

VP Ellipsis Revisited:

Optional deletion of non-finite auxiliaries

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9 January 2013

Overview

1. **Introduction: the pattern**
2. Preliminaries: the verbal structure
3. Analysis, Part I: the ellipsis site
4. Analysis, Part II: auxiliary ellipsis
5. Extending the analysis: VP fronting
6. Digging deeper: predicate ellipsis
7. Conclusion and further issues

Introduction: the pattern (1)

VP ellipsis (VPE) = non-pronunciation of the verb phrase

- (1) Betsy was hassled by the police, and Peter was, too.
= ... and Peter was [~~hassled by the police~~], too.

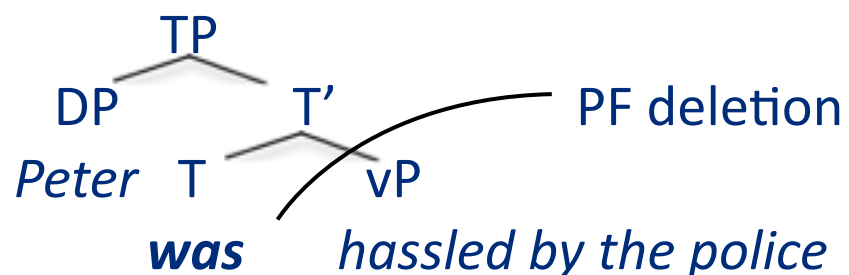
Finite auxiliary remains overt.

(English) main verb is always deleted, even when finite.

- (2) Betsy ate an apple, and Peter **did**, too.
= ... and Peter [ate an apple], too.

Introduction: the pattern (2)

- Standardly:
Under a deletion approach to ellipsis, VPE is analysed as PF deletion of VP, or more recently vP, licensed by the auxiliary or the T head (Johnson 2001, 2004; Merchant 2001; Gengel 2007 and many others)



Introduction: the pattern (3)

Main research question in this talk:

What happens in sentences with more than one auxiliary?

- (3) Betsy must have been being hassled.
- = finite modal – perfect *HAVE* – progressive *BE* – passive *BE* – V

Introduction: the pattern (4)

Answer: More than just VP/vP is targeted by VPE (Akmajian & Wasow 1975, Sag 1976).

- (4) Betsy must have been being hassled by the police, and...
- a. * Peter must ~~have been being~~ hassled by the police, too.
 - b. Peter must have ~~been being~~ hassled by the police, too.
 - c. Peter must have been ~~being~~ hassled by the police, too.
 - d.* Peter must have been being hassled by the police, too.

Introduction: the pattern (5)

Akmajian & Wasow (1975), Sag (1976):

- Lexical verb obligatorily elided under VPE
- *Being* obligatorily elided under VPE
- *Have*, modals and finite auxiliaries never elided under VPE
- *Be/been* optionally elided under VPE

	Modal/ finite aux	Have	Be	Been	Being	Lexical V
Elided	*	*	(✓)	(✓)	✓	✓

- Aim: explore and explain this observation
!!! Discussion on deletion of *have*: see later

Introduction: the pattern (6)

Main claims of this talk:

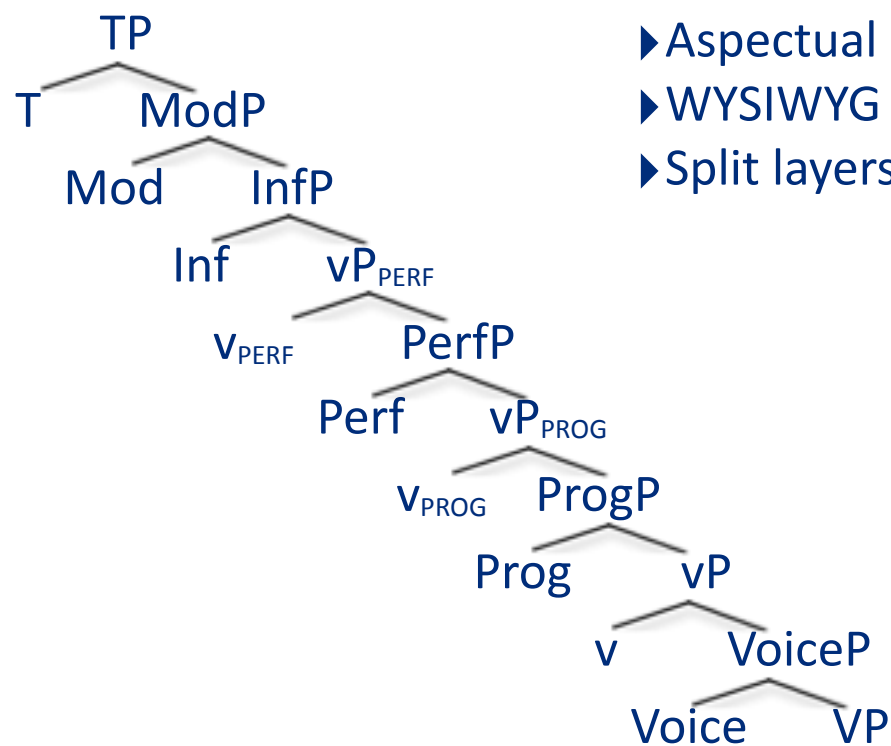
- VP Ellipsis targets the progressive aspectual layer (when it is present in the derivation).
- Optional auxiliary ellipsis = optional raising of auxiliaries out of the ellipsis site + rescue by PF deletion of the non-raised auxiliaries
- VPE = predicate ellipsis

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Preliminaries: The verbal structure (1)

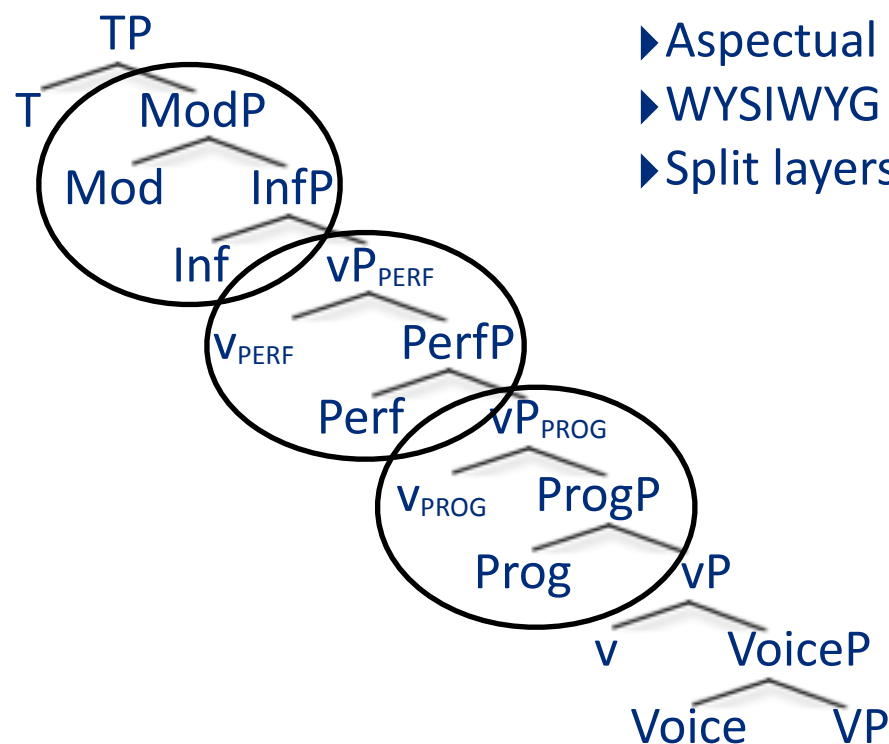
Bošković (2012), Cinque (1999), Harwood (2011):



- ▶ Aspectual layer + vP shell with auxiliary
- ▶ WYSIWYG approach
- ▶ Split layers = necessary for auxiliary raising

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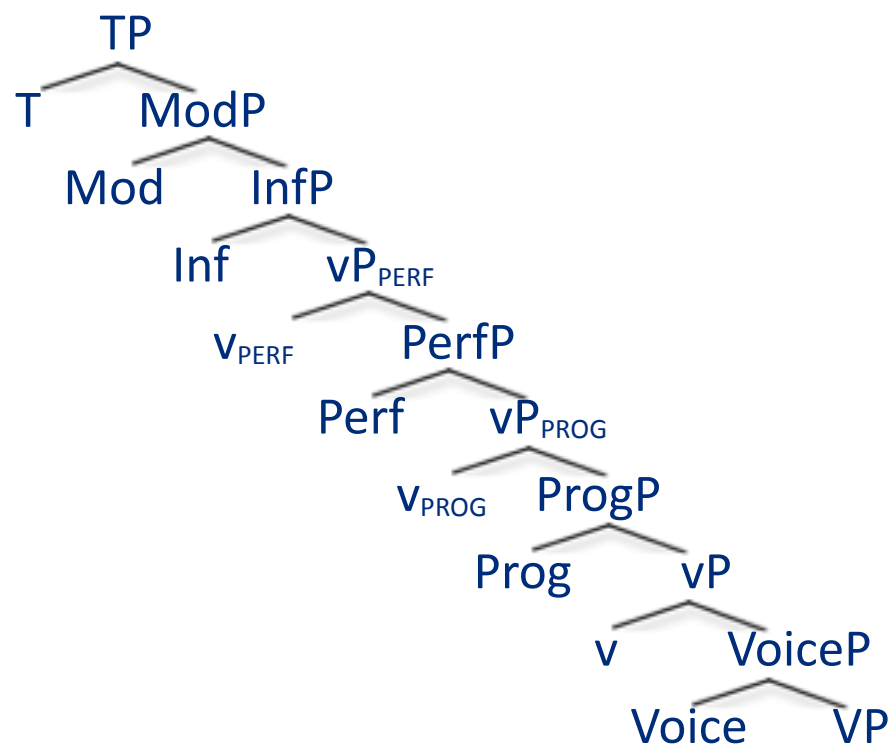
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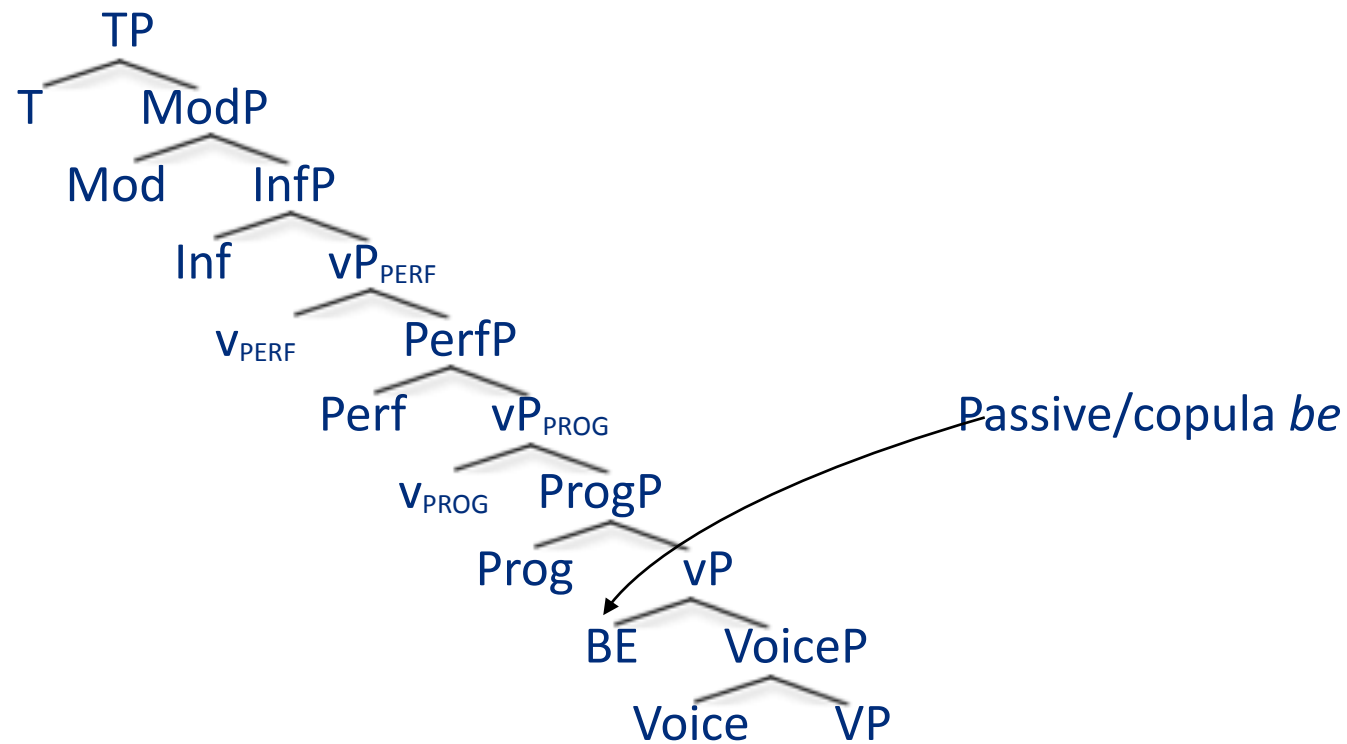
Preliminaries: The verbal structure (2)

Base positions



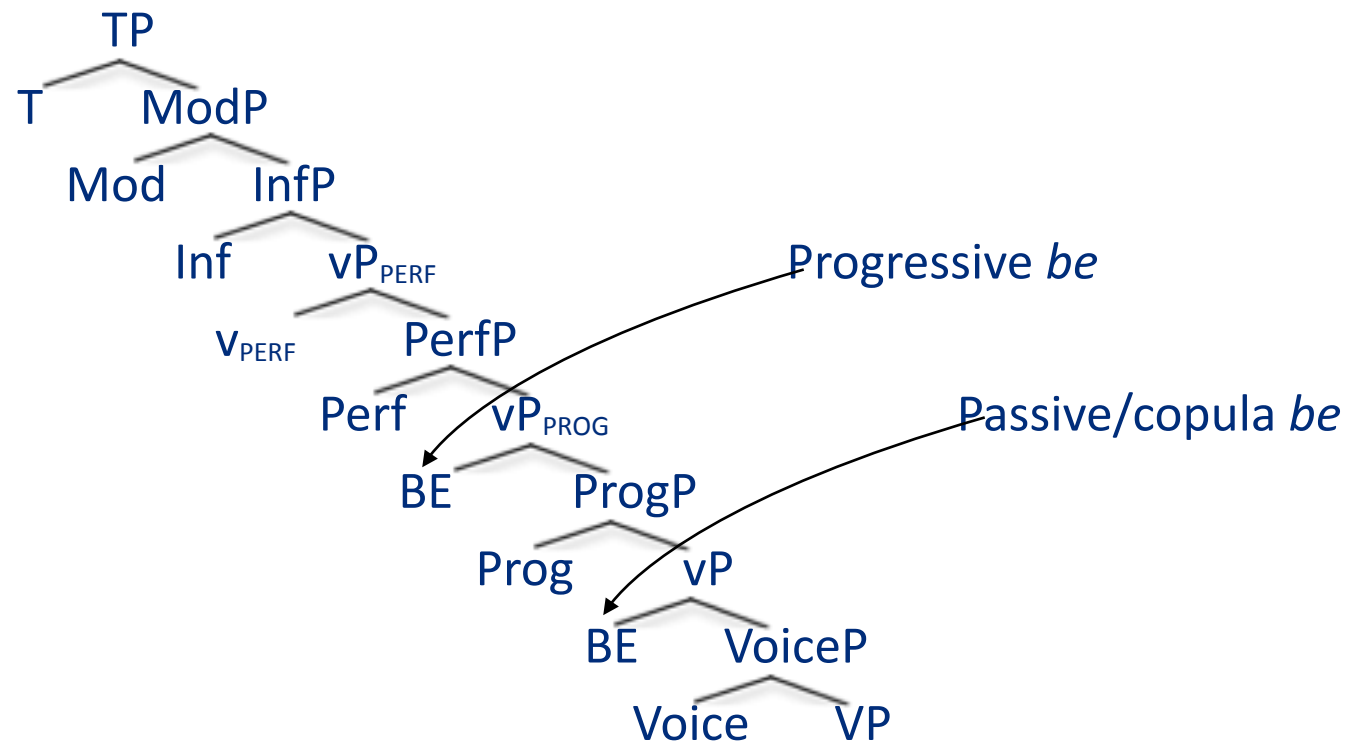
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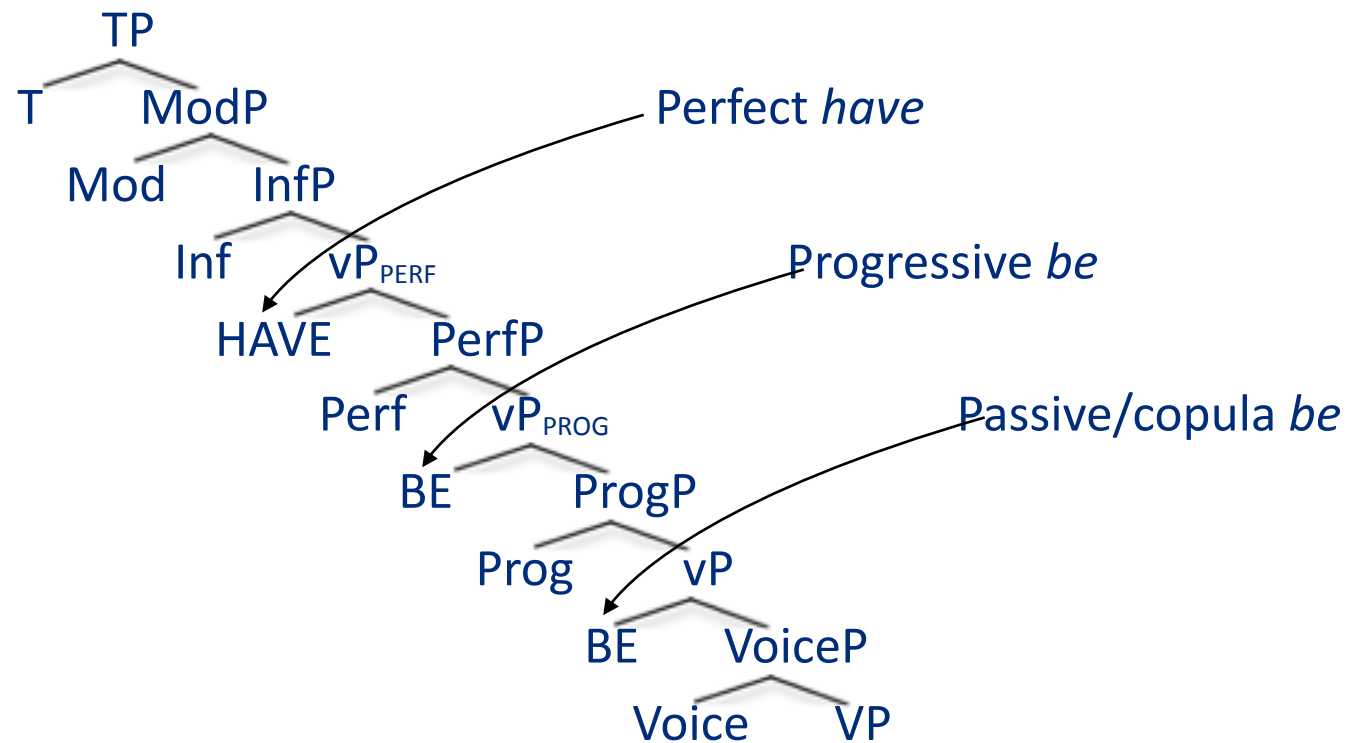
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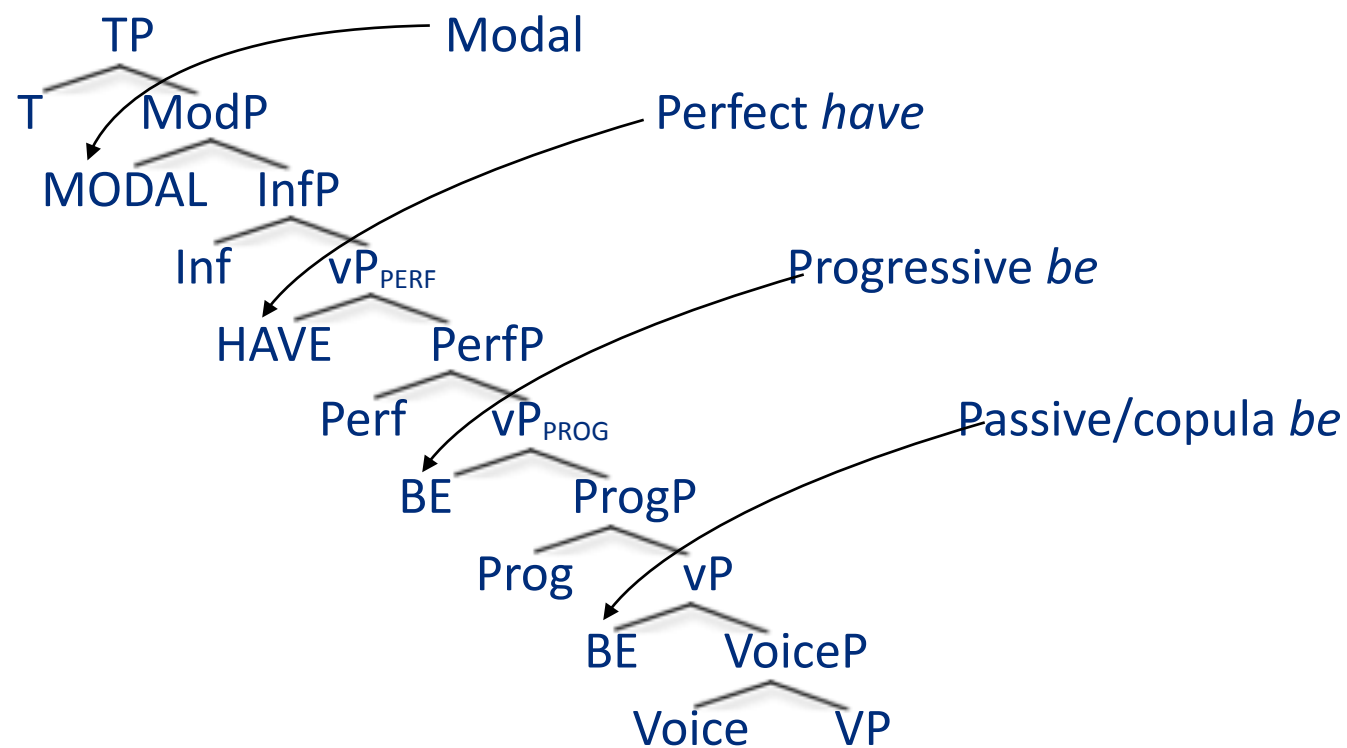
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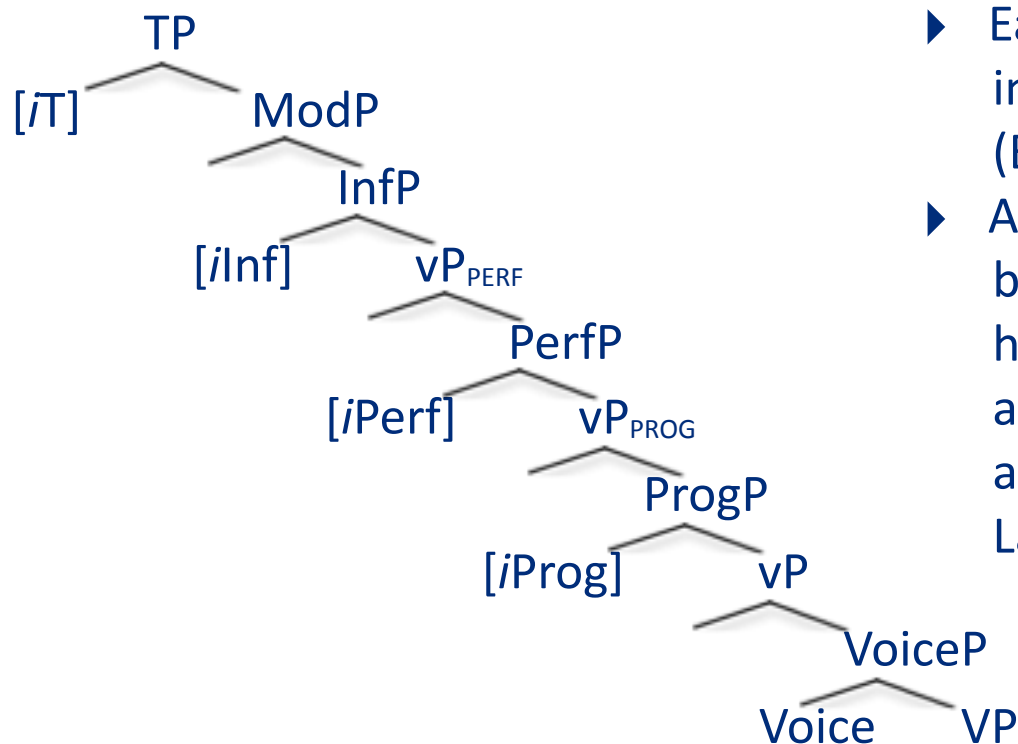
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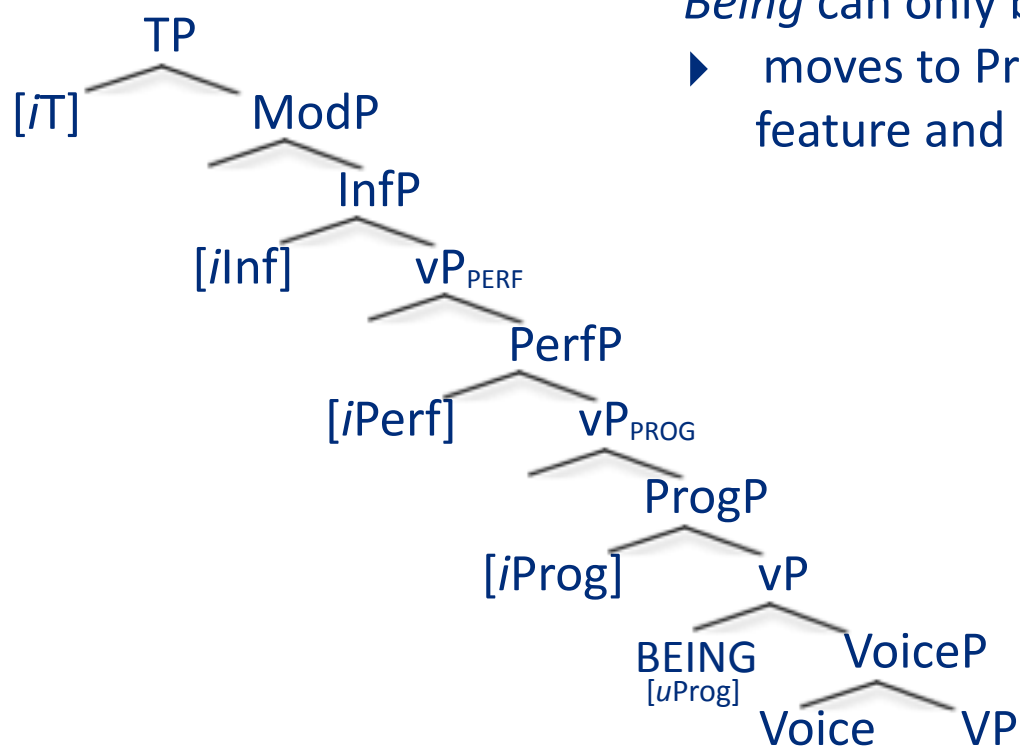
Preliminaries: The verbal structure (3)

