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Colloquium University of Toronto



The grammar of interactional language: the case of vocatives

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SSHRC  CRSH
Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council
Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines

Goals

Empirical:

What is the **form, function, and distribution** of vocatives?

Analytical:

What derives the **form, function, and distribution** of vocatives and how do they differ from propositional arguments?

Theoretical:

What do vocatives teach us about the system that regulates **interactional language**?

Vocatives

- (1) a. **Hey Wonder Woman!** It's time to save the world.
b. It is time to save the world, **Wonder Woman.**



Vocatives

Vocatives are used to talk **to** people

- (1) a. It is time to save the world, **Wonder Woman**.
b. It is time for **Wonder Woman** to save the world.
- (2) a. * It is time to save the world, **the original Wonder Woman**.
b. It is time for **the original Wonder Woman** to save the world.
- (3) a. It is time to save the world, **woman**.
b. * It is time for **woman** to save the world.



Propositional (p-)arguments are used to talk **about** people.

Vocatives do not behave like p-arguments.

Vocatives

- (1) a. It is time to save the world, **Wonder Woman**.
b. It is time for **Wonder Woman** to save the world.
- (2) a. * It is time to save the world, **the original Wonder Woman**.
b. It is time for **the original Wonder Woman** to save the world.
- (3) a. It is time to save the world, **woman**.
b. * It is time for **woman** to save the world.



Is there a structural difference?

There are different
types of vocatives

Vocatives

- (1) a. **Hey Wonder Woman!**
- b. **Hey Wonder Woman!** it's time to save the world.
- c. * It's time to save the world, **hey Wonder Woman.**

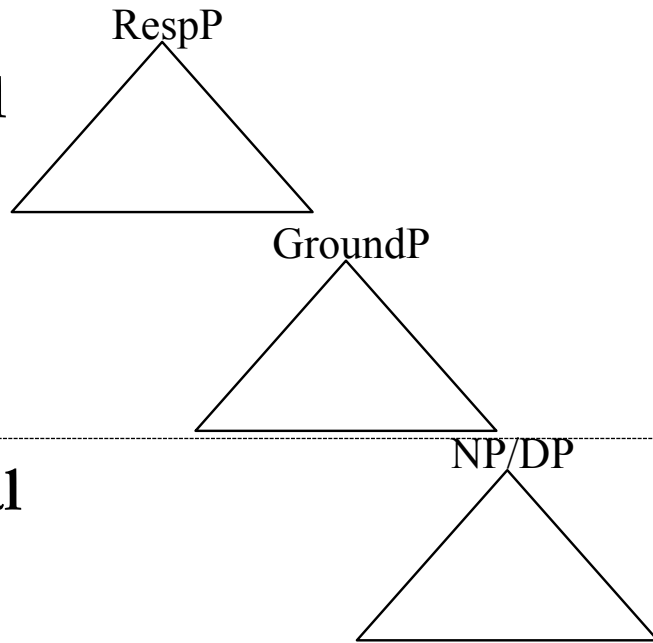
Is there a structural
difference?

The proposal in a nutshell

Hey **Wonder Woman!**

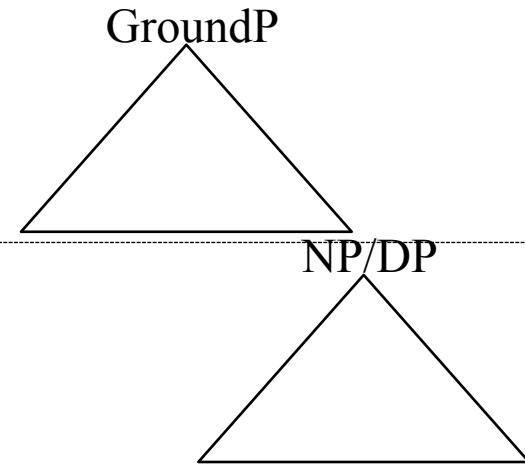
It's time to save the world, **Wonder Woman!**

Interactional structure



Propositional structure

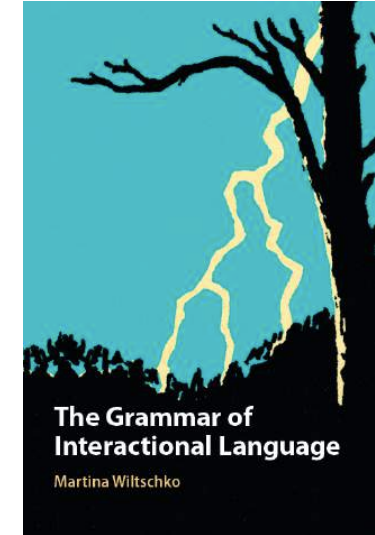
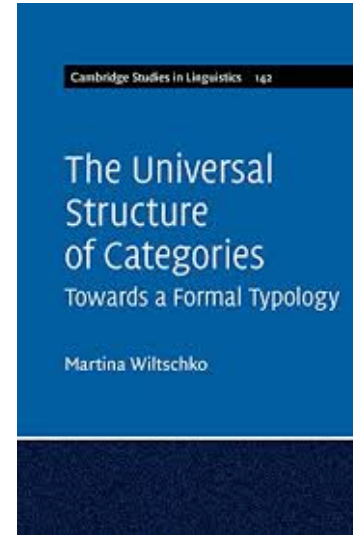
Vocatives as calls
for attention



Vocatives as addresses
in interaction

Roadmap

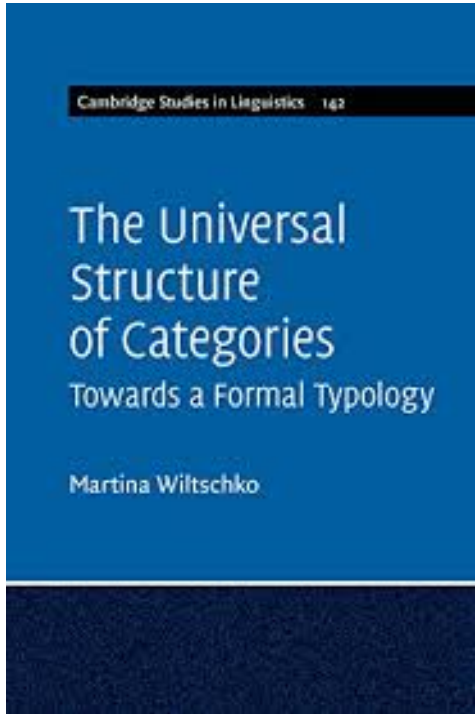
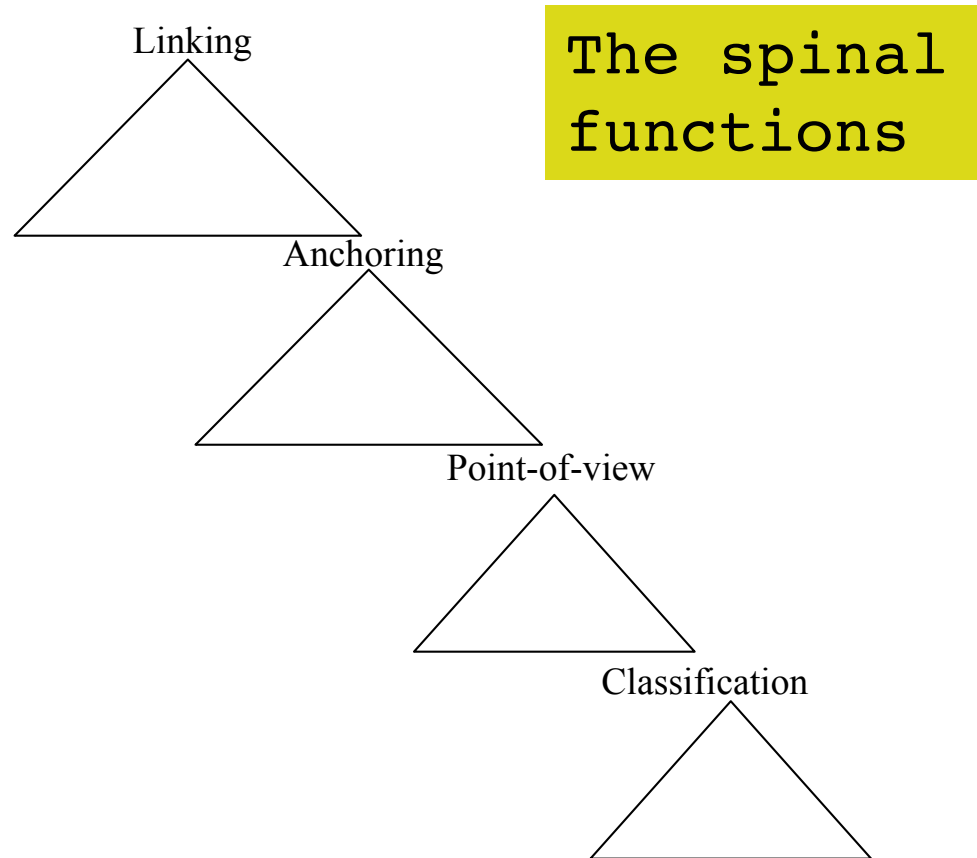
- Background:
 - The grammar of i-language
- The category of vocative phrases:
 - Vocatives are GroundP
- The internal structure of vocative phrases
 - Vocatives contain NP, DP, and $\text{Ground}_{\text{Spkr}}$ below $\text{Ground}_{\text{Adr}}$
- The structure of Calls vs. Addresses
 - Calls are RespP, Addresses are GroundP
- Responding to vocative calls.



The grammar of i-language

Background

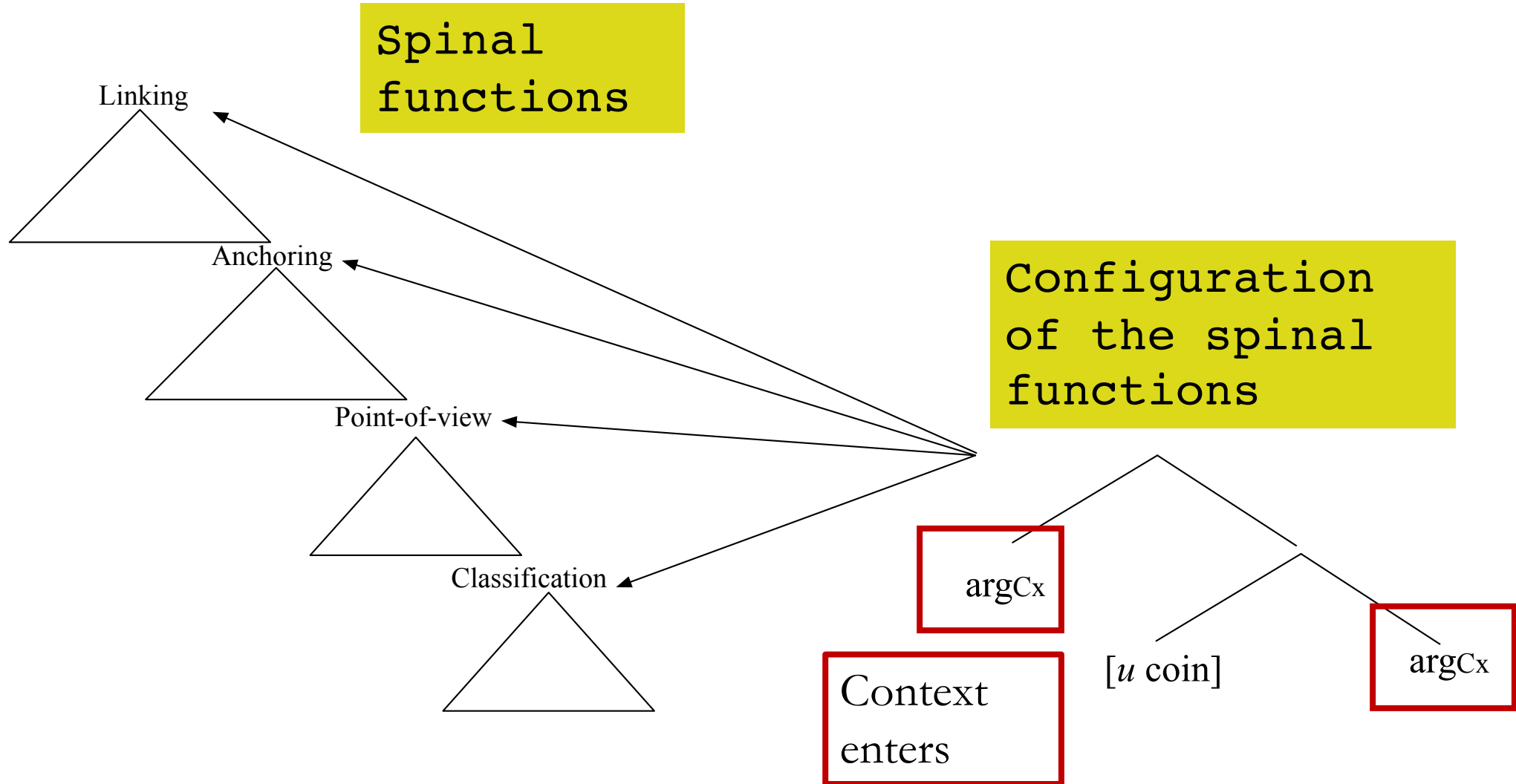
The universal spine hypothesis



Wiltschko 2014

The universal spine hypothesis

(Wiltschko 2014)

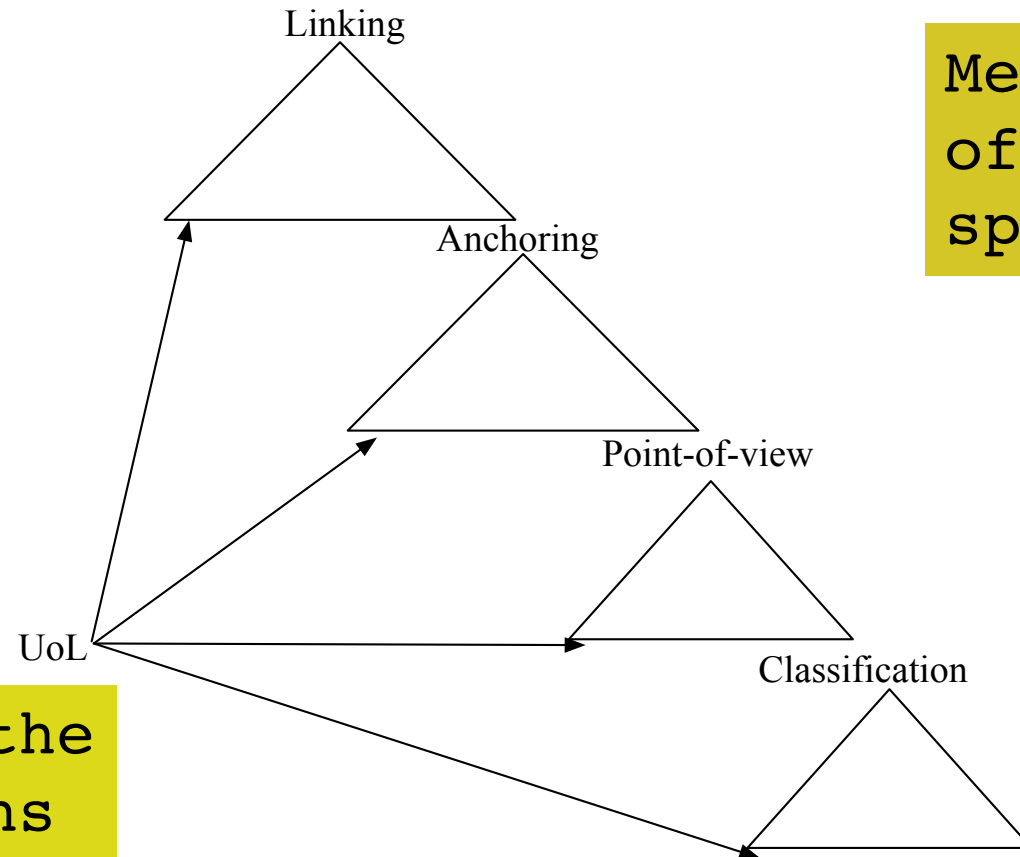


The universal spine hypothesis

(Wiltschko 2014)

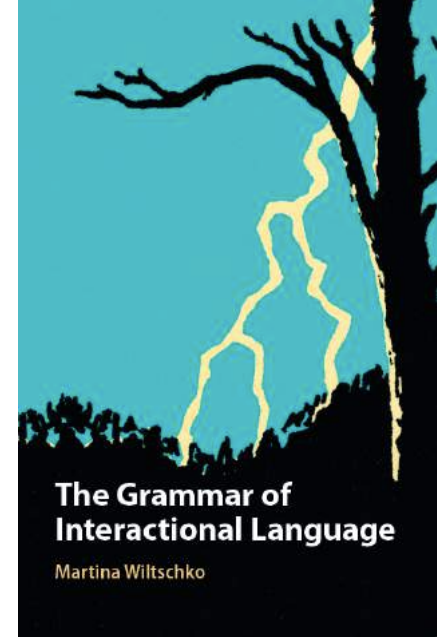
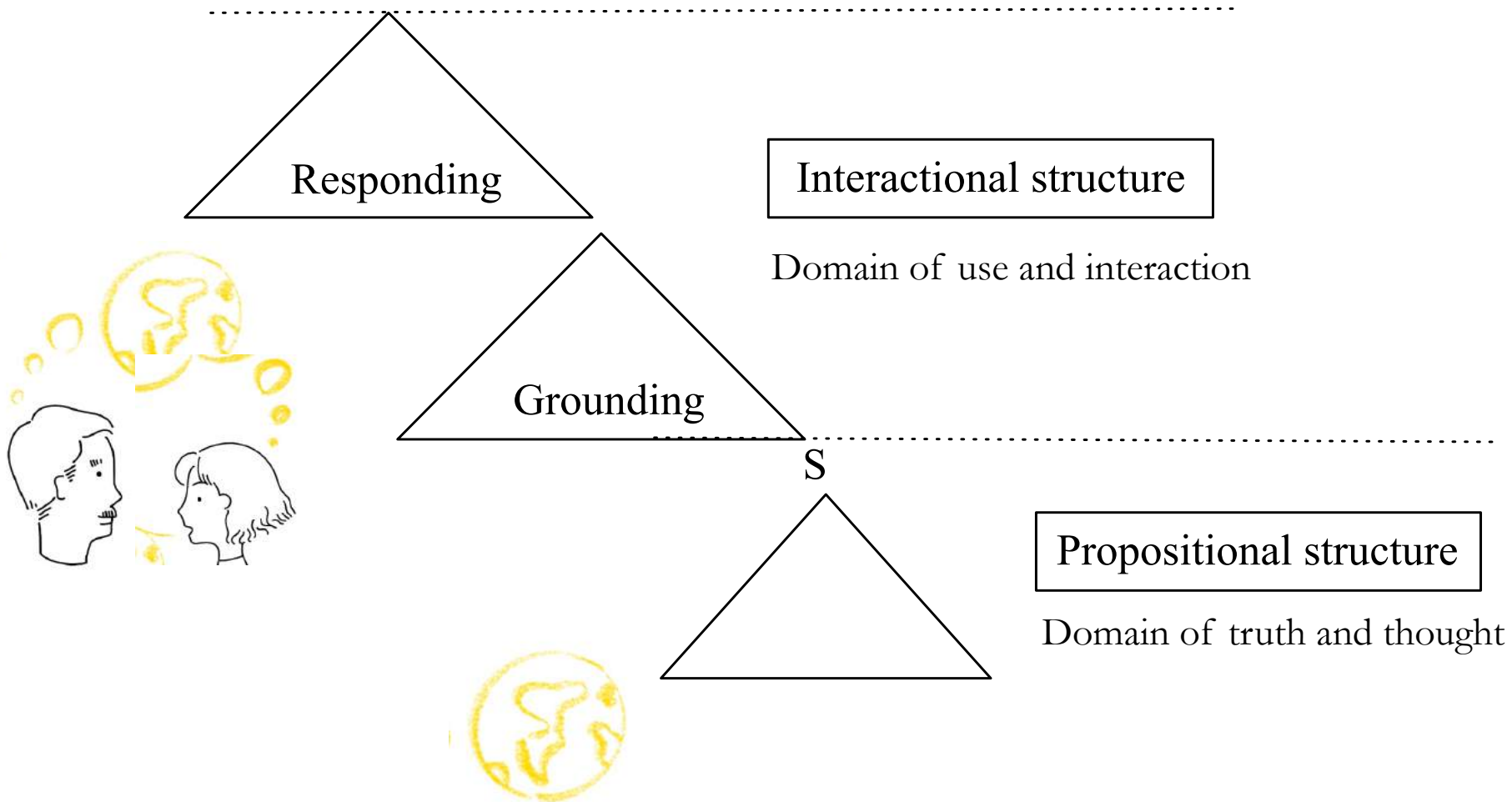
Lexicon
enters

Expression of the
spinal functions



Meaning is composed
of UoLs and the
spinal functions

The interactional spine hypothesis (ISH)



i-language

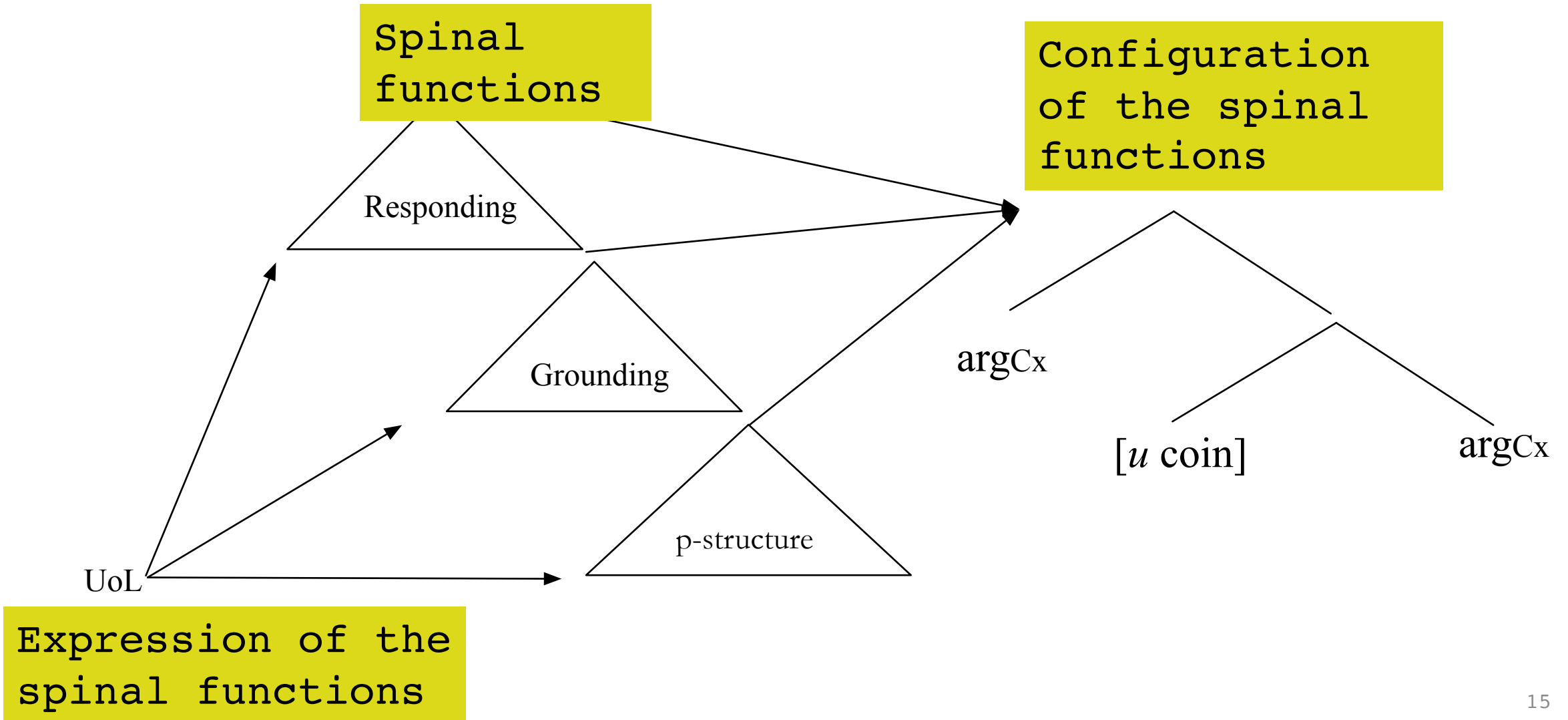
Request
confirmation
of agreement

(1) I Gal Gadot was amazing as Wonder Woman, eh?

