Dutch modal complement ellipsis: deletion in narrow syntax

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OUTLINE OF THE TALK

1   Dutch modal complement ellipsis: deletion or proform?
2   Analysis: narrow syntax deletion
3   Dutch modal complement ellipsis compared to English VPE
4   Other elliptical constructions and further research
5   Conclusions

Main claims: ❶ Ellipsis of modal complements in Dutch involves deletion of a fully-fledged VoiceP.
❷ Deletion takes place in narrow syntax, by checking of an uninterpretable ellipsis feature [uE] on the licensing head.
❸ Ellipsis licensing is subject to syntactic locality, not to adjacency.
❹ The projections inbetween the elided constituent and the licensing head play a crucial role in determining the extraction possibilities out of the ellipsis site.

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1   DUTCH MODAL COMPLEMENT ELLIPSIS: DELETION OR PROFORM?

Dutch allows the infinitival complement of deontic modals to be deleted:

(1) Ik wil   je   wel helpen, maar ik kan niet.
     I   want you PRT help   but   I   can   not
     'I want to help you, but I can't.'

➔ Two possible analyses:

① The modal selects a null proform (e.g. Lobeck 1995, Depiante 2000).
② Deletion of a fully specified syntactic structure (parallel to English VP ellipsis, e.g. Merchant 2001, Johnson 1996, 2001)

Argument for deciding between the analyses = (im)possibility of extraction:

extraction out of the ellipsis site is illicit   ➔ proform, no structure to host a trace
    ⇕
extraction out of the ellipsis site is allowed ➔ deletion of syntactic structure

A paradox: Dutch modal complement ellipsis (MCE)
   objects cannot extract out of the ellipsis site
   ⇕
   subjects can extract out of the ellipsis site

1.1   Objects cannot extract out of the ellipsis site

• Dutch MCE does not allow wh-extraction of an object out of the ellipsis site:

(2)   A: Wat   gaat   Katrien Bert geven?
          what goes Katrien Bert give
          'What is Katrien going to give Bert?'
      B: Dat   weet ik niet. **Wat** moet   ze   *(Bert geven)?
          that   know I not   what should she   Bert give
          INTENDED READING: 'I don't know. What should she give Bert?'

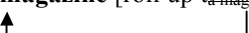• Dutch MCE disallows object scrambling out of the ellipsis site:

    (3)   Ik   wil   je   helpen, maar ik kan (* **je**)   niet.
             I   want   you help   but   I   can   you not
             'I want to help you, but I can't.'

This contrasts with the non-elliptical variant, where the definite object scrambles obligatorily:

    (4)   Ik   wil   je   helpen, maar ik kan (**je**)   niet (*****je**) helpen.
             I   want   you help   but   I   can you not   you help
             'I want to help you, but I can't help you.'

• Pseudogapping is not allowed in Dutch MCE.

Pseudogapping = movement of the remnant out of the ellipsis site prior to ellipsis (see Jayaseelan 1990; Johnson 1996; Lasnik 1999a, 1999b, 2001)

    (5)   Mina can roll up a newspaper and Tom can **a magazine** [~~roll up t~~_{a magazine}].

No pseudogapping in Dutch MCE:

    (6)   Katrien   kan brood   kopen   en   Bert kan **melk** *(kopen).
             Katrien   can bread   buy   and Bert can milk   buy
             INTENDED READING: '…and Bert can buy milk.'

1.2   *Subjects can extract out of the ellipsis site*

• The subject can survive the ellipsis, whether the embedded verb is transitive, unergative, unaccusative or passive:

    (7)   a. Ik   wil   je   wel helpen, maar **ik** kan niet.   **[transitive]**
                I   want   you PRT help   but   I   can not
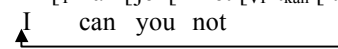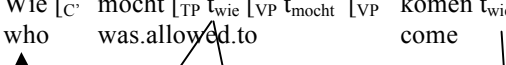   'I do want to help you, but I can't.'

           b. Tom wou   niet   werken, maar **hij** moest.   **[unergative]**
                Tom wanted not   work   but   he   must.PAST
                'Tom didn't want to work, but he had to.'
           c. Mina kan komen, maar **Peter** kan niet.   **[unaccusative]**
                Mina can come   but   Peter can not
                'Mina can come, but Peter can't.'
           d. Die broek moet niet gewassen worden, maar **die   rok** moet wel.
                that pants must not washed   become but   that   skirt must PRT
                'Those pants don't need to be washed, but that skirt does.' **[passive]**

• Subject wh-extraction is allowed:

    (8)   a. Niet iedereen moet   een gedicht voordragen. – Oh, **wie** moet
                not everyone must a   poem   recite   oh   who   must
                er   dan niet?
                there then not
                'Not everyone has to recite a poem.' – 'Oh, who doesn't have to?'
           b. Ik weet dat er   iemand niet mocht   komen, maar **wie**
                I   know that there someone not may.PAST come   but   who
                mocht   er   ook   weer   niet?
                may.PAST there also   again   not
                'I know that someone wasn't allowed to come, but who wasn't again?'

Note: The examples in (7) and (8) indeed involve extraction out of the ellipsis site: deontic modals are raising verbs, not control verbs (Wurmbrand 2003, Barbiers 1995).

