

A Generative and Historical Comparison of PDE and EModE V-to-I and V2 and: the Phrase *How Come* [*Emb*]

THE PROBLEM & THE POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS

If:

- English has V2 in interrogative main clauses with a topicalised *wh*-element
- *How* is a *wh*-element
- Only auxiliary verbs can move to the second position (C°)

How can we say 'how come you're home early?'?

Either:

- We can't
- Something is not what it seems/what it usually is
- No sense or order exists in the world of syntax and we should all be very sad ☹
- It's simply an expression that got stuck in old times' syntactic rules, no big deal, stuff happens

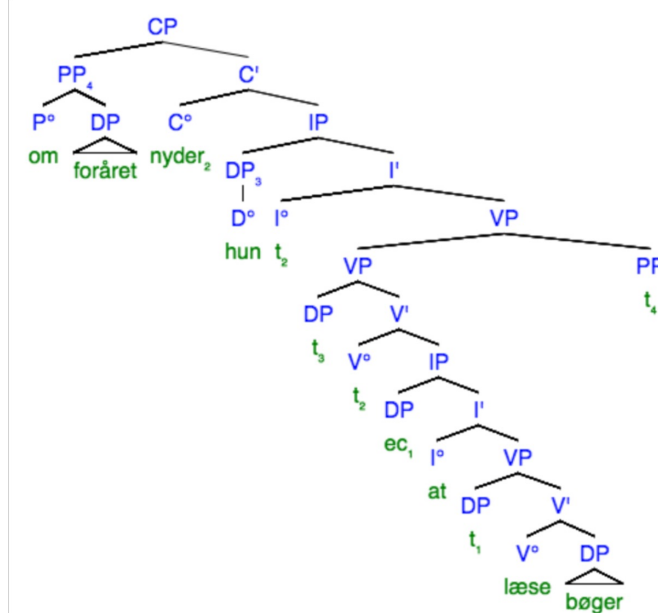
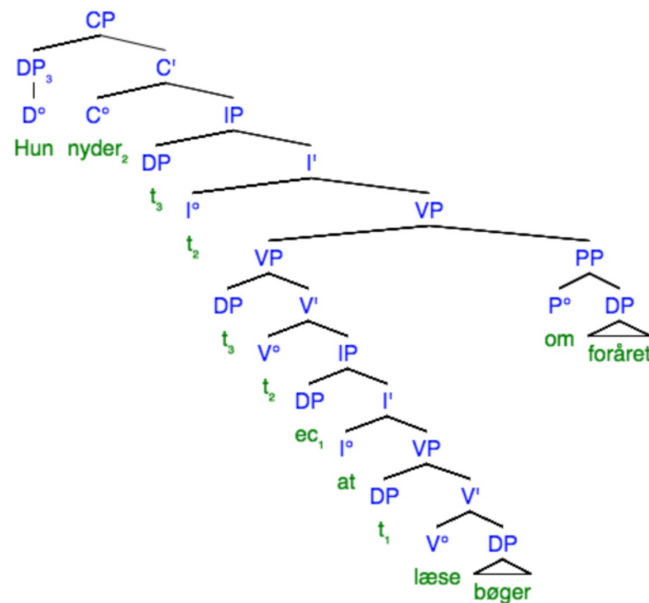
WHAT IS V2?

V2 = verb second

Meaning: the verb moves to the second position, i.e., C°.

PDE is not generally a V2 language, but has V2 in certain types of structures, e.g., the interrogative main clauses with an initial *wh*-element.

Danish is a V2 language – the verb will always be the second constituent in main clauses:



BEFORE V2 COMES V-TO-I

V2 entails movement from V° to I° to C° - it is not possible to go directly from V° to C°.

