Evolution of the Conception of Parts of Speech

(Diplomová práce)

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1. INTRODUCTION

Parts of speech are often seen as the basis for syntactic analysis of a language. As Crystal (1967, 25) argues, linguists frequently assume that “one can satisfactorily describe the word classes of (say) English before going on to the ‘meaty’ part of a grammar,” treating parts of speech as merely “part of a theoretical preamble to grammar.” This line of thinking is then reflected in the way they structure their grammar books, which traditionally follow a very similar pattern of putting parts of speech towards the beginning of a book and following it with more complicated matters. Crystal (1967, 25) considers this approach to be misguided because parts of speech cannot be grasped in isolation from the more complex parts of grammar.

Still, this way of thinking is relatively widespread because it seems to fit nicely into the way we think of language as a structure of several levels, each of which has a certain basic unit, which is viewed as a basic building block of a unit that is higher up in the abstract hierarchy. As a result, words and their categories are regarded as a natural starting point for explorations into the phrasal, clausal, and sentential domains.

In a way, the relationship between parts of speech and other parts of grammar is complex because it involves reciprocity: parts of speech are defined in terms of other parts of grammar, and other parts of grammar are defined in terms of parts of speech. Consequently, while Crystal’s criticism is not without merit, it is hard to come up with some part of grammar that could be defined at the very beginning of a book without using another part of grammar to help account for the former.

In the previous paragraphs, it has been shown that parts of speech are frequently considered fundamental for syntactic analysis. However, it has also been noted that their somewhat special status in grammar reference books may not be fully deserved. In this thesis, parts of speech are viewed as an important concept because they help linguists to make general statements that would otherwise not be possible. It is acknowledged that they either may be seen as fundamental in the sense that they are
related to the concept of word, which is thought to be a basic unit of syntax, or may not be seen as fundamental because their definitions require some understanding of other parts of syntax.

Now that the confusion surrounding the status of parts of speech within grammar has been clarified, it is time to move to the crucial matters that will be elaborated in detail in the following pages. It should be emphasized that the purpose of the whole endeavor is, among other things, to show that even such a seemingly simple, straightforward concept as parts of speech is in fact quite complex and multifaceted, that it has never been fully agreed upon what is meant by the term, and that there have been various incompatible conceptualizations to take account of.

One major paradigm in this area can be traced back to Dionysius Thrax and his conceptualization of parts of speech. His line of thinking has had such a strong grip on the minds of grammarians for centuries to come that even in this day and age we are still frequently faced with it. We might call it the traditional grammar view of parts of speech, or also the pre-linguistic view of parts of speech. What is characteristic of this approach is reliance on a mixture of criteria: semantic, morphological, and syntactic. That is the case despite the fact that the criteria have been used inconsistently and often provided conflicting results.

There have been numerous attempts to change the unreliable methodology underlying the identification of parts of speech. In the 20th century, with the advent of modern linguistics, came the idea that parts of speech should be identified solely on the basis of formal criteria. No semantic component should be part of the process. This view, which can be regarded as another major paradigm in this area, is prevalent nowadays, having been espoused by American structuralists, generativists, and even by most of the offshoots of these.

As far as the organization of the thesis is concerned, one part of it will focus on the development of the concept of parts of speech throughout the centuries, presenting various approaches as they came along. The concept as we know it dates back to the times of ancient Greece and Rome (Crystal 2008, 352). The way Greek grammarians
thought about it had a tremendous impact on the way Latin grammarians thought about it, and Latin grammarians then influenced their counterparts for other languages. As a result, much of what was known about parts of speech up until the 20th century was, to a very large extent, based on Latin. The 20th century represents a time when the strict reliance on Latin was slowly but surely being abandoned in favor of more modern approaches based on the notion that the same categories cannot be blindly adopted across languages. Still, as Gil (2000, 173) argues, word categorization remains largely Eurocentric: Latin played a huge role in the past; now the same role is played by English. Consequently, while European languages may be, with some difficulties, accounted for with the help of such Eurocentric frameworks, more distant languages are most probably not. One of those who have claimed that each language should be considered and described separately and in its own terms was the American anthropologist Franz Boas, who is best known for his studies of Native Americans and their culture. Boas (1911) placed considerable emphasis on diversity and was acutely aware of the fact that universal concepts should not be blindly applied to the study of all languages of the world.

In the second part, the thesis will explore in detail several problematic areas, providing, if possible, answers to such burning questions as:

- What criteria are there that help distinguish different parts of speech?
- Are parts of speech general or language-specific categories?
- How is it possible to determine parts of speech (categories of words) when there is no precise definition of what a word actually is?
- What is the role of prototypical (core) and fuzzy (peripheral) category members?

First of all, what needs to be considered is the fact that the concept of parts of speech is based on the concept of word. That seems unproblematic, but the reverse is true. It may seem surprising in view of all advances of modern linguistics, but there is no precise definition for “word.” Yes, there is a rule of thumb saying that words are all those strings of letters that are separated by spaces, but such a rule is just that. This method of recognizing words is easy enough to operationalize in real life, but it...
creates all sorts of problems, which will be dealt with later. People’s intuitions about which string is a word and which is not are definitely not a reliable source of information about the status of a given string. If there is not a reliable way of recognizing words, it might make their categorization problematic.

Furthermore, any problems at this stage of grammatical analysis will have repercussions in analyzing constituents higher up in the hierarchy, that is, phrases. If it is difficult to segment text into words reliably, what impact does that have on phrases? To understand what the concept of phrase signifies requires understanding what the concept of word signifies; and to determine what phrasal categories there are, it is necessary to determine what word (lexical) categories there are.

However, instead of focusing on the word as a problematic constituent, linguists tend to gloss over any issues related to it and take the concept of word for granted, something that does not need any explanation because it is self-explanatory. In this way, they sidestep this conundrum altogether and can devote their efforts to word categorization.

Word categorization is, however, similarly problematic because there is no single, reliable way of doing it. In fact, there are quite a few approaches, each of them offering its own set of criteria. The question arises which kinds of criteria are the right ones. There is no consensus on this matter, which means that one and the same word can be categorized differently in different approaches.

Also, different approaches vary in the way they structure their categorizations. Some theories assume that there should be only a very limited number of categories, while others do not have this limitation, which leads to a very fragmented categorization. The former theories are guided by a principle of economy called Occam’s razor, which Gil (2000, 175) explains in the following way: “A theory positing the existence of fewer entities is preferable to one positing the existence of more.” In other words, less is more. If the number of categories rises rapidly, it becomes progressively harder to make useful generalizations. On the other hand, if the categorization is not refined enough, the categories created in the process become
useless because they contain too many relatively heterogeneous members. Therefore, it is clear that a compromise is called for. The ideal, according to Crystal (1967, 41), is to have few general classes with some degree of intuitive coherence.

Another major issue related to parts of speech is whether they are universal categories that can be applied to any language, or language-specific categories that can be applied only to a particular language. In fact, the situation need not necessarily be one of binary opposition, because it is possible to combine the two seemingly opposite views to create a compromise solution (Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 31) Such a compromise would involve thinking of parts of speech as universal categories and, at the same time, as language-specific categories.

It is important to note that although the concept of parts of speech is ubiquitous and is considered to form the basis of grammatical analysis, it remains elusive and is likely to stay that way because there will never be a complete consensus on what a proper categorization should look like, with linguists of different persuasions placing their trust in different methods of categorizing.
2. PARTS OF SPEECH I: EVOLUTION

2.1. Ancient Greece and Rome

The concept of parts of speech began to be developed in ancient Greece. At the very outset, it was conceptualized in quite a distinct way from what we are used to these days. This first notion was not in fact even a product of specifically grammatical inquiries, as there were no grammarians as such at that time (Robins 1966, 8). Instead, the parts of speech identified were viewed through the prism of logic and rhetoric. Consequently, any possible references to the concept were not to be found in any grammar books, but in philosophical treatises that were not primarily concerned with grammar (Robins 1966, 8).

The philosophical notion of parts of speech was first suggested by Plato but was later also used by Aristotle. The Greek term for this notion was mērē lōgou, which can be translated as ‘sentence parts’ (Robins 1966, 7). Unlike today, it did not refer to word categories then. It was based on the observation that sentences can be divided into two parts, one of which is called ónoma and the other rhêma (Robins 1966, 7). The former tells us what we are talking about and is nominal in nature, while the latter tells us something about what we are talking about and is verbal in nature. Aristotle differed from Plato in that he added a third sentence part called sýndesmos, which included what is now known as conjunctions, articles, and pronouns (Robins 1966, 10). As mentioned above, this concept of parts of speech is,

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<th>Plato</th>
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<td>Aristotle</td>
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<td>Stoics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dionysius Thrax</td>
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<td>Apollonius Dyscolus</td>
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<td>Priscian</td>
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<td>Marcus Terentius Varro</td>
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<td>Aelius Donatus</td>
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however, different from what we understand by that term nowadays. From the current standpoint, the division of sentences into two main parts as suggested by Plato resembles a different concept, namely, that of topic and comment. Since that is not what we are concerned here with, it makes little sense to dwell on it any further.

As Robins argues (1966, 8), grammar as a separate discipline within philosophy can be traced to the **Stoics**. And it was the Stoics who transformed the Platonic/Aristotelian version of parts of speech into something that is much closer to the modern conception. It was them who started to think of *mērē lóγou* as word categories, not as sentence parts. In this way, they set the stage for the grammarian Dionysius Thrax and his investigation into the matter. The Stoics modified the system of parts of speech several times, expanding the number of categories to six (Robins 1966, 13).

However, the first important milestone in the evolution of the concept of parts of speech came only when the Greek grammarian **Dionysius Thrax** set out his system of eight parts of speech in his book *Tékhnē grammatikē* (*The Art of Grammar*). This book was pedagogical in nature and was supposed to help in teaching and learning classic Greek. Robins (1966, 13) argues that this system of parts of speech might have been devised by Dionysius’s teacher Aristarchus of Samothrace, but that is merely a speculation. At this point, it seems appropriate to elaborate on the individual categories identified. In the following overview, the names of the categories are taken over from Robins (1966), and their definitions from Davidson (1874).

- **ónoma (noun):**
  - “a declinable part of speech, signifying something either concrete or abstract (concrete, as stone; abstract as education); common or proper (common, as man, horse; proper, as Socrates, Plato)”
  - five attributes: number (*singular, dual, plural*), gender (*masculine, feminine, neuter*), form (*simple, compound, super-compound*), species (*primitive, derivative*), case (*nominative, generic, dative, accusative, vocative*)
- **rhêma (verb):**
  - “an indeclinable word, indicating time, person, and number, and showing activity or passivity”
  - eight attributes: moods (*indicative, imperative, optative, subjunctive, infinitive*), voices/dispositions (*passivity, activity, mediality*), form (*simple, compound, super-compound*), species (*primitive, derivative*), number (*singular, dual, plural*), person (*first, second, third*), tense (*past, present, future*), conjugation

- **metochê (participle):**
  - “a word partaking of the nature both of nouns and verbs”
  - It shares attributes with both nouns and verbs. The exceptions are mood and person.

