

LING567 Lab 2 Write-up

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Word Order

The basic word order of Finnish is primarily SVO. The following sentences from my illustrate the phenomenon:

- (1) a. Opiskelija tykkää tomaatista
student-NOM like-PRES tomato-ELAT
The student likes tomatoes

I simplified the lexical entries for these words, in that there is no case system built into the grammar yet. Nominals that appear in the subject position occur in the **nominative** case, and nominals that appear in the object position of a verb such as *tykata* (*to like*) appear in the **elative** case. The grammar currently overgenerates, however, and will create a sentence such as:

- (2) a. *Tomaatista tykkää opiskelija
tomato-ELAT like-PRES student-NOM
Tomatoes like a student

Elative nominals don't appear in the subject position. That sentence would really translate to something like *In the tomatoes opinion, he/she likes a student*, except the 3rd person pronoun (*hän*) is missing before *tykata*, so even that pragmatically-ill-formed meaning doesn't get generated.

Intransitive verbs are just SV, of course:

- (3) a. Opiskelija kavelee
student-NOM walk-PRES
the student is walking

Determiners precede nouns, as in the following examples:

- (4) a. Tämä opiskelija tykkää tomaatista
this student-NOM like-PRES tomato-ELAT
This student likes tomatoes

- b. Opiskelija kavelee tuolla kadulla
 student-NOM walk-PRES that-ADES road-ADES
 The student walks on that road

This last example illustrates a more complicated aspect of Finnish grammar, namely the agreement between cases in the object position. Both *tuo* and *katu* agree in case, which is the **adessive** case here.

Determiners

Finnish nominals don't require any overt determiners as is illustrated in the previous examples. *Opiskelija* (in the nominative case, as shown), for instance, means *the student* when in the subject position, and *a student* when in the object position. Two determiners (at the very least) do exist in Finnish, though, that can be attached to nominals in the nominative case: *tuo* (that, demonstrative), and *tämä* (this, demonstrative). They function according to their English translations, that is to say *tuo opiskelija* clearly translates to *that student*, while *tämä tomaatti* translates to *this tomato*.

Based on the recommendations in the lab directions, I assigned the PRED values to the two determiners my lexicon currently has that most closely matched their English translates. For *tuo* (that) I assigned the PRED value of 'distal+dem_q_rel, while for *tämä* (this) I assigned the PRED value of 'proximal+dem_q_rel.

Determinerless NPs

Determiners in Finnish are not obligatory and only seem to serve a demonstrative function. The nominative form of nouns based on their position in a sentence contain their own determiner-like semantic information. Because of this semantic information, creating a determinerless NP rule is essential to parsing Finnish sentences.

- (5) a. Opiskelija tykkää tomaatista
 student-NOM like-PRES tomato-ELAT
 The student likes tomatoes

This sentence illustrates the definite nature of the noun in the subject position, *opiskelija* (student). However, if the noun appears in the object position, it becomes indefinite. This is only for nominals in their nominative forms, however, as the example shows, an elative form of a nominal that follows provides a more indefinite meaning.

I created subtypes of the detless-np rule, nom-detless-np and elat-detless-np, to account for the difference in definiteness based on the positions of the nominals in the sentence (subject or object positions).

A spurious result

The sentence **tomaatista tykkää opiskelija* (tomatoes like a student) is being parsed. This is an incorrect sentence, as elative case nominals can't appear in the subject of a

sentence. Something that needs to be added to fix this is a differentiation in the subj rule so that certain things don't appear in subj (like relative NPs).

I tried to add a differentiation mechanism, but specifying specific subtypes were ruling out grammatical sentences and undergenerating. At this point in the time grammar is overgenerating, but by very little.