PDE main verbs stay in V°:

	I°	Adverbial	V°	
	I	never	loved	you
	*I	loved	never	you

Auxiliary verbs (and copula verb *be*) are either born in I° or move there when finite:

	I	will	never	love	you
	*I		never	will love	you

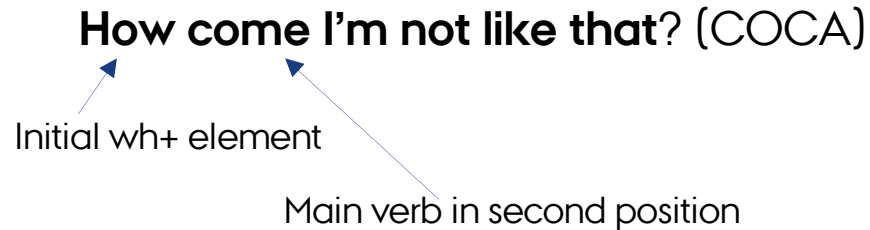
BEFORE V2 COMES V-TO-I

Often, PDE structures just have an empty I°, but not in negations:

	I°	Adverbial	V°	
*I		not	loved	you
*I	loved	not		you
I	did	not	love	you
I	will	not	love	you

But again, no main verbs (save copula main verb *be*) can move to I°

SO WHAT'S UP WITH *HOW COME*?

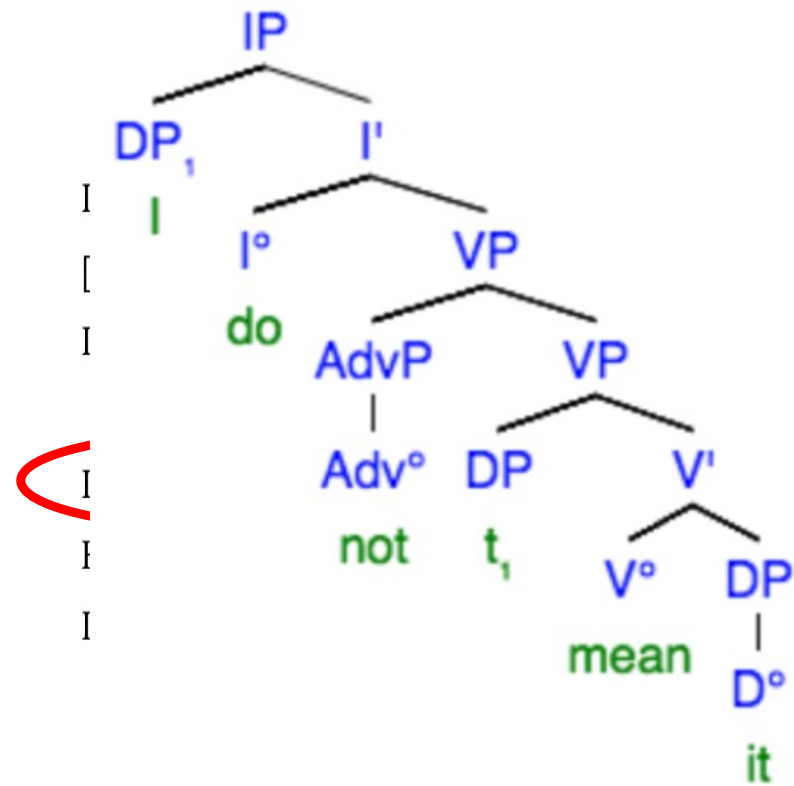


Nearly 10.000 instances of 'how come' in COCA (only 41 with 'how comes') (January 2021)

Apart from the main verb *come* in second position, there's also something odd about the semantics (we will return to this) and there's an open question as to whether the embedded clause, [I'm not like that] is the subject of the matrix clause or the complement to the verb (we will not return to this).

But for now: How can the main verb move to the second position?