- **árhron (article):**
  - “a declinable part of speech prefixed or subjoined to the various cases of nouns”
  - It has different forms when prefixed and when subjoined.
  - three attributes: gender, number, case

- **antônymia (pronoun):**
  - “a word assumed instead of a noun, and indicating definite persons”
  - six attributes: person, gender, number, case, form, species

- **prósthesi (preposition):**
  - “a word placed before any of the parts of speech, both in Composition and in Syntax”

- **epírrhêma (adverb):**
  - “an indeclinable part of speech, said of a verb or added to a verb”
• **sýndesmos (conjunction):**
  
  o “a word binding together a thought in order and filling up the hiatuses of speech”

As can be seen from the overview, the way words are classified is rather inconsistent because there is no single criterion that has a decisive role in distinguishing between individual parts of speech. In fact, the proposed classification is an odd mixture of semantic, morphological and syntactic criteria. Thus, for example, the article is defined morpho-syntactically: declension + distribution within a sentence. The noun, on the other hand, is defined morpho-semantically: declension + meaning. Moreover, some definitions contain very vague expressions. For instance, the noun is thought of as signifying something abstract or concrete, common or proper.

Nevertheless, this set of eight parts of speech has proved to be remarkably resilient throughout history, as it has remained pretty much the same from then on. Although there have been some changes, they have been relatively minor. The system devised by Dionysius Thrax was later adopted by the Greek grammarian Apollonius Dyscolus and passed on to the Roman grammarian Priscian (Robins 1966, 13). The adoption of the system into Latin grammar required a few alterations, the most important of which were the following:

- A new class of interjections was recognized.
- The class of articles was eliminated because there was no need for it in Latin, as there were no articles.

However, apart from that, the parts of speech and the thinking behind them remained the same. Still, we should mention one notable Roman grammarian who did not proceed in the same way as Priscian. This grammarian did not take any pre-established set of parts of speech for granted. He did not blindly assume that parts of speech that had worked for Greek would also work for Latin. Instead, he subjected Latin to thorough grammatical analysis and proposed a different system of parts of speech. The name of this grammarian was Marcus Terentius Varro, the author of *De Lingua Latina*. As Bornstein (1984, 5) explains, he suggested a classification of
words based on purely formal criteria. That can certainly be considered a break with the past tradition of mixing different criteria to arrive at a classification of words. As a result, his approach seems to be more consistent. Bornstein (1984, 5) provides the following list with explanations:

- **Nouns**: words with case inflections
- **Verbs**: words with tense forms
- **Participles**: words with both case inflections and tense forms
- **Conjunctions and adverbs**: words with neither case inflections nor tense forms

This system of parts of speech is based on the fact that there are two significant features, and these features can be combined in four different ways. It can be schematically represented as follows:

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<th>Case</th>
<th>Tense</th>
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<td><strong>Nouns</strong></td>
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<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Verbs</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participles</strong></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conjunctions &amp; adverbs</strong></td>
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Similar approaches to word classification can be found even in recent history. For instance, as Baker (2003, 1-2) mentions, the Principles and Parameters version of generative grammar included a similar schema (with different categories), but it was not well integrated into the theory. It distinguished between nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adpositions based on particular combinations of nominal and verbal features.

As stated above, Varro was an exception. Bornstein (1984, 5) argues that most grammarians of that time simply copied what had been written on this topic by Dionysius Thrax. Grammar books by such authors as Priscian (*Institutiones Grammaticae*) and Aelius Donatus (*Ars Grammatica*) were regarded as great
reference books. They were frequently used in teaching Latin grammar. Since Latin was an important language with an international presence and grammar a basic scholarly pursuit (part of the so-called trivium – grammar, logic, and rhetoric) at the time, it is no wonder that Latin grammar and those who wrote about it came to have considerable influence on the minds of grammarians and language learners across Europe. A classic example of such influence can be observed in the work of Ælfric of Eynsham, who laid “a foundation for the tradition of Latin-inspired English grammar” (Bornstein 1984, 6). In this way, European languages came to be described in terms of Latin. This profound influence can be recognized even nowadays in the way grammars of individual languages are conceptualized.
2.2. *Modistae (Modists, speculative grammarians)*

| Martin of Dacia | John of Dacia | Boethius of Dacia | Petrus Crocus | Michael of Marbais | Radulphus Brito | Thomas of Erfurt |

The Modistae (also known as Modists or speculative grammarians) were a group of grammarians in the 13th and 14th century who were concerned with “the relationship between language, thought, and the world,” and are now thought to be “the first to formulate a theory of grammar, incorporating categories of grammar called modes” (Aarts 2006, 366). Their theory came to be known as *grammatica speculativa* or *speculative grammar* (*speculum* ‘mirror’ or ‘image’), and the name for the group came from their philosophical concept of the modes of signifying (Bornstein 1984, 6). Although they tried to find a universal grammar, they based their research on Latin, drawing especially on the work of Priscian. The most influential Modist was **Thomas of Erfurt**, the author of *De modis significandi*.

As proponents of universal grammar, they are sometimes considered to be one of the precursors to the generative grammar devised by Noam Chomsky. However, it should be borne in mind that the two approaches are different in nature. As Bornstein (1984, 6) argues, Noam Chomsky’s generative grammar has been trying to find a universal grammar in human psychology, whereas the Modistae attempted to do so in the external world.

Zupko (2012) states that the basic tenet of the Modistae project was “the assumption that there is a triadic or parallel relationship between word, concept, and thing.” In terms of modes, it can be explained thus: “the formal structure of the *modi significandi* owes its existence to *modi intelligendi*, or modes of understanding,
which in turn are caused by modi essendi, or the modes of being a thing can exhibit outside the mind” (Zupko 2012). As is apparent, they came to the conclusion that language and its grammar are ultimately based on reality, on the nature of the real world. And since the nature of the world is given and is the same for all human beings, they assumed that there had to be a universal grammar out there just waiting to be found. The theory can be schematically represented as follows:

- **MODI SIGNIFICANDI**: LANGUAGE, GRAMMAR, FORM

- **MODI INTELLIGENDI**: THOUGHT, UNDERSTANDING, CONCEPT

- **MODI ESSENDI**: THE WORLD, BEING, THING

There are things in the world around us. When we think of them and try to understand them, we create concepts in our minds. When we want to express these concepts in the form of language, we use grammar to produce the desired result. In other words, “the principles of grammar … are derived from mental acts of signifying …, which reflect the way things really are …” (Zupko 2012).

As far as parts of speech are concerned, the Modistae took over the categories that Priscian identified in Latin and wanted to find out whether those categories could be substantiated by any underlying theory of grammar. As Zupko (2012) claims, they were aware of the fact that Priscian’s word categorization was problematic because it did not say anything about what caused the different parts of speech. His work was descriptive, but it was not explanatorily adequate. They intended to change that with the help of the modes mentioned above. They assumed that the distinct parts of speech were reflections of different ways of conceptualizing things in the real world, which in turn were reflections of the objective properties of those things. According to them, the rationale behind the parts of speech was language-external (independent of any particular language), rooted in ontology. Consequently, parts of speech were assumed to be universal.
2.3. Port Royal grammarians

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<tr>
<th>Antoine Arnauld</th>
<th>Claude Lancelot</th>
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Antoine Arnauld and Claude Lancelot were two 17th century monks at the Port-Royal-des-Champs Abbey in France. They co-authored the grammar book *Grammaire Générale et Raisonnée* (‘General and Logical Grammar’) (1660), in which they set out their conception of rationalist universal grammar. They drew on the conception of logic that was later elaborated on in a book called *La Logique de Port-Royal* (‘Port-Royal Logic’) (1662).

The Port Royal grammarians were convinced that all languages of the world had the same underlying logic (Bloomfield 1933, 6), differing only in certain accidental aspects, such as the words they used to express the thoughts and thought processes that occurred in the mind. They also believed in the power of reason, which they asserted was universal. In other words, they claimed that while languages appeared vastly different on the surface, they were much the same underneath thanks to universal logical and rational principles. They recognized three essential mental operations (Thomas 2011, 58):

- **JUDGING**: “affirming the properties of something”
- **CONCEIVING**: “attending or imagining”
- **REASONING**: “deducing a conclusion from judgements”

They claimed that a proposition was made up of a subject, a predicate and a copula, where the subject and the predicate represented the objects of thought and the mental operation of conceiving, while the copula represented the manner of thought and the operation of judging (Thomas 2011, 58). They distinguished between words signifying the objects of thought and words signifying the forms or manners of thought, and recognized nine parts of speech, out of which six belonged to the former category and three to the latter (Thomas 2011, 58).
Objects of thought:
- Nouns
- Articles
- Pronouns
- Participles
- Prepositions
- Adverbs

Forms or manners of thought:
- Verbs
- Conjunctions
- Interjections

Similarly to the Modistae, the Port Royal grammarians sought language-external explanations for grammar. However, unlike the Modistae, they did not use a tripartite system of modes. Instead, they made use of a system consisting of two separate levels. One of the levels had to do with what goes on in our minds, and the other with the language that is actually produced. According to them, parts of speech were a reflection of the mental processes. Unlike the Modistae, they did not assume that parts of speech were ultimately derived from objects in the real world and their properties.

They claimed that a certain thought could be expressed in various ways within a language. In this way, they set the stage for what were later to be known as deep vs surface structure and transformations. Their approach to language thus has striking parallels with that of the generativists from the middle of the 20th century onwards (Thomas 2011, 59).
2.4. *Traditional grammarians of English*  
* (18th and 19th century)

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<tr>
<th>Robert Lowth</th>
<th>Joseph Priestley</th>
<th>Lindley Murray</th>
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Traditional grammarians were those who came before the advent of modern linguistics. They include the Greek and Roman grammarians as well as the 18th and 19th century English grammarians. Their methods have attracted widespread criticism since the beginning of the 20th century. Otto Jespersen, Leonard Bloomfield, Noam Chomsky, and Geoffrey Keith Pullum have been among those who tried to debunk much of what the traditionalists believed in. The traditional grammarians of English in the 18th and 19th century were still heavily influenced by Latin. They followed in the footsteps of Ælfric of Eynsham, who had laid “a foundation for the tradition of Latin-inspired English grammar” (Bornstein 1984, 6). This proved to be untenable in the long term, as English began to be regarded as dissimilar to Latin.

As far as parts of speech are concerned, the traditional grammarians of English took over the categories of Priscian, making only a few alterations in the process. This resulted in a set of nine (sometimes eight – when articles were not included) widely used categories: nouns, adjectives, pronouns, verbs, articles, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections.

Similarly to most Greek and Roman grammarians, they made use of a mix of semantic, morphological, and syntactic criteria for distinguishing the parts of speech. Linguists from Jespersen onwards have criticized them for inconsistency in the application of these criteria, as some parts of speech were not defined in terms of all of the mentioned criteria. Another problematic aspect was that different types of criteria often provided different results. Last but not least, the definitions offered were not infrequently wrong, ambiguous, or vague.
To illustrate the problematic nature of the classification proposed, let us take a look at an example of such a classification. The following list of parts of speech is from Lindley Murray’s *English Grammar* (1860, 30-31):

- **Articles:**
  - Syntactic criterion – distribution: An article is “a word prefixed to a substantive.”
  - Semantic criterion – meaning (here grammatical meaning): An article is used to “point out” nouns and “show how far their signification extends.”

- **Nouns:**
  - Semantic criterion: A noun is “the name of anything that exists, or of which we have any notion.”
  - Syntactic criterion: A noun “may, in general, be distinguished by its taking an article before it.”

- **Adjectives:**
  - Syntactic criterion: An adjective is “a word added to a substantive.”
  - Semantic criterion: An adjective is used to express a quality.

- **Pronouns:**
  - Syntactic criterion: A pronoun is “a word used instead of a noun.”

- **Verbs:**
  - Semantic criterion: A verb is a “word which signifies to BE, to DO, or to SUFFER.”

