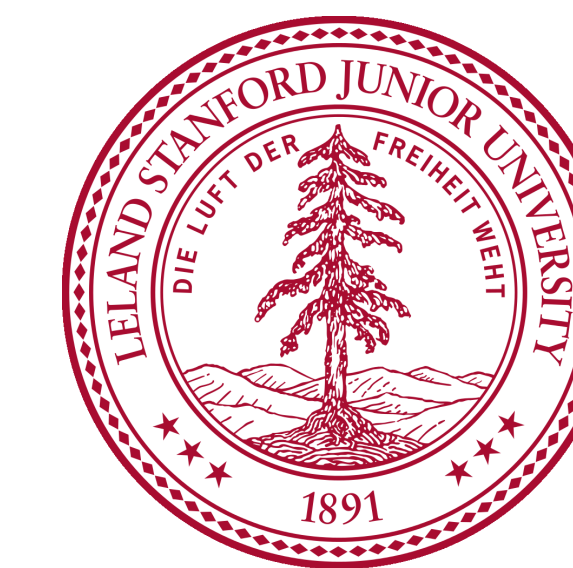


Agreement in English Existentials with Conjoined Associates

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Explananda

English existential clauses have notoriously unexpected agreement patterns, more so when the associate is conjoined (Chomsky, 1995; Sobin, 1997, 2014; Schütze, 1999).

- AGREEMENT VARIATION WITH NO CONJUNCTION
 - % **There is basically no jobs in industry.**
 - There's **only two thrift shops** down there.
 - There are **more new subdivisions** in town.
- SINGULAR AGREEMENT WITH CONJUNCTION:
 - % There is **[[conversations] and [rhetoric]]**
 - There is [[a prominent actor] and [actress]]**
- PLURAL AGREEMENT WITH CONJUNCTION:
 - There are **[[Bluebeard] and [Henry VIII]]**
 - There are **enough [[actors] and [actresses]]**

Claims

- The pattern in (2b) is a case of First Conjunct Agreement (FCA) and should be analyzed in the same way as FCA in other languages.
- This pattern is not reducible to the fact that a singular verb form is possible with a plural associate (i.e., that (1a) and (2a) are possible).

