Three consequences of the pronoun + ellipsis analysis of English tags

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1 Introduction

English tag questions like *No one left, did they?* have been persuasively argued to involve VP ellipsis and a referential pronoun in the tag (section 2). This note brings out three consequences with potential to contribute to current theoretical research:

Section 3: Tags allow otherwise unavailable transitive expletive constructions, suggesting that they involve an unexternalizable syntax 'saved by silence' through ellipsis.
Section 4: Tag pronouns can be anteceded by weak definites, supporting definite description approaches to pronouns for which weak definites have so far been a problem.
Section 5: Tag pronouns may be anteceded by certain idiomatic DPs that are otherwise not referential, also fitting definite description approaches, while weakening an important argument for the autonomy of syntax.

2 The pronominalization+ellipsis analysis of tags

Sailor (2009) reviews and extends evidence that the host-tag relationship in tag questions involves VP ellipsis and referential pronoun, rather than special rules like pronominal realization of a copy of the host's subject (Huddleston 1970, den Dikken 1995).

Tags have often been proposed to involve VP ellipsis (Emonds 1976: 2.3 (= 1970: 1.5), Le Sourd 1976: 514, Armagost 1978, den Besten 1983: 81, Napoli 1985: 308, Zagona 1986: 98-9, Culicover 1992: sec. 4, É. Kiss 2003: 42, Kay 2002: 464, Aelbrecht and Harwood 2012). The proposal has been given detailed support by Sailor (2009) through extensive parallels between the two phenomena, including strandable auxiliaries, auxiliary and modal mismatches, and reduced clefts. One of these parallels, built on in section 2, is illustrated in (1)-(2): both regular VP ellipsis and tags allow *there*-subjects to antecedents whose subject is not but could be a *there*-associate (Sailor 2003: 3.2).[1]

(1) a. **Nothing** was broken, was **there**/%??**it**. (cf. There was nothing broken.)

[1] For tags this has often been noted (Jespersen 1949: §3.1[4], Bruening 2010: 47n3, 48n6, 7, Postal 2003: 42) and raised as evidence against copy-identity of tag and host (Fillmore 1972: 17, Oehrle 1983, McCawley 1998: 506). There may be some variation, as in other cases of non-surface-identity (Grinder and Postal 1971, Kitagawa 1991). Sailor takes such *there* tags/ellipses to be problematic for a syntactic parallelism requirement on the antecedent-ellipsis relationship (Johnson 2001, Tanaka 2011a, Chung 2013, Merchant forthc). One could weaken the requirement or appeal to views of *there* and raised-subject constructions as syntactically identical (Bobaljik 2002). However, the issue might not exist if quantifiers on their weak readings reconstruct (Diesing 1992) and parallelism is stated over the result (as it is for QR, Fox 2000).

This was broken, wasn't **it**/***there**? (cf. *There was this broken.)

b. **Six**/***The books** are on the shelf, aren't **there**? (cf. There are six/*the…)
Six books fell off the shelf, didn't **they**/***there**? (cf. *There fell…)

(2) a. I'm sure **nothing** was broken, and Bill doesn't think **there**/***it** was, either.
b. Six books are on / fell off the shelf. - Really? **There** are / *fell?

It has likewise been widely observed that the tag's pronoun relates to the host's subject as a referential rather than bound or copy-induced pronoun should (Oehrle 1987: 244-5, McCawley 1998: 505-6, Reese 2007: 42, Sailor 2009: 3.1.2, Sag 2012: 150). One line of evidence comes from the phi-mismatches in (3): in (3)a 'epicene' *they* for *somebody*, in (3)b *you* to *somebody* because reference is to the addressee, in (3)c and (3)d *they* to singular antecedents because they introduce plural discourse referents, in (3)e *(s)he* to an inanimate standing for a human by deferred reference, and in (3)f nothing because *either you or I* does not denote a discourse referent. Referential pronouns outside tags show the same mismatches, as in *Yes, they are* to (3)a, (3)d or *#Yes, we must* to (3)f.

(3) a. Somebody's out there, isn't there / isn't he / aren't they? (Fillmore 1972: 17)
b. Somebody open the door, will you? (Quirk et al. 1985: 10.25n)
c. IBM doesn't make that model anymore, does it/do they? (McCawley 1998: 505)
d. John is drinking scotch and Mary is drinking vodka, aren't they? (McCawley 1998: 506, Sailor 2009: 3.1.2)
e. The ham sandwich in Booth 2 is attracting a lot of attention, isn't it/she/he? (Oehrle 1987 cited in Kay 2002: 468)
f. Either you or I must stay late, *__? (McCawley 1998: 506)

Another important line of evidence is tags to nonreferential subjects in (4). Here tag pronouns do not behave as if bound by or copies of quantificational host subjects, but like referential pronouns, as the second sentence of the examples shows (see esp. McCawley 1998: 505 and Sailor 2009: 3.1.1 as well as the literature cited above):

(4) a. Every woman we invited has come, haven't they/*hasn't she? They have/*she has.
b. No man will ever scale Everest, will *he/??they? Or will *he/??they?
c. No dogs are permitted here, are they? At least I don't think they are.
d. According to regulations, (only/fewer than/at most) six books can be assigned *(, can't they?) In fact I'm not sure that any/#they can.
e. Soldiers still remained (*, didn't they?) I know some/#they did.
f. Nothing was broken, was there/??it. Yes, there/*it was.

