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"English *One* and *Ones* as Complex Determiners"

A Research

SUBMITTED TO THE COMMITTEE OF DISCUSSION AT DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH - COLLEGE OF EDUCATION FOR HUMANITIES, UNIVERSITY OF DIYALA - A PARTIAL REQUIREMENT OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES FOR THE DEGREE OF B.A. IN ENGLISH.

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2022 1443

Acknowledgement

We would like to thank ALLAH for his

Guidance and careness in our life.

Our thanks are also to all the members in English

Department especially our marvelous supervisor

Dr. Abdulkareem Yaseen

Contents: **No.**

1. Introduction

A determiner is a general term for the words or a group of words that appear before a noun or a noun phrase. They're meant to describe the noun or noun phrase by either specifying, identifying, or quantifying it. Also referred to as prenominal modifiers, determiners are commonly placed before a noun and their function is to offer some valuable insight about the specific nature of the noun in question. Keep in mind that several determiners can be used all at once to tell us more about the noun or phrasal noun that follows them. Which is to say, you're NOT just limited to using one determiner at a time when describing a noun [1].

For example, in English (This problem is complex) "This" is a determiner that goes with "problem". Together, they form a noun phrase. "This" indicates that "problem" refers to some problem that was raised or mentioned just before in the discourse.

Determiners, by definition, are always attached to a noun. They are not used in isolation. If this is the case, then it is not a determiner but a pronoun (see "Nouns and pronouns"). For example, in "this is complex", "this" is a pronoun that can refer to many things, and not necessarily to nouns[2].

There are many languages where determiners differ from pronouns. This is the case in English for some determiners. For example, "your" in "your book" is a determiner and "yours" in "this is yours" is a pronoun. The difference between categories makes for a more transparent grammar, but in native use, the ambiguity is not problematic, as determiners are automatically integrated with the noun when listening to or producing language. In English, determiners always appear before the noun that they determine. In other languages, they can appear after the word. In yet

other languages, they are tightly integrated in the nouns, as prefixes or suffixes, and not separate words as in English.

1.1 Differences between a Determiner and an Adjective

An adjective also comes before a noun and they're also meant to describe it, not any different from a determiner. So, does that mean they're one and the same thing? The answer is NO. The two terms may relate to each other on the ground that they both modify a noun or noun phrase. However, when you look at them more keenly, you'll notice that a determiner is meant to modify a noun by introducing it to the targeted audience, while an adjective modifies it by offering further details about it. Another difference worth noting is that while adjectives can be graded, determiners, on the other hand, cannot. In other words, it's possible to express adjectives in varying intensities, while the same cannot be done to a determiner. For instance, you can describe the size of an object as either big, bigger or the biggest of them all. But the same cannot be done to a determiner. In short, you can't possibly add an 'er' or 'est' to intensify a determiner. Furthermore, while you can do away with adjectives without making any grammatical error, determiners are indispensable or the necessary part of a sentence and doing away with them means making a grave grammatical mistake.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents Types of Determiners. Section 3 describes Complex determiners. Section 4 explains (one) and (ones) as Determiners. Finally, Section 5 concludes the paper.

2. Types of Determiners

Determiners come in various shapes and forms, with each one of them serving a different function. The different types include:

1. Descriptive.
2. Quantitative.
3. Demonstrative.
4. Possessive.
5. Interrogative.
6. Distributive.
7. Articles.

A **descriptive adjective** is probably what you think of when you hear the word "adjective". Descriptive adjectives are used to describe nouns and pronouns. Words like *beautiful*, *silly*, *tall*, *annoying*, *loud,* and *nice* are all descriptive adjectives. These adjectives add information and qualities to the words they're modifying.

Examples:

-"The flowers have a smell" is just stating a fact, and it has no adjectives to describe what the flowers or their smell are like.

-"The *beautiful* flowers have a *nice* smell" gives us a lot more information, with two descriptive adjectives.

- You can say "The cat is *hungry*," or "The *hungry* cat" In both cases, the word *hungry* is an adjective describing the cat.

2. Quantitative

Quantitative adjectives describe the quantity of something. In other words, they answer the question "how much?" or "how many?" Numbers like *one* and *thirty* are this type of adjective. So are more general words like *many*, *half,* and *a lot*.

Examples:

-"How many children do you have?" "I only have *one* daughter."

-"Do you plan on having more kids?" "Oh yes, I want *many* children!"

