STUDIA UBB PHILOLOGIA, LXVI, 2, 2021, p. 251 - 266
(RECOMMENDED CITATION)
DOI:10.24193/subbphilo.2021.2.17

MODIFICATION VERSUS COMPLEMENTATION IN THE STRUCTURE OF ENGLISH NOUN PHRASES

ALINA PREDA[1]

ABSTRACT. ***Modification versus Complementation in the Structure of English Noun Phrases.*** Apart from its head, the core element around which all the other phrasal constituents cluster, the noun phrase may contain dependent elements effecting determination (which poses few taxonomical issues), modification or complementation (two functions notoriously difficult to demarcate). This article outlines the inconsistent ways in which reference grammars make the distinction between modification and complementation in the structure of English noun phrases, and offers a more unified approach aimed to solve the terminological quandary.

Keywords: *complementation, modification, premodifier, postmodifier, complement, the noun phrase*

REZUMAT. ***Structura grupului nominal din limba engleză.*** Se remarcă, în structura sintagmelor nominale din limba engleză, constituenți greu de clasificat ca realizând complementarea sau tipul de determinare cunoscut în engleză drept *modification* (în contrast cu cel numit *determination*, foarte ușor de identificat), ceea ce a dat naștere unor analize contradictorii în literatura de specialitate. Pornind de la dificultățile în analiză create de similaritatea anumitor elemente direct dependente sintactic de termenul nominal cu rol de centru al respectivului grup, acest articol examinează structura sintagmelor nominale așa cum este ea prezentată în gramatica practică a limbii engleze, prin analiza comparativă a diferitelor publicații de acest gen.

Cuvinte-cheie: *complementare, determinare, predeterminare, postdeterminare, complement, sintagme nominale*

[1] **Alina PREDA** is Associate Professor at Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. Her research interests include Syntax, Discourse Analysis, Gender Studies and Contemporary English Literature. Dr Preda is the author of several books, including *Jeanette Winterson and the Metamorphoses of Literary Writing* (2010), *A Synoptic Outline of Phrasal Syntax and Clausal Syntax* and *Interferences: On Gender and Genre* (2013). Email: alinapreda74@gmail.com

Introduction

The phrase can be defined as a sequence of words that functions as a grammatical unit in the structure of a clause but does not include both a subject and a tensed verb, acting, instead, like a single part of speech, namely like a noun, adjective, adverb or the verb of a clause. Being, by definition, an internally structured unit, any phrase must have a head, the central constituent which determines the syntactic type of that phrase and whose presence is compulsory, except in the special case of ellipsis. Besides the head, the central component on which all the other phrasal elements converge, the English noun phrase might contain dependent constituents that effect not only premodification, often preceded by determination (which is specific to noun phrases, posing rather few taxonomical issues), but also postmodification and/or complementation. Since these two functions have so far proven to be notoriously difficult to demarcate, an exploration of the linguistic descriptions given to the structure of the English noun phrase in reference grammars is essential in order to examine the roots of this taxonomic quandary. By offering not only a clear outline of noun phrase descriptions provided by prominent researchers in the field but also personal comments on how and why the distinction between modification and complementation is made by some linguists or not made by others – as the case may be, in this article I point to the lack of consistency that mars the manner in which authors of reference grammars (fail to) accurately describe postmodification versus complementation when they analyse the structure of English noun phrases, and I also make an attempt to identify the proper approach aimed to settle this terminological issue.

An annotated bibliographical overview

In the structure of an English noun phrase, some grammarians have identified four and others five structural constituents that must appear in a fixed order: one or more determiners, premodifiers, a head, postmodifiers and/or complements. Premodification consists of all the modifying constituents placed after any determiners but before the head-noun, while the modifying constituents that appear after the head-noun form what is known as postmodification. The following is an example of a noun phrase containing a multitude of modifiers:

the rusty old engines outside in the back garden which John tried to mend

the = definite article, central determiner
rusty = adjective, premodifier

old = adjective, premodifier
engines = common noun, head of the noun phrase
outside = place adverb, postmodifier
in the back garden = prepositional phrase, postmodifier
which John tried to mend = defining relative clause, postmodifier
(Dixon 21, adapted)

