

COPULAR SENTENCES AS A WINDOW INTO LOCALITY

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1. Copular sentences

CANONICAL COPULAR SENTENCE (Moro 1997; 2017a)

(1) [Due foto del muro]_i furono [_{SC} t_i [la causa della rivolta]].
two pictures of.the wall were the cause of.the riot
'Two pictures of the wall were the cause of the riot.'

INVERSE COPULAR SENTENCE (Moro 1997; 2017a)

(2) [La causa della rivolta]_i furono [_{SC} [due foto del muro] t_i].
the cause of.the riot were two pictures of.the wall
'The cause of the riot was two pictures of the wall.'

INVERSE COPULAR SENTENCE (*there*-sentence) (Moro 1997; 2017b)

(3) Ci_i furono [_{SC} [due foto del muro] t_i].
there.CL were two pictures of.the wall
'There were two pictures of the wall.'

2. A surprising contrast

EXTRACTION FROM A POST-VERBAL DP (INVERSE COPULAR SENTENCES)

(4) *[Di quale muro]_i pensi che la causa della rivolta furono [_{DP} due foto t_j]?
of which wall think.2SG that the cause of.the riot were two pictures

(5) [Di quale muro]_i pensi che ci furono [_{DP} due foto t_j]?
of which wall think.2SG that there were two pictures
'Which wall do you think there were two pictures of?'

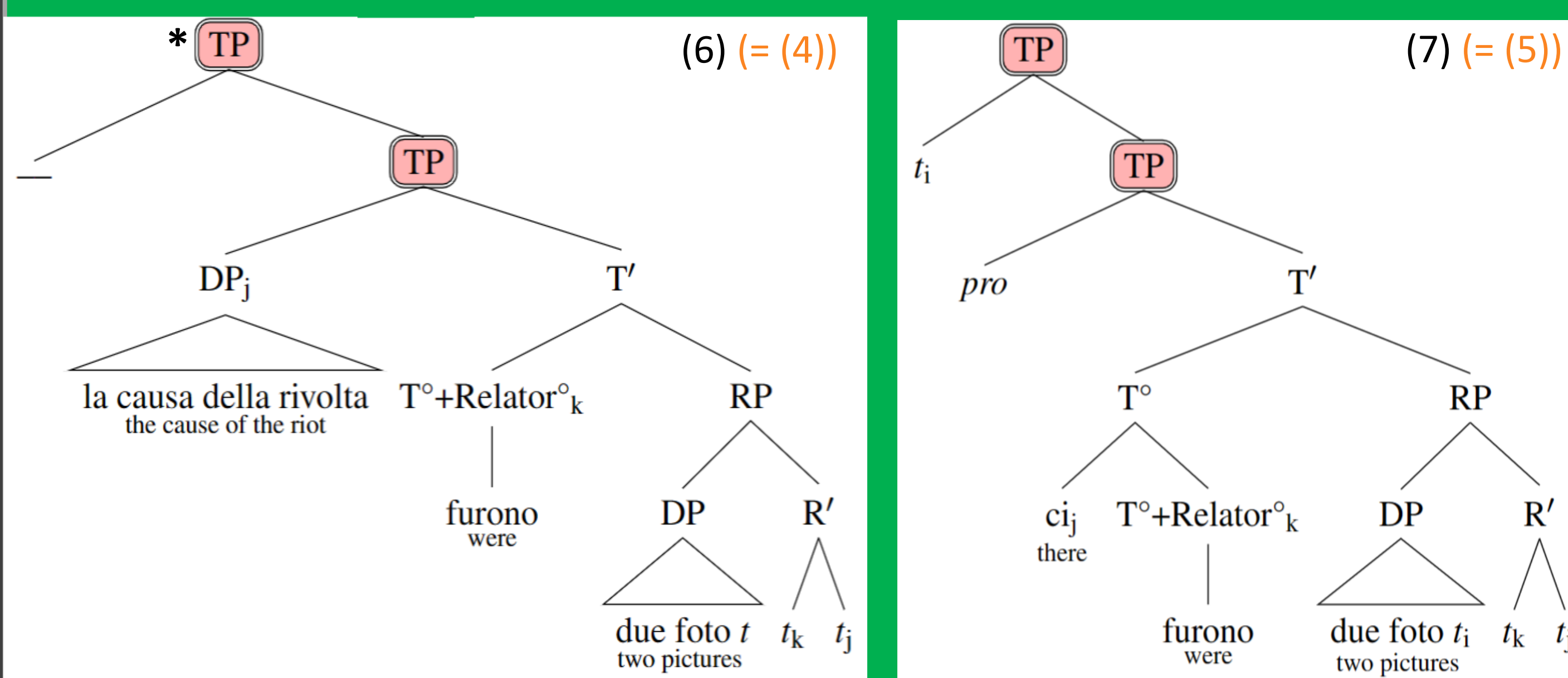
3. Research question

Which formulation better captures the conditions on the extraction from an XP?

