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Quantifiers in English Noun Phrases: Narrow and Broad Perspectives, and a Comparison with Vietnamese

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Abstract: This article examines English quantifiers through a two-tiered framework distinguishing their narrow-sense role as determiners from their broad-sense ability to function as heads of noun phrases. The analysis demonstrates that English quantifiers display extensive syntactic flexibility, particularly in fused-head and partitive constructions. The comparison with Vietnamese reveals a fundamental typological contrast: unlike English, some Vietnamese quantificational constructions require quantifiers to co-occur with classifiers (which categorize perceived characteristics of noun referents), thereby prohibiting head-like uses and fused-head constructions. This contrast highlights distinct architectural pathways for encoding quantity. The findings refine the theoretical classification of quantifiers by resolving long-standing terminological inconsistencies.

Keywords: broad sense; narrow sense; noun phrase; quantifiers.

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1. Introduction

In English, quantifiers (such as *some, all, many, few,* and *each*) play a crucial role in the structure of noun phrases, yet their syntactic function is not always confined to a single role. Traditional grammar has generally classified these items as determiners that modify the subsequent noun. However, modern grammatical studies have demonstrated that, in many cases, quantifiers themselves can occupy the head position of a noun phrase. In such cases, the noun phrase lacks an overt noun, and the quantifier functions as a substitute noun. Consider the following sentence: "Many were just beginning to see shares and unit trusts – bought two years ago before the crash of 1987 – regain those levels" (*British National Corpus*). Here, the word *many* no longer serves merely as a modifying determiner but instead functions as the head (implicitly "many people") of the noun phrase, which acts as the subject.

This functional flexibility raises the issue of how the term "quantifier" should be

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defined in a narrow sense (i.e., only when it functions as a determiner) and in a broad sense (including cases where it functions as the head of the noun phrase). A cross-linguistic perspective is particularly relevant here, since languages such as Vietnamese exhibit a markedly different architecture of noun-phrase structure, in which quantifiers typically co-occur with classifiers rather than operate independently as head-like elements. The contrast between English and Vietnamese therefore helps elucidate the limits of head-like behavior in quantificational expressions. A clear understanding of these two perspectives is not only theoretically significant (in the syntactic and semantic analysis of noun phrases) but also of practical relevance in applied linguistics.

While English quantifiers have been widely studied as determiners in syntax or as generalized quantifiers in semantics, these approaches are often treated separately. Meanwhile, studies on Vietnamese nominal structure tend to focus on classifiers and quantifying expressions without systematic comparison with English or broader theories of quantifiers. As a result, there is no comprehensive account integrating the narrow and broad perspectives on English quantifiers and examining them in comparison with Vietnamese within a functional grammar framework. This article therefore seeks to address the following question: How should quantifiers in English noun phrases be described in the narrow and broad senses, and what does a comparison with Vietnamese reveal about the structural limits of quantifiers across the two languages?

To answer this question, the article pursues three main objectives: to situate the narrow–broad distinction within a well-defined literature review; to identify and classify the principal structural types of English quantifiers based on corpus-supported evidence; and to interpret these types from a contrastive perspective in relation to Vietnamese.

2. Literature Review

The study of quantifiers occupies a central position in linguistics because they encode quantity, scope, and logical relations. Scholarly interest in quantifiers predates modern linguistics, with origins in classical logic. Aristotle's distinction between universal and particular propositions – expressed through all, no, and some – established a philosophical foundation for later linguistic analyses (Aristotle 1989). A formal conception of quantifiers emerged with modern predicate logic. Frege's Begriffsschrift introduced universal and existential quantifiers in their contemporary sense, establishing a semantic system with far-reaching influence (Frege 1879). Quantifiers entered linguistic theory more explicitly from the mid-twentieth century within generative grammar. Chomsky identified their syntactic behavior, although semantic interpretation remained secondary in his early work (Chomsky 1957; Chomsky 1965). The 1970s–1980s witnessed major developments through Barwise and Cooper's (1981) theory of generalized quantifiers, which conceptualizes quantifiers as relations between sets. This framework effectively accounts for proportional (most, many), negative (no, none), and vague (several, few) quantifiers, and provides a unified semantic architecture that facilitates cross-linguistic comparison.

From the late twentieth century, research on quantifiers expanded to cognitive linguistics, linguistic typology, and pragmatics. Cognitive approaches (Lakoff 1987; Langacker 1991) highlight the link between quantifiers and conceptual

structure, while typological studies reveal considerable cross-linguistic diversity in quantifier systems (Dixon 2010). Cross-linguistic differences in classifier use, number morphology, and culturally shaped quantificational meanings challenge assumptions based primarily on Indo-European patterns. In this respect, Vietnamese is a prototypical classifier language: the expression of quantity is obligatorily mediated by a classifier (e.g., *một người* (one person), *ba con mèo* (three cats), *vài cái ghế* (some chairs)), and quantifiers themselves cannot occupy the central, head position of the noun phrase. This structural dependency on classifiers stands in sharp contrast to English, where quantifiers may freely modify nouns or even function independently as head-like elements. Moreover, in Vietnamese, quantifiers are also recognized as a distinct type of linguistic expression. They are used to indicate a definite or indefinite quantity or number of entities. Broadly speaking, quantifiers can be divided into two main types: definite quantifiers, typically represented by numerals, and indefinite quantifiers, such as a lot of, a large number of, many of, a few, little, and some in English, and *những, các, ít, mỗi*, and *mọi* in Vietnamese (Cao Xuan Hao et al. 2005) . Furthermore, Nguyen Thien Giap (2016) defines quantifiers as words that express either a definite or indefinite quantity. Definite quantifiers include numerals denoting specific amounts, such as *một* (one), *hai* (two), *ba* (three), *bốn* (four), and *năm* (five). In contrast, indefinite quantifiers comprise items such as *tất cả* (all), *cả* (entire), *mấy* (several), *từng* (each), *những* (…), and *các* (…).