The existence of an additional structural constituent of the noun phrase, namely the complement, has been postulated. As Gerald Delahunty and James Garvey point out, "modifiers are not required or implied by the expressions they modify. These expressions would be grammatically complete without the modifiers – though of course adding or removing modifiers affects the meaning and consequently the referents of the modified expressions" (74-75). Complements, on the other hand, designate a central aspect pertaining to the head-noun, being essential constituents in the noun phrase. Thus, it has been stated that complementation appears either on its own or preceding postmodification, and normally takes the form of nominal clauses in apposition to the head-noun, of comparative clauses following the head-noun, of relative clauses, as well as of verbal clauses and of prepositional phrases. It will be demonstrated, however, that in a noun phrase comparative clauses and relative clauses are postmodifiers, not complements, and that not all verbal clauses and prepositional phrases are complements either, since many of these structures often function as postmodifiers.

Not all reference grammars differentiate between postmodifiers and complements in the structure of noun phrases. Some linguists use the term "complement" to refer solely to subject complements and object complements, in line with the narrow-scope definition given, for instance, by David Crystal, in *The Penguin Dictionary of Language* – "an element of clause or sentence structure, traditionally associated with 'completing' the meaning specified by the verb" (65), or by Stephan Gramley and Kurt-Michael Pätzold, who define the complement as "one kind of element which serves to complete the predication" (136). Consequently, such reference grammars only mention modifiers as post-head constituents in the noun phrase structure: "The noun head can be followed by several types of modifying expression" (164).

Gramley and Pätzold, for instance, classify prepositional phrases as "the most frequent postmodifiers" and also give some examples of verbal clauses and of relative clauses, but none of nominal clauses: "a person of distinction/ the valley beyond ours/ the valley to visit/ the valley which is situated beyond ours" (164). Geoffrey Leech also employs the narrow-scope definition of "complement", as a constituent following finite verbs and telling us something about the nature of the subject or object (88). Leech analyses all the phrasal constituents other than the head-noun as modifiers (263), which "give more information about the headword" (361). Similarly, Geoffrey Broughton explains

that some "noun phrases also have one or more modifiers; those we put in front of the head are premodifiers; those after the head are postmodifiers" (195-196). The same is true of Leech, Deuchar and Hoogenraad, as shown in their examples of noun phrase postmodifiers, for instance prepositional phrases – "the best day of my life," relative clauses – "a quality that I admire" (71) and nominal clauses – "The report that elephants were stampeding on the South Downs" (111).[2] It is clearly stated that, in noun phrases, prepositional phrases "act as postmodifiers" (74). John Eastwood counts relative clauses among a noun's postmodifiers: "They are talking about a body which was recovered from the river." (358) and, in what regards nominal clauses, he merely states that "we can use a that-clause after some nouns, mainly ones expressing speech or thought: The news that the plane had crashed came as a terrible shock. / Whatever gave you the idea that I can sing?" (345). Thus, it remains unclear whether Eastwood regards them as postmodifiers as well, but noun complementation is definitely not openly acknowledged, and the specification that nominal clauses "can be a complement of be" ("The truth is that I don't get on with my flat-mate.") suggests that he also favours the narrow-scope definition of the term "complement" (343).

Ronald Wardhaugh describes the noun phrase as containing postmodifiers in the form of prepositional phrases – "the boy at the back"/ relative clauses – "the person you are seeking"/ verbal clauses – "the place to be" (43-44), but nominal clauses that follow the head are termed appositives: "the fact that you said it" (44). Hilde Hasselgård, Stig Johansson and Per Lysvåg acknowledge the presence of complementation in the structure of verb phrases, adjective phrases and adverb phrases, but not in that of noun phrases, the elements positioned after the head-noun being termed postmodifiers (19), with the specification that a noun phrase may "also be expanded by apposition" in the form of proper nouns ("the author Erica Jong"), phrases ("Jostein Gaarder, the author of *Sophie's World*") or appositional clauses ("We have to face the fact that we made a serious mistake.") called "that"-clauses (101-102). "Appositives" is the term preferred by Marcella Frank as well, but only in the case of nominal clauses – "His belief that coffee grows in Brazil is correct." (280) and infinitive clauses – "his desire to be in good health" (326).[3] In the chapter dedicated to relative clauses she states that the adjective clause "modifies a preceding noun or

[2] Leech, Deuchar and Hoogenraad use the term "noun clauses" but I prefer to employ the equally valid term "nominal clauses" in order to establish a stronger contrast with "noun phrases".

