

Case assignment in TSL syntax: a case study

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Summary

Goal: **subregular** analysis of case licensing

Subregular hypothesis: linguistic patterns are properly contained in the class of regular (string/tree) languages

- Syntactic representations: derivation trees of Minimalist Grammars (Stabler 1997, 2011)
- MGs combine lexical items via Merge (•) and Move (◦).
- **Known fact:** Merge and Move are **Tier-based Strictly Local (TSL)** over derivation trees. (Graf 2018)
- Our analysis of case assignment in English illustrates how the TSL view extends to other syntactic dependencies.

Core Insight

- Case assignment follows a uniform pattern that generalizes Dependent Case Theory (Marantz 1991; Baker and Vinokurova 2010).
- Both structural and lexical case are mediated by sister-daughter relations.

TSL over trees

Intuition

- ignore irrelevant material by projecting specific nodes onto **tree tier**
- highly **local constraints** determine permissible tier shapes

Application to case-licensing

- Tier projection rules

Project ...	if ...
C + mother + selecting •	always
T _{fin} + mother	always
T _{inf} + mother	selected by ECM-verb or <i>for</i>
PRO + selecting •	always
NOM + selecting •	always
ACC + selecting •	not subject under projecting T _{inf}
DAT+ selecting •	treated as dependent case

Table 1: Tier-projection function

- Local constraints

If daughter of • is...	licensing sibling of • must be...
NOM	T _{fin}
ACC	•, T _{inf} , PRO, NOM
DAT	ACC

Table 2: Case licensing as daughter-sibling constraints

Datives

Merge node (•) with DAT daughter must have ACC sister:

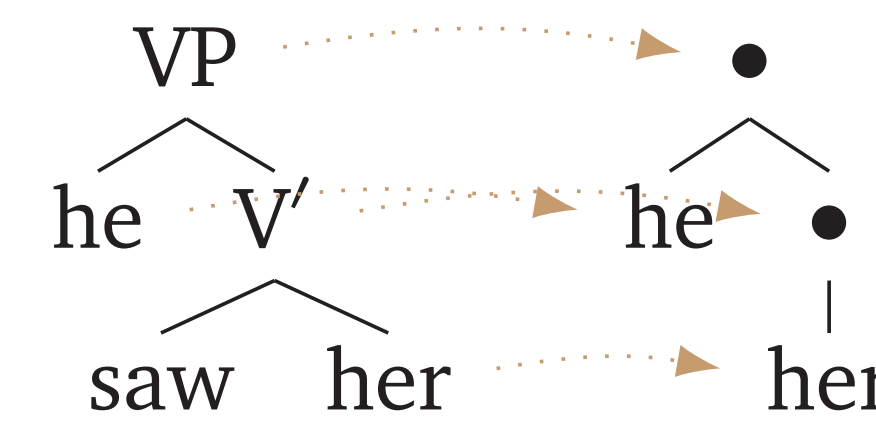
- (7) a. ?? I showed her him.
 b. I showed him to her.

Accusatives

The sister of a Merge node (•) with ACC daughter must be one of the following:

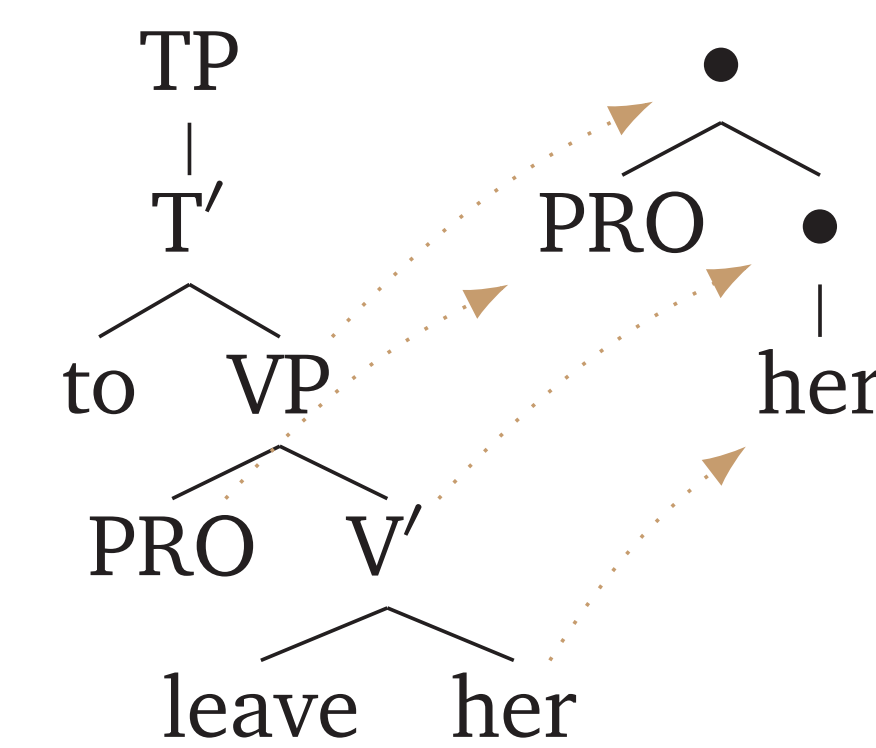
- NOM (Transitive verbs)

