Determiner Drop in Vernacular English

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What is the object of study?

(1a) Doctor came to visit us.

(1b) Cat's finally finished her meal.

(1c) Air is too dry.

The determiner on subject NP is dropped

(1a) **Doctor** came to visit us.

(1b) **Cat**'s finally finished her meal.

(1c) **Air** is too dry.

no overt D, despite the fact that these NPs have a definite specific interpretation

truth-conditionally equivalent to:

(2a) **The doctor** came to visit us.

(2b) **The cat**'s finally finished her meal.

(2c) **The air** is too dry.

The determiner on subject NP is dropped

(1a) **Doctor** came to visit us.

(1b) **Cat**'s finally finished her meal.

(1c) **Air** is too dry.

we'll refer to this phenomenon as det-drop

truth-conditionally equivalent to:

(2a) **The doctor** came to visit us.

(2b) **The cat**'s finally finished her meal.

(2c) **The air** is too dry.

Which English?

not restricted to any one regional or ethnic variety of American English

- in the Audio-Aligned and Parsed Corpus of **Appalachian English** (**AAPCAppE**; Tortora et al. 2017)
- Spears (2008) discusses the phenomenon (as *bare nouns*) in **African American English**, using intuitions
- We have them in **NYC English**

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- We have them in **NYC English**

This talk:

- examine the properties of det-drop sentences using corpus data (Part 1) and intuition data (Part 2)

- Part 3: explore an analysis of the properties which

  a) appeals to the concept of clausal truncation

  b) adopts the claim that D is merged in the clausal spine (à la Sportiche 2005)

Part 1: Corpus data (AAPCAppE)

The Audio-Aligned and Parsed Corpus of Appalachian English (AAPCAppE)

HOME PROJECT DESCRIPTION AAPCAPPE INTERVIEWS CITING THE AAPCAPPE NOTES ON THE PARSED PART

NOTES ON THE AUDIO-ALIGNED PART FUNDING ACKNOWLEDGMENTS OUTPUT AND ASSOCIATED PROJECTS

Home

The Audio-Aligned and Parsed Corpus of Appalachian English is a 1-million word corpus of Appalachian English, with two basic components:

- Transcripts which are time-aligned with the speech signal, and fully text-searchable
- A part-of-speech tagged and parsed version of the transcripts which are searchable online using structural queries

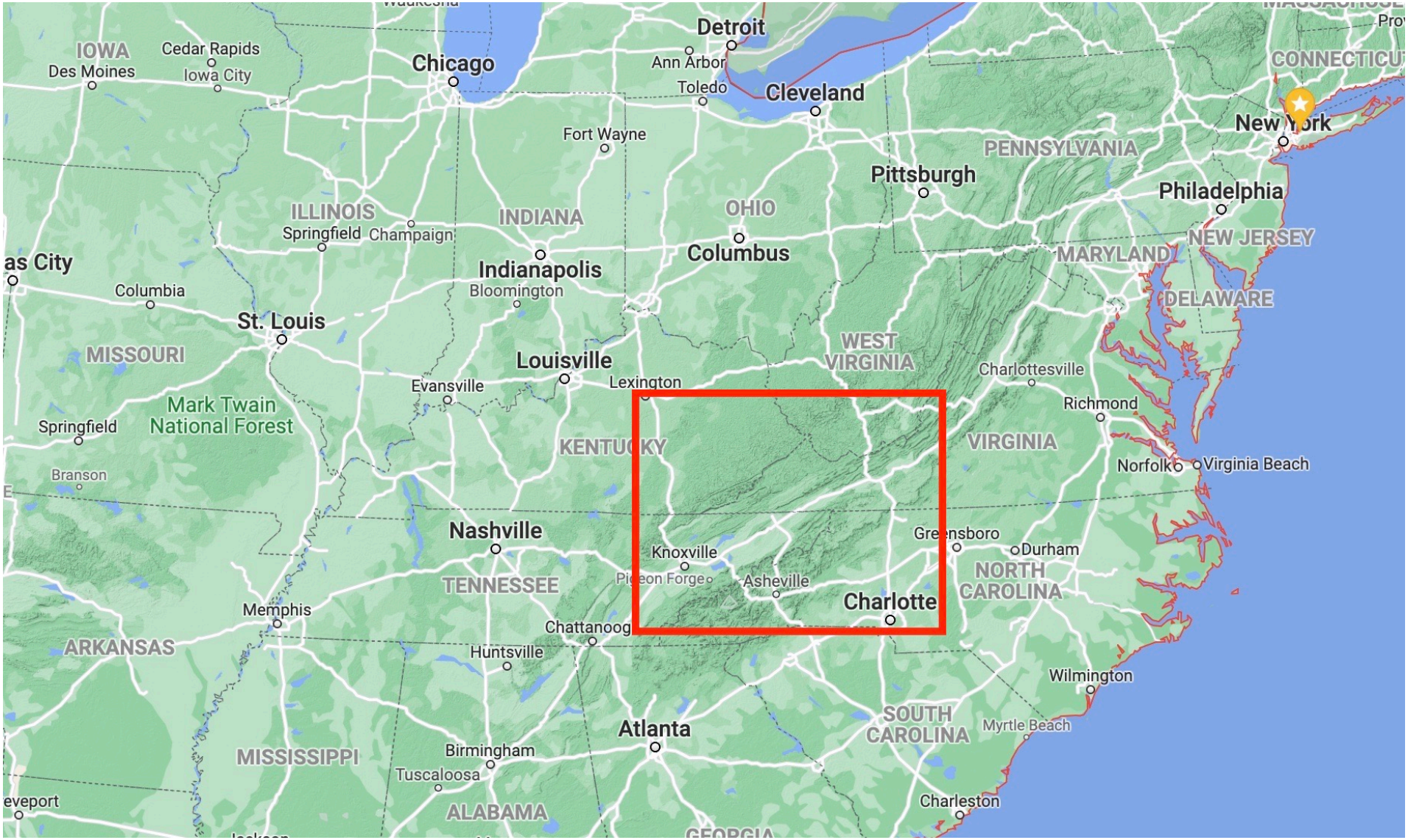
THE USER INTERFACE IS AVAILABLE AT: www.aapcappe.org

~one-million word parsed corpus based on transcribed oral histories collected from around the Southern Appalachian region of the United States

(127,375 sentence tokens)

http://aapcappe.commons.gc.cuny.edu

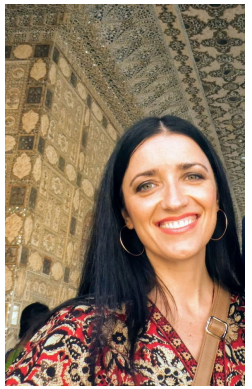
The Southern Appalachians



AAPCAppE co-authors

Tortora, C., B. Santorini, F. Blanchette, & C.E.A Diertani. **2017**.

