Generative AI and Language Understanding: Part 8

Sandiway Fong

University of Arizona

Free version: 3.5
I'm told 4.0
doesn't do this ...

Simple PP attachment

You

a boy saw the man with a telescope. Is this sentence ambiguous?

ChatGPT

Yes, the sentence "A boy saw the man with a telescope" is ambiguous because it could be interpreted in two different ways:

1. The boy saw a man who had a telescope.
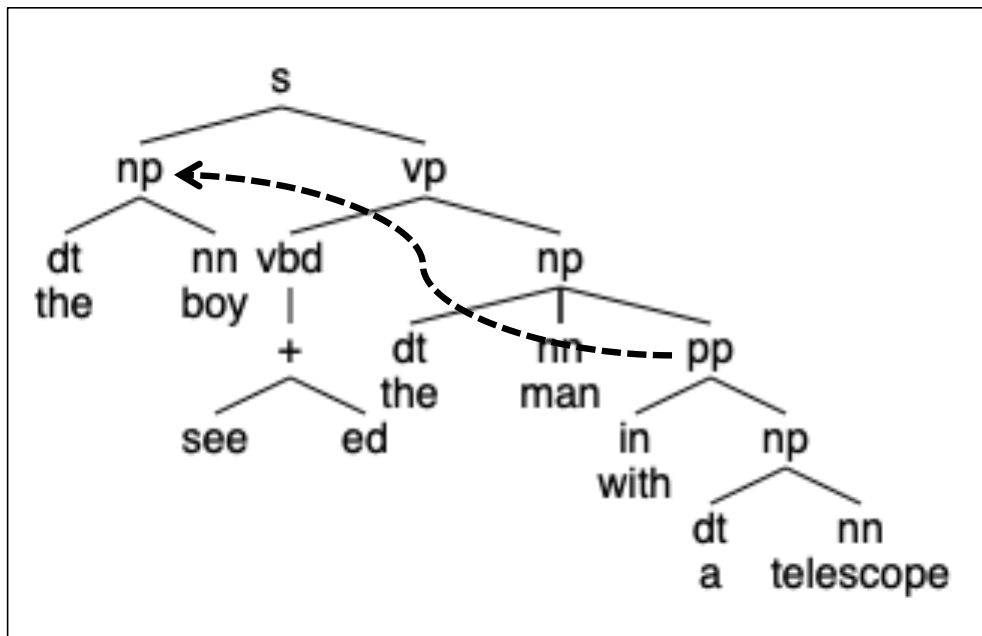2. The boy, who had a telescope, saw a man.

In the first interpretation, the man is the one with the telescope, and in the second interpretation, the boy is the one with the telescope. The placement of the prepositional phrase "with a telescope" creates this ambiguity.

Missing instrument *with*

Simple PP attachment

- Possessional *with* modification *not* possible with subject.

Not possible!
Phrase structure would have crossing
CHATGPT doesn't know this

ChatGPT 4

You
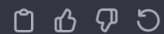a boy saw the man with a telescope. Is this sentence ambiguous?

ChatGPT
Yes, the sentence "A boy saw the man with a telescope" is ambiguous because it can be interpreted in two different ways due to its syntactic structure. These interpretations are:

1. **The boy used a telescope to see the man:** In this interpretation, the phrase "with a telescope" describes how the boy saw the man. The telescope is an instrument used by the boy.
2. **The man had a telescope:** Here, "with a telescope" is understood as describing the man. It suggests that the man was holding or possessing a telescope when the boy saw him.

The ambiguity arises from the lack of clear indication as to which noun ("boy" or "man") the phrase "with a telescope" is modifying. This is a common example used in discussions of syntactic ambiguity in language.

A better answer than the free ChatGPT 3.5!