-"I can't believe I ate that *whole* cake!"

3. Demonstrative

A **demonstrative adjective** describes "which" noun or pronoun you're referring to. These adjectives include the words:

- **This:** Used to refer to a singular noun close to you.
- **That:** Used to refer to a singular noun far from you.
- **These:** Used to refer to a plural noun close to you.
- **Those:** Used to refer to a plural noun far from you.

Demonstrative adjectives always come before the word they're modifying. Sometimes, like when you're responding to a question, you can leave off the noun being described and only use the adjective. For example, if someone asks you how many cakes you want to buy you can respond: "I want to buy *two* cakes," or you can just say: "I want to buy *two*."

Examples:

-"Which bicycle is yours?" "*This* bicycle is mine, and *that* one used to be mine until I sold it."

4. **Possessive**

Possessive adjectives show *possession*. They describe to whom a thing belongs. Some of the most common possessive adjectives include:

- **My:** Belonging to me.
- **His:** Belonging to him.
- **Her:** Belonging to her.

- **Their:** Belonging to them.
- **Your:** Belonging to you.
- **Our:** Belonging to us.

All these adjectives, except the word *his,* can only be used before a noun. You can't just say "That's my," you have to say "That's *my* pen." When you want to leave off the noun or pronoun being modified, use these possessive adjectives instead:

- Mine
- His
- Hers
- Theirs
- Yours
- Ours

For example, even though saying "That's *my"* is incorrect, saying "That's *mine"* is perfectly fine.

Examples:

"Whose dog is that?" "He's *mine*. That's *my* dog."

5. <u>Interrogative</u>

Interrogative adjectives *interrogate*, meaning that they ask a question. These adjectives are always followed by a noun or a pronoun and are used to form questions. The interrogative adjectives are:

- **Which:** Asks to make a choice between options.
- **What:** Asks to make a choice (in general).
- **Whose:** Asks who something belongs to.

Other question words, like "who" or "how" aren't adjectives since they don't modify nouns. For example, you can say "whose coat is this" but you can't say

"who coat?" *Which*, *what*, and *whose* are only considered adjectives if they're immediately followed by a noun. The word *which* is an adjective in this sentence: "*Which* color is your favorite?" But not in this one: "*Which* is your favorite color?"

Examples:

-"*Which* song will you play on your wedding day?"

-"*What* pet do you want to get?"

-"*Whose* child is this?"

6. <u>Distributive</u>

Distributive adjectives describe specific members out of a group. These adjectives are used to single out one or more individual items or people. Some of the most common distributive adjectives include:

- **Each:** Every single one of a group (used to speak about group members individually).
- **Every:** Every single one of a group (used to make generalizations).
- **Either:** One between a choice of two.
- **Neither:** Not one or the other between a choice of two.
- **Any:** One or some things out of any number of choices. This is also used when the choice is irrelevant, like: "it doesn't matter, I'll take *any* of them". These adjectives are always followed by the noun or pronoun they're modifying.

Examples:

-"*Every* rose has its thorn".

-"Which of these two songs do you like? "I don't like *either* song".

7. Articles

There are only three **articles** in the English language: *a, an,* and *the*. Articles can be difficult for English learners to use correctly because many languages don't have them (or don't use them in the same way). Although articles are their own part of speech, they're technically also adjectives! Articles are used to describe which noun you're referring to. Maybe thinking of them as adjectives will help you learn which one to use [3]-[4]:

- **A:** A singular, general item.
- **An:** A singular, general item. Use this before words that start with a vowel.
- **The:** A singular or plural, specific item.

3. (one) and (ones) as Determiners

3.1 Introduction

Perlmutter [5] took the prenominal *one* to be the same element in both of the following:

(1) John has written only one paper this year.

(2) Mary has just written one hell of a paper.

Despite the fact that the numeral interpretation perceived in (1) seems to be absent in (2). Other examples of a similarly non-numeral pre-N *one* are found in:

(3) There's one John Smithfield here to see you.

(4) One day, he'll realize that we were right.

In support of Perlmutter's unified approach to these two types of *one* is the fact that all are equally incompatible with plural nouns:

(5) He's written only one papers this year.

(6) She's just written one hell of papers.

(7) There's one John Smithfields here to see you.

(8) One days, he'll realize that we were right.

