LNGT 0250
Morphology and Syntax

Lecture #11
March 16th, 2015

Announcements
• Lecture by Prof. Shawna Shapiro today at 4:30 in RAJ conference room.
  Title: “My Struggle made me Strong”: Discursive Resistance in the Personal Narrative of a Refugee-background Student.
• I will give a maximum of 0.5% of extra credit, to be added to your total percentage, to those who both attend and then write a 300-word response essay. The deadline to submit the essay is March 30.

Syntax
• What is syntax?
• Syntax is the study of sentence structure in human language.
• Sentence structures are subject to rules.
• There are rules that syntacticians are interested in, and there are others that are not really relevant to linguistic theory.
• GPS3 from the textbook, pp. 34-35.

Prescriptive rules
• Can you think of cases where prescriptive rules can lead to problems in language usage?

Prescriptive rules
• Example pair 1:
  a. A good author needs to develop a clear sense of who she is writing for.
  b. A good author needs to develop a clear sense of for whom she is writing.
• Example pair 2:
  a. He ordered me to move the car quickly.
  b. He ordered me to quickly move the car.
Dialectal variation

• I aren’t going with you.
• I didn’t do nothing wrong.
• French:
  Je ne mange jamais viande
  I NEG eat never meat
  ‘I never eat meat.’

Grammaticality is not determined by meaning

Colorless green ideas sleep furiously.
  *Furiously sleep ideas green colorless.

The laptop got into a fight with the spoon.
  *Got the into laptop with fight a spoon the.

Competence vs. performance

• Our subconscious syntactic knowledge can be sometimes compromised by external factors, thereby affecting our performance. But our competence remains intact.

• Speech errors.
• Another example is the so-called garden-path effect.

Garden path sentences

1. The prime number few.
2. Fat people eat accumulates.
3. The cotton clothing is usually made of grows in Mississippi.
4. Until the police arrest the drug dealers control the street.
5. The man who hunts ducks out on weekends.
6. When Fred eats food gets thrown.
7. Mary gave the child the dog bit a bandaid.
8. The girl told the story cried.
9. I convinced her children are noisy.
10. Helen is expecting tomorrow to be a bad day.
11. The horse raced past the barn fell.
12. I know the words to that song about the queen don’t rhyme.
13. She told me a little white lie will come back to haunt me.
14. The dog that I had really loved bones.
15. That fall is never here hurts.
16. The man who whistles tunes pianos.
17. The old man the boat.
18. Have the students who failed the exam take the supplementary.
19. The raft floated down the river sank.
20. We painted the wall with cracks.
21. The tycoon sold the offshore oil tracts for a lot of money wanted to kill JR.
Competence vs. performance

• In syntax, we therefore focus on competence, not on performance. Doing so helps us tap into speakers' subconscious knowledge, i.e., their *i-language*.

Next class agenda

• Read Carnie’s Chapter 3.