

February 14, 2006

CLASS 6: SUBJECT-AUXILIARY INVERSION

HYPOTHESES

Which hypothesis which makes which predictions — and which should we pick?

- (1) a. SAI always gives rise to interrogative interpretation.
b. SAI can give rise to interrogative interpretation.
c. Interrogative sentences are always formed by means of SAI.
d. Interrogative sentences can be formed by means of SAI.
e. SAI is always used to form an interrogative sentence, and interrogative sentences are always formed by means of SAI.
f. SAI can give rise to interrogative sentences, and interrogative sentences can be formed by means of SAI.

• embedded / subordinate clauses: *indirect questions* / *reported questions*

- (2) a. All sentences with SAI are interrogative.
b. Some sentences with SAI are interrogative.
- (3) Direct questions are always formed by means of SAI.
⇒ All direct questions display SAI.
- (4) a. All interrogative sentences display SAI.
b. Some interrogative sentences display SAI.
- (5) Some sentences with SAI are interrogative and some interrogative sentences display SAI.

INVERSION

- (6) Verbs that are not auxiliaries do not invert with the subject. [Modern English]

• clear up criteria / find definitions: (*full/lexical*) verbs vs. (*modal & regular*) auxiliaries

Question: What is the point of all this discussion (especially last class and this one)?

PREDICATE INVERSION

In this exercise we examine the classification of inversion patterns. The exercise is similar to Exercise 11 in that it is longer and more discursive than Exercises 1-10. The idea is again that we carry further the kind of investigations started in the chapter and see where that would lead us. In particular we will find confirmation that English has more than one type of inversion, a point already shown in Exercise 11, and we will discover that not all patterns in which an inflected form of *be* appears to the left of the subject are cases of SAI. This exercise ties in with Exercise 11 and makes the same point.

Recall that we have discussed the derivation of word order patterns in which the subject of a sentence is preceded by an auxiliary. Let us start from (1a). Identify the subject of the sentence and replace it by a pronoun. Does the example contain any auxiliaries? Is the auxiliary followed by a full verb?

- (1) a Cost is complicating matters.

The subject of (1a) is *cost*; we replace the subject by a pronoun in (1b):

- (1) b It is complicating matters.

Apply SAI to the example in (1a,b) to form a direct question. What is the resulting order? As you can see we have straightforward sequences of auxiliary-subject:

- (1) c Is cost complicating matters?
d Is it complicating matters?

When we apply SAI, we cannot also move the verb *complicating* in front of the subject:

- (1) d *Is complicating cost matters?
e *Is complicating it matters?

Let us now turn to (2a). How does it differ from (1a)?

- (2) a Cost will be complicating matters.

The difference between (1a) and (2a) is that the state of affairs expressed by the latter sentence is situated in the future. This is achieved by means of the auxiliary *will*. By adding *will* to (1a) we create a sentence with two auxiliaries: the modal auxiliary *will* and the non-inflected form of *be*. Identify the subject and replace it by a pronoun. The subject of the sentence is *cost*. We can replace the subject of (2a) by a pronoun.

- (2) b It will be complicating matters.

Apply SAI to the examples in (2a,b) to form a direct question. What is the resulting order? As you can see we again have straightforward sequences of auxiliary-subject:

- (2) c Will cost be complicating matters?
d Will it be complicating matters?

Observe that when we apply SAI, we must move only one auxiliary: it is not possible to move two auxiliaries across the subject (2^e), nor is it possible to move both auxiliaries as well as the full verb (2f):

- (2) e *Will be cost complicating matters?
 f *Will be complicating cost matters?

Let us formulate this in terms of a general principle:

- (3) SAI moves only one auxiliary across the subject.

We can summarise the various patterns as in Table 1:

Table 1: SAI

Can the subject be a pronoun		yes
One auxiliary	Auxiliary-subject-verb	yes
	Auxiliary-verb-subject	no
Two auxiliaries	Auxiliary- subject –auxiliary verb	yes
	Auxiliary -auxiliary – subject – verb	no
	Auxiliary- auxiliary - verb - subject	no

Consider the examples in (4): the underlined subject is preceded by the verb *be*. Is *be* an instantiation of copula *be* or of auxiliary *be*? What arguments could you offer in support of your analysis?

