

Syntax: day 1

1. Dysfunctional analogies and other puzzles

- (1) **Active and passive sentences**
a. The baby chattered to us. [active]
b. We were chattered to by the baby. [passive]

c. The baby mattered to us.
d.

- (2) a. A gorilla sat on the table.
b. The table was sat on by a gorilla.

c. A lamp sat on the table.
d.

- (3) **Seem vs. hope**
a. Sue seemed to speak French.
b. It seemed that Sue spoke French.

c. Sue hoped to speak French.
d.

- (4) a. There seemed to be trouble on the Red Line.
b.

- (5) **promise vs. persuade**
a. John promised Sue to take better care of himself.
b. *John promised Sue to take better care of herself.

c.
d. John persuaded Sue to take better care of herself.

- (6) **What's the "understood" subject of talk?**
a. I want someone to talk.
a. I want someone to talk to.

b. I want someone to talk to me.

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- (7) **Can *he* and *Tom* corefer?**
a. Tom thinks he's gonna win the lottery.
b. He thinks Tom is gonna win the lottery.

- (8) **What about *he* and *who*?**
a. Who thinks he's gonna win the lottery?
b. Who does he think's gonna win the lottery?

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- How do we know these facts?
 - Why do we not make the analogies and generalizations that would lead us to the "wrong" grammar? How did we avoid them when acquiring language in infancy?

==> **The "poverty of the stimulus argument"**

2. Language differences against a backdrop of language similarities

Cross-linguistic investigation suggests that syntax is partly invariant across the species (obeys general "principles"), and partly subject to "parametric variation"

Principles [what is invariant across languages]

[G. Cinque (1999) *Adverbs and Functional Heads*, Oxford University Press. See also article "War of Words" in *New Scientist*, August 21, 1999.]

- The ordering of adverbs, when sorted by meaning, is invariant across languages:

(9) no longer > always

a. Italian

Da allora, non ha **più sempre** vinto
Since then, he has no longer always won

*Da allora, non ha **sempre più** vinto

b. Bosnian

On **vise** **uvijek** ne pobjedjuje
he no-longer always not wins

*On **uvijek vise** ne pobjedjuje

c. Chinese

ta **bu-zai** **zongshi** gen da-ge zhengcao
he no-longer always quarrels with Big Brother

*ta **zongshi bu-zai** gen da-ge zhengcao

(10) always > completely

a. English

He **always completely** ruins our plans
*He **completely always** ruins our plans

b. Albanian

Ai nuk i kupton **gjithnjë tërësisht** vërejtjet
he not understands always completely the remark

*Ai nuk i kupton **tërësisht gjithnjë** vërejtjet

c. Norwegian

De forstår **alltid helt** hva jeg snakker om
they understand always completely what I say

*De forstår **helt alltid** hva jeg snakker om

- The ordering of adverbs, when sorted by meaning, parallels the ordering of auxiliary verbs and particles which have the same function in many languages.

(11) future > terminative (adverbs and tenses)

a. English

He will **THEN NO-LONGER** go to Tarawa
*He will **NO-LONGER THEN** go to Tarawa

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b. Kiribatese (Micronesia) - Groves, Groves and Jacobs 1985,78

E na tia n naanako Tarawa
He **FUTURE TERMIN** go to Tarawa
'He will be finished going to Tarawa'

- Also: parallels tense suffixes in a mirror fashion.

(12) **past> habitual (adverb, tenses and suffixes [mirror])**

- a. English adverbs
He was **once usually** willing to help
*He was **usually once** willing to help
- b. Dagaare (West Africa) tense particles - Bodomo 1993,39
O da man nmiere ma
(S)he **PAST HABITUAL** beat-PROG me
'(S)he was usually beating me'
- c. Canela-Crahô (Brazil) tense particles - Popjies and Popjies 1986, 182
pê wa ajco apu to hane
PAST I HABITUAL PROG do thus
'I always used to do that'
- d. Aleut (North America) tense suffixes - Bergsland 1994,337ff
chisi-lga-**qali-qa**-x..
distribute-PASS-INCEPT-**HABITUAL-PAST**-sg
'it was distributed..'
- e. Khalkha Mongolian tense suffixes (Asia) - Svantesson 1991,191ff
bi: [...] moGoi-g cōlōd-**d'g bai-s' n**
I snake-ACC throw-**HABITUAL** be-**PAST**
'I used to throw it at the snake'
- f. Turkish tense suffixes - Kornfilt 1997,356
Hasan piyano çal-**ar-di**
Hasan the piano play-**HABITUAL-PAST**
'Hasa used to play the piano'

