Basic Sentences
Preparing for Morphology and Hundred Sentences Assignments

February 8, 2016
1. Propositional content

• Transitivity
• Grammatical Encoding
Events/states and entities

• Entity: the student
• Event: yawned
• State: understands

• Normally, the events and states are verbs and the entities are nouns.
Nootka nouns and verbs:

• Schachter, page 11
  Mamu.k-ma       qu.?as-?i
  working-PRES(INDIC) man-DEF
  ‘The man is working.’

  Qu.?as-ma       mamu.k-?i
  man-PRES(INDIC) working-DEF
  ‘The working one is a man.’

• Any word can take a definiteness suffix and be an argument of a “verb.”

• Any word can take a tense marker and be a predicate.
Events or states as functions with arguments

• One argument
  • The student yawned.
  • The student understands.

• Two arguments
  • The student read a book.
  • The student knows the answer.

• Three arguments
  • The student gave the assignment to the TA.
Arguments vs modifiers

- The arguments do or cause things (agent) or receive things (recipient) or things happen to them or they are affected in some way (patient).
- There are other modifiers such as:
  - quickly
  - certainly
  - with ease
  - with a stick
  - at 3:00
  - in the classroom
- The modifiers are called adjuncts.
Examples of Intransitive verbs

- Activities: play, study, work, write, fight, read, eat, dance, speak, swim, graze
- Activities with sound: Bark, hum, sing, laugh, cry, shout, purr, roar,
- Activity with body movement but not change of location: Nod, wave, smile, bow,
  - English: nod a greeting; smile a broad smile
- Aspectual: Start, stop, begin, continue, keep
- Change of location with mostly neutral manner: Come, go, arrive, depart, fall, turn (away, around), travel, wander, gather, arise
- Manner of motion: Walk, run, strut, roll, jump, march, limp, hop, scamper, plunge, flit,
  - English: walk/roll/limp/hop across the room vs
  - vs cross the room walking
  - vs go walking across the room
- Change of state: melt, freeze, grow, bloom, improve, fade,
  - English: grow tall, freeze solid vs
  - freeze and become solid
- Look, listen,
- pass (time passes), happen, occur
- Shine, blow, dawn, flow, clear away, sparkle, blaze, rustle, glow, glitter
- Strike (clock), toll, flutter,
- Locate: Wait, stand, rest, sit, lie, tower, hang, live, extend,
- Glide, float, waft, (smoke) curl up, wave, bend, sway,
- Know, understand,
- Grieve, rejoice,
Differences in intransitive verbs

- **Agentive verb:** Subject is volitional or does or causes something
  - The student spoke/sang/ran.
- **Non-agentive verb:** Something happens to the subject or at least the subject is not actively causing something to happen.
  - The butter melted.
  - The student (’s hand) bled.

- **In some human languages, agentive and non-agentive intransitive verbs behave differently in grammar:**
  - Some Western European Languages: I have walked vs I am fallen.
  - Different case marking on the subject.
  - Italian: non-agentive subject more frequently goes after the verb and can have a partitive clitic.
    - *ne hano telefonato tre (three of them called)
    - ne sono arrivato tre (three of them arrived)
  - West African languages: Agentive intransitive verbs have “cognate objects”: sing a song; smile a smile; yawn a yawn; but not melt a melt or break a break.
Differences in types of events and states
Lexical aspect

• Telic events have an endpoint:
  • If I start to fall and stop, I can’t say that I have fallen.
  • If I start to walk to school and stop partway, I can’t say that I have walked to school.

• Atelic events do not have an endpoint:
  • If I start to walk and then stop. I can say that I have walked.

• Sometimes verb tenses have different meanings depending on the lexical aspect:
  • Japanese
  • Gakusei ga aruite imasu
    Student SUBJ walk
    The student is walking.
  • Doa ga aite imasu
    door SUBJ open
    The door is open (is in the resulting state from having opened)
    or The door is opening
Copula sentences

• Identity:
  • Clark Kent is Superman.
  • Lori and Alan are the instructors.

