

The syntax of the *aan het*-construction

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The syntax of the *aan het*-construction

Basic structure: $[[\text{aan DET}_{\text{neut}} \text{V}_{\text{inf}}] \text{V}_{\text{fin}}]$

(1) Pieter is z'n kamer **aan het opruimen**.
 Peter is his room on the clean.up.INF
 'Peter is cleaning his room.'

“[U]sed instead [of the English progressive]” (Broekhuis *et al.* 2015:77)

Compare English *on the go*, *on the hunt*, *on the rise*...

(2) Pieter gaat/slaat **aan het opruimen**.
 Peter goes/hits on the clean.up.INF
 'Peter starts cleaning.'

Recent mentions

GENOOTSCHAP
OnzeTaal

ONTLEEDMYSTERIES

Wie ontleden heeft geleerd, denkt misschien dat elke zin zich daarvoor leent. Maar nog niet alle raadsels zijn opgelost.

Het grootste
ontleedmysterie

“This might just be the biggest syntactic mystery of them all. [...] Is *ben aan het werken* ‘am working’ a nominal or verbal predicate?”
(Coppen 2021:33, our translation)

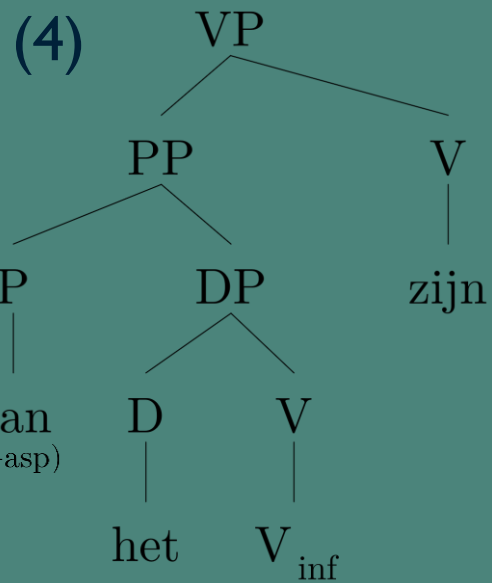


“[T]he internal organization of the progressive [*aan het V_{inf} zijn*] construction is still far from clear and therefore in need of further investigation.”
(Broekhuis et al. 2015:516)

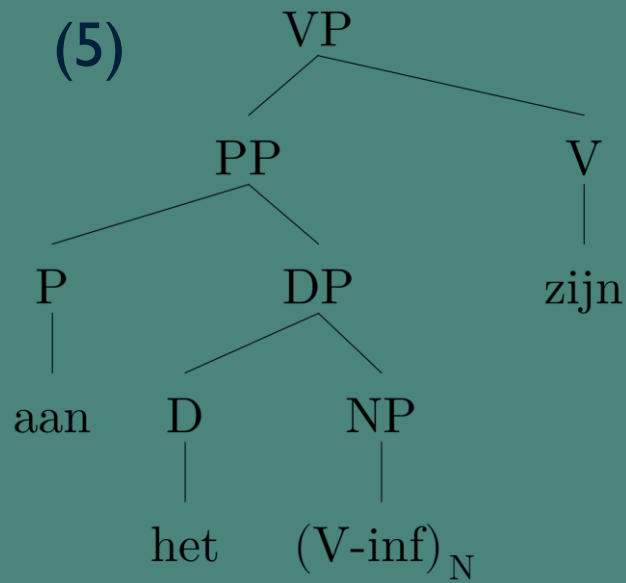
Previous syntactic analyses

(3) Pieter is **aan het opruimen**.
Peter is on the clean.up.INF
'Peter is cleaning his room.'

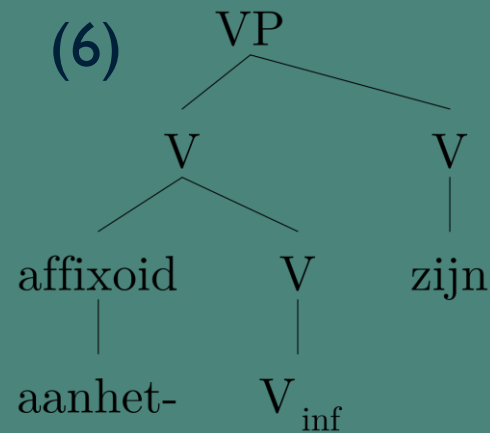
“Progressive” construction with *zijn* as V_{fin} (cf. Boogaart, 1999:ch.5; Lemmens 2015)



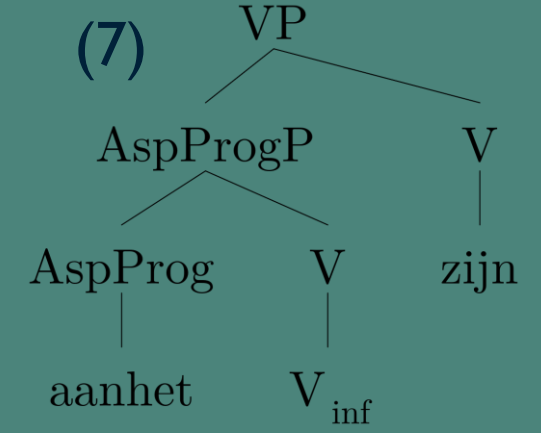
van Gelderen (1993:183)



Booij (2010:163)



Smits (1987:301)

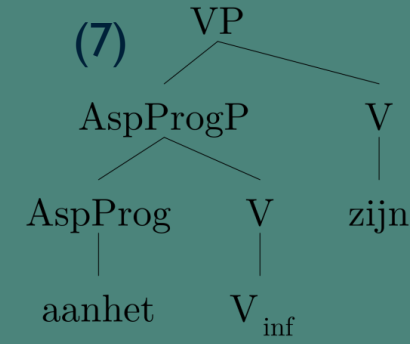
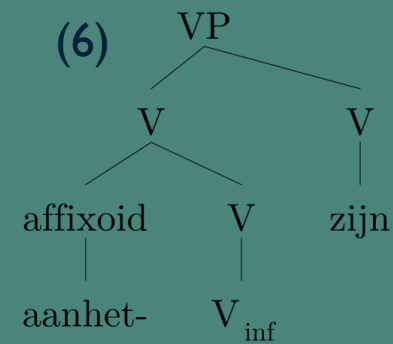
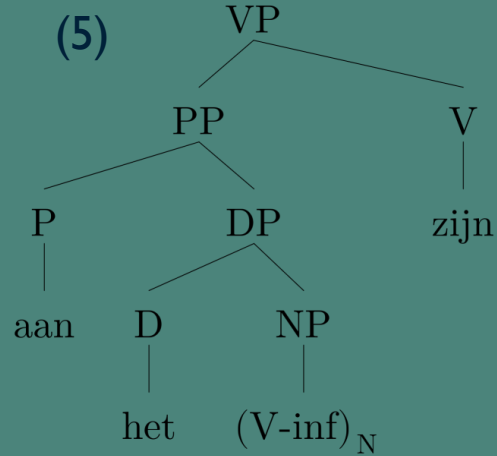
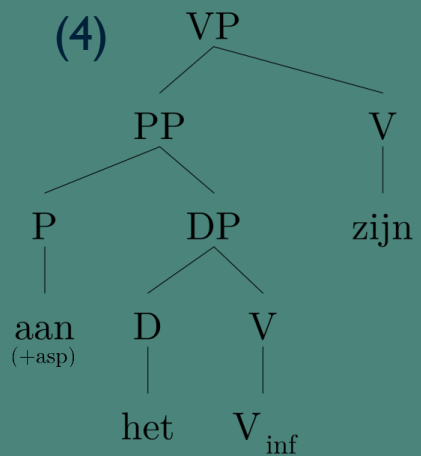


Ijbema (2003:18)

(8) “[T]he original lexical predicate (*aan* + NP [...]) is reinterpreted as an aspectual auxiliary leading to one complex VP” (Breed et al. 2017:319)

Previous syntactic analyses

(3) Pieter is **aan het opruimen**.
Peter is on the clean.up.INF
'Peter is cleaning his room.'