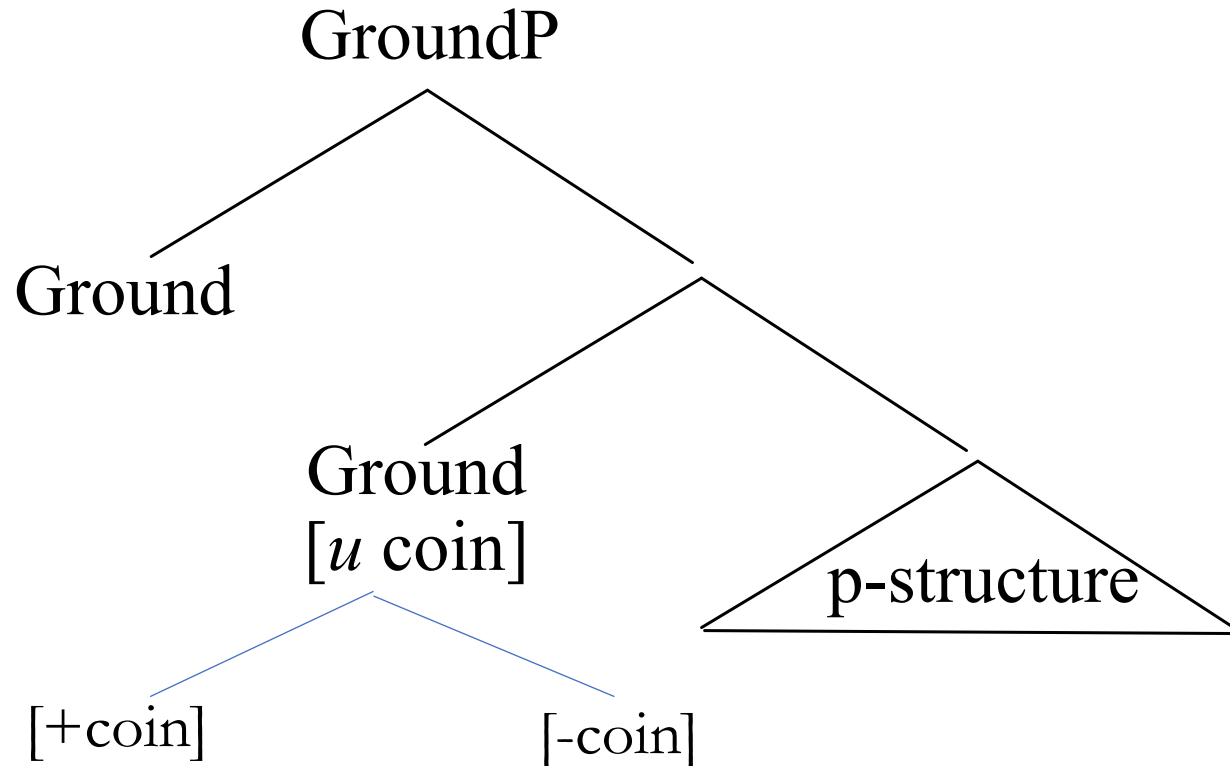
R Yeah, I know, right?
Confirmation
of agreement

Request
confirmation
of agreement
of agreement

The interactional spine hypothesis



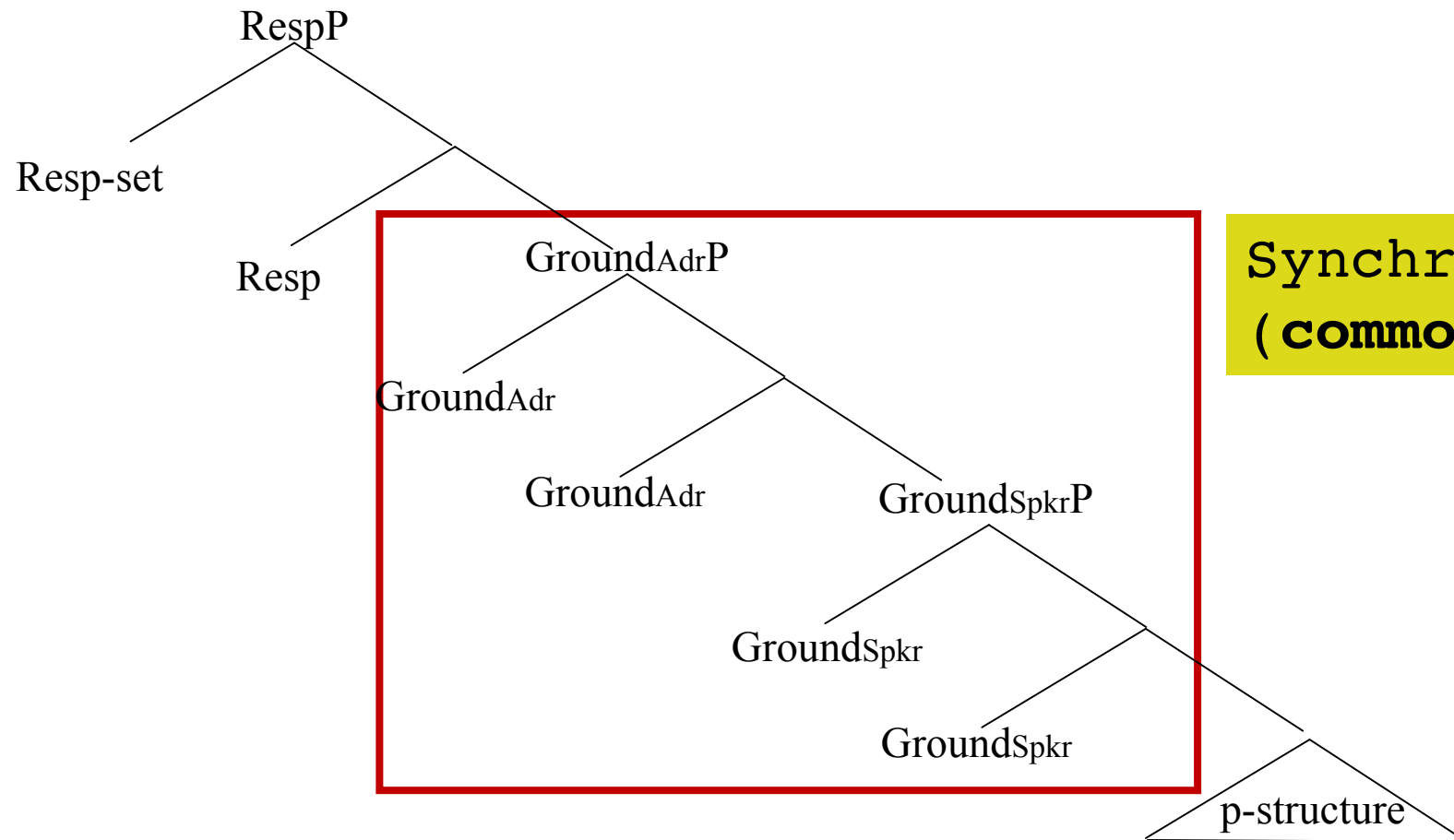
The interactional spine hypothesis



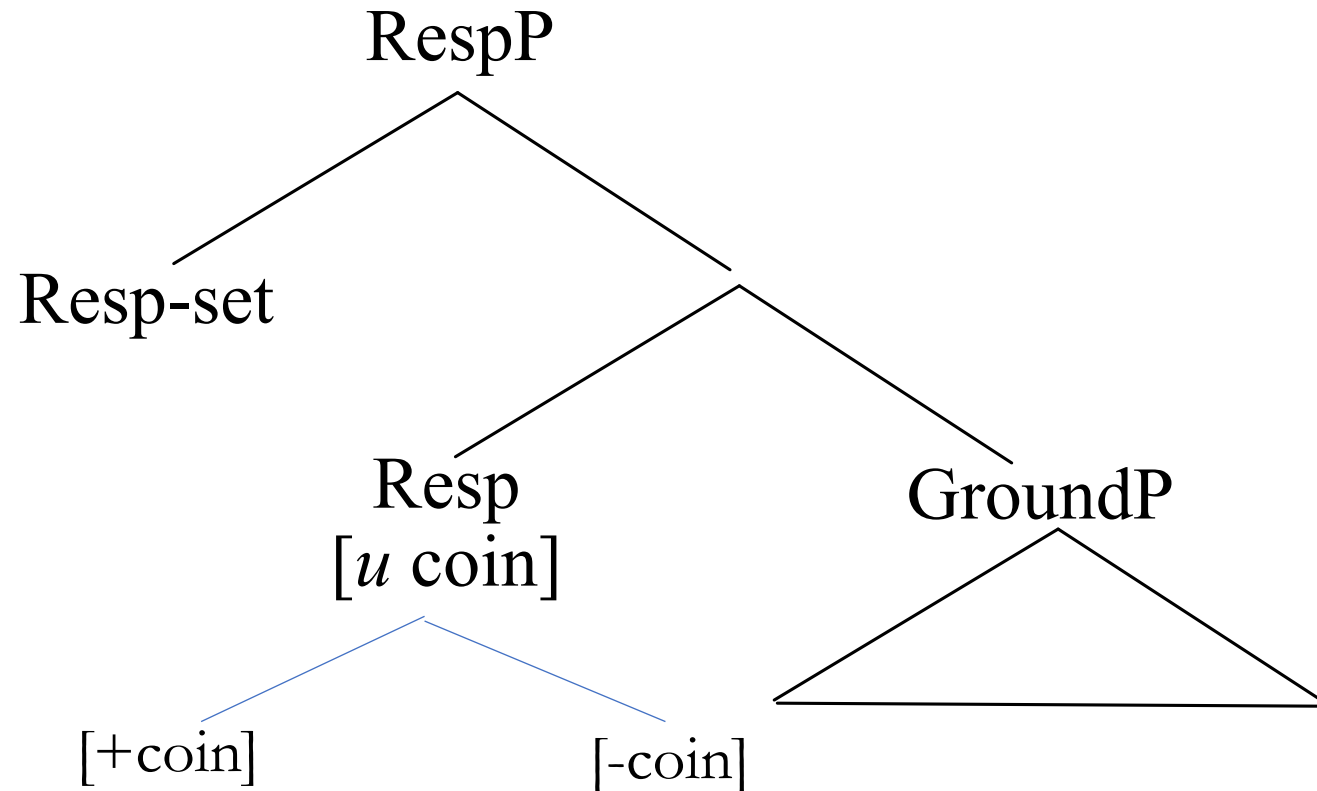
What I'm saying is
in my/your ground

What I'm saying is
not in my/your ground

The interactional spine hypothesis



The interactional spine hypothesis

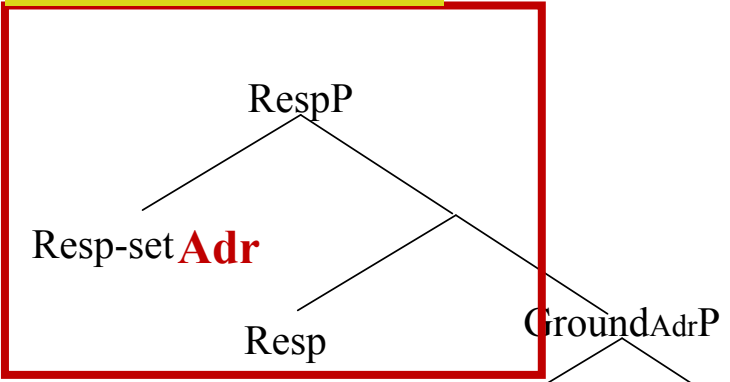


What I'm saying is in my/your response-set

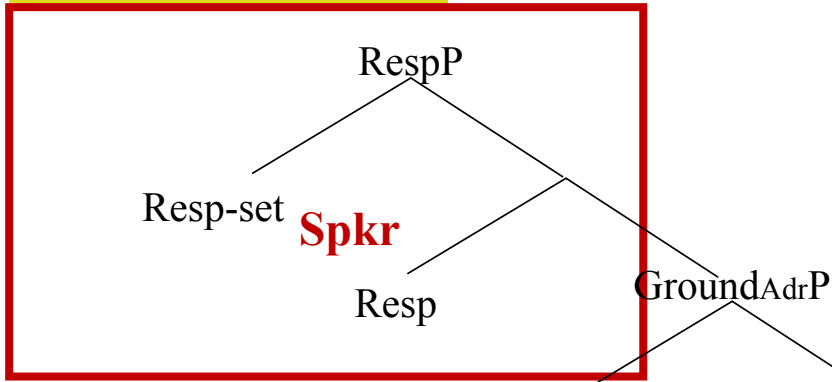
What I'm saying is not in my/your response-set

The interactional spine hypothesis

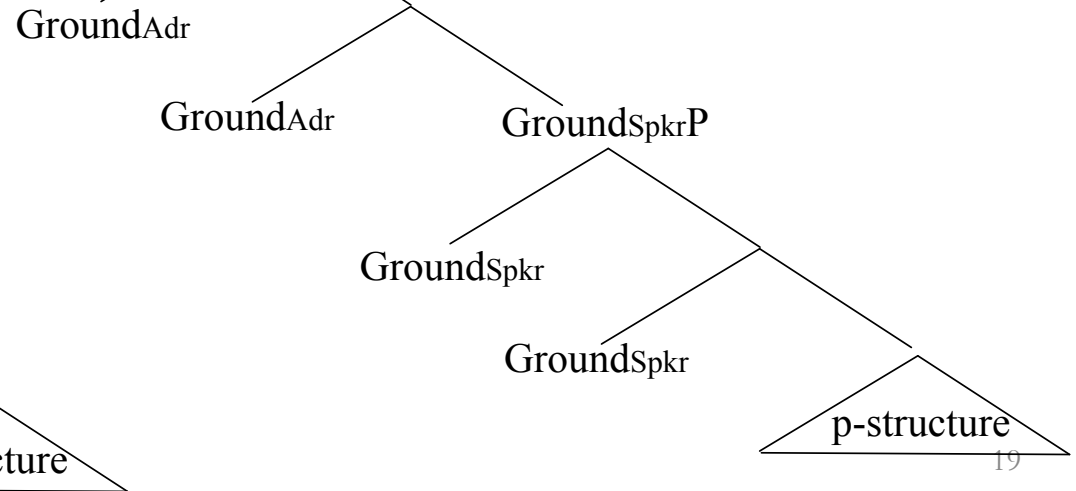
Initiating
move



Reacting
move

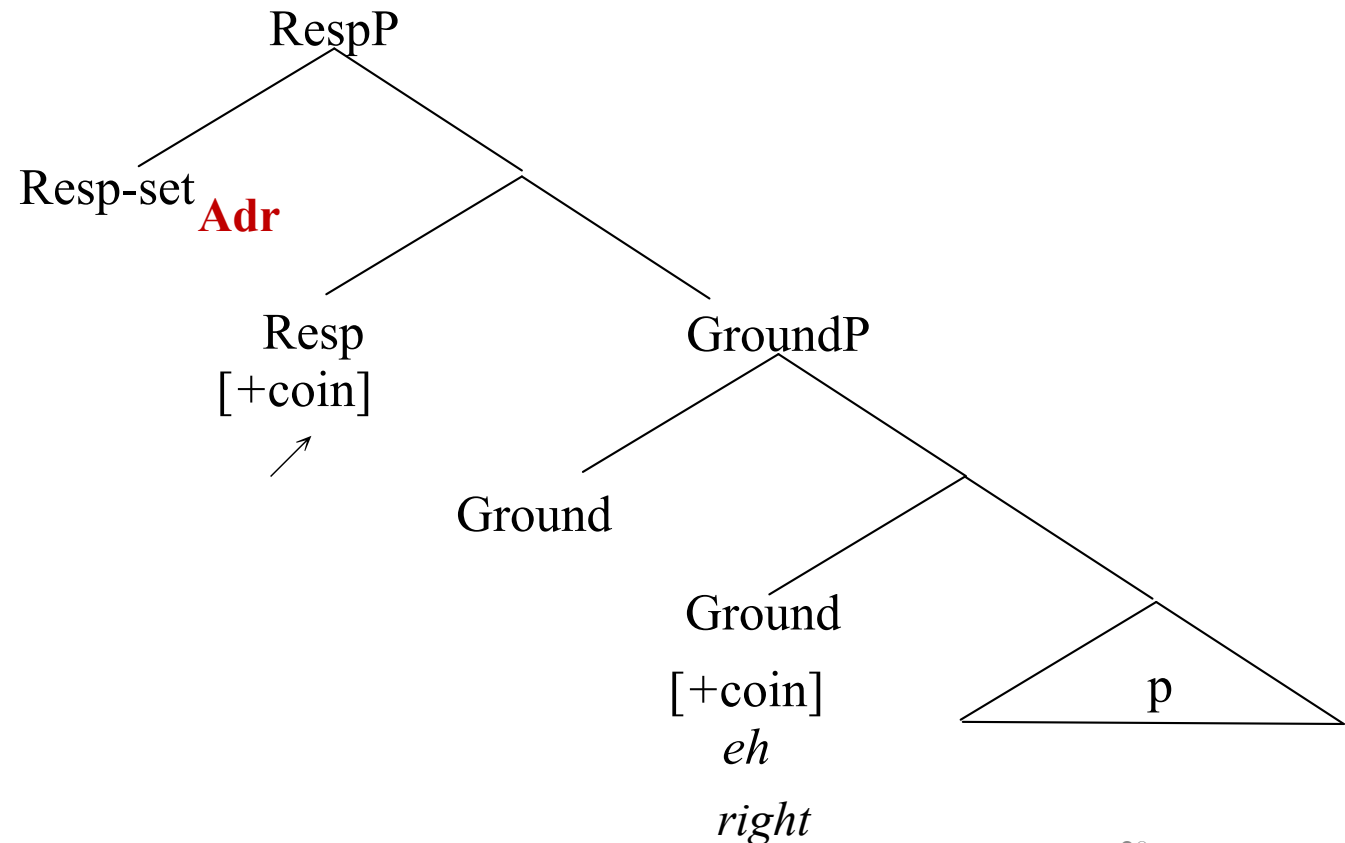


Sequence moves
(turn taking)



The interactional spine hypothesis

- (1) I Gal Gadot was amazing as Wonder Woman, **eh?**
R **Yeah, I know, right?**



