

A Superlative Argument for Syntactic Movement in Fragment Answers

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1. Introduction

- (1) - What did John eat?
a. He ate apples. (Full answer)
b. Apples. (Fragment answer)

Fragment answers in (1b) and how they are derived have attracted much attention. Various accounts have been proposed and most of the arguments either way involve (im)mobility of the fragments, islands, and connectedness.

I draw data from interpretation of superlative expressions in (2) (Pancheva and Tomaszewicz 2012, Tomaszewicz 2014, Shen 2014a,b) to tease apart accounts for fragment answers.

- (2) Sally bought the largest photo of a pear.

The interpretation in question, the relative reading with NP internal focus (RIN), is only available when the focus **overtly** moved from within the superlative NP to the sentential level.

The availability of the RIN in the fragment answer and its unavailability in the full answer can be straightforwardly accounted for in the syntactic movement account but less so in the PF movement account and the In Situ accounts.

2. Accounts

Syntactic movement account (Merchant 2004, a.o.): the fragment goes through A' movement to the left periphery in the syntax and the rest of the sentence is deleted in the PF.

- Syntax: John ate apples.
- Syntax: $[_{FP} [Apples] F [_{TP} John\ ate\ t_1]]$.
- PF: Apples John ate t_1 .

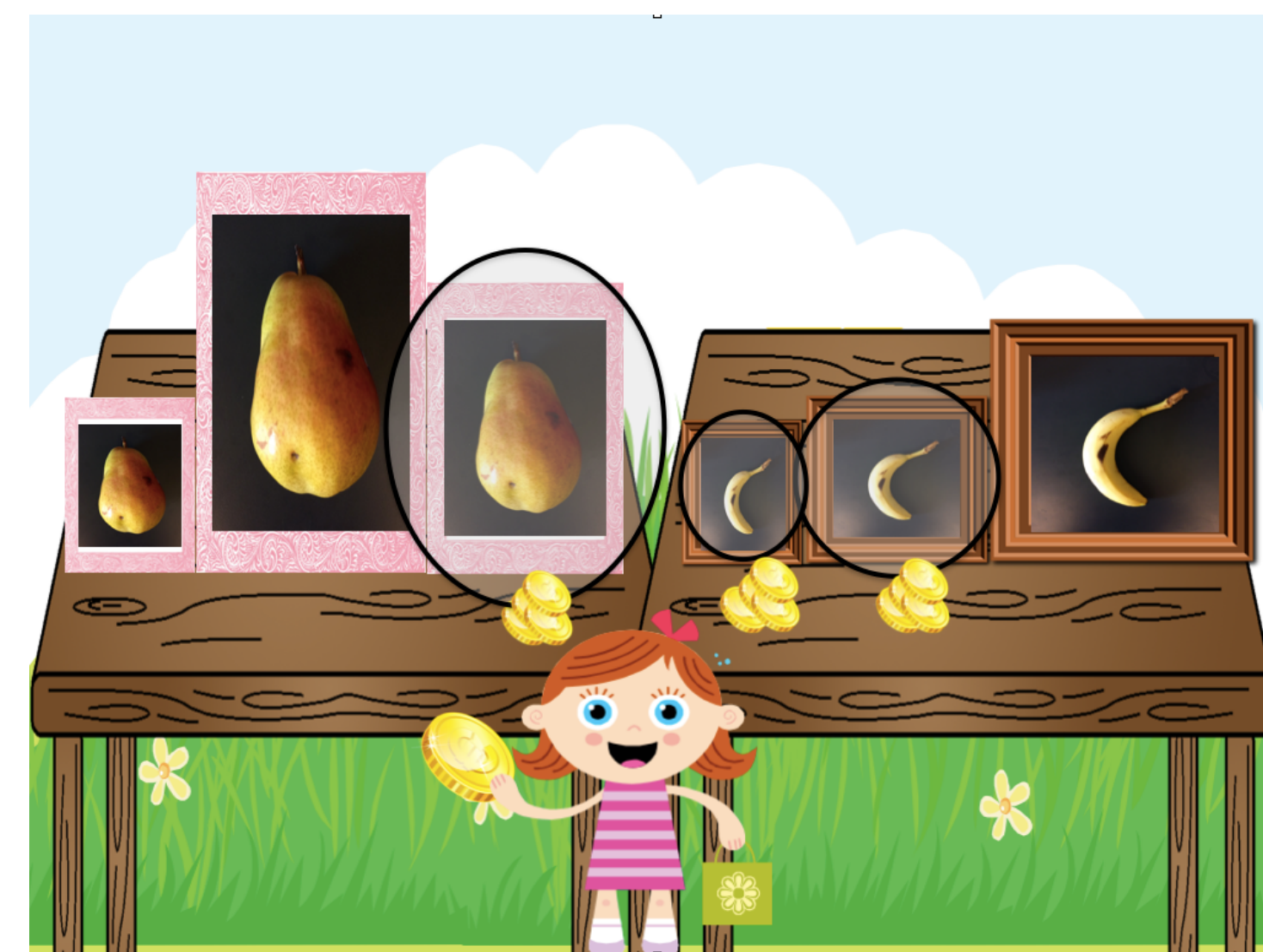
PF movement account (Weir 2014, 2015): the fragment goes through movement in the PF and the rest of the sentence is deleted in the PF.

