

Remarks on Replies:*

On Emphatic Polarity in English

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1 Overview

We will be considering two seemingly-distinct expressions of emphatic polarity (EP) in English

- These expressions only arise in a specific context I call a *retort*
- Although the morphosyntax of these two strategies differs on the surface, I propose that they share a core syntactic configuration, relating these facts to existing literature on the syntax of polarity

I then extend the analysis to a novel set of data that appear to involve *pro*-drop

- Evidence suggests these cases actually involve an interaction of movement and ellipsis.
- This is a positive result, since English lacks *pro*-drop generally.

2 On Retorts

Consider a context in which an English speaker asserts (1):

(1) John hasn't left.

The truth of this assertion can be denied in several different ways (e.g. *You're wrong!*)

- We will focus on two particular strategies for denying the truth of (1), both of which involve polarity emphasis (henceforth PE): (small caps = contrastive focus; parentheses = optional ellipsis)

Clause-Internal Polarity Emphasis

(2) He has too/so (left)!

Left-Edge Polarity Emphasis

(3) Yes he HAS (left)!

The locus of contrast in (2) is too/so, which lexically encode emphatic affirmative polarity

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- I refer to this truth-denial strategy as the *Clause-Internal* PE strategy, and to *too/so* (henceforth simply *too*)¹, as well as *NOT* (see Appendix A), as *clause-internal PE particles*.

The locus of contrast in (3) is apparently divided between *yes* and *has*

- Because the left-edge PE particles *yes/no* always appear clause-initially in English, I refer to this strategy as the *Left-Edge* PE strategy, and to *yes/no* as *left-edge PE particles*.

Note: retorts can be either affirmative or negative; that is, they can be used to deny the truth of either negative or affirmative assertions. For concerns of brevity, I will only discuss affirmative retorts here; see Appendix A for treatment of negative retorts, which requires additional discussion.

Crucial observations are in (4):²

- (4) a. **The Clause-Internal strategy and the Left-Edge strategy cannot co-occur in a clause.** That is, an English retort cannot involve both a left-edge PE particle (*yes*) and a clause-internal PE particle (*too*),³ shown below in (5).
- b. Nuclear stress falls on the clause-internal PE particle in (2), while it falls on T^0 in (3).

Complementary distribution of the Clause-Internal and Left-Edge strategies

- (5) *Yes he has too (left)!

This is the puzzle to be addressed: what is the source of this co-occurrence restriction?

- En route to an analysis, I adopt the following assumptions:
 - Clausal polarity is generated in ΣP , a dedicated polarity projection in the TP-layer (following Laka 1990, a.o.).
 - When Σ^0 is emphatic, it is realized as a segmentless stress morpheme (depicted as [']), which docks onto the nearest phonological material to its left at PF (cf. fn. 3).

3 The syntax of emphatic polarity in English

Consider (4a).

- Their complementary distribution suggests that **clause-internal PE particles like *too* are generated in the same structural position as left-edge PE particles like *yes*: Spec ΣP .**
- Although the two are generated in the same position, their behavior is not identical:

¹Although the status of *so* as a marker of emphatic polarity is noted as early as Klima (1964), younger speakers of American English use *too* with much greater frequency. Given that *too* and *so* are otherwise in free variation, any discussion of *too* here can be cross-applied to *so*, as well.

²A few additional properties of retorts that will not be crucial to the present discussion are given in Appendix B.

³Laka (1990: §2.2) describes an emphatic affirmative polarity morpheme “[aff]” (a lexical entry for Σ^0) whose only phonological content is stress (i.e. a floating stress morpheme; see below). This stress morpheme is phonologically realized on (i.e., it ‘docks to’) material in T^0 , triggering *do*-support in the absence of a modal or raised auxiliary there (*ibid.*). Laka argues in detail that this morpheme is in complementary distribution with the clause-internal PE particle *too*. Unlike the former, the latter are only licensed in what I have described as retort contexts; since retorts are the main focus of the present discussion, I leave “[aff]” aside here (but see fn. 8).

- Unlike clause-internal particles, left-edge particles like *yes* must undergo movement to an initial position in the clause (Postma and van der Wurff 2007 a.o.):⁴

(6) *He has YES (left)!

