The passive as an impersonalisation strategy in Afrikaans and Dutch: A corpus investigation

1   Introduction

Impersonalisation, i.e. "the process of filling an argument position of a predicate with a variable ranging over sets of human participants without establishing a referential link to any entity from the universe of discourse" (Gast & van der Auwera 2013: 136), has received considerable attention in the recent literature (e.g. Malchukov & Siewierska 2011; De Cock & Kluge 2016). An area that has attracted particular interest is the pronominal strategies that West Germanic languages use for impersonalisation (e.g. De Hoop & Tarenskeen 2015; Auer & Stukenbrock 2018; Haas 2018a; Fenger 2018). Consider the examples in (1) and (2).

(1)   Afrikaans:
       Mens *leef   net   een   keer.*
       one   live   only   one   time
       'One only lives once.'

(2)   Dutch:
       Ze   *hebben   mijn   fiets   gevonden.*
       they   have   my   bike   found
       'They have found my bike.'

In neither sentence does the subject refer to a specific, known individual or group of people. In (1), the Afrikaans pronoun *mens* 'one, you' (deriving from the noun 'human') serves to make a claim that, in principle, applies to everyone. In (2), the Dutch pronoun *ze* 'they' is used to make a statement not about everyone but about the actions of a particular person or group of humans who are still not explicitly identified.

Pronouns are, however, not the *only* strategies that languages have for impersonalisation (e.g. Posio and Vilkina 2013; Gast 2015; Haas 2018b). They also need not be the *preferred* strategy in certain impersonal contexts (see Van Olmen and Breed 2018a, 2018b and Section 2.2). Other

strategies include indefinite pronouns, generic noun phrases and agentless passives, as in (3) to (5) respectively.

(3) English:
     Someone *has stolen my bike!*

(4) Afrikaans:
     Mense *sê*   *dit*   *spook*   *in daardie huis.*
     people say it   haunt in that   house
     'People say that house is haunted.'

(5) Dutch:
     De   *belastingen* ***zijn*** *weer* ***verhoogd****.*
     the   taxes   are   again raised
     'Taxes have been raised again.'

Yet, all in all, little research has been undertaken on such non-pronominal impersonalisation strategies. This comparative gap in the literature is what we aim to start filling with the present article, by looking into the passive as an impersonalisation strategy in Afrikaans and Dutch. [1] On the basis of corpus data,[2] we would like to (i) determine if the passive is a productive strategy for impersonalisation in both Afrikaans and Dutch, (ii) find out whether it is more typically employed for some impersonal contexts than for others in the two languages and (iii) compare its use as an impersonalisation strategy in Afrikaans to that in Dutch.

---

[1] For clarity's sake, we would like to stress the difference between the passive as an impersonalisation strategy and the impersonal passive (see Kulikov 2011: 250-251). The latter term is typically reserved for constructions that demote an active subject but do not promote anything to be the passive subject. Dutch *er wordt gedanst* 'there is dancing' (lit. 'there becomes danced'), with expletive subject *er* 'there', is a case in point. Such an impersonal passive may be employed to avoid referring to everyone or to a specific, known person or group of people, i.e. as an impersonalisation strategy, but need not function that way. In *er wordt gedanst door de gasten* 'there is dancing by the guests', for instance, the human participants are clearly identified.

[2] We refrain from calling this article a corpus linguistic study. Locating every single Afrikaans and Dutch passive in existing corpora in an automatic way is difficult (if not unfeasible). Searches would need to be so broad that finding the relevant hits amongst the "false positives" would be a never-ending task. Our queries (see Section 3) therefore only target passives with a limited number of words between passive auxiliary and past participle. This decision prevents us from making definitive quantitative claims about, say, the overall (relative) frequency (per x number of words) of the agentless passive as an impersonalisation strategy in Afrikaans versus Dutch. Our data will, however, still give us a good idea of, for instance, the different impersonal uses that the passive fulfils in the two languages.

This article consists of four more sections. In Section 2, we will discuss the phenomenon of impersonalisation in detail. Section 3 will introduce our methodological approach and corpus data. In Section 4, the results will be presented and, in Section 5, we will give our conclusions.

2 Impersonalisation[3]

It is already clear from (1) and (2) that impersonalisation is a multifaceted phenomenon. *Mens* in (1) is roughly equivalent to 'everyone'. This paraphrase is, however, not possible for *ze* in (2), whose meaning is closer to 'someone' or 'some people'. In fact, even more fine-grained distinctions have been and need to be made. The people responsible for raising taxes in (5), for instance, are probably not as "unidentifiable" as the person who stole the bike in (3). For an analysis of the passive's use as an impersonalisation strategy, a good understanding of the different impersonal contexts is required. In what follows, we will therefore first describe the seven criteria used by Siewierska & Papastathi (2011), Gast & van der Auwera (2013) and Van Olmen & Breed (2018a, 2018b) to tell contexts apart and then introduce twelve possible impersonal contexts.

2.1 Criteria

2.1.1 Quantification (UNI/EXI)

This criterion relates to whether the state of affairs applies to everyone relevant to or included in the particular context – in which case it would be regarded as a *universal* (UNI) context – or whether it is assumed that there is a specific but unidentified individual or group of people to whom the state of affairs applies – in which case it would be considered an *existential* (EXI) context. Examples (1) and (2) respectively illustrate this difference. Further examples are (6) and (7).

---

[3] This section is similar to the corresponding section in Breed and Van Olmen (subm.), from which most examples here have been taken too. The two articles are part of a larger project about impersonalisation strategies in West Germanic and the theoretical background is thus also essentially the same.

(6) German: UNI
     Man *sollte   nicht trinken   und   fahren.*
     one   should   not   drink   and   drive
     'One should not drink and drive.'

(7) English: EXI
     They *have increased the highway's toll charge again.*

2.1.2 Perspective (INT/EXT)

An impersonal context is said to involve an *internal* (INT) point of view when "a 'center of consciousness' (e.g. the speaker or hearer) identifies, or is identified, *with* the set of referents under discussion" (Gast and van der Auwera 2013: 139). When no such identification takes place, the perspective is *external* (EXT). The difference can be exemplified by (8) and (9). The speaker of (8) includes him- or herself in the context, imagining that he or she too would drink a lot of Greek iced coffee when in Athens, and takes an internal point of view. By contrast, the speaker of (9) does not include him-/herself in the context, indicating that it is the inhabitants of Athens that drink a lot of frappé, and adopts an external perspective.

(8) Dutch: INT
     *In Athene   drink   **je**   veel   frappé.*
     in Athens   drink   you   much frappe
     'In Athens, you drink a lot of frappé.'

(9) Dutch: EXT
     *In Athene   drinken **ze**   veel   frappé.*
     in Athens   drink   they   much frappe
     'In Athens, they drink a lot of frappé.'

2.1.3 Veridicality (VER/NVER)

The criterion of veridicality relates to the truth or realness of the state of affairs. When the state of affairs is presumed to be true or is put forward as true, the context is *veridical* (VER). Example (10) is a case in point: frequently being rained upon is presented as a fact for anyone who visits or lives in England. When the state of affairs is only hypothetical, the context is regarded as *non-veridical* (NVER), as in (11).

4

(10) English: VER
*In England, **one** often gets wet.*

(11) Dutch: NVER
*Wat gebeurt er als **je** door een trilspin gebeten wordt?*
what happens there when you by a daddy.longlegs bitten becomes
'What happens when you get bitten by a daddy longlegs?'

2.1.4 Modality (MOD/NMOD)

Non-veridicality can be expressed through modal verbs. If this is the case for an impersonal context, like in (12), where the state of affairs is not put forward as a fact but as something to strive for, it is characterised as *modal* (MOD). An impersonal context is *non-modal* (NMOD) when it is non-veridical but no modal form is used. Consider, for example, the conditional subordinate clause as well as the interrogative main clause in (13).

(12) Afrikaans: MOD
***Jy moet** altyd jou bes doen.*
you must always your best do
'You must always give your best.'

(13) Dutch: NMOD
*Leef **je** langer als **je** veel leest?*
Live you longer if you much read
'Do you live longer if you read a lot?'

2.1.5 (Un)knownness (COR/VAG/INF/SPE)

The amount of information regarding the (implied) unidentified human participant(s) available to the speaker may differ in impersonalisation. More precisely, four types of "(un)knownness" have been distinguished in the research: (i) corporate, (ii) vague, (iii) inferred and (iv) specific.

When it is possible to derive, from the state of affairs itself (and, more broadly, the discourse context), who the particular person or group of people responsible for it is or are, even though they are not explicitly named, the impersonal context can be characterised as partly known. The typical situation in which this occurs is exemplified in (14). It involves a state of affairs that can be assumed to be attributable to some kind of institution, which is why the context is

sometimes called *corporate* (COR). In (14), for instance, one can presume that it is the police or some government agency that is setting up new speed cameras.

(14) Dutch: COR
Ze *zetten* *opnieuw* *flitspalen* *op.*
they set again speed.cameras up
'They are setting up speed cameras again.'

When it is not possible for the speaker to identify the particular person/people responsible for a state of affairs, even though the speaker has specific information about it, the context is regarded as *vague*. Sentence (15) can serve as an example: the speaker knows that the hearer's bike has been found and that the discovery is due to some specific (group of) individual(s), about whom they are however unable to provide more detail.

(15) Afrikaans: VAG
Hulle *het* *jou* *fiets* *in* *die* *park* *gekry.*
they have your bike in the park found
'They have found your bike in the park.'

When the state of affairs is not actually known to the speaker but has been deduced – together with the existence of the human participant(s) behind it – from some signs in the situation, the context is regarded as *inferred* (INF). The speaker in (16), for instance, gathers from the smell that an individual exists who made popcorn in the staff room.

(16) English: INF
Someone *has made popcorn in the staff room again, I can smell it.*

Lastly, when the speaker is at the same time and place as the person/people accomplishing the event there and then and may therefore have strong suspicions about who they are but does not explicitly identify them, a context is *specific* (SPE), as in (17).

(17) Dutch: SPE
Ah, **ze** *kloppen* *op* *de* *deur.*
ah they knock on the door
'Ah, they are knocking on the door.'

2.1.6 Number (PL/NN)

The (implied) unidentified human participants in an (existential) impersonal context may be necessarily *plural* (PL) or *number-neutral* (NN), i.e. either one person or more than one person. This difference can be illustrated by (18) and (19): the action of gathering in the first example always requires more than one individual whereas finding the hearer's dog in the second one could have been accomplished by one person or by a group of people.

(18) Afrikaans: PL
Hulle   *het*   *hier*   *by mekaar*   *gekom*   *vir*   *'n partytjie*
they   have   here   by each.other   come   for   a party
'They have gathered here for a party.'

(19) English: NN
They *found your dog in the park.*

2.1.7 Reportative evidentiality (SAV)

This criterion concerns the use of speech act verbs (SAV) such as 'say' and 'claim' to introduce a statement as reported information coming from an unidentified and/or unidentifiable source of evidence. Consider, for example, the use of the impersonal pronoun 'they' in (20) and its not uncommon replacement 'people' in (21).

(20) Afrikaans: SAV
Hulle *sê*   *eier*   *is baie*   *goed vir*   *mens*   *se*   *hare.*
they   say   egg   is very   good for   one   their hair
'They say that egg is very good for one's hair.'