(8) reinterpreted as an aspectual auxiliary



Two discussions:

1. Nominal or verbal?
2. Lexical or functional?

This talk

Two discussions:

1. Nominal or verbal?
2. Lexical or functional?

Basic structure: $[[\text{aan DET}_{\text{neut}} V_{\text{inf}}] V_{\text{fin}}]$

Observation: Syntactic behavior varies with V_{fin} (*zijn* ‘to be’ vs. the rest)
For example, whether V_{inf} may license internal argument:

(9) Pieter **is (z'n kamer)** aan het opruimen.
Peter is his room on the clean.up.INF
‘Peter is cleaning (his room).’

(10) Pieter **slaat (*z'n kamer)** aan het opruimen.
Peter hits his room on the clean.up.INF
‘Peter starts cleaning (*his room).’

Aim of this talk: Compare *aan het*-constructions with different V_{fin} to each other and to clearly nominal/verbal + lexical/functional constructions

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Two discussions:

1. Nominal or verbal?
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Aim of this talk: Compare *aan het*-constructions with different V_{fin} to each other and to clearly nominal/verbal + lexical/functional constructions

Comparison between two groups...

1. Progressive (*zijn* ‘to be’)
2. Ingressive (*gaan* ‘to go’, *slaan* ‘to hit’, *(ge)raken* ‘to get’ *zich zetten* ‘to put oneself’)
(Leaving aside for now: causatives, continuatives, modals, copulas, Acl-verbs (cf. Van Pottelberge 2004))

...with clearly verbal/functional & nominal/lexical benchmarks:

3. Modal auxiliary + VP-complement (*moeten* ‘must’)
4. Lexical verb + PP-complement (*denken aan* ‘to think of’)

Syntactic properties

7 properties

Syntactic properties

7 properties

1. Right-based compl.

2. IPP of highest verb

3. High internal
argument V_{inf}

4. High particle V_{inf}

5. *Van*-object V_{inf}

6. Embedded auxiliary

7. R-extraction

Syntactic properties

7 properties

<i>Functional head</i>	←————→		<i>Lexical head</i>
<i>VP-complement</i>			<i>PP-complement</i>
(1) AUX_{MOD} [V_{inf}]	[<i>aan het</i> [V_{inf}]] V_{fin}		(4) <i>denken</i> [<i>aan het</i> V_{inf}]
	(2) <i>zijn</i>	(3) <i>gaan, slaan,</i> <i>(ge)raken, zich zetten</i>	

1. Right-based compl.

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	(1) AUX _{MOD} [V _{inf}]	[aan het [V _{inf}]] V _{fin}		(4) <i>denken</i> [aan het V _{inf}]
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1. Right-based compl.				
2. IPP of highest verb				
3. High internal argument V_{inf}				
4. High particle V_{inf}				
5. Van-object V_{inf}				
6. Embedded auxiliary				
7. R-extraction				

Syntactic properties (1/7)

	(1) AUX_{MOD} [V_{inf}]	[aan het [V_{inf}]] V_{fin}		(4) <i>denken</i> [aan het V_{inf}]
		(2) <i>zijn</i>	(3) <i>gaan, slaan, (ge)raken, zich zetten</i>	
1. Right-based compl.				

(1) AUX_{MOD} [V_{inf}] +
 dat Pieter z'n kamer moet [V_P opruimen]
 that Peter his room has.to clean.up.INF
 'that Peter has to clean his room'

(3) [aan het [V_{inf}]] *gaan/slaan/etc.* -
 dat Pieter z'n kamer slaat [*aan het opruimen]
 that Peter his room hits on the clean.up.INF
 'that Peter is cleaning his room'

(2) [aan het [V_{inf}]] *zijn* -
 dat Pieter z'n kamer is [*aan het opruimen]
 that Peter his room is on the clean.up.INF
 'that Peter is cleaning his room'

(4) *denken* [aan het V_{inf}]
 dat Pieter denkt [PP aan het opruimen]
 that Peter thinks on the clean.up.INF
 'that Peter is thinking of cleaning up'

Not its base-position, cf. Freezing: -
 [het opruimen] waar Pieter <aan> denkt <*>

Syntactic properties (2/7)

2. IPP of highest verb

(1) AUX_{MOD} [V_{inf}]	[aan het [V_{inf}]] V_{fin}		(4) <i>denken</i> [aan het V_{inf}]
	(2) <i>zijn</i>	(3) <i>gaan, slaan, (ge)raken, zich zetten</i>	
2. IPP of highest verb			

(1) AUX_{MOD} [V_{inf}]

Pieter heeft **moeten** opruimen.

Peter has must.INF clean.up.INF

‘Peter has had to clean up.’

+

(3) [aan het [V_{inf}]] *gaan/slaan/etc.* -

Pieter is aan het opruimen **geslagen**.

Peter is on the clean.up.INF hit.PTC

‘Peter has started cleaning.’

(2) [aan het [V_{inf}]] *zijn* -

Pieter is aan het opruimen **geweest**.

Peter is on the clean.up.INF be.PTC

‘Peter has been cleaning.’

-

(4) *denken* [aan het V_{inf}] -

Pieter heeft aan het opruimen **gedacht**.

Peter has on the clean.up.INF think.PTC

‘Peter has thought of cleaning.’

Syntactic properties (2/7)

	(1) AUX _{MOD} [V _{inf}]	[aan het [V _{inf}]] V _{fin}		(4) <i>denken</i> [aan het V _{inf}]
		(2) <i>zijn</i>	(3) <i>gaan, slaan, (ge)raken, zich zetten</i>	
2. IPP of highest verb	+	-	-	-

(1) AUX_{MOD} [V_{inf}]

Pieter heeft **moeten** opruimen.

Peter has must.INF clean.up.INF

‘Peter has had to clean up.’

+

(3) [aan het [V_{inf}]] *gaan/slaan/etc.* -

Pieter is aan het opruimen **geslagen**.

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(2) [aan het [V_{inf}]] *zijn* -

Pieter is aan het opruimen **geweest**.

Peter is on the clean.up.INF be.PTC

‘Peter has been cleaning.’

-

(4) *denken* [aan het V_{inf}] -

Pieter heeft aan het opruimen **gedacht**.

Peter has on the clean.up.INF think.PTC

‘Peter has thought of cleaning.’

