomatoes

the <u>coastal</u> plain

Some people classify numbers as this type of modifier. Sledd calls numbers limiting adjectives: the <u>two</u> students.

According to Francis (1956)[8], the adjectives modifying nominals can sometimes have special meaning. If the noun itself is derived from a verb, the meaning is that of "manner of action".

a <u>continuous</u> worker

a <u>hard</u> student

a <u>rapid</u> performance

If the headnoun is derived from an adjective the meaning is that of "degree of quality".

a <u>perfect</u> stranger

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[8] Nelson W. Francis, <u>The Structure of American English.</u> (The Ronald Press Company, 1959) pp. 297-312.

<u>utter</u> darkness

an <u>absolute</u> necessity

If the adjective has the same form as when it is a noun, like the word <u>Spanish</u>, the meaning is ambiguous as to whether the modifier functions as adjective or noun.

these <u>Spanish</u> students (those who study the language, Spanish, or students from Spain)

a <u>deaf and dumb</u> teacher (one who teaches those who are deaf and dumb or one who is himself deaf and dumb)

There may be more than one adjective in a nominal construction.

a <u>foolish</u> <u>old</u> dog

It often happens that the adjective itself is in turn, modified by different types of words.

The intensifier is the most common type of modifier of an adjective.

a <u>very</u> good man

a <u>quite</u> correct answer

Adverbs may modify the adjective in a nominal construction.

the <u>widely</u> famous singer

Nouns may modify the adjective.

<u>stone</u> cold coffee

<u>sea</u> green cloth

Verbs may modify the adjective.

the <u>freezing</u> cold water.

the <u>boiling</u> hot water.

a hard <u>to get</u> success.

An adjective itself can modify an adjective in the nominal construction.

<u>icy</u> cold water

<u>deathly</u> pale color

<u>dark</u> blue color

The prepostional phrase (and infinitive) can sometimes modify an adjective in the nominal construction.

an easy <u>on the eyes</u> problem.

a good <u>for nothing</u> idea.

a man easy <u>to talk to</u>

a book interesting <u>to scholars</u>

a place distant <u>from civilization</u>

Most adjectives come before the headnoun but sometimes they come after the headnoun.

a) in certain fixed phrases, often from technical vocabularies or familiar quotations.

court <u>martial</u>

darkness <u>visible</u>

fee <u>simple</u>

b) when the adjective is a part of larger construciton.

a figure <u>vague and shadowy</u>

a man <u>taller than I thought</u>

3. <u>Nouns as Nominal Modifiers</u>

Noun attributives always come before the headnoun. The general meaning is that of "identification".

a <u>bath</u> robe	<u>Wednesday</u> evening (evening is
a <u>father</u> image	the head)
the <u>health</u> service	a <u>nerve</u> specialist
<u>Christmas</u> day	a <u>grocery</u> lad .
that <u>woman</u> doctor	a <u>school</u> principal
<u>child</u> psychology.	

Francis (1958)[9] also classifies the possessive noun construction in this group, while some people, for example, Bloomfield, don't.

<u>Child's</u> play

my <u>father's</u> house

that <u>woman's</u> doctor

The meaning of the noun attributive to the construction

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9 Francis, <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 299.

might change from "identification" to "undergoer of action", if the headnoun is derived from a verb.

    a <u>truck</u> driver

    the <u>milk</u> delivery

The noun attributive can be distinguished from the adjective by adding the intensifiers. The intensifiers can be added to the adjective but not to the noun. For example, we can say <u>a very small house</u> but we can't say *<u>a very town house.</u>

If the adjective and the noun attributive appear in the same nominal construction, the adjective always comes before the noun.

    the <u>small</u> town house

    an <u>industrious paper</u> boy

    that <u>new beautiful</u> alley cat

Compound Nouns

Bloomfield (1933)[10] points out that the construction of compound words is most similar to the construction of noun phrases especially when one noun modifies another noun. For example, <u>blackbird</u> (a compound noun) and <u>black</u> <u>bird</u> (a noun-adjective phrase) are different in both meaning and intonation. The compound

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[10] Bloomfield, <u>loc. cit.</u>

word <u>blackbird</u> gets the strong stress on the first syllable of the construction, which is the syllable <u>black</u>, the other syllable being reduced, and it means a bird of a particular species. But as for the nominal phrase, the word <u>bird</u> gets the strong stress,

The following are other examples of compound words.

    do᷄or-knob (a kind of knob)

    Fre᷄nchman

    ic᷄e cream

    blu᷄e-eyed girl

    be᷄droom

    ap᷄ple-pie

For the compound <u>blackbird</u> we can substitute the compound <u>bluebird</u> and <u>redbird</u>, as well as single-word nouns.

What you saw was a bla᷄ckbird.

                blu᷄ebird.

                re᷄dbird.

                spa᷄rrow.

                ro᷄bin.

On the other hand, for <u>black</u> in the phrase <u>black bird</u> we can readily substitute any other color name which applies to a given bird.

