Dutch long passive was tried to reject

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Long passive

1) Matrix passive

2) Implicit control

(1) *Er   werd   geprobeerd de computers te repareren.*
EXPL AUX.SG tried   the computers to repair
lit. 'It was tried to repair the computers.'   [implicit control]

3) Long object promotion

(2) *De computers$_i$ werd-en geprobeerd t$_i$ te repareren.*
the computers$_i$ AUX-PL tried   t$_i$ to repair
lit. 'The computers were tried to repair.'   [long passive]

Long passive ≈ passive across two verbs.

(Wurmbrand 2001, 2014, Wurmbrand & Shimamura 2017)

Diagnostics

- Matrix passive + implicit control + long object promotion.

- Plural agreement with the matrix auxiliary. (cf. Third Construction)

(3)   [*De beide personen*]$_i$ *werd-en geprobeerd* t$_i$ *te reanimeren*
     the both persons$_i$ AUX-PL tried   t$_i$ to resuscitate
     lit. 'Both people were tried to resuscitate ...'   (De Gelderlander; August 11, 2019)

- Nominative case on pronominal objects.

(4)   *Hij*$_i$ *werd nog geprobeerd* t$_i$ *over te halen*   *door Eugene Reaper*
     he.NOM$_i$ was still tried   t$_i$ PRT to persuade by   Eugene Reaper
     lit. 'He was still tried to convince by Eugene Reaper ...'   (GTA IV Wikipedia page)

The distribution of long passive

- Not possible in English.

- Possible in German (Germanic), Czech, Croatian (Slavic), European Portuguese, Italian (Romance), Japanese (Japonic), Acehnese, Takibakha Bunun (Austronesian), Kannada (Dravidian), ...

  (Wurmbrand 2014)

- **Dutch**: unclear.
  - → Prevailing view: ungrammatical.   (e.g. Broekhuis 1992)
  - → Numerous examples on the internet.
  - → Recent claims about speaker variation.   (Tavenier 2020)

⤳ Calls for an experimental approach.

Long passive
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Theoretical background
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The experiment
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Hypothesis 1: implicit control > long passive

(5) a. *Er   werd geprobeerd de duiven te vangen met een groot net.*
EXPL AUX tried   the pigeons to catch with a   large net
lit. 'It was tried to catch the pigeons with a large net.'   [–LP]

b. *De duiven werden geprobeerd te vangen met een groot net.*
the pigeons AUX.PL tried   to catch with a   large net
lit. 'The pigeons were tried to catch with a large net.'   [+LP]

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Hypothesis 2: Events > Situations in long passive

- Complements of Event verbs (*try, forget*): more transparent and more dependent than Situation complements (*decide, promise*).
  - Temporal interpretation, type of control, finiteness, clitic climbing, scrambling, **long passive**. (Wurmbrand 2001, 2014, Wurmbrand & Lohninger 2019)

(6) a. *Elsa **probeerde** de puzzel (*morgen) op te lossen.*
Elsa tried   the puzzle (*tomorrow) PRT to solve
'Elsa tried to solve the puzzle (*tomorrow).'   [Event]

b. *Elsa **besloot** (gisteren) de puzzel (morgen) op te lossen.*
Elsa decided (yesterday) the puzzle (tomorrow) PRT to solve
'(Yesterday,) Elsa decided to solve the puzzle (tomorrow).'   [Situation]

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Hypothesis 3: non-aspectuals > aspectuals

- Putative differences within Event verb class due to aspectuality:

(7) a. *Er   werd **geprobeerd** de analyse te begrijpen.*
    EXPL AUX tried   the analysis to understand
    lit. 'It was tried to understand the analysis.'   [7, 6, 6, 6]

  b. *Er   werd **begonnen** de woonkamer op te ruimen.*
     EXPL AUX begun   the living.room PRT to clean
     lit. 'It was begun to clean the living room.'   [3, 4, 3, 4]

(Pitteroff & Schäfer 2019)

- Extension to long passive (+ long object promotion)?

