

# The canonical GOAL passive in Dutch and its dialects

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## 1. The typology of double object patterns

The cross-linguistic variation in passivization of double object patterns has recently been the source of renewed interest. It is sometimes claimed (most recently in Trips, Stein and Ingham 2016) that English is the only West Germanic language allowing for the passivization of the indirect object, illustrated in (1). The passive form in (1b) is variously referred to as the indirect object passive, the GOAL passive (Haddican and Holmberg 2012, 2014) or the RECIPIENT passive (Trips, Stein and Ingham 2016). From now on, I will use the label GOAL passive for convenience sake, as this term allows me to use the same term to refer to the constituent which functions as the indirect object in the active sentence and to the constituent that becomes the subject in the passive sentence.<sup>2</sup> Trips *et al* claim: “the recipient passive arose in English but *not in other West Germanic languages*” (2016: slide 3, my italics). German has been reported not to have a canonical GOAL passive (2) (Anagnostopoulou (2003: 70), Alexiadou and Schäfer (2013:9), Alexiadou *et al* (2014:10) for recent discussions). The claim that, like German, Dutch lacks a canonical GOAL passive, as shown in (3), is also common in the literature, as in, for instance, Broekhuis and Cornips (2004, 2012), Broekhuis, Corver and Vos (2015), Alexiadou and Schaeffer (2013:8), Alexiadou *et al* (2014:10).

- (1) a. They gave the girl the ball.  
b. The girl was given the ball.  
c. %The ball was given the girl. (Haddican and Holmberg (H&H) 2012, 2014)
- (2) a.Ge. Sie hat dem Mann die Blumen geschenkt.  
she has the-DAT man the flowers given  
'She has given the man the flowers.'  
b.Ge. \*Er wurde die Blumen geschenkt.  
He.NOM was the flowers.ACC given  
'He was given the flowers.'  
c.Ge. Die Blumen wurden dem Mann geschenkt.  
The flowers.NOM were the.DAT Mann given  
'The flowers were given to the man.'  
(Alexiadou *et al* 2014 :10)
- (3) a.Du Ik heb hem het eten bezorgd.  
I have him the food delivered  
'I delivered the food to him.'  
b.Du \*Hij werd het eten bezorgd. (door mij).  
He was the food delivered (by me)  
'He was delivered the food by me.'  
c.Du Het eten werd hem bezorgd. (door mij).  
The food was him delivered (by me)  
'The food was delivered to him by me.'  
(Alexiadou *et al* 2014 :10)

The goal of this paper is essentially empirical: it challenges the claim in Trips *et al* (2016) that English is the only West Germanic languages with a GOAL passive, and it challenges the

specific claims made in the generative literature (Broekhuis and Cornips 2004, 2012) that Dutch lacks the GOAL passive. As I will show, among other things, such claims fail to take into account the microvariation reported in the earlier literature. Section 2 contains a detailed discussion of the GOAL passive in West Flemish. Section 3 offers some discussion of the situation in Dutch in general, where it will appear that it is far from clear that the GOAL passive is not available, shedding more doubt on the claims prevalent in the literature.

## 2. The IO passive in West Flemish

### 2.1. The data: overview

As shown by the examples in (4) and (5), WF, a dialect of Dutch and a West Germanic language, does have an GOAL passive: the definite GOAL, *Valère* in active (4a), has been promoted to become the subject of the passive sentence (4b). Similarly, the indefinite GOAL *nen student* ('a student') in active (5a) has been promoted to subject status in the passive (5b). All of the discussion in this section is based on my own dialect intuitions; the core intuitions are corroborated in Dhaenens (2014).

- (4) a. dan ze Valère die posten beloofd een  
       that-PL they Valère those jobs promised have  
       'that they promised Valère those jobs'
- b. da Valère die posten beloofd wierd/is.  
       that Valère those jobs promised 'became'/ is  
       'that Valère was promised those jobs'
- (5) a. dan ze nen student die posten beloofd een.  
       that-PL they a student those jobs promised have  
       'that they promised a student those jobs'
- b. dat \*(ter) nen student die posten beloofd is<sup>3</sup>  
       that ter a student those jobs promised is  
       'that a student was promised those jobs'

Observe that the obligatory presence of expletive *er* in (5b) is not a specific property of the GOAL passive: it is fully in line with the pattern found elsewhere in (W)F: an indefinite or quantified subject systematically requires for the sentence to appear in the existential pattern with *er*-insertion, as exemplified in active transitive (6a) or passive monotransitive (6b).