In this paper, I will attempt to extend a unified approach to *one* to encompass, in addition, the *one* of:

(9) I have a red car and you have a blue one.

Despite the fact that this *one* is compatible with a plural:

(10) I have red cars and you have blue ones.

(11) He lost only one blood in the accident.

(12) You've just had one hell of fun.

(13) There's one Domino Sugar all over the table.

(14) One money, (and) you'll succeed Nor, parallel to (9) or (10) do we have:

(15) I like red wine and you like white one.

(16) She's had good luck but he's had bad one.

The fact that plural *ones* is possible in (10) will turn out, as I will try to show, not to be incompatible with taking the *one* of (9), as well as the *one* of (10), to be essentially the same as the *one* of (1)-(4).

3.2 *One* is not a noun

The *one* in examples (1)-(4) looks like a determiner of some sort. But the *one* of (9) and (10), especially insofar as it is post-adjectival, looks at first glance like a noun, and in that sense looks quite unlike determiner *one*. If the *one* of (9) and (10) were really a noun, though, it would have to be recognized as an extremely odd one, since, unlike ordinary nouns, it cannot be a bare plural:(17) I have cars and you have ones, too.

Similarly, there is to a large extent no completely bare *a one*: (18) I have a car and you have a one, too.

Which would be surprising if *one* were a noun. In addition, *one* cannot be immediately preceded by a numeral in sentences like:

(19) You have three cars but I only have two ones.

In which respect *one* is again behaving in an un-noun-like fashion. The conclusion must be, that the *one* of (9) and (10) is not a noun.

3.3 One is a determiner

If *one* is never a noun, then a unified approach to all instances of *one* will lead to the conclusion that *one* is in all cases a determiner, just as it is in (1)-(4). In which case the phrase *a blue one* in (9) must contain two determiners. Furthermore in:

(20) We have only one blue one.

"one blue one" must contain two determiners that are identical in form.

This conclusion, to the effect that English allows two (sometimes identical) indefinite determiners in what looks like one DP is less surprising than it might appear, given the existence in some English (e.g. mine) of:

(21) It'll take us a half a day to finish that job.

In which *a half a day*, with two identical determiners, is perfectly natural. Similarly in :

(22) a such a wonderful book.

3.4 One and a/an

Of course, there is a discrepancy between (21) and (22), which contain two instances of the indefinite article *a/an*, and (20), which contains two instances of *one*. But this discrepancy is arguably a relatively minor one, in particular, if interpreted against the background of Perlmutter and Barbiers [6], both of whom argue in favor of a close relation between prenominal *one* and the indefinite article. Perlmutter (p. 234) more specifically took English to have, as a source for the indefinite article, "a rule which obligatorily converts unstressed proclitic *one* to *an*".

Perlmutter's formulation/rule was not immediately able, as he himself noted, to account for generic-like *a/an*, given the absence of a comparable (stressed) generic prenominal *one* that would be its source:

(23) A spider has eight legs and many eyes.

(24) One spider has eight legs and many eyes.

The generic-like reading of (23) does not seem to carry over to (24). The rule that Perlmutter suggested was meant to treat pairs like:

(25) That was a hell of a paper.

(26) That was one hell of a paper.

As involving, respectively, an unstressed and a (somewhat) stressed variant of the same element *a/one*, with the same interpretation. As just noted, the kind of pairing that holds for (25) and (26) does not hold for (23) and (24). In part similarly, the intended pairing breaks down for:

(27) Too long a book.

Which has no counterpart with *one*:

(28) Too long one book.

A third such problem for Perlmutter's conversion rule lies in:

(29) A few books.

(30) One few books

Where, again, the indefinite article has no *one* counterpart to serve as a plausible source.

A fourth problem for the pairing of *a* and *one* can be seen in:

(31) They're selling one-drawer desks in the back of the store.

(32) They're selling a-drawer desks in the back of the store.

In which, this time, prenominal *one* is possible, but cannot be replaced by *a/an*. Despite these several discrepancies between *one* and *a/an*, I will, in partial agreement with both Perlmutter and Barbiers, take there to be a significant relation between *a/an* and *one*, to be spelled out in the next section.

