

24.902 Problem Set #2

due October 10, 2007

Problem One: DON'T DO THIS ONE!

Consider the following ungrammatical sentences. In cases where a DP is italicized, assume that the italicized DP has been moved from the spot marked with "e" (short for "empty spot"). Explain why each sentence is ill-formed. Some of these examples may violate more than one constraint or principle; make sure you list everything that goes wrong.

- (1) — *We believe to be likely that *we* will win.
- (2) — *I told *Jerry* about e.
- (3) — *It seemed to the clone of *Porter* to be hired e.
- (4) — *It seems it to be likely that *we* will win.

Problem Two

In Choctaw (a Muskogean language spoken in Oklahoma and Mississippi), transitive verbs agree with both the subject and the object:

- (5) Chi- bashli -li -tok
2sgOBJ cut 1sgSUBJ PAST
'I cut you'
- (6) Is- sa- sso -tok
2sgSUBJ 1sgOBJ hit PAST
'You hit me'

(here the numbers stand for persons, "sg" means "singular", and "SUBJ" and "OBJ" stand for "subject" and "object"--so *chi-*, for instance, means "second person singular object").

Intransitive verbs split into two types, exemplified below:

- (7) a. Hilha -li -tok
 dance 1sgSUBJ PAST
 'I danced'
 b. Ish- ipah ð?
 2sgSUBJ eat Q
 'Have you eaten?'
 c. I:- bali:li-tok
 1plSUBJ run PAST
 'We ran'
- (8) a. Sa- hohchafoh
 1sgOBJ be-hungry
 'I am hungry'
 b. Chi- cha:hah
 2sgOBJ be-tall
 'You are tall'
 c. Pi- hohfaya -tok
 1plOBJ be-ashamed PAST
 'We were ashamed'

Question one: What do you think is going on here?

Choctaw exhibits a phenomenon known as "switch-reference marking". Under certain circumstances, the verb in the first of two clauses may bear a morpheme indicating, roughly, whether the subjects of the two clauses refer to the same person or not (SS stands for "same subject", DS for "different subject"):

- (9) a. Tobi apa -li -cha oka ishko -li -tok
 bean eat 1sgSUBJ SS water drink 1sgSUBJ PAST
 'I ate beans and I drank water'
 b. Tobi apa -li -na tâchi ish -pa -tok
 bean eat 1sgSUBJ DS corn 2sgSUBJ eat PAST
 'I ate beans and you ate corn'

In (9a), the "same subject" suffix *-cha* indicates that the subjects of the two clauses refer to the same person; in (9b), where the two clauses have different subjects, you get the "different subject" suffix *-na*. These suffixes are obligatory in these examples; using *-na* in (9a), or *-cha* in (9b), would yield an ill-formed sentence.

Consider the following examples of sentences involving switch reference markers. The sentence marked with % is one on which Choctaw speakers disagree; in some dialects of Choctaw (call them Choctaw A), this sentence is well-formed, while in other dialects (Choctaw B), it is ill-formed.

- (10) a. Nita pisa -li -**cha** bali:li -li -tok
 bear see 1sgSUBJ SS run 1sgSUBJ PAST
 'I saw the bear and ran'
- b. Sa- hohchafo-**cha** tobi hothoni -li -tok
 1sgOBJ hungry SS bean cook 1sgSUBJ PAST
 'I was hungry, so I cooked some beans'
- c. *Nita pisa -li -**na** bali:li -li -tok
 bear see 1sgSUBJ DS run 1sgSUBJ PAST
 'I saw the bear and ran'
- d. % Sa- hohchafo-**na** tobi hothoni -li -tok
 1sgOBJ hungry DS bean cook 1sgSUBJ PAST
 'I was hungry, so I cooked some beans'

Question two: Give a description of the rules for the use of same-subject and different-subject markers in Choctaw A and Choctaw B. Your rules should make reference to the syntactic behavior of the subjects of the clauses.

Problem Three

The following Hebrew sentence is ambiguous:

- (11) ha-yeladim zarku **li** 'et ha-kadur le-tox ha -gina 'al-yad ha-mitbax
 the boys threw to-me ACC the ball into the garden next-to the kitchen
 'The boys threw **my** ball into the garden next to the kitchen'
 'The boys threw the ball into **my** garden next to the kitchen'
 'The boys threw the ball into the garden next to **my** kitchen'

However, there are things the sentence cannot mean. For example, it cannot mean 'My boys threw the ball into the garden next to the kitchen.'

Now, consider the following data about **li**:

- (12) ha-'uga ne'exla **li**
 the cake was-eaten to-me
 '**My** cake was eaten'
- (13) ha-mitriya nafla **li**
 the umbrella fell to-me
 '**My** umbrella fell'
- (14) ha- xalon nišbar **li**
 the window broke to-me
 '**My** window broke'

(15) *ha-kelev šaxav **li**
the dog lay to-me
'**My** dog lay down'

(16) *ha-po'alim 'avdu **li**
the workers worked to-me
'**My** workers worked'

What kind of condition on **li** might capture these data?