(21) Dutch: SAV
Mensen *beweren*   *dat*   *hij*   *schuldig is.*
people   claim   that   he   guilty   is
'People claim that he is guilty.'

2.2   Contexts

Siewierska and Papastathi (2011) and Gast and van der Auwera (2013) employ the criteria discussed in Section 2.1 in slightly different ways, to distinguish various impersonal contexts.

In Van Olmen and Breed (2018a, 2018b), the two approaches are integrated, resulting in twelve contexts:

- four universal contexts (found in Gast and van der Auwera 2013);

- one corporate context (found in both Siewierska and Papastath 2011 and Gast and van der Auwera 2013);

- one context with speech act verbs (found in Siewierska and Papasthati 2011);

- and six existential contexts, combining Siewierska and Papastathi's (2011) criterion of (un)knownness and Gast and van der Auwera's (2013) criterion of number:

  - vague contexts with a plural or a number-neutral reading;

  - specific contexts with a plural or a number-neutral reading;

  - inferred contexts with a plural or a number-neutral reading.

Table 1[4] provides a summary of these impersonal contexts and their discriminating features. It is followed by an English example for each context.

Use	Quantification	Perspective	Veridicality	Modality	(Un)knownness	Number	Speech act verb
UNI-INT-NVER-NMOD	universal	internal	non-veridical	non-modal	N/R	N/R	N/R
UNI-INT-NVER-MOD	universal	internal	non-veridical	modal	N/R	N/R	N/R
UNI-INT-VER	universal	internal	veridical	N/R	N/R	N/R	N/R
UNI-EXT	universal	external	N/R	N/R	N/R	N/R	N/R
EXI-COR	existential	N/R	N/R	N/R	N/R	N/R	N/R
EXI-VAG-PL	existential	N/R	N/R	N/R	vague	plural	N/R

---

[4] N/R is short for 'not relevant' and is added whenever a criterion does not actually help distinguish one context from another context.

EXI-VAG-NN	existential	N/R	N/R	N/R	vague	number-neutral	N/R
EXI-INF-PL	existential	N/R	N/R	N/R	inferred	plural	N/R
EXI-INF-NN	existential	N/R	N/R	N/R	inferred	number-neutral	N/R
EXI-SPE-PL	existential	N/R	N/R	N/R	specific	plural	N/R
EXI-SPE-NN	existential	N/R	N/R	N/R	specific	number-neutral	N/R
SAV	existential	N/R	N/R	N/R	N/R	N/R	yes

Table 1. Twelve impersonal contexts

(22) *What happens if **one** breaks one's little toe?*   (UNI-INT-NVER-NMOD)
(23) ***One** should not drink and drive.*   (UNI-INT-NVER-MOD)
(24) ***You** only live once.*   (UNI-INT-VER)
(25) *In Italy, **they** eat a lot of pasta.*   (UNI-EXT)
(26) ***They** have raised the electricity tariff again.*   (EXI-COR)
(27) ***They** have set off bombs in a few places in the city.*   (EXI-VAG-PL)
(28) ***They** have found your student card in the bathroom.*   (EXI-VAG-NN)
(29) *I see **they** had a party here last night.*   (EXI-INF-PL)
(30) *I can smell **someone** made popcorn in the staff room again.*   (EXI-INF-NN)
(31) ***They** are knocking on the front door and the back door at the same time.* (EXI-SPE-PL)
(32) ***They** are waiting for you in front of your office.*   (EXI-SPE-NN)
(33) ***People** say that this place is haunted.*   (SAV)

3   Methodological approach

3.1   Background

Corpus research into impersonalisation strategies faces a number of challenges (see Van Olmen and Breed 2018a: 6-7 for an in-depth discussion). A first one is that, with exceptions such as the German pronoun *man* in (6), the strategies are typically not dedicated to the expression of impersonalisation. Dutch *je* in (8), for instance, can serve as an impersonal pronoun as well as a personal second person singular pronoun. In the same vein, passives may but need not serve impersonalisation purposes (see fn. 3). Any corpus study of such strategies thus entails the arduous task of separating the relevant from the irrelevant cases, often inevitably in a manual way, and of dealing with potential ambiguity between impersonal and non-impersonal readings (e.g. Siewierska and Papastathi 2011: 587-588 on the latter problem for 'they' in a variety of languages; see also Section 3.2).

A second and related challenge is that, for many a strategy, the irrelevant hits for its specific form will vastly outnumber the attestations that do fulfil the function of impersonalisation. It seems fairly obvious, for example, that Afrikaans *hulle* occurs much more frequently as a personal third person plural pronoun than as an impersonal pronoun, as in (15). There is, in other words, a risk that, for certain impersonalisation strategies, possibly including the passive, locating all the relevant instances in a sizeable corpus is a never-ending undertaking.

A third and final problem is specific to strategies like the passive, in Afrikaans and Dutch in particular. Unlike impersonal pronouns, it involves not a single form that can easily be searched for in an exhaustive manner but, as (34) shows for Dutch, the combination of an auxiliary – with a range of forms – and a past participle – whose formation exhibits substantial variation – with potentially considerable intervening linguistic material.

(34) Dutch:
*De   olifant **is/was/wordt/werd**   waarschijnlijk vanwege   het   erg   slechte*
the   elephant is/was/becomes/became probably   because.of the   very   bad
*weer   niet   meer   **gefotografeerd/buitengelaten/benaderd.***
weather not   anymore photographed/let.out/approached.
'The elephant hasn't been/hadn't been/isn't/wasn't photographed/let out/approached anymore probably because of the very bad weather.'

Due to these features and especially for non-tagged corpora, any query whose results are more or less guaranteed to include all passives (e.g. with any number of words between auxiliary and past participle) is bound to be so open that many, if not most, of its hits will be false positives. Sifting through those would simply not be feasible.

In view of the challenges mentioned above, this article will not present a comprehensive corpus linguistic investigation of the passive as an impersonalisation strategy in Afrikaans and Dutch. Rather, we will make use of samples of the results of more restricted queries (see Section 3.2). However, the ease or difficulty with which these samples are compiled can still give us a good idea of the productivity of the passive as an impersonalisation strategy. Moreover, the analysis

of the samples will enable us to determine in which impersonal contexts the passive occurs and which ones are proportionally more or less frequent. Finally, our similar samples based on similar Afrikaans and Dutch corpora will make a comparison of the two languages possible.

3.2 The data

To compile the comparable samples for our two languages, we drew on five corpora. For Afrikaans, we used the 6-million-word fiction and 16-million-word newspaper parts of the Taalkommissiekorpus (henceforth TK; Taalkommissie 2011) and two smaller corpora of spoken language, i.e. the 560,000-word Gesproke Korpus van Afrikaans (Ponelis 1976) and the 70,000-word Korpus van Gesproke Afrikaans (Van Rooy 2003) with mostly non-broadcast interviews from the early 1970s and 2000s respectively (hereafter KGA for both). For Dutch, we used the Lassy Groot corpus (LG; Van Noord et al. 2013) and, more precisely, a 6-million-word subcorpus of fiction and a 27-million-word subcorpus of newspapers extracted from the LG by Breed et al. (2017), and the Corpus Gesproken Nederlands's (CGN; Nederlandse Taalunie 2004) 560,000-word component with non-broadcast interviews form the late 1990s.[5]

The sample for each language contains 600 passives serving as an impersonalisation strategy and is made up in the following way:

- 100 simple tense passives from the spoken data (KGA and CGN)

- 100 simple tense passives from the newspaper data (TK and LG)

- 100 simple tense passives form the fiction data (TK the LG)

- 100 perfect tense passives from the spoken data (KGA and CGN)

---

[5] We are aware that there is variation between the Afrikaans and Dutch corpora. The spoken data, for example, is mostly from the 1970s for Afrikaans but from the 1990s for Dutch. The reason for this difference is the lack of (access to) other more recent, sizeable speech corpora. Within such constraints, we have nevertheless chosen data that is as similar in the two languages as possible (e.g. non-broadcast interviews).

- 100 perfect tense passives from the newspaper data (TK and LG)

- 100 perfect tense passives form the fiction data (TK and LG)

Two comments are in order here.

First, the variation in genres is motivated by the hypothesis that some impersonal contexts may be more typical of one genre than of another. Speech and (the dialogues in) fiction will not only give us a good idea of the passive as an impersonalisation strategy in "normal" conversation but are also the places where one would expect, for instance, EXI-SPE cases to occur, as they rely on the presence of unidentified human participants in the here and now of the speaker's situation (see Section 2.1.5). Such contexts seem much less likely to appear in, say, newspapers. The latter genre, however, could be more concerned than regular conversation with the dealings of institutions and hence be a more natural place for EXI-COR contexts to arise (see Section 2.1.5). The different genres can thus be assumed to provide us with a more comprehensive picture of the passive's potential as an impersonalisation strategy.

Second, this aim of a fuller understanding also motivates the separate subsamples for simple tenses (e.g. Afrikaans *daar word gesê dat ...* 'it is said that …') and perfect tenses (e.g. Dutch *mijn telefoon is gestolen* 'my phone has been stolen'). The rationale behind them is that certain impersonal contexts may be more characteristic of simple than of perfect tenses and vice versa. It is not improbable, for instance, that UNI cases strongly correlate with simple tenses whereas EXI-INF ones are more closely associated with perfect ones, as it seems more natural to make inferences about the existence of a specific but unknown (set of) individuals based on signs of their completed behaviour. Moreover, exploratory data indicates that perfect passives are much less frequent than simple ones.[6] An entirely random sample of passives would therefore likely

---

[6] Extrapolations of our samples suggest, for example, that, in spoken Dutch, simple passives have a frequency of 121.52 instances per 100,000 words while perfect ones occur just 35.03 times per 100,000 words. (These figures were calculated as follows: dividing the number of all passives examined to reach the 100th impersonalising one by the number of all randomized hits examined to reach the aforementioned point; applying this percentage to the total number of query hits; dividing the resulting number by the subcorpus size; and multiplying it by 100,000).

have few perfect ones and, to some extent, obscure the passive's potential in certain impersonal contexts.

The data was extracted by searching for every past participle that features a form of one of the passive auxiliaries (e.g. *word* and *is* in Afrikaans; *word, werden, is* and *waren* in Dutch) within a span of one word to the right of it and four words to the left of it. The one-word rightward range ensures that subclauses, for instance, are not simply excluded (e.g. Afrikaans *… dat my kar gesteel is* '… that my car has been stolen'). The four-word leftward range allows for some linguistic material to appear between auxiliary and past participle while avoiding too broad a query that would produce an unworkable amount of false positives (see Section 3.1). The past participles were looked for in two different ways. For the CGN, we relied on the part of speech tag WW(vd,vrij,zonder), which is used for all past participles that do not serve as a modifier of a noun or fulfil a nominal function (Van Eynde 2004: 31). For the other corpora, we employed a formula that does as much justice to the variation in past participle formation as possible. The Dutch LG corpus, for example, was searched for words beginning in *ge-, be-, ont-, ver-* or *her-* (e.g. *ge-zegd* 'said', *ver-deeld* 'distributed') – potentially preceded by yet other morphemes (e.g. *dicht-ge-trokken* 'pulled shut', *uit-ge-voerd* 'carried out') – and ending in *-t*, *-d* or *-n* (e.g. *ontdek-t* 'discovered', *gebakk-en* 'baked').

