

Semantics



AMBIGUITY

Meaning can be construed



- Ambiguity is the experience of being able to see two meanings from one form.
- Not unlike artwork that shows two faces in one drawing.

Famous Ambiguous Art



<http://brainstorm-services.com/wcu-lit/ambiguity.html>

Lexical Ambiguity



- Lexical ambiguity has two interpretations for a lexical item in the sentence.
 - Polysemy and homophony are to blame.
 - Polysemy= a word that has two related meanings:
 - ✦ “bright”: smart and illuminated
 - Homophony= a word form that has two utterly unrelated meanings.
 - ✦ “club”: social gathering place and blunt weapon

The peasants are revolting!



The peasants [**VP** are revolting.]

The peasants [**VP** are [**AP** revolting.]]

Structural Ambiguity



- Occurs when you can combine a set of words in a sentence more than one way to create more than one interpretation.

Real World- Language MATTERS



- You be the judge: Read the statement from a will and testament. The children share the family fortune. How much of money does each sibling take home?
“Divide my savings of \$400,000 equally between my children Mark, June, Leith and Trudy.”
 - How much do they each get?

Theoretical Examples



- **Put the box on the table in the kitchen.**

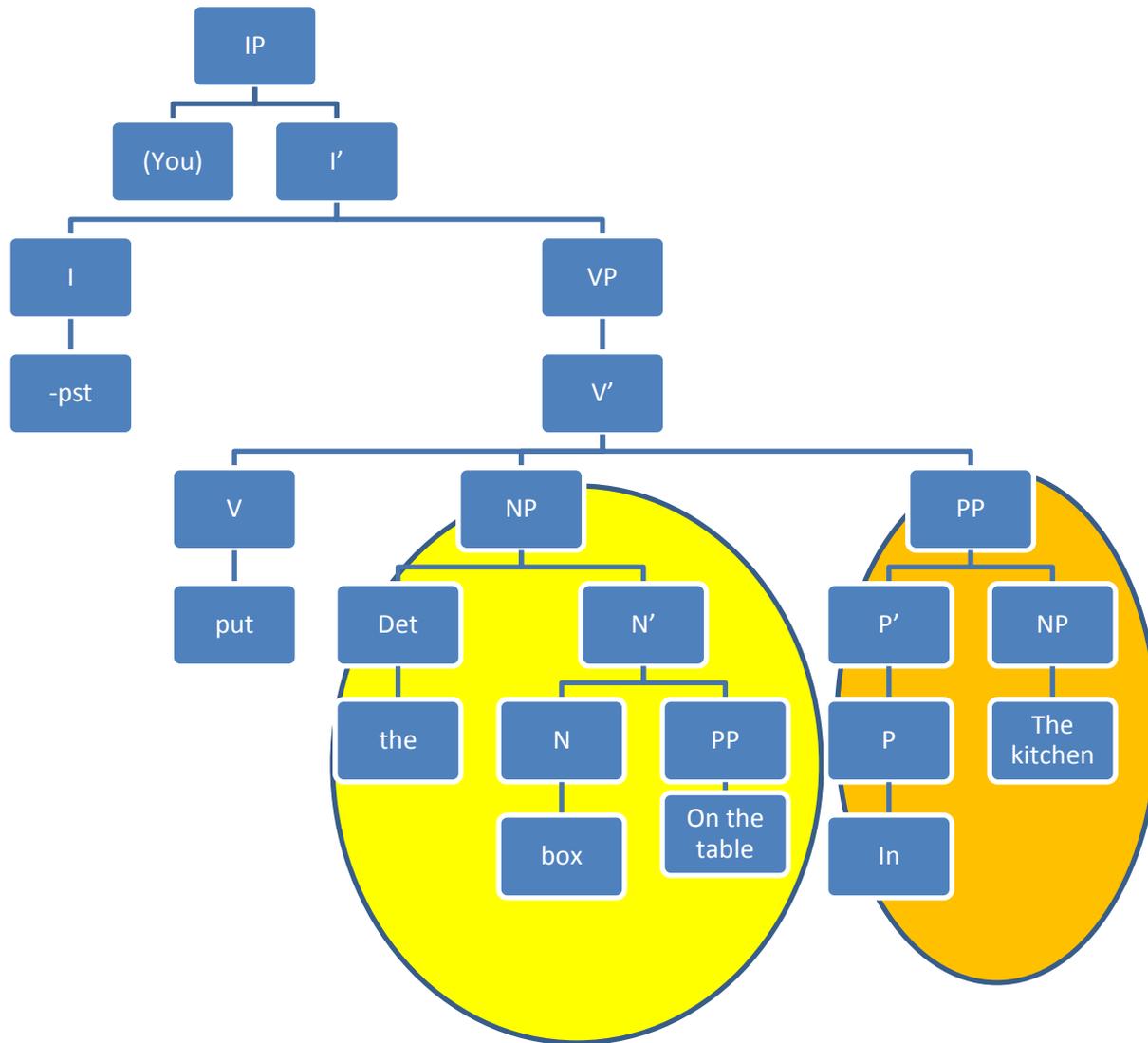
OPTION 1

Put [the box on the table] in the kitchen.