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The hypotheses

H1 Construction type

Regular implicit control (without long object promotion) is better than long passive.

H2 Broad verb class

Event verbs (*proberen* 'try', *vergeten* 'forget') are better than Situation verbs (*besluiten* 'decide', *beloven* 'promise') with long passive.

H3 Aspectuality

Within the Event class, non-aspectuals (*proberen* 'try', *vergeten* 'forget') are better than aspectuals (*beginnen* 'begin', *ophouden* 'cease').

Experimental design

- Sentence judgment experiment
- 80 participants (mean age 19.1; 84% female)
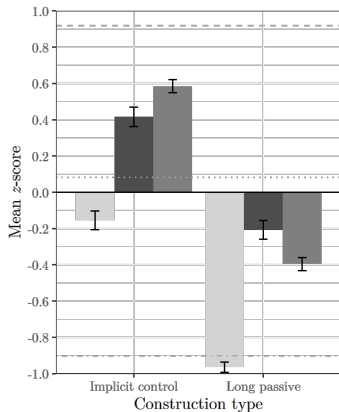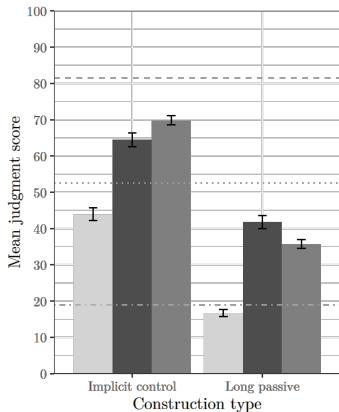- Judgments on 0–100% slider bar, *naturalness*

- 24 experimental items, 48 fillers
- Context sentence + target sentence
    - *Construction type* (implicit control vs. LP)
      ⤳ **H1**: implicit control > LP

    - *Verb type* (Event$_{non-aspectual}$, Event$_{aspectual}$, Situation)
      ⤳ **H2**: Events > Situations (in LP)
      ⤳ **H3**: non-aspectuals > aspectuals

Experimental items

(8) *Vrijwel alle elektronische apparaten op de universiteit zijn gisteren kapot gegaan.*
almost all electronic   devices   at the university are yesterday broken went
'Almost all electronic devices at the university broke down yesterday.'

    a. *De computers werden vandaag door het IT-team **geprobeerd** te repareren.*
      the computers AUX.PL today   by   the IT-team tried   to repair

    b. *Er   werd vandaag door het IT-team **geprobeerd** de computers te repareren.*
      EXPL AUX today   by   the IT-team tried   the computers to repair

    c. *De computers werden vandaag door het IT-team **besloten** te repareren.*
      the computers AUX.PL today   by   the IT-team decided   to repair

    d. *Er   werd vandaag door het IT-team **besloten** de computers te repareren.*
      EXPL AUX today   by   the IT-team decided   the computers to repair
      'The IT-team tried/decided to repair the computers today.'

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Experimental results

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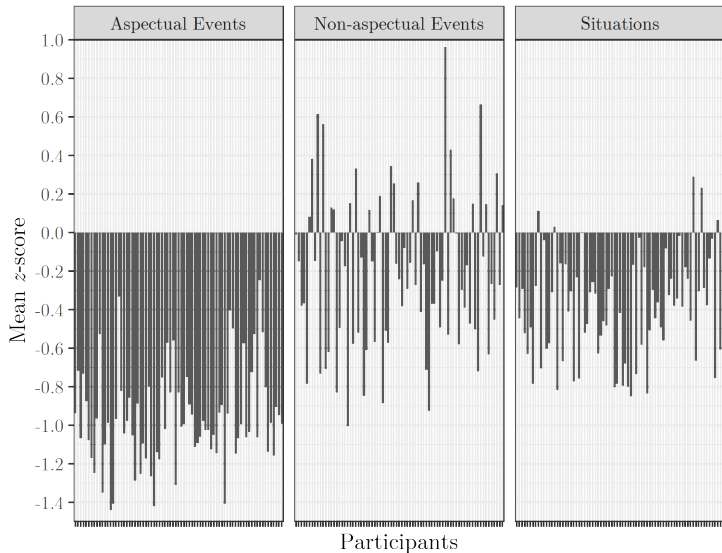00000

