

Homework 6: Language Variation

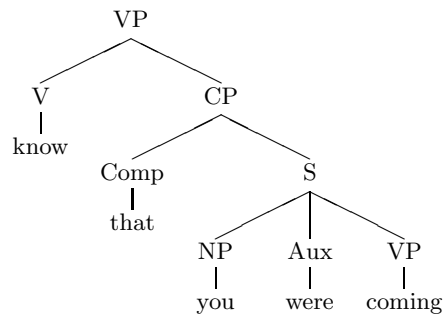
Ling 101 (Bruening)

October 26, 2006; due October 31

1 Word Order

In English, embedded sentences are often introduced by the complementizer *that*, which precedes the embedded sentence:

- (1) I didn't know **that** you were coming. (4)
(2) CP → Comp S
(3) Comp → that, ...



We can integrate this into our phrase structure rules by hypothesizing that the complementizer (Comp) is the head of a phrase CP, which takes S as its complement, as in the CP rule above. S will have its normal form, $S \rightarrow NP \text{ (Aux) VP}$. (We also need to modify our VP rule to allow $VP \rightarrow V \text{ CP}$.)

Look at the data from some other languages below. Assuming the data to be representative of all languages, you should be able to formulate an *implicational universal* relating the position of the complementizer within the embedded sentence (marked by square brackets) to the basic word order of S, V, and O in a language.

- | | | |
|----------------|----|---|
| English | a. | The child saw Mary. |
| | b. | I didn't know [that you were coming]. |
| Spanish | a. | Juan contestó la pregunta.
John answered the question |
| | b. | Juan sabía [que Pedro había hablado con los empleados].
John knew [that Pedro had spoken with the employees]. |
| Mayo | a. | hu? ili-usi Maria-ta biŋa-k.
the little-child Mary-Acc see-Past
'The child saw Mary.' |
| | b. | inapo kaa hu?neeya-ye [a?bo em siika-ye ?wi].
I not know toward.here you go that
'I didn't know [that you were coming].' |

- Japanese**
- a. Mary-ga sono hon-o yonda.
 Mary-Nom that book-Acc read
 ‘Mary read that book.’
- b. John-ga [Mary-ga sono hon-o yonda **to**] itta.
 John-Nom Mary-Nom that book-Acc read **that** said
 ‘John said [that Mary read that book].’

Implicational Universal: _____

In addition, state the phrase structure rules for CP, S, and VP in Japanese:

2 Morphology

Languages can be classified into four types morphologically: **analytic**, **polysynthetic**, **agglutinating**, and **fusional**. Which type does each of the following languages belong to? (Recip = reciprocal; Caus = causative; Indic = indicative statement)

- (4) Swahili *Type:* _____
 ha- tu- ku- wa- pat- an- ish- a
 Neg 1Pl Pst 3Pl get Recip Caus Indic
 ‘We didn’t get them to agree with each other.’
- (5) Latvian *Type:* _____
 las-u las-ām rakst-u rakst-ām
 read-1Sg/Pres read-1Pl/Pres write-1Sg/Pres write-1Pl/Pres
 ‘I read, we read, I write, we write’
- (6) Japanese *Type:* _____
 Gakusei-wa homer-are-na-i.
 student-Topic praise-Passive-Neg-Pres
 ‘The student is not praised.’

3 Be-Drop in AAVE

(Data here come from William Labov 1972, *Language in the Inner City*.)

A dialect of English sometimes called African American Vernacular English (AAVE)—because it is prevalent among African Americans, though others use it as well—is characterized by, among other things, dropping the verb *be*:

- (7) a. She the first one started us off. (NP)
- b. I know, but he wild, though. (Adjective)
- c. We on tape. (PP)
- d. But everybody not black. (Negation)
- e. Boot always comin' over my house to eat, to ax for food. (V-ing)
- f. 'Cause we gon' sneak under the turnstile. (gon')

You might think this dialect just lacks the auxiliary verb *be*, but it turns out that in many cases it does appear, and in fact is *required* (I only give two examples showing that it's required, but it is in all the others as well):

- (8) a. I was small. (Past)
- b. You got to be good, Rednall! (Infinitive)
- c. Be cool, brothers! (Imperative)
- d. He is a expert. (Emphasis)
- e. Are you gon' give us some pussy? (Yes-No Questions)
- f. (You ain't the best sounder, Eddie!) I ain't! He is! (Ellipsis)
- g. It always somebody tougher than you are. (Comparative)
- h. Do you see where that person is? (Wh-word moved from after *be*)
- i. Who is it? (Subject Question)
- (9) *Required: comparative example*
- a. He as nice as he says he is.
- b. * He as nice as he says he.
- (10) *Required: ellipsis example*
- a. (Is he here?) He is now.
- b. * (Is he here?) He now.

Standard English has a property of contraction of the verb *be*, as in *he's*, *I'm*, *you're*. It turns out that contraction may not apply everywhere, just like *be*-drop may not apply everywhere in AAVE. Compare (11a) below, where contraction may apply, with (12a), where it may not. Your task is to compare the environments where *be* can be dropped in AAVE and where it can't with the environments in Standard English where *be* can be contracted.

First, construct Standard English examples of all the environments in (7) and (8) to see whether Standard English allows *be*-contraction in these environments. Where contraction is ungrammatical, put a * before the sentence. The first one of each are done for you as examples.

- (11) a. She's the first one who started us off. _____ (NP)
- b. _____ (Adj)
- c. _____ (PP)

- d. _____ (Neg)
 - e. _____ (V-ing)
 - f. _____ (going to)
- (12)
- a. *I's small. _____ (Past)
 - b. _____ (Inf)
 - c. _____ (Imp)
 - d. _____ (Emph)
 - e. _____ (Y/N Q)
 - f. _____ (Ellipsis)
 - g. _____ (Compar)
 - h. _____ (Wh)
 - i. _____ (Subj Q)

Are the environments where Standard English allows *be*-contraction the same as the environments where AAVE allows *be* to be dropped? If they are different, state how.

Finally, does your conclusion to the last question indicate that *be*-drop is just ignorance and laziness, or is it part of a rule-governed grammatical system? Explain.