- (6) a. dan \*(der) drie studenten dienen boek gelezen een  
       that-PL \*(there) three students that book read have  
       'that three students have read that book'
- b. dan \*(der) drie studenten betrapt zyn  
       that-PL \*(there) three students caught are  
       'that three students were caught'

Section 2.2. provides arguments to the effect that in WF GOAL passives, the GOAL argument is promoted to subject status. Section 2.3. shows that WF GOAL passives also comply with two specific diagnostics for Dutch passivization set out in Broekhuis and Cornips (2004, 2012), in particular with respect to the presence of an AGENT and the eventive interpretation.

## 2.2. Subject diagnostics for the GOAL passive

In the WF GOAL passives (4b) and (5b), the promoted GOAL acquires all the syntactic properties of the WF subject, both when definite (4b) and when indefinite (5b). (cf. Haegeman 1986a,b, Zaenen et al 1990 for early diagnostics).

### (i) Agreement.

In the GOAL passive, the GOAL DP agrees for person and number with the finite verb and (in the relevant contexts) with the complementizer (7)-(8). (7a) illustrates a passive with a definite GOAL: the finite auxiliaries *wierden/woaren* ('were') are plural as is the complementiser *dan* ('that') and they thus can be seen to agree with the plural DP *de studenten* ('the students'). Neither complementizer nor auxiliary can be singular (7b-d). In (8a) agreement is triggered by the plural indefinite *drie studenten* ('three students'). Again the agreement is mandatory (8b-d). The patterns in (7) and (8) also entail that in the passive sentences, singular agreement with the THEME *dienen bureau* ('that office') would be ungrammatical, cf. (7d) and (8d).

- |     |    |   |                     |               |          |                 |
|-----|----|---|---------------------|---------------|----------|-----------------|
| (7) | a. | dan   | <u>de studenten</u> | dienen bureau | beloofd  | wierden/ woaren |
|     |    | that –PL                                      | the students        | that office   | promised | were-PL         |
|     |    | 'that the students were promised that office' |                     |               |          |                 |
|     | b. | *dat  | <u>de studenten</u> | dienen bureau | beloofd  | wierden/ woaren |
|     |    | that –SG                                      | the students        | that office   | promised | were-PL         |
|     | c. | *dan  | <u>de studenten</u> | dienen bureau | beloofd  | wierd/ was      |
|     |    | that –PL                                      | the students        | that office   | promised | was-SG          |
|     | d. | *dat  | <u>de studenten</u> | dienen bureau | beloofd  | wierd/ was      |
|     |    | that –SG                                      | the students        | that office   | promised | was-SG          |
- 
- |     |    |   |          |                       |               |          |                 |
|-----|----|---|----------|-----------------------|---------------|----------|-----------------|
| (8) | a. | dan   | *(der)   | <u>drie studenten</u> | dienen bureau | beloofd  | wierden/ woaren |
|     |    | that –PL  | *(there) | three students        | that office   | promised | were-PL         |
|     |    | 'that three students were promised that office' |          |                       |               |          |                 |
|     | b. | *dat  | *(der)   | <u>drie studenten</u> | dienen bureau | beloofd  | wierden/ woaren |
|     |    | that –SG  | (there)  | three students        | that office   | promised | were-PL         |
|     | c. | *dan  | *(der)   | <u>drie studenten</u> | dienen bureau | beloofd  | wierd/ was      |
|     |    | that –PL  | *(there) | three students        | that office   | promised | were-SG         |
|     | d. | *dat  | *(der)   | <u>drie studenten</u> | dienen bureau | beloofd  | wierd/ was      |
|     |    | that –SG  | *(there) | three students        | that office   | promised | were-PL         |

### (ii) Case

When pronominal, the GOAL DP is realised as a nominative, and like other nominative pronouns, it allows for pronoun doubling. In (9a) the strong nominative pronoun *zie* is a doubler for the weak form *ze*. For full discussion of WF subject pronouns I refer to my earlier work (Haegeman 1991, 1992, 2004). In the Flemish regiolect, the subject of the GOAL passive can be the impersonal pronoun *men* ('one'), which is restricted to subject position of a finite clause (9b).<sup>4</sup>

- |     |    |    |                 |            |               |
|-----|----|----|-----------------|------------|---------------|
| (9) | a. | da | <u>ze (zie)</u> | die posten | beloofd wierd |
|-----|----|----|-----------------|------------|---------------|

- that she (she) those positions promised weird  
 ‘that she was promised these jobs’
- b. Het komt veel voor dat men die behandeling afgeraden wordt.  
 it comes often for that one that treatment disrecommended is  
 ‘It is quite common that one is advised against that treatment.’