[3] Marcella Frank calls them "infinitive phrases" but the terminology used in this article takes into account the role of the infinitive forms in the economy of the sentence. Thus, they are classified as infinitive phrases if they "act like nouns or premodify the head of a Noun Phrase" and as infinitive clauses if they "postmodify the head of a Noun Phrase" or act like adverbs, "whether they are part of the complementation in an Adjective Phrase or in an Adverb Phrase, or simply show purpose, result, etc." (Preda, "Phrases and Clauses" 34).

pronoun" (273). Prepositional phrases are considered modifiers – "the recovery of his son from pneumonia/ the recovery of the money from the thieves/ his injury to his knee/ our admiration for the doctor" (197-198). Sidney Greenbaum and Gerald Nelson also count among postmodifiers prepositional phrases and relative clauses ("a nasty gash on his chin which needed medical attention"), as well as nominal clauses ("the realization that miracles don't happen") which they call appositive clauses (48-50). Herman Wekker and Liliane Haegeman specify that, despite the significant differences between appositive clauses and relative clauses, both are viewed as postmodifiers (41-42). No clear distinction is, therefore, drawn, in these works, between complementation and postmodification.

Similarly, Leech and Svartvik include in the range of noun phrase postmodifiers both relative clauses – "Did you see the girl who was sitting in the corner" and nominal clauses – "The fact that she's good looking", as well as prepositional phrases – "Did you see the girl in the corner?" and infinitive clauses – "The next train to arrive was from Chicago." (268)/ "We gratefully accepted his promise to help us." (270).[4] As it will be shown later, the former infinitive construction, "to arrive", is a postmodifier, whereas the latter, "to help us," is a complement, since it is appositive, just like nominal "that"-clauses in a similar position, clauses which are also viewed as complements. László Budai supplies examples of postmodifiers expressed not only by relative clauses, appositive clauses and prepositional phrases, but also by adjectives ("the house ablaze"), adverbs ("the room above") and noun phrases in apposition (337-338).

Sidney Greenbaum explains that the "typical postmodifiers of nouns are prepositional phrases and relative clauses" but also offers more examples of parts of speech that appear as postmodifiers, including verbal clauses, as well as adverbs ("the day before"), adjectives ("something ethnic" and "the bonfire proper") and noun phrases ("his address this morning"), specifying that these, however, are "more restricted in their use as postmodifiers of nouns" (219). Greenbaum (219) offers a more precise taxonomy of clauses that function as postmodifiers in a noun phrase, differentiating between finite relative clauses ("We don't have a constitution which stops government from legislating certain things."), relative *-ing* participle clauses ("The air mass bringing the coldest temperatures is the polar continental mass which comes in from the Soviet Union."), relative *-ed* participle clauses ("An intake shaft would provide higher ventilation efficiency for the more extensive layout planned for the mine."), relative infinitive clauses ("When is the best time to do it?"), appositive finite clauses ("It's really shorthand for the view that well-being depends on more than the absence of disease.") and appositive infinitive clauses ("This is an

[4] Leech and Svartvik also call them "infinitive phrases" as they do not distinguish between infinitive phrases and infinitive clauses.

opportunity for Christians everywhere to at least unite in prayer for a speedy end to the war in the Gulf.").[5] Randolph Quirk, Sidney Greenbaum, Geoffrey Leech and Jan Svartvik bring an even more detailed classification, mentioning appositive postmodification by *-ing* clauses ("I'm looking for a job driving cars.") and appositive postmodification by *of*-phrases, pointing out the contrast between "the city of Rome" – which features an appositive prepositional phrase, and "the people of Rome" – which contains a "regular postmodifier" (1284). But although Quirk et. al. mention complementation, the example that they provide actually falls under adjective complementation rather than noun complementation: "a bigger car than that" (1239) displays the adjective phrase *bigger … than that*, where the head *bigger* is complemented by the comparative structure *than that*. Thus, the head noun *car* is modified by a discontinuous adjective phrase, and not complemented by the comparative structure, since "*a car than that" would make no sense. As far as noun phrases are concerned, therefore, complementation is not acknowledged, and the postmodification is seen as "comprising all the items placed after the head" for instance prepositional phrases ("the car outside the station"), verbal clauses ("the car standing outside the station"), relative clauses ("the car that stood outside the station") and nominal clauses ("The news that the team had won calls for a celebration."), which Quirk et. al. call appositive clauses (1244). Examples of appositive postmodification by infinitive clauses are also provided: "The appeal to give blood received strong support." (1271-1272). This particular distinction between verbal clauses which are reduced relatives and verbal clauses which are appositive is essential and, as it will be shown, can be used to solve the postmodifier versus complement terminological quandary.

