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DEVELOPING QUESTION TAGS IN ENGLISH AND TELUGU

(Programming point of view)

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Introduction

Sentence

In order to state general rules about the construction of sentence, it is constantly necessary to refer to smaller units than the sentence itself. Our first task must therefore be to explain what these smaller units are that we need to distinguish, confining our attention for the present to a few sentences which, though showing considerable variety, are all of fairly elementary structure.

Traditionally speaking, sentence contains subject and predicate. The subject of the sentence has a close general relation to 'what is being discussed', the 'theme' of the sentence. And also subject determines concord. i.e. with those parts of the verb that permit a distinction between singular and plural, the form selected depends on whether the subject is singular or plural. Furthermore, the subject is the part of the sentence that changes its position as we go from statement to question. Ex. Had *he* given the girl an apple?

In contrast with the subject, there are few generalizations that we can usefully make about the predicate since it tends to be a more complex and heterogeneous unit. We need to subdivide it into its elements or constituents. One division can be auxiliary as operator and predication. The distinctions may be illustrated as follows:

He	had	given the girl an apple
Had	he	given the girl an apple?
He	had	given the girl an apple, hadn't he?
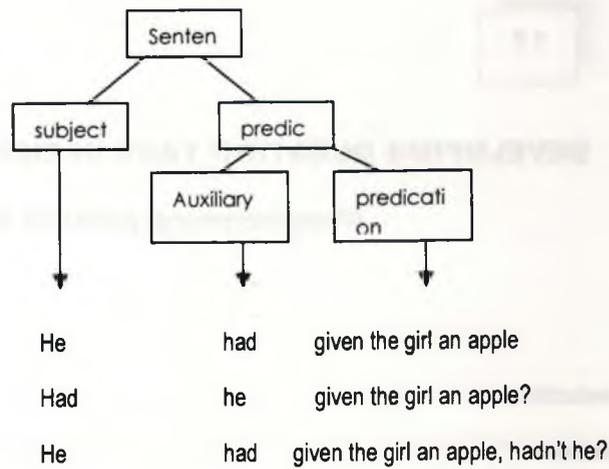
This particular division of the sentence helps us to understand, for example, how interrogative and negative sentences are formed, how certain adjuncts are positioned. and how certain types of emphasis are achieved.

Range of operators

1. The verb expression may have several auxiliaries:

Ex. He should have been questioned by the police.

In such cases, it is the first auxiliary that acts as operator;

Should he have been questioned by the police? No, he shouldn't...

He should have been questioned by the police, shouldn't he?

2. Where the verb expression has no auxiliary in the positive declarative sentence, 'do' is introduced when an operator is required:

Ex. It rained steadily all day.

Did it rain steadily all day? No, it didn't.

3. The verb 'be' can act as operator whether it is an auxiliary:

Ex. John is searching the room.

Is John searching the room?

John is searching the room, isn't he? (proper noun becomes personal pronoun)

4. The same is true to some extent, especially in BrE, for 'have':

Ex. He has a degree.

Has he a degree?

Subject

As the sentence indefinitely complex, so may the subject. For example, the following sentences – simple and complex – can become one simple sentence with a very complex noun phrase as subject.

The girl is Mary Smith

The girl is pretty

The girl was standing in the corner

You waved to the girl when you entered

The girl became angry because you waved to her

The pretty girl standing in the corner who became angry because you waved to her when you entered is Mary Smith

Gerunds as subjects

If a sentence begins with verb+ing (gerund), the verb must also be singular.

Ex:

Knowing her has made him what he is.

Dieting is very popular today.

Not studying has caused him many problems.(not related to this paper)

Washing with a special cream is recommended for scalp infections.

Being cordial is one of the greatest assets.

Writing many letters makes her happy.

Where as in Telugu language there is no syntactic or semantic analysis needed and put a string 'kadaa' after the sentence, irrespective of the complexity.

Question tags

Question tags are short questions spoken at the end of a statement either to confirm it, get confirmation from the listener or to add force to what is said. Such question tags are added in almost all languages in their own way. In English they have taken a particular shape in interrogative form: auxiliary + subject. Where as Telugu just adds 'kadaa' at the end of the sentence. In English a negative tag is added to a positive statement while a positive tag is added to a negative statement:

He is very hungry, isn't he?

He lost his pen, didn't he?

It isn't very cold today, is it?

It may be noted that it is not only the negative verb that forms a negative sentence. It is rather the essence or idea of the sentence. the negative idea may be conveyed by:

None of the clothes were washed, were they?

A pretty lose like that is nothing, is it?

The following words have a negative meaning and, thus, must be used with a positive verb, and also neither. So sentences which contained this kind of words are considered as negative sentences and these are not discussed in this paper.

Negative forms are usually contracted (n't). (If they are not, they follow the order auxiliary+subject+not: he saw this yesterday, did he not?)

