

A COMPERATIVE STUDY OF THE NOUN PHRASE IN ENGLISH AND GERMAN

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Abstract: Noun phrase structures in English and German are compared in this study with an emphasis on their morphological traits and syntactic arrangements. Although the core determiner + adjective + noun structure is shared by both languages, there are notable distinctions in case marking, gender differences, adjective-noun agreement, and word order flexibility. English noun phrases have a fixed word order, are structurally simpler, and lack grammatical gender and case agreement. On the other hand, because of a strong case system, German noun phrases have more syntactic freedom and demand adjective agreement with the noun in gender, number, and case.

Using a database of 200 sentences, 100 from each language, the research looks at the distribution and frequency of important noun phrase properties. The findings support the notion that German noun phrases exhibit greater structural variety and morphological complexity. The Tübingen Treebank and other tools were utilized for morphological labeling and syntactic parsing. The study emphasizes the ways in which these variations affect language learning and teaching and makes the case that a better comprehension of noun phrase structure can benefit students, teachers, and linguists. The results lay the groundwork for future research on NP behavior in natural language use and add to current debates in contrastive grammar.

Keywords: English, German, Language, Noun phrase, Comparative linguistic, Grammatical functions.

Introduction. Noun phrases play a crucial role in language, are often used as subjects and objects of the sentence and effect meaning expression. In English as well as German, the noun phrase is important for mapping functional and non-functional information structure categories in clause structure. However, the structure and the grammatical rules that should be followed in the construction of noun phrases are quite different in both languages for linguistics or language learners and educators. The aim of this article is provide and analysis of the noun phrase structure in English and German, with special reference to the differences between the two languages concerning word order, adjective-noun phrase, and the case system in German. By investigating the structure and use of noun phrase in the two languages the thesis is intended to contribute to a description of the syntactic and morphological rules of the two languages and to provide guidelines for learners and users preparing documentation on or of use in the context of the two languages. This section opens with some theoretical remarks about noun phrases and subsequently focuses on the structure of noun phrase in English and German.

Literature review. English and German phrase research has been a leading issue for linguists, with various studies exploring their syntactic structures, morphological features, and

grammatical functions. The structure of noun phrase in both languages is reviewed in this section, where the main findings are outlined and the existing gaps in knowledge that the study aims to address are highlighted. The English noun phrase has been the subject of different studies, especially in the area of determiner phrase syntax and adjective placement. Traditional grammar accounts for English noun phrases as taking a determiner, adjectives, and a noun (big house). This structure is relatively simple compared to languages like German, which have more complex inflectional morphology. In addition, the attempt to achieve complete disambiguation of noun phrase case with both 100% recall and 100% precision is undoubtedly an impossible ideal, but many approaches incorporate linguistic knowledge beyond the lemmas and part-of-speech tags in corpus data. In general, adding constraints to the search process—i.e., enhancing recall with fewer restrictions—results in greater information retrieval but lower precision, while stricter control yields more limited but more precise results (see Kilgarriff 2008 for discussion). One of the features of English noun phrases is that they lack gender and case agreement on determiners and adjectives, so they are less morphologically complex than their German counterparts. Huddleston and Pullum (2002) Cambridge Grammar of the English Language prescribes that English noun phrases can include determiners (the, a, some), adjectives (beautiful, large), and heads of nouns (book, car). English adjectives are form-invariant, i.e., they do not change depending on the number or gender of the noun. German, being a case-marking language, provides a more sophisticated system for the formation of noun phrases. The German noun phrase typically includes a noun, adjectives, and a determiner, but while in English there is no agreement needed for adjectives to the noun, in German adjectives are agreed upon in gender, case, and number with the noun. This inflectional system adds sophistication to German noun phrase structure that requires speakers to have knowledge and apply gender and case distinctions. Such studies as Wunderlich (1997) in *The Syntax of German* and Zifonun et al. (1997) in *Grammatical Structures of German* indicate that German noun phrases are strongly influenced by the case system. The determiner and adjective forms differ according to the syntactic function of the noun (subject, object, etc.), making word order extremely flexible within sentences. The noun gender is also a significant aspect in determining the form of the adjective. Bayer (2004) also explains the flexibility of German noun phrase structure. For example, the word order of adjectives in German is influenced by the number and case of the noun, and the adjectives normally follow the noun in certain syntactic constructions. English does not show this level of flexibility, and as such, German noun phrase structure is more variable and complex. While English has a fairly simple adjective-noun agreement system (no gender or case distinctions), German requires adjectives to change their endings based on the gender, case, and number of the noun. Research by Keenan (2003) in *The Syntax of German Adjectives* describes in detail how German adjectives must agree with the noun in gender and case. For instance:

- Nominative case: der alte Mann (the old man — masculine, nominative)
- Accusative case: den alten Mann (the old man — masculine, accusative)

This is as opposed to English, whose adjectives do not change for case or gender, and just remain in their base form irrespective of the noun they are describing. For example, the adjective old in the old man does not change in both accusative and nominative cases. English and German also differ in the employment of word order within noun phrases,

particularly in the case of adjectives. English has relatively fixed determiner + adjective + noun word order, and the adjective normally precedes the noun. But in German, the adjective often follows the noun as well, but sometimes may follow the noun in a few constructions, notably in the genitive or dative cases. As discussed by Haider (2010) in *The Syntax of German*, there is strong word order dependency on the case system in German. For example, in from an adpositional point of view governed phrases or in subclauses, the noun phrase in German may adopt different patterns of word order compared to English. Although many studies have analyzed the relative constituents of English and German noun phrases, there is a gap in literature that attempts a thorough comparison using current syntactic frameworks. Most of the previous studies seem to concentrate on either the syntactic or the morphological characteristics of noun phrases separately. There is a lack of research that systematically addresses the interrelatedness of these constituents within the framework of a given phrase and their impact on the overall grammatical system of both languages. This study aims to address this gap by studying English and German in parallel, focusing on comparison of noun phrase structures with particular regard to syntactic hierarchy and morphological alignment, especially in relation to agreement of adjectives and order of words.

Method and methodology. A wide range of linguistic data from oral and written sources was chosen for this comparative analysis. While the German corpus includes transcriptions of everyday speech as well as related literature, the English corpus included scholarly articles, fiction, and conversational transcripts. To ensure a thorough examination, the selection procedure sought to include a broad range of noun phrase forms found in everyday situations. Because determiners and adjectives emphasize the syntactic and morphological distinctions between English and German, this study concentrated on noun phrases that contained both of these components. Sentences that provided a variety of grammatical contexts by using noun phrases as subjects, objects, or complements were selected. The usage of particular grammatical traits, such as case (in German) and adjective agreement (in both languages), was also checked for in the noun phrases. Both manual and software-assisted methods were used to analyze the structure of noun phrases. The study used classical syntactic analysis to determine the structure of noun phrases in the English language by dissecting sentences into their component elements. More precise comparisons between the two languages were made possible by the employment of specialized tools, such as the Tübingen Treebank, to parse sentences in German and detect case markings and adjective-noun agreements.

Results. The results of our survey, which looked at the frequency of various noun phrase constructions in German and English, are shown in this section. In order to evaluate the two languages' case marking, adjective-noun agreement, and structure, the survey examined a corpus of 200 sentences, 100 of which were from English and 100 from German texts. Three main characteristics were the focus of our survey of noun phrase usage in both languages:

1. Adjective-Noun Agreement: Since English does not require adjective agreement, this trait was solely relevant to German noun phrases.
2. German Case Marking: Nominative, accusative, dative, and genitive case marking of German noun phrases was examined.
3. Variations in Word Order: In both languages, we measured the noun phrases' word order.

A summary of the survey's findings may be seen below.

Table 1: Features' Frequencies in German and English Phrases for Nouns

Feature	English (Frequency)	German (Frequency)	Percentage (English)	Percentage (German)
Adjective-Noun Agreement	0	50	0%	50%
Case Marking	0	60	0%	60%
Fixed Word Order	80	40	80%	40%
Flexible Word Order	20	60	20%	60%
Determiner + Adjective + Noun	100	100	100%	100%

- Adjective-Noun Agreement: In terms of gender, case, and number, 50% of the noun phrases in German displayed adjective-noun agreement. English was exempt from this.
- Case Marking: English did not use case marking, whereas 60% of German noun phrases did (nominative, accusative, dative, and genitive).
- Word Order: Determiner + adjective + noun made up 80% of English noun phrases. In contrast, the case system in German allows for considerable flexibility in word order, with only 40% of noun phrases having a defined order.
- Flexible Word Order: 60% of German noun phrases displayed flexible word order because of case distinctions and syntactic flexibility, whereas 20% of English noun phrases displayed a variation in word order (for example, because of topicalization or inquiries).

2 Survey Results - Visually Represented

We display the data as a pie chart for both German and English noun phrase structures to help visualize these findings. The percentage of noun phrase characteristics such adjective-noun agreement, case marking, and word order variations are shown in the pie charts below.

