

FOCUS CONSTRAINTS ON ELLIPSIS — AN UNALTERNATIVES ACCOUNT

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Focus and Ellipsis

- The FOCUS–ELLIPSIS GENERALIZATION (FEG): Focal elements cannot be elided.

- (1) (Who was Kim going to kiss?) — (2) (What was Kim going to do?)
 a. ALEX. a. Kim was going to kiss ALEX.
 b. Kim was going to kiss ALEX. b. Kiss ALEX.
 c. #ALEX.

- FEG can be stated without recourse to [F]-markers using UNALTERNATIVE SEMANTICS (UAS, see [1, 2, 3])

- UAS uses two universal, relational focus constraints to derive Roothian focus alternatives; given two constituents U(nfunky) and F(unky)...

Weak Restriction U may introduce alternatives only if F does
 ('either F is focal, or U+F are, or none of them is')

Strong Restriction U does not introduce alternatives, F must
 ('F must be focal, U must not be')

- What counts as U and F, and which of the two constraints applies, is language specific.
 In English:

WHERE?	any two sister nodes	
WHICH?	default metrical weights	reversed metrical weights
	Weak Restriction	Strong Restriction
HOW?	strong sister = F(unky), weak sister = U(nfunky)	

- additional:
- | WHERE? | ellipsis |
|--------|--|
| WHICH? | Strong Restriction |
| HOW? | non-elided = F(unky), elided = U(nfunky) |

- This means that whenever ellipsis applies, the elided part is automatically prevented from introducing alternatives, and the remnant must be focal.

- The first half of this prohibits 'elision of focal elements'.

- The second half derives MAXELLIDE effects, without transderivationality

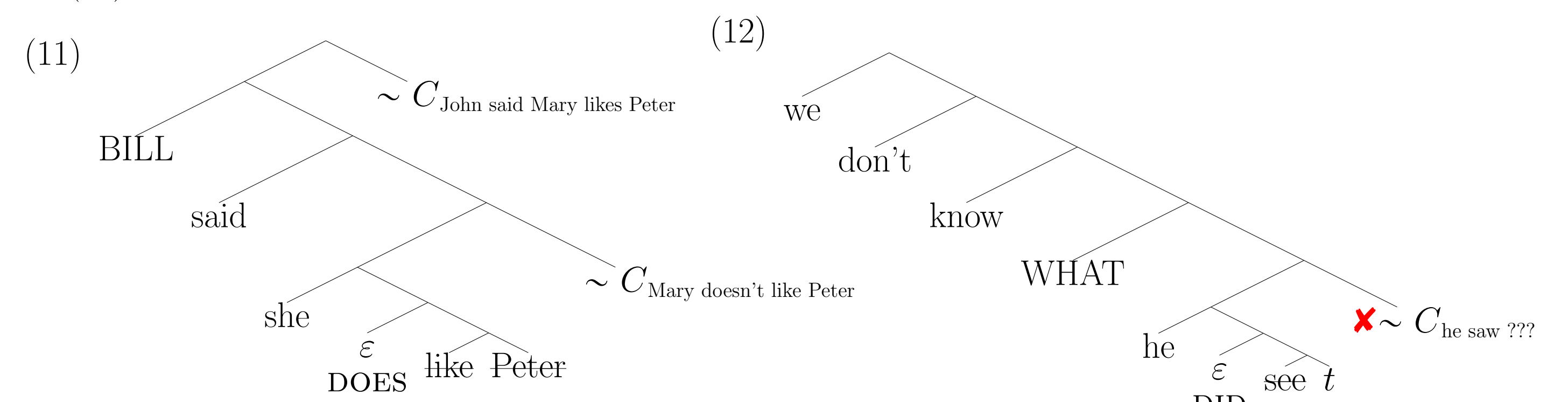
- So rather than ellipsis being sensitive to focus, possible focus alternatives are restricted by ellipsis.

No Extraction — no MaxElide Effect?

Takahashi & Fox, [7]: The *Parallelism Domain* for VPE must include the antecedents to any VP internal traces; MaxElide only applies within the PD. This results in the impression that ME is only active with trace-containing EVPs:

- (8) John said Mary likes Peter.
 a. BILL also said she does
 b. BILL also did.
- (9) a. John said Mary [likes Peter]_{PD}. BILL also said she does [like Peter]_{PD}.
 b. John [said Mary likes Peter]_{PD}. BILL also did [say-Mary-like-Peter]_{PD}.
- (10) John saw something, but we don't know
 a. *what he did [see-*t_{what}*]_{PD}. PD contains trace, but not antecedent
 b. *what he did see-*t_{what}*]_{PD}. PD ok, ellipsis not maximal in PD
 c. [what he did see-*t_{what}*]_{PD}. PD contains antecedent, ellipsis maximal

Proposal: Apparent ME obviations involve SECOND OCCURRENCE FOCUS (SOF) on lower element cf. (11).

