

n is for “Not There”

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It has become a standard assumption by now that roots have no lexical category and therefore a categorizing head n is required in order to create a noun. Given that this head will perforce be frequently null, the question arises what its semantics and featural makeup is. I will first argue that gender, number and even declension class can be not only lexically pre-specified, but also constructed in syntax proper, and then examine the relevance of these findings for two alternative hypotheses: (a) that gender and number are projected as separate functional heads or (b) that they are features on heads and/or maximal projections, and in particular on nP.