

English VP preposing as resumption

George Walkden

Department of Linguistics & English Language, University of Manchester

george.walkden@manchester.ac.uk · <http://personalpages.manchester.ac.uk/staff/george.walkden/>

Outline of the talk:

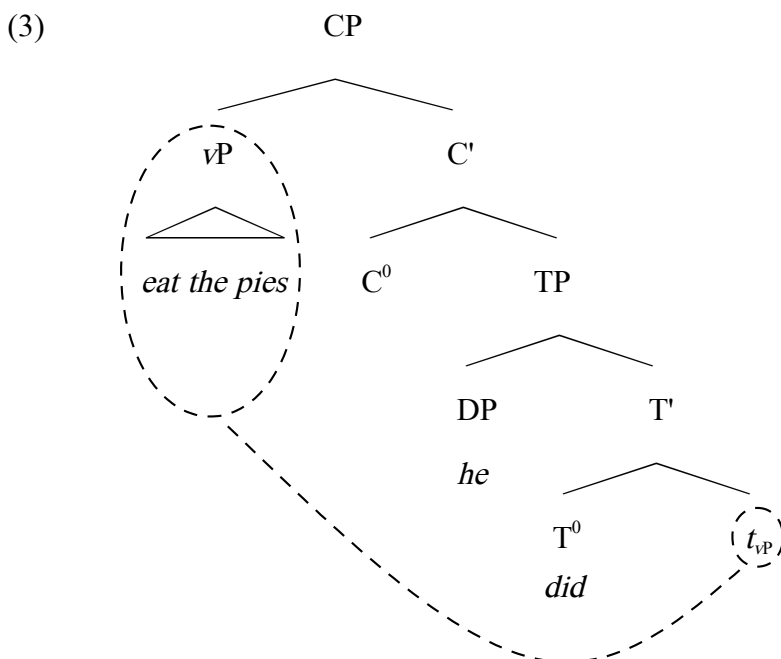
1. VP preposing: introduction and previous research
2. Problems for a movement analysis
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1. VP preposing: introduction and previous research

The phenomenon of VP preposing (also known as VP fronting and VP topicalization) is illustrated by (1) and (2).

- (1) *(We wanted John to eat the pies, and) eat the pies he did.*
- (2) *(We hoped that Wiggins had won a gold medal, and) won a gold medal he had.*

Pre-GB analyses (e.g. Reinhart 1978) viewed VP Preposing as simple permutation of the VP to a clause-initial position, an insight which GB and Minimalist analyses (e.g. Zagana 1988a, b; Baltin 2007) have implemented as movement. (3) represents the bare bones of what I take to be the standard GB and Minimalist analysis.



The contents of the preposed constituent represent a salient proposition explicitly evoked in preceding discourse (Ward 1990). VP preposing has featured in two main debates in the recent theoretical literature:

- ♣ Does VP preposing involve one movement or two?
 - **Only one:** traditional approach; Vicente (2009)
 - **Two or more:** Dorfman, Leu & Levon (2003); Rimell & Leu (2005); Baltin (2007)
- ♣ Are VP preposing and VP ellipsis basically the same thing?
 - **Yes:** Johnson (2001); Kim (2003)
 - **No:** Aelbrecht & Haegeman (2012)

All this literature essentially takes for granted that VP preposing involves movement. In the next section I consider some facts that point to a different type of analysis.

2. Problems for a movement analysis

How can we tell if we have movement? Basic idea here follows Adger & Ramchand (2005: 162):

On the assumption that traces are simple copies ... we expect to see what we will call *identity effects* in a movement derivation, but not necessarily in a base-generation derivation.

For instance:

- ♣ Differences in selection, agreement, or case
- ♣ Lack of evidence for intermediate copies
- ♣ Lack of locality restrictions

Much as for the question formation and relativization in Scottish Gaelic discussed by Adger & Ramchand, I will suggest that ‘some A'-dependencies that appear to arise from movement are, in fact, cases of base generation’ (2005: 163).

Data is taken from a small judgement survey of 12 native speakers of English (all linguists). Examples (1) and (2), for instance, were judged fully grammatical by all 12 speakers.

