Syntax, Semantics, Pragmatics: Where do we Find Optimality?

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Optimality in Pragmatics

Many pragmatic phenomena are analyzed as requiring comparisons of several alternatives and picking the best one (examples from Blutner and Zeevat 2008)

- Implicatures
    - Conventional implicatures
    - Conversational implicatures
    - Scalar implicatures
    - Exhaustivity implicatures
    - Implicature projection
- Presupposition projection
- Distribution of discourse particles

  ⋮

Optimality in Syntax/Semantics: Reference-Set Constraints

Optimality condition ≈ reference-set constraint ≈ transderivational constraint ≈ global economy condition ≈ interface strategy

An Informal Definition

Given some input tree t, a reference-set constraint computes a set of possible output trees for t — called the reference set of t — and picks from said set the optimal output tree according to some economy metric.

Some examples from the literature:

- Rule I (Reinhart 2006)
- Scope Economy (Fox 2000)
- Fewest Steps (Chomsky 1995)
- Merge-over-Move (Chomsky 2000)
- Focus Economy (Reinhart 2006)

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Example: Focus Economy

(1) a. [$_{\mathrm{TP}}$ John [$_{\mathrm{VP}}$ bought [$_{\mathrm{DP}}$ a red **car**]]].
Focus set: {TP, VP, DP, red car, car}

b. [$_{\mathrm{TP}}$ John [$_{\mathrm{VP}}$ bought [$_{\mathrm{DP}}$ a **red** car]]].
Focus set: {red}

Focus Projection

Any constituent containing the carrier of sentential main stress may be focused.

Focus Economy Rule

If the main stress has been shifted, a constituent containing its carrier may be focused iff it cannot be focused in the tree with unshifted stress.

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Example: Focus Economy, Cont.

Computing the Focus Sets

a) Neutral Stress

- TP_S
  - John_W
  - VP_S
    - bought_W
    - DP_S
      - a_W
      - AP_S
        - red_W
        - car_S

b) Shifted Stress

- TP_S
  - John_W
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        - red_S
        - car_W

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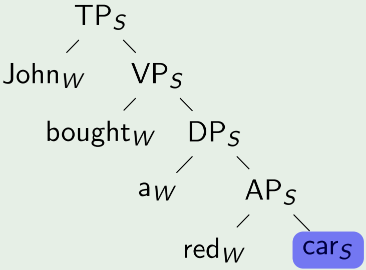
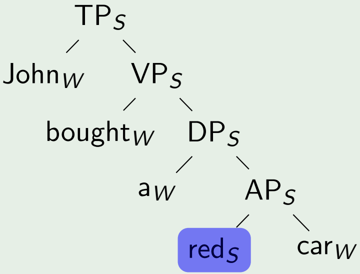


b) Shifted Stress



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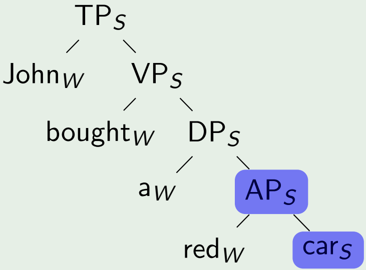

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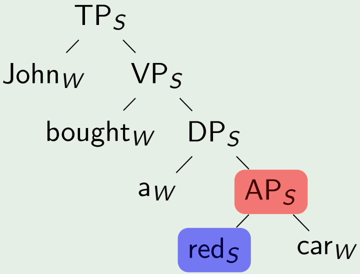

Example: Focus Economy, Cont.

Computing the Focus Sets

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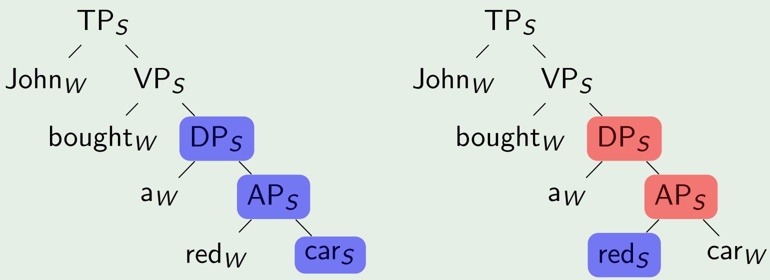

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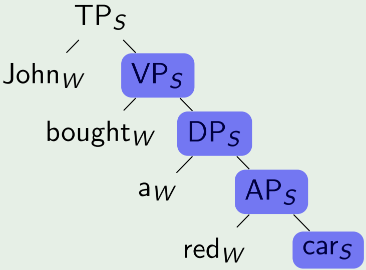

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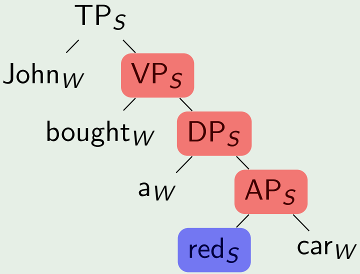