- **Adverbs:**
  - Syntactic criterion: An adverb is “a part of speech joined to a verb, an adjective, and sometime to another adverb.”
Semantic criterion: An adverb “expresses some quality or circumstance respecting it [V, Adj, or Adv].”

• **Prepositions:**
  - Semantic criterion: A preposition is a part of speech that is used “to connect words with one another” and “to show the relation between them.”

• **Conjunctions:**
  - Semantic criterion: A conjunction is “a part of speech that is chiefly used to connect sentences.”

• **Interjections:**
  - Semantic criterion: Interjections are words used to “express the passions or emotions of the speaker.”

There are several things that should be elaborated on. In the list of definitions, there are no morphological criteria. Murray does mention the morphological features, if any, of the individual parts of speech later on in the book, but he apparently does not consider them important enough to include them in the definitions. Still, it needs to be emphasized that they play a role in his account of parts of speech, so he does deal with nominal, adjectival, pronominal, and verbal paradigms.

The definitions he provides are not always correct. For instance, he claims that pronouns are used instead of nouns, but that is not true. In fact, they are used instead of noun phrases. Some of the definitions he provides are ambiguous. Consider, for example, the definition of prepositions. He claims that they are used to connect word with one another, but such a definition does not help to distinguish them from conjunctions, which may also connect words with one another. Some of the definitions he provides are vague. Nouns are a case in point. According to him, a noun is “the name of anything that exists, or of which we have any notion.” It is difficult indeed to imagine what he means by such a description.
2.5. 20th and 21st century linguists

Otto Jespersen
American structuralists
Generativists
Quirk et al.
Huddleston and Pullum
Ronald Wayne Langacker
William Croft

Otto Jespersen is often regarded as one of the most influential linguists of the 20th century. His works brought many new insights into the way languages should be studied, having a lasting influence on later linguists. Of particular importance here is the book entitled *The Philosophy of Grammar* (1924), in which he attempted to challenge some of the time-honored yet wrong assumptions about grammar.

As far as word categories are concerned, Jespersen (1924) claimed that it would be very easy indeed to pick holes in the definitions contained in most of the contemporary grammar literature. He also said that there was no consensus on the way the parts of speech were to be distinguished: morphological form, meaning, sentence function, or a combination thereof. He himself was of the opinion that formal criteria should take precedence over any others.

Jespersen (1924) restructured the traditional system of parts of speech as follows:

- Substantives
- Adjectives
- Pronouns
- Verbs
- Particles
The last category, that is, the category of particles is of special interest here. It includes adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections (words that have invariable form, with the exception of some adverbs). At this point, it should be noted that the same category was in existence in ancient Greece, but later it was broken down into four separate parts of speech. Jespersen found little reason to have four distinct categories, so he thought this step would be for the best. The category became something of a wastebasket: he put in it such words that did not belong to any of the four other categories (substantives, adjectives, pronouns, or verbs).

He was of the opinion that most of the differences between the words included in the category of particles had been unreasonably exaggerated. As an example, he used the spurious distinctions between adverbs, prepositions, and conjunctions of the same form. For instance, he was well aware of the fact that *before* was frequently variously categorized as an adverb, preposition, or conjunction depending on what followed it. If what followed was a noun, it was a preposition; if what followed was a clause, it was a conjunction; if nothing followed, it was an adverb. He disagreed with such a distinction because he considered the situation as analogous to that of verbs with different complements. He claimed that a verb was a verb, no matter whether it had a nominal complement, a clausal complement, or none at all. Thus, the same should apply to the example above. All cases of *before* should be considered particles.

**American structuralists**, as Aarts (2006, 369) states, conceived of parts of speech as form classes, relying exclusively on formal (morphosyntactic) criteria to distinguish between them. The best known American structuralist was **Leonard Bloomfield**. In his book *Language* (1933), he criticized those who were searching for what he called “philosophical and psychological pseudo-explanations” for word categories (Bloomfield 1933, 17). He saw it as a tendency of some philosophers to “look for truths about the universe in what are really nothing but formal features of one or another language” (1933, 6). He viewed parts of speech as language-particular categories. There is no single set of universal categories to choose from because the formal behaviors of words in individual languages differ. Bloomfield (1933, 196) also argued that “it is impossible to set up a fully consistent scheme of parts of speech, because the word-classes overlap and cross each other.” However, this point
came to be seen as problematic within the framework. As time went on, American structuralists became increasingly strict and dogmatic in their categorization, adopting the concept of Aristotelian categories.

One of the potential problems of their approach was what Croft (2000) termed “splitting.” This term refers to the fact that it is potentially possible to divide the lexicon further and further, as there are so many differences in formal behavior of individual words that it might warrant establishing hundreds of categories. Such tendencies obviously needed to be kept in check at the time because an overabundance of categories would go against the purpose of categorization, which is to be able to make generalizations that can then be used for predictions.

Similarly to later structuralists, generative grammarians also believed in “an all-or-none view of category membership,” which reflected their mathematical leanings (Aarts 2006, 370). For them, parts of speech were universal categories that were part of Universal Grammar. In the Principles and Parameters version of generative grammar, they came up with a system of four lexical categories that were distinguished with the help of two binary features N and V (Baker 2003, 1-2). Each of these features could have one of two values: + or -. The result can be seen in the table below.

**Table 2: Parts of speech within the Principles and Parameters version of generative grammar**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nouns</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbs</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjectives</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adpositions</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

But the system was not well integrated into the overall theory, which is why it was later largely discarded. As Baker (2003, 3) argues, generative syntax has since been preoccupied with “the similarities that hold across the lexical categories,” but no so
much with their differences. As a result, this area (lexical categories) still remains underdeveloped in generative grammar.

Baker (2003) tried to change the sorry state of affairs in his book on lexical categories, in which he demonstrated that there were three universal major lexical categories: nouns, verbs, and adjectives. He defined nouns as bearers of a referential index, verbs as licensors of subjects, and adjectives as neither nouns nor verbs. He also argued that adpositions were just a functional category, so they should not be thought of as the same in nature as the other three.

Quirk et al. (1985, 67-68) proposed a system of parts of speech divided into four sections, which contained 13 categories in total:

- **OPEN CLASSES**
  - Nouns
  - Adjectives
  - Full verbs
  - Adverbs

- **CLOSED CLASSES**
  - Pronouns
  - Determiners
  - Modal verbs
  - Primary verbs
  - Prepositions
  - Conjunctions

- **LESSER CATEGORIES**
  - Numerals
  - Interjections

- **OTHERS** (items such as the negative *not* and infinitival *to*)
The first two sections reflect the traditional division of parts of speech into closed and open classes based on whether they readily accept new members. The third section contains two minor word classes that are considered of minor importance. The last section is a wastebasket category for items that do not fit anywhere else.

Quirk et al. (1985, 73) were aware that their classification was open to dispute. They acknowledged that the labels used for the categories seemed deceptively specific, with the categories themselves being rather heterogeneous. This heterogeneity made the whole taxonomy fragile in the face of criticism. They pondered whether any other changes should be made, but they were not able to provide any definitive answers. Their classification was ultimately based on two criteria: grammatical form and function. The notional criteria were deemed unsatisfactory.

**Huddleston and Pullum** (2002, 22) proposed a system of parts of speech composed of nine categories in total. They too based their classification exclusively on grammatical criteria. Their taxonomy looks as follows:

- Nouns
- Adjectives
- Determinatives
- Verbs
- Adverbs
- Prepositions
- Subordinators
- Coordinators
- Interjections

If we compare the classifications that can be found in the two major reference grammars, we can gain some insights into the differences in the philosophies of these two works. As can be seen, Huddleston and Pullum provide a smaller set of categories (9 vs 13) than Quirk et al. At first sight at least, Huddleston and Pullum’s system is neater in comparison with Quirk et al.’s, as they, for example, do not allow...
any wastebasket category in the classification. However, there are even more substantial differences between the two:

- Q – determiners vs H&P – determinatives
- Q – nouns and pronouns vs H&P – nouns
- Q – conjunctions vs H&P – coordinators and subordinators
- Q – full, primary, and modal verbs vs H&P – verbs
- Q – numerals vs H&P – no separate category of numerals

Apart from the changes mentioned above, there are others that cannot be seen just by looking at the lists, because they are hidden under the surface. Huddleston and Pullum (2002) follow in the footsteps of Jespersen (1924) and make alterations to the traditional categories of adverbs, prepositions, and conjunctions. So while the same or similar categories are in both the classifications, it does not mean that the categories include the same members. Thus, for instance, according to Quirk et al. (1985), the item *before* can be classified as an adverb, preposition, or conjunction, depending on what follows (nothing/NP/clause). But according to Huddleston and Pullum (2002), *before* is only ever a preposition, no matter what follows.

It should be borne in mind that these two reference grammars are grammars of the English language only, so they definitely do not represent any universal systems that could readily be used to account for other languages. Also of note is the fact that both reflect the view that grammatical criteria are the only criteria that should be used to distinguish the parts of speech.

So far, we have seen that the 20th and 21st century grammarians have become particularly fond of formal (grammatical) criteria. In fact, they have used them as the only reliable indicator of class membership, criticizing at the same time the semantic (notional) criteria that were part of traditional grammar. Otto Jespersen, American structuralists, generativists, and even the authors of the two best known reference grammars of English have all believed that any other way of categorizing words is simply wrong.
However, semantic criteria are still here with us. Why? First, they have frequently been used in pedagogical (school) grammars. Consequently, many people use them if they need to categorize words for some reason. Second, of all the types of criteria on offer, the semantic ones are the most accessible to ordinary people (that is, non-linguists). Apart from these two points, there is one more that deserves to be mentioned. There are still linguists who believe that parts of speech can be defined with the help of semantic (and pragmatic) criteria. Two such proposals will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

The author of the first such proposal is the cognitive grammarian **Ronald Wayne Langacker**. He argues that saying that grammatical categories cannot be defined semantically is “a fundamental dogma of modern linguistic theory” (Langacker 2013, 93). He goes on to claim that the traditional notional definitions are unworkable, but he thinks that that does not necessarily mean that all semantic definitions are useless. The problem lies in finding such definitions that would be applicable to all the member of a particular class, not only to the prototypical ones (Langacker 2013, 94).

To have proper definitions, we have to take into account our cognition and our capacity for construing the same situation in different ways (Langacker 2013, 94). Thus, we may conceptualize objective reality in ways that the traditional definitions could not handle. New definitions are therefore needed. But it needs to be borne in mind that conceptual definitions are not available for all the parts of speech identified in the world’s languages. Rather, they are limited to those that are universal and fundamental (Langacker 2013, 95-96). Nouns and verb are prime examples.

Langacker (2013, 98) argues that “what determines an expression’s grammatical category is not its overall conceptual content, but the nature of its profile in particular,” where the profile is “the focus of attention within the content evoked.” A noun profiles a thing, which is “any product of grouping and reification,” where reification refers to the “capacity to manipulate a group as a unitary entity for higher-order cognitive purposes” (Langacker 2013, 105). A verb profiles a relationship that is processual. Adjectives, adverbs, and prepositions profile relationships that are non-processual (Langacker 2013, 115). Adjectives have a single focal participant – a
thing; adverbs have a single focal participant too – a relationship; and prepositions have two focal participants – a thing and a thing/a relationship (Langacker 2013, 115-116).