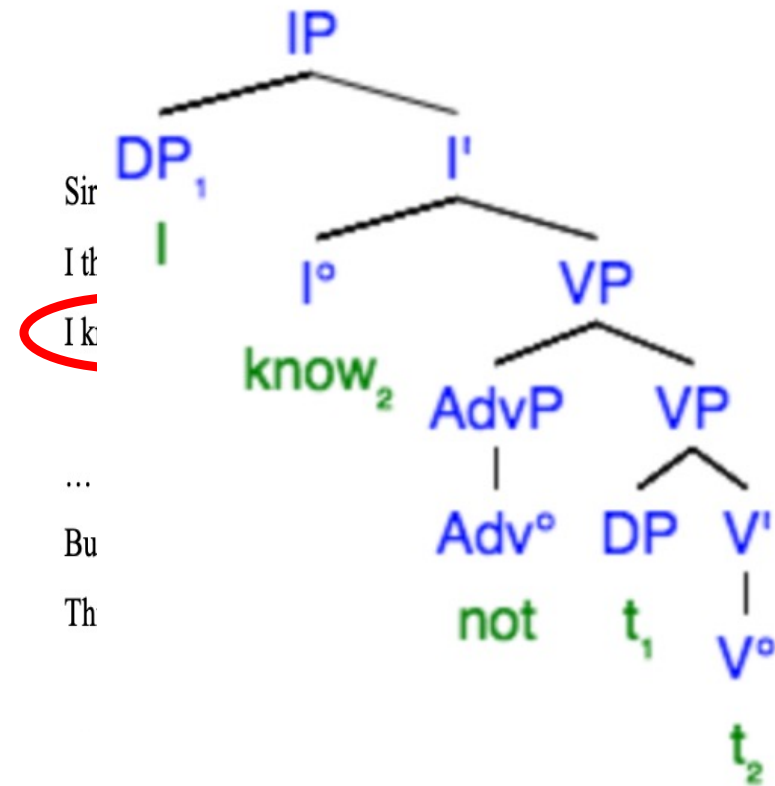
EMODE V-TO-I



occur:

(1602) 2019)

(1606) 2001)



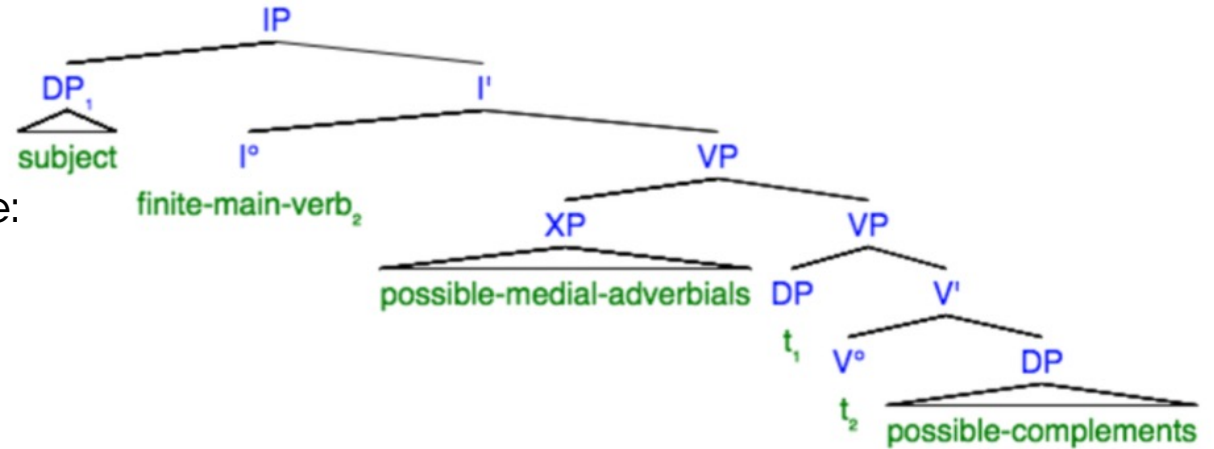
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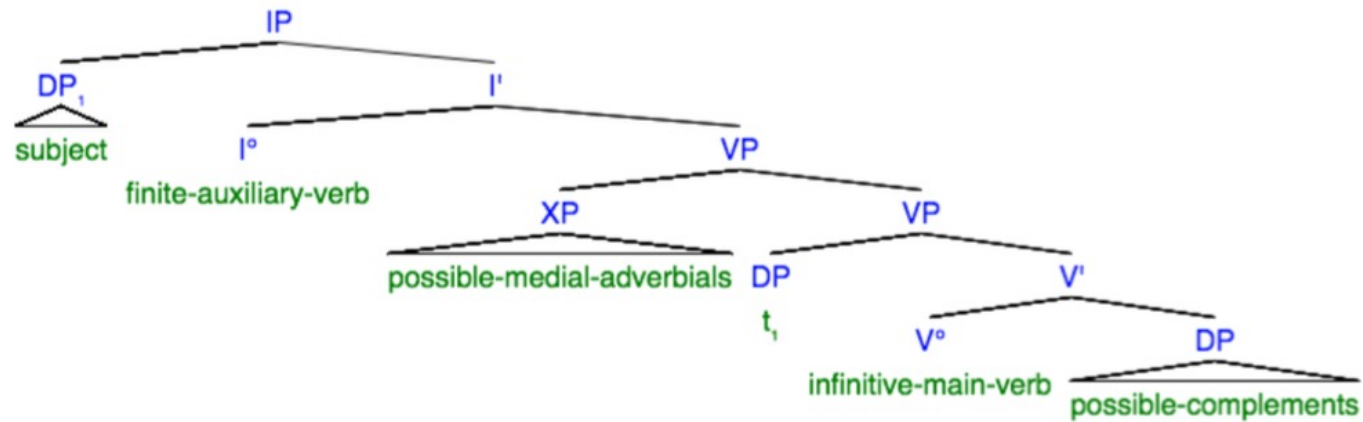
EMODE V-TO-I

