What can understudied languages teach us about syntax?

# What can understudied languages teach us about syntax?

today's answer:
more than I can describe in 20 minutes…

some random, anonymized bits of slander:

'...it's a poke in the eye for Chomsky and his stupid theory of universals, which implies that there's no need studying any language but your own because they're all basically the same anyway.'
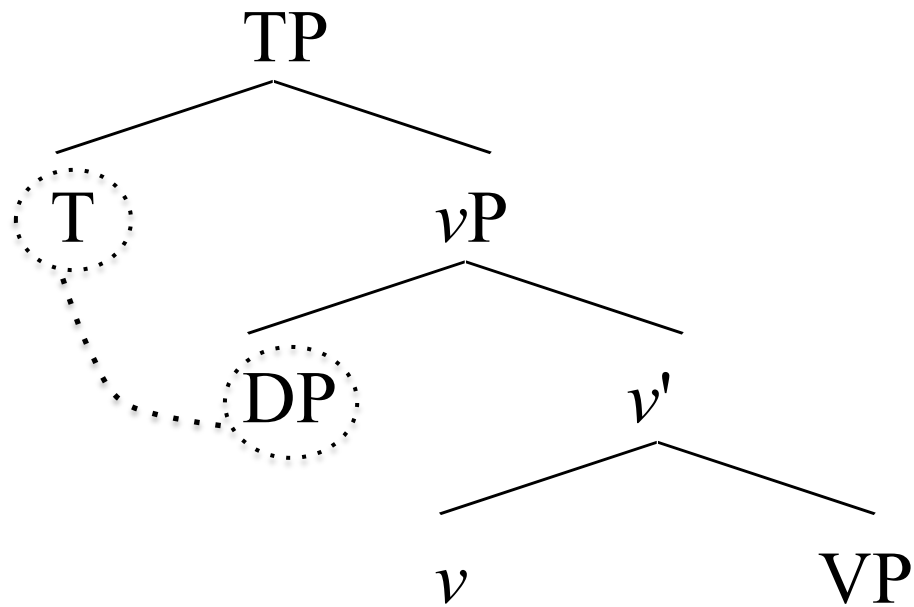
'...most cognitive scientists, linguists included, speak only the familiar European languages...'
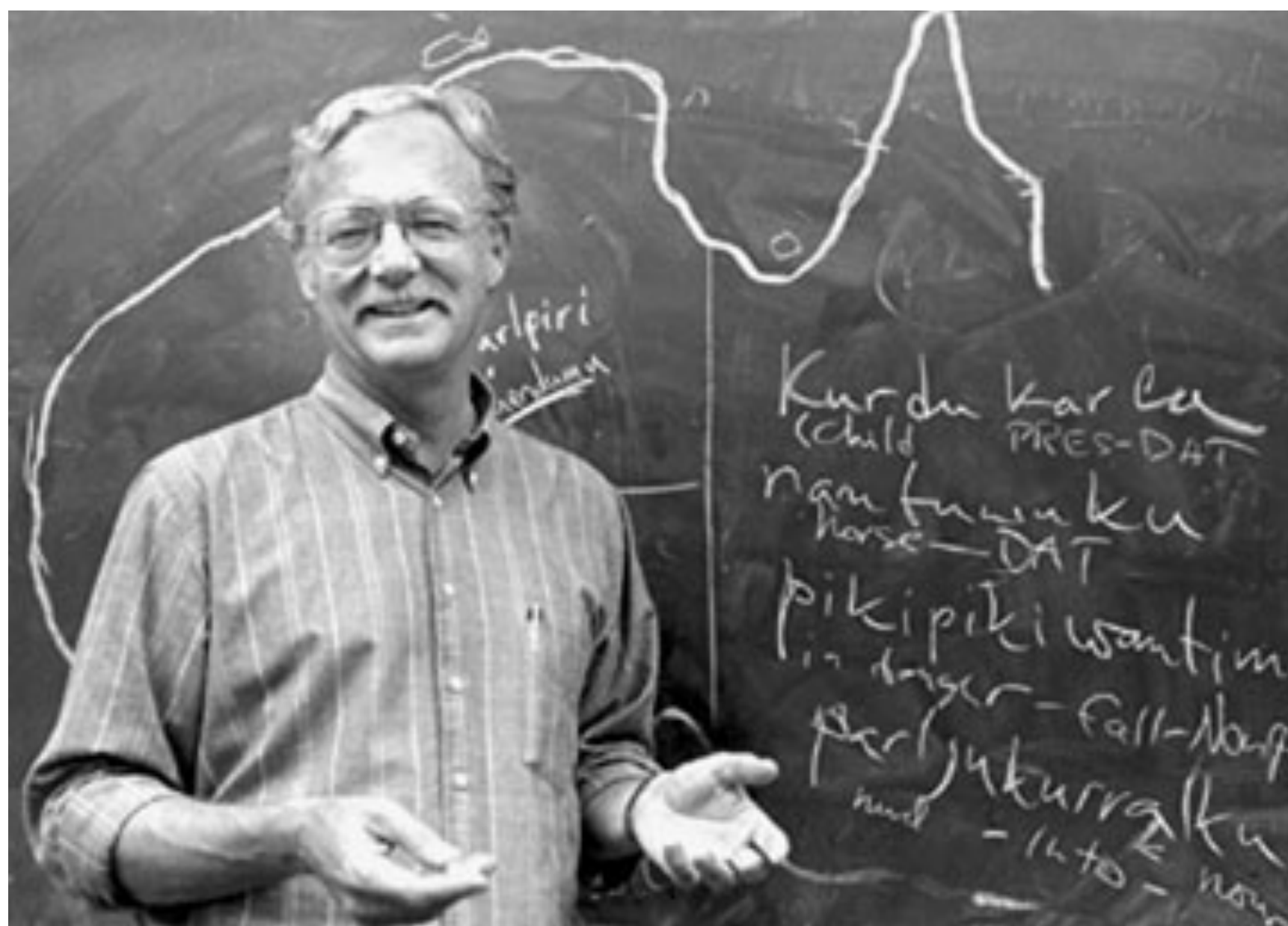
Uyghur Kaqchikel Passamaquoddy