-

Syntactic properties (3/7)

	(1) AUX_{MOD} [V_{inf}]	[aan het [V_{inf}]] V_{fin}		(4) <i>denken</i> [aan het V_{inf}]
		(2) <i>zijn</i>	(3) <i>gaan, slaan, (ge)raken, zich zetten</i>	
3. High internal argument V_{inf}				

(1) AUX_{MOD} [V_{inf}] +

dat Pieter **z'n kamer** moet opruimen
that Peter his room must clean.up.INF
'that Peter has to clean his room'

(3) [aan het [V_{inf}]] *gaan/slaan/etc.* -

dat Pieter (***z'n kamer**) aan het opruimen slaat
that Peter his room on the clean.up.INF hits
'that Peter starts cleaning (*his room)'

(2) [aan het [V_{inf}]] *zijn* +

dat Pieter **z'n kamer** aan het opruimen is
that Peter his room on the clean.up.INF is
'that Peter is cleaning his room'

(4) *denken* [aan het V_{inf}] -

dat Pieter (***z'n kamer**) aan het opruimen denkt
that Peter his room on the clean.up thinks
'that Peter is thinking about cleaning (*his room)'

Syntactic properties (3/7)

	(1) AUX _{MOD} [V _{inf}]	[aan het [V _{inf}]] V _{fin}		(4) <i>denken</i> [aan het V _{inf}]
		(2) <i>zijn</i>	(3) <i>gaan, slaan, (ge)raken, zich zetten</i>	
3. High internal argument V _{inf}	+	+	-	-

(1) AUX_{MOD} [V_{inf}] +
 dat Pieter **z'n kamer** moet opruimen
 that Peter his room must clean.up.INF
 'that Peter has to clean his room'

(3) [aan het [V_{inf}]] *gaan/slaan/etc.* -
 dat Pieter (***z'n kamer**) aan het opruimen slaat
 that Peter his room on the clean.up.INF hits
 'that Peter starts cleaning (*his room)'

(2) [aan het [V_{inf}]] *zijn* +
 dat Pieter **z'n kamer** aan het opruimen is
 that Peter his room on the clean.up.INF is
 'that Peter is cleaning his room'

(4) *denken* [aan het V_{inf}] -
 dat Pieter (***z'n kamer**) aan het opruimen denkt
 that Peter his room on the clean.up thinks
 'that Peter is thinking about cleaning (*his room)'

Syntactic properties (3/7)

	(1) AUX _{MOD} [V _{inf}]	[aan het [V _{inf}]] V _{fin}		(4) <i>denken</i> [aan het V _{inf}]
		(2) <i>zijn</i>	(3) <i>gaan, slaan, (ge)raken, zich zetten</i>	
3. High internal argument V _{inf}	+	+	-	-

(1) AUX_{MOD} [V_{inf}] +

dat Pieter **z'n kamer** moet opruimen
 that Peter his room must clean.up.INF
 'that Peter has to clean his room'

Compare:

dat Pieter moet (***z'n kamer**) opruimen
 that Peter his room must clean.up.INF

(2) [aan het [V_{inf}]] *zijn* +

dat Pieter **z'n kamer** aan het opruimen is
 that Peter his room on the clean.up.INF is
 'that Peter is cleaning his room'

and:

dat Pieter aan het (***z'n kamer**) opruimen is
 that Peter his room on the clean.up.INF is

Syntactic properties (3/7)

	(1) AUX _{MOD} [V _{inf}]	[aan het [V _{inf}]] V _{fin}		(4) <i>denken</i> [aan het V _{inf}]
		(2) <i>zijn</i>	(3) <i>gaan, slaan, (ge)raken, zich zetten</i>	
3. High internal argument V _{inf}	+	+	-	-

(1) AUX_{MOD} [V_{inf}] +

dat Pieter **z'n kamer** moet opruimen
that Peter his room must clean.up.INF

‘that Peter has to clean his room’

(2) [aan het [V_{inf}]] *zijn* +

dat Pieter **z'n kamer** aan het opruimen is
that Peter his room on the clean.up.INF is

‘that Peter is cleaning his room’

Compare:

dat Pieter moet (***z'n kamer**) opruimen
that Peter his room must clean.up.INF

and:

dat Pieter aan het (***z'n kamer**) opruimen is
that Peter his room on the clean.up.INF is



Fully parallel Merge order
with auxiliaries (cf. Barbiers et al. 2018),
in contrast to ingressive V_{fin}

Syntactic properties (4/7)

	(1) AUX _{MOD} [V _{inf}]	[aan het [V _{inf}]] V _{fin}		(4) <i>denken</i> [aan het V _{inf}]
		(2) <i>zijn</i>	(3) <i>gaan, slaan, (ge)raken, zich zetten</i>	
4. High particle V _{inf}				

(1) AUX_{MOD} [V_{inf}]

dat Pieter <op> moet <op> ruimen
that Peter up must up clean.INF
'that Peter has to clean up'

+

(3) [aan het [V_{inf}]] *gaan/slaan/etc.* -

dat Pieter <*op> aan het <op> ruimen slaat
that Peter up on the up clean.INF hits
'that Peter starts cleaning up'

(2) [aan het [V_{inf}]] *zijn*

dat Pieter <op> aan het <op> ruimen is
that Peter up on the up clean.INF is
'that Peter is cleaning up'

+

(4) *denken* [aan het V_{inf}] -

dat Pieter <*op> aan het <op> ruimen denkt
that Peter up on the up clean.INF thinks
'that Peter is thinking about cleaning up'

Syntactic properties (4/7)

	(1) AUX _{MOD} [V _{inf}]	[aan het [V _{inf}]] V _{fin}		(4) <i>denken</i> [aan het V _{inf}]
		(2) <i>zijn</i>	(3) <i>gaan, slaan, (ge)raken, zich zetten</i>	
4. High particle V _{inf}	+	+	-	-

(1) AUX_{MOD} [V_{inf}]

+

dat Pieter <op> moet <op> ruimen
 that Peter up must up clean.INF
 ‘that Peter has to clean up’

(3) [aan het [V_{inf}]] *gaan/slaan/etc.*

-

dat Pieter <*op> aan het <op> ruimen slaat
 that Peter up on the up clean.INF hits
 ‘that Peter starts cleaning up’

(2) [aan het [V_{inf}]] *zijn*

+

dat Pieter <op> aan het <op> ruimen is
 that Peter up on the up clean.INF is
 ‘that Peter is cleaning up’

(4) *denken* [aan het V_{inf}]

-

dat Pieter <*op> aan het <op> ruimen denkt
 that Peter up on the up clean.INF thinks
 ‘that Peter is thinking about cleaning up’

Syntactic properties (4/7)

	(1) AUX _{MOD} [V _{inf}]	[aan het [V _{inf}]] V _{fin}		(4) <i>denken</i> [aan het V _{inf}]
		(2) <i>zijn</i>	(3) <i>gaan, slaan, (ge)raken, zich zetten</i>	
4. High particle V _{inf}	+	+	-	-

(1) AUX_{MOD} [V_{inf}] +

dat Pieter <op> moet <op> ruimen
that Peter up must up clean.INF

‘that Peter has to clean up’

(2) [aan het [V_{inf}]] *zijn* +

dat Pieter <op> aan het <op> ruimen is
that Peter up on the up clean.INF is

‘that Peter is cleaning up’



Again, fully parallel Merge order with auxiliaries (cf. Barbiers et al. 2018), in contrast to ingressive V_{fin}

Syntactic properties (5/7)

	(1) AUX_{MOD} [V_{inf}]	[aan het [V_{inf}]] V_{fin}		(4) <i>denken</i> [aan het V_{inf}]
		(2) <i>zijn</i>	(3) <i>gaan, slaan, (ge)raken, zich zetten</i>	
5. <i>Van-obj</i> V_{inf}				

(1) AUX_{MOD} [V_{inf}] –
 *Pieter moet opruimen **van z'n kamer**.
 Peter must clean.up.INF of his room
 (Intended: 'Peter has to clean his room.')

