

Minimalist Grammar exercises

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CoLi UdS

1 Japanese case

Japanese has both case markers and a topic marker *wa*.

- (1)
- a. kodomo ga terebi o mita
child NOM TV ACC watched
'the child watched TV'
 - b. *kodomo ga terebi ga mita
child NOM TV NOM watched
 - c. *kodomo o terebi o mita
child ACC TV ACC watched
 - d. kodomo wa terebi o mita
child TOPIC TV ACC watched
'The child, she watched TV'
 - e. kendou wa kodomo ga suru
kendo TOPIC child NOM watched
'TV, the child watched it'

Create a lexicon that can generate these sentences. Assume the case and topic markers are *Ds*, and pretend for now they are on the other side of the noun (*ga kodomo* rather than *kodomo ga*)

Japanese also allows the object and subject to change order, even with no topic marker.

- (2)
- terebi o kodomo ga mita
TV ACC child NOM watched
'The child watched TV.'

Can your lexicon handle this? If not, what do you need to change? How does the solution strike you? What should we do about the N-D order?

2 Arizona Tewa passives

(Data from Kroskrity 1985)

Consider the following data from Arizona Tewa:

- (3)
- a. he'i sen ne'i 'enu mank^{hw}edi
that man this boy 3.3.hit

- ‘That man hit this boy’
- b. né’i ’enú hẹ’i sen-di mánk^{hw}édi
 this boy that man-dat 3.passive.hit
 ‘This boy was hit by that man’
- c. na:bí kwiyó hẹ’i p’o mánsunt’ó
 my woman that water 3.3.drink
 ‘My wife will drink that water’
- d. hẹ’i p’o nasunt’íi
 that water 3.passive.drunk
 ‘That water was drunk’

Recall that passives are characterised by promoting the object (treating it more like a subject) and demoting or deleting the subject (if it’s there, it has a different case marker or is introduced by a preposition like in English *by*-phrases).

Arizona Tewa has subject and object agreement on the verb (that’s what the “3”s mean – 3rd person). You can treat 3rd person as a feature. Don’t worry about the difference in order and word-status between the dative case marker and the demonstratives and possessives. Just make them all Ds and pretend *sen-di* is *di sen*.

Make a lexicon that can generate these data. Show the derivations.

3 Dutch topicalisation

Dutch is a V2 language. This can be analysed as Dutch having obligatory *topicalisation*: some element is considered a topic, and that element moves to the front of the sentence. We also need the verb to move up to the first phrase.

For example, subjects are often thought to be topics, and some analyse things with contrastive focus as being topics.

- (4) a. Het kind heeft een boek gelezen
 the child has a book read
 ‘The child read a book’
 #‘*the child* a book has read’ (... but it didn’t read an adult)
- b. Een boek heeft het kind gelezen
 a book has the child read
 ‘*A book* the child has read’ (... but not a magazine)
 #‘a book read the child’
- c. Heeft het kind een boek gelezen?
 has the child a book read?
 ‘Has the child read a book?’

Create a lexicon that can generate these data. Treat topic as a licensing feature, and see if you can find a way to move the verb all by itself even though we don’t have head movement in our system.

Hint: you can add a feature *-f* to a phrase of category *X* with a silent head $\epsilon ::= X \ X \ -f$. Another choice is to cross-list it: $s::X$ and $s::X \ -f$ are both in the lexicon. (What are the advantages and disadvantages of each? Can you think of a better way?)

How is each of these strings generated?

Why do (a) and (b) have spurious readings (the readings marked with a #)?