Degree resultatives as second-order constructions

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1. Introduction.

There is a vast and still growing literature on resultatives. They play center stage in construction grammar (Goldberg 1995: Chapter 8; Goldberg & Jackendoff 2004) and related frameworks, such as Simpler Syntax (Culicover & Jackendoff 2005: Chapter 4, Section 5) but also in lexicalist Montague grammar (Dowty 1979: Chapter 2), LFG (Simpson 1983), HPSG (Müller 2002: Chapter 5), transformational grammar (Thompson 1973), Government and Binding Theory (Hoekstra 1988; Carrier & Randall 1992; den Dikken 1995: Chapters 2, 3 and 5), and Minimalism (Snyder 2001). The present work is a contribution to this effort, where the focus is on a particular reading of certain resultatives and where the observations offered here lead to a similar conclusion regardless of analytical framework.

The resultatives at issue here form a small but growing group of expressions with an intensifying function which have productive patterns. Henceforth, we will refer to them as *degree resultatives.* To see the difference with ordinary resultatives, compare (1) to (2):

(1) Jones wiped the dust off the book.
(2) Smith beat the crap out of Jones.

Structurally, (1) and (2) are alike (transitive, with a PP within the VP), but semantically they differ. In (1), the resultative is literal; *off the book* is predicated of the dust resulting from Jones's wiping action. In (2), on the other hand, we are not literally talking about Smith removing excrement from the body of Jones, but about the intensity of the beating (Hoeksema & Napoli 2008; Haïk 2012; Perek 2016). The expression is idiomatic, but part of a productive pattern; we could substitute for *beat* verbs like *hit, bash, whack, kick, club, bludgeon, trample, clobber* and other verbs of contact-by-impact (Levin 1993), or verbs like *annoy, irritate, bug* and other psych-verbs (Sells 1987). In such examples the constructional contribution to the interpretation of the verb phrase is intensification (Gyselinck & Colleman (2016, 2017).

We introduce the concept of *second-order constructions*, which, at least initially, rely on corresponding first-order constructions for their interpretations (somewhat similar to secondary grammaticalization, as in Givón 1991; Traugott & Trousdale 2013). That is, the degree interpretation of (2) is available because the literal interpretation of (1) is available. Second-order constructions, then, are derived from first-order constructions.

The existence of second-order constructions is only partially arbitrary. We cannot predict for a given language which first-order constructions will lead to second-order constructions. In the case of degree resultatives, we will see that they frequently involve expressions recruited from the general set of taboo expressions in the language. They involve

death and diseases, mental illness, loss of body parts, sex and defecation, bodily fluids and such, as well as various euphemisms that hint more opaquely at these taboo topics. Which taboo expressions are put to which use, however, is largely arbitrary and language specific, as a comparison of Dutch and English degree resultatives will show.

In a first-order construction, meaning is determined by the component lexical items, plus the constructional meaning contribution. In a second-order construction, the original first-construction meaning is overwritten by a new interpretation, while the old interpretation is still potentially available. In (2), there is a literal (unlikely) interpretation, which is resultative, and an idiomatic degree interpretation, corresponding to the second-order construction.

In (2) we have an ordinarily transitive verb. The form *verb + [the + taboo term] + out of NP* is an intensified variant of the form *verb + NP*, where in the first pattern the expletive is the direct object and in the second pattern NP is the direct object and, in both, NP is the patient argument of the verb. (2) belongs to the class of caused motion constructions: an agent causes an object to change location. But in its second-order reading it is an intensification of an action (*beating*) involving an agent and a patient.

Resultative constructions can intensify verbs that are typically intransitive as well:[1]

(3) a. Jones was laughing himself sick.
b. Smith worked his ass off.

(3a) has the form *verb + reflexive + XP*. The resultative predicate (here *sick*) often denotes death, dismemberment, sickness and other taboo topics (on the intimate relation between taboo expressions, intensification, and pejoratives, see Napoli & Hoeksema 2009). (3b), on the other hand, has the form *verb + possessive pronoun + bodypart + off* (a somewhat productive pattern; Cappelle 2014). The possessive pronoun of (3b), like the reflexive of (3a), is bound by the subject.

Secondary resultatives that have a degree interpretation act as intensifiers. Dutch has various of these intensifying degree resultatives. Some are very much like English. Compare (4) to (3a):

(4) Fred schrok zich dood.
Fred startled REFL dead
'Fred got startled out of his wits.'

[1] As is clear for (2b), literal interpretations are often bizarre. So (3b) is not about a mishap at work involving a chain saw. Importantly, (3b) is also not an instance of the AAVE camouflage construction discussed in Collins, Moody and Postal (2008), where *X's ass* stands for a whole X, exemplified in (i):
(i) I'm gonna sue your ass.
(i) lacks the characteristic intensifier interpretation associated with degree resultatives. Contrast (i) with *I'm gonna sue your ass off*. The latter suggests that the addressee will be taken to the cleaners (so it is a degree resultative), whereas (i) merely threatens litigation. (See also Irwin 2015 for discussion of AAVE attributive modifiers involving taboo body parts, such as *Park your sorry ass car somewhere else*, with related expressive meaning.)

Dutch also has an intensifying degree resultative that has a body part, similar to English (3b), with a reflexive instead of the English possessive pronoun.

(5) Jaap schaamde zich de ogen uit de kop.
Jaap shamed REFL the eyes out the head
'Jaap was ashamed to death.'

