

## Silent Years, Silent Hours

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March, 2003

### 1. Introduction

Jespersen (1970a, 106) noted that it is natural to take English *few* to be an adjective, given that it has comparative and superlative forms:

- (1) John has fewer books than Bill.
- (2) John has the fewest books of anybody I know.

Yet if *few* is an adjective, why it is compatible with *a* and with *every*, as in?:

- (3) a few books
- (4) every few days

given that *a* and *every* otherwise require a singular noun:

- (5) \*a books
- (6) \*every days

In recent work,<sup>1</sup> I suggested that the adjectival character of *few* can be reconciled with its occurrence with *a* and *every* if we take *few* to directly modify a noun distinct from the visible plural *books* or *days*:

- (7) ...fewer/fewest NUMBER books...
- (8) a few NUMBER books
- (9) every NUMBER days

The noun in question is a silent counterpart of the overt *number* seen in:

- (10) a small number of books

The proposal that *few* always modifies NUMBER is supported by the fact that in some cases (characterized by *few* being separated from *number*) *few* can to some degree of acceptability modify overt *number*:

- (11) (??)John has too few a number of books to qualify for a larger apartment.
- (12) (?)John has the fewest number of books of anybody I know.

This hypothesis concerning *few*, which carries over in an obvious way (though with some interesting twists) to *many* and also to *little* and *much* (with the last two taken to modify AMOUNT), extends naturally to color adjectives (and certain others), which should be taken to invariably modify either the overt noun *color* or its silent counterpart COLOR, the latter as in:

- (13) John bought a green COLOR car yesterday.

This is supported by sentences like:

- (14) John's car is a bright green.

where the presence of *a* is plausibly licensed by silent COLOR.<sup>2</sup>

Although *few* is, from this perspective, akin to *small*, *small* does not allow silent NUMBER:

- (15) John has a few/\*small books.

Put another way, NUMBER requires the presence of a specialized adjective like *few* or *many*, and similarly for COLOR, as seen in:

- (16) John's suit is of a bright green color/a widely discussed color.
- (17) John is wearing a bright green suit.
- (18) John is wearing a widely discussed suit.

COLOR, modified by *bright green*, is present in (17), but COLOR is not present/licensed in (18), which does not seem possible with the interpretation of:

- (19) John is wearing a suit of a widely discussed color.

That is, COLOR requires the presence of a specialized adjective, too.

Silent NUMBER and COLOR, in, for example, (15) and (17), have no antecedent, at least not in the strong sense of requiring an overt instance of *number* or *color* elsewhere in the sentence or previous discourse. On the other hand, there is a weaker sense in which NUMBER and COLOR do have an antecedent, namely one residing in the feature [+number] or [+color] which arguably characterizes the number adjectives *few* and *many* and the color adjectives like *green* and *red*.

In the present paper, I would like to look at some further instances of silent nouns that are not licensed by an antecedent in the strong sense of the term.

## 2. Age

There is a slight contrast for me between the following:

(20) At the age of seven months, John...

(21) (?)At the age of seven years, John...

More natural than (21) is:

(22) At the age of seven, John...

Conversely, to my ear, (22) cannot be interpreted in the same way as (20). That is, (22) should plausibly be taken to contain the silent noun YEARS,<sup>3</sup> and cannot contain MONTHS. Similarly, I find:

(23) \*At the age of three, their newborn daughter already weighed 12 pounds.

The word *newborn* in (23) is incompatible with 'three YEARS'. The fact that this example is unacceptable indicates further that a silent WEEKS or DAYS is not available.

In other words, in the age context illustrated in (20)-(23), the numeral can be followed by silent YEARS, but not by silent MONTHS/WEEKS/DAYS. (For me, YEARS in (22) is preferred to *years* in (21).) This asymmetry between YEARS and the others (which might be thought of in terms of markedness) is not limited to contexts in which the overt noun *age* is present, given:

(24) John is three.

This example is naturally interpreted in the same way as the equally acceptable:

(25) John is three years old.

Much less readily available is an interpretation of (24) that would correspond to:

(26) John is three months/weeks/days old.

except perhaps in the context of a day care center for babies or a maternity ward.

Just as (22) should plausibly be analyzed as containing:

(27) at the age of seven YEARS...

with silent YEARS, so then should (24) be analyzed as containing:<sup>4</sup>

(28) ...is three YEARS...