3.5 One is a complex determiner containing a classifier

Let me execute the idea that *a/an* is a reduced form of *one* in a different way from Perlmutter (and Barbiers). Let me start from generic-like (23) and

(24) and in particular from (23) vs. (24) being reminiscent of a fact from Chinese. According to Cheng and Sybesma (1999, 533-534; 2012, 640), a singular classifier in Chinese cannot occur within a generic DP (whether or not ('a/an/one') is present)[7],[8]. This leads me to think that *one* cannot occur in (24) with a generic-like reading for the same reason that singular classifiers are excluded from Chinese generic DPs, which in turn leads to the following proposal:

(33) An English DP with *one* contains a singular classifier.

That *one* is associated with a singular classifier, while *a/an* is not, is close to Perlmutter's idea that *a/an* is a 'reduced form' of *one*, though by expressing the notion of 'reduction' in terms of the more specific notion of the presence vs. absence of a classifier, we can formulate an account of (23) vs. (24) that Perlmutter's less specific proposal was unable to do. More precisely put, the phrase *one spider* in (24) must, by (33), contain a singular classifier. But, judging from Chinese, singular classifiers are plausibly incompatible with generic readings. Therefore, (24) cannot be a generic type of sentence in the way that (23) can be. In Cardinaletti and Starke's (1999) terms, we might want to go further and relate the fact that *one* is associated with extra syntactic material (the singular classifier) to the fact that *one* is (arguably) morphophonologically 'bigger' than *a/an*. We can do this as follows. *One* is to be understood as bimorphemic and in particular as 'w- + an', where *w*- (as I will write it) is the classifier and *an* the indefinite article. The difference in vowel quality between *one* and *an* might be due to independent properties of English phonology, perhaps involving (in part) stress. The necessary pronunciation of the *n* of *one* even before a consonant, as opposed to the necessary dropping of the *n* of *an* before a consonant, might again just be phonology. Or it might also be related to syntax, especially if the order

'classifier - indefinite article' (*'w- + an*; cf. Ghosh (2001, chap.3) on some Tibeto-Burman having 'CLF Num N' order) is produced by leftward movement from a structure in which the indefinite article precedes the classifier. From this perspective, the additional contrasts (beyond the generic one) mentioned earlier between *one* and *a/an* look as follows. The contrast in:

(34) We have a/one few days left.

Can be attributed to a clash between the classifier *w-* that is part of *one* and the silent noun NUMBER (capitalization will indicate silence) that accompanies *few*, in a way that is parallel to:

(35) We have (only) a/one small number of days left.

As well as to:

(36) Mary has written a/one number of papers this year.

In all of (34)-(36), *number*/NUMBER is not allowed to co-occur with the classifier contained in *one.* In the variants of (34)-(36) with *a*, there is no comparable classifer, just the indefinite article, and so no clash. (The clash in question may in turn be related to the classifier-like status of *number*/NUMBER itself in these sentences - cf. Liao (2015).) As for:

(37) Too long (of) a/*one book.

It looks like the classifier that is part of *one* blocks the preposing of the degree phrase (Ireturn to (37) below). Finally, the restriction seen in:

(38) They're selling one-drawer/a-drawer desks in the back of the store.

may be linked to:

(39) They're real Brooklyn-lovers.

(40) They're real (the) Bronx-lovers.

Via a prohibition against bare articles appearing within compound-like structures, with the classifier contained in one protecting it, in a way that remains to be spelled out, from this prohibition.

3.6 English ones

If *one* is a complex determiner (containing two subparts, namely a classifier and an indefinite article), then *ones* in examples like: (41) They have blue ones.

Must be an even more complex determiner with (at least) three subparts, namely a classifier, an indefinite article, and plural *-s*. An immediate objection might be that *ones* cannot be followed by an overt noun, as seen in: (42) They have blue ones cars.

Unlike more familiar determiners. This objection to the determiner status of *ones* is weaker than it looks, for two kinds of reasons.

3.7 Singular vs. plural

The fact that English speakers differ from one another on *(*)those ones*. We have seen earlier that *ones* is readily licensed by an immediately preceding adjective, as in:

(43) They bought three *(blue) ones yesterday.

Whereas if *ones* is immediately preceded by a determiner (broadly construed), we generally have unacceptability, as in:

(44) *They bought few/a small number of/three/several/some ones yesterday.

