Answers to exercises: Chapter 7

1. Identifying noun phrases

Remember that the best way to discover where a noun phrase begins and ends is to replace it with a pronoun.

- *their film stock*
- *the intense heat and powerful cosmic radiation on the moon*
  
  Here you may argue that there are two NPs, *the intense heat* and *powerful cosmic radiation on the moon*, but we think that it is actually two N’ constituents which have been co-ordinated to give a new N’, *intense heat and powerful cosmic radiation*. This constituent is then modified by *on the moon* and takes a determiner *the*.

- *the moon*
- *conditions that should have made it useless*
- *it*
- *the shadows*
- *light sources and, in particular, powerful spotlights*
- *multiple light sources*
- *powerful spotlights*
- *the only light source on the moon*
- *the moon*
- *the sun*
- *not one still picture*
- *the film footage*
- *NASA*
- *both*
- *the same time*

2. Which is the head?

We will ignore the pronouns here, as well as the noun phrases that just consist of a determiner and a noun. There isn’t much to say about them. Remember that even if a modifier consists of one adjective, it is still a full AP: the adjective could have had modification. This is different from a pre-modifying noun, which could not have been modified in any way.

- *their film stock*
  
  head: *stock*
  
  pre-modifier: noun film

- *the intense heat and powerful cosmic radiation on the moon*
  
  Since this NP contains two co-ordinated N’, we would have to say there are two heads, *heat* and *radiation*. The first N’ contains the AP pre-modification *intense* and the second two APs, *powerful* and *cosmic*. The co-ordinated N’ is post-modified by *on the moon*. 
conditions that should have made it useless
head: conditions
post-modifier: relative clause that should have made it useless

light sources and, in particular, powerful spotlights
Again, as a co-ordinated noun phrase, there isn’t any one head. Each conjunct contains one pre-modifier: the noun light and the AP powerful.

multiple light sources
head: sources
pre-modifier: AP multiple
noun light
Multiple is a little odd as an adjective; it does not do the things we expect an adjective to do. There is a group of these elements that indicate amount or number, including the numerals, that behave differently from other adjectives, and if you get serious about grammar, you might want to think about whether there should be a further category. However, given the categories we have introduced in the book, adjective is the most appropriate.

powerful spotlights
head: spotlights
pre-modifier: AP powerful

the only light source on the moon
head: source
pre-modifier: AP only (maybe with similar concerns to those for multiple)
noun light
post-modifier: PP on the moon

not one still picture
head: picture
pre-modifier: AP still
AP not one
It is not clear what to say about not one, but it seems clear to us that it forms a constituent; we have the structure [[not one] [still picture]] rather than [not [one still picture]]. So, we assume that not modifies one and one itself is one of these tricky adjectives like multiple.

the film footage
head: footage
pre-modifier: noun film

the same time
head: time
pre-modifier: AP same

3. Analysing noun phrases

(a) the self-styled apostle of the New Labour philosophy
head: apostle
determiner: article the
pre-modifier: AP self-styled (one of these elements that could have been considered a verb, but as we said in the book, it can be so hard to distinguish that we analyse them as adjectives; however, it may be something you want to look into further — there are many such examples in the noun phrases below)
post-modifier: PP of the New Labour philosophy

(b) an all-singing, all-dancing, devastatingly handsome cash machine
head: machine
determiner: article an
pre-modifier: AP all-singing
  AP all-dancing
  AP devastatingly handsome
noun cash

(c) one of several Latinos springing up from the Spanish-American diaspora that is gaining ground (and financial muscle) on the mainstream music industry in Nashville, Los Angeles and New York
This is a little tricky. Structurally, it looks like a missing head pre-modified by one, meaning something like ‘one Latino of several Latinos’. Under this analysis we would say:
head: 0
pre-modifier: AP one
post-modifier: of several Latinos springing up from the Spanish-American diaspora that is gaining ground (and financial muscle) on the mainstream music industry in Nashville, Los Angeles and New York
Can you think of another way of analysing it?
Since there is a long and interesting noun phrase as the complement of of, let’s take a look at that one too.
head: Latinos
determiner: article 0
Remember the argument we had for saying that plural and non-count nouns can take a zero determiner.
pre-modifier: AP several (some of you might have put this as a determiner, but since it can combine with the as in the several benefits of online banking, we don’t consider it a determiner)
post-modifier: clause springing up from the Spanish-American diaspora that is gaining ground (and financial muscle) on the mainstream music industry in Nashville, Los Angeles and New York
You may have analysed this as two separate post-modifiers, springing up from the Spanish-American diaspora and that is gaining ground (and financial muscle) on the mainstream music industry in Nashville, Los Angeles and New York, but we think that that is gaining ground (and financial muscle) on the mainstream music industry in Nashville, Los Angeles and New York modifies Spanish-American diaspora and therefore is part of a very long post-modifier of Latinos. It does not itself modify Latinos.
(d) *the little boy at the birthday party who nobody ever wants to talk to*