In a study dedicated to phrases, Randolph Quirk considers complementation to be a special kind of postmodification and explains that some linguists prefer to use the term "qualifiers" to refer to the clauses embedded in a noun phrase, be they relative or nominal clauses, verbal clauses or even prepositional phrases: "Note that some authors also speak of 'qualifiers': usually after the head, used to describe it still further; realized not by individual words, but by embedded clauses and groups: as in 'the unforgettable times that we spent together'" (Quirk 3). In *Collins Cobuild English Usage* of 1993 just the grammatical items that offer "more information about the subject of the clause" and those that "describe the object of a clause" are considered complements (145), and only "a word or group of words which comes in front of a noun and adds information about the thing which the noun refers to" are considered modifiers (403). Thus, "a word or group of words which comes after a noun and gives more information about the person or thing referred to" is defined as a qualifier

[5] Here "for" is not a preposition but a subordinating conjunction and "Christians everywhere" is, thus, not a complement of preposition but the subject of the infinitive clause.

(556). Not only adjectives but also nouns can play the role of modifier: a noun modifier is "almost always singular" as in "the *car* door, a *football* player, a *surprise* announcement" (443) but noun modifiers can feature together, as in "*car body repair* kits, a *family dinner* party, a *Careers Information* Officer" and a noun modifier can be preceded by adjectives: "a long *car* journey, a new scarlet *silk* handkerchief, complex *business* deals" (444). Qualifiers can be expressed by prepositional phrases ("a girl with red hair/ the man in the dark glasses"), adverbs or adjectives (the dungeon beneath/ the individuals concerned/ the person responsible), adjective phrases ("machinery capable of clearing rubble off the main roads"), verbal clauses ("two of the problems mentioned above/ a simple device to test lung function") or relative clauses ("The man who had done it was arrested."); no mention is made, though, of nominal clauses following the head of a noun phrase (556-557). Instead, in line with the narrow-scope view of complementation, the entry dedicated to 'that'-clauses details the use of these particular grammatical structures as complements after 'be' ("The important thing is that we love each other."). It is then stated that they can be used after nouns "which refer to what someone says or thinks" but there appears no mention of noun complementation, only several examples: "I had a feeling that no-one thought I was good enough." (708-709). Additionally, Angela Downing and Philip Locke seem to take a narrower view of qualifiers: arguing that the term postmodifier, "for which one can also use the term qualifier," covers "all the experiential post-head items that are placed after the head noun and which, like the pre-head items, help to define and identify the noun referent still further," they identify another element, different from the postmodifier, namely the complement, "realised for instance by content clauses," as in "the fact that he left," "the belief that peace is round the corner," and then mention the fact that noun phrases "can also function in apposition to the head noun," as in "the acknowledged master Edgar Degas" (404). Thus, Downing and Locke view complements as different from qualifiers and identify them with appositives. In my opinion, since these qualifiers can actually be accommodated under one of the already mentioned structural components, namely postmodification or complementation, there seems to be no obvious need to postulate the existence of a further sub-division of postmodification (Preda, *Synoptic Outline* 25).

Michael Swan explains, in his 1996 *International Student's Edition* of *Practical English Usage*, that there is "a wider sense" in which the word "complement" is used, so as "to add something to a verb, noun or adjective to complete its meaning" (127). Here are some of his examples featuring noun complements: "Does she understand the need for secrecy? / "Alan's criticism of the plan made him very unpopular." (127-128). Swan mentions, among the items he identifies as noun complements, "clauses (with or without prepositions)" and