What we saw was a black bi᷄rd.

                white

                green

                red

Besides, the descriptive adjective <u>black</u> in the phrase can be modified by the intensifier <u>very</u> or <u>rather</u>: <u>very</u> <u>black</u> <u>bird</u>, <u>rather</u> <u>black</u> <u>bird</u>, while <u>very</u> can't modify a compound noun. We can, however, expand the adjective <u>black</u> in the phrase with the inflectional suffixes - <u>er</u> and - <u>est</u>: <u>blacker</u> <u>bird</u>, <u>blackest</u> <u>bird</u>, but the compound <u>blackbird</u> does not yield to this kind of expansion.

We should note that the writing of compounds varies considerably. The phrase <u>black</u> <u>bird</u> is written as two words, whereas the compound <u>blackbird</u> is written as only one. But we find that a very large number of compounds are actually written as two words.

Appositives

An appositive is a special type of noun working as a modifier of the headnoun. It modifies and follows the headnoun. It is always marked by a single-bar juncture in intonation (that is, by a brief pause) before and after.

> His brother, / a doctor, / was there.
>
> Mr. Jones, / the art critic, / praised the painting.
>
> The children, / both boys and girls, / received presents.

If the single-bar juncture before and after the appositive do not appear, it is called a "close appositive".

> the poet Chaucer
>
> the disease poliomyelitis
>
> the product cellophane

The "close appositive" looks very much like the noun
attributive (noun-adjunct) but the two are different. The first
type of modifier comes after the headnoun but the second type cames
before. In speech we can distinguish one from the other by the
stress. The modifier is always marked by stronger stress.

the product céllophane (appositive)

próduct control (noun-adjunct)

There is another type of appositive where the headnoun is
a personal or geographical title and the noun in apposition is a
proper noun. The difference between this type of appositive and
the "close appositive" is merely that of meaning.

Professor Jones

Vice-President Smith

the River Duddon

4. Verbs as Nominal Modifiers

Francis (1958)[11] clearly explains the verb as modifier.

1. If a verb of $\{$ -ing $\}$ inflection type appears as a nominal
modifier, the headnoun will represent the "performer of action"
indicated in the "modifier".

a purring cat   the shrieking aunt

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[11] Francis, op. cit., pp. 303 - 304.

> a <u>singing</u> seaman   <u>a fighling</u> man
>
> a <u>barking</u> dog   <u>running</u> water
>
> <u>helping</u> hands

Usually this type of modifier precedes the headnoun but sometimes it can follow when it is a part of a larger construction.

> water <u>running in the street</u>
>
> The players <u>reporting</u> were all veterans.

2. If a verb of $\{$-ed$\}$ inflection type appears as a nominal modifier, the headnoun will represents "the undergoer of the action" indicated in the "modifier".

> a <u>sealed</u> envelope   our <u>invited</u> guest
>
> the <u>dismissed</u> employee   the <u>insulted</u> mother
>
> a <u>stunned</u> cat   <u>baked</u> potatoes
>
> this <u>broken</u> bottle

This type of modifier follows the headnoun when it is a part of larger structure.

> potatoes <u>baked slowly</u>

If the verbs working as nominal modifiers and the noun attributives occur in the same construction, the verbs will always come first.

> <u>purring</u> <u>alley</u> cat
>
> <u>cemented</u> <u>wall</u> board

Words that end with $\{$- ing$\}$ or $\{$- ed$\}$ are not always verbs; sometimes they are adjectives or nouns. If they are adjectives,

intensifiers can be added as in a very interesting alley cat or a rather dilapitated wall, but there are no constructions like *a very purring alley cat or *a rather cemented wall.

In the following constructions we can see clearly the verb, adjective, and noun with {- ing} ending. They have the same form but different meanings.

a pleasing table   pleasing here is an adjective.

It means a table that is pleasing;

"very" can be put in front of it.

a rotting table   rotting is a verb.

It means a table that is in the

process of rotting; "rotting" can

be moved to the place after the

headnoun.

a dining table   dining is a noun.

It means "a table for dining".

Dining cannot be moved nor added to.

As for the constructions like a dancing girl, a trotting horse, a racing yacht, or a fighting man, prosody plays an important role in distinguishing the idea. Primary stress on horse identifies trotting as a verb. The noun phrase means "a horse in the process of trotting". However, stronger stress on trotting changes the meaning to "a horse that runs races in which the horses

are allowed only to trot" the same kinds of relationship hold true for the other examples.

If the verbs in marked infinitive form appear as nominal modifiers, they will follow the headnoun.

> a time to laugh
>
> money to burn
>
> a man to see

5. Adverbs as Nominal Modifiers

> (especially the then and there classes of
>
> adverbs which give time and place meaning)

The position of the modifying adverb is generally immediately after the headnoun.