These patterns of coreference have various causes: for instance, an existential bare plural may or may not provide kind/generic or specific discourse referents, depending on context. What matters is the systematic parallelism between tag and referential pronouns,

provided other factors are controlled for, as here where tag pronouns are compared with referential pronouns in independent sentences with VP ellipsis.[2]

The proposal that tags involve referential pronoun and VP ellipsis is not a full theory of tag questions. Three other elements need addressing.

One is the syntax-meaning relationship in tag question. Tags seem to build on the combination of an assertion and a *yes-no* question, which like a tag may express a request for confirmation: *John left. Didn't he?* (Hudson 1975, den Besten 1983, Oehrle 1987). However, not just any affirmation + confirmation request gives a tag, and tags have rhetorical meanings not found in such combinations, some of which vary dialectally (Oehrle 1987, Culicover 1992, McCawley 1998: 501-2, Algeo 2006: chap. 16, Asher and Reese 2007). Essentially following Culicover (1992) for (i-iii) and partly Asher and Reese (2007) for (ii, iv), let us suppose that: (i) tags are the parataxis of an assertion and a special *yes-no* question; (ii) the special question has a left-periphery head Σ° responsible the question meaning; (iii) Σ° presupposes all but itself to be given; (iv) Σ° is restricted to the tag question context, perhaps semantically by taking propositional argument in (ii) and/or (iii), perhaps prosodically by needing a host with a certain prosody.

The second element is the obligatoriness of ellipsis in tags, since VP ellipsis is optional in similar non-tags: *Kate should leave – Or should she (leave)?*. There are other constructions with obligatory ellipsis and their analyses suggest options here. One is to require Σ° to bear the ellipsis-triggering feature [E] (Baltin 2012: 417 for British English *do*-ellipsis). Alternatively, ellipsis might be needed to externalize the tag (Culicover and Winkler 2004: 3.4 attribute obligatory ellipsis in comparative inversion to constraints on the focus-prosody mapping, and Merchant 2003 to an unexternalizable trace, for which see also Thoms 2011). Perhaps most satisfactorily, ellipsis might follow from the anaphoricity required by Σ° in (iii), as in Culicover (1992). Let us suppose that given information must be coded as anaphorically as possible (Sauerland 2004, Wagner 2006), and that ellipsis when available beats other VP anaphora. In general, the givenness of a VP must be inferred, leaving room for uncertainty and so for absence of ellipsis. In tags, however, the meaning of Σ° ensures that the VP is given, requiring ellipsis (cf. Den Dikken et al. 2000: 1.4 for obligatory ellipsis in pseudoclefts).[3]

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[2] Similar examples are often briefly mentioned ((4)b with *he* Sailor 2003: 3.1.2, similarly McCawley 1998: 505, (4)c Quirk et al 1985: 10.58, (4)e cf. É. Kiss 2003: 42, (4)f cf. McCawley 1998: 506). (4)f is problematic: in (i) *it* is acceptable to some speakers in tags but not cross-sententially (save through modal subordination, which would rule in unacceptable tag pronouns). Sailor (2003: 3.1.2) also contrasts (4)b and (ii-a), but cf. the "exceptional wide scope" in (ii-b), so that (ii-a) fits expectations ("referential" then may be a misnomer: what is relevant is that tag pronouns pattern with cross-sentential ones.)

(i) a Nothing came in the mail, did there/%it? - Yes there/*it did.
b No two people are alike, are *there/%they? *No, they aren't.
(ii) a ?[No girl]$_i$ hates her$_i$ own father, does she$_i$?
b No girl hates her own father: ?She fears the shadow of her future that she perceives in him.

[3] The grammatical rather than pragmatic coding of givenness by Σ° might also make tags less susceptible to accommodation of the antecedent than VP ellipsis is: while both allow split antecedence (3)d (q.v. Johnson 2001: 473, Merchant forthc), Sailor (2009: 3.2.3.1) shows that only in VP ellipsis can be it used to construct a collective reading not found in the antecedent.