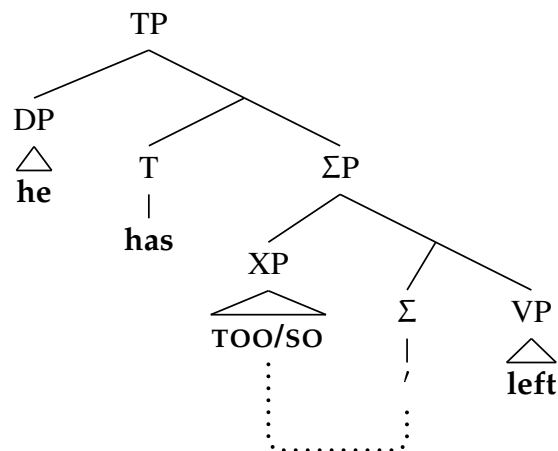
- This movement targets a high polarity projection in the CP domain, PolP,⁵ and is also responsible for non-emphatic left-edge particle answers to yes/no questions (which I leave aside here).

Interestingly, this movement may help us to understand the observation in (4b):

- Clause-internal emphatic polarity particles are selected by emphatic Σ^0
 - When left-adjacent to emphatic Σ^0 at Spell-Out, these particles host its floating stress morpheme ([']), yielding e.g. *too*
- Left-edge emphatic polarity particles are also selected by emphatic Σ^0 ; however, they are required to move away before Spell-Out
 - Stress arises on T^0 only when e.g. *yes* has moved away, leaving T^0 as the next closest host to the left of Σ^0 .

This relatively simple state of affairs yields the following derivation for the Left-Edge PE strategy:

(7) *The Left-Edge PE strategy: He has too/so left!*

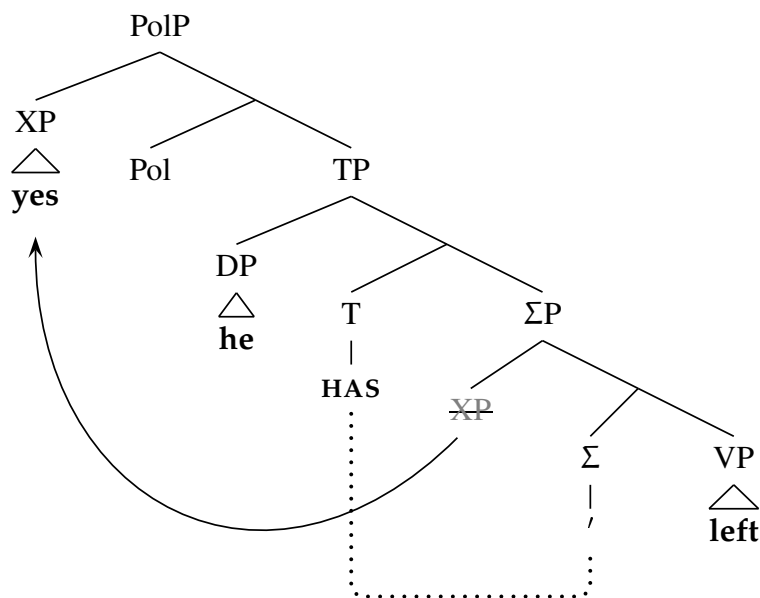


⁴As an alternative to the movement-based account of *yes/no* that I adopt here, one could argue that these PE particles are base-generated at the left edge of the clause (at or near their Spell-Out position), and they are associated with clause-internal polarity via an Agree relationship with Σ^0 . See Kramer and Rawlins (2008) and Holmberg (2011). In principle, these two analyses ought to be empirically distinguishable; however, the question of whether a relevant diagnostic exists for English remains open.

⁵For more on this PolP, see Laka 1990, Zanuttini 1997, Holmberg 2001, a.o. Although I have used a different label, I assume it is just a higher projection of ΣP , as it shares many of the same properties (including bearing a floating stress morpheme when emphatic, which docks to material in its specifier; I have left this aside here, but see (12)).

A derivation for the Clause-Initial PE strategy is below: movement of *yes* yields a stressed T^0 :

(8) *The Clause-Initial PE strategy: Yes he HAS left!*



We now turn to some novel data involving English retorts.

4 On subjectless retorts

The Clause-Internal strategy has an alternate form which has gone unnoticed, whereby the subject is omitted (typically in a “back-and-forth argument” context):⁶

- (9) A: He has NOT!
 B: Ø has TOO!
 A: Ø has NOT!
 ...etc.

This is surprising: English uniformly prohibits *pro*-drop, even in similar syntactic environments:

- (10) A: They_i are leaving already.
 B: That's true, *(they_i) are.