Jingulu Lamnso-Maliseet

Warlpiri Wôpanâak

Atayal Kîsêdjê Zulu Mbya
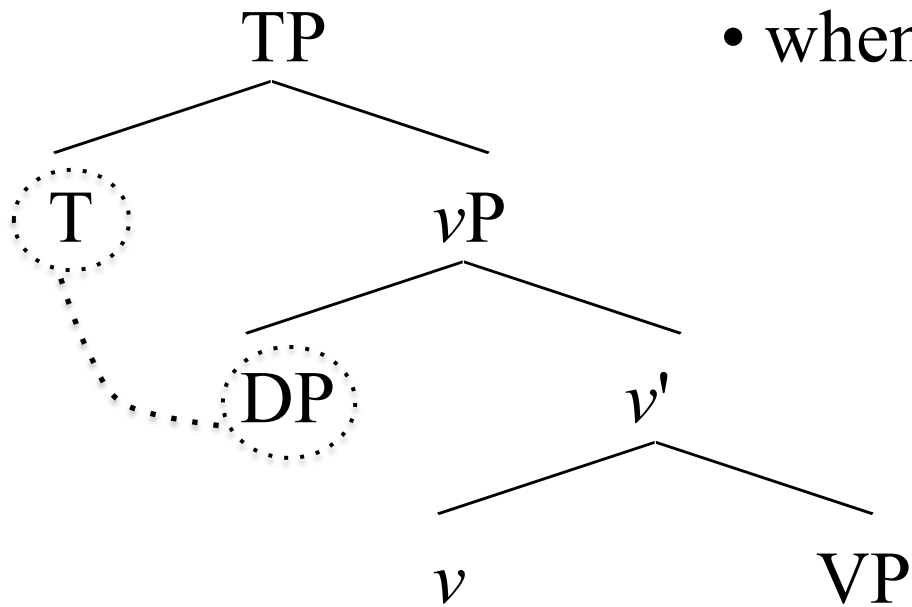
Chol Tlingit

....

An issue for today: Agree

An issue for today: Agree

TP

T

vP

DP

v'

v

VP

• when does this happen?

An issue for today: Agree

TP

T

vP

DP

v'

v

VP
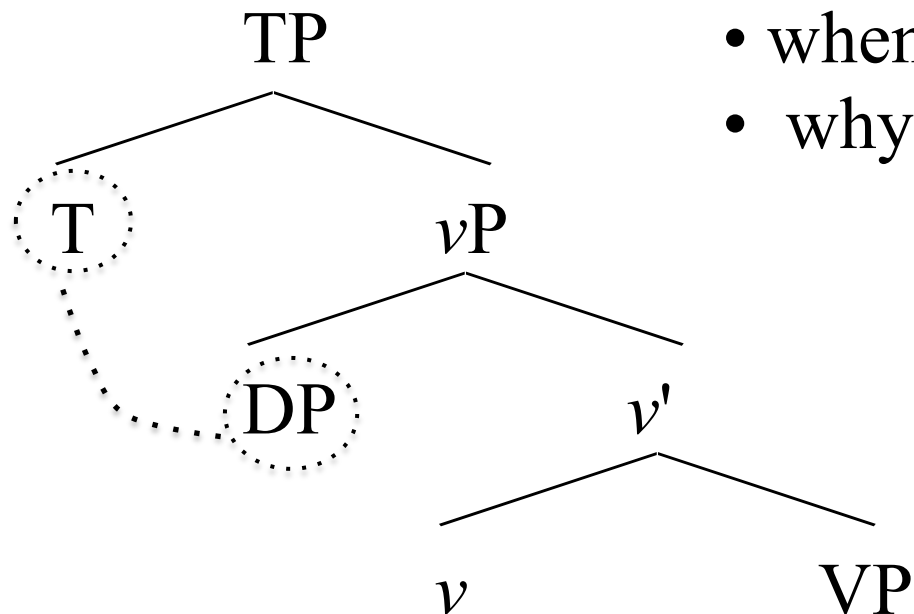
- when does this happen?
- why does it happen?

An issue for today: Agree

TP

T

*v*P

DP

v'

v

VP
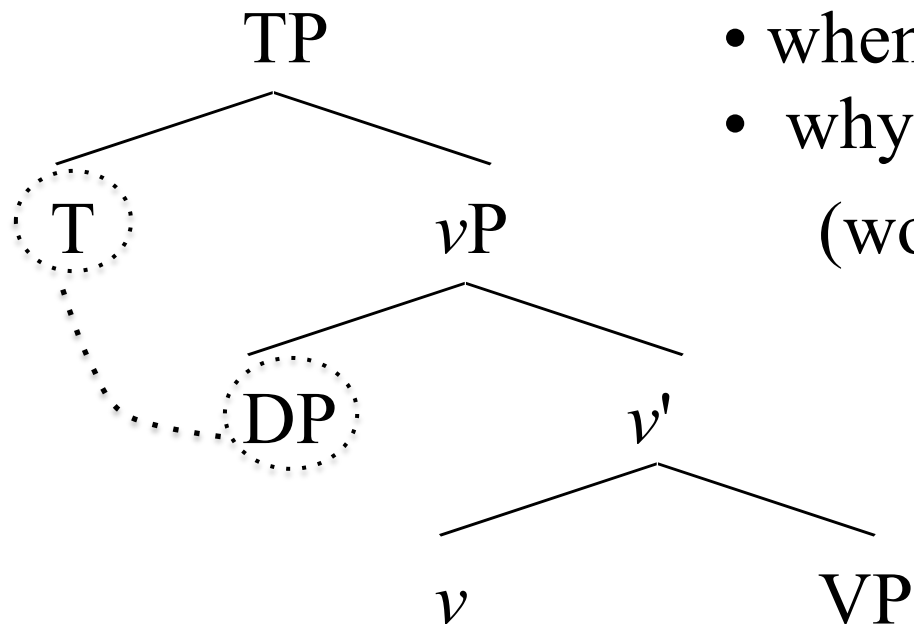
- when does this happen?
- why does it happen?

(would anything bad happen if
it didn't?)