> the people there
>
> the temperature outside
>
> heavens above
>
> Europe now
>
> The discussion afterwards
>
> the work thereafter
>
> his study abroad
>
> inside man   or man inside
>
> outside man   or   man outside

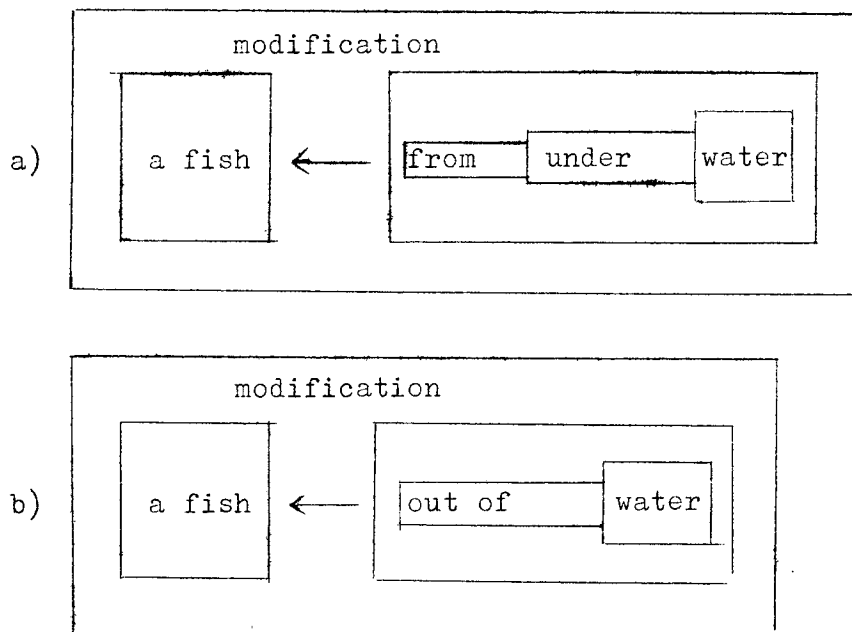## 6. Prepositional Phrases as Nominal Modifiers.

The prepositional phrase consists of a preposition and its object. The object can be an ordinary noun with or without a determiner, a pronoun, a function noun (any word that acts as a noun), or a structure of modification with a noun as head. The meaning of this type of modifier is that of "identification"

a period of being a way

a way of doing

a day for peacefully resting

a luncheon at tweleve - thirty

a man in the truck

the pipe underwater

the conversation after dinner

the noise like a thunderbolt

a time for us

a mile from here

a time up to now

a letter from abroad

The object of a prepositional phrase may itself be a prepositional phrase as in:

a book from under the table

a table for after dinner

a trip to beyond the mountain

Francis[12] explains the structure of nominal modification with a noun as head and a prepositional phrase with more than one preposition as modifier in the following way.

```
        ┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
        │              modification                         │
        │  ┌──────────┐   ┌──────────────────────────────┐  │
        │  │          │   │                    ┌───────┐  │  │
  a)    │  │  a fish  │ ◄─┼─┤from│ │ under │   │ water │  │  │
        │  │          │   │                    └───────┘  │  │
        │  └──────────┘   └──────────────────────────────┘  │
        └──────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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        ┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
        │              modification                         │
        │  ┌──────────┐   ┌──────────────────────────────┐  │
        │  │          │   │                    ┌───────┐  │  │
  b)    │  │  a fish  │ ◄─┼─┤out of│          │ water │  │  │
        │  │          │   │                    └───────┘  │  │
        │  └──────────┘   └──────────────────────────────┘  │
        └──────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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In (b) water is the object of out of, while in (a) water is the object of under, and the whole phrase under water is the object of from. The first expression has one more layer of structure than the second. is can be seen by counting the number of "Chiness boxes" we must put within another to complete the analysis.

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[12] Francis, Ibid., pp. 310 - 311.

7. Included Clauses as Nominal Modifiers.

A clause looks like a sentence pattern except that it contains a word like who, which, that, or conjunctions. The effect is to take a complete sentence and subordinate it to a larger pattern. The meaning of included clauses as modifiers is that of "identification" or "description".

> The man who came early is good.
>
> The time when you can do it best has gone.
>
> The day after you left is what she means.
>
> The fact that it is raining is discouraging.
>
> We heard the news that the war is over.

When relative clauses modify nouns or noun-headed structures of modification, the relative pronoun always shows concord with the headnoun according to the substitute group to which it belongs.

> the carpenter who was on the roof
>
> a principal who was smiling   ("who" refers to a
>
>   person)
>
> a waiter who took our order.
>
> a stain which wouldn't come out
>
> a reason which he gave   ("which" refers to
>
> the cat which sat on the fence   something)
>
> the people that couldn't wait
>
>   ("that" occurs in place
>
> the stain that wouldn't come out
>
>   of "who" or "which")
>
> the man that just came in

Sometimes the relative word (includer) does not appear in the clause. This can happen when the headnoun appears as an object of the verb of the included clause. The omission of the relative word is shown here by the "zero" sign (∅).

> the reasons ∅ he gave
>
> the man ∅ we knew
>
> the letter ∅ somebody sent
>
> a mouse ∅ the cat dragged in
>
> a place ∅ he goes in summer
>
> a story ∅ I heard today
>
> the man ∅ he told his story to

Another type of included clause is called the "infinitive clause". It contains a relative pronoun and an infinitive:

> a quiet place in which to ask

When the prepositional phrase and relative clause both modify the same headnoun, the prepositional phrase always comes before the relative clause.

> The man at the back who was smiling
>
> Some friends from Toledo who were wealthy

Some constructions contain various types of nominal modifiers at the same time. The order is as in the following.