Lasnik (1995): Auxiliary raising for feature checking



- ▶ Each aspectual head bears an interpretable inflectional feature (Bjorkman 2012, Lasnik 1995)
- ▶ Auxiliaries are merged inflected, but their morphological form has to be licensed by checking of a PF feature against the relevant aspectual head (Chomsky 1993, Lasnik 1995)

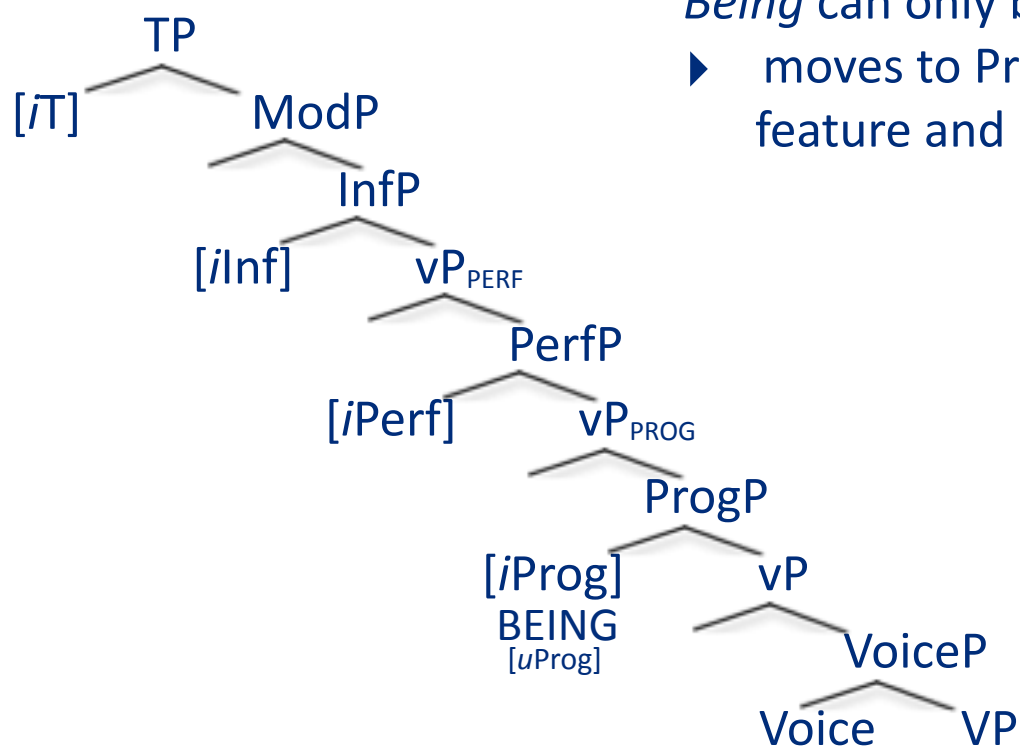
Preliminaries: The verbal structure (3)



Being can only be copular or passive BE.

- moves to Prog to check its inflectional feature and license its morphological form

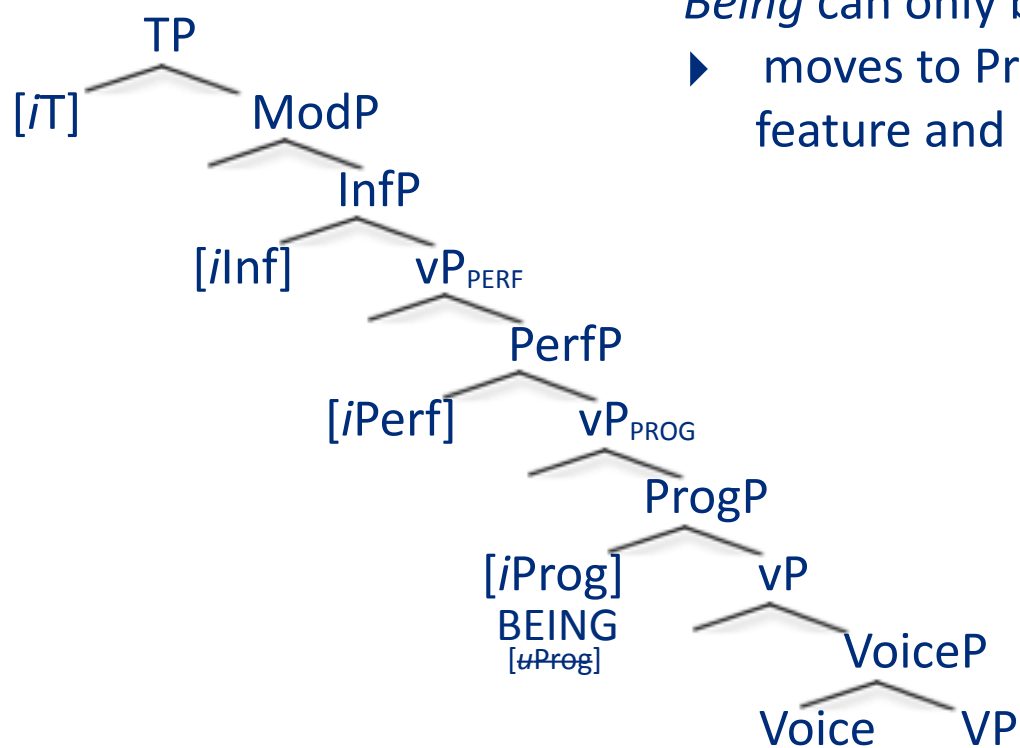
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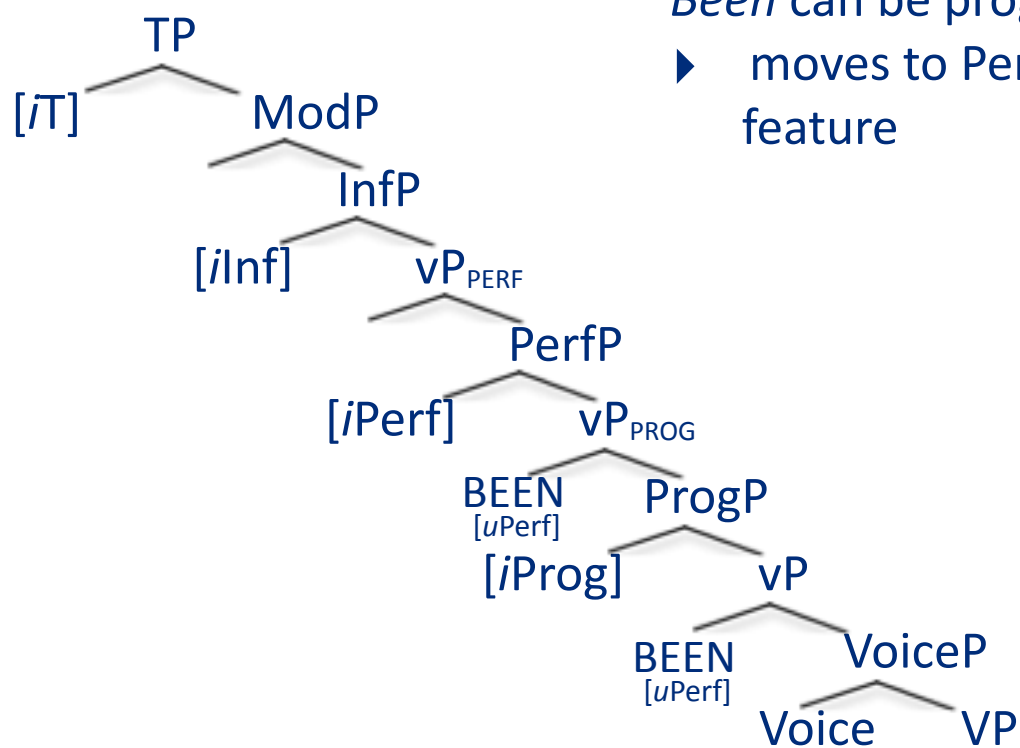
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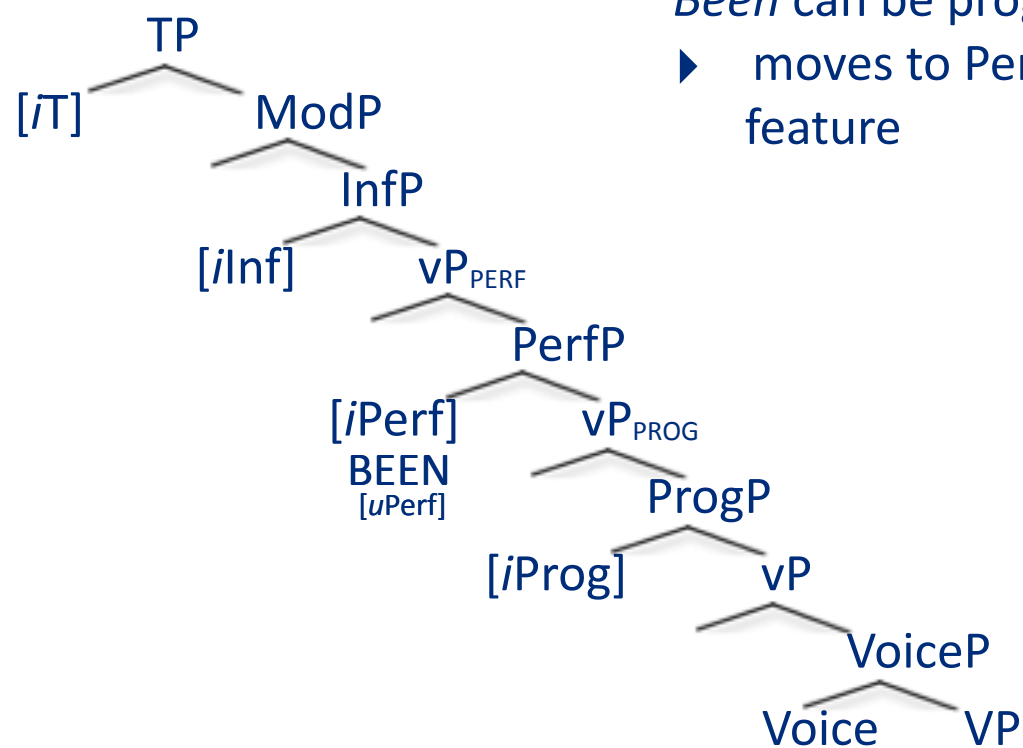
Preliminaries: The verbal structure (3)



Been can be progressive, passive or copular BE.

- moves to Perf to check its inflectional feature

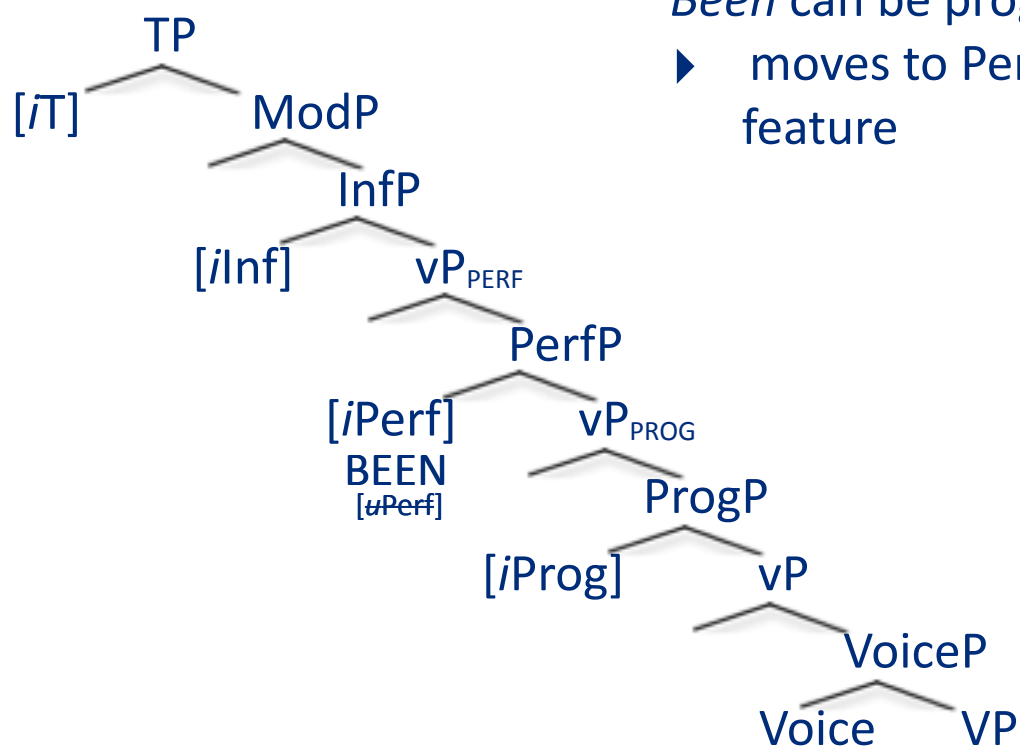
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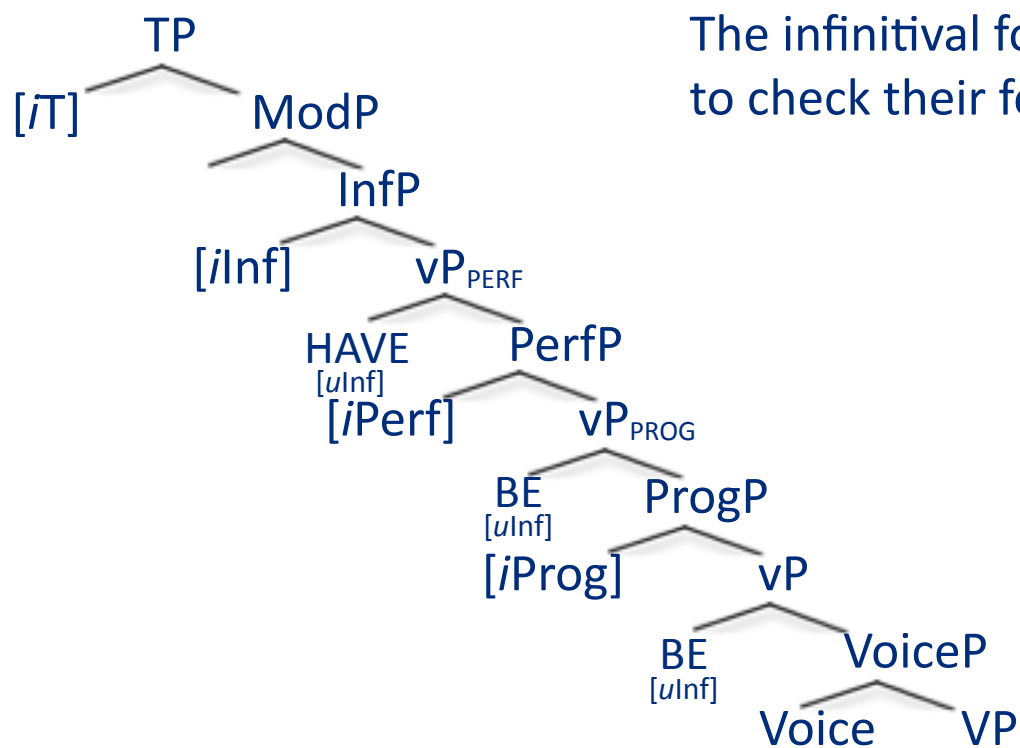
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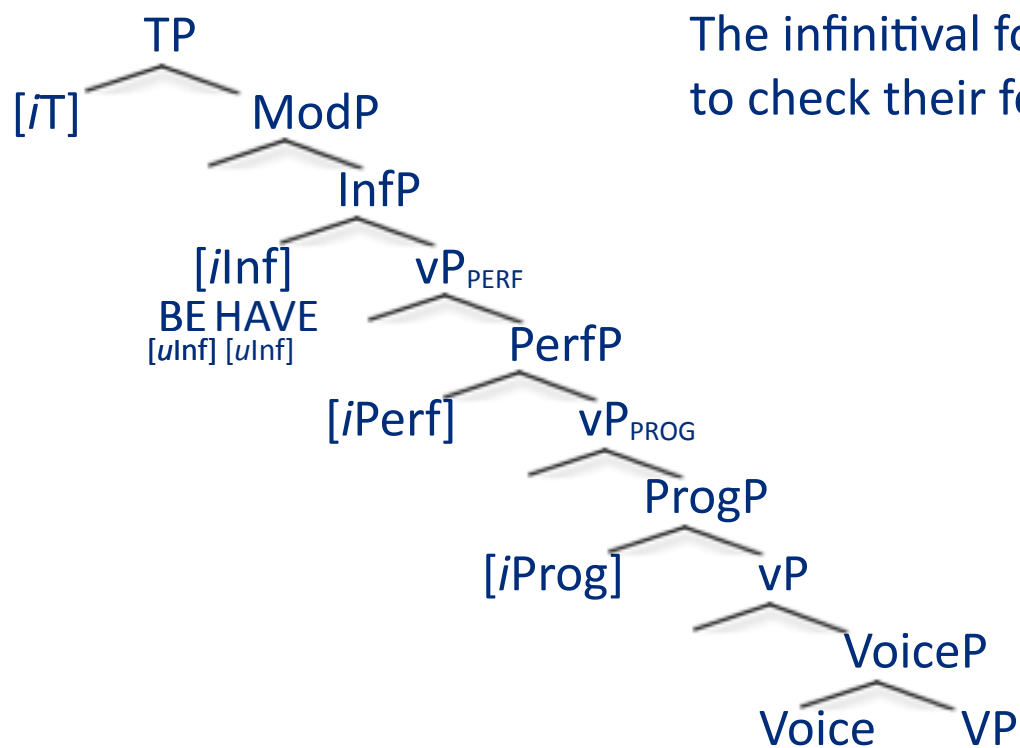
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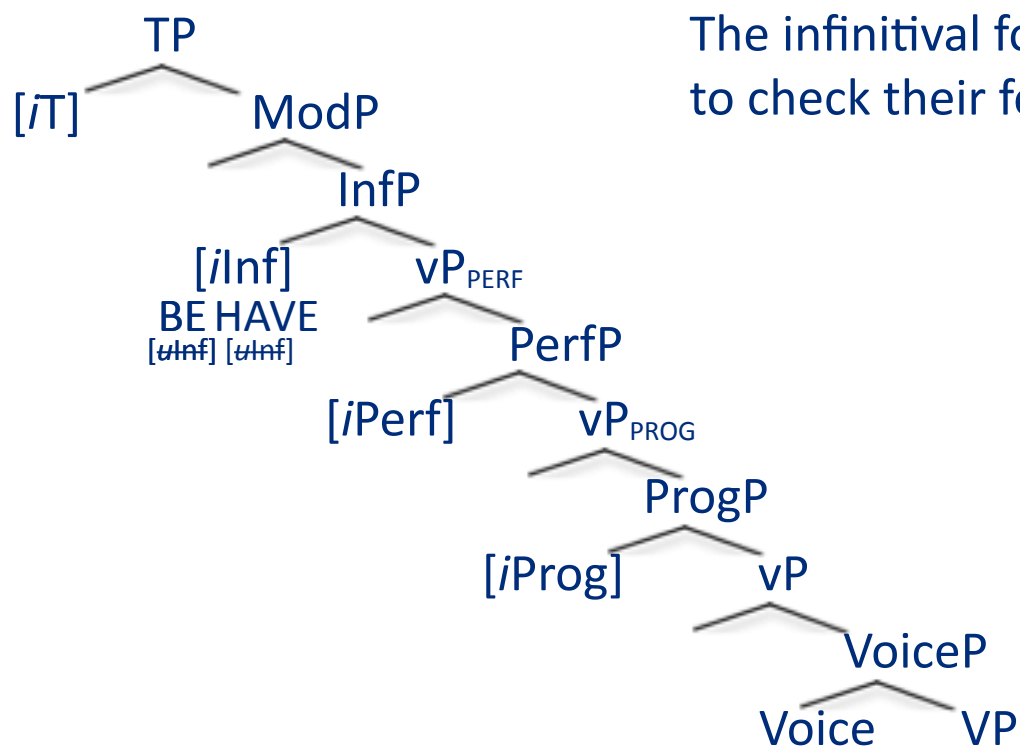
The infinitival forms *have* and *be* move to Inf to check their features.