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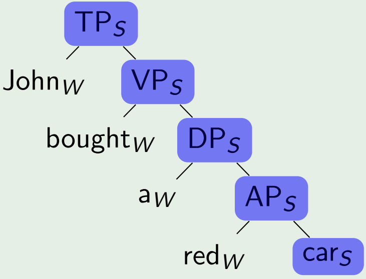

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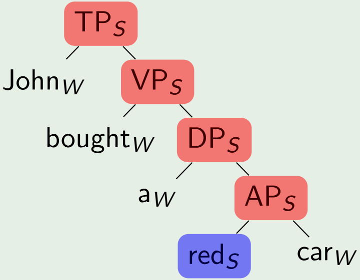


Optimality in Syntax, Semantics, Pragmatics

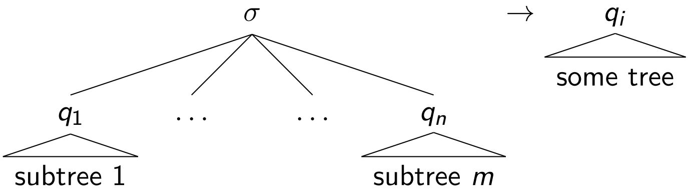
- It seems that the same kind of optimality conditions can be found in all three modules:
  1. compute set of alternatives
  2. pick best option
- But if we use linear tree transducers as a model, it turns out that reference-set constraints involve no comparisons. Rather, they are...
  - **Insight 1 (theory-internal)**
    a different way of specifying standard well-formedness constraints ⇒ involve no tangible notion of optimality
  - **Insight 2 (across theories)**
    connected to unidirectional OT.
- Pragmatic optimality conditions, on the other hand, are usually modelled with bidirectional OT
  ⇒ different from reference-set constraints.

Linear Tree Transducers in Pictures

A linear finite-state bottom-up tree transducer

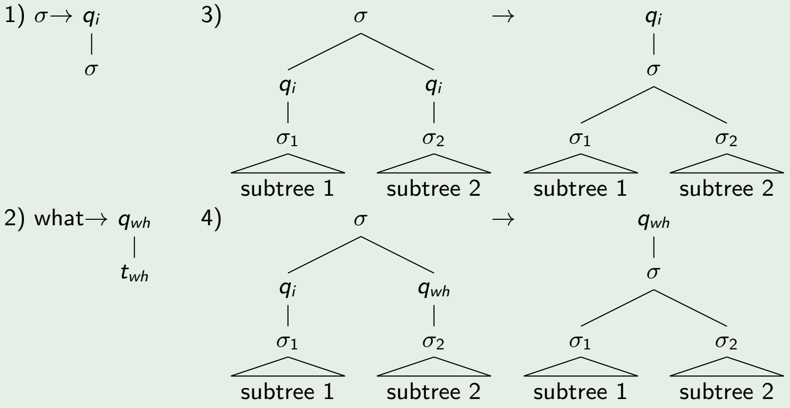
- traverses an input-tree from the leaves towards the root,
- labels it with states q_i, and
- transforms it into an output-tree.

It does so using rules of the following kind:



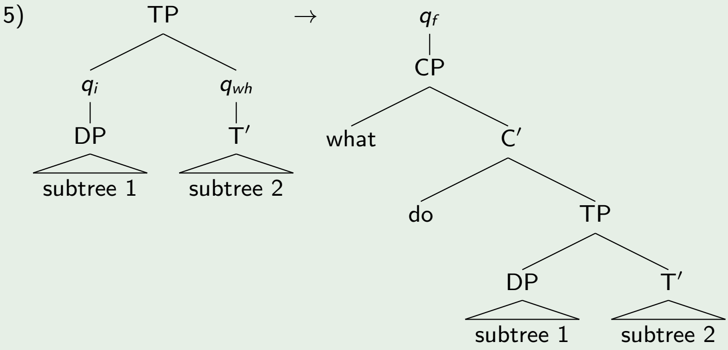
A Simple Example (Part 1)

A Transduction for Restricted wh-Movement, Rules 1–4



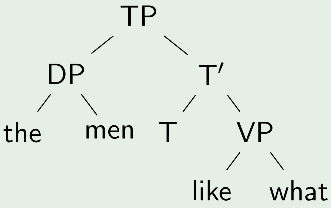
A Simple Example (Part 2)

A Transduction for Restricted wh-Movement, Rule 5



A Simple Example (Part 3)

A Transduction for Restricted wh-Movement, Application



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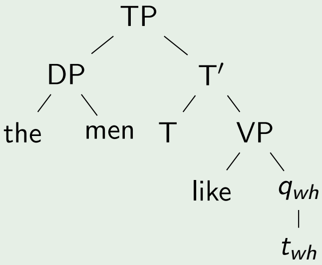

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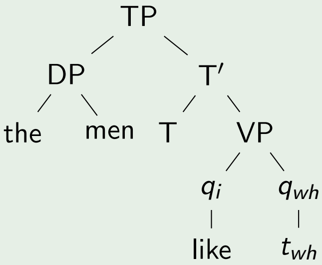

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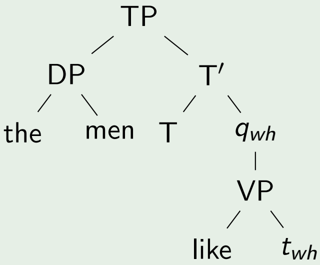

