

Unexpectedly acceptable

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Paradoxical situation

- (1) A paper proposes a constraint C on construction X and illustrates its relevance by exhibiting occurrences of X that violate C and are unacceptable.
- (2) Corpus research provides examples of X violating C which appear to be perfectly acceptable.

A case in point: *do so* and stativity

Lakoff & Ross 1976: *do so* does not allow stative antecedents

Culicover & Jackendoff 2005: *do so* does not allow non-action antecedents

(1) *Robin dislikes Ozzie, but Leslie doesn't do so.
[Stative, C&J:284, (2a), their judgment]

Naturally occurring examples of *do so* with stative antecedents

(Michiels 1978, Houser 2010)

(2) The basic idea is that whenever the relation of complementary distribution holds between phones belonging to a common phoneme, it does so because the phonetic value of the phoneme depends upon the phonetic environment in which it occurs. [Stative, in Fodor, Bever and Garret, *The Psychology of Language*, cited by Michiels 1978, 175]

Usage preferences (UPs):

- Statistically significant preferences in usage
- Can concern lexical semantics, semantics, syntax, discourse, ...
- Single violation of a UP usually has little effect on acceptability
- Multiple violations can be cumulative and can cause strong unacceptability

UPs for finite *do so*

UP1 Finite *do so* very strongly prefers to occur with non-stative antecedents. (Houser 2010: 98%)

UP2 Finite *do so* very strongly prefers to occur referring to the same state of affairs as its antecedent and hence with the same subject as its antecedent. (Miller 2011: 98%)

UP3 Finite *do so* prefers to occur with a non-contrastive adjunct. (Miller 2011: 83%)

UPs and *do so*

- (1) *Robin dislikes Ozzie, but Leslie doesn't do so. [UP1–, UP2– UP3–]
- (3) The basic idea is that whenever the relation of complementary distribution holds between phones belonging to a common phoneme, it does so because the phonetic value of the phoneme depends upon the phonetic environment in which it occurs. [UP1–, UP2+ UP3+]

UPs and grammaticality

What is the grammaticality of examples (1)-(2)?

All of these examples are grammatical.

If you do not accept this conclusion you must assume one of the two following positions:

- (i) combining violations that do not individually lead to ungrammaticality can lead to ungrammaticality.
- (ii) some individual violations of grammaticality can have no influence on acceptability (if the UPs are taken to be constraints on grammaticality).

The ↓ (downarrow) judgment

(8) ↓Robin dislikes Ozzie, but Leslie doesn't do so..

I suggest using the ↓ sign to indicate a reason for unacceptability different from

- syntactic ill-formedness (*)
- semantic and pragmatic ill-formedness (#)
- dialectal or sociolectal variation (%)

UPs vs. recycling hypothesis

Arregui, Clifton, Frazier & Moulton 2006 propose a recycling theory on acceptability of Post-Auxiliary Ellipsis (PAE) with syntactically mismatched antecedents which essentially comes down to the same as position (ii) above, i.e. claiming that ungrammaticality can have little effect on acceptability.

Discourse constraints as
usage preferences
Post-Auxiliary Ellipsis

PAE with active-passive mismatches:

Kertz 2010.

PAE with nominal antecedents

- (1) Mubarak's survival is impossible to predict and, even if he does, his plan to make his son his heir apparent is now in serious jeopardy. (COCA: CBS Evening News)
- (2) Mubarak's survival was surprising to many. #We're still not sure how he did.

Discourse constraints on PAE

AUX-Choice Post-Auxiliary Ellipsis

Formal characteristics: The subject of the antecedent is IDENTICAL with the subject of the PAE construction and the auxiliary is (at least weakly) STRESSED, signalling a change in tense, aspect, modality, or (in overwhelmingly the most frequent case) polarity.

Discourse requirement: A CHOICE BETWEEN THE MEMBERS OF A JOINTLY EXHAUSTIVE SET OF ALTERNATIVE SITUATIONS must be highly salient in the discourse context, and the point of the utterance containing the PAE is strictly limited to SELECTING ONE MEMBER OF THAT SET.

- (3) —Did Kim decide to leave? (Polar question: $p \vee \neg p$)
—Yes, she did.
—No, she didn't.
- (4) Kim decided to leave. (Assertion places p on the table, $p \vee \neg p$)
—No, she didn't.
- (5) —Kim's decision to leave came as a surprise.
—#No she didn't.
—↓No she didn't.

Some nouns can denote polar questions

- (7) That depends on his survival. [= on whether or not he survives]
- (8) At this stage, her participation is still unclear [= whether or not she will participate is still unclear]
- (9) That depends on his decision. [= on what he decides; ≠ whether or not he decides]

Nouns denoting polar questions can serve as antecedents if they are used in a context where they provide a salient alternative

- (1) Mubarak's survival is impossible to predict and, even if he does/#does it, his plan to make his son his heir apparent is now in serious jeopardy. (COCA: CBS Evening News)
- (2) Mubarak's survival was surprising to many. We're still not sure how he did it/#did.
- (3) My Dad suffered from a subarachnoid haemorrhage in 2001. We were told that he had a 30% chance of survival and if he did, he would be left requiring nursing care
- (4) Mubarak's decision is impossible to predict, but even if he #does
...

- (5) His decision on participation in the race is as yet in serious doubt, but if he does/#does it, he will be a serious contender.
- (6) The former champion's participation in the race surprised many fans. They wondered why did it/#did.
- (7) This letter deserves a response, but before you do, ... (Kehler 2002, from Ward p.c.) [you should respond, but before you do]

Robert, Matsuo & Duffield 2013

N°14 in their test materials:

During the cold war, there were many defections.

- a. It was bad that the CIA agent exposed important secrets.
- b. The CIA agents exposure of important secrets was bad.
- c. The agency is upset that he did
- d. The agency is upset that he did it.)

They are still trying to repair the damage.

Aux-Choice, in the verbal variant the proposition is asserted, in the nominal version it is presupposed.

Grant, Clifton & Frazier 2012

Non-actuality implicatures.

This problem was to have been looked into, but obviously nobody did. (Kehler, 2002, example (4) p. 5)

Conclusions

- Stereotypicality of language use
- Knowledge of usage is part of linguistic competence
- Grammar is competence **and** usage is competence
- Ignoring the relevance of usage preferences leads one to attribute to syntax properties of usage.

When something is UNEXPECTEDLY
ACCEPTABLE don't throw it out. Think about it,
and if you don't know what to do about it, put it in
the footnotes

THAT'S A LESSON I LEARNED FROM IVAN