UoLs of i-language include

- recycled words
- dedicated particles
- Intonational contours

The interactional spine hypothesis

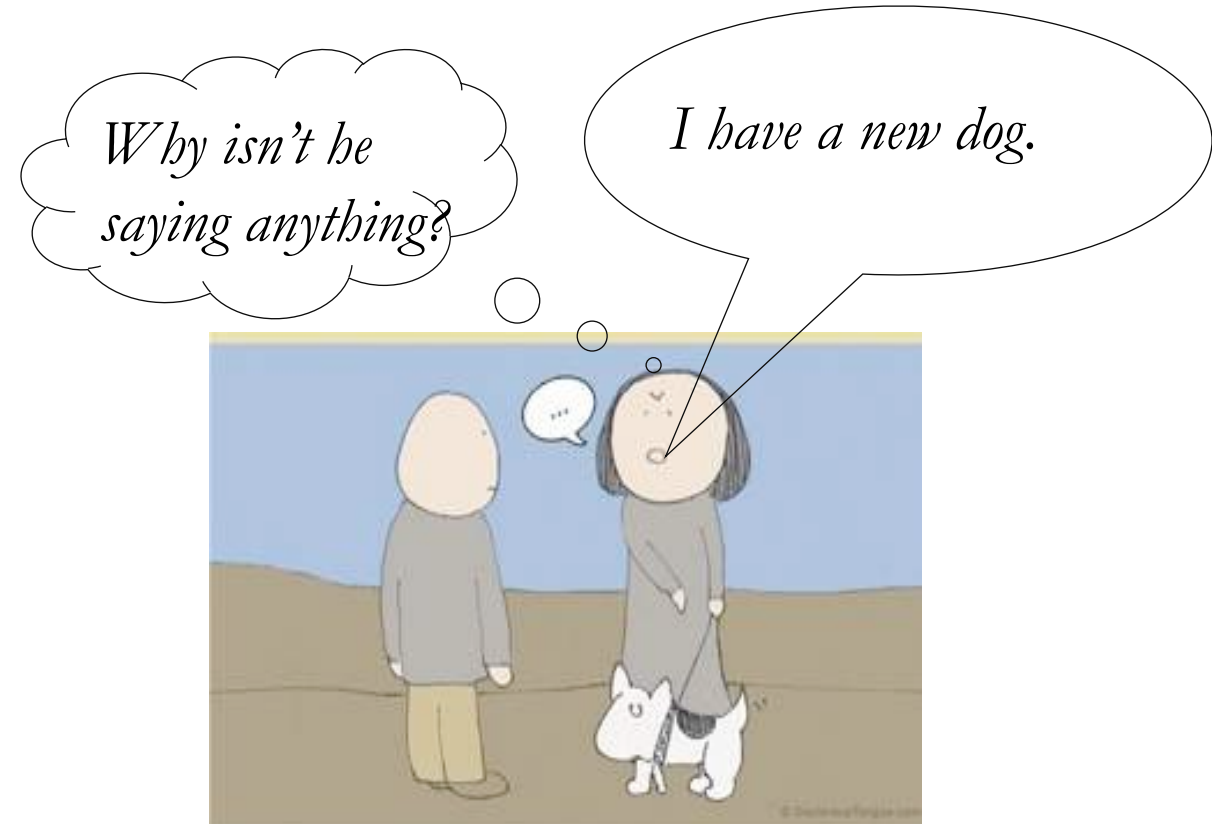
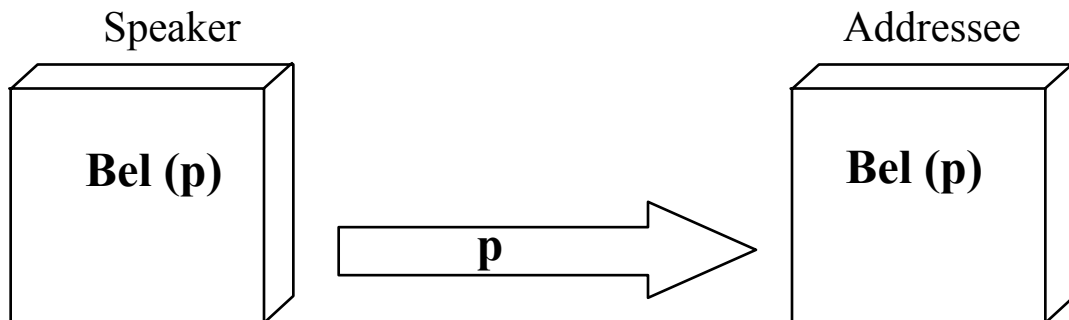
Assertions need a response

Classic Speech-Act Theory

S asserts p if

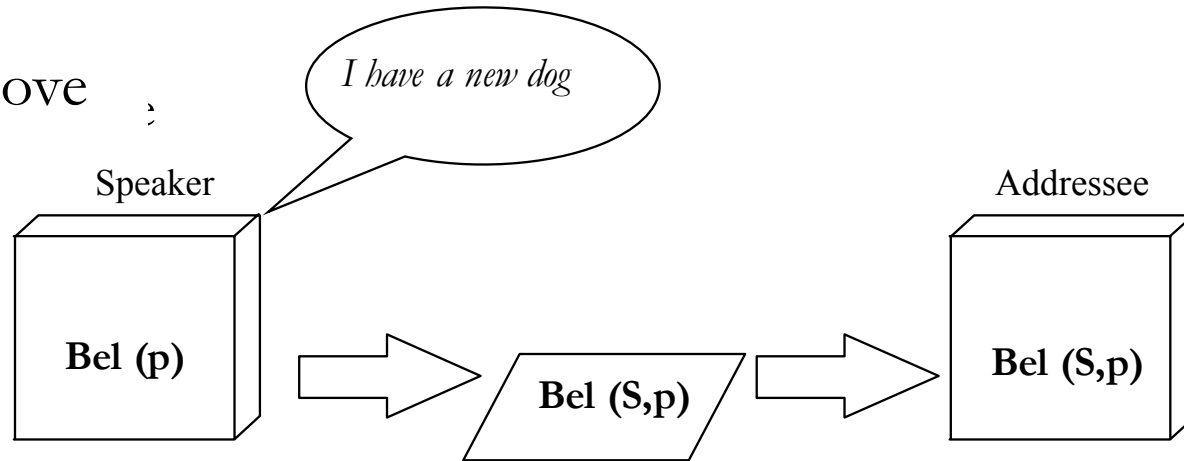
- i) S believes p
- ii) S wants A to believe p

Bach & Harnish 1979

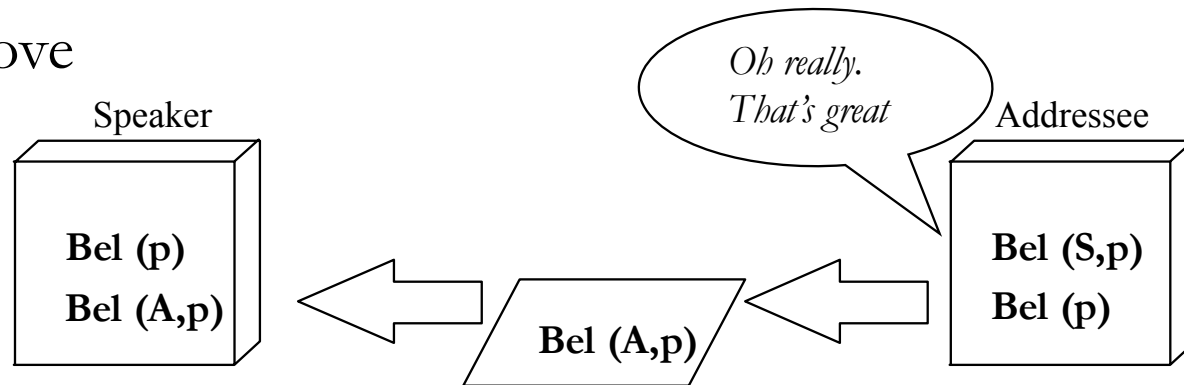


The interactional spine hypothesis

Initiating move

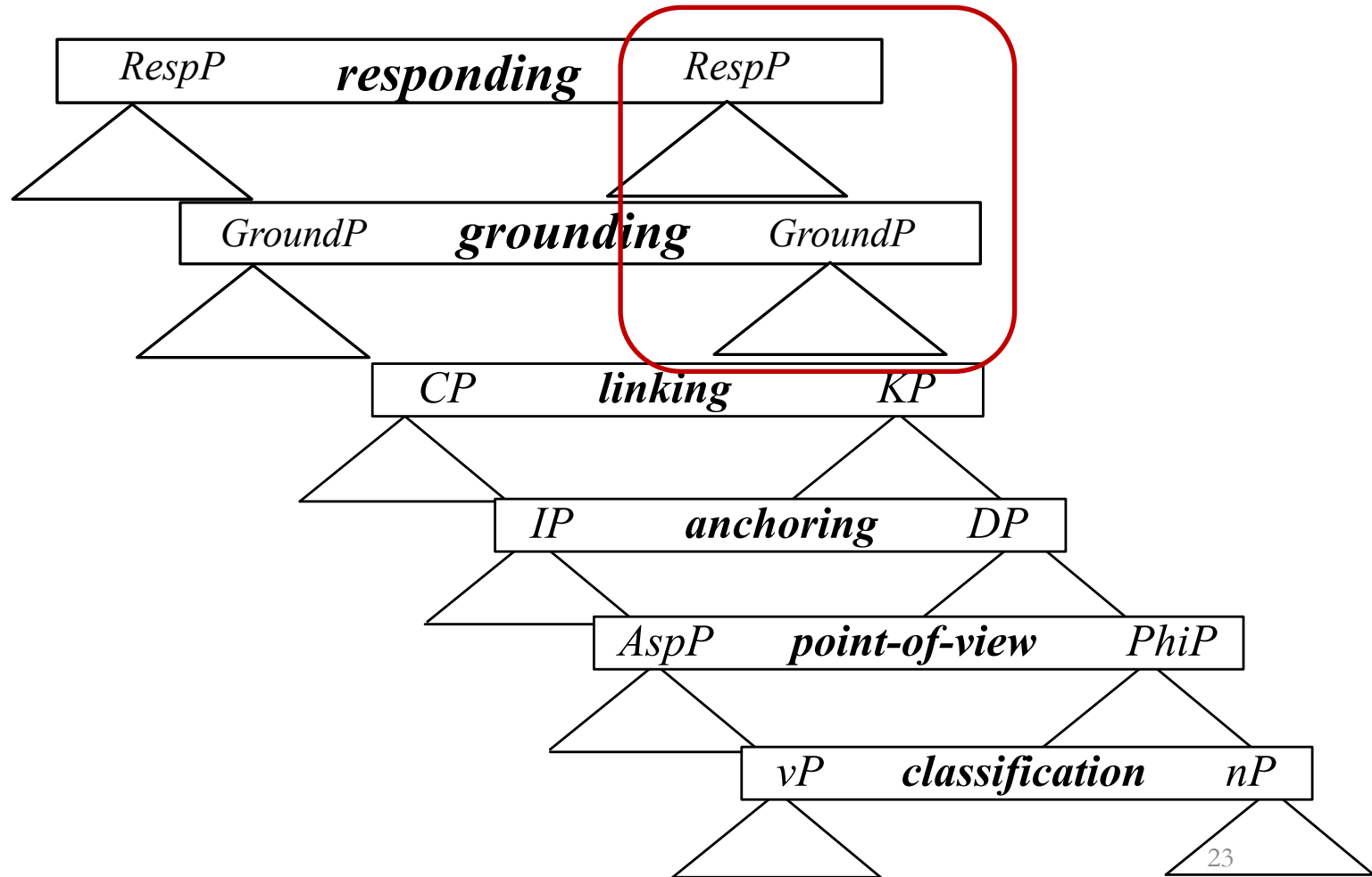


Reacting move



The parallels between nominal and clausal structure

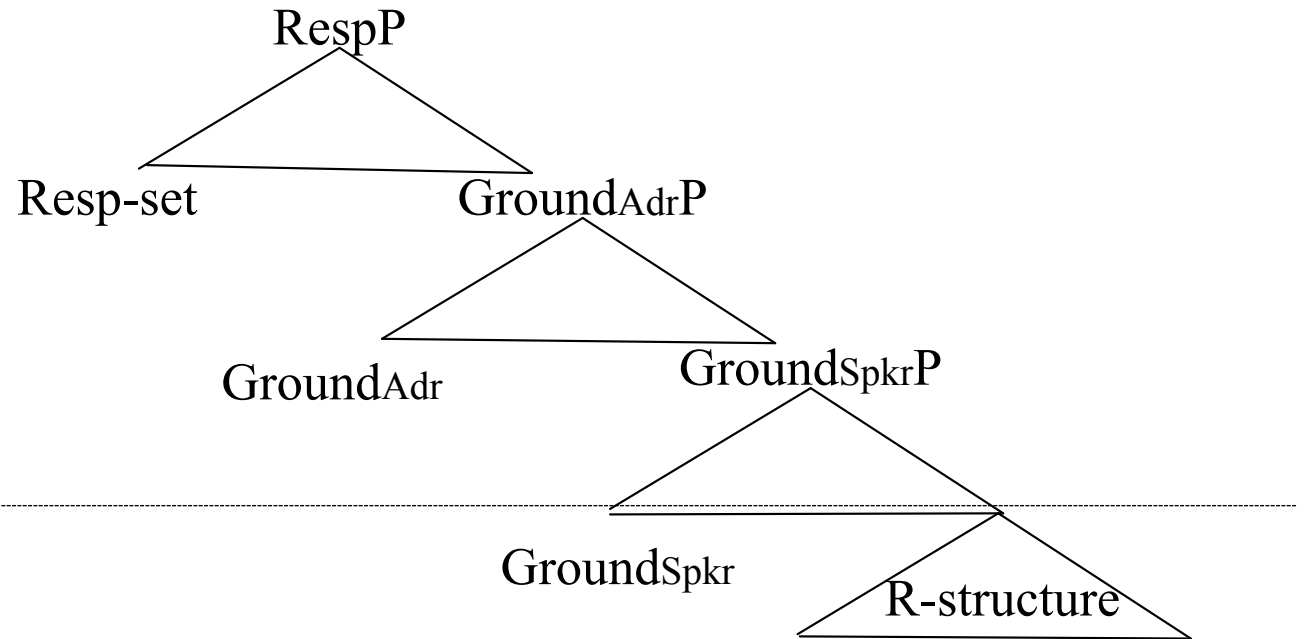
Is there evidence
for grounding and
responding in the
nominal spine?



What we do with nominals?

Grammar of interaction (use):

- We use nominals to talk **to** people and express our attitudes towards them.



Grammar of truth:

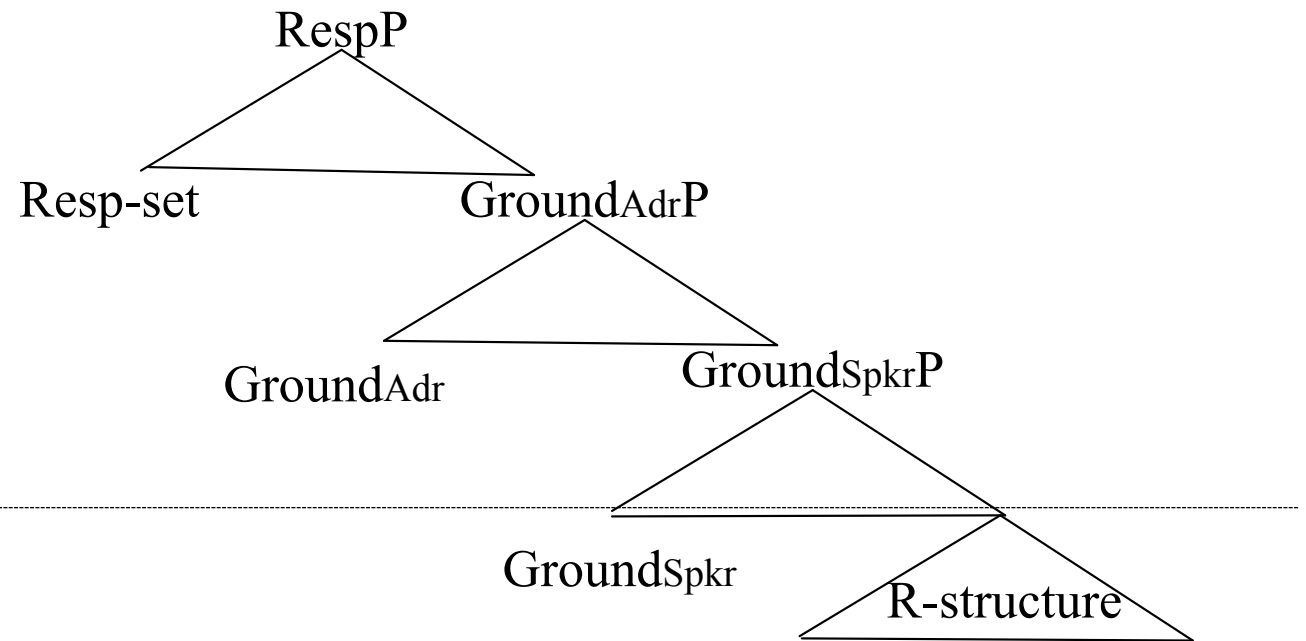
- We talk **about** people and things.

Two sources for person

PRAGMATIC PERSON

... corresponds to **interactants**

... locus of formality



GRAMMATICAL PERSON

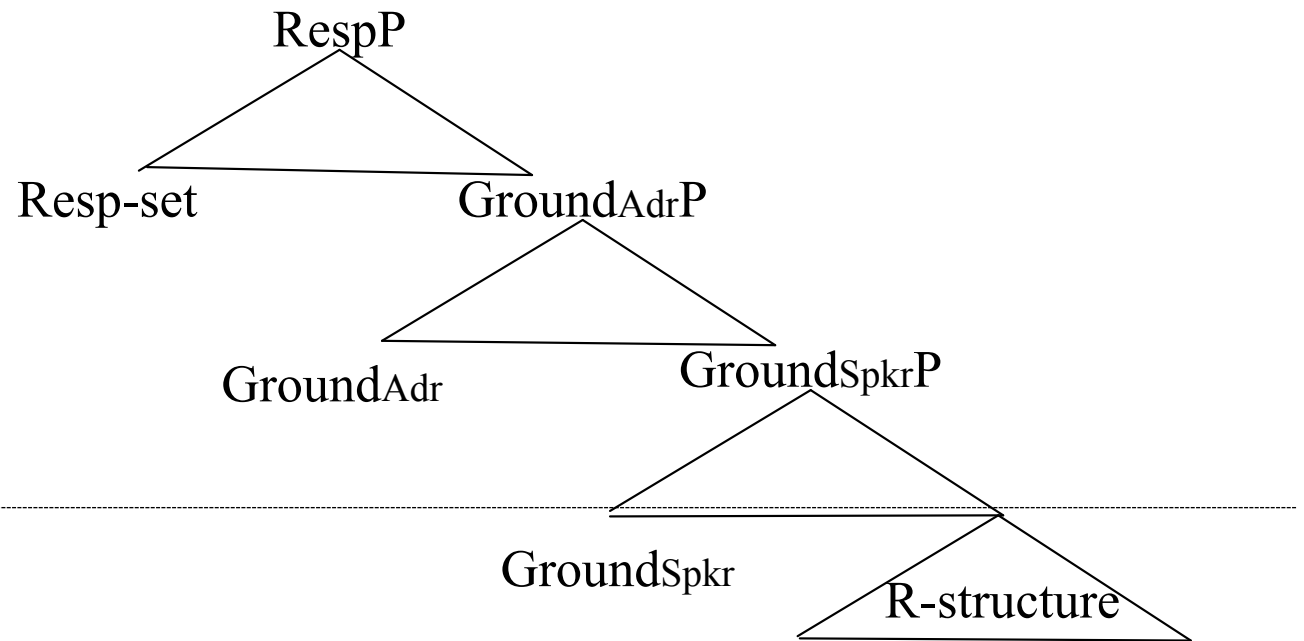
... binary features [+/-1/2]

Two sources for deixis

PRAGMATIC Deixis

... conditioned by discourse factors

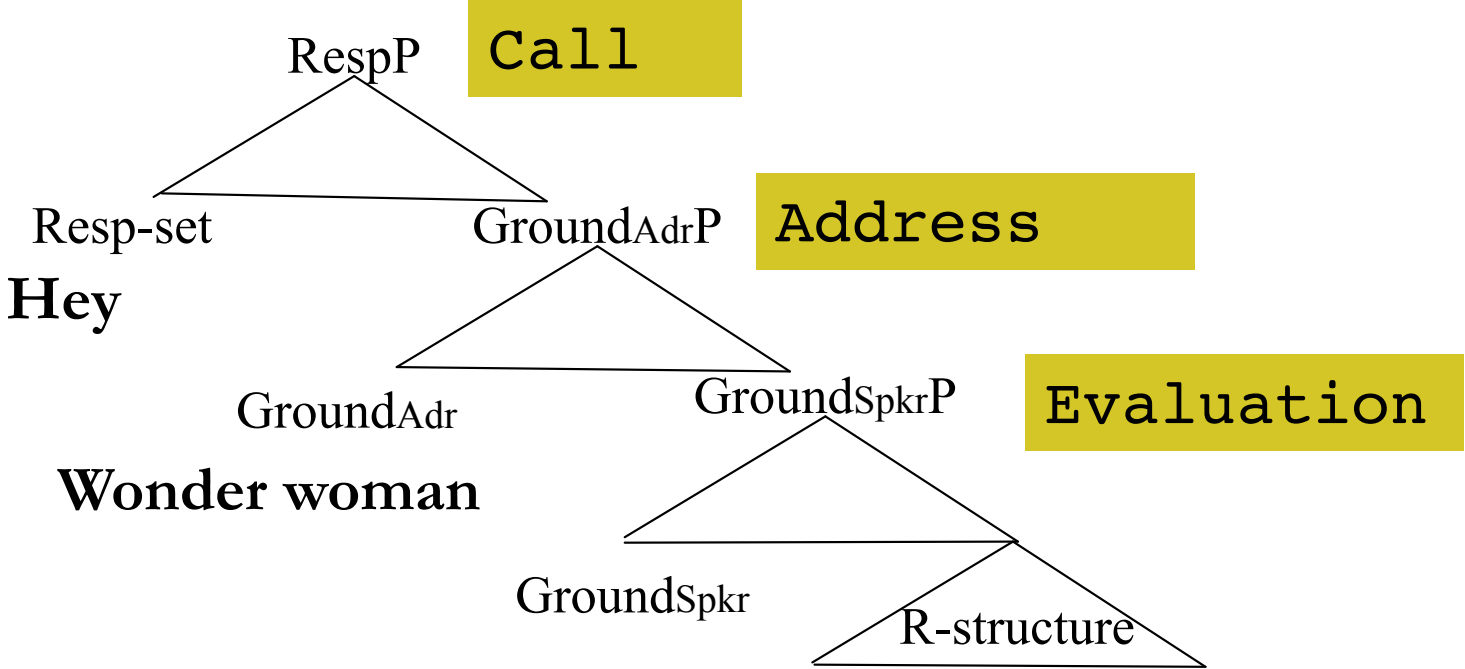
... Speaker/Adr old/new



GRAMMATICAL Deixis

... conditioned by spatial factors

Vocatives



The category of vocative phrases

Evidence from interpretation

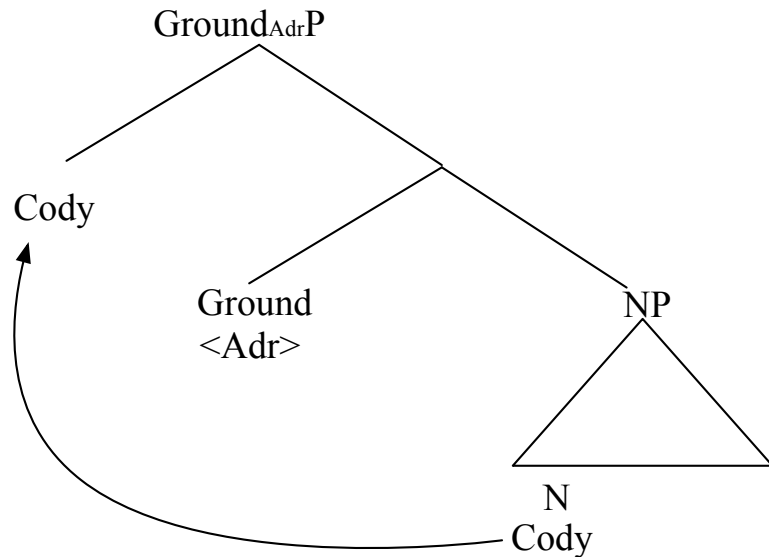
Evidence from distribution

Vocatives are GroundP

Evidence from interpretation

“addresses maintain or emphasize the contact between speaker and addressee.”