gives several examples of nominal clauses but only one of a relative clause: "I admire your belief that you are always right./ There's still the question of whether we're going to pay her./ The idea that I might get married delighted my mother./The main reason why I don't believe her is this." (375-376). Nevertheless, some issues that point to the inconsistency of this approach may be identified. Thus, in these examples, "that you are always right" and "that I might get married" are, indeed, nominal clauses complementing the nouns "belief" and "idea", yet "of whether we're going to pay her" is a prepositional phrase complementing the noun "question" and containing as its complement of preposition the nominal clause "whether we're going to pay her", so this is an instance of noun complementation by a prepositional phrase, and the defining relative clause "why I don't believe her" as we shall see, should be analysed as a postmodifier. Rodney Huddleston and Geoffrey K. Pullum view relative clauses as modifiers and nominal clauses as complements: "the guy who fainted" and "the book I'm reading" – they say, contain modifiers, whereas "the idea that he liked it" contains a complement (84). Complements, Huddleston and Pullum argue, "have to be licensed by the head noun" just like complements in clause structure "have to be licensed by the head verb," whereas modifiers "are the default type of dependent, lacking the above special features" and several postmodifiers can co-occur in one and the same noun phrase: "a young woman from Boston who complained." Thus, the noun phrases "the loss of blood" and "a ban on smoking" contain complements, whilst "a friend from Boston" and "people who complained" contain postmodifiers (83). The shorter postmodifiers will appear first, closer to the head, the longer ones being placed towards the end of the clause: "a guy from France who I was talking to last night" (Huddleston 264). Actually, complements can also co-occur in one and the same phrase ("his criticism of the book for its repetitiousness/ his purchase of the land from the Government for $10,000"), although noun phrases "with more than one complement are generally rather infrequent" (Huddleston 261), and the two types of dependents can also appear together, with the complement, due to its stronger connection with the head, preceding the postmodifier: "a king of England_of considerable intelligence" (Huddleston 264).

Classification criteria at the syntactic-semantic differentiation interface

Even though the differences between them are difficult to point out, postmodifiers and complements are two different types of dependents and, therefore, using the term "postmodification" for all post-head elements is unwarranted. Instances of complementation, when they occur, need to be acknowledged. Care, however, must be taken, so as to properly identify noun

complements, avoiding confusion with adjective complements, for instance. Thus, one syntactic argument put forward in favour of singling out complementation inside the noun phrase is that it offers more specific information, with reference not necessarily to the head, but to a premodifier, as in "*Inspector Morse* is a *longer* series than we had anticipated." Here, some grammarians would argue, the comparative "than we had anticipated" is a complement in the structure of the noun phrase even though it does not describe the head-noun "series" but, instead, complements its premodifier, namely the comparative adjective "longer". Huddleston and Pullum, for instance, call such structures indirect complements, "because although they follow the head noun it is not the head noun that licenses them" (95). Huddleston and Pullum would argue that "than we had anticipated" does complement the head noun, despite being licensed by its premodifier, the comparative adjective "longer". Indeed, if the premodifier is dropped, the noun phrase becomes ungrammatical: "**Inspector Morse* is a series than we had anticipated". Yet, the head-noun "series" is not simply premodified by "longer" and complemented by the comparative clause. Instead, this is an instance of split modification of the head-noun "series" by a discontinuous adjective phrase.[6] Thus, "longer … than we had anticipated" should be seen as an adjective phrase whose syntactic function is modifier of the head-noun "series". In the internal structure of this adjective phrase, the head adjective "long*er*" contains a comparative inflection that does, indeed, license a complement, realised by the comparative clause "than we had anticipated" but the mere presence of complementation in the internal structure of the adjective phrase should have no bearing on the analysis of the noun phrase (Preda, *Synoptic Outline* 25).

This does not, of course, mean that one cannot distinguish between postmodification and complementation in the structure of the noun phrase, even when the noun phrase itself is discontinuous, and the following two examples illustrate what the difference consists in: "A rumour is going around that politicians have lately been trying to advertise as fact." versus "A rumour is going around that the cure for COVID-19 has been found." In the first sentence, "A rumour … that politicians have lately been trying to advertise as fact" is the subject, expressed by a noun phrase having the noun "rumour" as head, preceded by the indefinite article "A" as central determiner and followed by a relative clause as postmodifier. However, the postmodifier does not immediately follow the head-noun, being separated from it by a verb phrase functioning as the predicate of the sentence, so this noun phrase is split. In the second sentence, "A rumour … that the cure for COVID-19 has been found" is the subject, expressed

[6] For additional information regarding the complementation of adjectives see Alina Preda, "Modification versus Complementation in the Structure of English Adjective Phrases and Adverb Phrases." *Philobiblon*, vol. XXV, no. 1, 2020, pp.105-123.

by a noun phrase having the noun "rumour" as head, preceded by the indefinite article "A" as central determiner and followed by a nominal clause as complement. However, the complement does not immediately follow the head-noun, being separated from it by a verb phrase functioning as the predicate of the sentence, so this noun phrase is split.

