

# snippets

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# Super-local Remove in nominal preposing around *though*

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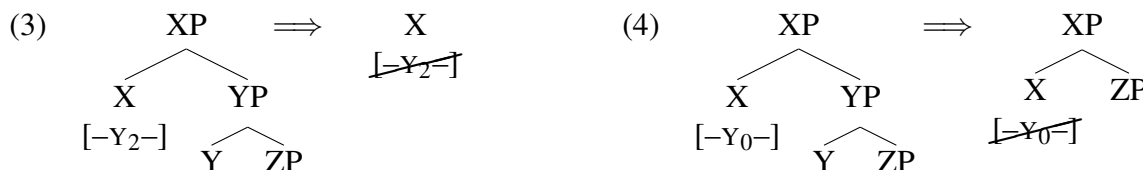
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Müller (2017) argues that, whereas Merge builds structure, a mirror-image operation Remove removes structure. This squib provides more evidence for Remove, arguing that it explains an otherwise puzzling nominal-preposing paradigm.

Remove is feature-driven and highly local, being subject to (1):

- (1) **Strict Cycle Condition (SCC)** (ibid:4)  
Within the current XP  $\alpha$ , a syntactic operation may not exclusively target some item  $\delta$  in the domain of another XP  $\beta$  if  $\beta$  is in the domain of  $\alpha$ .
- (2) The **domain** of a head X is the set of nodes dominated by XP that are distinct from and do not contain X.

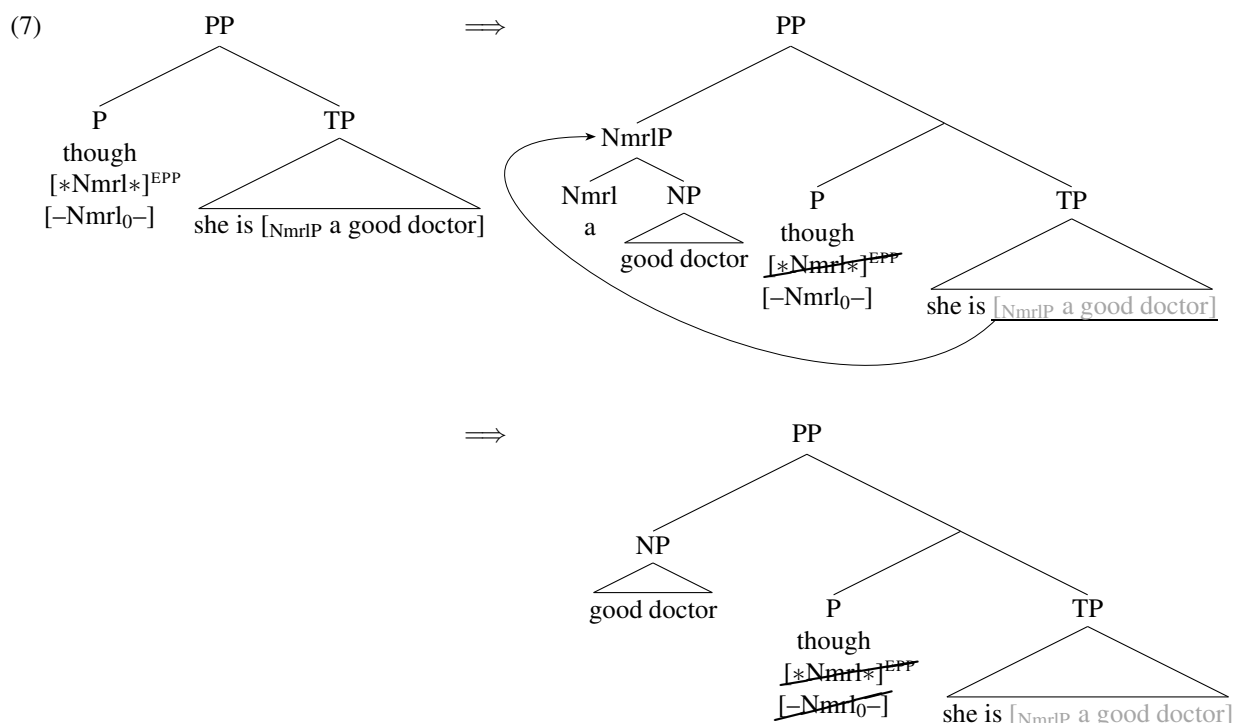
A head's Remove-feature can target a maximal projection ( $[-Y_2-]$ ) or a head ( $[-Y_0-]$ ). In the former case, the entire YP is removed ((3)). In the latter case, the head Y and its “shell” are removed, and its dependents reattached to the main tree ((4)).



The Remove hypothesis predicts that a head should be able to attract an XP and remove its XP shell. This is correct. When *though* attracts a predicate nominal headed by *a*, the *a* must disappear for many speakers, myself included (Levine 2001:152; cf. Ross 2000):

- (5) Though she is a good doctor ...
- (6) (?\*A) good doctor though she is ...

On the Remove hypothesis, this is straightforward to explain. Assume that *a*, the nominal's head, is a Numeral (Perlmutter 1970, though cf. Yasui 1975). *Though* optionally (i.e. in (6), but not (5)) bears a Numeral-probe with an EPP-subfeature ( $[*Nmrl*]^{EPP}$ ). In (6), it probes, finds the *a*-nominal (satisfying  $[*Nmrl*]$ ), and attracts it (satisfying the EPP-subfeature). This version of *though* also bears a Remove-feature  $[-Nmrl_0-]$ , as a lexical idiosyncrasy (on which more below). It therefore removes *a* (and the NmrlP shell):



(For me, *a*-nominals that are not profession-related behave identically: (?\*A) *good person though she is ...*)

This analysis makes several predictions.

First, when the *though* lacking  $[\ast Nmrl\ast]^{EPP}$  is chosen (so the *a*-nominal does not move), *though* should be unable to remove *a* long-distance—because Remove obeys the SCC ((1)), preventing long-distance Remove. This is correct:

(8) \*\*Though she is good doctor ...

Secondly, recall that the cooccurrence of  $[-Nmrl_0-]$  and  $[\ast Nmrl\ast]^{EPP}$  on (one version of) *though* is a lexical idiosyncrasy. Nothing in the theory forces the *though*-bearing  $[\ast Nmrl\ast]^{EPP}$  to also bear  $[-Nmrl_0-]$ . Therefore, it is possible for there to be grammars in which a version of *though* bears  $[\ast Nmrl\ast]^{EPP}$  but not  $[-Nmrl_0-]$ , so an *a*-nominal can prepose around *though* and retain its *a*. There are indeed: for Postal (1998:29), (9) is acceptable.

(9) %A good doctor though she was ...

Thirdly, if indeed the Remove-feature is  $[-Nmrl_0-]$ , it should not remove *the* (a D). This is correct. For a reviewer, certain *the*-nominals can prepose around *though*, but the *the* must remain:

(10) %The best doctor though she might be ...

Remove, then, makes possible an explanation of the otherwise strange phenomenon of *a*-deletion, its strictly local nature, and the idiolectal variation it displays.

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