Frances Blanchette
Penn State



Beatrice Santorini
UPenn

Ariel Diertani
Elemental Cognition

AAPCAppE

aapcappe.org/transcript/AOHP-WS-1/125/

The Audio-Aligned and Parsed Corpus of Appalachian English (AAPCAppE)

What is the AAPCAppE? | How to use this interface | New Tree Search | New Text Search | View Search Results | Edit Token | List of Corpora | Citations | Sign-out | Contact Us

{inaudible} and kept the rent you know.

KW: Mmhmm.

WS: So uh {laughing}

KW: {laughing} So you have a lot of land.

WS: Well I did have. I've done like my daddy. I've d- divide it up to the children.

KW: Mmhmm hmm.

WS: I'd oncet had two hundred and seventy some acres. it's all divided up. and all living at home.

KW: {laughing}

WS: Well I don't know. the children is all a= making their own living you know. all of them got more than I ever had. money {inaudible}.

KW: Yeah.

WS: But you can get money now like it ain't nothing.

KW: {laughing} Uh where did you attend school?

WS: Tamarack. down here. schoolhouse is tore down now. {inaudible}

KW: Mmhmm how long did you go to school?

WS: I was in the seventh grade when I quit. course quit at fifteen years old.

KW: What what were the teachers like back then?

WS: Well they wasn't uh nothing like they are now. they uh wanted you to study and wanted you to learn. and if you didn't they'd uh use the hickory or send you home.

KW: {laughing} Hmm.

WS: They uh that's how=come me to quit. they Charles Hobson was the teacher. {throat-clearing} he got too hard on me. and I wouldn't take it. why I just stayed home. {laughing}

KW: Really? {laughing}

WS: That's right.

KW: {laughing}

Parsed Tree

```
( (IP-MAT (CODE <WS_xmin=448.96>)
      (NP-SBJ (D 0) (N schoolhouse))
      (VP (BEP is)
          (CODE <$$WS_xmax=449.88>)
          (CODE <WS_xmin=450.21>)
          (VP (VAN tore)
              (RP down)
              (ADVP-TMP (ADV now))))
      (PUNC .)
      (CODE <$$WS_xmax=451.3>))
  (ID AOHP_WS_1,.125))
```

PennTreebank method of annotation

Audio File

MP3: 0:00 / 0:00

WAV: AOHP-WS-1,125.wav

TextGrid: AOHP-WS-1,125.TextGrid

AAPCAppE data

(3) **Schoolhouse** is tore down now. AAPCAppE: AOHP-WALTERSOUTH-1,.125

(4) **Train** would go up there too. AAPCAppE: ALC-033-2,.108

(5) **Purpose of the union** was to give miners rights to strike. AAPCAppE: ALC-807-A-2,.250

(6) **Lump of coal**'s all we want. AAPCAppE: SKCTC_MINNIELUNSFORD_1,.263

(7) **Man** said we're gonna know what Hell is like. AAPCAppE: DOHP_ROYCASTLE_3,.376

AAPCAppE det-drop: Numbers

restricted to: **matrix subject NPs**

all examples of det-drop are in **root sentences**

- number of matrix subject NPs with dropped det = **243**
- out of total number of matrix subject NPs with D (overt or covert) = **3,565**
- percent of det-drop = **6.82%**

AAPCAppE data: methods

```
node:   NP-SBJ
query:  (D exists)  AND  NOT
((D idoms  this*|that*|these*|those*|This*|That*|These*|Those*)
AND  NOT (D hasSister  N*))
```

CorpusSearch query to extract subject NPs with D (covert/overt)

```python
def extract_blocks(filename):
    with open(filename, 'r') as file:
        content = file.read()

    blocks = []
    count = 0
    d_count = 0  # Counter for "(D" occurrences

    start_delimiter = "*/"
    end_delimiter = "/~*"

    current_block = ''
    within_block = False
    between_ip_mat_and_vp = False

    lines = content.splitlines()

    for line in lines:
        if start_delimiter in line:
            within_block = True

        if within_block:
            current_block += line + '\n'

            # Count the occurrences of "(D" between "(IP-MAT" and "(VP"
            if "(IP-MAT" in line:
                between_ip_mat_and_vp = True
            elif "(VP" in line:
                between_ip_mat_and_vp = False
            elif between_ip_mat_and_vp and "(NP-SBJ (D " in line:
                d_count += line.count("(NP-SBJ (D ")
            # elif between_ip_mat_and_vp and "(NP-SBJ (D " in line:
            #     d_count += line.count("(NP-SBJ (D ")

        if end_delimiter in line:
            within_block = False
            if current_block:
                blocks.append(current_block)
                count += 1
                current_block = ''

    return blocks, count, d_count


filename = "sbj_total.out"
output_blocks, block_count, d_count = extract_blocks(filename)

for block in output_blocks:
    print(block)

print("Number of blocks:", block_count)
print("Number of times '(D' appears between '(IP-MAT' and '(VP':", d_count)
```

script to extract only matrix subject NPs outputted by corpus search query

AAPCAppE data: summary

- **det-drop phenomenon exists**
- **no evidence of possibility of embedding**

so for example, the following should be ungrammatical:

(8) *I thought union picketed all the time through there.

Part 2: Judgment data

(8) *I thought union picketed all the time through there.

Judgment data

1. **det-drop sentences cannot be embedded**

Judgment data: another property

1. det-drop sentences cannot be embedded

2. det-drop sentences have a discourse function that can be characterized as "no call on the addressee"

Intuitions on interpretation

(9) Mailman doesn't have any experience.

(10) Duck was looking for fish last night.

(11) Dog freaks out every morning.

(12) Guy has never seen *Star Wars*.

(13) Pill worked.

intuitions:

- no hearer is around, **or**
- if hearer is around, they are expected to not respond, **or**
- if hearer is around and does respond, it's typically ***yup*** and nothing more.
- **not felicitous in ongoing dialogue**

Interpretation

Context 1: I see an oversized package crammed into my mailbox, all bent and destroyed. **I can say:**

Mailman doesn't have any experience.