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Experimental results

- LP: not very natural, worse than implicit control (*)   **[✓ H1]**
- Note: reduced judgment scores for implicit control as well

- Event verbs are worse than Situation verbs overall (*)
    - Within LP, non-aspectual Events > Situations (*)   **[✓ H2]**
    - Within LP, aspectual Events < Situations (*)   **[✗ H2]**

- Clear disadvantage for aspectual Event verbs (*)   **[✓ H3]**

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Individual variation

Individual variation and theory building

"It has come to be generally acknowledged that not all speakers of 'the same language' might have the same competence, but that does not justify basing the theory only on sentences for which there is universal agreement, and extrapolating by some means to dictate the status of the remainder."

"In cases where people disagree, that fact cannot be ignored; the theory must be able to describe *every* speaker's competence, and thus must allow for variation wherever it occurs."
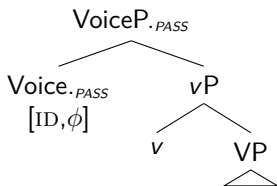
—Carson Schütze (1996: 37)

The syntax of long passive

The components of long passive

1) Matrix passive
2) Implicit control
3) Long object promotion

(9) *De computers$_i$ werd-en geprobeerd t$_i$ te repareren.*
     the computers$_i$ AUX-PL   tried   t$_i$ to repair
     lit. 'The computers were tried to repair.'

Passive: Decomposed Voice domain

- The external argument is introduced by Voice. (Kratzer 1996)
- A passive Voice head encoding the implicit agent.
  - ⤳ A numerical index feature (cf. Kratzer 2009), possibly also ϕ-features.

$$
\begin{array}{c}
\text{VoiceP.}_{PASS} \\
\diagdown \\
\text{Voice.}_{PASS} \quad v\text{P} \\
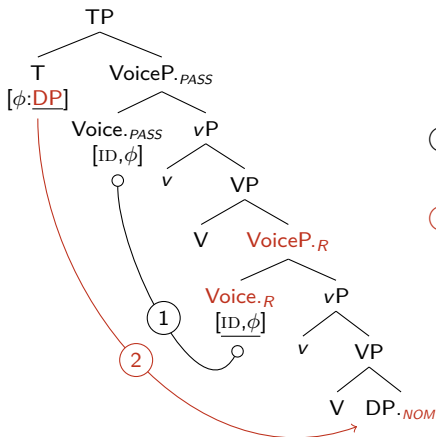[\text{ID},\phi] \quad \diagdown \\
v \quad \text{VP}
\end{array}
$$

(e.g. Embick 2004, Schäfer 2008, Bruening 2013, Legate 2014, Alexiadou et al. 2015)
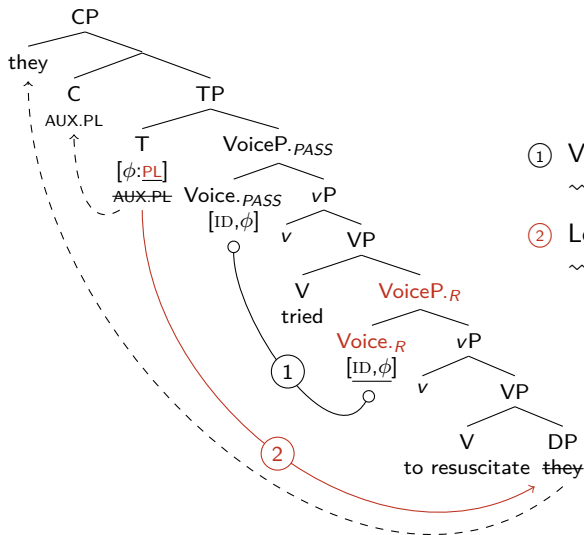
Long passive as Voice restructuring

- Restructuring: complements smaller than CP.
- Long passive: the complement is headed by an underspecified Voice.$_R$ head.