Lardil
(Tangkic, Northern Australia)

Lardil preliminaries

miyar   'spear-NOM'

miyar-in   'spear-ACC'

miyar-kan   'spear-GEN'

miyar-ur   'spear-INSTR'

Lardil preliminaries

miyar   'spear-NOM'
miyar-in   'spear-ACC'
miyar-kan   'spear-GEN'
miyar-ur   'spear-INSTR'

dilmirrur   'dugong'
dilmirrur**u**-n   'dugong-ACC'
dilmirrur**u**-kan   'dugong-GEN'
dilmirrur**u**-r   'dugong-INSTR'

Lardil preliminaries

miyar	'spear-NOM'
miyar-in	'spear-ACC'
miyar-kan	'spear-GEN'
miyar-ur	'spear-INSTR'

dilmirrur	'dugong-NOM'	balibal	'stingray sp.'
dilmirrur**u**-n	'dugong-ACC'	balibal**i**-n	'…-ACC'
dilmirrur**u**-kan	'dugong-GEN'	balibal**i**-kan	'…-GEN'
dilmirrur**u**-r	'dugong-INSTR'	balibal**i**-wur	'…-INSTR'

truncation

Lardil preliminaries

miyar	'spear-NOM'
miyar-i**(n)**	'spear-ACC'
miyar-kan	'spear-GEN'
miyar-ur	'spear-INSTR'

dilmirrur	'dugong-NOM'	balibal	'stingray sp.'
dilmirrur**u**-**(n)**	'dugong-ACC'	balibal**i**-**(n)**	'…-ACC'
dilmirrur**u**-kan	'dugong-GEN'	balibal**i**-kan	'…-GEN'
dilmirrur**u**-r	'dugong-INSTR'	balibal**i**-wur	'…-INSTR'

truncation

Lardil preliminaries

miyar	'spear-NOM'
miyar-i**(n)**	'spear-ACC'
miyar-kan	'spear-GEN'
miyar-u**(r)**	'spear-INSTR'

dilmirrur	'dugong-NOM'	balibal	'stingray sp.'
dilmirrur**u**-**(n)**	'dugong-ACC'	balibal**i**-**(n)**	'…-ACC'
dilmirrur**u**-kan	'dugong-GEN'	balibal**i**-kan	'…-GEN'
dilmirrur**u**-**(r)**	'dugong-INSTR'	balibal**i**-wu**(r)**	'…-INSTR'

truncation

Lardil preliminaries

miyar	'spear-NOM'
miyar-i**(n)**	'spear-ACC'
miyar-kan	'spear-GEN'
miyar-u**(r)**	'spear-INSTR'

- we discover underlying forms by adding inflection

- inflection is **sometimes null**

dilmirrur	'dugong-NOM'	balibal	'stingray sp.'
dilmirrur**u**-**(n)**	'dugong-ACC'	balibal**i**-**(n)**	'…-ACC'
dilmirrur**u**-kan	'dugong-GEN'	balibal**i**-kan	'…-GEN'
dilmirrur**u**-**(r)**	'dugong-INSTR'	balibal**i**-wu**(r)**	'…-INSTR'

truncation

Lardil concord processes

• DP-internal

Ngada derlde marun-ngan-**i** miyar-**i**

I   break boy-GEN-**ACC** spear-**ACC**

'I broke the boy's spear'

Lardil concord processes

• DP-internal

Ngada derlde marun-ngan-**i** miyar-**i**
I   break boy-GEN-**ACC** spear-**ACC**
'I broke the boy's spear'

Marun-ngan miyar derlde-e
boy-GEN   spear break-PASS
'The boy's spear was broken'

Lardil concord processes

• DP-internal

Ngada derlde marun-ngan-**i** miyar-**i**
I   break boy-GEN-**ACC** spear-**ACC**
'I broke the boy's spear'

Marun-ngan miyar derlde-e
boy-GEN   spear break-PASS
'The boy's spear was broken'

Derlde-wala marun-ngan miyar
break-just   boy-GEN   spear
'Just break the boy's spear'

3rd person objects of imperatives are NOM

Lardil concord processes

• DP-internal

Nyingki kurri thungal-**i** [ngithun-**i**   kirdi-thuru-**Ø**]
you   see   tree-**ACC**   I.GEN-**ACC** cut-FUT-**ACC**
'You saw the tree which I will cut down'

Lardil concord processes

• DP-internal

Nyingki kurri thungal-**i** [ngithun-**i**   kirdi-thuru-**Ø**]
you   see   tree-**ACC**   I.GEN-**ACC** cut-FUT-**ACC**
'You saw the tree which I will cut down'

Kurri-wala thungal [ngithun kirdi-thur]
see-just   tree   I.GEN   cut-FUT
'Just look at the tree which I will cut down'

Lardil concord processes

- DP-internal
- Tense concord

Ngada nguthungu warnawu liban-**i**

I   slowly   cook   pumpkinhead-**ACC**

'I slowly cooked the pumpkinhead'

Lardil concord processes

- DP-internal
- Tense concord

Ngada nguthungu warnawu liban-**i**

I   slowly   cook   pumpkinhead-**ACC**

'I slowly cooked the pumpkinhead'

Ngada nguthunguthu-**r** warnawu-**thur** liban-**kur**

I   slowly-**FUT**   cook-**FUT**   pumpkinhead-**FUT**

'I will slowly cook the pumpkinhead'

Lardil concord processes

- DP-internal
- Tense concord

Ngada netha yak-**in** birnkil-ur
I   hit   fish-**ACC** fishing.spear-INSTR
'I hit the fish with a fishing spear'

Lardil concord processes

- DP-internal
- Tense concord

Ngada netha yak-**in**   birnkil-ur

I   hit   fish-**ACC** fishing.spear-INSTR

'I hit the fish with a fishing spear'