(3) [aan het [V_{inf}]] V_{fin} +
 Pieter slaat aan het opruimen **van z'n kamer**.
 Peter hits on the clean.up.INF of his room
 'Peter starts cleaning his room.'

(2) [aan het [V_{inf}]] *zijn* –
 *Pieter is aan het opruimen **van z'n kamer**.
 Peter is on the clean.up.INF of his room
 (Intended: 'Peter is cleaning up his room.')

(4) *denken* [aan het V_{inf}] +
 Pieter denkt aan het opruimen **van z'n kamer**.
 Peter thinks on the clean.up.INF of his room
 'Peter is thinking of cleaning his room.'

Syntactic properties (5/7)

	(1) AUX _{MOD} [V _{inf}]	[aan het [V _{inf}]] V _{fin}		(4) <i>denken</i> [aan het V _{inf}]
		(2) <i>zijn</i>	(3) <i>gaan, slaan, (ge)raken, zich zetten</i>	
5. <i>Van</i> -object V _{inf}	-	-	+	+

(1) AUX_{MOD} [V_{inf}] -

*Pieter moet opruimen **van z'n kamer**.

Peter must clean.up.INF of his room

(Intended: 'Peter has to clean his room.')

(3) [aan het [V_{inf}]] *gaan/slaan/etc.* +

Pieter slaat aan het opruimen **van z'n kamer**.

Peter hits on the clean.up.INF of his room

'Peter starts cleaning his room.'

(2) [aan het [V_{inf}]] *zijn* -

*Pieter is aan het opruimen **van z'n kamer**.

Peter is on the clean.up.INF of his room

(Intended: 'Peter is cleaning up his room.')

(4) *denken* [aan het V_{inf}] +

Pieter denkt aan het opruimen **van z'n kamer**.

Peter thinks on the clean.up.INF of his room

'Peter is thinking of cleaning his room.'

Syntactic properties (5/7)

	(1) AUX _{MOD} [V _{inf}]	[aan het [V _{inf}]] V _{fin}		(4) <i>denken</i> [aan het V _{inf}]
		(2) <i>zijn</i>	(3) <i>gaan, slaan, (ge)raken, zich zetten</i>	
5. <i>Van</i> -object V _{inf}	-	-	+	+

Attested examples (from OpenSoNaR):

- (11) *Zo druk slaan de dames zelfs aan het afwegen van voor- en nadelen [...]*
(SoNaR WR-P-P-H-0000024740)
 ‘The ladies even start weighing up pros and cons so excitedly...’
- (12) *ik ben [...] aan het afbouwen gegaan van de Seroxat.* (SoNaR WR-P-P-H-0000024740)
 ‘I started cutting back on the Seroxat.’
- (13) *Toen Remy [...] zich [...] aan het schrijven zette van zijn officiële brief [...]*
(SoNaR WR-P-P-H-0000024740)
 ‘When Remy started writing his official letter...’

Syntactic properties (6/7)

	(1) AUX_{MOD} [V_{inf}]	[aan het [V_{inf}]] V_{fin}		(4) <i>denken</i> [aan het V_{inf}]
		(2) <i>zijn</i>	(3) <i>gaan, slaan, (ge)raken, zich zetten</i>	
6. Embed low auxiliary				

(1) AUX_{MOD} [V_{inf}] +
 Pieter moet z'n kamer **laten** opruimen.
 Peter must his room let.INF clean.up.INF
 'Peter has to have his room cleaned.'

(3) [aan het [V_{inf}]] *gaan/slaan/etc.* -
 *Pieter slaat aan het **laten** opruimen van z'n kamer.
 Peter hits on the let.INF clean.up.INF of his room
 (Intended: 'Peter is starting to have his room cleaned.')

(2) [aan het [V_{inf}]] *zijn* +
 Pieter is z'n kamer aan het **laten** opruimen.
 Peter is his room on the let.INF clean.up.INF
 'Peter is having his room cleaned.'

(4) *denken* [aan het V_{inf}] +
 Pieter denkt aan het **laten** opruimen van z'n kamer.
 Peter thinks on the let.INF clean.up.INF of his room
 'Peter is thinking of having his room cleaned.'

Syntactic properties (6/7)

	(1) AUX_{MOD} [V_{inf}]	[aan het [V_{inf}]] V_{fin}		(4) <i>denken</i> [aan het V_{inf}]
		(2) <i>zijn</i>	(3) <i>gaan, slaan, (ge)raken, zich zetten</i>	
6. Embed low auxiliary	+	+	-	+

(1) AUX_{MOD} [V_{inf}] +
 Pieter moet z'n kamer **laten** opruimen.
 Peter must his room let.INF clean.up.INF
 'Peter has to have his room cleaned.'

(3) [aan het [V_{inf}]] *gaan/slaan/etc.* -
 *Pieter slaat aan het **laten** opruimen van z'n kamer.
 Peter hits on the let.INF clean.up.INF of his room
 (Intended: 'Peter is starting to have his room cleaned.')

(2) [aan het [V_{inf}]] *zijn* +
 Pieter is z'n kamer aan het **laten** opruimen.
 Peter is his room on the let.INF clean.up.INF
 'Peter is having his room cleaned.'

(4) *denken* [aan het V_{inf}] +
 Pieter denkt aan het **laten** opruimen van z'n kamer.
 Peter thinks on the let.INF clean.up.INF of his room
 'Peter is thinking of having his room cleaned.'

Syntactic properties (6/7)

	(1) AUX_{MOD} [V_{inf}]	[aan het [V_{inf}]] V_{fin}		(4) <i>denken</i> [aan het V_{inf}]
		(2) <i>zijn</i>	(3) <i>gaan, slaan, (ge)raken, zich zetten</i>	
6. Embed low auxiliary	+	+	-	+

(1) AUX_{MOD} [V_{inf}] +

Pieter moet z'n kamer **laten** opruimen.

Peter must his room let.INF clean.up.INF

'Peter has to have his room cleaned.'

(2) [aan het [V_{inf}]] *zijn* +

Pieter is z'n kamer aan het **laten** opruimen.

Peter is his room on the let.INF clean.up.INF

'Peter is having his room cleaned.'

(3) [aan het [V_{inf}]] *gaan/slaan/etc.* -

*Pieter slaat aan het **laten** opruimen van z'n kamer.

Peter hits on the let.INF clean.up.INF of his room

(Intended: 'Peter is starting to have his room cleaned.')

No semantic (ingressive) restriction, cf.

Pieter begint z'n kamer te **laten** opruimen.

Peter begins his room to let.INF clean.up.INF

(4) *denken* [aan het V_{inf}] +

Pieter denkt aan het **laten** opruimen van z'n kamer.

Peter thinks on the let.INF clean.up.INF of his room

'Peter is thinking of having his room cleaned.'

Syntactic properties (6/7)

	(1) AUX _{MOD} [V _{inf}]	[aan het [V _{inf}]] V _{fin}		(4) <i>denken</i> [aan het V _{inf}]
		(2) <i>zijn</i>	(3) <i>gaan, slaan, (ge)raken, zich zetten</i>	
6. Embed low auxiliary	+	+	-	+

Attested examples (from OpenSoNaR):

- (14) *Ik ben het resultaat nog aan het **laten bezinken** [...]* (SoNaRWVR-P-P-G-0000480013)
 ‘I am still letting the result sink in...’
- (15) *nu zijn ze en masse mensen in armere regio’s aan het **laten sterven** van de honger [...]* (SoNaR WR-P-E-A-0000422946)
 ‘now they’re letting people in poorer regions die from starvation en masse...’
- (16) *Overheid is soortgelijk onderzoek aan het **laten doen**.* (SoNaR WR-P-E-L-0000000538)
 ‘The government is having similar research done.’