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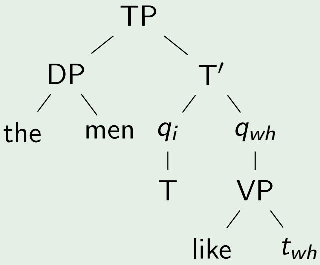

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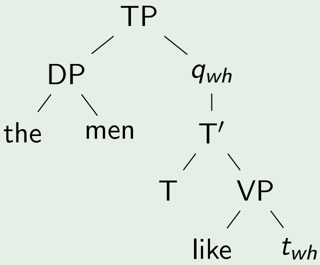

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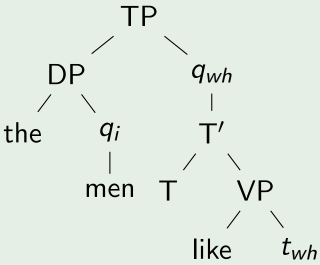

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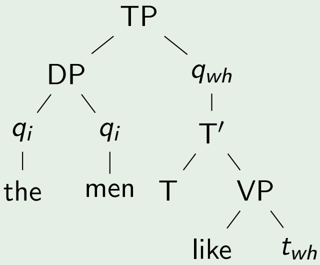

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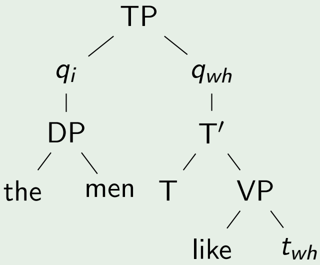

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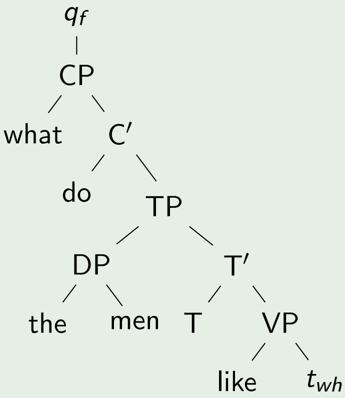

Some Important Facts

What is Possible?

- Relabeling nodes
- Deleting subtrees
- Inserting subtrees of bounded size
- Enforcing constraints that define regular tree languages

What is Impossible?

- Copying of arbitrary subtrees
- Switching positions of non-siblings (e.g. specifier and complement)
- Counting past some threshold

Mathematical Properties

- A transducer can be decomposed into a sequence of smaller transducers, *et vice versa*.
- If the input tree language of a transducer is regular, then so is its output language. Regular tree languages are sufficiently powerful for Minimalism (Kobele et al. 2007).

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Strategy

For a given reference-set constraint C, exhibit

- a Minimalist grammar that generates the input language, and
- a sequence of transducers that computes the same mapping from inputs to optimal outputs.

- Due to the mathematical properties of transducers, the output language is no more complex than the input language
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But why should this work for arbitrary reference-set constraints?

OT: A Bird's Eye Perspective

It seems natural to model reference-set constraints via OT.

Reference-Set Constraints as OT Grammars

- Use Gen to compute the reference-sets.
- Use a sequence of constraints to filter out the suboptimal candidates.

A Major Complaint

Without further restrictions, OT grammars can generate any kind of (tree) language
$\Rightarrow$ they don't tell us anything about reference-set constraints.

Fortunately, there is a weaker alternative...

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Optimality Systems: A Restricted Version of OT

Optimality Systems (OSs; Frank and Satta 1998)

A variant of OT that keeps just the bare skeleton.

- All constraints only consider the output, never the input.
- No correspondence theory
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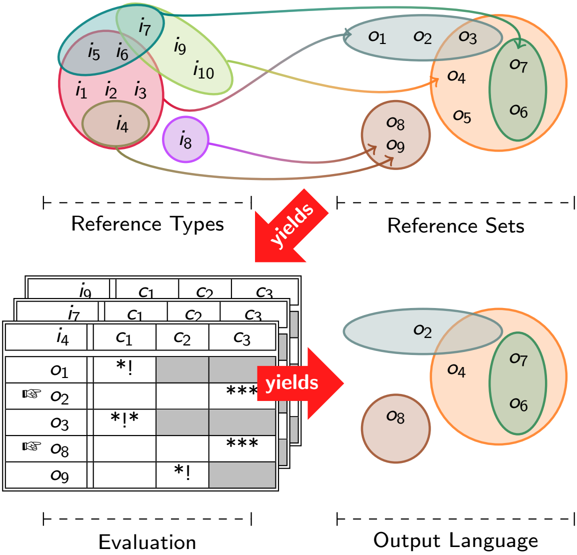
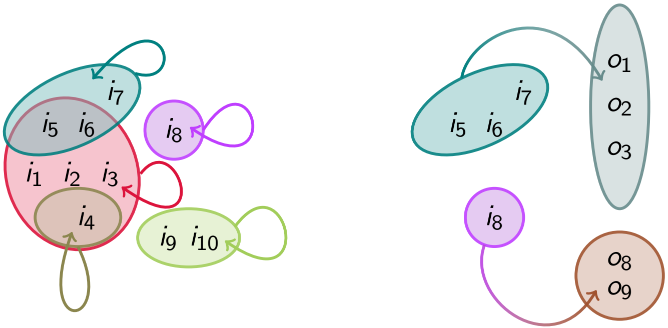
Depiction of a Controlled OS



Reference-set Constraints as Controlled OSs

- Almost all constraints in the literature exhibit one of the two configurations below.
- What do the two have in common?



