

Dutch has the preposition *met* ‘with’ that expresses the instrumental. In (1a), *met* ‘with’ is combined with a full DP. The inanimate pronoun in Dutch is *’t* ‘it’.<sup>1</sup> (1b) illustrates that *’t* ‘it’ can be used as the object of a verb.

- (1) a. Ik schilder met een kwast.  
I paint with a brush  
‘I am painting with a brush.’  
b. Ik zie ’t.  
I see it  
‘I see it.’

*Met* ‘with’ and *’t* ‘it’ do not appear together, as illustrated in (2a). Instead, Dutch uses the R-pronoun *’r* ‘there’ and the postposition *mee* ‘with’, as shown in (2b).<sup>2,3</sup>

- (2) a. \*Ik schilder met ’t.  
I paint with it  
‘I am painting with it.’  
b. Ik schilder ’r -mee.  
I paint there -with  
‘I am painting with it.’

R-pronouns (van Riemsdijk, 1978; Koopman, 1994) are nominal elements that are syncretic with locative pronouns, which in Dutch means they contain the morpheme *r*. The adpositions they combine with obligatorily follow the R-pronoun, see (2b) and (3). Notice also that the preposition *met* ‘with’ differs phonologically from the postposition *mee* ‘with’ (see (1a) and (2b)).

- (3) \*Ik schilder mee ’r.  
I paint with there  
‘I am painting with it.’

The main question I address in this paper is how to correctly rule out *met* *’t* ‘with it’ in (2a), and let the R-pronoun and postposition in (2b) appear. I argue that R-pronouns are not something special, but a consequence of regular spellout mechanisms. Just like van Riemsdijk (1978) I analyze an R-pronoun and postposition as a type of allomorph of the preposition and pronoun. The crucial difference in the current approach is that spellout rules out the ungrammaticality of the preposition and pronoun and not the stipulation of a filter.

This paper focuses on the instrumental R-pronoun and postposition *’r-mee* ‘with it’ and *waar-mee* ‘with what’ in Dutch. This instance is interesting for two reasons. First, just like for all R-pronouns, the R-pronoun is syncretic with the locative. In many of the R-pronouns and postpositions, the meaning component of the locative is intuitive, as many prepositions express locations, directions etc. However, an instrumental expresses an instrument, which does not have a meaning component associated with location. Ideally, an analysis treats the syncretism not as accidental but allows for the locative meaning to be absent. The second reason why I focus on this particular R-pronoun and postposition has to do with the form of the adposition. The preposition *met* ‘with’ does not only turn into a postposition, but it also changes into *-mee* ‘with’ when it is combined with an R-pronoun. This last observation has so far remained unexplained.

The main generalization is that the instrumental R-pronoun and postposition *waar-mee* ‘with what’ takes precedence over the instrumental preposition and inanimate pronoun *met wat* ‘with what’. This generalization is subject to an important condition: the instrumental object needs to form a proper constituent i.e. a constituent to the exclusion of other features. When this condition is not met, the preposition and pronoun appear. This can straightforwardly follow in a system in which spellout targets phrasal constituents: Nanosyntax (Starke, 2009). I work this idea out capturing the following observations. First, R-pronouns are syncretic with locatives. Second, regular pronouns appear with prepositions, R-pronouns with postpositions. Third, the instrumental preposition and postposition differ in form (*met* vs. *mee*).

<sup>1</sup>The longer form that is mostly used in writing is *het* ‘it’. I will use the spoken variant *’t* throughout this paper.

<sup>2</sup>The R-pronoun *’r* in (2b) can be written as *er*, *der* and *’r* and pronounced as respectively /ɛr/, /dər/ or /ər/. As far as I am aware, there is no clear meaning difference between these forms. See Wesseling (2018) for discussion. In my examples I use *’r*, but the other two forms fit just as well.

<sup>3</sup>In this paper I do not make any claims about the distinction between prefixes and prepositions, or suffixes and postpositions.