Today, quantifiers remain a focus of inquiry in syntax (scope, movement, binding), semantics (monotonicity, presupposition), and pragmatics (implicature, contextual dependence). Interdisciplinary approaches – integrating philosophy, logic, psycholinguistics, and computational linguistics – offer insights into real-time processing of quantifiers and context-sensitive meaning variation. Cross-linguistic evidence further demonstrates that quantification is not merely a logical construct but a culturally grounded linguistic strategy for representing human experience.

The term quantifier in English has been used inconsistently across linguistic scholarship. Many traditional grammars did not assign a separate category for "quantifiers" but subsumed them under determiners or adjectives. Indeed, until the mid-twentieth century, words such as all, some, and each were typically classified either as limiting adjectives or as indefinite pronouns (in cases where no overt noun followed). Only from the 1960s onward did grammarians gradually begin to treat them as an independent category – namely, as determiners and as separate from adjectives (Matthews 1972). Nevertheless, even within modern classifications, the term quantifier can be understood in two distinct senses, depending on the perspective adopted. In earlier grammatical traditions, quantifiers were not consistently treated as a distinct grammatical category but were instead subsumed under broader classes such as adjectives, pronouns, or determiners. More recent descriptions, particularly those of Quirk et al. (1985) and Huddleston and Pullum (2002), have provided a more systematic account of these items, especially in relation to the internal structure of the noun phrase. In the present study, the term quantifier is used in two senses. In the narrow sense, it refers to determiners or determinative-like elements that directly encode quantity within the noun phrase. In the broader sense, the term extends to quantificational expressions that can function as the head of a noun phrase,

including fused-head constructions and partitive structures.

In its narrow definition, quantifier is understood as a subclass of determiners, comprising those words that explicitly denote quantity or amount with respect to the noun. Typical quantifiers in this sense include some, many, much, all, few, little, each, every, either, neither, any, no, several, and enough, as well as cardinal numbers. Quirk et al. (1985), for example, divide the determiner system in noun phrases into three groups:

a) predeterminers, such as *all, both,* and *half*
b) central determiners, including articles (*the, a/an*), demonstratives (*this, that, these, those*), and possessives (*my, your*)
c) postdeterminers, typically comprising quantifiers and numerals, such as *many, few, several* or *one, two, three*.

Thus, in the narrow sense, "quantifier" refers primarily to determiners of quantity, usually co-occurring with a noun. The inventory of narrow-sense quantifiers generally excludes demonstratives and articles: for instance, the (definite article) or this/that (demonstrative) are semantically associated with definiteness rather than quantity, and are therefore not regarded as quantifiers in the strict sense. By contrast, words such as some, many, and few clearly express quantity and are thus considered prototypical quantifiers. Yet the boundary between quantifiers and other categories is not always clear-cut. The word many, for instance, is sometimes analyzed as a quantifier (determinative), given its distribution in partitive constructions (many of them), but it also displays adjectival properties: it can be modified by intensifiers (e.g., anything which enlarges such a view, and highlights scientists in their very many guises, is to be welcomed [British National Corpus]), can inflect comparative and superlative forms (more, most), and can even function as a predicate (e.g., the chronic nature of AIDS means that people's needs are many and varied [British National Corpus]). Accordingly, some traditional grammarians classified many as an adjective, whereas modern grammar treats many as a determinative (Huddleston and Pullum 2002). This debate reveals that "quantifier" in the narrow sense is fundamentally a syntactic concept: it designates a particular subset of determiners, although the exact membership of that subset may vary depending on the classificatory criteria adopted by different authors. By contrast, in Vietnamese, the category corresponding to "narrow-sense quantifiers" in English is distributed across several different word classes, including adverbial elements expressing quantity (e.g., nhiều, ít), determiners (e.g., mọi, từng), as well as numeral–classifier combinations. Crucially, Vietnamese quantifiers cannot directly occupy the syntactic slot of a prenominal quantifying element without restriction; instead, they typically appear before a classifier–noun sequence (e.g., nhiều người, ít con mèo, mọi học sinh), indicating that narrow-scope quantifiers in Vietnamese are subject to more stringent syntactic constraints than in English. This typological difference shows that English determiners exhibit a substantially broader distributional range than their Vietnamese counterparts.

In a broader perspective, the term quantifier may encompass any linguistic expression that conveys quantificational meaning. According to Barwise and Cooper (1981), in logical semantics, an entire noun phrase (comprising both determiner and noun) is treated as a quantifier, since it expresses a quantificational relation between

the set of entities referred to and the proposition. For example, a sentence containing the phrase *every student* can be given a logical representation in which *every* operates as a universal quantifier over the set of students. Under this broader conception, many expressions not syntactically classified as determiners are still treated as quantifiers semantically. Huddleston and Pullum emphasize that quantification and quantifier are essentially semantic notions, not rigid syntactic categories (2002: 410–412). Indeed, other parts of speech may also encode quantity or degree: adverbs (always and never, which quantify temporal frequency), adjectives (numerous and whole), or even multi-word expressions (a lot [of] and a number of). Thus, when interpreted broadly, the scope of "quantifier" is not restricted to the determiner class. Culicover (1982) even suggested that quantifier is a loosely descriptive label lacking syntactic coherence, serving primarily as a semantic category. A broader, semantically based approach of this kind cannot be straightforwardly mapped onto Vietnamese, since the expression of quantification in Vietnamese is realized primarily through multi-element noun-phrase structures, typically consisting of quantifier + (classifier) + noun. In Vietnamese, quantifiers do not function as independent nominal heads; rather, they must combine with a noun or, in cases of noun ellipsis, with a classifier in order to form a well-formed nominal unit. Consequently, many Vietnamese quantifiers lack English-like broad-scope interpretations, as they cannot participate in noun-ellipsis constructions without an accompanying classifier (e.g., *nhiều người/chuyện, ít điều, một vài người*). It should be noted that in the case of mass nouns, the classifier element may be omitted, but this does not alter the overall typological profile of the Vietnamese noun phrase.

