

ABSTRACT

The Indefinite Article as a Signal of Countable Use of Uncountable Nouns

The present thesis deals with the role of premodification in the countability of nouns. More specifically, it concentrates on the dual class nouns, i.e. nouns that are used both countably and uncountably. The aim of the thesis is to determine whether the presence of premodification results in the countable use of dual class nouns. Also, the semantics of the premodifiers is taken into account.

The theoretical part of the thesis summarizes information from grammar books and describes the category of countability. All of the types of nouns, i.e. countable, uncountable and dual class, are characterized. Semantic classification of adjectives is included, too, as adjectives are the most frequent noun class in terms of premodification.

The empirical part of the thesis concentrates on the analysis of specific examples and aims to decide the impact of the presence of premodification on the dual class nouns. For these purposes, three nouns were chosen (*difference*, *interest*, *language*) and fifty instances of each noun were excerpted from the British national corpus. Each of the instances was assessed in terms of countability, in the case of *difference* the semantics of premodifiers was determined (this step was eliminated in the case of the other nouns, as the hypothesis concerning the role of semantics in the countability turned out to be incorrect). Also, postmodification was taken into account. As for the formal division of the empirical part, each noun has its own chapter that is further divided into count and noncount part with tables characterizing individual groups of use. These differ from noun - they were determined on the basis of repeating phrases or patterns after sorting out the instances. In the case of *difference* and *interest*, also additional excerption is included. Their aim is to focus on the role of premodification in frequently occurring constructions. The results are summarized in tables.

The extent of the present paper does not allow deducing any general conclusions, however, it is still possible to describe certain tendencies considering the behaviour of the dual class nouns. Generally speaking, the impact of premodification varies. Very important is probably the semantics of the noun itself. The analysis has shown that one of the instances in which premodification influences the countability are nouns with almost no difference between their count and noncount meanings. In the case of the present analysis, *difference* is an example of such a noun, behaving

countably in the majority of the excerpted sentences. In the rest of the examined nouns, *interest* and *language*, premodification is of no influence. The key factor is always the semantics of noun. To conclude, the impact of premodification cannot be generalized; each noun has to be examined individually.