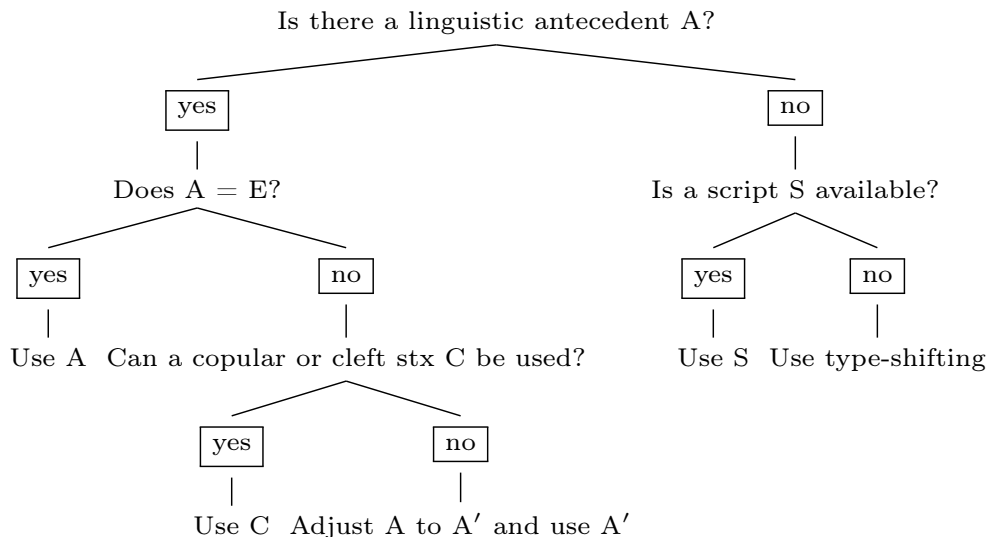

Stochastic resolution of ellipsis: Why the holy grail of a grand unified theory will never be found

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Many different beasts have been called elliptical: sluicing, VP-ellipsis, fragment answers, short directives, and even bare exophoric fragments, among others. I argue that while all of these can give rise to determinate propositional contents, these contents are not all generated by the same mechanisms. Instead, there is a stochastic ranked decision tree for resolving a putative ellipsis E:



I show that the left branches of this tree help model the behavior of traditional sluicing, as well as the disjunctive sluicing. I also show that accommodation (with parallelism) is necessary, but that recent versions fail to work exactly as needed. I further document and analyze a surprising novel pattern of strict identity: Warner ‘morphological’ identity effects are found in code-switching ellipsis.

- (1) I Maria itan sto parti, and her sister will *(be), too.
the Maria was at.the party

Finally, I show that fragments from scripts differ from truly exophoric fragments; the latter can be accounted for with a single type-shifting rule.