Interpretation

Context 2: I'm discussing the mailman's behavior with my neighbor. I'm telling her that the mailman never respects my mail-hold requests; he never puts the oversized packages on my front stoop; he spills his coffee on my letters... **In support of my observations, my neighbor can corroborate with:**

(*I know!*) *The mailman doesn't have any experience.*

In this case, it would be infelicitous for her to say to me:

**Mailman doesn't have any experience.*

Interpretation: *no call on addressee*

predict det-drop to be incompatible with any discourse particles entailing a *common ground*

particles that entail a *common ground* (= involve of an interlocutor)

- **well** (Jucker 1993)
- **so**
- **it's like**

Interpretation: *no call on addressee*

(14a) *So mailman doesn't have any experience.

(14b) *Well mailman doesn't have any experience

(15a) So the mailman doesn't have any experience.

(15b) Well the mailman doesn't have any experience.

precedents in the literature for the ***no-call-on-addressee*** discourse type?

Other examples of this discourse type

- **Exclamatives:** *What a beautiful day!*

  "Affirmative exclamatives leave Addressee in a position of passive observer whom Speaker let know about her opinion" (Beyssade & Marandin 2019:57)

- **Tenseless imperatives:** *No feeding the animals.*

  "...in many languages a nonfinite or nominalized clause is used to express imperative-like meaning in the absence of an interlocutor" (Portner et al. 2019:4)

Other examples of this discourse type

- **English Written Subject Omission:** *Came on a rainy day.*

  "The speaker/writer is not addressing an external hearer/reader and there is no turn taking" (Haegeman 2019)

- **German root infinitivals:** *Die Bücher auf den Tisch legen!*

  "structural lack of V^0-in-C^0 goes together with lack of grammatically encoded *call on the addressee*" (Gärtner 2016)

- **German V1 narrative declaratives:** *Kommt da plötzlich ein Kerl herein.*

  "V1 declaratives seem to be 'alive' and still used commonly in narrative contexts..." (Önnerfors 1996)

No-call-on-addressee structural properties

- **English Written Subject Omission:** *Came on a rainy day.*
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(16) *Die Bücher auf den Tisch legen!*

the books on the table put.INF

Gärtner 2016: incompatible with common-ground discourse particles

(17) **Die Bücher doch auf den Tisch legen!*

the books MP on the table put.INF

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Looking like English det-drop!

Gärtner 2016: incompatible with common-ground discourse particles

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Haegeman 2019; Gärtner 2016; Önnerfors 1996

Looking like English det-drop!

each author independently shows these structures cannot be embedded

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each author independently argues that the no-call-on-addressee interpretation correlates with clausal truncation

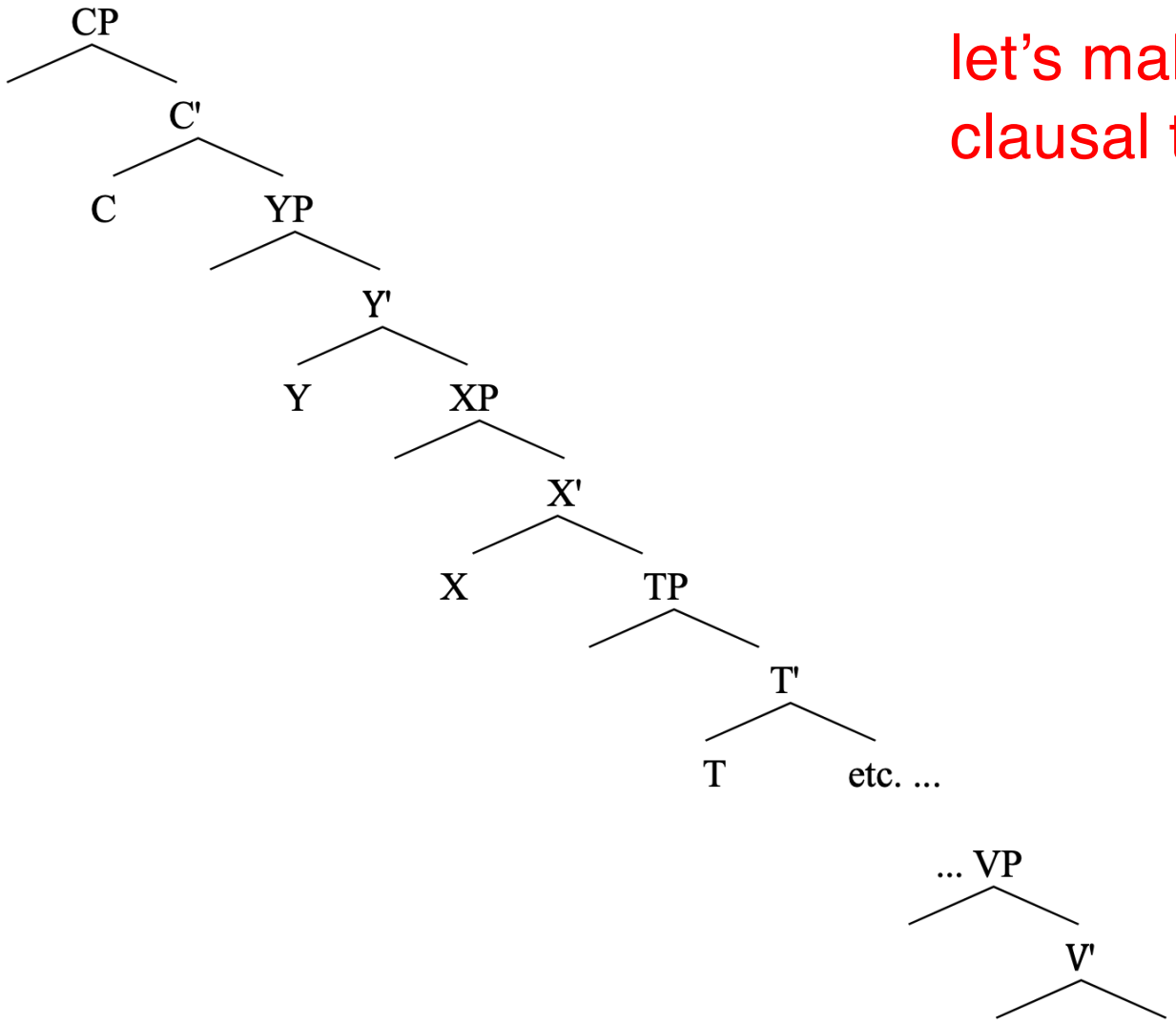
No-call-on-addressee structural properties