Syntactic properties (7/7)

7. R-extraction

(1) AUX_{MOD} [V_{inf}]	[aan het [V_{inf}]] V_{fin}		(4) <i>denken</i> [aan het V_{inf}]
	(2) <i>zijn</i>	(3) <i>gaan, slaan, (ge)raken, zich zetten</i>	
7. R-extraction			

(1) AUX_{MOD} [V_{inf}] –
 **[het opruimen]_i waar Pieter moet t_i*
 the clean.up.INF where Peter must
 (Intended: ‘the cleaning Peter has to do’)

(3) [aan het [V_{inf}]] *gaan/slaan/etc.* –
 **[het opruimen]_i waar hij aan t_i slaat*
 the clean.up.INF where he on hits
 (Intended: ‘the cleaning he’s starting’)

(2) [aan het [V_{inf}]] *zijn* –
 **[het opruimen]_i waar Pieter aan t_i is*
 the clean.up.INF where Peter on is
 (Intended: ‘the cleaning Peter’s doing’)

(4) *denken* [aan het V_{inf}] +
[het opruimen]_i waar hij aan t_i denkt
 the clean.up.INF where he on thinks
 ‘the cleaning he’s thinking of’

Syntactic properties (7/7)

	(1) AUX_{MOD} [V_{inf}]	[aan het [V_{inf}]] V_{fin}		(4) <i>denken</i> [aan het V_{inf}]
		(2) <i>zijn</i>	(3) <i>gaan, slaan, (ge)raken, zich zetten</i>	
7. R-extraction	-	-	-	+


(1) AUX_{MOD} [V_{inf}] -
 *[het opruimen]_i **waar** Pieter moet t_i
 the clean.up.INF where Peter must
 (Intended: ‘the cleaning Peter has to do’)

(3) [aan het [V_{inf}]] *gaan/slaan/etc.* -
 *[het opruimen]_i **waar** hij aan t_i slaat
 the clean.up.INF where he on hits
 (Intended: ‘the cleaning he’s starting’)

(2) [aan het [V_{inf}]] *zijn* -
 *[het opruimen]_i **waar** Pieter aan t_i is
 the clean.up.INF where Peter on is
 (Intended: ‘the cleaning Peter’s doing’)

(4) *denken* [aan het V_{inf}] +
[het opruimen]_i **waar** hij aan t_i denkt
 the clean.up.INF where he on thinks
 ‘the cleaning he’s thinking of’

Syntactic properties: Overview

	<i>Functional head</i> <i>VP-complement</i>			<i>Lexical head</i> <i>PP-complement</i>
	(1) AUX _{MOD} [V _{inf}]	[aan het [V _{inf}]] V _{fin}		(4) <i>denken</i> [aan het V _{inf}]
		(2) <i>zijn</i>	(3) <i>gaan, slaan,</i> <i>(ge)raken, zich zetten</i>	
1. Right-based compl.	+	-	-	-
2. IPP of highest verb	+	-	-	-
3. High internal argument V_{inf}	+	+	-	-
4. High particle V_{inf}	+	+	-	-
5. Van-object V_{inf}	-	-	+	+
6. Embed low auxiliary	+	+	-	+
7. R-extraction	-	-	-	+

Syntactic properties: Overview

	Functional head	Lexical head		
	VP-complement	[aan het [V _{inf}]] V _{fin}		PP-complement
	(1) AUX _{MOD} [V _{inf}]	(2) <i>zijn</i>	(3) <i>gaan, slaan, (ge)raken, zich zetten</i>	(4) <i>denken</i> [aan het V _{inf}]
1. Right-based compl.	+	-	-	-
2. IPP of highest verb	+	-	-	-
3. High internal argument V _{inf}	+	+	-	-
4. High particle V _{inf}	+	+	-	-
5. Van-object V _{inf}	-	-	+	+
6. Embed low auxiliary	+	+	-	+
7. R-extraction	-	-	-	+

	[aan het [V _{inf}]] V _{fin}	
	<i>zijn</i>	<i>gaan, slaan, (ge)raken, zich zetten</i>
Overlap with functional element/VP-complement	5/7	1/7
Overlap with lexical element/PP-complement	2/7	5/7
Mutual overlap progressive/ingressive	3/7	

Analysis

Crucial: Properties of *aan het*-constituents with progressive/ingressive interpretation, also without finite verb present (cf. Van Pottelberge 2004:51; Andree 2022)

- (17) *Dus Pieter (*z'n kamer) <*op> aan het <op>ruimen...*
 'So Peter starts cleaning (*his room)...

Proposal: Synchronically, there are two different *aan het*-constituents

Aanhet1 Higher 'progressive' one combines with *zijn*

Aanhet2 Lower 'ingressive' one combines with *slaan/gaan/(ge)raken/zich zetten*

Syntactic hierarchy (Cinque 1999): **MOD** > *Aanhet1* > **CAUS** > *Aanhet2*

Ongoing process of grammaticalization: higher position, gaining characteristics of **functional** element selecting **verbal** complement

Analysis

Syntactic hierarchy (Cinque 1999): **MOD** > *Aanhet1* > **CAUS** > *Aanhet2*

Ongoing process of grammaticalization: higher position, gaining characteristics of **functional** element selecting **verbal** complement

Aanhet1 may take scope over *Aanhet2*...

- (18) *Pieter is [[aanhet₂ opruimen] aan het₁ slaan].*
 Peter is on the clean.up.inf on the hit.inf
 ‘Peter is starting to clean up.’

...but not the other way around:

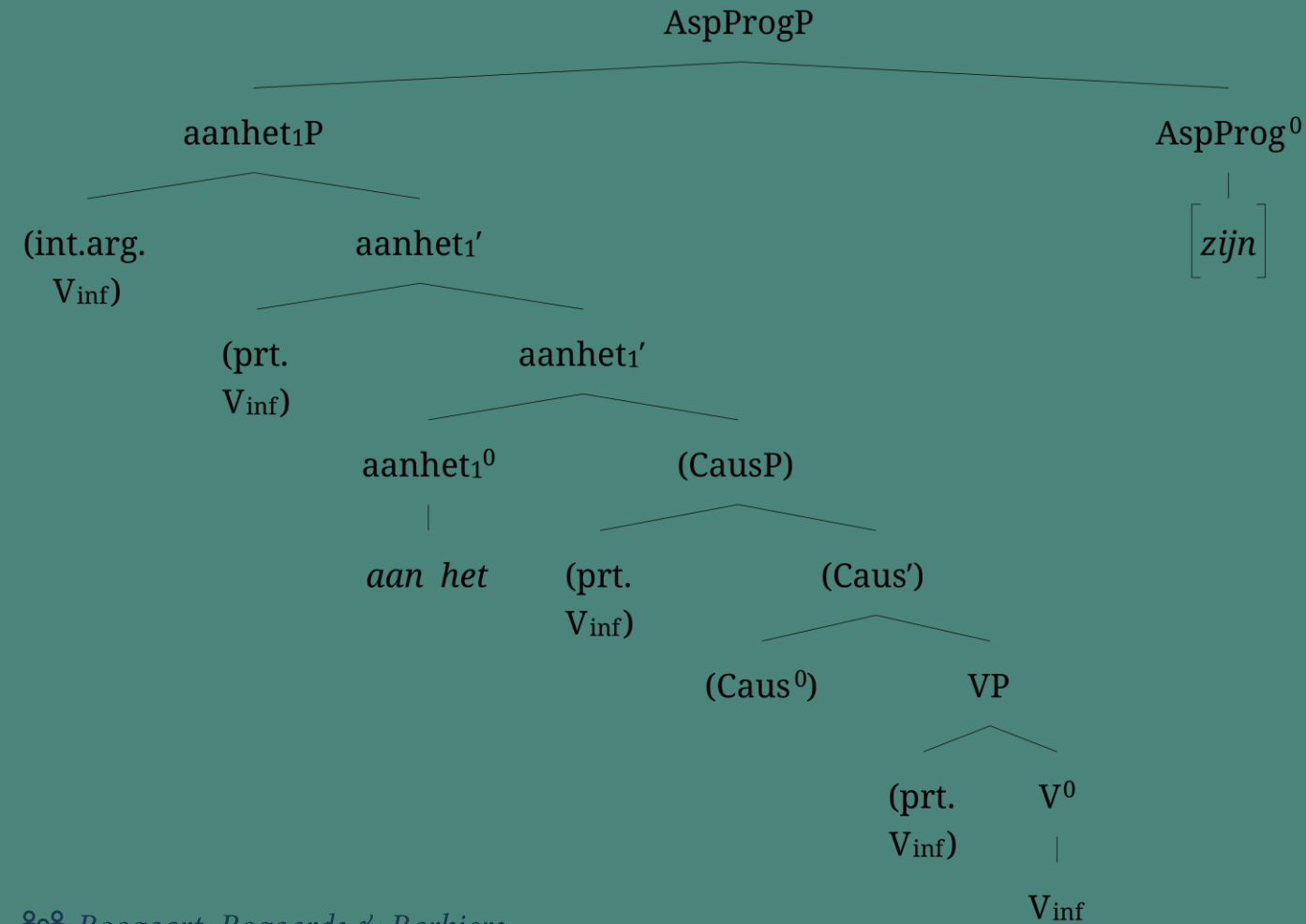
- (19) **Pieter slaat [[aan het₁ opruimen] aan het₂ zijn].*
 Peter hits on the clean.up.inf on the be.inf
 (Intended: ‘Peter is starting to be cleaning up.’)

Analysis

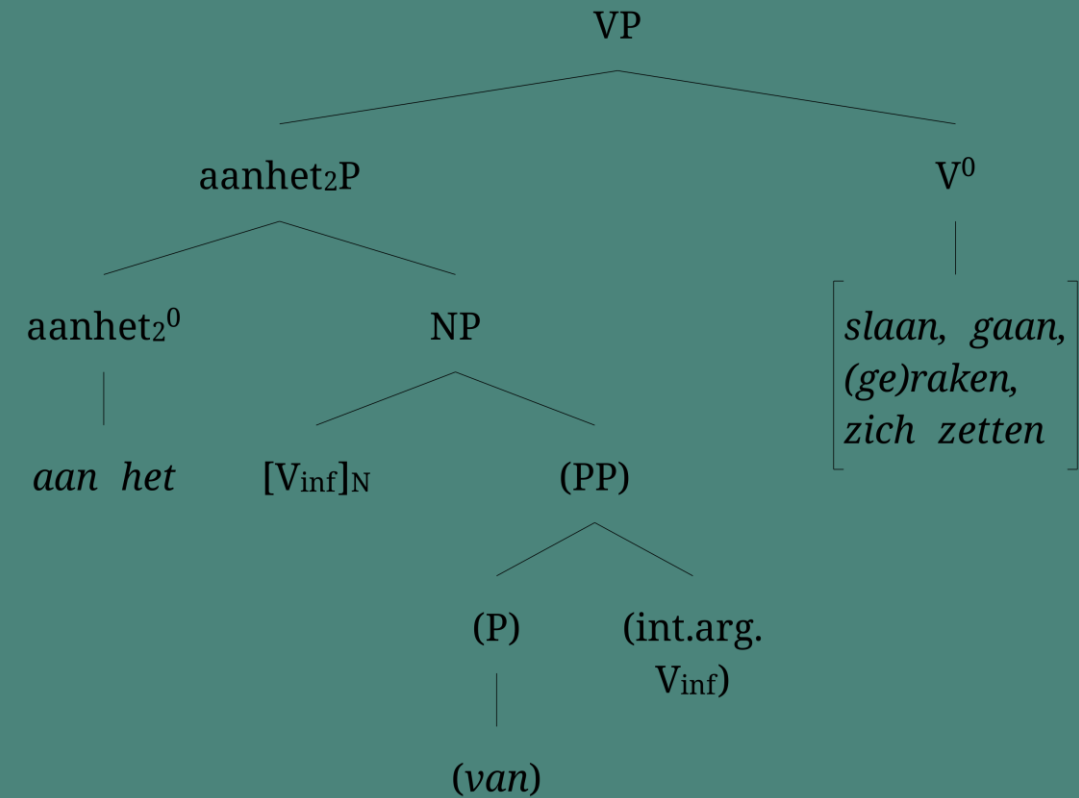
Syntactic hierarchy (Cinque 1999): **MOD** > *Aanhet1* > **CAUS** > *Aanhet2*

Ongoing process of grammaticalization: higher position, gaining characteristics of **functional** element selecting **verbal** complement