Ngada ne-**thur** yak-**ur**   birnkil-uru-**r**

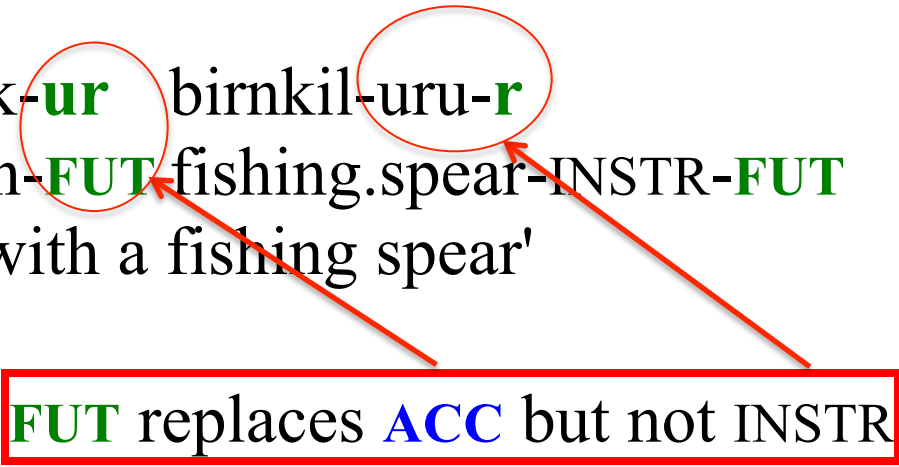I   hit-**FUT** fish-**FUT** fishing.spear-INSTR-**FUT**

'I will hit the fish with a fishing spear'

Lardil concord processes

- DP-internal
- Tense concord

Ngada netha yak-**in**   birnkil-ur
I   hit   fish-**ACC** fishing.spear-INSTR
'I hit the fish with a fishing spear'

Ngada ne-**thur** yak-**ur**   birnkil-uru-**r**
I   hit-**FUT** fish-**FUT** fishing.spear-INSTR-**FUT**
'I will hit the fish with a fishing spear'

FUT replaces **ACC** but not INSTR

Lardil concord processes

We really do want to think of FUT as 'replacing' ACC:

Ngada kurri-**thur** karnjin-**kur**
I   see-**FUT**   wallaby-**FUT**
   [ngithun thabuji-kan-**i**   la-tharrba-**Ø**]
     my   older.brother-GEN-**ACC** spear-NONFUT-**ACC**
'I want to see the wallaby
    that my older brother speared'
    (Hale 1997, 44)

Lardil concord processes

We really do want to think of FUT as 'replacing' ACC:

Ngada kurri-**thur** karnjin-**kur**
I   see-**FUT**   wallaby-**FUT**
    [ngithun thabuji-kan-**i**   la-tharrba-**Ø**]
      my   older.brother-GEN-**ACC** spear-NONFUT-**ACC**
'I want to see the wallaby
    that my older brother speared'
    (Hale 1997, 44)

    → FUT doesn't spread to relative clause,
             so we see the underlying ACC there.

Lardil concord processes

We really do want to think of FUT as 'replacing' ACC…

…just when FUT is assigned <u>after</u> ACC:

Kangka-wala marun   [luuli-thur]!

tell-just   boy.NOM dance-FUT

'Just tell the boy to dance!'

Lardil concord processes

We really do want to think of FUT as 'replacing' ACC…

   …just when FUT is assigned <u>after</u> ACC:

Kangka-wala marun   [luuli-thur]!
tell-just   boy.NOM dance-FUT
'Just tell the boy to dance!'

Ngada kangka marun-**i** [luuli-thuru-**Ø**]
I   tell   boy-**ACC** dance-FUT-**ACC**
'I told the boy to dance'

Lardil concord processes

We really do want to think of FUT as 'replacing' ACC…
　　　…just when FUT is assigned <u>after</u> ACC:

Kangka-wala marun   [luuli-thur]!
tell-just   boy.NOM dance-FUT
'Just tell the boy to dance!'

Ngada kangka marun-**i** [luuli-**thuru**-**Ø**]   **FUT**-**ACC**
I   tell   boy-**ACC** dance-**FUT**-**ACC**
'I told the boy to dance'

Ngada kurri-**thur** karnjin-**kur**   ~~**ACC**~~-**FUT**
I   see-**FUT**   wallaby-**FUT**
'I want to see the wallaby'

Lardil concord processes

We really do want to think of FUT as 'replacing' ACC…

    …just when FUT is assigned <u>after</u> ACC:

Ngada kangka marun-**i** [luuli-**thuru**-**Ø**]   **FUT**-**ACC**
I   tell   boy-**ACC** dance-**FUT**-**ACC**
'I told the boy to dance'

Ngada kurri-**thur** karnjin-**kur**   ~~**ACC**~~-**FUT**
I   see-**FUT**   wallaby-**FUT**
'I want to see the wallaby'

ACC assigned *before* **FUT** Tense concord.

Lardil concord processes

We really do want to think of FUT as 'replacing' ACC…

    …just when FUT is assigned <u>after</u> ACC:

Ngada kangka marun-**i** [luuli-**thuru-Ø**]   **FUT-ACC**
I   tell   boy-**ACC** dance-**FUT-ACC**
'I told the boy to dance'

Ngada kurri-**thur** karnjin-**kur**   ~~**ACC**~~-**FUT**
I   see-**FUT**   wallaby-**FUT**
'I want to see the wallaby'

ACC assigned *before* **FUT** Tense concord.
    ...so when does Tense concord take place?

The timing of Lardil concord

Lardil concord happens in the narrow syntax.

The timing of Lardil concord

Lardil concord happens in the narrow syntax.
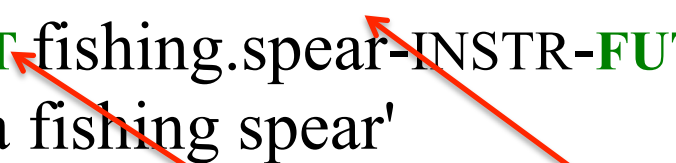
       two arguments:
- sensitive to semantics of case
- bleeding relations with movement operations

The timing of Lardil concord

Lardil concord happens in the narrow syntax.
- sensitive to semantics of case

Ngada ne-**thur** yak-**ur**   birnkil-uru-**r**
I   hit-**FUT** fish-**FUT** fishing.spear-INSTR-**FUT**
'I will hit the fish with a fishing spear'

FUT replaces **ACC** but not INSTR

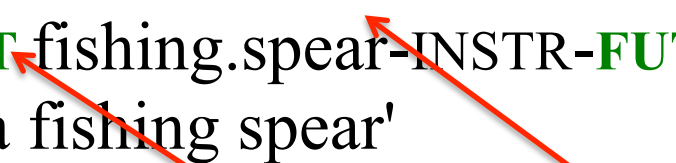…more generally, doesn't replace *meaningful* cases.
→ semantics-morphology interface=syntax.