Preliminaries: The verbal structure (3)



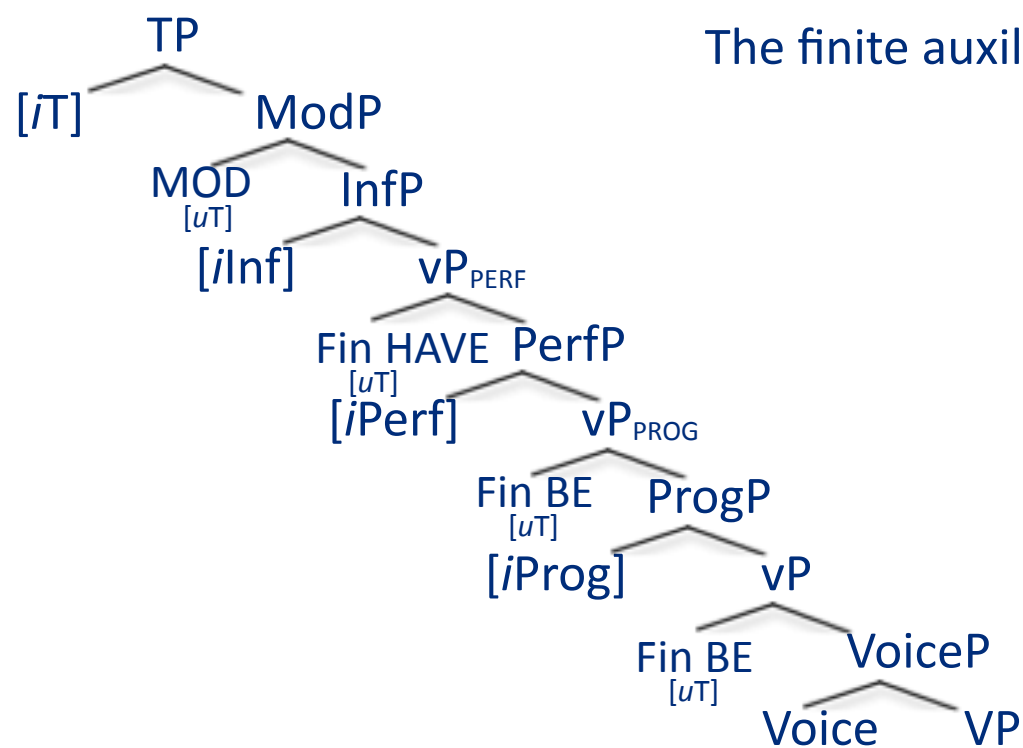
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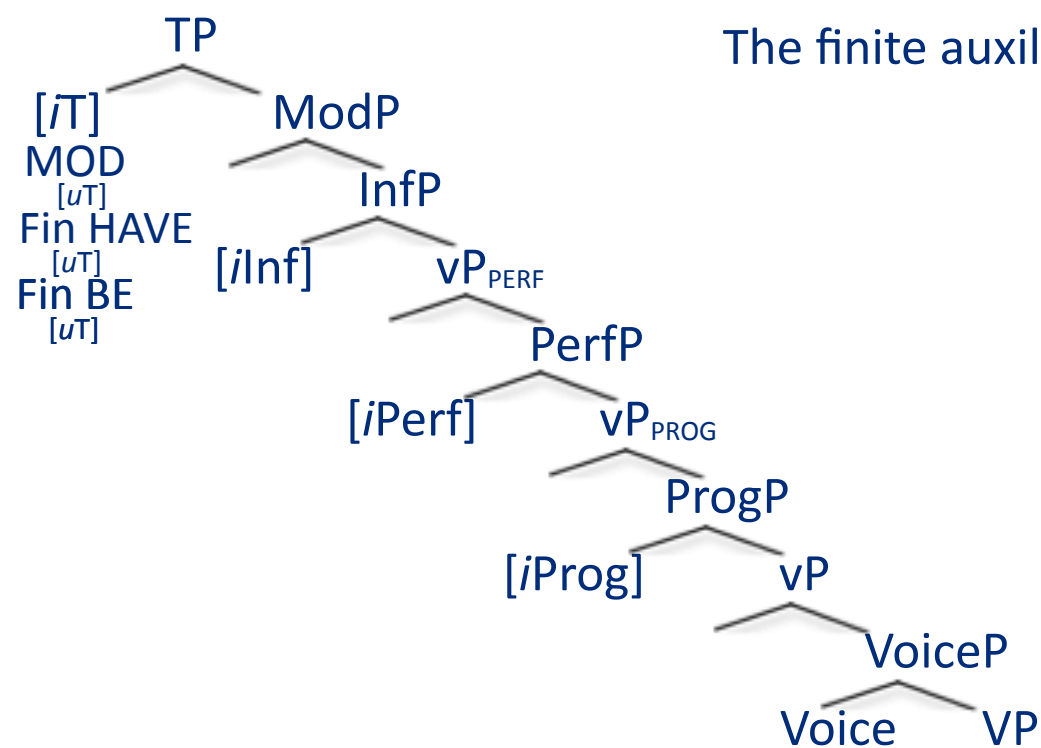


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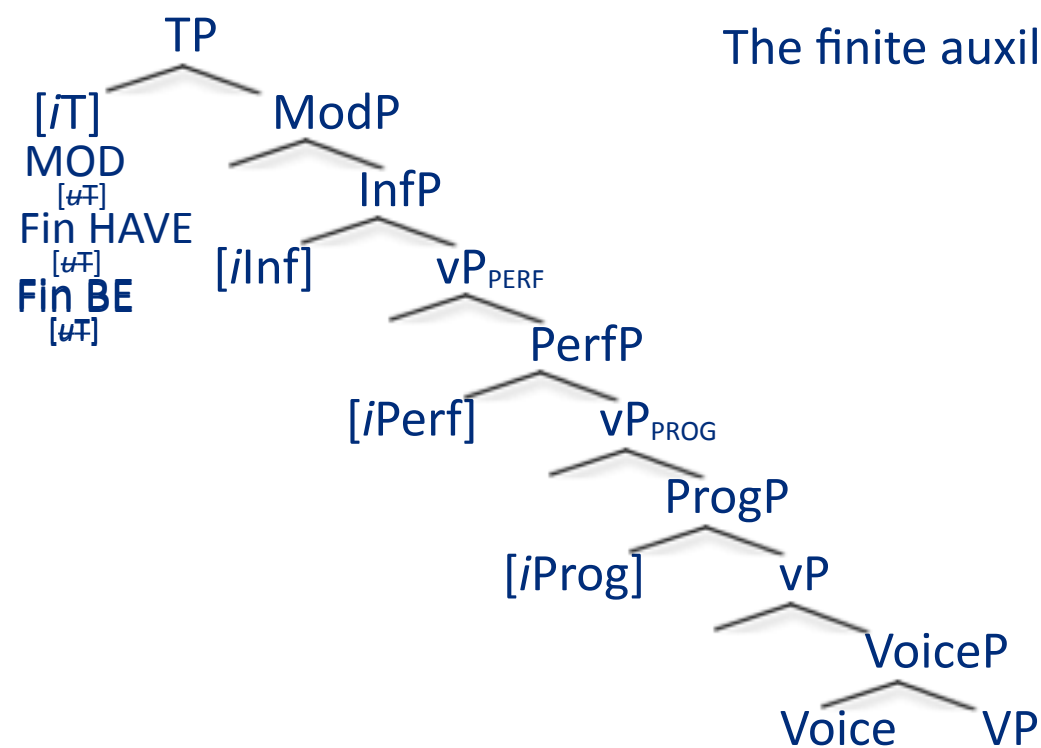
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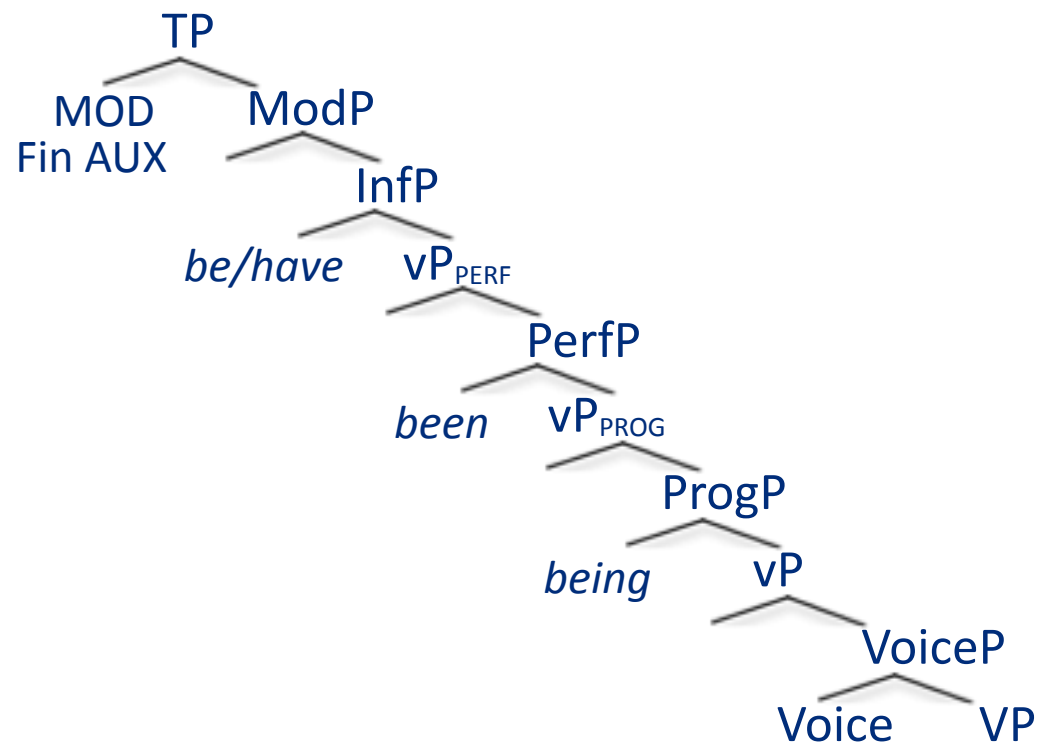


Preliminaries: The verbal structure (3)



Preliminaries: The verbal structure (4)

Surface positions:



Preliminaries: The verbal structure (5)

IMPORTANT: The overt movement of auxiliaries is a concern for PF.

Auxiliaries could potentially move covertly to check inflectional features at LF, BUT...

No overt movement/checking = crash at PF

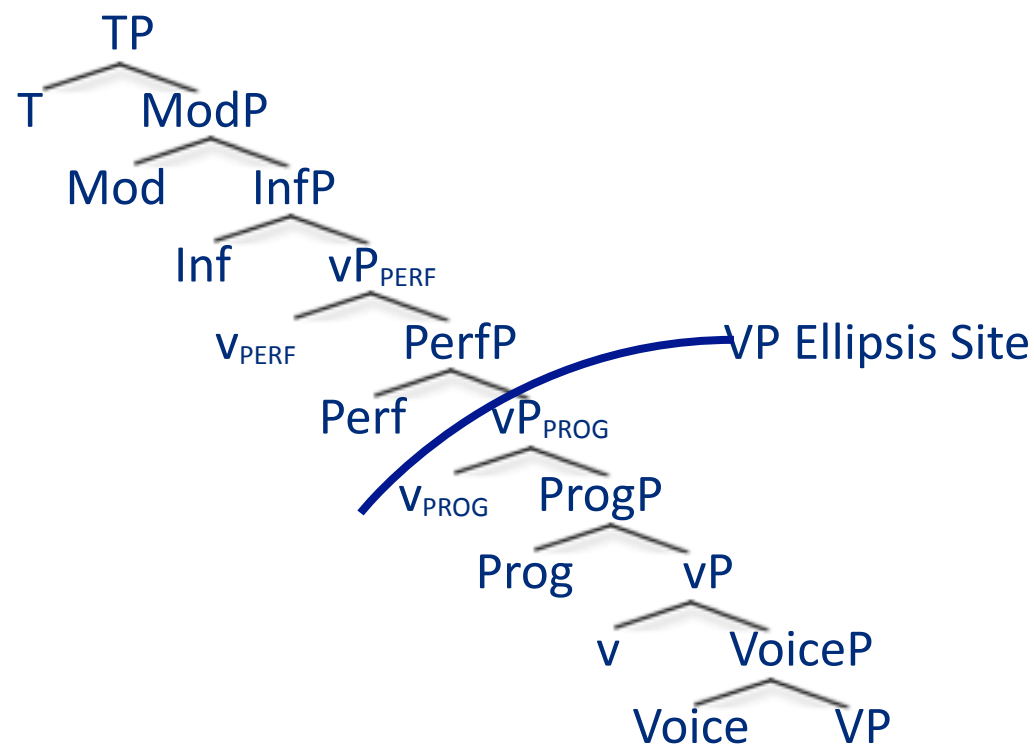
(See Chomsky 1993, 1995; Lasnik 1995; Roberts 1998)

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Analysis, part I: The ellipsis site (1)

Our claim: VPE elides as much as the progressive layer (vP_{prog}), if present.



Analysis, part I: The ellipsis site (2)

Argumentation behind this claim:

Only auxiliaries generated inside the ellipsis site can ever be elided.

- ▶ Two basic accounts for optional auxiliary ellipsis:
 1. Optional extension of ellipsis site (Akmajian, Steele & Wasow 1979, Bošković 2012)
 2. Optional raising of auxiliaries (Sailor 2012, Thoms 2012)

Analysis, part I: The ellipsis site (3)

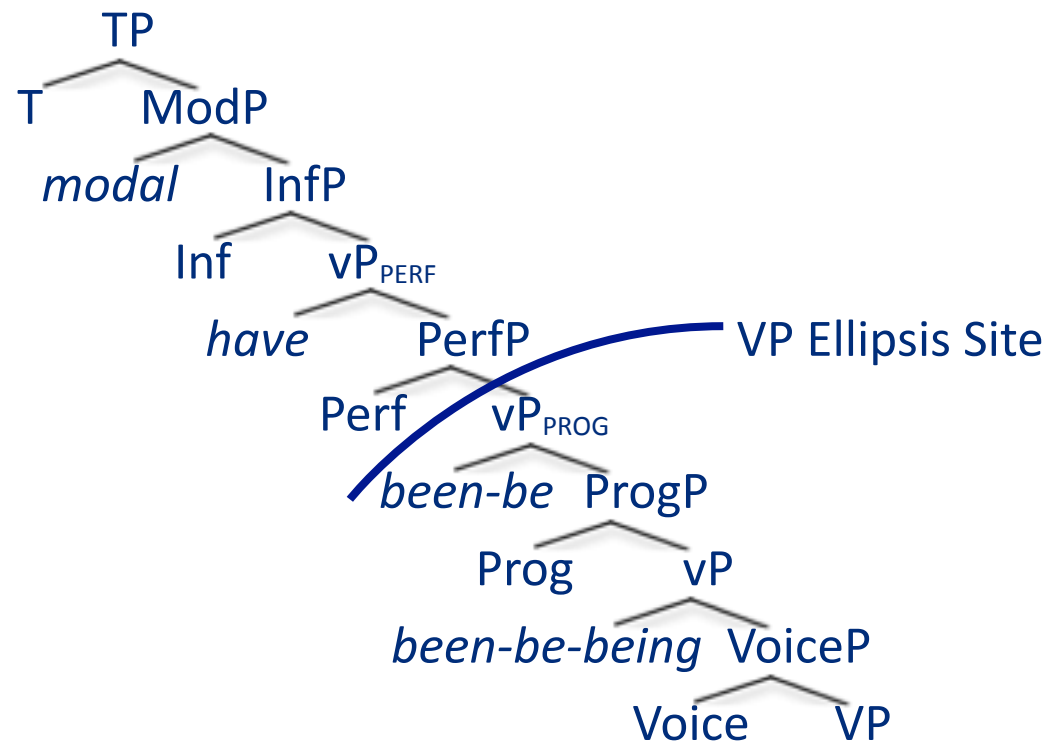
Consensus: auxiliaries can only be elided if they are at some point contained within the ellipsis site.

In other words: if an auxiliary can be elided, its base position needs to be included in the ellipsis site.

(The opposite does not necessarily hold: if an auxiliary is not elided, it can still be base-generated in the ellipsis site.)

Analysis, part I: The ellipsis site (4)

Base positions of the auxiliaries:



Analysis, part I: The ellipsis site (5)

We show that all auxiliaries generated within or below the progressive aspectual layer can be elided.

➡ VPE targets vP_{prog}

► Copula *BE* can be elided:

- (5) a. John has been in the garden, and Mary has (**been**) ~~in the garden~~, too.
b. John will be in the garden, and Mary will (**be**) ~~in the garden~~, too.

► Passive *BE* can be elided:

- (6) a. John has been arrested, and Mary has (**been**) ~~arrested~~, too.
b. John might be arrested, and Mary might (**be**) ~~arrested~~, too.

Analysis, part I: The ellipsis site (6)

Progressive *BE* can be elided:

- (7) a. John may be questioning our motives, but Peter won't (**be**)
~~questioning our motives.~~
b. John may have been questioning our motives, but Peter hasn't (**been**)
~~questioning our motives.~~

!! There is a mismatch interpretation available without progressive *BE*:

- (8) a. ...Peter won't ~~question our motives.~~
b. ...Peter hasn't ~~questioned our motives.~~

► How can we be sure the progressive auxiliary is ever actually elided?

Analysis, part I: The ellipsis site (7)

Can we find contexts that show whether progressive *be* can genuinely be elided?

► Our answer: YES, and they show it can be elided.

- **Ellipsis and existential constructions**
- Ellipsis and idiomatic expressions

Analysis, part I: The ellipsis site (8)

Ellipsis and existential constructions

Unergative and transitive existentials depend on progressive aspect (Milsark 1974; Aissen 1975; Burzio 1986; Ward & Birner 1996; Deal 2009; Harwood 2011):

- (9) a. There was a clown dancing at my birthday party.
 b. * There has a clown danced at my birthday party.
 c. * There might a clown dance at my birthday party.
 d. * There danced a clown at my birthday party.

Analysis, part I: The ellipsis site (9)

If we apply ellipsis to these existentials, no mismatch interpretation without the progressive will be available.

Results: All our informants accepted deletion of progressive *be* in these existentials.

(10) John said there had been a clown dancing at his birthday party, even though we all knew there hadn't (**been**) ~~a clown dancing at his birthday party~~.

(11) John said there would be a clown dancing at his birthday party, even though we all knew there wouldn't (**be**) ~~a clown dancing at his birthday party~~.

► Progressive *be* is optionally elided.

Analysis, part I: The ellipsis site (12)

Recapitulating:

- Passive *be/been* can be elided.
 - Copula *be/been* can be elided.
 - Progressive *be/been* can be elided.
 - Perfect *have* is never elided.
 - Modals and other finite auxiliaries are never elided.
- ➡ However, there is some discussion as to whether or not perfect *have* can be elided:
- ▶ Perfect *have* cannot be elided - Sag (1976), Lobeck (1987), Johnson (2001), Bošković (2012), Sailor (2009, 2012), Wurmbrand (2012)
 - ▶ Perfect *have* can be elided - Akmajian, Steele & Wasow (1979), Thoms (2010)

Analysis, part I: The ellipsis site (13)

Akmajian, Steele & Wasow (1979), Thoms (2011): *have* can be elided!

(15) John couldn't have studied Spanish, but Bill could.

(Akmajian, Steele & Wasow 1979:15, example 48)

! Wurmbrand (2012): the acceptability of (5) is due to the available mismatch reading in which perfect aspect is altogether absent from the elided constituent:

(16) John couldn't have studied Spanish, but Bill could [~~study Spanish~~].

Analysis, part I: The ellipsis site (14)

Can we find contexts that show whether *have* can genuinely be elided or not?

- **Ellipsis and fixed expressions**
- Ellipsis and identity requirements

Analysis, part I: The ellipsis site (15)

Ellipsis and fixed expressions

Certain expressions are dependent on perfect aspect:

- (17)
- a. We have been to Rome.
 - b. * We are being to Rome.
 - c. * We will be to Rome.
 - d. * We are to Rome.
- (18)
- a. Sarah has been around the block a few times.
 - b. * Sarah is being around the block a few times.
 - c. * Sarah will be around the block a few times.
 - d. * Sarah was around the block a few times.

Analysis, part I: The ellipsis site (16)

If VPE is applied to these expressions, no mismatch interpretation without the perfect aspect will be available.

► This context shows whether perfect *have* can be elided.

Result: 80% of our (British English) informants rejected ellipsis of *have* in these cases.

(19) * This time next year Jon will have been to Rome, and I will **have**
~~been to Rome~~, as well.

(20) * I thought Sarah might have been around the block a few times,
and indeed she might **have** ~~been around the block a few times~~.

Analysis, part I: The ellipsis site (19)

Recapitulating:

- Passive *be/been* can be elided.
 - Copula *be/been* can be elided.
 - Progressive *be/been* can be elided.
 - Perfect *have* is never elided.
 - Modals and other finite auxiliaries are never elided.
- The ellipsis site must include at least the base position of progressive *BE*.
- ➡ Claim: VPE elides vP_{prog} .

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Analysis, part II: Auxiliary ellipsis (1)

Reminder

	Modal/ finite aux	Have	Be	Been	Being	Lexical V
Elided	*	*	(✓)	(✓)	✓	✓

- Ellipsis site = vP_{prog}
- Auxiliaries raise to the relevant tense/aspectual head to license their morphological form (by checking a PF feature).