About cases like (4), Broekhuis, Corver, and Vos (2015: 254) remark that "they mainly bring about an amplifying effect." They note that the same can be said about ditransitives like that in (5) and (6), analyzed in Cappelle (2014).[2]

(6) Ik pieker me een ongeluk.
I worry myself an accident
'I worry intensely.'

In (5-6) we find two NPs within the VP, neither of which is inside a PP; this is the structural configuration we mean when we use the term *ditransitive*. Datives in the double-object construction appear in this configuration, as well. Some have argued, at least for English, that dative constructions form part of a larger set of constructions that includes resultatives (Snyder & Stromswold 1997; but see Carrier & Randall 1992: appendix). We do not, however, include datives in our discussion (whether in the double-object construction or in PPs), because we have come across no examples of dative constructions that have a degree interpretation.

We treat ditransitives like (5-6) as a special case of resultatives. This analysis of (5-6) is coherent with the common view of resultatives, ditransitives, and directed motion constructions as all involving change along a (metaphorical) path (Simpson 1983; Hoekstra 1984; Larson 1988; Rappaport & Levin 1991; Goldberg 1995; den Dikken 1995; Hale & Keyser 1996). These three constructions cannot co-occur: in the same way that a resultative predicate cannot be added to a resultative construction (apart from conjunction), it cannot be added to a ditransitive or directed motion construction (examples adapted from Goldberg 1995: 82):

(7) a. He wiped the table dry (*clean).
b. Joe kicked Bob a suitcase (*open).
c. Sam tickled Chris off her chair (*silly).

Semantically, resultatives (including ditransitives[3]) can often be analyzed in terms of a CAUSE predicate. E.g. *wipe the table clean* causes the table to become clean by wiping, while *give someone a present* causes someone to have a present (Harley 2002). The same is true for

[2] The short form of the reflexive appears in (6). For relevant discussion see the remarks on Dutch Type 1 in Section 4.2.1.

[3] We are not claiming that all ditransitives are causative. E.g. *to begrudge someone something* does not seem to have any causative entailments, just like *verb + NP + AP* is not necessarily resultative, cf. e.g. *consider Jorge lazy, call Mariko stingy, find Hsing Hsing foolish.*

caused motion: *drive the truck to Atlanta* causes the truck to be in Atlanta (Dowty 1979). The class of resultatives discussed here will include these three types as subtypes. In each there is a causative meaning reinterpreted metaphorically as a high degree.[4]

This paper introduces and discusses second order degree resultatives, a phenomenon that shows a number of cross-constructional similarities with other types of intensifier expressions, is common to many languages, and can be realized in a variety of syntactic patterns. Our discussion centers on Dutch and English, which attest intensifying degree resultatives in several syntactic patterns and, thus, show that the potential for the second-order construction discussed here is not determined primarily by the syntax, but, rather, by the semantics: we point out two characteristics of the (literal) resultative constructions that license the (idiomatic) degree sense. Additionally, though Dutch and English are closely related languages, comparison of the two languages allows us to note subtleties of degree resultatives that might have gone unnoticed in a study of only one or the other of the languages. An examination of corpora from different time periods shows that the set of degree resultatives is rapidly growing in the number of lexical items that can partake in the relevant constructions, analogous to the equally rapid growth in the lexical domain of degree adverbs in Dutch in the period 1600–2000 (Hoeksema 2005), just as one might expect if the second-order construction is semantically motivated; language embraces multiple ways to express intensity. The study here, then, sheds light on how a second-order construction can arise, diversify, and thrive.

2. Two words of caution on the notion of degree.

Applying the term *degree* to the second-order constructions discussed here calls for explanation since that term has taken on a particular formal meaning for many. We offer that

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[4] One important aspect of this reinterpretation is that an actual change of state is not expressed. Whereas regular resultatives of atelic verbs such as Dutch *martelen* 'to torture' are telic, the same is not true of degree resultatives. Van Hout (2012: 124) presents the following pair of examples, using a Dutch version of the well-known *in an hour/for an hour*-test (Dowty 1979), which marks predicates that combine with *in an hour* as telic and those that combine with *for an hour* as atelic.

(i) De dictator heeft de gevangene urenlang /*in een uur gemarteld.
The dictator has the prisoner for hours/ in an hour tortured
'The dictator tortured the prisoner for hours /*in an hour'

(ii) De dictator heeft de gevangene in een uur /*urenlang doodgemarteld
The dictactor has the prisoner in an hour /*for hours dead-tortured
'The dictator has tortured the prisoner to death in an hour / *for hours'

When we apply the same test to *vervelen* 'bore' we see no change in telicity:

(iii) Ik heb me urenlang / *in een uur (dood) verveeld
I have me for hours / in an hour (to death) bored
'I have bored myself to death for hours'

This follows rather directly from the semantics of the degree resultative, since it does not express a change of state, but intensity. *Zich doodvervelen* 'to be bored to death' is therefore atelic, just like *zich vervelen* 'to be bored'. (For discussion of telicity in the related area of particle verbs, see Walková 2017).

explanation in Section 2.1. Further, degree expressions have varying interpretations, which we acknowledge in Section 2.2, though the nuances will play no part in our overall discussion.

2.1 Various ways to express degree.

In the literature on degree marking, much attention goes to adverbs of degree and the morphosyntactically marked categories of comparatives and superlatives[5] (Corver 1997; Neeleman, van de Koot & Doetjes 2004). Degree marking, however, is not just a matter of lexical heads. A broader view of the issues reveals important parallelisms between adverbs of degree and a number of other ways of expressing degree.