Third, pronominalization is obligatory in tags, but so it is in similar nontags. Whereas repetition of *John* is awkward in *John left - Or did he/?John (in fact) leave?*, it is impossible with VP-ellipsis in *John left - Or did he/*John?* This too should fall out from principles of anaphoric coding (Ariel 1996, Gundel et al. 1993, Schlenker 2005).[4]

3 Transitive expletive constructions

In tags and other VP ellipsis, *there* can occur if the antecedent can be paraphrased by a *there* construction (section 2). Tags allow for an even more remarkable *there*: when the host is unergative or transitive, provided its subject is a weak quantifier. The result is a transitive expletive construction TEC in the tag, (5), with no overt counterpart, (6):

(5) a. Somebody tried to get in, didn't they/there? (Fillmore 1972: 17)
b. No one could solve this problem, could there? (von Fintel 1992, cit. B. Partee pc)
c. *Everyone could solve this problem, couldn't there? (ibid)
d. No one solved the problem, did there? (von Fintel 1992, cit. B. Santorini pc)
e. No one ever solves that problem, does there? (ibid)

(6) a. *There couldn't (any one) solve (any one) that problem (anyone).
b. *Did there no one/any one/someone {solve that problem, try to get in}?

The tags in (5) are TECs if tag ellipsis is governed by the usual syntactic and semantic parallelism to the antecedent (Johnson 2001, Tanaka 2011a, Chung 2013, Merchant forthc). I shall assume so and set out the consequences.[5]

TECs are not far from the parametric options of standard English, so to speak. Von Fintel (1992) discusses (5) in his study of TECs in Middle English, (7)a (also Jonas 1996, Ingham 2000, 2003, Tanaka 2000), and raises their existence in earlier modern English (also Jespersen 1949: 3.2-2) and current Appalachian English (also Zanuttini and Bernstein 2009). They have received a detailed study in Belfast English, (7)b (Henry and Cottell 2007). Even standard English has TECs in the progressive, (7)c.[6]

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[4] Pertinent is the variable availability of epithets in tags, %*John hasn't washed the dishes, has the son of a bitch?* (McCawley 1998 vs. Culicover 1992; cf. Schlenker 2005 on definites vs. epithets).

[5] Tags offer less to probe elided structure than other VP ellipsis, since any problem in the tag, such as an island violation, would also arise in the host. Yet evidence for parallelism within the tag itself is not wholly lacking. The host subject must be a possible *there*-associate (not a strong quantifier), and the meaning must be identical to the host modulo the assertion-question difference. A TEC in the tag (as antecedent of ellision or via LF copying or as a pro-VP) meets these desiderata, while other possibilities seem to get the wrong auxiliary, *No one solved the problem, *does there* ~~*exist someone who solved the problem*~~ and the wrong meaning for the right one, *No one solved the problem, did there* ~~*exist someone who solved the problem*~~.

[6] This is a TEC, not an EC *there was a soldier* with a reduced relative modifying *soldier* or a control complement or a control adjunct: (i-a) shows that *guarding every building* is transparent to extraction and inverse scope, while a reduced relative (i-b) or a control CP (i-c) is not (cf. Rezac 2006, Deal 2009).

(i) a (That's why) there was a soldier guarding every building t_i. ($\forall > \exists$)
b (That's why$_i$) you will meet t_i [a soldier guarding every building $*t_i$]. ($*\forall > \exists$)

(7) a. Ther shal no thyng hurt hym. (1461, Ingham 2000: 23)
b. There should (lots of students) have (lots of students) been (lots of students) taking the classes. (Belfast English, Henry and Cottell 2007: 280)
c. There was a soldier guarding every building.

The study of TECs in Germanic VO languages has led to the conclusion that they depend on the availability of middle-field positions to get the subject and/or object out of the vP (Bobaljik and Jonas 1996, Jonas 1996, Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou 2001, Chomsky 2001, Richards 2004, Henry and Cottell 2007, Engels 2010, with literature).[7] Henry and Cottell's (2007) investigation of TECs in Belfast English is particularly relevant, for the dialect shares with standard English the absence of middle-field object shift and V2. Its TECs have weak quantifier subjects in middle-field positions between the expletive and the main verb. The availability of these positions distinguishes it from standard English in other expletive constructions as well, *There might (several students*$_{BE/*sE}$*) have (several students*$_{BE/*sE}$*) been (several students*$_{BE/sE}$*) arrested*. Other English TECs also use middle field subject positions, though more restricted. Middle English TECs are limited to negative quantifier subjects like (7)a, leading Ingham (2000, 2003) to conclude that they rely on Spec,Neg. Standard English TECs (7)c arguably rely on Spec,Asp$_{prog}$ for the subject, (8)a, given their restriction to the progressive and the word order *be subject V-ing* if a structure like (8)b is assumed.