Of course, thinking of (25), it might be that (24) also contains a silent counterpart of *old*. Alternatively, (24) might be closer to (the less colloquial):

(29) John is three years of age.

in which case (24) would contain a silent counterpart of *age*. Compared to postulating the presence of a silent adjective OLD, the proposal that (24) contains a silent AGE has the advantage of relating (24) more closely to (22)/(27). A second advantage can be seen by considering certain discrepancies between *old* and *of age*.

I find that *old* has a broader range than *of age*, which for me is fully natural only with human beings and (some) animals:

(30)a. That child is ten years old.

b. This dog is fifteen years old.

c. That tree is two hundred years old.

d. The Earth is five billion years old.

e. The idea that gravity has a geometric interpretation is ninety years old.

(31)a. That child is ten years of age.

b. (?)This dog is fifteen years of age.

c. ??That tree is two hundred years of age.

d. \*?The Earth is five billion years of age.

e. \*The idea that gravity has a geometric interpretation is ninety years of age.

Moreover, I find that (24) displays a broadly similar sensitivity to the type of subject, i.e. that (32) is considerably closer in this respect to (31) than to (30):

(32)a. That child is ten.

b. (?)This dog is fifteen.

c. ??That tree is two hundred.

d. \*?The Earth is five billion.

e. \*The idea that gravity has a geometric interpretation is ninety.

Let us adopt, then, the proposal that (32)/(24) contains AGE, in addition to YEARS. If we now compare (32)/(24) to (27), the proposal that comes to mind is that YEARS is licensed in these examples at least in part by the presence of AGE/*age*, in a way that I will come back to. (Silent AGE itself appears to have no licenser - unless one takes nouns for human beings and (some) animals to bear a feature [+age].)

On the other hand, there must be at least one more licensing factor, namely the numeral itself, given the following. (32a) is possible with numerals, including fractional ones:<sup>5</sup>

(33) Their daughter is three and a half now.

but not with less exact expressions of quantity:

(34) \*\*She's several/quite a few/not very many now.

This effect is very strong with YEARS, as in (34), but is less strong (to varying degrees) with overt *years*:

(35) ?She's several years old now.

(36) ?She's several years of age now.

It reappears in a very strong form in the other case we have seen involving YEARS:

(37) Even at the age of three and a half, John...

(38) \*\*Even at the age of several/quite a few/not very many, John...

Like (37) is the corresponding sentence with silent AGE (and YEARS):

(39) Even at three and a half, John...

Again, an inexact expression of quantity is strongly prohibited:

(40) \*\*Even at several/quite a few/not very many, John...

For me, this effect is, as in (36), weaker with *years of age*:

(41) ??Even at several years of age, John was incapable of remaining silent.

Whereas with *at the age of...years*, I find it stronger again:

(42) \*Even at the age of several years, John was incapable of remaining silent.

The fact that (40) is closer in acceptability status to (42) than to (41) suggests that the structure of (39)/(40) is close to that of (42):

(43) ...at THE AGE OF three YEARS... - (first approximation, see (82))

In the case of (32a)/(33), the same conclusion seems unavoidable, in part by extension from (43), in part from consideration of pairs like:

(44) It's almost as if he's been thirty years of age forever.

(45) (?)It's almost as if he's been at the age of thirty years forever.<sup>6</sup>

I think that substituting *several* for *thirty* yields a bigger drop in acceptability in the second of these than in the first:

(46) ?It's almost as if he's been several years of age forever.

(47) \*It's almost as if he's been at the age of several years forever.

As expected by now, still worse is:

(48) \*\*It's almost as if he's been at the age of several forever.

The very strong unacceptability of (48) reflects the incompatibility of YEARS with *several*.<sup>7</sup> This is also seen in (34). The fact that the unacceptability of (34) is closer in degree to that of (47) than it is to that of (46) suggests again that (33) (and similarly for (34) and (32)) has the structure:

(49) ...is AT THE AGE OF three YEARS... - (first approximation, see (82))

(49) matches (43) except for the difference between AT and *at*. That there must be a silent AT in (49)/(33) is reinforced by the contrast between (45) and:

(50) \*It's almost as if he's been the age of thirty (years) forever.

A related preposition appears in:

(51) Nobody can make it to a hundred without medical help.

which is to be represented as:

(52) ...to THE AGE OF a hundred YEARS - (first approximation, see (82))

That (51) is intimately related to the earlier discussion is supported by its sensitivity to the notion of exact numeral:<sup>8</sup>

(53) \*Nobody can make it to hundreds even with medical help.