Zwicky (1974: 787)



Vocative function

i) Names & identifies Adr

ii) Personalizes p-content for Adr

Vocative identifies the addressee

Context: In a classroom. At the end of a written test, Emily is still working on her test despite the fact that the teacher had indicated that time is up and all other students have already handed in their test.

- Teacher:
- a. Time's up **Emily**. Please hand in your test now.
 - b. Time's up. Please hand in your test now.

Vocative selects
addressee from a
group of potential
addressees

Vocative identifies the addressee

Context: Emily is the only student who had to write a make-up test after school. All other students have gone home and Emily is alone in the classroom with the teacher.

- Teacher:
- a. Time's up **Emily**. Please hand in your test now.
 - b. Time's up. Please hand in your test now.

Vocative initiates
conversation

Vocative can't
be repeated

Context: Emily is the only student who had to write a make-up test after school. All other students have gone home and Emily is alone in the classroom with the teacher.

- Teacher:
- a. * Time's up **Emily**. Please hand in your test now **Emily**.
 - b. Time's up. Please hand in your test now **Emily**.

Vocatives personalize p-content

- a. You shouldn't text while driving
- b. You shouldn't text while driving, **Konrad**.

Impersonal
statements
become personal

Context: Konrad is texting while driving his mother to the dojo.

Mother: Ummm. You shouldn't text while driving.

Konrad: Relax! I can multi-task. I'm a good driver.

Mother: No. You don't understand. You shouldn't text while driving, **Konrad**.

Vocatives personalize p-content

Context. 2 friends are discussing current events around the world.

Kelly: Donald Trump is still refusing to commit to a peaceful transfer of power.

Jamie: Oh shit!/*Oh shit, Kelly!

**Exclamatives
become personal**

Context: 2 friends just completed their driver's test

Kelly: They just told me that you passed and I didn't.

Jamie: *Oh no!/Oh no, Kelly!

The category of vocative phrases

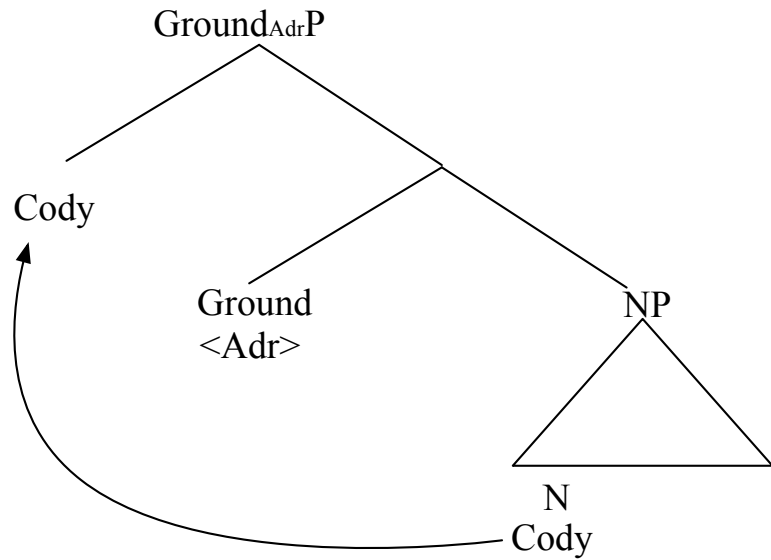
Evidence from interpretation

Evidence from distribution

Vocatives are GroundP

Evidence from distribution

Categorial identity determines distribution



Vocatives do not
behave as DPs nor NPs

Vocative phrases are not DPs

1.
 - a. **Sweetheart**, where are the avocados?
 - b. **Kid**, where are the avocados?

2.
 - a. *I asked **sweetheart** if they knew where the avocados were.
 - b. *I asked **kid** if they knew where the avocados were.

Nominals that
can be used as
vocatives can't
(always) be used
as p-arguments

Vocative phrases are not DPs

1.
 - a. * The/This kid! That's my seat.
 - b. The/This kid is in my seat

Nominals that can
be used as p-
arguments can't
(always) be used
as vocatives

Vocative phrases are not DPs

- a. ***Kid that works here**, do you know where the avocados are?
 - b. ***Emily, who is a fighter**, can you teach me self-defense?
-
- a. I asked **the kid that works here** if they knew where the avocados were.
 - b. **Emily, who is a fighter**, taught me self-defense.

No relative
clauses with
vocatives

Vocative phrases are not DPs

Context: Mother to her daughter, Emily:

1.
 - a. **Emily**, what are you doing?
 - b. What are you doing, **Emily**?
 - c. What I asked, **Emily**, is what are you doing?

2.
 - a. ***You**, what are you doing?
 - b. *What are you doing, **you**?
 - c. *What I asked, **you**, is what are you doing?

Pronouns are
determiners
and cannot be
used as
vocatives

Vocative phrases are not DPs

Context: Mother to her daughter, Emily:

1.
 - a. What are **you** doing?
 - b. * What is **Emily** doing?

2.
 - a. * **You**, what are you doing?
 - b. * What are you doing, **you**?
 - c. * What I asked, **you**, is what are you doing?

Pronouns can be used as p-arguments

Vocative phrases are not DPs

Context: Substitute teacher to student whose name they don't know:

- a. ***You**, what are you doing?
- b. *What are you doing, **you**?
- c. *What I asked, **you**, is what are you doing?

The restriction
is not
pragmatically
conditioned

Vocative phrases are not DPs

Stress and
gesture license
GroundP

Context: Substitute teacher to student whose name they don't know:

- a. ↗YOU! (↗With the green shirt)! What are you doing?
- b. * What are you doing, ↗YOU? (With the green shirt)?
- c. * What I asked, ↗YOU (with the green shirt), is what are you doing?

Vocative phrases are not NPs

1.
 - a. *Kid is sitting in my seat.
 - b. *I saw kid in my seat.

2.
 - a. John is in hospital.
 - b. the way to use knife and fork
 - c. Mary is chair of the department.
 - d. He found door after door closed.
 - e. She is playing piano for the choir

Bare nouns do not
have specific
reference

But vocatives do!

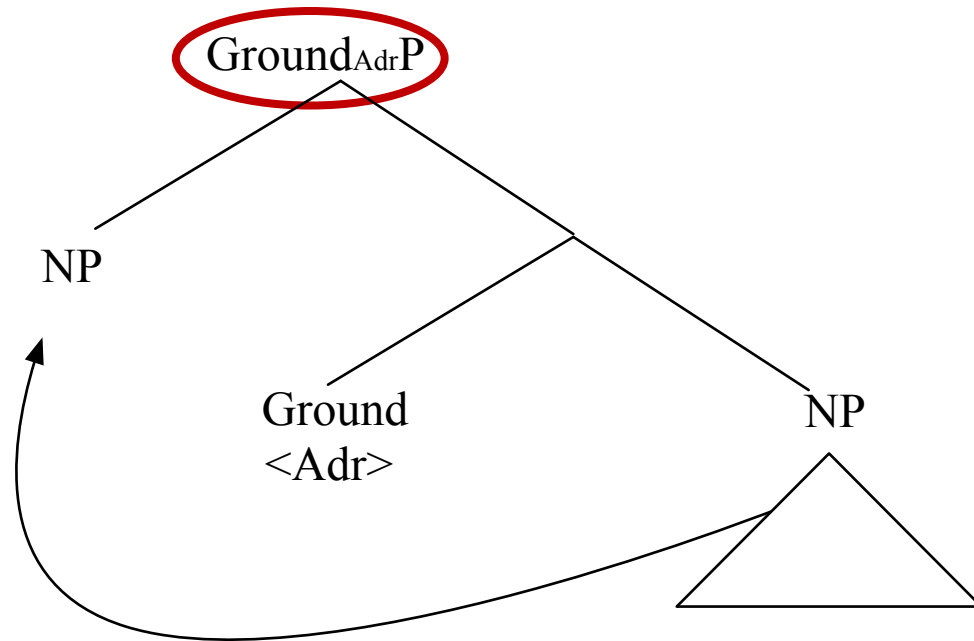
The category of vocative phrases

Evidence from interpretation

Evidence from distribution

Vocatives are GroundP

Vocative Phrases are GroundP

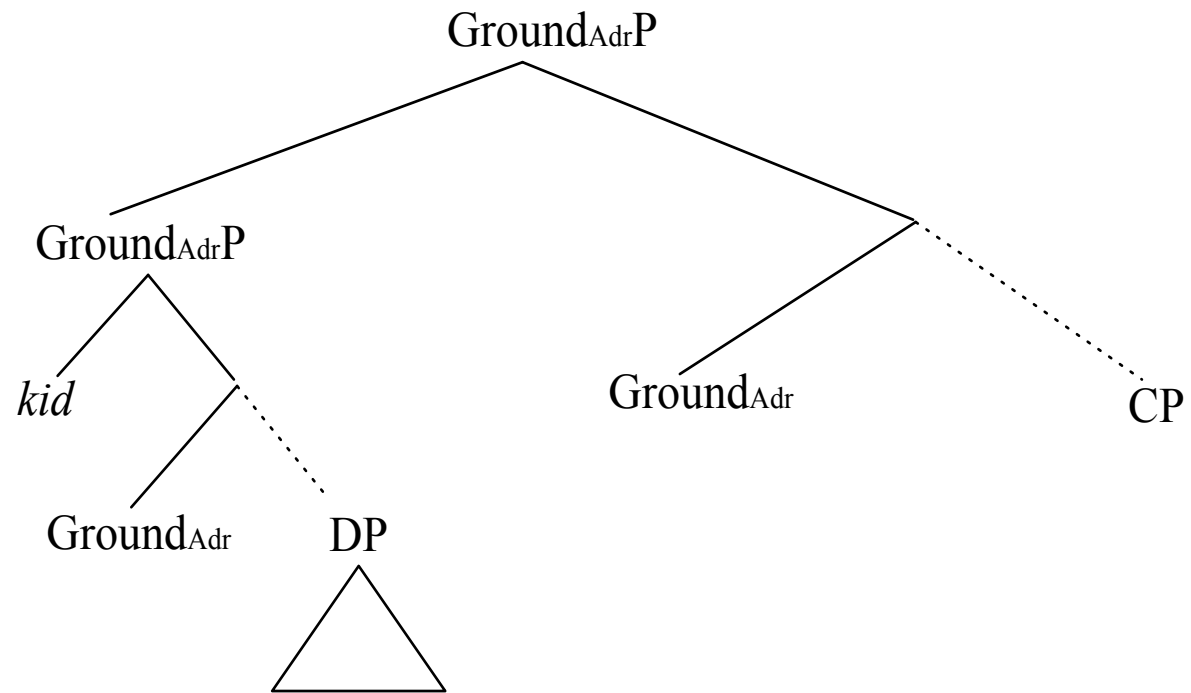


Specific reference is a function of i-structure

GroundP is not construction-specific (unlike VocP)

Vocatives are GroundPs

Nominal GroundPs
are licensed in
clausal GroundP

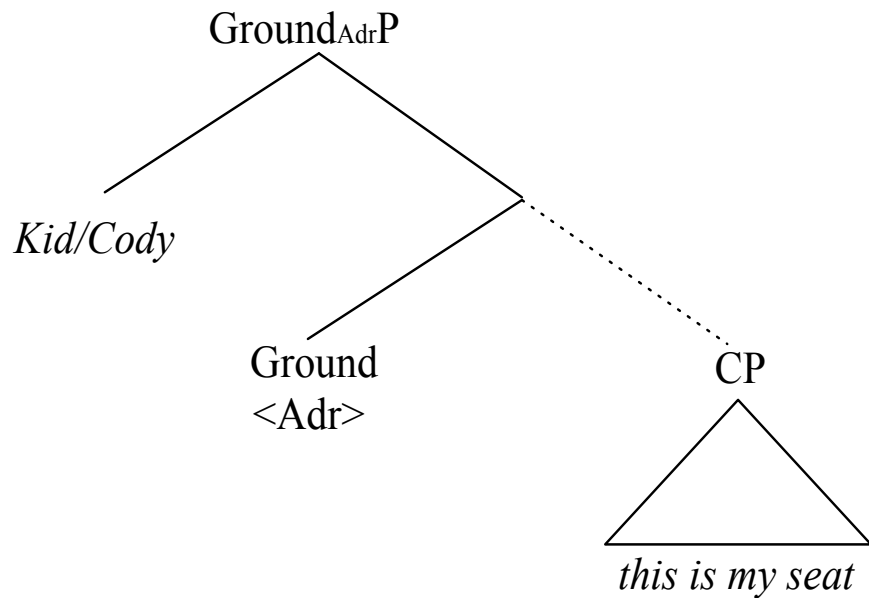


Distribution of vocatives

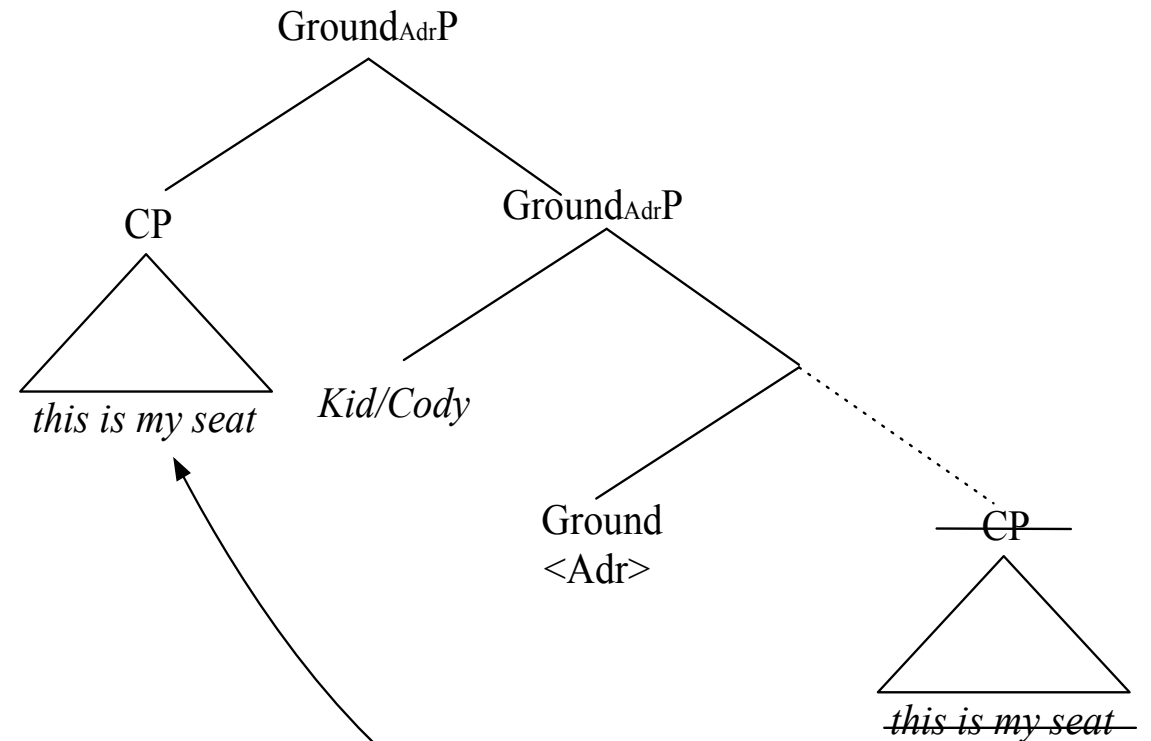
- | | | |
|----|---|-----------|
| a. | Cody/kid , this is my seat. | S-initial |
| b. | This is my seat, Cody/kid . | S-final |
| c. | Listen, Cody/kid , this is my seat. | S-medial |
| d. | I said, Cody/kid , that this is my seat. | S-medial |

External syntax of vocatives

S-initial



S-final

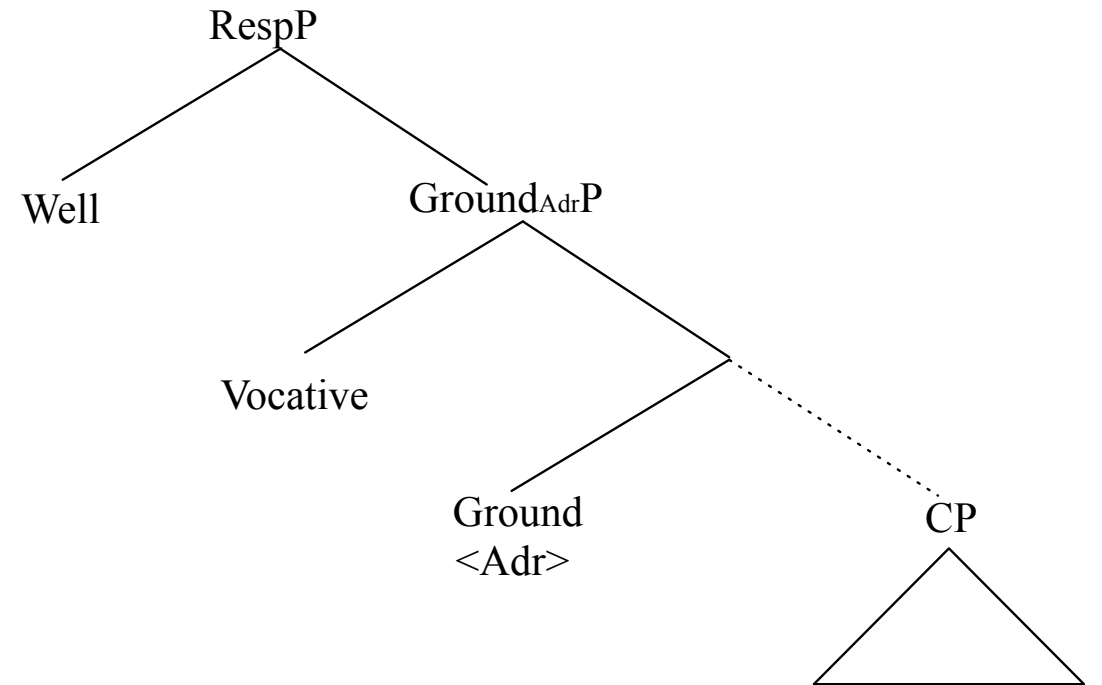


External syntax of vocatives

Not movement to RespP

Well occupies RespP (Wiltschko, to appear)

- a. **Well** **Cody**, this is my seat.
- b. **Well**, this is my seat **Cody**.
- c. * This is my seat, **well** **Cody**



What about
S-medial
vocatives?

External syntax of vocatives

S-medial vocatives have restricted distribution:

- following (certain types of) topics
- immediately preceding embedded clause

- [That new kid in my class], **Cody**, I really like her.
- [Those new shoes of yours], **Kelly**, Marge also has a pair
- [As for meat], **Kimiko**, I like beef.
- [Speaking of Marge], **Mohammed**, I heard she got a new job

Hanging topic

Hanging topic

As-for topic

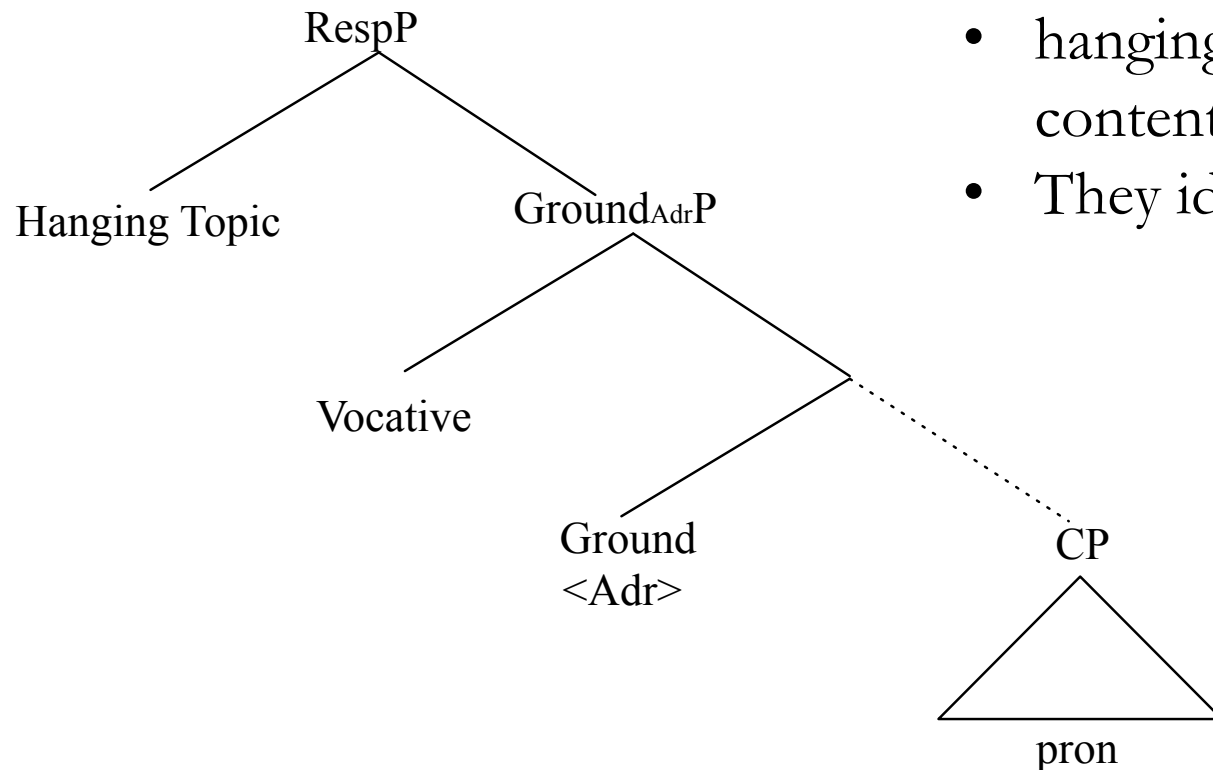
Speaking-of topic

What about
S-medial
vocatives?

