Table of contents

Acknowledgements ix

Introduction 1

CHAPTER 1
The attention they have been getting 5
Introduction 5
1.1 Halliday & Hasan's (1976) approach 5
1.2 The class of general nouns 6
1.3 The cohesive function of general nouns: Continuum and context 7
1.4 Corpus linguistic findings 9
Conclusion 10

CHAPTER 2
The corpus linguistic point of view 13
Introduction 13
2.1 Electronic corpora and the study of language 13
2.2 Corpus linguistics: Theory and methodology 16
2.2.1 Corpus-based versus corpus-driven approaches 17
2.2.2 Technical possibilities and descriptive tools 18
2.3 A lexical approach to the description of English 22
2.3.1 The lexical item 23
2.3.2 The Pattern Grammar 24
2.3.3 Lexical priming 27
2.3.4 Lexis, grammar, and text: Differences in the corpus-driven approach 28
2.4 A corpus theoretical approach to general nouns 31
2.4.1 The corpus theoretical framework 31
2.4.2 Minimal assumptions for the study of general nouns 35
Conclusion 38

CHAPTER 3
Minimal assumptions in practice: Interpreting corpus data 41
Introduction 41
3.1 The corpora of the present study 41
3.2 Frequency 43
3.2.1 What does the computer count? 43
3.2.2 Frequency lists and key words 45
3.2.3 Frequency and general nouns 48
3.2.4 The nouns in the corpus study 50
3.3 Context 54
3.3.1 Analysing concordance data 54
3.3.2 Dynamic categories and *ad hoc* labels 58
Conclusion 61

CHAPTER 4
Time nouns 63
Introduction 63
4.1 Time nouns – an overview 63
4.2 Time orientation 71
4.3 Investing time 75
4.4 Evaluation and text organisation 77
4.5 The fuzziness of meaning 81
4.6 The need for local categories of description 83
Conclusion 87
Appendix 88

CHAPTER 5
People nouns 99
Introduction 99
5.1 People nouns – an overview 99
5.1.1 Meanings of people nouns 100
5.1.2 The descriptive tool 'person' 104
5.2 *man* and *woman* 105
5.2.1 The introducing function 107
5.2.2 The characterising function 108
5.2.3 The continuity function 109
5.2.4 The meaning of a noun in its narrow context: The support function 111

5.3 *men* and *women* 115
5.4 *people* 119
5.5 *family* 123
5.6 People nouns – the group 126
Conclusion 130
Appendix 131

CHAPTER 6
World nouns 141
Introduction 141
6.1 The diversity of meanings of world nouns 141
6.2 Evaluation in discourse 144
6.2.1 Language use and language functions 145
6.2.2 Approaching evaluation 146
6.2.3 Corpus linguistics and evaluation 149
6.3 Evaluative meanings of world nouns 151
6.3.1 Adjective patterns with general nouns 152
6.3.2 Evaluative patterns of world nouns 153
Conclusion 158

CHAPTER 7
Re-examining the minimal assumptions 161
Introduction 161
7.1 Frequency 161
7.1.1 Meaning and paraphrase 162
7.1.2 Frequent nouns as characteristics of texts 164
7.2 General nouns and the word class noun 166
7.3 Context 168
7.3.1 Subgroups of nouns 168
7.3.2 Local textual functions of general nouns 171
7.4 What are general nouns? 172
7.4.1 Quantitative and qualitative features of general nouns 173
7.4.2 General nouns and cohesion 175
7.4.3 A corpus linguistic view on general nouns 177
Conclusion 178

CHAPTER 8
Developing the corpus linguistic theory 179
Introduction 179
8.1 The methodology of the corpus study 179
8.2 Even more attention is needed 181
8.2.1 Future work 181
8.2.2 Applications 184
8.3 Describing meaning in text: A flexible approach 185
8.3.1 The elusiveness of meaning 186
8.3.2 The corpus linguistic theory – where are we now? 188
8.3.3 Flexible grammar 190

Appendix 1: Pattern codes 195
Appendix 2: 'Longer' examples in Chapter 5 196

References 197
Index 205