Two types of verb-movement possible:

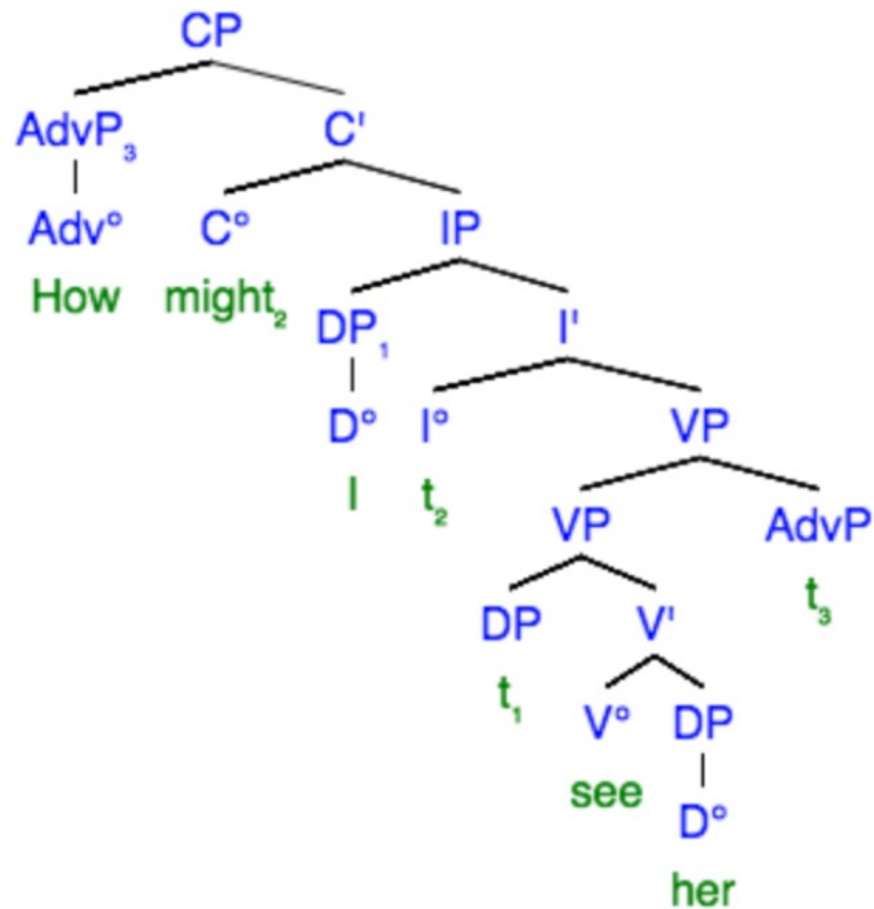
Without auxiliary:



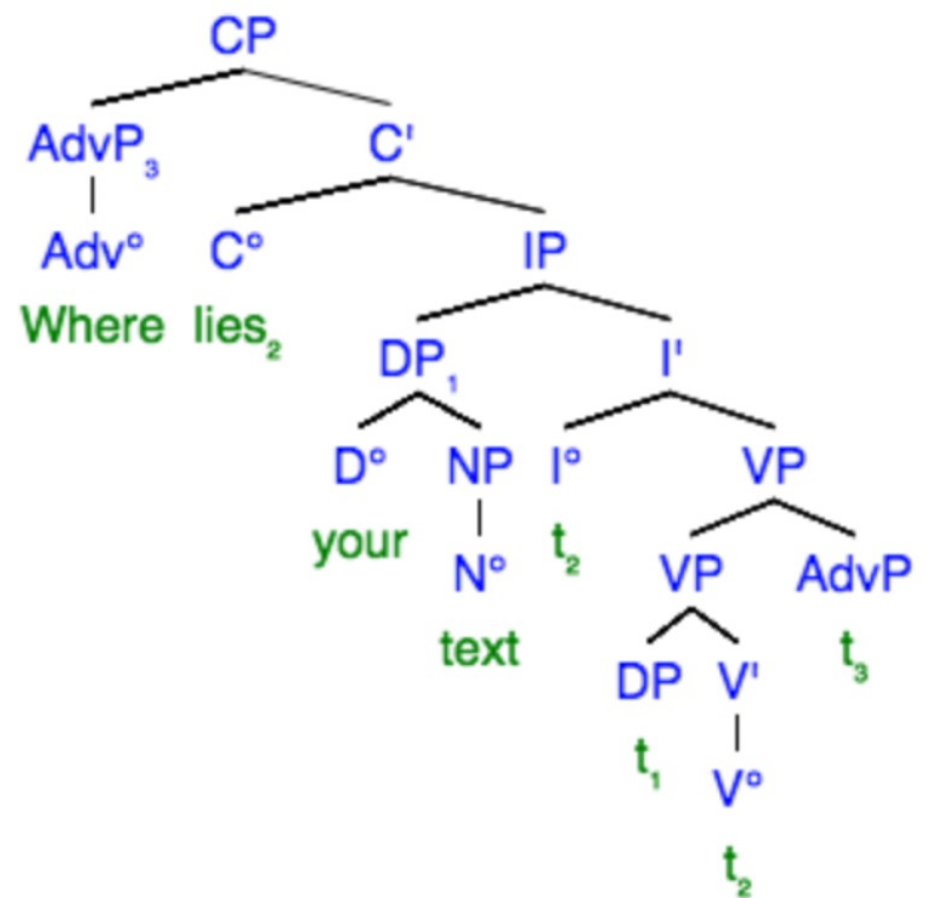
With auxiliary:



EMODE INTERROGATIVE MAIN CLAUSES



019)



BACK TO *HOW COME*

“Well, maybe *come* is still in V°. How do you know it has even moved?”

Cannot be tested with adverbials – everything is ungrammatical:

How come [I’m not like that]?

Why does he often talk to me?

*How come often [I’m not like that]?

*Why does often he talk to me?

*How often come [I’m not like that]?

*Why often does he talk to me?

*How come [I’m not like that] often?

= no explicit evidence for *come* in C°

However, since there is historical evidence that main verbs have had the ability to move out of V° into I° and further into C°, *come* being in C° is a likelier explanation than an interrogative main clause without V2 of which there is no found precedent.

Furthermore, the specific combination *how come* was used while main verbs could move (Merriam-Webster)

BACK TO *HOW COME*

”What if there are just erased elements, so the base structure of ‘how come [you were arrested]?’ is actually ‘how ~~did it come about~~ [that you were arrested]?’”

What.

This is just weird.

This ‘Reduction Theory’ is unprecedented and unsatisfactory. Radford (2018) agrees.

BACK TO *HOW COME*

“Okay, but couldn’t *how come* in its entirety be the *wh*-element, so it is only one constituent?”

English does have single constituents (and words) spelled with a space.

However,

how can be postmodified by an aggressive non-D-linker like *the hell*, while *the hell* cannot follow *how come*, indicating that *how come* is not a constituent (Radford 2018, 234-235)

Other *wh*-elements can remain at their base position to form echo questions. *How come* cannot.

CP-spec	C°	IP-spec	I°	AdvP	V°	PP
How come		I	am ₁	not	t ₁	like that
Why	am ₁	I	t ₁	not	t ₁	like that?
How	am ₁	I	t ₁	not	t ₁	like that?

