

Workshop for Friday, April 10

Problem 1: Pronouns

Part 1 (30 minutes) *Work in a group of 4. Take notes on your answers to the following questions, and keep this workshop in your portfolio. We may pause for class discussion in between Parts 1 and 2 if there is a need to do so.*

1. Study the example sentences on pp 6-7 of *On Nature and Language*. What is meant by “coreference”? Do you agree with the grammaticality judgments in the book?
2. As a group, try to make sense of the final paragraph on p. 6. What exactly is meant by “domain” and “phrase”?
3. Think of several more sentences containing pronouns and proper names. (Don’t limit yourselves to just “he” and “John”!) Try to find some sentences in which co-reference is possible, and others (like 7 in the book) where it isn’t possible.
4. Reread the generalization in the paragraph below (10) on p. 7. Do your examples conform to this generalization?

-----You may stop here if time is almost up.-----

5. What about the sentence “Bev saw her.” Is coreference possible between “Bev” and “her”? What if we replace “her” with “herself”?
6. What about the sentence “Bev thought that Tom saw her.” Is coreference possible between “Bev” and “her”? What if we replace “her” with “herself”?
7. What additional generalization would you propose based on questions 5 and 6?

Part 2 (15 minutes) *This part involves a short small-group discussion. Feel free to combine two groups together at this stage if you like.*

8. On p. 7 the authors ask a series of questions, ending in “Why do all speakers unerringly converge to postulate a structural principle rather than a simpler linear principle, or even no principle at all?” Reread the explanation proposed on pp 7-9, then summarize this explanation within your group. Do any alternative explanations seem plausible to you?

Problem 2: Question formation

Part 1 (20-30 minutes): *Work in groups of 4.*

1. Look at (21) on p. 18. Discuss the meaning of this sentence with your group. The * indicates that this is ungrammatical *under the interpretation in which “how” is linked to the position marked with the blank line*. Does the question seem grammatical to you under a different interpretation?
- 2.
3. Look at the Italian (22). Try to figure out what each word means, and how this example parallels (21).
4. Now turn to the French examples (23 a-c). See if you can figure out the meaning of each French word. If you can't, you can just work with the English translations, which follow the French word orders fairly closely. Why is (23b) unsurprising given what we have seen in (21) and (22)? Why is (23c) surprising?
5. Try to make sense as a group of the first 2 or 3 sentences of the paragraph following (23): “This is immediately explained if...”
6. If you have extra time, see if you can generate more English data with respect to complex Wh-questions. This can be tricky!

(Pause for class discussion if necessary)

Part 2: (15-20 minutes) *Discussion. Feel free to join two groups together at this stage.* Reread the final paragraph of section 5.1, on p. 20. Discuss first how the examples you have just studied support the claims made in this paragraph. Based on any exposure you have had to languages other than English, how plausible do these claim seem to you? If you can, share some facts from other languages you may be familiar with which may shed light on the issue of variability among grammars.