

The Dutch “semi-passives” with *krijgen/zien* and their German and English counterparts

This paper presents a constructionist analysis of the Dutch “semi-passive” constructions with *krijgen* ‘to get’ and *zien* ‘to see’ illustrated in (1) and (2) below, respectively, comparing these to a number of formally and/or semantically similar non-canonical passives in English and German. All Dutch examples included below are from the SoNaR corpus.

The construction with *krijgen* has already attracted a fair share of linguistic attention, but there is no agreement on its syntactic status and its semantic range of application (see, e.g., Colleman 2016 vs. Broekhuis 2016). I will bring in new data from the SoNaR and NLCOW corpora which allow for a more fine-grained identification of the formal and semantic subclasses of ditransitive verbs accommodated by this *krijgen*-construction in present-day Dutch. On the basis of a set of over 2,000 attested *krijgen*-passive instances, it will be shown that, on the one hand, the construction is found with certain types of verbs that are not readily found in the active double object construction, whereas, on the other hand, other types can be shown to occur with *krijgen* far less frequently than might be expected on the basis of their occurrence in the double object construction, or even not at all. The posited lexical and semantic constraints will be compared to those identified for the German *bekommen/kriegen*-passive in Leirbukt (1997), Lenz (2016), Oya (2016), etc.

The construction with *zien* has not yet been the subject of extensive grammatical research. Interestingly, as illustrated in (3) below, the *zien*-pattern attracts verbs from a number of semantic classes that are less readily used with *krijgen*, such as dispossession and deprivation verbs. The examples in (3) also show that the construction comes in a reflexive and a non-reflexive variant. This *zien*-construction bears a degree of functional resemblance to the English construction with “Experiencer have” in (4), which, in Kirchner (1952) already, is analysed as an “Ausweichkonstruktion” that speakers resort to in cases where the regular English ditransitive passive is not an option (cf. * *I was stolen seven bitcoins*). The Dutch and English constructions in (3) and (4), though structurally quite different, can be argued to occupy similar beneficiary/adversative niches in the respective networks of passive constructions. I will also address the question to what extent German can be said to possess a similar *sehen*-passive.

- (1) De SP.A-Spiritfractie krijgt één schepenzetel toegewezen.
- (2) Het Football Experience Center ziet zich een subsidie van 299.000 euro toegewezen.
- (3) a. Wie wil reserveren kan dat beter zes weken van tevoren doen. Tom Cruise en Nicole Kidman zagen zich onlangs een tafel geweigerd.
b. De schepen ... die in afwachting van de resultaten van het gerechtelijk onderzoek al zijn bevoegdheden zag afgepakt, blijft ervan overtuigd dat...
- (4) "I had seven bitcoins stolen from me through fraud," Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak said at the Times' Global Business Summit. <<https://www.cnbc.com/2018/02/26/>>

References

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