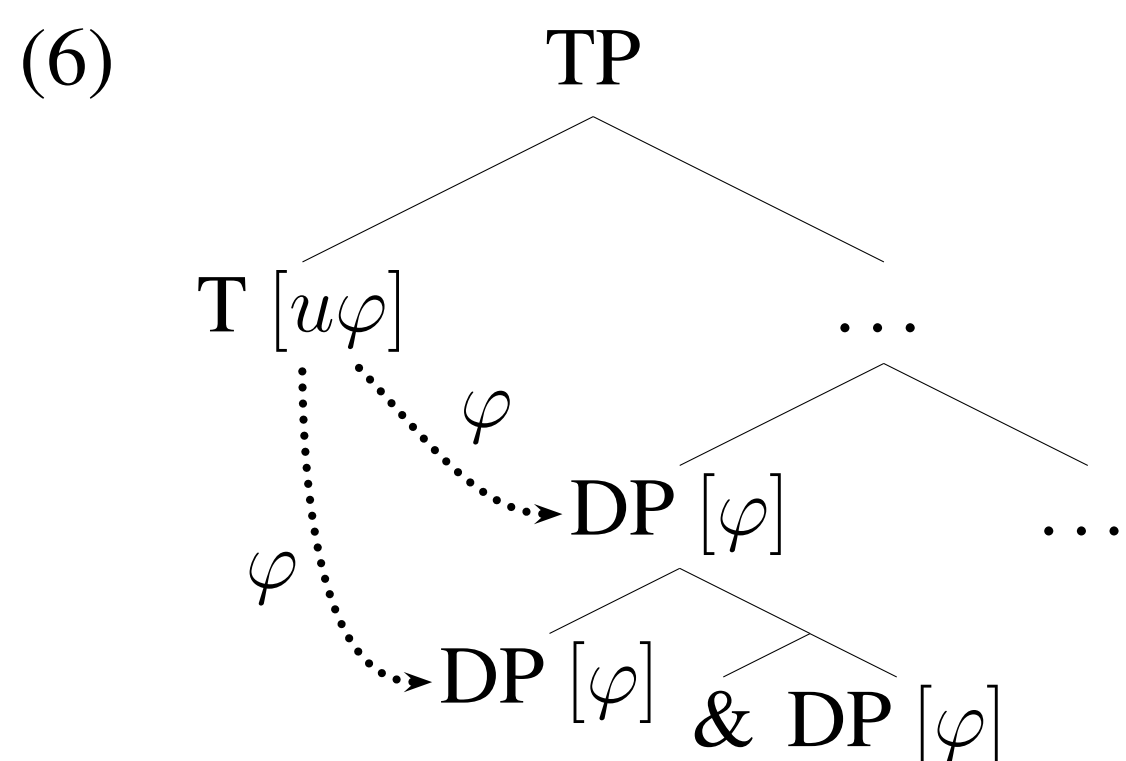
First Conjunct Agreement

In many languages, verbs may agree with either the first conjunct of a conjoined subject DP or the full conjunction when the subject appears post-verbally.

- Lebanese Arabic (Aoun et al., 1994)
raah/raah-o [Kariim w Marwaan].
left.3MSG/-3PL Kareem and Marwan