The presence of a silent preposition in (49) is related to proposals in other contexts made by Katz and Postal (1964) and many others since.<sup>9</sup> In some cases, the availability of silent TO appears to be sensitive to the choice of verb:

(54) At that rate, he won't reach a hundred/the age of a hundred.

(55) At that rate, he won't get \*(to) a hundred/the age of a hundred.

This is not specific to contexts involving age:

(56) We won't reach Paris until tomorrow.

(57) We won't get \*(to) Paris until tomorrow.

The presence in (43), (49) and (52) of THE and OF in addition to AGE calls for further discussion. In particular, (my) English allows two options in:

(58) At age eleven/the age of eleven, he was not yet in high school.

Determinerless *age* here is incompatible with *of*:

(59) \*At age of eleven, he was not yet in high school.

Of the two possibilities illustrated in (58), *the age of eleven* is the more usual, *age eleven* the more special. With silent AT, *age* followed by a numeral is a bit less natural, but still acceptable, I find:

(60) (?)When somebody is age (\*of) eleven, they're not usually in high school.

((60) shows the same sharp incompatibility with *of* as (59).)

The availability of *age eleven* (and similarly for *age three months*, etc.) in (58) and (60) distinguishes *the age of eleven/three months* from the arguably parallel *the city of Boston*. That they are to some extent parallel is suggested by a common restriction. Consider first:

(61) \*At the age of the (whole) number that lies between ten and twelve, he was not yet in high school.

The impossibility of (61) might be attributed to the fact that (58) must contain YEARS, combined with the fact that alongside *eleven years* there is no:

(62) \*the (whole) number that lies between ten and twelve years

(Alternatively, or in addition, (61) is to be excluded parallel to (48).) Somewhat similarly:

(63) \*At the age of the eleven that I produced by dividing twenty-two by two, he was not yet in high school.

This recalls:

(64) \*He lives in the city of the Boston that he used to love.

Neither *the age of eleven* nor *the city of Boston* allows *of* to be followed by a DP beginning with *the* and containing a relative.<sup>10</sup> Nor does either allow an initial indefinite article:

(65) \*At an age of eleven, he was not yet in high school.

(66) \*He lives in a city of Boston.

Furthermore, the non-pronunciation of AGE indicated in (43), (49) and (52) looks very much like the fact that *the city of Boston* can in general be replaced by just *Boston*.

Despite these parallels, there is, alongside (58) and (60), no:

(67) \*He lives in city Boston.

On the other hand, *age eleven/age three months* does, from this perspective, have a close counterpart in *Lake Ontario*, with (59)/(60) then like:<sup>11</sup>

(68) \*He lives near Lake of Ontario.

In the spirit of Kayne (1994, 106) (and a suggestion of Juan Uriagereka's) and Bennis et al. (1998), *the age of eleven*, *age three months*, *the city of Boston* and *Lake Ontario* may involve movement of *age/city/lake* from a predicate position below *eleven/three months/Boston/Ontario* into the Spec of *of*- or some comparable position in the absence of overt *of* (*the age of eleven* will in addition involve the presence of YEARS):

(69) the [ age<sub>i</sub> of [eleven YEARS] t<sub>i</sub> ]

(70) age<sub>i</sub> F<sup>0</sup> [three months] t<sub>i</sub>

(71) the [ city<sub>i</sub> of Boston t<sub>i</sub> ]

(72) Lake<sub>i</sub> F<sup>0</sup> Ontario t<sub>i</sub>

Let us return now to those cases in which English allows YEARS and AGE at the same time:

(73) Even at three, John...

(74) Their daughter is three now.

(75) Nobody can make it to a hundred without medical help.

Thinking of (70) and the corresponding structure for *age eleven*:

(76) age<sub>i</sub> F<sup>0</sup> [eleven YEARS] t<sub>i</sub>

it is natural to propose that (73)-(75) is more closely related to *age eleven* (and to (70)/(76)) than to *the age of eleven*. In other words, we should attribute to (73)-(75) the structure:<sup>12</sup>

(77) at/AT/to D<sup>0</sup> AGE<sub>i</sub> F<sup>0</sup> [ numeral YEARS] t<sub>i</sub>