(1) He saw her.



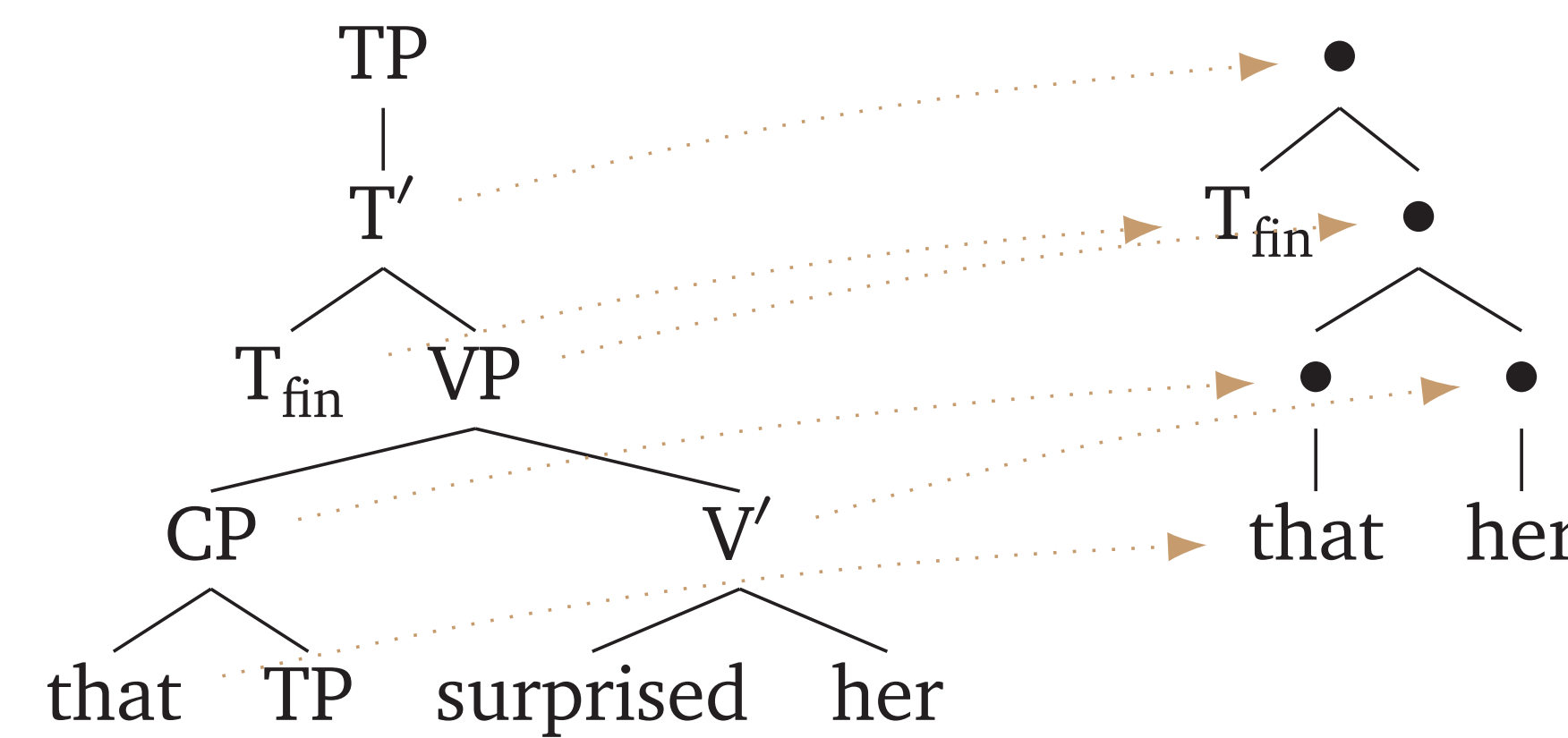
- PRO (Control)