Output Joint Preservation

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If two reference sets overlap, then so do the reference types that are mapped to them.

Theorem (Frank and Satta 1998; Wartena 2000; Jäger 2002)

A controlled OS can be implemented as a transducer if

- the OS is output-joint preserving, and
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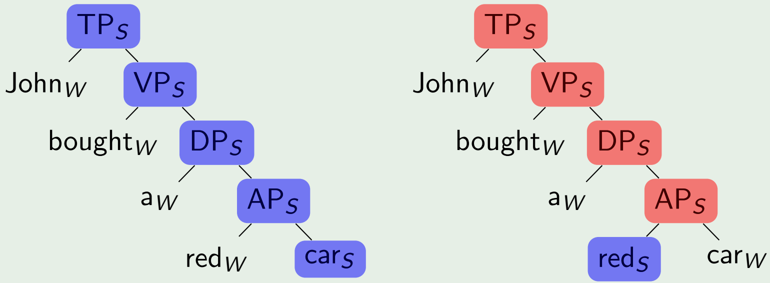
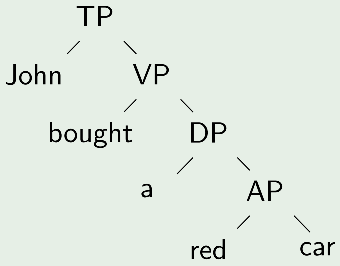


Transducer Model: Gen

Step 1 & 2: Gen

- Non-deterministically relabel input with S/W-subscripts.
- Non-deterministically focus some node along the "stress path".

Transducing an Input into a Stress-Annotated Output with Focus



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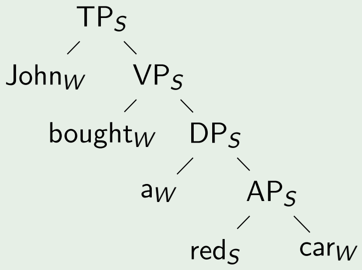

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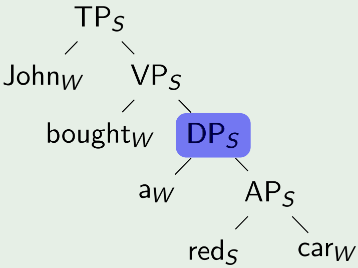


Transducer Model: The Constraint

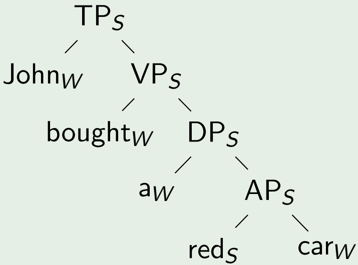
Focus Economy requires reference to the neutral stress pattern. We allow this by implicitly representing the neutral stress within the same tree!

Strategy

- Define two paths StressPath and NeutralPath.
- StressPath represents the path of the current stress.
- NeutralPath represents the path of the neutral stress.
- Add a constraint that requires focus to be in the stress path, but unless StressPath and NeutralPath pick out the same nodes, focus may not be in NeutralPath.

Example of ϕ

StressPath and NeutralPath



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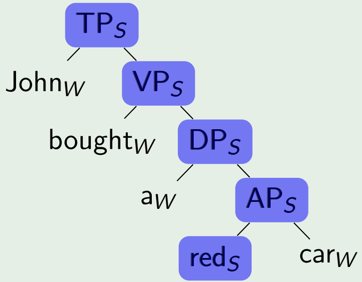

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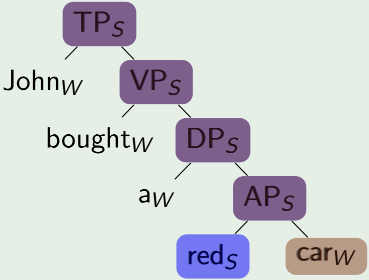

Merge-over-Move (MOM)

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If two convergent derivations d and d' are built from the same lexical items and identical up to step n, at which point d continues with Merge and d' with Move, filter out d'.