(iii) Relativization

Like canonical definite subjects, relativized GOAL DPs are associated with relativizer *die* (10a) and with *dat/die* alternations (10b). These properties are characteristic of subject relativization in West Flemish (11), and they are unavailable in object relativization (12). See also Haegeman (1984, 1992).

- (10) a. Dat zijn de studenten dien die posten beloofd woaren.  
 that are the students *die*-PL those jobs promised were  
 ‘Those are the students that were promised those jobs.’
- b. Dat zijn de studenten dan-k peinzen dien die posten beloofd woaren.  
 that are the students that-I think *die*-PL those jobs promised were  
 ‘Those are the students that I think were promised those jobs.’
- (11) a. Dat zijn de studenten dien die posten beloofd oan.  
 that are the students *die*-PL those jobs promised had  
 ‘Those are the students who promised those jobs.’
- b. Dat zijn de studenten dan-k peinzen dien die posten beloofd oan.  
 that are the students that-I think *die*-PL those jobs promised had  
 ‘Those are the students who I think promised those jobs.’
- (12) a. Dat zijn de posten dan/\*dien die studenten beloofd oan.  
 that are the jobs that/*die*-PL those students promised had  
 ‘Those are the jobs that those students had promised.’
- b. Dat zijn de posten dan-k peinzen  
 that are the jobs that-I think  
 dan/dien die studenten beloofd oan.  
 that/*die*-PL those jobs promised had  
 ‘Those are the jobs that I think that those students had promised.’

(iv) Existential patterns

As already illustrated, if the GOAL is an indefinite nominal ((5b), (13a)), a numeral (13a) or a *wh*-constituent (13b), *er* insertion is obligatory when the GOAL is promoted to becoming the subject of the passive.<sup>5</sup> As shown in the active sentences in (14), this pattern is replicated in sentences with the same types of subjects in other contexts.

- (13) a. dan \*(der) Ø/drie studenten dienen post beloofd zyn  
 that *ter* Ø/three students that job promised are  
 ‘that (three) students were promised that job’
- b. Kweeten niet wien dat \*(er) dienen post beloofd is.  
 I know not who that \*(there) that job promised is  
 ‘I don’t know who was promised that job.’

- (14) a. dan \*(der) Ø/drie studenten dienen post beloofd een  
 that *ter* Ø/three students that job promised have  
 ‘that (three) students have promised that job’  
 b. Kweeten niet wien dat \*(er) dienen post beloofd eet.  
 I know not who that \*(there) that job promised has  
 ‘I don’t know who has promised that job.’

(v) Distribution

Like canonical definite subjects, the definite GOAL DP in the GOAL passive has to be linearly adjacent to the complementizer *dat* (‘that’)<sup>6</sup> in embedded clauses (15) and to the finite verb in root clauses (16). In (15a), adjuncts such as *gisteren* (‘yesterday’) or *verzekerst* (‘probably’) cannot intervene between the complementiser *dat* (‘that’) and the GOAL *Valère*. In (15b), the THEME *die posten* (‘those jobs’) cannot intervene between the complementiser *dat* (‘that’) and the GOAL *Valère*. In (16), the same adjacency requirement is illustrated for root clauses in which the finite verb, here the auxiliary *wierd* (‘was’), has moved to C. (17) and (18) show that identical adjacency restrictions apply to definite subjects of transitive sentences.