Aanhet1



Aanhet2



Analysis

Syntactic hierarchy (Cinque 1999): MOD > *Aanhet1* > CAUS > *Aanhet2*

FUNCTIONAL
VERBAL

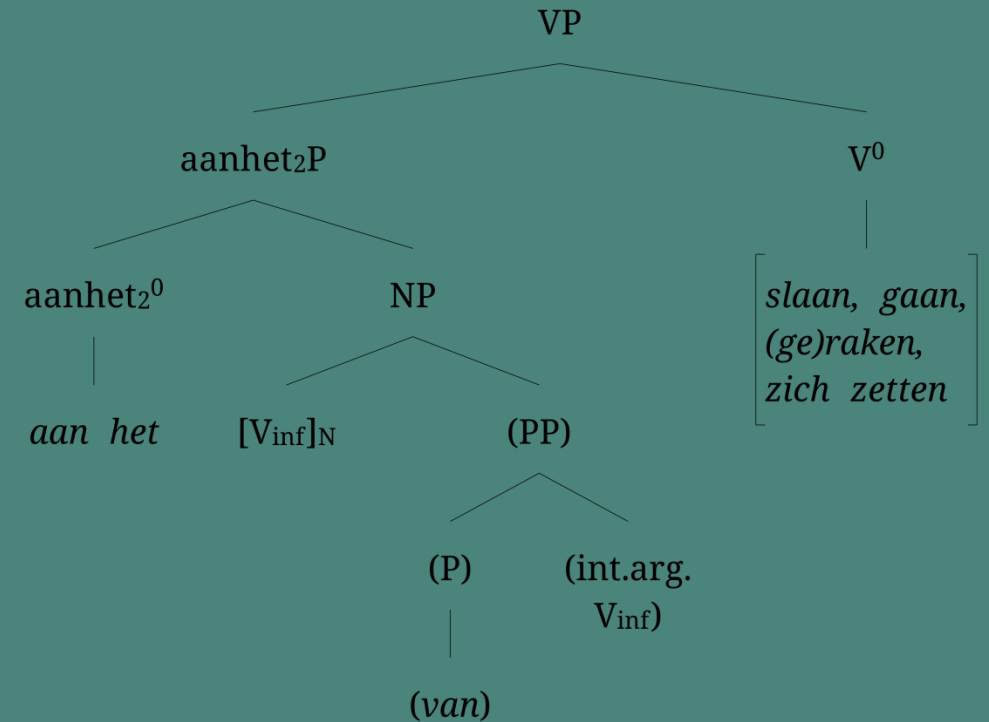
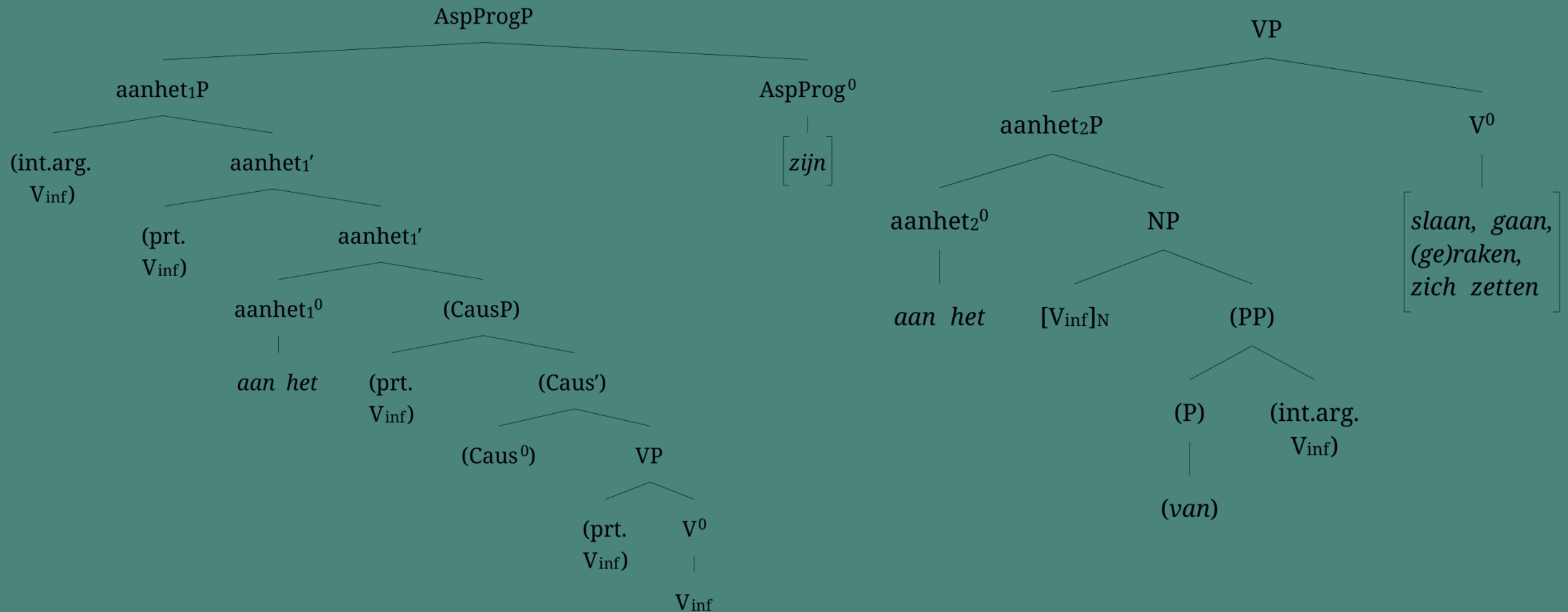
LEXICAL
NOMINAL

moeten [_{VP} V]

Aanhet1

Aanhet2

denken [_{PP} *aan*]



Outlook

Diachrony: *aanhet2* → *aanhet1*?

Van der Horst (2005) suggests that ingressive reading came first

Variation: Dialects that have verbal cluster interruption with auxiliaries (e.g. West Flemish): also with *aan het*?

Scope: Other verbs and complements of ‘situational’ *aan* (e.g. V_{stem})
(cf. van der Horst 2005; Lemmens 2015:8; Booij & Audring 2018; Bogaards 2020, under review)

More extensive/systematic corpus study

Theory: Division of labor between *aan het* (*aanhet*IP) and *zijn* (AspProgP)?

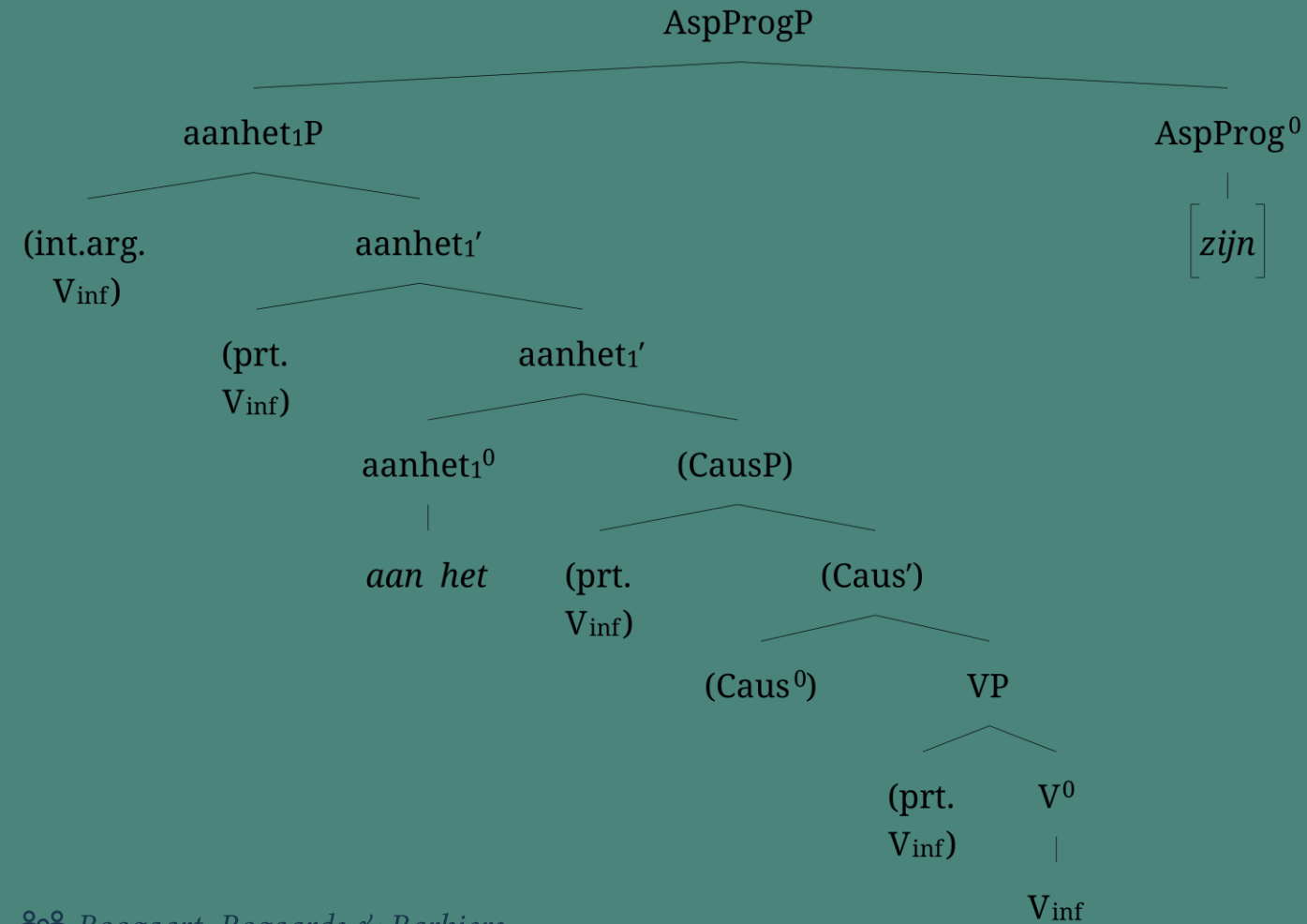
Thank you for your attention!