“Kareem and Marwan left.”
- Colloquial Finnish (van Koppen, 2005, 85-86)
sitä **ole-n/-mme** [minä ja sinä-kin] käy-neet
EXPL **be-1SG/-1PL** I and you-also visit-PTC.PL
Pariisi-ssa.
Paris-INE
“You and I have visited Paris.”

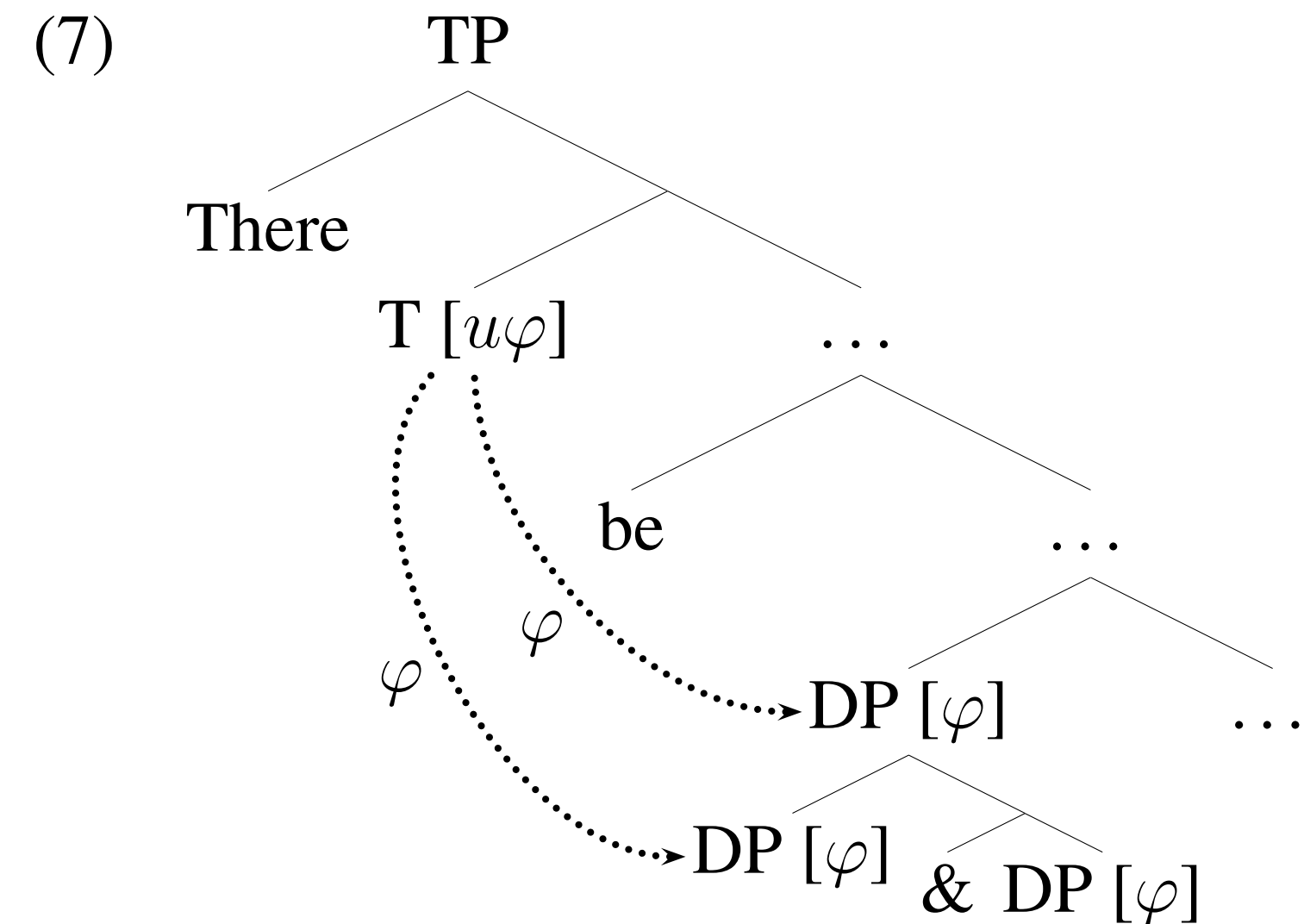
We account for FCA as follows:

- Assume standard definition of Agree (Chomsky, 2000; 2004) and asymmetrical structure of conjunction (Munn, 1993; Kayne, 1994; Zoerner, 1995).
- When a φ -probe c-commands a conjoined subject DP, neither the first conjunct nor full conjunction c-commands the other; both are potential goals for Agree.



Proposal

Structure of *there* existentials (see Chomsky, 1995; Sobin, 1997; Schütze, 1999; Richards and Biberauer, 2005; Rezac, 2006; Deal, 2009; Sobin, 2014, i.a.):



In this configuration, T may Agree with either the full conjunction or the first conjunct of the associate DP.

FCA vs. Non-Standard Singular Agreement

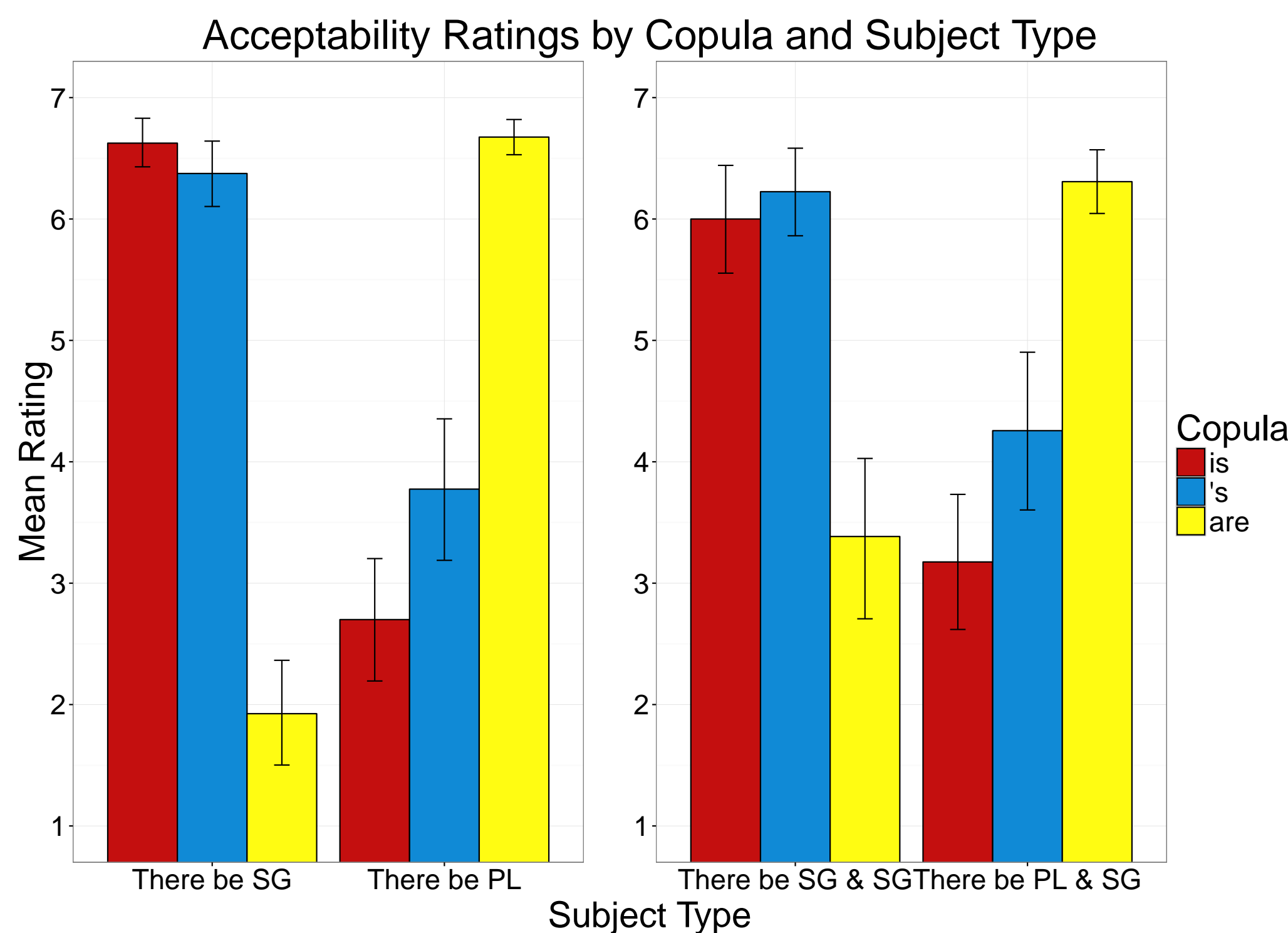
Alternatively, we might explain (2b) in virtue of the fact that singular agreement is possible in existential constructions with plural associates more generally (1a, 2a). However:

- (2b) is cited as standard English (e.g., Sobin, 2014), whereas examples like (1a) pattern in usage and perception like non-standard morphosyntactic variables (Krejci 2015; Hilton 2015).
- Data from COCA show that the pattern in (2b) is used much more frequently than that in (1a) or (2a).

	Singular First Conjunct	Plural First Conjunct
<i>is/has been</i>	1,097 (48.4%)	2,211 22 (1.1%)
<i>'s/s been</i>	1,114 (49.1%)	165 (8.4%) (9.5%)
<i>are/have been</i>	56 (2.5%)	1,780 (90.5%)

	Singular Non-conjoined	Plural Non-conjoined
<i>is/has been</i>	86,322 (46.0%)	184,363 642 (1.0%)
<i>'s/s been</i>	98,041 (52.3%)	4,998 (7.5%) (8.5%)
<i>are/have been</i>	3,238 (1.7%)	60,696 (91.5%)

- Acceptability judgments from native speakers ($N = 47$) show the pattern in (2b) to be much more acceptable than the patterns in (1a) and (2a).