The timing of Lardil concord
Lardil concord happens in the narrow syntax.
- sensitive to semantics of case

Ngada ne-**thur** yak-**ur** birnkil-uru-**r**
I hit-**FUT** fish-**FUT** fishing.spear-INSTR-**FUT**
'I will hit the fish with a fishing spear'

FUT replaces **ACC** but not INSTR

Anna pišet pis'mo ručkoi. [*Russian*]
Anna writes letter.**ACC** pen.INSTR

Anna **ne** pišet pis'm**a** ručkoi.
Anna not writes letter.**GEN** pen.INSTR

The timing of Lardil concord

Lardil concord happens in the narrow syntax.

- sensitive to semantics of case
- bleeding relations with movements:

Ngawa be-**thur** bidngen-**kur**

dog bite-**FUT** woman-**FUT**

'The dog will bite the woman'

The timing of Lardil concord

Lardil concord happens in the narrow syntax.

- sensitive to semantics of case
- bleeding relations with movements:

Ngawa be-**thur** bidngen-**kur**

dog bite-**FUT** woman-**FUT**

'The dog will bite the woman'

Bidngen be-yi-**thur**.   Concord bled by passive

woman bite-PASS-**FUT**

'The woman will be bitten'

The timing of Lardil concord

Lardil concord happens in the narrow syntax.

- sensitive to semantics of case
- bleeding relations with movements:

Ngawa be-**thur** bidngen-**kur**

dog bite-**FUT** woman-**FUT**

'The dog will bite the woman'

Bidngen be-yi-**thur**.
woman bite-PASS-**FUT**
'The woman will be bitten'

Concord bled by passive

Ngajurdangkar ngawa be-**thur**?
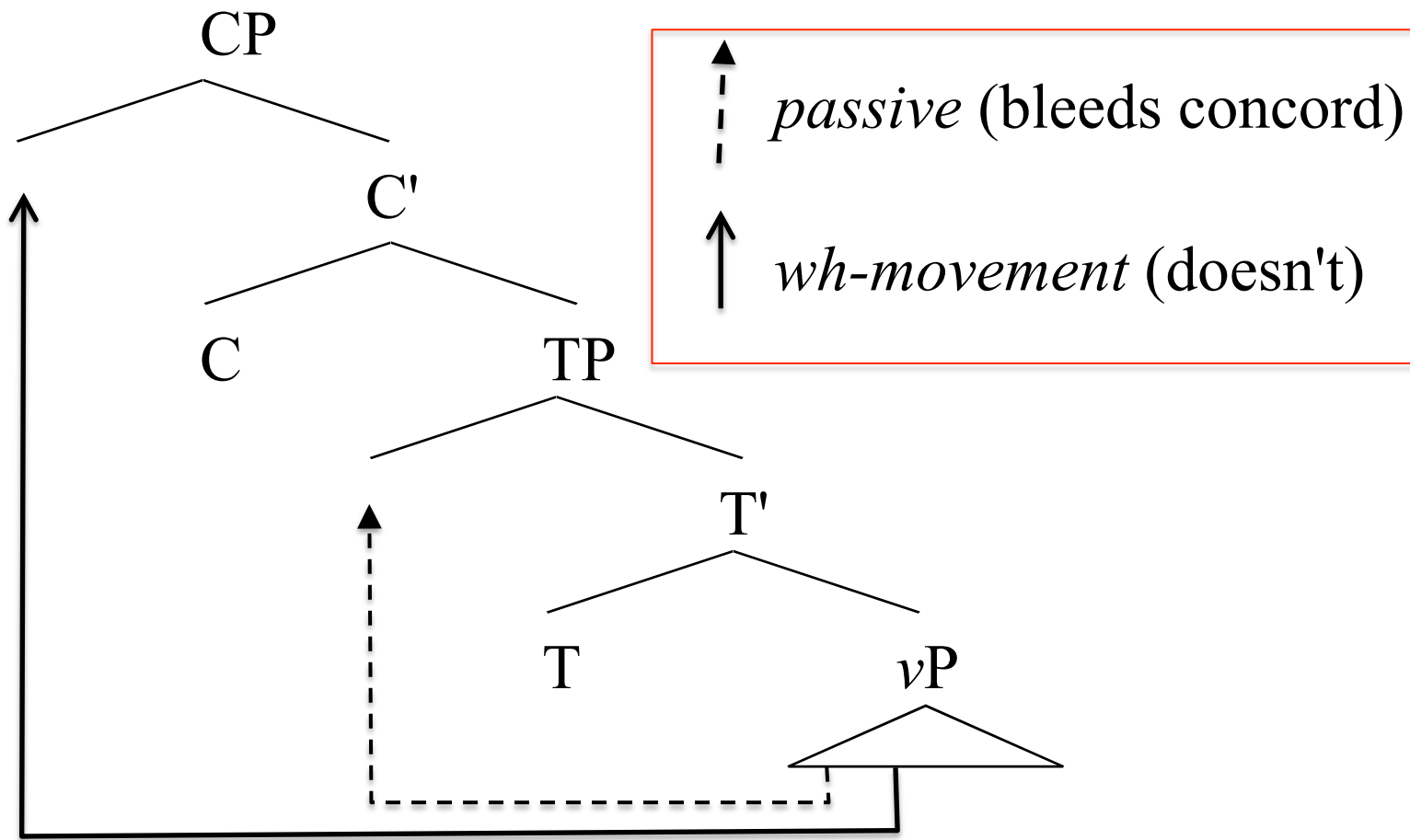**who.FUT** dog bite-**FUT**
'Who will the dog bite?'

…but not by wh-mvmt.