Suppose we want to characterize Jones by ascribing to him a high degree of poverty. We could do this by using an adverb of degree: *Jones is extremely poor*, or a stereotypical comparison: *Jones is as poor as a church mouse*, or a clause licensed by subordinating *so* that is read as a result of high degree: *Jones is so poor that he has to send his children to the almshouse*. We could use pitch (and duration, cf. Braver, Dresher, & Kawahara 2016): *Jones is póór*; and repetition: *Jones is poor, poor, poor*. Some languages also use a variety of morphological processes, such as affixation, including diminutives and augmentatives: Italian *basta e strabasta* 'it's enough and it's more than enough', *bello bellissimo* 'beautiful very beautiful' (Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi 1994). Spoken languages tend to have a high number of lexical contrasts (morphologically unrelated lexical items) indicating degree: English *eat* vs. *devour*. A variety of means of intensification litters the components of the grammar, much more so than means of de-intensification (Zillig 1982; Polanyi 1985; Sandig 1991). Sign languages, in contrast, tend to indicate degree via changes in the phonological parameters (Wilcox & Shaffer 2006) or via a separate degree sign (Brito 1984), although there are some lexical contrasts indicating degree, such as American Sign Language RAIN vs. POUR.

There are also degree compounds (aka elative compounds), which are often comparison-based (German *blitzschnell* 'lightning fast') and may have a resultative meaning (Hoeksema 2012). Compare *crystal-clear* 'clear as crystal' = 'very clear' with Dutch *stervenskoud* 'dying cold' = 'very cold'. In the latter, the interpretation does not seem to be 'as cold as dying', but 'so cold, that it might cause death'. Similar cases in Dutch are *kotsmisselijk* 'puke-nauseous', *snotverkouden* 'snot suffering-from-a-cold' = 'to have a cold to the degree that it causes one to produce (lots of) snot', *stomdronken* 'mute-drunk' = 'drunk to the extent one cannot talk anymore'. The same contrast can be found in Italian, where degree compounds like *mondo cane* 'dog world', *donna cannone* 'cannon woman/ enormously fat woman', for example, seem to be solely comparative, but *stanco morto* 'dead tired' hints of a resultative sense.

In the light of this rich variety of ways of expressing degree, one can better see the second order constructions examined in this paper as examples of degree expressions. Thus we step away from a narrowly construed treatment in terms of DegP's in favor of the older view (Sapir 1944; Bolinger 1972) of gradability and degree marking as a pervasive property of natural language, expressible by a variety of mechanisms.

[5] At least in many European languages. Other language families may use different strategies for marking comparatives and superlatives – cf. Stassen (1985).

2.2 Varying interpretations of degree.

Intensity or high degree is a variable notion. In the case of a verb such as *sweat* (*I am sweating my guts out*) we think of the amount of sweat produced. The same holds, mutatis mutandis, for other verbs of emitting effluents (*puke, piss, bleed*) and verbs of ingestion (*eat, drink, gorge*). In other cases, such as *fight* or *sing*, high degree is more about intensity than amount produced. In yet other cases, duration may come into play, as with *wait* (Dutch *zich suf wachten* 'wait oneself into a tizzy'). A verb like *sleep* (*sleep one's ass off*) may be interpreted equally well in terms of duration and intensity (depth of sleep). In addition, we include cases such as Dutch *de sterren van de hemel zingen* 'sing the stars off heaven' = 'sing beautifully', where the high degree interpretation is arguably associated with the manner of singing, rather than raw intensity, as might be the case with say *Janis sang her guts out every night.* In general, in many cases it would be hard to decide whether we are talking about the manner or the intensity of the rendering. We, thus, do not explore these distinctions here, instead lumping all together as intensification since the degree expressed by the resultative is always high.

3. Occurrence of degree resultatives across languages and the importance of endpoint.

This paper looks at data from only English and Dutch. However, resultatives with varying syntactic structures occur in many spoken languages, including other Indo-European languages (French, Legendre 1997; German, Stiebels 1998; Latvian, Wälchli 2012; Romanian, Farkas 2011; Russian, Spencer & Zaretskaya 1998), as well as genetically unrelated languages (Chinese, Sybesma 1992, Cheng & Huang 1995, Li 1995; Japanese, Washio 1997, Nishiyama 1998; Korean, Kim 1993, Wechsler & Noh 2001; Thai, Matsui 2007; Yoruba, Baker 1989). None of these works mention degree resultatives, but it could be that the studies simply overlooked them, since their focus was elsewhere.

Sign languages also express resultatives in a number of ways. A motion event that ends in a particular way, for example, might well involve one or more classifiers, with the endpoint of the motion having a phonological change iconic of the result in one or more of the classifiers (and see Tang & Yang 2007; Kentner 2014). For example, to express that a car hit a tree, and the tree fell over as a result, the classifier for 'car' might move toward the classifier for 'tree', hit it, and then the classifier for 'tree' might change orientation from upright to on its side. Or, to express that the car hit a tree and the car rumpled, we might begin the same way, but when one classifier hits the other, the classifier for 'car', which uses the 3-handshape () might bend the extended digits (), or if only the front of the car rumpled, the 3-handshape might bend only the extended index and middle fingers, and how tightly those fingers bend can indicate how great the rumpling was (Sutton-Spence & Napoli 2013). These resultatives can certainly be exaggerated and understood as non-literal, such as in a car hitting a tree so hard the tree flies up and flips a few times in the air before landing.