→ The subject A-moves from a position below the modal to the surface subject position (in (9)a) and can A'-move to [Spec,CP] from there (cf. (9)b).

    (9) a.…[_{TP} Ik [_{T'} kan [je [niet [_{VP} t_{kan} [t_{ik} [_{VP} t_{je} helpen]]]]]]]
            I   can you not   help

        b. [_{CP} Wie [_{C'} mocht [_{TP} t_{wie} [_{VP} t_{mocht} [_{VP} komen t_{wie}]]]]]
            who   was.allowed.to   come

Arguments:

① Deontic modals can have inanimate subjects when their complement is passive, just like raising verbs and unlike control verbs:

(10) a. De   auto **moet**   gewassen worden.   **[deontic modal]**
        the   car has.to   washed   become
        'The car must be washed.'
     b. De   auto **lijkt**   gewassen te worden.   **[raising]**
        the   car seems   washed   to become
        'The car seems to be being washed.'
     c.* De   auto **probeert** gewassen   te worden.   **[control]**
        the   car tries   washed   to become

② Deontic modals, like raising verbs and unlike control verbs, allow impersonal passives:

(11) a. Er   moet   gedanst worden.   **[deontic modal]**
        there has.to   danced become
        'Someone has to dance.'
     b. Er   lijkt   gedanst te worden.   **[raising]**
        there seems   danced to become
        'There seems to be dancing going on.'
     c.* Er   probeert gedanst te worden.   **[control]**
        there tries   danced to become

Analysis: Modals are raising verbs that select a non-finite TP complement.

(12) Peter moet   werken.
     Peter has.to   work

(13) [CP [TP Peter [VP moet [TP tPeter [VoiceP [vP tPeter [VP werken]]]]]]].

Dutch MCE: paradox

   objects cannot be extracted out of the ellipsis site → **proform** analysis
   ⇕
   subjects can be extracted out of the ellipsis site → **deletion** account

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→ **Claim: Dutch MCE = deletion of a fully-fledged syntactic structure.**
   Consequence: The restriction on object extraction must be due to something else.

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2   ANALYSIS: NARROW SYNTAX DELETION

Overview:
2.1   Narrow syntax deletion
2.2   Subject extraction = allowed
2.3   Wh-object extraction = ungrammatical
2.4   Object scrambling = ungrammatical

2.1   Narrow syntax deletion

• Core ingredients of the analysis:

① The head H of the constituent that will be elided bears an interpretable ellipsis feature [*i*E] (comparable to Merchant's 2001, 2004 [E]-feature).
② The ellipsis-licensing head L bears a matching uninterpretable ellipsis feature [*u*E].
③ When L is merged, the ellipsis features are checked via an Agree relation and HP is elided. Deletion occurs in narrow syntax (see also Baltin 2007).
④ As a result, the ellipsis site is no longer accessible for any syntactic operations**.**

(14)
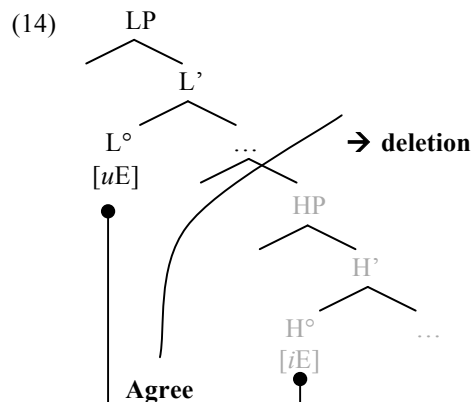
• **Consequence**: The licensing head and the ellipsis site do not have to be in a head-complement relation (contra Merchant 2001, 2004).

Importance to (English) VPE:

The licensing head of VPE has to bear prosodic stress and can therefore not be contracted:

(15) Mina is not coming, but Tom {**is**/* **'s**}.

However: The element bearing stress is not always adjacent to the ellipsis site:

(16) I wasn't thinking about that. - Well, you SHOULD have been [~~thinking about that~~].

→ This is explained if deletion occurs via Agree rather than via a head-complement relation between the licensing head and the ellipsis site.

• Narrow syntax deletion applied to Dutch MCE:
   a. The modal V°-head is the licensing head bearing [*u*E].
   b. The phase head Voice° can bear an interpretable ellipsis-feature.

(17)
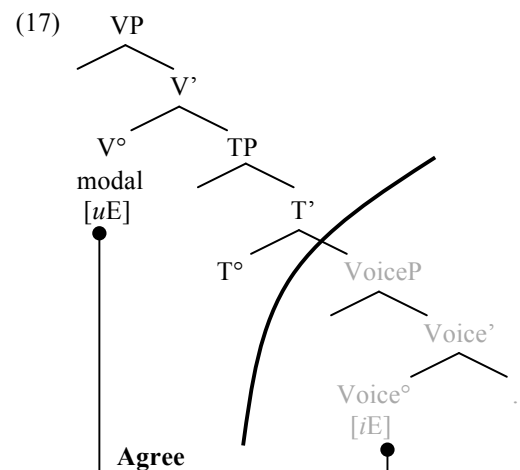
Note: Voice° is distinguished from v° here (see Merchant 2007, to appear a; Baltin 2007).