Ellipsis

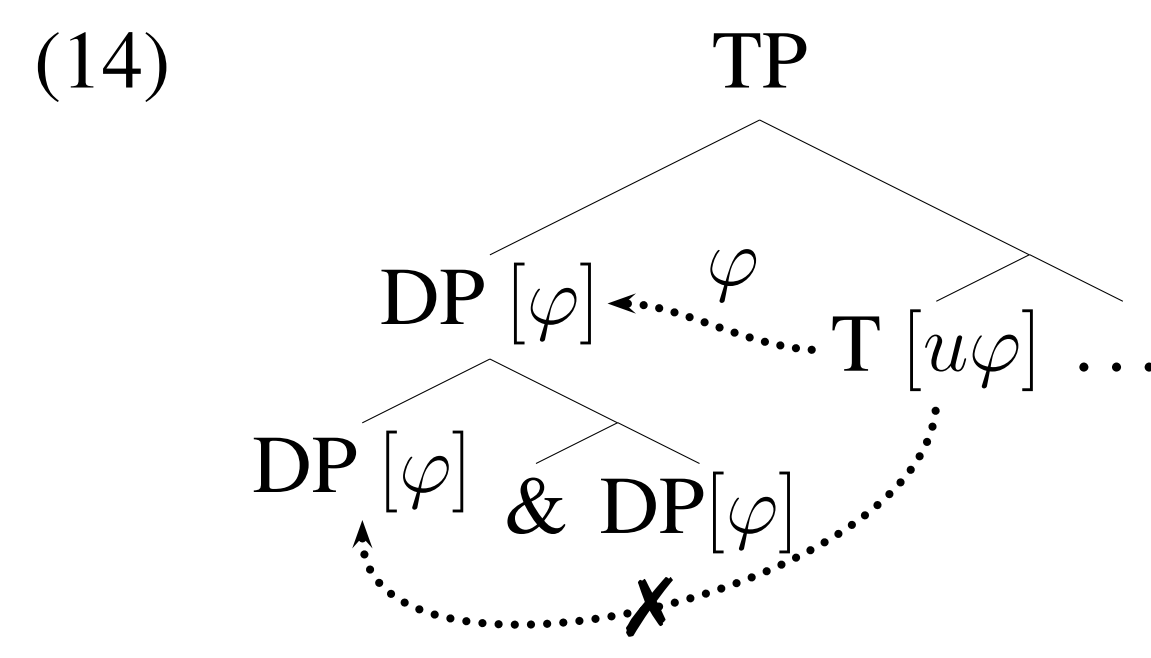
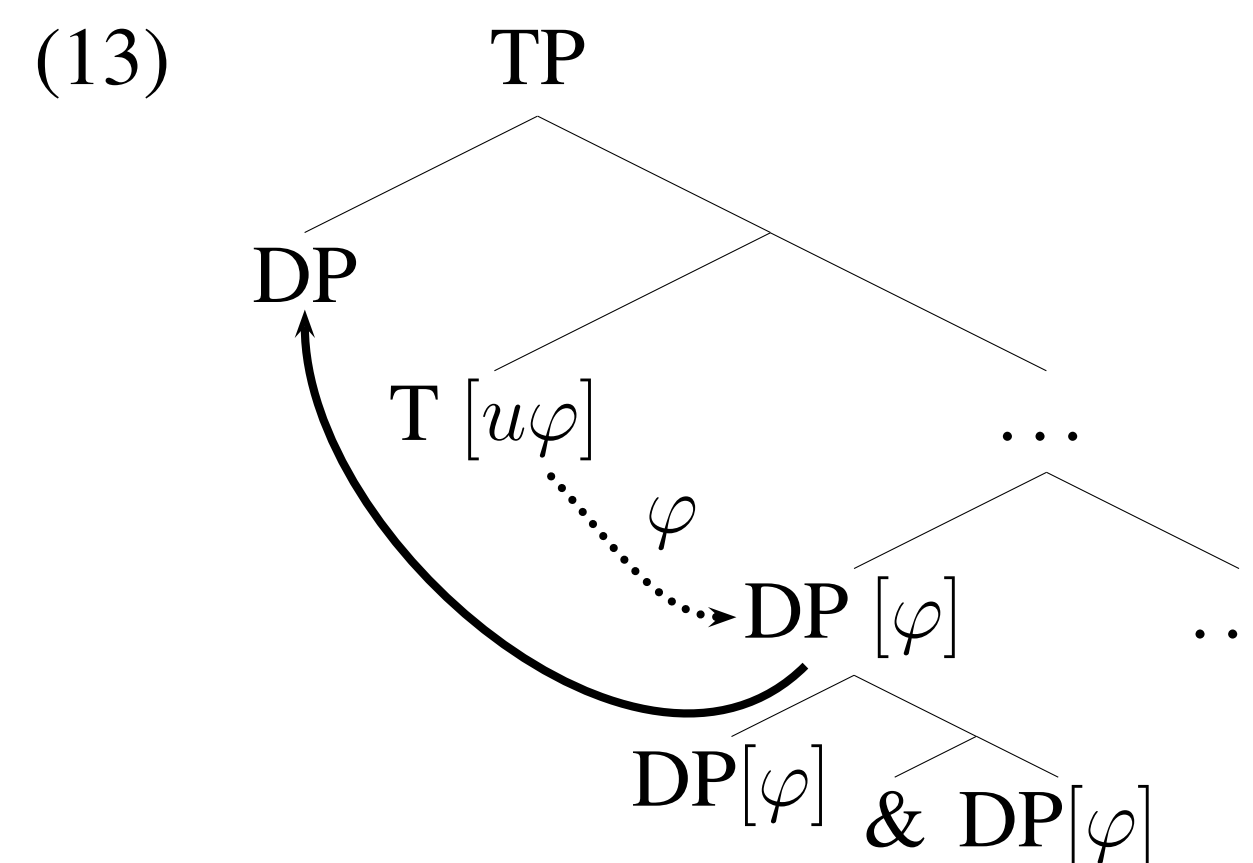
Sentence (2b) could be an instance of ellipsis: *there is an actor and [there-is] an actress*.