• Role:
  • She is a doctor.

• Description/Property:
  • She is tall.

• Some languages have zero copula (She doctor)
• Some languages have zero copula in the present tense but use a copula in the past tense.
Existential sentences

• There are rabbits on the lawn.
• There were students arrested.
• There were students yawning in class.
• There are (no) unicorns.

• Types of existential sentences
  • Have
  • Be
  • Exist
  • Special particle
# Irregularity in existential sentences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Hebrew</th>
<th>Turkish</th>
<th>Russian</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is a book on the table.</td>
<td>Yesh sefer al ha shulxan.</td>
<td>Kösede bir kahve var.</td>
<td>Jest kniga na stolje. (There is a book on the table.)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(There is a book on the table.)</td>
<td>(There is a book on the corner.)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>There isn’t a book on the table.</td>
<td>Eyn sefer al ha shulxan.</td>
<td>Kösede bir kahve yok.</td>
<td>Njet knigi na stolje. (There is not a book on the table.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(There is not a book on the table.)</td>
<td>(There is not a book on the corner)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There was a book on the table.</td>
<td>Haya sefer al ha shulxan.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>(There was a book on the table.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>There wasn’t a book on the table.</td>
<td>Lo haya sefer al ha shulxan.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(There was not a book on the table.)</td>
<td></td>
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Presentational sentences
Also have irregular or special grammar

• That’s my son.
  • We can’t normally use “that” to refer to people. E.g., I can’t say, “I see that” while pointing to a person.
  • But the presentational use of “that” can be used for people.

• Here’s my son.

• Voici un livre.
  • Looks like a contraction of “voire” (see) and “ici” (here).
Transitive verbs: agent and patient

• Cause motion: push, pull, move,
• Cause motion with manner: throw, roll, bounce
• Cause motion with path: insert, remove,
• Cause motion with manner: wipe, blow, sweep
• Move in place: shake, wave,
• Cause change of state: melt, freeze, break, bake
• Contact: touch, kick, hit, tap,
• Create: create, make, build, form,
• Create with method: bake, draw, sew
• Attach: sew, glue,
• Fill: load, fill,
  • English: load the truck with hay/load hay onto the truck
• Cover: paint, cover, spray, smear
  • English: spray the wall with paint/spray paint on the wall
• Agent, Patient, Recipient: give, hand, award, present
  • English: hand something to someone/hand someone something
• Convey information with or without manner: tell, whisper, say, scream,
• Cause emotion: frighten, scare, startle, surprise, anger, please
• Experience emotion: fear, like, love, hate
• Activities: write, read, sing, say
• Other: share, shelter, risk
Unusual types of two-argument verbs

• Experiencer verbs:
  • I like ice cream.
  • I fear snakes.
  • Ice cream pleases me.
  • Snakes frighten me.

• Possession:
  • I have a book.
  • A book is to me.
  • My book exists.
  • My book is.
  • Many variations depending on alienable possession, inalienable possession, kinship, body parts, etc.
Grammatical Encoding

- The dog bit the man.
- The man bit the dog.

Grammatical Encoding is how you know which noun is the agent and which is the patient.

English is exotic in the degree to which it relies on word order.
Japanese topic marker, subject marker, and object marker (plus free word order)

• Otoko wa inu o mimasita.
  man  TOP dog OBJ saw
  The man saw the dog.

• Otoko ga inu o mimasita.
  man  TOP dog OBJ saw
  It was the man that saw the dog.

• Inu wa otoko ga mimasita.
  dog TOP man SUBJ saw
  As for the dog, the man saw it.

• Inu wa otoko o mimasita.
  dog TOP man OBJ saw
  The dog saw the man.

• Inu ga otoko o mimasita.
  dog SUBJ man OBJ saw
  It was the dog that saw the man.

• Otoko wa inu ga mimasita.
  man  TOP dog SUBJ saw
  As for the man, the dog saw him.
Agreement markers

Quechua, page 136, Thomas Payne, Describing Morphosyntax
Nominative-Accusative vs. Ergative-Absolutive Encoding

Nominative Accusative
• She yawned.
• She (agent) saw me (patient).
• I (agent) saw her (patient).