Voice° is the clause-internal phase head rather than v° (see Baltin 2007).
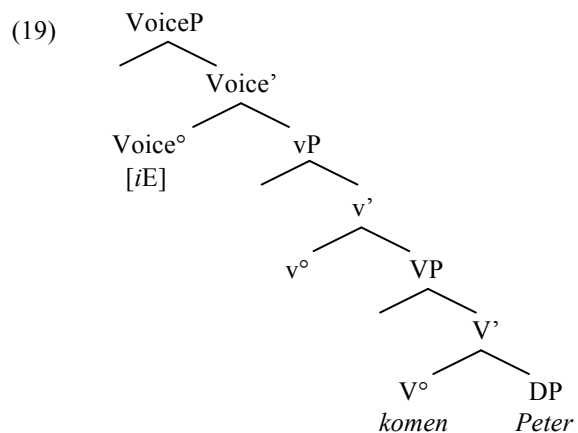
2.2   Subject extraction = allowed

• Subject raising

(18) Mina kan komen, maar **Peter** kan niet.   **[unaccusative]**
    Mina can come   but   Peter can not
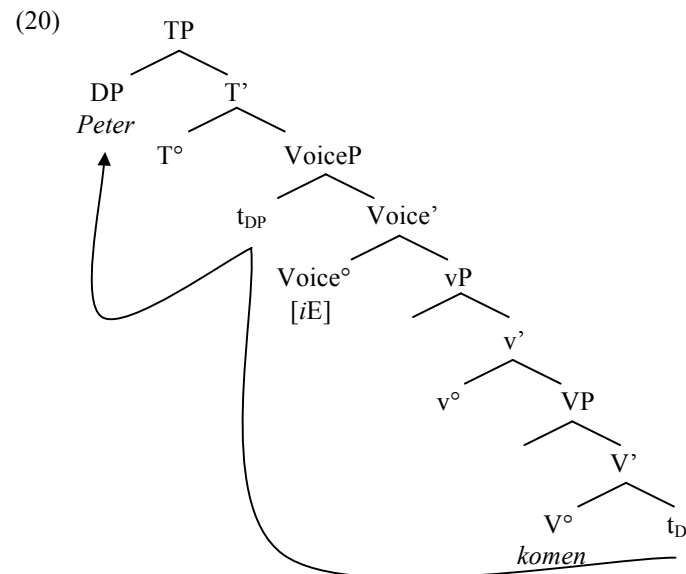   'Mina can come, but Peter can't.'

Step 1: VoiceP

→ The derived subject is base-generated in the complement position of main verb *komen* 'come'.
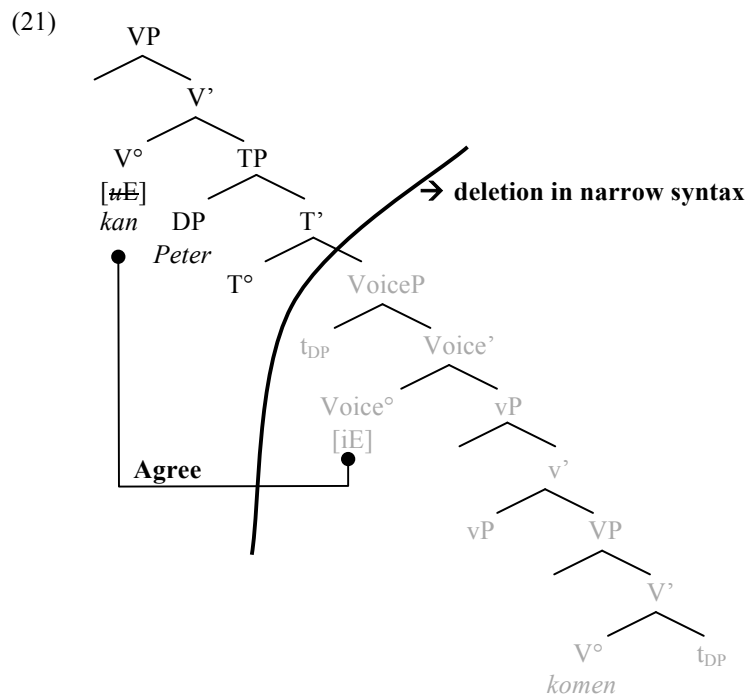Voice° bears a [iE]-feature.

(19) VoiceP

Step 2: merger of T° and projection of TP

→ The subject moves to [Spec,TP] because of an [EPP] feature on T° (via [Spec,VoiceP])

(20) TP

Step 3: merger of the licensing head V°

→ The uninterpretable ellipsis feature on the modal is checked against that of Voice° via Agree, and VoiceP is elided in narrow syntax.
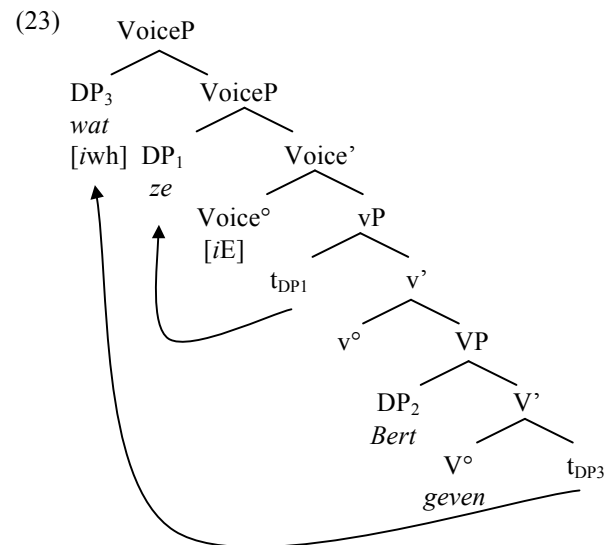
(21)

VP
V'
V° [~~uE~~] *kan*
TP
DP *Peter*
T'
T°
VoiceP
t_DP
Voice'
Voice° [iE]
vP
v'
vP
VP
V'
V° *komen*
t_DP

→ **deletion in narrow syntax**

Agree

- **Note**: From this position in [Spec,TP] the subject is free to undergo further operations → A'-extraction of the subject = allowed.