2.1 *Anti-identity: morphological mismatches*

Substitution of certain classes of acceptable preposed VPs into their extraction site fails. See also Bresnan (2001: 18) referencing Andrews (1994: 218), Dorfman, Leu & Levon (2003: 5) and Kayne (2005: 99, fn. 21).

- (4) *(She said that she would meet me, and) meet me she has.*
(Good: 8, Intermediate: 3, Bad: 1)
- (5) *(The boy promised to do his homework, and) do his homework he has.*
(Good: 8, Intermediate: 4, Bad: 0)
- (6) *(Everyone said that Susan called her mother twice, and) ?called her mother twice Susan did.*
(Good: 4, Intermediate: 5, Bad: 3)
- (7) *(We'd heard that the shipwrecked man swam to shore, and) swam to shore he had.*
(Good: 8, Intermediate: 2, Bad: 2)

In all these cases, substitution of the preposed constituent into the lower position leads to straightforward ungrammaticality.¹

- (8) **She has meet me.*
(9) **He has do his homework.*
(10) **Susan did called her mother twice.*
(11) **He had swam to shore.*

- ▲ Kayne (2005: 99, fn. 21) compares (4)–(5) with the Germanic *Infinitivus Pro Participio* (IPP) effect, where a participle surfaces in a less specified form as an infinitive.
- But (6) and (7) show that it can't be that simple.
 - In (7) in particular the preposed constituent contains a finite verb (see also Dorfman, Leu & Levon 2005: 3).
- ▲ Not all combinations are acceptable. There are some syntactic/semantic restrictions:

- (12) *(I expected Billy to have gone to the shops, and) *gone to the shops he will.*
(Good: 0, Intermediate: 1, Bad: 11)
- (13) *(Last time it was Amy who drove the getaway car, and) *drove the getaway car she should.*
(Good: 1, Intermediate: 2, Bad: 9)

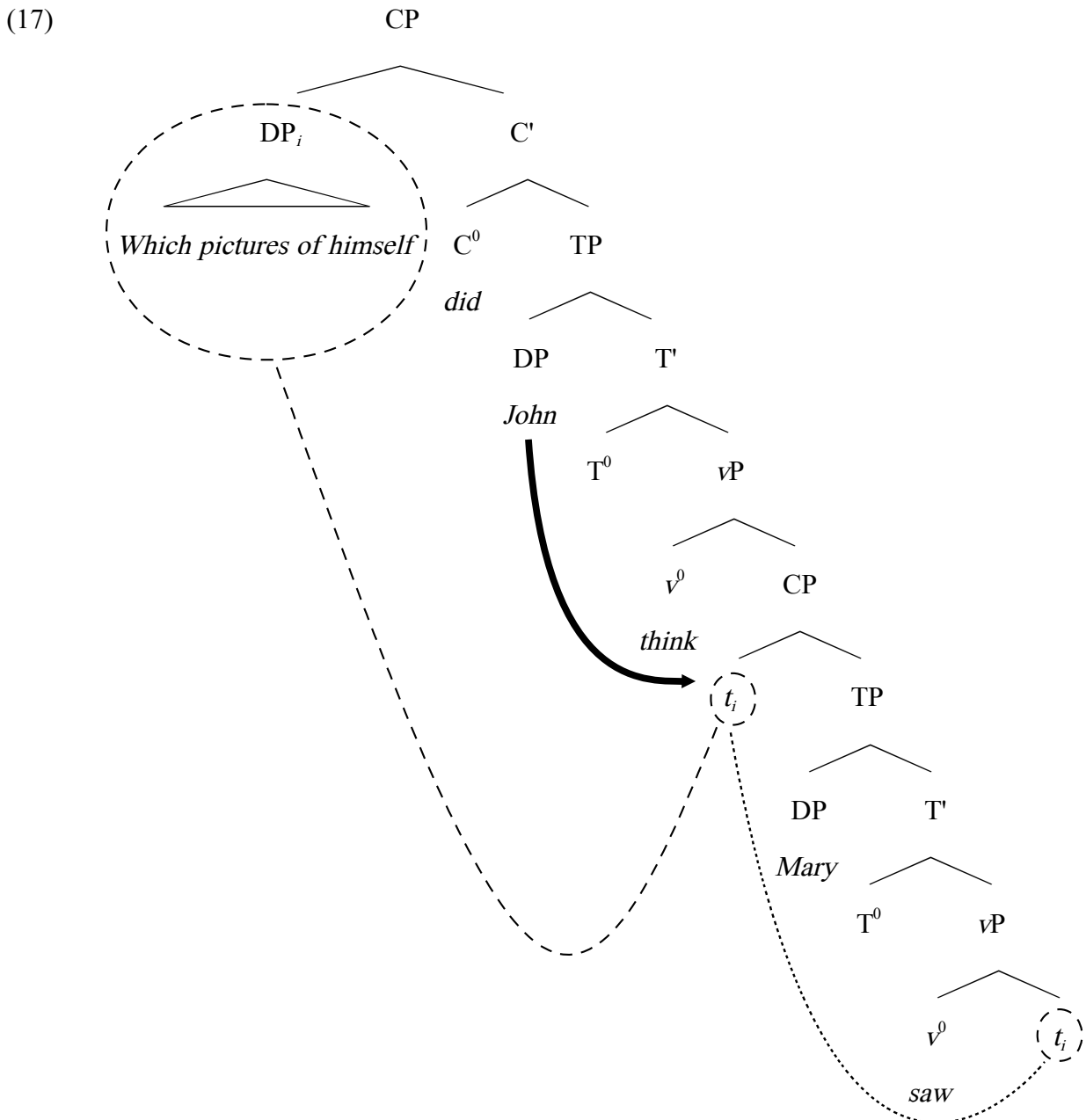
2.2 Anti-identity: intermediate copies?

