

[Exercises from Adger (2002)]

1 Reflexives and ϕ -features

This exercise is intended to begin to develop your skills in syntactic argumentation. Follow the instructions exactly. Do not try to do more than is asked for each section.

1.1 Part A

There is a class of words in English called **reflexive pronouns**. These words are formed from a pronominal plus the word *self* in its singular or plural form. Examples are:

myself	ourselves
yourself	yourselves
himself	themselves
herself	
itself	

In a simple sentence, these words are restricted in their distribution:

- (1) * I kicked yourself
- (2) * He kicked yourself
- (3) You kicked yourself

Notice that examples like (3) have a special semantic property. The person doing the action described by the verb, and the person affected by this action, are one and the same. In (3), *you* are the kicker and the kickee. The words *you* and *yourself* are said to be **coreferential**, since they both refer to the same person. Other examples of expressions that can be co-referential are *Anson* and *he* in the following sentences:

- (4) Anson thought that he had bought the paint stripper.
- (5) I asked Anson if he was happy.

In (4) and (5), the pronoun *he* appears to take on its meaning via the expression *Anson*. In these particular sentences, another reading is also possible. *He* can refer to someone else entirely, just as *she* does in (6).

- (6) The boy thought she was happy.

In (6), *she* is not coreferential with *the boy*, since coreferentiality appears to require matching ϕ -features.

Let us state this idea as an explicit hypothesis, the **Coreferentiality Hypothesis**:

(7) For two expressions to be coreferential, they must bear the same ϕ -features.

We can see the Coreferentiality Hypothesis as a kind of general interface rule which relates syntactic features to semantic interpretation.

In the examples with reflexives we have a case of **obligatory coreference**. In (3), *you* and *yourself* are required to be interpreted as coreferential. The same can be said for the following cases:

(8) He kicked himself.

(9) We kicked ourselves.

(10) They kicked themselves.

Using this notion of coreferentiality, we can state a hypothesis that will differentiate between the good and the bad examples above. We will call this hypothesis the **Reflexive Generalization**, for ease of reference. Parts B–F of this exercise will be devoted to revising this hypothesis, so what we have here is just a first attempt:

(11) **The Reflexive Generalization** (First attempt):

A reflexive pronoun must be coreferential with another expression in the sentence.

The Reflexive Generalization has the consequence that a reflexive pronoun will have to be coreferential with another expression, and hence, have the same ϕ -features as that expression.

Task 1. Provide some further examples that support this result for person features.

1.2 Part B

Now look at the following data:

(12) You kicked yourselves.

(13) * We kicked myself.

(14) * They kicked himself.

Task 2. Explain how our generalizations account for these examples.

Task 3. Provide some further examples that support this result for number features.

1.3 Part C

Now look at the following data:

- (15) * He kicked herself.
- (16) * She kicked itself.

Task 4. Explain how these examples are captured by the hypothesis, and provide more examples which show that gender features are relevant.

1.4 Part D

The following examples show that this hypothesis is not enough to explain the distribution of reflexive pronouns:

- (17) * Myself saw me.
- (18) * Himself saw him.

Task 5. Explain why the Reflexive Generalization is not enough to rule out these examples.

Task 6. How might you alter the hypothesis so that it covers these examples? (Hint: there are two possibilities here: one involves the order/structural position of the words, the other involves the case of the pronoun inside the reflexive. You need not remember exactly what we did in LX321, just say something sensible.)

1.5 Part E

Look at the following examples:

- (19) * I thought he liked myself.
- (20) * You said she liked yourself.

Task 7. Whichever hypothesis you came up with for Task 6, explain whether these data are problematic for it or not.

1.6 Part F—Summary

These data show that the distribution of reflexives is not just conditioned by their ϕ -features, but that word order, case, and other aspects of syntactic structure may enter into their analysis too. This is a general fact about syntactic problems. They rarely confine their solutions to just one part of the grammar.

2 Imperatives

This exercise draws upon the (admittedly incomplete) hypothesis developed in the last exercise. It involves structures like the following, known as **imperatives**:

- (21) Close the door!
- (22) Eat dirt!
- (23) Know yourself!

