

Assignment

To receive a grade for this course, you do two things: (1) an assignment (due date: Nov 1), and (2) write an essay (5–9 pages) on a topic of your interest chosen in consultation with me (due date: Dec 14). (1) and (2) will be weighted at a ratio of 2:3.

This is the assignment.

The sentence “I am here” is in a sense always true and can only be used in special circumstances (cf. Fillmore 1971: 258) (by which I do not imply that it is hardly ever used; for some reason, it is actually used quite often). However, once it is embedded in a complex sentence like “The deer is not aware that I am here”, “There is no need for me to be here” or “I am not here to entertain you”, it makes perfectly good sense; these sentences are by no means always true and do not require anything like the hearer not seeing the speaker. Most importantly, the embedded sentence does not act as a tautology, a necessary truth.

Similarly, the sentence

“I am not here”

is in a sense always false, and it can, it seems, never be used on its own; still, complex sentences containing it can be unproblematic.

You are to carry out 4 of the following 6 tasks, but in any case the first one.

Task 1

Retrieve examples of such complex sentences from the following sources (one from each).

<http://nation.time.com/2013/06/27/the-good-the-bad-and-the-ugly/>

<http://www.divinecaroline.com/love-sex/our-sexless-marriage>

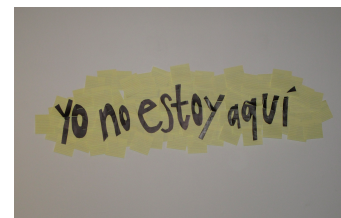
Sometimes the sentence “I am not here” appears in a different syntactic guise, say, as

“I (were) not here” (http://www.khabar.com/magazine/features/another_mans_shoes.aspx)

or as

“I ... not be here” (<http://www.wri-irg.org/node/6039>).

Get one case from each of these two pages too.



Task 2

In all four cases, “I (...) not (be) here” makes good sense. Try to explain why it makes good sense in your last example (the one from <http://www.wri-irg.org/node/6039>).

Make use of the relevant parts of Zimmermann (2012: 2360-2374; i.e., sections 1-3) and the second half of week 3 of the course website, **The benefit: j can shift but i stays the same**, plus the following clues:

The complex sentences have in common that the clause “I am not here” is embedded under some kind of intensional, or modal, (full or auxiliary) verb (sometimes via a “that” complementizer). Such verbs have extensions that take propositions, i.e., sets of situations, as arguments. Thus if alpha is such a verb, we have that the meaning of alpha relative to i and j is a function that takes (i.a.) the set of situations k such that ..., where in ... both k and i can play roles. This particular intensional verb (see, e.g., <http://www.univie.ac.at/sub14/proc/arregui.pdf>) denotes a function that maps a proposition to a truth value, and in fact, whether the value is 'true' may depend on all the members k in the proposition, all of which may be distinct from the situation of utterance i...

Task 3

In your first example the intensional verb involved is a speech report verb. Reconstruct what the direct speech may have been in each of the two cases, and justify what changes are needed to pass from the direct to the indirect speech. Do the two cases differ regarding the reasons for the change(s)? Does (in)sincerity enter into it?

Task 4

One example features the verb “notice” embedding the clause “I am not here”. This verb is commonly regarded as ‘factive’, that is, as introducing a presupposition that the argument proposition is true or follows from the Common Ground. How can that be – did we not agree that “I am not here” is doomed to be false? Maybe this verb is not the relevant intensional verb?

Task 5

When we say or write “I were not here” as part of a complex sentence like that from http://www.khabar.com/magazine/features/another_mans_shoes.aspx (maybe you would say or write “I wasn’t here” in the same function), we use the ‘irrealis’ subjunctive, not a past tense. Try to describe or define the meaning of this morpheme and to show that it fits together with the content of the clause “I am not here” on which it operates.

Task 6

Refer to Isaiah 52:6 of the Bible in the King James or the English Standard translation, and comment on the relevance of this verse to the topic at issue above.

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