(Wurmbrand & Shimamura 2017; cf. Pietraszko 2021)

1. Voice–Voice dependency (ID,ϕ) ⤳ semantic argument sharing.
2. Agreement between matrix T and the embedded object ⤳ long object promotion.

(10) *Zij_i*   *werd-en (nog) geprobeerd te reanimeren.*
they.NOM AUX-PL (still) tried   to resuscitate
lit. 'They were still tried to resuscitate.'

① Voice–Voice dependency
    ⤳ 'trier' = 'resuscitator'.

② Long object promotion
    ⤳ PL agreement & NOM.

(see Wurmbrand 2001 for *te* in V)

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Deriving the variation

Hypothesis 1: implicit control > long passive ✓

- In line with claims that long passive is ungrammatical or marked in
  Dutch.   (cf. Schmid et al. 2005, Bader & Schmid 2009 for German)

- Possibly due to a preference for bigger complement clauses (TP, CP)
  and control via PRO:
    - ⤳ Voice$_R$ is marked and, for some speakers, unavailable.
    - ⤳ PRO blocks long object promotion.

Hypothesis 2: Events $>$ Situations in LP ✓/✗

- Event$_{non-aspectual}$ $>$ Situation, but Event$_{aspectual}$ $<$ Situation
- Situation complements (*besluiten* 'decide'): more opaque and more independent than Event complements (*vergeten* 'forget').

- Situation verbs require a TP-complement, Event verbs do not.
  - ↝ VoiceP.$_R$ should be too small for a Situation complement.
  - ↝ PRO blocks long object promotion.

    <div align="right">(Wurmbrand 2001, 2014, Wurmbrand & Lohninger 2019)</div>

  ... but long passive is not impossible: only lower ratings than non-aspectual Event verbs.
  - ↝ Coerced into a simultaneous interpretation. (cf. Wurmbrand 2001)

- *Weigeren* 'refuse': Situation verb.   (Wurmbrand & Lohninger 2019; see also Landau 2015)

(11) *...dat Suzanne weigert **volgende week** naar de tandarts te gaan.*
    ...that Suzanne refuses next   week to   the dentist   to go
    'that Suzanne refuses to go to the dentist next week.'

- Long passive encourages a simultaneous interpretation:

(12) *Hun vragen   werd-en door iedereen steeds   geweigerd te beantwoorden.*
    their questions AUX-PL by   everyone constantly refused   to answer
    lit. 'Their questions were constantly refused to answer by everyone.'
                                                    [experimental item]

    ⤳ VoiceP.$_R$ complement & long object promotion possible.

- Requires effort and/or may not be available for all Situation verbs.

Hypothesis 3: non-aspectuals > aspectuals ✓

- In both long passive and implicit control.

- Preference for the raising use of these verbs, rather than as control
  predicates?   (cf. Pitteroff & Schäfer 2019)
    - No individual arguments ⤳ passive and control impossible. (see Appendix)

      ⤳ Long passive and implicit control should be equally unacceptable.
        ... but long passive is ungrammatical, and implicit control degraded.

- Proposal: the nature of the infinitive.
    - Impersonal passive possible (Broekhuis & Corver 2015) ⤳ the matrix clause
      meets the basic conditions for implicit control and long passive.
    - ⤳ Infinitive: obligatory control adjunct [PP P CP].   (Landau 2021)

Adjunct status

- No *wh*-extraction.