Another feature used to differentiate between postmodification and complementation is their degree of compulsoriness. Thus, modification is considered optional and always used to describe the head-noun, whilst complementation is regarded as compulsory and may complete the meaning of either the head-noun or of some other constituent in the noun phrase. As Randolph Quirk puts it, "heads are obligatory and modifiers are generally optional, but determination and complementation depend on the presence of some other element (usually the head) and are functions whose conditions of occurrence cannot be defined so simply (Quirk 3). On the one hand, modification is, by definition, a one-way dependency relation (Burton-Roberts 36) in which the modifier can only appear in the presence of the element modified (in our case the head of the noun phrase) so it is not only the determiners and the complementation items that depend on the presence of the head, but also the premodifying and the postmodifying constituents. On the other hand, complementation is a two-way dependency relation (Burton-Roberts 36), so it is not only the complementation item that depends on the presence of the head-noun, but the head-noun also depends on the presence of its complement, which it licenses semantically and, in some cases, even syntactically. As a result, there exists a mutual two-way dependency of complement and head.

This "degree-of-compulsoriness criterion" employed to distinguish between postmodification and complementation appears, thus, to be mainly semantic in nature: it pertains to semantic "satisfaction", since it is suggested that omitting complementation items would leave the meaning of a preceding word "unsatisfied". Quirk et al. argue that on the syntactic level complementation may be either compulsory or optional, yet on the semantic level it is compulsory. Nevertheless, since "the need for semantic 'satisfaction' is a matter of degree," there seems to be no "straight choice between optional and obligatory elements of phrases" (Quirk et al. 66-67). There is, in fact, no shortage of examples showing that modifiers are not always optional. Consider the following: "The claim that vaccines cause autism should be dismissed as irrelevant." where the nominal clause that vaccines cause autism (placed in apposition to the simple subject and considered to be a complement) is a compulsory element, because "*The claim should be dismissed as irrelevant." makes little sense, as it does not express a complete thought. The sentence below contains a *premodifier*, "An *unfounded* claim should be dismissed as irrelevant." but this element is compulsory, because "*A claim should be

dismissed as irrelevant." clearly makes even less sense than "*The claim should be dismissed as irrelevant.", although what was deleted from the former counts as a complement and what is missing from the latter is a mere premodifier.

And here is another example, which focuses on "The rumour that politicians have lately been trying to advertise as fact will be used to justify lifting lockdown measures." versus "The rumour that the cure for COVID-19 has been found might have been created to justify lifting lockdown measures." In the first sentence, "that politicians have lately been trying to advertise as fact" is not the rumour but provides additional information about the rumour, so this is a postmodifier expressed by a defining relative clause similar in function to an adjective, which would be a *premodifier*: "The *persistent* rumour will be used to justify lifting lockdown measures." In the second sentence, "that the cure for COVID-19 has been found" is the actual rumour, so the nominal clause in restrictive apposition to the simple subject has the syntactic function of noun complement in the economy of the sentence and, inside the noun phrase, it complements the head-noun "rumour" by renaming it. In what regards the criterion of compulsoriness, the two subordinate clauses are of equal importance to the meaning of the respective sentences. If the subordinates are omitted, the remains are equally incomplete semantically, whilst being equally correct syntactically. "The rumour […] will be used to justify lifting lockdown measures." is just as (un)informative and as well structured as "The rumour […] might have been created to justify lifting lockdown measures." Neither subordinate can be considered more important than the other one to the formation of a grammatically correct statement that voices a complete thought, because both are needed to complete the meaning of the sentence they are part of.

Moreover, although relative clauses are postmodifiers and nominal clauses are complements, it is indisputable that, whether relative or nominal, all clauses appearing after the head-noun, as part of the noun phrase, are optional when realized by means of non-defining (non-restrictive) structures. In "My tutor, who admires you greatly, has invited us both to dinner." there is a non-defining relative clause, postmodifier, whose presence was deemed optional by the speaker, and in "Her suggestion, that all the fees be doubled, was considered unacceptable." there is a nominal clause, noun complement, in non-restrictive apposition to the simple subject, whose presence was not considered mandatory by the speaker, its content having probably been mentioned before. It can be concluded that, as Peter Hugoe Matthews shows, the criterion of "obligatoriness" is not universally appropriate in distinguishing between different types of dependency within phrases. (146-167). Of course, generally, it can be accepted that, more often than not, modification is a one-way dependency relation, whereas complementation is always a two-way dependency relation.