- (15) a. dat (\*gisteren/verzekerst) Valère die posten beloofd wierd  
 that (yesterday/probably) Valère those jobs promised was  
 ‘that Valère was (probably) promised those jobs (yesterday).’  
 b. \*dat die posten Valère beloofd wierd  
 that those jobs Valère promised wierd
- (16) a. Daarom wierd (\*gisteren/verzekerst) Valère die posten beloofd.  
 for that reason is (yesterday/probably) Valère those jobs promised  
 ‘For that reason Valère was (probably) promised those jobs (yesterday).’  
 b. \*Daarom wierd die posten Valère beloofd.  
 for that reason was those jobs Valère promised
- (17) a. dat (\*gisteren/verzekerst) Valère die posten beloofd eet  
 that (yesterday/probably) Valère those jobs promised has  
 ‘that (probably) Valère promised those jobs (yesterday).’  
 b. \*dat die posten Valère beloofd eet  
 that those jobs Valère promised has
- (18) a. Daarom eet (\*gisteren/verzekerst) Valère die posten beloofd.  
 for that reason has (yesterday/probably) Valère those jobs promised  
 ‘For that reason Valère probably promised those jobs (yesterday).’  
 b. \*Daarom eet die posten Valère beloofd.  
 for that reason has those jobs Valère promised

In WF transitive existential patterns, with an indefinite or quantified subject and the obligatory presence of *er*, a definite object may shift to the left of the indefinite subject (19a,b).

- (19) a. dan der drie studenten dienen boek gelezen een  
 that-PL there three students that book read have  
 ‘that three students have read that book.’  
 b. dan der dienen boek drie studenten gelezen een

that-PL there that book three students read have  
 ‘that three students have read that book.’

In the GOAL passive too, a definite direct object can shift across an indefinite GOAL (20).

- (20) a. dan der drie studenten dienen job beloofd zyn  
 that-PL there three students that job promised are  
 ‘that three students were promised that job.’  
 b. dan der dienen job drie studenten beloofd zyn  
 that-PL there that job three students promised are  
 ‘that three students were promised that job.’

(vi) Non-finite clauses

To the best of my knowledge, the GOAL passive is productive in West Flemish and it is also available in non-finite control clauses, in which case the GOAL will be a controlled PRO (21a).

The goal subject of a passive clause may undergo raising in *te* infinitives (21b), though this is restricted due to the fact that WF does not have many such raising verbs.

- (21) a. Me [PRO] dienen anderen post beloofd te zyn,  
 with that other job promised to be  
 goa-se niet veruzen.  
 goes-she not move  
 ‘Having been promised that other job, she’s not going to move house.’  
 b. Ze pleegdege zie zukken medicamenten voorengeschreven te zyn.  
 she used she such medications prescribed to be  
 ‘She used to be prescribes that medication.’

(vii) Coordination

That it is the GOAL nominal which is promoted to subjecthood in the GOAL passive is also confirmed by the possibilities of coordination. For instance, an active clause can coordinate with a GOAL passive clause under one shared subject (22a); a THEME passive clause can coordinate with a GOAL passive clause under one shared subject DP (22b).

- (22) a. Die twee studenten mochten nor us  
 those two students might to home  
 en goan da medicament neu niet meer voorengeschreven worden.  
 and go that medication now no longer prescribed be  
 ‘Those two students were allowed to go home and now will no longer be prescribed that medication.’  
 b. Valère is eerst vur een interview utgenodigd  
 Valère is first for an interview invited  
 en is doa toen dienen post beloofd.  
 and is there then that job promised  
 ‘Valère was first invited for an interview and was promised the job there.’

### 2.3. The AGENT in the GOAL passive

As in other passive sentences, in a GOAL passive sentence, the AGENT can be overtly expressed (23).

- (23) Ik zyn                dienen velo    aangeraden                door 2 collega's.  
 I am                this bicycle    recommended                by two colleagues  
 ‘I was recommended that bike by two colleagues.’

When the AGENT is not overt, it is implicit and such an implied AGENT can be modified by an adjunct: in (24a), *per ongeluk* (‘unintentionally’) or *espres* (‘intentionally’) modify the understood AGENT of the activity of prescribing. The implied AGENT can control into a purpose clause: in (24b), the purpose clause is predicated of the understood AGENT of promising.

- (24) a.    dat    Valère                per ongeluk /espres  
           that    Valère                by accident /intentionally  
           te    veel cortisonepillen                voorengeschreven    wier  
           too    many cortisone pills                prescribed                was  
           ‘that Valère was prescribed too many cortisone pills by accident.’  
       b.    Valère is                nen anderen post                beloofd  
           Valère is                another position                promised  
           voor em                ketent                te stellen.  
           for him                content                to make  
           ‘Valère was promised another job to please him.’

### 2.4. Event passive

Based on the diagnostics in Broekhuis and Cornips (2004, 2012) I conclude that the WF GOAL passive can have an eventive reading.

