

Description of English Syntax

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Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Sentence structure	1
2.1	Predicate	1
2.2	Subject	1
2.2.1	Pro-drop	2
2.3	Object	2
2.4	Adjectives	3
3	Questions	3
4	Embedded sentences	5
5	Reporting speech	7
6	Negatives	9
	List of Syntactic Trees	10
	References	11

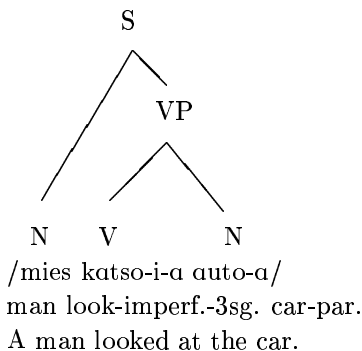
1 Introduction

Finglish is an artificial language created for a linguistics class at the University of South Carolina in spring 2001. It borrows much of its grammar and vocabulary from Finnish[1] so it could be considered to be in the Finno-Ugrian family of languages.

Although Finglish phonology[2] is quite similar to that of Finnish, the morphology[3] differs significantly. Because of the simplified morphology also the the syntax is somewhat different from Finnish.

2 Sentence structure

Finglish is basically a SVO language and the basic sentence structure is like in the figure 1. Although, due to the cases and other inflectional morphology, the word order is not very important and can vary a lot.



Tree 1: A simple sentence

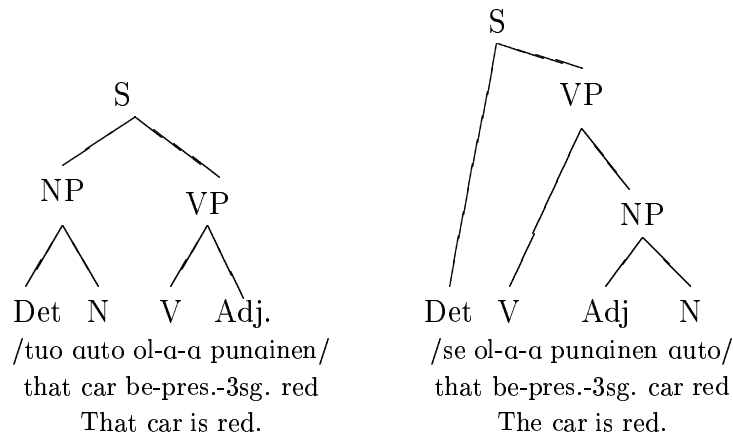
2.1 Predicate

The most important part of Finglish sentences is the predicate verb. It is the only phrase that is always realized in every sentence. e.g. [sat-a-a] 'rain-3sg-pres.' 'It is raining.'. /*(mæ) rakast-a-n sæ-æ/* '(I) love-1sg.-pres. you-par.' 'I love you.'

2.2 Subject

The subject noun of a sentence is always in nominative case but it can have a possessive suffix and a clitic particle as in /*(mæ-n) talo-ni-ko palo-i-a/* 'I-gen. house-1sg.pos.-question burn-imperf.-3sg.' 'Was it my house that burnt.'

Finglish does not have articles so there are sometimes ambiguities about definiteness of nouns. Definiteness can sometimes be affirmed by using demonstrative pronouns as in the sentence in the tree 2.



Tree 2: Demonstrative pronouns

2.2.1 Pro-drop

If the subject of the sentence is a personal pronoun it is not usually phonetically realized. This pro-drop does not apply if the pronoun is attached to a clitic particle like in the left most sentence in figure 4.

2.3 Object

The direct object of a sentence can be in any case. The case depends on the semantic role of the object. If the object is

Patient it is in Partitive case.

Goal it is in Allative case.

Starting point it is in Ablative case.

Location it is in Adessive case.

Received it is in Genitive case.