External syntax of vocatives

S-medial vocatives have restricted distribution:

- following (certain types of) topics



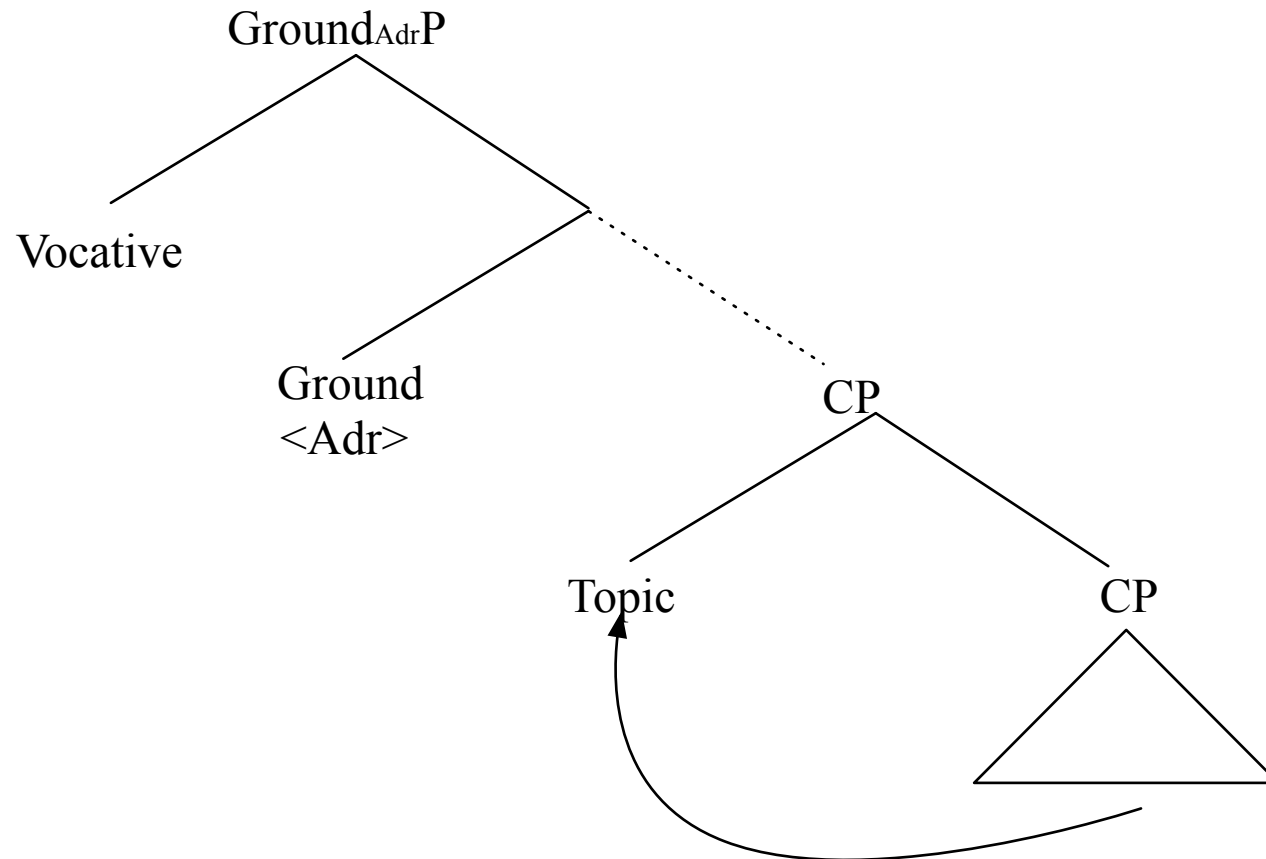
- hanging topics and *as for/ speaking of* topics identify the content of an earlier thread of the conversation
- They identify the **target of the reaction**

External syntax of vocatives

- a. * [That new kid in my class], **Cody**, I really like [~~that new kid in my class~~]
b. **Cody**, [that new kid in my class] I really like [~~that new kid in my class~~]
- a. * [Those new shoes of yours], **Kelly**, Marge also has [~~those new shoes of yours~~]
b. **Kelly**, [those new shoes of yours] Marge also has [~~those new shoes of yours~~]
- a. * [Meat], **Kimiko**, I like [~~meat~~].
b. **Kimiko**, [meat], I like [~~meat~~].
- a. * [Marge], **Mohammed**, I heard [~~Marge~~] got a new job.
b. **Mohammed**, [Marge], I heard [~~Marge~~] got a new job.

External syntax of vocatives

Other topics
differ



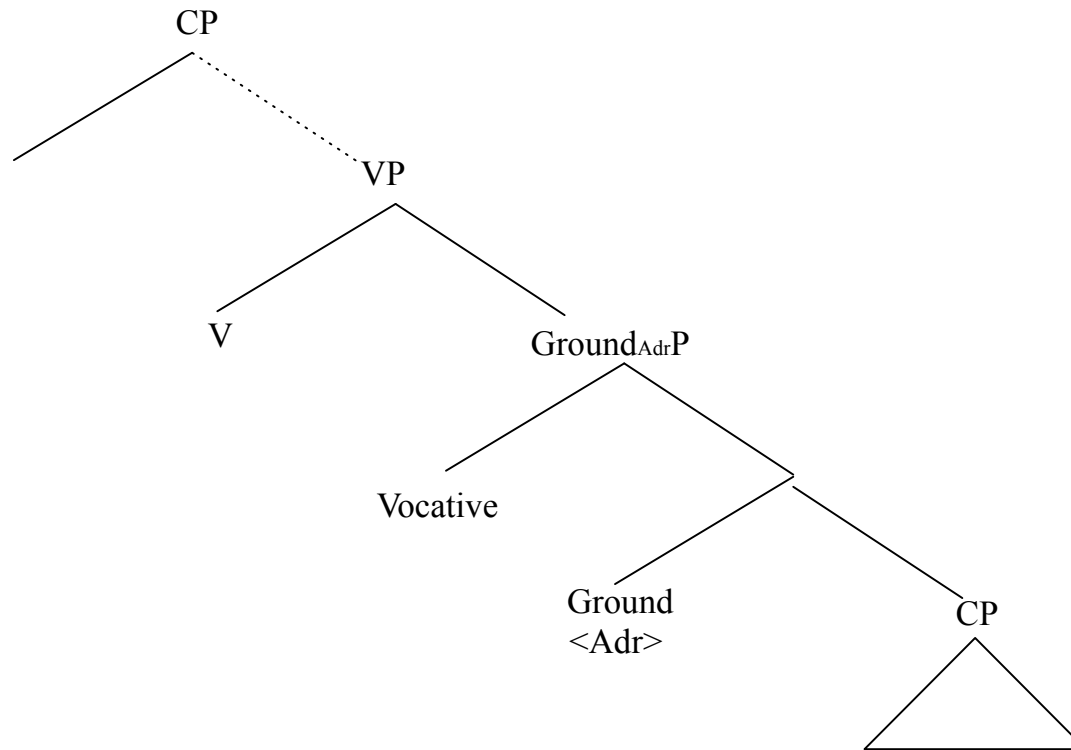
External syntax of vocatives

S-medial vocatives have restricted distribution:

- following (certain types of) topics
 - immediately preceding embedded clause
- a. I'm afraid, **sir**, [that my coyote is nibbling on your leg].
 - b. I imagine, **Lady Jane**, [that you will find the sherbet pleasant].
 - c. I wonder, **grandmother**, [if you recall the 1915 flood]?

External syntax of vocatives

GroundP can be embedded



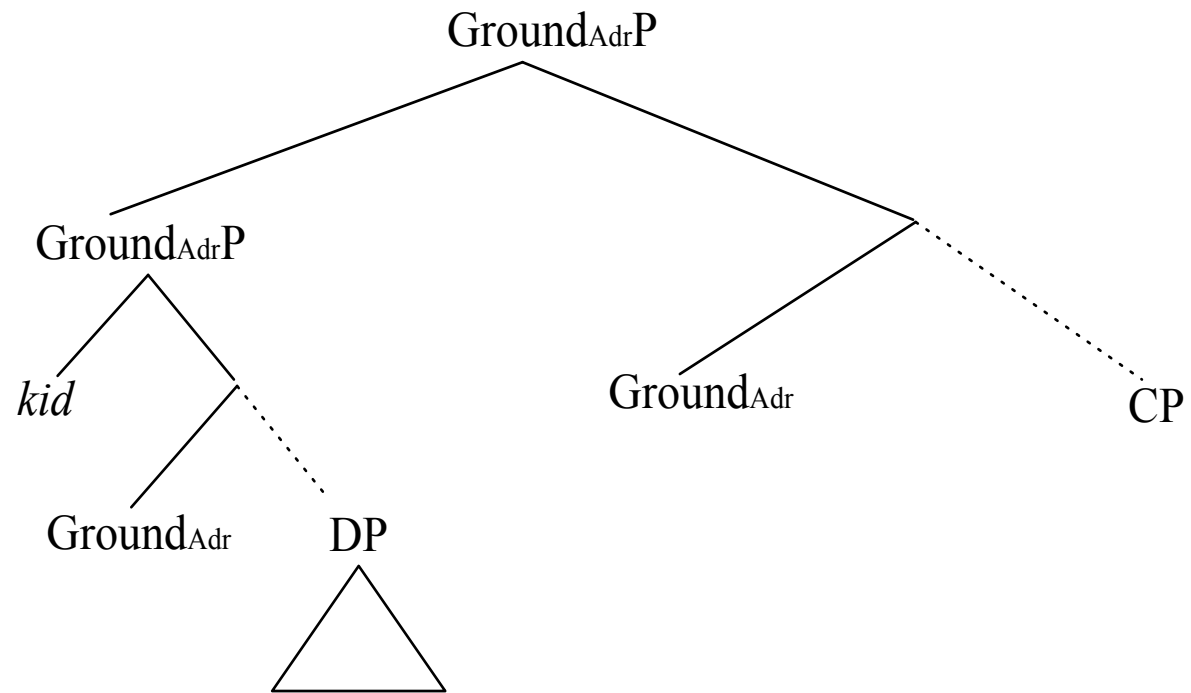
External syntax of vocatives

1.
 - a. I'm afraid, **sir**, [that my coyote is nibbling on your leg].
 - b. I imagine, **Lady Jane**, [that you will find the sherbet pleasant].
 - c. I wonder, **grandmother**, [if you recall the 1915 flood]?

2.
 - a. I'm afraid, (***sir**), of your coyote.
 - b. I imagine, (***Lady Jane**), a world of pleasing sherbet.
 - c. I wonder, (***grandmother**) about the 1915 flood

Vocatives are GroundPs

Nominal GroundPs
are licensed in
clausal GroundP



Vocatives are GroundPs

Evidence from Self-talk

1. Matzi to self:

a. You're an idiot.

b. I'm an idiot.

No Addressee

No Ground_{Adr}

2. Matzi to self:

a. Matzi, you're an idiot.

b. * Matzi, I'm an idiot.

No Ground_{Adr}

No Vocative

Summary

There is a structural difference between vocatives and arguments:

Propositional arguments = DPs

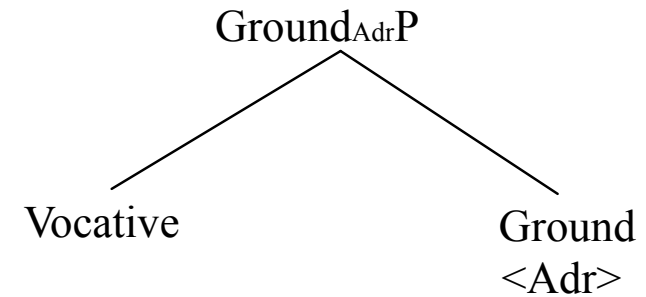
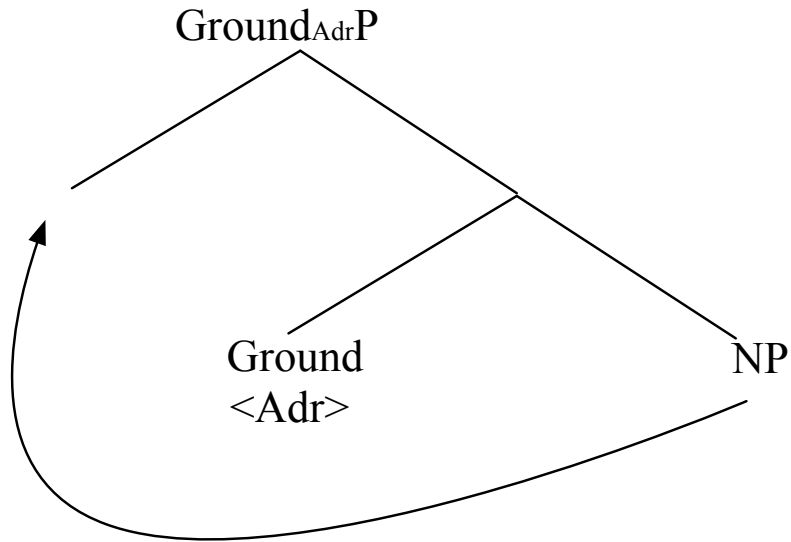
Interactional arguments = GroundPs

So why are definite
DPs ill-formed but
names are ok?

Roadmap

- Background
 - The structure and function of the interactional layer
- The category of vocative phrases:
 - Vocatives are GroundP
- The internal structure of vocative phrases
 - Vocatives contain NP, DP, and Ground_{Spkr} below Ground_{Adr}
- Restriction on nouns
 - Any noun that can serve to name the speaker is a legitimate vocative nominal
- The structure of Calls vs. Addresses
 - Calls are RespP, Addresses are GroundP
- Conclusion

Vocatives contain NP complements



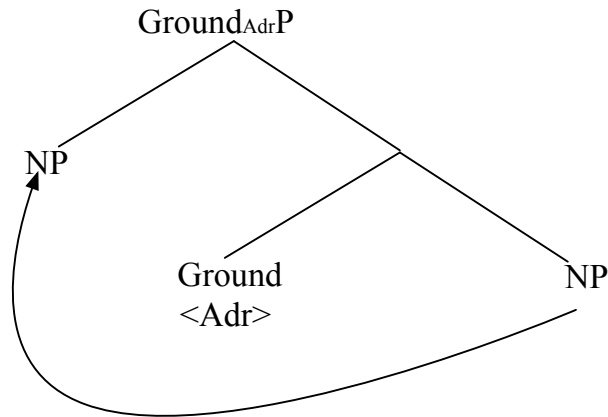
**Alternative:
Vocatives as
intransitive
GroundP**

Vocatives contain NP complements

Evidence 1:

The logic of extended projections:

to be a nominal GroundP, there must be a nominal nucleus



All vocatives contain NP complements

Evidence 2:

Vocatives may contain other material typically associated with nominal constituents

- a. No, **my Lady**. They'll not risk anything *that* illegal. (Dune, p. 181)
- b. Where are you **my little bookworm**?

<https://www.thoughtco.com/vocative-grammar-1692598>

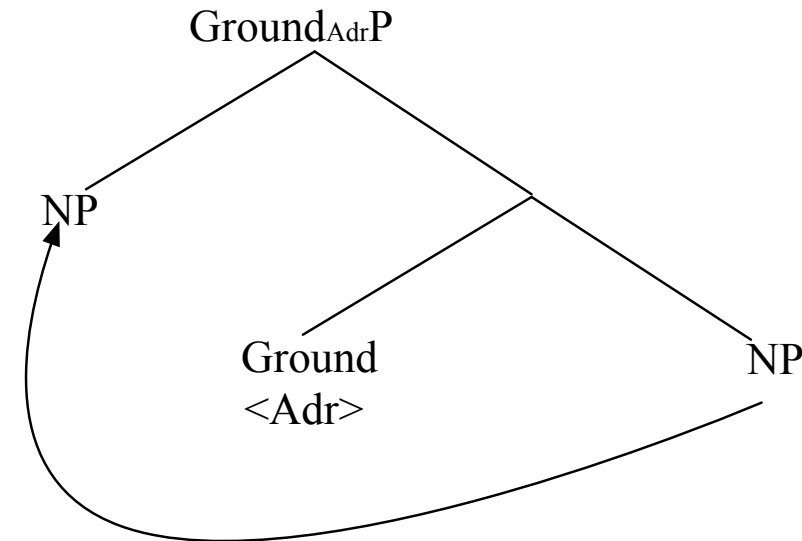
NP moves to SpecGround_{Adr}P

- Evidence from interpretation

Addressee role
is assigned in
SpecGround_{Adr}

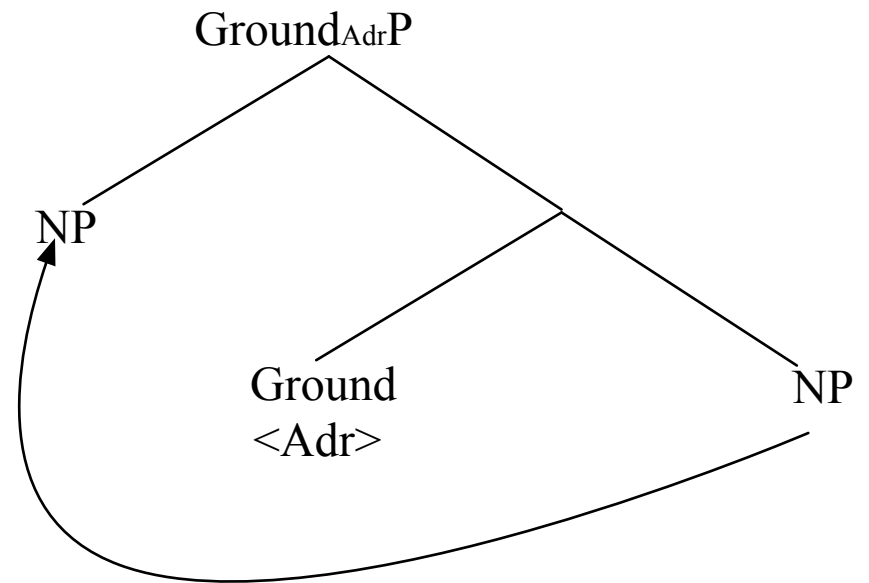
- Evidence from licensing

GroundP is
activated via
movement into
Spec



Argument from intepretation

Names can move as
NPs (without DP)



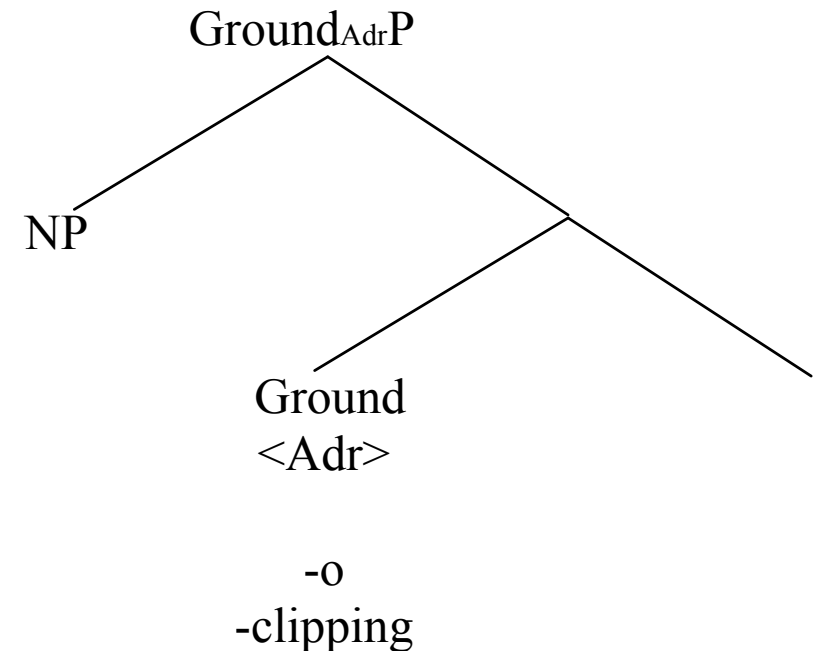
Evidence from vocativization strategies

Vocative suffixation: kid → kiddo

1. a. It's your turn, **Kiddo**.
- b. *It's (the) **kiddo**'s turn.
- c. It's (the) **kid**'s turn.