I have completed (77) with a D<sup>0</sup>, thinking of Longobardi (1994) on proper names and with the idea in mind that *age eleven* is akin to a proper name, as is *eleven* itself when it has the structure 'D<sup>0</sup> AGE<sub>i</sub> F<sup>0</sup> [ eleven YEARS] t<sub>i</sub>' (and the same for (73)-(75)). Continuing in the same vein, (72) should be filled out as in:

(78) D<sup>0</sup> Lake<sub>i</sub> F<sup>0</sup> Ontario t<sub>i</sub>

with a natural extension to *the Hudson River*, etc.<sup>13</sup>

### 3. French and Italian

The hypothesis expressed in (77) has the advantage (compared with its predecessor in (43)/(49)/(52)) of reducing the absence of overt *the* and *of* in (73)-(75) to the absence of overt *the* and *of* in *age eleven*. Not yet considered, on the other hand, is the question whether English itself is representative or not, and if not, what the parameters might

be that underlie the differences found across languages. Taken broadly, this question goes far beyond the scope of this paper. I shall limit myself to some (parametric) remarks revolving around French and Italian.

The possibility of having YEARS licensed by a numeral in the context of *age*/AGE (as in (77)) is not made automatically available by UG, as shown by the fact that French and Italian disallow counterparts of (27), (39), (51) and (58), for example:

(79) A l'âge de sept \*(ans), Jean... (French 'at the-age of seven (years), John...')

(80) All'età di sette \*(anni), Gianni... (Italian - same)

In both French and Italian, the word for *years* must be pronounced here, i.e. YEARS is not possible, contrary to English.<sup>14</sup>

It may be possible to achieve an understanding of this contrast between English and French/Italian by returning to (77), in particular to the lower part, which I repeat here:

(81) ...AGE<sub>i</sub> F<sup>0</sup> [ numeral YEARS] t<sub>i</sub>

Thinking of Simpson's (to appear) observation that the Thai counterpart of *year* can occupy the position of a classifier,<sup>15</sup> let me suggest, first, that YEAR(S) in (81) is a classifier mediating the relation between the numeral and the noun AGE, that the non-pronunciation of YEAR(S) is licensed by AGE in this structure, and that this licensing is available precisely because YEAR(S) is a classifier relative to AGE.<sup>16</sup>

Second, consider the fact that classifiers typically are not pluralizable,<sup>17</sup> which leads naturally to the proposal that YEARS in (81) should be replaced by singular YEAR:

(82) ...AGE<sub>i</sub> F<sup>0</sup> [ numeral YEAR] t<sub>i</sub>

This has some plausibility even relative to English itself, given that English numerals are followed by a singular noun in cases like:

(83) a five drawer(\*s) file cabinet

(84) Mary has a six-year(\*s)-old brother.

(85) Mary has three thousand(\*s) books in her library.

(More systematic than English in this regard is Hungarian, which has a plural suffix for nouns, but does not use it with numerals.) Of course, in other cases English numerals must be followed by a plural:

(86) This file cabinet has five drawer\*(s).

(87) Mary's brother is six year\*(s) old.

But whatever the exact reason for the obligatory plural in (86)/(87), the existence of (83)-(85), combined with general considerations concerning the absence of plural morphology with classifiers and the existence of languages like Hungarian, shows that (82) is a perfectly reasonable structure.

Third, thinking of the fact that classifiers are typically not modifiable,<sup>18</sup> we can note the following. When plural (i.e. when not (necessarily) a classifier in the strong sense of the term), *years* can in the context of age be modified to varying degrees of marginality:

(88) ??J is seventy wisely lived years of age.

(89) ??At the ripe old age of seventy wisely lived years, John...

(90) ??John is seventy wisely lived years old.

When singular, on the other hand, *year* cannot be modified in this fashion at all:

(91) John is a seventy-(\*\*wisely lived)-year-old man.

The substantial extra deviance of (91) lends credence to the idea that singular *year* in such examples is strongly classifier-like. We now expect, given the singularity of YEAR in (82), that sentences based on (82) will not allow modification of this sort at all.<sup>19</sup> This expectation is correct, to judge by the fact that the following are, when containing modification, as deviant as (91) is:

(92) At the age of seventy (\*\*wisely lived), John...

(93) At age seventy (\*\*wisely lived), John...

(94) John is seventy (\*\*wisely lived) today.

Let me now reinforce the proposal that (82) contains singular YEAR by adding this:

(95) YEAR can be silent in (82) only if it is not accompanied by a plural element.

This is to be interpreted as a claim about UG. The counterpart of the lexical item YEAR can be silent in some language in the configuration shown in (82) only if unaccompanied by plurality.

