An Important Distinction: Words as such, words in use, and words about words

Parts of Speech, aka lexical categories: What a word is in and of itself—can be flexible, or not always clear which is which, but for most pre-Ph.D. language studies, it's not worth getting into the details

- Noun: persons, places, things, ideas (I like 'thingness')
- Verb: actions, links between nouns, structural support for other verbs
- Adjective: properties of nouns
- Adverb: properties of things other than nouns
- Pronoun: placeholders for nominal information
- Preposition: better defined structurally (see below), although I've never seen a good definition
- Interjection: emotional slop
- Conjunction: connections and relationships
- Determiner: information about where we are in a discourse

These are not universal categories; they do not appear in every language. Even English is in the process of losing its distinction between adjectives and adverbs in favor of a category of modifiers. I've also included determiners, which includes words like a/an/the/that/this that are often called adjectives, but that don't work like adjectives except insofar as they tend to precede nouns.

VS

Parts of Sentences, aka grammatical categories: what a word does when used—these are very flexible and can raise some of the questions that are available when trying to determine a part of speech

- Noun → subject, direct object, indirect object, predicate nominative (not a particularly useful category in English, but it's a helpful distinction for other languages), nominal modifiers (see below)
- Verb → transitive, intransitive, modal, auxiliary, moods, linking…
- Adjective → provide information about nouns or pronouns
- Adverb → provide information about sentences or clauses, verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs
- Pronoun → replaces a noun that has been mentioned or assumed
- Preposition → provide information that used to be given by nominal cases: location, time,
- Interjection → a syntactically stranded emotional outburst (not my favorite—keep these to a minimum)
- Conjunction → connections and relationships between and among words, phrases, or clauses
- Determiner → preceded nouns but usually provide information about where we are in a discourse, rather than about the noun exclusively

VS

Category terms:

modifier—of verbs, nouns, pronouns, adjectives, etc.

nominal—nouns, pronouns, mentions of any word/term/phrase/unit of language

verbals—verbs and the things that look like verbs that aren't behaving like verbs in grammatical categories: gerunds, infinitives, participles