

READING GROUP ON SYNTAX OF QUANTITY

(On Richard S. Kayne 2002 'On the Syntax of Quantity in English')

Some Big Claims

- (i) There are some 'unpronounced elements' in a noun phrase, such as NUMBER (§1), A (§2), GOOD (§7), and VERY (§9).
- (ii) In all languages, modifiers with the interpretation of *many* or *few* necessarily modify NUMBER (or *number*). (=260)
- (iii) UG excludes the possibility that a single adjective could simultaneously express what is expressed by *large/small* and what is expressed by *number*. (=261)
- (iv) **Principle of Decompositionality PD:** UG imposes a maximum of one interpretable syntactic feature per lexical item. (=262)

Observations

- (i) *Few, little, many, and much* are adjectives.
 - ☞ comparative/superlative forms (1-23), *too* (24-33)
- (ii) *Few* and *many* are adjectival modifiers of NUMBER.
 - ☞ *small* (34-35), (41-42); (116)
- (iii) *Few* and *a few* are not the same:
 - ☞ no corresponding comparative. (99) vs. (100)
 - ☞ polarity items (101) vs. (102).
 - ☞ *few* → *many* vs. *a few* → **a many* (103) vs. (104)
 - ☞ *very* (105) vs. (106)
- (iv) The difference between *a few* and **a many* → NUMBER (singular): the 'small' component of interpretation. E.g. (119-120) vs. (121-122); fn 24.
- (v) The difference between **a many* and *a good many* → GOOD. E.g. (137).
- (vi) The difference between *many* and *numerous* → *numerous* incorporates *number* (*number* + *ous*) E.g. (163-167), (180) vs. (181), (187-190) vs. (191-194).
- (vii) Regarding AP movement, English and French differ. E.g. (214-215) vs. (216-217), (220-221) vs. (222-223).
- (viii) *Many a* imposes distributivity, e.g. (233-234).

Assumptions and Elaborations

- (i) Overt *number* is an ordinary count noun; NUMBER is neither singular nor plural. E.g. (43-47), (56). NUMBER may be singular optionally. E.g. (97), (111).
- (ii) Overt *a* requires a singular noun. The unpronounced A (=X⁰) does not require a singular noun; it requires a non-plural. E.g. (60-61).
- (iii) There is AP (*how* A and *too* A) movement/pied-piping within DP. E.g. (66).
- (iv) The presence of *a* in exclamatives is necessary, e.g. (75).
- (v) In exclamatives, *a* requires a singular, e.g. (64), (72), (76). A singular N forces the choice of *a* over A, e.g. (62), (82). If N is neither plural nor singular, X⁰ would be A, e.g. (81).
- (vi) *How big* is lexical whereas *what* is not lexical, e.g. (72) vs. (74);
- (vii) *Few* can (marginally) cooccur with overt *number* only if AP pied-piping has taken place. E.g. (84) vs. (79-80); (85-88).
- (viii) GOOD is incompatible with comparatives (*-er, too, so*). E.g. (138), (148-155).
- (ix) Scalar reversal with adjectives always depends on the presence of either *very* or VERY. E.g. (195), (197-198).
- (x) *So/very/incredibly numerous* and *so smart* must raise within DP. E.g. (207-209).
- (xi) Bare *numerous, many, and few* must raise via head movement when they have sentential scope. E.g. (225), (227-229).
- (xii) *quite a few = quite a little + NUMBER*. E.g. (238) vs. (239).
- (xiii) Bare *few* and bare *little* can license polarity items. → NOT *few* and NOT *little*. E.g. (248-251).
- (xiv) Other unpronounced elements include AMOUNT (§12), NOT (§13), COLOR, SIZE, CITY, STATE, RIVER, DOG, PERSON (§15), PLACE (fn 6), PEOPLE (fn 21), and MANY/MUCH (fn 28).

(prepared by Sze-Wing Tang)