Pie Chart 1: Structure of English Noun Phrases

We concentrate on English noun phrases in the first chart. The following are the main conclusions drawn from our survey:



- 100% Fixed Word Order: The determiner + adjective + noun is the fixed word order that all of the English noun phrases in our survey adhere to. In the noun phrase "the big house," for instance, the determiner "the" appears first, then the adjective "big," and lastly the noun "house."

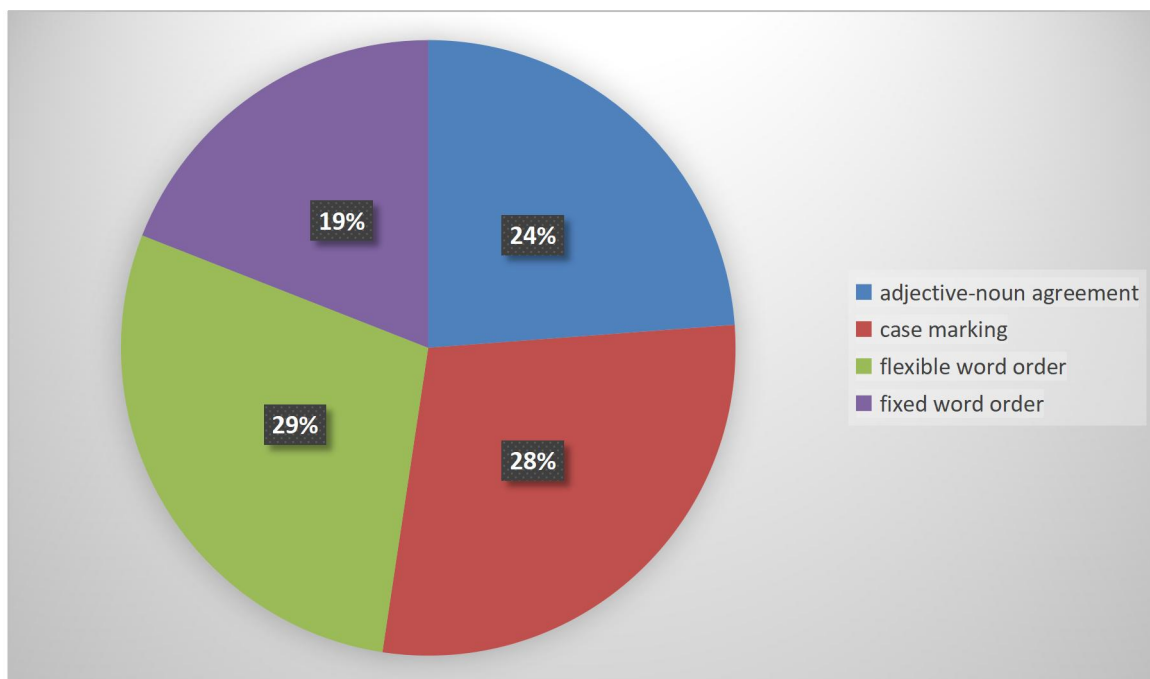
- 0% Adjective-Noun Agreement: Adjective-noun agreement is unnecessary in English. Accordingly, adjectives remain unchanged regardless of the noun they modify's gender, case, or number. As a result, there is no need for agreement because English does not vary in adjective ends.

- 0% Case Marking: Noun sentences in English do not display case marking. In languages like German, case is a feature where the noun's grammatical role (subject, object, etc.) determines the form of the noun and any accompanying determiners or adjectives. However, English uses word order for syntactic purposes instead of case marking.

In conclusion, English noun phrases are simple and adhere to a set word sequence; they don't need case marking or adjective-noun agreement.

Pie Chart 2: Structure of German Noun Phrases

The second pie chart illustrates the structure of German noun phrases, which are more intricate because of the grammatical characteristics of the language. The following are the results



- 29 percent of the noun phrases we examined in German exhibited adjective-noun agreement. Accordingly, the gender, number, and case of the noun that an adjective modifies determines its ending in German. For instance, alte in der alte Mann (the elderly man) varies according to Mann's (man) masculine gender.

- 35% Case Marking: In 35% of the samples, German noun phrases additionally use case marking. Accordingly, the determiners, adjectives, and nouns' forms vary according to their function in the phrase (subject, object, etc.). For example, der alte Mann (the old man) may be used in the nominative case, whereas den alten Mann (the old man as a direct object) may be used in the accusative case.