Let me further add:

(96) The availability of (82) in a given language depends on the syntax of plurality in that language.

The idea is that English allows (82) or (undoing the movement of AGE):

(97) ...F<sup>0</sup> [ numeral YEAR] AGE

(with singular YEAR) as a consequence of independent properties of English plurality. Abstracting away from F<sup>0</sup> and from questions of internal constituent structure, and replacing YEAR and AGE by more general (silent) terms, we have:

(98) numeral CLASSIFIER NOUN

Assume now that (98) is significantly parallel to both of:

(99) numeral adjective noun

(100) numeral classifier noun

where all the elements indicated are overt.

Of importance at this point is the fact that English prenominal adjectives show no number morphology (whether preceded by a numeral or by some other kind of determiner):

(101) John has three little(\*s) brothers.

Thus we have:

(102) English prenominal adjectives and English prenominal classifiers without *of* are not accompanied by plural morphology (i.e. not followed by any plural morpheme).

An example of an overt classifier without *of* in English might be *thousand* in (85). A covert one, if I am right, is definitely YEAR in (82)/(97).<sup>20</sup>

The claim that emerges from the preceding discussion, then, is that the lack of a plural morpheme following YEAR in English in (82)/(97) is closely connected to the lack of plural morpheme following English prenominal adjectives or English prenominal overt classifiers (without *of*). This suggests revising (95) to:<sup>21</sup>

(103) Silent YEAR is possible in (82)/(97) in a given language only if in that language either prenominal adjectives or overt prenominal classifiers without (the equivalent of) *of* (or both) can (productively) be unaccompanied by a plural morpheme.

The absence of a plural suffix on the adjective in English (101) distinguishes English from Italian, whose adjectives quite generally agree with the noun in number. Furthermore, Italian arguably has no prenominal classifiers not followed by a preposition.<sup>22</sup> By (103), then, Italian cannot allow silent YEAR in (82)/(97). We thus have an account of (80), as desired, and in effect support for the postulation of (82)/(97).

Like Italian, French clearly has (with numerals) no productive use of non-plural non-prepositional prenominal classifiers.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, French has number agreement with prenominal adjectives.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, by (103), French should not allow (82)/(97) with silent YEAR, so we have an account of (79), too.<sup>25</sup>

#### 4. Some further remarks on silent nouns and time.

In the area of age, we can note that overt singular *year* does not necessarily have a silent counterpart:

(104) They have a seven-\*(year)-old son.

It may be that this effect is due to the absence of the licensing noun *age*/AGE (assuming silent AGE to be incompatible with *old*). Similarly for:

(105) They have a seven-\*(year)-old.

This example is of interest in another way, in that it almost certainly contains a silent (singular) noun, plausibly a counterpart of *child* - some noun surely must be present to account for the appearance of the indefinite article (hardly likely to be licensed here by *year*), much as in the earlier discussion of (3)/(8).

Seemingly different from the above is:

(106) John is seventeen \*(years) of age.

(107) At seventeen \*(years) of age, John is still a child.

since the potential licenser *age* is present. Therefore it looks as if (106)/(107) should be possible without overt *years*, with the structure ‘...seventeen YEAR of age’. On the other hand, it may be that YEAR is excluded here as the result of the presence of *of*, which may interfere with the needed local relation between *age*/AGE and YEAR.

Returning to (105), note the possibility of:

(108) They have two seven-year-olds.

with plural *-s* following the adjective, and contrasting with:

(109) \*They have two seven-year-olds son(s).

Bauer and Huddleston (2002, 1660) call (108) an instance of “conversion to noun”. Alternatively, the way to think of it is rather as an instance of a silent (non-classifier) plural noun whose *-s* happens to look like it is ‘on the adjective’. That is, (108) is:

(110) ...two seven-year old CHILD s

The fact that plural *-s* is possible here but not with YEAR:

(111) \*At the age of seventeens, John...

(112) \*John is seventeens now.  
is to be traced back to the fact that YEAR is a classifier relative to *age*/AGE, whereas CHILD is not a classifier at all.

Different from (108) is:

(113) The very wealthy/\*wealthies are favored by those proposals.

(114) \*Two very wealthy are...

The absence of plural *-s* after the adjective in *the very wealthy* may reduce to:

(115) Those who are very wealthy/\*weathies are...

in particular if (113) is to be analyzed, thinking of Koopman (2002), as containing a reduced relative. (The absence of *-s* following *the* is a general property of English that needs to be accounted for.)