(8) a. [BE$_v$ [$_{AspP}$ Asp$_{prog}$ [$_{vP}$ EA Voice$_v$ […√…]]]] (Deal 2009: 301)
b. [BE [$_{AspP}$ [a soldier]$_{EA}$ √guard+v+ing [$_{vP}$ t_{EA} t_v [$_{VP}$ $t_{\sqrt{guard}}$ [every building]$_{DO}$]]]]

Standard English therefore, bars most TECs because it lacks middle-field subject (and object) positions. Tags, in turn, must differ from non-tag counterparts in one of three ways: (A) By providing middle-field subject positions, and not just for negative quantifiers as (5)a and (9) show. (B) By allowing middle-field object shift of the Icelandic type, which licenses TECs even with in-situ subjects, but which unlike tag TECs (9)b is limited to discourse-old objects. (C) By evading the constraint that requires either the subject or the object to raise to the middle-field in TECs in the first place.

(9)a. ?Lots of people have bought that book, haven't there?
b. ?Many people have lodged complaints about me, haven't there?

The property that distinguishes tags from their overt counterparts in the VP and middle field is ellipsis. Ellipsis is immune to certain constraints that bar parallel overt

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c A soldier tried to guard every building. (*∀>∃)

[7] There is another condition on TECs. In Belfast English, T or T-to-C trace must be occupied by an auxiliary, dummy *do*, or raised main verb *have*. The condition is also met in Middle English TECs. It is automatically met in tags. Henry and Cottell (2007) propose that the *there*-associate would intervene in T-V amalgamation, so that T must be lexicalized; see Engels (2010) for Faroese with a different analysis.

structures, such as failure to satisfy the EPP. Accordingly, recent work explores the hypothesis that these constraints arise in externalization (Merchant 2001, Lasnik and Park 2003, Boeckx 2008, Lasnik 2009, with literature). This suggests that TECs emerge in tags because ellipsis suspends externalization constraints barring them otherwise, whether by hindering the use of middle-field positions (A/B), or by forcing the subject/object to use them (C). If this is on the right track, then tag TECs have potential to shed light both on the nature of TEC constraints and on the interaction of externalization and silence. I shall sketch a couple of options to illustrate.

One possibility is that standard English does have middle field subject and/or object positions in syntax but cannot externalize them. Externalization has been proposed to restrict middle-field positions in Scandinavian object shift, by taking the shifted object to interfere in PF merger of finite/participial morphology with V in VP (Bobaljik 2002), or to violate the linearization order V<O established in the VP unless V moves as well (Fox and Pesetsky 2004). Tag TECs do not seem to rely on middle-field object shift of this type, since they are not subject to its interpretive restrictions. However, externalization might restrict middle-field subject positions in similar ways. For instance, the middle-field in standard as in Belfast English might provide positions for subject movement, but in the former they might interfere in the merger of verbal morphology, or the heads that project them might lack affixal vocabulary items to realize them. These problems would be obviated when the middle field is not be externalized in tag TECs. Variation of this sort between standard and Belfast English would have little repercussion elsewhere, matching Henry and Cottell's (2007) failure to find any correlated property that would differentiate standard and Belfast English or group the latter with Icelandic.

A different possibility, of much theoretical interest, is to attribute to externalization the very constraint that in TECs the subject or object leave the vP. Richards (2010: 2.1.5) derives instances of this constraint from the unlinearizability of multiple insufficiently distinct DPs in a phase, assuming that both subject and object are externalized with the v-phase. A linearization problem should disappear under ellipsis. Chomsky (2007: 23) relates the constraint to ambiguity in labeling base-generated [DP, [v VP]], where labels are relevant at the interfaces, not in syntax. If [DP, [v VP]] needs a label at PF, say for linearization, it should be rescued by ellipsis.[8] Chomsky (1995: 343-4) advances another externalization-based account, attributing the constraint to "surface" theme-rheme articulation, which in English requires the theme to appear "at a boundary" - in Spec,T or at the right periphery if PF-heavy (see (10)c below). Nonexternalization might render irrelevant the "surface" need or the relevance of prosodic weight.[9]

If tags avoid externalization constraints on TECs, tag TECs can in turn be used to investigate the nature of silence. Silence in ellipsis reflects the absence of externalization because it suspends externalization constraints. Less clear has been the nature of silent copies of movement. On the one hand, they have been employed to block *wanna* contraction, which belongs to PF (but see Sato 2012). On the other hand, there is

[8] The question is independent of whether [DP, [v VP]] needs a label at the CI interface. If so, it could get one by 'covert' movement of the DP, i.e. movement whose PF realization is of the foot rather than the head, so that at PF [DP, [v VP]] would thus still need a label.

[9] Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou's (2001, 2007) proposals also seem adaptable to amnesty by ellipsis.

evidence for their invisibility to other PF constraints and to linearization (Bošković and Nunes 2007), and for amnestying intervention effects created by overt copies (Bošković 2011). This suggests that that ellipsis and silent copies both reflect the absence of externalization (Chomsky 1995: 202-3), without requiring a full identification of the two phenomena (Johnson 2001). Chomsky (2001: 26-9) brings TECs to bear on this issue, by contrasting rightward shift of heavy subjects which can lead to good TECs, (10)c (also Kayne 1979: 715, Chomsky 1995: 343, 2001: 20, 29), with *wh*-movement of objects which is of no help, (10)a (cf. Chomsky 2001: 29), to which may be added the likewise basically ungrammatical *wh*-movement of subjects, (10)b:[10]

(10)a. *Who did there visit a group of people from India (last night)?
b. ?*How many people from India did there visit you (last night)?
c. There visited us last night a large group of people who traveled all the way from India.