2.3   Wh-object extraction = ungrammatical

(22) A: Wat   gaat   Katrien Bert   geven?
       what goes   Katrien Bert   give
     B: Dat   weet ik niet. **Wat** moet   ze *(Bert geven)?
       that   know I   not   what should she   Bert give
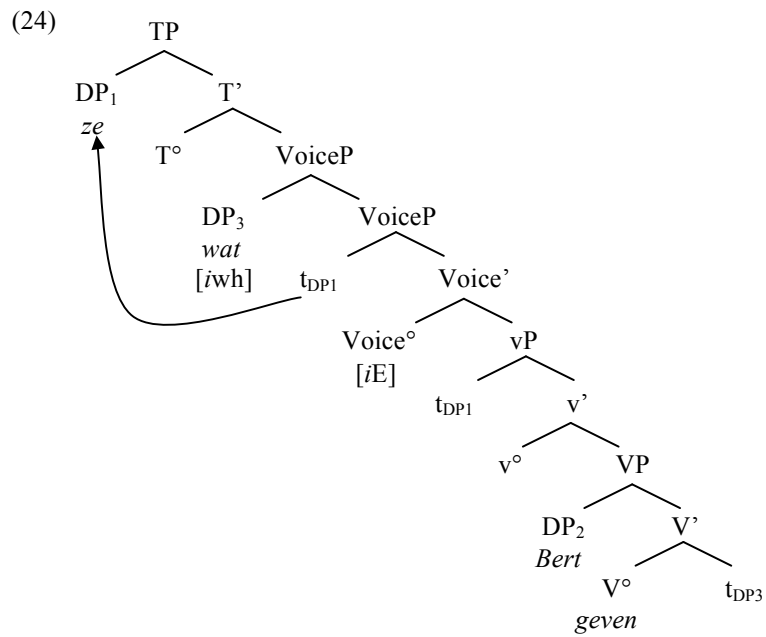   INTENDED READING: 'What should she give Bert?'

Step 1: VoiceP

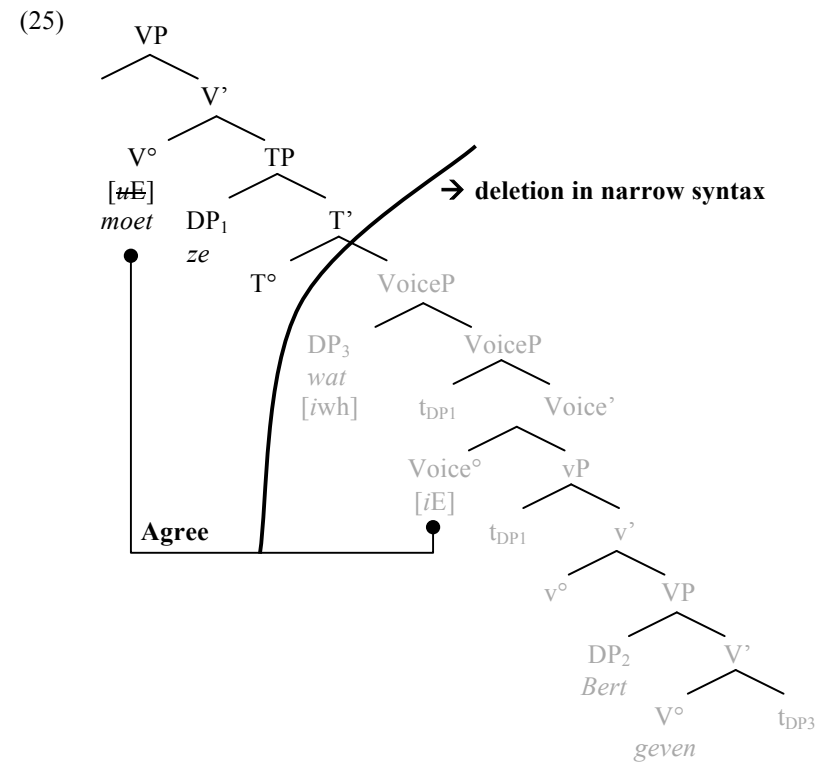→ The subject and the wh-object move to the phase edge [Spec,VoiceP]. Voice° bears a [iE]-feature.

(23)

VoiceP
DP₃ *wat* [iwh]
VoiceP
DP₁ *ze*
Voice'
Voice° [iE]
vP
t_DP1
v'
v°
VP
DP₂ *Bert*
V'
V° *geven*
t_DP3

Step 2: merger of T° and projection of TP

→ The subject moves to [Spec,TP].

