

## Formal Foundations of Linguistics (Linguistics 680)

### You Didn't Learn This in School

Most of the rules of language are never explicitly taught and are never discussed in the usage handbooks. Why? Because:

- a. There's no need, because everyone already knows them (unconsciously).
- b. The teachers and handbook writers (like everyone else except, in some cases, linguists) are not conscious of them.

#### Examples

1. *Sneet*, *sneeb*, and *sneech* are possible English words; but *tseeb* is not. (phonotactic rules)
2. If *sneet*, *sneeb*, and *sneech* became English words, we could guess without being told what their plurals were. (morphophonemic rule)
3. (prosodic rules)
  - a. What're you DOing? [The most prominent accent in this sentence normally falls on *do-*, even if this word is not being emphasized.]
  - b. What're YOU? [to one of group of trick-or-treaters]
  - c. What ARE you? [to trick-or-treater with unique costume]
  - d. WHAT're you doing? [We already established that you're doing something, but what is it?]
  - e. \*WHAT're you? [Intended: we already established that you are something, but what is it?]
4. (interaction of control and passive)
  - a. Kim persuaded Sandy to take out the trash. ([If the persuasion is completely successful, Sandy takes out the trash.]
  - b. Kim promised Sandy to take out the trash. [If the promise is kept, Kim takes out the trash.]
  - c. Kim was persuaded to take out the trash.
  - d. \*Kim was promised to take out the trash.

5. (shows that preceding is a more general phenomenon)
  - a. The secretary-general appealed to the delegates to be reasonable.
  - b. The secretary-general appeared to the delegates to be reasonable.
  - c. The delegates were appealed to to be reasonable.
  - d. \*The delegates were appeared to to be reasonable.
  
6. (control vs. raising)
  - a. A unicorn seemed to be eating the azalea.
  - b. There seemed to be a unicorn eating the azalea.
  - c. A unicorn tried to eat the azalea.
  - d. \*There tried to be a unicorn eating the azalea.
  
7. (*that*-trace effect)
  - a. Who do you think Chris spoke to?
  - b. Who do you think that Chris spoke to?
  - c. Who do you think spoke to Chris?
  - d. \*Who do you think that spoke to Chris?
  
8. (interaction of pied piping with choice of relative pronoun)
  - a. Whom did you speak to?
  - b. Who did you speak to?
  - c. You spoke to WHOM?
  - d. You spoke to WHO?
  - e. To whom did you speak?
  - f. \*To who did you speak?
  
9. (choice of pronoun depending on position of antecedent)
  - a. Kim<sub>*i*</sub> thinks that Sandy<sub>*j*</sub> admires him<sub>*i*/*\*j*/*k*</sub>.
  - b. Kim<sub>*i*</sub> thinks that Sandy<sub>*j*</sub> admires himself<sub>*\*i*/*j*/*\*k*</sub>.
  - c. Kim<sub>*i*</sub> thinks pictures of him<sub>*i*/*j*/*k*</sub> will depress Sandy<sub>*j*</sub>.
  - d. Kim<sub>*i*</sub> thinks pictures of himself<sub>*i*/*j*/*\*k*</sub> will depress Sandy<sub>*j*</sub>.
  
10. (weak crossover)
  - a. Which boy<sub>*i*</sub> loves his<sub>*i*</sub> mother?
  - b. \*Which boy<sub>*i*</sub> does his<sub>*i*</sub> mother love?

11. (weak island)

- a. Which car did they fix?
- b. How did they fix the Volvo?
- c. Which car did you wonder how they fixed?
- d. \*How did you wonder which car they fixed?

12. (parasitic gaps)

- a. Which official did you instruct rivals of [gap] to assassinate [gap]?
- b. ?Which official did you inform [gap] that the police were about to arrest [gap]?
- c. \*Which official [gap] informed you that the grand jury had subpoenaed [gap]?