However, since there are several cases when modifiers are clearly not peripheral elements, one can merely distinguish between "completing" and "non-completing" constituents, regardless of the class that those constituents are said to belong to – the class of modification items or that of complementation items, respectively. Therefore, linguists like Jim Miller argue that the head provides essential information and "controls the other words in a phrase, the modifiers", which offer additional information (3) and "fall into two classes – obligatory modifiers, known as complements, and optional modifiers, known as adjuncts" (4). Complements, Miller explains, complete the phrase's head "with respect to syntax but also with respect to meaning", whilst adjuncts merely append something and are "not part of the essential structure" (5). Nevertheless, adding the complement versus adjunct distinction to the description of noun phrase structure does little more than confuse terminology.

Ronald Carter and Michael McCarthy make the terminological distinction between the two categories of post-head dependents in a more explicit manner. Thus, postmodifiers "specify which person or thing or type of person or thing is being referred to" and are mainly expressed by relative clauses but, even if expressed by a different part of speech, all the other postmodifiers "can be paraphrased by a relative clause": "the house which is nearby/ the house nearby/ the girl who is wearing jeans/ the girl in jeans" (323). Complements complete the head-noun's meaning and are expressed by prepositional phrases which "cannot be paraphrased with relative clauses" and which normally have as head the prepositions *to*, *of*, *in*, *for* and *with*: "her right to compensation/ government of the people/ your belief in his talent/ the relationship with neighbouring countries" (330). In Carter and McCarthy's opinion, the following structures can also be complements in a noun phrase: *to*-infinitive clauses ("The decision to go ahead was not a popular one."), defining *wh*-interrogative clauses ("That's part of the reason why we bought it."), *that*-clauses ("The fact that he was calm did not influence the jury.") or *as to* + *wh*-clause ("There were a number of reservations as to whether they should be allowed to participate."), the last two structures being more frequently encountered in formal writing (329). Although what Carter and McCarthy call "defining *wh*-interrogative clauses" are actually relative clauses and, thus, postmodifiers not complements, their description of noun phrase structure is less blurry than the other ones outlined above and comes closer to making a clear-cut distinction between the two types of post-head dependents.

Huddleston explains that semantically "complements generally correspond to arguments of a semantic predicate expressed in the head noun, while modifiers usually give properties of what is denoted by the head" (262) but admits that from a syntactic point of view "the distinction is a good deal more difficult to draw

than that between complements and modifiers (or adjuncts) in clause structure – and indeed it is much less generally drawn in grammars of English." (263)

Both these elements are placed after the head and, even though most postmodifiers are optional, their presence may sometimes be mandatory – semantically, at least, if not syntactically as well, so a more straightforward analysis based on additional criteria is required. My proposal is to refer to noun phrase constituents by employing the term complement if they are in (partial) apposition to the head-noun, both the head and the complement designating the same referent from two different points of view or being "in some sense equivalent" (Huddleston 262). A distinction can, thus, be made between nominal clauses and appositive verbal clauses, which are complements and relative structures, namely finite relative clauses and verbal clauses that are actually non-finite (reduced) relative clauses, which are postmodifiers. Regrettably, it is not possible to draw such a sharp distinction in the case of prepositional phrases, though. But, as Huddleston pointed out, "the occurrence of a complement of a given kind" depends on the presence of a noun phrase head of an appropriate subclass, since complements expressed by prepositional phrases are obligatory with certain deverbal nouns and with certain nouns whose stems are derived in lexical morphology from adjectives that license complements headed by specific prepositions: "She relied on her father./ Her reliance on her father/ They believe in God./ Their belief in God./ He was eager to win./ His eagerness to win" (Huddleston 260-263). Thus, if we start from examples 1 and 2, containing finite clauses, since in such cases complements and postmodifiers are easier to tell apart, the distinction between 3 and 4, 5 and 6, 7 and 8, or 9 and 10, respectively, becomes clearer as well:

1. I resented the suggestion that the queen had overeaten.
2. I resented the suggestion that the queen had overlooked.
3. Her husband had been a king of Spain.
4. He had been a king of considerable intelligence.
5. My criticism of anti-vaxxers' behaviour stems from legitimate concern.
6. The criticism in my book stems from legitimate concern.
7. He chose a career counselling addicts.
8. Do you know the social worker counselling addicts?
9. The Queen's promise to help could not have come at a better time.
10. The next promise to arrive may be from the Queen herself.