(24)

(25)

→ **deletion in narrow syntax**

Step 3: merger of the licensing head V°

→ The uninterpretable ellipsis feature on the modal is checked against that of Voice°
   via Agree, and VoiceP is elided in narrow syntax.
→ The wh-object is stuck in the ellipsis site.

Step 4: merger of TP and CP

→ The modal first moves to T° and then to C°
   The subject moves to the higher [Spec,TP]
   C° bears an uninterpretable [wh]-feature, but cannot attract the wh-object anymore
      to check it.
→ **The derivation crashes**

(26) * CP

[Tree diagram:

CP
└─ C'
   ├─ C°
   │ [*u*wh]
   │ *moet* •
   └─ TP
      ├─ DP₁
      │ *ze*
      └─ T'
         ├─ T°
         │ t_moet
         └─ VP
            └─ V'
               ├─ t_V°
               └─ TP
                  ├─ t_DP1
                  └─ T'
                     ├─ T°
                     └─ vP
                        ├─ DP₃
                        │ *wat*
                        │ [*i*wh]
                        └─ vP
                           ├─ t_DP1
                           └─ v'
                              ├─ v°
                              │ [*i*E]
                              └─ VP
                                 ├─ DP₂
                                 │ *Bert*
                                 └─ V'
                                    ├─ V°
                                    │ *geven*
                                    └─ t_DP3

Agree (crossed out)]

2.4   *Object scrambling = ungrammatical*

(27)   Ik   wil   je helpen,   maar   ik   zal   (* **je**)   niet   kunnen.
       I   want   you help   but   I   will   you   not   can
       'I want to help you, but I will not be able to.'

• The object normally scrambles from [Spec,VoiceP] to a position in the higher clause, higher than the modal.

Argumentation in 2 steps:

① The object obligatorily precedes negation in non-elliptical sentences:

(28)   Ik   wil   je   helpen, maar ik   zal (je)   niet (* je)   kunnen   helpen.
       I   want you help   but I   will you   not   you   can   help
       'I want to help you, but I will not be able to help you.'

② Negation sits in the higher clause:

(29)   Ik   zal   je   niet kunnen   helpen.
       I   will you   not can   help
       = 'I will not be able to help you'
       ≠ 'I will be able not to help you.'

→ Object scrambling goes to a position in the higher clause as well:

(30)

[Tree diagram:

VP
├─ *je*
└─ VP
   ├─ *niet*
   └─ VP
      └─ V'
         ├─ *kunnen*
         └─ TP
            ├─ *ik*
            └─ T'
               ├─ T°
               └─ VoiceP
                  ├─ t_je
                  └─ …]

• **However**: Ellipsis takes place before the object can move out of the ellipsis site.

→ Analysis of an elliptical sentence:

(31)
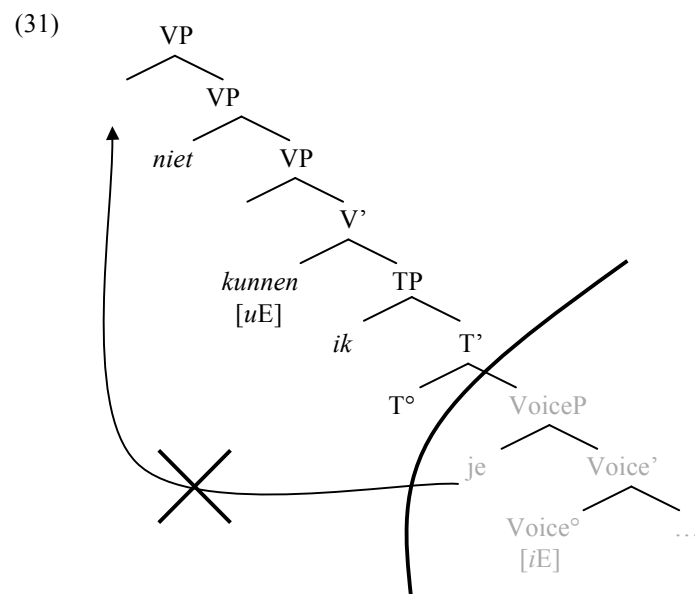
→ **Only subjects survive Dutch MCE, because they move out of the ellipsis site to a position inbetween the ellipsis site and the ellipsis licensing head.**

3   **DUTCH MODAL COMPLEMENT ELLIPSIS COMPARED TO ENGLISH VPE**

3.1   *English VPE*

• In English VPE, both objects and subjects can be extracted out of the ellipsis site (cf. Schuyler 2002, Merchant to appear b).

① Object extraction:

(32) a. What is Tom going to buy? – I don't know. **What** should he [~~buy t~~$_{\text{what}}$]?
     b. Mina rolled up a newspaper and Tom did **a magazine** [~~roll up t~~$_{\text{a magazine}}$]

② Subject extraction:

(33) a. I know Peter can't come to my talk, but **who** can [~~come t~~$_{\text{who}}$ ~~to my talk~~]?
     b. Mina wasn't arrested, but **she** should be [~~arrested t~~$_{\text{Peter}}$].

→ **Why this contrast with Dutch?**

English: a. The head licensing English VPE is the modal or auxiliary in **T°**.
                b. **v°** is the head bearing the [iE]-feature (vPE rather than VoicePE, see Merchant 2007, to appear a).

