

Problem set #2 (24.902 2003): Complements vs. Modifiers

[due September 17, 2003]

Part 1: Draw trees

For each NP or VP below, perform the following tasks:

- Use such tests as *one*-pronominalization and the *do-so/do-it/do-that* test to determine which PPs are arguments and which are adjuncts. Present your findings by giving the relevant examples, with or without stars (as appropriate), followed by the conclusion you draw from each one.
- Draw a tree for the NP or VP that conforms to your findings. Make *absolutely sure* that your tree can be generated by the grammar given in class and in the summary posted on the website.
 - the friend of the composer from Canada
[assume the friend, not the composer, is from Canada]
 - the friend of the composer from Canada
[now assume the composer, not the friend, is from Canada]
 - the old student on the bus
[two possibilities]
 - the coffee
[be careful!]
- We will...
 - eat the sushi on the porch in warm weather.
 - read books.
 - survive.

Part 2: English and Dutch locations and goals¹

Question 1: Prepositional phrases with the prepositions *in* and *on*, when used with a verb of motion, are often ambiguous between describing the general location of an action and describing the endpoint or *goal* of the motion. For example, sentence (3) can be understood as meaning either A or B:

- Bill jumped in the ditch.
ambiguous: A. Bill jumped up and down in the ditch. [location]
B. Bill jumped into the ditch. [goal]
- The kids jumped on the stage.
ambiguous: A. Mary jumped up and down on the stage. [location]
B. The kids jumped onto the stage. [goal]

¹ Source of the Dutch data: Mulder, René and Rint Sybesma. 1992. Chinese is a VO Language. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 10: 439-476. (Yes, that's the title of the article.)

Notice now that the (a) examples below are ambiguous between location and goal readings for the *in* and *on* phrases, but the (b) examples have only the goal reading:

- Bill jumped in the ditch, and Mary did so too.
 - Bill jumped in the ditch, and Mary did so in the playground.
- The girls jumped on the stage, and the boys did so too.
 - The girls jumped on the stage, and the boys did so in the playground.

These data suggest that the location and goal readings are associated with different structures. **Using the grammar for VP developed in class, draw a tree for each of the two readings of (3) [VP only -- don't do the rest of the sentence], and explain how your proposed structures explains the data in (5) and (6).**

Question 2: Explain in a few sentences how your proposal explains the contrast in (7). Use trees to clarify your explanation, as needed.

- Sue read the paper in her office and Bill did so in his room.
 - *Sue put the book in her office and Bill did so in his room.

Question 3: Examine the Dutch sentence fragments in (8)-(12). These are actually subordinate clauses (also called "embedded clauses"). Please imagine that they have been introduced by the Dutch equivalent of "I believe" -- e.g.. "I believe that Jan is reading the book", etc. I present data from subordinate clauses, rather than from main clauses, because something special happens in main clauses that obscures the facts that I want you to pay attention to.

You have two tasks. You will want to work out your answers to these two questions at the same time, even though you will present these answers separately:

- Assume that the grammar for the Dutch VP is just like the grammar of the English VP except that (1) the *order* of elements on the right side of the arrow may in some cases be different and (2) Dutch may have some word order options where English has only one option. **Write this grammar, using our English VP grammar as your model.**

Your should therefore have one or more complement rule, adjunct/modifier rule, etc. that are as much like English as the data allow. Where Dutch differs from English, however, your grammar must reflect this.

2. Explain, *referring to your grammar*, each of the contrasts in (8)-(12). That is, explain why (8a) is good while (8b) is bad, why (9a-b) express different ranges of meaning, etc.² You may (and probably should) refer to material that we discussed in class when giving your explanations, Draw trees where it is helpful.

