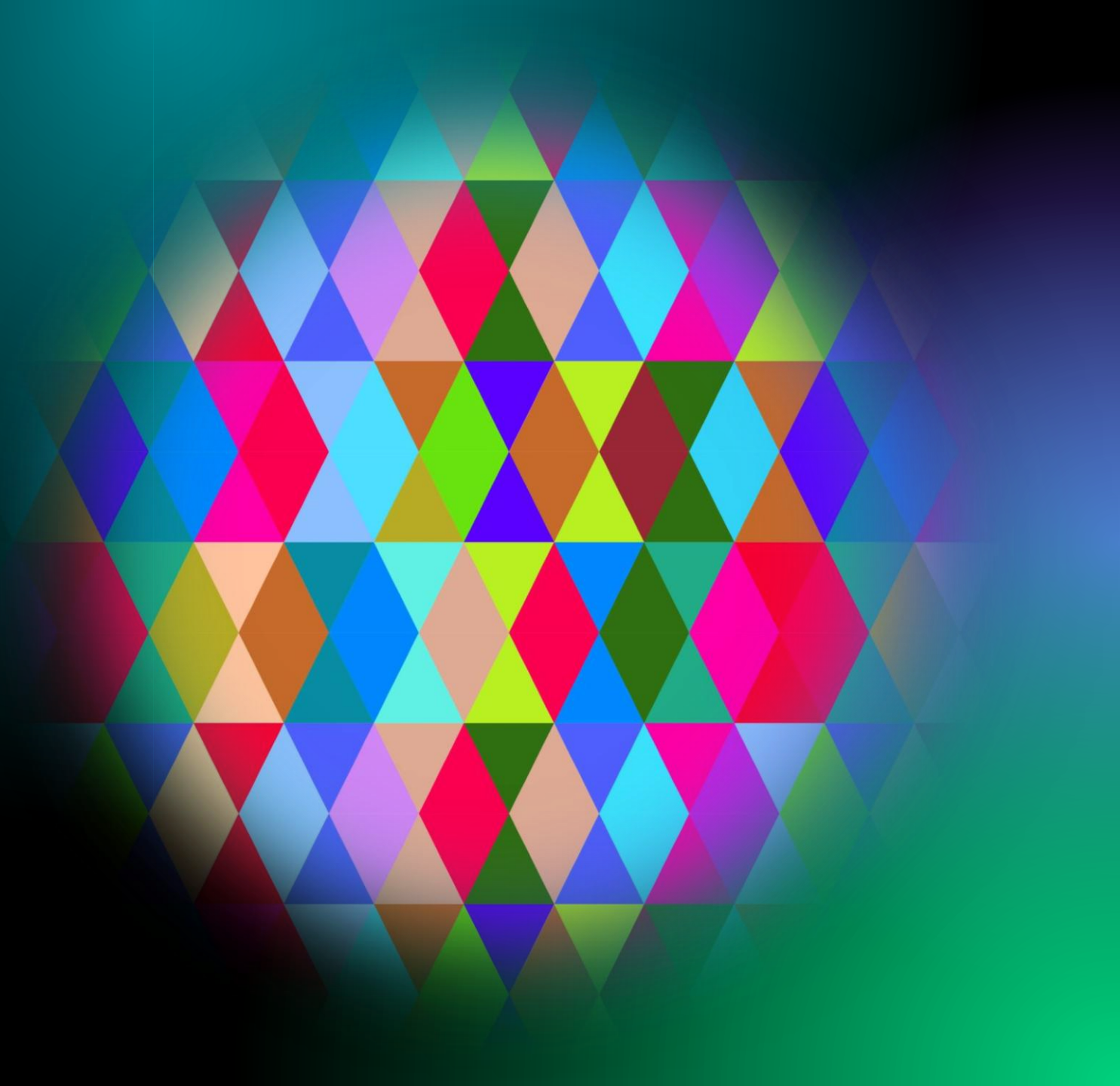


Derivation of NPE gap

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The plan for today

- Recap of last week
- Missing antecedent test
- Number mismatch and morphology
- Thematic assignment
- A middle ground?