Tag TECs indicate that silencing the vP + middle field obviates constraints on TECs, yet silence of the *wh*-moved subject or object in the same domain is of no help. Taking, for instance, the hypothesis that tag ellipsis obviates the need to linearize the transitive subject in this domain, one might expect a silent *wh*-copy to do so as well. Thus tag TECs prove an essential element in exploring the nature of TECs and of externalization.

To illustrate the potential with a concrete proposal, among many alternatives, let us suppose that the TEC **There has [$_{\alpha P}$ [$_{DP}$ a group of people] [$_{vP}$ visited us]]* cannot be externalized because of the indeterminacy of the label of [$_{\alpha P}$ DP, [v DP]]. Since tags obviate the problem by not externalizing αP, the label seems needed for externalization (contrast Chomsky 2013). The movements that help are all criterial within the same spell-out domain δ as the edge of the v-phase {DP, v}: EPP movement of DP to Spec,T, and criterial middle-field movements like object shift and rightward heavy shift, perhaps all targeting projections of v above the thematic layer αP for features like [Neg] (Chomsky 2008: 150; MacKenzie and van der Wurff 2012: 855ff. for middle-field negative shift). Movements that do not help have only successive-cyclic sites in δ. When a criterial movement to αP is triggered by v, v is the probe and thus arguably the label, labeling αP as v (Chomsky 2008: 145). When DP raises to Spec,T, a complete chain is formed in δ, arguably making the lower chain-link of DP in αP invisible for labeling, so that v alone is left as the label of αP (Chomsky 2013). Successive-cyclic movements, by contrast, do not form a complete chain in δ, may not be feature driven, and consequently may even be inserted by late Merge upon their criterial movement, so that they would not resolve the labeling problem of αP within δ (see Bošković 2007 with literature on these options).[11]

[10] Right-shift of the object does not help; there are ways to derive this such as relativized minimality, but it likely incurs a conflict between the need of an unshifted *there*-associate to be indefinite and hence novel, and the vP of rightward shifts in general to be informationally light, usually given (note 11).

[11] These possibilites interact with the details of spell-out and externalization (distinct as in Chomsky's 2013 *the man who said that Z was elected*, where *Z* is spelled out before *elected* is Merged but linearized to its left). Particularly pertinent seems the externalizability of base and criterial but not successive-cyclic occurrences, as in *Who did you say (*what) read what* (Bošković 2007: 634, Chomsky 2008: 155).

4 Weak definites

I turn now to a second phenomenon revealed in tags: referential pronouns to weak definites like *(go to) the hospital*, which have been thought to be empirically excluded yet are predicted by one important approach to pronouns: as definite descriptions.

Weak definites are *the*-DPs that do not behave like other *the*-DPs in uniqueness and familiarity in a situation (Schwarz 2012, Carlson et al. 2006). In (11), no antecedent for *the hospital* has been introduced, it allows a sloppy reading where Bill and John go to different hospitals, and it can covary under *every* whereby each victim goes to a different one and may go to several. None of this is available to ordinary definites like *the shelter*.

(11)a. Bill was taken to the hospital and John was too. (Schwarz 2012)
b. Every accident victim ended up in the hospital for weeks. In fact, most of them ended up having to be treated in several different hospitals. (Schwarz 2012)

The literature explores whether weak definites can be unified with other definites or are something else like incorporated NPs (op. cit.). One relevant consideration has been

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To advance, a better map of the empirical landscape is needed. First, not all ellipsis licenses TECs: pseudogapping doesn't, (i), some VP ellipsis doesn't like it, (ii), while other, tag-like ellipsis fares better, (iii). The difference might rest in the amount of structure affected: pseudogapping has been argued to target less than regular VP ellipsis (so Baltin 2003, 2012), (some) VP ellipsis might still not delete enough to fix a problem with the αP or middle field (Merchant 2013 where it targets the vP complement of Voice° to exclude voice mismatches, cf. Tanaka 2011b, Arregui et al. 2006), while tag ellipsis triggered by the special left-peripheral head Σ° deleting as much as possible would.

(i) No participants solved my problem, but some did/*there did yours.
(ii) Nothing ever solves this problem. – I know *it/??there doesn't.
(iii) a No one could solve that problem. ?Could there?
b Lots of people have read that book. - ?There have?