Evidence for these differences from the analysis for Dutch:

a. English modals are T° heads, just like temporal auxiliaries. They behave differently from Dutch modals (see Ijbema 2002, Wurmbrand 2003):

   - English modals lack inflection, unlike Dutch modals.
   - English modals cannot co-occur, while Dutch modals can.
   - English modals cannot take DP complements, while Dutch modals can.

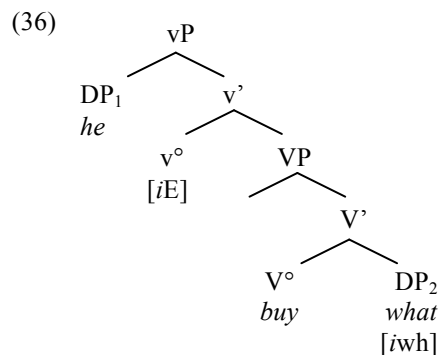b. The passive auxiliary is deleted in Dutch, but not (necessarily) in English:

(34) a. Deze broek wordt   best niet gewassen, maar die rok mag
this   pants become   best not   washed   but   that skirt may
wel (* **worden**).
PRT   become
'These pants don't have to be washed, but this skirt can be washed.'
b. The trash is taken out whenever it is apparent that it should **be**.

• Derivation of (32)a:
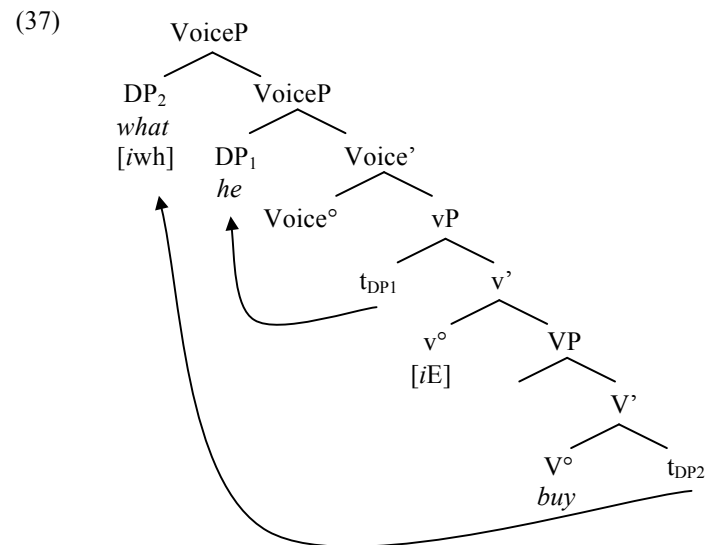
(35) What is Tom going to buy? – I don't know. **What** should he [buy t~what~]?

Step 1: vP:
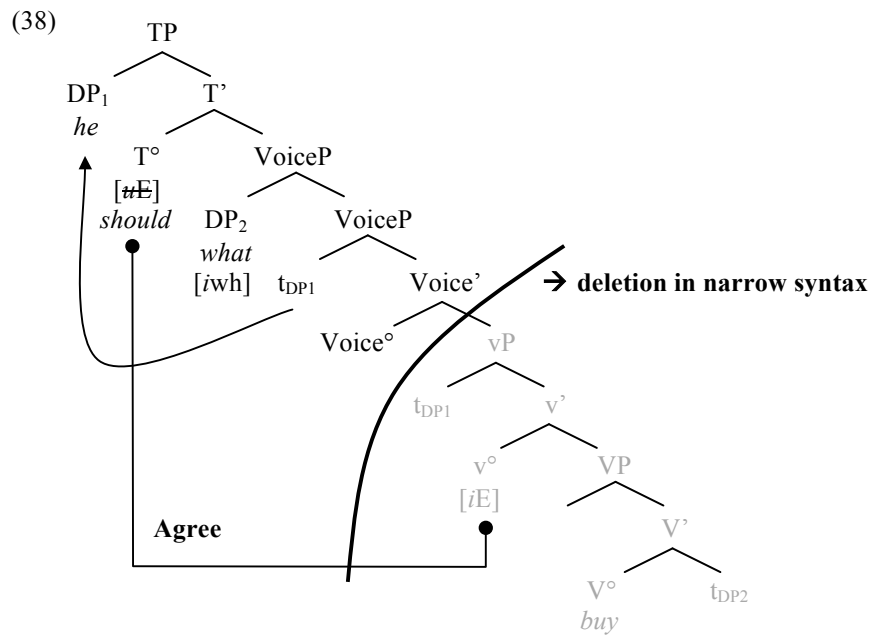
→ v° is the head bearing an interpretable [E]-feature.

(36)
```
              vP
            /    \
         DP₁      v'
         he      /  \
              v°     VP
             [iE]   /  \
                      V'
                    /    \
                  V°      DP₂
                 buy     what
                        [iwh]
```

Step 2: merger of the phase head Voice° and projection of VoiceP

→ Voice° attracts the subject and the wh-object to the phase edge.