Sometimes these resultative degree interpretations can be encoded in single lexical items, such as the sign FALL-IN-LOVE in ASL, in which the dominant hand is a 1-handshape (like the classifier for person) which literally falls on the palm of the nondominant hand and bounces along it. Several such signs appear in Irish Sign Language, including TONGUE-ROLL-OUT-OF-MOUTH to indicate so good one drools, STEAM-COME-OUT-OF-EARS to indicate intense anger, EYES-POP-OUT-OF-HEAD to indicate astonishment, and HAIRS-STAND-UP-ON-ARM to indicate getting the creeps (Leeson & Saeed 2012: 134 ff). So far as we know, the first work to

discuss this particular type of degree-resultative lexical item in sign languages was Wilcox and colleagues (2003: 146), who said they indicated "deviant behavioural effect for intensity of experience" when talking about examples from ASL and Catalan Sign Language. In fact, even taboo degree resultatives occur in sign languages, as in ASL, such as NIPPLES-STIFFEN and BALLS-SHRINK to indicate great cold, or GET-ERECTION to indicate attractiveness (Mirus, Fisher & Napoli 2012).

Thus consideration of the data and analysis in our study may lead others to insights in the analysis of many languages, spoken and sign. Still, we predict that not all languages will have secondary resultatives that are second-order constructions expressing degree. In particular, second-order constructions ride piggy-back on first-order constructions; they cannot exist without them. Thus, if a language lacks literal resultatives, it will also lack intensifying degree resultatives, and if it has restrictions on literal resultatives, we expect those restrictions to hold of intensifying degree resultatives.

This prediction holds quite generally of the languages we have examined. That is, we have found no languages that have intensifying degree resultatives that do not also have literal resultatives – a result consistent with our claim that the former derive from the latter. But we will address an important complication regarding German in Section 8.

Consider this prediction with respect to Italian. Italian exhibits a degree resultative exemplified in (8) with *morire* 'die' and *impazzire* 'go crazy' – two of the exceedingly few secondary predicates allowed in this construction:

(8) a. E' bella da morire.
is beautiful to die
'She is drop-dead gorgeous.'

b. Mi piace da impazzire!
me pleases to go-insane
'I like it a lot / I love it to pieces.'

(8) has a number of properties in common with a Dutch degree resultative construction exemplified in (9) (Heinsius 1929; Booij 2010). (Here GEN indicates genitive case.)

(9) a. De professor herhaalde haar argumenten tot vervelens toe.
the professor repeated her arguments to boring-GEN to
'The professor repeated her arguments ad nauseam.'

b. De jongen was tot gek wordens toe verliefd.
the boy was too crazy become-GEN to in-love
'The boy was madly in love"

On the whole, however, Italian lacks the variety of degree resultatives found in English and Dutch. Certainly, the reflexive examples and body-part cases found in English and Dutch do not have counterparts in Italian. Our analysis of degree resultatives attributes this to the fact that Italian, and Romance in general, is impoverished with respect to secondary resultative predicates. Romance restricts most secondary resultative predicates to co-occurring with only endpoint-oriented verbs or accomplishment verbs (cf. Napoli 1992 for Italian; Farkas 2009 for

Romanian). Thus it's no accident that only a few secondary resultatives can be interpreted as degree resultatives. Modern Greek patterns much like Italian or Spanish with regard to these restrictions on secondary resultatives (Giannakidou & Merchant 1999), and, like Italian, has a degree resultative with 'to death' – a definite endpoint.

The notion of endpoint so prevalent in secondary resultative predicates (literal or degree) in Romance languages and in Greek might well play a part in degree resultatives in general. To see this, we need to consider the variety of types of gradable predicates (Kennedy & McNally 2005). Some correspond to closed scales (with definite endpoints), some to open scales (without definite endpoints), and some to half-open scales (e.g. the set of natural numbers $\mathbb{N}$ form a half-open scale, with 1 as the definite endpoint at the lower end, but no upper endpoint). The modifiers that combine with predicates are sensitive to scale type (Klein 1998; Paradis 2001; Rotstein & Winter 2004; Wechsler 2005). Scales with endpoints easily take absolute modifiers (*completely full, totally empty, absolutely dead*), whereas open scales do not (**completely old, *totally large, *absolutely many*), preferring non-absolute modifiers (*very, pretty, rather, quite*), although the situation is more complicated than this outline suggests, witness expressions like *a little bit pregnant* and, conversely, *totally beautiful* (Tribushinina & Janssen 2011).

This notion of absolute modifier is not to be confused with a sense of maximality (which it might or might not contain). Thus *half* can combine with a modifier to produce an absolute modifier in that halfway is a precise point on the scale (as in *She sits there so refined, and drinks herself half-blind,* from Barry Manilow's song "Copacabana"; the same is true for Dutch, as in (45) below).

The modifiers we find most frequently with degree resultatives are of the absolute kind, even when the relevant predicate normally does not require absolute modifiers. For English, this point can be illustrated by the contrast between (10a) and (10b), on the one hand, and (10b) and (10c) on the other.

(10) a. They drank themselves absolutely silly.
b. #They drank themselves very/rather silly.
c. We consider them very silly.

(10a), with an absolute modifier, is entirely colloquial. (10b), with a non-absolute modifier, sounds self-conscious or, perhaps, humorous, but not entirely spontaneous. We indicate this judgment here by #. However, (10c), with a non-absolute modifier, is entirely ordinary. That is, the felicity of the type of modifier depends not on the predicate itself (*silly*), but on the construction.