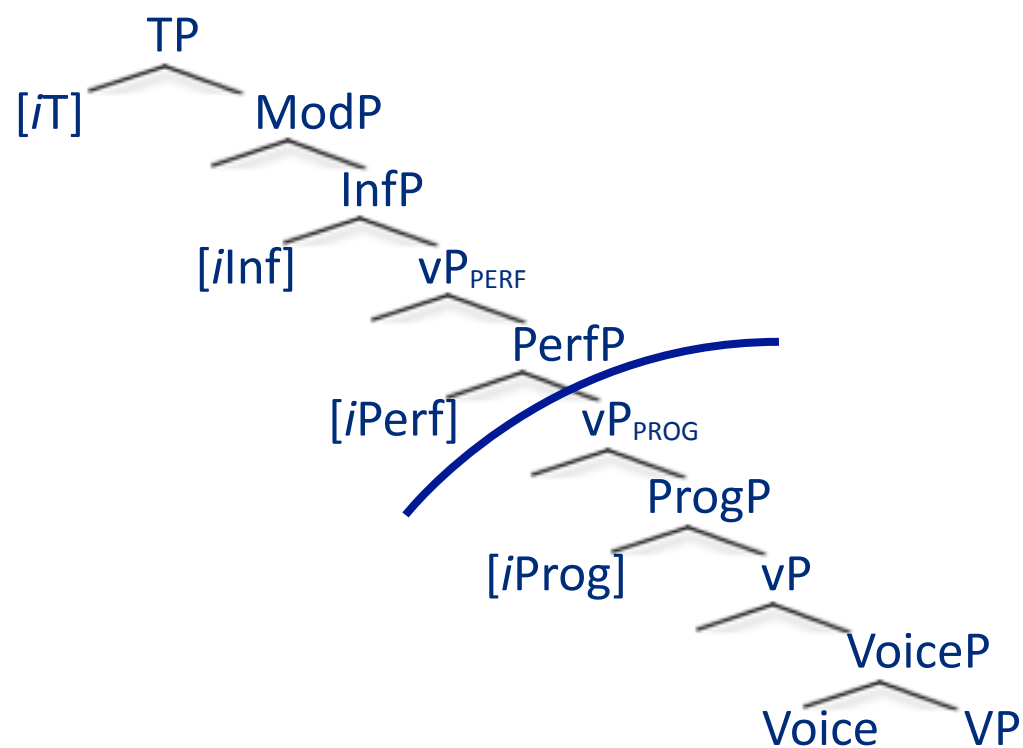
Analysis, part II: Auxiliary ellipsis (2)

A. Modals/have and being/lexical V

B. Be and been

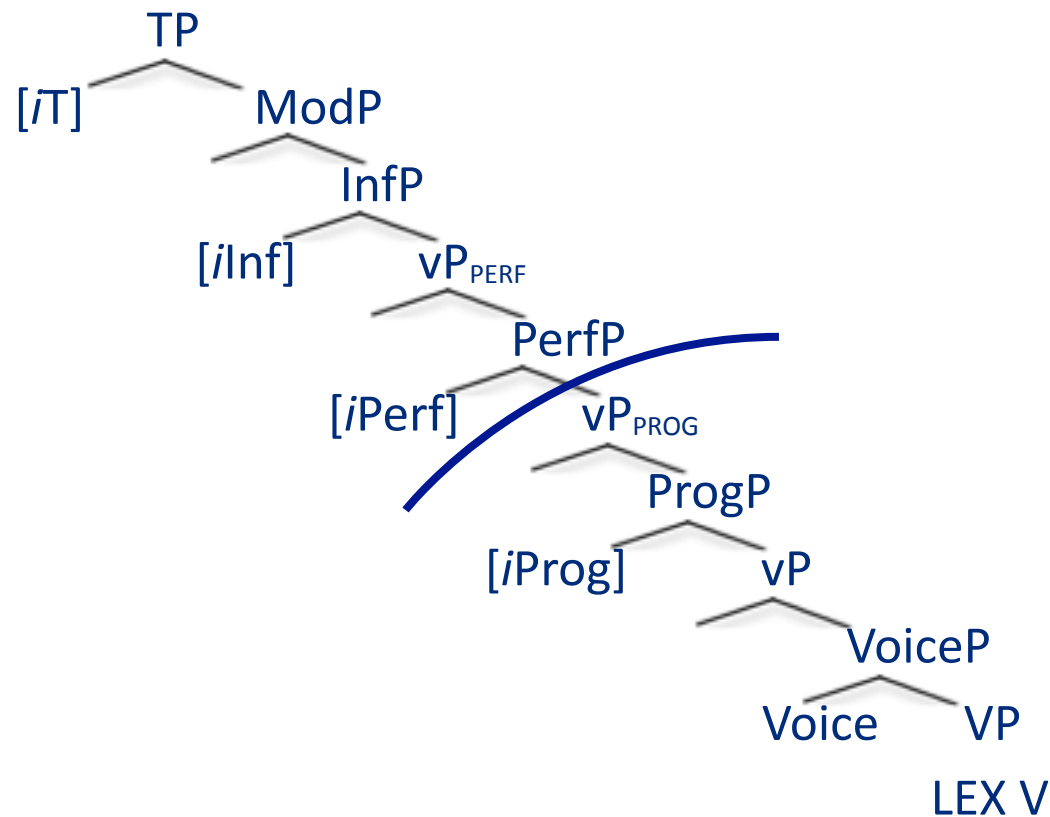
Analysis, part II: Auxiliary ellipsis (3)

A. Modals/*have* and lexical V/*being*



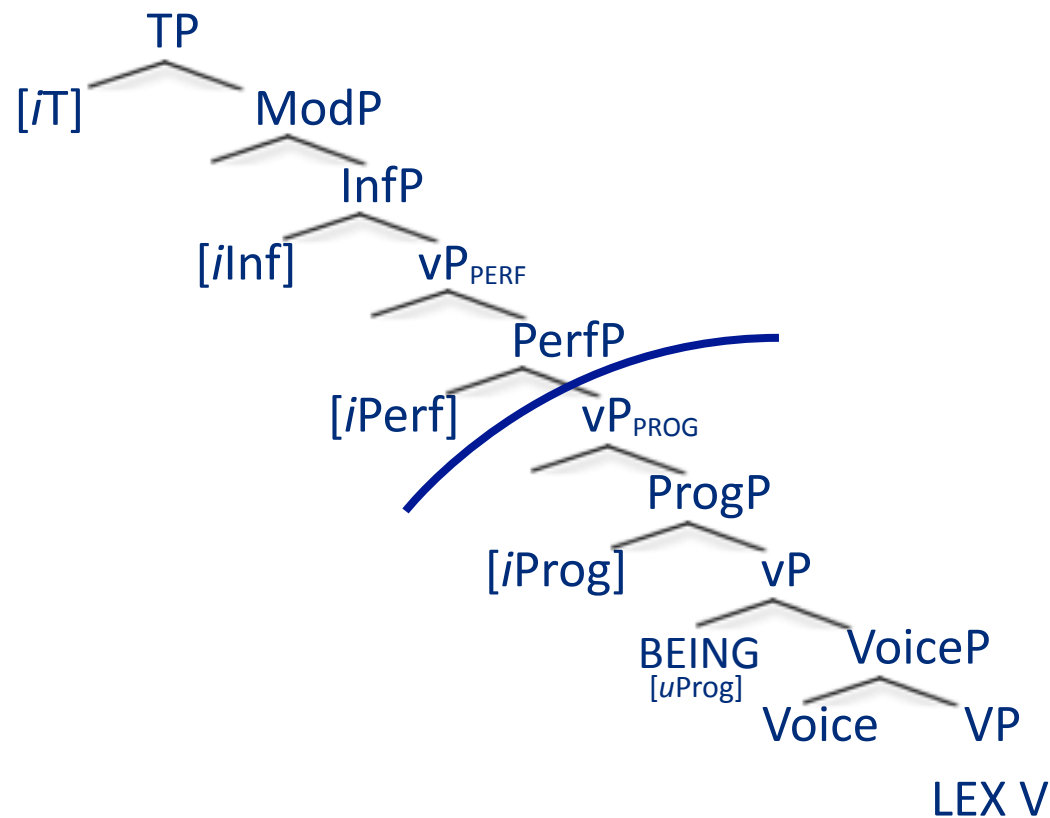
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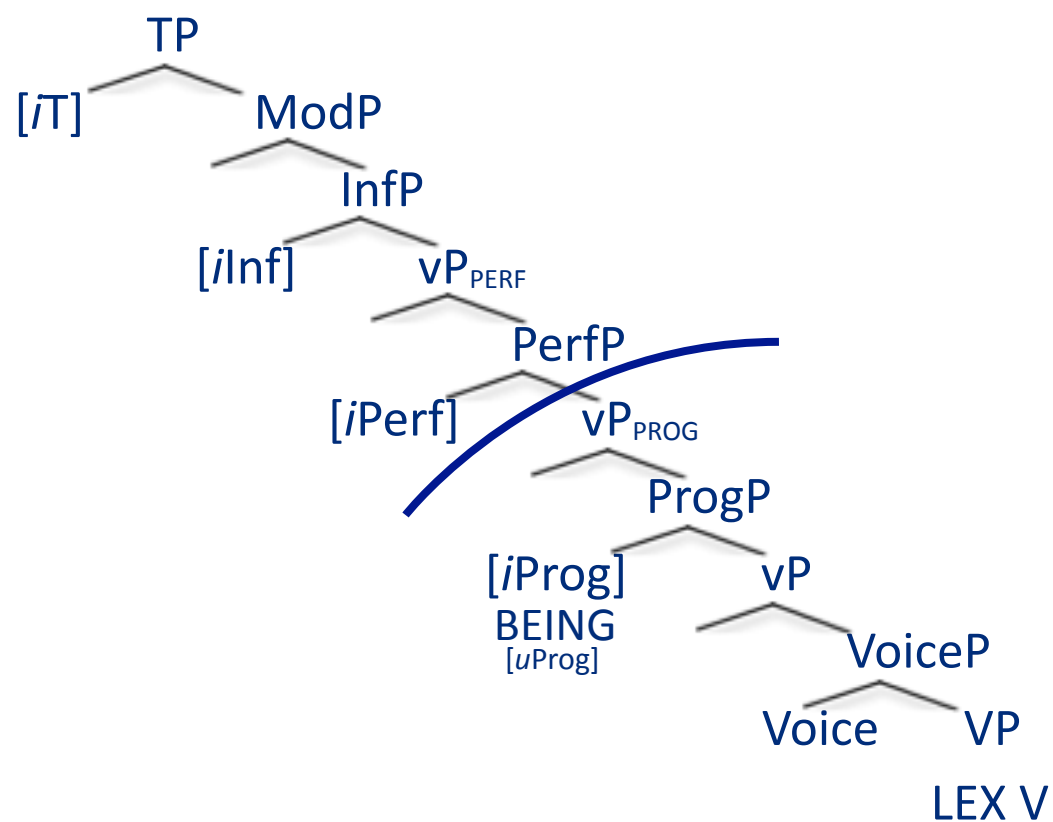
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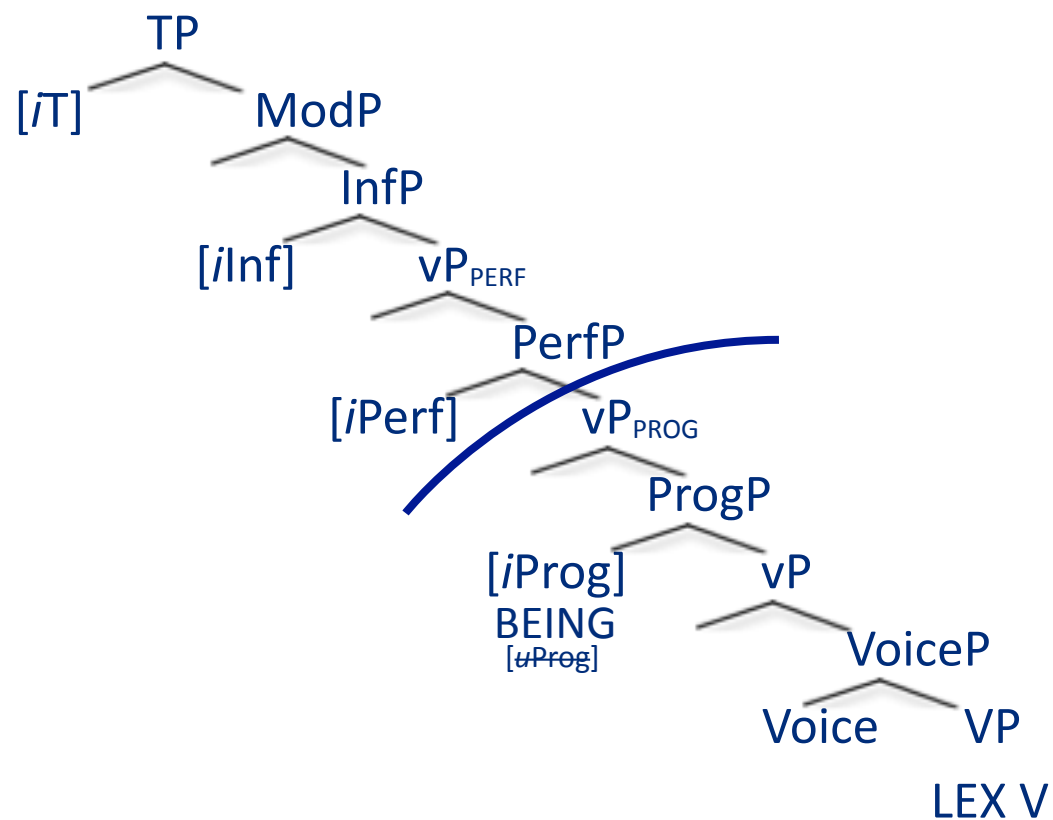
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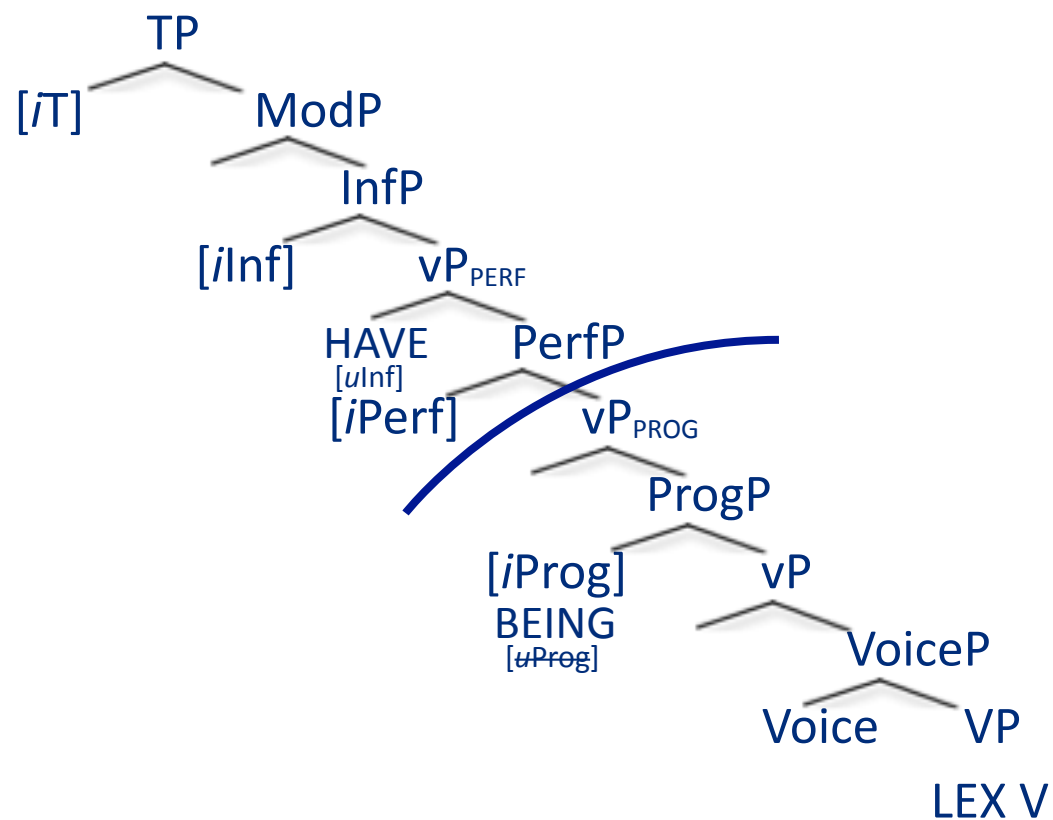
Analysis, part II: Auxiliary ellipsis (3)

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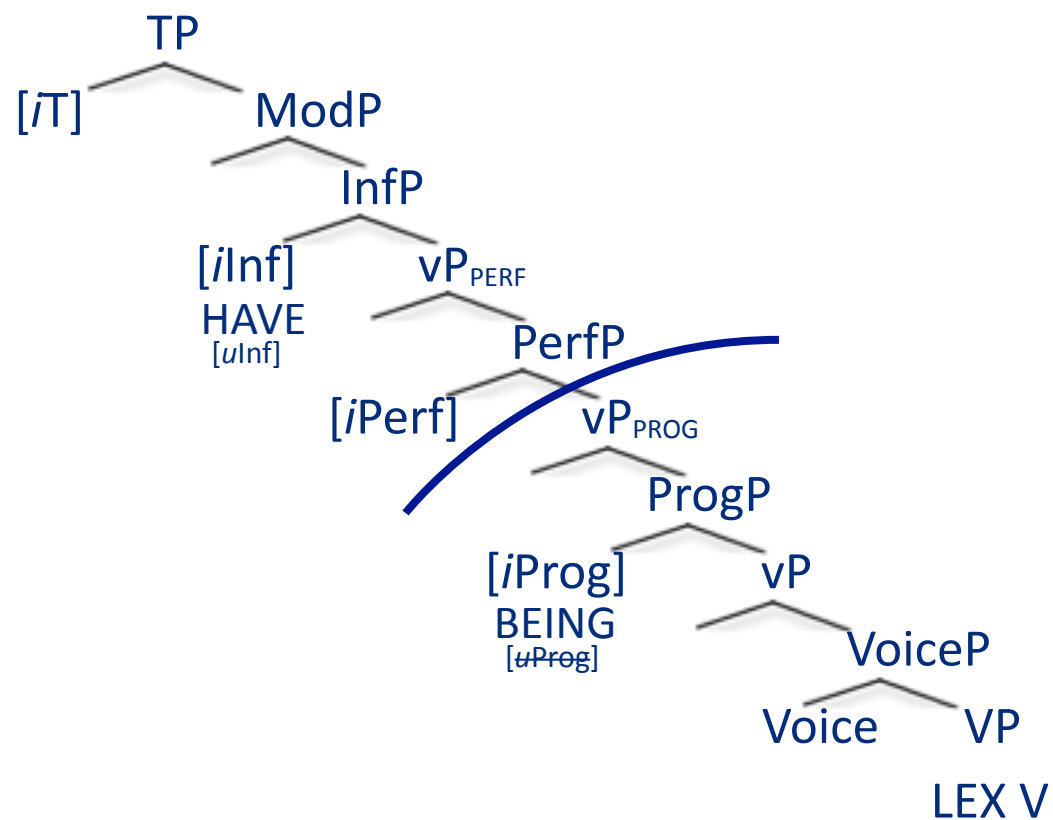
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A. Modals/*have* and lexical V/*being*



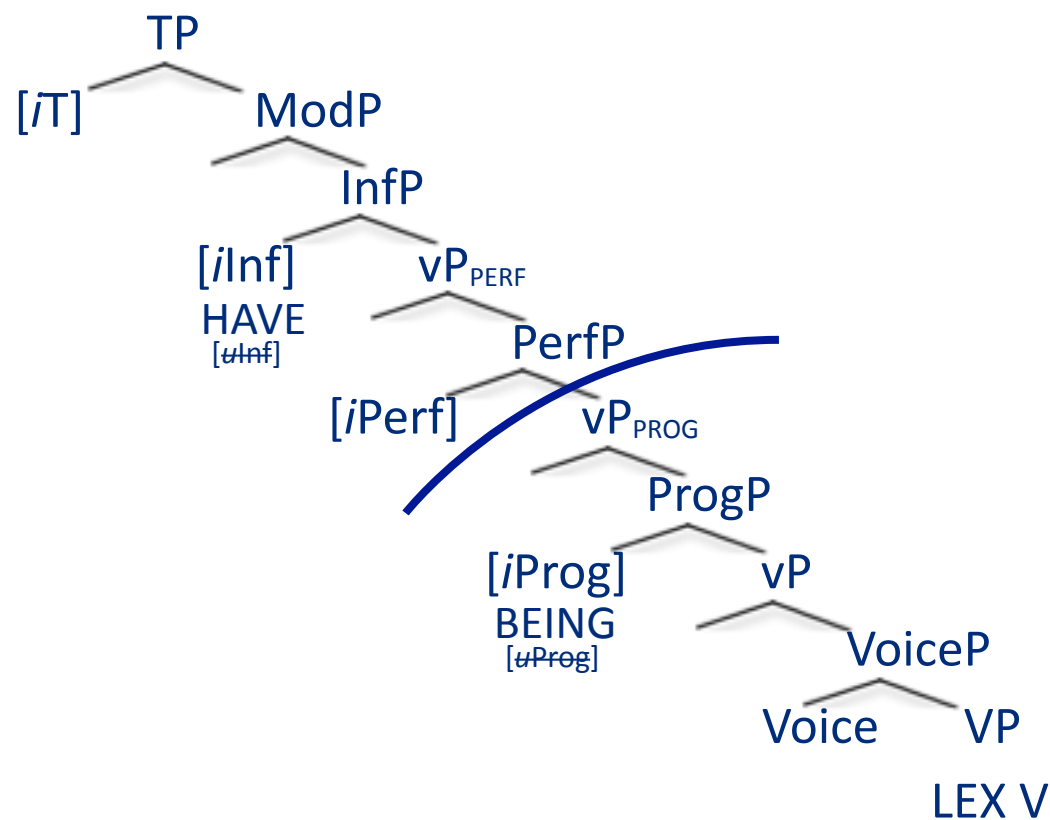
Analysis, part II: Auxiliary ellipsis (3)