Nevertheless, within English grammar studies, the term quantifier is frequently employed in this broad sense to designate words or phrases expressing quantificational meaning, including both determiners such as some, many, and few, and instances in which these same items function independently as noun phrases. To avoid ambiguity, however, the present study draws a clear distinction: "quantifier (narrow sense)" as determiners expressing quantity and "quantifier (broad sense)" including also those quantificational words/phrases functioning as the head of a noun phrase (pronominal quantifiers). This distinction aligns with its treatment in modern grammars such as The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language (2002), which classifies items like some and all as determinatives, and analyzes their independent use in lieu of a noun as instances of the "fused-head" construction – that is to say, the determiner simultaneously fulfills the role of head noun. By contrast, traditional grammars typically referred to such cases (e.g., some standing alone) as "indefinite pronouns." In summary, although terminological practices differ depending on perspective, the underlying phenomenon is the same: certain determiners (quantifiers in the narrow sense) are capable of assuming the role of a noun, thereby constituting quantifiers in the broad sense.

Furthermore, the issue of quantifiers has attracted considerable attention in studies across traditional grammar, modern grammar, and formal semantics. From a syntactic perspective, and going beyond Quirk et al. (1985) and Huddleston and Pullum (2002), numerous studies have examined the classification of quantifiers. For example, Milsark (1977) introduced the distinction between weak and strong

determiners in order to account for their distribution in so-called there-sentences. Weak determiners (e.g., some, any, no, many, and few) are licensed in postverbal position following there is/are, whereas strong determiners (the, all, each, every, and most) are excluded. This distinction is primarily semantic: weak determiners carry an existential interpretation, while strong determiners encode totality or universality. Nonetheless, the contrast overlaps with the notion of quantifiers in the narrow sense, as most strong determiners correspond to universal quantifiers such as all and every, whereas weak determiners correspond to existential quantifiers such as some and several, or similar terms.

From a semantic perspective, the "generalized quantifier theory" proposed by Barwise and Cooper (1981) treats each noun phrase (determiner + noun) as a binary relation between two sets, thereby classifying quantifiers in logical terms (e.g., universal versus existential). In this view, every, all, and each are analyzed as universal quantifiers, whereas some and a(n) are treated as existential quantifiers. Such formal theories, however, extend beyond the scope of traditional syntax, and of the primary concern of the present article, namely the grammatical functions of quantifiers within the structure of noun phrases.

3. Methodology

To address the research question (how should quantifiers in English noun phrases be described in the narrow and broad senses, and what does a comparison with Vietnamese reveal about the structural limits of quantifiers across the two languages?), the study primarily employed a qualitative, document-based approach. Specifically, this contrastive approach is grounded in grammatical description and supported by corpus-based examples, focusing on identifying structural patterns rather than statistical measurement. The author synthesized and compared descriptions of quantifiers in both classical and contemporary English grammar references – most notably the analytical frameworks of Quirk et al. (1985) and Huddleston and Pullum (2002), in conjunction with more recent scholarly studies on quantifiers (Feiman and Snedeker (2016) found systematic differences in how quantifiers are interpreted in ambiguous sentences. This suggested that individual quantifiers may be related to distinct mental representations in language processing.). The research contrasted traditional and modern perspectives on the classification and usage of quantifiers, while also examining illustrative examples drawn from authentic linguistic data, including both grammar references and corpus evidence from the *British National Corpus*. Where appropriate, Vietnamese data drawn from descriptive grammars and authoritative analyses of the classifier system, as well as the combinatory patterns between quantifiers and classifiers, are incorporated in order to highlight typologically significant contrasts.

This research adopts a qualitative, contrastive approach grounded in grammatical description and supported by corpus-based examples. Rather than aiming at statistical measurement, it focuses on identifying structural patterns in the use of quantifiers and comparing the English and Vietnamese systems within a clearly defined theoretical framework.The English data were drawn from two principal sources: (i) major descriptive and theoretical grammar works, particularly Quirk et al. (1985) and Huddleston and Pullum (2002), and (ii) authentic examples from the *British National Corpus*. Only those examples that clearly represent one of the target

constructions – namely determiner use, fused-head use, or partitive structures – were selected. Examples that were repetitive or not directly relevant to the structural classification were omitted.

The analysis followed four steps: identifying and grouping quantifiers by syntactic profile; classifying English data into determiner, fused-head, and partitive types; examining Vietnamese correspondences and differences, especially in classifier use and count–mass neutralization; and interpreting the results in relation to the literature. The methodology is based on explicit selection criteria, clearly defined data, and a systematic contrastive procedure.

A syntactic analysis was applied to determine the grammatical roles of quantifiers (whether as determiners or as heads), whereas a semantic analysis was employed to account for their meanings and ranges of usage. This combined approach enables the formulation of observations of theoretical relevance (particularly with respect to the internal structure of noun phrases) as well as to propose implications for applied linguistic research.