- Syntax: John ate apples.
- PF: $[_{CP} [Apples] C [_{TP} John\ ate\ t_1]]$.
- PF: [Apples John ate t_1].

In Situ accounts (Morgan 1973; Hankamer 1979; Wilder 1997 a.m.o.): the fragment stays in situ and the rest of the sentences is deleted in the PF.

- Syntax: John ate apples.
- PF: John ate [apples].

3. Relative Reading with NP Internal Focus (RIN)



(3) Sally bought the largest photo of a pear.

Absolute Reading (ABS):	Relative Reading with NP Internal Focus (RIN):
<i>The photo of a pear that Sally bought is larger than other pear photos.</i>	<i>Out of all the photos Sally bought, the photo of pear is the largest.</i>
(False in the scenario.)	(True in the scenario)

- (4) **Generalization:** RIN is only possible when the NP internal focus is **overtly** moved to the sentential domain. (Shen 2014)

- (5) No Movement
a. # Sally bought the largest photo of a pear.
b. Did Sally buy the largest photo of a pear?
-Yes
- (6) Overt Movement
a. ✓ It was a pear who Sally bought the largest photo of.
b. ✓ What Sally bought the largest photo of is a pear.
c. ✓ This was the pear that Sally bought the largest photo of.
- (7) Covert Movement
a. # A different collector bought the largest photo of every fruit. (QR)
b. # Did Sally buy the largest photo of a pear, or a banana? (Alternative question)
c. # School A admitted the oldest child of the same family as School B did. (ACD)
- (8) LF for the RIN
[[A pear]₁ [DegP₂ [2 [1 [S [Sally bought t₂ large photo of t₁]]]]]]

4. From Superlative to Fragment Answers

Szabolcsi (1986) observes that wh-question allows the RIN. (9) shows that fragment answers allow the RIN but the full answer counterpart does not.