↳ **Crucially, omission of the subject in (9) requires omission of the VP:**

- (11) *Are too leaving!

Thus, subject omission isn't just the result of rapid speech or simple recoverability:

- Its correlation with VP omission strongly implicates **ellipsis of the minimal constituent containing both the subject and the VP**: namely, TP ellipsis (TPE).

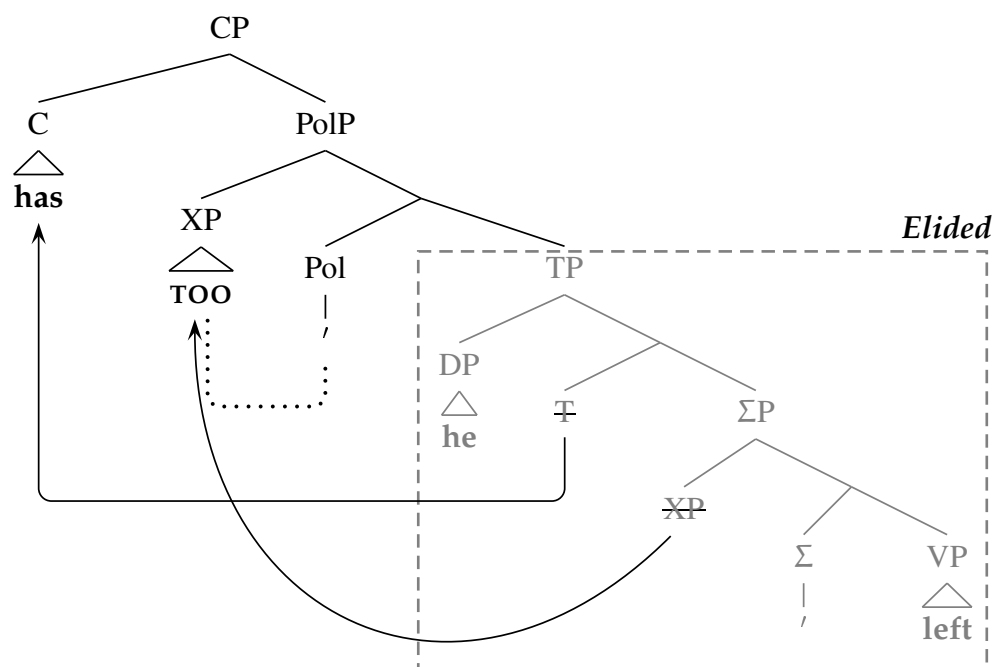
⁶This is a novel observation for English, but see Holmberg (2001) for a similar-looking phenomenon in Finnish. Extending the present analysis to capture these Finnish facts is a matter I set aside for future work.

5 Revitalizing the Tense C-Command Condition

How does the string *[has too]* survive TPE, given that both its syntactic components are base-generated inside the elided constituent? They must be moving out before ellipsis occurs.

- However, *has* (T^0) and *too* ($\text{Spec}\Sigma P$) do not form a constituent, so they can't be moving out of TP together as a unit!
 - A possibility I'd like to explore here is that each moves independently:
 - » *Too* undergoes movement to Spec of an emphatic Pol^0 (like emphatic Σ^0 , also realized as [']; see fn. 5)
 - » Subsequently, T^0 moves past *too* – but why? We'll return to this.

(12) Has too!



- I assume T^0 lands in C^0 , consistent with the fact that (9) (as well as (2)) is a **root phenomenon**
 - The Head Movement Constraint is not a factor here, assuming it only constrains movement across heads with like features (à la Relativized Minimality: see Roberts 2010)
- Following this movement, TPE occurs obligatorily (cf. **Has TOO John left!*)
 - This resembles various other cases of “elliptical repair” noted in the literature Merchant (2006); I leave this aside here.

So what drives the movement of T^0 ?

- I propose that this is an effect of the *Tense C-Command Condition* (Laka 1990: p. 9):

(13) Tense must c-command at S-structure all propositional operators of the clause.⁷

Laka: TCC must be satisfied by a T^0 with phonological content (yielding English *do*-support: her §1.3). It can also force movement of T^0 (yielding Basque aux-fronting: her §1.2.5).

- This second property of the TCC drives movement of T^0 to a position above PolP:
***too* is a propositional operator, and must be c-commanded by T^0 at Spell-Out.**
 - This is parallel to regular clausal negation, which is also a propositional operator (cf. *do*-support).