First, while examples with stative readings are available when the passive auxiliary *zyn* (‘be’) is selected, an eventive reading of the GOAL passive is available both with the auxiliary *worden* (‘become’) and with the - probably much more common - alternative *zijn* (‘be’).

Second, specific temporal specifiers modifying the event time are compatible with the GOAL passive (25), for instance in (25) *gisteren* (‘yesterday’) modifies the time of the event of prescribing.

- (25) dat    Valère gisteren                te    veel cortisonepillen    voorengeschreven    is  
       that    Valère yesterday                too    many cortisone pills    prescribed                is  
       ‘that Valère was prescribed too many cortisone pills yesterday.’

### 2.5. Conclusion: WF has a GOAL passive

All the diagnostics discussed above converge and point clearly towards the conclusion that WF, a dialect of Dutch and a West Germanic language, has a productive GOAL passive, contrary to claims in the current generative literature.

Whether the emergence of the GOAL passive in WF can also be attributed to contact with French, as argued for English by Trips, Stein and Ingham (2016) is a questions that

needs to be addressed. It is true that the WF lexicon provides strong evidence of contact of French as shown in Haegeman (2009). Though this needs to be examined further, I do not at this stage have reasons to assume that WF GOAL passives are particularly productive with Latinate verbs. An alternative hypothesis might be that the emergence of the GOAL passive is due to Ingvaenonic influence (see Dhaenens 2014). I do not further speculate on this issue here.

I also do not provide a syntactic account for the GOAL passive here, but the core ingredients required for such an account are clear. The essence of the account would be that in the active double object pattern, the GOAL has structural case, and that its case originates with the active double object verb. When passivised, the verb loses its case assigning potential and hence the GOAL has to be assigned nominative. In contrast, in the GOAL passive pattern, whatever is the source of the accusative case on the THEME in the active sentence must also be available under passivization. The GOAL passive can for instance be analysed as in Haegeman (1986a,b), suitably updated along the lines proposed recently by Haddican and Holmberg (2012, 2014).

## 2.6. WF as a symmetric double object language

Recently Haddican and Holmberg (2012, 2014) have been investigating the extent to which languages displaying the double object pattern in the active may instantiate a GOAL passive, a THEME passive or both. I refer to their papers for discussion, but in relation to that debate, it is important to add here that WF patterns with symmetric double object languages in that in addition to the GOAL passive illustrated above, a THEME passive is also available. (26) illustrates a THEME passive with an indefinite THEME nominal. In this case, as expected, the insertion of *er* is obligatory and the THEME may remain in a low position. (27) illustrates the pattern with a definite THEME nominal. For reasons of space I will not discuss the intricacies of the judgements for the latter pattern here (Haegeman 2016).

- (26) a. dan            ze        Valere toen    drie posten       beloofd een.  
           that-PL        they    Valere then    three jobs       promised have  
           ‘that they then promised Valère three jobs’  
       b. dan-PL \*(der) Valere        toen    drie posten       beloofd zyn  
           that    \*(der) Valere        then    three jobs       promised are  
           ‘that then three jobs were promised to Valère’
- (27) a. dan        ze        Valère        die posten       verleden jaar    beloofd een  
           that-PL    they    Valère        these jobs       last year       promised have  
           ‘that they promised Valère those jobs last year’  
       b. dan        die posten       Valère verleden jaar    beloofd       zyn  
           that-PL    those jobs       Valère last year       promised       are  
           ‘that those jobs were promised to Valère last year’

## 3. The wider picture

The picture outlined for WF above seems to me uncontroversial and challenges repeated claims in the literature to the effect that English is the only West Germanic language having a GOAL passive and that the grammar of Dutch is incompatible with a GOAL passive. Of course, the possibility remains, as suggested in Dhaenens (2014), that with respect to Dutch and its dialects, the GOAL passive is restricted to WF, justifying at least some of the claims in the literature, at least if these are taken to be restricted to Dutch. However, on this point, the



indications are that the GOAL passive may be more widespread than is acknowledged. The following observations are relevant for the discussion.