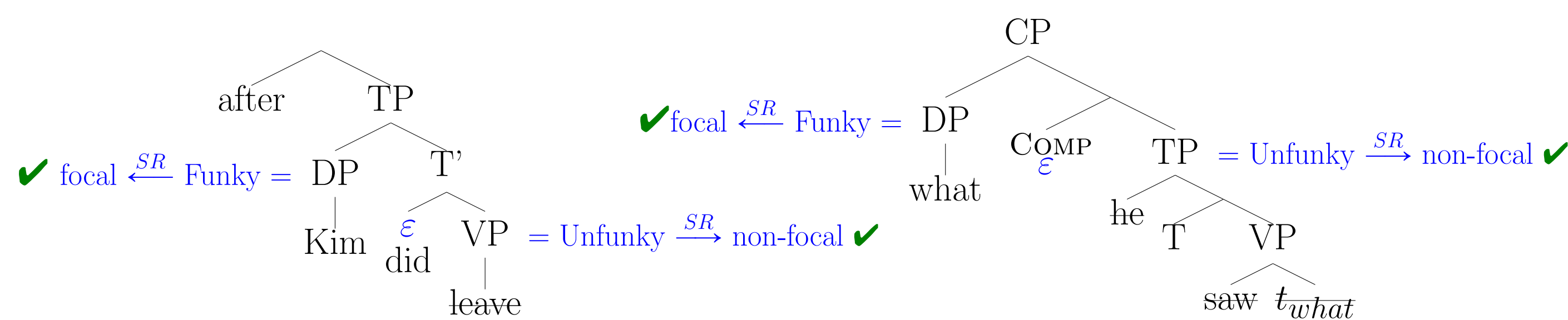


It is crucial for SOF that the lower focus must find a target before any higher focus is encountered. But, as in [7]'s proposal, this is impossible if the Focus Domain (the c-command domain of $\sim C$) contains an unbound trace, cf. (12).

Illustrations

Basic

- (3) Al left after Kim did. (4) John saw something, but we don't know what.

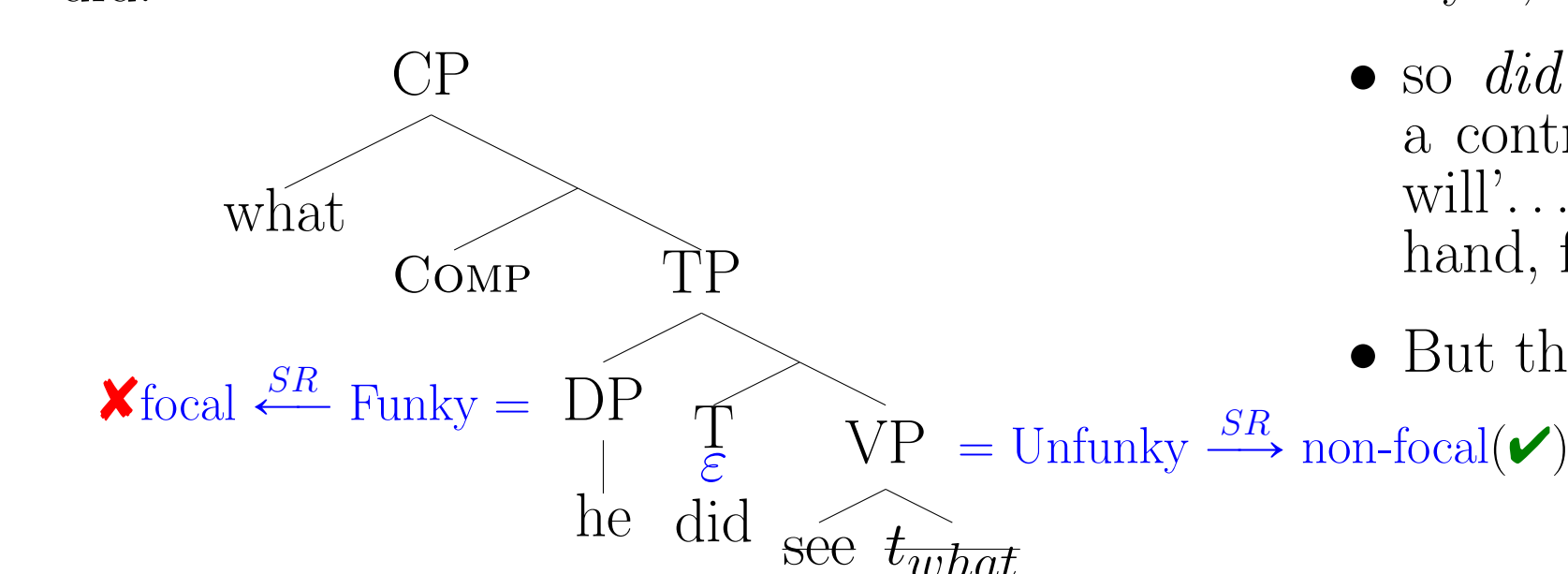


MaxElide

- (5) MAXELIDE: Let XP be an elided constituent containing an A'-trace. Let YP be a possible target for ellipsis. YP must not properly contain XP. ([5], p.141)

- (6)*John saw something, but we don't know what he did.

