A Generative Analysis of "Yes, indeed"

Or, not seeing the wood for the trees

The Problem

- ***Yes, indeed*** is a legitimate English utterance, so must be analysable.
- The semantics of the utterance indicate that ***yes*** is a sentence substitute, and dictionaries describe it so (e.g. *Collin's English Dictionary, Complete & Unabridged 2012 Digital Edition*).
- ***Yes, indeed*** must therefore be analysable generatively as a sentence.

An Interpretation

- ***Yes indeed*** could be seen as a form of generative sluicing, where a short noun phrase acts as an elided version of an implied verb phrase or clause. ***Yes, indeed*** does imply an elided version of a clause; but sluicing is seen as applying to questions, not answers, and ***yes, indeed*** is not a noun phrase.
- What ***Yes, indeed*** implies is agreement, it establishes consensus.
- The agreement must be between parties, so the first and second persons (speaker and listener) are also implied.
- The agreement must be about something, so a third person topic is implied.
- ***Indeed*** acts as an emphatic intensifier, so all the other semiotic components must be within the word ***yes***. (Although ***indeed*** can be offered as a single word marker of agreement, which may mean that even the ***yes*** can be implied rather than stated.)
- ***Indeed*** creates the context of ***yes***, excluding other contextual meanings (*I will do it, I can do it, I allow you to do it, let it be so*, etc.).

Into the Trees

This gives us the following generative tree structure:

<table>
<tr><td>Yes</td><td>Indeed</td><td colspan="6">Yes</td></tr>
<tr><td>1st Person</td><td>Intensifier</td><td colspan="2">Consensus</td><td colspan="2">Topic</td><td colspan="2">2nd Person</td></tr>
<tr><td>[I]</td><td>[emphatically]</td><td>[establish]</td><td>[consensus]</td><td>[about]</td><td>[X]</td><td>[with]</td><td>[you]</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="8">S</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="5">NP</td><td colspan="7">VP</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">Int</td><td colspan="6">VP</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">V</td><td colspan="5">NP</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">N</td><td colspan="2">PP</td><td colspan="2">PP</td></tr>
<tr><td>P</td><td>NP</td><td>P</td><td>NP</td></tr>
<tr><td>[t]</td><td>indeed</td><td>[t]</td><td>[t]</td><td>[t]</td><td>[t]</td><td>[t]</td><td>[t]</td></tr>
</table>

Which leaves us with a few problems:

- Where did all those trace elements come from?
- Are they really there?
- Is ***Yes*** simultaneously a Noun Phrase and a Verb Phrase, and what does that tell us about tree structure syntactic rules?
- If the utterance had been just ***Yes***, which of the traces is the sound-syntax correspondence, or is there no correspondence between sound and structure?