- The genial   milk   inspector   on my right   who was smoking a pipe
det / adj /noun adjunct /headnoun / prep.phrase / relative clause

- <u>the</u>   <u>mason's</u>   <u>two</u>   <u>very</u> <u>fine</u> <u>stone</u>   <u>walls</u>

det/possessive noun/limiting adj/adv intensifier/adj/n.adjunct/headnoun

- <u>the</u> <u>high</u>   <u>birth</u>   <u>rate</u> <u>in America</u>   <u>today</u>

det / adj / n-adjunct / headnoun / prep.phrase / adv.

The structural linguists use the immediate constituent

technique to describe a structure of modification. The immediate

constituent technique is applied on the assumption that most

structures of modification consist of two parts: the head noun

and the modifier. Leonard Bloomfield's <u>Language</u>,[13] which is consi-

dered to be one of the standard works of linguistic science, presents

a theory which was followed by the structuralists. This theory

suggests that every syntactic structure has at least two free

forms combined in a phrase.

$$\overset{1}{\text{John}} \quad \overset{2}{\text{ran}}$$

$$\overset{1}{\text{poor}} \quad \overset{2}{\text{John}}$$

The structure of nominal modification is explained as a

subordinative endocentric construction. That is, the whole

construction belongs to the same form class of one (or more) of

the constituents which is the center or head of the construction.

In the phrase <u>poor John</u>, <u>John</u> is the head of the construc-

tion. It contains the noun expression. <u>Poor</u> is the attributive

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[13] Bloomfield, <u>loc. cit.</u>

(modifier) of the head. It contains an adjective expression.

The construction poor John has the same function as John. It is called a character substance construction.

The important notion about levels of structure is that a construction is made of two parts (immediate constituents) each part of which is made of two parts, and so on, until the ultimate constituent is reached.

In the phrase This very fresh milk, This is a modifier of very fresh milk. Very is a modifier of fresh milk. Fresh is a modifier of milk. Milk is the head of the construction and the ultimate constituent (head).

Inside this character-substance construction there is a feature of order. The adjective expression precedes and modifies the noun expression.

The limiting adjectives (determiners and numeratives) precede and modify the descriptive adjective plus noun.

These seven new toys

There is also order in the descriptive adjective phrase whose meaning is that of qualitative character.

big black sheep

kind old man

The black sheep is big. Thus the blackness of the sheep is more central to the characteristics of the sheep than its size as expressed in the word big.

Immediate Constituent Diagrams

There are a number of methods of diagramming structures according to their immediate constituents. The simplest and most generally useful is that known as the tree diagram, used by Nida and Gleason[14].

The three old ladies upstairs own a boxer dog with a mean temper
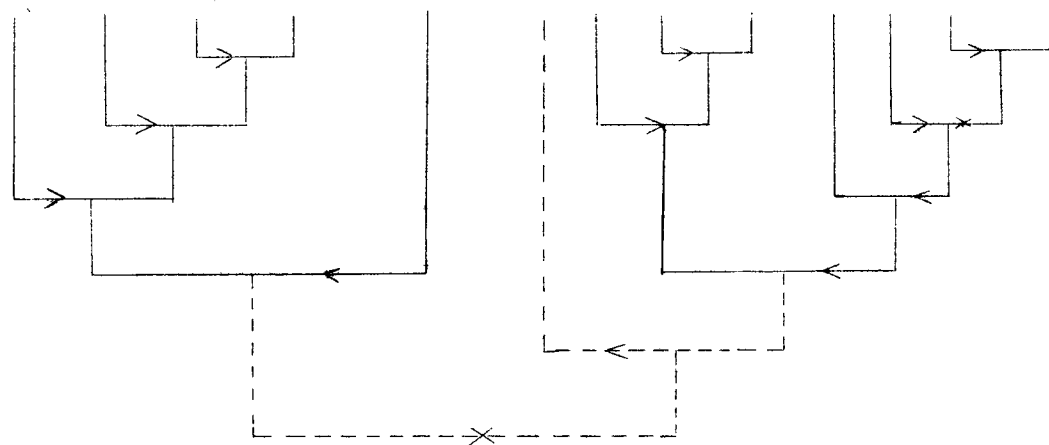
The modifier - head construction is marked by an arrow pointing toward the head.
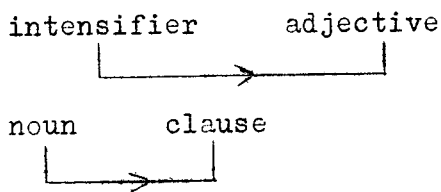
adjective   noun

article   noun

noun   phrase

noun   adverb

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[14] Gleason, op. cit., pp. 151 - 152.

intensifier   adjective

noun   clause

The three old ladies upstairs own a boxer dog with a mean temper

Det Numeral Adj Noun Adv. | Verb Det Noun Noun Prep Det Adj Noun

(diagram of sentence structure with labels: mod., head, n.phrase, adj.phrase, modifier, Adjunct, phrase intruder, verb complement, direct object, predicate, sentence)
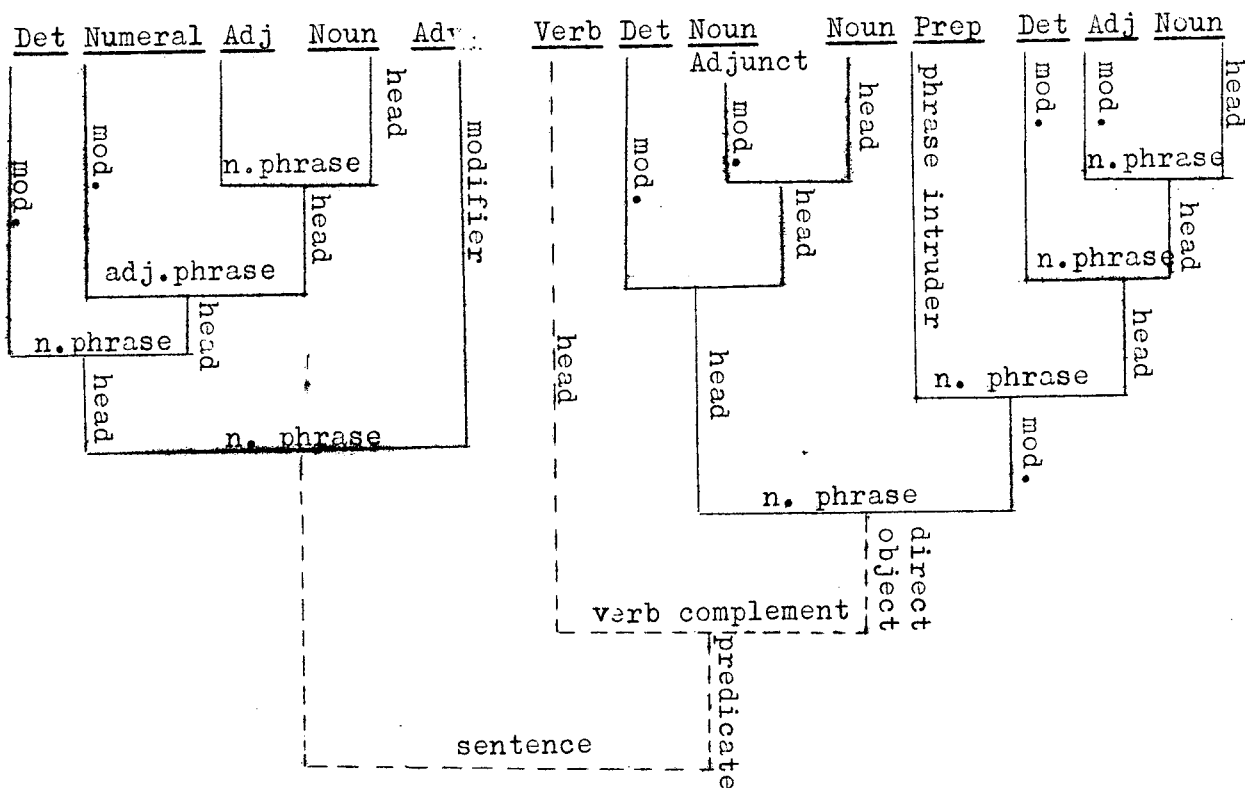
The following are examples of diagraming nominal construction by Nida (1966)[15]