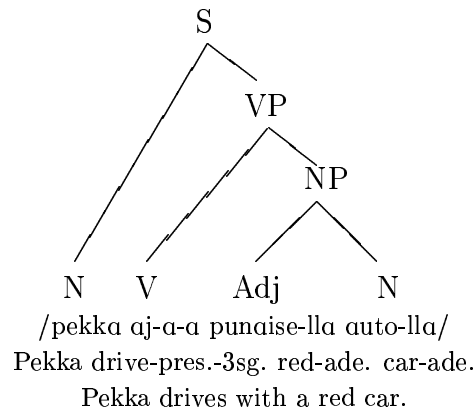
The complement of be-verb is in Nominative case.

All of the following sentences have the same structure as the sentence in figure 1. The differences are in the verb and the case of the object.

/mies katso-i-a auto-lla/
 man look-imperf.-3sg. car-all.
 'A man looked to the car.'
 /mies katso-i-a auto-lta/
 man look-imperf.-3sg. car-abl.
 'A man looked from the car.'
 /mies odot-i-a auto-lla/
 man wait-imperf.-3sg. car-ade.
 'A man waited at the car.'
 /mies ost-i-a auto-n/
 man buy-imperf.-3sg. car-gen.
 'A man bough a car.'

2.4 Adjectives

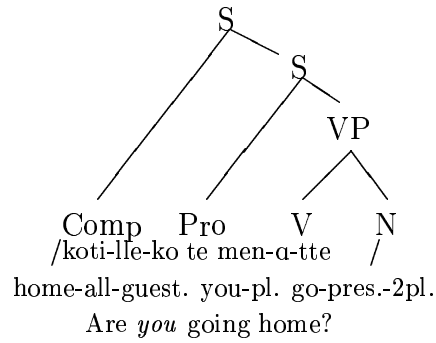
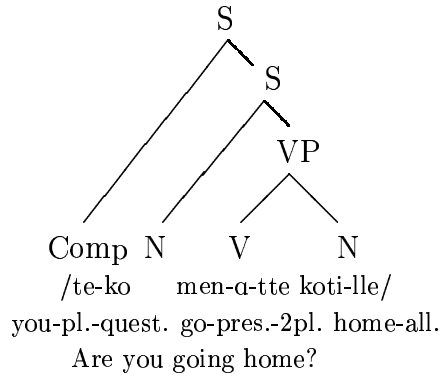
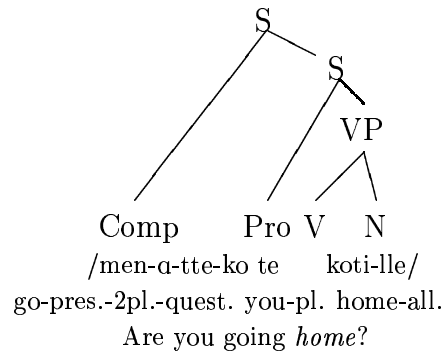
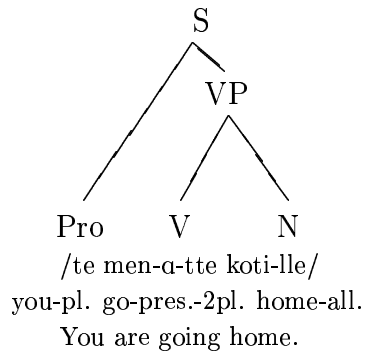
Adjectives are an exception to the head last property of Finglish. They appear before their heads. Adjectives also follow the case of the word they are modifying like exemplified in the tree 3.



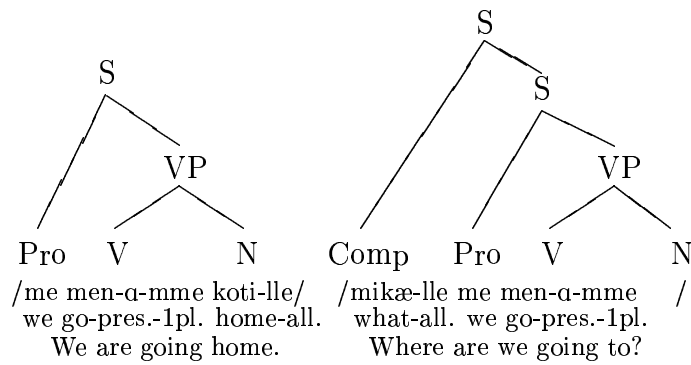
Tree 3: Adjective phrase

3 Questions

Yes-no-questions are formed by adding the clitic particle /-ko/ to the questioned word and moving the word to the beginning of the sentence. This process is exemplified in the tree 4.