- English Subject Omission: *Came on a rainy day.*
- German root infinitivals: *Die Bücher auf den Tisch legen!*
- German V1 narr. declaratives: *Kommt da plötzlich ein Kerl herein.*
- English det-drop: *Mailman doesn't have any experience.*

no-call-on-addressee interpretation correlates with clausal truncation

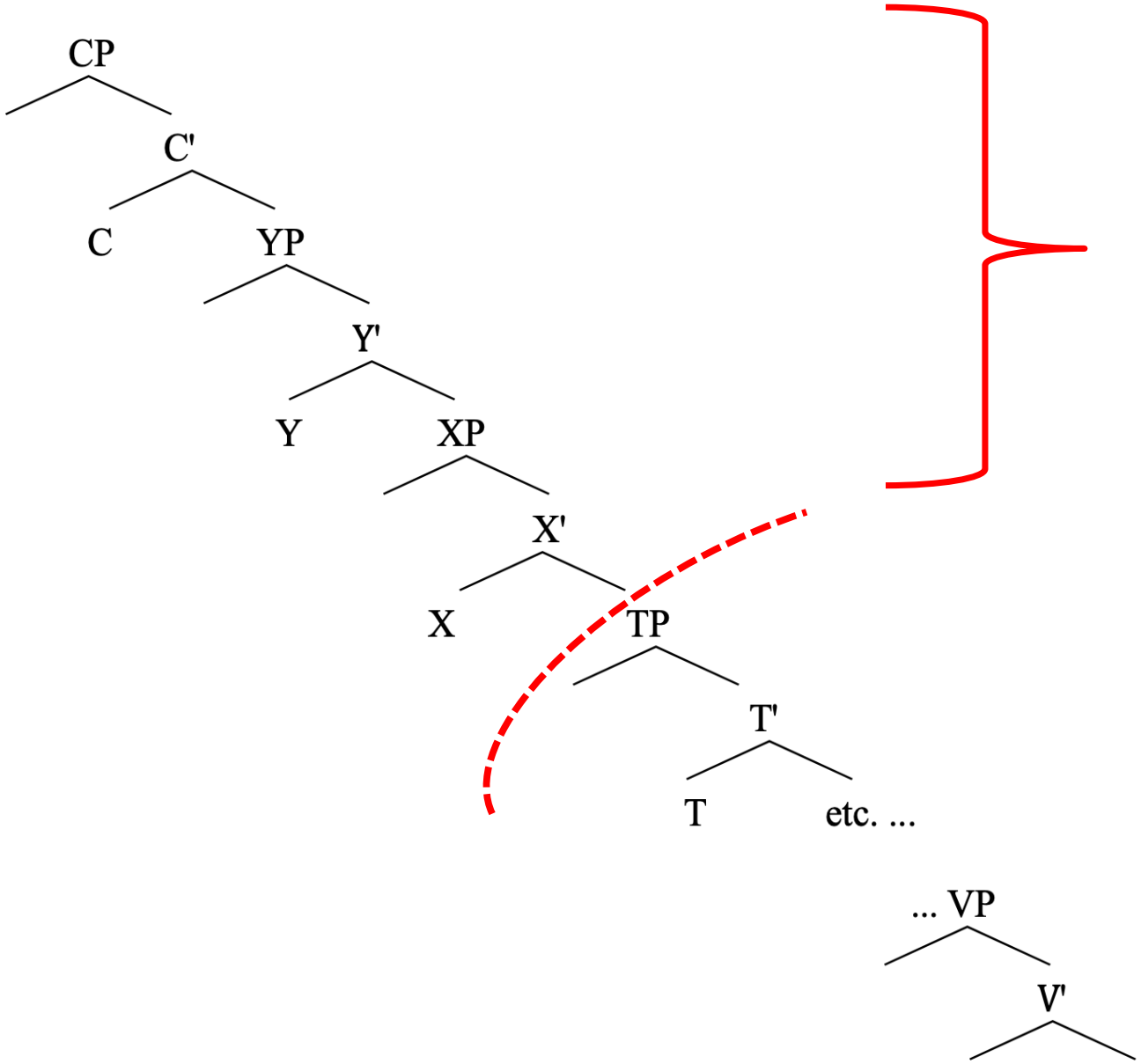
Part 3: Truncation

since English **det-drop** disallows embedding and has a no-call-on-addressee interpretation...



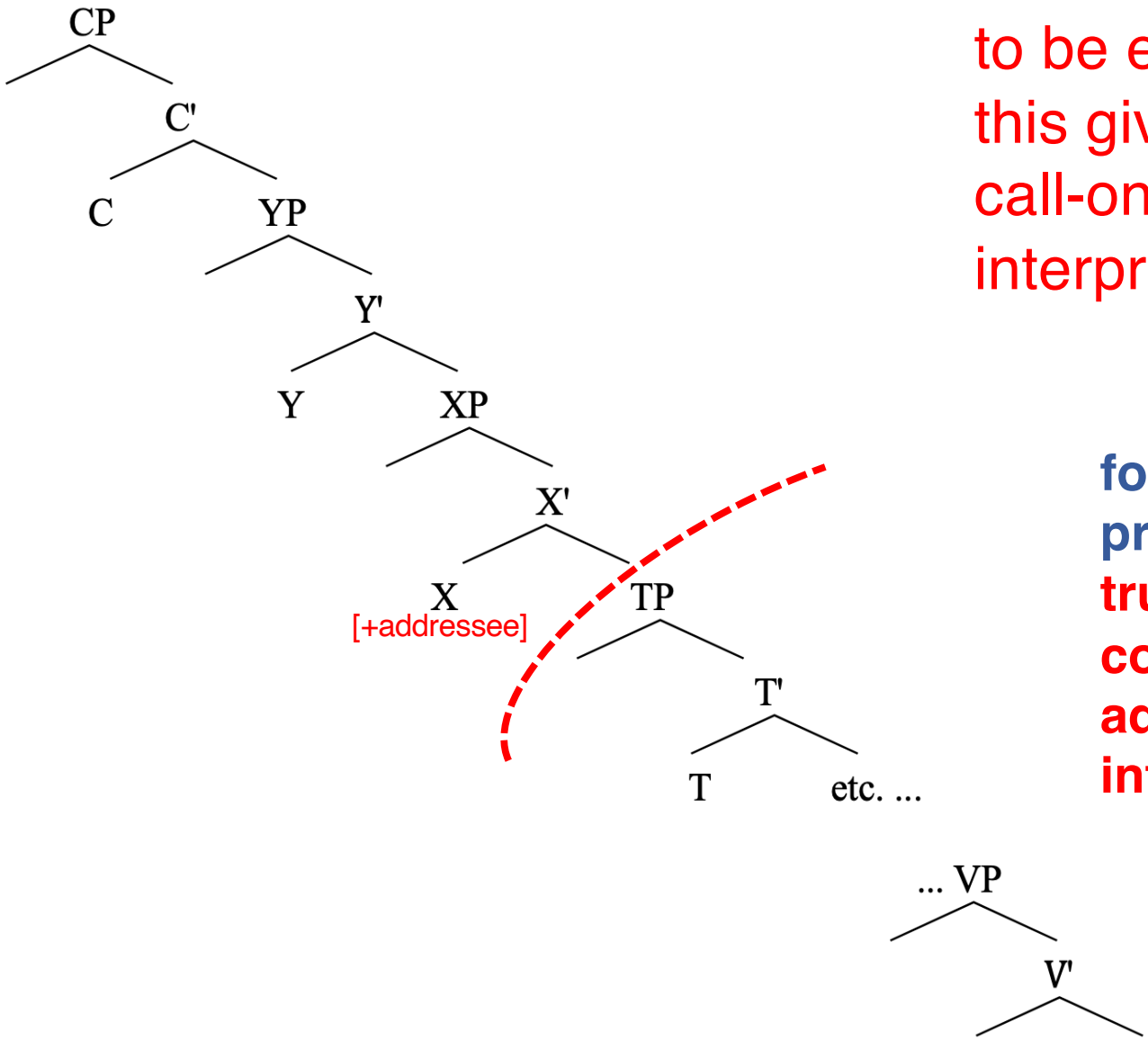
let's make the case for clausal truncation

