

24.902, Problem Set #1
due Wednesday, Sept. 26, 2007

Problem One:

Here is an ambiguous sentence:

- (1) I will alarm the student with the snake in the kitchen.

This sentence has several possible trees. Draw two of them (using the Bare Phrase Structure format), explain what meanings the trees are associated with, and use the constituency tests we developed in class to show that your trees are correct. This last job will involve showing that, when you use a constituency test to force (1) to have one of your trees and not the other, the sentence in fact only has the meaning associated with that tree.

Problem Two:¹

Here's another ambiguous sentence:

- (2) John jumped on the stage.
• meaning 1: *John jumped onto the stage* [the "goal" reading].
• meaning 2: *John, while standing on the stage, jumped.* [the "location" reading]

On the other hand, consider (3):

- (3) a. John jumped on the stage, and Mary did so on the table.
b. John jumped on the stage, and Mary did so too.

(3a) seems to only have the "location" reading, though (3b) has both readings. Why is that, do you think?

Problem Three:

Consider the following data from Dutch. All of these examples are embedded clauses; they could, for example, be following something meaning *I believe*. (later in the class, we'll be learning about how the difference between main clauses and embedded clauses in Dutch...I think. If not, please remind me. Anyway, it's the embedded clauses that have the interesting phenomenon that I want you to concentrate on right now).

- (4) a. ...dat Jan het boek lest.
that Jan the book reads
'...that Jan is reading the book'

b. *...dat Jan lest het boek.

¹ Problems Two through Four shamelessly stolen (somewhat adapted) from David Pesetsky

- (5) a. ...dat Jan in de sloot springt.
 that Jan in the ditch jumps
 '...that Jan is jumping in the ditch'
 (either jumping up and down within the ditch, or jumping into the ditch from outside it)
- b. ...dat Jan springt in de sloot.
 that Jan jumps in the ditch
 '...that Jan is jumping in the ditch'
 (only jumping up and down within the ditch)
- (6) a. ...dat Jan op het podium springt op de trampoline
 that Jan on the stage jumps on the trampoline
 'On the trampoline, Jan jumps onto the stage'
 OR: 'On the stage, Jan jumps up and down on the trampoline'
 BUT NOT: 'On the stage, Jan jumps onto the trampoline'
- b. ...dat Jan op de trampoline springt op het podium.
 that Jan on the trampoline jumps on the stage
 'On the stage, Jan jumps onto the trampoline'
 OR: 'On the stage, Jan jumps up and down on the trampoline'
 BUT NOT: 'On the trampoline, Jan jumps onto the stage'

What are the relevant word order rules in Dutch? Just state them in prose, making use of notions we've developed in class.

Problem Four:

What do the Dutch and English examples below teach us about idioms (where by *idioms* I mean strings of words which don't end up meaning what they literally appear to mean; e.g., *kick the bucket* can mean *die* in English)?

- (7) a. ...dat Jan boter aan de galg smeert
 that Jan butter on the gallows spreads
 '...that Jan spreads butter on the gallows'
 OR: '...that Jan is making a useless effort'
- b. ...dat Jan boter smeert aan de galg
 that Jan butter spreads on the gallows
 '...that Jan spreads butter on the gallows'
 NOT: '...that Jan is making a useless effort'

- (8) a. ...dat Jan ouwe koeien uit de sloot haalt
that Jan old cows out the ditch hauls
'...that Jan hauls old cows out of the ditch'
OR: '...that Jan is stirring up the past'
- b. ...dat Jan ouwe koeien haalt uit de sloot
that Jan old cows hauls out the ditch
'...that Jan hauls old cows out of the ditch'
NOT: '...that Jan is stirring up the past'

English idioms (here I've suppressed judgments; please use your own, or phone a friend. For non-native speakers, the idiom *jump in the lake* means something like (an emphatic version of) *go away*):

- (9) a. John longed to be a high jumper in his school's track team, and spent long hours practicing his high jumping in the parking lot. He was a terrible high jumper, and kept landing on cars and damaging himself (and the cars). After a while, the coach told him it would be safer to do his jumping practice in water, where his landings would be softer. He suggested that John jump in the lake instead. When John's impressionable brother Bill also began jumping in the parking lot, the coach told Bill to do it in the lake as well.
- b. John asked Mary to do his Syntax homework for him. She told him to jump in the lake. Later, Bill asked Mary to do his Physics homework for him, and she told him to do it in the lake, as well.