Ergative Absolutive
• She yawned.
• Her (agent) saw I (patient).
• Me (agent) saw she (patient).
Ergative-Absolutive
(case marking)

(Yupik, page 135, Payne, Describing Morphosyntax)
Ergative-Absolutive (agreement)

(9) *Yup’ik*

   - traveled-1SG
   - S

b. Ayallruu-q. “He traveled.”
   - traveled-3SG
   - S

c. Cingallruu-a-nga. “He greeted me.”
   - greeted-3SG-1SG
   - A
   - P
Mixed systems

• Nominative-Accusative in some tenses and Ergative-Absolutive in others.
• Nominative-Accusative on pronouns and Ergative-Absolutive on other nouns.
• Ergative on subjects of agentive intransitive verbs and Absolutive on subjects of non-agentive intransitive verbs.
• Etc.
Split Ergativity based on tense, aspect, mood (TAM)

Ergative-absolutive used in the past tense.

Ergative-absolutive is more patient oriented.

Patient is more likely to be affected in the past tense. In non-past tenses, you don’t know whether the patient is affected or not because you don’t know whether the event was completed.

There is a third pattern where the A is dative and the P is nominative. It is an evidential mood. See book by Alice Harris. The A is more like an experiencer than an agent in those sentences.

(41)  *Georgian* (from Comrie 1989)

a. Student-i midis.
   -NOM goes
   “The student goes.”

b. Student-i ceril-s cers.
   -NOM letter-ACC writes
   “The student writes the letter.”

c. Student-i mivida.
   -ABS went
   “The student went.”

d. Student-ma ceril-i dacera.
   -ERG letter-ABS wrote
   “The student wrote the letter.”
Agreement markers are even more topic worthy than pronouns.

The agreement markers show a nominative accusative system. A and S are the same. P is different.

The pronouns show an ergative-absolutive system. A is different from S and P.

This is consistent with Payne’s universal because agreement markers are more associated with topic worthiness than pronouns.
2. Information Status

- Dogs must be carried.
- What you must do is carry a dog.
- What you must carry is a dog.
- What you must do with a dog is carry it.
Word order can be used for information status

• Some languages use word order to express which noun phrases are new in the discourse and which are old:

  • Who saw Bill?
    • It’s John that saw Bill.
    • It’s Bill that John saw.
Pragmatic Roles
“The flow of given and new information”

When we hear the sentence

Who saw Bill?,

we understand that someone saw Bill. This fact becomes given information, a shared assumption between the speaker and hearer.

The question asks for a piece of new information, Who?

Who saw Bill?

new old/given
How to express new information in English

• A. Who saw Bill? perceiver: who/John (new)
  • B. John saw Bill/him. perceived: Bill/him (old)
    • Stress on “John”

• A. Who did John see? perceiver: John/he (old)
  • B. John/he saw Bill. perceived: who/Bill (new)
    • Stress on “Bill”

• Intonation encodes new information.
How to mess up the encoding of new information
(Comrie, page 56)

• A. Who saw Bill?  
  perceiver: who/John  (new)

• B. John saw Bill/him.  
  perceived: Bill/him  (old)
  • Stress on “John”

• A. Who saw Bill?  
  perceiver: who/John  (new)

• B. #John saw Bill/him.  
  perceived: Bill/him  (old)
  • Stress on “Bill/him”

• A. Who did John see?  
  perceiver: John/he  (old)

• B. John/he saw Bill.  
  perceived: who/Bill  (new)
  • Stress on “Bill”

• A. Who did John see?  
  perceiver: John/he  (old)

• B. #John/he saw Bill.  
  perceived: who/Bill  (new)
  • Stress on “John”
Focus Using Cleft Constructions (Kroeger)

• English can express new information with a cleft sentence: \( \text{It's } x \text{ that } \ldots \)

• The cleft sentence may take on a reading of contrastive focus.
  • Contrastive focus implies that the focused item is being chosen from a delimited set

It's **John** that saw Bill (, not Joe).
It was **Mary** that John gave the flowers to (, not Susan).
It is the **Secretary** who will visit us (, not the President).
Why is it called a cleft?

