A polar whole

Dutch *heel* ‘whole’ as a special kind of negative polarity item

1 This paper discusses a peculiar polarity item from Dutch, ‘polar-heel’, whose properties have not been studied in the literature before. This incarnation of the adjective/quantifier *heel* ‘whole/all’ shows a highly restricted distribution. We argue that ‘polar-heel’ is a strictly negative polarity item which can be licensed in either of two ways (cf. (i) and (ii), below). The discussion in this paper thus seeks to show that ‘polar-heel’ is a non-empty analog to an A’-bound gap, which likewise can be either ‘real’ or ‘parasitic’.

(i) direct licensing, under an overt-syntactically established Spec–Head agreement relationship with the negative head Neg<sup>0</sup>

(ii) parasitic licensing, via overt-syntactically established connectedness to the licensing chain of another negative polarity item

2 Polar-heel (illustrated in (1)) is dependent on sentential negation, being licensed (at least in cases of direct licensing — strategy (i)) directly by the negative head Neg<sup>0</sup>, not by some negative constituent. In fact, its sensitivity to scope island effects (cf. (2)) goes so far that it does not want to be separated from its licensing Neg by a c-commanding negative element: the a–examples in (3)–(4) are ungrammatical, and contrast strikingly with the grammatical b–examples featuring the familiar type of any–NPIs. The emergence of scope island effects, combined with the restrictions on polar-heel licensing in double object constructions illustrated in (5), make the case for an analysis in terms of overt-syntactic feature-checking category movement of the container of polar-heel into SpecNegP. On the assumption (for which independent evidence will be provided in the paper) that the gap left by movement of phrases containing polar-heel can only be trace, not pro (à la Cinque 1990), the ungrammaticality of (5b) follows from the general ban on ‘real’, trace-leaving movement of indirect objects (cf. *children are nice to give a present *(to)). Movement to SpecNegP cannot use SpecCP as an escape hatch, which explains the clause-mate condition on the licensing of polar-heel (illustrated in (7a)): whenever there is a CP-node in between, licensing fails.

3 The ban on licensing polar-heel in indirect objects and in embedded CPs evaporates whenever polar-heel can be parasitic on another polarity item, including (in the double object case) another instance of polar-heel itself: (5c) contrasts minimally with (5b), and (7b) with *ooid* is much better than (7a). Parasitic licensing of polar-heel has properties which fit in with well-known characteristics of parasitism — including the anti-c-command condition (8), the need for parasitic licensing to be established prior to Spell–Out (9), and the connectedness requirement (10). In (8), the *any*–NPI which is intended as a licensor of parasitic polar-heel c-commands the latter and thus fails to license it (cf. *which article t was filed without reading pg?); in (9) (modeled on Uribe-Etxebarria’s 1994 examples of LF NPI–licensing) licensing of the ‘real’ NPI
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is possible only at LF (after reconstruction of the subject), too late for the licensing of the parasite; in (10b) the parasitic NPI fails to connect at Spell-Out to the licensing chain of the ‘real’ NPI (on the assumption, to be substantiated in the paper, that possessors cannot c-command out of DP in overt syntax).

4  Polar-heel occurs in definite noun phrases only, but it is more restricted than other instantiations of heel in that it strongly prefers the distal demonstratives die/dat ‘that’ (cf. (11)). This suggests a parallel with *N of a N constructions (cf. (12)), which will be taken up in the paper with an eye to establishing D⁰ as the position of heel in the structure of the complex noun phrase containing polar-heel. In the closing section of the paper, we will also address the links between noun phrases containing polar-heel and the likewise negatively polar adverb helemaal (cf. (13)), and compare the latter to its English analog at all.

(1)  a.  ik ken die hele vent *(niet)
     I know that whole bloke not
   b.  ik ken heel die vent *(niet)
     I know whole that bloke not
     ‘I don’t know that bloke at all’

(2)  a.  ik zou mijn studenten dat (hele) boek niet laten lezen
     I would my students that whole book not let read
     ‘I wouldn’t let/have my students read that book at all’
   b.  ik zou {hooguit/precies} drie studenten dat (*hele) boek niet laten lezen
     I would at.most/exactly three students that whole book not let read
   c.  {hooguit/precies} drie studenten hebben dat (hele) boek niet gelezen
     at.most/exactly three students have that whole book not read

(3)  a.  *ik ken [geen vrienden van die hele vent]
     I know no friends of that whole bloke
   b.  ik ken [geen vrienden van ook maar één van mijn collega’s]
     I know no friends of also but one of my colleagues

(4)  a.  ?*ik zou niemand die hele vent voorstellen
     I would nobody that whole bloke introduce
   b.  ik zou niemand ook maar één van mijn collega’s voorstellen
     I would nobody also but one of my colleagues introduce

(5)  a.  hij wil die student die (hele) constructie niet uitleggen
     he wants that student that whole construction not explain
   b.  hij wil die (?*hele) student die constructie niet uitleggen
   c.  hij wil die (hele) student die hele constructie niet uitleggen

(6)  a.  ... [Negp [... heel ...]do [Neg Neg [... IO tdo]]]
   b.  *... [Negp [... heel ...]o [Neg Neg [... tio do]]]

(7)  a.  *ik geloof niet dat ik die hele vent ken
     I believe not that I that whole bloke know
   b.  ik geloof niet dat ik die hele vent ooit gezien heb
     I believe not that I that whole bloke ever seen have
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(8) ik geloof niet dat ook maar iemand die (*hele) vent kent
I believe not that also but anyone that whole bloke knows

(9) [een dokter die die (*hele) vent ook maar enigszins kon helpen] was niet te vinden
a doctor who that whole bloke also but in any way could help was not to find

(10) a. hij heeft [die (hele) vent z’kin broer] nooit gekend
he has that whole bloke his brother never known

   b. ik geloof niet dat hij [die (*hele) vent z’kin broer] ooit heeft gekend
I believe not that he that whole bloke his brother ever has known

(11) ik ken die/*de/*deze/*een hele vent niet
I know that/the/this/a whole-INF bloke not

(12) ik ken die/*de/*deze/*een idioot van een dokter niet
I know that/the/this/an idiot of a doctor not

(13) ik ken die vent helemaal *(niet)
I know that bloke at all not

‘I don’t know that bloke at all’