Tree 4: Yes-no questions



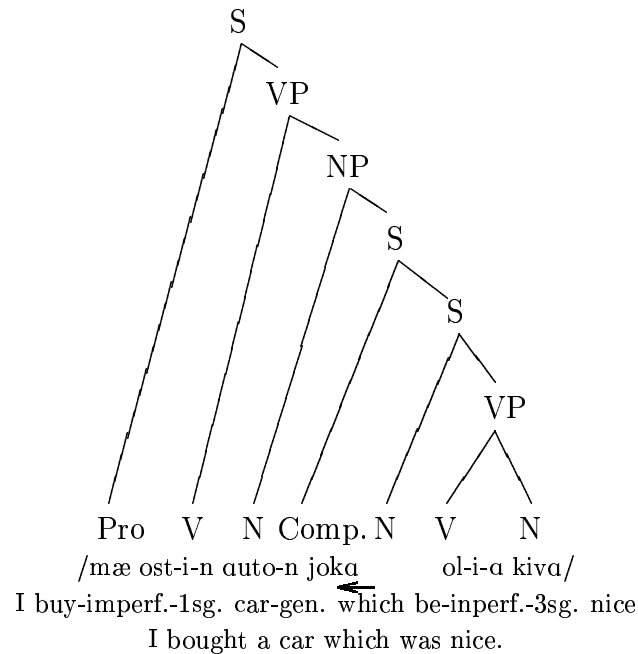
Tree 5: Interrogative question

Other kind of questions are formed with interrogative pronouns. A declarative sentence is transformed to a question by adding an interrogative pronoun as a complementizer like in figure 5.

4 Embedded sentences

Embedded sentences always begin with a complementizer. It can be either relative pronoun /joka, mikæ/, co-ordinating conjunction /ettæ kun jos vaikka/ or a question word.

In figures 6 and 7 there are examples of relative sentences. Note that pronoun /joka/ in figure 6 refers to the immediately preceding word when the pronoun /mikæ/ in figure 7 refers to the whole preceding sentence.



Tree 6: Relative sentence.

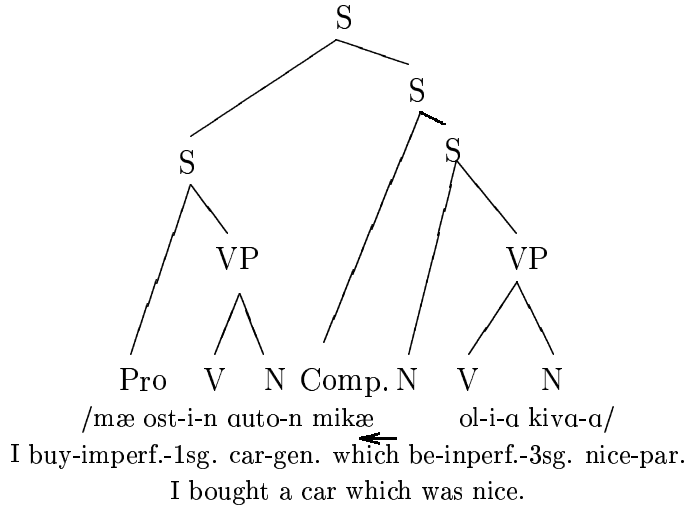
In tree 8 there are examples of two other kind of embedded sentences. The left one is coordinated and the right one is an indirect question sentence. In tree 9 there is an example of more complex sentence.

Below there are several examples of sentences using other coordinating conjunctions.