Second, neither right-shift nor tag TECs are available for any weak quantifier subject, (iv). Constraints on right-shift TECs are partly or wholly those on "outside verbal" expletive constructions (cf. Chomsky 1995: 343), such as informational lightness of the VP, approaches to which are reviewed in Deal (2009: sec. 8), Hartmann (2008: chap. 3), and do not yet all yield correlations like Kayne's (1975: 714-5) correspondence between outside verbal ECs and PP extraposition from subject (q.v. Kayne 2005, Baltin 2006, Göbbel 2007, Drummond 2009, Sheehan 2010). (Un)acceptable right-shift TECs in the literature (Kayne 1979: 715, Chomsky 1993: 343) might correspond to (un)acceptable tag TECs, (v), but tag TECs like (5) seem to resist even with heavy subjects, and the matter needs investigation for outside verbals generally, like those with definite subjects discussed in the literature, (vi).

(iv) a Moles ruined your garden, *did(n't) there?
b *There ruined my garden moles that must have gathered from all the corners of the world.
(v) a ?And at that point a group of six-eyed trolls {entered the room, visited you}, did(n't) there?
b *A new book by J. K. Smith has just overwhelmed your students, did/didn't there?
(vi) Suddenly there ran out of the woods the man we had seen at the picnick.

the apparent inaccessibility of weak definites to referential pronouns. A pronoun coreferential with a potential weak definite forces a unique reading (signalled by !):

(12)a. Every accident victim was taken to the hospital$_i$. !It$_i$ has a beautiful roof-top garden. (Schwarz 2012)
b. Bill is in the hospital$_i$, and John is too. !It$_i$ has an excellent heart-surgery department. (Schwarz 2012)
c. Bill is in the hospital$_i$ and John is in the hospital/!it$_i$ too. (Schwarz 2012)

Schwarz (2012) observes that this is a problem for Elbourne's (2005) theory of pronouns as definite DPs with NP ellipsis. Two components of Elbourne's proposal are relevant to this prediction, stated in (13) relative to English 3rd person pronoun:

(13)a. Syntax: pronouns are DPs whose D differs from *the* in requiring a silent NP, e.g. by ellipsis, and is realized as *he, she, it, they* according to its phi-features.
b. Interpretation: the D of pronouns has the same interpretation(s) as *the*.

Elbourne's proposal predicts that pronouns should be interpretable as weak definites if the *the* of weak definites has the same interpretation(s) as other uses of *the*. This prediction tends to characterize reductions of pronouns to definite descriptions generally, unlike approaches that interpret pronouns through accessible discourse referents (Büring 2011, with literature). Definite description approaches give pronouns the same meanings as definite descriptions, however these are interpreted, including when not obviously referential, as with paycheck and neontological uses (Elbourne 2005, e.g. 2.6.2). On analyses of weak definites like Schwarz's (2012), where weak definites do use the definite determiner *the* but in such a way as not to introduce a discourse referent, Elbourne's proposal still predict that pronouns should allow the weak definite reading, because they are realizations of the same *the*-DP as a full weak definite is.

To give this prediction its chances, we need to put a pronoun with a weak definite antecedent (easily licensing NP ellipsis/recovery) into a context where a weak definite could occur (unlike in most of (12)) and avoid interfering factors (like ambiguity). Tags to hosts with weak definites meet these requirements as best may be. Weak definites are highly collocationally restricted, but they do sometimes occur as subjects (Carlson et al. 2006, Aguilar-Guevara and Zwarts 2010). Then they can be tested with tag pronouns.

The following example indicates that when weak definites are picked up by tag pronouns, the nonunique reading is indeed retained, in contrast to other definites and to other pronouns (# marks out-of-the-blue oddity, ! marks the unique reading):[12]

[12] The literature cited takes weak definites to be good as subjects in generic contexts only. This does not appear to be so, as the examples show. Generic contexts raise a confound: they support the kind reading of singular definites, which like the weak definite reading does not require uniqueness of instances, but is restricted to specific kind-supporting contexts and remains available with a coreferential pronoun (*In the 80s, the car$_i$ took us everywhere; in the 90s environmental concerns started to limit its$_i$ use)*. Without prejudicing any eventual unification, at a first investigation kind and weak definite uses of singular definites must be distinguished. The examples below avoid generic and other kind supporting contexts,

(14)a. To go to Jesenik, **the train** first took each of you to Olomouc, didn't **it**? None of you remember what **!it** looked like, only that !**it** had no restaurant? (**#the car**)

b. For most ex-inmates interviewed, **the pen/slammer** didn't change anything, did **it**. !**Its** work insertion program(s) in particular was (were) a total failure. (#**the prison/#the courtroom**)

c. For most victims of the epidemic across the four states, **the hospital** was a waste of time, wasn't **it**? They didn't visit !**it** more than once. (**#the shelter**)

d. **The radio** let you know that bad weather was coming, didn't **it**? Yet each of you simply turned (!)**it** off and went to the mountains anyway. (**#the cell-phone**)

Bare singulars like *(go to) prison*, which have been related to weak definites and also resist pronominalization (Scholten and Aguilar-Guevara 2010), behave the same: *prison* for *the pen/slammer* in (12) has nonunique readings.