4. Findings

Based on the selected dataset, English quantifiers in noun phrases can be classified into three primary structural types. The first category involves narrow-sense quantifiers functioning as determiners that precede nouns, as illustrated by *some students*, *many books*, *much information*, *each student*, and *every option*. In these instances, the quantifier directly modifies the noun and its use is largely determined by the grammatical properties of that noun. The second category consists of fused-head constructions, wherein no overt noun is present, as in *many were absent*, *some arrived late*, *few survived*, and *both agreed*. Here, the quantifier itself occupies the head position of the noun phrase, with the implied noun being recoverable from the surrounding context. The third category includes partitive constructions of the form *quantifier + of + noun phrase*, such as *some of the students*, *none of them*, and *both of the options*. In these structures, the quantifier selects from a subset that is already identifiable, and the phrase remains syntactically complete even though the lexical noun is not repeated outside the *of*-phrase.

With regard to distribution, the data reveal a clear and generally stable distinction between quantifiers that combine with count nouns and those that select mass nouns. Quantifiers such as *many* and *few* typically occur with plural count nouns, whereas *much* and *little* are associated with mass nouns. Similarly, *each* and *every* require singular count nouns, while *all* can combine with either plural count nouns or mass nouns, depending on the intended reference. The corpus data further indicate that many quantifiers can occur independently in pronominal or fused-head uses, including *some*, *many*, *few*, *all*, *both*, *either*, *neither*, and *none*. However, this property is not shared by all items. For instance, *every* rarely appears on its own and is more commonly found in compound forms such as *everyone* and *everything*. Partitive constructions exhibit another consistent pattern: the noun phrase following *of* is typically definite or otherwise identifiable, as in *some of the students*, *all of them*, and *none of my money*. This suggests that partitives operate over a contextually given set rather than referring to an unrestricted class.

From a contrastive perspective, three observations are particularly noteworthy. First, the choice of quantifier in English is closely tied to the count–mass distinction,

whereas Vietnamese does not grammaticalize this contrast in the same way. English distinguishes between *many books* and *much information*, while Vietnamese can use *nhiều* in both *nhiều sách* and *nhiều thông tin*. Second, the Vietnamese items *nhiều* and *ít* do not correspond straightforwardly to single English equivalents. Depending on the context, *nhiều* may correspond to *many* or *much*, and *ít* to *few* or *little*. This indicates that, although the meanings are comparable, the grammatical mapping between the two languages is not one-to-one. Third, English permits fused-head uses such as *many were absent*, whereas Vietnamese generally does not allow comparable structures. Forms like *nhiều đã đến* are unacceptable unless an explicit noun or classifier-based expression is added, as in *nhiều người đã đến*.

These findings indicate that English quantifiers exhibit a wider range of syntactic behavior than their Vietnamese counterparts. While English allows quantifiers to function as determiners, as heads, and within partitive constructions, Vietnamese tends to express quantifiers through modifier-like elements within classifier-based noun phrases. Overall, the results support the usefulness of distinguishing between narrow and broad senses of quantifiers in English. At the same time, the Vietnamese data highlight the limitations of applying this distinction directly across languages with different nominal structures. The main contrasts between English and Vietnamese quantifiers can be summarized as follows:

Table 1: *Main contrasts between English and Vietnamese quantifiers*

Features	English	Vietnamese
Count–mass distinction	Grammaticalized	Largely neutralized
many/much versus nhiều	Distinct forms	One general form
few/little versus ít	Distinct forms	One general form
Fused-head use	Productive	Not available
Partitive structure	Quantifier + of + NP	Lexical expressions

5. Discussion

5.1. Narrow-Sense Quantifiers as Determiners

In the narrow sense, quantifiers are determiners that specifically denote quantity or amount with respect to the subsequent noun. They precede the noun, or any adjective modifying the noun, and occur in initial position within the noun phrase, specifying how many or to what degree the entity in question is referred to. Examples include *some pupils*, *many problems*, *few options*, *no answer*, *each person*, *every time*, *either choice*, *neither option*, and *all cases*. In these noun phrases, items such as *some*, *many*, *few*, *no*, *each*, and *every* serve as quantifiers functioning as determiners of the head noun (e.g., *pupils*, *problems*, and *options*).

Typically, a noun phrase permits only one central determiner; therefore, narrow-sense quantifiers cannot normally co-occur with

another central determiner in the same phrase. One cannot say *the many students* if both *the* and *many* are understood as central determiners of *students*; though the phrase *the many students* is possible with the interpretation "those numerous students," which means *"the"* is not an independent article, but rather a modifying element functioning as an "identifier," meaning "those numerous students" (i.e., *the* + an already identified NP). This case is different from the situation where *the* and *many* compete for the same position. In other words, *many* in *many students* occupies the position of central determiner, which blocks the occurrence of articles such as *the* or *a* before it. Nevertheless, certain predeterminers may precede a central determiner: for example, *all my friends* (*all* as predeterminer, *my* as central determiner), or *half the time* (*half* as predeterminer, *the* as central determiner). Items such as *all, both,* and *half* are generally classified as predeterminers rather than postdeterminers, but given their quantificational meaning, they are sometimes also treated as quantifiers in a broader sense. Furthermore, some postdeterminers (such as numerals and certain quantifiers) may combine with an article or other determiner in the initial position. For instance, in the phrase *the many challenges*, *many* follows the article *the*. In such cases, according to Huddleston and Pullum (2002), *many* does not function as the main determiner but instead modifies the noun adjectivally, since the definite article *the* already occupies the central determiner slot. Similarly, in *the few people* ("those few people"), *the* is the determiner, and *few* functions as a descriptive modifier expressing paucity. Thus, from a syntactic standpoint, narrow-sense quantifiers typically function independently as determiners, but they may also appear in combination with other determiners in special constructions, where they shift to an adjectival role. In the majority of cases, however, quantifiers such as *some, any, each, every, no, either, neither, much, many, few, little, several,* and *enough* function directly as determiners, determining the quantificational interpretation of the entire noun phrase. The structure of Vietnamese noun phrases presents a sharp contrast to that of English. Vietnamese lacks articles and does not encode a stratified determiner system corresponding to the English tripartite division of predeterminer–central determiner–postdeterminer. In Vietnamese count noun phrases, quantifiers occur pre-nominally and must obligatorily combine with a classifier (e.g., *nhiều con mèo, vài cái ghế*), and it is the classifier that constitutes the syntactic nucleus, serving as the element that directly links to the noun. As a consequence, Vietnamese quantifiers do not compete for the same syntactic position as English determiners, nor do they exhibit blocking or co-occurrence restrictions with articles or demonstratives in the way English quantifiers do, since the ordering and functional distribution of these elements are fundamentally different in the Vietnamese noun phrase.