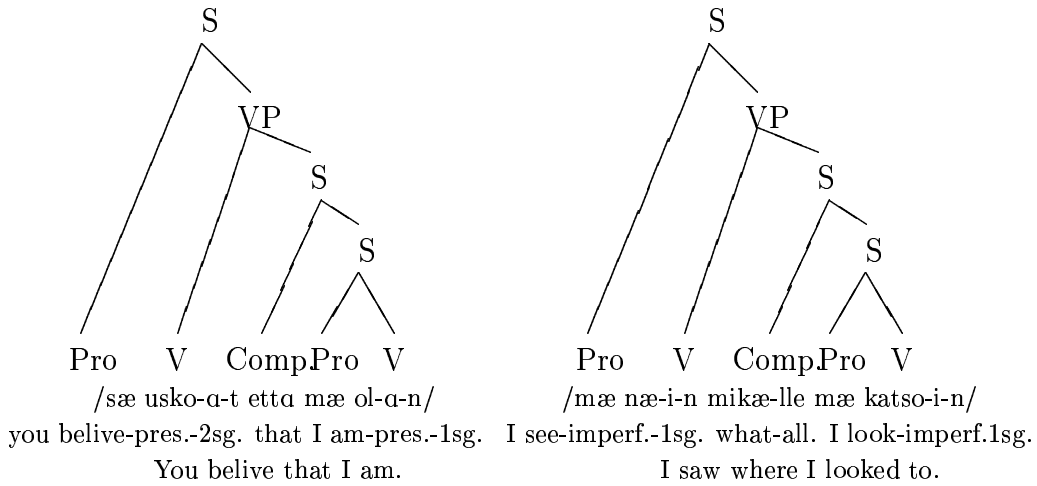
/men-a-mme kun kello ol-a-a kuusi/

'go-pres.-1pl. when clock be-pres.-3sg. six'

'We will go when it's six o'clock.'

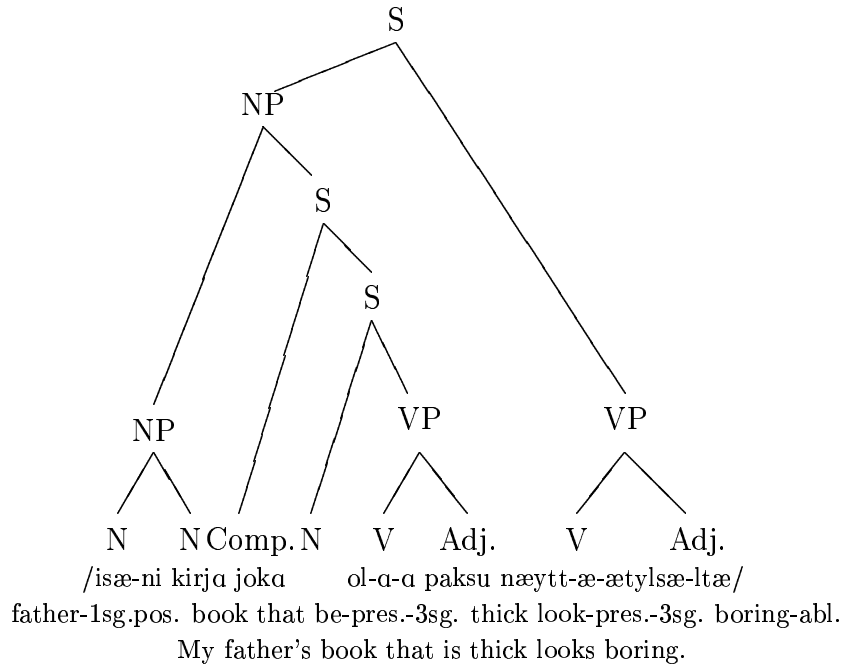


Tree 7: Relative sentence.



