

Problem set 9: 24.900

Due Wednesday, 11/14/01

1. For each sentence below, answer the following questions:
- What principle (or principles) of Binding Theory is responsible for each of the judgments?
 - How does that principle account for the judgment?
 - Draw a tree for each sentence. (OK, it's not a question, but do it anyway.)

- (1)
- *Mary likes himself.
 - *She_i sold Mary_i's car for lots of money.
 - *Bill_i will see him_i in the mirror.
 - *Herself_i saw Sue_i in the mirror.
 - *Bill_i thinks that Sue saw himself_i yesterday.

2. Explain the acceptability judgments given for the following sentences:

- (2)
- Mary has not claimed that Bill has ever visited Cambridge.
 - #Mary has claimed that Bill has ever visited Cambridge.
 - #Mary has ever claimed that Bill has not visited Cambridge.
- (3)
- No children lifted a finger to help Tom.
 - #The man with no children lifted a finger to help Tom.
[ok with its literal meaning, of course!]
 - #Tom lifted a finger to help no children.

3. This question asks you to discover a puzzle. It does not ask you to solve it, but a small amount of extra credit will be given for any explicit proposals that work!

English has a construction called "VP ellipsis" in which the VP of a sentence is not pronounced when there is an antecedent VP somewhere in the discourse. Here are some examples. The underscore marks the place of the missing VP. The dotted underscore indicates the antecedent:

- (4)
- Person 1:* Mary will read a book about linguistics.
Person 2: John will _____, too!
 - Tom has eaten lunch, but nobody else has _____.

We can assume that the missing VP undergoes an optional rule of the syntax that tells the phonology not to pronounce the VP. We represent the effect of this rule as in (5):¹

- (5)
- Mary will read a book about linguistics. John will ~~read a book about linguistics~~ too.
 - Tom has eaten lunch, but nobody else has ~~eaten lunch~~.

Notice that there must be an actually pronounced antecedent for the unpronounced VP. If I see you riding a unicycle, and I know that Bill also has that skill, it is still unacceptable for me to say, for example, "That's great! By the way, do you know that Bill can ___ too", since the unpronounced VP has no actual linguistic antecedent. If I wanted to use VP ellipsis, I'd have to say the antecedent, e.g. "It's great that you can ride a unicycle. By the way, do you know that Bill can ___ too"?

Now I will present two puzzles. Your only job is to tell me what the puzzles are (with specific mention of how the puzzles relate to the text you just read, and to the topics that we've been discussing in class):

- (6) **Puzzle 1**
Little Billy can finally feed himself! And little Suzie can ___ too!
- (7) **Puzzle 2** (the two examples show the same thing)
- Person 1:* No student can claim that he has ever heard of phonemes before.
Person 2: I can _____!
 - No member of our group will buy anything at the gift shop. Well...perhaps John will _____.

¹ You may notice, by the way, that if the sentence does not contain an actual word in the position of I, a form of the verb *do* is found when ellipsis takes place: *Tom ate lunch, but nobody else did*. We'll ignore such sentences here.