- A formulation based on **phases** (Phase Impenetrability Condition – PIC);
- A formulation based on **selection** and the **configuration** in which the XP occurs (Subjacency Condition).

4. The PIC

- PIC: Extraction of an expression α from a phase Φ is possible only if α is the edge of Φ (simplified version, based on Chomsky 2000).



THREE SPECIAL ASSUMPTIONS (den Dikken 2006: 115-123):

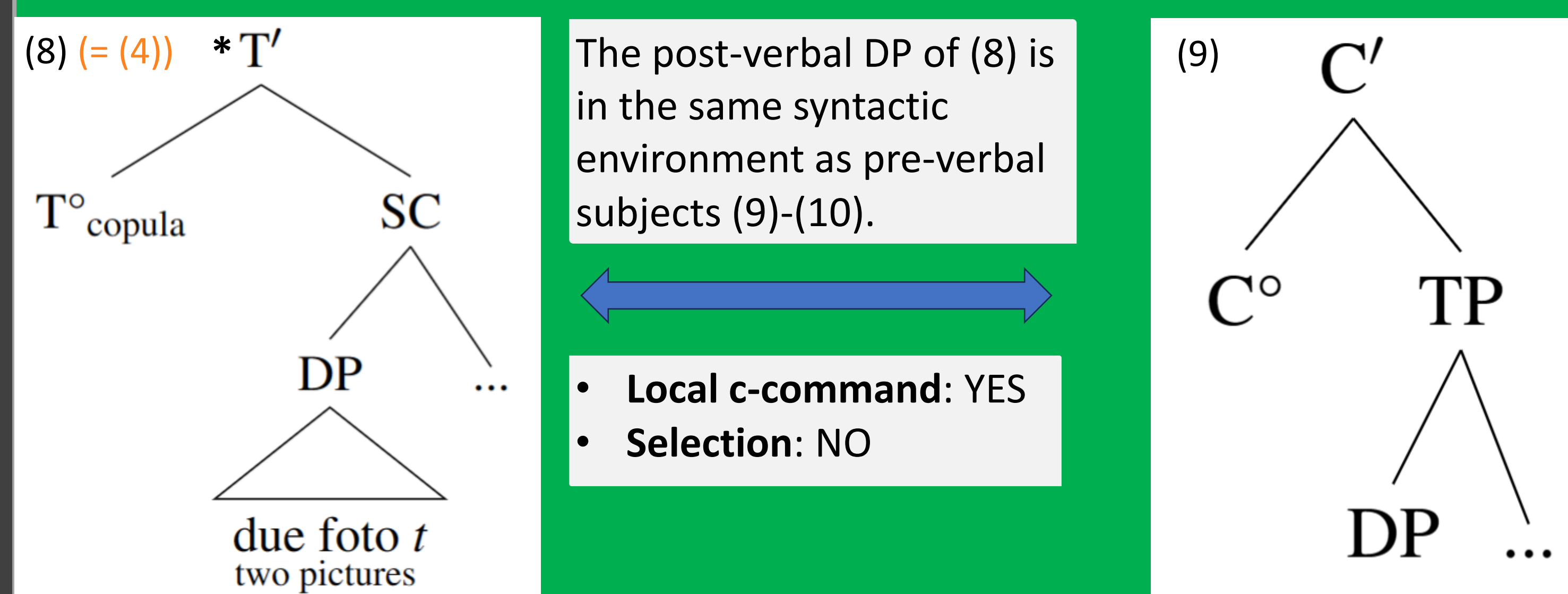
- The TP headed by the copula in (6)-(7) constitutes a phase, owing to phase-extending head-movement;
- GENERAL RESTRICTION ON ADJUNCTION: Adjunction to phrases headed by meaningless elements is prohibited;
- The copula (T°) is meaningless only in (6).

ISSUES:

- Can the idea that the copula is meaningless only in (8) be justified on semantic grounds?
- There is no independent evidence that meaning affects the syntactic operation of adjunction.