- By ϵ , DP needs to be focal if VPE takes place
- so *did* should be focused, and there should be a contrastive target of the form 'he didn't', 'he will'... etc. which there isn't; *what*, on the other hand, fails to be marked as focal
- But that is not the full story...

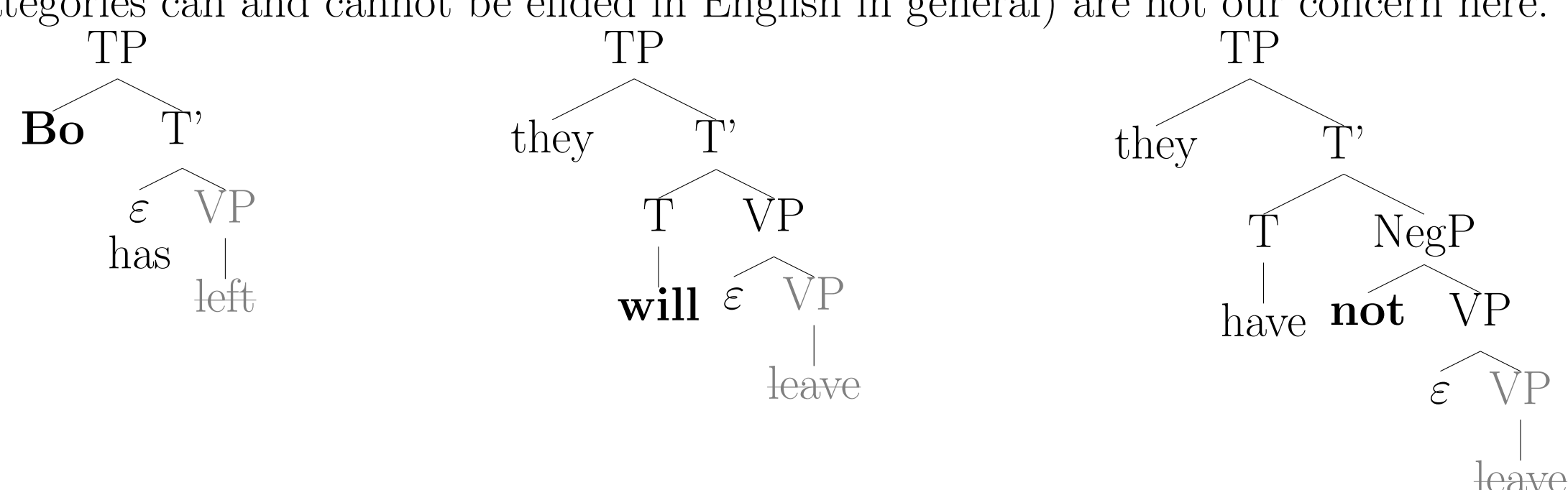


Disclaimer

VPE in English can occur with a contrasting subject, auxiliary, or negation [cf. the *Auxiliary vs. Subject Choice* distinction in [6].

- (7) They have left. BO has, too. / No, but they WILL. / No, they have NOT.

We assume that in all cases, the Strong Restriction is triggered by an element ϵ , regarding its minimally c-commanding constituent (**funky**) and its complement (unfunky); the various (im)possible locations of ϵ (i.e. what categories can and cannot be elided in English in general) are not our concern here.



Summary

- UAS provides a natural explanation for ME effects, without reference to syntactic F-markers.
- Whenever a Strong Restriction applies, the unfunky sister (the elided phrase, in this case) is prevented from deriving focus alternatives.
- Apparent ME obviations involve SOF on lower element.
- If the extractee is not itself focused, ME effects are judged weaker, infelicity of such sentences is simply pragmatic.
- Remaining mystery: Griffiths [4] sentences where SOF cannot find its target before getting to the higher focus, but the sentence is still grammatical (cf. (15)).

References

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- [3] Daniel Büring (2016b). "Discontinuous Foci and Unalternative Semantics." vol. 56 of *Current Trends in Generative Linguistics*, 67-82. Ljubljana: Filozofska Fakulteta Ljubljana.
- [4] James Griffiths (2017). "Beyond MaxElide: A-bar-extraction from ellipsis sites." Paper presented at the *Generative Linguistics in the Old World (GLOW) 40*, Leiden, March 2017
- [5] Jason Merchant (2008) "Variable island repair under ellipsis." *Topics in ellipsis* 1174 (2008): 132-153.
- [6] Miller, Philip and Geoffrey K. Pullum (2013). "Exophoric VP Ellipsis." In Philip Hofmeister and Elisabeth Norcliffe, eds., *The Core and the Periphery: Data-driven Perspectives on Syntax Inspired by Ivan A. Sag*, 5-32. Stanford CA: CSLI Publications.
- [7] Takahashi, Shoichi and Danny Fox (2005). "Max Elide and the Re-Binding Problem." In *Proceedings of SALT XV*.