Certain quantifiers are subject to specific syntactic constraints when functioning as determiners. According to Swan (2016, sections 147, 151-154):

Each and *every* require a singular count noun (e.g., *each student, every issue*) and govern singular verb agreement, since they convey distributive reference to individual members. By contrast, *all* typically combines with plural count nouns (*all students*) or mass nouns (*all information*), with plural verb agreement in the case of plural count nouns.

Therefore, *much* combines with singular mass nouns (*much time*), whereas *many* combines with plural count nouns (*many*

times). Similarly, *little* selects mass nouns, while *few* selects plural count nouns.

Certain pairs exhibit formal similarity but semantic contrast when used as determiners: *few* (hardly any), - *a few* (some), and *little* (hardly any), and - *a little* (somewhat). In these latter cases, *a few* and *a little* are determiner phrases consisting of the article *a* plus the quantifier (*few/little*), rather than *a* functioning as the article of the head noun (*a few books*, but never *a few book*). This shows that the boundary between quantifiers and nouns can at times become blurred: *few* and *little* may themselves be construed as nouns ("a small amount") when accompanied by *a*. Nevertheless, in this study, *a few* and *a little* are treated as special quantificational complexes.

Some and *any* form a pair distinguished largely by discourse-pragmatic factors. *Some* commonly appears in affirmative statements or in interrogatives that carry an implicature of expectation (i.e., the speaker anticipates a positive answer). The following examples are taken from the *British National Corpus*:

"I have *some* ideas*;* would you like *some* tea?

Below I've listed *some* ideas which many people have already carried out. Would you like *some* more tea?

By contrast, *any* appears in negatives and in neutral interrogatives:

Do not put *any* ideas into the child's head about what might happen.

No, do you have *any* ideas about that?

This contrast lies more in pragmatics than in pure syntax, but it remains relevant when analyzing *some/any* as determiners."

Overall, narrow-sense quantifiers in their determiner role establish the referential scope of the noun phrase: for example, *all students* denotes the entire set of students under consideration; *most students* denotes a majority of the set; *some students* indicates an indefinite subset (at least one, possibly more); *no student* asserts the absence of any member of the set; *each student* highlights individual members distributively; *either option* restricts reference to one of two alternatives; and *neither option* excludes both. These interpretations belong to the semantic dimension but are closely tied to the syntactic role of the corresponding quantifiers. When functioning as determiners, quantifiers require a following noun (except in cases where the noun may be omitted due to recoverability from context). Without such a noun, the phrase is incomplete, and the hearer anticipates its presence (e.g., *many of* without a complement noun phrase is incomplete). Nevertheless, there are constructions in which the noun is elided or implicit, and the quantifier itself assumes head status. These are the cases that belong to the broad sense of quantifiers, to be discussed in the following section.

5.2. Broad-Sense Quantifiers and Their Uses

Broad-sense quantifiers encompass all cases in which a quantifying expression itself constitutes a complete noun phrase, rather than merely serving as a modifier of a following noun. In other words, in such contexts the quantifier functions as the head of the noun phrase: the noun may be entirely omitted, or it may appear within a dependent prepositional phrase (*of*-phrase). Two principal subtypes can be distinguished: (a) pronominal quantifiers, which occur independently without a following noun or *of*-phrase; and (b) partitive quantifiers, in which the quantifier is followed by an *of* + NP construction denoting the set over which quantification applies – this type may also be described as "phrasal quantifiers."

Both of these types are the phenomena that Huddleston and Pullum (2002) collectively referred to as the fused-head construction. In Huddleston and Pullum's

framework, the fused-head construction is a type of noun phrase in which a *single expression* simultaneously realizes two functions: it functions as the head of the NP; at the same time it has a dependent function that, in an ordinary NP, would be adjacent to a separate nominal head (typically a determiner or an internal modifier).

In the following example – some writing which is called art criticism will be helpful, *some* will not – the word "some" is analyzed as a fused head: it is a determiner or a modifier by lexical category, but it also occupies the syntactic head position of the NP. In short, a fused-head construction is a noun phrase whose overt "head" is a determinative or modifier that has fused with an understood noun, so that one word carries both the head function and the dependent function within the NP (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 410–412). In other words, the fused-head construction is a single word that simultaneously fulfills two grammatical functions: serving as the head of the noun phrase while also carrying the determiner or specifying function. Differently, the quantifier assumes the role of a noun in order to stand alone.