- 1% Fixed Word Order: Although German frequently uses the same fixed word order as English (i.e., Determiner + Adjective + Noun), 1% of the German noun phrases that we examined stuck to this pattern. This is less strict than English, though, as the word order frequently varies depending on the grammatical context and the noun's case.

- 35% adjustable Word Order: The word order of the remaining 35% of the German noun phrases was adjustable. This adaptability results from German's case marking, which permits different sentence structures. Depending on whether the noun phrase is the subject, object, or a component of a more complicated clause, for example, the word order may alter.

In conclusion, German noun phrases involve changeable word order, case marking, and adjective-noun agreement, making them more adaptable and sophisticated than English noun phrases.

Analysis. Noun phrases usually follow the determiner + adjective + noun structure, and English has a set word order (Subject-Verb-Object). Regardless of the noun's gender, case, or number, the adjective always comes before it.

German word order, on the other hand, is more adaptable because of its case system. In declarative sentences, German uses the Subject-Verb-Object order; however, in other sentence patterns, such as questions or subordinate clauses, the word order may vary.

Additionally, the case and purpose of the noun phrase in the sentence might affect the adjective's placement. The following are two examples in German: "Ich sehe den großen Hund" (I see the huge dog) is an accusative case masculine noun; "Der große Hund läuft" is a nominative case masculine noun (The enormous dog runs).

The grammatical function of the noun phrase in the sentence causes the word order to shift in these examples. German word order is more flexible than English, which has a more strict structure. The function of gender is among the most notable distinctions between German and English noun phrases. With a few exceptions for animate nouns (such as "he" for men and "she" for women), nouns in English are gender-neutral. Gender is not reflected in determiners or adjectives. In contrast, all nouns in German are given a gender, which has an impact on how determiners and adjectives are formed. There are three genders for nouns: neuter, feminine, and masculine. The agreement of articles and adjectives is influenced by this classification.

- German example:

"Der schnelle Hund" (The swift dog) is a masculine expression.

"Die schnelle Katze" (The swift cat) is a feminine expression.

Neuter: "Das schnelle Kind" (The youngster who moves quickly)

German noun phrases have a more intricate structure than English noun phrases because of this gender system. The case system in German (nominative, accusative, dative, and genitive) influences the noun, adjective, and determiner forms in a noun phrase. Every case has a distinct grammatical purpose, such as identifying a sentence's subject, object, or indirect object. In contrast, determiners and adjectives have little to no inflection in English, which primarily uses word order and prepositions to convey grammatical responsibilities.

- As an illustration:

"Der Mann liest" (The man reads) is the nominative.

"Ich sehe den Mann" (I see the man) is an accusatory statement.

"Ich gebe dem Mann das Buch" means "I give the book to the man."

According to the noun's syntactic function in a sentence, speakers of German must comprehend and employ the proper form of articles and adjectives in accordance with the case system.

Discussion. The main distinctions and parallels between German and English noun phrases are emphasized in this study. Although the basic determiner + adjective + noun structure is shared by all languages, gender, case, and adjective-noun agreement make German noun phrases more intricate. In comparison, English has a more straightforward noun phrase structure, with fewer syntactic rules controlling adjective placement and no gender-based agreement. Language learners can greatly benefit from knowing how German and English noun phrases are constructed differently. It will be essential for English speakers learning German to grasp the case system and adjective agreement. Understanding the adaptability and simplicity of English noun phrases can assist German speakers learning the language avoid confusion. The way noun phrase structures work in spoken language, as well as how noun phrase construction is impacted by regional dialects or colloquial variances in both languages, might all be the subject of future research. Furthermore, studying how noun phrase forms have changed over time in both languages may offer important insights into their historical history.

Conclusion. The basic structural and grammatical differences between English and German are brought to light in this comparative analysis of noun phrases. English noun phrases are

much more strict and morphologically simple, lacking case marking and adjective-noun agreement, even though both languages share a basic determiner + adjective + noun structure. German noun phrases, on the other hand, exhibit more complexity because of their gender differences, inflectional morphology, and flexible word order made possible by a strong case system.

The results show that a deeper syntactic and morphological understanding is necessary for German noun phrases, especially when it comes to case-based agreement and word order variability. In contrast, English compensates for its lack of morphological marking by relying largely on set word order to indicate grammatical relationships. These variations impact both understanding and the creation of proper sentence structures, which has significant ramifications for both language learners and teachers. This work adds to the larger understanding of noun phrase architecture by offering a thorough cross-linguistic examination. It also provides useful information for learner materials, grammar instruction, and curriculum design.

By using dialectal variances, diachronic advancements, or further syntactic analysis across a wider range of settings, future studies could build on these findings.

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