

# Semantics 5

# **A condition on reconstruction**

Two guards seem to me to be standing in front of every building.

(ambiguous?)

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Two guards seem to me to be standing in front of every building.

(ambiguous? yes.)

Two guards seem to themselves to be standing in front of every building.

(ambiguous?)

# A condition on reconstruction

Two guards seem to me to be standing in front of every building.

(ambiguous? yes.)


Two guards seem to themselves to be standing in front of every building.

(ambiguous? no.)

# A condition on reconstruction

Remember that we had an idea that a sentence like this is only ambiguous because *two guards* can reconstruct back into the embedded clause:

two guards seem [        to be standing in front of  
every building]



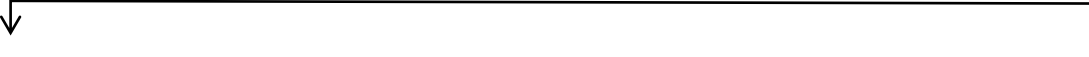
which is why there's no ambiguity in:

two guards think [that I am standing in front of  
every building]

# A condition on reconstruction

Suppose it's true that ambiguity would require reconstruction:

Two guards seem to themselves **two guards** to be standing in front of every building.



...would anything go wrong if you reconstructed?

## **moral:**

Reconstruction involves picking a particular position to interpret a moved phrase in...

both for binding theory and for quantifier scope.

**moral:**

sometimes taken as evidence for a particular approach to movement...*copy theory*.



**moral:**

sometimes taken as evidence for a particular approach to movement...*copy theory*.