After the extraction of the data, the results for each corpus were put in a random order and then analysed manually until 100 passives serving as an impersonalisation strategy were found. This process meant sifting out clearly irrelevant cases, including passives with an overt agent like (35a) and entirely false positives like (35b). *Bezit worden* in (35b) matches our query but *bezit* is a noun with the meaning 'possession' here and *worden* is not an auxiliary but the main verb.

(35) Dutch:
    a.   *… die   deels door de   overheid   **wordt   gesubsidieerd.***
        … which   partly by   the   government becomes subsidised
        '… which is partly subsidised by the government.' (LG, fiction)

b. *Daarom   zal   dit   jullie erfelijk   **bezit**   **worden**.*
    therefore will   this   your   hereditary possession   become
    'Therefore, this will become your hereditary possession.' (LG, fiction)

Moreover, not all agentless passives could be regarded as functioning as an impersonalisation strategy either. When looking at (36) out of context, for instance, one might assume that this sentence is a relevant hit.

(36) Afrikaans:
  *Hy   besef   skynbaar   wat   van   hom   **verwag**   **word**.*
  he   realise apparently what   of   him   expected   become
  'He seems to realise what is expected of him.' (TK, ficton)

However, when one considers what precedes in (37), it becomes evident that a particular known human participant is implied, i.e. the woman bringing the bottles, and that the passive sentence does not have an overt agent phrase as it can easily be derived from the context. In other words, every agentless passive needed to be and was evaluated in view of its surrounding discourse.

(37) Afrikaans:
  *Dan bring **sy** die bottels een vir een na die ou man se neus.*
  'Then she brings the bottles to his nose one by one.'
  ... Hy besef   skynbaar   wat   van   hom   verwag   word.
  … he   realise apparently what   of   him   expected   become
  '… He seems to realise what is expected of him.' (TK, fiction)

Another type of agentless passive that had to be excluded in light of its context can be illustrated by (38). The sentences before *gedwongen worden* 'be forced' make clear that the first person singular would be forced to write a letter not by a human participant but by their circumstances of potentially running out of animal postcards. This passive does thus not meet our description of impersonalisation in Section 1.

(38) Dutch
  Binnenkort zal mijn stapeltje dierenkaarten op zijn. Wat dan? Stuur ik je foto's van
  Provençaalse dieren? ... Nee, als ik geen dierenfoto's meer overheb,
  'Soon, my stack of animal postcards will have run out. What then? Will I send you photos of
  Provençal animals? … No, if I do not have any animal photos left,
  *zal   ik **gedwongen worden**   je   toch   een   echte brief te schrijven.*
  will   I   forced   become   you   after.all   a   real   letter to write

'I will be forced to write you a real letter after all.' (LG, fiction)

Unclear cases were resolved through discussion between the authors, of which the conclusion occasionally was that an agentless passive was essentially ambiguous between an impersonal and a non-impersonal interpretation. Consider, for example, the excerpt about an exterminator in (39).

(39) Dutch:
De meeste klussen kostten hem niet meer dan drie uur, van het zetten van de vallen tot en met het sprayen. Hij spreidde zijn bezoeken over een paar weken zodat het meer werk leek dan het was. Maar mensen waren bereid de hoogste bedragen neer te tellen om van ratten af te komen, vooral als er ook kinderen in huis waren.
'Most jobs took him no more than three hours, from setting the traps to spraying. He spread out his visits over a couple of weeks so that it seemed like more work than it was. But people were prepared to pay the highest prices to get rid of rats, especially if there were also kids in the house.'

Wasberen,	*mollen*	*en*	*eekhoorns*	*moesten*	*diervriendelijk*	***worden***	***gevangen***,
raccoons	moles	and	squirrels	had.to	animal-friendly	become	caught

'Raccoons, moles and squirrels had to be caught in an animal-friendly way,'
maar het kon bijna niemand iets schelen hoe ratten aan hun einde kwamen.
'but almost nobody cared about how rats met their maker.' (LG, fiction)

It is possible to read the passive here as an expectation specific to the exterminator of the story: his clients want him to treat raccoons and the like in a humane manner. One can, however, also interpret the sentence as a more general expectation applying to everyone, as the suitability of replacing the passive with (40) and its impersonal pronouns suggests. For that reason, instances like (39) were included in our sample.

(40) Dutch:
Wasberen,	*mollen*	*en*	*eekhoorns*	*moest*	*je/men*	*diervriendelijk*	***vangen***.
raccoons	moles	and	squirrels	had.to	you/one	animal-friendly	catch

'Raccoons, moles and squirrels, you/one had to catch those in an animal-friendly way.'

Note, finally, that the substitution test illustrated in (40) was employed more generally to check whether an initial impersonal interpretation was likely or not in the context and, for the sake of completeness, that we did not limit such replacements to impersonal pronouns but also at times tested, say, an indefinite pronoun or a noun phrase like 'people'.

3.3   Method of analysis

Each passive serving as an impersonalisation strategy was further analysed in terms of the seven criteria discussed in Section 2.2, in order to determine the impersonal context in which the passive is employed. To do this analysis, we first designed the decision tree in *Figure 1*, to distinguish the twelve impersonal contexts.
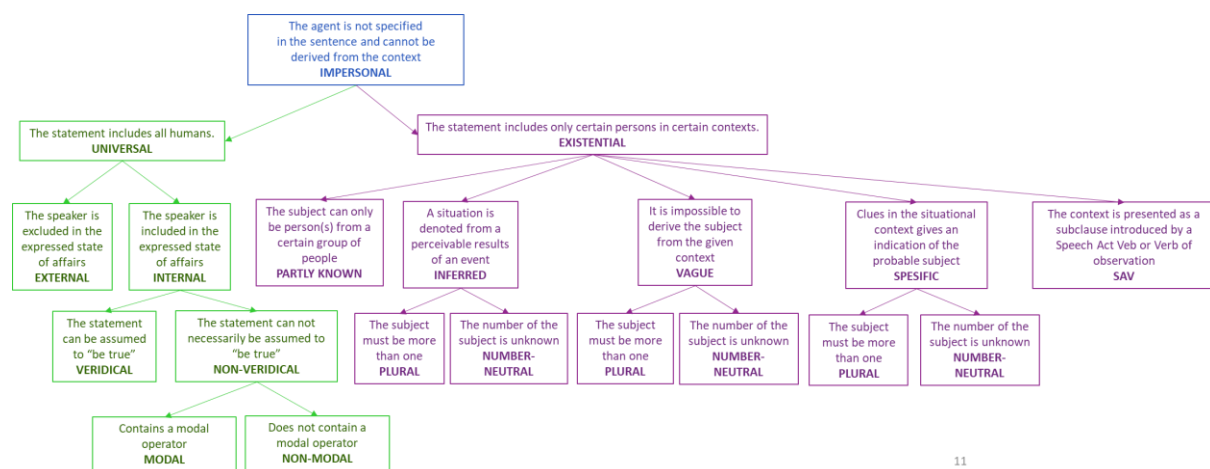
Figure 1: **Decision tree of impersonal contexts**

We then used an IF statement with multiple AND/OR conditions[7] in Excel to analyse each passive sentence according to the decision tree, as in *Figure 2*.

---

[7] An example is the formula for the UNI-INT-NVER-NMOD context: =IF(AND(C2="universal"; D2="internal"; E2="nonveridical"; F2="nonmodal"; G2="NA"; H2="NA"; I2="NA"); 1; 0)

Excel window — "WORD Fiksie 100 - Excel"

Formula bar: `: in my slaapkamer word tatami-matte gelÃª sodat ek soggends op hulle sagte strooiwange uit die bed kan tree, vet kussings word in tekstuurryke lope in...`

B (Context)	C (UNIVERSAL?)	D (INTERNAL?)	E (VERIDICAL?)	F (MODAL?)	G (KNOWNESS?)	H (NUMBER?)	I (SAV VERB TYPE?)	J (UNI-INT-NVER-NMOD)	K (UNI-INT-NVER-MOD)
UNI-INT-NVER-NMOD	universal	internal	nonveridical	nonmodal	NA	NA	NA	1	0
UNI-INT-NVER-MOD	universal	internal	nonveridical	modal	NA	NA	NA	0	1
UNI-INT-VER	universal	internal	veridical	nonmodal	NA	NA	NA	0	0
UNI-EXT	universal	external	NA	NA	partly known	NA	NA	0	0
EXI-COR	existential	NA	NA	NA	partly known	NA	NA	0	0
EXI-VAG-PL	existential	NA	NA	NA	vague	plural	NA	0	0
EXI-VAG-NN	existential	NA	NA	NA	vague	numberneutral	NA	0	0
EXI-INF-PL	existential	NA	NA	NA	inferred	plural	NA	0	0
EXI-INF-NN	existential	NA	NA	NA	inferred	numberneutral	NA	0	0
EXI-SPE-PL	existential	NA	NA	NA	spesific	plural	NA	0	0
EXI-SPE-NN	existential	NA	NA	NA	spesific	numberneutral	NA	0	0
SAV	existential	NA	NA	NA	vague	plural	verb	0	
: in my slaapkamer word tatami-matte gelÃª sodat ek soggends op hulle sagte strooiwange uit die bed kan tree, vet kussings word in tekstuurryke lope ingestop en orals waar my hand of boud mag wei, kom ek hulle teÃ«.	existential	na	na	na	vague	numberneutral	na	0	0
NÃ¡ die wedstryd drink hulle groot hoeveelhede teenmiddel in die hotel en dit is dÃ¡Ã¡r waar die proefneming beplan word.	existential	na	na	na	partly known	na	na	0	0
Toe daar eenmaal op â€™n finale plan besluit is, word daar gehandel.	existential	na	na	na	partly known	na	na	0	0
Hy weet hoe om leerlappe voordelig te sny uit â€™n stuk leer sodat niks vermors word nie.	universal	internal	nonveridical	nonmodal	na	na	na	1	0
Op ten minste een geleentheid het die hoofveldwagter, in 'n lesing aan besoekende natuurbewaringstudente, toe hy gevra word na waarna hy in 'n veldwagter soek, gesÃª: "Iemand wat 'n buffel met 'n rewolwer van sy lyf kan afhou en daarna twintig kilometer kan huis toe stap.	existential	na	na	na	partly known	na	na	0	0
Nog het hy die vertroue nie prysgegee dat dit deur volgehoue vlyt moontlik sal wees om meer aangaande die lewe en werke van hierdie eiesoortige dog oortuigde self-opgeleide Christen te kan vasstel, en selfs wil hy die stoute hoop koester dat verdere onvermoede geskrifte van die hand van die ontslapene nog aan die lig gebring sal word.	existential	na	na	na	vague	numberneutral	na	0	0
Twee dinge aan haar kan mooi genoem word sonder voorbehoud: haar dieprooi hare wat met die kleur van verouderde shiraz tot op haar skouers val, en haar hande.	universal	internal	nonveridical	modal	na	na	na	0	1
Gelukkig is die operasiesale die dag toegesÃª aan oogartse vir katarakoperasies, en word die pasiÃ«nte mooi opgedeel tussen die praktisyns.	existential	na	na	na	partly known	na	na	0	0

Figure 2: **Screenshot of our analysis of passives in Excel**

4 Results of the corpus investigation

In Section 1, we formulated three main research goals. Here, they are phrased as questions and we will address them one by one in the following subsections.