The author of the second proposal is William Croft, who combines semantic and pragmatic criteria (prototypical meaning and prototypical discourse function). His system is as follows (Croft 2000):

- **Nouns:**
  - Prototypical discourse function: reference.
  - Prototypical meaning: object.

- **Verbs:**
  - Prototypical discourse function: predication.
  - Prototypical meaning: action.

- **Adjectives:**
  - Prototypical discourse function: modification.
  - Prototypical meaning: property.

Croft (2000, 88) claims that it is an unmarked feature of nouns to be associated with reference to an object, an unmarked feature of verbs to be associated with predication of an action, and an unmarked feature of adjectives to be associated with modification by a property. Other combinations represent marked cases.
3. PARTS OF SPEECH II: MAIN ISSUES

3.1. Words and word categories within syntactic analysis

According to Huddleston and Pullum (2002, 20), syntactic analysis is based on three essential concepts:

- **SYNTACTIC CONSTITUENTS:** Sentences are composed of parts called constituents. These constituents may themselves be composed of different constituents. To be specific, there arises a hierarchy with sentence at the top and word at the bottom. It can be represented as follows: SENTENCE $\rightarrow$ CLAUSE $\rightarrow$ PHRASE $\rightarrow$ WORD. Obviously, it is possible to further subdivide words into morphemes and then phonemes, but these subdivisions are not part of syntax; rather, they belong to morphology and phonology respectively. Consequently, when the focus is on syntax, the lowest constituent in the hierarchy is a word.

- **SYNTACTIC CATEGORIES:** Syntactic constituents can be classified into a limited range of categories. At each level of analysis, there are different categories (clausal, phrasal, and lexical).

- **SYNTACTIC FUNCTIONS:** Syntactic constituents have specific functions within the larger units they are part of.

What syntacticians do is segment sentences into their constitutive elements, determine the category status of these elements, and finally, determine their function. This thesis deals with parts of speech (lexical or word categories); therefore, attention is paid exclusively to the WORD level of syntactic analysis. What is of concern here is the word as a syntactic constituent and the way words are categorized. For any categorization to be practicable and serviceable, it is vital to know what is being categorized. In this case, it is words. As will be shown in the following section, the concept of word, though seemingly simple, is complex and variable.
3.2. Wordhood

The word represents a simple concept – at least that is what our intuition tells us. It has a unique position among all grammatical terms in that everybody seems to have some sort of notion about what a word is. Sapir (1921, 34) argues that words have psychological validity and that “there is not, as a rule, the slightest difficulty in bringing the word to consciousness as a psychological reality.” We use the term every day without giving much thought to what it signifies and are convinced that we know everything necessary about it, yet our knowledge is at best only partial. It is a well-known fact that word usage depends on the context of use, and thus, it should come as no surprise that the term we are here concerned with also differs in meaning, depending on where we intend to deploy it. Lay people do not feel the need to have a precise understanding of the concept because they can easily make do with what little they know. Linguists, on the other hand, cannot be satisfied with such a state of affairs, requiring much more to meet their needs. That is at least what should theoretically be the case, but reality tells a slightly different story.

In general, linguists seem to be similar to non-professionals in that they take the notion of word for granted. It has a certain meaning that does not need to be explicated because it is more than clear. As a result, they can readily move on and talk about word classes or categories without the slightest hint of ambiguity or uncertainty. However, such a stance is not really conducive to a proper understanding of the concepts of word and word categories. If we do not know what exactly the notion of word signifies, how can we possibly categorize words? The answer is that we cannot, at least not without a great deal of simplification and abstraction.

Haspelmath (2011, 32) further adds that our inability to define the concept of word leads to difficulties in defining such significant notions as syntax and morphology. We assume that morphology deals with word structure and syntax with various combinations of words, but we do not pay attention to the fact that the word *word* represents a vague notion, which makes the definitions seem rather useless.
Also, a certain classification of words is a prerequisite for a classification of higher constituents (phrases). The categorization of phrases is based on the concept of the head of a phrase. If the central, obligatory element – head – of a phrase is a noun, then we are dealing with a noun phrase; if it is an adjective, we are dealing with an adjective phrase; and in a similar fashion we could continue until all the phrasal categories have been listed. However, that is not the point here. What is important to emphasize is rather the fact that if a word category is wrongly identified, it has repercussions higher up in the hierarchy of the language system.
3.3. **Wordhood: criteria**

Linguists have identified several criteria that are supposed to help us distinguish whether we are dealing with a word or not, but as Haspelmath (2011, 32) argues, “these are not uniformly applicable across contexts and languages, and where they are applicable, they do not always converge.” The problem lies in the fact that not only are we not able to identify words reliably in one language, but we also face difficulties when conducting cross-linguistic research. Imperfect as the criteria are, it is worthwhile to have a look at them to gain insight into why they are not reliable.

According to Haspelmath (2011), there are four basic types of criteria that are used for identification of words: orthographic, phonological, semantic, and morphosyntactic (grammatical).

3.3.1. **Orthographic criterion**

The orthographic criterion can be explained thus: **words are separated by spaces.** It seems easy enough to operationalize, and it is the criterion that is most commonly employed in everyday life, but probably it is much too easy to be reliable. Indeed, there are several flaws to this method of recognizing words, which will be discussed in the following:

- **SPOKEN LANGUAGE:** The criterion is unusable when we deal with spoken language, as there are no spaces to be seen. In other words, we have to have a written record to be able to use this criterion. This is an insurmountable problem for languages that have only a spoken form, not a written one.

- **CONTRACTIONS (CLITICS):** Is the form *isn’t* one word or two? According to the orthographic criterion, it is one word because it is written without spaces, but at the same time, we are aware that it consists of *is* and *not*, which may bias our final judgment in the other direction.
• **COMPOUND WORDS:** They may be spelled in three different ways: solid, with a hyphen, and with a space in between. That inevitably leads to chaos because the way we spell a certain form decides whether it can be considered a word or not. Consider the following examples: *summerhouse* and *summer house*. By applying the orthographic criterion, we come to the conclusion that the former is a word, while the latter is two words. It is obvious that this way of differentiation is untenable.

• **CROSS-LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE:** We have to ask ourselves whether the separation of words by spaces is a common orthographic practice in all languages of the world. The answer is no. Haspelmath (2011, 36) contrasts orthographies based on the Latin, Greek, and Cyrillic alphabets with the Japanese, Chinese, and Sanskrit orthographies. While the former use spaces, the latter do not.

### 3.3.2. Phonological criteria

There are several phonological criteria, but none of them is reliable (or universally applicable across languages). They have to do with:

- pauses
- main stress
- word boundary sound changes

First, there is the **separation of words by pauses**. This is the equivalent to the separation of words by spaces in written texts. This criterion seems to be of little use because people do not pause between every two words. In fact, in connected speech, they speak such that individual words are joined together and sometimes even slurred. However, it might be argued that we should rather focus on the **potential separation of words by pauses**. That is, we should stop thinking in terms of what really happens, and start thinking in terms of what could potentially happen. What is
problematic about this notion of potential pauses is that we can make pauses not only at word boundaries, but also, for example, at certain morpheme boundaries. Also problematic is the fact that we do not make pauses when pronouncing contractions, such as I’m, even though it is clear that the item is composed of two words I and am. As a result, we can conclude that neither of the two proposed versions of this phonological criterion is without issues.

Another phonological criterion has to do with main stress: **words have only one main stress.** Here the problem lies in the fact that some words, such as the and a, are usually not stressed at all. They have no main stress or any other stress, which means that they should not be regarded as words, yet linguists think of them as words.

Yet another criterion is specific to particular languages and is thus not universally applicable: certain languages are known for **regular sound changes at word boundaries.** When such a change is encountered, the listener recognizes that it is a word boundary. An example of this phenomenon is obstruent devoicing in Russian (Haspelmath 2011, 37). An obvious question that needs to be asked is this: How do we proceed in a language in which such phenomena are not present? In such languages, this criterion is useless, and attention must be focused on different criteria.

### 3.3.3. Semantic criterion

Semantically speaking, a word used to be considered one of the minimal units of meaning, or, as Sapir (1921, 35) puts it, “one of the smallest, completely satisfying bits of isolated ‘meaning’ into which the sentence resolves itself.” This notion of word was widely believed to be true despite obvious contradictory evidence in the form of compound words and other similar phenomena. Later it was disproved, and a new minimal unit of meaning was found: morpheme.

It needs to be said that definitions similar to the one presented above are very vague and potentially misleading. For instance, we are not told what is meant by this
“meaning.” Does it refer only to what is traditionally called lexical meaning, or does it also refer to grammatical meaning? Also, such definitions do not really help to distinguish clearly between morphemes and words, and between words and phrases. For example, consider the case of so-called phrasal verbs. It is immediately clear from the designation that something is wrong. How can a verb be a phrase? A verb is a word category, not a phrasal one. Consequently, it seems nonsensical to use such a designation. But there is a simple explanation for how this confusion came about. Take, for instance, the item look after. On the one hand, the item has a non-compositional meaning, so, on the above account, it fulfills the criterion for wordhood. On the other hand, it seems obvious that it is in fact a phrase consisting of a verb and a preposition licensed by the verb. When someone blends the views together, the result is the illogical appellation “phrasal verb,” where “phrasal” refers to its status as a phrase and “verb” to its status as a word. The correct way to proceed would be to categorize the word look as a verb and then explain that this verb can, within a VP, combine with various prepositional complements.

The following are examples of possible sentences that may result from such combinations: He looked up. She looked after him. Putting syntactic differences to the side, we may ask what the difference in terms of semantics is. In the first example, the meaning is fully transparent, or compositional. Consequently, it is no problem to derive the meaning of look up from its components look and up. However, the same cannot be said about the second example, where there is no transparent meaning to be found. Taking compositionality of meaning into account, should we say that the item look up in the first example represents two words, while the item look after in the second represents only one word? That would be the logical conclusion if we did indeed base our judgment on the notion that the word is a minimal non-compositional unit of meaning, but the fact is that linguists shy away from this criterion for wordhood because they are convinced that it is inadequate to the task. Still, it should be borne in mind that this criterion is very alluring for non-linguists exactly because it is based on meaning, which is accessible to everybody, as it does not require any formal training in linguistics. That might be one of the reasons why the use of such terms as phrasal verbs has proliferated in the past.
3.3.4. Morphosyntactic (grammatical) criteria

David Crystal (2008, 522-523) lists the following criteria:

- **MINIMAL FREE UNIT:** This notion comes from Bloomfield (1926, 156), who states that “a minimum free form is a word.” The word is the smallest meaningful unit that can stand on its own (in isolation), constituting a complete utterance. It “cannot be analyzed into parts that may (all of them) be uttered alone (with meaning)” (Bloomfield 1926, 156). Let us check to see whether this criterion works. In the case of words such as *fast* and *talk*, there is absolutely no problem. Words with inflections, such as *faster* (FAST – ER) and *talks* (TALK – S), also pass the test (they are minimum free forms) because one of their parts, namely the inflectional suffix, cannot stand on its own. But what about, for example, the articles *a* and *the*? Can they stand on their own, as a sentence? No, they cannot. Yet they are usually regarded as words. Consequently, one may either deny them the status of word or consider them to be exceptions to the otherwise reliable rule. The latter is the preferred view.

- **STABLE INTERNAL STRUCTURE:** There is little potential for the rearrangement of parts of a complex word. Take, for instance, the word *incredible* (IN – CRED – IBLE). Any possible rearrangement will lead to the creation of an unintelligible string of letters, such as *ibleincred* (IBLE – IN – CRED).