5. The Subjacency Condition

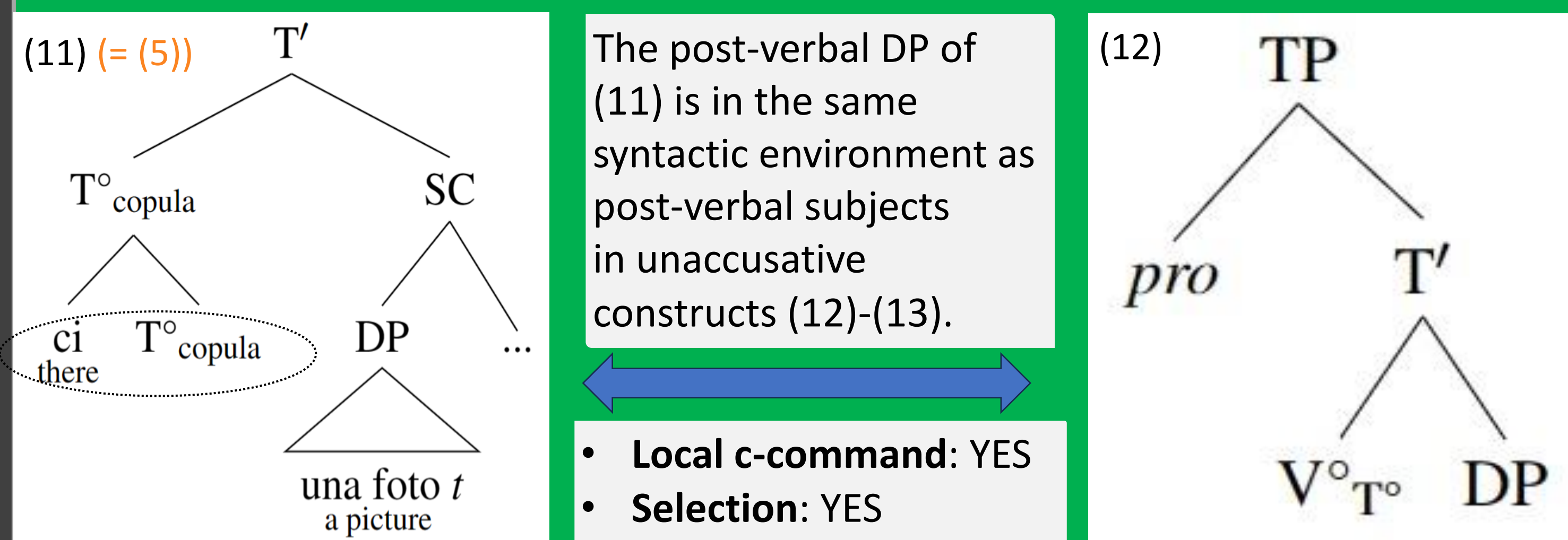
- Subjacency Condition: Extraction of an expression α from a maximal projection XP is possible only if XP is both selected and locally c-commanded by a verb-like head (Cinque 1990; Moro 1997).



(10) *[Which wall]_i do you think that [_{DP} a picture of t_j] was the cause of the riot?
(the same holds for Italian – Moro 1997; Greco et al. 2020)

- The Subjacency condition à la Cinque (1990) provides a unified account of the ill-formedness of (4) and the ill-formedness of extraction from pre-verbal subjects.

6. A special unaccusative construct



(13) [Di quale muro]_i pensi che arrivarono [_{DP} due foto t_j]?
of which wall think.2SG that arrived.3PL two pictures

- *There*-sentences satisfy all the standard diagnostics for **unaccusativity** in Italian (Moro 1997; Hale and Keyser 2002):

(14) a. Ci sono state due foto del muro.
there are been.PL.F two picture.PL.F of.the wall
'There have been two pictures of the wall'.
b. Ce ne sono state [_{DP} due t_j].
there of.them are been two

- The Subjacency condition à la Cinque (1990) provides a unified account of the well-formedness of (5) and the well-formedness of extraction from post-verbal subjects in unaccusative constructs.

7. Take-home points

- The contrast between (4) and (5) is naturally captured by the Subjacency Condition à la Cinque (1990);
- The contrast between (4) and (5) could be reduced to the PIC only if the PIC were to be supplemented with *ad hoc* assumptions, including reference to meaning;
- «Though varieties of government would be "imperfections," to be avoided if possible, the closer-to-primitive notion of **L-marking** should pass muster, hence also notions of barrier that are based on nothing more than L-marking.» (Chomsky 2000: 117).

References

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