Deletion vs. base generation

- Last week, we looked at Ross's account of NPE (and other types of ellipsis), which derives the gap through a process of pronominalisation and **deletion**.
- We also had a brief look at Jackendoff's (1977) theory which proposes that ellipsis gaps are **base-generated empty categories**.
- Today, we will further compare these two types of approach.

Missing antecedent test

- This is what we saw last week as the “camel test”.
- The Camel test (Grinder & Postal 1971):

(25) a. I have never ridden a camel, but Ivan has ____, and he says **it** stank horribly.

b. #I have never ridden **a camel**, and **it** stank horribly.

(26) a. I have seen no painting with all of the brightest colours, but my partner has seen one ____, and he said **they** actually mix very well together.

b. #I have seen no painting with **all of the brightest colours**, and **they** actually mix very well together.

Missing antecedent test

- There's more!

(1) Four guards escorting an Oscar winner stopped a group of crazy fans outside the Oscar Award event, and later on another five ___ stopped a different group. Fortunately, **they** are both unharmed.

Grammatical number-mismatch

- We also saw that NPE tolerates number mismatch.
(2) A book by Ad Neeleman will be published in 2027, while two ___ have/*has already been published this year.
- The problem is not the interpretation of the gap. An LF theory can resolve this problem by saying that what is copied at LF is the NP *book by Ad Neeleman*, which would be something like (3). And this will get quantified over by the numeral, still giving rise to the plural reading.
(3) λx . x is a book by Ad Neeleman (simplified version)
- What is crucial here is the agreement with the verb. And it is hard to say that this agreement takes place at LF (?)

Grammatical number-mismatch

- There's further evidence of agreement:

(4) A new book by Ad Neeleman will be published in 2027, while these ___ have/*has already been published this year.

- We see in (4) that the demonstrative is in its plural form, patterning with the verb. It is hard for a theory using base-generated empty categories and interpretive mechanisms at LF to explain the morphological agreement.
- In languages with a richer morphological system, we will see other sorts of agreement as well (adjectives, for instance).

Thematic assignment

- Like verbs, nouns can assign thematic roles.

(5) a. The invasion of Iran by America

b. American's invasion of Iran

c. *Iran's invasion by America

d. Iran's oil fields

- We can see that the spec,DP position can only host agents/possessors, while patients are barred from this position.

Thematic assignment

- Now have a look at NPE structures:

(6) Russia's invasion of Ukraine has been highly condemned, but no one has done so for Iran's ____

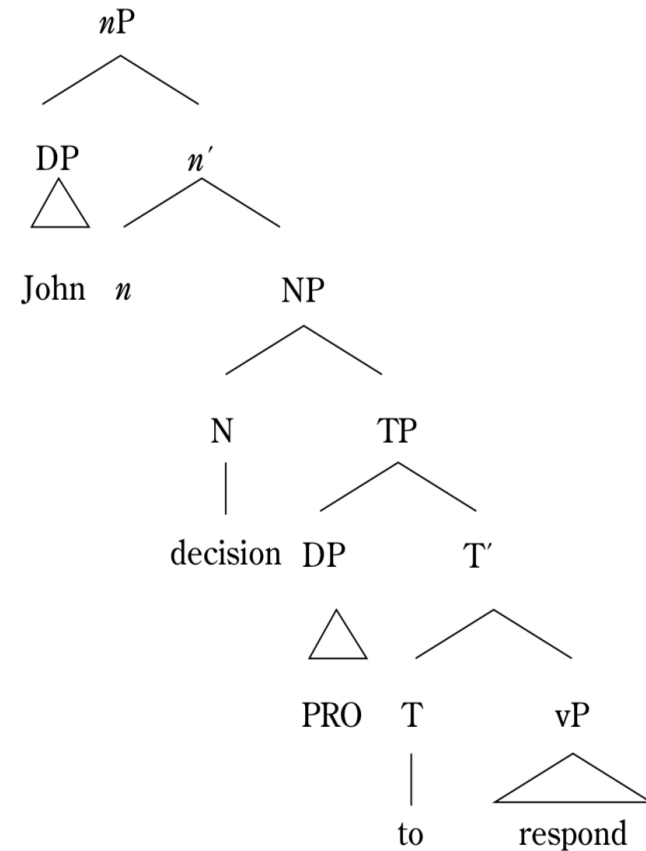
- (6) cannot mean **the invasion of Iran**. It has to be **the invasion by Iran**.
- If what is inserted is an empty PRO/*pro*/etc., there should be nothing regulating thematic positions **and** assigning thematic roles. Therefore, a worse outcome is that (6) is ungrammatical since the DP **Iran** receives no thematic role.

