

This is a partial answer sheet to HW2. I only provide answers to the questions that many students got wrong. these are questions IV and V. Questions I – III will be done in class. We will also talk about IV and V in class, of course, but I would like you to look over the answers first.

Markman
Syntax

Name _____

HW # 2 DUE: OCTOBER 15, 2007

READ CH. 8 AND 10!!

I. C-command [5 pts]

1. Please refer to p.125 of Carnie. List all the notes that are *asymmetrically* c-commanded by NP1 (the baker).[2pts]

WE WILL DO THIS IN CLASS

2. List ALL of the *symmetric* c-command relations that you see in this tree (refer to the tree on p.125) [2pts]

WE WILL DO THIS IN CLASS AS WELL.

3. What nodes (if any) does the node 'N1'(baker) *asymmetrically* c-command? [1pt]
NONE!

II. X-bar theory [2pts]

Please provide a tree structure for the sentence in (1) below. You must use the X-bar notation and show all the needed bar-levels. You should / may refer to your notes and /or the book. Please use the back of the page or a separate paper for the tree:

(1) *John often reads the big book of poems with a red cover*

TO BE DONE IN CLASS.

IV. Theta roles and Case [8pts]

In class we discussed that the following sentence in (1) is ungrammatical with the intended meaning “The donut was eaten”

(1) **The donut(i) ate t(i)*

(a) what is/are the reason(s) for the ungrammaticality of this sentence?[1pts]

The sentence is ungrammatical because the active verb ‘eat’ assigns two theta-roles but there is only one NP.

(b) Why is (2) possible, unlike (1)? [1pts]

(2) *The donut(i) was eaten t(i)*

Unlike (1), (2) involves a passive construction. The passive morpheme ‘en’ absorbs the agent theta-role. Hence there is only one theta-role and only one NP. The construction is grammatical.

(c) Does your hypothesis explain why (3a,b) are both impossible? How so? [2pts]

Yes. In (3a) there are two NPs, but only one theta-role AND only one case.

Passivization removes the agent theta-role and the verb’s accusative case is gone as a result. (Burzio’s Generalization). Now, ‘the donut’ gets nominative case from spec TP and an internal (theme) theta-role from the verb. However, John has no theta-role and no case.

The situation is similar in (3b). Here John gets nominative case from spec TP, but still has no theta-role. In addition, there is no case for ‘the donut’ since the verb does not assign accusative case.

(3)a. **The donut was eaten John*

b. **John was eaten the donut*

(d) Why is the sentence in (4) impossible? Why can’t accusative case be assigned by the passivized verb? [2pts]

(4) **Him was killed*

Burzio’s generalization: no external theta-role → no accusative case. The passive morpheme absorbs the external (agent) theta-role and accusative case goes with it. Hence, you cannot say ‘Him’ was killed.

(e) Does your answer for the question in (d) also account for why (5) is ungrammatical? Explain, please. [2pts]

(5) **Him existed*

Yes. Since ‘exist’ is an unaccusative verb it cannot assign accusative case to its sole argument. In addition, in both (4) and (5) the T’s nominative case remains

unassigned, which is another reason for the ungrammaticality of these examples (at least in English).

V. Intransitives [5pts]

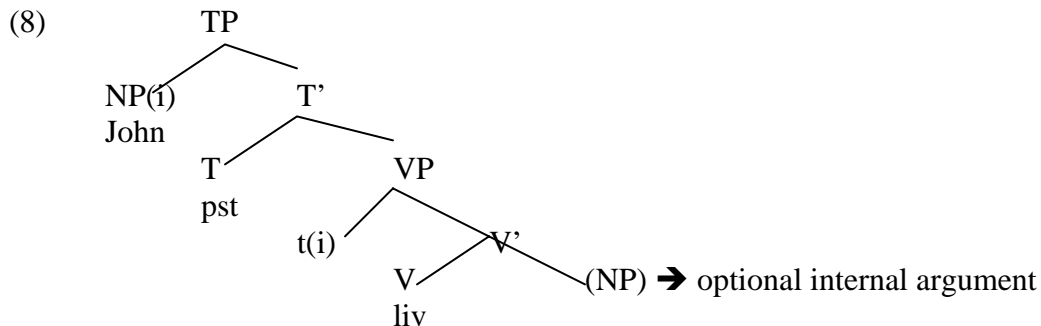
a) Why is it possible to say (6) but not (7)? Explain on a separate sheet or on a back. [2pts]

(6) John lived a good life vs. (7) *John existed a happy existence

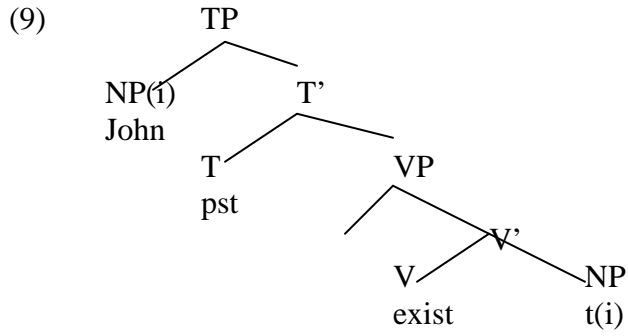
“Live” is an unergative verb while “Exist” is unaccusative. An unergative verb can take an optional NP internal argument and assign the theme theta-role to it. However, an unaccusative verb cannot take another NP as an internal argument because “John” – the sole argument of ‘exist’ – IS the internal argument. There is no “room” to put “happy existence”

b) Draw two VP structures for (8) and (9) respectively. Indicate ALL the theta-assignments via arrows and state what theta roles are assigned. Then indicate for each theta-role whether it is external or internal. Do your structures for (8) and (9) explain why (6) is grammatical while (7) is ungrammatical? State your answer in one or two sentences. [3pts]

(8) John lived vs. (9) John existed



→ ‘live’ assigns external (agent) theta-role to John;
 → John moves to spec TP for NOM. case



→ ‘exist’ assigns internal (theme) to John; John moves to spec TP for NOM case because the unaccusative ‘exist’ cannot assign accusative case to John.

Yes. my structures in (8) and (9) explain why (6) is grammatical while (7) is not because in the unergative construction it is possible to add an internal argument, while in the unaccusative (9) there is not.