(And, yes, this was also briefly discussed in LX321 as well, but you can think it over again.) The interesting thing about these examples is that they appear to have something missing. Compare these sentences to the following ones:

- (24) Frieda closed the door.
- (25) Kane ate dirt.

Traditionally, these sentences are said to have missing subjects (this is a notion we'll come back to).

There are, on the face of it, two obvious ways to think about these examples:

- **Hypothesis A:** imperatives are just like other sentences, and have a subject but this subject is just not pronounced.
- **Hypothesis B:** imperatives are not full sentences. They really don't have a subject at all.

2.1 Part A

Look at the following sentences:

- (26) Keep yourself clean!
- (27) Look after yourself!

Task 1. Assume that the Reflexive Generalization from the preceding exercise is correct (although we know it's not the whole story). How do the data in (26) and (27) suggest the correctness of Hypothesis A?

Task 2. Provide some more examples, along the lines of (26) and (27), which support your answer. This is extremely easy, but will get you into the habit of finding relevant examples, a useful skill in syntactic argumentation.

2.2 Part B

Look at the following sentences:

(28) * Keep myself clean!

(29) * Look after herself!

Task 3. Do the data back up the conclusion you reached in Task 1, or do they contradict it? Explain your answer.

Task 4. Provide further examples that make the same point.

Task 5. These data not only suggest that there is an unpronounced subject in these imperatives, but also suggest what that unpronounced subject is. Say what you think it is, and why.

2.3 Part C

Of course it is possible to maintain Hypothesis B and deal with the data we have seen here. What we need to do is adopt an extra hypothesis:

- **Extra hypothesis:** only second-person reflexives are allowed in an imperative.

What we now have is a choice between two grammars: Grammar A adopts Hypothesis A, while Grammar B adopts Hypothesis B plus the Extra hypothesis. Notice that both grammars get the data right. Grammar A says there is a pronominal subject in imperatives with the right ϕ -features to allow only a second-person reflexive in the imperative. Grammar B says that there is no subject at all in imperatives, and that, independently, only second-person reflexives are allowed in imperatives.

Task 6. Choose between grammars A and B, and say what motivated your choice.

2.4 Part D

English has a construction known as the **tag-question**. Some examples are given below:

- (30) Frieda closed the door, didn't she?
- (31) I can come, can't I?
- (32) You won't be there, will you?

These structures are called tag-questions, because they involve a simple sentence, with an extra 'tag' on the end. The generalization we can make about these structures is roughly as follows:

Tag Question Generalization: The tag in a tag question is constructed from the auxiliary of the main sentence, which is negated if the main sentence is positive, and which is positive if the main sentence is negative, followed by a pronoun which has the same ϕ -features as the subject.

- (33) Close the door, won't you!?
- (34) * Close the door, won't he!?

Task 7. Given this generalization, construct an argument from the data above for either hypothesis A or hypothesis B.

3 Pronouns and coreference

3.1 Part A

This exercise flows from the last two, but looks at how pronouns and reflexives are distributed. Consider the following data:

- (35) * I kicked me.
- (36) I kicked myself.
- (37) * You kicked you.
- (38) You kicked yourself.
- (39) * We kicked us.
- (40) We kicked ourselves.

We can formulate a hypothesis to cover these data, using the same kinds of concepts. We will term this the **Pronoun Generalization**:

(41) A pronoun cannot be coreferential with another pronoun.

Task 1. Explain how this hypothesis extends to the following data:

(42) He kicked him.

(43) They kicked them.

(44) She kicked her.

(Hint: think carefully about the coreference possibilities in these sentences.)

3.2 Part B

Recall the two grammars that you chose between in the last exercise. Grammar A stated that imperatives had an unpronounced subject, while Grammar B stated that imperatives have no subject at all, but that only second-person reflexives could appear in imperatives.

Now consider the following data:

(45) Kick me!

(46) Kick them!

(47) * Kick you!

Task 2. Assume Grammar A is the correct grammar, and that the Pronoun Generalization holds. Explain how the new data given above fall out in this new grammar.

Task 3. Assume Grammar B is the correct grammar, and that the Pronoun Generalization holds. Explain how the new data don't immediately follow, and revise Grammar B by adding a new hypothesis to fix it.

Task 4. Now explain which of the two grammars is preferable, and why.