More on constituents

Jean Mark Gawron

Introduction to Syntax

San Diego State University

gawron@mail.sdsu.edu

http://www.rohan.sdsu.edu/∼gawron

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1 Heads

List the NPs, their number, and the heads of the NPs in the following sentences. Assume that there are NP modifiers of N so that there can be NPs inside NPs. For the NPs that are not inside other NPs, show that you are right with a verb agreement argument, using both positive and negative data. Here is an example to get you started:

(1) A vacuum cleaner salesman should never buy a used car.

Answer:

NP	Number	head
A vacuum cleaner salesman	Singular	salesman
vacuum cleaner	Singular	cleaner
vacuum	Singular	vacuum
a used car	Singular	car

Some positive number agreement arguments:

(2) a. A vacuum cleaner salesman <u>is</u> always happy.

    b. Vacuum cleaner salesmen <u>are</u> always happy. (when you pluralize an NP you may have to change or eliminate the determiner)

    c. A used car makes you unhappy.

Some negative number agreement arguments:

(3) a. * A vacuum cleaner salesman <u>are</u> always happy.

    b. * Vacuum cleaner salesmen <u>is</u> always happy.

    c. * Used cars <u>makes</u> you unhappy.

(1.1) My geometry teacher found the notebook with the scribbles in the margin.

(1.2) The newspaper article on disarmament reported two treaties with Central Asian countries.

(1.3) Black rubber boots with silver buckles may impress the unsophisticated.

(1.4) That year the mayonnaise dispenser factory produced few mayonnaise dispensers.

(1.5) Flights 309 and 278 landed.

2 PPs

Underline the PPs in the following sentences. If one PP is inside the other, underline twice. For example:

(4) John went <u>into that house <u>with a red door.</u></u>

If two PPs are next to each other and neither is inside the other, underline each of them once.

(5) John went <u>into that house</u> <u>with his sister.</u>

(2.1) that notebook with the scribbles in the margin

(2.2) that notebook with the scribbles in my drawer

(2.3) the pen at the back of the drawer in the desk

3 Sentences

Underline the embedded sentences (clause) in the following sentences. If one sentence is inside the other, underline twice. If two sentences are next to each other and neither is inside the other, underline each of them once.

(3.1) The proof that John ate his dinner is that empty plate.

(3.2) The fact that John fooled his teacher proves that he can fool you.
(3.3) Sue brought that notebook with the scribbles in the margin.
(3.4) For John to object now would upset his boss.
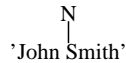
4 Trees

Draw trees for the following sentences.

Make sure your trees are readable whether you draw them by hand or with a computer. Readability considerations many of you have ignored in your homeworks include (a) size of the tree and the size of the print in the tree; (b) how dark the pencil you use is; and (c) reasonably spaced layout of the tree. If you draw your tree by hand, draw it on a separate piece of paper as many times as it takes to resolve your layout issues. Then copy it to your final version neatly. Do not use triangles except for constitituents that are one word long. Thus, for example, you may do:

NP
△
John

You will be marked off for using triangles in other cases.

If a construction poses a problem, do your best, and comment on the problem. If you posit a word with white space in it, put quotation marks around the proposed lexical item. For example, a tree claiming that *John Smith* is a noun would look like this:

N
|
'John Smith'

Note: you will still get points deducted if you say something is a word and are wrong.

You do not have to give any syntactic arguments in this section but, before drawing your trees, you should make sure that the things your trees claim are constituents are in fact constituents.

(4.1) John went into that house with a red door.
(4.2) John went into that house with his sister.
(4.3) The proof that John ate his dinner is that empty plate.
(4.4) The fact that John fooled his teacher proves that he can fool you.
(4.5) Sue brought that notebook with the scribbles in the margin.
(4.6) For John to object now would upset his boss.