The timing of Lardil concord

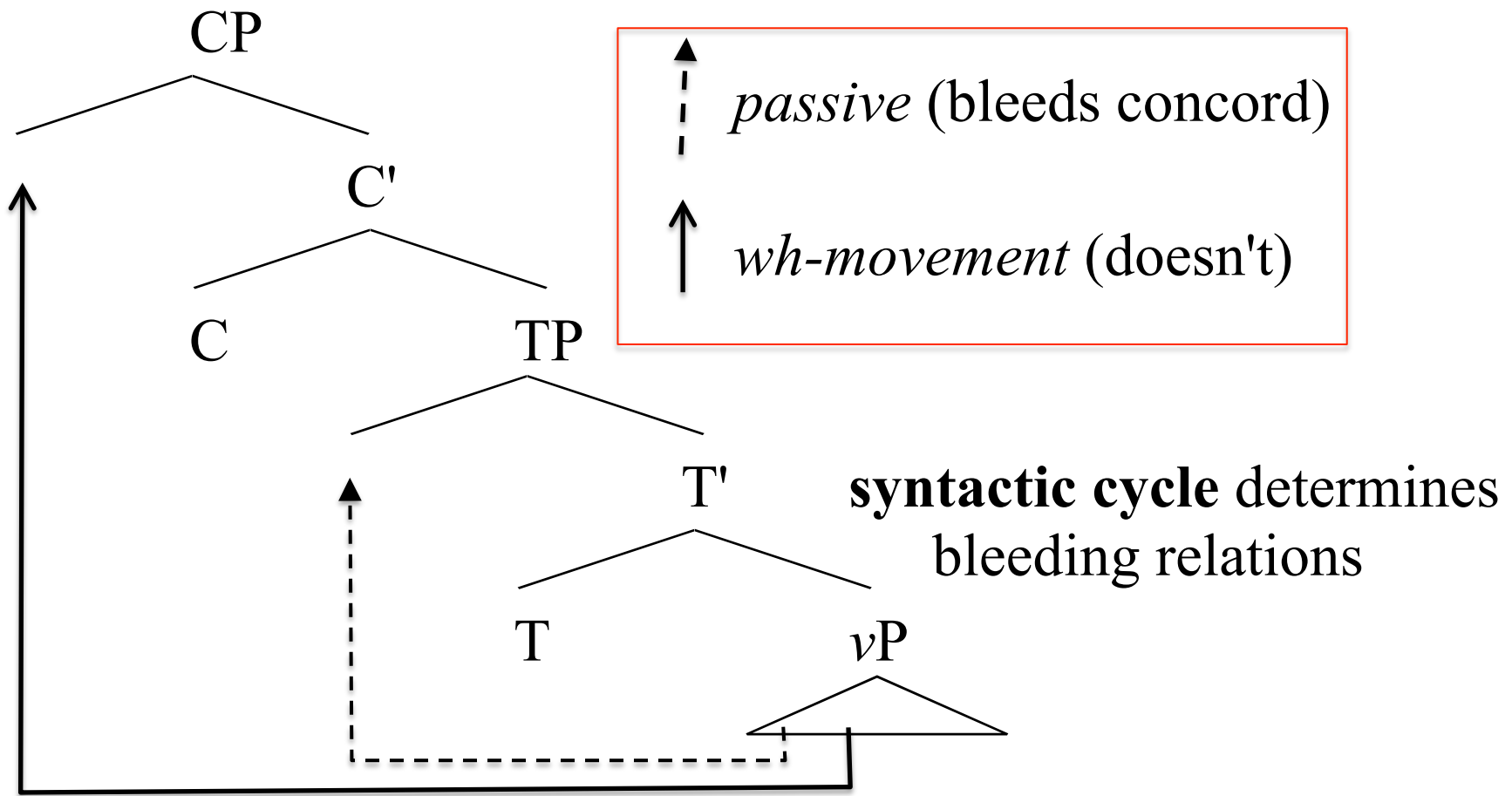Lardil concord happens in the narrow syntax.

- sensitive to semantics of case
- bleeding relations with movements:

passive (bleeds concord)

wh-movement (doesn't)

The timing of Lardil concord

Lardil concord happens in the narrow syntax.
- sensitive to semantics of case
- bleeding relations with movements:

CP

C'

C

TP

T'

T

*v*P

passive (bleeds concord)

wh-movement (doesn't)

syntactic cycle determines bleeding relations

The timing of Lardil concord

Lardil concord happens in the narrow syntax.
- sensitive to semantics of case
- bleeding relations with movements:

Bidngen   be-yi-**thur**

woman   bite-PASS-**FUT**

'The woman will be bitten'

Pis'ma   **ne**   bylo polučeno

letter.**GEN not** was received

'No letter was received'   [*Russian*]

- passive bleeds Lardil Tense Concord,
  but not Russian Genitive of Negation…

The timing of Lardil concord

Lardil concord happens in the narrow syntax.

- sensitive to semantics of case
- bleeding relations with movements:

Bidngen   be-yi-**thur**

woman   bite-PASS-**FUT**

'The woman will be bitten'
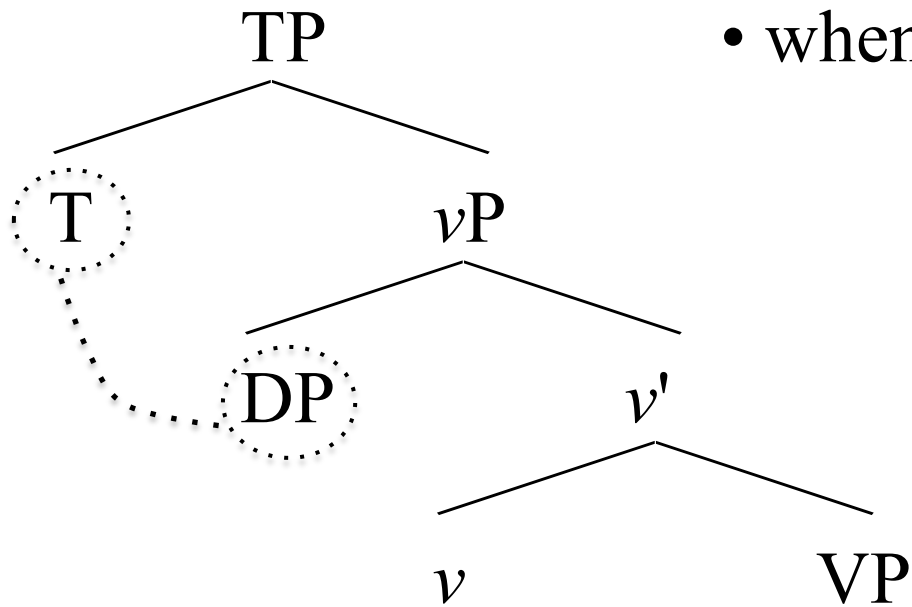

Pis'ma   **ne**   bylo polučeno

letter.**GEN** **not** was received
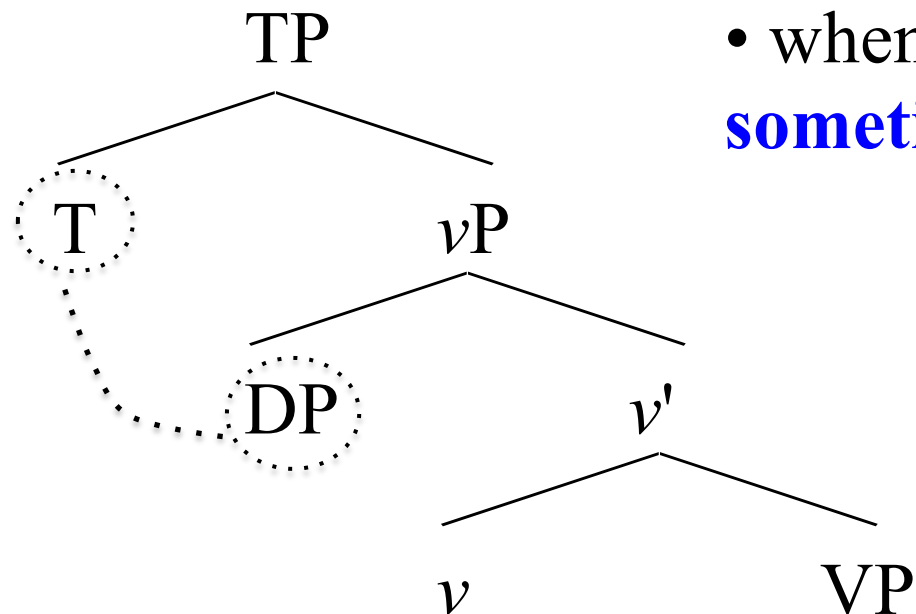
'No letter was received'   [*Russian*]

- passive bleeds Lardil Tense Concord,
     but not Russian Genitive of Negation…
              …because Negation is lower than Tense.

An issue for today: Agree

TP

    T   *v*P

         DP   *v*′

             v   VP

- when does this happen?

An issue for today: Agree

- when does this happen?
  sometimes, in narrow syntax

Zulu

(Bantu, South Africa)

Zulu Augments (Halpert 2011, in progress)

U-muntu a-ka-phek-anga i-qanda
AUG-1.person NEG-1S-cook-NEG.PAST AUG-5.egg
'A/the person didn't cook a/the egg'

Zulu Augments (Halpert 2011, in progress)

U-muntu   a-ka-phek-anga   qanda

AUG-1.person   NEG-1S-cook-NEG.PAST   5.egg

'A/the person didn't cook **any egg**'   **augmentless**

augmentless nominals must be:
- c-commanded by negation (NPIs)
- in certain structural positions…

Zulu Augments (Halpert 2011, in progress)

U-muntu   a-ka-phek-anga   qanda
AUG-1.person NEG-1S-cook-NEG.PAST 5.egg
'A/the person didn't cook **any egg**'

A-ku-phek-anga   muntu   **i**-qanda
NEG-17S-cook-NEG.PAST 1.person **AUG**-5.egg
'NOBODY cooked a/the/any egg'

Zulu Augments (Halpert 2011, in progress)

U-muntu   a-ka-phek-anga   qanda

AUG-1.person   NEG-1S-cook-NEG.PAST   5.egg

'A/the person didn't cook **any egg**'

A-ku-phek-anga   muntu   **i**-qanda

NEG-17S-cook-NEG.PAST   1.person   **AUG**-5.egg

'NOBODY cooked a/the/any egg'

*A-ku-phek-anga   (**u**)-muntu   qanda

NEG-17S-cook-NEG.PAST (**AUG**)-1.person 5.egg

→ must be highest nominal in *v*P

Zulu Augments (Halpert 2011, in progress)

- augmentless nominal must be highest in vP

...but cannot then be moved out of this position:

ngeke   ku-fundise   muntu
never   17S-teach.SJC   1.person
'Nobody will ever teach'

*ngeke muntu   a-fundise
 never   1.person 1S-teach.SJC

Zulu Augments (Halpert 2011, in progress)
- augmentless nominal must be highest in *v*P

...but cannot then be moved out of this position:

…and movement makes

       previously inaccessible nominals available:

U-muntu   a-ka-phek-anga   qanda

AUG-1.person   NEG-1S-cook-NEG.PAST   5.egg

'A/the person didn't cook **any egg**'

*A-ku-phek-anga   (**u**)-muntu   qanda

 NEG-17S-cook-NEG.PAST (**AUG**)-1.person 5.egg

Zulu Augments (Halpert 2011, in progress)
- augmentless nominal must be highest in *v*P

...but cannot then be moved out of this position:

…and movement makes

      previously inaccessible nominals available:

→ must be highest in *v*P *after movement has taken place.*

      (and see Holmberg and Hróarsdóttir 2004,

        Asarina 2011 on Icelandic)