• “Cleft” is the past participle of “cleave”, to cut.

To cleave off a subject:

John saw Bill.

1. cut here
2. add “it’s” and “who/that”

It’s John that saw Bill.
Why is it called a cleft?

To cleave off a non-subject.

John saw Bill.

1. cut here
2. move the piece you cut off
3. add “it’s” and “who/that”

It’s Bill that John saw.
Meaning of clefts

• Note that these mean the same thing in the sense that the noun phrases have the same semantic roles:
  • John saw Bill.
  • It’s John who saw Bill. (subject is cleft)
  • It’s Bill who John saw. (object is cleft)
    • Perceiver: John
    • Perceived: Bill

• The cleft word order is not encoding semantic roles or grammatical relations. It is encoding new information.
How to express new information in English

• A. Who saw Bill? perceiver: who/John (new)
• B. It’s John that/who saw Bill/him.
  • “John” is clefted. perceived: Bill/him (old)

• A. Who did John see? perceiver: John/he (old)
• B. It’s Bill that/who saw John. perceived: who/Bill (new)
  • “Bill” is clefted.

• Clefting encodes new information.
How to mess up the encoding of new information (Comrie, page 56)

• A. Who saw Bill?  perceiver: who/John (new)
• B. It’s John who saw Bill/him.
  perceived: Bill/him (old)

• A. Who saw Bill?  perceiver: who/John (new)
• B. #It’s Bill who John saw.  perceived: Bill/him (old)

• A. Who did John see?  perceiver: John/he (old)
• B. It’s Bill who John saw.  perceived: who/Bill (new)

• A. Who did John see?  perceiver: John/he (old)
• B. #It’s John who saw Bill.  perceived: who/Bill (new)
Focus in Russian
(Comrie, p78)

• English word order codes grammatical relations. Russian word order seems free by comparison:

  Tanja ubila Mašu. ‘Tanja killed Masha.’
  Tanja Mašu ubila. ‘Tanja killed Masha.’
  Mašu ubila Tanja. ‘Tanja killed Masha.’
Focus in Russian
(Comrie, p78)

• Although GR’s are the same for all, Pragmatic Roles are different.

Tanja ubila Mašu. ‘Tanja killed Masha.’
Tanja Mašu ubila. ‘Tanja killed Masha.’
Mašu ubila Tanja. ‘Tanja killed Masha.’

• Russian basic word order places topic at the beginning of the sentence and focus at the end.
Hungarian

• The new information immediately precedes the verb. Since question words are asking for new information, they also immediately precede the verb. (Comrie, page 57)

a. Ki l’atta Zoli-t?
   who saw Zoli
   Who saw Zoli?

b. Zoli-t ki l’atta?
   Zoli who saw
   Who saw Zoli?

c. Vili l’atta Zoli-t.
   Vili saw Zoli
   Vili saw Zoli

   Perceiver: Vili/who (new)

d. Zoli-t Vili l’atta.
   Zoli Vili saw
   Vili saw Zoli.

   Perceived: Zoli (old)
Hungarian

a. Ki-t l´atta Zoli?
   who saw Zoli
   Who did Zoli see?
b. Zoli ki-t l´atta?
   Zoli who saw
   Who did Zoli see?
c. Zoli Vili-t l´atta.
   Zoli Vili saw
   Zoli saw Vili.
d. Vili-t l´atta. Zoli
   Vili saw Zoli
   Zoli saw Vili

Perceiver: Zoli (old)
Perceived: Vili/who (new)
3. Subject, Agent, Nominative, Definite, Animate, Old Information

• Prototypical sentence:
  • The batter hit a ball.
  • He hit a ball.

• The subject is agentive, nominative, animate, definite, and old information.