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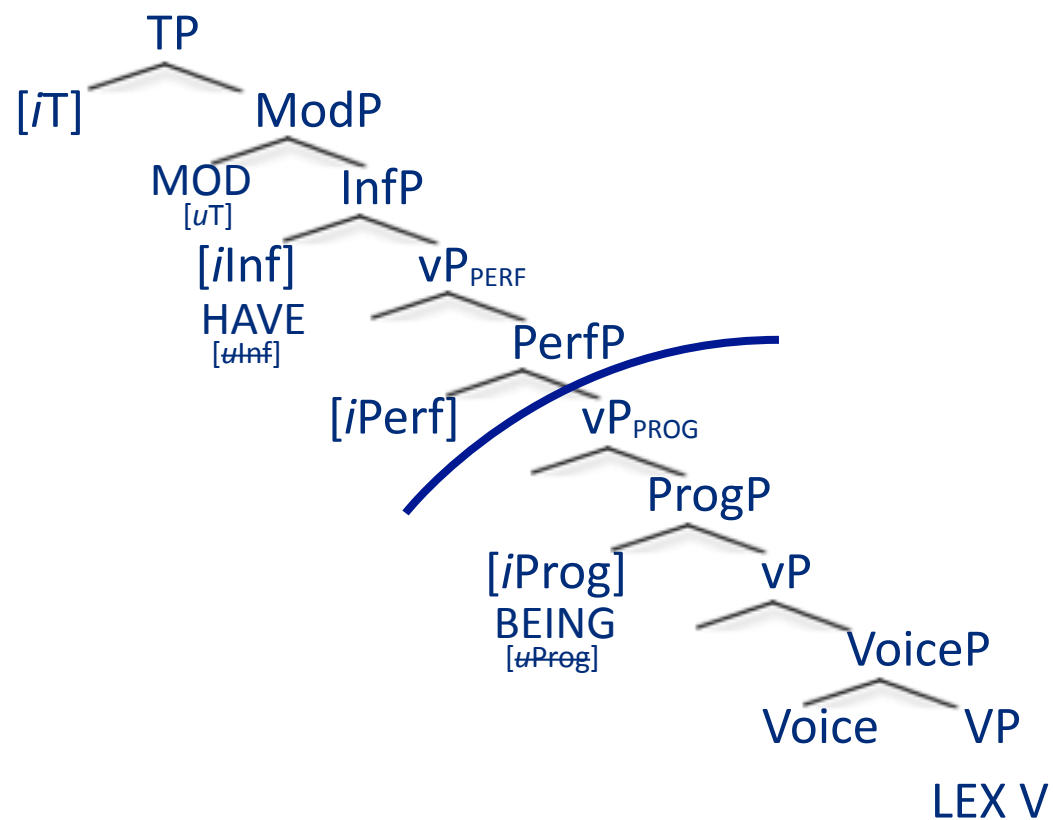
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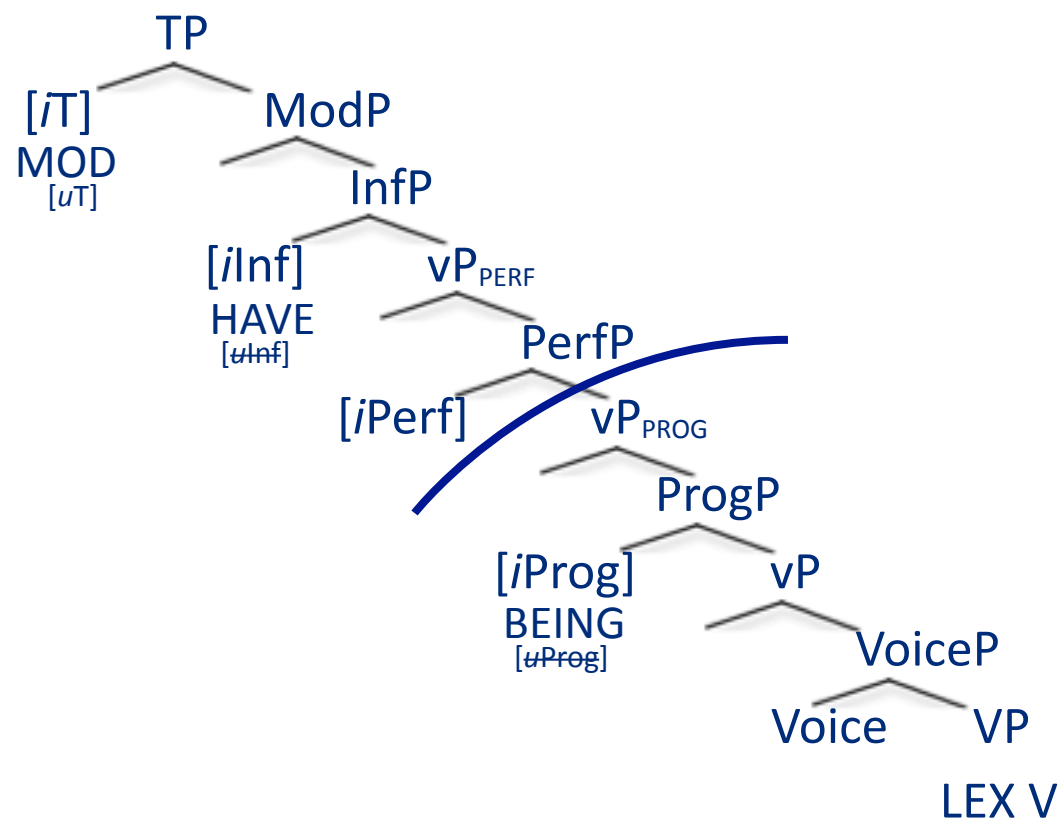
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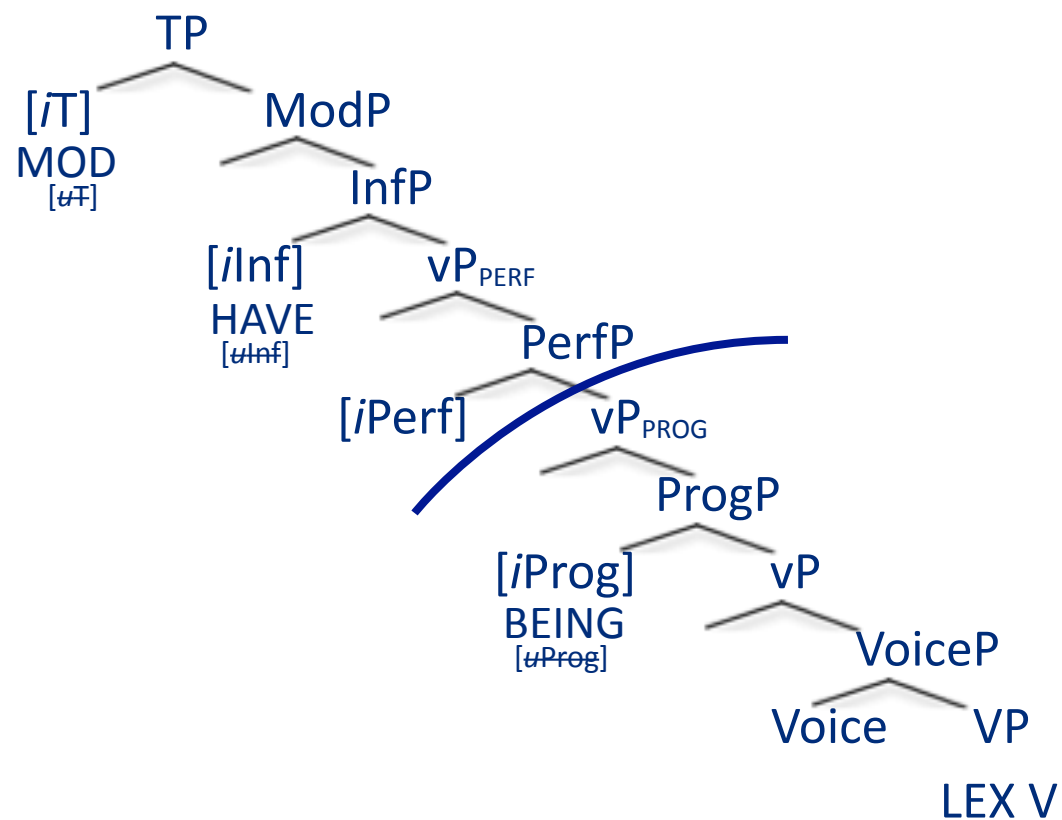
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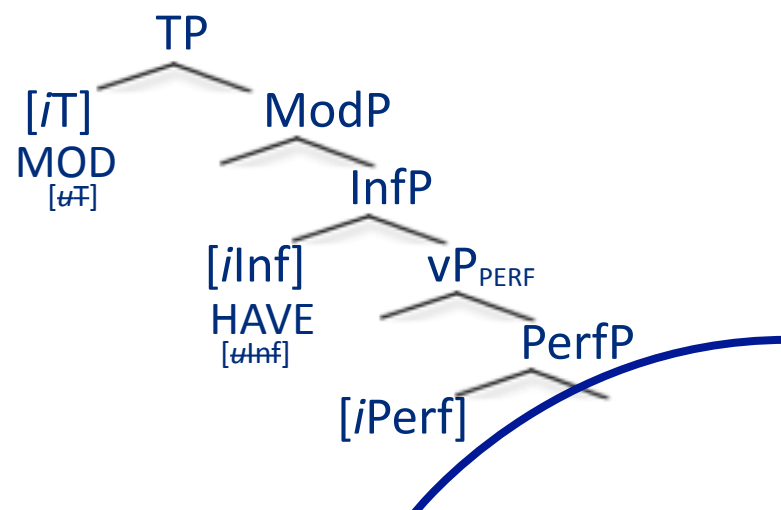
Analysis, part II: Auxiliary ellipsis (3)

A. Modals/*have* and lexical V/*being*



Analysis, part II: Auxiliary ellipsis (3)

A. Modals/*have* and lexical V/*being*



Analysis, part II: Auxiliary ellipsis (4)

Elided

- Lexical verb: merged inside the ellipsis site and never raises out
- *Being*: merged inside the ellipsis site and only raises to Prog°, INSIDE the ellipsis site

Not elided

- *Have*: merged outside the ellipsis site
- Modals: merged outside the ellipsis site



Analysis, part II: Auxiliary ellipsis (5)

B. *Be and been*

Be/been are merged inside the ellipsis site.

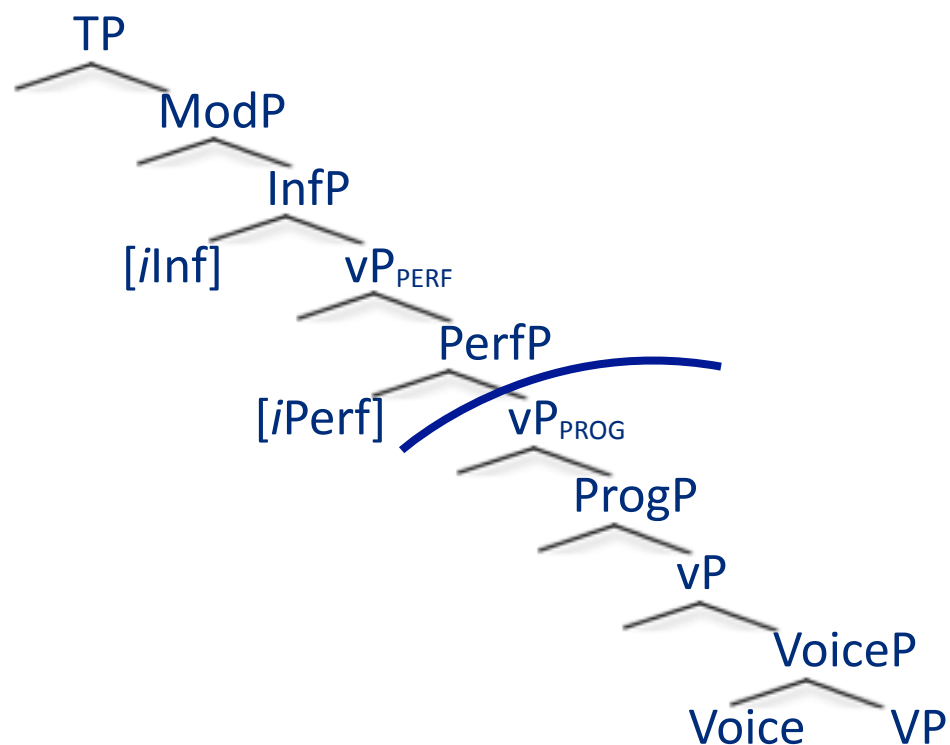
They raise out of the ellipsis site for checking.

► Two options available:

1. Raise and check = survive ellipsis.
2. Remain within the ellipsis site and be deleted via ellipsis, thereby removing the problematic PF features from the derivation.

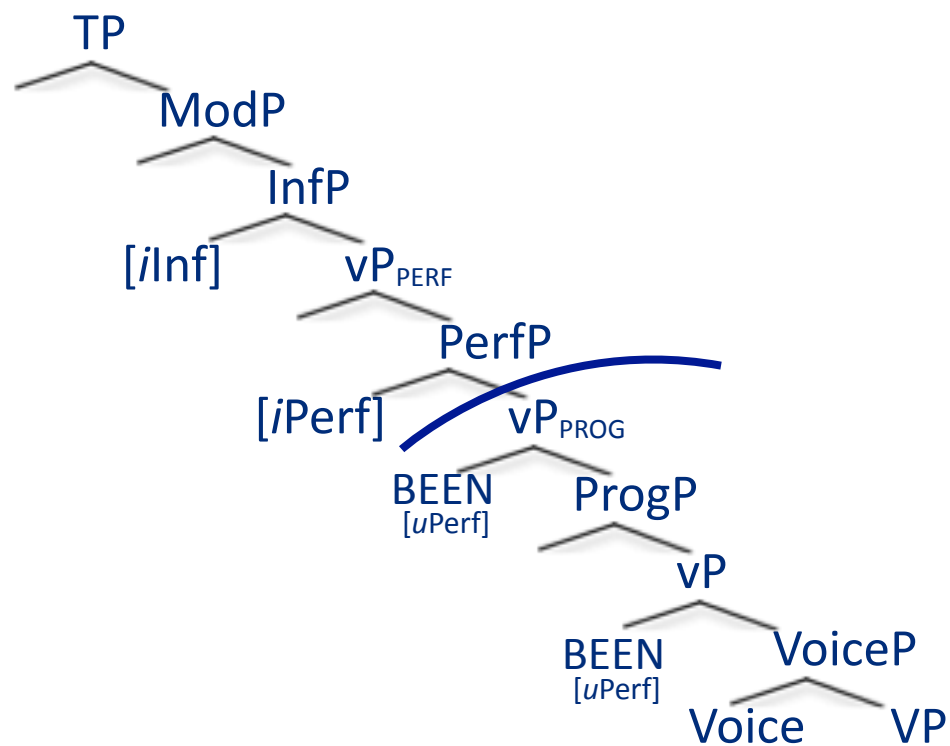
Analysis, part II: Auxiliary ellipsis (6)

Non-ellipsis of *be/been*



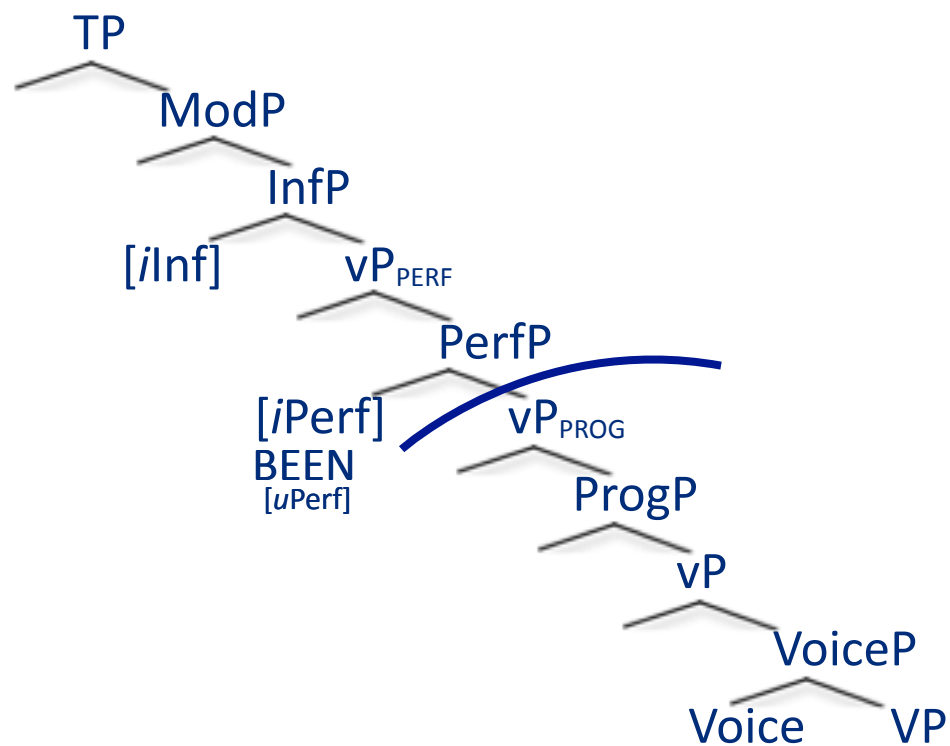
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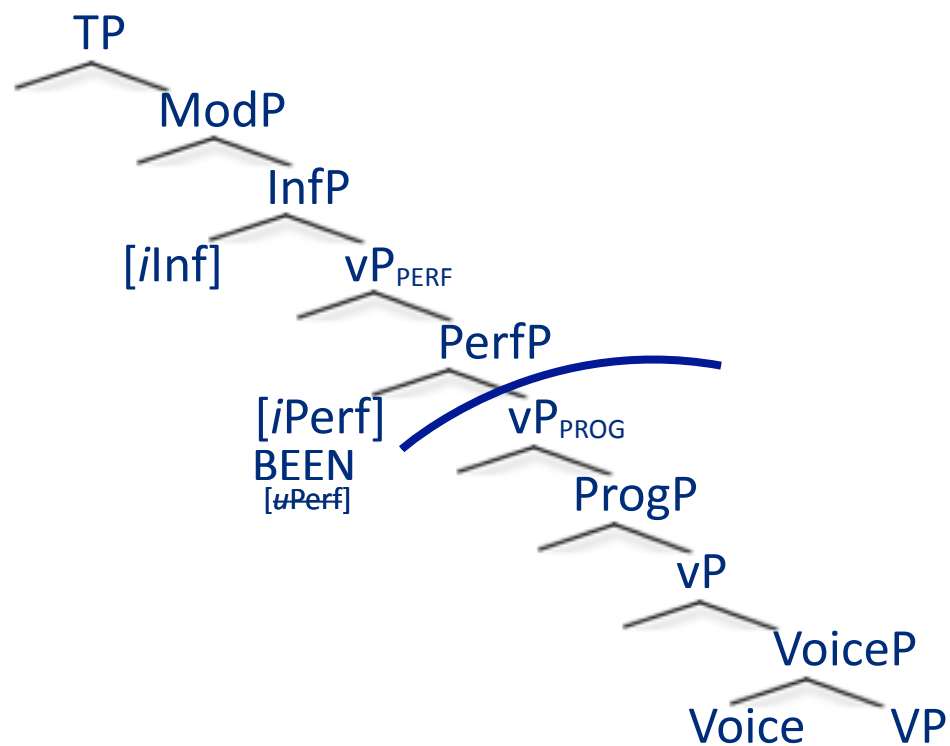
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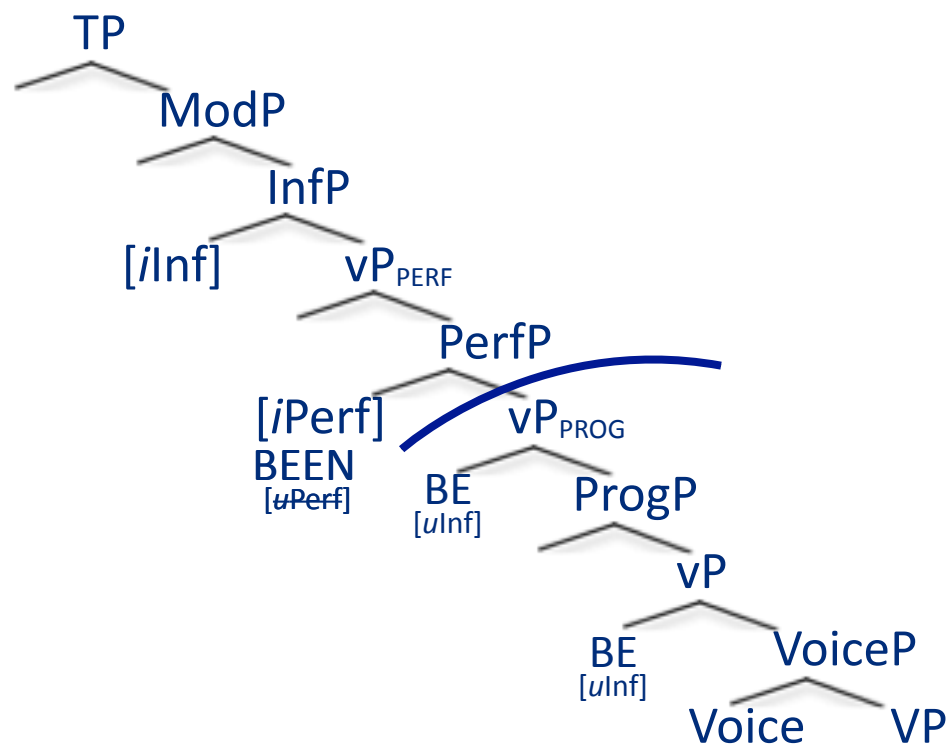
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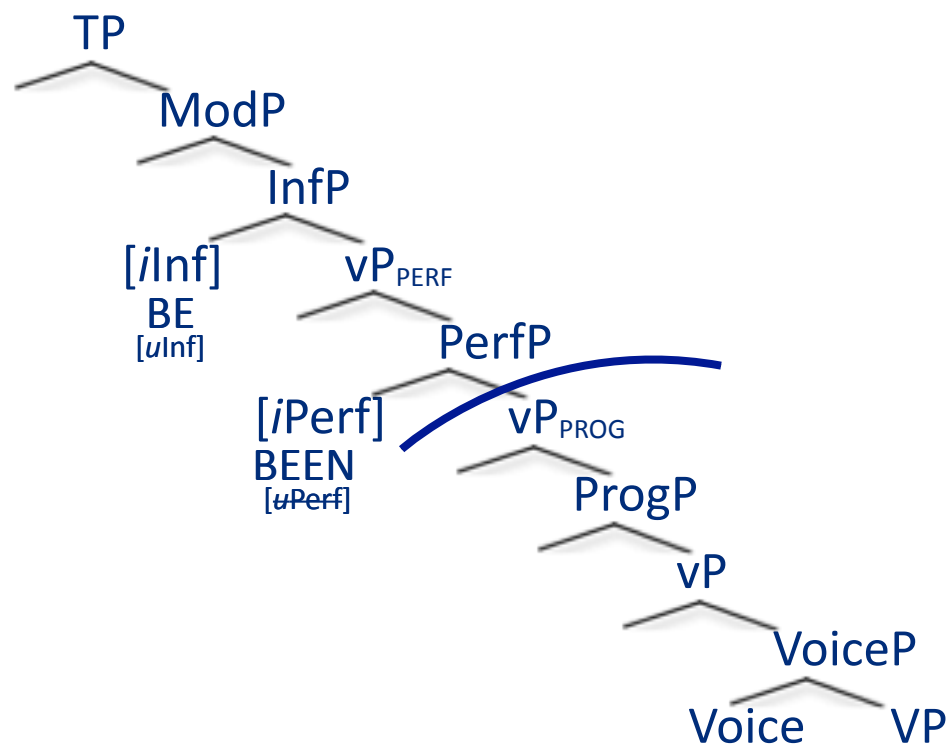
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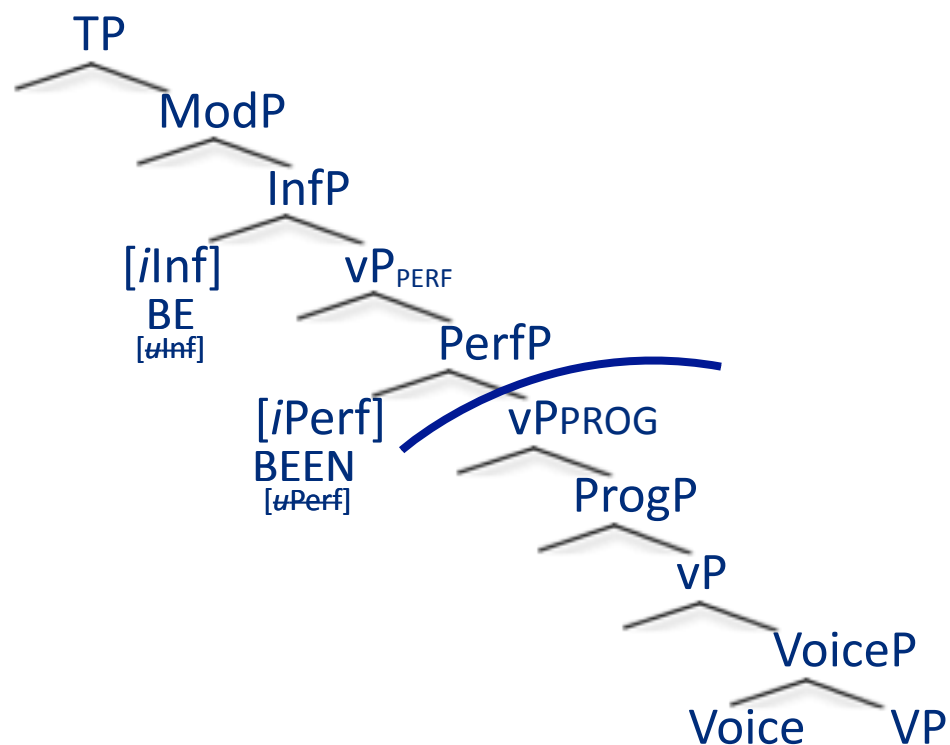
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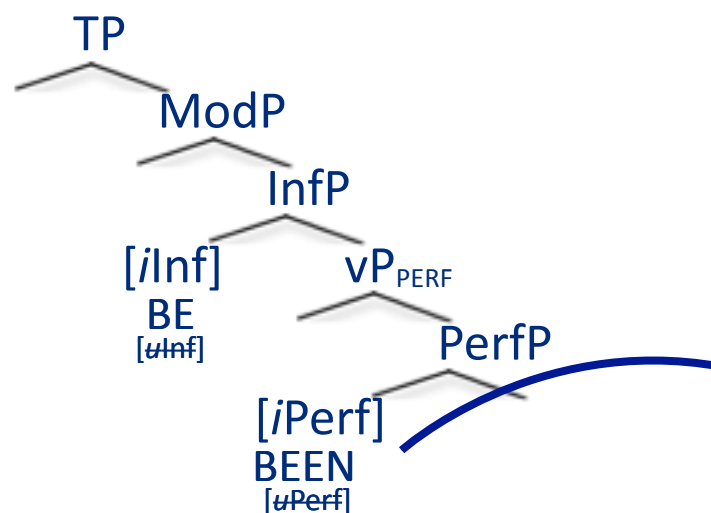
Analysis, part II: Auxiliary ellipsis (6)