It is noteworthy that this phenomenon has no direct counterpart in Vietnamese: quantifiers cannot independently fulfill the head function of the noun phrase. Vietnamese requires either an overt noun or the insertion of a generic classifier (e.g., nhiều cái, *ít* điều, *một vài* người), and even these generic classifier constructions are not as freely used as the pronominal quantifiers found in English. The obligatory role of the classifier thus blocks the emergence of the fused-head construction that is so characteristic of English.

5.2.1. Quantifiers Used as Pronouns (Fused Determiner - Head without **of***)*

A number of quantifiers may occur without an accompanying noun, with the nominal meaning recoverable from context. Take the following example: These were frequently tenant farmers but *many* came to own their own land, especially in the Weald. Here, *many* appears alone (without a following noun), but the hearer understands the elliptical meaning "many people came." Similarly: *Some were late* (*some = some people*); *few survived* (*few = few individuals*); *several have objected* (*several = several persons have objected*); *none was found* (*none = not one [item] was found*); *all is lost* (*all = everything is lost*); *both were present* (*both = both people were present*); *neither is correct* (*neither = neither option is correct*); and *one died* (*one = one person died*). In these examples, *many*, *some*, *few*, *several*, *none*, *all*, *both*, *neither*, and *one* are quantifiers functioning pronominally, that is, each forms a complete noun phrase capable of serving as subject or object. The omitted noun is typically a generic one (*people*, *things*, *ones*), which is pragmatically inferable. Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 410-415) analyze this phenomenon as determiner–head fusion, whereby "a single determiner functions simultaneously as the head of the noun phrase." Traditional grammars, by contrast, generally label such items "indefinite pronouns" or "pronominal quantifiers." The difference, however, is terminological rather than substantive. For example, *none* is regarded as a pronoun meaning "not one (person/thing)," but it may equally be analyzed as the independent form of *no* (determiner) + noun. Similarly, *all* when standing alone denotes "everything/everyone"; *both* = "both people/things"; *either* = "one of two"; *neither* = "not either"; *one* = "one person/thing"; *ones* (plural) = "the ones (of

that type)"; *another* = "one more, a different one"; *others* = "other people/things"; and *some* = "an unspecified number of people/things." All may be interpreted as quantifiers that replace the full construction *quantifier + noun.*

Interestingly, several quantifiers exhibit distinct forms for determiner and pronominal uses. For example, *no* functions as a determiner, while *none* is the corresponding pronoun. *Either* and *neither* may function as determiners (*either choice, neither option*) or as pronouns (*either is fine; neither was chosen*). *Each* and *every*, however, rarely occur alone: one does not normally say *"each was late"* unless the context is explicit and restrictive; rather, *"each of them was late"* is preferred. *Every* never appears on its own but is lexicalized in complex pronouns such as *everyone* and *everything*. These complex pronouns incorporate suffixes (e.g., *-one, -body, -thing*) corresponding to generic nouns. Thus, *everyone, everybody* (all people), and *everything* (all things) are syntactically indefinite pronouns, but morphologically analyzable as composites: *everyone = every + one*, *someone = some + one*, and *nobody = no + body*. Huddleston and Pullum (2002) treat them as complex determinatives that obligatorily occur in fused form, since the base element (*every, some, no*) cannot appear independently in these uses. In this sense, *someone, anyone, no one,* and *everyone* exemplify quantifiers (*some, any, no, every*) fused with a generic nominal element (*one/body/thing*) to yield a single lexical item with pronominal function. They may therefore also be classified as a type of broad-sense quantifier, albeit realized as lexicalized compounds rather than simple words.

When functioning pronominally (as the head of a noun phrase), quantifiers may assume the full range of grammatical roles typical of nouns or noun phrases: such as subject, object, and complement. Consider the following examples: *Few were chosen* (*few* as subject; verb agreement is plural, since *few* denotes plurality); *I saw several* (*several* as object of *saw*); and *many of these are old, but some are new* (*some* functions as subject of *are*, standing for *some [of these]* retrievable from context). With respect to agreement**,** when the noun is omitted, the verb generally agrees with the notional number expressed by the quantifier. Thus, quantifiers such as *all* and *many* denote plurality and therefore take plural verbs, as in the following examples:

Many were shocked and surprised at the interference of the bishops in the parliamentary process.

All have found themselves caught up in the nightmare that is the US capital law system.

By contrast, *each, every, either,* and *neither* denote a singular reference and govern singular agreement, as in the following examples:

Each stands to the other in the same relation – a relation which presupposes.

Neither has been caught because both seem to have known of the swoops on their many hide-outs even before the authorities who conducted them.

None presents a special case: traditional usage prescribes singular agreement (*none is…*, interpreted as "not one"), but in contemporary English *none* frequently takes plural agreement when the implied reference is plural (*None of them were found*). Both options are acceptable, with choice depending on contextual interpretation.

The possibility of noun ellipsis in English is a typologically uncommon phenomenon and stands in sharp contrast to the Vietnamese pattern, where sentences such as "*nhiều* đã đến" or "*vài* đã đi" are ungrammatical unless a noun or classifier is overtly expressed ("*nhiều* người đã đến," "*vài* người đã đi"). Vietnamese thus

maintains significantly stricter requirements regarding the overt realization of nominal elements within the noun phrase.

5.2.2. The Partitive Structure "Quantifier + of + NP"

Another common subtype of broad-sense quantifiers is the so-called *partitive construction*. In this structure, the quantifier appears initially, followed by a prepositional phrase *of + NP* that specifies the set from which the quantifier selects a portion or subset. Examples include: *some of the students, most of my time, none of the answers, half of the population, both of them, each of us, neither of the options, one of the problems, two of the samples,* and *several of these cases*. Semantically, these may be paraphrased as follows: *some of the students* = "a subset of the students (already contextually given)"; *most of my time* = "the greater part of my time"; and *none of the answers* = "no answer (from the given set of answers)."