In Dutch, this same effect can be found and more easily, since a larger group of adjectives are employed with frequency in degree resultatives. In fact, the effect is so strong in Dutch that we debated using an * to indicate the acceptability judgments on (11c) and (12c), but opted instead for #, to be consistent with how we treated the English examples.

(11) a. Frits schrok zich lam.[6]
Fritz startled REFL lame
'Fritz was startled out of his mind.'

b. Frits schrok zich **helemaal** lam.
Fritz startled REFL completely lame
'Fritz was startled completely out of his mind.'

c. #Frits schrok zich **erg** lam.
Fritz startled REFL very lame
'Fritz was startled very much out of his mind.'

d. Het paard was een {beetje/ erg} lam.
the horse was a {bit / very} lame
'The horse was a bit/very lame.'

(12) a. Gerda schaamde zich rot.
Gerda schamed REFL rotten
'Gerda was ashamed to the core.'

b. Gerda schaamde zich **helemaal** rot.
Gerda schamed REFL completely rotten
'Gerda was completely ashamed to the core.'

c. #Gerda schaamde zich **erg** rot.
Gerda shamed REFL very rotten
'Gerda was ashamed very much to the core.'

d. Gerda voelde zich erg rot.
Gerda felt REFL very rotten
'Gerda felt very bad.'

So the fact that *rot* in (12c) does not readily combine with *erg* 'very' is not due to the lexical preferences of *rot*, since that would predict (12d) to be equally bad, but to the fact that it appears in a degree resultative.

We conclude that the second-order construction itself imposes a scalar endpoint interpretation on the resultative predicate.

4. Classification of construction types.

[6] Besides 'lame', Dutch *lam* may also mean 'drunk', in which case it may take both absolute and non-absolute degree modifiers:

(i) De studenten waren nogal/volkomen lam.
the students were rather/completely wasted
'The students were rather/completely drunk.'

The 'drunk' reading is potentially available in resultatives with the verbs *drinken* 'drink' and *zuipen* 'drink (heavily)', e.g.

(ii) We gaan ons lam drinken.
we go us wasted drink
'We are going to get wasted.'

Today degree resultatives in English and Dutch occur in several syntactic patterns. We outline and exemplify them here, both for ease of reference in our later discussion of their emergence over time and in order to give a sense of the range of data behind the tables in that later discussion.

4.1. English.

We outline six syntactic patterns of degree resultatives, then summarize them in a table.

4.1.1 Six patterns.

English Type 1: *verb + fake reflexive + predicate*.

Verbs that are usually intransitive (like *laugh*) and some that can optionally be intransitive (like *eat*) or that are can be understood as causative when they are transitive (like *jump*) can be intensified by adding a reflexive pronoun and a result predicate, typically one denoting a state with a strong negative connotation, such as death, sickness, or decay, as we saw in (3a). This state functions metaphorically as a scalar endpoint (as discussed in Section 3). The intensification itself may, but need not, have negative connotations. E.g. *sick* is a negatively evaluated state, but *laughing oneself sick* involves maximal mirth without adverse associations. In other cases, like *working oneself to death*, there is a finer line between a literal interpretation and a merely intensifying interpretation. Still, one can say *Every week, I work myself to death, and I love it.* The modifier *every week* makes it clear that no literal reading is intended, while the second conjunct indicates a positive appraisal. Among the most common verbs that make use of this kind of intensification are *laugh, dance, work, drink, eat*.

The resultative predicate may be an AP (*laugh oneself sick*) or a PP (*drink oneself to death*). There may be restrictions on which verb combines with which predicate, as discussed in the next section.

The reflexive in this construction is fake (Simpson 1983) because either the verb is not subcategorized to take an object, or the object does not satisfy the verb's usual selectional restrictions. For example, *sing* is usually intransitive, although it can take objects that are its referential extension, such as *a song* or *the national anthem.* In particular, it does not generally allow an animate object, yet in *sing oneself hoarse*, the object is [+animate]. Fake reflexives cannot bear contrastive stress, a characteristic that helps in identifying them:

(13) *I am only laughing MYSELF sick.

English Type 2: *verb + X's body part + {off/ out}*

In this construction, as well, the verb is generally one that does not take a direct object or only optionally does so, where the body part does not satisfy the verb's usual selectional restrictions and is not to be understood as a literal argument, and thus is a fake object (to extend the terminology of 'fake reflexive'). The verbs *cry, freeze, fuck, laugh, scream* and *work* are common here, in combinations such as *freeze X's extremities off, cry X's eyes out, scream X's head off* and *work X's tail off.* Often the possessive pronoun is bound by the subject:

(14) a. We were freezing {our/*their} balls off.
b. The baby was crying {his/*my} eyes out.
c. The kids were screaming {their/*your} heads off.

Other times, the possessive may be free:

(15) a. The visitor was talking my ears off.
b. They kept on blabbering her ears off.
c. You're working our balls off, do you realize that?

With verbs of communication (understood broadly enough to include *sing*) that take a goal/ beneficiary argument, a free possessive pronoun is understood to be that argument.

(16) a. Please sing to me. Go on, sing my ears off.
b. Don't blabber to us. You're blabbering our ears off.

When the possessives are bound, they require local antecedents just as fake reflexives do (see 17a), and they reject the use of *own* as well as any form of contrastive stress:

(17) a. *We thought they were crying our eyes out.
b. *Freddy was crying his own eyes out.
c. *Freddy was crying HIS eyes out.

English Type 3: *verb* + [*the* + *taboo term*] + [*out of NP*].