(the) good woman   (adj + noun)

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[15] Eugene A. Nida, <u>A Synopsis of English Syntax.</u> Second revised edition. (Mouton & Co., The Hague, The Netherlands, 1966)

(a) floating stick   (verb-ing + noun)

(a) lovely and gracious personality   (adj and adj + noun)

(a) pretty young woman   (adj + adj + noun)

(the) university chemistry club   (noun + noun + noun)

(a) very fine dress   (intensifier (adv)

                                       + adj + noun

(a) rather recently published article (intensifier (adv)

                                       + adv + verb-ed

                                       + noun

Jack's affair   (noun possessive

                                       + noun)

almost all the chiefs   (predet + det + noun)

God almighty   (noun + adj)

(The) first person imaginable   (det + postdet

                                          ordinal   + noun

                                          + adj)

(a) book on the table   (det + noun + phrase)

(The) hope that he will come was destroyed (det + noun

                                          + clause

Jones, the baker, is a good fellow   (noun + noun in

                                          apposition)
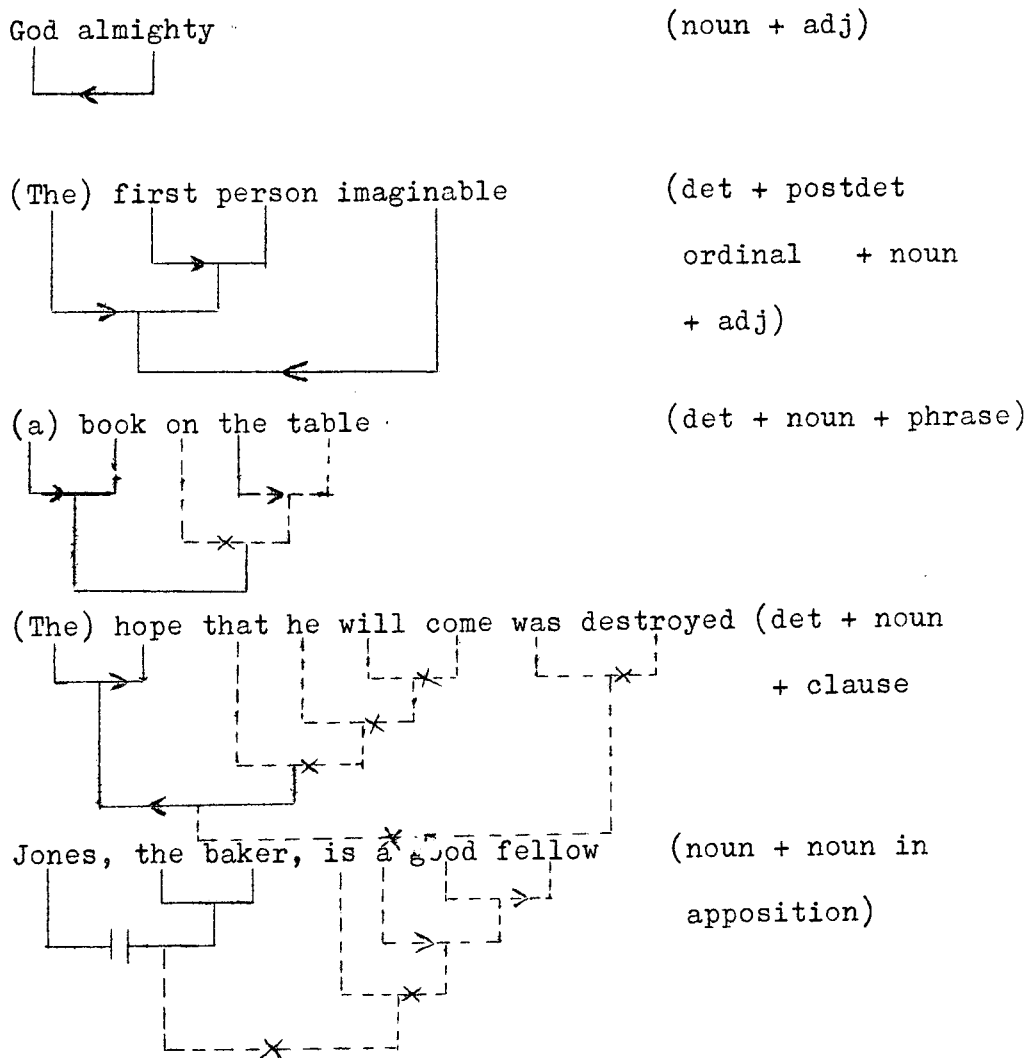
Fries[16] uses the line to explain the immediate constituents

of a phrase.

the | salary | checks | for | the | staff

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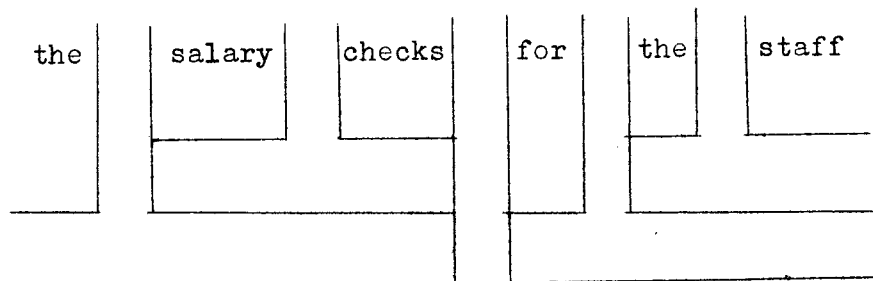
16 Fries, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 272.

Francis' "Chinese boxes"[17] can show clearly the series of structures of nominal modification one within the other. For the modifier-head construction, the arrow points toward the head. For example, ‎ good ⟶ man

the → | high → | birth ⟶ rate | ← in | America | ← today

the → | salary ⟶ checks | ← for → | the ⟶ staff
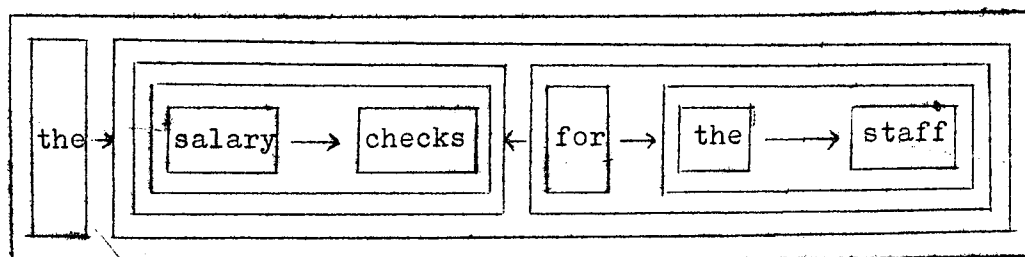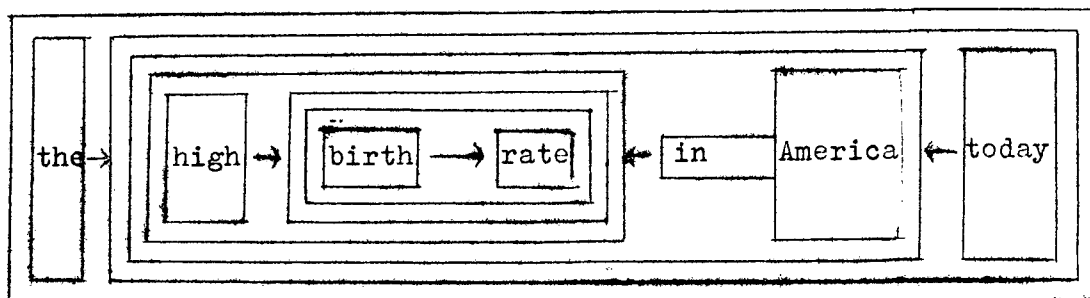
Note the discrepancy in the relationship between the and the remainder of the phrase as shown by Francis and that of Fries above.

There are many techniques that are used to illustrate the various levels of the relationship of words in a nominal construction. Francis's Chinese boxes are quite good at showing relationships, but it is not easy to draw the boxes.

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[17] Francis, op. cit., p. 312.

Hockett[18] used another different form of diagram to explain the relationships of immediate constituents.
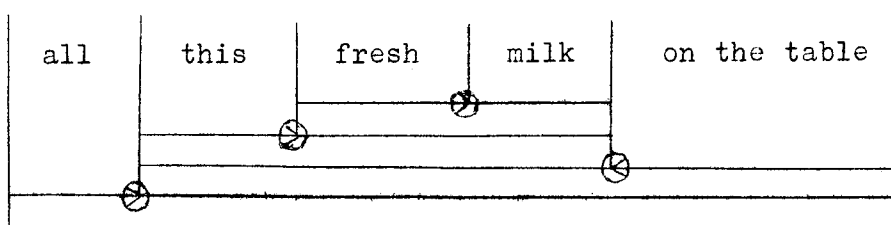
The marks " $>$ " and " $<$ " are placed at the junctions of immediate constituents, and point from the attributes towards the head.

The techniques used by structural grammarians to describe English nominal modification are rather clear. We can see how each construction is composed of a string of words. But there may be structural ambiguity which results from the structure itself of an utterance, and lexical ambiguity or the multiple meanings that reside in the words themselves, which structural techniques do not clarify.

The following are examples of structural ambiguities that Norman C. Stageberg points out in his article called Some Structural Ambiguities[19].

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[18] Charles F. Hockett, A Course in Modern Linguistics.(The Macmillan Company, 1959) p. 188.

[19] Norman C. Stageberg, "Some Structural Ambiguities" Readings in English Linguistics, Edited by Harold B. Allen. (Meredith Publishing Company 1964) pp. 111 - 119.

1. Adj + noun in possessive case + noun

A dull boy's knife. The trouble here is that the
adjective may modify either the noun in the possessive case or the
second noun. It is true that in English we tend to interpret an
adjective as modifying everything that follows it up to and in-