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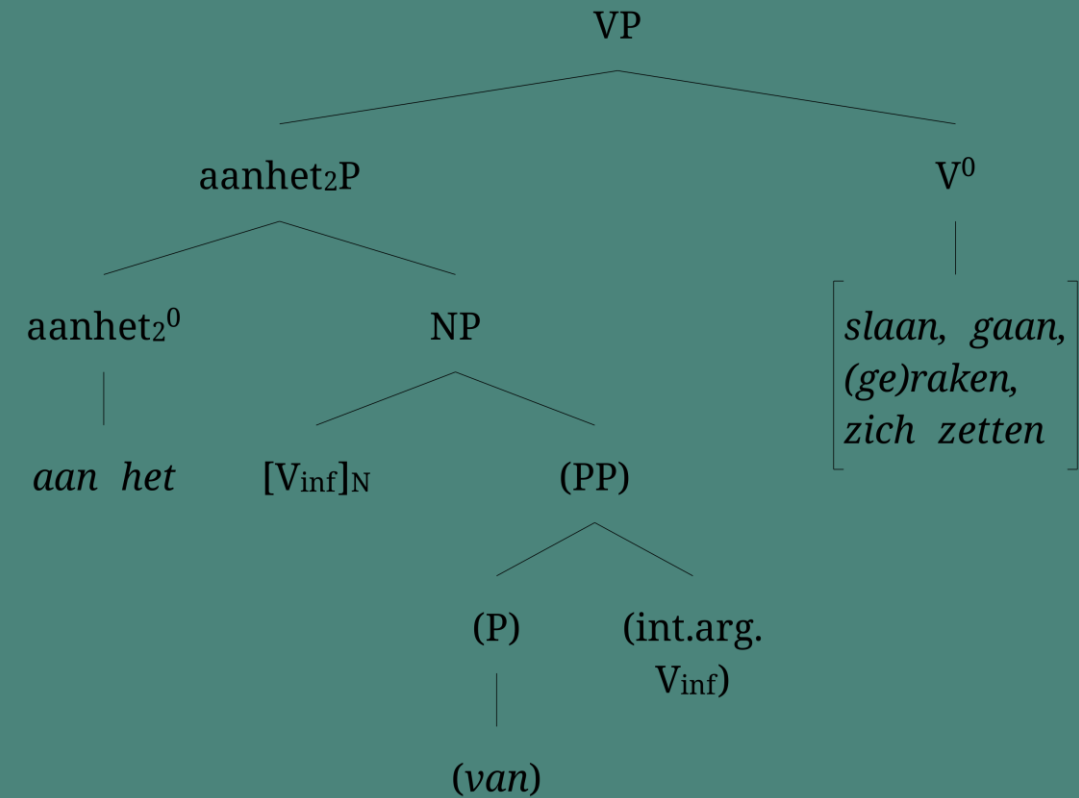
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Analysis

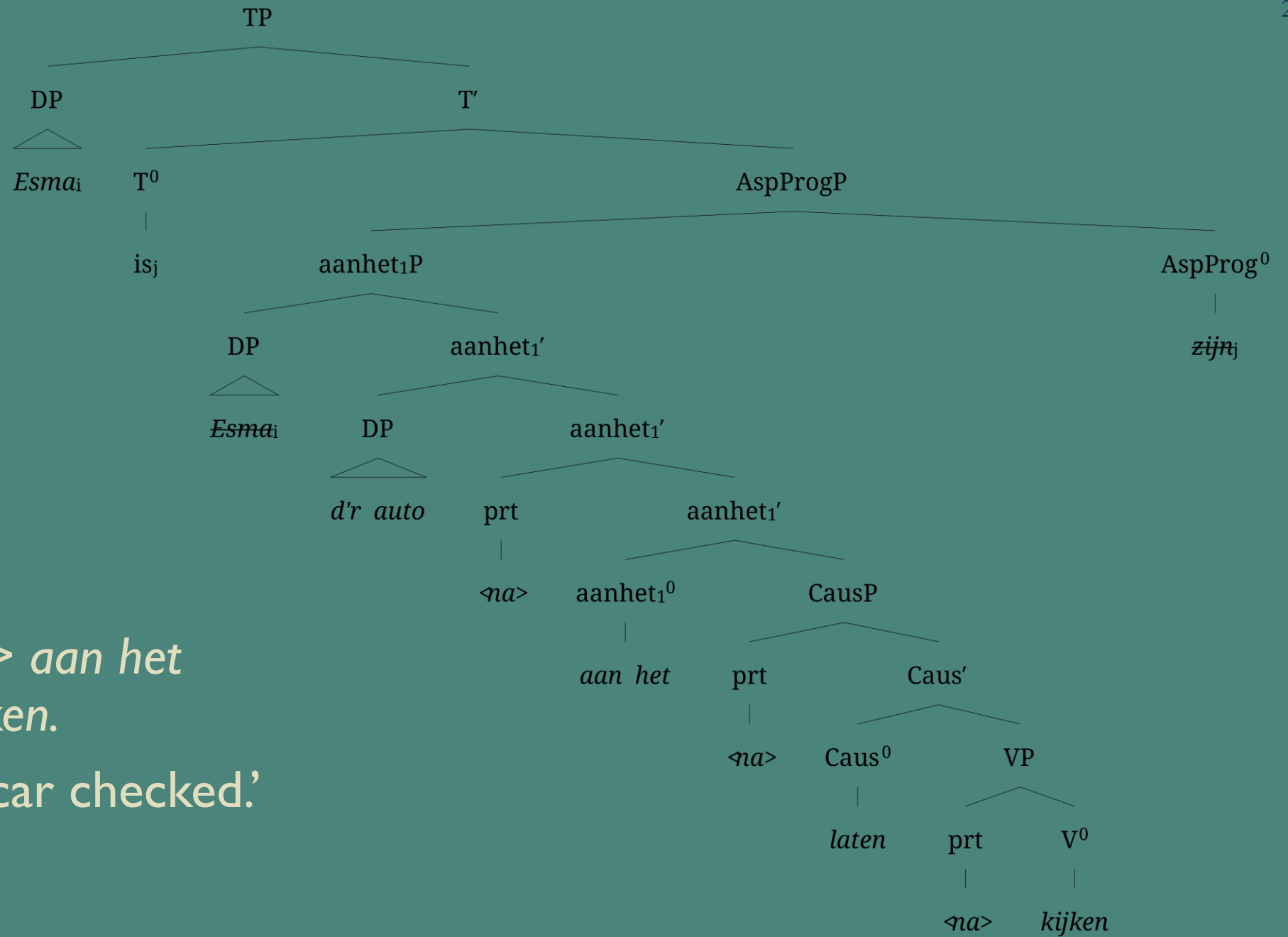
Aanhet1



Aanhet2



Example derivation



*Esma is d'r auto <na> aan het
<na> laten <na> kijken.*

‘Esma is having her car checked.’