### 3.1. The descriptive literature

First of all, it is noteworthy that since the early 20th century, GOAL passives have been frequently reported in relation to Dutch usage in the descriptive literature (Wellander 1920, de Vooy 1949, Van Haeringen 1956, 2006 :70, Kooiman 1963, Langendonck 1968, van den Toorn 1971 to mention but a few, see Declerck 2016 for a full survey). Indeed, Den Besten (1989: 189-90, note 10) signals that according to De Vooy (1947/1960: 333) the following examples ‘are supposed to be grammatical’ in some northern dialects of Dutch:

- (28) a. Hij (nom.) wordt (sing.) de reiskosten (plur.) vergoed  
           he is (for) the travel expenses compensated  
       b. Zij (plur.) mogen (plur.) geen voedsel (sing.) geweigerd worden  
           they may no food refused be

Den Besten comments ‘If this is true we have found an SOV language that patterns like English (against Dutch and German)’ (1989: 190, note 10). The availability of the GOAL passive in Dutch would be in line with a long standing hypothesis in the descriptive literature that typologically the grammar of Dutch is somewhere ‘in between’ that of English and that of German (the so called ‘Dutch Sandwich’ as in Van Haeringen 1956)) and indeed in the Van Haeringen (1956: 69-70), GOAL passives were cited as representative examples.

In the recent formal literature on Dutch (for instance Broekhuis and Cornips 2004, 2012), the reportings in the earlier descriptive literature are marginalised. To the extent that GOAL passives are taken to exist, they are claimed to be subject to severe restrictions (see ANS 1987 and Broekhuis et al (2015: 432-436) for a survey of restrictions, and Declercq 2016 for an extensive evaluation in the light of more recent literature).

### 3.2. Attestations

That the GOAL passive is part of the grammar of at least some speakers of Dutch, is suggested by the wide array of google attestations of GOAL passives. (29) provides some examples. Admittedly, the source of the quotations is Belgian, and more systematic research would be required to verify the apparent regional bias to the attestations. It is for instance conceivable, that the GOAL passive is part of the grammar of Flemish speakers of Dutch and remains ungrammatical for Dutch speakers originating from Holland, indicating regional microvariation.

- (29) a. Ik werd deze cursus aangeraden door 2 collega's.  
I became this course recommended by two colleagues  
( [www.vodderschool.be](http://www.vodderschool.be) )  
'I was recommended this course by two colleagues.'
- b. De winnaars zullen hun prijs overhandigd worden na de ...  
The winners will their prize handed become after the ...  
(<http://www.historischekranten.be/issue/HWN/1984-05-25/edition/null/page/23>)  
'The winners will be given their award after...'

- c. omdat ik wacht op mijn vast contract  
 because I wait for my fixed contract  
 die ik beloofd ben voor binnen paar weken.  
*Rel* I promised am for in a few weeks  
 (<http://forum.zappybaby.be/> )  
 ‘because I am waiting for my permanent contract which I was promised for  
 within a couple of weeks’
- d. Wij willen jullie niets opdringen,  
 We want you nothing enforce,  
 noch willen wij iets opgedrongen worden.  
 nor want we something enforced become  
 (<http://forum.politics.be/showthread.php?p=4466804> (location: **Breda**)  
 ‘We don’t want to force anything on you nor do we want to be forced anything  
 upon ourselves.’

### 3.3. Acceptability questionnaires

In order to assess the acceptance rate of GOAL passives for Dutch and to assess the nature of regional variation (if any), D’Hulster (in progress) carried out an elicitation test of speakers of Dutch in Belgium and Holland. In total, 356 informants, all self declared native speakers of Dutch, participated in the test, testing nine regions in Flanders and the Netherlands: the provinces Gelderland, Groningen, Zeeland, Limburg and the region around the capital Amsterdam for the Netherlands, and the provinces West-Flanders, East-Flanders, Limburg and Antwerp for Flanders. Informants were asked to rate GOAL passives and THEME passives.

A first and surprising conclusion that emerges from the results of the questionnaires is that none of the regions show a significant higher rate of acceptability for the THEME passives than for GOAL passives, which indicates minimally that the GOAL passive seems to be perceived acceptable to some degree throughout the Netherlands and in Flanders.

In three regions, Amsterdam, Zeeland and West-Flanders, d’Hulster’s informants were found to rate the GOAL passive as significantly better than the THEME passive. To some extent, this seems to confirm the findings of Haegeman (1986a,b) and Dhaenens (2014) that there is a regional preference for the GOAL passive, and the judgements from d’Hulster’s speakers originating from West Flanders may well have been influenced by the informants’ dialect or regiolect, but, surprisingly, the results, if confirmed, would suggest that the preference is not restricted to just West Flanders and it would seem as if there is a ‘Western bias’ extending beyond what would be the WF dialect area.