One final question must be addressed: why do we not see the effects of the TCC (that is: T movement) in the derivation of the Left-Edge strategy? This would yield e.g.:

(14) **Has YES!*

- ↳ **Left-edge PE particles are illocutionary operators**, on par with Q-particles (cf. Krifka 1994). They contribute strictly to the illocutionary force of the retort, rather than to its propositional content.

The TCC does not apply to illocutionary operators, so a left-edge PE particle cannot trigger T^0 movement under this approach. T^0 should stay in-situ when *yes* is in SpecPolP, as attested in (3).

6 Conclusion

- I propose a syntax for emphatic expressions of polarity in English retorts, relating two strategies that look distinct on the surface.
- In turn, this allows an apparent case of *pro*-drop in English to be reduced to independent processes.

References

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⁷See Laka 1990: p. 41 for discussion of this condition, which she equates to the independent semantic requirement that event variables be bound by Tense.

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Appendices

A Negative retorts behave like affirmative retorts

Throughout, I have argued for the existence of retort contexts, which license two distinct response strategies: the Clause-Internal strategy (2) and Left-Edge strategy (3).

- The preceding discussion appealed strictly to affirmative retorts for one main reason: the clause-internal PE particles *too/so* are uniquely licensed in such contexts.
- The situation is not as clear in negative retorts: there does not immediately appear to be a negative morpheme that is uniquely licensed in retort contexts
 - In this section, I argue that this is an illusion arising from homophony: the negative counterpart of *too/so* is the clause-internal PE particle *NOT*.

A.1 Negative Clause-Internal polarity emphasis

To see this, first consider a negative example of the Clause-Internal strategy:

(15) He has *NOT*!

Problem: this retort-only morpheme is homophonous with focused clausal negation in *non*-retorts:

(16) (John claims that he has finished his homework, but...) He has *NOT*.

Given this pair, we might think that the *NOT* in (15) is actually the same as the one in (16)

- This is incorrect, however – negation in non-retort contexts behaves differently with respect to e.g. contraction

Specifically, in non-retort contexts involving focused negative polarity, contraction of an auxiliary in T⁰ is possible. Additionally, the focused negative morpheme itself can contract in such contexts:

Contraction in non-retort contexts involving focused polarity

- (17) A: Is John coming?
 B1: I told you earlier that [he is NOT (coming)].
 B2: I told you earlier that [he's NOT (coming)].
 B3: I told you earlier that [he ISN'T (coming)].

A very different pattern arises in retorts.

- To avoid the homophony problem described above, let's consider an affirmative retort (since too/so is only licensed in retorts, and not elsewhere)⁸

No contraction in affirmative retorts

- (18) A: John hasn't left.
 B1: He has too!
 B2: *He's too!
 B3: *He HASTA!⁹

We can test this directly in negative retorts, as long as we disambiguate them from non-retorts

- This can be done by constructing an example that stands in response to a prior, affirmative retort (i.e., retorts license retorts)
 - We see that a negative retort disallows contraction, just like its affirmative counterpart:

No contraction in negative retorts

- (19) A: [...] He has too!
 B1: He has NOT!
 B2: *He's NOT!
 B3: ??He HASN'T!

Another method for helping disambiguate negative retorts from non-retorts is to control for the intonational melody of the utterance.

⁸We cannot test the affirmative correlate of *not* contraction, since focused affirmative polarity in non-retort contexts does not have segmental content. Instead, a non-segmental floating stress morpheme (which Laka 1990 calls “[aff]”, capable of triggering *do*-support) is the only available strategy for expressing emphatic affirmative polarity in non-retort contexts. Thus, since “[aff]” has no segmental content, it clearly cannot undergo contraction.

We can, however, test the availability of auxiliary contraction in a clause containing “[aff]”. It is impossible:

A: Is John not coming?
 B1: I told you earlier that [he is].
 B2: *I told you earlier that [HE's].

This pattern stands in contrast to (17 B3), which shows that focused NOT in non-retort contexts is capable of undergoing contraction. The relevant generalization seems to be that material in T⁰ can ‘inherit’ the focus of an element that contracts and cliticizes to it, whereas material in [Spec, TP] (i.e. subjects) cannot. I leave this aside.