(13) **The Cinque Hierarchy**

- [*frankly* Mood_{sentence type}
[*luckily* Mood_{evaluative}
[*allegedly* Mood_{evidential}
[*probably* Mod_{epistemic}
[*once* T(Past)
[*then* T(Future)
[*perhaps* Mood_{irrealis}
[*necessarily* Mod_{necessity}
[*possibly* Mod_{possibility}
[*usually* Asp_{habitual}
[*finally* Asp_{delayed}
[*tendentially* Asp_{predispositional}
[*again* Asp_{repetitive(I)}
[*often* Asp_{frequentative(I)}
[*willingly* Mod_{volition}
[*quickly* Asp_{celerative(I)}
[*already* T(Anterior)
[*no longer* Asp_{terminative}
[*still* Asp_{continuative}
[*always* Asp_{continuous}
[*just* Asp_{retrospective}
[*soon* Asp_{proximative}
[*briefly* Asp_{durative}
[*(?)* Asp_{generic/progressive}
[*almost* Asp_{prospective}
[*suddenly* Asp_{inceptive}
[*obligatorily* Mod_{obligation}
[*in vain* Asp_{frustrative}
[*(?)* Asp_{conative}
[*completely* Asp_{SgCompletive(I)}
[*tutto* Asp_{PICompletive}
[*well* Voice
[*early* Asp_{celerative(II)}
[*?* Asp_{inceptive(II)}
[*again* Asp_{repetitive(II)}
[*often* Asp_{frequentative(II)}
Verb
-

Parameters [what varies across languages]

The Multiple Question Parameter

Simple *wh*-questions

English

(14) **What** did he give to Mary?

Chinese

(15) Ta song-le Zhangsan **shenme**?
he gave John what
'What did he give to John?'

Bulgarian like English

(16) **Kakvo** e dal na Ivan?
what he-has given to John
'What did he give to John?'

Multiple *wh*-questions

English

(17) **What** did he give to **whom**?

Chinese

(18) Ta song-le **shei shenme**?
he gave who what
'What did he give to whom?'

Bulgarian not like English

(19) **Kakvo na kogo** e dal?
what to whom he-has given
'What did he give to whom?'

The "how much moves" Parameter

(20) **Universal Question Rule**

The linguistic expression that "asks the question" (the *wh*-phrase) is displaced to the periphery of the sentence. [What about Chinese? Wait until later in the semester...] Sometimes more than just the question word is "displaced" to the periphery of the sentence.

- **English displaces less than French:**

- (21) a. Pour qui as-tu voté ___ ?
for whom have you voted
b. *Qui as-tu voté pour ___ ?
who have you voted for

- **Russian displaces less than English or French:**

- (22) a. O čëm Maša govorila ___ ?
About what Masha spoke
'About what was Masha speaking?'
b. *Čëm Maša govorila o ___ ?

- (23) a. Whose book did Mary buy ___ .
b. *Whose did Mary buy ___ book.

- (24) Čju Maša kupila ___ knigu?
whose Masha bought ___ book

- **Okinawan displaces less than English, French or Russian. Only a *piece* of the question word is relocated (optionally) to the sentence periphery -- the piece that "asks the question".**

- (25) a. wan-ya [Taruu-ga nuu-**GA** kam-yi-ra] chichibusaN.
I Taru what-GA eat-PRES-Q want-to-hear
'I want to hear what Taru eats.'

Taruu-ya nuu- ___ kam-yi- **GA**?
Taru what eat-PRES GA
'What does Taru eat?'

- **Okinawan questions have the form that English would have if we said in English:**

- (26) a. *Wh- did Mary buy -at?*
b. *Wh- did I put my keys -ere?*
c. *Wh- did Bill do that -y?*

The verb-second parameter

- (27) ***German*** (Germanic family of languages; Europe)
Subordinate clause: verb is at the end.
Main clause: main verb follows the first phrase (or comes first),
unless there's an auxiliary verb, in which case the auxiliary
verb follows the first phrase and the main verb is at the end

- Karitiana*** (Arikém family of languages, Rondonia state, Brazil)
Subordinate clause: verb is at the end
Main clause: main verb follows the first phrase (or comes first),
unless there's an auxiliary verb, in which case the auxiliary
verb follows the first phrase and the main verb is at the end
[Storto 1996]

- Vata*** (Kru family of languages; Ivory Coast, Africa)
verb follows the first phrase (or comes first), unless there's an auxiliary verb,
in which case the auxiliary verb follows the first phrase and the main verb is
at the end [Koopman 1984]

- Kashmiri*** (Indo-Aryan family of languages; Indian subcontinent)
verb follows the first phrase, unless there's an auxiliary verb, in which case
the auxiliary verb follows the first phrase and the main verb is at the end
[Bhatt 1994]

- (28) **Languages that don't exist** (we think):

- a. Like German, but patterns of subordinate and main clause are reversed.
b. Main verb must follow the *second* phrase, *third* phrase, etc.
c. Not the main verb, but the direct object must follow the first phrase.

3. Syntactic variation across languages involves the abstract system, not superficial facts about word order

- **Weird correlations: Greenbergian Universals** [see excerpt]