Start low, end high: The life of pre-elements

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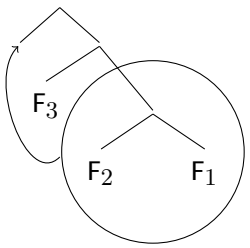
This paper examines the distinction between 'pre-' and 'post-' elements in morphosyntax from the point of view of verbalizers in Dutch. There are six types of verbalizers: three pre-elements (the prefixes *be-/ver-/ont-*, inseparable particles, and separable particles) and three post-elements (the suffixes *-el/-er*, *-eer*, and *-ig*) (Haas and Trommelen 1993). They differ in two systematic ways:

1. the pre-elements are transparent for past tense morphology, whereas the post-elements are not: a verb with a strong past tense like *duiken* ('to dive', past tense: *dook*, not regular **duik-te*) remains strong when combined with a pre-element (e.g. *in-duiken* 'to dive into', past tense: *in-dook*, not regular *in-duik-te*), but becomes weak when combined with a post-element, e.g. *duik-el-en* ('to tumble', past tense: *duik-el-de*, not **dook-el*).
2. the pre-elements can be combined with a form containing a post-element, but not the other way around:

(1) [be + [hand + el]] *[[be + hand] + el]
prf + hand + suff prf + hand + suff
'to treat'

We analyse this two-way distinction within the framework of Nanosyntax (Starke 2009, Baunaz et al. 2018), by proposing that pre-elements always originate as the very foot of the verbal fseq (Starke 2018:244–245, and see also Pretorius 2017 on verbal particles in Afrikaans). Post-elements on the other hand spell out one or more heads of the fseq, but not including the foot. In the schematic derivation in (2), the pre-element first grows to its maximal size after which it undergoes spell-out driven evacuation movement to allow for the spell-out of the lexical root it combines with (here represented as F_3). Unlike in the prefix-as-specifier-approach (Vanden Wyngaerd et al. 2022, Caha and Ziková 2022), the pre-element in its post-movement position does not label the structure and as a result is free to move even higher, thus allowing for T and V to be spelled out as a single constituent, and hence allowing for strong past tense.

(2)



Post-elements on the other hand are analyzed as is customary in Nanosyntax: they spell out part of the fseq after movement of the lexical root around them. As a result, V and T never form a constituent to the exclusion of the suffix, and strong past tense is disallowed. Moreover, given that pre-elements

start lower than post-elements and the latter always need a movement-containing foot, pre-elements always end up higher in the structure than post-elements.

In the talk we explore the consequences of this proposal, including the corollary that (at least some) lexical roots may have a unary foot.

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