Non-ellipsis of *be/been*



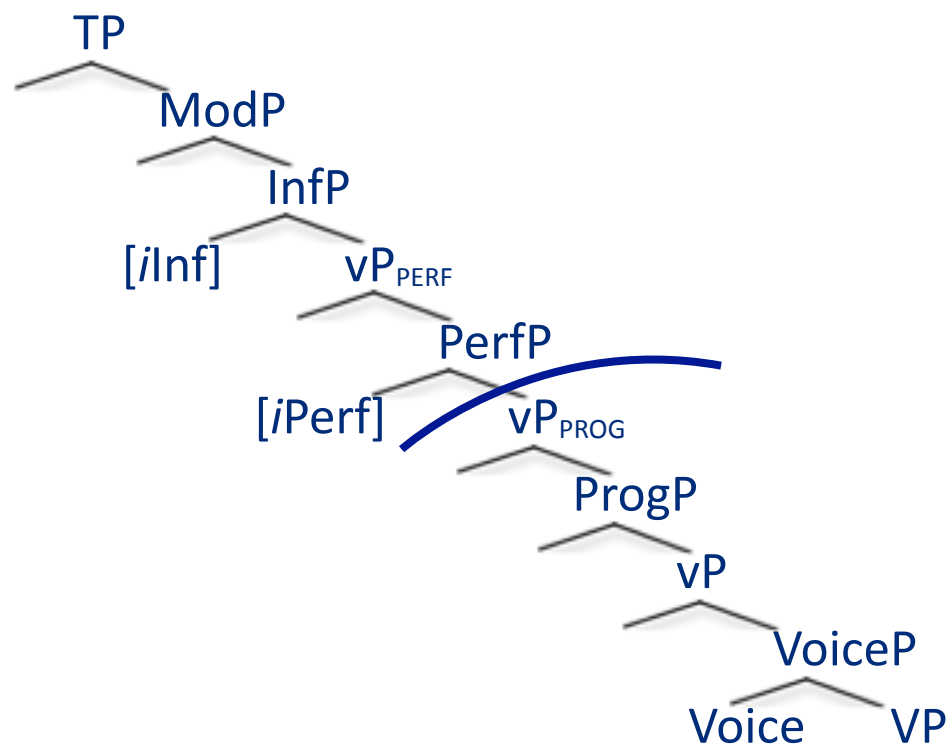
Analysis, part II: Auxiliary ellipsis (6)

Non-ellipsis of *be/been*



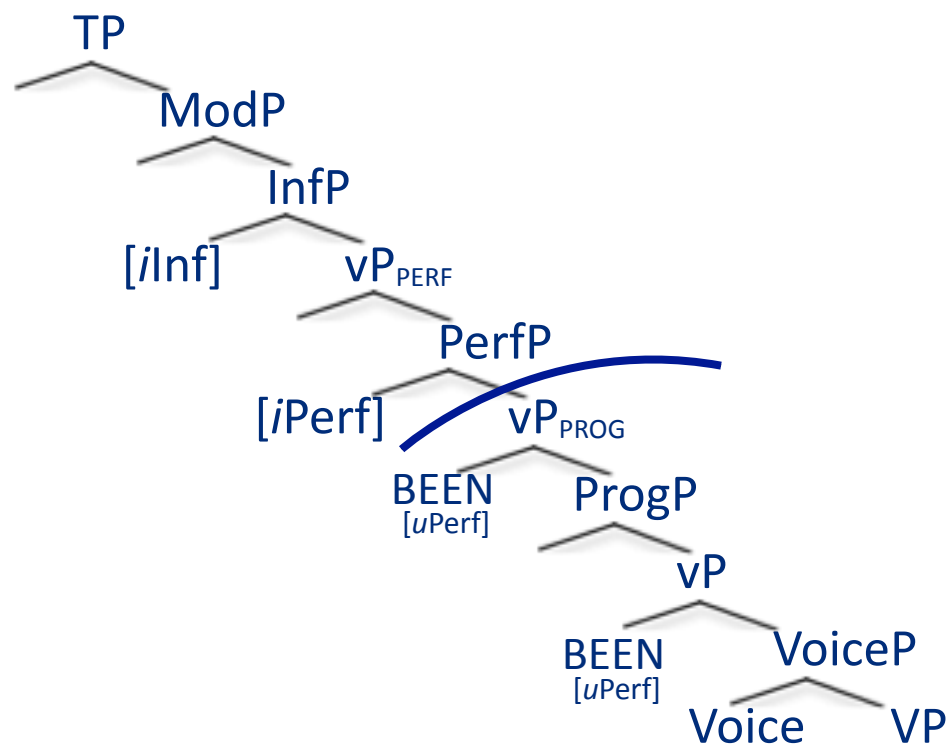
Analysis, part II: Auxiliary ellipsis (7)

Ellipsis of *be/been*



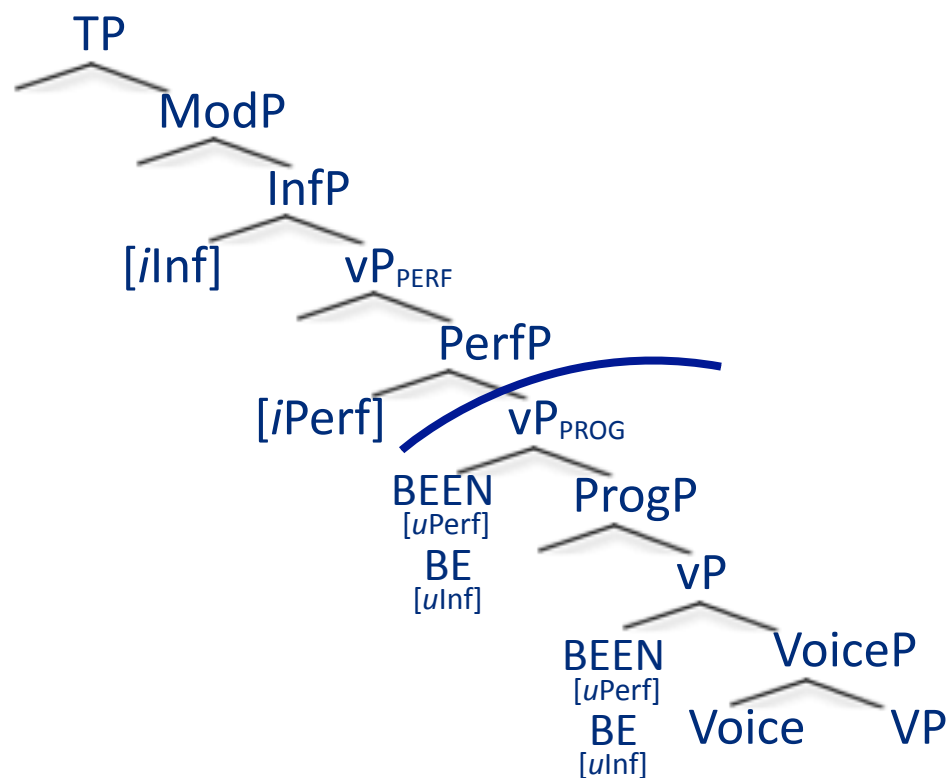
Analysis, part II: Auxiliary ellipsis (7)

Ellipsis of *be/been*



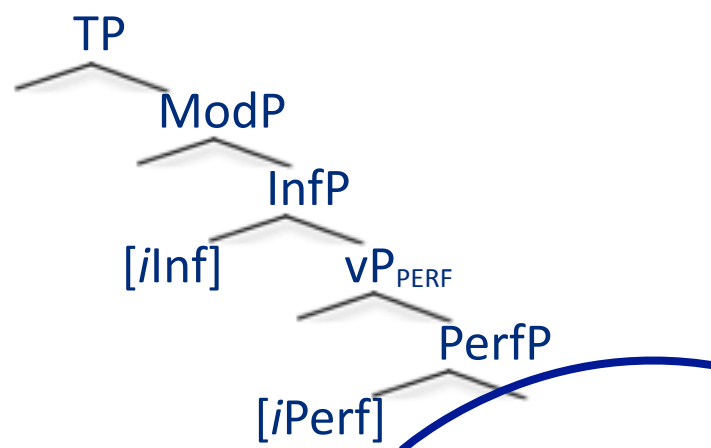
Analysis, part II: Auxiliary ellipsis (7)

Ellipsis of *be/been*



Analysis, part II: Auxiliary ellipsis (7)

Ellipsis of *be/been*



Analysis, part II: Auxiliary ellipsis (8)

If *be/been* raise out of the ellipsis site to check their features, they survive ellipsis.

If *be/been* do not raise and remain in the ellipsis site, their uninterpretable features are elided along with them, so the derivation does not crash at PF.

- ▶ Optional raising only made possible by rescue via ellipsis
- ▶ Prediction: auxiliary raising obligatory in all other contexts.

Relevant data: VP fronting.

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4. Analysis, Part II: auxiliary ellipsis
5. **Extending the analysis: VP fronting**
6. Digging deeper: predicate ellipsis
7. Conclusion and further issues

Extending the analysis: VP fronting (1)

VPF targets the same chunk of structure as VPE (Zagona 1982; Johnson 2001; Kim 2003; Aelbrecht & Haegeman 2012; Funakoshi 2012; Aelbrecht 2012)

- The lexical verb is fronted
- *Being* is fronted
- *Have* is never fronted
- Modals are never fronted

Extending the analysis: VP fronting (2)

Lexical verb and *being*: always fronted

(23) * If John says he has eaten fish, then [fish] he has **eaten**.

(24) If John says he has eaten fish, then [**eaten** fish] he has.

(25) * If John says he was being seduced, then [seduced] he was **being**.

(26) If John says he was being seduced, then [**being** seduced] he was.

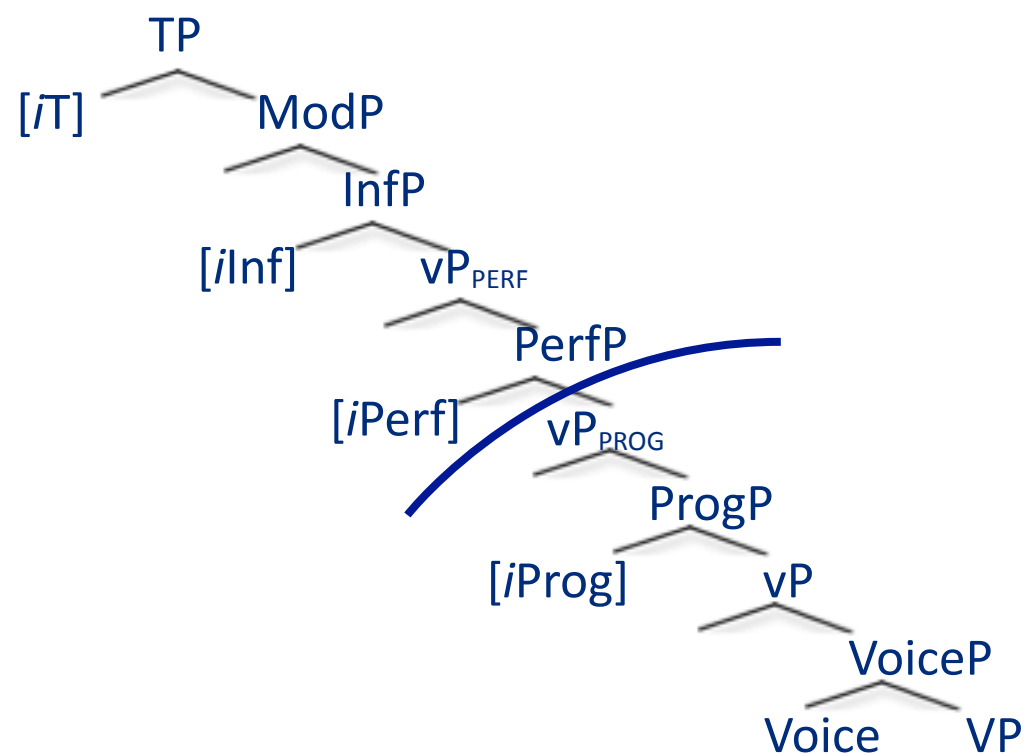
Extending the analysis: VP fronting (3)

Modals and *have*: never fronted

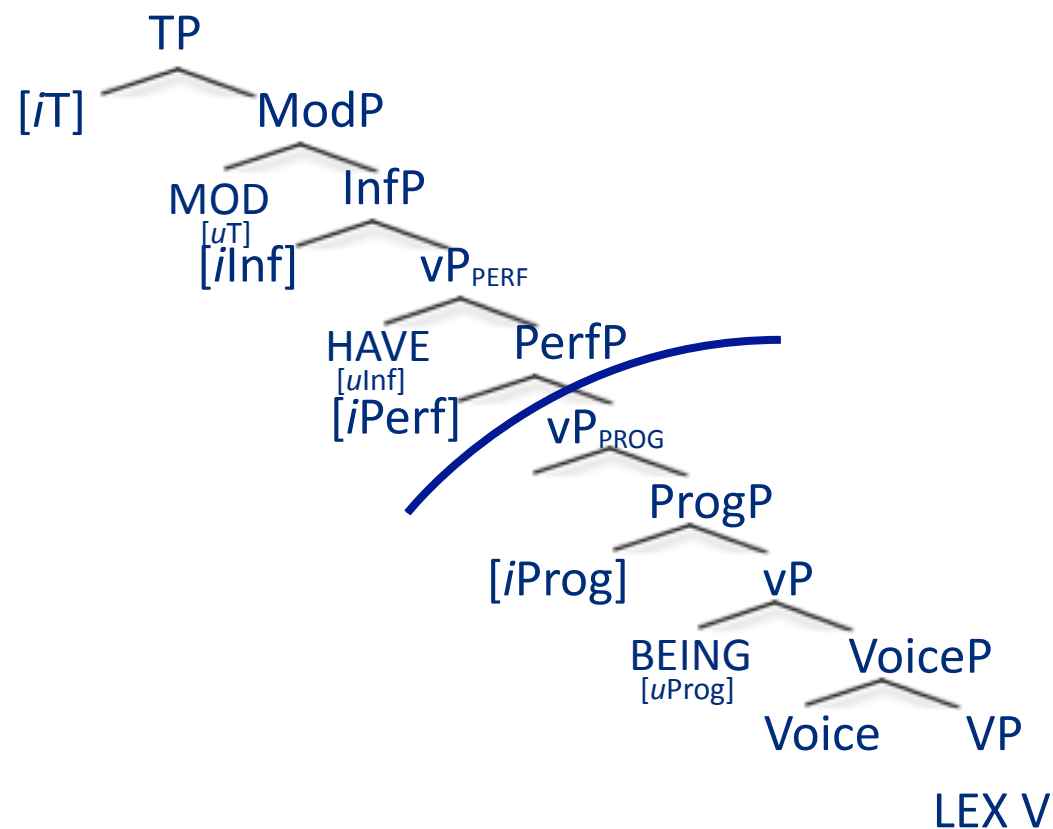
- (27) If John says he may have eaten fish, then [eaten fish] he may **have**.
- (28) * If John says he may have eaten fish, then [**have** eaten fish] he may.
- (29) If John says he will eat fish, then [eat fish] he **will**.
- (30) * If John says he will eat fish, then [**will** eat fish] he.

► Explanation: VPF targets same constituent as VPE: vP_{PROG} !

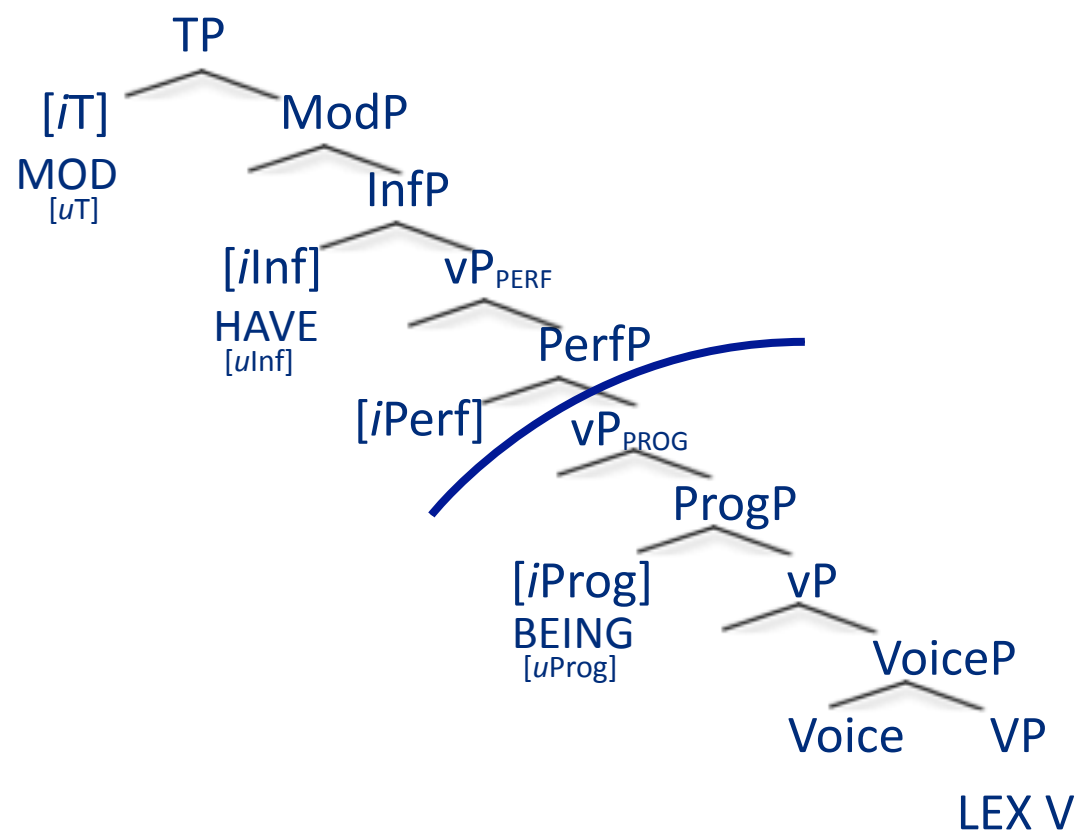
Extending the analysis: VP fronting (4)



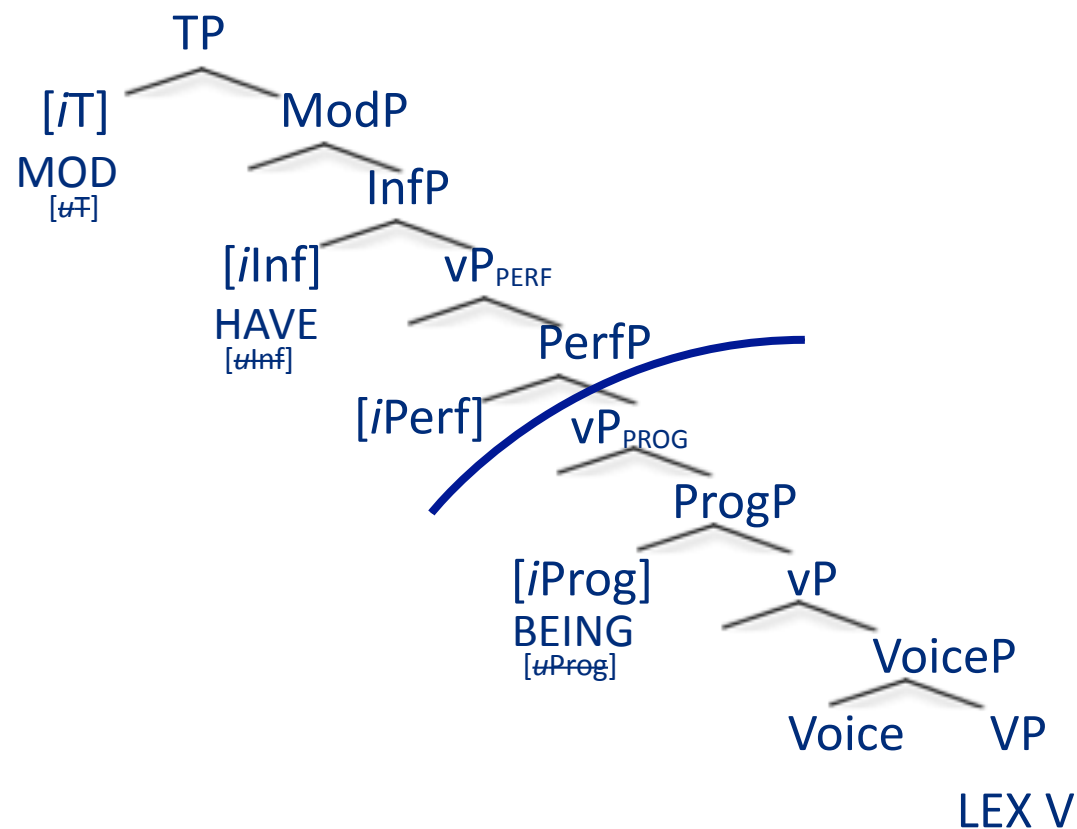
Extending the analysis: VP fronting (4)



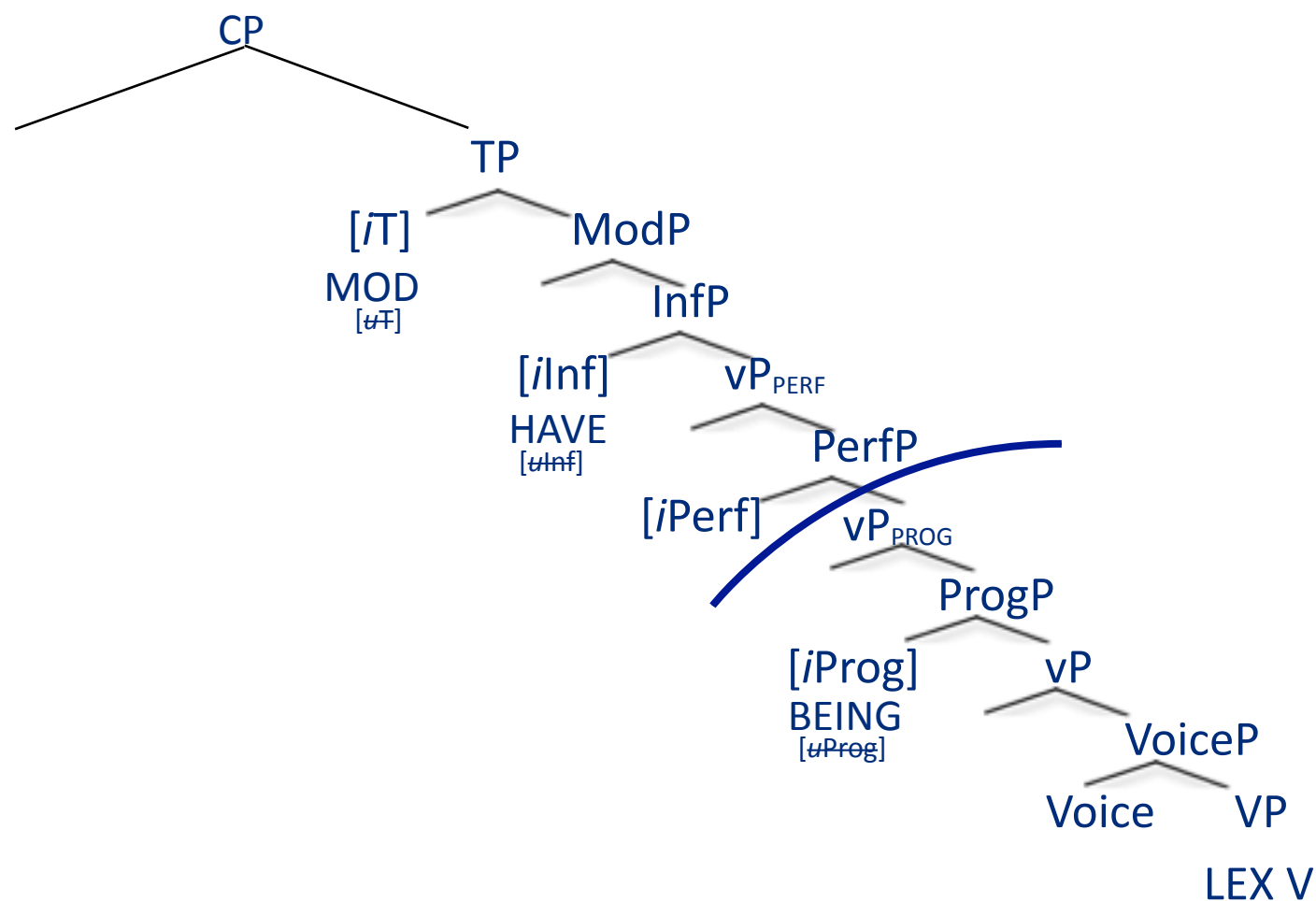
Extending the analysis: VP fronting (4)



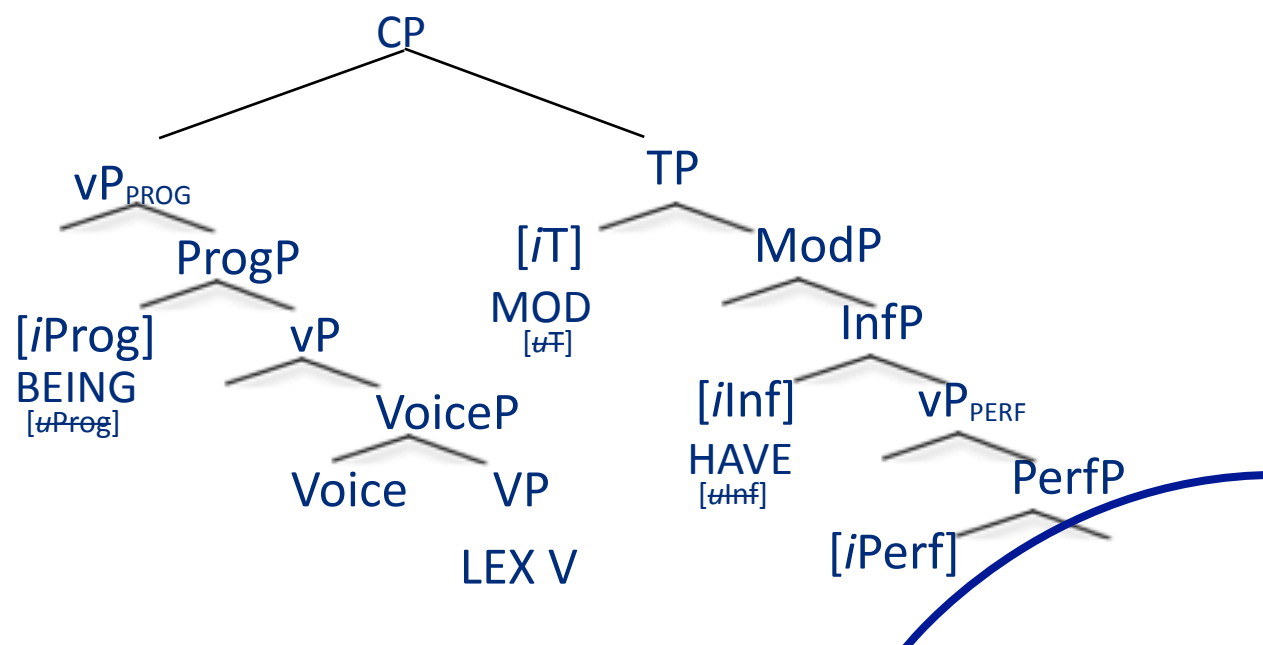
Extending the analysis: VP fronting (4)



Extending the analysis: VP fronting (4)



Extending the analysis: VP fronting (4)



Extending the analysis: VP fronting (5)

Akmajian, Steele & Wasow (1979) and Roberts (1998): *be/been* can never be fronted, not even optionally:

- (31) a. If John says he'll be working late, then [working late] he will **be**.
b.* If John says he'll be working late, then [**be** working late] he will.
c. If John says he has been working late, then [working late] he has **been**.
d.* If John says he has been working late, then [**been** working late] he has.