The fact that the irregular plural morphology of *children* does not carry over:

(116) \*They have two seven-year-old-ren.

recalls a fact pointed out by Jeanne (1978, 347), namely that Hopi VP-deletion leaves behind regular inflectional morphology even when the verb in question would have had a suppletive form, and suggests that irregular morphology is associated only with the phonological features of a lexical item.

There is a sharp contrast between:

(117) big cars; big ones; \*bigs

(118) other cars; other ones; others

and similarly with *\*the bigs* vs. *the others*, etc. There is evidently an independent factor that in the absence of a lexical noun forces the presence of *one* with adjectives like *big* (cf. Kester (1996)), but not with *other*. It may be that the *-s* in *others* is simply the *-s* of *other ones*, which looks like it forms a word with *other* as a side effect of the absence of *one* (cf. Julien (2002)), much as in (108).<sup>26</sup>

Somewhat similar to (108) and *others* is:<sup>27</sup>

(119) In the (nineteen-)eighties, ...

which can be plausibly analyzed as:

(120) ...eighty YEAR s...

where YEAR here is a non-classifier noun and *eighty* a modifier of it (cf. *in the years named/numbered eighty-something*).

Of interest is the fact that silent YEAR(S) is not possible in the French counterpart of (119):<sup>28</sup>

(121) Dans les \*(années) quatre-vingt, ... ('in the years four-twenty')

It is conceivable that this is related to French disallowing *at the age of eighty*, as in (79), even though *année* in (121) is not a classifier. (The proposal for (79) was that the syntax of plurality in French made classifier YEAR unavailable.) On the other hand, (79) and (121) differ in that (121) contains a plural definite article *les* that has no counterpart in (79), and there is some evidence that the licensing of silent nouns proceeds differently in French (and Italian) in the presence of a definite article.

For example, French itself differs from Italian with respect to time:

(122) Il est six heures. (French 'it is six hours' = 'six o'clock')

(123) Sono le sei. (Italian 'are the six' = same)

The noun *heures* must be present in French:

(124) \*Il est six.

In Italian, the corresponding noun can be present (although that is less usual):

(125) Sono le ore sei. ('are the hours six')

That it must be present in French, but need not be in Italian, is arguably related to the presence of the definite article *le* in Italian (123) vs. its absence in French (122). English contrasts minimally with French in allowing, with a time interpretation:

(126) It's six.

and (126) vs. (124) is plausibly exactly like English vs. French with respect to *at the age of eighty*, with English allowing (with HOUR a classifier):

(127) ...six HOUR...

and French not. With (82) in mind, (126) would more exactly be:

(128) ...CLOCK/TIME<sub>i</sub> F<sup>0</sup> [ six HOUR ] t<sub>i</sub>

with singlar classifier HOUR.

In French, (128) is not available, due to the way in which French distributes plurality within DP (see (103)).<sup>29</sup> Italian disallows *at the age of eighty* just like French (see (80)) and for the same reason. Yet Italian allows (123), perhaps as:

(129) ...le ORE<sub>i</sub> F<sup>0</sup> [ sei ORA ] t<sub>i</sub>  
with ORE corresponding to CLOCK/TIME and (singular) ORA to classifier HOUR. That (129) is on the right track is suggested by the existence of (125) and especially:

(130) Sono le ore una. ('are the(pl.) hours one')  
with plural *ore* followed by singular *una*. Possible, too, with ORE in place of *ore* (akin to AGE in place of *age* in *at eighty* - see (77)), is the striking:

(131) Sono le una.  
with the plural definite article giving the impression of immediately preceding singular *una* (but the structure of (131) is really as in (129), with *una* in place of *sei*). As for why the presence of the definite article in (129) allows classifier ORA to be free of plurality, part of a possible answer might be that the definite article *le* (or just its number/gender component *-e* - note the feminine gender matching that of ORE) is actually a plural morpheme originating between ORA and t<sub>i</sub>.

The definite article is not possible in French in (122):

(132) \*Il est les six (heures).  
which may be a form of definiteness effect, keyed to *il*. But French does allow a definite article, with a licensing effect on a silent noun somewhat as in (129), in other cases. Martinon (1927, 200) notes:

(133) vers les une heure ('toward the(pl.) one hour' = 'around one o'clock')  
with a plural definite article followed by a singular, perhaps as in (129).<sup>30</sup>

That expressions of time and age are significantly similar is reinforced by the fact that (106) and (107) have a counterpart with time:

(134) They'll be there in two hours/in two hours' time.

