The Scope of Negative Prefixes in English and Romanian

The aim of the paper is to discuss the scope of negative verbal prefixes in English and Romanian in a first phase syntax framework where verbs undergo decomposition (Ramchand 2008) (*<init, proc, res>*). I argue that negative verbal prefixes have different scope effects than word negation or sentence negation. In addition, I propose that a new version of Distributed Morphology, namely, spanning (Svenonius 2012, 2014, Ramchand 2014) can capture the data in a convincing way.

I look at the negative verbal prefixes *de-* (*deactivate, decode, deconstruct, decontaminate, decrease, deform), **dis**- (disfigure, dishonor, disinherit, disintegrate, displease, distrust*), **un-** (*untie*), all of which compete for the expression of 'the undoing of a previous state' (*untie*, as argued in Marchand 1972:636) or the opposite/ the lack of a certain state (*distrust*). There is also **mis-** (*misdiagnose, misinform, misinterpret, mislead, misspell, mistrust*), which is special as it expresses the meaning 'to do smth badly' ('to give an incorrect diagnosis', 'to give incorrect information' a.o.). As for Romanian, I look at the prefixes **de-** *(deactiva, decoda, deconstrui, deforma)*, **des/dez**- *(desfigura, dezonora, dezmoşteni, dezintegra)*, **dis-** *(dispărea* 'disappear'). There is no counterpart for **mis-**. Unlike the prefixes above, which seem to present combinatorial restrictions (*un-*, for instance, seems to combine essentially with non-states (Horn 1988)- when it combines with states, it gives rise to a different meaning, as one can see in the case of *unlove*, a change of state verb), the prefixes **non-** (*nonlove*) in English and **ne-** *(nelinişti* 'to disquiet') in Romanian can attach to any type of verb, and, in addition, they seem to behave like word negation. The interest of this paper, however, is represented by the prefixes with different scope effects than word negation (*de-, dis-, mis-* in English, *de-, des/dez-, dis-* in Romanian).

Starting from the very simple remark that a verb such as *to deconstruct* does not mean 'not to construct/ to not construct', and *to not deconstruct a building* does not mean 'to construct a building', it is argued that negative verbal prefixes do not negate a word (in this case, the word *construct*), but scope lower. This has first been noted by G. Lakoff (1969) who decomposed *dissuade* as *persuade not to*. A closer look at the data reveals that trying to analyze negative prefixed verbs in terms of their positive counterparts seems to be insufficient to capture their meaning, and a more fine-grained analysis where one can decompose the verb is needed. Hust (1975), for instance, shows that *I have disarmed the prisoners* does not mean 'I have not armed the prisoners', but 'I have caused the prisoners to come not to have arms', and *I have disassembled the mechanism* does not mean 'I have not assembled the mechanism', but 'I have caused the mechanism to come to be no longer assembled'. A similar remark can be made for Romanian (*dezasambla, dezarma*). Negation prefixes seem to act differently from word or sentence negation, being internal to and scoping below CAUSE. In a similar way, *untie* created with the privative/ reversative prefix *un-* would mean 'cause to be tied no longer' (Marchand 1969:205). Interestingly, in *misdiagnose* ('give an incorrect diagnosis'), the negation seems to scope over a silent adjective CORRECT modifying the base. It thus seems to be the case that the negative prefix negates the final state, which can be expressed by a verb ('to have arms'), an adjective ('assembled', 'tied', 'correct'), a noun ('trust' in *distrust*), even a preposition (*dezgropa* 'negative prefix-hole', meaning 'cause to come to be not in the hole')-although in the last three cases, it could be argued that what is negated is again the verb (*be/ have/ come to be*) .
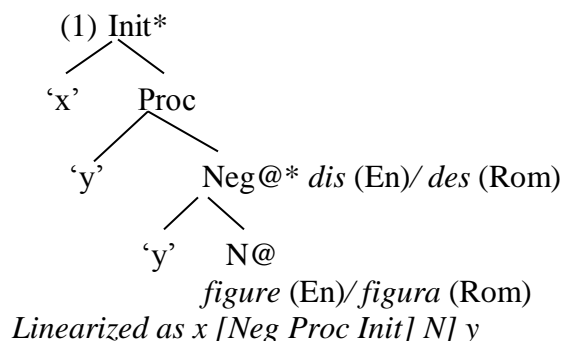
I would like to suggest that these facts about negative prefixes could be nicely accounted for by recasting the intuitions of lexical semantic decomposition into a first phase syntax

(Ramchand 2008), where the verb is decomposed into an initiation projection (*init*), a process projection (*proc*) and a result projection (*res*).

Moreover, using the spanning framework would make the analysis even more elegant and economical. According to spanning, words are spans, i. e. an extended projection of complement heads (Svenonius 2012). The innovative aspect comes from the elimination of redundant labels (Brody 2000), as dismissing intermediate projections and using the same label for X and XP seems to be a logical consequence of the fact that heads select heads (heads select phrases, and phrases are projections of heads).

Brody's Mirror Theory, according to which the syntactic relation 'X complement of Y' is identical to an inverse-order morphological relation 'X specifier of Y', provides a direct linearization mechanism which eliminates head-movement from the system, linearizing specifiers to the left of heads (*already go*) and heads to the left of complements (*go-ne*). Instead of resorting to head movement, it can be argued that a span spells out at a certain height. This is indicated by Brody (2000) by means of the diacritic @. Furthermore, in order to indicate that a certain head forms a word with the head below, Ramchand (2014) makes use of the diacritic *.

Thus, a verb such as *disfigure* may tentatively be assigned the representation in (1):

(1) Init*
'x'   Proc
    'y'   Neg@* *dis* (En)/ *des* (Rom)
        'y'   N@
            figure (En)/ *figura* (Rom)
Linearized as x [Neg Proc Init] N] y

To conclude, in the paper, I provide first phase-syntax representations for negative verbal prefixes in English and Romanian, showing that scope phenomena can be captured syntactically if one resorts to verb-decomposition. Moreover, I use spanning as a direct linearization mechanism, thus capturing word formation in a more elegant and economical way.

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