- **POSITIONAL MOBILITY:** Words can move relatively freely within a sentence.

- **RESISTANCE TO INTERRUPTION (COHESIVENESS):** Words usually do not allow any insertions. However, there are quite notable exceptions, such as the insertion of *bloody*, *fucking*, and other similar elements within words such as *absolutely* and *incredible*. 
As have been shown, there are several different criteria that should help us distinguish words from non-words, but the reality is that we are often faced with contradicting results, with one set of criteria at odds with another. Thus, it should come as no surprise that we often have to distinguish between the orthographic, phonological, semantic, and grammatical word.

Let us take a look at an example for illustration. The string won’t can be regarded as either one word or two words. Orthographically, it is seen as one word because there are no spaces. Phonologically, it is viewed as one word because there are no pauses and only one main stress (in citation form). Semantically, however, the string cannot be considered one word, because it is composed of two independent meanings having to do with modality and negation. Grammatically, the string may be seen as two words, as a combination of two forms (will and not) accompanied by several sound changes (a vowel change, a consonant deletion, and a vowel deletion explicitly marked by an apostrophe). The problem with this view is that the form won’t is not transparently derivable from will and not. From a current perspective, there is no clue as to what the first two letters (wo) stand for. As for the other grammatical criteria, it has to be noted that they provide a mixed picture. While won’t is internally stable and resists interruption, it is not a minimal free unit.

At this point, it is quite clear that no matter how hard we try to define the concept of word, our efforts are doomed to fail because the word is an elusive notion. It has been pointed out that different criteria often lead to different conclusions. Even if we combine them into one definition, we do not make any progress. Consider, for instance, a seemingly comprehensive definition supplied by Crystal (2003, 470): the word is “the smallest unit of grammar that can stand alone as a complete utterance, separated by spaces in written language and potentially by pauses in speech.” It contains grammatical, orthographic, and phonological aspects. However, it is neither fully reliable nor universally applicable.

In this section, it has been shown that the concept of word is a problematic, multifaceted notion. Yet, it has also been mentioned that people in general have some vague notion of what a word is, and employ it in their everyday lives without much
thinking. Linguists usually do the same, focusing on more worthy pursuits. What that means is that the word has become an axiom, something that is universally accepted, self-evident, and requires no proof. It simply exists and has a certain form. On the one hand, this attitude is understandable, as it allows people in general and linguists in particular to work on without having to bother with such trivial things as the notion of word. On the other, it may cause trouble if taken to an extreme. Consequently, it should be borne in mind that every piece of research dealing with words in one way or another needs to specify what exactly is meant by word. This clarification can then serve as a good starting point for further inquiry.
### 3.4. Categorization

Categorization is a natural human process that helps people to think, speak, and work in an efficient and effective way. As Aarts (2005, 361) puts it, it is “a process of systematization of acquired knowledge,” or, to be more precise, “a cognitive process which allows human beings to make sense of the world by carving it up, in order for it to become more orderly and manageable for the mind.” Rijkhoff (2007, 709) states that it is realized by “putting people or things, but also more abstract entities such as words, into groups on the basis of certain shared characteristics.” Thus, what all categorizations have in common is that they take as input a set of elements and put it through a filter that distinguishes between individual elements based on some criteria, with the result in the form of a set of categories.

Before proceeding further, let us have a look at the way Crystal (2008, 68) defines categorization: “the whole process of organizing human experience into general concepts with their associated linguistic labels.” His definition differs from the others stated above in that he explicitly refers to the linguistic component. By referring to linguistic labels, he points out that categorizations are impossible without language. Categorization is a psycholinguistic phenomenon. When we think or speak about categories, we do so by way of language. The labels we use are invented linguistic expressions.

Categorization may pertain to anything at all, but since we are concerned with parts of speech here, we will focus on possible word categorizations. The first point that needs to be emphasized (and that cannot be emphasized enough) is that word categories (parts of speech) are always based on some theory, that is, they are theory-internal constructs. In other words, there are no parts of speech to be found outside language theory. If anyone says that the word *dog* belongs to the category of nouns, they presuppose that there is indeed a certain categorization of words and that within it there is a class called nouns. Even linguistically naïve people use such terms as noun, verb, and others, which means that they have some sort of awareness of the existence of word categories.
But why are these categories so important? What is their significance? Crystal (2003, 206) claims that the main reason for their utilization is “to be able to make general and economical statements about the way the words of the language behave.” By utilizing them, we can make statements about the general behaviors of nouns, verbs, and other word categories. That would otherwise be impossible. If it were not for the concept of categories, we would be forced to make statements only about the behaviors of individual words, which would be not only very uneconomical, but it would also make any study of languages and their grammars impossible.

What criteria are used in the process of categorization? In an ideal world, there would be a broad consensus on what criteria are relevant to the matter at hand, but we do not live in an ideal world, which means that opinions are divided on this issue. Consider the following example. In general, we categorize sciences into three broad classes, namely, natural sciences, humanities, and social sciences. If we want to put linguistics into one of these categories, we are faced with an unexpected obstacle: we do not know where to put it. Traditionally, it has been considered to belong to the humanities, but nowadays there are also voices claiming that linguistics belongs to either natural sciences or social sciences. How is that possible? It is the result of people drawing lines in different places, or, as one might say, of different perspectives. Linguistics is the scientific study of language. So far it is clear. But now we move on to the difficult part. Language itself can be seen as part of human culture (the humanities), as a social product (social sciences), or as a natural object (natural sciences, specifically biology). This particular example shows two major issues inherent in any categorization:

- Do categories have strict or fuzzy boundaries?
- What are the relevant criteria?

These questions will be answered in the following two sections.
3.5. *Categories: strict or fuzzy boundaries*

As is obvious from the example in the preceding section, things can often be categorized in more than one way, and it is hard, and often impossible, to determine which way is the right one. The boundaries between individual categories do not seem to be strict. In fact, it can be argued that they may sometimes be quite fuzzy, with some elements belonging clearly to a certain category (PROTOTYPES/CORE MEMBERS) and others appearing to be on the boundary between categories (PERIPHERAL/FUZZY MEMBERS).

Such a state of affairs, however, appears to fly in the face of the classical, or Aristotelian, conception of categories, which is based on the all-or-none principle of categorization (Aarts 2006, 363). As Aarts (2006, 363) explains, it means that “something must be either inside or outside a category.” Consequently, there are no fuzzy/blurred boundaries or ambiguous cases. What can be seen instead are strict boundaries and no ambiguities. Why is this approach to categorization often preferred? What makes it superior? Aarts (2006, 364) lists several factors that play a role:

- **Strict categorization is in the spirit of what science is about:** scientific endeavors are aimed at eliminating doubts and uncertainties in the search for truth. Vague categorization is the polar opposite: it introduces imprecision, which makes it highly problematic.

- **Strict categorization is simple and straightforward,** bringing the much-needed order into the anarchy that our world is. In comparison, vague categorization is rather complicated and only strengthens the sense of anarchy.

- **Strict categorization is the result of the natural human tendency to see the world in terms of clearly separate entities.** Vague categorization goes against this tendency.
As Aarts (2004, 343-344) argues, these two divergent approaches to categorization stem from two broad lines of thinking about language: one putting emphasis on orderliness, regularity, systematicity, and rules, while the other emphasizing messiness, fuzziness, and exceptions. As a result of these underlying assumptions, the two views cannot be reconciled.

The issue of blurred boundaries between categories is associated with another important concept – gradience. A so-called gradient is “a scale which relates two categories of description … in terms of degrees of similarity and contrast” (Quirk 1985, 90). This term is often used when it needs to be pointed out that “the elements of language cannot artificially and rigidly be forced within certain pre-defined bounds” and that there needs to “a certain degree of categorial flexibility” (Aarts 2004, 344). That only serves to highlight the fact that “grammar is to some extent an indeterminate system” (Quirk et al. 1985, 90). However, as Quirk et al. (1985, 90) claim, some grammarians might be tempted “to overlook such uncertainties, or to pretend that they do not exist.” On the one hand, such simplification might be perceived as necessary because it helps to prevent the theory from becoming too convoluted and losing its predictive value; on the other, any simplification will of necessity lead to a theory that does not fully reflect reality.
3.6. Categories: criteria

As Crystal (1967, 29) argues, while there might be several criteria that can be utilized in determining parts of speech in English, there is “no obvious single criterion, such as inflectional type, or fairly self-evident combination of criteria, which could be used to classify all, or even most words.” Linguists do not agree as to which criteria are the most relevant. Still, there is a tendency towards formal criteria because they are seen as more reliable than notional or any other criteria. However, it should be borne in mind that even formal criteria are not always capable of providing the ideal in the form of neat categories with strict boundaries.

Some linguists take the view that a certain combination of various kinds of criteria is the way forward, as it were. However, they inevitably have to deal with one major problem: different criteria may provide different results. How to solve this conundrum? There seems to only one way out of this trap, namely, by ranking the criteria in a certain way (by giving some of them a privileged position). Those criteria that are higher up in such a hierarchy are dominant and have a decisive role in determining parts of speech. Obviously, if we rank the criteria thus, we might as well dispense with those that are considered so irrelevant as to have no weight in decision-making at all.

There are three widely recognized types of criteria that help us distinguish between individual word categories: semantic, morphological, and syntactic.

3.6.1. Semantic (notional) criterion

This criterion has to do with meaning. Words are categorized according to the type of meaning they express. For example, verbs are said to denote actions (e.g. go and do), states (e.g. be and exist), or events (e.g. happen and occur), nouns various entities such as people (e.g. mom and dad), things (e.g. table and chair), or places (e.g. theater and museum), and adjective qualities/properties (e.g. nice and new).
The problem with this criterion is that there are so many exceptions that it cannot be considered a reliable indicator of a word’s category status. For instance, nouns do not refer only to people, places, or things: they may also refer to qualities/properties (e.g. honesty and clarity) or events (e.g. meeting and party). As can be seen, there is some overlap among the categories. The fact that adjective are prototypically used to denote qualities should not make us think that just because some word denotes a quality, it has to be an adjective. Similarly, the fact that verbs are prototypically used to denote events should not make us think that just because some word denotes an event, it has to be a verb. What is honesty? A quality. Is it an adjective then? No. Why? Because, syntactically speaking, it does not behave like one. What needs to be borne in mind here is that we cannot really say that a certain semantic notion is exclusive to one category only, which means that any possible word categorization based on the semantic criterion is bound to fail.

The semantic criterion is often considered the traditional one, the one used exclusively in traditional linguistics based on Greek and Latin, the one that has been disparaged by modern linguists as seriously flawed. However, it is disingenuous to claim that the traditional criteria for word categories are wholly notional, because it is not based on fact. It can be proved with the aid of a traditional grammar book written by Lindley Murray (1860). In it, he states that there are nine parts of speech and then goes on to describe them in detail. From the following, it becomes clear that the traditional criteria are actually an inconsistent mix of different types of criteria, not purely semantic ones. Murray (1860, 30), for instance, describes an article as “a word prefixed to substantives, to point them out, and to show how far their signification extends,” and a pronoun as “a word used instead of a noun, to avoid the too frequent repetition of the same word.” In both these definitions, he refers to syntactic criteria, to the distribution of various parts of speech within a sentence. The fact that articles appear in front of substantives does not have anything to do with semantics: it is a matter of syntax. Similarly, the fact that pronouns are used instead of nouns (which is inaccurate) is not a matter of semantics, but of syntax. As these and other definitions in the book show, the view that traditional parts of speech are purely notional categories is downright wrong. They are semantico-grammatical categories. In sum, traditional parts of speech should not be equated with notional
categories, as often happens in discussions of this topic, because the traditional conception is only partly based on semantic considerations.