No call on addressee < truncation



clausal truncation
= lopping off
higher functional
field

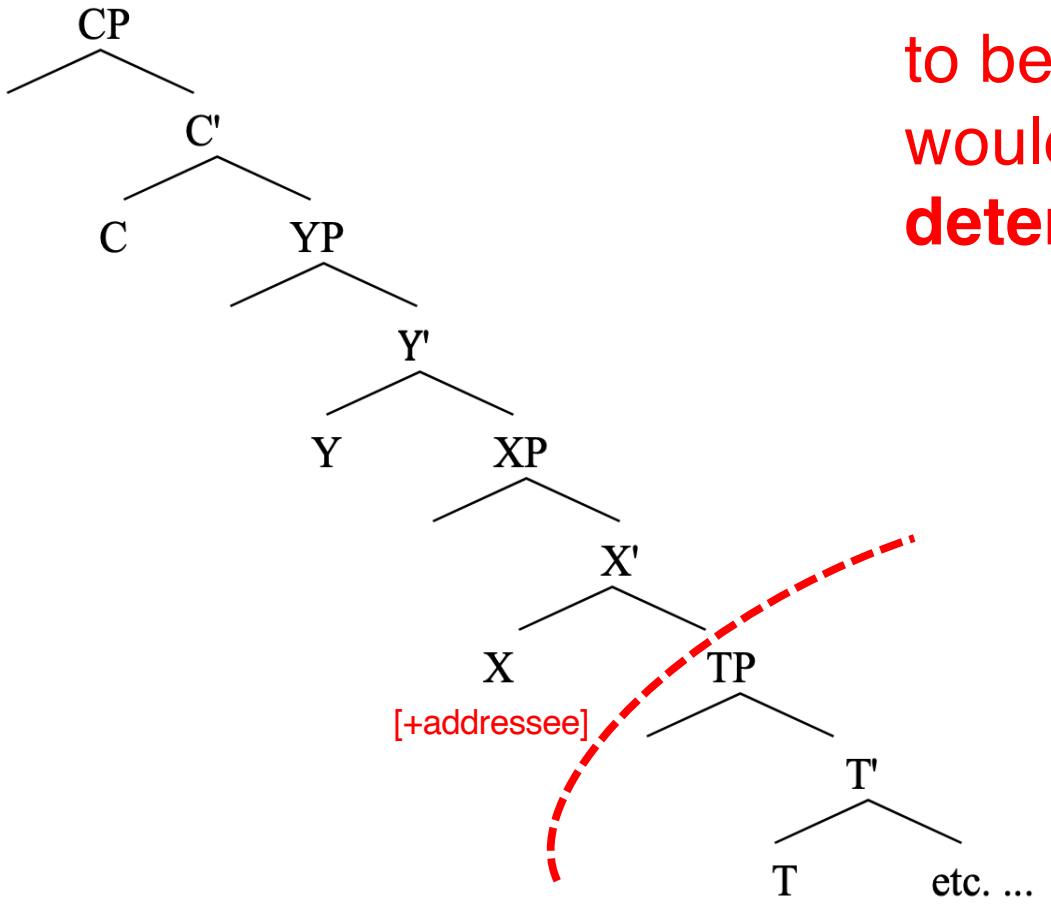
No call on addressee < truncation



to be explained: how this gives the no-call-on-addressee interpretation

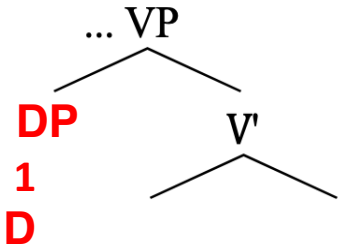
formalizes the intuition of previous authors: truncated structures correlate with no-addressee / narrative interpretation

Determiner drop < truncation?