This construction, like those that follow, is nearly always for verbs that require direct objects. Examples include expletives for the taboo term, such as *scare the hell out of someone, annoy the shit out of someone, beat the living crap out of someone,* etc., as well as milder instances of taboo terms, such as those having to do with death or religion, including *scare the living daylights out of someone, beat the devil out of someone*. As noted earlier, however, while the expletive is the direct object of the verb, it is not an argument, nor does it satisfy the verb's usual selectional restrictions. Instead, the NP in the PP [*out of NP*] is the patient argument. So once again we have a fake object.

Sometimes we find in this construction a verb that usually does not take a direct object, but, instead, takes a PP where the object of the P is an argument of the verb. Zimmer (2016) and Perek (2016) note relevant cases, such as (18), involving *listen to,* from COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American prose). Here what would have been the object of *to* if we didn't have a fake object (that is, *your tape,* cf. *listen to your tape*) appears as the object of *out of*.

(18) Six months later Joe Perry called him and said: 'I've been listening the hell out of your tape. Let's do something.'

Note that *listen* may have a direct object in the particle verb construction *listen out*: *please, listen us out.*

English Type 4: *verb + NP + predicate*.

This construction is very often the ordinary transitive construction with a resultative secondary predicate added, as in *love someone to death, rob someone blind, bore someone stiff, scare somebody shitless.* It has a passive counterpart (compare 19a–c with 19d–e, ungrammatical passive sentences corresponding to Type 3):

(19) a. We were scared witless.
b. Your parents must be worried sick.
c. The boys were bored stiff.
d. *Fred was annoyed the crap out of.
e. *The crap was annoyed out of Fred.

Just as with English Type 1, sometimes we find in this construction an object that does not satisfy the selectional restrictions of the verb and, in that sense, is fake; thus the resultative predicate licenses a fake object. And sometimes we find verbs that can be understood as causative when they have an object (like *work* in *They worked us too hard*). In fact, the same range of verbs that allow a fake reflexive in English Type 1 also appear in English Type 4 with a fake object. Interestingly, even these English Type 4 examples have passive counterparts (though sometimes the *get*-passive sounds distinctly better than the *be*-passive).

(20) a. They worked us to the bone. / We were worked to the bone.
b. I danced her dizzy. / She was danced dizzy.
c. Our teenage daughter drank us under the table. / We got drunk under the table by our teenage daughter.
d. He'll eat you out of house and home. / You'll get eaten out of house and home.
e. She laughed him out of the room. / He was laughed out of the room.

This raises the question of whether English Type 1 really should be separated out from English Type 4. We will see an advantage to maintaining this distinction when we turn to Dutch later.

In the active sentences in (20), the syntactic complexity (of subject, primary verb, fake object, plus resultative predicate) corresponds to a range of interpretations of who is doing the action. In some instances the subject is understood to have caused another to do the primary action (as with 20a). In others the subject is understood to have done the primary action plus caused another to do that action (as with 20b). In others the subject and object are both understood to have done the action, but the subject out-does the object (as with 20c, similar to *She outdrank us*). And in others the subject is understood to have done the action with a resultant negative effect on the object (as in 20d–e).

Also, just as with English Type 3, sometimes we find in this construction a verb that usually does not take a direct object, but, instead, takes a PP where the object of the P is an argument of the verb. That argument winds up promoted to direct object position, as in:

(21) a. We need to talk about this.
b. Sure. But we don't need to talk it to death.

English Type 5: *verb + NP +* [*out of X's body part*]

This construction is also an ordinary transitive construction with a resultative secondary predicate. The body part ranges over *brain, wits, mind, skin, skull,* etc., and the possessive must be bound by the experiencer argument of the verb:

(22) a. [The sheriff]$_i$ scared her$_j$ out of {*his$_i$/ her$_j$} wits.
b. [The lecture]$_i$ bored them$_j$ out of {*its$_i$/ their$_j$} skull.
c. [Thunder claps]$_i$ will frighten Fido$_j$ out of {*their$_i$/ his$_j$} senses.
d. Nora$_i$ irritates me$_j$ out of {*her$_i$/ my$_j$} mind.

We distinguish English Type 5 from English Type 4 because its passive counterpart is more common than the active construction.

English Type 6: *verb + the* {*clothing/ body part*} + [*off NP*]

This construction has a transitive verb whose object is various pieces of clothing or body parts, but that object is fake. Instead, the NP object of the P *off* is the experiencer argument of the verb ({*charm/ annoy/ scare} the pants off somebody*). An example from our corpora is:

(23) I think we could bore the pants off the viewers if we did something of that kind.[7]

We will see in Section 6.4 that the examples with clothing differ from the examples with body parts in certain ways. So we will talk about English Type 6a, which concerns clothing, and English Type 6b, which concerns body parts.

4.1.2 Overview of English types.

In Table 1, we present the six types of degree resultatives we have characterized above.

Type	Structure	Example
1	verb + fake reflexive + predicate	*laugh oneself silly*
2	verb + X's body part + {*off/ out*}	*scream one's head off*
3	verb + [*the* + taboo term] + [*out of* NP]	*annoy the hell out of someone*
4	verb + NP + predicate	*love someone to death /rob someone blind*
5	verb + NP + [*out of* X's body part]	*bore people out of their skull*
6a	verb + the clothing + [*off* NP]	*charm the socks off someone*
6b	verb + the body part + [*off* NP]	*nag the ears off someone*

Table 1: Six types of degree resultatives in English

[7] Ronald Reagan's reaction to Walter Mondale's suggestion they should have a dozen or so TV debates for the 1984 presidential elections.