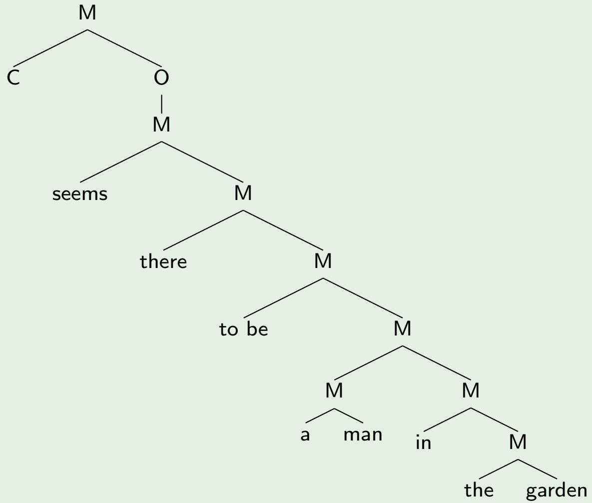
(3) a. There seems t_{there} to be a man in the garden.

b. * There seems a man to be $t_{\text{a man}}$ in the garden.

c. A man seems $t_{\text{a man}}$ to be $t_{\text{a man}}$ in the garden.

Derivation Trees of (3a) and (3b)

Example



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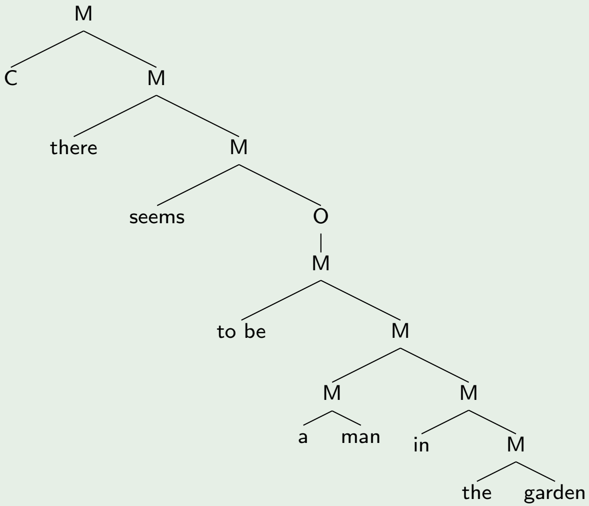
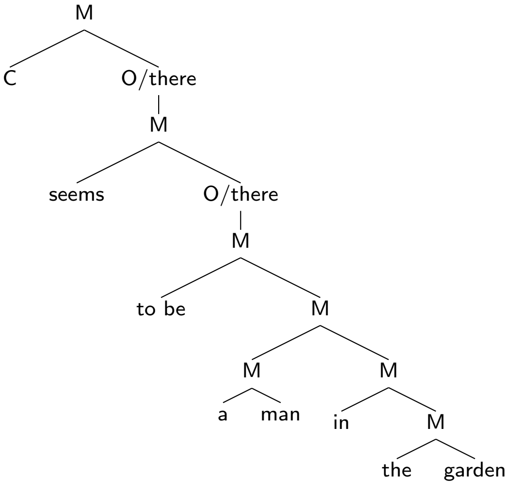


Transducer Model: GEN (Step 1)

- Fuse the two derivations into one underspecified derivation.
  - Remove all features but the category feature.
  - Inside TP: Replace O or Merger of *there* by new label O/there.

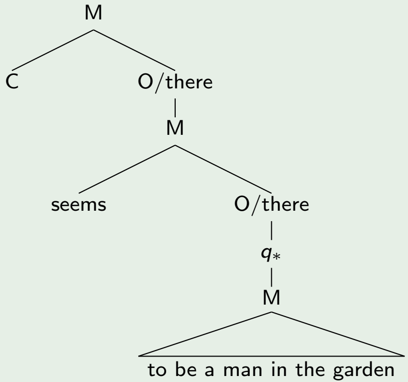


Transducer Model: GEN (Step 2)

- Turn O/there back into O or Merge of *there*.
  - Use a transducer with states q_*, q_O and q_C.
  - In state q_*, the transducer non-deterministically rewrites O/there as O or Merge of *there*.
  - If the transducer rewrites O/there as O, it switches into state q_0.
  - In state q_0, every occurence of O/there is rewritten just as O.
  - The transducer switches out of q_0 only if it encounters a CP (indicated by state q_C; cf. structured numerations).
- Reinstantiate the features.

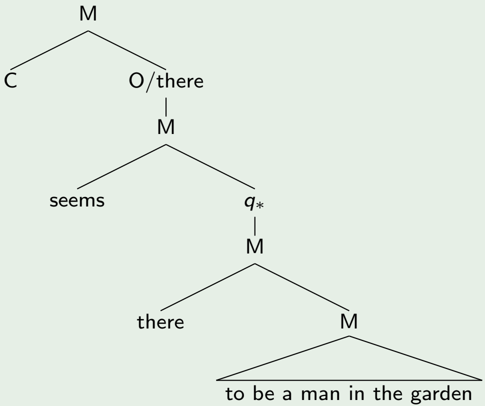
Transducer Model: Examples of Step 2

Example 1



Transducer Model: Examples of Step 2

Example 1



Transducer Model: Examples of Step 2

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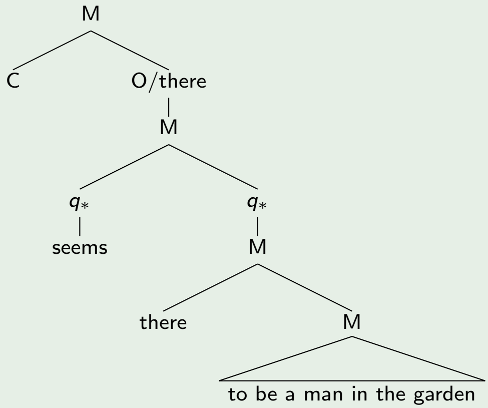