The sample studied by D’Hulster is relatively small so care and more investigation will be needed before any firm conclusions can be drawn, but the preliminary results of D’Hulster’s work at least do not lead to the conclusion that the GOAL passive is categorically excluded from all varieties of Dutch. For more details on this research I refer to D’Hulster (in progress). D’Hulster’s research suggests that in line with some of the descriptive literature, denying the existence of the GOAL passive in standard Dutch may well be an oversimplification.

### 3.4. Conclusion

Whilst the current generative literature categorically denies the availability of the GOAL passive in the grammar of Dutch, descriptions of usage, google attestations and a number of acceptability test suggest that this may well be a simplification and that it may be the case that the pattern has become or is becoming part of the grammar of a segment of speakers of

standard Dutch. If this turns out to be correct, the underreporting of the GOAL passive in the literature on Dutch can be compared to that signalled for the English GOAL passive in Lightfoot 1979 (261-265) and related to prescriptive attitudes to language use.

#### 4. Conclusion

This paper provides empirical evidence against recent claims in the formal literature to the effect that English is the only West Germanic language with a GOAL passive, showing that at least the West Flemish dialect of Dutch has a productive canonical GOAL passive. The WF data strongly challenge the claims in the current literature that Dutch lacks a canonical GOAL passive, since at least one Dutch dialect does display the pattern. I have also tentatively suggested that evidence from the descriptive literature, from contemporary informal language use and from acceptability tests with Dutch informants in D'Hulster (in progress) sheds further doubt on the claim that as far as Dutch is concerned, the GOAL passive is restricted to the West Flemish dialect.

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- <sup>2</sup> I leave aside ‘non-canonical’ passives such as the English *get* passive and the German/Dutch non canonical passives (Alexiadou and Schäfer 2013)
- <sup>3</sup> Haddican and Holmberg (2012) give (ia).  
 (i) a. There were two men given a prestigious award last night. (H&H 2012: 201 (24b))  
 Parsed as an existential passive, this would be the English equivalent of Flemish (5b). However, the acceptability of this example for English speakers is unclear. The authors themselves say: “We acknowledge that we have not investigated to what extent the varieties of English discussed in this section accept [ia].” Andrew Radford (p.c.) points out that for him (ia) can only have a parse as a reduced relative, i.e. as in (ib) and is not acceptable as a genuine existential passive (ic).  
 (i) b. There were [<sub>DP</sub> two men (who were) given a prestigious award last night.]  
 c. There were [<sub>VP</sub> two men given a prestigious award last night.]  
 There is no doubt that WF (5b) must be parsed as an existential. In WF reduced relatives can be extraposed, as shown in (ii):  
 (ii) a. K’een doa drie camions [geloan me frut] gezien.  
 I have there three trucks loaded with fruit seen  
 b. K’een doa drie camions gezien, [geloan me frut].  
 I have there three trucks seen, loaded with fruit.  
 ‘I saw three trucks there, loaded with fruit.’  
 Extraposition of the direct object *die posten* (‘those jobs’) and the passive participle *beloofd* (‘promised’) is not possible in (5b):  
 (iii) \*dat ter nen student is [die posten beloofd ]  
 that ter a student is those jobs promised  
<sup>4</sup> This property cannot be tested for the dialect because the impersonal pronoun *men* is not used.  
<sup>5</sup> There is cross linguistic variation here. Referring to an observation in Hellan (1990, 74f.), Platzack (2005: note 16) signals that in Norwegian GOAL existential passives the direct object and not the indirect object is subject to an indefiniteness requirement:  
 (i) Det ble gitt Jon et stort ansvar / \*ansvaret  
 there was given Jon a great responsibility / responsibility.DEF  
 Platzack concludes (2005: note 18):  
 Another reason for not assuming structural case on the indirect object is that it never seems to be subject to an indefiniteness constraint.  
 The WF pattern is clearly different, suggesting that in this language the indirect object may receive structural case from the verb, as argued in Haegeman (1986a,b).  
<sup>6</sup> In WF the complementiser *dat* is obligatorily present in all embedded clause, frequently leading to doubly filled Comp positions.