3.6.2. Morphological criteria

Morphological criteria can be divided into two groups: inflectional and derivational. The former focuses on inflectional affixes, while the latter focuses on derivational affixes. The fact that some inflections are typical of one category and other inflections are typical of a different category means that we can use them to distinguish between individual classes. For example, the English nominal paradigm consists of the plain singular form, plain plural form, and genitive form. The plain singular form is regarded as the basic one. The other two forms are usually created with the aid of affixes *s* and ‘s. These inflections serve as a distinguishing factor. As for the second criterion, certain affixes are typically used to create new words of a particular category. The suffix *ity* is, for instance, used to turn adjectives into nouns.

A few things need to be borne in mind, though:

- Some categories are invariant, that is, members of some categories do not change their form under any circumstances, which means that we cannot use these criteria to distinguish between them. Consider, for instance, conjunctions such as *and* and *or*. They do not have any inflectional or derivational affix. Now consider prepositions such as *with* and *in*. They do not have inflectional or derivational affix either. It is therefore impossible to distinguish between such words based on the morphological criteria.

- There are words that do not change their form even in the categories that are known to have typical inflections. For instance, nouns are known to have two typical affixes: one for plural and one for genitive. However, there are irregular nouns that differ in this regard. Let us take a look at two examples. The plain singular form *sheep* has as its plural counterpart the very same shape *sheep*. Similarly, the singular *deer* has the plural counterpart *deer*. 


These nouns are irregular because they do not add a -s suffix to the base. The singular and plural counterparts are the same in form, so it is impossible to use the plural marker as a distinguishing feature, as is possible with nouns such as table (PL: tables) and chair (PL: chairs).

- Some affixes are used for more than one purpose. Consider the suffix -s. It is utilized by nouns to create plural forms (SG + -s = PL: table + -s = tables) and by verbs to create 3rd person singular present tense forms (NON-3RD + -s = 3RD: walk + -s = walks). That means that just knowing that there is such a suffix on a word does not help us in assigning the word to the correct category. Walks can be construed either as the plural form of the noun walk or as the 3rd person singular present tense form of the verb walk. Consequently, we have to look elsewhere to be able to do that (syntax).

- The derivational criterion can be utilized only in words that have been derived from another form with the help of an affix. Those words that do not have it for whatever reason (e.g. conversion) cannot be reliably categorized based on this criterion. Thus, while it is possible to say that neighborhood is a noun because it consists of neighbor + hood, where -hood is a derivational suffix used to create nouns, it is not possible to proceed this way with words such as walk or talk, which do not have any derivational affix.

3.6.3. Syntactic criterion

The syntactic criterion refers to the distribution of different categories of words within a sentence. That is, it deals with the whole set of linguistic contexts in which particular kinds of words can occur (Crystal 2008, 154). This conception was first applied in a systematic way in phonology, but later its use spread to other linguistic disciplines.

In syntax, it started to be used in the form of so-called frames, which are also known as substitution frames or syntactic frames (Crystal 2008, 197). These concepts refer
to the fact that words of the same category can be substituted for each other in a given context. Thus, in the sentence Peter talks a lot, we can replace Peter with Mary. Since Peter and Mary may occur in the very same environment (in the very same position in the sentence), it can be concluded that they belong to the same category (nouns).

However, the problem is that the noun Peter can also be replaced with the pronoun he. If we assume that nouns and pronouns are two separate categories, then the above-mentioned way of analysis proves to be lacking. Also, Peter can be replaced with this guy. This guy is a noun phrase. What we have to bear in mind to make sense of this apparent incongruity is that Peter is a noun and a noun phrase at the same time. So far, we have been thinking of Peter merely as a noun, but now it seems to be clear that we should have been thinking of it as a noun phrase. When we replaced Peter with Mary, we assumed that we were substituting a noun for another noun, but in fact we were substituting a noun phrase for another noun phrase. The same can be applied to this guy: it is a noun phrase that replaces another one (Peter). What we have found is not that nouns can be substituted for one another in the given position, but that noun phrases can. Substitution tests like this are thus very problematic if used to determine word categories.

Another problem with this approach is that whether words can be used in a certain context interchangeably is not dependent only on what category they fall into, but also on what we might call semantic congruity, that is, semantic compatibility with what precedes and follows. In other words, words need to fit in not only syntactically, but also semantically. Thus, while Cats meow fulfils both these conditions, Dogs meow do not. We know that dogs do not meow, so we conclude that the sentence is nonsensical. However, should we conclude from this that dogs and cats do not belong to the same category? No, we should not. In the following paragraph, it will be demonstrated why such a conclusion is unwarranted.

Linguists tend to sidestep this issue with the help of the grammaticality vs acceptability distinction, claiming that we should focus purely on grammaticality in such substitution tests, disregarding the semantic considerations that might interfere
with the acceptability of a given utterance. Thus, by uttering *Dogs meow*, we have created a grammatically correct yet semantically anomalous sentence. We think of such sentences as unacceptable, but not as ungrammatical. And if grammatical considerations are the only relevant ones, we might say that the sentence has the same structure as *Cats meow*, which is clearly both grammatical and acceptable, and that the words *cats* and *dogs* belong to the same category because they occur in the same positions in a given frame.

Substitution frames are not the only kind of frames used for the determination of word categories. In generative grammar, subcategorization frames are of major importance. They are formal representations used “to specify the range of SISTER CONSTITUENTS which a LEXICAL item takes” (Crystal 2008, 460). Thus, for instance, nouns, as heads of noun phrases, often take a determiner (e.g. *my house*). The determiner is obligatory when the noun in question is countable and is in the singular (e.g. *a cat* vs *cat*), but in other cases, its presence, or absence, depends on circumstances (e.g. *Water is a liquid.* vs *The water is murky.*). In the first instance, we are talking about water in general; in the second, we are talking about some specific body of water. The determiner is the only element within a noun phrase that may be obligatory. Other elements, in the form of optional modifiers, are never obligatory. These include adjective phrases (e.g. *a small town*), preposition phrases (e.g. *a girl with blonde hair*), or clauses (e.g. *a song that everybody loves*). Adjectives form their own adjective phrases, within which they may be optionally modified by adverbs (e.g. *really bad*) and/or complemented by preposition phrases (e.g. *nice of you*) or clauses (e.g. *good to know*). They may be deployed before a noun (as attributive modifiers, e.g. *a nice trip*), immediately after a noun (as postposed modifiers, e.g. *a professor emeritus*), or after a copular verb (as predicatives, e.g. *They were asleep*). The subcategorization of verbs is the most complex of all and forms the basis of the concept of subcategorization. Verbs are heads of verb phrases and may be accompanied by obligatory complements (e.g. *He said that it was true.*) and/or optional adjuncts (e.g. *He said it yesterday.*). We may also say that verbs take arguments (complements + subject).
At this point, it needs to be stated that while the three criteria explained in the preceding paragraphs are the most widely recognized in the linguistic community, they are others that might be gainfully employed. They more or less correlate with the individual levels of the language system. Crystal (1967, 42) argues that “[i]t cannot be aprioristically assumed that any one group of criteria is irrelevant.” All criteria are potentially relevant, but the focus is mostly on the syntactic criteria these days. Those other kinds of criteria mentioned are as follows:

- Phonological
- Lexical
- Pragmatic

### 3.6.4. Phonological criteria

Phonological criteria have to do with various sound patterns, such as stress, number of syllables, vowel harmony, or prosodic characteristics (Crystal 1967, 42). In English, these criteria play such a minor role that they barely deserve to be mentioned. In fact, the only applicable criterion is stress, and even this criterion can be utilized in only relatively few cases. As an illustration, let us consider the case of some disyllabic nouns and verbs that differ in stress placement. The noun *permit* and the verb *permit* are classic examples. These two words look the same but are pronounced differently. According to Wells (2008, 601), the noun is pronounced /ˈpɜːmɪt/ in Standard British English or /ˈpɜːmt/ in Standard American English, and the verb /pəˈmɪt/ in Standard British English or /pəˈmt/ in Standard American English. As is common in such cases, nouns tend to be stressed on the initial syllable and verbs on the second syllable. This seems to be the case, but only on the surface. The reasons why this criterion is considered to be a minor one are as follows:

- It cannot be applied when we deal with written words. If we see the written form of the word *permit*, for instance, in isolation, without any co-text, what do we do to decide where to put the main stress? We either assume that it is a noun and stress it accordingly, or we assume that it is a verb and stress it
accordingly. However, if we do this, we are engaging in circular reasoning. In such a case, we simply cannot use the criterion of stress to tell us whether a given written word is a noun or a verb, because when we say the word out loud, we already assume that it is either a noun or a verb.

- If we are concerned with spoken words, this criterion can be applied. For example, when someone produces one of the disyllabic words that have the noun-verb distinction in question, the difference in pronunciation can help us distinguish whether the word has been used as a noun or as a verb. But it is still usable only in a limited number of cases. Thus, it would be imprudent indeed to elevate it to the same level as, for instance, the syntactic criterion, whose universal applicability is one of its great advantages.

- And even when we deal with those spoken words to which it applies, the results might be inconclusive, as some of these disyllabic nouns and verbs may be pronounced in more than one way. According to Wells (2008, 601), the pronunciation /pəˈmɪt/ may represent either a verb or a noun, which makes the criterion not fully reliable.

### 3.6.5. Lexical criterion

As Crystal (1967, 43) argues, this particular criterion could potentially define categories in terms of “similarity or identity of collocability, ranging from identity within a grammatically-defined context to complete non-equivalence.” This criterion is not currently used, so it will not be discussed any further here.

### 3.6.6. Pragmatic criterion

This comparatively new criterion attempts to define parts of speech in terms of prototypical discourse functions attributed to the individual word categories. For example, nouns have a prototypical discourse function called reference, verbs a function called predication, and adjectives a function called modification. As Croft
(2000, 88) explains, it is a prototypical and unmarked feature of nouns to be associated with reference to an object, a prototypical and unmarked feature of verbs to be associated with predication of an action, and a prototypical and unmarked feature of adjectives to be associated with modification by a property.

As can be seen from the preceding description, Croft in fact utilizes a combination of two kinds of criteria: semantic and pragmatic. Semantically speaking, nouns prototypically refer to objects, verbs to actions, and adjectives to qualities. It has already been explained that classifications based on such vague notions are inadequate. However, here they are combined with prototypical pragmatic functions, which means that there is a total of nine different possibilities, three of which are unmarked. Croft (2000, 89) illustrates his conception of parts of speech in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>REFERENCE</th>
<th>MODIFICATION</th>
<th>PREDICATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OBJECTS</td>
<td>unmarked nouns</td>
<td>genitive, adjectivalisations,</td>
<td>predicate nominal, copulas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PPs on nouns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROPERTIES</td>
<td>deadjectival nouns</td>
<td>unmarked adjectives</td>
<td>predicate adjectives, copulas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACTIONS</td>
<td>action nominals,</td>
<td>principles, relative clauses</td>
<td>unmarked verbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>complements,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>infinitives, gerunds</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.7. Categories: universal or language-particular

In this section, it will be explored whether parts of speech can be regarded as universals or not, and if so, which of them are universal. Let us begin with a short introduction into the area. In linguistics, there are two basic approaches to language universals: the Greenbergian and the Chomskyan approach (Comrie 1989, 1-2). Both are named after their most prominent proponents: Joseph Harold Greenberg and Avram Noam Chomsky respectively. They can be distinguished along three dimensions (Comrie 1989, 1-2):

- **THE RESEARCH DATABASE**
  - **Greenbergian**: The research database comprises a wide range of different languages. What is emphasized is the breadth of coverage.
  - **Chomskyan**: The research database comprises a small number of languages, but they are explored in detail. What is emphasized is the depth of coverage.