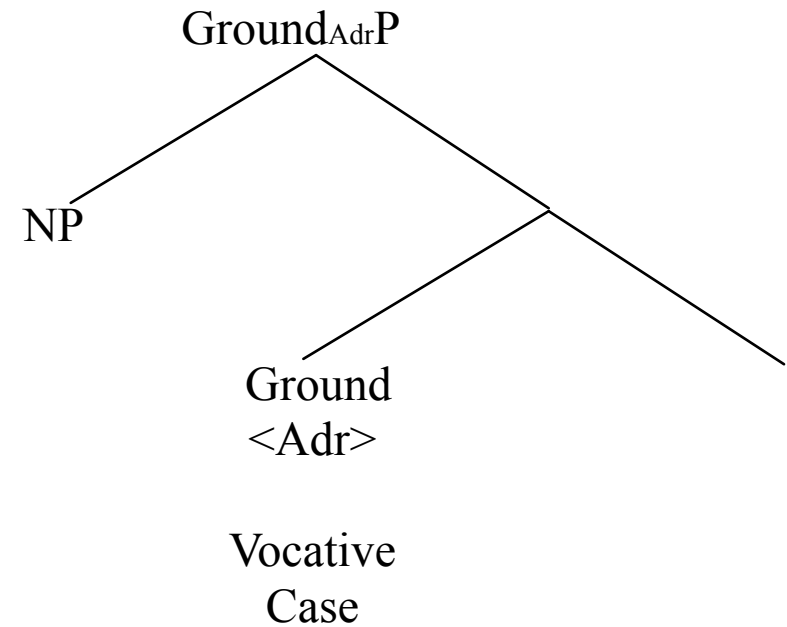
Vocative clipping: honey → hon

2. a. Are you ready to order, **Hon**?
- b. *Is (my) **hon** ready to order.
- c. Is my **honey** ready to order?



Evidence from vocativization strategies

Fer, serv-e, aqua-m
bring slave-VOC water-ACC
'Slave, bring water



Some Vocatives contain DP

1. a. Kid! That's my seat.
b. ***The** kid! That's my seat

No definite
articles

2. a. What happened, **my** love/darling?
b. What happened, **my** friend/child?

Terms of endearment
& kinship terms

3. a. What have you done, **you** idiot/bastard?
b. What have you done, **you** linguist/philosopher?

Evaluative
vocatives

Some Vocatives contain DP

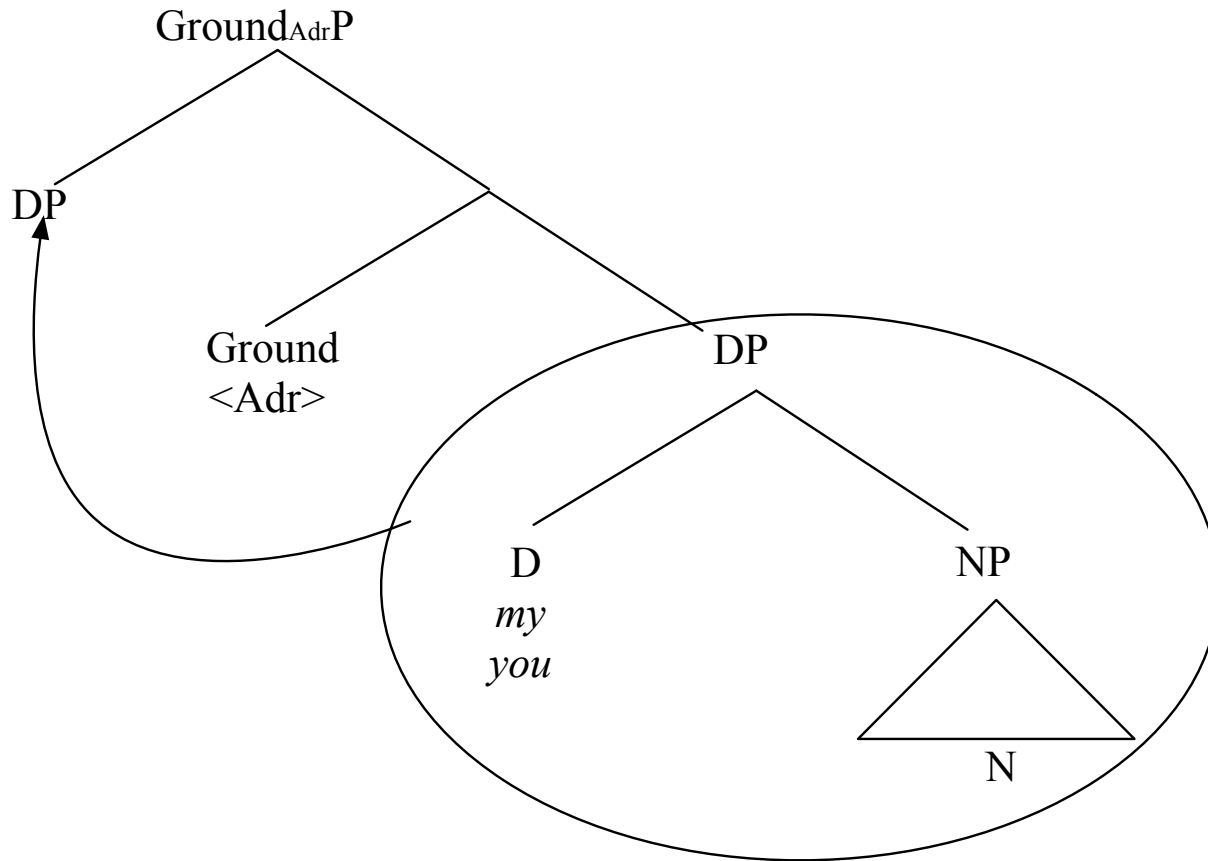
3. a. What have you done, **you** idiot/bastard?
- b. What have you done, **you** linguist/philosopher?

Evaluative
vocatives

4. a. What have **you idiots/bastards** done?
- b. What have **you linguists/philosophers** done?

Evaluative meaning is
absent in p-arguments

Some Vocatives contain DP

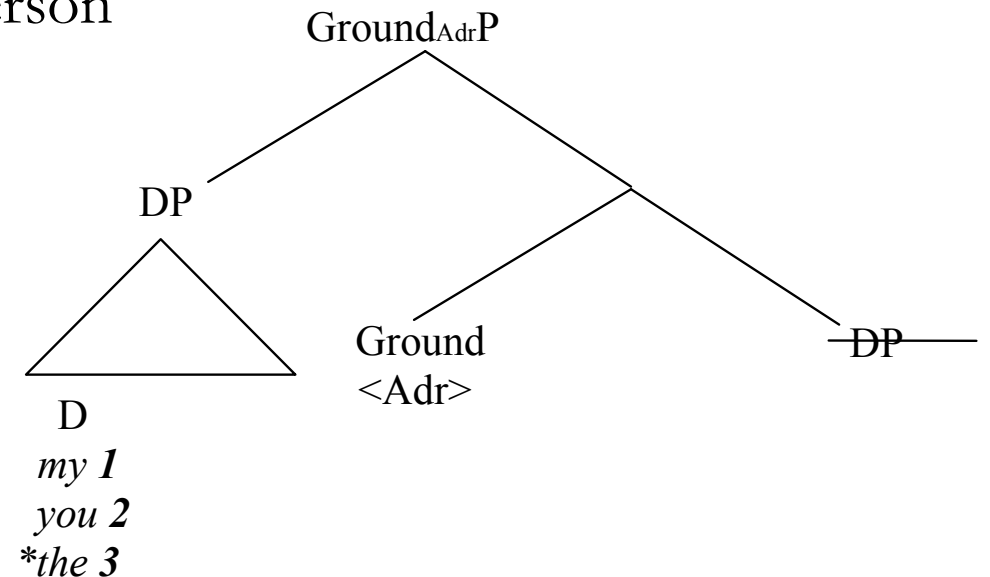


But if DP can be present, why is definite article ruled out?

Definite articles prevent reference to A_{dr}

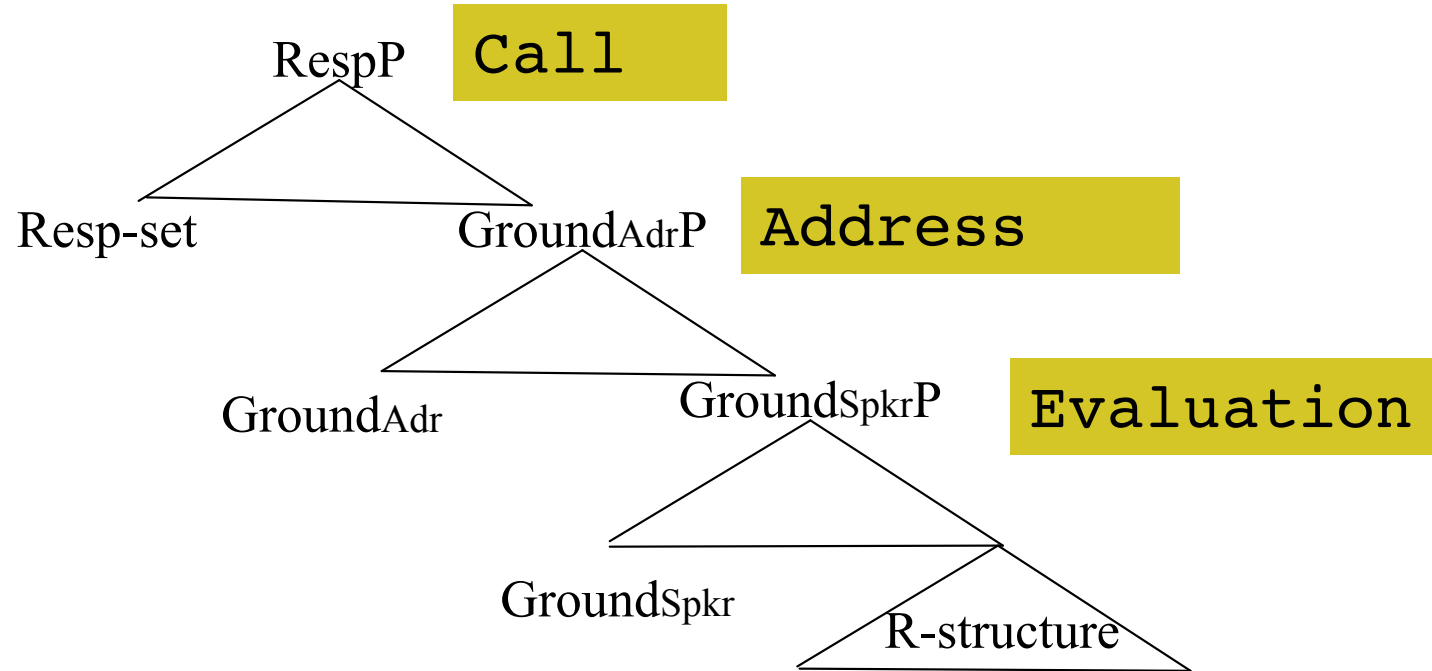
Hypothesis:

- DP can only be interpreted in SpecGroundP if it contains 1st or 2nd person features.
- 1st and 2nd person features are interpretable in interactional structure
- There is no interactional equivalent of 3rd person



Vocatives

Is there evidence
for $\text{Ground}_{\text{spkr}}$



Some vocatives contain Ground_{Spkr}P

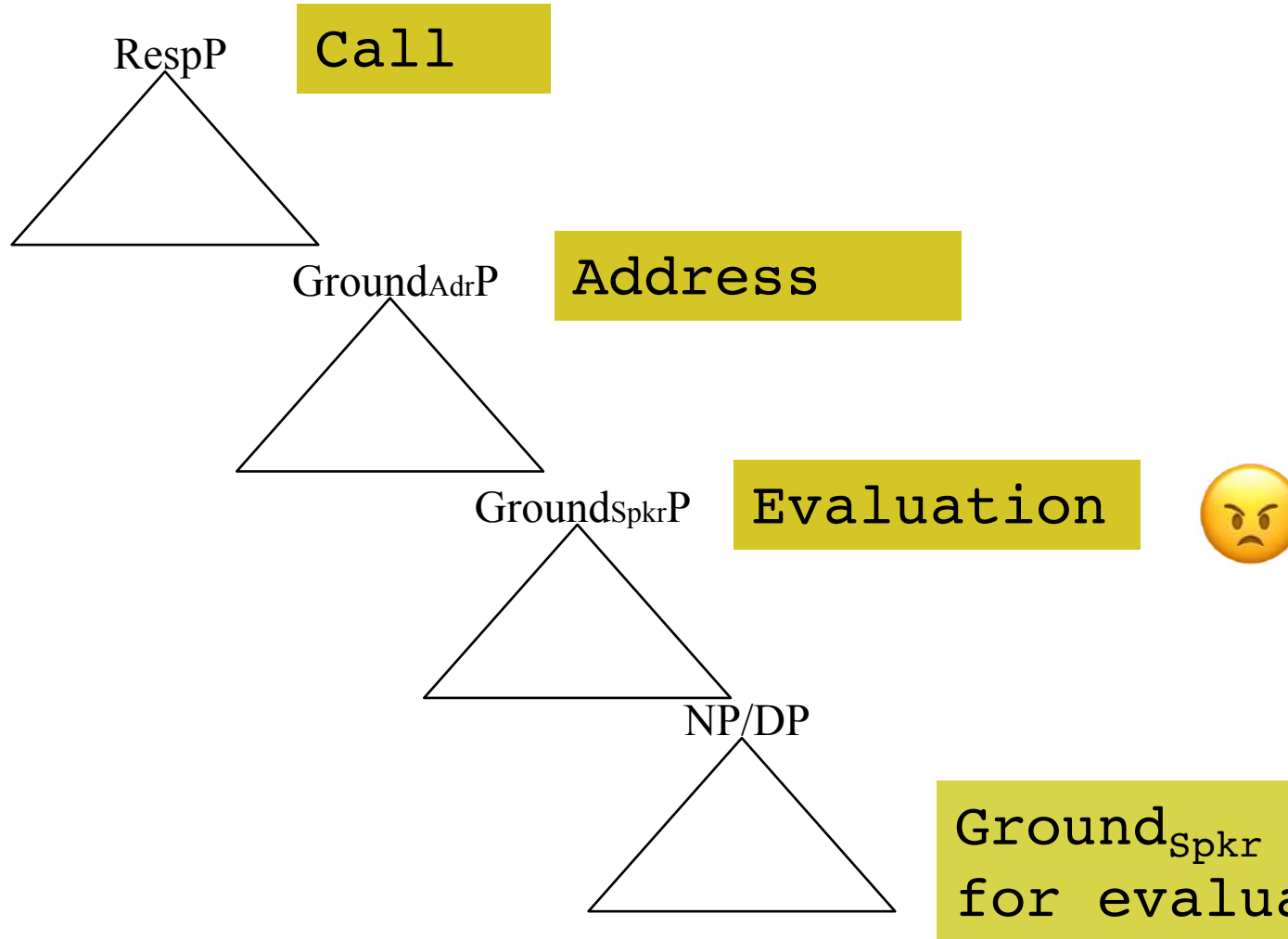
1.
 - a. What have you done, **you idiot/bastard**
 - b. What have you done, **you linguist/philosopher**

2.
 - a. What have you done, **idiot/bastard**
 - b. What have you done, **linguist/philosopher**



Is the contrast
structurally
conditioned?

Some vocatives contain $\text{Ground}_{\text{Spkr}}\text{P}$

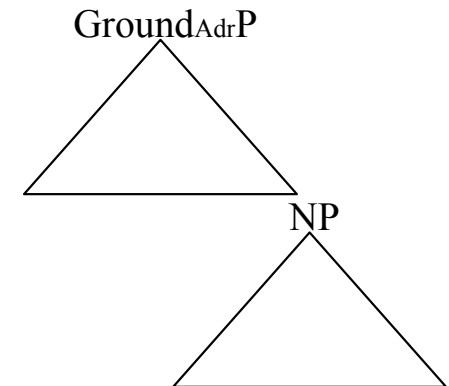
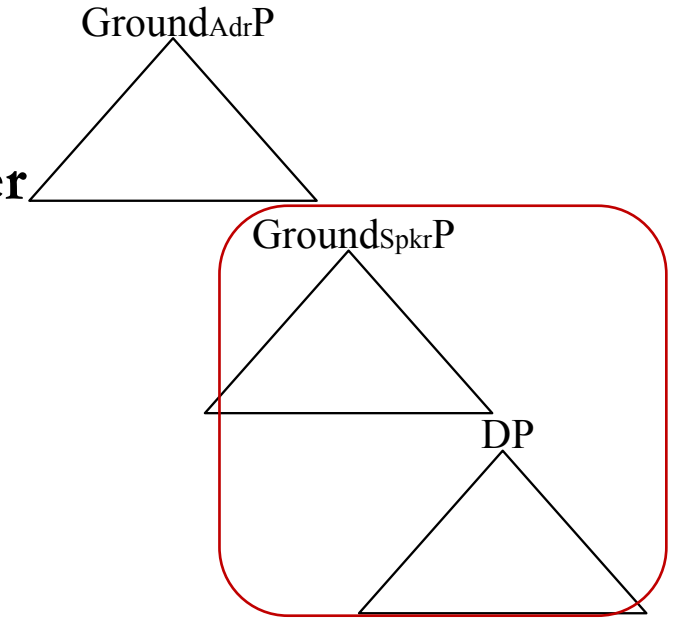


Some vocatives contain $\text{Ground}_{\text{Spkr}}\text{P}$

1. a. What have you done, **you idiot/you bastard** 😡
b. What have you done, **you linguist/you philosopher**

Why does $\text{Ground}_{\text{Spkr}}$ require DP?

2. a. What have you done, **idiot/bastard** 😐
b. What have you done, **linguist/philosopher**

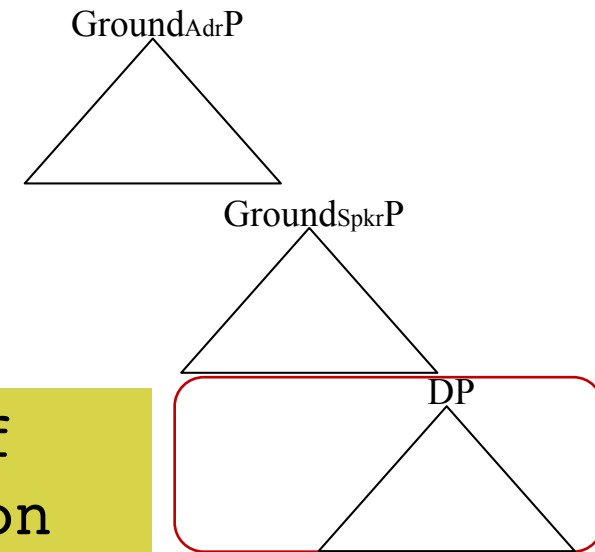


Some vocatives contain $\text{Ground}_{\text{Spkr}}\text{P}$

1. a. What have you done, **you idiot** → DP denotes a referent
- b. What have you done, **idiot** → NP denotes a predicate

Referents can be evaluated,
predicates cannot be.

Target of
evaluation



Some vocatives contain Ground_{Spkr}P

1.
 - a. What have you done, **my love/my darling**
 - b. What have you done, **my friend/my child**

2.
 - a. What have you done, **love/darling**
 - b. What have you done, **friend/child**



Is the contrast
structurally
conditioned?

Some vocatives contain $\text{Ground}_{\text{Spkr}}\text{P}$

1. Waitress to customer

a. Are you ready to order, **love**



b. * Are you ready to order, **my love**



2. Store-keeper to customer:

a. What do you want, **son?**



b. * What do you want, **my son?**

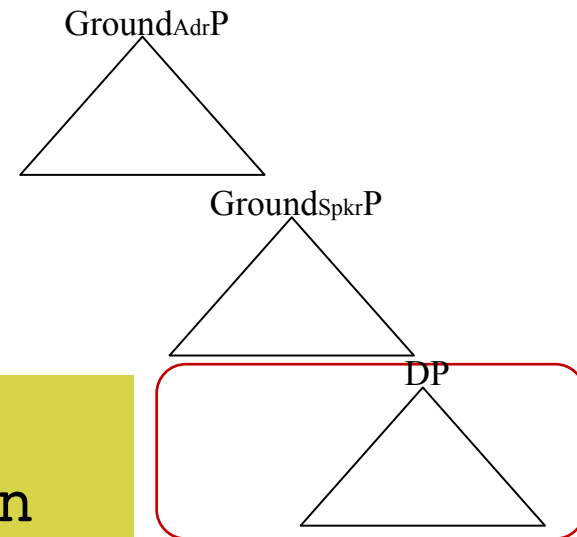


Some vocatives contain $\text{Ground}_{\text{Spkr}}\text{P}$


1. a. Are you ready to order, **my love** → DP denotes referent
- b. Are you ready to order, **love** → NP denotes a predicate


Referents can be evaluated,
predicates cannot be.

Target of
evaluation



Some vocatives contain $\text{Ground}_{\text{Spkr}}\text{P}$

1.
 - a. What have you done, **you idiot/bastard** 
 - b. What have you done, **you linguist/philosopher**

2.
 - a. What have you done, **my love/my darling** 
 - b. What have you done, **my friend/my child**

What determines whether the evaluation is negative or positive?

p-arguments lack Ground_{Spkr}

1. a. *What are **you idiot** doing



b. What are you doing, **you idiot**.



2. a. What are **you linguists** doing



b. What are you doing, **you linguists**.



p-arguments lack Ground_{Spkr}

1. a. ***My son** came to confession today.
- b. Are you coming to confession today, **my son**?