A'-movement is successive-cyclic:

¹ Admittedly (7) is not the best example, due to the *swam/swum* syncretism for some speakers of English.

- (14) *Which pictures of himself_i did John_i like?*
- (15) *Which pictures of himself_i did John_i think Mary saw?*
- (16) *Which pictures of herself_i did John think Mary_i saw?*

Example (15) shows that the moved *wh*-constituent can be reconstructed into the intermediate SpecCP, as illustrated in (17). (The solid arrow indicates binding.)



As observed by Huang (1993), however, reconstruction into the intermediate SpecCP is not available for VP preposing.

- (18) *(It was common knowledge that John_i would criticize himself_i, but)
criticize himself_i; John_i thinks Mary would not.
(Good: 0, Intermediate: 2, Bad: 10)

- (19) *(We_i'd like to save ourselves_i, and) *save ourselves_i; we_i think Mary can.*
(Good: 0, Intermediate: 1, Bad: 11)

Reconstruction into the base position is, in contrast, acceptable (intermediate judgements here may be due to processing difficulty):

- (20) *(Some say that Mary_i would criticize herself_i, but)
?criticize herself_i; John thinks Mary_i would not.*
(Good: 3, Intermediate: 7, Bad: 2)

- (21) *(We recommended that Mary_i mutter to herself_i, and)
mutter to herself_i; we believe Mary_i did.*
(Good: 8, Intermediate: 4, Bad: 0)

How to account for this data?

- ♣ Contrast between A'-movement (*wh*-phrases) and adjunction (VP preposing)?
 - Nope; see Huang (1993: 108).
- ♣ Contrast between *wh*-movement and other A'-movement?
 - Nope; see Huang (1993: 108).
- ♣ Caused by the presence of a subject trace within the moved category?
 - Nope; see Heycock (1995).
- ♣ Caused by VP preposing not leaving intermediate copies?
 - How and why would this work? Violates everything we know about locality.
- ♣ Caused by VP preposing not being movement-derived?

2.3 Excursus: *what exactly is preposed?*

Classical analysis involves movement of VP (or *vP*). But this can't be the whole story, since some adverbs can be included in what is preposed (see also Dorfman, Leu & Levon 2003).