4.1 *Is the passive a productive impersonalisation strategy in Afrikaans and Dutch?*

This question can be answered in various ways, depending on one's definition of productivity. We will address it here by examining whether or not the passive is used for the whole range of impersonal contexts. Consider Table 2 and Figure 3 for the Afrikaans results, where the four universal contexts are presented in purple and the eight existential ones in green, and Table 3 and Figure 4 for the Dutch findings, where blue indicates a universal context and yellow an existential one.

Afrikaans	Simple passive			Perfect passive			**Total**
	Newspaper	Spoken	Fiction	Newspaper	Spoken	Fiction	
UNI-INT-NVER-NMOD	10	20	15	0	2	2	**49**
UNI-INT-NVER-MOD	17	17	9	1	0	0	**44**
UNI-INT-VER	0	1	1	0	1	1	**4**
UNI-EXT	8	3	1	0	4	1	**17**
EXI-COR	26	19	26	67	30	32	**200**
EXI-VAG-PL	4	9	5	5	4	8	**35**
EXI-VAG-NN	33	29	42	27	54	48	**233**
EXI-INF-PL	0	0	0	0	0	1	**1**
EXI-INF-NN	0	0	0	0	0	4	**4**
EXI-SPE-PL	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
EXI-SPE-NN	0	0	0	0	0	2	**2**
SAV	2	2	1	0	5	1	**11**
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	**600**

Table 2: Afrikaans impersonalising passives and their uses
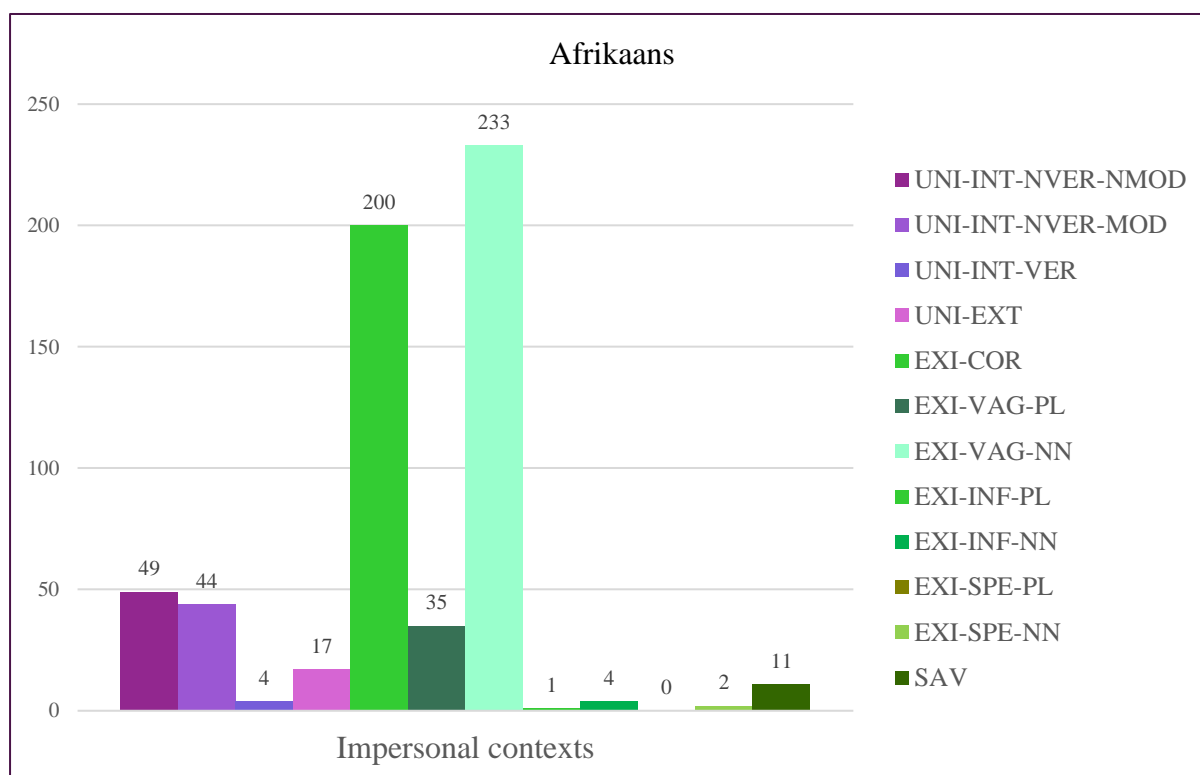
Figure 3*: **Afrikaans impersonalising passives and their uses**

Dutch	Simple passive			Perfect passive			Total
	Newspaper	Spoken	Fiction	Newspaper	Spoken	Fiction	
UNI-INT-NVER-NMOD	1	8	4	0	2	2	**17**
UNI-INT-NVER-MOD	18	15	26	0	0	0	**59**
UNI-INT-VER	7	5	4	0	0	0	**16**
UNI-EXT	6	4	8	0	0	0	**18**
EXI-COR	30	29	18	52	46	33	**208**
EXI-VAG-PL	9	12	10	16	13	6	**66**
EXI-VAG-NN	27	23	26	30	39	54	**199**
EXI-INF-PL	0	0	0	1	0	1	**2**
EXI-INF-NN	0	0	1	1	0	4	**6**
EXI-SPE-PL	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
EXI-SPE-NN	0	1	0	0	0	0	**1**
SAV	2	3	3	0	0	0	**8**
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**600**

Table 3: Dutch impersonalising passives and their uses
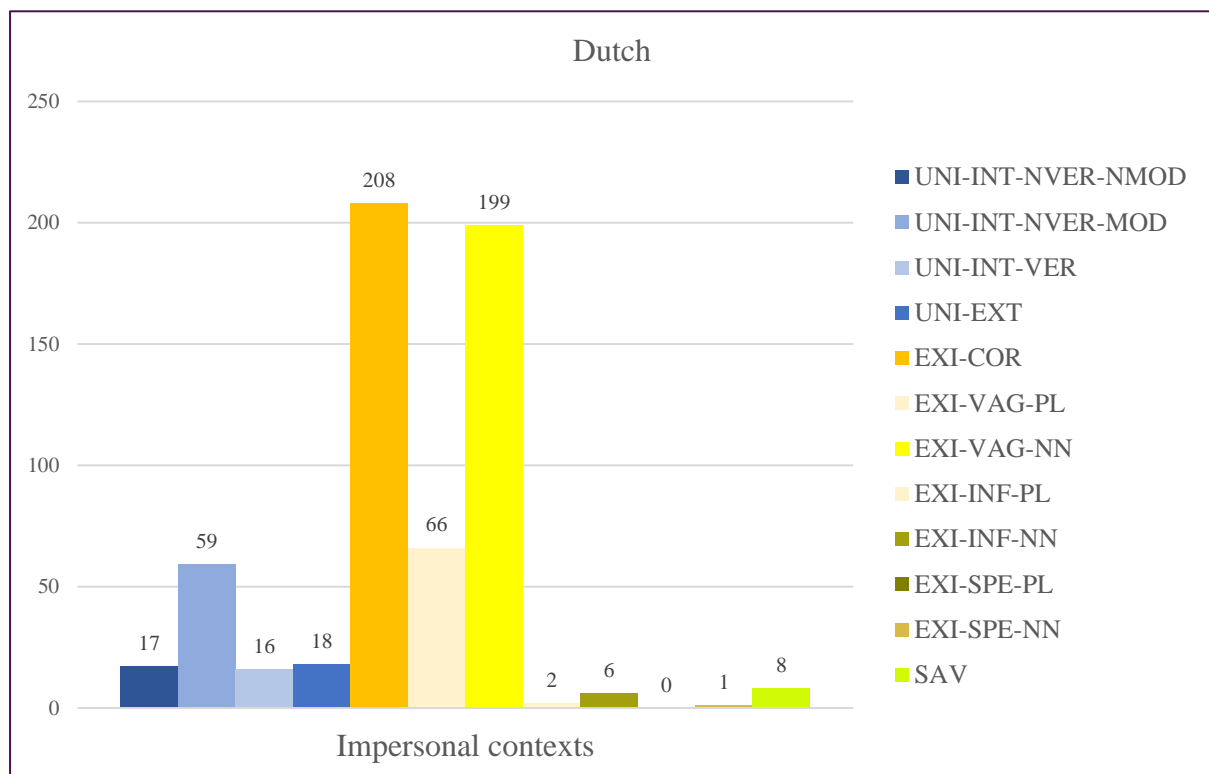
Figure 4*: Dutch impersonalising passives and their uses

Tables 2 and 3 and Figures 3 and 4 show that the passive is indeed used for almost the entire range of impersonal uses. Consider the different universal types in (41) to (44) first. In (41), the general claim that darning one's winter socks – note the impersonal pronoun *'n mens*! – is fine is followed by a passive – in an (intrinsically non-veridical) conditional subclause – that can be interpreted as applying to anyone, speaker and addressee included. This UNI-INT-NVER-NMOD analysis can be confirmed by the appropriateness of the paraphrase 'if one does it too often'. The NVER-MOD context in (42) is UNI-INT too, as calling the woman's hair and hands beautiful is something that anyone is said to be able to do in any case.

(41) Afrikaans: UNI-INT-NVER-NMOD
Daar is niks mee verkeerd om 'n mens se winterkouse te stop nie,
'There is nothing wrong with darning one's winter socks,'
maar as dit darem té veel gedoen word, lyk dit nie meer netjies nie.
but if it though too much done become look it not more neat not
'but if it is done too often, though, it will no longer look neat.' (TK, fiction)

(42) Afrikaans: UNI-INT-NVER-MOD
Lank en skraal is sy, met 'n hoekigheid wat sedert haar huwelik al meer aan die versag is; selfs haar bewegings het vloeiend geraak.
'She is tall and slim, with a squareness that has been softening more and more since her marriage; even her movements have become smooth.'
*Twee dinge aan haar **kan** mooi **genoem word** sonder voorbehoud:*
two things on her can beautiful called become without reservation
'Two aspects of hers can be called beautiful without reservations:
haar dieprooi hare wat met die kleur van verouderde shiraz tot op haar skouers val, en haar hande.
'her crimson hair that drops to her shoulders with the colour of aged shiraz and her hands.'
(TK, fiction)

The newspaper article in (43), with a UNI-INT-VER passive, tells the story of a football player whose mistake during a game made his manager consider taking serious action against him. To describe what happened eventually, the journalist uses the common soup-centred saying below expressing the universal fact that, in the end, one never takes measures as severe as those that were initially announced. In (44), lastly, the writer is talking about the kissing habits in different areas in France and states that people in and around Lille kiss four times. This generalization

does not appear to be intended as including speaker and/or addressee. When talking about the custom in the South, the writer even explicitly uses third person plural *ze* – indicative of a UNI-EXT perspective – rather than, say, UNI-INT *je* 'you'.