From a syntactic perspective, two analytical possibilities have been proposed:

(a) The quantifier is taken as the head of the noun phrase, while the *of + NP* phrase functions as its complement or dependent.

(b) The noun within the *of + NP* phrase is treated as the true head, with the quantifier analyzed as a special type of determiner or modifier (analogous to possessive constructions such as *x of y*).

According to Quirk et al. (1985) and Huddleston and Pullum (2002), analysis (a) is more plausible: in [Quantifier + of + NP] structures, *Q* is regarded as the head, with the *NP* providing the source set. For instance, *"all of the students"* is interpreted as "a group characterized as 'all,' drawn from the set of students already identified." Here, *all* functions as the nucleus encoding quantification, while *of the students* specifies the reference domain. This analysis accords with the intuition that *all of the students* can, in appropriate contexts, be reduced simply to *all*, with the dependent phrase recoverable from context. By contrast, analysis (b) would require treating *students* as the head and *all of* as a complex determiner – a treatment that complicates the structure and fails to explain why the noun can often be omitted while the quantifier alone retains full meaning. Consequently, most modern grammarians adopt the view that [Quantifier + of + NP] represents a fused-head construction, in which the quantifier is the head and *of + NP* a dependent constituent. Several grammatical points are noteworthy in this construction:

- Definiteness requirement: The noun phrase in *of + NP* must be definite (introduced by *the, this/that, possessives*, or an object personal pronoun). Thus, one says *some of the students, none of my money*, or *all of them*, but not *some of students* (with a missing *the*). This is known as the *partitive rule*: the source set must be identifiable.

- Optional omission of *of*: With *all, both*, and *half*, the preposition *of* may be omitted before definite noun phrases: *all (of) the students, both (of) my parents*, and *half (of) the time*. With most other quantifiers, however, *of* is obligatory when followed by a definite noun phrase: for example, *most of the students* (not *most the students*); and *several of the cases* (correct) versus *several the cases* (ungrammatical).

- Agreement patterns: Research shows that in Q of NP constructions, verb agreement tends to follow the number of the noun in the *of*-phrase, rather than the surface form of *Q*. Consider the following examples:

Half of the houses were boarded up in areas that were starving (plural verb *were*, since "*houses"* is plural, even though *half* is morphologically singular).

All of the fuss is a result of climatologists barking up the wrong tree, misled by computer models which are all making the same mistake. (*fuss* is an uncountable noun, hence the singular verb *is*, though *all* often occurs with plural reference). This pattern reflects speakers' interpretation that the *of NP* phrase specifies the reference set, which determines number.

Some cases, however, admit both singular and plural agreement. For an example with the quantifier "none":

None of the Indian girls complain, because they are afraid of being beaten up.

The trouble is that *none of the* three firms is nearly as Japanese as the owners would like it to be.

None of the students is/are present (both forms acceptable).

Vietnamese lacks a structural counterpart to the English pattern "partitive quantifier + of + NP." Instead, part–whole relations are expressed through lexical means (e.g., *một trong số các…*, *vài người trong nhóm…*, and *hầu hết trong số…*). These constructions do not give rise to a fused-head configuration, and the quantifier never functions as the syntactic head of the entire phrase, thereby further illustrating the typologically fixed nature of quantifier placement in Vietnamese.

In sum, the *Q of NP* structure enables the expression of quantification over a known set. It is an extremely common pattern in English, especially with items such as *some/any of…*, *a lot of…*, *most of…*, *a few of…*, *none of…*, *both of…*, *neither of…*, and *half of…*.

5.2.3. "The + Quantifier" as a Noun Phrase

In addition to the two major subtypes discussed above, another noteworthy extension of broad-sense quantifiers is the structure *the + quantifier* used as a noun phrase. Normally, the article *the* precedes a noun or a noun phrase. In certain contexts, however, *the* can combine directly with an adjective or a quantifier to form a noun phrase referring to a group of people or entities characterized by that property. Examples include: *the many* ("the numerous ones"), *the few* ("the few people/things"), *the majority* ("the great majority"), *the rich* ("the rich people"), and *the impossible* ("the impossible thing/phenomenon"). In these cases, *the many* and *the few* function as collective nouns: *The few (who came) enjoyed the evening* (i.e., "those few people who attended enjoyed the evening"). Similarly, *the many* may denote "the majority (of people or things)".

These structures are in fact instances of fused modifier-head or fused determiner-head constructions: *the few* can be interpreted as *the few people* and *the rich* as *the rich people*. Huddleston and Pullum (2002) classify such cases as fused modifier-heads when the post-*the* element is adjectival, and as fused determiner-heads when the post-*the* element is a determiner. The case of *the many* is somewhat special: while *many* is ordinarily a determiner, in combination with *the* it is nominalized, meaning "the greater part (of people/things)." This usage is relatively infrequent and tends to occur in formal or fixed expressions (e.g., *the few* or *the proud* in slogan form). Nevertheless, it illustrates the capacity of quantifiers to undergo nominalization in particular contexts, thereby extending the range of broad-sense quantifiers.

When quantifiers are used in the broad sense (whether pronominally or in *Q of NP* structures), they no longer require an overt noun immediately following, but they typically imply a corresponding entity retrievable from context. This requires the hearer or reader to infer the intended referent. Take the following example:

"Now Queen Mary, Roehampton was overfull of severe burn cases, some civilian and some service personnel. Would we take *some*?"