(I don't know) **what** Mary will eat \_\_\_

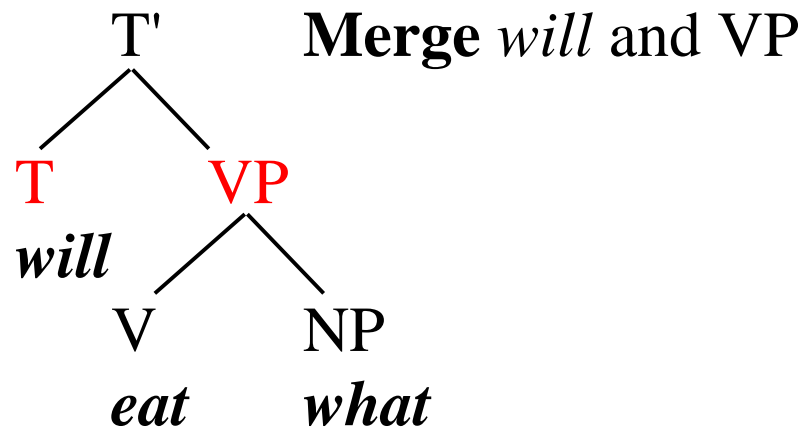
**moral:**

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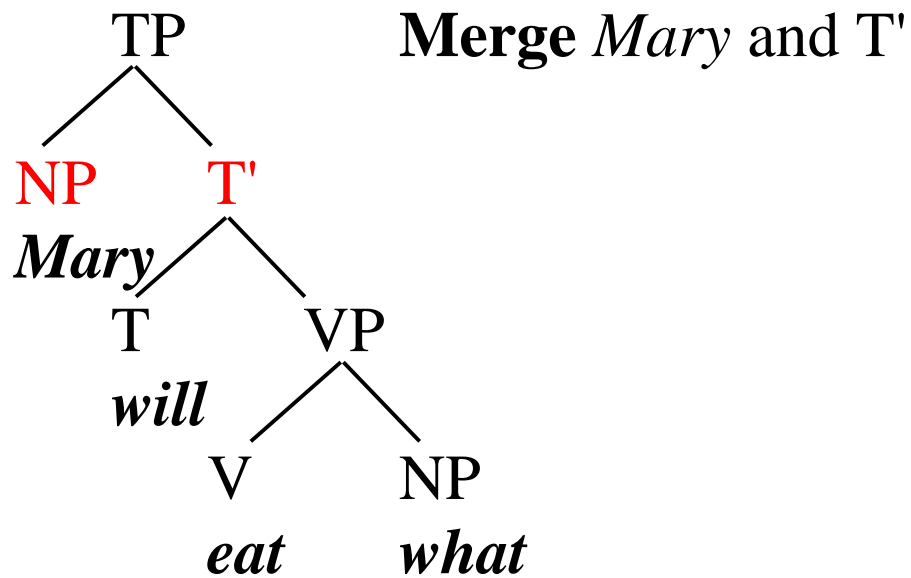
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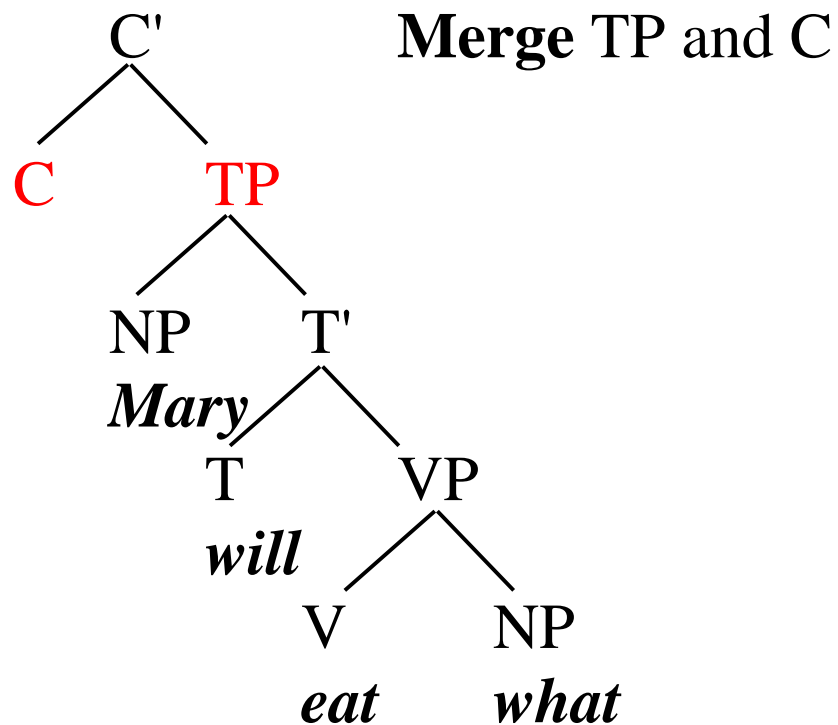
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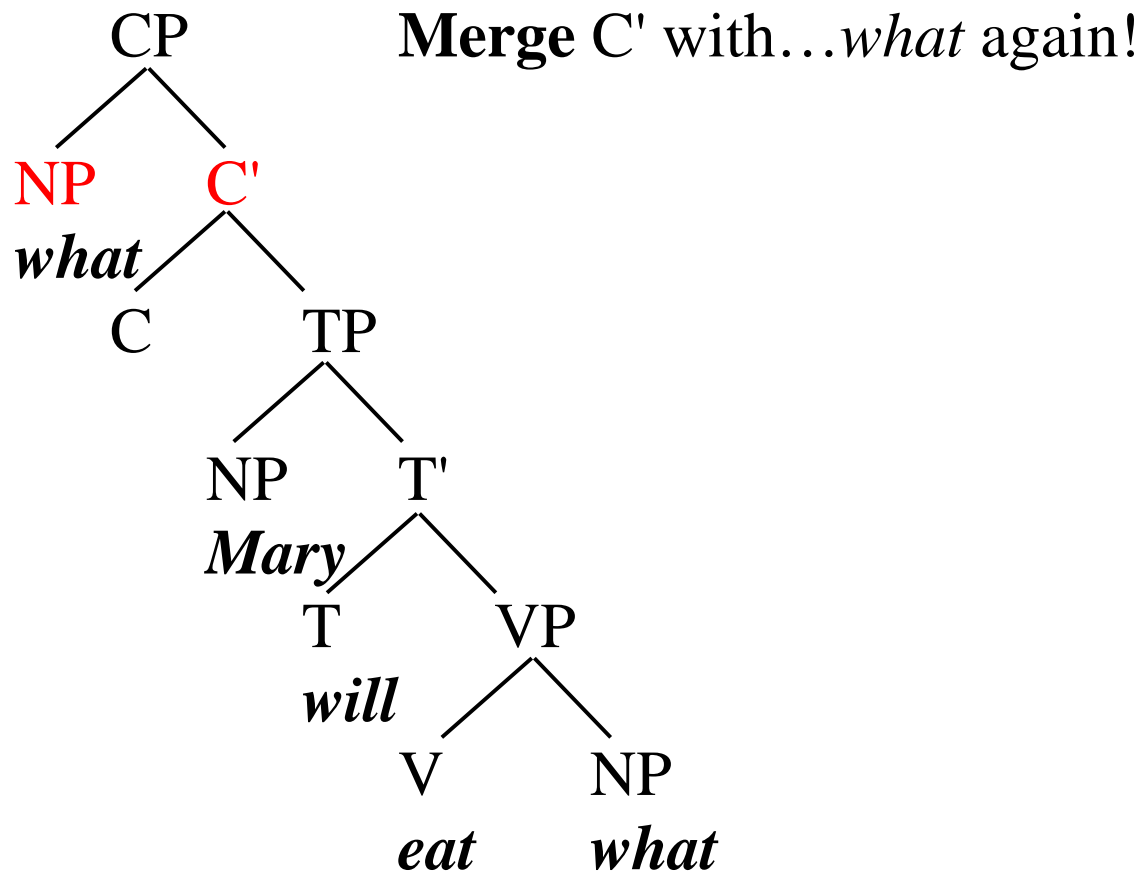
## moral:

(I don't know) **what** Mary will eat \_\_\_\_



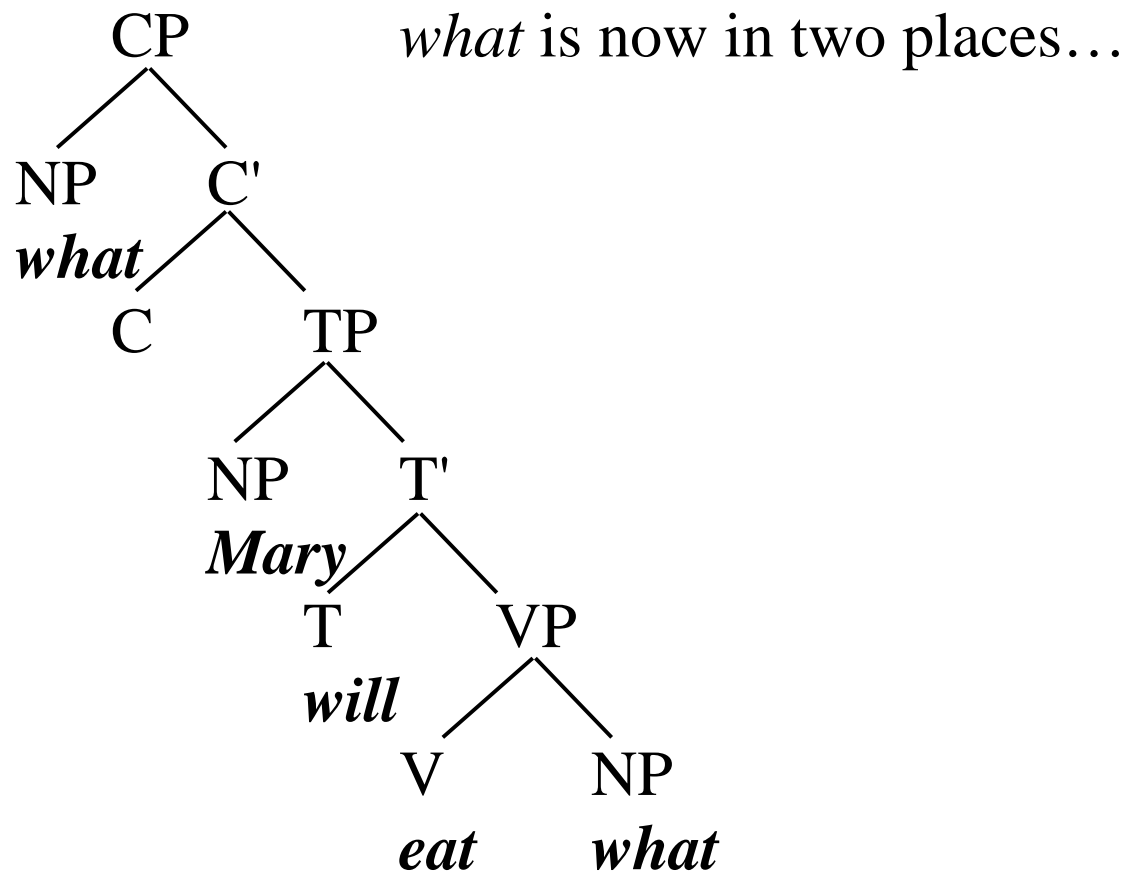
# moral:

(I don't know) **what** Mary will eat \_\_\_\_



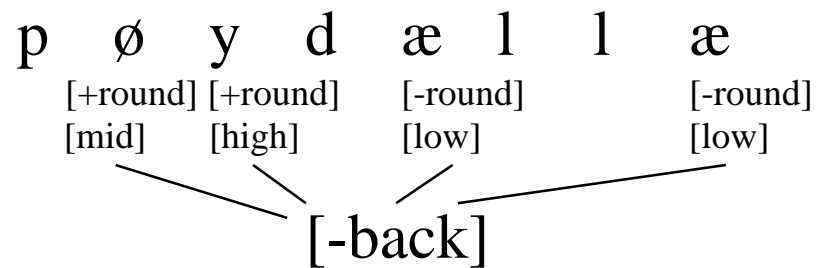
## moral:

(I don't know) **what** Mary will eat \_\_\_\_



# moral:

(remember Finnish vowel harmony?)



('on the table')



## **moral:**

Reconstruction involves picking a particular position to interpret a moved phrase in...

both for binding theory and for quantifier scope.

now for a new topic...

# What happens when you elide?

*VP-ellipsis:*

Adam ate an apple,  
and Eve did [\_\_\_\_] too.

## What happens when you elide?

*VP-ellipsis:*

Adam ate an apple,  
and Eve did [\_\_\_\_] too.

*"Sluicing":*

Adam ate something,  
but I don't know what [\_\_\_\_]

## What happens when you elide?

*VP-ellipsis:*

Adam ate an apple,  
and Eve did [**eat an apple**] too.

*"Sluicing":*

Adam ate something,  
but I don't know what [**Adam ate**]

# What happens when you elide?

*"Sluicing":*

Adam ate something,

but I don't know what [Adam ate]

- nothing structurally there, but semantics puts something there as part of interpretation?
- elided material structurally present--just not pronounced?

# What happens when you elide?

## preposition stranding:

Peter was talking with someone,

but I don't know (**with**) *who(m)* [\_\_\_]

*Who* was he talking **with**?      **With** *whom* was he talking?

# What happens when you elide?

## preposition stranding:

Peter was talking with someone,

but I don't know (**with**) *who(m)* [\_\_]

*Who* was he talking **with**?      **With** *whom* was he talking?

Pjotr govoril s kem-to,      [*Russian*]

no ne znaju \*(s) *kem* [\_\_]

\**Kem* on govoril s?      √ **S** *kem* on govoril?