(43) Dutch: UNI-INT-VER
Een foute inworp en het daaropvolgende tegendoelpunt in de Champions League-wedstrijd op Steaua Boekarest zou de directe aanleiding zijn geweest. Het klopt dat toenmalig Standard-trainer Boskamp die avond in Roemenië razend was. ...
'A bad throw-in and the subsequent counter goal in the Champions League game at Steaua Bucharest is said to have been the direct motivation. It is true that then Standard manager Boskamp was furious that evening in Romania. …'

Ach,	*de*	*soep*	**wordt**	*nooit zo heet*	**gegeten**	*als*	*ze*	*wordt*	*opgediend.*
oh.well	the	soup	becomes	never so hot	eaten	as	she	becomes	served

'Oh well, the soup is never eaten as hot as it is served.'
Deflandre werd niet afgerekend op die ongelukkige laterale inworp.
'Deflandre did not get written off on the basis of that unfortunate lateral throw-in. (LG, newspaper)*

(44) Dutch: UNI-EXT
Aanvankelijk dacht ik dat het hier in het zuiden drie keer werd gedaan omdat de mensen meer tijd hebben dan de altijd drukke Parijzenaars. Of misschien omdat ze meer mediterraan van aard zijn, extraverter en emotioneler. Maar toen ontdekte ik dat
'At first, I thought that, here in the south, it was done three times because people have more time than the ever busy Parisians. Or perhaps because they are more Mediterranean in nature, more extravert and more emotional. But then I discovered that'

in de	*omgeving*	*van*	*Lille,*	*waar*	*Alain*	*geboren*	*is, er*	*vier*	*keer*	**wordt**	**gezoend.**
in the	area	of	Lille	where	Alain	born	is, there	four	times	becomes	kissed

'in and around Lille, where Alain was born, they kiss four times.' (LG, fiction)

The various existential uses are exemplified in (45) to (51). The beginning of the article in (45) features an EXI-COR passive. There exists a particular "entity" that is responsible for the state of affairs but it is not overtly identified. We can gather from the verb itself, however, that this entity is some kind of known institution with the power to fine people, like the police or the judiciary. In (46), the claims are clearly made by a specific entity too and, to be precise, by a group of people rather than an individual, given the plurality of the reports and the accusations. Moreover, their existence is not inferred from the context and they are not present in the here and now of the writer, making this a EXI-VAG-PL use. In (47), there are no inferences about

or immediate presence of any human participants either. The passive differs from that in (46), though, in that the church may have been burgled by a group of people or by just one person. It is, in other words, EXI-VAG-NN.

(45) Afrikaans: EXI-COR
*Riversdal. Die sakeman   wat onlangs **beboet is** omdat   hy in 'n natuurreservaat*
Riversdale the businessman that recently fined   is because he in a   nature.reserve
gejag   het,
hunted   have
'Riversdale. The businessman that has recently been fined because he was hunting in a nature reserve'
het toestemming gehad om die wild in die reservaat te verwyder.
'had permission to remove the wildlife from the reserve.' (TK, newspaper)

(46) Afrikaans: EXI-VAG-PL
'n Opposisieparty het gister die kop van dr. Monde Mayekiso, hoof van die departement van omgewingsake se tak mariene en kusbestuur, geëis. … Dit volg op verskeie berigte die afgelope ruk
'An opposition party demanded yesterday that Dr Monde Mayekiso, head of the Department of Environmental Affairs' Maritime and Coastal Government branch, be sacked. … It follows various recent reports'
waarin   bewerings   van   swak en   ontoereikende administrasie by mariene en
wherein claims   of   weak and insufficient   management   at maritime and
*kusbestuur   **gemaak is***
coastal.government   made   is
'in which claims of weak and insufficient management at the Maritime and Coastal Government have been made.' (TK, newspaper)

(47) Afrikaans: EXI-VAG-NN
Diefstal is 'n permanente gegewe in hierdie gewestes. Saam met vuur, mes, maan. Eer en liefde ook.
'Theft is a permanent given in these regions. Together with fire, knife, moon. Honour and love too.
Daar is ingebreek   by die   Romaanse kerkie   op die   heuwel.
there is broken.into at the   Roman   little.church on the   hill
'They have broken into the little Roman church on the hill.' (TK, fiction)

Next, both (48) and (49) can be regarded as EXI-INF: the occurrence of the state of affairs, as well as the entity responsible for it, is a deduction in either case. In (48), the discarded stuff is seen as evidence for the likely past event – note the epistemic necessity verb *moeten* 'must'! – of a group of people loading stolen bicycles and mopeds onto a truck. In (49), a woman's

curious disappearance makes the first person narrator conjecture that someone may have abducted her. The difference between the two examples is that the event in (48) necessarily involves multiple human participants while that in (49) does not. It is interesting in this regard that the sentence following the passive in (48) mentions multiple *dieven* 'thieves' whereas the reply to the first person narrator's guess in (49) brings up Daniel as a single suspect.

(48) Dutch: EXI-INF-PL
De fietsen worden op bestelling gestolen. De bewoners van de appartementen aan de Rode Kruislaan in Nijmegen hebben het spoor teruggevolgd. Buiten, onder de poort naar de doorgaande weg,
'The bikes are stolen to order. The residents of the apartments at Red Cross Lane in Nijmegem tracked back the trail. Outside, under the gateway to the main road,

moeten	*de*	*gestolen*	*fietsen*	*en*	*brommers*	*zijn*	*ingeladen.*
must	the	stolen	bikes	and	mopeds	are	loaded.up

'the stolen bikes and mopeds must have been loaded up.'
De voor de dieven overbodige spullen zijn daar namelijk teruggevonden .
'The stuff that the thieves did not need was found there, you see.' (LG, newspaper)

(49) Dutch: EXI-INF-NN
'Kunnen we misschien niet beter naar de politie gaan?' probeer ik. 'Hazelaar kon toch ook de moord op uw man niet oplossen?' antwoordt hij met een wedervraag.
''Would it perhaps not be better if we went to the police?' I try. 'Hazelaar could not solve your husband's murder either, could he?' he replies with a counter question.'

'Maar	*misschien*	*is*	*ze*	*wel*	*ontvoerd!'*
but	maybe	is	she	well	kidnapped

''But she may very well have been kidnapped.''
'Als het om de code gaat, dan moet Daniel erachter zitten.'
''If it is about the code, Daniel must be behind it.'' (LG, fiction)

Example (50) can be considered an instance of EXI-SPE-NN. Interviewee A is going on about his students' attitudes toward spelling mistakes when he is interrupted by a knock on the door. He uses a passive to describe the action by some unknown individual at this specific time and place before the recording is paused. Afterward, interviewer B attempts to get the conversation going again. The SAV passive in (51), finally, features the speech act verb *sê* 'say' and presents the following claim, which is supposed to substantiate the previous one, as reported information but from some unidentified and/or unidentifiable source.

(50) Dutch: EXI-SPE-NN

A: *En dan zeggen ze ja maar we zien we zien op TV of we zien in de krant we zien wij daar ook spellingfouten. Maar 'k zeg ik dan ... Ja. Si ze vinden dat zo precies niet meer belangrijk hè.*
'And then they say we see see on TV or we see in the newspaper we see spelling errors there too. But I then say… Yes. They do not seem to find that so important anymore, right?'

Er   wordt   op de   deur   geklopt.
there becomes on the   door   knocked
'There is a knock on the door.'

B: *Ja. En dus ja. U u zegt u ziet daar uh ergens een evolutie in.*
'Yes. And so yes. You you are saying you can see some uhm evolution in there somewhere.'
(CGN, spoken)

(51) Afrikaans: SAV
En omdat hy nie gevang word nie, miskien word hy aangemoedig of aangespoor om daarmee voort te gaan.
'And because he does not get caught, he is perhaps encouraged or incited to continue with it.'

Daar word   gesê   dat   van   die   jongeres,   kinders, word   verslaaf op 'n
there become said   that   of   the   young.people   children become addicted in a
manier   aan   hulle eie   adrenalien   stimulus.
way   to   their own   adreline   stimulus
'It is said that some of the young people, children, become addicted in a way to their own adrenaline stimulus.' (KGA, spoken)

The only context that is not attested at all for Afrikaans or Dutch is EXI-SPE-PL. A possible reason for its absence is that EXI-SPE contexts in general, linked to the here and now of a conversation, do not tend to arise in corpora. Siewierska & Papastathi (2011: 590) did not find any EXI-SPE cases of 'they' in their nine-language translation corpus either: "[The identity of the human participant(s) in this use] resides in the situational context …[, which] is manifest to the speaker and not to the hearer, let alone the reader. One may therefore well imagine that in written texts verbal contexts are much more likely to underlie 3pl IMP[ersonal] uses than situational ones." EXI-SPE can probably be assumed to be rare in the spoken language of interviews too. There may be an immediate context but the genre and the formal character of recording the session (for the corpus) makes it implausible that some action is undertaken at the time and place of the interview by an unidentified individual, let alone a group of people.

To conclude the present section, we will briefly compare the passive's impersonal uses to those of the well/better-studied impersonal pronouns in Afrikaans and Dutch. As Table 2 and Figure

3 make clear, the passive is essentially employed in the whole range of impersonal contexts in Afrikaans. In this respect, it is very different from the pronouns as impersonalisation strategies in the language. Both *('n) mens* and *jy* 'you' are restricted to universal uses with an internal point of view while *hulle* 'they' is limited to UNI-EXT, SAV and existential contexts (see Van Olmen & Breed 2018a: 19-20). The Dutch passive is similar to its Afrikaans counterpart when it comes to its range of impersonal uses, as Table 3 and Figure 4 show, and so are the second person singular *je* and the third person plural *ze*. *Men*, however, shares the passive's potential as an impersonalisation strategy of being able to occur in basically all universal and existential contexts (see Van Olmen & Breed 2018b: 822, 838-839).

4.2   Is the passive more typically employed for some impersonal contexts than for others?

It is already clear from Tables 2 and 3 and Figures 3 and 4 that the answer to this question is positive. In the present section, we will go into more detail. We will also investigate whether the simple passive's uses are similar to the perfect passive's and whether any usage differences exist between the subcorpora.