- (22) *(I hoped the examiners wouldn't completely demolish my thesis, but)
completely demolish my thesis the examiners unfortunately did.*
(Good: 7, Intermediate: 4, Bad: 1)

- (23) *Willingly examined every folio a scholar has.* (Dorfman, Leu & Levon 2003: 5)

Stranded adverbs are heavily dispreferred:

(24) *(You told me that the boat had sunk, and) ?*sunk it had completely.*
(Good: 3, Intermediate: 4, Bad: 5)

(25) *(They feared the tiger was badly injured, and) *injured it was badly.*
(Good: 1, Intermediate: 2, Bad: 9)

Assuming the fixed hierarchy of functional projections in Cinque (1999), and assuming that adverbs do not move, examples like (23) indicate that the preposed constituent can be as large as Mod_{volitional}. However, ‘low’ adverbs can also *precede* the stressed auxiliary in VP preposing constructions (see also Baker 1971, 1981; Sag 1978; Ernst 1983; Abels 2003; Dorfman, Leu & Levon 2003):

(26) *(The Romans were expected to destroy the city, and) destroy the city they quickly did.*
(Good: 8, Intermediate: 3, Bad: 1)

(27) *They (*quickly) have (quickly) destroyed the city.*

(28) *(The Romans were said to have destroyed the city, and)
destroyed the city they almost have.*

(29) *They (*almost) have (almost) destroyed the city.*

If (28) is grammatical, then the extraction site must be smaller than Asp_{prospective}. But this leads to either i) a paradox, or ii) the conclusion that the moved constituent can vary in size. The ungrammaticality of (30) suggests ii).

(30) *(I wasn't sure whether he'd willingly examine the folio critically, but)
willingly examine the folio he critically did.
(Good: 0, Intermediate: 3, Bad: 9)

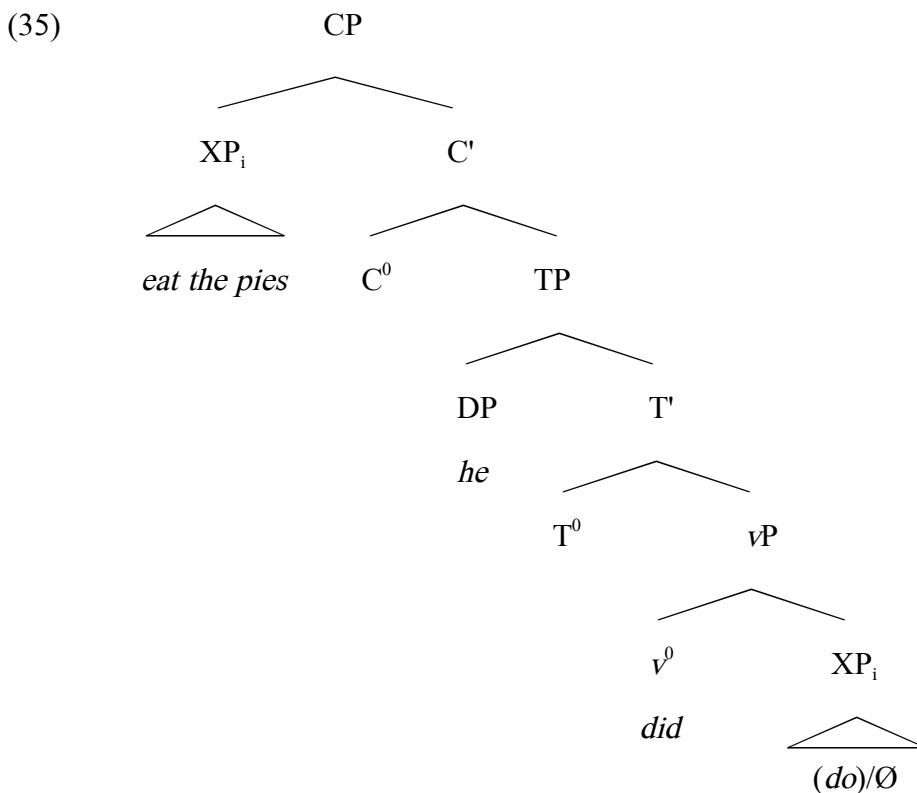
3. Towards a resumption analysis

- One possibility for resolving the problems in 2.1 and 2.2 is to analyse the preposed constituent as base-generated (first Merged) there, binding a resumptive pro-form lower in the tree: a ‘pronominal element which is obligatorily bound and which appears in a position in which, under other circumstances, a gap would appear’ (McCloskey 2007).
 - This resumptive has the properties of a variable.
- What exactly is the pro-form? Two candidates:
 - The stressed auxiliary in v^0 (or thereabouts) is itself a pro-predicate.