Referential pronouns to weak definites might not be restricted to tags. In the following example, the pronoun and the pronoun-like adjunct PRO seem to allow the nonunique reading in a pronoun + ellipsis structure similar to the context of tags.

(15) Some say that **the pen/hospital** helped them get their life back on track; for me **it** didn't, despite **PRO** being intended to do so. (**#the rehabilitation facility**)

Elbourne's elided definite description approach to pronouns predicts weak definite reading for pronouns if, and only if, weak definites are *the*-definites meeting (13)b. The availability of the reading supports the conjunction of these hypotheses, in contrast to alternatives, such as an analysis of weak definites that does not attribute them *the* save on the surface (Carlson et al. 2006, Schwarz 2012 review these), or approaches to referential pronouns that need accessible discourse referents (Büring 2011 reviews these).

This leaves it open why weak definite readings are difficult for pronouns even in positions where weak definites can occur, as in (12)c. One place to look is pragmatic factors that affect pronominalization like salience, ambiguity, parallelism, coherence, and choice of anaphor (Ariel 1996, Gundel et al. 1993, Joshi et al. 2005, Cornish 1999, Poesio et al. 2010, Schlenker 2005). These might lead to resolution to a unique referent even for pronouns that could reflect weak definites. In tags, the antecedent is unambiguous and obligatorily pronominalized, arguably by the meaning of the tag rather than pragmatics as discussed in section 2, suspending these factors.

5 Idiomatic DPs

Theories of pronouns also face the pronominalization of idiomatic DPs that seem neither referential nor definite, yet can antecede tag pronouns.

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contrasting weak definites with semantically similar singular definites and tag pronouns with other pronouns (they also have the semantic enrichment typical of weak definites, e.g. *being in the hospital*).

The nature of idiomatic DPs has been probed by a variety of diagnostics (Ross 1973, Chomsky 1986, Abney 1987). Some call for syntactic independence but no perhaps interpretive content, insofar as expletives participate in them, notably A-movement. Others need content: pronominalization, relativization, topicalization, *wh*-questioning, dislocation, sharing across coordination, and POSS-ing subject positions. Some idiomatic DPs resist all interpretive and syntactic independence, pronominalization among them: *Once you kick the bucket*$_i$*, you can't kick/do it*$_i$ *again* (no idiomatic reading). Others are permissive, *?That tack*$_i$*, it*$_i$ *shouldn't be taken on easy problems* (Ross 1973: 107; Ruwet 1991, Nunberg, Wasow and Sag 1994, Horn 2003). Both types allow straightforward analyses on both discourse-referent and definite-description approaches to pronouns: *the tack* has the regular *the* and an N meaning 'direction' with a restricted distribution, while *the bucket* has no compositional meaning for NP and *the* at all.[13]

There are however more difficult cases. Tag pronouns play an important role in examining them, because as discussed in section 4 they should be and are more available than other referential pronouns. Ross (1973) offers a detailed study of one grammar.[14] Some idiomatic DPs, like *(take) the tack*, behave almost like regular DPs. Others, *like pay ∅/little/no heed to* (16), can undergo A-movement but resist tests of independent interpretable content of the DP, including tag pronouns. Their existence is further evidence against the copy-realization analysis of tag pronouns.

(16) *pay heed to* (Ross 1973: passim)
a. *A-movement in passive*: Little/no/?*∅ heed as paid to the Chief's lamentations
b. *Tag+passive*: ?*Little heed was paid to her, was it?

In between are *make headway*, which passes some content tests, and *keep tabs on*, which does not. Both allow pronominalizations in tags and in tags alone:

(17) *make headway* (Ross 1973: passim)
a. *Tag+passive*: Some headway has been made, hasn't it.
b. *Pronoun/ellipsis*: If you want to make headway on this, you'd better make some/?*it on that too.
c. *Dislocation+pronoun/ellipsis* Appreciable headway, I doubt that you'll make *it/?any.

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[13] Even when idiomatic DPs participate in identity relations like pronominalization, *one*-replacement and NP ellipsis, this is often limited to occurrences the same idiom: *When **the bottom** fell out of the stock market, prices hit **the bottom/#it**. - That's where I drew **the line**, and I would not cross **it**. I decided I would not lay my life on **the line/*it** for this. I could read between **the lines/*them**. – She never broke **my heart**, so eat **your heart/*yours** out*. Arguably, this is because identity relations distinguish homonyms, as in *On the **banks** of the river, **banks/*some/*others/*they/*mightier ones** dwarved all other buildings*, though they can hold across polysemy like physical and content qualia in *The committee made sure **every book** weighed less than a kilogram before proposing **it/one** for the award* (cf. Chomsky 2000).