4.2.1   Universal versus existential contexts

Figures 5a and 5b demonstrate that impersonalising passives are more frequently employed in existential contexts than in universal ones. In both Afrikaans and Dutch, existential uses make up more or less 80% of our results.
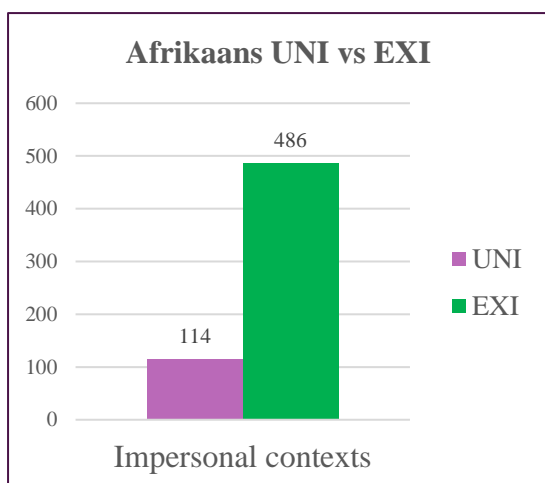
Figure 5a: Afrikaans universal versus existential impersonal contexts
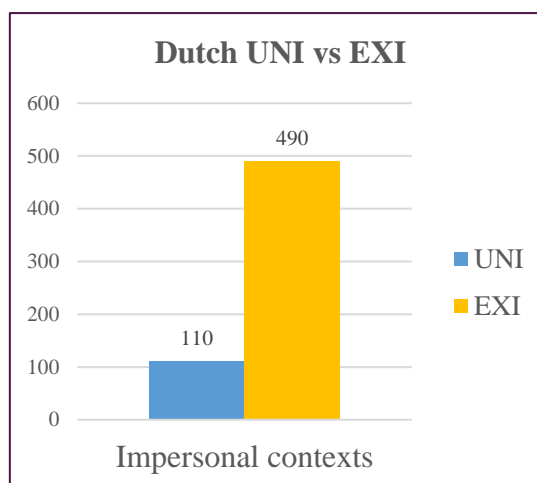
Figure 5b: Dutch universal versus existential impersonal contexts

This percentage is quite high compared to what the literature tends to say about the other well-studied impersonalisation strategy that covers every use in many languages, i.e. the so-called 'man'-pronoun (see Siewierska 2011; though, as mentioned before, its Afrikaans instantiation *('n) mens* is UNI-INT only). It is said to rarely serve existential purposes in actual usage (e.g. Zifonun 2001 on German *man* 'one, they'; Fonesca-Greber & Waugh 2003 on French *on* 'one, they'). For Dutch *men* and the passive, however, the contrast does not appear to be so stark, in proportional terms. An exploratory examination of 75 arbitrary instances of *men*, where each of our subcorpora makes up one third of the data, suggests that it is actually used existentially in about 60% of the cases, with no substantial differences between the three genres. In absolute terms, the existential passive is probably much more frequent than existential *men*, though, as the impersonal pronoun seems to be disappearing from the language (e.g. Duinhoven 1990).[8] The numbers in Figures 5a and 5b could also be linked to earlier findings from a completion task study (see Van Olmen & Breed 2018b: 819, 833-834). In this questionnaire, Afrikaans and

---

[8] Support for this hypothesis comes from the comparison of *men*'s relative frequencies with extrapolations of our sample data to the subcorpora in their entirety (i.e. determining the proportion of 100 impersonalising passives to the number of randomized hits examined to reach the 100th relevant instance; applying this percentage to the total number of query hits; dividing the resulting number by the size of the subcorpus; and multiplying it by 100,000). *Men* and the impersonalising passive (would) occur 44 versus 260 times per 100,000 words in newspapers, 49 versus 96 times in spoken language and 38 versus 151 times in fiction.

Dutch native speakers were asked to fill in the subject slots of sentences representing, within extra context, the entire range of impersonal uses. The syntactic slot to be completed clearly favoured impersonal pronouns and, for the UNI-INT sentences, the participants indeed went for impersonal pronouns in 95% of the cases in the two languages. Of the existential sentences, just the EXI-COR ones exhibited a comparable proportion of impersonal pronouns in Afrikaans (85%) as well as in Dutch (99%), which also had them in 84% of the EXI-VAG-PL ones. The percentages for the other uses were far lower, indicating that "the universal-internal domain has a much stronger preference for pronominal forms of impersonalization" (Van Olmen & Breed 2018b: 839) than the rest of the impersonal domain. One way in which Figures 5a and 5b might now be interpreted is as tentatively suggesting that the passive (which the completion task did not allow as an option) at least partially fills the existential gap left by the impersonal pronouns in the two languages.

One crucial qualification regarding the preceding paragraph is that the ratio of universal versus existential cases is highly dependent on the simple or perfect nature of the passive (see Section 3.2 too). Figures 6a and 6b provide, for Afrikaans and Dutch respectively, the simple and the perfect passive's proportions of universal versus existential uses.
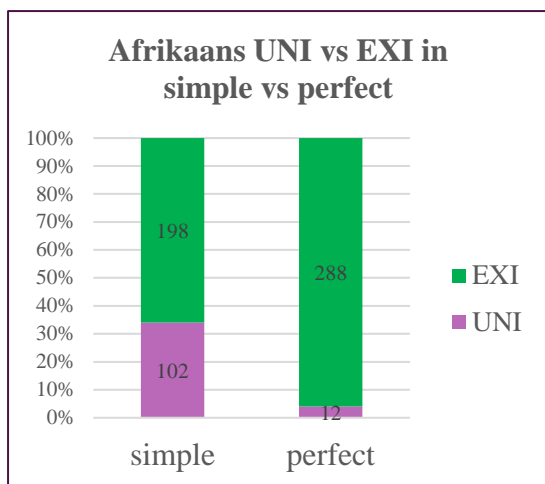
Figure 6a: Afrikaans universal versus existential impersonal contexts in simple versus perfect passives
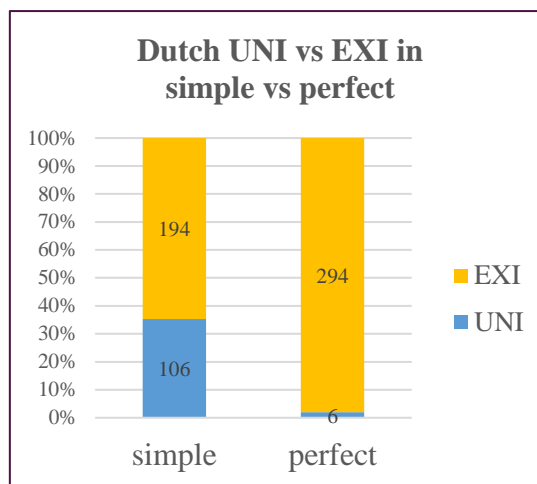
Figure 6b: Dutch universal versus existential impersonal contexts in simple versus perfect passives

The existential cases may outnumber the universal ones in both simple and perfect passives in both Afrikaans and Dutch but, while the latter account for roughly one third of the simple ones, they are hardly ever found in the perfect ones in either language. These results are, however, not surprising. The perfect portrays an event as completed and this construal is hard to reconcile with universal quantification. This type of quantification is concerned with, for instance, the description of people's typical behaviours, the presentation of general rules and expectations and the expression of universal facts, which all tend to be unbounded. Examples (52) and (53) are cases in point.

(52) Afrikaans: UNI-INT-NVER-MOD
Ek is altyd baie bewus van die feit, jy weet, dat daar 'n ou tradisie sou bestaan dat
'I am ever very much aware of the fact, you know, that there would exist an old tradition that'
*rooiwyn byvoorbeeld **gedrink** moet **word** teen kamertemperature.*
red.wine for.instance drunk   must become at   room.temperatures
'red wine, for instance, should be drunk at room temperature.' (KGA, spoken)

(53) Dutch: UNI-INT-VER
'Ik heb nog steeds niet door hoe dat precies in z'n werk gaat, Muis,' zeg ik timide. 'Geeft niets, luister, het werkt zo:'
''I still do not understand how that works exactly, Mouse,' I say timidly. 'No problem, listen, it works like this:'
*met wit, dat wil zeggen officieel bestaand geld **wordt** iets **gekocht**.'*

28

with   white   that   wants say   official   existing   money   becomes something bought
'with white or, in other words, officially existing money, one buys something.' (LG, fiction)

It is nevertheless not impossible for a perfect passive to serve as a universal impersonalisation

strategy, as (54) with the rare impersonal pronoun *man* 'man' makes clear (if *man* was a noun,

the indefinite article would be required; see Van Olmen & Breed 2018a: 17 for details).

(54) Afrikaans: UNI-INT-NVER-NMOD
   *As die   roer   op 200   **ingestel is**, hoeveel   moet man vir   500   kompenseer?*
   if the   rudder   at 200   set   is how.much   must man for   500   compensate
   'If the rudder has been at 200, how much does one have to compensate for 500?' (TK, fiction)

In this conditional context, the event in the subordinate clause – of setting the rudder of a gun

at 200 feet – must be finished before one can consider modifying the entire contraption in order

to compensate for a distance of 500 feet. The hypothetical completed nature of the first event

in relation to the second one makes a perfect passive acceptable here.

4.2.2   *More specific impersonal contexts*

Let us now go beyond the universal versus existential distinction and have a closer look at the

impersonalising passive's more specific uses in Tables 2 and 3 and Figures 3 and 4. What we

have already commented on is the relative infrequency of the different universal-internal uses.

A preference for impersonal pronouns in these types of context has been offered as a potential

explanation. Other contexts that are (specially) rare are the EXI-INF and EXI-SPE ones: 1.16%

of the Afrikaans data and 1.50% of the Dutch data. The likely reason for their near absence has

also been discussed before, with respect to EXI-SPE-PL in particular (see Section 4.1). The

identity of the human participants in this use is anchored in the immediate situation evident to

the speaker but not the addressee, because of which it is probably unlikely to arise in written

language or in the structured and formal setting of recorded interviews. This argument can be

extended to EXI-SPE-NN, and to both EXI-INF uses. In the latter too, the inferred existence

of the human participant(s), as well as the inferred event itself, is very much situational. Note

in this regard that Siewierska & Papastathi's (2011) nine-language translation corpus study did not find any EXI-INF cases of 'they' either.

By far the two most common uses of the impersonalising passive in Afrikaans and Dutch are EXI-COR – 33.33% of cases in Afrikaans and 34.67% in Dutch – and EXI-VAG-NN – 38.83% in Afrikaans and 33.17% in Dutch. Their high frequencies are not a coincidence in our view, as the passive seems particularly well-suited for them. First, what characterises EXI-COR is the fact that the human participants, though not explicitly identified, are in a sense partly known because the event described can only really be ascribed to a particular institution or entity. In (55), for example, the act of sentencing someone can solely be done by the court.

(55) Dutch: EXI-COR
*Een jongeman van 22 uit Stekene **is veroordeeld** tot 240 uur gemeenschapsdienst.*
a young.man of 22 from Stekene is sentenced to 240 hour community.service
'A 22-year-old young man from Stekene has been sentenced to 240 hours of community service.'
(LG, newspaper)

Substituting the passive here for an impersonal pronoun such as *ze* would be perfectly possible and acceptable and result in a clause like 'they have sentenced a 22-year-old young man to 240 hours of community service'. A potential issue with the third person plural is that it is mostly used as a personal pronoun and that addressees/readers may therefore be inclined to look for a referent. The passive avoids this problem (which, admittedly, does not arise with *men* – though this pronoun is disappearing and Afrikaans only has *hulle* as a pronominal option in EXI-COR contexts) and, more generally, the inclusion of a marker whose reference is clear from the state of affairs anyway.

Second, what is interesting about EXI-VAG-NN is that it occurs substantially more often than EXI-VAG-PL in Afrikaans (six and a half times) and in Dutch (three times). A possible reason for the passive's partiality to EXI-VAG-NN is revealed by a more in-depth look at its corpus examples. Strictly speaking, many of them cannot actually be considered "number-neutral", in

that only one unidentified individual can be responsible for the event and never two people or more. In (56), for instance, it is hard to see how the act of shooting a single guinea fowl with a shotgun may have been accomplished by more than one person. In the vein of the "necessarily plural" distinction made in the literature, one could analyse such cases as "necessarily singular" or EXI-VAG-SG.