= remarkable contrast with VP ellipsis.

► This can easily be explained by our analysis.

Extending the analysis: VP fronting (6)

Fronted constituent same as ellipsis site: vPPROG

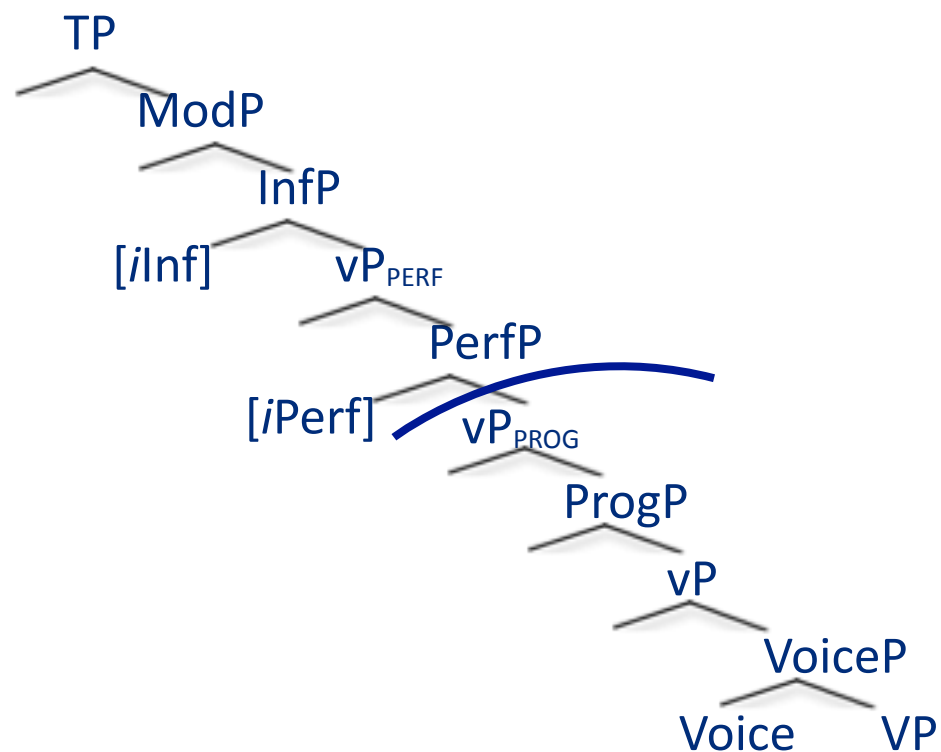
Be/been are generated inside fronted constituent

▶ Two options for *be/been*:

- *Be/been* raise out of VPF site to Perf°/Inf° to check features.
 - ▶ Not fronted, derivation fine.
- If *be/been* do not raise and remain in the VPF site, no ellipsis occurs to rescue the derivation.
 - ▶ The unchecked features remain and the derivation crashes.

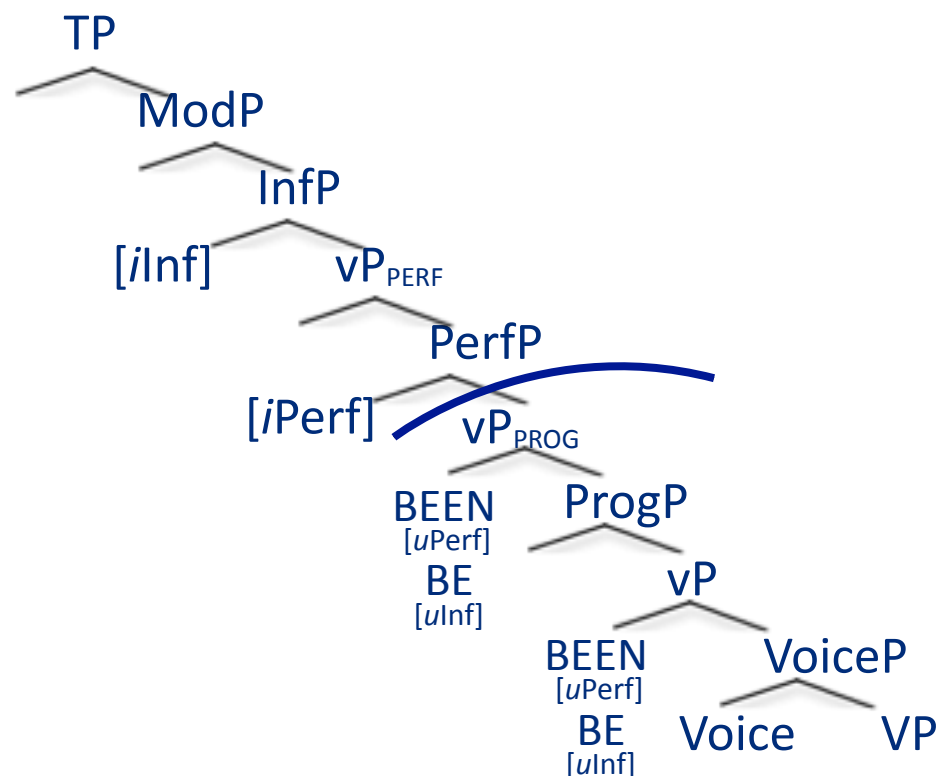
Extending the analysis: VP fronting (7)

Raising of *be/been*



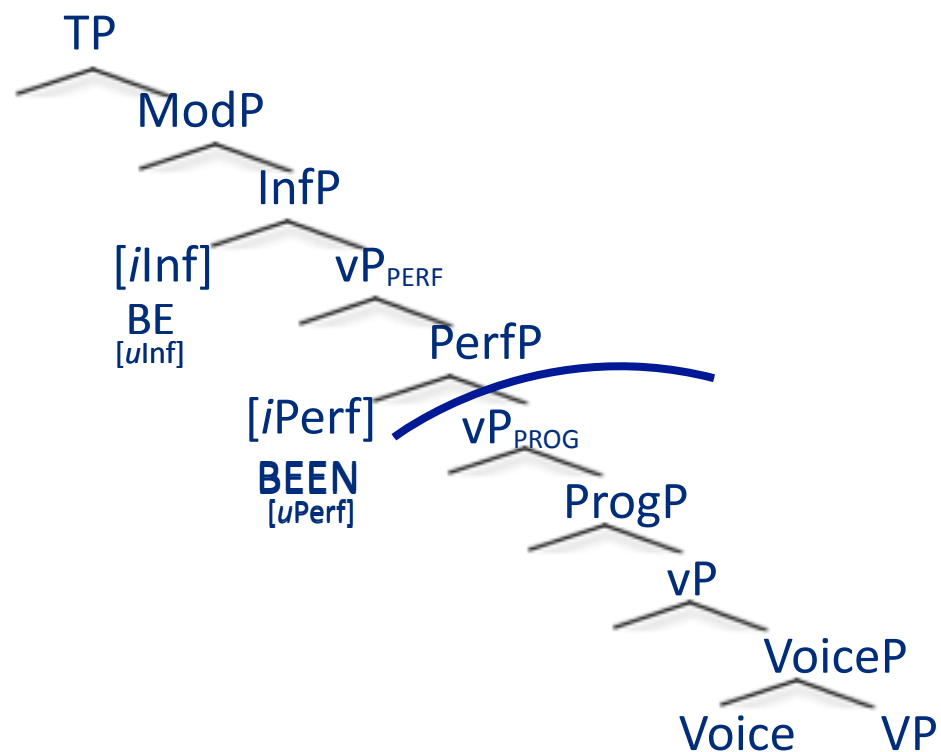
Extending the analysis: VP fronting (7)

Raising of *be/been*



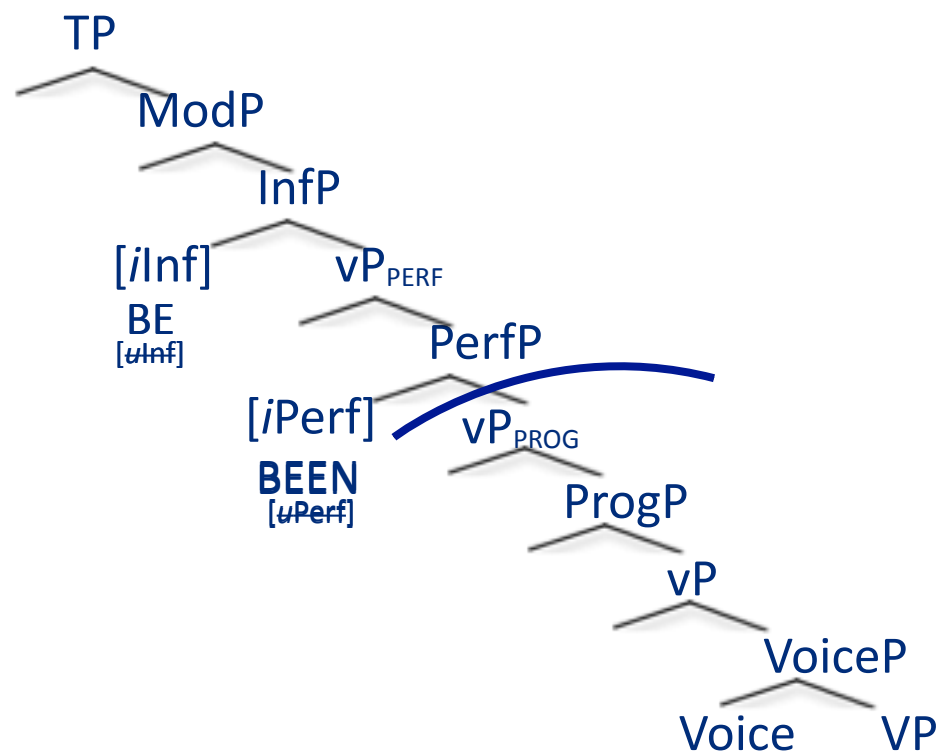
Extending the analysis: VP fronting (7)

Raising of *be/been*



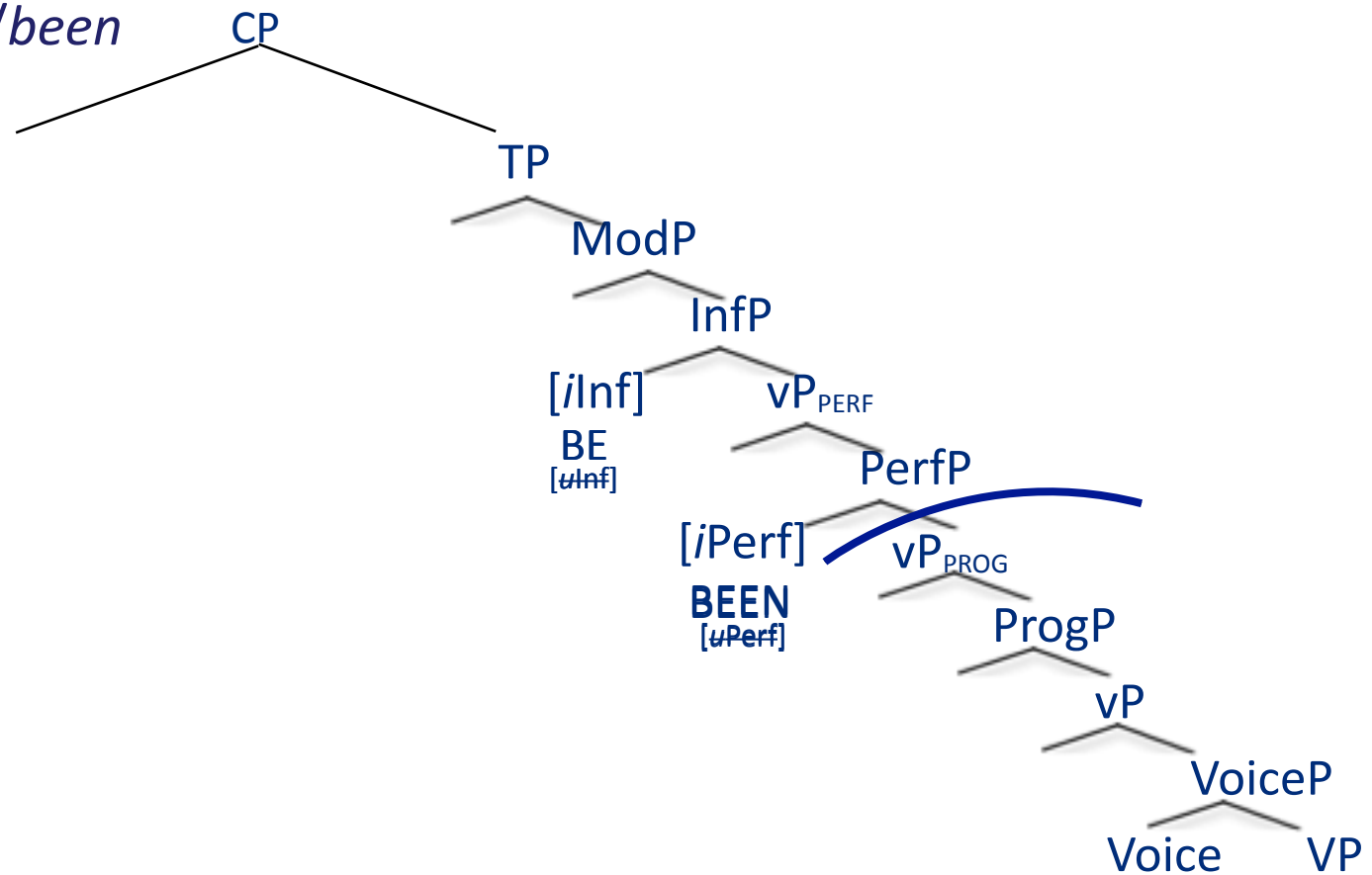
Extending the analysis: VP fronting (7)

Raising of *be/been*



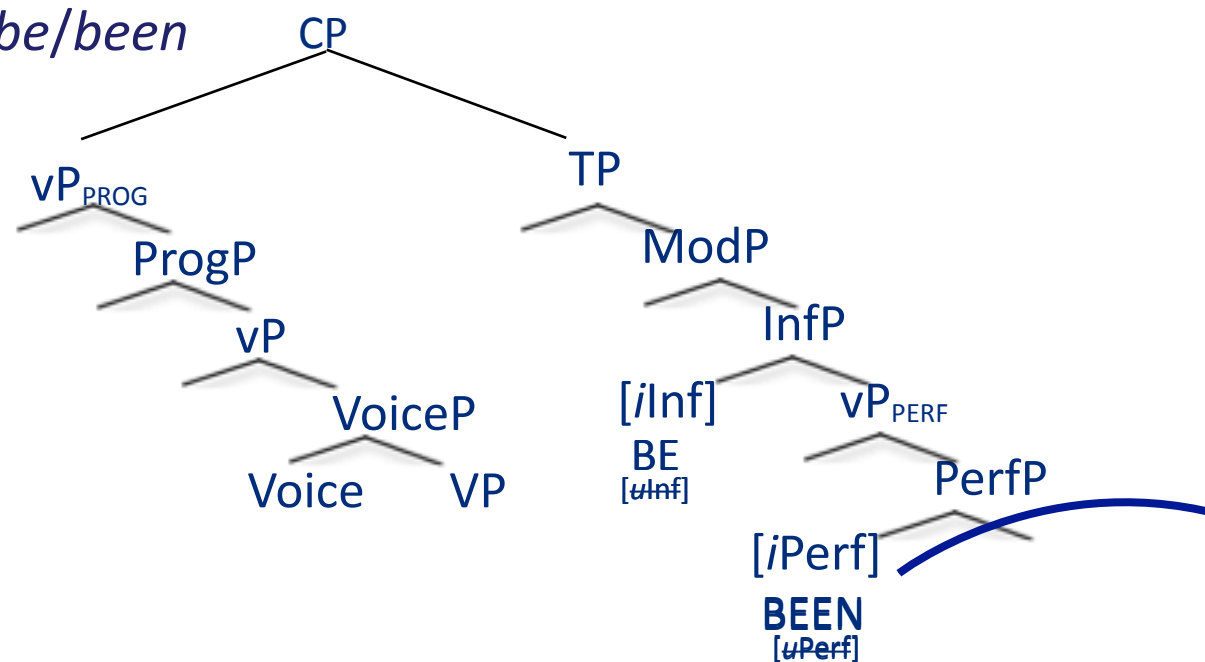
Extending the analysis: VP fronting (7)

Raising of *be/been*



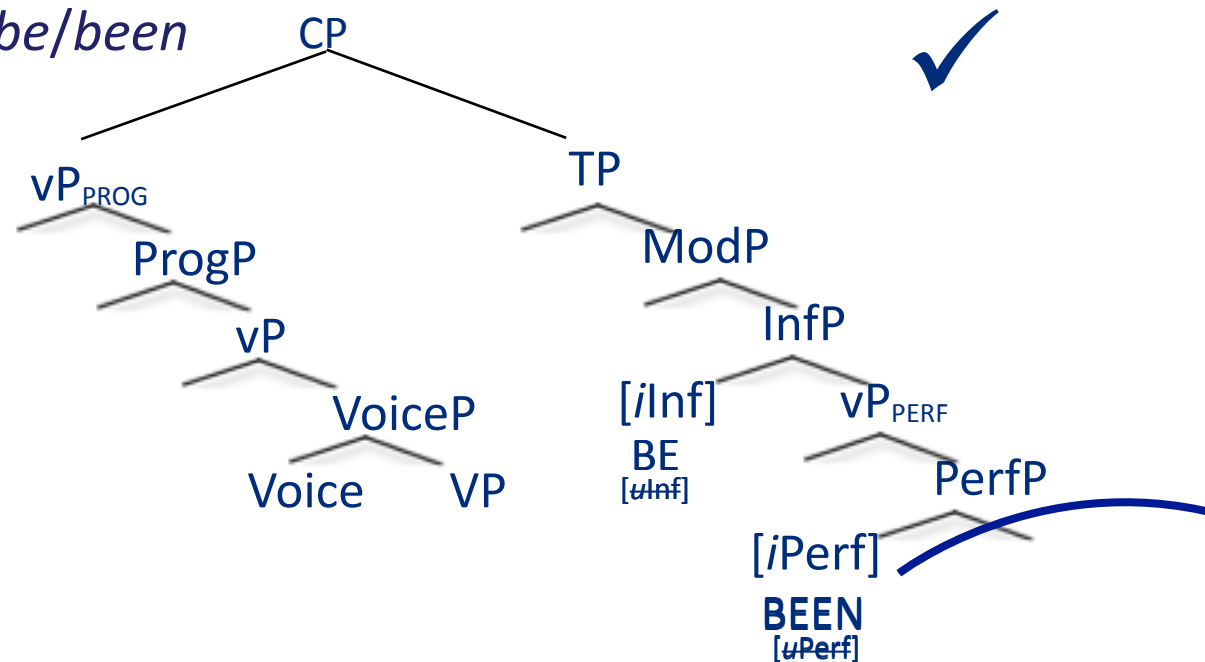
Extending the analysis: VP fronting (7)

Raising of *be/been*



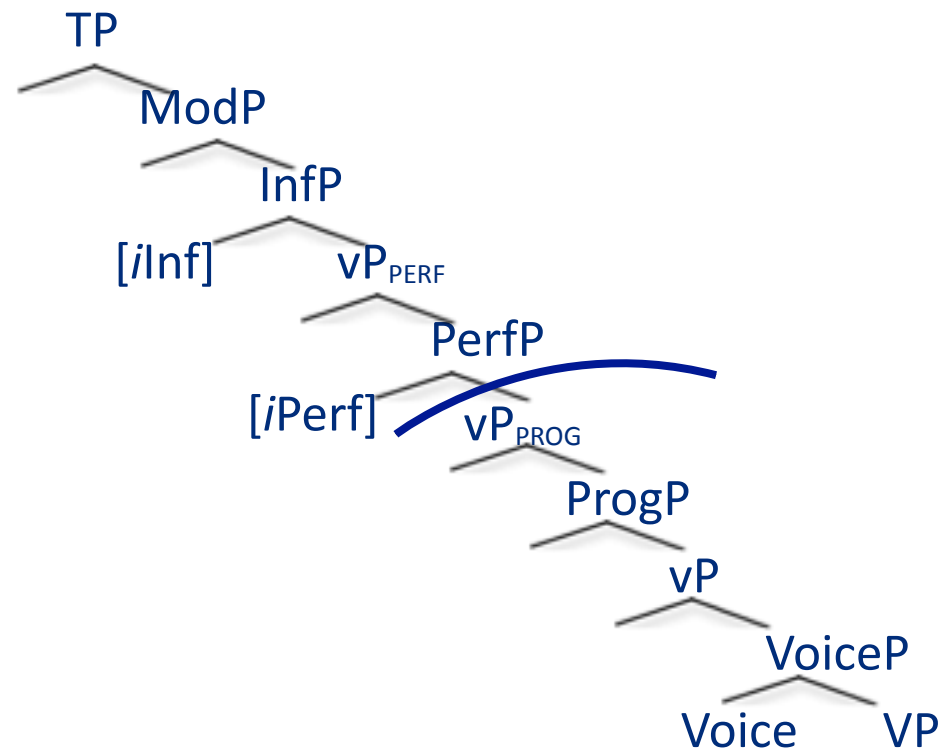
Extending the analysis: VP fronting (7)