(37)
```
                    VoiceP
                  /        \
              DP₂           VoiceP
             what          /     \
             [iwh]      DP₁        Voice'
                        he        /      \
                            Voice°        vP
                                        /    \
                                    t_DP1     v'
                                            /    \
                                          v°      VP
                                         [iE]    /   \
                                                     V'
                                                   /    \
                                                 V°      t_DP2
                                                buy
```

Step 3: merger of ellipsis licensing head T°

→ The subject moves to [Spec,TP].
The [*u*E]-feature on T° is checked against the [*i*E] on v° and vP is elided.

(38)

TP
DP₁ *he*
T'
T° [*u*E] *should*
VoiceP
DP₂ *what* [*i*wh]
t_DP1
VoiceP
Voice'
Voice°
vP
t_DP1
v'
v° [*i*E]
VP
V'
V° *buy*
t_DP2

Agree

→ **deletion in narrow syntax**
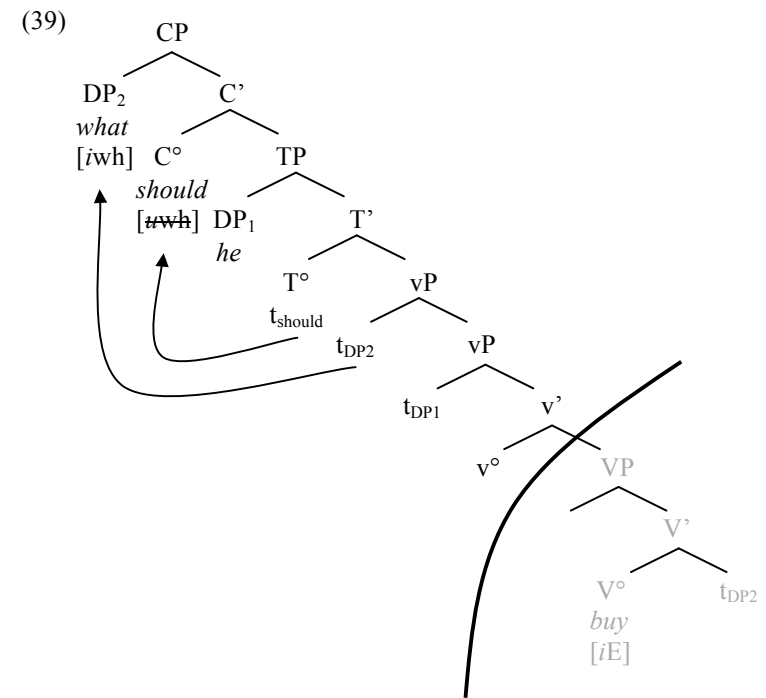
Step 4: merger of C° and projection of CP

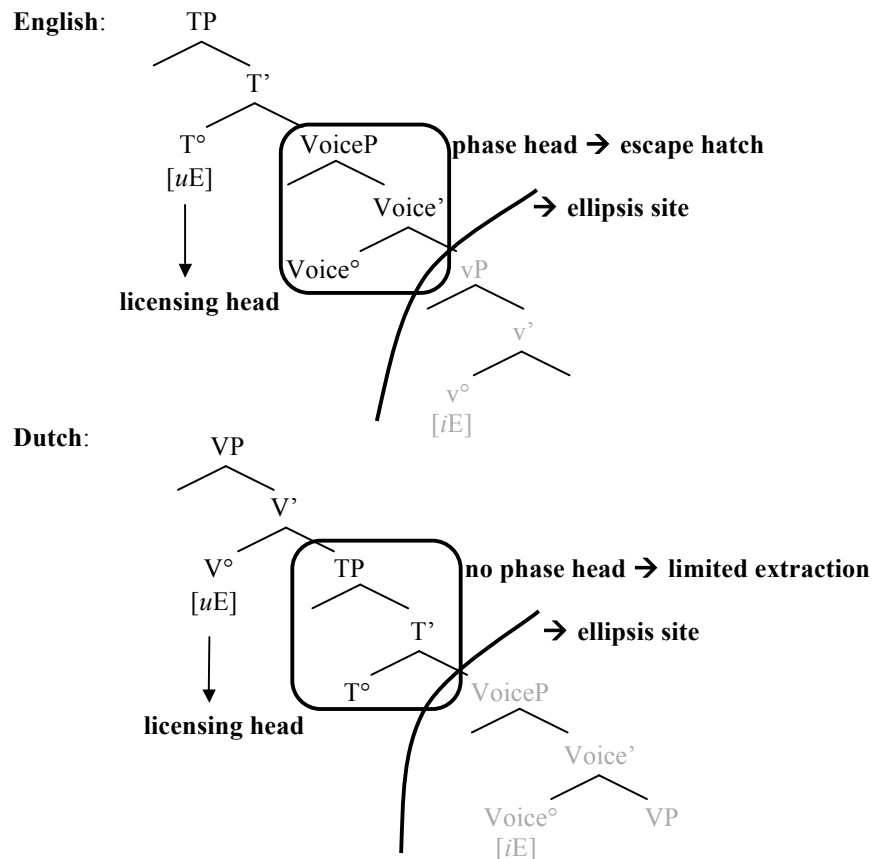→ The wh-object moves to [Spec,CP] to check C°'s [*u*wh].
   The verb moves to C°.