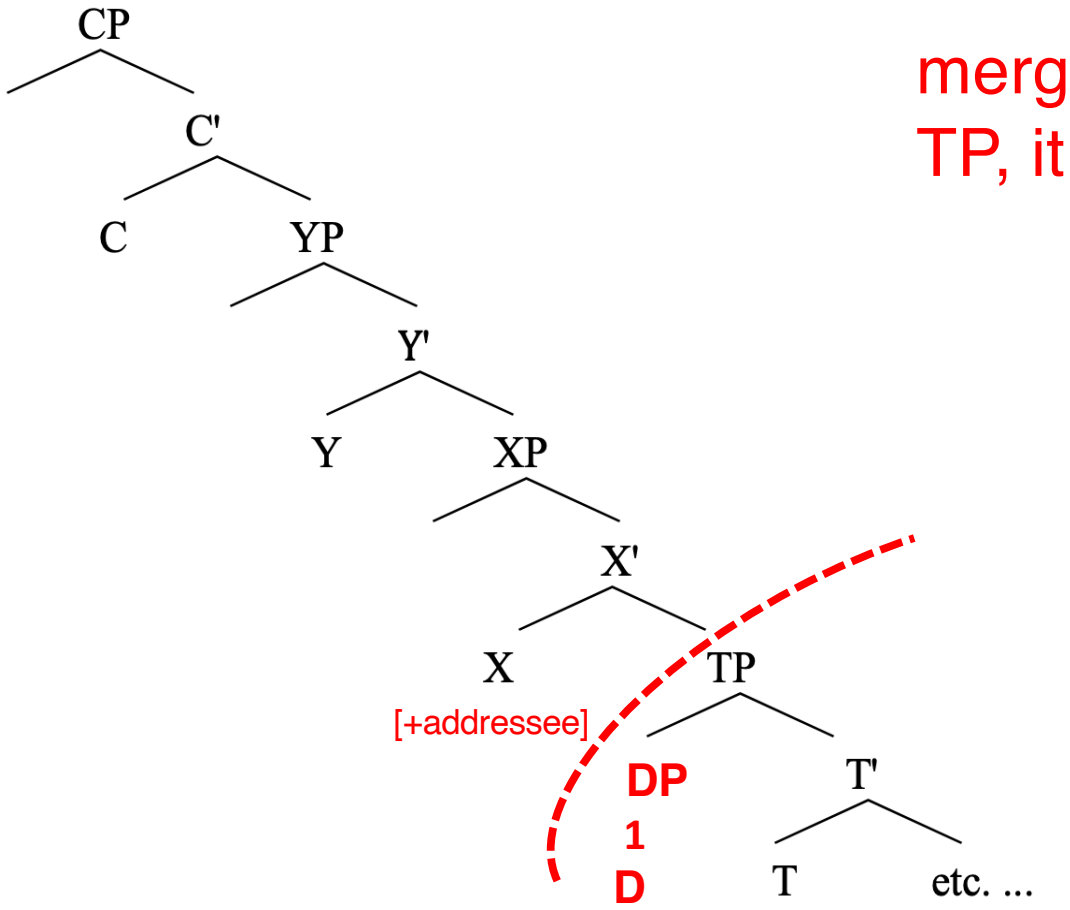


to be explained: why would this entail **determiner drop**?

especially under a theory where the determiner is embedded inside the subject NP?

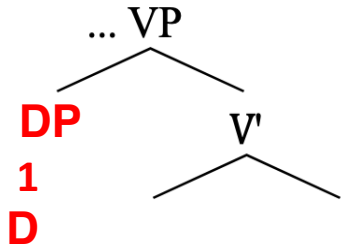


Determiner drop < truncation?

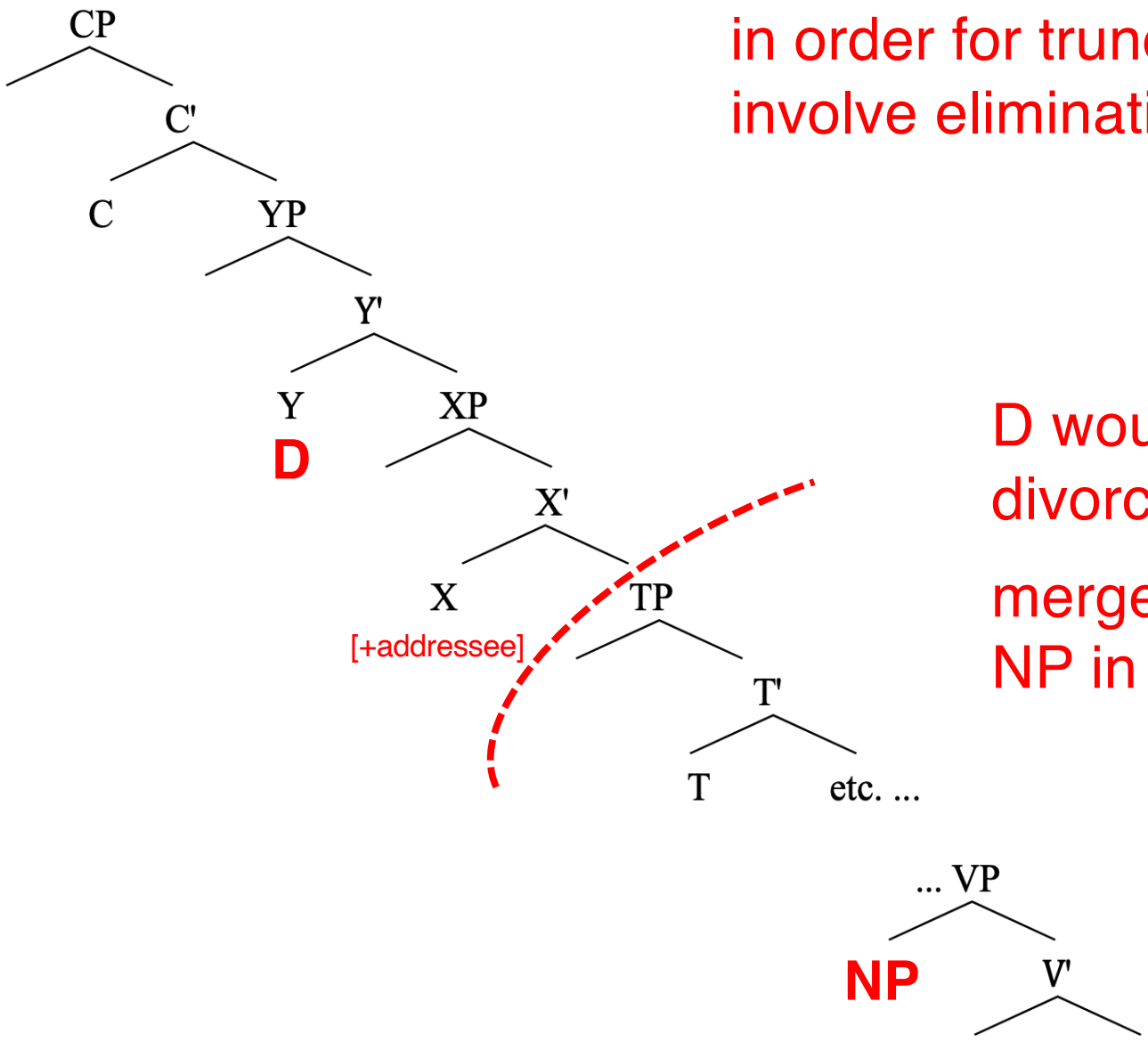


merged inside VP or TP, it wouldn't matter

either way, clausal truncation would leave the D inside of the DP



Determiner drop < truncation?