4.2. Dutch.

We outline four patterns of degree resultatives in Dutch, then summarize them in a table. But before listing and exemplifying the types, we need to explain that Dutch word order generally places the finite verb in verb-second position and places other forms (perfect or passive participles, for example) at the end of the VP. For the sake of simplicity of exposition, we characterize our construction types in terms of the verb being at the end of the VP, since that's where the main verb will be if auxiliaries are used. Please keep that in mind when comparing the examples to the type pattern.

4.2.1 Four patterns.

Dutch Type 1: *fake reflexive + predicate + verb*.

In (24) we see fake reflexives with resultative predicates in a structure that looks identical to English Type 1:

(24) a. We schaamden ons dood.
we shamed ourselves dead
'We were ashamed to death.'

b. Ik erger me kapot.
I annoy myself kaput
'I am annoyed as hell.'

c. De boeren werkten zich krom.
the farmers worked REFL bent
'The farmers worked their asses off.'

d. De studenten verveelden zich rot.
the students bored REFL rotten
'The students were bored stiff.'

There is an important difference between the English and Dutch instances of Type 1, however. The Dutch cases typically employ what are known as the short forms of the reflexive, e.g. *zich* 'him/ her/ itself' rather than the long form *zichzelf* 'him/ her/ itself'. This has to do with the fact that the reflexive is inherent in these constructions and cannot be replaced by non-reflexive elements. (And this is the reason why we did not conflate English Type 1 as a special instance of English Type 4 in our discussion of English above; maintaining the distinction facilitates comparison of the two languages.)

While Dutch uses the short forms for inherent reflexives (Everaert 1986; Reinhart & Reuland 1993; Bouma & Spenader 2008), the complementary distribution of short and long reflexives described in the linguistic literature is showing signs of weakening. New usage on the Internet social network Twitter attests long reflexives, though rarely, creeping into inherent-reflexive positions.[8] The long forms cannot be interpreted contrastively in their

[8] A referee suggested we use a fixed corpus such as NL-COW here. However, this corpus is both a bit small and too well-written to exhibit many nonstandard forms, at least among

innovative use as fake reflexives, whereas they can be in their other uses. In (25a) we have a fake reflexive of Dutch Type 1, but one that has the nonstandard long form *mezelf*, where *mezelf* cannot bear contrastive stress (whereas *dood* can, as indicated). In (25b), we have an ordinary transitive resultative of Dutch Type 4 (discussed below –and comparable to English Type 4 discussed above), with the expected long form *mezelf*, where here *mezelf* can bear contrastive stress (as indicated).

(25) a. Ik schrok mezelf dóód.
I startled myself dead
'I startled myself dead.'

b. Ik schiet liever mezélf dood.
I shoot rather myself dead
'I would rather shoot MYSELF dead.'

Dutch Type 2: *(possessive) body part$_1$* + [{*uit/op*} *X's body part$_2$*] + *verb*

In (26) we see Dutch examples of this construction, which has many similarities to English Type 2. The direct object here, however, can be either a body part or a sign of degradation or distress (that is, affliction) of a body part. With either type of direct object, the P (*uit* or *op*) takes an object that is another body part and a possessive appears with that second body part. However, only direct objects that are actual body parts can have an overt possessive (Cappelle 2014). In (26a–c) we give the example without the possessive on the direct object, then, in square brackets, we give the example with that possessive – the example comparable to English. Note that (26d–e) involve affliction of a body part, hence there is no example with a possessive on the direct object.

(26) a. Jullie moeten de ogen uit je kop schamen.
you.plur should the eyes out your head shame
'You guys should be ashamed to death.'
[Jullie moeten je ogen uit je kop schamen.
you.plur should your eyes out your head shame]

b. Callas zong de longen uit haar lijf.
Callas sang the lungs out her body
'Callas sang her heart out.'
[Callas zong haar longen uit haar lijf.
Callas sang her lungs out of her body]

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reflexives. Twitter, however, is ideal for nonstandard language. From 2014 Twitter we have the following data on two verbs (selected at random): *vervelen* 'bore' and *ergeren* 'annoy'.
(i) Ik verveel me dood (I bore self dead = 'I am bored to death') 14023 Tweets
Ik verveel mezelf dood (nonstandard, with long reflexive) 2 Tweets
(ii)Ik erger me dood (I annoy self dead = 'I am annoyed to death') 1888 Tweets
Ik erger mezelf dood (nonstandard, with long reflexive) 1 Tweet
This distribution amounts to roughly 1 in 5000. Thus the nonstandard form (often routinely starred by linguists) is attested and used by some.

c. Dirk Kuyt rende de benen uit zijn lijf.
Dirk Kuyt ran the legs out his body
'Dirk Kuyt ran himself ragged.'
[Dirk Kuyt rende zijn benen uit zijn lijf.
Dirk Kuyt ran his legs out of his body]

d. De advocaat praatte de blaren op zijn tong.
the solicitor talked the blisters on his tongue
'The solicitor talked his head off.'

e. Hij fietste zich het snot voor de/zijn ogen
he biked self the snot before the/his eyes
'He rode his bicycle as fast as he could'

If we have true body parts as both direct object and object of a preposition, they must be semantically related: the first body part is typically a meronym of the second body part (we include *lijf* 'body' in 26c). That is, the first denotes a part of the second.

The idioms in (27) have variants in which the possessor is expressed by a short reflexive pronoun. In these instances, instead of the possessive pronoun on the object of the P (that is, on body $part_2$), we find the definite article.[9]

(27) Callas zong zich de longen uit het lijf.
Callas sang REFL the lungs out the body
'Callas sang her heart out.'