Tree 8: Embedded sentences

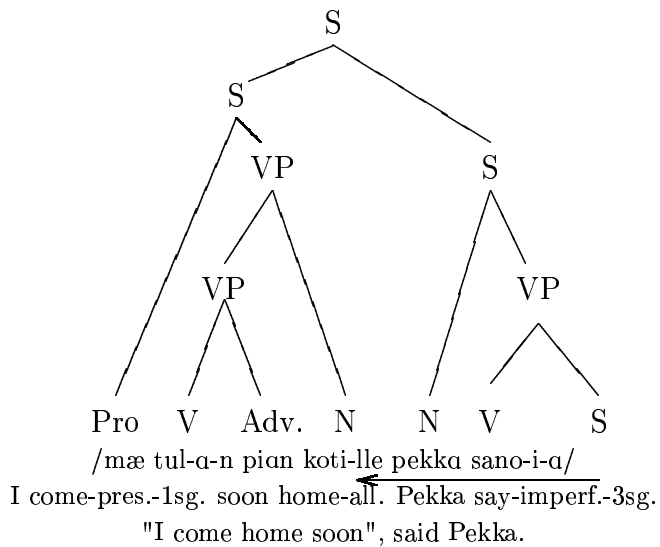
/juoks-i-n kun ol-i-a kiire/
 'run-imperf.-1sg. because be-imperf.-3sg. rush'
 'I ran because I were in a rush.'
 /ol-a-n jos ajattel-a-n/
 'be-pres.-1sg. if think-pres.-1sg.'
 'I am if I think.'
 /usko-i-t vaikka valehtel-i-n/
 'belive-imperf.-2sg. even lie-imperf.-1sg.'
 'You belived even though I lied.'



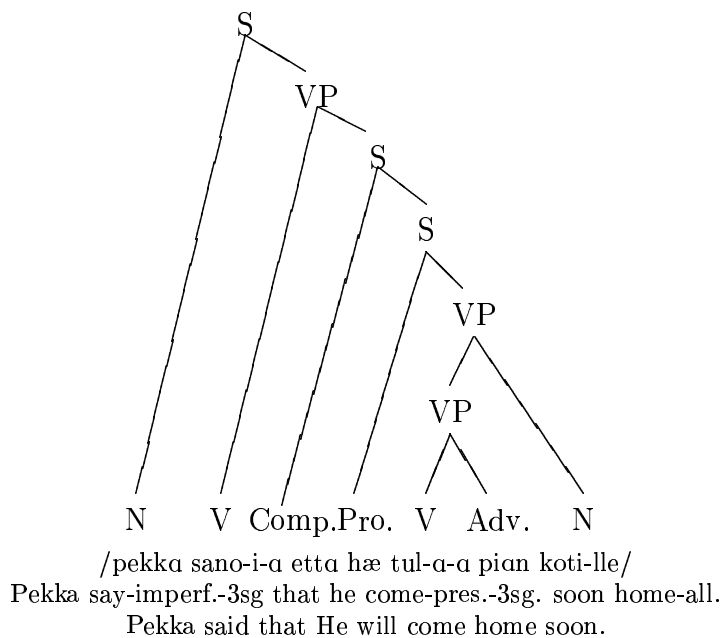
Tree 9: Complex sentence

5 Reporting speech

There are two ways to report speech in Finnish. Sentence in the tree 10 is a direct quote from Pekka and the sentence in the tree 11 is indirect quote told by a third person.



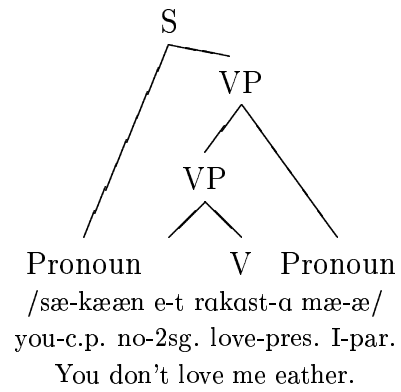
Tree 10: Direct speech



Tree 11: Indirect speech.

6 Negatives

Negative sentences are formed with word /e-/ that is attached to a personal suffix and the predicate is in this case without personal suffix. An example of a negative sentence is in the tree 12.



Tree 12: Negative.

List of Syntactic Trees

1	A simple sentence	1
2	Demonstrative pronouns	2
3	Adjective phrase	3
4	Yes-no questions	4
5	Interrogative question	4
6	Relative sentence.	5
7	Relative sentence.	6
8	Embedded sentences	6
9	Complex sentence	7
10	Direct speech	8
11	Indirect speech.	8
12	Negative.	9

References

- [1] H. Sulkala, M. Karjalainen: Finnish, Routledge, (1992)
- [2] K. Palin: Phonological description of Finglish, University of South Carolina, (2001)
- [3] K. Palin: Morphological description of Finglish, University of South Carolina, (2001)