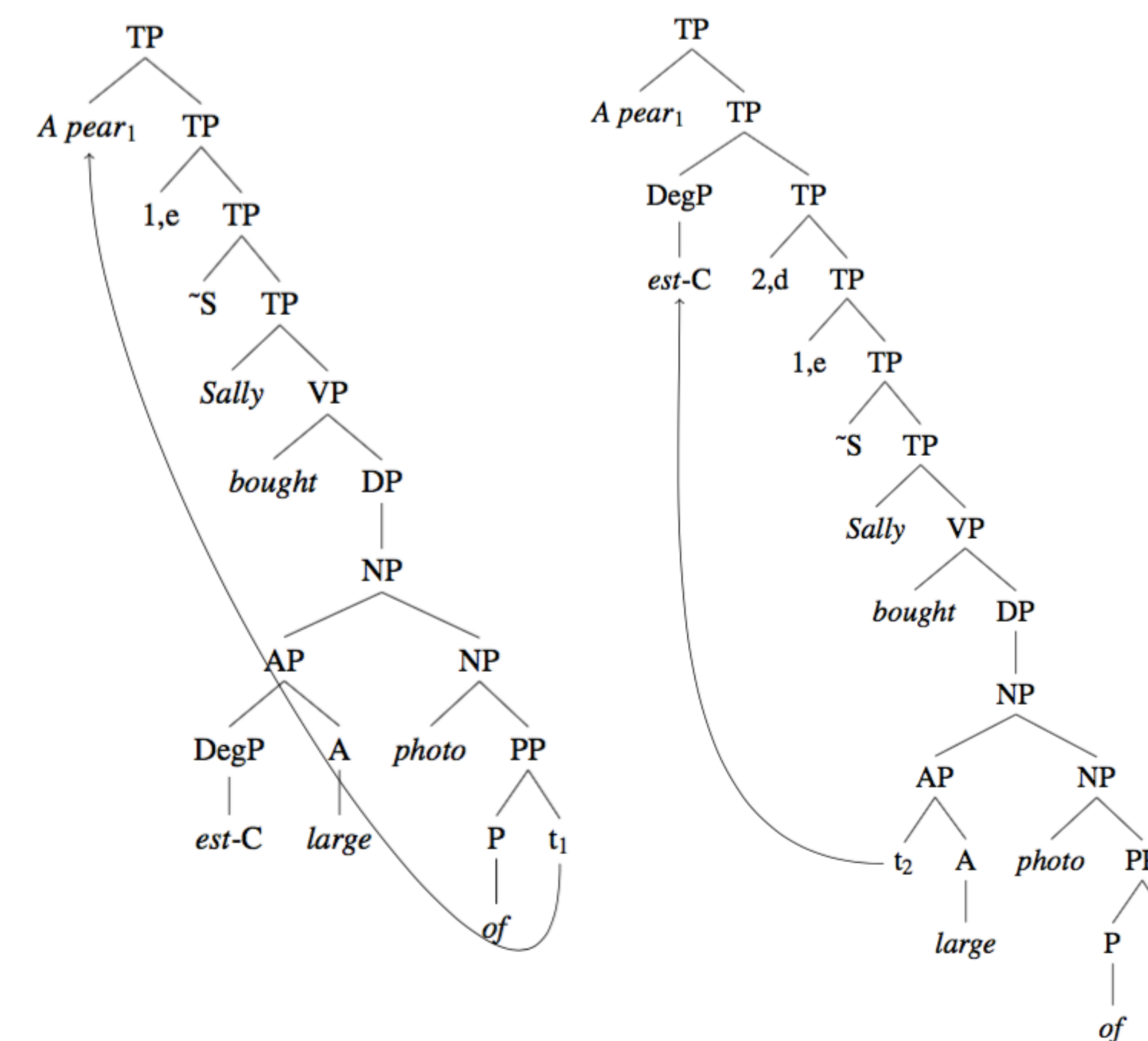
- (9) What did Sally buy the largest photo of?
✓ -A pear.
#- Sally bought the largest photo of a pear.

Syntactic movement account
Full answers → do not allow the RIN without overt movement.
Fragment answers → involve syntactic movement which is required by the LF for the RIN.

PF movement account
Full answers → do not allow the RIN without overt movement.
Fragment answers → PF movement does not have an effect on the LF. The asymmetry between the fragment answer and the full answer is unexpected.

In Situ accounts
Full answers → do not allow the RIN without overt movement.
Fragment answers → no movement. The asymmetry between the fragment answer and the full answer is unexpected.

Q: Why is overt/covert movement relevant for the RIN?
A: The LF for the RIN in (8) requires a particular order of movement.



5. Alternative Sources?

- (10) a. A pear was what Sally bought the largest photo of.
b. It was a pear who Sally bought the largest photo of.
c. What Sally bought the largest photo of is a pear.

Evidence against alternative sources from German:
P stranding and case matching

- (11) a. -Wo-von hat Sally das größte Photo gekauft? (German)
-what-of has Sally the largest photo bought?
b. -Von einer Birne.
-Of a.dat pear. (RIN ✓)

- (12) Es war eine Birne von der Sally das größte Foto gekauft hat.
It was a pear of which Sally the largest photo bought has
'It was a pear that Sally bought the largest photo of.'
FA: Es war eine Birne von der Sally das größte Foto gekauft hat.

- But:
(13) a. The largest photo that Sally bought was of a pear.
b. Das größte Foto das sie gekauft hat war von einer Birne.
the largest photo that she bought has was of a pear

6. Conclusions

This study shows that certain interpretative facts of superlatives are straight-forwardly accounted for under the syntactic movement of fragment answers but not the PF movement or the In Situ approach to fragment answers.

Note that the data presented here do not argue against the no deletion approach in Ginzburg & Sag 2000, Stainton 2006 Jacobson to appear.

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