BACK TO

"What if *come* is an explanation i

Come would then be in lin

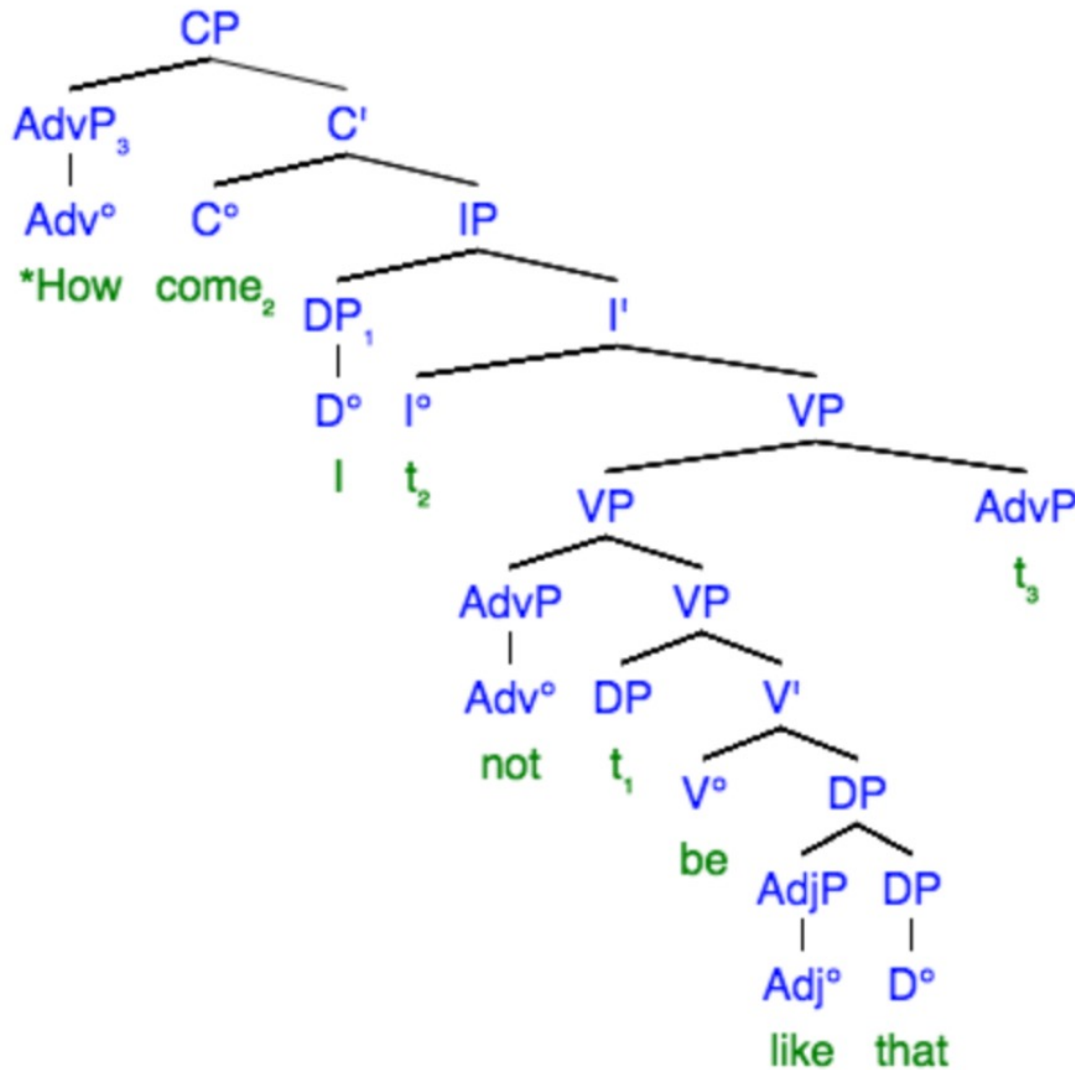
However, clc finite verb. *H*

How c

If *come* was

*How c

be is



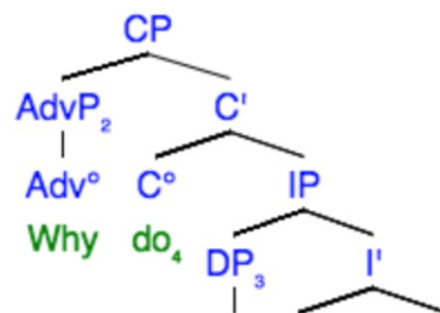
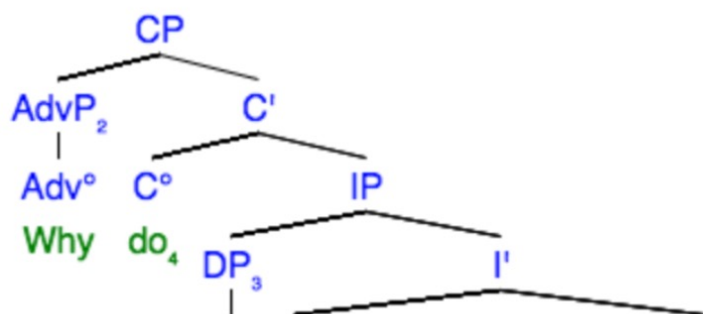
? Couldn't that be