- (4) a Complicating matters is cost. (*Washington Post*, 10.12.2, page A16, col 1)
 b Helping to run the house were a cook, a housemaid and a manservant. (Carol Shields, *Jane Austin*, Phoenix, 2000: 123)

Identify the participles associated with the auxiliaries. We find that in the examples the participle (*complicating*, *helping*) precedes its auxiliary. Restore the sentences to a more neutral word order in which the subject precedes the auxiliary and the verb:

- (5) a Cost is complicating matters.
 b A cook, a housemaid and a manservant were helping to run the house.

The initial element of the examples in (4) is a string of words containing the participial form of the verb (*complicating*, *helping*). Given that they display the order auxiliary- subject we might conclude that the examples in (4) are simply examples of SAI.

However this conclusion would be rash. We first examine (4a). Try replacing the subject in (4a) by a pronoun. The resulting sentence is no longer acceptable.

- (5) c *Complicating matters is it.

The examples in (4) and in (5) contain just one auxiliary *be*. To examine if they really illustrate SAI we could also try to test our generalisation in (3). What would happen if there was a sequence of auxiliaries, as in our earlier examples in (2)? Recall that principle (3) summarises our finding that SAI moves only one auxiliary to the left of the subject. Try adding the future maker *will* to the sentence, replacing the present tense form of *be* by *will be*.

- (6) a Complicating matters will be cost.

Observe that if we insert a future marker *will* in example (4a), the resulting order is that in which both *will* and *be* precede the subject *cost*. If we apply SAI as described in (3) above, then only the auxiliary *will* should precede the subject. But in (6), if only the auxiliary *will* precedes the subject while *be* follows it the sentence is unacceptable:

- (6) b *Complicating matters will cost be.

If you return to the main properties of SAI as summarised in Table 1, you will see that the inversion which is illustrated in (4) is quite different from SAI. We summarise the differences in Table 2, where we use the abbreviations listed below. In the discussion above, identify which examples provide evidence for the various properties:

Subject = SU, auxiliary = Aux, verb = V, acceptable: OK, unacceptable: *.

Table 2: Two inversion patterns

		SAI	Examples in (3)
	SU = pronoun	OK	*
One Aux	Aux – SU	OK	OK
Two Aux	Aux – SU – Aux	OK	*
	Aux – Aux - SU	*	OK

Because of the differences between the two patterns, we will not consider the examples in (4) as illustrations of SAI. This means that the term SAI is restrictive: not every sequence in which an auxiliary precedes the subject is automatically an instantiation of SAI. If you examine the properties of (4b) along the lines outlined above you will conclude that that example to is not an instantiation of SAI.

The patterns illustrated in (4) are often referred to as **predicate inversion**. In predicate inversion patterns the string of words that would follow *be* in the neutral order, the predicate, precedes *be* and the subject, which would normally precede *be*, follows *be*. Examples (7)-(10) also illustrate predicate inversion. Restore the sentences in (7)-(10) to the more neutral order, in which auxiliary *be* is preceded by its subject:

- (7) Hurting the industry's ability to raise fares is the fact that the big airlines are putting more seats back into the skies to battle the rapid expansion of the budget airlines. (*Wall Street Journal*, 29.3.4, page A6, col 6)
- (8) Sitting next to her in the remote cabin was 71-year old Elisabeta Sigilyetova, one of the last living speakers of a rare dialect of Khanty, a regional tongue nearly overwhelmed by Russian's Slavic majority. (*Wall street Journal*, 26.3.4, page A1, col 4)
- (9) Enjoying the festivities at the Sterling Fire Department's Patton Hall are, clockwise from above, Robyn, Blocher's dog, Winston, 5; Melanie Howard and Cosmo, 2, and , from left, Scott Morrison, Blocher, Cinston, and Blocher's father, Bill Blocher. (*Washington Post*, 25.3.4, 'Loudoun', p.1 col 1)
- (10) Tucked away in the back of the booth of Haboltdt & Company , a Paris dealer, is perhaps the best old master drawing here. (*New York Times*, 8.3.4. page E5, col 6)

We return to the patterns illustrated in (4) and in (7)-(10) in Exercise 20 of Chapter 4.