

The Heart of a Noun

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The purpose of this paper is to show what happens when nouns lose heart – that is, when they lose those pragmantactic properties which are fundamental for the prototypical functioning of nominal elements. In (1), I show some of the steps in the transition from locational nouns – words like *top*, *front*, *back*, *side*, and so on – to prepositions or adverbial expressions.

- (1) a. There was water on the (shiny) top(s)_i of the car(s)_j.
a'. There was water on it_{i,j} / i_j.
b. There was water on (*shiny) top(*s)_i of the car(s)_j.
b'. There was water on it_{*i,j} / them_{*i,j}.
c. There was water atop (*of) the car(s).
d. He put his walkie-talkie to the side.
e. He put his walkie-talkie aside.

When locational nouns have articles or other determiners, the nouns can be either pluralized or modified, or both; when the article is absent, both of these options also become impossible. A correlated phenomenon is the possibility of coreference: the contrast between (1a') and (1b') suggests that while non-locational nouns like *car(s)* can always be referred to by pronouns like *it* and *they* (and the same would hold true for other proforms like *this / that*), such presupposed coreference is only possible for locational nouns that are preceded by articles.

Note that the loss of the article is only possible when the locational noun occurs as the object of certain prepositions, as can be seen in (2).

- (2) a. There was water in/on/by/near/under/etc. the front of the car(s).
b. There was water in/*on/*by/*near/*under front of the car(s).

Thus we see that while *front* allows the deletion of the article only when it is preceded by *in* (the same is true for *back*), and while *top* only permits articlelessness after *on* [and can we really believe that the link between inness and the articlelessness before the frontback dimension, and the link between onness and articlelessness before the notion of superiorsurface, are unrelated?], *side* can be articleless after *in*, and possibly after *by*, assuming that adequate justification can be given for a derivation like *by the side of X* → *by side of X* → *by side X* → *beside X*. I am not sanguine about finding evidence for deriving (1e) from (1d), nor for finding plausible and demonstrable sources for adverbs (?) like *away*, *apart*, *akin*, *ahead*, *afoot*, *asea* (there appear to be a fair number of

these - possibly on the order of a few dozen) from prepositional phrases whose objects are the nouns *way, part, kin, head, foot*, and so on, though it seems fairly uncontroversial to postulate the presence of these elements as morphemes following the prefix *a-* in the former words.

I would argue that this process of nominal decay can proceed even further, as suggested by the contrast between (3) and (4):

- (3)
- a. [Zulécio is in the side of the car.] → (By **Article Drop**)
 - b. (*Zulécio is in side of the car. → (By **Preposition Incorporation**)
 - c. Zulécio is inside of the car. → (By **Of Drop [OPT]**)
 - d. Zulécio is inside the car.
- (4)
- a. Zulécio is by the side of the car. → (By *Article Drop*)
 - b. *Zulécio is by side of the car. → (By *Preposition Incorporation*)
 - c. *Zulécio is byside of the car. → (By *Of Drop [OBL]*)
 - d. (*Zulécio is byside the car.) → (Morphophonemics: *by* > *be*)
 - e. Zulécio is beside the car.

The relevant distinction here, which I would like to draw between *inside* and *beside*, appears most clearly in the contrast between (3a) and (3b). In the former case, I would suggest that it makes sense to assign to the noun *side*, even though it has a preposition *in* prefixed to it, enough nominality to prevent the dropping of the *of* which English always likes to have between any two nouns. Thus in English, we can only say *a kilogram of butter* or *a glass of milk*, while German allows their *of-less* variants: *ein Kilo Butter* and *ein Glas Milch*. What is interesting, in the context of a discussion of nominal decay, is the difference in optionality of this *of* between (3a) and (3c): in the former sentence, there would be no question of a possible dropping of the *of* after the *side*, whereas in (3c), after the article has vanished, apparently *side* sinks to a value of nominality that is low enough so that the English noun-separating *of* need only appear as an option. For some reason that is not clear to me (I wonder if it has to do with the obligatory conversion of *by* to *be* before *side*), *beside* loses so much of the nominality of *side* that no intervening *of* after it is even tolerated as an option.

I would argue that the decay of nominality can continue, so that in forms like *behind* and *beneath*, it may even become difficult for the English speaker to see any relationship to such historically derivative words like *hindsight* and *hindquarters*. There is no longer any clear motivation for analyzing *hind-* as a noun, and of course, less still for seeing *neth-* as one in the probably morphologically related *netherworld* and *nethermost* and *beneath*. In the case of *between*, probably there are many speakers who no longer perceive any morphological link to such words as *twenty*, *twin*, *twilight*, *twain* (and *twelve* and *two*). I assume that the process has proceeded so far in the case of *but* that no one but a professional etymologist or historian of English can recognize that this word once contained *out*.

I want to argue that these processes of nominal decay, which appear to be linked to article loss and preposition incorporation, are not restricted to only locational nouns: consider the facts in (5):

- (5) a. Felix went to the bed, (but it was so fluffy that he couldn't fall asleep).
 b. Felix went to bed, (*but it was so fluffy that he couldn't fall asleep).
 c. Felix went to *(the) bed, which was hard as flint.

With nouns like *bed*, *church*, *school*, *college*, *stage*, etc., which can become articleless under certain conditions involving prototypical use, and so on, we see that articlelessness brings with it, as was the case for the locational nouns, an associated impossibility of referring to the denuded noun with coreferential pronouns, or of modification by relative clauses referring to the articleless noun itself. Interestingly, it remains possible to have relative clauses referring to the place denoted by the prepositional phrase that contains the articleless noun: cf. (6).

- (6) Jairson went to bed, where he fell asleep

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My paper will present related facts concerning the behavior of locational nouns in Brazilian and in the Mozambican Bantu language Kitchangana. I will also examine the ways in which predicate nouns (as in (7)) and measure phrases (as in (8)) seem to represent cases of defective noun phrases,

- (7) a. Delson is a doctor_i, (*and I have always wanted to be it_i).
 b. Delson is a doctor, which he has always wanted to be.
 c. ?Delson is a doctor, which Eneida has always wanted to be.
 d. ??Delson is a doctor, which Edmar is not.

- (8) a. The concert has lasted six hours, (*which are passing slowly).
 b. The examination will cost six dollars, (*which are on the table).

with an eye to seeing whether there are any general parameters which can be appealed to in studying the ways which nouns “lose heart,” eventually fading from sight even morphologically, as has begun to happen in words like *aback*, and *behind*, and has definitely come full cycle in words like *window* or *daisy*, which used to mean “the eye of the wind” and “the eye of the day,” respectively.

The problem of loss of heart is of course not restricted to nouns alone; I intend to search for a general theory of the processes which are involved in this phenomenon, to which I hope that the present paper may make an initial contribution.