# What happens when you elide?

## case matching:

Er will jemandem schmeicheln, [*German*]

*he wants someone.DAT flatter*

aber sie wissen nicht, [wem \_\_ ]

*but they know not who.DAT*

'He wants to flatter someone, but they don't know who'

Er will jemanden loben,

*he wants someone.ACC praise*

aber sie wissen nicht, [wen \_\_ ]

*but they know not who.ACC*

'He wants to praise someone, but they don't know who'

# What happens when you elide?

## case matching:

Er will jemandem schmeicheln,

*he wants someone.DAT flatter*

aber sie wissen nicht, [wem \_\_ ]

*but they know not who.DAT*

'He wants to flatter someone, but they don't know who'

... wem er schmeicheln \_\_ will

*who.DAT he flatter wants*

'...who he wants to flatter'

# What happens when you elide?

## case matching:

Er will jemandem schmeicheln,

*he wants someone.DAT flatter*

aber sie wissen nicht, [wem \_\_ ]

*but they know not who.DAT*

'He wants to flatter someone, but they don't know who'

... wem er schmeicheln \_\_ will

*who.DAT he flatter wants*

'...who he wants to flatter'

## **What happens when you elide?**

two pieces of evidence for ellipsis as a process that prevents pronunciation of syntactically present structure.

on the other hand...

# What happens when you elide?

She bought a big car,  
but I don't know how big [ \_\_\_ ]

A biography of one of the Marx brothers is going to be published  
this year...  
guess which [ \_\_\_ ]!

# What happens when you elide?

She bought a big car,

but I don't know how big [she bought a \_\_ car]

A biography of one of the Marx brothers is going to be published  
this year...

guess which [a biography of \_\_ is going to be published]!

# What happens when you elide?

She bought a big car,

but I don't know how big [she bought a \_\_ car]

A biography of one of the Marx brothers is going to be published this year...

guess which [a biography of \_\_ is going to be published]!

→ apparently ellipsis repairs islands? discuss...



# One moral

Interpretation doesn't exactly apply to the sentence that you hear.

- *reconstruction*

[Which picture of himself] did he buy [**which picture of himself**]?

- *Quantifier Raising*

**everyone** Someone loves everyone

- *ellipsis*

She bought something,  
but I don't know what [**she bought \_\_\_**]

## **Association with focus**

I will only give Mary three cookies.

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I will only give **Mary** three cookies.

I will only give Mary **three** cookies.

I will only give Mary three **cookies**.

## Association with focus

I will only give **Mary** three cookies.

I will only give Mary **three** cookies.

I will only give Mary three **cookies**.

= “I will give Mary three cookies, but I will not give anyone else three cookies”

## Association with Focus

I will only give **Mary** three cookies.

I will only give Mary **three** cookies.

I will only give Mary three **cookies**.

I will give **Mary** three cookies, too.

I will give Mary **three** cookies, too.

I will even give **Mary** three cookies.

I will even give Mary **three** cookies.

## Association with Focus

I will only give **Mary** three cookies.

I will give **Mary** three cookies, too.

I will even give **Mary** three cookies.

“I will give Mary three cookies...

“...but I will not give anyone else three cookies”

“...and I will also give other people three cookies.”

“...and I will also give other people three cookies,  
but Mary is the least likely case”

## Focus

I will give **Mary** three cookies

→ used when alternatives to *Mary* are salient:

- answering “Who will you give three cookies to?”
- contrasting: “No, I won’t give **John** three cookies...”
- listing: “I will give **Susan** three cookies,  
I’ll give **John** three cookies, and...”

## Focus

Languages vary in how they realize focus...

- word order changes:

¿ Quién compró el periódico ayer?                    (*Spanish*)  
who bought the newspaper yesterday

Ayer compró el periódico **Juan**.  
yesterday bought the newspaper Juan





## Focus

Languages vary in how they realize focus...

- word order changes
- morphemes:

hat:ak-at    koni    pisa                    (*Chickasaw*)  
man-NOM    skunk    sees  
'The man sees the skunk'

hat:ak-**akot**        koni    pisa  
man-FOC.NOM    skunk    sees  
'**The man** sees the skunk'

hat:ak-at        koni-**akõ:**            pisa  
man-NOM    skunk-FOC.OBJ    sees  
'The man sees **the skunk**'

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