(39)

CP
DP₂ *what* [*i*wh]
C'
C° *should* [*u*wh]
TP
DP₁ *he*
T'
T° t_should
vP
t_DP2
vP
t_DP1
v'
v°
VP
V'
V° *buy* [*i*E]
t_DP2

→ **Both subjects and objects can survive English VPE because they can move out of the ellipsis site to the clause internal phase edge [Spec,VoiceP] prior to merger of the ellipsis licensing head T°.**

3.2   Summary

Core of the analysis: The projection(s) inbetween the elided constituent and the licensing head play(s) a crucial role in extraction (im)possibilities out of the ellipsis site.

English VPE: The intervening projection VoiceP is a phase.
→ Movement to the phase edge prior to ellipsis provides an escape hatch.
Dutch MCE: The intervening projection is a TP.
→ Only what moves to [Spec,TP] or adjoins to TP can extract out of the ellipsis site

English:

TP
T'
T° [uE]
VoiceP   **phase head → escape hatch**
Voice'
→ **ellipsis site**
Voice°
licensing head
vP
v'
v°
[iE]

Dutch:

VP
V'
V° [uE]
TP   **no phase head → limited extraction**
T'
→ **ellipsis site**
T°
licensing head
VoiceP
Voice'
Voice°
[iE]
VP

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4   OTHER ELLIPTICAL CONSTRUCTIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

4.1   TP ellipsis: sluicing, stripping, fragment answers

① Sluicing

• **Prediction**: not only constituents moving to a position inbetween the ellipsis site and the licensing head can survive ellipsis, also constituents moving to the **specifier position of the licensing head** can.

→ Sluicing instantiates such a case.

• Sluicing allows extraction of both objects and subjects:

(40) a. I saw something, but I don't know what [$_{TP}$ ~~I saw t$_{what}$~~]
     b. Someone stole my bike, but I don't know who [$_{TP}$ ~~t$_{who}$ stole my bike~~]

Narrow syntax deletion analysis:
   - Sluicing is licensed by C° bearing [$u$wh, iQ] (see Merchant 2001).
   - Sluicing deletes TP (Merchant 2001).
   - C° attracts the wh-element to its spec to check [$u$wh].

(41)

CP
DP [$i$wh]
C'   → **deletion in narrow syntax**
C° [~~$u$wh~~] [~~uE~~]
TP
t$_{DP}$
T'
T° [iE]
...
Agree

12/14
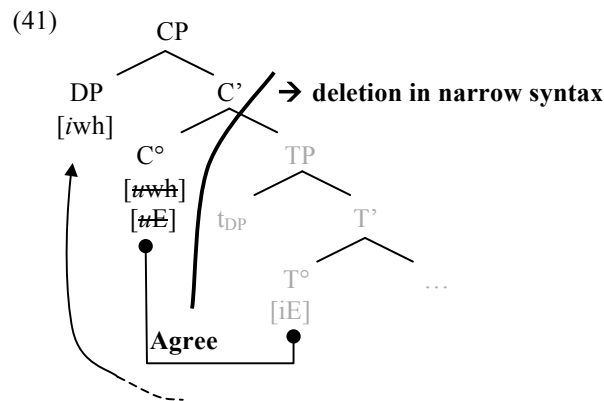
→ Because the movement of the wh-element and the checking of the [*u*E]-feature happen simultaneously, the wh-element survives the ellipsis.

② Stripping

(42) I gave MINA a present, but not THOMAS [~~TP I gave t~Thomas~ a present~].

Narrow syntax deletion analysis:
- There is a NegP dominating CP (Merchant 2003), with Neg° bearing [*u*E].
- The contrasted constituent moves to [Spec,CP] to check a [FOCUS]-feature (cf. Merchant 2003).
- TP carries the [*i*E] and gets elided

→ The remnant constituent moves to a position inbetween the licensing head Neg° and the ellipsis site TP and therefore survives the ellipsis.

③ Fragment answers

(43) A: Who did you give a present? – B: Mina [~~TP I gave t~Mina~ a present~].

Narrow syntax deletion analysis:
- C° is the licensing head bearing [*u*E].
- The contrasted constituent moves through [Spec,CP] to check a [FOCUS]-feature (arguments for movement in fragment answers, see Merchant 2004).
- TP carries the [*i*E] and gets elided

→ The remnant constituent moves to the specifier of the ellipsis licensing head and therefore survives the ellipsis.

4.2   Further research

Can we reduce the traditional distinction between deep and surface anaphora (cf. Hankamer & Sag 1976) to the size of the deleted constituent?

• Does this analysis work for all other ellipsis cases that have been analyzed as deletion, such as pseudogapping (Merchant 2007, to appear a), gapping and NP ellipsis?

• Does this analysis work for ellipsis cases that have been analyzed as a null proform, such as clausal complement deletion (Kennedy & Merchant 2000) and null complement anaphora (Depiante 2000)?

→ **Towards a unified analysis of ellipsis?**

5   CONCLUSIONS

❶ Dutch displays a restricted form of verb phrase ellipsis that involves the deletion of a fully-fledged VoiceP.

❷ Ellipsis is deletion in narrow syntax, which happens when the uninterpretable [E]-feature on the licensing head is checked against the interpretable [E]-feature on the head of the constituent that will be elided.

❸ The only constituents that can survive ellipsis are those that move out of the ellipsis site before the licensing head is merged. This means that the projections inbetween the licensing head and the ellipsis site and the specifier of the licensing head itself are possible escape hatches.

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