[14] The study of individual grammars is essential, for speakers vary: *Tabs were kept on Jane Fonda by the FBI *(, but they weren't kept on Vanessa Redgrave)* excludes pronominalization for Bresnan (1982: 502) but permits it for Nunberg et al. (1994: 502), while for Ross (1973: 125) even passivization requires modification of *tabs, Close/??∅tabs are being kept on Maximilian* (an effect studied by Ruwet 1991 under the hypothesis that A-movement requires referential independence, without addressing counterexamples).

d. *PRO*: ?*Before PRO being made on the corollaries, significant headway will have to be made on the main theorem.
e. *POSS-ing*: ?Significant headway's being made on others is wonderful news.
f. *Coordination*: Such significant headway has been made in the past, and will be made again before long.
g. *Relative*: The headway that you have made on Chapter 57 of your term paper is promising.

(18) *keep tabs on* (Ross 1973: passim)
a. *Tag+passive*: ?Pretty close tabs are being kept on Willy, aren't they?
b. *Pronoun*: *Close tabs are always kept on left-wingers, but they are never on moderates like H. L. Hunt.
c. *Dislocation+pronoun*: *Such annoyingly close tabs, I don't think you should keep them even on presidential candidates, Sir.
d. *PRO*: *PRO having been kept on Teddy, close tabs probably won't have to be kept on those other fascist peace-nicks.
e. *POSS-ing*: **Tabs's even being kept on Dick Gregory indicates that they're worried.
f. *Coordination*: *Close tabs were kept on me, and may later be kept on you.
g. *Relative:* ?*The tabs that we kept on the Shadow were not of any help to the NRLB.

If referential pronouns need discourse referents, *pretty close tabs* must introduce one, and something must be said about a discourse referent that can be picked up by a pronoun only in collocation with √*keep*. If referential pronouns are definite descriptions, the tag to *pretty close tabs* can reflect the_{they} *pretty close tabs*, and so no problems arise how the pronoun gets the idiomatic meaning of *tabs* in the context of √*keep* because it is a realization of *tabs*.[15] Elbourne's (2005) theory requires the tag for *the tabs* to have the syntax-semantic mapping analogous to *the surveillance*: the pronominal variant $the_{it/they}$ of the definite *the*, and an NP whose content supports the meaning of *the* such as existence and uniqueness presuppositions. At the same time, it does not require the content of the NP need not be rich enough to support the needs of pronominalization outside tags like salience (section 4), along say deixis and possession, **THOSE/*your close tabs were in fact kept on Jane*. The chief apparent obstacle for the theory is the inability of *tabs* (or *headway*) to co-occur with overt *the*, but this has a number of solutions. Perhaps most simply, to the very limited extent that the content of *tabs* supports an anaphoric use of *the tabs*, namely in tags, the pronoun *they* = the_{they} *tabs* with its NP ellipsis beats the overt definite description *the tabs* as choice of anaphoric strategy, as is the case in tags generally. *Headway*, being richer in content, allows *the* when modified by a relative which narrows down its denotation.

If idiomatic DPs can be picked up by referential pronouns thanks to their content, then there is a consequence for an important argument in generative grammar. The *tabs*

[15] Elbourne's theory does not require a pronoun to use the same NP as its linguistic antecedent, but in many contexts the pronoun must track both semantic and grammatical phi-features of the antecedent, suggesting that this requirement holds: *Dogs/scissors have been with us for a long time; I can't imagine society without them/*it* where *it = the species, the object* is unavailable (Cornish 1986, Pollard and Sag 1994).

class of idiomatic DPs has been used to support the autonomy of syntax, because they participate in A-movement while failing to participate in phenomena like *wh*-movement and pronominalization that rely on a DP's content. This has suggested that A-movement and the EPP position it targets are autonomous of interpretive motivations (the argument is reviewed, with full references, in Ruwet 1991). However, if tag pronouns are referential pronouns that need *the tabs* to have regular *the* + contentful NP interpretation, rather than the syntactic or realizational substitution of a pronoun for a potentially contentless *tabs*, then taggable idioms disappear from this argument (cf. Chomsky 1981: 327, 1986: 212n71 on the theta-role of idiomatic DPs, pronominalization, and Case Theory). It is not clear that any idioms remain to support it. This does not challenge the autonomy of syntax, but it does remove one of its pillars. Its other mainstay is the distribution of expletives like *there*, which is strongest showing that the EPP position where they occur does not need interpretable content, less so for A-movement since it remains debated whether expletives do move. Indeed, the *tabs* class of idioms has been used to argue that A-movement is sensitive to interpretation, insofar as speakers like Ross need modify *tabs* to permit A-movement, perhaps to bolster its content (cf. Ruwet 1991).

6 Conclusion

This note has raised three consequence of the ellipsis + referential pronoun analysis of English tags that bear on issues of current theoretical importance. The potential of tags derives from the grammatical coding of anaphoricity to the host of their elided structure and pronominal subject, which allows the examination of otherwise inaccessible structures and interpretations.

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