Raising of *be/been*



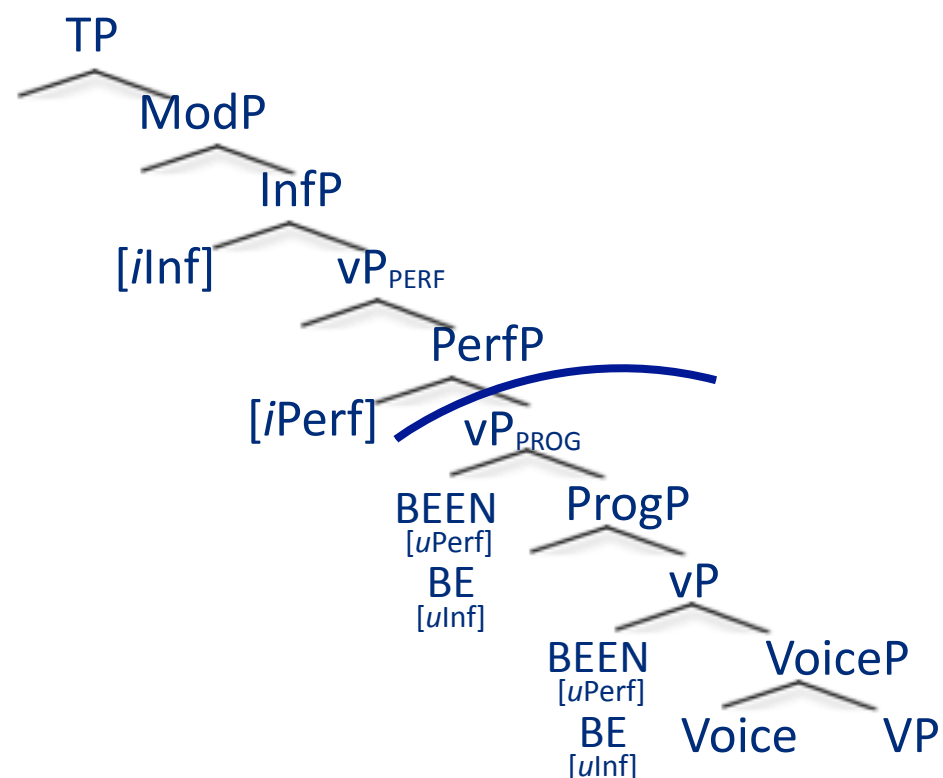
Extending the analysis: VP fronting (8)

Non-raising of *be/been*



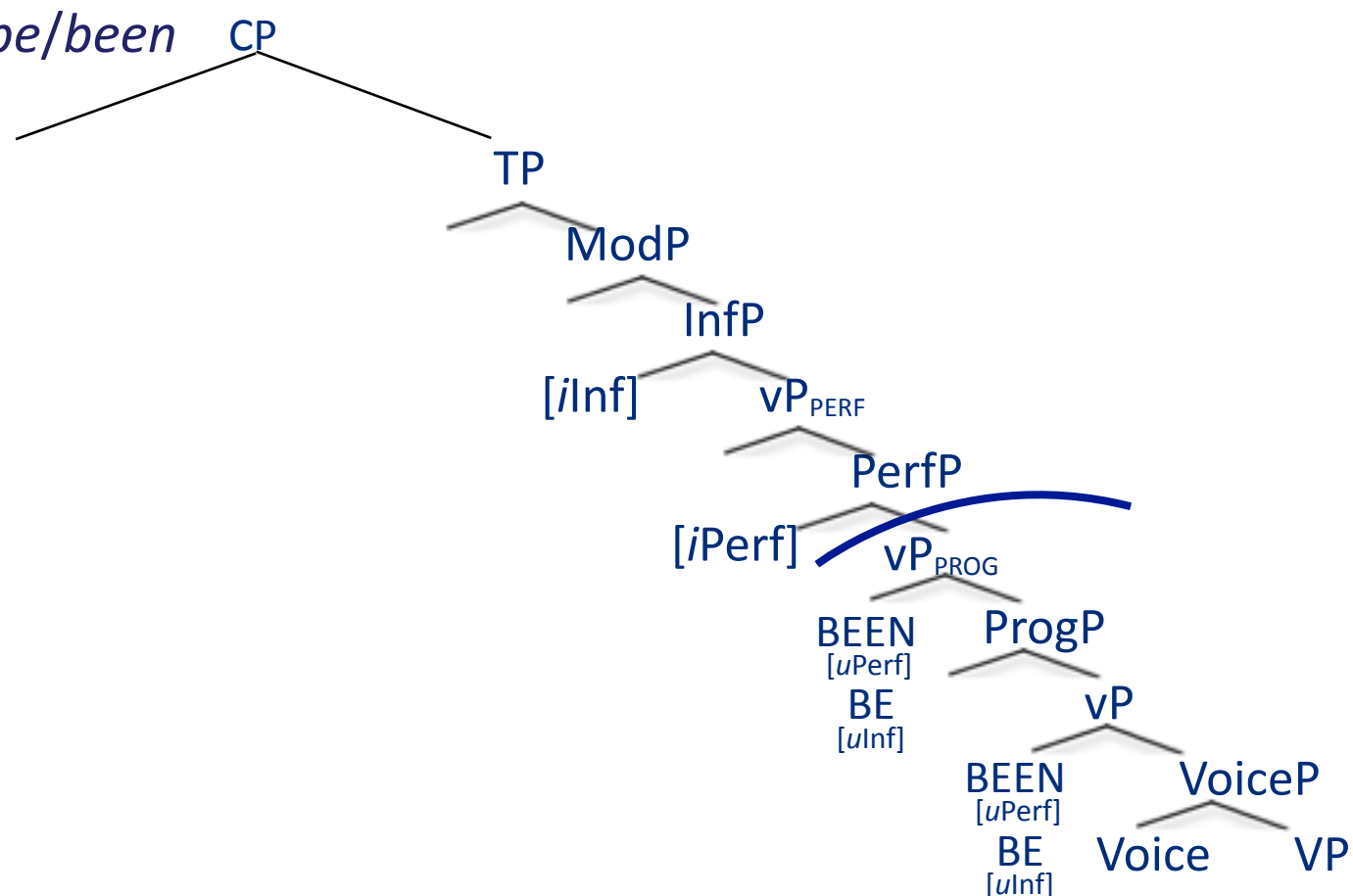
Extending the analysis: VP fronting (8)

Non-raising of *be/been*



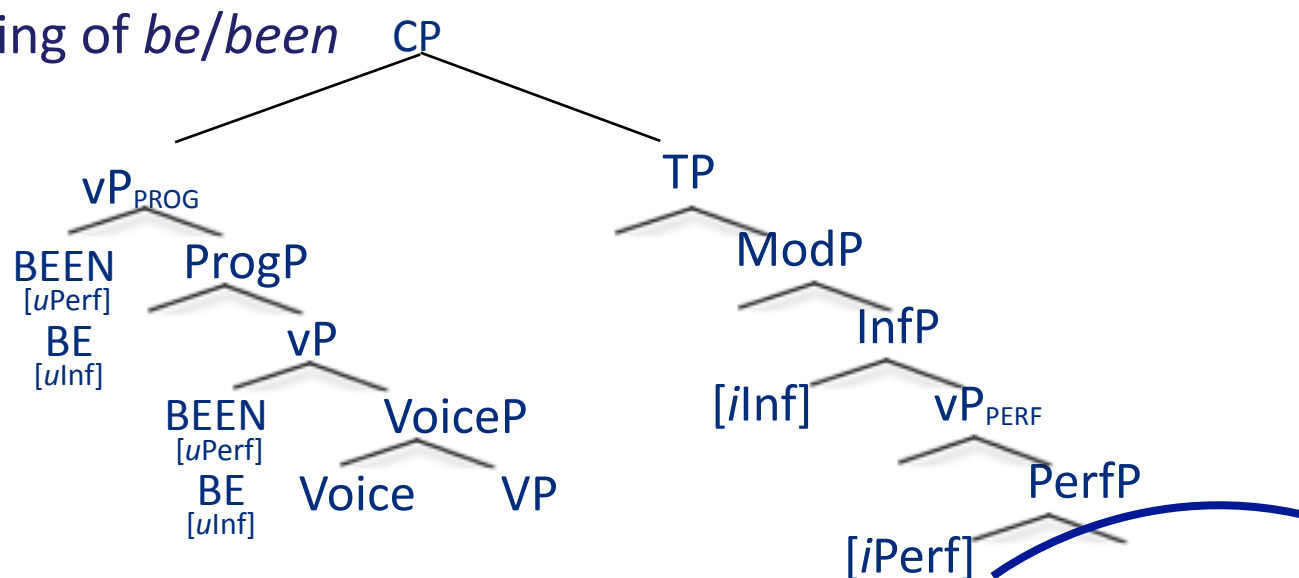
Extending the analysis: VP fronting (8)

Non-raising of *be/been* CP



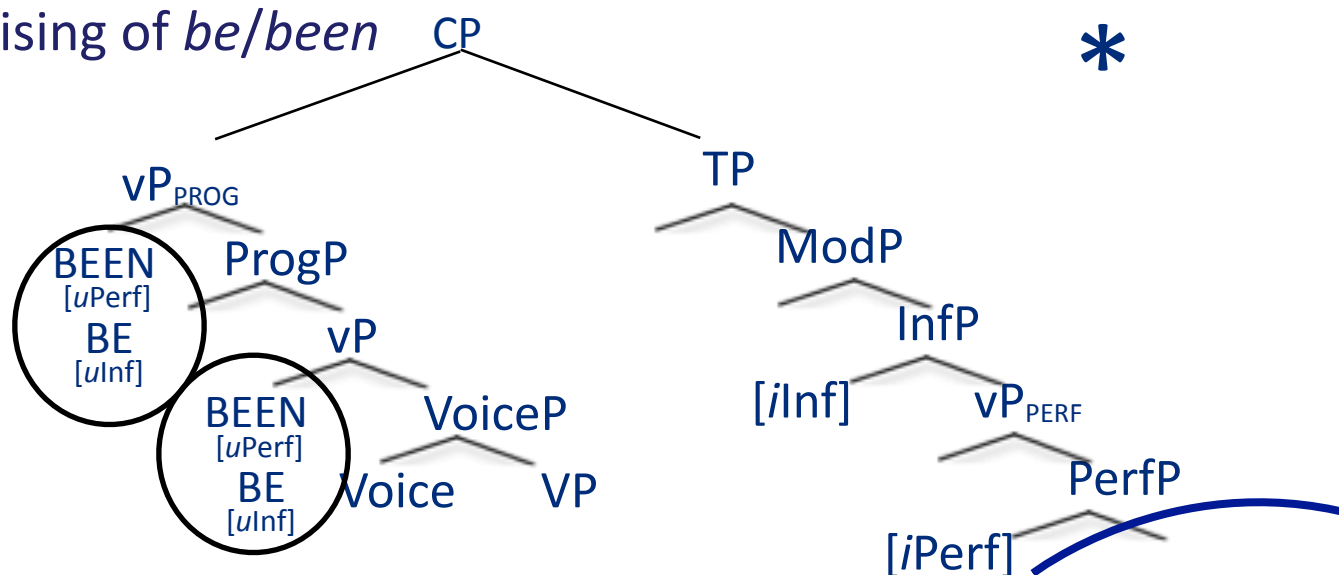
Extending the analysis: VP fronting (8)

Non-raising of *be/been* CP



Extending the analysis: VP fronting (8)

Non-raising of *be/been*



Extending the analysis: VP fronting (9)

Extending the data set even more:

We expect other phenomena that make use of either VPE or movement of the verb phrase to exhibit the same pattern.

- ➡ Phenomena involving VPE: optional deletion of *be/been*.
- ➡ Phenomena involving movement: obligatory stranding of *be/been*.

This prediction is potentially borne out in:

- Tag questions in American English (involving VPE)
- Specificational pseudo-clefts (involving VPF)
- Predicate inversion (involving VPF)

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Digging deeper: Predicate ellipsis (1)

Our claim: VPE elides as much as vP_{prog} .

! If progressive aspect is absent from the structure VPE elides vP .
= ‘variable ellipsis site’

(Note: ‘variable’ depending on what is present in the structure, not in the sense of Akmajian, Steele & Wasow 1979 and Bošković 2012, for whom VPE can optionally elide more or less, and who explain the optional deletion of *be* and *been* in this way.)

Digging deeper: Predicate ellipsis (2)

Problem: If the constituent being targetted by VPE varies, it is harder to formalise how ellipsis is licensed.

For instance, if the ellipsis site is recognised as ‘the constituent bearing the E-feature’ (Merchant 2001), does the E-feature sometimes occur on v_{prog} and sometimes on v ?

How to formalise the licensing of ellipsis, and more specifically, how to determine the size of the ellipsis site formally?

Our (speculative) solution: VPE is predicate ellipsis.

Digging deeper: Predicate ellipsis (3)

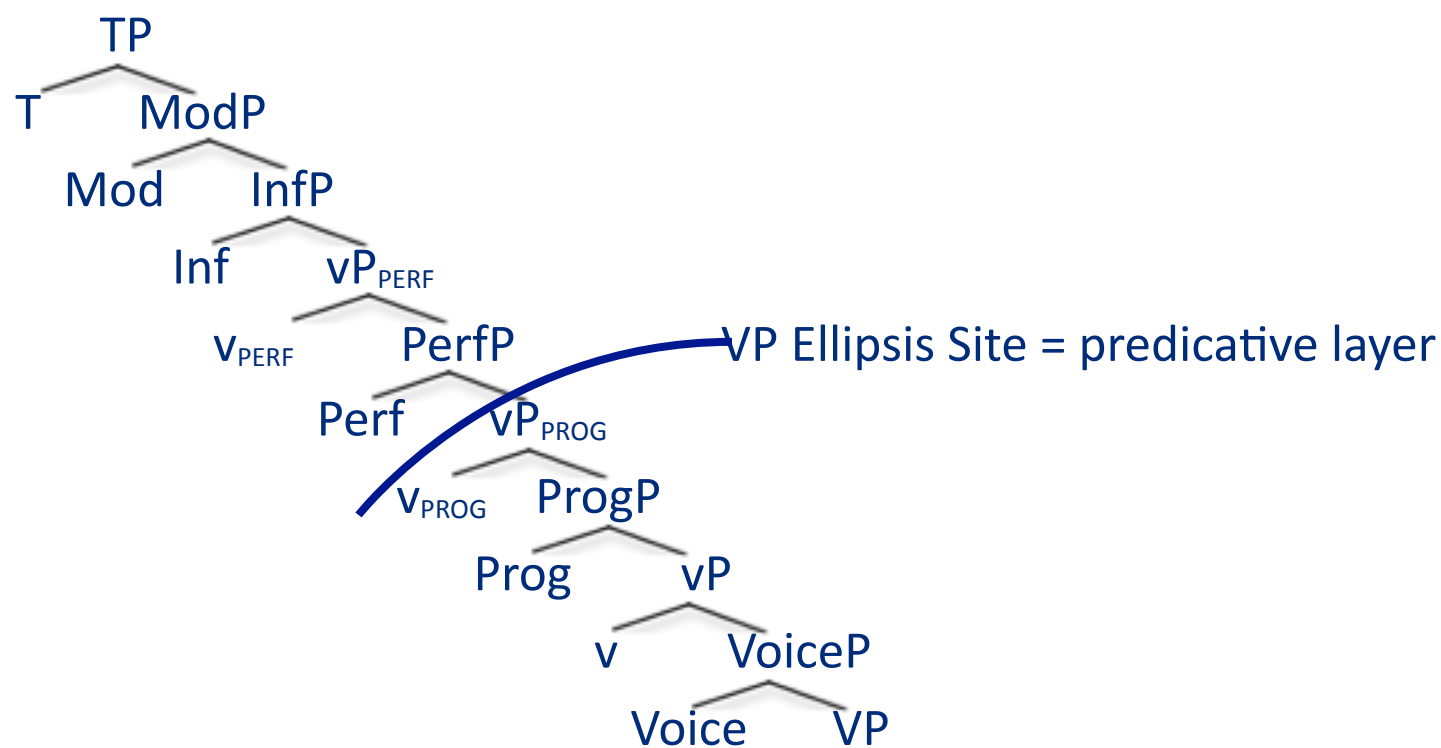
Our suggestion:

VPE targets the highest projection in the predicate layer of the clause.

What is included in this predicate?

- ▶ Lexical VP/DP/PP/AP
- ▶ The internal and external arguments of this lexical predicate
- ▶ Little v projection: determines some lexical properties, such as agentivity, causality etc.
- ▶ Voice
- ▶ (According to us) the progressive projection

Digging deeper: Predicate ellipsis (4)



Digging deeper: Predicate ellipsis (11)

Our tentative proposal:

- Divide between progressive and perfect aspect in English
- Predicative layer: up to vP_{prog}
- Functional verbal layer: from PerfP up to TP/FinP

(Will's work: vP_{prog} constitutes the clause-internal phase.)

VPE targets the predicative layer, but nothing higher:

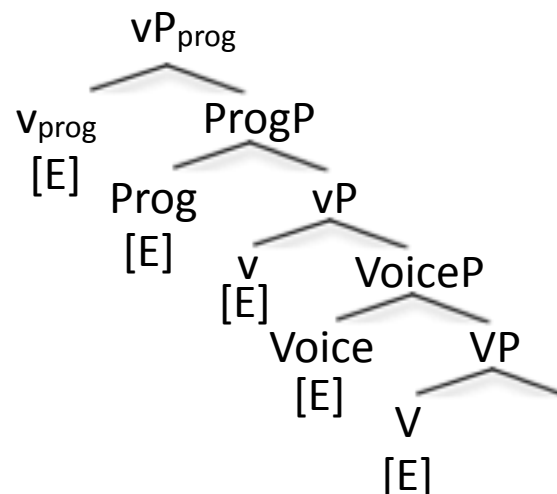
- ▶ vP_{prog} when it is present
- ▶ vP otherwise

Digging deeper: Predicate ellipsis (12)

How to formalise this?

Merchant (2001, 2004): E-feature

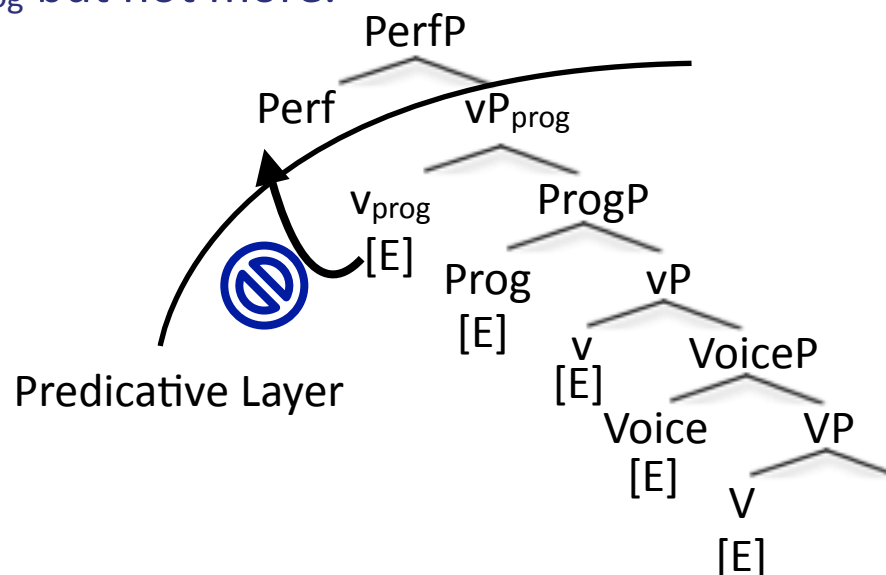
Suppose: E-feature starts out on V, and percolates up to every next head of the predicative layer (See Grimshaw's 2005 extended projections)



Digging deeper: Predicate ellipsis (13)

It cannot be transferred to a projection higher than the predicative layer in Standard English: E for predicate ellipsis is only compatible with heads that are part of the predicative layer (see Grimshaw's 2005 Extended Domains).

VPE elides as much as vP_{prog} but not more.

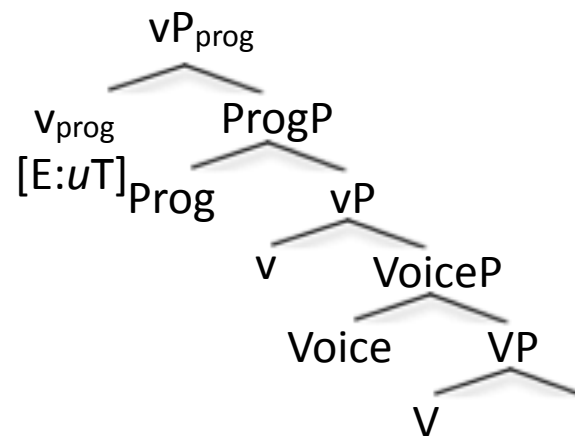


Digging deeper: Predicate ellipsis (14)

Note: E-feature marks the ellipsis site; it is not on the licensing head of the ellipsis (contra Merchant)

This approach is compatible with Aelbrecht's (2010) account of ellipsis licensing.

E-feature with uninterpretable Tense

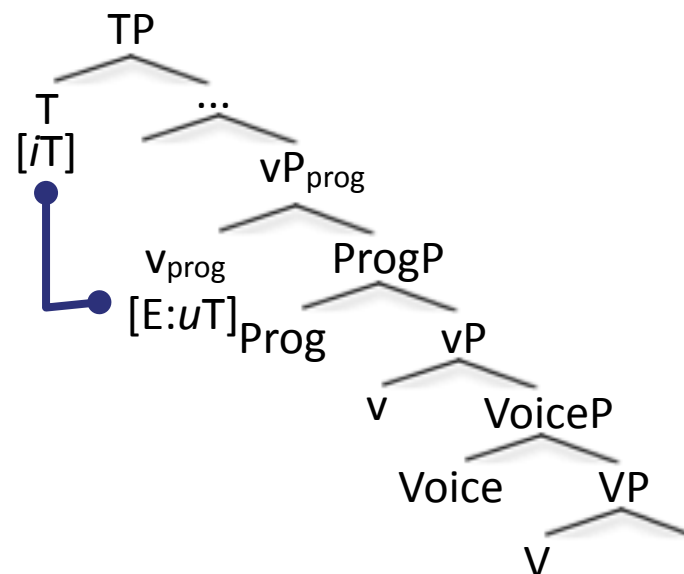


Digging deeper: Predicate ellipsis (15)

Aelbrecht (2010): Ellipsis is licensed via an Agree relationship between the licensing head and the E-feature marking the ellipsis site lower down.

VPE is licensed by T head

T checks E and triggers ellipsis of vP_{prog} .



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Conclusion and further issues (1)

- ▶ VPE and VPF target vP_{prog} .
- ▶ Lexical verb never raises out of this site: never escapes ellipsis or fronting
- ▶ *Being* raises to Prog° , within the VPE/VPF site: never escapes ellipsis or fronting
- ▶ *Have* and modals are merged outside of the VPE/VPF site: never elided or fronted
- ▶ *Be/been* are merged inside of the VPE/VPF site but raise out to check inflectional features:
 - ▶ If they raise in ellipsis contexts, they escape ellipsis.
 - ▶ Alternatively, *be/been* may remain in the ellipsis site and be elided, having their unchecked features deleted at PF
 - ▶ *Be/been* must raise in fronting contexts because there is no ellipsis operation to alternatively delete their features.

Conclusion and further issues (2)

- VPE targets the predicative layer, which includes the progressive projections, but not the perfect.
- VPE targets as much of this predicate as possible.
- This can be formalized using the E-feature (Merchant 2001; Aelbrecht 2010) and Extended Projections (Grimshaw 2005).

Thank You!