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Creating sentences (without tears!)

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Making sentences is a bit like cooking

- ▶ You need ingredients
- ▶ You need to put them together in a certain way
- ▶ It's nice to have someone to talk to and eat with!

How do we learn to cook?

- ▶ We grow up with seeing and helping others cook
- ▶ We taste something and somehow know how to make it — rare!
- ▶ We follow a recipe until we have it figured out

How do we learn to make sentences?

- ▶ We grow up with the language
- ▶ We hear a recording or see a written-down sentence in an archive and somehow know how to make other sentences — rare!
- ▶ We follow a recipe until we have it figured out

Four “dishes”

1. **basic sentences** The man sang.
2. **negative sentences** The woman didn't sing.
3. **commands** Sing!
4. **confirmation questions:** Are you going to sing?

“I walked.”

subject pronoun = I

verb root = walk

tense suffix = -ed

Pattern: subject verb.root-tense

If you know a sentence pattern and some nouns and verbs, you can create lots of new sentences.

You talk-ed.

My sister work-ed.

The man sneez-ed.

...

...

Caution: Sometimes the pattern doesn't work!

I sing-ed. → I sang.

Caution: Sometimes there is more than one pattern!

“I will walk”

subject tense verb.root

What goes into a basic sentence?

- ▶ **verb root**: expresses the action or state
- ▶ **subject**: expresses the one doing the action or in the state

and one or more ...

- ▶ tense: expresses when the action happens
- ▶ aspect: expresses whether the action is complete, on-going, about to happen, or repeating
- ▶ other important bits (“spices”)

Three patterns for creating basic sentences

1. **pronoun pattern:**

the subject is a separate word from the verb

2. **verb-sentence pattern:**

the verb can function as a sentence all by itself

3. **clitic pattern:**

the subject “leans” onto another word

Pronoun pattern

Lushootseed

ʔut'ilib čəd. = I am singing or I sang.

Pattern: (ʔu-)verb.root subject

Nisenan

solim ni = I am singing.

Pattern: **verb.root**-m **subject**

Verb-sentence pattern

Barbareño

swe' = He is asleep.

kwe' = I am asleep.

pwe' = You are asleep.

Pattern: subject-verb.root

- ▶ Similar pattern used in Ventureño.

Oneida

wahatkétskoʔ = He got up.

Pattern: modal-subject*-verb.root-aspect

- ▶ *agent prefix would be more accurate.
- ▶ Similar pattern found in Seneca.

Kawaiisu subject doubling!

shi'in mahanaan = She is washing.

Pattern: subject verb.root-n-subject.

Clitic pattern

Kwakiutl

daʔtəluχ = She is laughing.

k'iʔsuχ daʔtəla = She is not laughing.

Pattern: subject leans onto first word of the sentence.

Negative sentences

General recipe: add negation to a basic sentence!

Tutudine

yəshɬdaɬ = I'm running.

du yəshɬdaɬ = I'm not running.

Recipe: Add **du** to a basic sentence.

- ▶ Similar recipe used in Kawaiisu and Keresan.

Seneca

gyë:twahs = I plant (or 'I am planting').

de?gyë:twahs = I don't plant (or 'I am not planting').

Recipe: Add negation prefix **de?**- to the verb.

- ▶ Similar recipes in Barbareño and Ventureño.

But you might have to do some other adjustments as well ...

English: Basic sentence: I walk-ed.

Negative sentence: I not walk-ed → I did not walk.

Recipe: Add not, add special dummy verb “do”, move tense from verb root to dummy verb.

Oneida

waʔkheyaʔtakéhaʔ = I helped her.*

yah teʔkheyaʔtakenhá:u

= I didn't help her* or I hadn't helped her*.

Recipe:

- ▶ add yah
- ▶ add teʔ-
- ▶ if needed, adjust the aspect suffix to -:u

*or them or someone.

Command sentences

Ventureño: *yət!* = Come here!

Barbareño: *we'!* = Sleep!

Pattern: *verb.root!*

- ▶ No subject marker on the verb.¹
- ▶ Also used in Kawaiisu, Tutudine.

¹Some of these languages do use a subject marker when speaking a command to several people.

Nisenan

solip = Sing! (one person)

solikwa = Sing! (two or more people)

Recipe:

- ▶ talking to 1 person: add **-p** to **verb root**
- ▶ talking to 2+ people: add **-kwa** to **verb root**

Tutudine: close cousins!

dahsida = Sit down!

hi dahsda = He sits down.

Recipe: Use 2nd person subject prefix – but watch out for similarity with statement with 3rd person subject statement!.

Confirmation questions

Kawaiisu: rising intonation

Shi'in mahanaan. = She is washing

Shi'in mahanaan↑? = Is she washing?

Pattern: sentence↑

- ▶ Similar recipe used in Barbareño and Seneca.

Lushootseed

ʔut'ilib = He is singing.

ʔut'ilib ʔu = Is he singing?

Recipe: Add question particle ʔu after the verb.

- ▶ Question particles also used in Keresan, Oneida, and Tutudine.

Ventureño

tšnowo = He/she/it stops.

tšnowonu = Did he/she/it stop?

Recipe: add **-nu** (or **-u**) to the verb of a basic sentence.

- ▶ Similar recipe in Nisenan.

Alutiiq gets the last word:

Unguwallriang'iagcunityuni'taallriaten-qaa?