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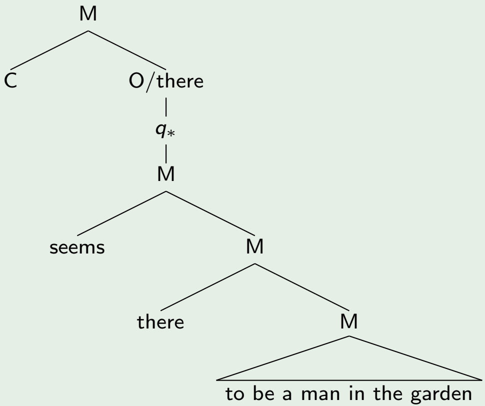

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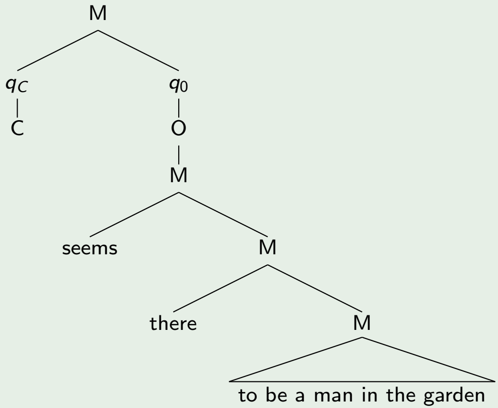

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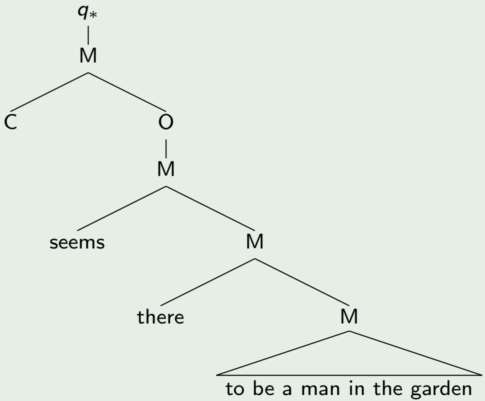
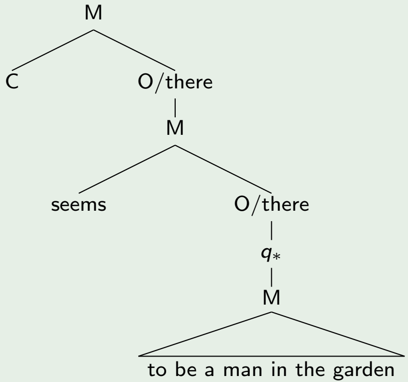


Transducer Model: Examples of Step 2

Example 2



Transducer Model: Examples of Step 2

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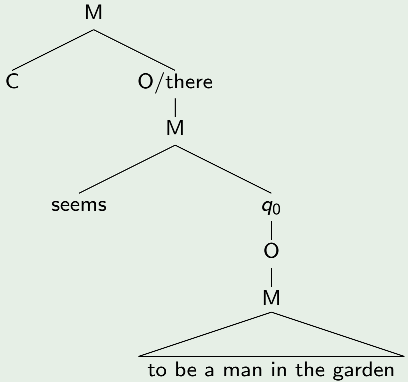
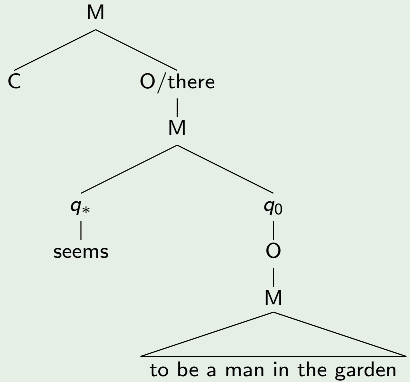


Transducer Model: Examples of Step 2

Example 2



Transducer Model: Examples of Step 2

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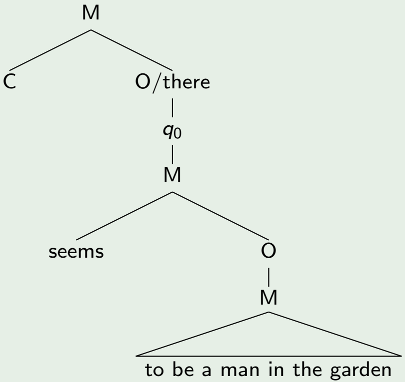

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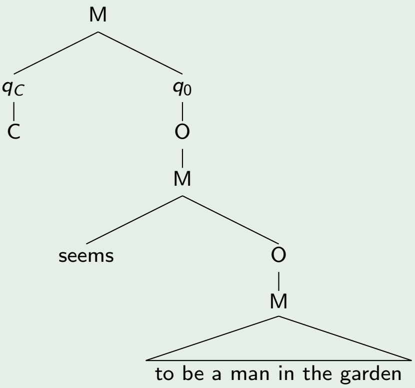

