

Chapter 1, Problem 1: Judging Examples

- (i) *Kim and Sandy is looking for a new bicycle.*
This is unacceptable in standard English, because it requires *are* instead of *is*. There are dialects in which this is acceptable, however.
- (ii) *Have you the time?*
This is acceptable, but not very colloquial in standard American English. It is quite standard in British English, but Americans would be more likely to say *Do you have the time?*
- (iii) *I've never put the book.*
This is unacceptable, because the verb *put* requires specification of a location (that is, where the book was never put).¹
- (iv) *The boat floated down the river sank.*
Almost all speakers find this example unacceptable. But psycholinguists have argued that this is actually a grammatical sentence, meaning 'The boat that was floated down the river sank.'
- (v) *It ain't nobody goin to miss nobody.*
This is unacceptable in standard English, but acceptable in African American vernacular English. In standard American English, the same thought would probably be expressed with *There isn't anybody who is going to miss anybody* or *Nobody is going to miss anybody*.
- (vi) *Terry really likes they.*
This is unacceptable in all varieties of English: *they* should be *them*.
- (vii) *Chris must liking syntax.*
This is unacceptable, because *must* can't be followed by an *-ing* verb. Either *Chris must like syntax* or *Chris must be liking syntax* is acceptable (even if they aren't true).
- (viii) *Aren't I invited to the party?*
This is acceptable in most varieties of American English. There are some speakers, however, who prefer *Am I not invited to the party?*
- (ix) *They wondered what each other would do.*
Most American English speakers find this sentence perfectly acceptable, though there are some who find *each other* in subject position awkward (and hence prefer *They each wondered what the other would do*).
- (x) *There is eager to be fifty students in this class.*
This is unacceptable. One could plausibly claim that it should be analyzed as syntactically well-formed but bizarre in meaning. One could equally plausibly claim that its syntax is anomalous.
- (xi) *They persuaded me to defend themselves.*
This is unacceptable. A reflexive pronouns like *themselves* requires a coreferential NP that is in some sense 'closer' to it. Characterizing this sense of 'closer' is the topic of section 1.2 and most of Chapter 7.
- (xii) *Strings have been pulled many times to get people into Harvard.*
Most speakers find this fully acceptable. A few may object to breaking up the idiom *pull strings* in this way.

¹Is this a syntactic or a semantic problem?...

(xiii) *Terry left tomorrow*

This sentence is grammatically well-formed but bizarre in meaning. The form of the verb places the event described in the past, but the adverb *tomorrow* places it in the future. Hence, the sentence has an implicit contradiction in it.

(xiv) *A long list of everyone's indiscretions were published in the newspaper.*

Speakers' reactions to this sentence are likely to be quite divided. Some will find it fully acceptable. Others will say that the singular noun *list* requires a singular verb *was*.

(xv) *Which chemical did you mix the hydrogen peroxide and?*

This is completely ungrammatical. Unlike prepositions (e.g. *with*), conjunctions like *and* really can't be stranded at the end of a sentence like this.

(xvi) *There seem to be a good feeling developing among the students.*

This is unacceptable. It would be okay with *seems* instead of *seem*, or with *good feelings* in place of *a good feeling*. So this seems to be a case of agreement failure, though here the verb appears to be agreeing with the following NP, not the preceding one.