(13) A. *Hoe was Lars* **opgehouden** *les te geven?*
     how was Lars ceased   lesson to give
     'How did Lars cease to teach?'

   B. *Plotseling.* / #*Zonder pauze.*
      suddenly   without break
      'Suddenly.' / #'Without a break.'   [aspectual]

(14) A. *Hoe had Lars* { **geweigerd** / **geprobeerd** } *les te geven?*
     how had Lars   refused   tried   lesson to give
     'How did Lars refuse/try to teach?'

   B. *Plotseling.* / *Zonder pauze.*
      suddenly   without break
      'Suddenly.' / 'Without a break.'   [Situation / Event$_{non-aspectual}$]

PPs

- Dutch aspectual verbs: infinitival or PP dependent.

(15) *Het hield   op / begon { te regenen / met regenen }.*
       it   ceased PRT   began   to rain   with raining
       'It ceased/began to rain.'

- The infinitive is itself a PP.

(16) *... voldoende om op te houden met onze tijd te verknoeien.*
       ... enough   for PRT to cease with our time to waste
       '... enough to cease wasting our time.'   (J. van de Wetering: De zaak IJsbreker)

  → The P-layer may be covert.

Infinitives as obligatory control adjuncts

- Adjunct status, PP (overt/covert), obligatory control.
  - ⤳ Obligatory control adjunct [PP P CP].   (Landau 2021)

Long passive

- Control adjuncts have too large a structure.
  - ⤳ Voice-Voice dependency and long object promotion blocked.

Implicit control

- Adjunct control requires syntactic predication.   (Landau 2013, 2021)
  - ⤳ Impossible with an implicit argument (*qua* feature bundle on Voice).
  - ⤳ May be saved by pragmatics (cf. Reed 2020) → degraded.

Conclusion

- Long passive is a marginal phenomenon in Dutch.
    - ⇝ Better than ungrammatical, worse than grammatical fillers.
    - ⇝ Acceptable for some speakers.

- There are contrasts with respect to verb classes.
    - Non-aspectual Event verbs are better than Situation verbs.
        - ⇝ Minimal required size of the complement.
    - Aspectual verbs are degraded in general.
        - ⇝ The infinitive is an adjunct: both control and long object promotion fail.

- Marginal phenomena & individual variation ⇝ new perspectives on the syntax of a language and the nature of linguistic judgments.
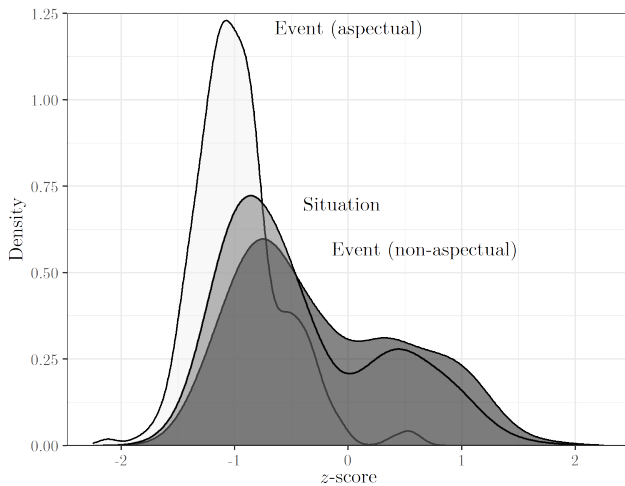
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Appendix

Two populations

The third construction

- Extraposition of the complement clause and scrambling of the object.

  (Den Besten et al. 1988, Den Besten & Rutten 1989, Broekhuis & Hoekstra 1990)

(17) *dat Jan computers$_i$ t$_j$ heeft geprobeerd* [*PRO t$_i$ te repareren*]$_j$.
    that Jan computers   has   tried   to repair
    'that Jan tried to repair computers.'