In sentence 1, "that the queen had overeaten" was the actual suggestion and this is a complement in the noun phrase structure, expressed by a nominal clause in apposition to the simple direct object, whereas in 2, "that the queen had overlooked" is a relative clause, postmodifier, because it simply specifies which suggestion the speaker is talking about. Semantically, there is a two-place

predicate in sentence 3, expressed by the noun "king", which requires the presence of two arguments: one appears in subject-position, namely "He", and the other is the prepositional phrase "of Spain", which complements this head-noun. The semantic relations in sentence 4, which can be rewritten, using a finite relative clause, as "He had been a king *who displayed* considerable intelligence.", are different, because there are no longer "two arguments with a "king" relation between them" but simply one argument, "with the two properties of being king and of being of considerable intelligence" (Huddleston 262-263). Consequently, the prepositional phrase in sentence 4 postmodifies the head-noun, giving a property of the individual denoted by the noun "king". A particular relationship can be identified between the head-noun and the prepositional phrase complementing it in certain noun phrases having as head a deverbal noun (criticise => my criticism of anti-vaxxers' behaviour) or a noun whose lexical stem is morphologically derived from an adjective (eager to help => her eagerness to help). This relationship parallels that "between the predicator and its complements in clause structure." (Huddleston 260) Thus, the prepositional phrase in sentence 5 is a complement in the noun phrase structure. We can, however, rephrase 6 as "The criticism *which can be found* in my book stems from legitimate concern.", so this prepositional phrase expressing location can be recast as a finite relative clause. Therefore, it is a postmodifier. In sentence 7, "counselling addicts" was, actually, the career, so this appositional *-ing* clause is a complement, whilst 8 can be recast using a finite relative clause, "Do you know the social worker *who was* counselling addicts?", so "counselling addicts" is a relative *-ing* clause, postmodifier. In sentence 9, "to help" was, in fact, the Queen's promise, so this appositional infinitive clause is a complement, but since 10 can be rephrased to include a finite relative clause, "The next promise *which is bound* to arrive may be from the Queen herself", "to arrive" is a relative infinitive clause, postmodifier.

Conclusion

In light of the examples above, it can be stated that providing a satisfactory account of the nature of complementation as distinct from postmodification in the structure of the noun phrase is an extremely challenging yet not an utterly impossible task. Since postmodifiers and complements are two distinct types of elements, it is not advisable to take the easy way out using terms like pre-head and post-head dependents, or to view complementation merely as a type of postmodification. There is also no immediate need to avoid having to distinguish between postmodification and complementation by resorting to the term qualifier. Nor is there any particular point in classifying all the elements that follow the head-noun as postmodifiers or in using the term modifier exclusively for

premodifiers and arguing that whatever follows the head-noun constitutes complementation. What is required, however, is an accurate description of phrase structure that allows for the distinction between postmodifiers and complements to be made not merely by leaning on positional terms and not simply by relying on degrees of compulsoriness: "It would be idle to suggest that such criteria can yield a sharp distinction between complements and modifiers: there is bound to remain a considerable area of indeterminacy – but this does not mean that we should simply abandon the distinction" (Huddleston 264). Thus, on the one hand, since adjectives are normally premodifiers, sometimes even postmodifiers, in a noun phrase, and given that relative clauses are the equivalent, in clause form, of this particular part of speech, relative clauses should be considered postmodifiers as well. And so should the prepositional phrases which can be rephrased as finite relative clauses, as well as the verbal clauses that are actually reduced relative clauses. On the other hand, appositive constructions, whether expressed by nominal clauses or verbal clauses, as well as prepositional phrases licensed by head nouns that require complementation, should be analysed as complements. And, finally, confusion with adjective complements can be avoided once one recognises that it is only in the internal structure of a discontinuous adjective phrase effecting split modification of a head noun that comparative clauses function as complements. In the noun phrase structure, however, the very same comparative clauses that feature after the head noun are not licensed by the head itself but actually by a premodifier and, thus, should be classified as postmodifiers.

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