cluding the headword, but despite this tendency we often meet
ambiguities like a blond artist's model, a clever reporter's
man's necktie. An advertisement in the New Yorker played upon
this pattern with this legend: "A handsome man's shirt? No, a
man's handsome shirt.

2. adj + noun + noun

Little Charm Motel. In this case the adjective may
modify the immediately following noun or the second noun. We
meet ambiguities of this kind often in such expressions as modern
language teaching, big building owners, basic English text, hot
evening drink, fresh strawberry ice cream, hot bed covers, heavy
box production, and deep love movies.

3. Modifier (noun or adjective) + noun

Fleet planes told shoot snooper jet. What kind of
planes do we have here, speedy planes or planes of the fleet?
The sentence is ambiguous because we do not know the form class
of the modifier fleet.

German teachers visit Greensboro. Would you take this
to mean teachers of German or teachers from Germany?

4. More or most + adj + noun.   The ambiguity lies in the two possibilities - that more or most may modify the adjective or the noun.

Give me more realistic details.

The defense system should have fewer troops with more modern arms, including field missiles.
Occasionally the words less or least, because of their use in the sense of fewer and fewest, will cause a similar difficulty.

This soap has less harmful effects on the hands.

5. Noun + noun + noun

Study of fish blood system may aid cancer research.
Does the first noun fish modify the compound noun blood system, or does the compound noun fish blood modify system?

Cream cheese cake.   Is this cheese cake with cream or cake with cream cheese?

Usually when we meet a collocation of three nouns the sense operates to prevent ambiguity, as in hand garden plow and coil bed springs. When more than three nouns pile up, the result is likely to be confusion, as in this.

New Moscow bus student travel office

6. Adjective + series of nouns

A baseball player must have good vision, coordination,

and speed. Does the adjective _good_ in this sentence modify only _vision_, or the whole series of nouns? If one insists that it modifies only vision, then what can be said about this sentence, which has exactly the same pattern?

She raised _wonderful tulips, hyacinths, and crocuses._ Does wonderful here modify only tulips? Thus it seems apparent that the situation itself makes for ambiguity. Of course the lexical compatibility of the words may keep the reading from going wrong. For instance, the first sentence would be clear if the adjective were compatible only with _vision._

A baseball player must have _sharp vision, coordination, and speed._

7. Noun + series of adjectives.

In the following example of a _New York Times_ advertisement, the words describe three colors in which men's socks are available: _heather gray, red, and blue._ If one ordered red socks on the basis of this description, what color would he get -- red, or heather red?

8. Modifier + past participle + noun.

In this pattern the question is whether the first term modifies the past participle or the noun.

Steep pointed gables, _heavy padded coat_, _clean swept room._

9. -ing verb + noun.

This pattern may sometimes be constructed in two ways:
as modifier + noun, or as verb + noun object

So you think you have <u>moving problems</u>!

He joined the <u>standing committee</u>.

She maintains an <u>entertaining apartment</u>.

10. adj + noun + conjunction + noun.

The question is whether the adjective modifies only
the first noun or both nouns.

A new company was formed to handle <u>artificial ice and fuel</u>

11. Series of words + modifying word or word group.

The series usually consists of nouns. The question
that arises is whether the modifier refers to all items in the
series or only to the last item.