- Impossible with matrix passive. (see also Wurmbrand 2004 for German)

(18) a. *dat (er)   t$_j$ geprobeerd werd* [*PRO computers te repareren*]$_j$.
        that (EXPL)   tried   AUX   computers to repair
    b. **dat (er)   computers$_i$ t$_j$ geprobeerd werd* [*PRO t$_i$ te repareren*]$_j$.
        that (EXPL) computers   tried   AUX   to repair
        'that it was tried to repair computers.'

  → Scrambling, not long passive: no matrix agreement.
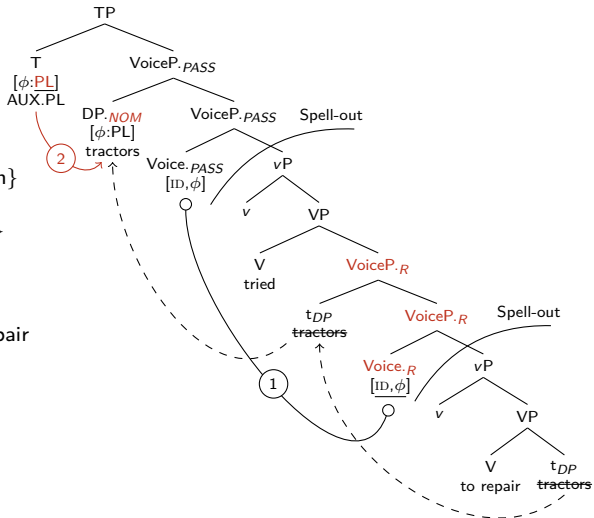
Long passive to the rescue

- Agreement (i.e. long passive) improves the acceptability:

(19) *dat (er)   boeken$_i$ geprobeerd* { **werd / ?werd-en* } [*t$_i$ te lezen*]
     that (EXPL) books   tried   AUX   AUX-PL   to read
     lit. 'that books were tried to read'   (Broekhuis 1992)

- A tension for speakers who do not allow long passive:

  a) Scrambled object: a compulsion to be interpreted as a subject.

  (cf. Den Besten et al. 1988)

  b) Long object promotion requires Voice.$_R$.

- A possible theoretical implementation: the scrambled object as a defective intervener for agreement between T and the passive implicit agent.

  ✗ Implicit control (via PRO).   (cf. van Urk 2013)

  ✓ Long passive: implicit control builds on the Voice-Voice dependency.

Phases

TP

T
[ϕ:PL]
AUX.PL

VoiceP.$_{PASS}$

DP.$_{NOM}$
[ϕ:PL]
tractors

VoiceP.$_{PASS}$

Spell-out

Voice.$_{PASS}$
[ID,ϕ]

vP

v

VP

V
tried

VoiceP.$_R$

VoiceP.$_R$

Spell-out

t$_{DP}$
tractors

Voice.$_R$
[ID,ϕ]

vP

v

VP

V
to repair

t$_{DP}$
tractors

(20) *Er   werd-en* {tractoren}
EXPL AUX-PL   tractors
geprobeerd [{*tractoren}
tried   tractors
te repareren].
to repair
lit. 'It was tried to repair tractors.'

Aspectuals as raising verbs?

- Only *beginnen* 'begin': expletive subjects, also idiom chunks.

(21) *Er* { *begon* / **hield op* / **startte* / **stopte* } *sneeuw te vallen.*
 EXPL began ceased PRT started stopped snow to fall
 'It began/ceased/started/stopped to snow.'

- Functional aspectual heads (above Voice): no individual arguments, monoclausal configuration. (see Cinque 1997, 2004, Wurmbrand 2004)

  ⤳ **Passive** & **control** are impossible.

  ⤳ Long passive and implicit control should be equally unacceptable.

    - (Attempted) long passive: Voice.$_R$ remains unvalued + no subject.
    - Similarly for (attempted) implicit control.