

# Contemporary Grammar of English

## Third Year 2020-2021

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Lecture 21:

- Post-determiners:





# Post-determiners: Closed-class Quantifiers



There are two small groups of closed-class quantifiers which function as post-determiners:

1. Those that occur only with plural count nouns: many, a few, few, fewer, several
  - I have corrected the many spelling errors in your report.
  - She invited a few friends to the party. ( some friends )
  - She's got few friends left. (not many friends)
  - There are fewer honest politicians in Iraq.
  - I haven't seen her for several years.
2. Those that occur only with noncount nouns: much, little, a little
  - Can you give me a little help? (some help)
  - They gave little help. (not much help)
  - We don't have much money.
  - Some of the young players have so much ability.

# Post-determiners: Closed-class Quantifiers



- **Few** and **little** may be preceded by central determiners other than **a**: **these few days, that little money.**
- **Several** can be preceded by a possessive determiner in the sense of 'separate', 'respective': **their several opinions.**
- **Many and few** can also be used predicatively in formal style: **His faults were many/few.**
- **Many** has the additional potentiality of functioning as a pre-determiner with singular count nouns preceded by a/an:
  - Many an ambitious student. (= many ambitious students)
  - Many a good athlete. (= many good athletes)
- The quantifier **enough** is used with both count and noncount nouns:
  - There are (not) enough students.
  - There is (not) enough money.

Occasionally it follows the noun (especially noncount: **money enough**), but this use strikes many people as archaic or dialectal.

# Post-determiners: Open-class Quantifiers



There is also a large open class of phrasal quantifiers which function semantically like the closed-class quantifiers, but most of which consist of a noun of quantity (lot, deal, amount, etc.) followed by *of* and often preceded by the indefinite article. Some of these, including *plenty of*, can co-occur equally with noncount and plural count nouns:

The room contained 

{	plenty of	}	students
	a lot of		
	lots of		
			furniture

These quantifiers (especially lots) are chiefly used informally. Others are restricted to quantifying only noncount nouns [1], or plural count nouns [2]:

The chest contained a 

{	great	}	deal	
	good			
	(large)	}		of money. [1]
	(small)			
quantity	}			
amount				

The hall contained a 

{	(great)	}	number of students. [2]
	(large)		
	(good)		



Although the quantity nouns *lot*, *deal*, etc. look like the head of a noun phrase, there are grounds for arguing that the whole expression (*a lot of*, *a good deal of*, etc.) functions as a determiner. Notably, the verb regularly has number concord with the second noun, rather than the first, as in:

- *Lots of food was on the table.* = *There was lots of food on the table.*

There is a tendency (esp in AmE) to use *amount* for the more generally acceptable number also with count nouns, despite objections to this usage:

- *There were large amounts of tourists on the ferry.*
- *This hall can seat a large amount of people.*

In familiar spoken English we find a wide range of quantifiers roughly synonymous with *lots of*:

- *We've got bags of time.*
- *She's got (stacks, heaps, loads) of money.*
- *They have umpteen jazz records*



# Phrasal Quantifiers



The phrasal quantifiers provide a means of imposing countability on noncount nouns, such quantifiers fall into the following groups:

1. General partitives:  $\left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{two pieces} \\ \text{a bit} \\ \text{an item} \end{array} \right]$  of  $\left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{news} \\ \text{information} \\ \text{furniture} \end{array} \right]$

2. Typical partitives:  $\left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{a slice of cake} \\ \text{a roast of meat} \\ \text{a few loaves of bread} \\ \text{a bowl of soup} \\ \text{a bottle of wine} \end{array} \right]$

3. Measures:  $\left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{a pint of beer} \\ \text{a spoonful of medicine} \\ \text{a pond of butter} \end{array} \right]$