- **THE DEGREE OF ABSTRACTNESS OF ANALYSIS**
  - **Greenbergian**: Analyses within this framework are relatively concrete in that they focus on the occurrence/non-occurrence of concrete observables in the research database.
  - **Chomskyan**: Analyses within this framework tend to be fairly abstract, exploring abstract structures rather than concrete examples.

- **THE KINDS OF EXPLANATIONS FOR LANGUAGE UNIVERSALS**
  - **Greenbergian**: The explanations proposed vary widely, but they are usually functionalist in character (for example, processing effort).
  - **Chomskyan**: The principal explanation proposed is innateness.

To sum up, the Greenbergian approach is functionalist and empiricist in nature. Cross-linguistic data are observed, generalizations arrived at inductively, and functionalist explanations provided. The Chomskyan approach is formalist and
rationalist in nature. It deals with highly abstract objects, which are removed from the actual observable data, but the data are used for verification. It emphasizes the role of reason and intuitions. The explanations it provides all stem from the belief that all humans are genetically endowed with an innate linguistic module containing Universal Grammar.

The universals identified using either of the two approaches can be divided into two broad groups depending on whether they allow exceptions or not. Those universals that are exceptionless are conventionally termed “absolute universals,” while those that are not are called “universal tendencies” (Comrie 1989, 19). It might be argued that absolute universals are preferable, but the fact is that they are rare in comparison with universal tendencies.

Now that we have covered the background information, we can move on to what is of particular interest to us. The key question is as follows: Are parts of speech universal or language-particular categories? Anward, Moravcsik, and Stassen (1997, 167) argue that “the history of part-of-speech research is characterized by oscillation between two extreme positions. According to one view, parts of speech are universal; according to the other, their nature and their very existence vary across languages.” Those who support the former position may be called universalists, while those who support the latter particularists.

Universalists believe that word categories can be defined “independently of particular languages” (Dryer 1997, 116). Particularists, on the other hand, are convinced that word categories in each language are defined “on the basis of language-particular distributional properties” (Dryer 1997, 116). While there might be similarities between individual languages, these should not automatically be taken to mean that there are universal categories out there.

The universalist view held the upper hand up until the end of the 19th century (Anward, Moravcsik, and Stassen 1997, 167). This dominance can be attributed to the following factors:
MAIN FACTOR: The leading role of Latin as the language of the educated led to the view that grammars of other languages should be modeled on that of Latin. That view was also supported by the widely held opinion that Latin was a “perfect” language. As Bloomfield (1933, 6) states, “The medieval scholar saw in classical Latin the logically normal form of human speech.” As a result, the word categories from Latin were carried over to other languages, without much thought as to whether such an approach is justifiable considering the differences between individual languages.

MINOR FACTOR: There were a few schools of thought that espoused the notion of universal grammar and, by implication, universal categories: the Modistae, (or speculative grammarians) at the turn of the 13th and 14th century, and the Port Royal grammarians in the 17th century. The Port Royal grammarians, for instance, believed in general grammar, which, as Bloomfield (1933, 6) claims, attempted to demonstrate that “the structure of various languages … embodies universally valid canon of logic.”

A turning point came at the beginning of the 20th century. With a growing interest in as-yet-unexplored languages came the idea that individual languages should be described in language-specific terms. The leading proponents of this idea were, among others, researchers Franz Boas and Edward Sapir (Anward, Moravcsik, and Stassen 1997, 167). Boas is best remembered for his work on American Indian cultures. In his anthropological studies, he was concerned, among other things, with the languages of Native Americans. He was well aware of the fact that there were so many different tribes on the continent that it would be nonsensical to lump them together and make generalizations about them that might not reflect reality, no matter how convenient it might seem to the outer world. His respect for diversity made him suspicious of any overly broad generalizations. It was clear to him that if there were noticeable differences between the individual tribes, then the differences between all the languages of the world must be even greater.

Bloomfieldian structuralism continued the overall trend set by Boas, emphasizing the non-universality of word categories. As Bloomfield (1933, 198) argued, it would be
“a mistake to suppose that our parts-of-speech system represents universal features of human expressions.” The way languages behave differs to a greater or lesser degree, with no two languages working exactly the same. Morphosyntactic behaviors of different parts of speech are not identical across languages. But Bloomfield (1933, 17) also argued that there were those who thought otherwise, often using various “philosophical and psychological pseudo-explanations.” Thus, while these people claimed to have found a way to categorize words cross-linguistically by referring to such grand notions as logic and metaphysics, what they really achieved was merely “an incomplete restating of the chief categories of [their] language” (Bloomfield 1933, 270). It simply makes no sense to talk about universal categories if there is no formal evidence to support such a claim. Thus, for a while, word categories were thought to be language-particular.

However, then came another turning point: the Chomskyan Revolution of the late 50s and early 60s. Things have come full circle. Following up on the work done by the 17th century Port Royal grammarians, Chomsky came up with his own version of universal grammar (Universal Grammar, or UG), setting out, among other things, a set of four basic lexical categories (Nouns, Adjectives, Verbs, Adpositions). This area, however, remained poorly explored for several decades after that. Later on, generativists added a set of minor functional categories, which included categories such as Inflections, Complementizers, and Determiners.

As a result of an early focus in transformational-generative grammar on English, this language acquired a role similar to that of Latin in the Middle Ages. English grammar became a model for other grammars, and the word categories recognized in English came to be considered universal. Since then, this fixation on English was gradually reduced by generativists’ attempts at exploring other world languages, yet their belief in universal categories remains.

In the last few decades, particularists have regained some lost ground, arguing that universal word categories are just a fiction. For instance, Haspelmath (2007) argues that there are no pre-established (a priori) categories to choose from, so when one wants to categorizes words across languages, it is not possible to do that with one set
of universal categories. Haspelmath (2012, 109) maintains that “[c]ategories represent language-particular generalizations and cannot be carried over from language to another one.” Each language has to have its own categories.

Still, the predominant view at this point in time is that parts of speech are in some sense universal. But it is common sense that not all the categories that have been identified, for instance, in English, are applicable to other languages, which are in some cases very different from one another typologically. Since we want to generalize over quite a large number of languages, we have to be careful in stating what is universal and what is not. It seems apparent that the number of categories that are truly universal must be very low. It does not seem conceivable that the eight or so categories that work for English could be usable for all languages.

Over the years, it has become clear that the only major categories that seem to be universal are the categories of noun and verb (Dryer 1997, 116). Adjectives are far from universal. In the languages that do not have a distinct category of adjectives, these are lumped in with either nouns or verbs, depending on the language in question. There is a long European tradition to classify them as nouns, which is in contrast with data from some non-European languages, such as Chinese, that classify adjectives as verbs. Adverbs are even more problematic because there is a dispute over whether a separate category of adverbs is justifiable. For instance, generative grammarians tend to assume that adverbs are in fact adjectives (Emonds 1987).

To conclude, it might be appropriate to mention a somewhat special case: the category of interjections. Interjections have a unique status within grammar because they are not only morphologically invariant, but also syntactically independent. They can stand on their own, forming an autonomous unit. Or they can be thrown in somewhere within a sentence, again forming an autonomous unit.
4. CONCLUSION

Parts of speech are one of the many classifications in linguistics. They are vital because they represent generalizations that can be used in language description. Without them, any attempt at language description would be futile, because linguists would have to describe every word of language separately without acknowledging the many similarities that can be found among words. Such observations would have no predictive power, and as such they would prove of little use.

However, what needs to be borne in mind is that the part-of-speech classification is fraught with the very same difficulties as any other categorization. The way linguists categorize depends to a large extent on their assumptions and their methodology. As the first part of the thesis amply demonstrated, there have always been disagreements among linguists about what the right criteria for word categorization are. The Greek and Roman grammarians tended to use a mixture of semantic, morphological, and syntactic criteria, with a particular emphasis on the morphological ones. The problem was that these three kinds of criteria frequently did not provide the same results, which made them unreliable for the purpose. Later on, the Modistae came up with their theory that parts of speech reflected the structure of the real world (ontological basis) and were to be defined semantically. The Port Royal grammarians believed all languages had the same underlying logical structure. Parts of speech were a reflection of this universal logic and were to be defined semantically. What is interesting is that the classifications provided by both the Modistae and the Port Royal grammarians were much the same as those provided by the Greek and Roman grammarians. The only difference thus seems to be in the way they accounted for the different categories, not in the system of categories itself. The traditional grammarians of English in the 18th and 19th century again used a mixture of semantic, morphological, and syntactic criteria, and again it proved to be an exercise in futility, with varying results. In the 20th century, the semantic criteria came to be heavily criticized for their unreliability, and the trend was to focus exclusively on formal criteria. The trend is still here now in the 21st century, despite a few attempts at word categorizations based on “meaning” criteria (semantic/pragmatic). What is
perhaps most intriguing about the individual classifications proposed over the years is the fact that they have all contained almost the same categories. From Dionysius Thrax onward, the situation has changed very little indeed.

But the criteria have not been the only sticking point. Another one has been whether to follow the “lumping” or “splitting” approach. In other words, should we conceptualize parts of speech as a small number of large categories that have greater predictive power but that also allow some measure of heterogeneity? Or should we conceptualize them as a large number of rather small categories that have little predictive power but that are homogeneous? Throughout the history of parts of speech, the trend has been to try to find a compromise between the two positions, as each of them has its own advantages and disadvantages. Still, it seems reasonable to claim that the “lumping” approach has been the preferred position, helping to keep the number of categories in check.

Another problem that the thesis has dealt with is the following question: How is it possible to determine parts of speech (categories of words) when there is no precise definition of what a word actually is? It has been pointed out that while the concept of word is essential to grammar theory, it remains surprisingly elusive. The common, instinctive notion based on orthography has been mentioned, but it has been found wanting. Furthermore, several notions of word have been described (orthographic, phonological, semantic, and grammatical), but it has been recognized that there is in fact no single notion of word that would be universally applicable, both within a particular language and across languages. The notions have frequently proved incompatible, providing different results. Still, it has been concluded that it is convenient as well as necessary for linguists to abstract away from the various exceptional cases in order to be able to move forward. In the thesis, the concept of word is seen as a fuzzy notion, with prototypical cases (those that are readily identified as words) and peripheral cases (those that may or may not be identified as words, depending on the observer). The prototypical words can be assigned to the individual word categories without any issues, but the peripheral ones cannot. The wordhood of the latter has to be proved by any researcher who deals with them in their work. Or at the very least, any study dealing with parts of speech should contain
a part explicating what is meant by “word” in that particular study. Without it, any comparisons between that study and any other studies are of little value.