- There is a null pro-predicate in the complement of the stressed auxiliary.
 - Evidence from ‘British *do*’, itself a pro-predicate and alternating with zero, favours the latter view at least for my variety:

- (31) Eat the pies he did (do).
 (32) Won a gold medal he had (done).
 (33) Meet me she has (done).
 (34) Swam to shore he had (done).

- The pro-form is therefore either ‘British *do*’ or zero.
- The relationship between the pro-form and the preposed constituent is simply one of (extra-syntactic?) binding/coindexation.



4. Remaining problems and theoretical implications

4.1 Island effects

A resumption analysis, all else being equal, predicts immunity from island constraints: see McCloskey (2007).²

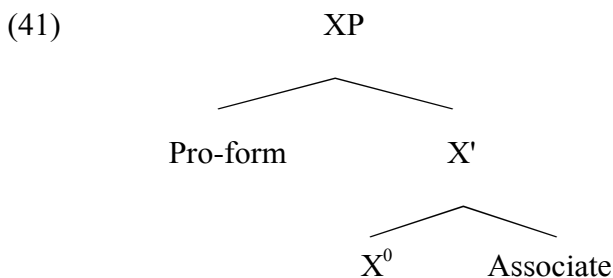
² However, given the existence of Agree, it is in principle possible for non-movement dependencies to be subject to locality constraints (Adger & Ramchand 2005: 167).

- (36) *(As for) Chomsky, I wasn't sure whether to believe the claim that my riddle reached him.*
 (37) *They're the kind of people that you can never be sure whether or not they'll be on time.*

This prediction does not hold for VP preposing, as island effects are found:³

- (38) *(They didn't expect him to sing the national anthem, and)
 ??sing the national anthem I'm not sure whether he did.*
 (Good: 0, Intermediate: 7, Bad: 5)
- (39) *(Sally supposedly wanted to eat cheese, but) *eat cheese I questioned Sally's desire to.*
 (Good: 0, Intermediate: 1, Bad: 11)
- (40) *(Hercules boasted that he had cleared the stables, but)
 cleared the stables we didn't believe the claim that he had.
 (Good: 1, Intermediate: 3, Bad: 8)

This may suggest a movement analysis after all. In fact, a movement account of resumption is given by Felser (2001) for partial *wh*-copying in German, and by Lipták & Vicente (2009) for predicate fronting in Spanish. The common feature of the two is a base-generation structure schematized in (41).



The null head is conceptualized as a ‘relator’ introducing an abstract subject-predicate relationship between the pro-form and its associate (Felser 2001: 29; Lipták & Vicente 2009: 681–682; cf. also the analysis of small clauses in den Dikken 2006).

4.2 Are VP preposing and VP ellipsis the same thing? (Johnson 2001)

- If the nullness of the lower ‘copy’ in VP preposing can’t be interpreted straightforwardly as an instance of chain reduction, then a lot of the appeal of Johnson’s (2001) hypothesis is lost. See also Aelbrecht & Haegeman (2012) for more differences.

³ However, non-island-violating instances are also degraded: see (20) and (21).

4.3 Does VP preposing involve one movement, or multiple movements? (Baltin 2007)

- The answer might be ‘none’.
 - Though the facts with regard to scope, binding, crossover etc. need to be the subject of more research.
- The crucial ‘Pesetsky’s Paradox’ data are highly dubious according to my informants:

(42) (*She said she would visit them on each other’s birthdays, and*)
 *?*visit them she did on each other’s birthdays.*

(Good: 2, Intermediate: 3, Bad: 7)

- See also Vicente (2007):
 - The scope data are highly dubious (2007: 101).
 - The structure lacks the typical intonation of multiple topicalization configurations (2007: 112).
- This type of analysis would leave the Potential Complete VP Constraint (Phillips 2003, Landau 2007), according to which a preposed VP has to be a potential complete VP in its own right, totally unexplained.

5. Summary and conclusions

- English VP preposing is more complicated than it seems.
- Non-identity effects suggest a non-movement account of the relation between a preposed VP and its gap.
- Conceptualizing VP preposing as resumption may be a fruitful way of thinking about the structure – though many questions remain unanswered.

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