⁹Since too is only licensed in retorts, and contraction of clause-internal PE particles in retorts is impossible, there is no licit contraction for too in the grammar of English. Therefore, the ungrammatical case here is simply hypothetical, constructed by analogy to contracted forms of the homophonous non-finite marker *to*.

- An intonational contour typically associated with retorts, but largely infelicitous with non-retorts involving focused polarity, is the so-called “incredulous” contour described in Pierrehumbert and Hirschberg (1990)
 - Applying this melody to the strings below forces a retort reading. As a result, contraction is unavailable:

(20) *Retort (with “incredulous” contour)*

A: John is coming.

B1: He is NOT!

B2: #He’s NOT!

B3: #He ISN’T!

Thus, there is some evidence for the existence of a clause-internal PE particle NOT, which is the negative analogue of too/so (i.e. it is only licensed in retorts).

We turn now to negative Left-Edge strategy examples, which we do not expect to involve this morpheme, given (4a).

A.2 Negative Left-Edge strategy

Consider a negative example of the Left-Edge strategy:

(21) No they are NOT!¹⁰

Problem: the acceptability of (21) appears to conflict with the observation from (4a) that left-edge PE particles cannot be clausemates with clause-internal PE particles.

To sort this out, we can now apply our contraction diagnostic to see how this NOT behaves.

- If it can contract, or if the auxiliary preceding it can contract, then it does not behave like the uncontroversial clause-internal PE particles too/so
- Recall the analysis above: I argue that left-edge PE particles block the appearance of clause-internal PE particles
 - If this is correct, then we expect the NOT in (21) to behave differently than too/so.
- This prediction is borne out – the NOT in instances of the Left-Edge strategy tolerates both types of contraction:¹¹

(22) a. No they AREN’T!

b. No they’re NOT!

¹⁰Note that the left-edge PE particle in (21), as in all retorts involving left-edge PE particles, is part of the same prosodic phrase as the rest of the clause. Crucially, as noted in (Laka 1990: p. 159), separating the left-edge PE particle from the rest of the clause with a break (a.k.a. “comma intonation”) changes both the interpretation and the syntax of the reply. For example, note that genuine retorts – those involving only a single Intonation Phrase – cannot include discourse-new material, including adverbs. On the other hand, the reply strategy involving two major prosodic phrases *can* include such material. Note also that this second strategy is also uttered with less exclamative force.

i. *No he probably won’t!

ii. No, he probably won’t.

¹¹For reasons I do not fully understand, auxiliary contraction preceding *not* is only possible with forms of *be* in American English, while British varieties also allow contraction of *have* (e.g. *They’ve not left yet*, *He’s not said anything*).

This suggests that negative instances of the Left-Edge strategy behave the same as affirmative instances: neither involves a clause-internal PE particle, given the availability of contraction

- An obvious question that arises is: what is the status of the *NOT* in the Left-Edge strategy?
 - Here, I follow Kramer and Rawlins (2008): the clause-internal negation that co-occurs with initial *no* is an instance of negative concord
 - That is, *NOT/N'T* in Left-Edge strategy arises on Σ^0 following spec-head agreement with *no* before it moves to the left edge.
 - Concerns of space prevent further discussion of this analysis here; see *ibid.* for additional argumentation.

B Some additional properties of retorts

Dutch

Dutch has a “short elliptical reply” strategy which is similarly licensed only in retort contexts, although the syntax of these Dutch replies is quite different than the English cases described here.

- See van Craenenbroeck (2010) for extensive discussion.

Discourse-new material

Discourse-new material cannot be introduced in retorts of either type (see fn. 10)

- There is a strong preference for the subjects of retorts to be pronominalized
- Epithets, however, are marginally possible:

- (23) A: John never gossips.
 B1: ?Yes that idiot DOES!
 B2: ?That idiot does TOO!

More on retort intonation

Retorts of both type involve only one Intonation Phrase (IP).

- The string in (3) corresponding to the Left-Edge strategy can be pronounced with a prosodic break following the left-edge PE particle (indicated by a comma):

- (24) Yes, he has!

However, this utterance differs in several ways with its single-IP counterpart in (3).

- Foremost, (24) is not felicitous as a reply to (1), so it is not a retort.
 - Moreover, (24) can contain discourse-new material (such as adverbs), but (3) cannot:

- (25) a. Yes, he really has!
 b. *Yes he really HAS!

The same also holds for the negative counterparts of the Clause-Internal strategy and Left-Edge strategy: see fn. 10.