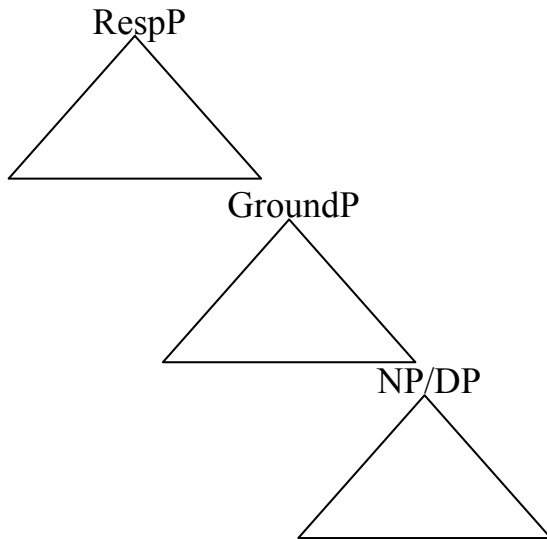


2. a. What are **you linguists** doing.
- b. What are you doing, **you linguists**.

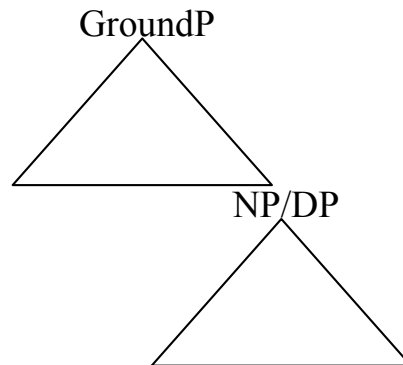


The syntax of **calls** and **addresses**

Calls



Addresses



Predictions:

- different **distributions**
- different **content**
- different **interpretive functions**

Different distributions

Addresses

1.
 - a. I imagine, **Lady Jane**, that you will find the sherbet pleasant.
 - b. **Lady Jane**, I imagine that you will find the sherbet pleasant.
 - c. I imagine that you will find the sherbet pleasant, **Lady Jane**.

May occur initially,
medially or finally

Calls

2. **(Hey) Grandma Myshkin!** Tell me about Lublin.

May ONLY occur
initially
And constitute an
independent utterance.

Zwicky 1974, Slocum 2016

Different content

Calls may be preceded by **hey**

- (1) **Grandma Myshkin!** Tell me about Lublin.
- (2) **Hey Grandma Myshkin!** Tell me about Lublin.
- (3) I imagine, **Lady Jane**, that you will find the sherbet pleasant.
- (4) * I imagine, **hey Lady Jane**, that you will find the sherbet pleasant.

Different interpretive functions

“**Calls** are designed to catch the addressee’s attention, **addresses** maintain or emphasize the contact between speaker and addressee.”

(Zwicky 1974: 787)

Addresses

1. a. **Wonder Woman**, tell me about Aries.
- b. I imagine, **Wonder Woman**, that you will save the world.
- c. Nice kick, **Wonder Woman**.

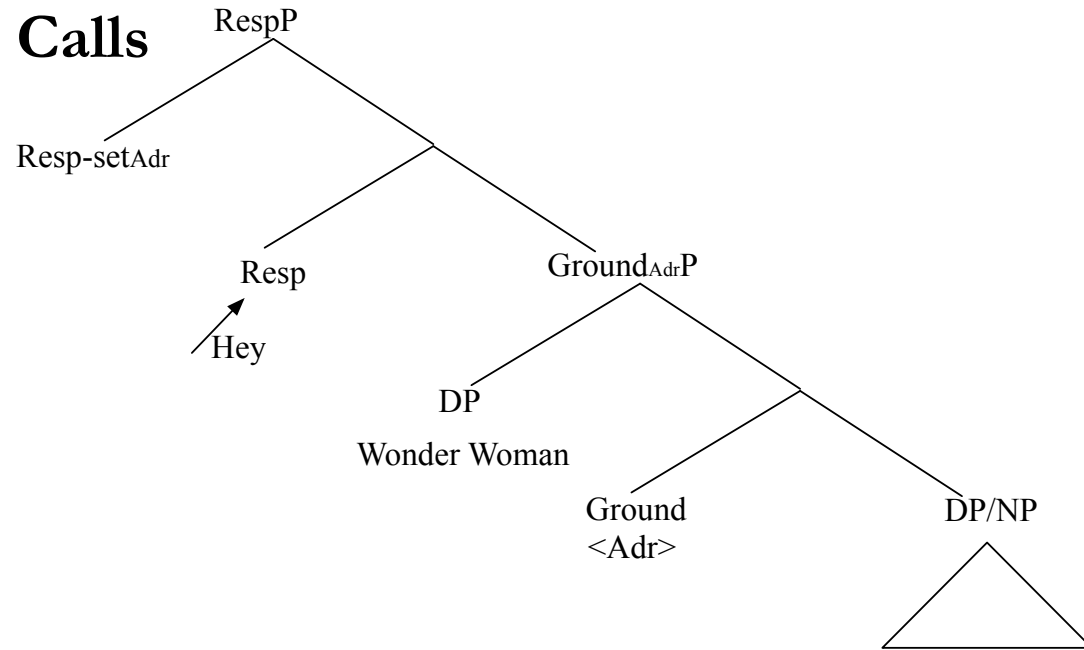
- name the addressee
- personalize the p-content

Wonder Woman has her back towards the speaker

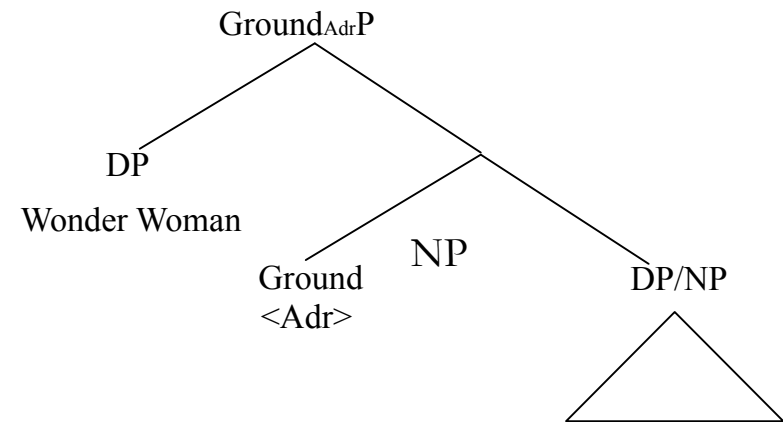
2. **(Hey) Wonder Woman!**

- Call for attention

The structure of **Calls** & **Addresses**



Addresses



- RespP is not embeddable
- Calls have an extra layer of structure to host intonation and *hey*
- RespP is locus of call for attention/response

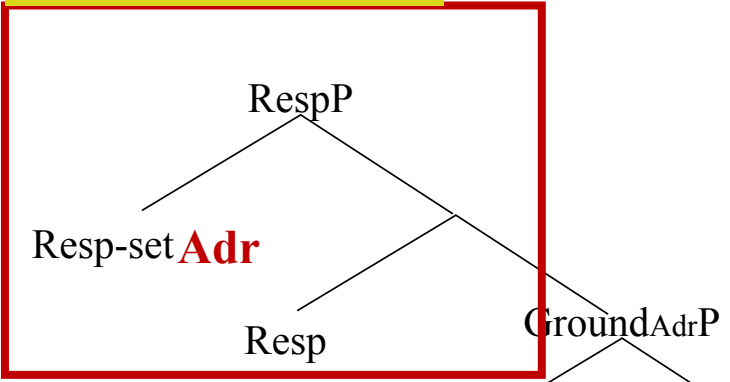
- GroundP is embeddable
- GroundP lacks positions for call UoLs
- GroundP is locus of Adr & evaluation

Roadmap

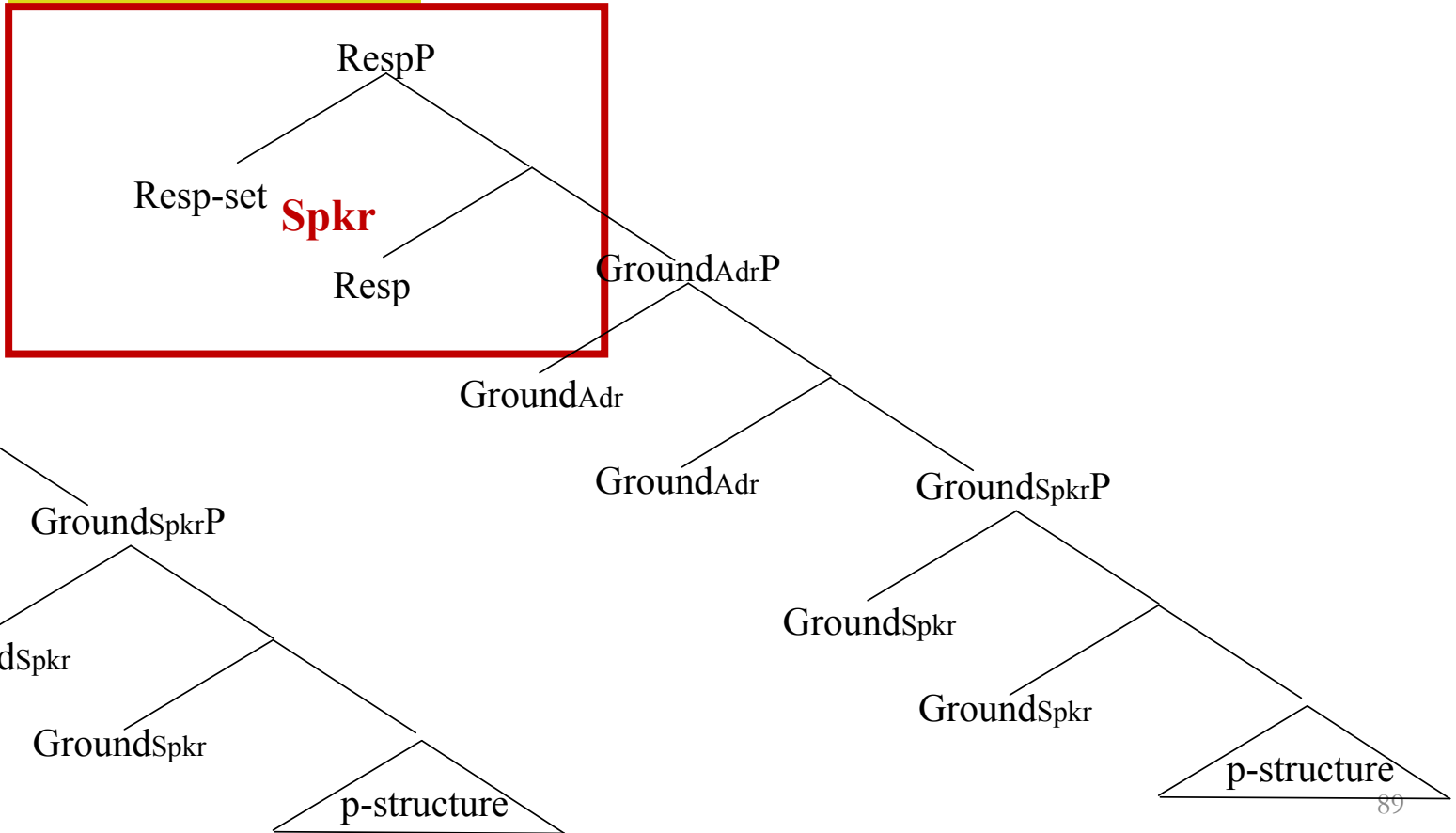
- Background
 - The structure and function of the interactional layer
- The category of vocative phrases:
 - Vocatives are GroundP
- The internal structure of vocative phrases
 - Vocatives contain NP, DP, and $\text{Ground}_{\text{Spkr}}$ below $\text{Ground}_{\text{Adr}}$
- The structure of Calls vs. Addresses
 - Calls are RespP, Addresses are GroundP
- Responding to vocative calls.

The interactional spine hypothesis

Initiating
move



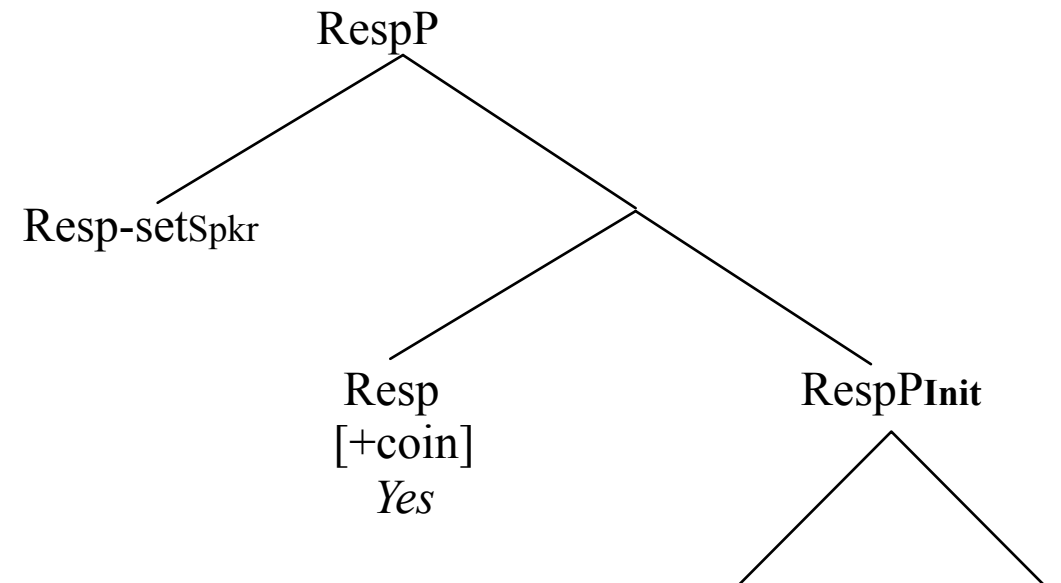
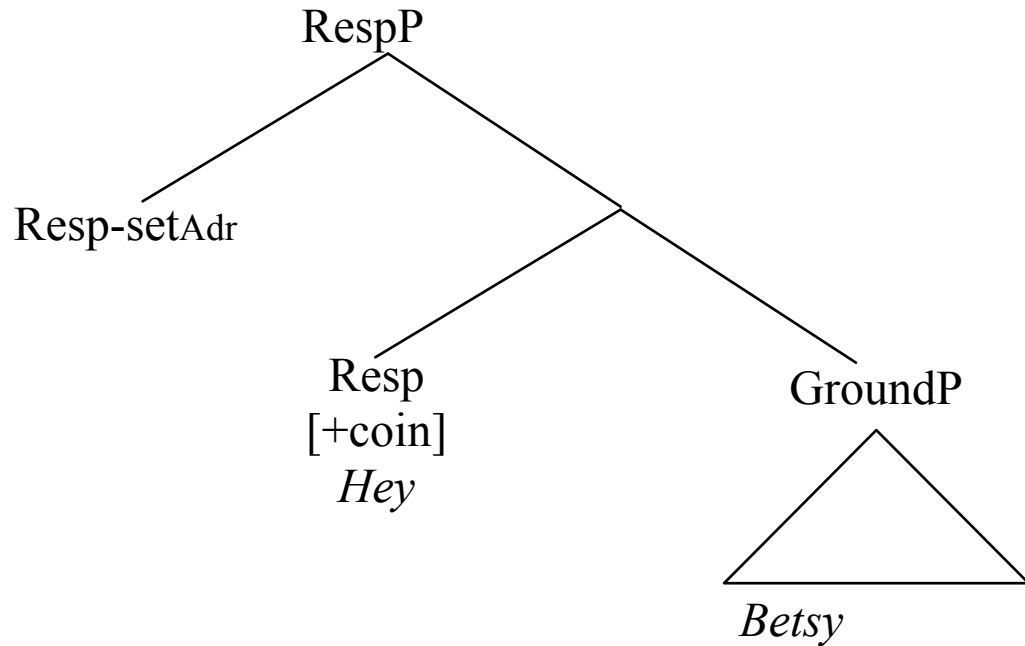
Reacting
move

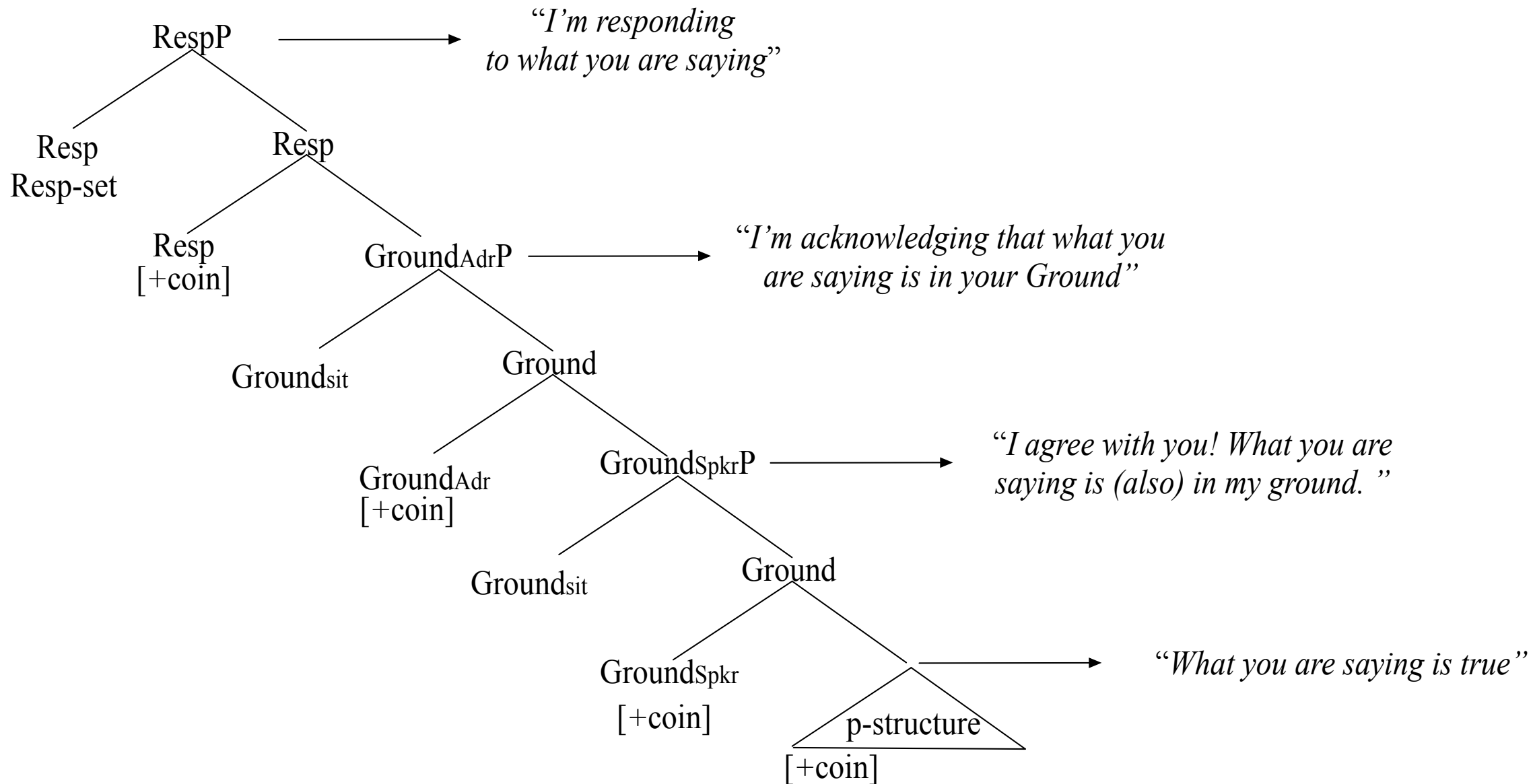


Response to vocative

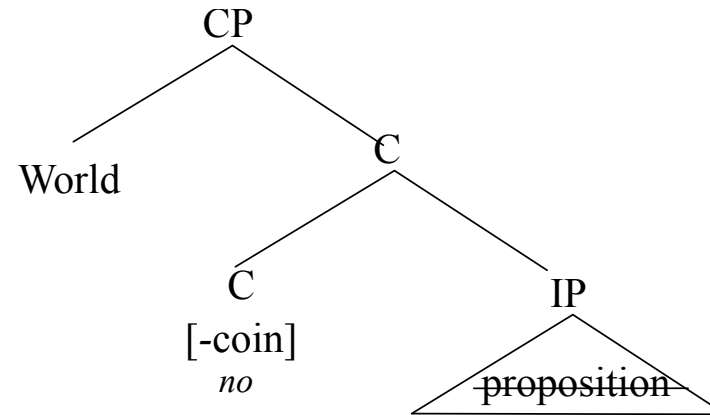
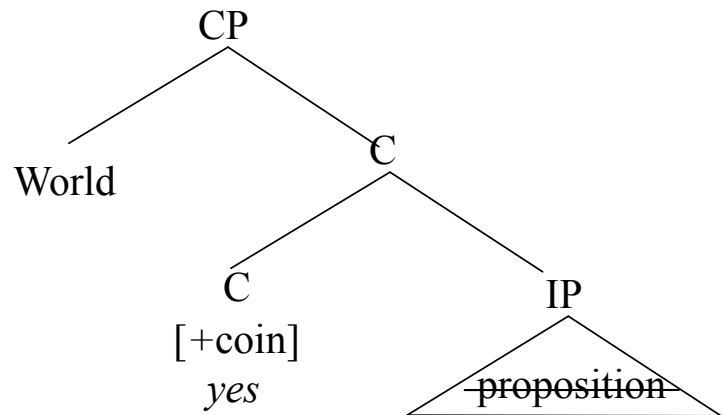
1. I: Hey Betsy?

