

Topics in Syntax: Assignment 3

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June 22, 2016

This is the third, and final, assignment for this course. It is a small project.

1 Project:

Choose one of the following verbs (they are ones whose status as auxiliaries is somewhat problematic), and investigate how far they behave like main verbs and how far like auxiliaries with respect to the 'NICE' properties.

- *get*
- *ought*
- *need*
- *better* (as in *you'd better not do that again*)
- *dare*
- *use* (as in *She used to smoke*)

Structure your discussion like this: for each of the properties, say what it is, and give a simple example of a standard auxiliary, and a standard main verb.

Then give a query that can be used to investigate whether your chosen verb behaves like an auxiliary, and a query that can find examples of it behaving like a main verb.

For example, for inversion:

- a query that will find *ought* inverted (like an auxiliary)
- a query that will find it un-inverted (with *do* as the as the inverted auxiliary) – i.e. behaving as a main verb

If your search produces some results, then give some examples. The examples should be presented in the standard way for linguistics papers (i.e. numbered), and should have the document reference (e.g. BNC/J2F, assuming the example is from the BNC).

It may help you to bear in mind that auxiliaries can be used in 'tag' questions:

- (1) a. She will not play tennis, will she?
b. She will play tennis, won't she?

Only auxiliaries can be used in this way (main verbs cannot):

- (2) a. *She plays not tennis, plays she?

This is not discussed separately from the NICE properties, because it actually follows from them (tag questions involve inversion, which is only possible with auxiliaries, and sometimes also a negative form (e.g. *won't she*) which is again only possible with auxiliaries).