- This would require ellipsis to target a non-constituent.
- This analysis is inconsistent with *there* existentials that contain predicates requiring plural subjects:
 - # There is a professor meeting together and there is a student meeting together.
 - There is a professor and a student meeting together.

FCA: Hierarchical or Linear?

Sobin (2014) generates (2b) by having T search linearly for the nearest lexical DP with which to agree. However:

- Agree usually operates hierarchically; it is unexplained why it would operate linearly for only conjoined associate DPs.
- Examples such as (3a) are not generated.
- This analysis faces difficulties in explaining obligatory full agreement with pre-verbal, conjoined subjects.
 - John and Mary are/*is tired.
 - Lebanese Arabic (Aoun et al., 1994)
[Kariim w Marwaan] **raah-o/*raah**.
Kareem and Marwan **left-3PL/*left.3MS**
“Kareem and Marwan left.”
 - Colloquial Finnish (van Koppen, 2005, 85-86)
[minä ja sinä-kin] sitä **ole-mme/*-n/*-t**
I and you-also EXPL **be-1PL/*-1SG/*-2SG**
käy-neet Pariisi-ssa.
visit-PTC.PL Paris-INE
“You and I have visited Paris.”
- Two ways to account for data in (10) - (12) hierarchically: interaction between constraints on Agree and movement (Doron, 2000; van Koppen, 2012; Crone, 2015), as in (13), or bidirectional Agree (Baker, 2008), as in (14).



- If agreement is linear regardless of whether the subject is pre- or post-verbal, last conjunct agreement (LCA) with pre-verbal subjects is predicted.
- Therefore, this account must stipulate that agreement is linear only for post-verbal subjects.

Outstanding Questions

Why is full agreement less acceptable than FCA? We offer no explanation, but note similar phenomena in other languages:

- Tegelen Dutch:** Complementizers obligatorily realize FCA unless some element intervenes between the complementizer and the subject (van Koppen 2012).
- Biblical Hebrew:** Both FCA and full agreement are attested in VS clauses, but FCA occurs in 210 of 235 (89.4%) clauses with post-verbal conjoined subjects (Moreshet 1967; Doron 2000).

Where else do we predict to see FCA in English?

- The possibility of FCA depends on the relative position of the subject DP with respect to T, not the positions of the subject and the verb.
- If a verb raises to C and the subject DP occupies [Spec, TP], we do not predict FCA to be possible.

Phenomenon	FCA Possible?
Questions	No
Residual V2	No
Locative inversion	Maybe (depends on analysis of LI)

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Acknowledgments

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