

Introduction to Linguistics — Assignment #2

1 The sentences in (1a) (featuring the preposition *with*) and (1b) (with the conjunction *and*) are semantically quite close; yet they behave syntactically quite differently under question formation: though (2a) and (2b), so-called ‘echo questions’ with *who* in the same position as *Bill* or *Mary*, are both good, there is a sharp contrast between (3a) and (3b).

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| (1a) John saw Bill with Mary at ELTE | (1b) John saw Bill and Mary at ELTE |
| (2a) John saw <i>who</i> with Mary at ELTE?
John saw Bill with <i>who</i> at ELTE? | (2b) John saw <i>who</i> and Mary at ELTE?
John saw Bill and <i>who</i> at ELTE? |
| (3a) <i>who</i> did John see with Mary at ELTE?
<i>who</i> did John see Bill with at ELTE? | (3b) * <i>who</i> did John see and Mary at ELTE?
* <i>who</i> did John see Bill and at ELTE? |

- a. Give a descriptive generalisation covering the facts in (2) and (3).
- b. The problem with the sentences in (3b) ostensibly is not the fact that the coordination structure is ‘dissolved’: even when *and* clearly links two conjuncts after *wh*-fronting has taken place, the result usually remains bad, as we see in (4a,b). But there is one interesting exception: (4c) is fine. What is going on here?

- (4a) **who* did John read an article about and see a picture of Mary?
(4b) **who* did John read an article about Bill and see a picture of?
(4c) *who* did John read an article about and see a picture of?

- c. Even the generalisation that *wh*-fronting of a *subpart* of one of the conjuncts linked by *and* is impossible does not seem to be fully descriptively adequate: in the sentences in (5a–c), a portion of one of the conjuncts is *wh*-fronted while the other conjunct remains *intact*. Can you think of a property that the coordinations in (5) have that sets them apart from the ungrammatical sentences in (4a,b)?

- (5a) this is a book *which* millions of people can walk into a bookstore and buy
(5b) *how many dogs* can a person have and still stay sane?
(5c) that is the drug *which* athletes take and become quite strong

2 The sentence in (6) is ambiguous between a reading in which the binoculars are in the subject’s possession (see the paraphrase in (6a)) and one in which they are in the man’s possession (as in the paraphrase in (6b)). This ambiguity disappears when we passivise the sentence: for the reading in (6a), the sentence in (7a) is the only suitable passive form; for the reading in (6b), only (7b) works in the passive.

- (6) they watched the man with binoculars
(6a) ‘they used binoculars as an instrument in watching the man’
(6b) ‘they watched the man who was carrying binoculars’
(7a) the man was watched with binoculars
(7b) the man with binoculars was watched

- a. Provide a structure-based explanation for the fact that (7a) can only correspond to the reading in (6a) and (7b) can only have the reading in (6b). Key here is the question of where in the structure the phrase *with binoculars* is attached.
- b. While the ‘echo question’ in (8a), in which *binoculars* is replaced with a *wh*-word that remains inside the prepositional phrase, is just as ambiguous as (6), in (8b) we only get the reading in (6a). It is relevant in this connection to note that *wh*-fronting fails in (9), which is based directly on the paraphrase in (6b). Present a descriptive generalisation that can capture the empirical facts presented here.
- (8a) they watched the man with what?
(8b) what did they watch the man with?
(9) *what did they watch the man who was carrying?