moving to C° would

in I° or C° will be the

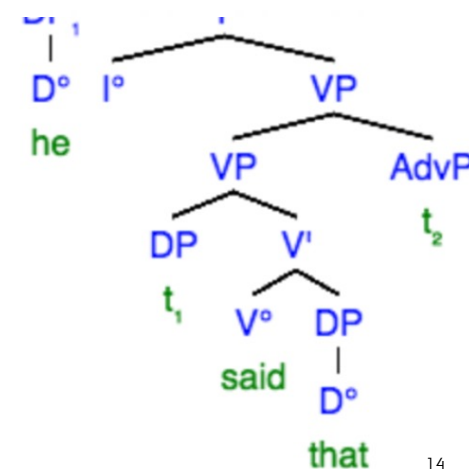
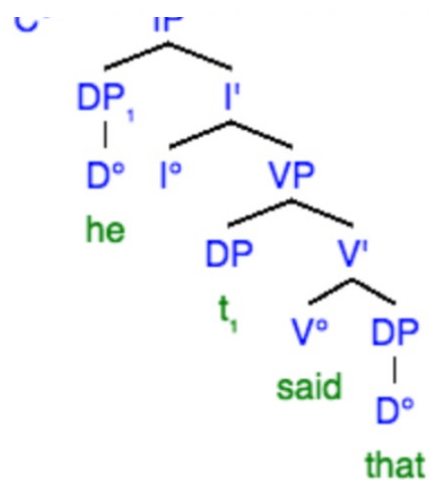
that

ce fills up I°.



[Why do you think [he said that?]]

[How come [you think [he said that?]]]



HOW COME AS AN IDIOMATIC EXPRESSION

How came [_{emb}] is not the past tense of *how come* [_{emb}].

Not used much (50 results in COCA, but present in e.g., still-read *Pride and Prejudice* (Austen (1813) 2007)

Semantic difference: *how came* = *how*

Difference in embedded clause:

How come has a finite embedded clause, a CP without a complementiser

How came has a non-finite embedded clause, an IP

How come you know?

*How come you to know?

How came you to know?

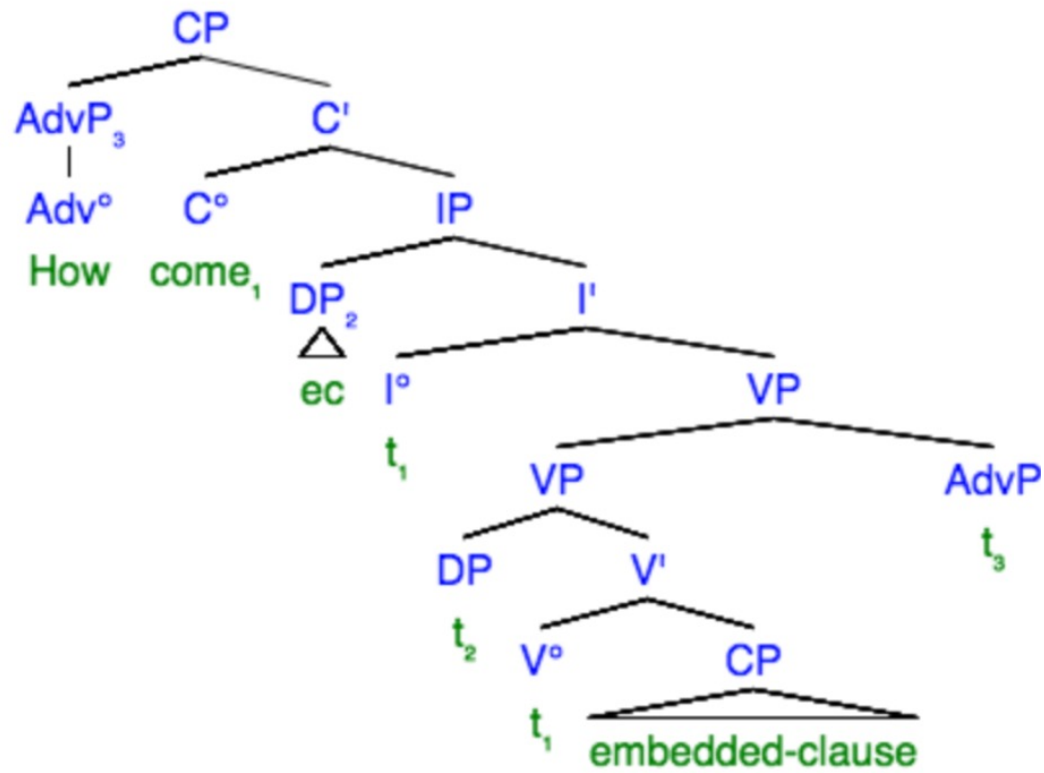
*How came you know?