(2) He persuaded her [CP PRO to leave her].



- Merge node • (Clausal subjects)

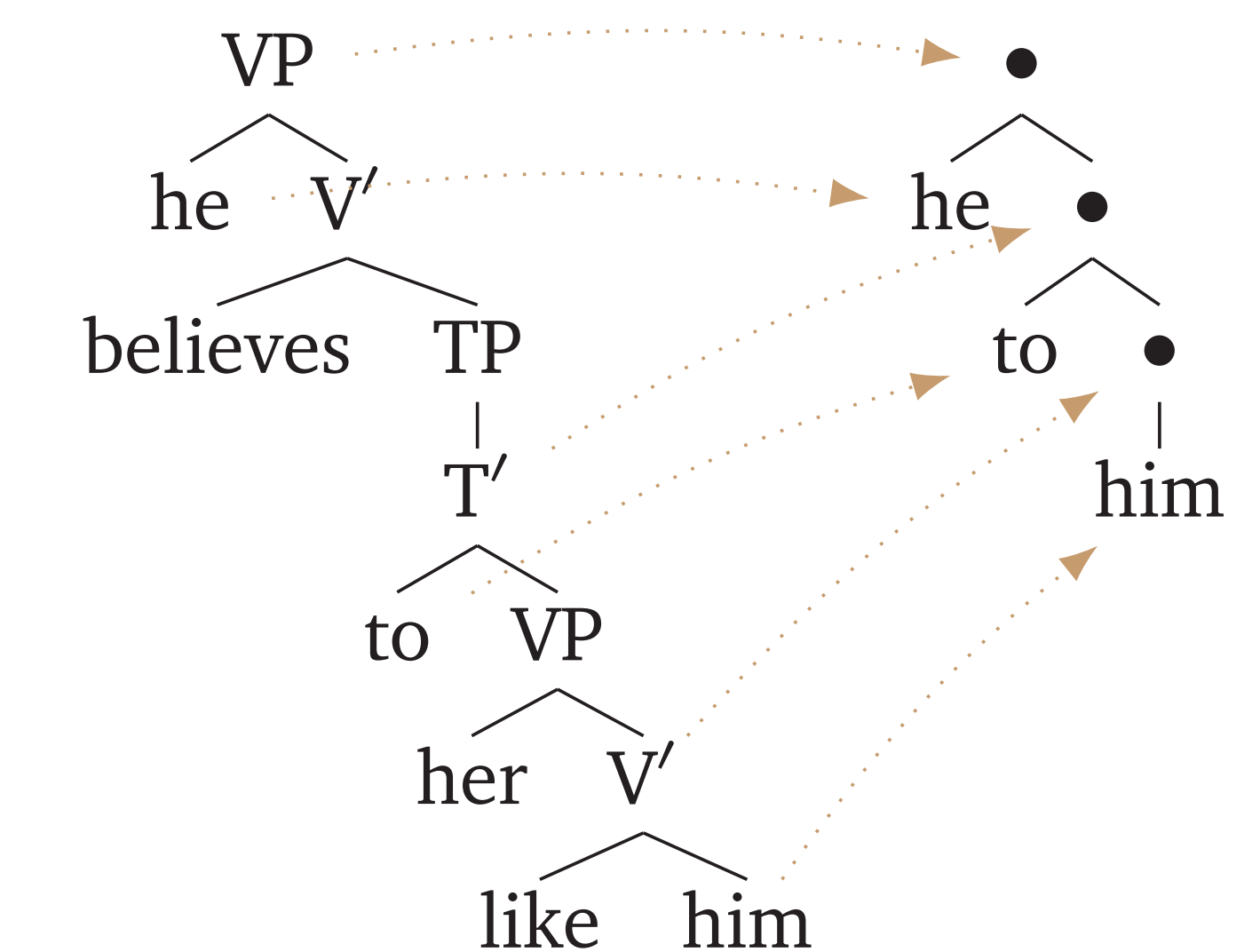
(3) That John left early surprised her.