- (8) a. ...dat Jan [het boek lest].
that Jan the book reads
'...that Jan is reading the book'
- b. *...dat Jan [lest het boek].
- (9) a. ...dat Jan [in de sloot springt]
that Jan in the ditch jumps
'...that Jan is jumping into the ditch'
[moving into the ditch from elsewhere
OR jumping up and down within the ditch]
- b. ...dat Jan [springt in de sloot]
that Jan jumps in the ditch
'...that Jan is jumping (up and down) in the ditch'
[jumping up and down within the ditch
NOT moving into the ditch from elsewhere]
- (10) a. ...dat Jan [op het podium springt op de trampoline].
that Jan on the stage jumps on the trampoline
'On the trampoline, Jan jumps onto the stage.'
OR: 'On the stage, Jan jumps up and down on the trampoline.'
BUT NOT: 'On the stage, Jan jumps onto the trampoline.'
- b. ...dat Jan [op de trampoline springt op het podium].
'On the stage, Jan jumps onto the trampoline.'
OR: 'On the stage, Jan jumps up and down on the trampoline.'
BUT NOT: 'On the trampoline, Jan jumps onto the stage.'
- (11) a. ...dat het stoplicht [op groen springt].
that the traffic light to green jumps
'...that the traffic light changed to green'
- b. *...dat het stoplicht [springt op groen].
- (12) a. ...dat hij [het boek op de tafel legde].
that he the book on the table put
- b. *...dat hij [het boek legde op de tafel].
- c. *...dat hij [op de tafel legde het boek].
- d. *...dat hij [legde het boek op de tafel].

Question 4: Idioms. What do we learn about idioms from the Dutch and English examples in (13)-(18) below?

HINT: Your answer should not come from outer space and should not be too deep. It has something simple and obvious to do with complements vs. modifiers. Your answer should contain a sentence whose beginning is something like "an idiom may consist of an X and a Y, but may not consist of ..." and should continue with evidence supporting your view. If your answer is clear and explicitly supported by facts, it will be fairly short.

Important: *I have not given any judgments of grammaticality or acceptability (stars, etc.), or any indication of meaning differences for the English examples in (16)-(18). It will be your job to supply judgments, either from your own intuitions, or by asking native speaker friends.*

Dutch:

- (13) a. ...dat Jan [boter op zijn brood smeert].
that Jan butter on his bread spreads
'...that Jan spreads butter on his bread'
- a'. ...dat Jan [op zijn brood boter smeert].
that Jan on his bread butter spreads
- b. ...dat Jan [boter smeert op zijn brood].
'...that Jan spreads butter on his bread'
- (14) a. ...dat Jan [boter aan de galg smeert].
that Jan butter on the gallows spreads
'...that Jan spreads butter on the gallows'
OR: '...that Jan is making a useless effort'
- b. ...dat Jan [boter smeert aan de galg].
ONLY: '...that Jan spreads butter on the gallows'
NOT: '...that Jan is making a useless effort'
- (15) a. ...dat Jan [ouwe koeien uit de sloot haalt]
...that Jan old cows out the ditch hauls
'...that Jan hauls old cows out of the ditch'
OR: 'that Jan is stirring up the past'
- b. ..dat Jan [ouwe koeien haalt uit de sloot].
ONLY '...that Jan hauls old cows out of the ditch'
NOT: '...that Jan is stirring up the past'

² The English words written without quotation marks below the Dutch are called "glosses", and represent word-for-word translations of the Dutch. English text written below the Dutch within single quotation marks is a translation, not necessarily word for word.

English [no judgments supplied]:

- (16) a. The safest place to practice jumping in place is the water. That's why when Bill started to do his jumping practice on the asphalt playground, his jumping coach told him to jump in the lake instead. *He also told Sue to do it in the lake.*
- b. When Bill asked Sue to do his syntax homework for him, she told him to jump in the lake. When Tom later made the same request, *she told him to do it in the lake too.*
- (17) a. After I let Sue and Mary lie down on my revolutionary new waterbed for a few minutes, I asked them what they thought. They weren't sure. Sue said she'd have to sleep on it first, and *Mary also said she'd have to do that on it.*
- b. After I told Sue and Mary about my revolutionary idea, I asked them what they thought. Sue said she'd have to sleep on it first, and *Mary said she'd have to do that on it too.*
- (18) a. The hazing ritual for my fraternity is really bizarre.³ You have to make small incisions in your teeth by biting down on sharp objects. Bill here decided to cut his teeth on a razor blade, while *I did it on some scissors.*
- b. Do we know linguistics, you ask? Of course we know linguistics! Why Bill here, he cut his teeth on syntax! And me, *I did it on phonology.*
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Extra credit: What do you notice about the acceptability, meaning, etc. of the following pairs of English sentences. How might you explain the contrasts you detect?

- (19) a. The committee will not look kindly on such arrogance.
b. The committee will kindly not look on such arrogance.
- (20) a. John takes syntax seriously.
b. John seriously takes syntax.

³ And illegal.