Homework 9
LIN 311: Syntax, Fall 2018

Problem 1. More Infinitives.

(Based on Carnie, Ch. 15, GPS5)

Draw the trees of the following sentences. Indicate movements with arrows, and index PROs indicating control, where applicable. Show where θ-roles and Case are assigned. You may abbreviate NPs/DPs into triangles.

Notice that in these sentences we combine several different types of infinitives!

(1)   Susan agreed to try to seem to have been kissed.

(2)   Fred appeared to have wanted to try to dance.

Problem 2. DP Trees

Draw the trees of the following DPs. Show θ-role assignments and movements.

(1)   Mary's every wish

(2)   That book's cover

(3)   Each picture of Hermione's fish

(4)   Sally's explanation of the disaster.

Problem 3. Fuck-All.

In a short paper by the Irish syntactician James McCloskey of UC Santa Cruz, certain interesting observations are made about a set of expressions that are common in cruder varieties of English spoken in the British Isles. The most common form of the idiom is *fuck-all*, which means something like 'absolutely nothing.' Thus, (1-a) can be paraphrased as *They wrote absolutely nothing this year*.

In Britain (according to McCloskey) *bugger-all* and *sod-all* are synonyms of *fuck-all*, and have the same distribution. If you can't bring yourself to write *fuck-all* in your answer, you may pick one of these other forms, or use some appropriate abbreviation.

What makes this construction is interesting is a syntactic restriction on its use. The following examples, taken from McCloskey's paper (with a few minor adaptations) illustrate this restriction.

Your task: to discover what the restriction is. Your answer can be quite short, so long as it is explicit. Also, please draw a tree for the sentence in (3-a), and indicate all movements and θ-roles and case-assignments. You may abbreviate NPs/DPs and PPs into triangles.

Hints: Think about the verb classes we discussed in class. This problem is much easier than it might seem at first! Feel free to add extra data to your discussion, if you have intuitions about the construction or feel like asking a British or Irish friend.

(1)   a.   They wrote *fuck-all* this year.
        b.   They've done *fuck-all* about this.
        c.   I know *fuck-all* about connectionism.

(2)   a.   *Fuck-all* has been done about this problem.
        b.   Absolutely *fuck-all* was achieved by this action.
        c.   *Fuck-all* has been said about unemployment in the campaign so far.
        d.   *Fuck-all* has been written about this so far.

(3) a. *Fuck-all* ever happens around here.
     b. *Fuck-all* else grows in my garden but dandelions.
     c. *Fuck-all* emerged from those discussions that would make a body optimistic.
     d. *Fuck-all* ever changes around here.
     e. *Fuck-all* lasts around here.
     f. *Fuck-all* else came my way, so I took the job as a lavatory cleaner.
     g. *Fuck-all* ever starts on time around here.

(4) a. **Fuck-all* would make us turn back now.
     b. **Fuck-all* supports this roof but a couple of planks.
     c. **Fuck-all* could destroy these walls.
     d. **Fuck-all* would control this mob.
     e. **Fuck-all* could refute that argument.
     f. **Fuck-all* could ever make me trust this government.

(5) a. **Fuck-all* is good anymore.
     b. **Fuck-all* is relevant to this question.
     c. **Fuck-all* is dangerous here.

Problem 4.* Gerunds

In English, there is a form of the verb called the **gerund**. This form is specified by suffixing *-ing* to the verb. In this exercise, we will suppose that *-ing* form in English is ambiguous between **a noun** and **a verb**.

Part 1.

Draw a tree, fully specified for case features, for each of the phrases in bold in the following sentences. Note that the phrases in bold have to be DPs, since they are in subject position.

(1) a. **The reading of Shakespeare** satisfied me.
     b. **Reading Shakespeare** satisfied me.

Part 2.

There are some data sets. Say for each data set whether it supports the tree you drew above, or whether it is problematic. Say why in each case.

(2) a. The constant reading of Shakespeare (satisfied me).
     b. Constantly reading Shakespeare (satisfied me).
     c. *The constantly reading Shakespeare (satisfied me).
     d. *Constant reading Shakespeare (satisfied me).

(3) a. The readings of Shakespeare (satisfied me).
     b. *Readings Shakespeare (satisfied me).

(4) a. No reading of Shakespeare (satisfied me).
     b. *No reading Shakespeare (satisfied me).
     c. *Not reading of Shakespeare (satisfied me)
     d. Not reading Shakespeare (satisfied me).

(5) a. Every reading of Shakespeare (satisfied me).
     b. *Every reading Shakespeare (satisfied me).
     c. Every reading of Shakespeare (satisfied me).
     d. *Every reading Shakespeare (satisfied me).

(6)   a.   *Having read of Shakespeare (satisfied me).
        b.   Having read Shakespeare (satisfied me).

Note that (6-a) here is grammatical on a different interpretation. It can mean having read about Shakespeare but it can't mean having actually read Shakespeare's works. The star in the example is indicating that this sentence is ungrammatical under the reading where Shakespeare is the THEME argument of *read*.

Part 3.

Gerunds can also have subjects. Examples of these appear in the following data set:

(7)   a.   Bill's reading of Shakespeare (satisfied me).
        b.   Bill's reading Shakespeare (satisfied me).

Say how you think these subjects are added on to the structures you drew in Part 1. Point out anything unexpected that is going on in the trees.

Part 4.

Now look at the following data set. Here you can see that the verbal version of *-ing* can have a different kind of subject which is *accusative*. It is possible to capture this difference by positing a null determiner. Say what you think the selectional and case properties of this null determiner are.

(8)   a.   *Bill reading of Shakespeare (satisfied me).
        b.   Bill reading Shakespeare (satisfied me).

Part 5.

The null D approach to these data captures everything we have seen so far. The following data set, however, shows that it is not the last word. Given the data in (9-a) and (9-b), explain why the last two examples are problematic.

(9)   a.   *Bill's reading Shakespeare and Maureen's singing Schubert satisfies me.
        b.   Bill's reading Shakespeare and Maureen's singing Schubert satisfy me.
        c.   Bill reading Shakespeare and Maureen singing Schubert satisfies me.
        d.   *Bill reading Shakespeare and Maureen singing Schubert satisfy me.