(56) Afrikaans: EXI-VAG-NN

Dis	*'n*	*tarentaal*	*wat*	*een*	*oggend*	*kort*	*na*	*sonop*	*in 'n bloekombos*	*net*
it.is	a	guinea.fowl	that	one	morning	short	after	sunset	in a bluegum.forest	just

buite	*Bergville*	*op pad*	*na*	*Winterton*	*geskiet*	*is.*
outside	Bergville	on road	to	Winterton	shot	is

'It is a guinea fowl that was shot one morning just after sunset in the bluegum forest just outside Berville on the road to Winterton.'
'n Haelgeweer is gebruik.
'A shotgun was used.' (TK, fiction)

Replacing the passive here by an impersonal pronoun is somewhat problematic. The only real alternative in Afrikaans is the third person plural (it is probably also the most common one in Dutch; see Van Olmen & Breed 2018b: 833). *Hulle* is known to be able to appear in number-neutral cases (see Section 2.1.5 for an example). Its sense of plurality may therefore be argued to have bleached to some extent in impersonal uses (see Van Olmen & Breed 2018a: 24). Yet, in cases where the context is strongly suggestive of a single person, *hulle* remains strange, as (57) shows (note that the ? judgment concerns the reading of the sentence as EXI-VAG).

(57) Afrikaans: EXI-VAG-NN
? *Dis 'n tarentaal wat **hulle** … **geskiet het**. 'n Haelgeweer is gebruik.*
'It is a guinea fowl that they shot … A shotgun was used.'

The passive is again a useful way of avoiding this problem, due to its lack of overt marking of the plural/number-neutral/singular nature of the human participant(s). Another – undoubtedly quite frequent – option for what we can call EXI-SG contexts would be the indefinite pronoun *iemand* 'someone', of course (see also Van Olmen & Breed 2018b: 832-833).

It is important to add here that EXI-COR and EXI-VAG appear to be very typical of impersonal

31

'they' as well. In the earlier completion task study (see Van Olmen & Breed 2018b: 833-834), EXI-COR was the context with the highest percentage of third person plurals in Afrikaans and Dutch. EXI-VAG-PL and EXI-VAG-NN were among the contexts with the highest proportions of 'they' too in both languages. The study did not look at EXI-VAG-SG but it is still interesting to observe, in view of the preceding paragraph, that *hulle* and *ze*'s percentages decreased from plural to number-neutral while the Afrikaans and Dutch passive is used more often in number-neutral than in plural contexts. Siewierska & Papastathi's (2011: 590) (limited) corpus data on Dutch also show that EXI-COR and EXI-VAG are impersonal *ze*'s most frequent uses.

UNI-EXT and SAV, finally, are fairly marginal uses of the passive in Afrikaans (respectively 2.83% of cases and 1.83%) and Dutch (respectively 3.00% and 1.33%). The available evidence for the third person plural, by contrast, indicates that they are quite normal for this impersonal pronoun. Both are among the contexts with the highest proportions of 'they' in the Afrikaans and Dutch completion task data and they are also attested multiple times, though half as often as EXI-COR and EXI-VAG, in Siewierska & Papastathi's (2011) corpus. Together, these facts tentatively suggest that the two uses prefer pronominal to passive impersonalisation. We have no immediate explanation why this would be the case for SAV. For UNI-EXT, however, one reason may be that a passive like (58a) is essentially vague between an internal and an external perspective. In the former interpretation, speaker and/or addressee can imagine themselves as people visiting Italy and thus eating pasta. In the latter reading, the speaker is describing a habit of the inhabitants of Italy.

(58) Afrikaans
    a.   *In Italië **word** pasta **geëet**.*
        in Italy become pasta eaten
        'In Italy, pasta is eaten.'
    b.   *In Italië eet **jy** pasta.*
        'In Italy, you eat pasta.'
    c.   *In Italië eet **hulle** pasta.*
        'In Italy, they eat pasta.'

This ambiguity may not always be desirable, though, and can easily be avoided by employing impersonal pronouns rather than the passive: the second person singular or *('n) mens* for UNI-INT-VER and the third person plural for UNI-EXT, as in (58a) and (58b) respectively. In fact, what our examples suggest is that passives are usually only used for UNI-EXT purposes when the external perspective is evident from the context. Consider, for instance, the interview with a Belgian radio presenter in a Belgian newspaper in (59).

(59) Dutch: UNI-EXT
     'Wordt er stilaan niet te veel geleuterd op de radio?'
     'Are people not starting to waffle too much on the radio?'

'In	*Nederland*	***wordt***	*er*	*op de*	*radio*	*veel*	*meer*	***geleuterd***	*dan hier.*
In	Netherlands	becomes	there	on the	radio	much	more	waffled	than here

     'In the Netherlands, people waffle much more on the radio than here.'
     In alle landen rondom ons wordt vijf keer langer gepraat.'
   'In all countries around us, people talk five times longer.' (LG, newspaper)

The entire setting itself already points to an external perspective. The explicit comparison of the Netherlands to *hier* 'here', i.e. Belgium, (as well as the subsequent sentence) disambiguates the passive even further as not internal but external: the interviewee is talking about a habit of people on Dutch radio.

4.2.3   *Comparison of the subcorpora*

Table 4 and Figure 7 present the distribution of the various impersonal uses of the Afrikaans passive in our three subcorpora: newspapers, spoken interviews and fiction. Table 5 and Figure 8 do just the same for the Dutch passive. In what follows, we will point out a few of the most striking differences, mainly to show and stress that the passive's use as an impersonalisation strategy – like that of other forms of impersonalisation, undoubtedly – is not genre-independent. A detailed discussion of all (dis)similarities is beyond the scope of this article, though.

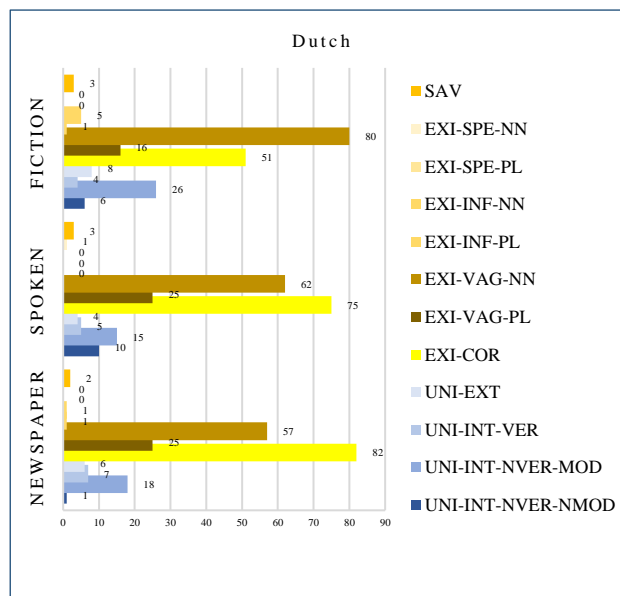| Afrikaans	Newspaper	Spoken	Fiction
UNI-INT-NVER-NMOD	10	22	17
UNI-INT-NVER-MOD	18	17	9
UNI-INT-VER	0	2	2
UNI-EXT	8	7	2
EXI-COR	93	49	58
EXI-VAG-PL	9	13	13
EXI-VAG-NN	60	83	90
EXI-INF-PL	0	0	1
EXI-INF-NN	0	0	4
EXI-SPE-PL	0	0	0
EXI-SPE-NN	0	0	2
SAV	2	7	2
Total	**200**	**200**	**200**

Table 4: Uses of the impersonalising passive in Afrikaans in newspapers versus speech versus fiction
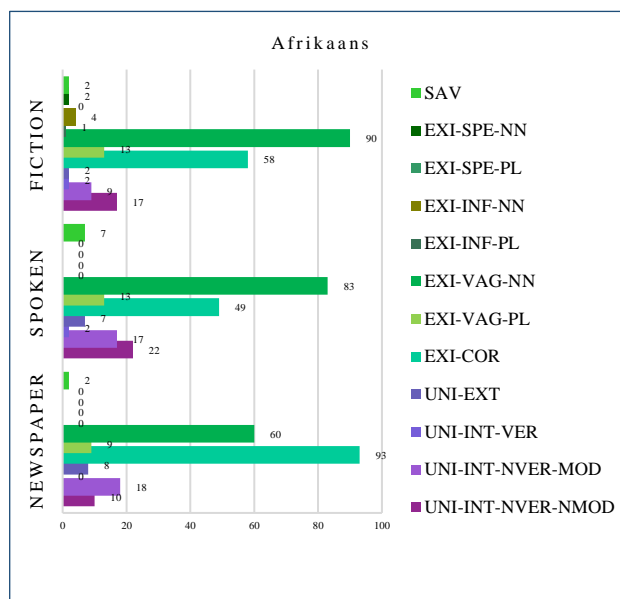
Figure 6: Uses of the impersonalising passive in Afrikaans in newspapers versus speech versus fiction

Dutch	Newspaper	Spoken	Fiction
UNI-INT-NVER-NMOD	1	10	6
UNI-INT-NVER-MOD	18	15	26
UNI-INT-VER	7	5	4
UNI-EXT	6	4	8
EXI-COR	82	75	51
EXI-VAG-PL	25	25	16
EXI-VAG-NN	57	62	80
EXI-INF-PL	1	0	1
EXI-INF-NN	1	0	5
EXI-SPE-PL	0	0	0
EXI-SPE-NN	0	1	0
SAV	2	3	3
Total	**200**	**200**	**200**

Table 5: Uses of the impersonalising passive in Dutch in newspapers versus speech versus fiction

Figure 5: Uses of the impersonalising passive in Dutch in newspapers versus speech versus fiction

Probably the most prominent contrast has to do with the passive's two most frequent uses. In

Afrikaans, spoken language and fiction have approximately three EXI-VAG-NN instances for

every two EXI-COR ones (83 to 49 cases and 90 to 58 respectively). In newspapers, however, this ratio is reversed (60 to 93 cases). Almost precisely the same difference is found in Dutch, between newspapers on the one hand (57 to 82) and fiction on the other (80 to 51). The reason for this higher frequency of EXI-COR in newspapers is probably that they simply write more about issues involving institutions, which often do not need to be identified explicitly given the event described, as in (60) and (61).

(60) Afrikaans: EXI-COR
*Hy   is die   naweek in die   Moot-polisiekantoor   **aangehou**   voordat   hy op borgtog*
he   is the   weekend in the   Moot-police.office   detained   before   he on bail
vrygelaat   is.
released   is
'He was detained at the Moot police station over the weekend before being released on bail.'
(TK, newspaper)

(61) Dutch: EXI-COR
*Masureel   en   Milosevic   **zijn   geschorst**.*
Masureel   and   Milosevic   are   suspended
'Masureel and Milosevic have been suspended.' (LG, newspaper)

In (60), the institution involved in detaining him is of course the police while that responsible for releasing him on bail is clearly the court. In (61), which appears in an article about football, the two players mentioned here have obviously been suspended by the governing body of the sport, the Royal Belgian Football Association.