- **head:** boy
- **determiner:** article *the*
- **pre-modifier:** AP *little*
- **post-modifier:** PP *at the birthday party*
- **relative clause:** *who nobody ever wants to talk to*

(e) *this nascent Miami-based power house*

- **head:** house
- **determiner:** demonstrative *this*
- **pre-modifier:** AP *nascent*
  - **AP Miami-based**
- **noun power**

(f) *an absurdly pointless dexterity with my hands*

- **head:** dexterity
- **determiner:** article *an*
- **pre-modifier:** AP *absurdly pointless*
- **post-modifier:** PP *with my hands*

(g) *a new, younger audience, all eager to buy merchandise*

- **head:** audience
- **determiner:** article *a*
- **pre-modifier:** AP *new*
  - **AP younger**
- **post-modifier:** AP *all eager to buy merchandise*

  *This is an example of how an AP containing an adjective which itself has post-modification usually occurs after the noun, unlike other APs.*

(h) *the first legal nude beach in Australia*

- **head:** beach
- **determiner:** article *the*
- **pre-modifier:** AP *first*
  - **AP nude**
- **post-modifier:** PP *in Australia*

(i) *the denial of the validity of material things*

- **head:** denial
- **determiner:** article *the*
- **post-modifier:** PP *of the validity of material things*

  *Note that the second PP modifies validity and not denial, hence it is nested inside the post-modifier.*

(j) *the undisputed king of the on-line ostrich dealers*

- **head:** king
- **determiner:** article *the*
- **pre-modifier:** AP *undisputed*
- **post-modifier:** PP *of the on-line ostrich dealers*
4. Find the head noun

Intuitively, we would probably all agree that the key nouns in these noun phrases are thing, whisky and crisps, respectively. We would say that these are the semantic heads. Structurally, it looks more like kind, brand and sort head the noun phrases. This would give a standard structure with a determiner, a head noun and a post-modifying PP. If we assume that thing, whisky and crisps head their respective phrases, then it is not so clear how to analyse what kind of, which brand of and what sort of.

Let’s use agreement to try to discover evidence for one structure or the other. Remember all the time that as linguists, we are not out to tell people what they should say; we want to study what people do say. We will therefore just tell you what things would count as evidence; we will not have anything to say about what people prefer. We will leave it to you to test with native speakers or search a corpus. If you use the web, make sure that surprising results are not misprints or English produced by non-native speakers. Even with these caveats, we suspect you will find a fair amount of variation, indicating that there is some disagreement or uncertainty.

We turn to noun phrase internal agreement first, which is normally limited to number agreement between the determiner and the head noun. This means replacing the wh-determiners with determiners which show number, like this/that and these/those. We also need to make sure that one of the nouns is singular and one plural, so we change the first two to kind of things and brands of whisky. We then get the following noun phrases:

(a) this/these kind of things
(b) that/those brands of whisky
(c) this/these sort of crisps

What grammaticality judgements would you or your native speaker friends assign to these? Do you and they prefer agreement to be with the first noun or the second?

Let’s turn now to agreement with the verb. In order for the determiner not to influence the choice, we go back to the wh-determiners.

(a) What kind of things attract/attracts the most attention?
(b) Which brands of whisky sell/sells best?
(c) What sort of crisps is/are crunchiest?

Do native speakers use the verb form which agrees with the first noun or the second? Are there differing views?

Now, if you find that there is a preference for agreement with the second noun, so that the structure would be something like:

those [kind of] things

Would you then be put off by the fact that that is not a ‘normal structure’? No, you shouldn’t be. Language changes (or more correctly, language users change language). The fact that some people pronounce it as what kinda things can be seen as evidence that this is treated as one unit.
The fact that you may get inconsistent behaviour should not bother you either; just compare
A lot of flowers was/were delivered and
A bunch of flowers was/were delivered
They are very similar in structure, but native speakers treat them quite differently. Some have changed in structure over time and some have not been so quick in doing that.