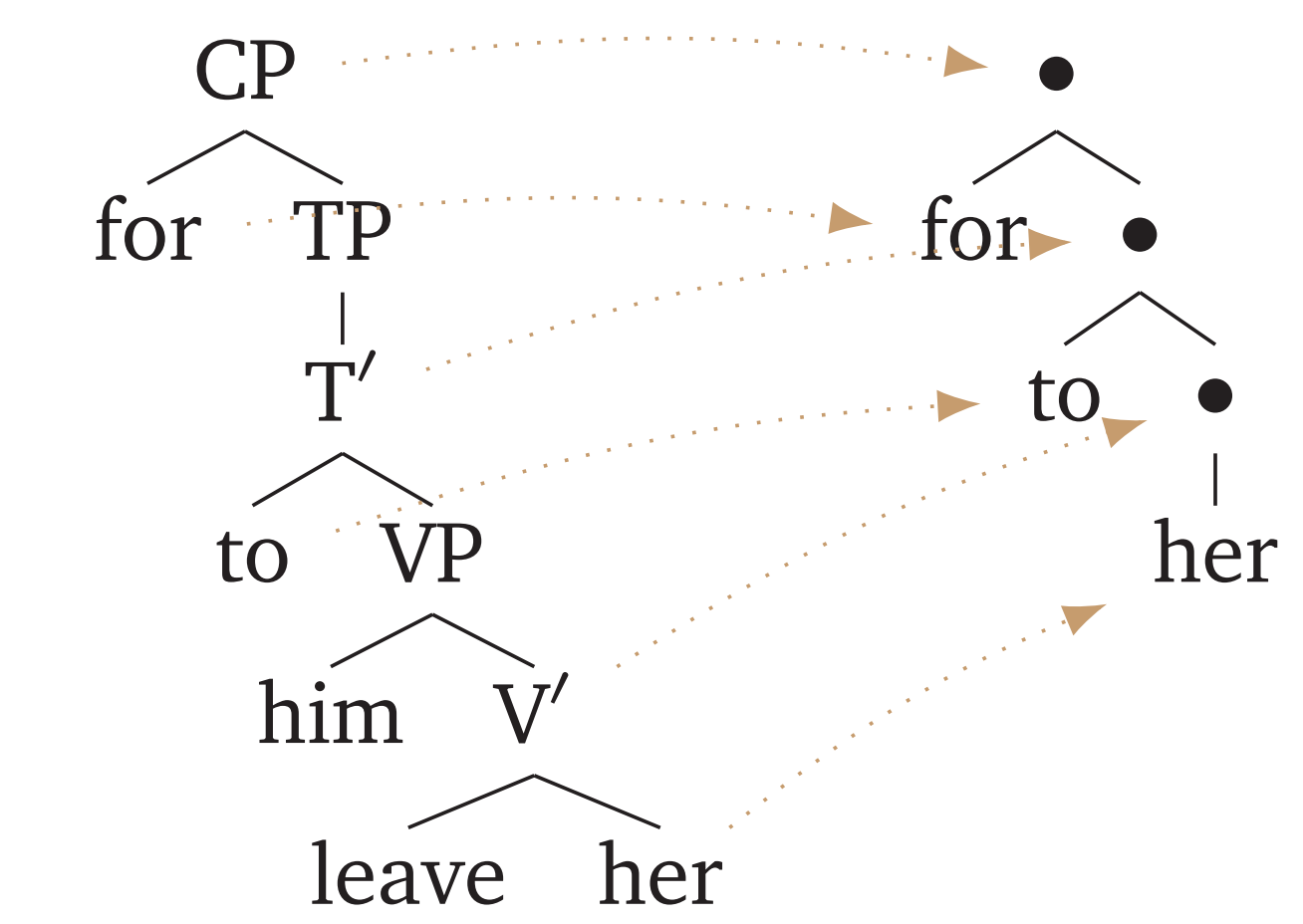
- T_{inf} (ECM/*for*-clauses)

- T_{inf} is projected on the tier if it is selected by an ECM verb or *for*
- ACC-marked subjects under projecting T_{inf} do not project
- Any ACC object in ECM and *for*-clauses are licensed by T_{inf}

(4) He believes [TP her to like him].