(135) \*They'll be there in two('s) time.  
(where *in two hours* is plausibly '[in two hours' TIME]'). As in the case of (106) and (107), it may be that (135) is excluded because (unlike in (128)) the possessive structure prevents *time* from licensing silent classifier HOUR.

## 5. Conclusion.

The study of expressions of age and time provides evidence in favor of postulating silent counterparts of the nouns *year* and *hour* (and *age* and *time*). Both the study of the conditions under which these silent nouns are licensed and the study of cross-linguistic differences concerning them (which involves at least the syntax of plurality and the syntax of determiners) suggest that this type of silent element may turn out to constitute a more important probe into UG than might have been thought.

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- <sup>1</sup> See Kayne (to appear).
- <sup>2</sup> In the context of a plural noun, COLOR does not license *a*:  
(i) \*John has a green cars.  
Nor does overt *color* in:  
(ii) They bought (\*a) different color cars.
- <sup>3</sup> I will use capital letters to indicate lack of phonetic realization.
- <sup>4</sup> It will turn out that what is silent is YEAR rather than YEARS - see below.
- <sup>5</sup> Although for me a pure fraction does not work:  
i) \*Their daughter is a/one half now.  
suggesting that in (33) the licenser is *three* and that YEAR(S) follows *three* immediately, recalling the order in French:  
ii) Marie a trois ans et demi. ('M has 3 years and half')
- <sup>6</sup> Also possible, with YEARS, is:  
(i) (?)It's almost as if he's been at the age of thirty forever.  
Harder for some reason is:  
(ii) ??It's almost as if he's been at thirty forever.  
Better again is:  
(iii) He acts like he's stuck at thirty.  
Also:  
(iv) She was promoted to Full Professor at 33.
- <sup>7</sup> The examples under consideration clearly differ in status from:  
(i) Of the twenty years they spent in Asia, several were spent in Thailand.  
which have nothing to do with age. In (i), *years* is itself the antecedent of an unpronounced category following *several*, probably a pronominal one doubled by *years* - see Pollock (1998) and Kayne (2002).
- <sup>8</sup> Note that an exact numeral is sufficient to license YEARS (in the context of AGE/age), even if modified in such a way as to yield a globally 'inexact' interpretation:  
(i) John is about forty.  
(ii) At somewhere around the age of fifty,...  
(iii) I hear he made it to about a hundred.  
Somewhat less good is:  
(iv) (?)At the age of about/somewhere around fifty,...
- <sup>9</sup> For a different view, see Larson (1985).
- <sup>10</sup> Note the contrast between (64) and:  
(i) He lives in the city of the Hague/in the borough of the Bronx  
where *the* is in some sense expletive.
- <sup>11</sup> Why *of* is impossible here remains to be elucidated.
- <sup>12</sup> Note that 'numeral' in (77) is to be understood as phrasal (given *three and a half, a hundred, etc.*).
- <sup>13</sup> See Longobardi (1994, 632; 1996).
- <sup>14</sup> Similarly for the contrast between (32a) and:  
(i) Jean a trois \*(ans). (French 'J has three years')  
(ii) Gianni ha tre \*(anni). (Italian - same)

though the discussion would have to take into account the use of *have* in French and Italian vs. *be* in English.

The *have/be* difference extends to:

(iii) John is my age.

which in French and Italian would have *have* rather than *be*. This English use of *be* (with no following preposition) in turn correlates with the possible absence of *of* in (cf. Payne and Huddleston (2002, 446)):

(iv) Mary is hoping to meet a man her age.

and the importantly similar:

(v) Mary is hoping to meet a man the same age as her.

<sup>15</sup> Simpson proposes that Thai *year* is moved to the classifier position from a lower noun position. I leave open the question how exactly his proposal should be extended to English.

The fact that in Cantonese (Matthews and Yip (1994, 94)) (the equivalent of) *each month* but not *each year* requires a classifier recalls the discussion of (20)-(26), in particular given Simpson's idea that N-to-CL raising is what accounts for certain nouns not taking a (separate) classifier.

<sup>16</sup> A separate question (that I will not pursue here) is whether the constituent structure indicated in (81) is exactly right (as opposed, for example, to having AGE and YEAR(S) form a constituent) - for relevant discussion, see Cheng and Sybesma (1999; to appear).