Thematic assignment

- The fact that the DP in Spec,DP is interpreted thematically also means that there must be structure originally in the gap.
- Radford (2000) suggests that there's an extra layer above NP, called nP, mirroring the structure of the sentential clause.

a. John's decision to respond

b.



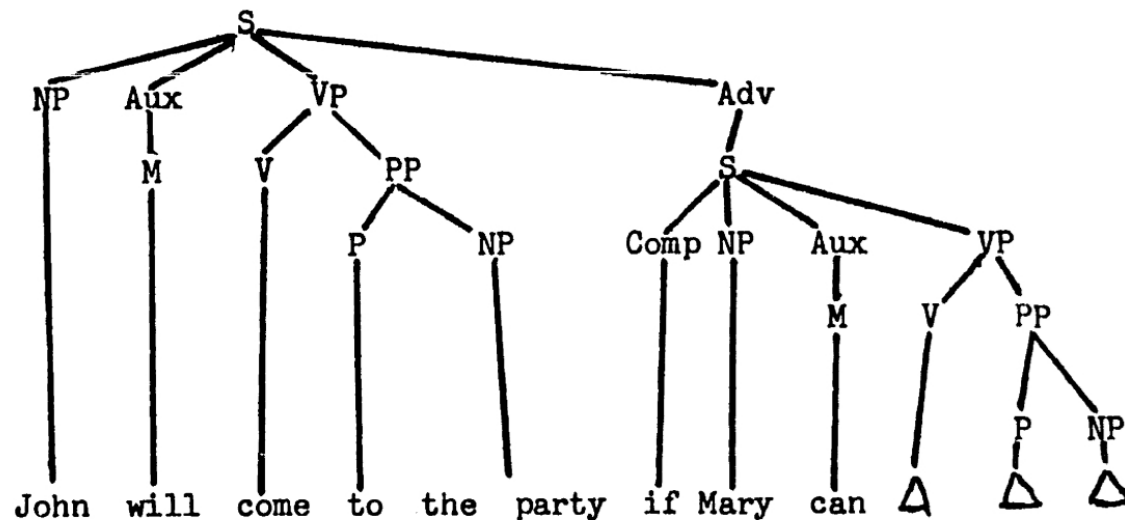
Thematic assignment

- As a result, (6)'s interpretation means that the DP ***Iran*** actually starts in Spec,nP to receive the agent role, before moving to Spec,DP.
- Again, we see that for the semantics to work, there must have been syntax initially.

Middle ground?

- Wasow (1972) attempts to strike the balance between a base-generation and a deletion theory by proposing that the gap actually has its internal structure, which is made up of phonologically null constituents.
- This might seem an attractive resolution. But in actuality it does not solve any of the problems we have just discussed. The issue with a base-generation theory is not the absence of constituent structure, but rather that of **lexical material**.

(31) (a)



Reference

- Grinder, John and Paul Postal (1971). Missing Antecedents. *Linguistic Inquiry* 2: 269-
- Jackendoff, Ray (1977). X-Bar Syntax: A Study of Phrase Structure. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Radford, Andrew (2000). NP shells. *Essex Research Reports in Linguistics* 33 : 2-20.
- Wasow, Thomas (1972). Anaphoric Relations in English. PhD dissertation, MIT.