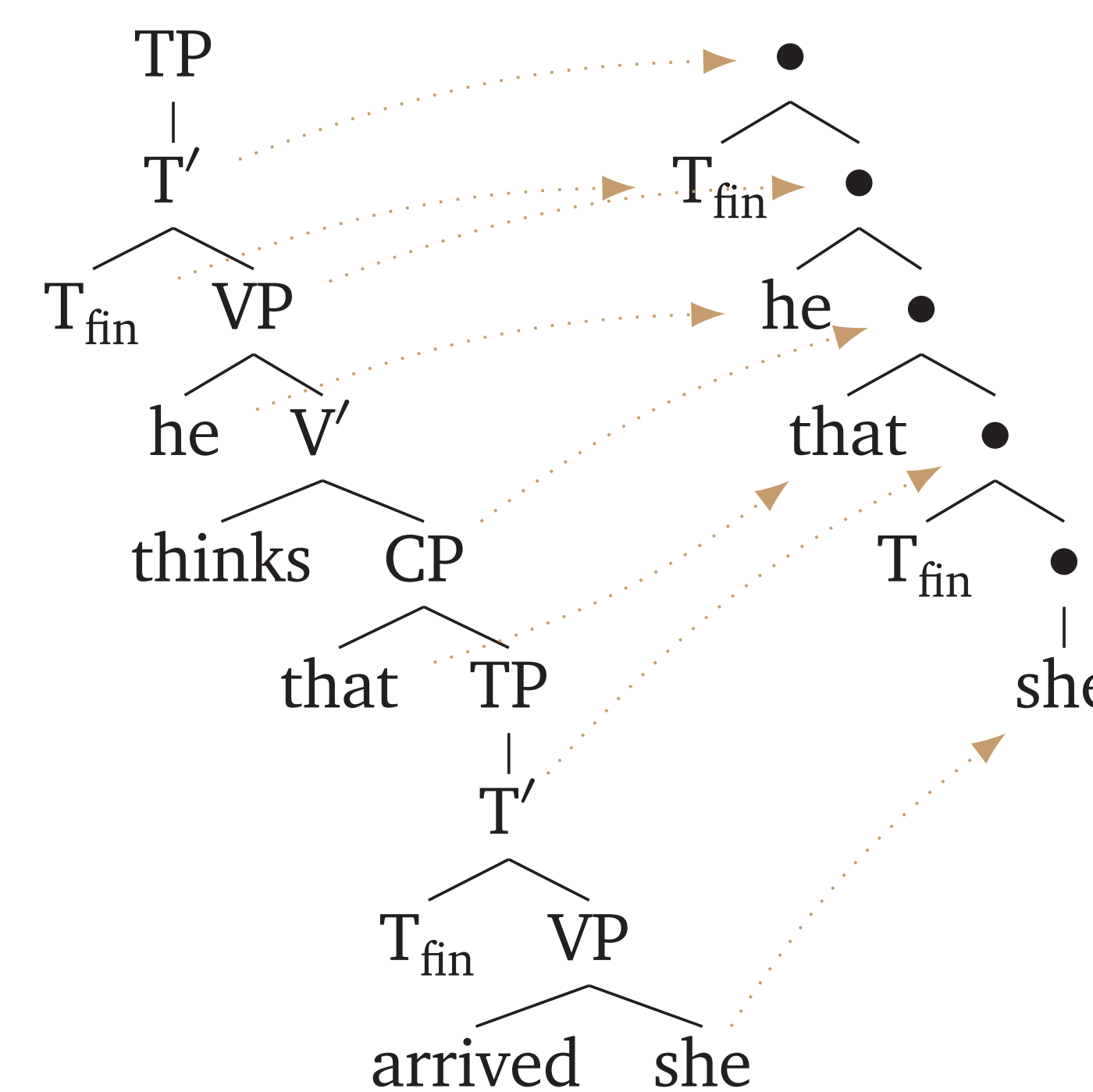
(5) For him to leave her is surprising.