The verb 'have' may be used as a main verb. when it functions as a main verb in Amencan English, the auxiliary forms 'do', 'does', or 'did' must be used in the tag.

'there is', 'there are', and 'it is' forms contain a pseudo-subject so the tag will also contain 'there' of 'it' as if it were a subject pronoun.

Rules preparation

In elementary level one can teach a human being, these rules, by giving examples and putting that in practice etc. In advanced level some rules are prepared and given to the learner. This rule preparation for human being and for a machine is dissimilar. Machine needed much minute information than the human.

Now the issue is how a machine understands above theory. Primarily, the program should identify the **subject word** and **operator** in the sentence; make appropriate modification and confer output.

If we speak in terms of tasks, the first task should be:

Task 1: Identifying the subject word

> Here each subject word is predefined/defined in the program i.e. every subject word has a rule/condition. The subject words are:
>
> I (1st person singular)
>
> You (2nd person singular)
>
> They (3rd person plural)
>
> He (3rd person singular)
>
> She (3rd person singular)
>
> It (3rd person singular) and

Proper nouns and human relations (ex. Mother), professionals (ex. Doctor)

> - proper nouns, human relations and names of the professions are given in separate file.

Task 2: Identifying the subject word from the complex subject.

> It is required to give correct pronoun at the tag.
>
> In a sentence we can more than one subject. ex Rama, Sita and their sons Lava, Kusha were ...weren't they?.
>
> - Here personal pronoun 'they' replaces the whole noun phrase.

Task 3: Place of the subject word

> A subject word can exist in four different places in a sentence namely at
>
> the beginning of the noun phrase i.e.   sub (.*) (op),
>
> end of the noun phrase i.e.   (.*) sub (op),
>
> middle of the noun phrase i.e.   (.*) sub (.*) (op)

or individually i.e.   sub (op)

- thus every structure of simple sentence needed minimum four rules.

Task 4: Identifying special cases

Ex. sentence with 'there', 'either'

- given in the program.

Task 5: Identifying **visible operator**

A visible operator can occur/exist,

in between the strings in a sentence like   (.*) op (.*)

Task 6: Identifying **invisible operator**

Invisible operators are occurred mainly in simple past and present tenses

Ex. He goes there, He went there.

Task 7: Substituting the operator, negative word 'not' and subject pronoun

Task 8: Giving error messages etc.

Programming

Progression of the rules is very important because we have to take care of overlapping problem of rules. I started with a string followed by *and he, and she, and they, and men, and women* with simple past tense.

Ex. Rama *and he* went there, didn't they?

if ($file=~ /^(.*) (and he||and she||and they||and $masc||and $fe) ($ipast||[a-z]+ed) (.*)\.$/){

$file=~ s/^(.*) (and he||and she||and they||and $masc||and $fe) ($ipast||[a-z]+ed) (.*)\.$/$1 $2 $3 $4, didn't they?/;

print "$file\n";

}

Above rule says that when a sentence starts with any string then have phrase 'and he' or and she' etc and verb simple past, the question tag would be: 'didn't they?'

In this way whole program works.

#masculine propemouns and boy-man with auxiliary takes 'he'

elsif ($file=~ /^($masc||$ma_rel||He) ($aux) (.*)\.$/){

$file=~ s/^($masc||$ma_rel||He) ($aux) (.*)\.$/$1 $2 $3, $2n't he?/;

print "$file\n";

}

Above rule says that when masculine proper noun or word 'boy' or 'man' or kinship word comes at first and immediately followed by an auxiliary and any string, the question tag would be: the auxiliary then the word 'he'.

The most important point in this kind of programming is progression. If we wont follow the progression properly it will be difficult to find solution for the inflection form.

Telugu tag

Telugu language the program is quite simple, put the sentence as it is and add a tag 'kadaa'. That's all.

Ex. mlru ninna vachaaru, kadaa? (You came yesterday, don't you?)

    aame mamcidi, kadaa?(She is good. Doesn't she?)

        etc.

Thus, Telugu doesn't need any critical programming aspects.

The condition would be 'substitute the full stop with a coma and put 'kadaa' after the coma.

Ex: aame mamcidi.   aame mamcidi, kadaa?

In Telugu there is no negation in tag. What ever may be the structure of question, the tag would remain the same, 'kadaa' . where as in English the type of a sentence is very important i.e. sentence type influences the question tag.

Conclusion

This kind of program is quite helpful to get different structure of a sentence. One can use this type of programs in teaching language, first/second or foreign. And also useful for structural analysts where they have to built many structures manually. With the help of this kind of programs they can save precious time.

Abbreviations

op – operator, sub – subject, *. – a string.

Files needed:

1. Irregular verbs list, 2. Auxiliary verbs list, 3.Proper nouns list (some names), 4. Kinship word list (ex. Mother), 5. Profession names (ex. Doctor)

Program

PERL and Linux environment.

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