• The object is indefinite, new information, not nominative.
Not all subjects are agents

• Chris opened the door with a key.
• The key opened the door.
  • The key is an instrument.
• The wind opened the door.
  • The wind moves and causes things, but it doesn’t have volition.
• The door was opened/The doors were opened.
  • The patient is the subject. You can tell because the verb agrees with it.
• The door opened.

• How to tell that Chris, the key, and the wind are not the same kind of agents:
  • ?Chris and the key opened the door.
  • ?The key and the wind opened the door.
  • ?Chris and the wind opened the door.
What happens when the subject in non-prototypical sentences?

• Definite object:
  • Hebrew:
    Raiti yeled.
    saw.1sg boy
    I saw a boy

    Raiti et ha-yeled.
    saw.1sg dom the boy
    I saw the boy.

  DOM = differential object marker

• Animate object
  • Spanish
    El hombre vio al perro.
    the man saw dom.def dog
    The man saw the dog.

    El hombre vio el coche.
    the man saw the car
    The man saw the car.
Non-prototypical sentences

• In some languages you cannot say:
  • A ball hit me.
  • She hit me.
  • The subject cannot be inanimate or the object cannot outrank the subject in animacy or person.

• You have to say something like
  • I was hit by a ball.
  • I was hit by her.
  • But it’s not actually a passive voice sentence. It is something else called an inverse sentence.
4. Transitivity Alternations

- Adding arguments
- Deleting arguments
- Incorporating arguments
- Or the same arguments are expressed with different grammatical roles
  - A patient becomes a subject
  - A recipient becomes an object
  - A possessor becomes a subject
Adding arguments

- Chris sang a song.
- Pat sang-cause Chris a song.
- Pat sang-cause a song to Chris.
Deleting arguments

• Chris broke the vase.
• The vase broke.

• English does not add any morphology to the verb for this, but some languages do. Often it is a reflexive morpheme (the vase broke-self).
Incorporating arguments

• I caught a fish.
• I fish-caught.
• I animal-caught (a fish).
Passive voice

• The student read a book.
• A book was read by the student.

• Passive voice doesn’t need to be done with an auxiliary verb:
  • Gakusei wa sensei ni yom-are-masita.
  • student top teacher call-pass-polite.past
  • The student was called by the teacher.
Possessor raising

• She hit my arm.
• She hit me on the arm.

• Her hand went up.
• She went up handwise.

• She hit my mother.
• She hit me on the mother.
Dative Shift and Applicatives

• Dative Shift
  • I gave a book to him.
  • I gave him a book.

• Benefactive shift
  • I baked a cake for her.
  • I baked her a cake.

• Applicative
  • I baked a cake for her.
  • I baked-for her a cake.
  • I walked with a stick.
  • I walked-with a stick.
Derivations

• I gave a book to the student
• A book was given to the student.

• I gave a book to the student.
• I gave the student a book.
• The student was given a book.

• She hit my arm.
• She hit me on the arm.
• I was hit on the arm.
Derivations

• Chris wrote a letter with a pen.
• A letter write-pass with a pen by Chris.

• Chris wrote a letter with a pen.
• Chris wrote-with a pen a letter.
• A pen write-with-pass a letter by Chris.

• Chris wrote a letter with a pen.
• Pat write-cause Chris a letter with a pen.
• Chris write-cause-pass a letter with a pen.
5. Non-Propositional Content

- Tense, Aspect, Mood
- Definiteness
- Negation
- Modality
- Evidentiality
6. Other sentence types

• Questions
  • Yes-no
  • alternatives
  • question word

• Imperatives, hortatives, and prohibitives
7. Noun phrases

- book
- a book
- a blue book
- a blue book on the table
- my book
- a book about linguistics
- one book
- many books
- every book
8. Coordinate structures

- Pat and Chris read a book.
- Pat read a book and went to a movie.
9. Multi-clause sentences

- I know that the student read a book.
- The student who I met read a book.
- That the student yawned annoys me.
- The student tried to yawn.
- The student convinced the teacher to yawn.