<u>A conservative, a Fascist, and an atheist who might</u>
<u>be excluded from the leading profession because of non-conforming</u>
<u>beliefs</u>

<u>Red, yellow, blue, navy, or white with trim.</u>

12. Modificand + two modifying word groups (prepositional
phrases, relative clauses and verbal phrases).

Here the trouble lies in the third term - what does it
refer to?

a) Modificand + prepositional phrase + relative clause. In this pattern the writer often intends the relative clause to modify the modificand; but when this clause appears to modify the last word of the preceding phrase, then the sentence is ambiguous. There is no ambiguity, of course, when ties in agreement prevent us from misreading.

The life of a movie star that the public sees does look glamorous.

She has cute ideas for parties that are easy to plan.

He has a blue satin ribbon around his neck which is tied in a bow at the top.

We have a reputation for fine food, quick service, and a friendly atmosphere which amounts to a tradition.

b) Modificand + prepositional phrase + verbal phrase.

There was a spotted dog in the group barking at the speeding ear.

c) Modificand + relative clause + prepositional phrase

I was talking about the books I read in the library.

d) Modificand + relative clause + verbal phrase.

We watched the old miner, Maheu, who was feeding his horse, begrimed with dust from the mine.

e) Modificand + relative clause + relative clause.

Fred had <u>a second-hand car that he later traded for a</u> <u>motorcycle which he loved to tinker with.</u>

f) Modificand + verbal phrase + relative clause.

There is also <u>a theater located near the business</u> <u>district which is crowded every night.</u>

g) Modificand + verbal phrase + verbal phrase.

I saw <u>the rake lying against the box stuffed with</u> <u>leaves from my last raking.</u>

Fries in his <u>Structure of English</u> points out that if one does not know the form-class, that is the part of speech of a word, then one does not recognize the pattern and as a consequence the word is ambiguous.

<u>German teachers</u> visit Greensboro.

He joins <u>the standing committee</u>.

Traditional grammar resorted to vague semantic notions in order to specify what could qualify as a well-formed expression. The structural linguists, in an effort to avoid such "mentalism" chose to reduce this goal drastically. Thus structuralists claimed on occasion simply to give an account of which sequences of words occur in a particular body of sentences which were examined. Linguistic analysis was then said to succeed simply in providing

a set of elements by means of which one could transcribe sentences
as linear sequences of units. Structuralists also claimed that
structural science provided, or should have provided, exact pro-
cedures for constructing automatically a grammatical analysis for
any given presented sentence or for a language as a whole, but
with no indications of just what sort of thing a grammatical
analysis would have to be. But in any case, the attempt to explain
directly the knowledge which the language user has of grammatical
well-formedness had been abandoned.

Structural grammar can explain rather clearly how words
on the surface of structures of nominal modification are related
to one another, but it only explains what are visible connections
between words. It is too objective to explain a language
thoroughly. It gives no deep explanation of language, but just
naively assumes that mere description will provide its own inter-
pretation. There are a lot of invisible things that speakers
understand by their intuition. This part of the language, ignored
by structuralists in accordance with their theories, is important.
This is the weak point of structural grammar. This is why
structural grammar is insufficient to explain how a language
works.