R: Yes



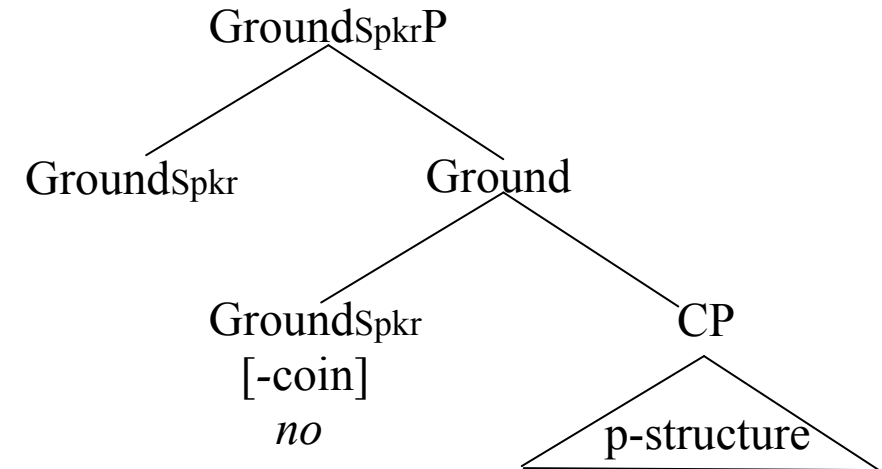
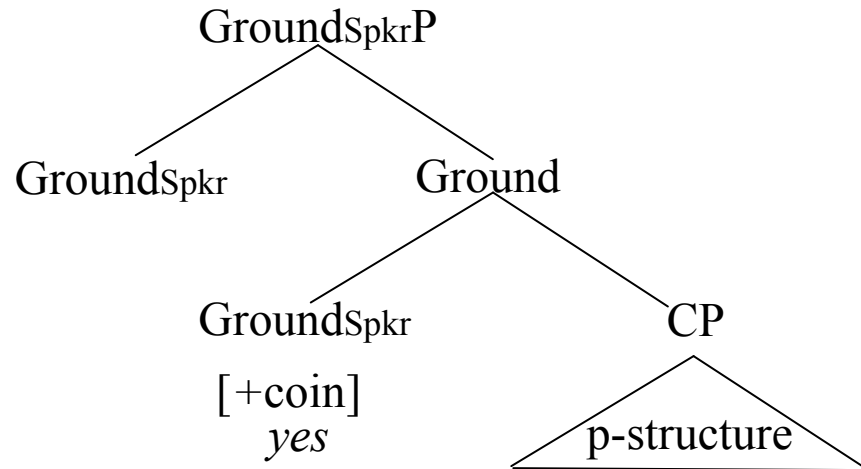


Polar response markers



1. I: Did you save the world?
R: Yes.
No.

Response markers as agreement markers

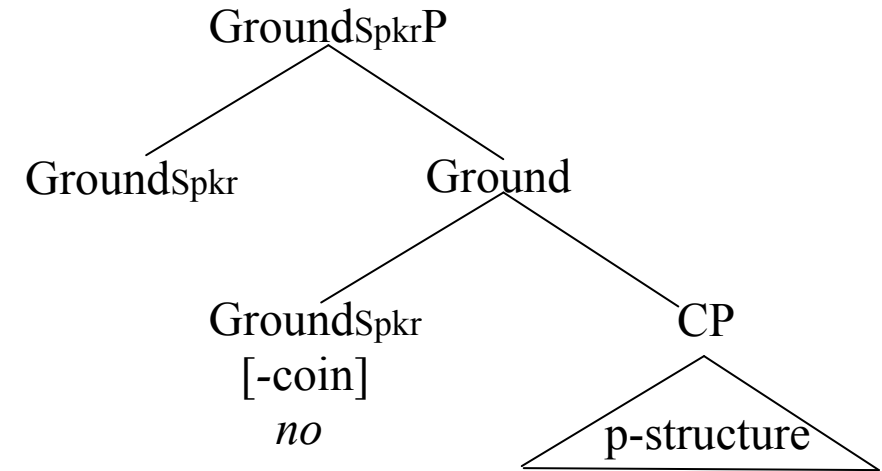
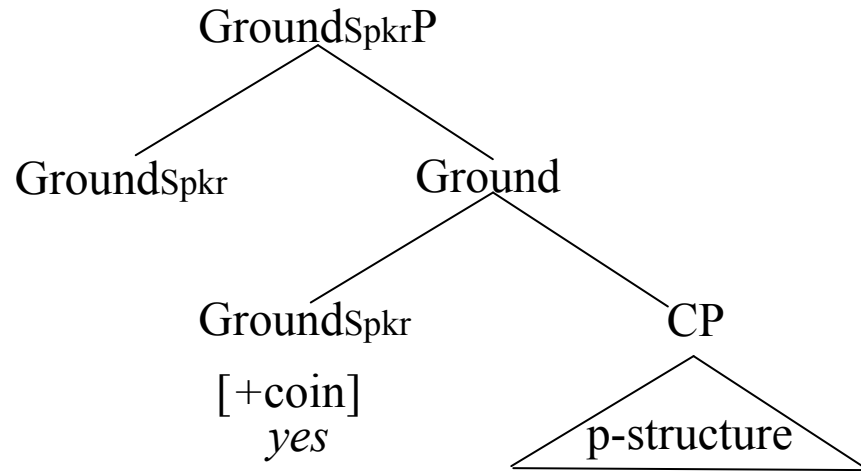


Response to wh-Question

Katie: Why would he do something like that?
Brooke: **Yes**, I know. That is the question.

BB-2012-05-23

Response markers as agreement markers

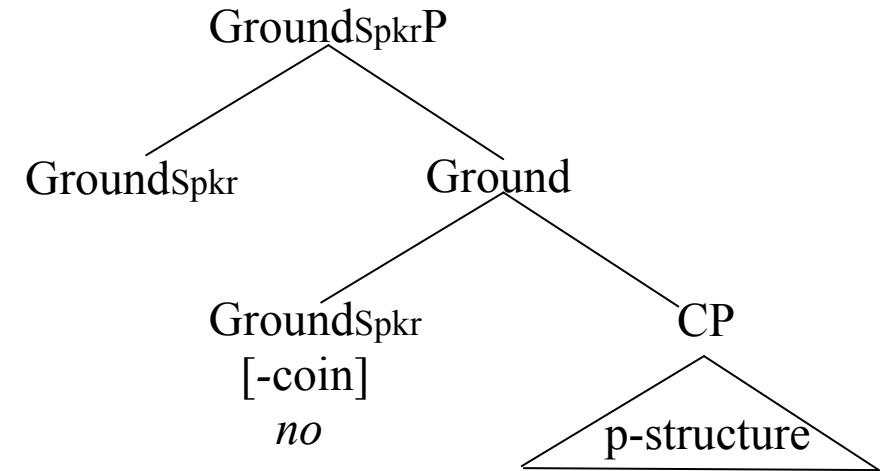
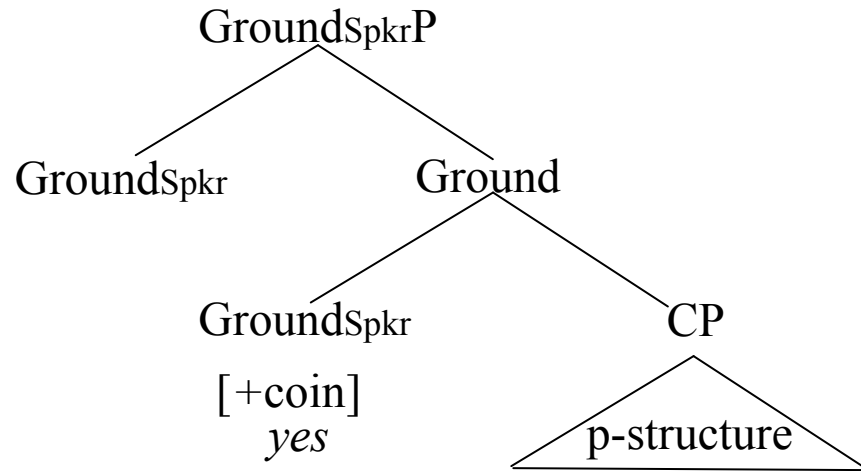


Response to imperative

Tracy: Give it to me!
Brooke: **No!**

GH-2012-01-20

Response markers as agreement markers

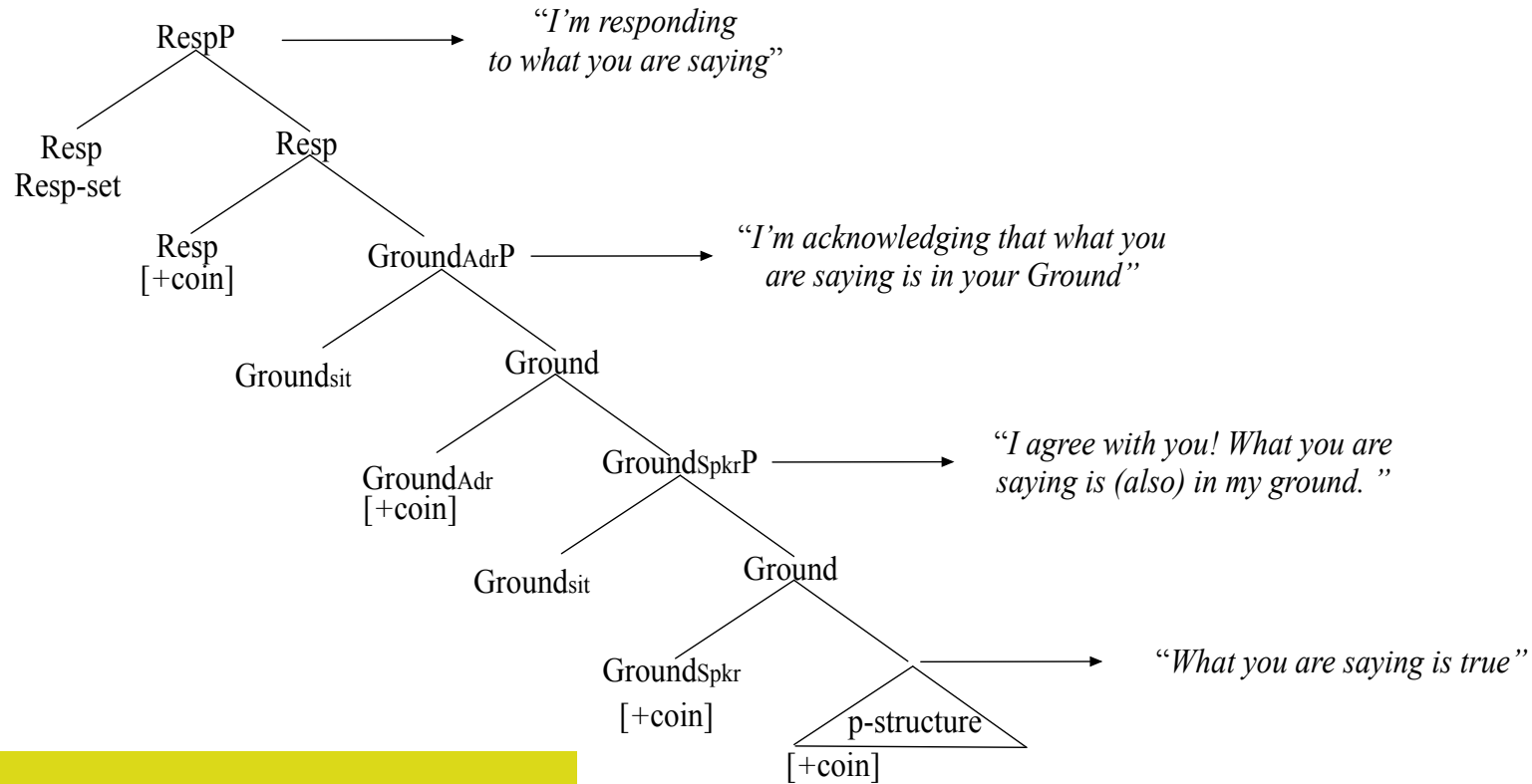


Response to exclamative

Steffy: Wohoo
Brooke: Yes!

BB-2012-05-03

Response markers as acknowledgment markers



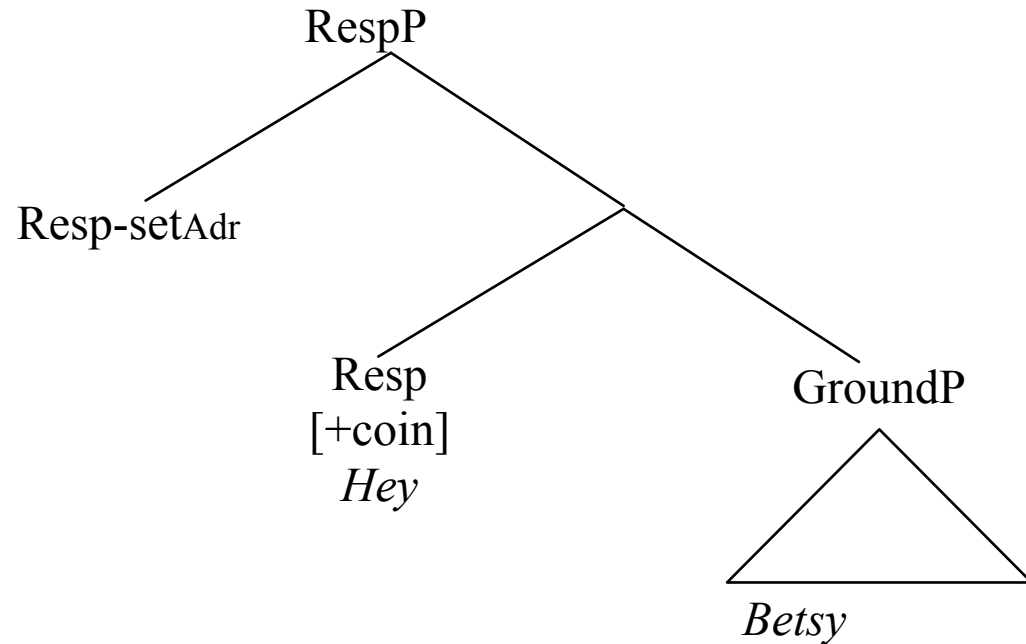
Yeah no can co-occur

Dorothy: [We've got] to do this shopping Peter.

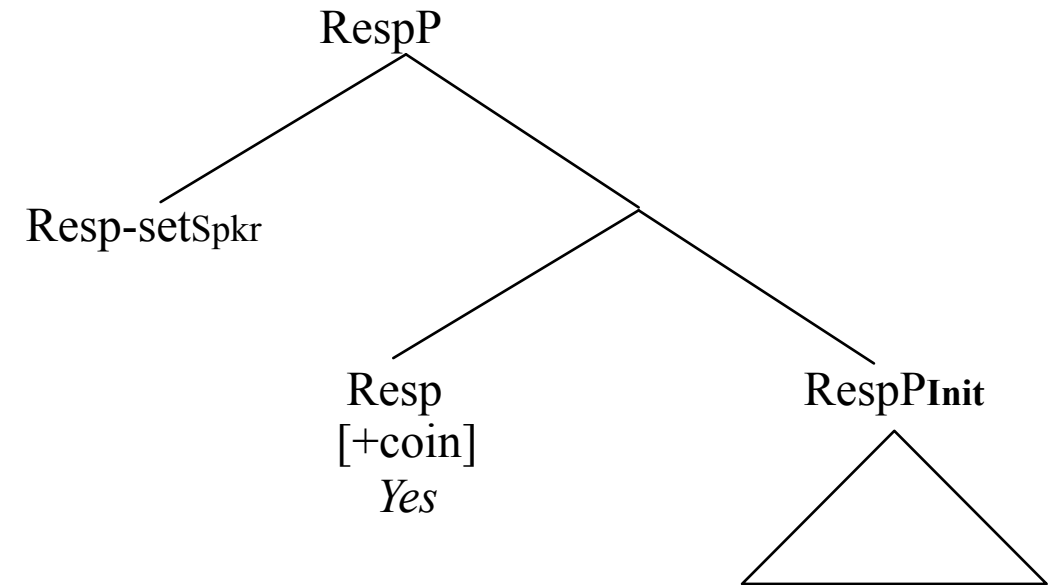
Peter: **Yeah, no** it's alright nanna, we've got 5 minutes.

Response to vocative

1. I: Hey Betsy?



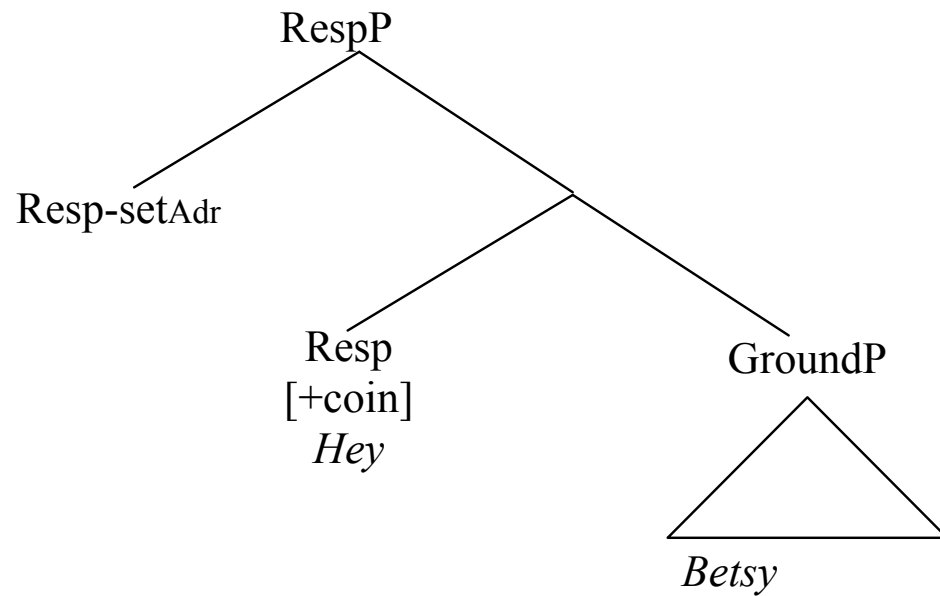
R: Yes



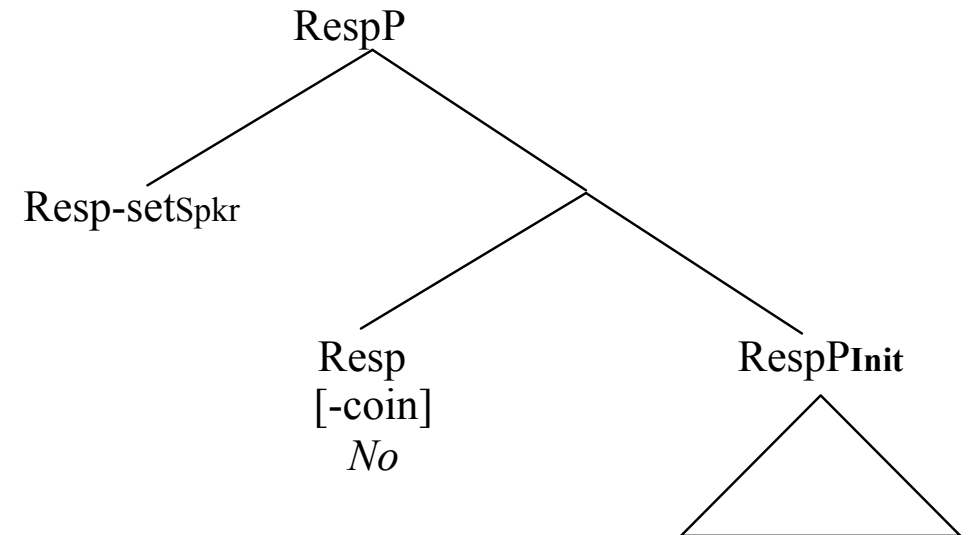
Your initiation is
in my response set

Response to vocative

1. I: Hey Betsy?

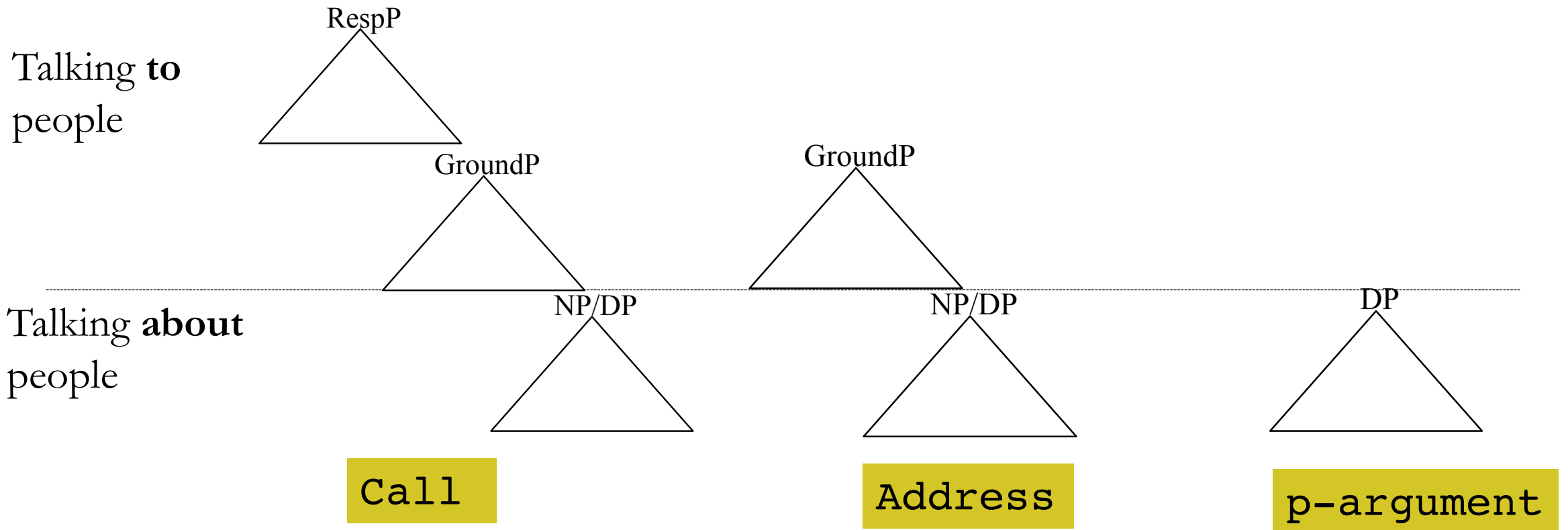


R: No!



Your initiation is **not**
in my response set
= contradiction

The structure of vocatives



Thank you, audience!

Audience! Thank you!