Another, though small, difference worthy of note concerns EXI-INF and EXI-SPE. Such uses may be very infrequent but it is, in our view, not a coincidence that all seven attestations in our Afrikaans data occur in the fiction subcorpus and that seven of the nine cases in the Dutch data are found in the fiction and speech subcorpora. As discussed in Sections 4.1 and 4.2.2, EXI-INF and EXI-SPE are highly contingent on the immediate situation, making it unlikely that the contexts arise in written language or in structured formal interviews. Still, unlike newspapers, any spoken conversation between people will always retain the potential for these uses: there is a here and now at which some unidentified individual can perform an action (EXI-SPE) or

from which a speaker can deduce the occurrence of an event and the existence of some person responsible for it (EXI-INF). This argument can be extended to fiction, in that this genre may contain imagined conversations with an immediate situation in the story, and explains why the few EXI-INF and EXI-SPE cases in our data tend to occur where they do.

Other dissimilarities exist. Afrikaans newspapers, for instance, exhibit relatively more UNI-INT-NVER-MOD cases than UNI-INT-NVER-NMOD ones (18 to 10), compared to spoken language (17 to 22) and fiction (9 to 17). Dutch newspapers too have many more UNI-INT-NVER-MOD cases than UNI-INT-VER-NMOS ones (18 to 1). We have no ready explanation for this difference, however – like for other possible minor points of divergence between the three subcorpora.

4.3 How does the Afrikaans impersonalising passive compare to the Dutch one?

It should be evident from the discussion in the preceding sections that the Afrikaans and Dutch impersonalising passives resemble one another closely with regard to the parameters examined here. The similarities between the two languages can be summed up as follows:

- The passive can be used in the whole range of impersonal contexts (only EXI-SPE-PL was not attested in the data). In Afrikaans, it thus differs from the impersonal pronouns as they are limited to either the universal-internal or the non-universal-internal domain. In Dutch, the passive only shares its usage potential with *men*.

- The passive is employed much more frequently for existential than for universal purposes – in its simple form and especially in its perfect form, whose aspectual construal clashes with universal quantification, and compared to the only similar impersonal pronoun, *men*. This fact may be due to a preference for pronominal forms of impersonalisation in the universal domain.

- EXI-INF and EXI-SPE uses are very rare in our data and, in this respect, the passive is

similar to third person plural impersonal pronouns. The likely reason for the infrequency of these contexts is that they are highly dependent on the speaker's immediate situation, which is not accessible in written language. They do tend to be slightly more typical of the interviews and fiction than of the newspapers. This difference can be attributed to the fact that, in the former subcorpora, there still exists a(n imagined) here and now allowing actions by unidentified individuals or inferences about them.

- EXI-COR is one of the passive's two most common uses. At least part of the explanation must lie in its defining characteristic, i.e. of the event itself making the entity responsible for it partially known. There may therefore be less of a need to indicate impersonalisation with distinct markers such as pronouns (which, in the case of the third person plural, may have the additional disadvantage of essentially being ambiguous between a personal and an impersonal interpretation).

- EXI-VAG-NN is the passive's other most frequent use and it occurs considerably more often than EXI-VAG-PL. In this regard, the passive seems to differ from the third person plural, for which the available evidence points to a preference for plural uses to number-neutral ones. The high frequency of EXI-VAG-NN passives is probably in part motivated by the fact that many EXI-VAG contexts are, in actual fact, necessarily singular. For such cases, the alternative use of *hulle* or *ze* is somewhat incongruous: even in its semantically bleached use as an impersonal pronoun, the third person *plural* clashes with the singular nature of the event. This type of incompatibility does not arise with the passive (or with an indefinite pronoun like *iemand*).

- The passive is regularly employed for UNI-EXT and SAV purposes. In view of what we know about the third person plural's uses, however, these contexts seem comparatively uncommon. A potential reason for the relative infrequency of UNI-EXT is the passive's intrinsic vagueness between an internal and an external reading. Speakers might want to

37

avoid this ambiguity and use, respectively, *jy*, *('n) mens* or *je* and *hulle* or *ze* to be explicit about the perspective that they wish to communicate.

- Newspapers differ from the other subcorpora in that they contain more EXI-COR cases than EXI-VAG-NN ones (but see below). The explanation for this difference is that the former genre is bound to discuss the actions of institutions like the government, the police and the judiciary more.

There are also dissimilarities between Afrikaans and Dutch. The ratio of EXI-VAG-NN cases to EXI-VAG-PL ones, for example, is much larger in Afrikaans (six and a half times) than in Dutch (only three times). The reason for this difference is unclear to us, though. Another point of divergence between the languages has to do with the relation between the passive's two most frequent uses in spoken language. EXI-COR prevailing over EXI-VAG-NN has been said to be characteristic of newspapers. Yet, it is also found – in a less extreme form – in our subcorpus of Dutch speech (75 to 62 cases) but not in that of Afrikaans speech (49 to 83). The difference is due to the nature of the two sets of interviews. The Dutch ones are all of school teachers and centre around a more or less fixed series of questions about the impact of, among other things, the 1995 spelling reform and education policies. As a result, many of the answers relate to the actions taken by the institutions responsible for the domains being talked about (e.g. the Dutch Language Union, the government). The Afrikaans interviews, by contrast, cover a wider range of topics and interviewees and are more free-flowing.

5   Conclusion

In our view, Section 4.3, which is essentially a summary of this article's findings, answers the questions raised in Section 1, in showing that: (i) the passive is a productive impersonalisation strategy in Afrikaans and in Dutch, being used in the entire range of impersonal contexts; (ii) it is more typically employed for some impersonal purposes than for others – for instance, with EXI-COR and EXI-VAG-NN as its top uses and with usage variation between different genres;

(iii) on the whole, the impersonalising passive behaves very similarly in the two languages.

The explanations offered for these results regularly refer to impersonal pronouns.[9] UNI-EXT's low frequency, for example, has been linked to the passive's ambiguity in perspective and the comparative explicitness of, say, *mens* versus *hulle*. In the same vein, to account for EXI-VAG-NN's high frequency, we have discussed the potential need to distinguish EXI-VAG-SG cases and, subsequently, their apparent incompatibility with the third person plural. Our claims about impersonal pronouns are, however, mostly based on data that is, strictly speaking, not wholly comparable (e.g. very small corpus studies, completion tasks). The reason is that, thus far, no systemic corpus investigations of the usage of Afrikaans and Dutch impersonal pronouns have been undertaken. It is only such future research, though, that can really confirm, for instance, whether explicitly external *hulle* is indeed employed more often than the vague passive for the expression of UNI-EXT.

References

Auer, P. & A. Stukenbrock. 2018. When 'you' means 'I': The German 2nd Ps.Sg. pronoun *du* between genericity and subjectivity. *Open Linguistics* 4, 280-309.

Breed, A., F. Brisard & B. Verhoeven. 2017. Periphrastic progressive constructions in Dutch and Afrikaans: A contrastive analysis. *Journal of Germanic Linguistics* 29, 305-378.

Breed, A. & D. Van Olmen. subm. Developing and validating a visual questionnaire for the study of impersonalisation strategies: A design thinking approach. *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies*.

De Cock, B. & B. Kluge (eds.) 2016. Special issue: The referential ambiguity of personal

---

[9] Another such explanation that should be added to the list is the use of the passive for existential purposes when the context contains a potential referent for a third person plural pronoun. Speakers may wish to avoid impersonal *hulle* or *ze* in this kind of situation – as the addressee could very well understand it as personal – and draw on the passive (or *men* in Dutch) instead.

pronouns and its pragmatic consequences. *Pragmatics* 26(3).

De Hoop, H. & S. Tarenskeen. 2015. It's all about *you* in Dutch. *Journal of Pragmatics* 88, 163-175.

Duinhoven, A.M. 1990. Verdwijnt *men*? In J.B. den Besten, A.M. Duinhoven & J.P.A. Stroop (eds.), *Vragende Wijs: Vragen over Tekst, Taal en Taalgeschiedenis*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 70-80.

Fenger, P. 2018. How impersonal does *one* get? A study of *man*-pronouns in Germanic. *Journal of Comparative Germanic Linguistics* 21, 291-325.

Fonesca-Greber, B. & L.R. Waugh. 2003. On the radical difference between the subject personal pronouns in written and spoken European French. In P. Leistyna & C.F. Meyer (eds.), *Corpus Analysis: Language Structure and Language Use*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 225-240.

Gast, V. 2015. On the use of translation corpora in contrastive linguistics: A case study of impersonalization in English and German. *Languages in Contrast* 15, 4-33.

Gast, V. & J. van der Auwera. 2013. Towards a distributional typology of human impersonal pronouns, based on data from European languages. In D. Bakker & M. Haspelmath (eds.), *Languages Across Boundaries: Studies in the Memory of Anna Siewierska*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 119-158.

Haas, F. 2018a. "You can't control a thing like that": Genre and changes in modern English human impersonal pronouns. In R.J. Whitt (ed.), *Diachronic Corpora, Genre and Language Change*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 171-194.

Haas, F. 2018b. Changing human impersonal pronouns in English: A corpus study. Paper at Societas Linguistica Europaea 51, Tallinn.

Kulikov, L. 2011. Passive to anticausative through impersonalization: The case of Vedic and Indo-European. In A. Malchukov & A. Siewierska (eds.), *Impersonal Constructions: A Cross-Linguistic Perspective*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 229-254

Malchukov, A. & A. Siewierska (eds.). 2011. *Impersonal Constructions: A Cross-Linguistic Perspective*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Nederlandse Taalunie. 2004. *Corpus Gesproken Nederlands Release 1.0.* The Hague: Dutch Language Union.

Ponelis, F. 1976. *Ponelis Gesproke Korpus van Afrikaans*. Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University.

Posio, P. & M. Vilkuna. 2013. Referential dimensions of human impersonals in dialectal European Portuguese and Finnish. *Linguistics* 51, 177-229.

Siewierska, A. 2011. Overlap and complementarity in reference impersonals: *Man*-constructions vs. third person plural-impersonal in the languages of Europe. In A. Malchukov & A. Siewierska (eds.), *Impersonal Constructions: A Cross-Linguistic Perspective*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 57-89.

Siewierska, A. & M. Papastathi. 2011. Towards a typology of third personal plural impersonals. *Linguistics* 49, 575-610.

Taalkommissie van die Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns. 2011. *Taalkommissiekorpus 1.1*. Potchefstroom: CTexT, North-West University.

Van Eynde, F. 2004. *Part of Speech Tagging en Lemmatisering van het Corpus Gesproken Nederlands*. Leuven: University of Leuven.

Van Noord, G., G. Bouma, F. Van Eynde, D. de Kok, J. van der Linde, I. Schuurman, E. Tjong Kim Sang & V. Vandeghinste. 2013. Large scale syntactic annotation of written

Dutch: Lassy. In P. Spyns & J. Odijk (eds.), *Essential Speech and Language Technology for Dutch: Theory and Applications of Natural Language Processing*. Berlin: Springer, 147-164.

Van Olmen, D. & A. Breed. 2018a. Human impersonal pronouns in Afrikaans: A double questionnaire-based study. *Language Sciences* 69, 1-29.

Van Olmen, D. & A. Breed. 2018b. Human impersonal pronouns in West Germanic: A questionnaire-based comparative study of Afrikaans, Dutch and English. *Studies in Language* 42, 798-846.

Van Rooy, B. 2003. *Korpus van Gesproke Afrikaans uit die Vroeë 2000's*. Potchefstroom: North-West University.

Zifonun, G. 2001. *Man lebt nur einmal*: Morphosyntax und Semantik des Pronomens *man*. *Deutsche Sprache* 3, 232-253.