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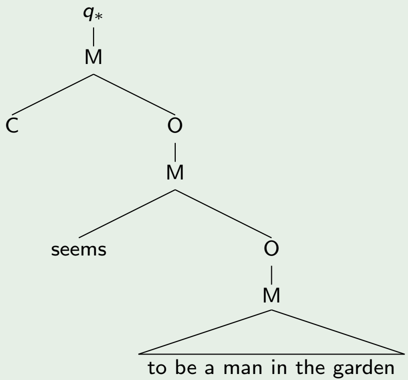


Transducer Model: The Induced Mapping

The output candidates for both (4a) and (4b) are now (5a)–(5b).

(4) a. There seems t_{there} to be a man in the garden.

b. * There seems a man to be $t_{\text{a man}}$ in the garden.

(5) a. * There seems there to be a man in the garden.

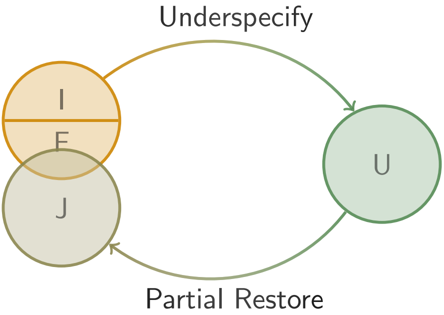
b. There seems t_{there} to be a man in the garden.

c. A man seems $t_{\text{a man}}$ to be $t_{\text{a man}}$ in the garden.

- We may extend the mapping such that (5c) is also assigned this reference set.
- (5a) still has to be ruled out.

Transducer Model: The Constraint

The only constraint is the input language itself!
By turning it into a transducer and composing it with GEN,
we remove all instances of overgeneration and filter out the illicit MOM violators.



Shortest Derivation Principle (SDP)

SDP

Given convergent derivations $d_1, \ldots, d_n$ over the same lexical items, pick the one(s) with the fewest instances of Move.

Why do we find the following contrast?

(6) a. Who$_i$ did John take [$_{\text{DP}_j}$ a picture of t_i]?

b. * Who$_i$ was [$_{\text{DP}_j}$ a picture of t_i] taken t_j by John?

Derivations for (6b)

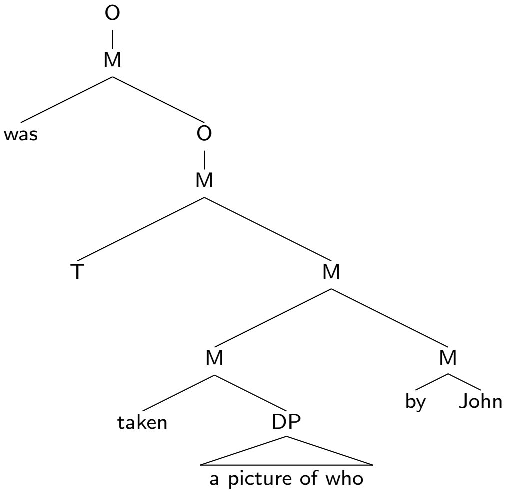
Two derivations are possible for (6b).
CED violation in (7c)

(7) a. $[_{VP}$ taken $[_{DP_j}$ a picture of who$_i]$ by John$]$
b. $[_{TP}$ $[_{DP_j}$ a picture of who$_i$ $]$ T $[_{VP}$ taken t_j by John$]]$
c. $[_{CP}$ who$_i$ was $[_{TP}$ $[_{DP_j}$ a picture of t_i $]$ T $[_{VP}$ taken t_j by John$]]]$

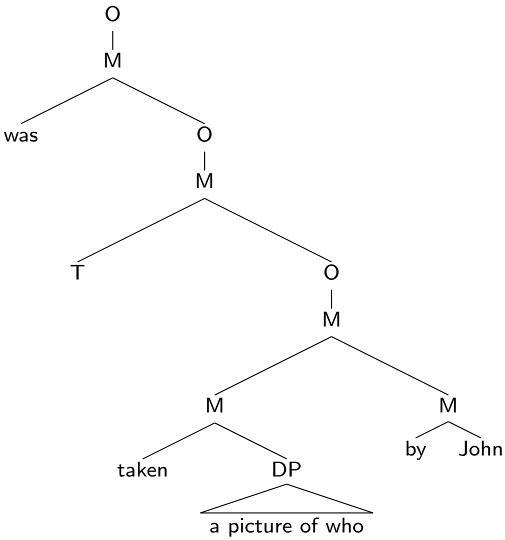
Derivation (8) is longer than (7)!