An issue for today: Agree
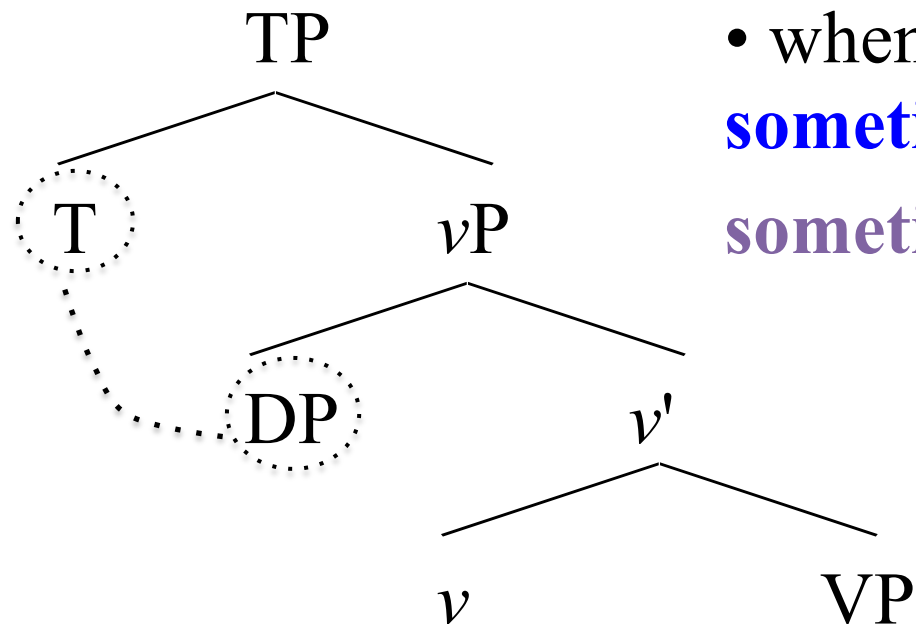
TP

T

vP

DP

v'

v

VP

- when does this happen?
sometimes, in narrow syntax

sometimes, after narrow-
syntactic movement

Kaqchikel

(Mayan, Guatemala)

Kaqchikel Agent Focus (Preminger 2011)

ja   **rat**   x-**at**-axa-n   ri   achin
FOC   **you** PRFV-**2SG**-hear-AF   the man
'It was **you** that heard the man'

ja   ri   achin x-**at**-axa-n   **rat**
FOC the man   PRFV-**2SG**-hear-AF **you**
'It was the man that heard **you**'

Kaqchikel Agent Focus (Preminger 2011)

ja   **rat** x-**at**-axa-n   ri   achin
FOC **you** PRFV-**2SG**-hear-AF the man
'It was **you** that heard the man'

ja   **yïn** x-**in**-axa-n   ri   achin
FOC **me** PRFV-**1SG**-hear-AF the man
'It was **me** that heard the man'

ja   ri   achin x-**in**-axa-n   **yïn**
FOC the man   PRFV-**1SG**-hear-AF **me**
'It was the man that heard **me**'

Kaqchikel Agent Focus (Preminger 2011)

ja   **rat**   x-**at**-axa-n   ri   achin
FOC   **you**   PRFV-**2SG**-hear-AF   the man
'It was **you** that heard the man'

ja   **yïn**   x-**in**-axa-n   ri   achin
FOC   **me**   PRFV-**1SG**-hear-AF   the man
'It was **me** that heard the man'

*ja   **rat**   x-**in**/**at**/Ø-axa-n   **yïn**
 FOC   **you**   PRFV-**1SG**/**2SG**/3SG-hear-AF   **me**
'It was **you** that heard **me**'

<u>Kaqchikel Agent Focus</u> (Preminger 2011)

ja   **rat** x-**at**-axa-n   ri achin
FOC **you** PRFV-**2SG**-hear-AF the man
'It was **you** that heard the man'

*ja   **rat** x-**in**/**at**/Ø-axa-n   **yïn**
 FOC **you** PRFV-**1SG**/**2SG**/3SG-hear-AF **me**
'It was **you** that heard **me**'

→there is a Probe that seeks to Agree with a Person
feature (and all Person features must be Agreed with)

Kaqchikel Agent Focus (Preminger 2011)

• there is a Probe that seeks to Agree with a Person feature (and all Person features must be Agreed with)

problem:

ja   ri   xoq   x-Ø-tz'et-ö   ri achin
FOC the woman PRFV-3SG-see-AF the man
'It was the woman who saw the man'

Kaqchikel Agent Focus (Preminger 2011)

• there is a Probe that seeks to Agree with a Person feature (and all Person features must be Agreed with)
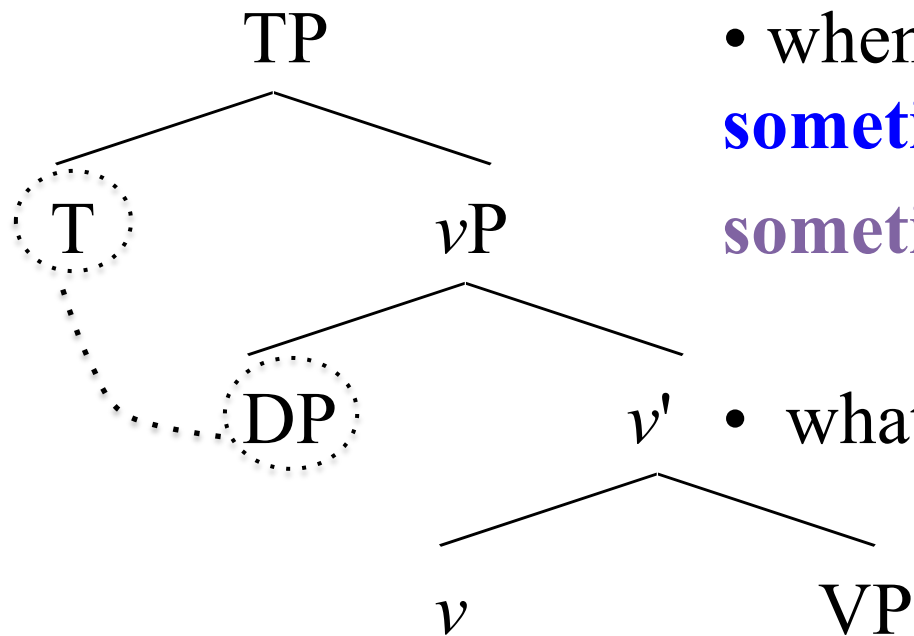
problem:

ja   ri   xoq   x-Ø-tz'et-ö   ri   achin
FOC the woman PRFV-3SG-see-AF the man
'It was the woman who saw the man'

Preminger's conclusion:
        you can't always get what you want.

An issue for today: Agree

TP

T

vP

DP

v'

v

VP

- when does this happen?
sometimes, in narrow syntax

**sometimes, after narrow-
syntactic movement**

- what would go wrong if it
failed?   **Nothing.**