For speakers who reject **those ones*, demonstrative *those* (as well as *these*) is acting like the other determiners of (44). Speakers who accept *those ones* and *these ones* may be taking *those/these* to be adjectival; alternatively they are taking the silent THERE/HERE that accompanies *those/these* to be adjectival.The contrast, for one set of speakers, between singular *this one, that one* and plural **these ones, *those ones* leads to the question whether the adjectival licensing relevant to plural *ones* is at all relevant to (certain instances of) singular *one*. In fact, (44) has a parallel with some singular

determiners:

(45) John was attending some class (or other) yesterday and Mary was attending some class/*some one (or other) yesterday, too.

(46) Mary made one mistake and John made one mistake/*one one, too. As with plural *ones*, adding an adjective changes the acceptability status: (47) Mary made one bad mistake and John made one bad one, too.

With singular *some* there is clearly an improvement, even if the result is not entirely natural:

(47) John was attending some weird class yesterday and Mary was attending some weird one (yesterday), too.

In addition, I find that *every* is to some degree like singular *some*, in some cases:

(48) As for spiders, every ?(single) one has eight legs.

whereas with *each* we have:

(49) Each spider/one will be found to have eight legs.

Why singular *one* is compatible with a preceding determiner to agreater extent than plural *ones* is left an open question.

3.8 Just singular one

A remaining question is why the following is possible without any adjective or modifier of any sort:

(50) We bought one, too.

This instance of *one* to be closer to the *one* of:

(51) We bought one book.

Then to the *one* of:

(52) We bought an expensive one.

In essence, the question is when exactly singular *one* needs an adjective. As an initial approximation, we may have:

(53) Only when preceded by another determiner does a singular *one* need to be preceded by an adjective.

3.9 The -s of ones

Saying that *ones* is plural normally goes with the (usually implicit) assumption that *one* and plural *-s* form a constituent. But that assumption is not straightforward. Nor is it in the case of *others*, as in:

(54) Give me the others.

Which I take to have an analysis as in:

(55) ...the other NOUN s

Where *-s* is associated with the silent noun rather than directly with *other*. An imaginable alternative would have *other* itself sometimes being a noun in addition to usually being an adjective. There are, however, reasons for thinking that at least this kind of category multiplication/neutrality is not made available by the language faculty. If, in addition to being an adjective, *other* could also sometimes be a noun, one would wrongly expect the following to be straightforwardly possible:

(56) Give me that other.

(57) *You've eaten every (single) other.

Furthermore, there is a striking fact having to do with the interaction between *other* and other adjectives. One has:

(58) The other American invasions took place years ago.

(59) The other American ones took place years ago.

If *other* could also be a noun, one would wrongly also expect to have:

(60) *The American others took place years ago.

Whereas if *other* is consistently an adjective, (60) reduces to:

(61) *The American other invasions took place years ago.

The appearance of plural *-s* following a silent noun is allowed in a variety of adjectival cases, not just with *others*:

(62) They have two four-year olds.

(63) If I had a choice among those crayons, I'd take all the reds.

(64) In that linguistics department, the first-years are under a lot of pressure.

In other cases, this is not possible, for reasons yet to be determined:

(65) *Speaking of invasions, the Americans took place years ago.

(66) Those three books are more interesting than these four(*s).

It seems almost certain that the *-s* of *ones* has the same property as the *-s* of *others* (and the *-s* of *four-year olds*, *reds* and *first-years*), namely this *-s* is associated with a silent noun, rather than simply with *one* itself. For example the following:

(67) I prefer red cars, but you prefer blue ones.

is to be analyzed, parallel to (55), as containing as a subpart:

(68) ... blue one CAR –s.

4. Conclusion

One and *ones* are complex determiners whose relation to their antecedent, when they have one, is mediated by a silent noun. They are never themselves nouns taking an antecedent directly. The question arises as to why the language faculty would turn its back on an analysis of *one* and *ones* as anaphoric nouns in certain cases. A possible answer might be in part the one given in Kayne [9] for personal pronouns, namely that the antecedent-pronoun relation is necessarily mediated by movement of a 'double' of the pronoun. This might hold, now, not only for *he*, *she*..., but also for *one(s)*, even though the character of the double would be different in the two cases. With personal pronouns, the double is a DP, with *one(s)* a NP. A broader question now arises. Why would the language faculty use

movement (internal merge) to express antecedent-'pronoun' relations in general? The most interesting answer I can think of is given in:

(69) All non-local syntactic relations necessarily involve internal merge (movement).

That is, there is no possibility, in a derivational syntax, of 'coindexing' or directly relating two phrases in any way distinct from internal merge (or external merge, in a highly local fashion).

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