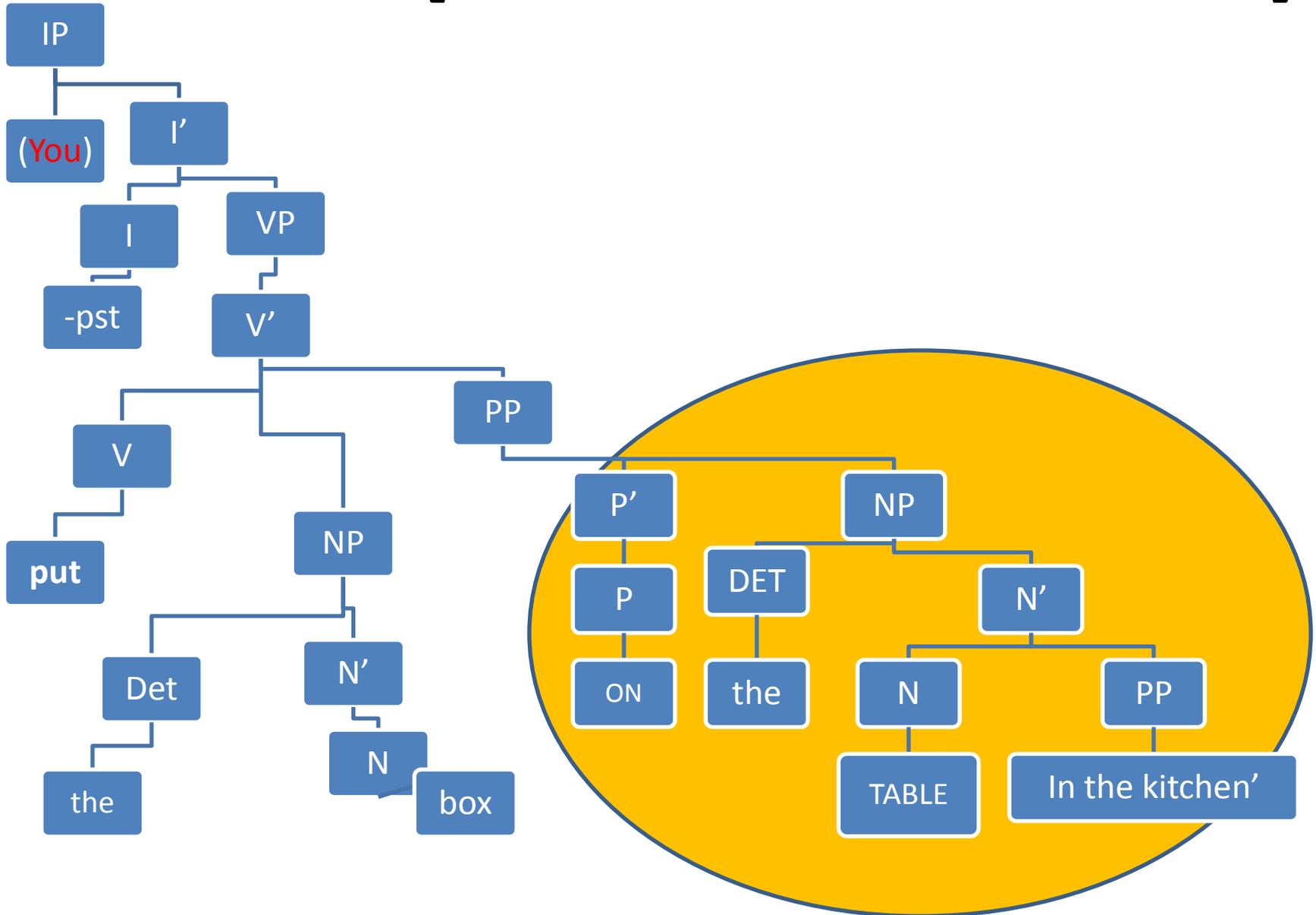
OPTION 2

Put [the box] on the table in the kitchen.

Put [the box on the table] in the kitchen.



Put the box [on the table in the kitchen.]



We painted the wall with cracks.

We painted  the wall.

with cracks

We painted 
the wall with cracks.

Draw a tree for these structural ambiguities.

- Together:
 - Which of them are lexically ambiguous?
 - Syntactically?

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- Lexical:
 - D, G
 - D is not identified by the book, but “ties” could be Polysemy. Tie (neck tie) and Tie (connection)
 - Black and white (colors) and black and white (clear and unambiguous).
- Syntactic:
 - A, B, D, E, F

Answers