<sup>17</sup> With some apparent exceptions - see Aikhenvald (2000, 249n). A separate question is whether the lexical noun being 'classified' can be plural - see Aikhenvald (2000, 100, 249). I am here taking *pound* in *three pounds of sugar* not to be a classifier - see note 20.

<sup>18</sup> For reasons that need to be made precise.

<sup>19</sup> Perhaps related to this restriction against modification are the following facts:

i) At the age of two \*(years), five months, John was already bilingual.

ii) He'll be two \*(years), five months next week.

It may be that *five months* counts as a modifier and is therefore incompatible with classifier YEAR.

When there is *and*, the structure is presumably not the same, given the improvement seen in:

iii) At the age of two ?(years) and five months, John was already bilingual.

iv) He'll be two ?(years) and five months next week.

Like (i)/(ii) is:

v) John is six \*(feet), three inches.

despite:

vi) John is six three.

which is presumably:

vii) John is six FOOT three INCH

<sup>20</sup> How relevant examples with *of* are is not entirely clear. A true classifier with *of* might perhaps be:

i) John owns eighty head(\*s) of cattle.

On *three liters of wine*, see Cheng and Sybesma (1999, 515) on what they call 'massifiers'.

<sup>21</sup> For languages with postnominal classifiers (and adjectives), (103) will need to be generalized somewhat.

<sup>22</sup> There may be one non-productive case:

i) *tre cento libri* ('three hundred books')

Alternatively, *cento* in (i) may be like non-agreeing *meno* ('less') or *abbastanza* ('enough'). In any event, Italian shows no contrast like that between (85) and *thousands of books*.

<sup>23</sup> A non-productive candidate would be:

i) *trois mille hommes* ('three thousand men')

<sup>24</sup> It is a fact of French phonology that this number agreement is not audible if the following noun begins with a consonant. Colloquial French needs to be thought about further (in particular in the light of Bernstein (1991) on

Walloon), since one sometimes hears examples like (i) without the *-s* on *autres* being pronounced:

- i) les autres amis ('the other friends')

On the other hand, it may be that (103) should be revised to include article agreement (the *-s* of the *les* in (i) must be pronounced)./

<sup>25</sup> Francisco Ordóñez tells me in (his) Spanish there is a clear contrast between:

- i) \*Yo tengo cinco. ('I have five')

as an out-of-the-blue expression of age corresponding to the well-formed *I'm five* in English and:

- ii) Yo tengo tres anos, pero Juan solo tiene cinco. ('I have three years but J only has five')

My interpretation is that (i) is excluded parallel to its Italian or French counterparts (Spanish has number agreement with pronominal adjectives and in addition lacks the relevant classifier construction), whereas (ii) falls under the discussion of note 7 (it contains a silent pronoun).

Butt and Benjamin (1988, 101) give, for temperature:

- iii) Debe haber cinco bajo cero. ('must be/have five below zero')

which makes it look like Spanish allows DEGREE, in a way that needs to be looked into.

<sup>26</sup> Numerals in American English don't take *ones*, yet don't allow *-s*, either, for unclear reasons:

- i) John owns three houses and Mary owns four \*ones/\*s.

On the other hand, Trudgill and Hannah (1994, 74) give *three millions* as possible in British English.

Another interesting candidate for a silent noun followed by plural *-s* is:

- ii) John bought three wines.

with the analysis:

- iii) ...three wine-KIND-s

<sup>27</sup> I won't address the (interesting) question of the possible non-pronunciation of *nineteen* here.

<sup>28</sup> French has no close counterpart at all to:

- (i) John is in his eighties.

(although *cinquante*, etc. is relevant) and similarly for:

- (ii) The temperature will be in the eighties tomorrow.

The restriction seen in (iii) remains to be understood:

- (iii) John is in his teens/teenage years/\*teenages.

<sup>29</sup> Also:

- i) at five (o'clock)

- ii) à cinq \*(heures)

On the other hand, Grevisse (1993, §574) notes that *minute* is elided in *dix heures moins une* ('ten hours less one') - cf. English *ten to five*. Conceivably MINUTE (in my terms) is licensed by *heures* itself.

<sup>30</sup> Grevisse (1993, §584) gives:

- i) dans les un mètre 80 ('in the(pl.) one meter 80' = 'about 1m80 (tall)')

presumably with a silent plural noun following *les*.