Here, *some* is understood as "some cases." Without context, however, *would we take some?* would remain ambiguous: "some of what?" Thus, pronominal quantifiers generally presuppose an established discourse set. By contrast, *Q of NP* expressions explicitly specify the set via the *of NP* phrase.

Modern syntax provides a unified analysis of these phenomena by maintaining that such items remain determinatives, differing only in that they also function as the head of the noun phrase. According to Huddleston and Pullum (2002), analyzing them as fused-head constructions avoids the need to multiply categories (e.g., listing *some* both as a determiner and as a separate pronoun). In their account, *some* remains a determinative, and when used without a following noun, it is understood as incorporating an implicit nominal element. In other words, the structure is still a noun phrase of the form "determinative–head", but the two functions are fused into a single element. This stands in contrast to traditional grammar, which would classify *some* in this use as a pronoun.

In sum, broad-sense quantifiers demonstrate the flexibility of English determinatives: many of them can constitute full noun phrases without the overt presence of a noun. This flexibility is enabled by their inherently wide semantic scope: *all* already denotes totality, *none* expresses absolute negation, and *some* selects an indefinite portion from a contextually given set. Accordingly, English has developed a set of indefinite pronouns derived from quantifiers for practical use. By comparison, Vietnamese quantifiers do not typically stand alone: one cannot say *"nhiều đã đến"* (many came) but must say *"nhiều người đã đến"* (many people came); likewise, one cannot say *"một vài ở đây"* but rather *"một vài người ở đây."* Vietnamese requires an overt noun or a generic classifier (*cái, điều, người*) to follow the quantifier. English, in contrast, allows noun ellipsis, which results in greater conciseness but requires speakers and learners to infer the implicit head noun from context.

This contrast reflects a fundamental typological boundary between classifier languages and determiner languages. Quantification in Vietnamese depends on the overt expression of nominal categories, whereas English permits syntactic compression by allowing quantifiers to directly assume the head function of the noun phrase. The findings are broadly consistent with previous studies, while also offering several refinements. They confirm the usefulness of distinguishing between narrow- and broad-sense quantifiers, suggesting that determiners, pronouns, and partitive constructions can be better understood as points along a continuum of quantificational behavior.

The English–Vietnamese contrast is shown to be structural rather than purely lexical. English operates within a determiner-based, noun-phrase system that allows head omission and fusion, whereas Vietnamese, within Simon Dik's functional grammar (1981), expresses quantification through operator-like elements interacting with classifiers and nouns. The analysis also explains why pairs such as *many/much* and *nhiều/ít* are not direct equivalents: the English distinction depends partly on the count–mass contrast, while Vietnamese forms are more general and embedded in a different nominal system. This helps account for common learner errors. These findings have implications for both contrastive linguistics and pedagogy. They highlight the structural robustness of broad-sense quantifiers in English and their

limitations in Vietnamese, and point to the need for explicit teaching of the count–mass distinction and the head-like use of quantifiers in English. Overall, the results reflect deeper typological differences between a determiner-based system and a classifier-based system, moving the discussion beyond description toward interpretation.

In spite of its conceptual, descriptive, and contrastive contributions, the article has a few minor limitations that suggest directions for future research. The data may be broader; furthermore, the research context could be explored in greater depth.

6. Conclusion

From the foregoing analysis, it is evident that the notion of *quantifier* in English can be understood in both a narrow and a broad sense. In the narrow sense, quantifiers are determiners expressing quantity that precede the noun (e.g., *some, many, few, all,* and *every*). In the broad sense, the term extends to include cases where these determiners themselves function as the head of the noun phrase – either pronominally or in *Quantifier + of* constructions. This distinction reflects the dual syntactic and semantic dimensions of quantifiers: at the narrow syntactic level, a quantifier operates as a dependent element of the noun; at the broader structural level, the quantifier may serve as the nucleus of the noun phrase, carrying full quantificational meaning.

Moreover, narrow-sense quantifiers observe specific syntactic rules (meaning restrictions on co-occurrence with count and mass nouns, as well as singular and plural agreement) and delimit the referential scope of the noun. When extended into the broad sense, these quantifiers reveal greater independence and flexibility, forming noun phrases without an overt head noun. This not only enriches the expressive resources of English but also requires more fine-grained analytical treatment.

Ultimately, recognizing these two perspectives on quantifiers proves valuable for linguistic research. It resolves long-standing issues of categorization (e.g., avoiding the need to separate *some* into determiner and pronoun by treating it as a single item with dual functions). It also strengthens syntactic theory, connects with logical analyses of quantification, and offers practical implications for applied linguistics. The comparison with Vietnamese further clarifies the scope of these two approaches. In English, both narrow-sense and broad-sense quantifiers operate within a determiner-based syntactic architecture, which permits noun-phrase ellipsis and the formation of fused-head structures. By contrast, Vietnamese employs a classifier-based nominal architecture in which quantifiers function solely as modifiers and cannot serve as nominal heads. This opposition illustrates the distinct grammatical pathways through which languages encode quantificational meaning, thereby offering important insights into the contrastive grammar of noun phrases across languages.

The article makes three main contributions to the literature. Conceptually, it treats the narrow–broad distinction as an explicit analytical framework rather than a finding. Descriptively, it identifies and illustrates the main structural patterns of English quantifiers. From a contrastive perspective, it shows that Vietnamese quantification is organized through classifier-based structures, with neutralization of the count–mass distinction and no productive equivalent of English fused-head uses. Overall, the article offers a more precise comparison of English and Vietnamese noun phrases and provides a

clearer basis for further research in syntax, semantics, and applied linguistics.

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