

Theory of Meaning Assignment #6

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1 Exercise B

1. (i) Sally kicked the ball.
 $\exists e (\text{AGT}(e, \text{sally}) \ \& \ \text{PAT}(e, \text{the.ball}) \ \& \ \text{kicked}(e))$
(ii) Sam collapsed.
 $\exists e (\text{PAT}(e, \text{sam}) \ \& \ \text{collapsed}(e))$
(iii) Barbara punched Kevin.
 $\exists e (\text{AGT}(e, \text{barbara}) \ \& \ \text{PAT}(e, \text{kevin}) \ \& \ \text{punched}(e))$
2. (i) “I like potatoes,” said the man.
 $\exists e (\text{AGT}(e, \text{the.man}) \ \& \ \text{PAT}(e, \text{quote}) \ \& \ \text{said}(e))$
(ii) Can’t think of a counter-example for this one.
(iii) See first counter-example.
3. Yes. Generalization (iii) tells us what will happen to a patient DP when there *is* an agent DP. This is not technically derivable from (i) and (ii).

2 Exercise C

1. Agent: My best friend’s dog ate my shoe.
2. Patient: Someone threw a rock at my head.
3. Goal: I shipped my poodle to Paris.
4. Source: Yesterday a very confused Parisian family received a poodle from New York.
5. Instrument: Bob likes to murder people with cans of soup.
6. I bought a poodle for my little sister.
7. Sometimes Gary likes to eat tomatoes in the park.

3 Exercise D

First, let me say that I don’t think a switch from the past tense to the simple present actually happens very often in well formed English – at least not when both tenses are describing a series of events that happened in the past. The prompt is a little unclear, but it is, for example, very possible to do such a tense switch when the simple present portion is a *comment on* the past narrative. For example (with simple present verbs bolded):

Last week I found a dragon egg in my back yard. It was big and purplish and kind of... opalescent? Anyway, I nearly threw my back out trying to get it into the garage. I set it in a leftover cardboard box, to keep it from rolling away on the smooth cement. But then I had to get off to see Margaret about the taxes, and by the time I got home I was exhausted, and with an early morning meeting waiting for me on the other side of a short night's sleep – well, I completely forgot about the egg. In retrospect, I **think** that this was my first mistake. You see, forgetting about powerful magical artifacts sitting in cardboard boxes in one's garage just **isn't** a good idea. Well anyway, **let's** fast forward a bit to the part where my garage **is** on fire.

Perhaps we might also be able to pull off such a tense switch in a different kind of narrative. Imagine a storyteller, orally narrating:

He was a right smart one, Gregory was, and he didn't want no truck with wizards nor bankers neither. So he did what any right sensible bloke would do and he packed himself up into a travelsack and hightailed it out of that town before things got nasty. Picked a bad night for it, though. Rain starts pouring down, thick and heavy, and pretty soon the sky is black as pitch, even though it's well before sundown. But he ducks his head down and keeps on hiking, because what else is a fellow supposed to do?

Compare the above to this version, which is written more like the narration you would find in an actual written down work (stop imagining a storyteller):

Gregory did not want any trouble with wizards or bankers, so he did what any sensible person would do and hightailed it out of town before things got nasty. Unfortunately for Gregory, he had picked the night of a ghastly storm. Rain starts pouring down in sheets, and soon the sky is black as pitch...

To my ear, at least, this transition sounds infinitely more awkward than the first. It grates on the internal ear like a rough stone. If my intuition is correct, or at least, somewhat in line with the majority of English speakers, then we have an interesting question – what is it about written vs. spoken language that allows/disallows tense shifts?