In the previous paragraph, it has been pointed out that “word” represents a category. The same is true of “parts of speech.” “Word” has been seen as a fuzzy concept. Is the same true of “parts of speech”? This issue has been elaborated on in detail, and the following conclusions have been reached. Whether parts of speech are thought to represent a fuzzy or strict categorization depends to a large extent on the overall view that the linguist have of language. So-called analogists tend to see language as systematic, rule-based, orderly, and regular, while so-called anomalists as messy, fuzzy, and full of exceptions. The former generally prefer the notion of Aristotelian categories with strict boundaries, and the latter prefer the notion of categories that is based on prototype theory, where prototypical members clearly belong to a certain category and where peripheral members create fuzzy boundaries. If some words have features that are typical of more than one category, they move along the scale between the two categories in question. Sometimes they are closer to one end, and at other times, to the other. While categories with strict boundaries have obvious advantages, they do not seem to reflect the real world, which is, to an extent, indeterminate.

Another major question that has been explored is that of the universality of word categories. Can parts of speech be considered language universals? Again, linguists are not in agreement, with one group claiming that parts of speech are language-particular categories and the other claiming that they are universal categories. However, even those who believe that parts of speech are universal do not think that all the word categories that are traditionally distinguished in English are applicable to all the world’s languages. Instead, what they have in mind is a very limited group of categories. Typological research suggests that it is probable that there are only two universal categories: nouns and verbs. That seems to fit in nicely with two other conceptual distinctions in grammar, one of which is the traditional subject-predicate contrast, and the other is the modern predicate-argument contrast. The predicate in both represents the verbal part of the sentence, whereas the subject or the arguments (subject + verbal complements) represent the nominal part. In generative grammar,
four lexical categories are considered universal: nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adpositions. Those who are of the opinion that there are no universal categories claim that languages should be studied in their own terms, without recourse to any preconceived set of categories. Their view is that languages differ so much that it is impossible for any universal set of categories to be workable. From the outline of the development of the conception of parts of speech provided in the thesis, it should be clear that the universalist position has dominated the particularist one most of the time. That has had to do with the profound influence of Latin, Latin grammars, and Latin grammarians on other languages and their grammarians. In more recent times, further impetus to this idea has been given by generative grammarians and their notion of universal grammar.
5. SHRnutí

Tato práce se zabývala vývojem v chápání slovních druhů. V první části se zaměřila na vývoj pojetí této oblasti gramatiky od počátků v období antiky až do současnosti. V té druhé se pak konkrétně soustředila na zodpovězení několika kontroverzních otázek týkajících se tohoto tématu.

Co se týče samotného vývoje pojetí slovních druhů, ten byl rozdělen do několika etap. První z nich bylo období Řecka a Říma, odkud pocházejí základy koncepce slovních druhů tak, jak je známe dnes. Řecký gramatik Dionysios Thrácký byl v tomto ohledu průkopníkem, jelikož je to právě v jeho knize, kde poprvé nalézáme rozdělení slov do celkem 8 kategorií na základě několika kritérií, jimiž byla kritéria sémantická, morfologická a syntaktická, přičemž ta morfologická hrála v jazyce jako klasické řečtiin hlavní roli. Co je podivuhodné na této soustavě 8 kategorií, tvořila podstatná jména, slovesa, participia, zájmena, spojky, příslovce, předložky a členy, je fakt, že zůstala v přibližně stejné podobě téměř 2000 let. I dnes jsou naše myšlenky o slovních druzích často založeny na obdobném principu, který využíval právě Dionysios Thrácký. Problemem jeho přístupu k věci ale bylo, že vedl k určité nekonzistentnosti, protože jednotlivá kritéria používal bez rozmyslu, v různém poměru a často mohla vést k různým výsledkům, kdyby se analýza prováděla opravdu důkladně. Ale jeho cílem bylo hledat vysvětlení, proč jsou slovní druhy tím, čím jsou. Jeho cílem byl pouhý popis, který poté mohl sloužit jako pomůcka při učení se klasické řečtině. Většina řeckých i římských gramatiků pouze kopírovala to, s čím přišel Dionysios.

Druhým obdobím, na které se tato práce zaměřila, byl přelom 13. a 14. století, kdy došlo k rozkvětu tzv. spekulativní gramatiky (modisté). Jednalo se vlastně o filozofické pojetí gramatiky, které hledalo vysvětlení, proč jazyk funguje tak, jak funguje, v okolním světě. V rámci této teorie se mělo za to, že jazyk a jeho gramatika jsou odrazem struktury reálného světa kolem nás, a jelikož má tento svět určitou objektivní podobu, která se nemění, tak jazyky musí sdílet nějaký společný základ, který se dnes běžně nazývá univerzální gramatika. Avšak jazyk a jeho gramatika


V posledním popisovaném období – 20. a 21. století – došlo k zásadní změně. Sémantická kritéria, která byla do té doby hojně využívána, se dostala pod palbu

Druhá část této práce se zaměřila na několik zásadních otázek, které se týkají slovních druhů a které jsou stále předmětem sporu. Jako první bylo nutné si uvědomit, že slovní druhy jsou často mylně považovány za základ gramatické teorie, bez něhož není možno postoupit dále. Faktem ale je, že slovní druhy potřebují ke své definici pojmy a poznatky z dalších oblastí gramatiky, a proto nelze jednoznačně říci, že tvoří jakýsi základ gramatiky. V jednotlivých oddílech druhé části práce se pak postupně rozebírala témata týkající se pojetí slova, jeho kategorizace, kritérií, která jsou nutná pro určení slovních druhů, aristotelovských a fuzzy kategorií a jazykových univerzálií.

Bylo zjištěno, že neexistuje naprosto jednotné pojetí slova, nýbrž se pohledy na něj liší. Bylo tu uvedeno několik kritérií (ortografické, fonologické, sémantické a gramatické), která nakonec vedla k diferenciaci pojmu slovo na pojmy ortografické, fonologické, sémantické a gramatické slovo. Tyto koncepce slova ovšem nejsou vzájemně kompatibilní. Žádná z uvedených koncepcí se neukázala jako naprosto spolehlivá, a proto závěr je, že slovo je tzv. fuzzy kategorií, tedy kategorií, která má své prototypické členy, jakož i členy, které jsou na jejím pomyslném okraji. A jsou to právě ty na okraji, které způsobují potíže. Otázku však bylo, zdali se jedná o slovo, a jsou to vždy rozpoznat, zdali se jedná o slovo, je problémem při určování slovních druhů. Problém to zajisté je, ale je to problém přehlížený a stále nevyřešený (a pravděpodobně také nevyřešitelný). Při kategorizaci slov si tak musíme stanovit, co je naším kritériem pro určení slova a podle toho postupovat. Jinak se nám může stát, že každý budeme mluvit o něčem jinému. Příkladem mohou být anglická frázová slovesa, která jsou sice nazývána slovesy, ale slovesy nejsou.

Stejně jako u slov i u slovních druhů vyvstává otázka, zdali je správné je chápat jako striktně oddělené kategorie, či zdali mezi jednotlivými kategoriemi jednoduše nejsou jasně definované hranice. Je totiž patrné, že některá slova jsou chápána jako
charakterističtější pro určitou kategorii, protože splňují všechna kritéria, zatímco jiná slova, která splňují jen některá kritéria, jsou považována za méně typická, a proto jsou vytěsňována na okraj dané kategorie. Čím méně splňují daná kritéria, tím více se vzdalují prototypickým členům kategorie, což má za následek, že vzniknou kategorie, které mají nejasné hranice (fuzzy kategorie). Pro ty lingvisty, jež vnímají jazyk jako uspořádaný a systematický, je mnohem bližší striktní aristotelovské pojetí kategorií. Naopak pro ty, kteří vnímají jazyk jako ne zcela jasně uspořádaný a s řadou výjimek, je bližší pojetí kategorií založené na teorii prototypu. Oba přístupy mají své výhody a nevýhody, ale druhý jmenovaný více odráží realitu, která není tak jasně strukturovaná, aby mohla být tak přesně kategorizována.

S tím, zdali jsou hranice mezi kategoriemi jasně či ne, souvisí i otázka, jaká kritéria vybrat pro určení slovních druhů. Tato práce se zabývala hlavně třemi hlavními kritérii, mezi něž patří kritérium sémantické (význam), morfologické (afixy) a syntaktické (distribuce ve větě). Dále pak byla uvedena tři méně významná kritéria, a to sice fonologické (přízvuk, prosodické charakteristiky apod.), lexikální (kolokační podobnost) a pragmatické (pragmatická funkce). Jak již bylo uvedeno dříve, sémantické kritérium je a vždy bylo problematické. Formální (morfologické a syntaktické) kritéria jsou považována za spolehlivější. Míra jejich využití závisí na konkrétním jazyce. V angličtině jako morfologicky „chudém“ jazyce je syntaktické kritéria bráno za naprosto klíčové.

V neposlední řadě se tato práce zabývala tím, zdali patří slovní druhy mezi univerzálie. Opět zde existují dva protichůdné názory. Jeden z nich říká, že slovní druhy patří mezi univerzálie a ten druhý pravý opak. Ti, kteří nevěří v existenci univerzálních slovních druhů, argumentují obrovskou variabilitou v jazykovém chování slov v různých jazycích, která znemožňuje existenci univerzální kategorií slov. Naopak ti, kteří věří v existenci univerzálních slovních druhů, argumentují, že i když tu variabilita mezi jazyky zajistě je, tak zde existuje i řada společných rysů, a slovní druhy jsou jedním z nich. Otázku zůstává, které slovní druhy jsou univerzální. Nedá se totiž předpokládat, že kupříkladu slovní druhy používané při popisu angličtiny jsou aplikovatelné na všechny jazyky na světě. Má se za to, že počet těch opravdu univerzálních kategorií musí být nutně velmi malý. Výzkumy
6. REFERENCES


A. PODKLAD PRO ZADÁNÍ DIPLOMOVÉ PRÁCE

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TÉMA ČESKY:
Vývoj v článkových slovních družstvách

NÁZEV ANGLICKÝ:
Evolution of the Conception of Parts of Speech

VEDOUcí PRÁCE:
Joseph Emonda, M.A., Ph.D. - KAA

ZÁSADY PRO VYPRACOVÁNÍ:
The thesis will track the way in which the understanding of so-called parts of speech has evolved over time, including how the concept came about in ancient times, and then focusing predominantly on the development of the concept in the context of the English language.

SEZNAm DOPoručENÉ LITERATURy:

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Klíčová slova v angličtině: parts of speech, categorization, word, universals, fuzzy categories

Abstrakt:

Tato práce si dává za cíl zmapovat vývoj v chápání slovních druhů od dob starověkého Řecka až po současnost a následně odpovědět na několik kontroverzních otázek, jež se slovních druhů týkají. Jsou zde zkoumány různé aspekty kategorizace slov: pojetí slova, pojetí kategorizace, kritéria kategorizace, fuzzy kategorie a univerzálitu kategorií. Mezi zásadní závěry plynoucí z této práce patří následující: Slovní druhy jsou svou povahou spíše fuzzy kategorie založené na teorii prototypu nežli striktně oddělené kategorie. Slovní druhy jsou v současnosti určovány téměř...
výhradně na základě formálních kritérií. A pouze některé slovní druhy (podstatná jména a slovesa) jsou všeobecně považována za univerzální.

**Abstrakt v angličtině:**
This thesis aims to track the evolution of the conception of parts of speech from the times of ancient Greece up to now, and to answer several controversial questions related to the notion of parts of speech. Various aspects of word categorization are explored: the conception of word, the conception of categorization, categorization criteria, fuzzy categories, and categorical universality. Among the main conclusions drawn from this thesis are the following: Parts of speech are fuzzy categories based on prototype theory rather than strictly separated categories. Parts of speech are currently identified based almost exclusively on formal criteria. And only some parts of speech (nouns and verbs) are generally considered universal.