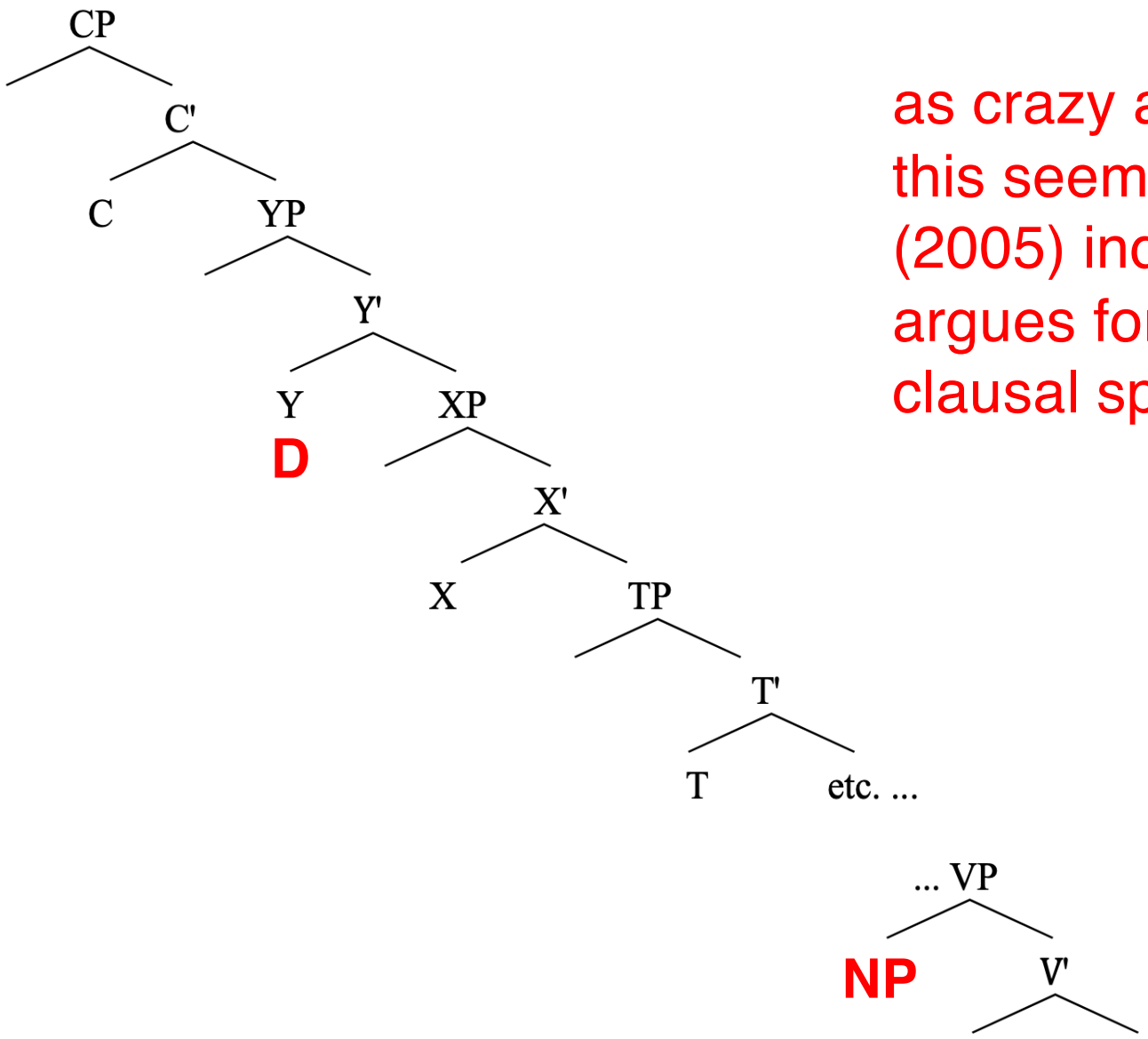


in order for truncation to involve elimination of D...

D would have to be divorced from NP

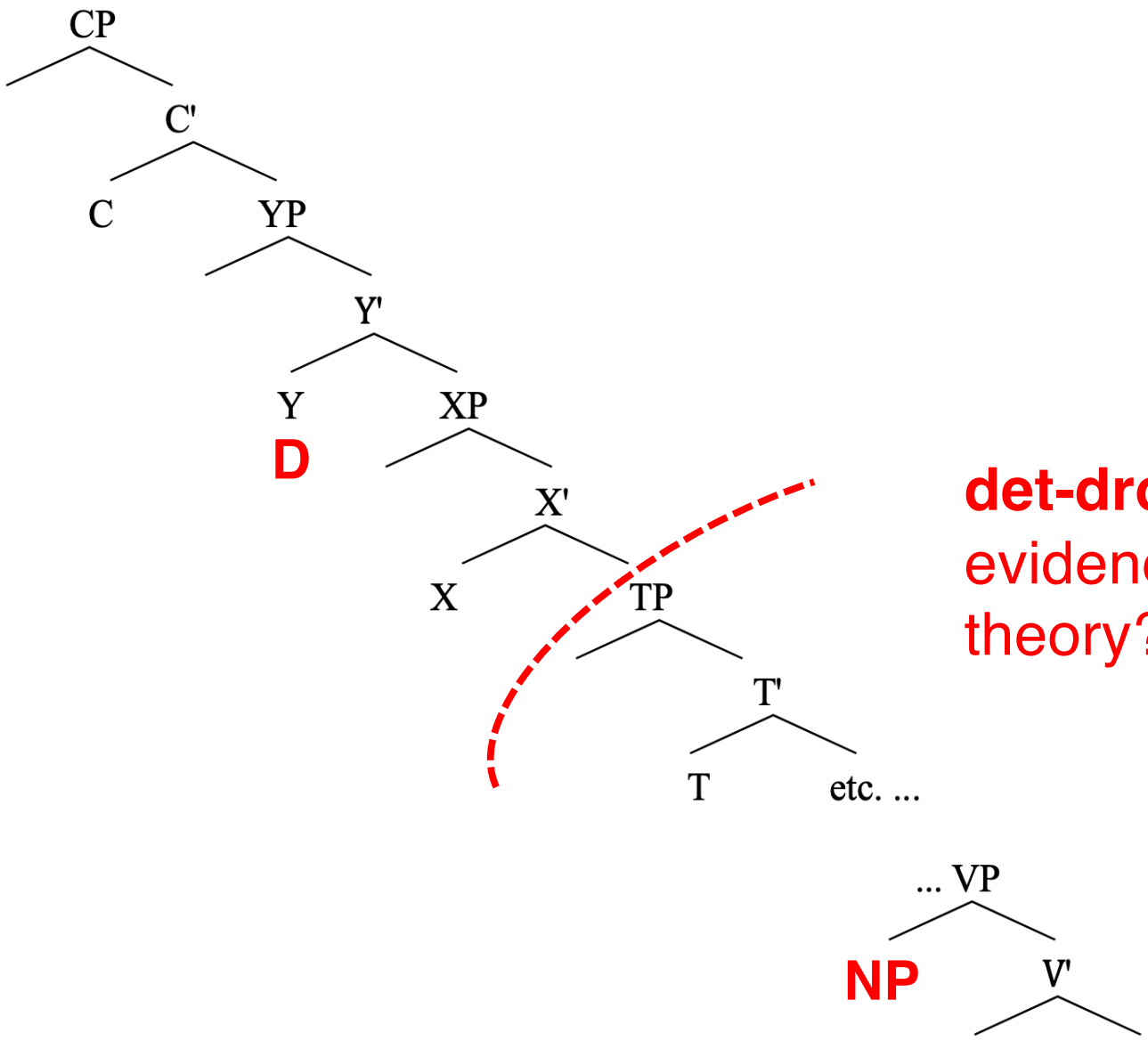
merged independently of NP in the clausal spine