Also: As mentioned earlier, *how comes* is also extremely rare

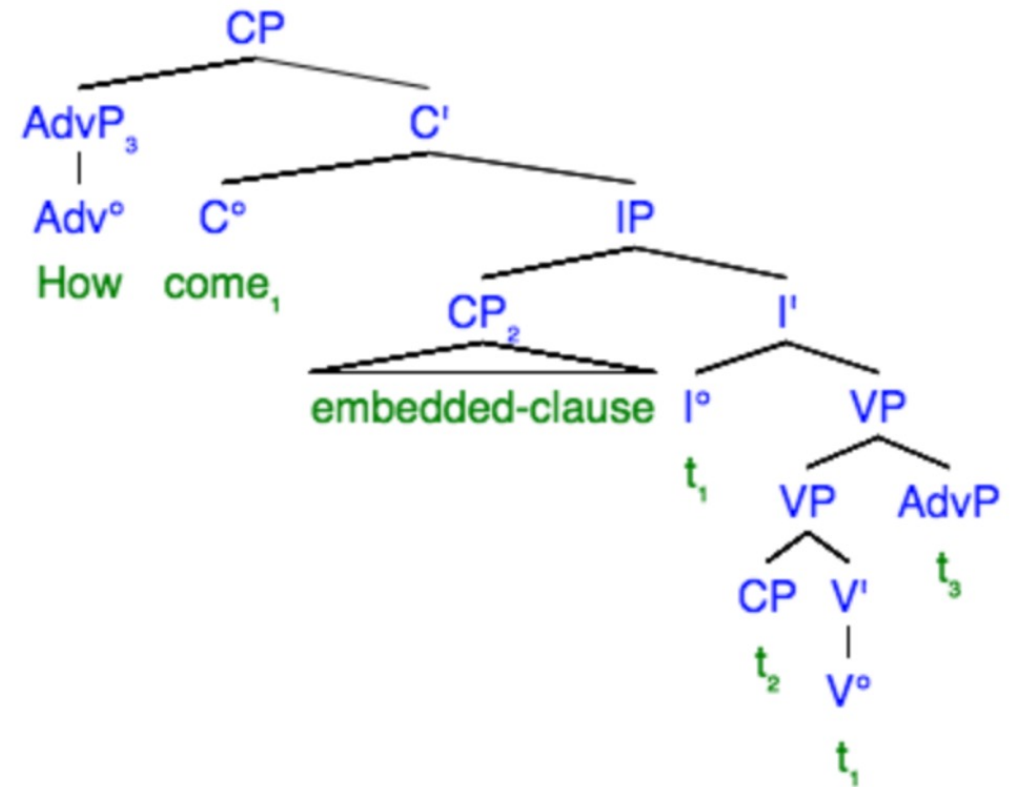
TO CONCLUDE:

- English interrogative clauses with an initial *wh*-element have V2.
- PDE main verbs cannot move out of V°. Only auxiliary verbs (and *be*) can exist in I° and C°.
- EModE main verbs and auxiliary verbs can both be found in I° and C°.
- *How come* [_{emb}] stands out from PDE clauses:
 - Lacks tense and inflection
 - The semantic and embedded clause type difference between it and *how came*
 - Contrasting ambiguity between it and *why*
 - Its archaic V2 main verb structure
- The conclusion: *How come* is not a productive PDE clause, but a syntactic relic from earlier stages of the English language with a set semantic use in which only the constituents within the embedded CP clause may be changed

$[emb]$ as complement:



$[emb]$ as subject:



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