Nominatives

Merge node (•) with NOM daughter must have T_{fin} sister:

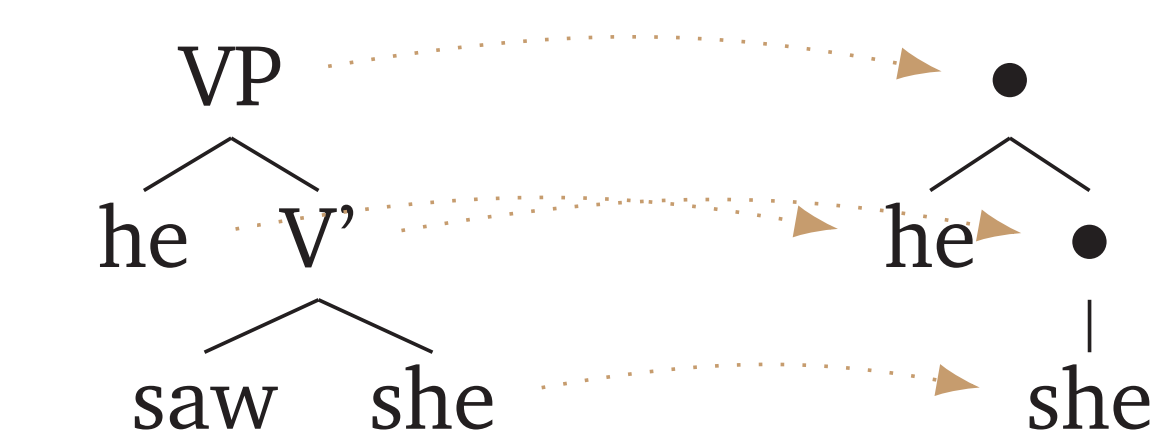
(6) He thinks that she has arrived.



Illicit configurations

“aunt” of NOM is NOM

(8) *He saw she.

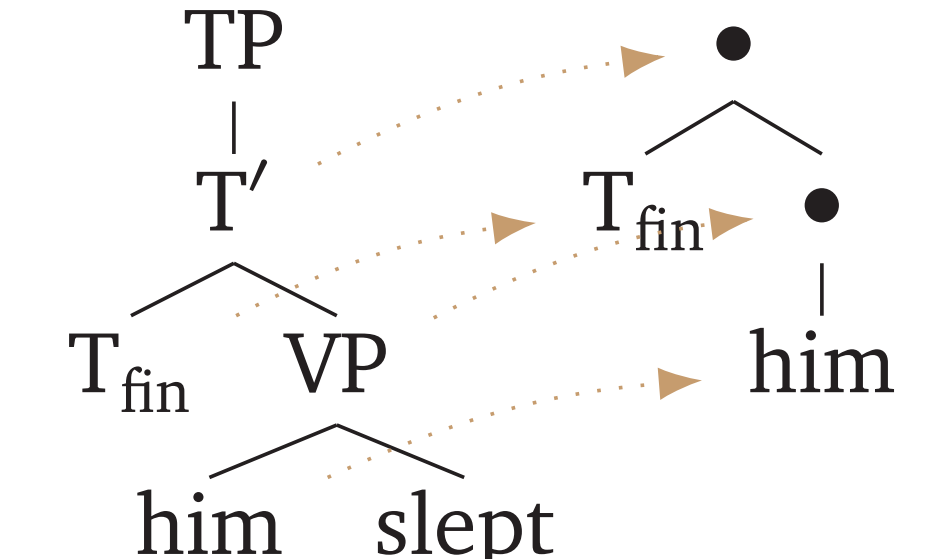


“aunt” of NOM is T_{inf}

(9) *He to leave is surprising.

“aunt” of ACC is T_{fin}

(10) *Him slept.



References

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