Sportiche (2005)



as crazy as we thought this seemed, Sportiche (2005) independently argues for merge of D in clausal spine

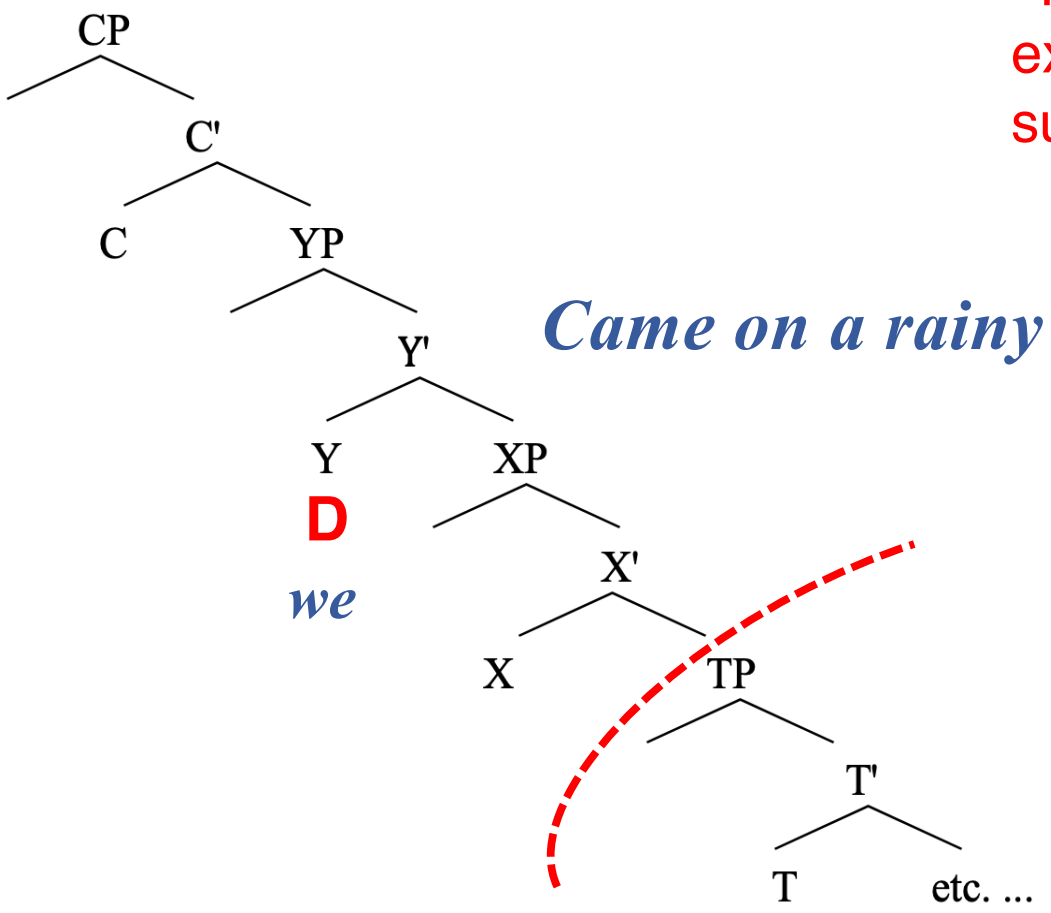
Sportiche (2005)



det-drop a piece of evidence for Sportiche's theory?

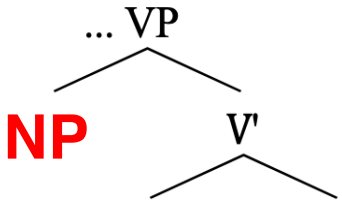
Haegeman (2019)

foreshadowed by Weir (2008:23)
"The initial article ... [drops], in exactly the same fashion as subject pronouns."



Came on a rainy day.

det-drop same phenomenon as Haegeman's subject drop?



Final summary

1. **det-drop sentences cannot be embedded**

2. **det-drop sentences have a discourse function that can be characterized as "no call on the addressee"**

det-drop is evidence for:

clausal truncation in **no-addressee** sentences

det-drop is evidence for:

Sportiche's theory of **D merged in clausal spine**

Final summary

our **det-drop** analysis:

formalizes the intuition that **clausal truncation** correlates with **no-addressee / narrative** sentences

our **det-drop** analysis provides:

a number of **cross-linguistic tie-ins**

Final summary

1. **V1 narrative declaratives in German** (Önnerfors)
2. **Root infinitival sentences in German** (Gärtner)
3. **Subject Drop in English** (Haegeman)
4. **Future work: look at truncated clauses in Hungarian** (Halm 2021)

Many remaining problems to be solved

1. det-drop sentences cannot be embedded
2. det-drop sentences have a discourse function that can be characterized as "no call on the addressee"
3. **det-drop sentences have evidential interpretation**

(30a) The guy's never seen *Star Wars*.

(30b) Guy's never seen *Star Wars*.

THANK YOU!

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- Beatrice Santorini
- Audience at Stony Brook U.

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NEH #HD-51543, 2012-2014

NSF #BCS-1256700

NEH #FB-55760-11

Thank you **REEDS**!

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