(8) a. $[_{VP}$ taken $[_{DP_j}$ a picture of who$_i]$ by John$]$
b. $[_{VP}$ who$_i$ taken $[_{DP_j}$ a picture of $t_i]$ by John$]$
c. $[_{TP}$ $[_{DP_j}$ a picture of t_i $]$ T $[_{VP}$ who$_i$ taken t_j by John$]]$
d. $[_{CP}$ who$_i$ was $[_{TP}$ $[_{DP_j}$ a picture of t_i $]$ T $[_{VP}$ taken t_j by John$]]]$

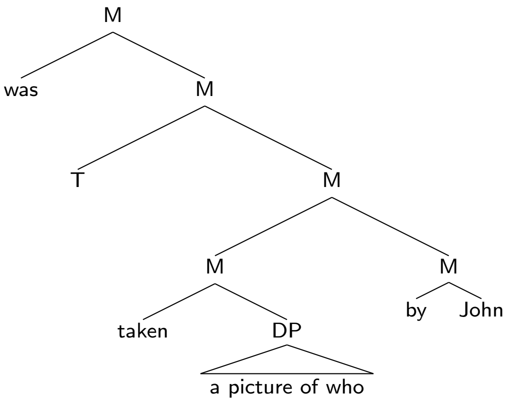
Derivation Tree of (7)



Derivation Tree of (8)



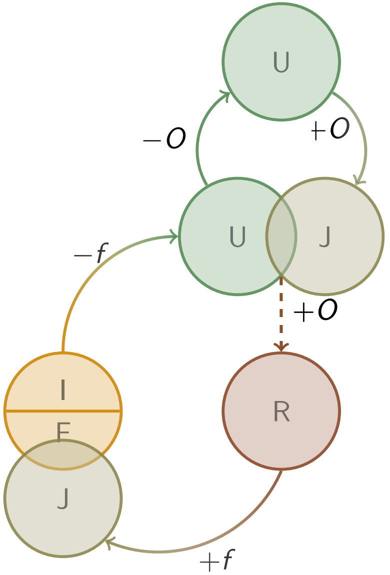
Underspecified Derivation Tree of (7) and (8)



Strategy

- Compute reference-set by
  1. mapping to underspecified derivation (i.e. remove Move-nodes)
  2. arbitrarily adding Move-nodes to underspecified derivation
  3. discarding all derivation trees that aren't in the input language (i.e. the junk)
- Filter out the suboptimal derivation trees (those that can be obtained from others by adding Move-nodes)
  1. Let R be the transduction that maps a derivation tree to the trees in its reference-set and $+O$ the transduction defined by adding Move-nodes
  2. The range of the composition of R with $+O$ is the set of derivation trees that can be obtained from some tree in the range of R by adding Move-nodes, i.e. the suboptimal outputs.
  3. Thus, the relative complement of the range of R and the range of the composition of R with $+O$ is the set S of optimal outputs. Composing R with the diagonal over S maps every tree to its optimal outputs.

Architecture of SDP



Scope Economy ≠ Semantic SDP

Scope Economy

QR is licit only if it induces a change in meaning.

Scope Economy (Rephrased)

Given convergent derivations $d_1, \ldots, d_n$ that are identical modulo QR and have identical meaning, prefer the one with the fewest instances of Move.

- Checking semantic identity is hard.
- Even if we ignore semantics, Scope Economy needs more power than the SDP because the number of QR-able phrases per CP is not finitely bounded!
- We can move to a more powerful type of transducer that still preserves regularity, but we lose closure under composition $\Rightarrow$ Scope Economy structurally more demanding than SDP

Underspecification-and-Filtration

A Rule of Thumb

A reference-set constraint is likely to be computable by a transducer if

- one can find a structure that encodes the commonalities of all the competitors, and
- neither the underspecification step nor the recovery step require insertion of material of unbounded size, and
- the economy metric can be implemented as
  - a well-formedness constraint on underspecified structures, or
  - a specific restriction on the recovery step, or
  - a transducer that turns optimal candidates into suboptimal ones.

Advantages of Reference-Set Constraints

- **Modularity**
  Constraint only depends on input language,
  not on mechanisms that generate it
- **Succinctness**
  Non-reference-set correspondent may fail to make
  the restriction explicit or be much more complicated;
  reference-set constraint may subsume
  very different constraints, depending on input grammar
- **More Tweakable Parameters**
  Reference-set constraint gives us at least four parametrizable
  components: reference types, reference sets, the map between
  the two, and the economy metric.
- **Reaching out**
  Connections to OT, sTAG and others may allow us
  to incorporate results from these frameworks

Conclusion (Part 1)

- Tree transducers were proposed as a model for reference-set constraints.
- OSs offer a bird's eye view on them (**Insight 2**).
- Most requirements for an OS to be efficiently computable are fulfilled by reference-set constraints; in particular, their corresponding OSs are output joint preserving.
- The only problematic areas are GEN and the OS constraints.
- The underspecification-and-filtration strategy offers a general solution.

Conclusion (Part 2)

- **Syntax**
  optimality conditions can be modelled by transducers
  $\Rightarrow$ no optimality considerations involved
- **Semantics**
  - Incorporating semantic information is difficult.
  - Even on a purely structural level, more powerful transducers are necessary (cf. Scope Economy).
- **Pragmatics**
  assumed to require at least bidirectional optimization, whereas transducers correspond to unidirectional optimality $\Rightarrow$ optimality in pragmatics fundamentally different

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