

Ling 101: Assignment 1
Assigned 2/6/2007
Due: 2/20/2007

Please write your section number and the name of your TA at the top of your assignment. Your assignment must be typed. This assignment will be out of 100 points, and it will be worth 5% of your grade for the semester.

Preliminary Information

List your native language (s)

List any additional languages that you have studied:

I Rules of Descriptive Grammar (25 pts)

In order to answer this question, you will have to be familiar with some notation used in linguistics. An asterisk (*) is used to mark sentences which are ungrammatical. Grammatical sentences are unmarked. Recall that "ungrammatical" is used in the descriptive sense of interest to linguists, not in the prescriptive sense. Pinker, whose use of the term we will follow, defines "grammatical" as "well formed according to consistent rules in the dialect of [a] speaker..." (p. 31). The dialect we have in mind here is the spoken language of the general college-educated American population.

(A) Look at the sentences in (1a) and (1b). Why is (1b) ungrammatical?

(1)

- a. Two paintings are on the wall.
- b. *Two paintings is on the wall

(B) Now consider the sentences in (2). Do the grammaticality judgments indicated correspond to your own? Assuming the correctness of these judgments, what rule or rules could a speaker use to generate the grammatical sentences (2a) and (2c) but not generate the ungrammatical sentence in (2b). Keep in mind that your rule(s) should also be able to account for the sentences in (1). How does your description of the sentences in (1) and (2) differ from prescriptions that govern standard usage?

(2)

- a. There are two paintings on the wall.
- b. *There is two paintings on the wall
- c. There's two paintings on the wall.

(C) The sentences in (3) show a similar pattern to the pattern seen in (1). However, the pattern in (4) is different from the one in (2). Write a description of the rules needed to generate the grammatical sentences in (3) and (4). Your rules should not generate the ungrammatical sentences.

(3)

- a. A Picasso and a Klee are hanging on the wall.
 - b. *A Picasso and a Klee is hanging on the wall
- (4)
- a. *There are a painting by Picasso and a painting by Klee hanging on the wall
 - b. There is a painting by Picasso and a painting by Klee hanging on the wall.
 - c. There's a painting by Picasso and a painting by Klee hanging on the wall.

II. Grammaticality Judgments (15 pts)

(A) Decide whether the phrases in (1) - (15) are grammatical in your spoken dialect. (If you are not a native speaker of English, consult a native speaker for judgments). Mark ungrammatical sentences with an asterisk (*) and say briefly what's wrong with them.

- (1) To the bank.
- (2) The rat the cat the dog bit chased ran.
- (3) The cat the dog bit ran.
- (4) What do you eat eggs and?
- (5) Who do you wonder whether they will come.
- (6) That rug isn't a fan of babies.
- (7) Its mayor praised her village.
- (8) The tree appears growing.
- (9) Susan told John that washing herself in public is a bad idea.
- (10) The candy ate the boy.
- (11) Immediately he opened the door he saw the murderer standing there.
- (12) The police officer arrested Sam and I.
- (13) Earlobe seven the by hexed fruitless.
- (14) Go take dog for a walk!
- (15) Mild thoughts emptied angry plans.

(B) Often it is possible to make sense of an ungrammatical sentence. Likewise a grammatical sentence can be incomprehensible. Mark the incomprehensible but grammatical sentences in (A) with a number sign (#).

III Essay question (20 points)

(adapted from Language Files page 13) Would language change if we put forth effort to advocate for prescriptive rules? Define a prescriptive rule and give evidence (3 or more examples) either from file 1.3, the Language Mavens, and/or personal experience, to support your arguments. Be sure to explain your examples. You may also find it useful to reference the information in this brief article: <http://www.pbs.org/speak/speech/correct/prescriptivism/> by Edward Finnegan, as well as the other essays found on that website.

IV Arbitrariness of Language (15 points)

Answer question 3 on page 19 (file 1.4) of your Language Files book.

V Animal Communication (25 points)

For each of the following animal communication systems, state if they demonstrate the following properties (cite examples to make your case) (a) arbitrariness, (b) a productive lexicon (c) syntax (grammar).

1. bee signals
2. bird songs
3. Irene Pepperberg's Parrot Alex
4. chimps in the wild
5. chimps raised in captivity with language exposure, such as Kanzi