This fact is connected to the fact that the possessive pronouns in examples like (27) are locally bound by the subject: compare (26c–d) with (28a–b):

(28) a. $Kuyt_j$ zag dat Van $Persie_i$ de benen uit $zijn_{i/*j}$ lijf liep.
$Kuyt_j$ saw that Van $Persie_i$ the legs out his $_{i/*j}$ body ran
'Kuyt saw that Van Persie ran himself ragged.'
[$Kuyt_j$ zag dat Van $Persie_i$ $zijn_{i/*j}$ benen uit $zijn_{i/*j}$ lijf liep.
Kuyt saw that Van Persie his $_{i/*j}$ legs out his $_{i/*j}$ body ran]

b. De advocaat praatte de blaren op {zijn/*mijn} tong.
the solicitor talked the blisters on {his/*my} tongue
'The solicitor talked {his/*my} head off.'

The construction plays with coreference, in one instance with a possessive and in the other with a reflexive. This is not uncommon; in many languages reflexives appear instead of possessives with inalienable objects (Herschensohn 1992; Postma 1997; Lødrup 1999).

As expected and just like the English cases cited above, the possessive in examples like (26) cannot be strengthened by *eigen* 'own' nor can it bear contrastive stress. Further, the

[9] There are also rare cases of double marking by reflexive and possessive pronouns. The choice between the various kinds of possessor markings in these idioms differs on a case by case basis and is not stable, diachronically (Bouma 2016).

reflexive in examples like (27) cannot bear contrastive stress nor can it be replaced with the long-form reflexive (but note the proviso mentioned above). Contrast (26a–b) to (29a–b), and (27) to (30):

(29) a. *Jullie moeten de ogen uit je eigen kop schamen.
you.plur must the eyes out your own head shame
'You should be ashamed to death.'

b. *Callas zong de longen uit HAAR lijf.
Callas sang the lungs out HER body
'Callas sang her heart out.'

(30) *Callas zong zichzelf de longen uit het lijf.
Callas sang REFL the lungs out the body
'Callas sang her heart out.'

The construction in (27), then, is ditransitive, where both objects (the reflexive and body part$_1$) are fake. We might well want to call this Dutch Type 2b: ***reflexive + body part$_1$ +* [{*uit/op*}] Def Art *body part$_2$*] + *verb***.

Quite generally, Dutch Type 2 (including Dutch Type 2b) does not occur with verbs that usually link an argument to direct object position; and all the direct objects we've seen so far in this construction are fake. Given that, we don't expect to find arguments in direct object position in Dutch Type 2. However, a few verbs of communication are exceptional (as we saw they were in English Type 2, but the special behavior is different here). In (31a) the object of the P is the goal argument of the communication verb *praten* 'talk'. This verb occurs in a degree resultative in (31b), where now the goal argument has been promoted to direct object of the verb. Given that body part$_1$ is present, as well, we have a ditransitive construction, where the first object is an argument of the verb (the goal) and the second is not. As with the ditransitive construction that has a reflexive in (27), body part$_2$ is introduced by a definite article, rather than a possessive. And now the body parts are understood to be those of the first object (the goal argument of the verb).

(31) a. Marie praat met Annie.
Marie talks to/with Annie
'Marie talks to Annie'

b. Marie praat Annie de oren van het hoofd.
Marie talks Annie the ears off the head
'Marie talks Annie's ears off.'

Other communication verbs exhibit somewhat different behavior. In (32a) we see the verb *vragen* 'ask', which can occur with an argument in direct object position and another argument as the object of a P. Just as with *praten* above, the object of the P is the goal argument. In (32b) we see *vragen* with a degree resultative, but now the goal argument has been promoted to direct object position (as in 31b):

(32) a. Marie vraagt de tijd aan Annie.
Marie asks the time to Annie
'Marie asks Annie the time.'
b. Marie vraagt Annie het hemd van het lijf
Marie asks Annie the shirt off the body
'Marie is asking Annie's head off.'

At this point we need to recognize the construction Dutch Type 2c: ***NP* + DefArt *body part*$_1$ + [{*van*} DefArt *body part*$_2$] + *verb***.

Thus Dutch Type 2 has three instantiations, where two of them are ditransitives. We have analyzed them as instances of one type of construction for two reasons. First, there are two body parts in all of them, where the first is a meronym of the second. Second, the body parts are understood to belong to some other element in the construction, where that element is an argument of the verb. They can be conflated formally to:

({*NP/ reflexive*}) + *{(X's)/*Def Art} *body part*$_1$ + [{*uit/ op/ van*} {*X's/* DefArt} *body part*$_2$] + *verb*

Dutch Type 3: {*fake reflexive/ NP*} + *NP* + *verb*.

The third construction type in Dutch is not a structural counterpart to English Type 3. Rather, Dutch has no structural counterpart to English Type 3 and English has no structural counterpart to Dutch Type 3. But they do have in common the fact that often a taboo item appears in both (such as a disease).

Dutch Type 3 with a fake reflexive looks very much like Dutch Type 1, especially given that the NP result is, arguably, a predicate (and see remarks on a variety of NP predicate types in resultatives as well as copular and other constructions in Hoekstra & Mulder 1990; Fernández Leborans 1999: 2359–2365; Müller 2002: Chapter 5; Bentley 2017). But we treat this construction with a fake reflexive as a unit with this construction with a referential NP – and, thus, as separate from Dutch Type 1 for two reasons. First, the phrase following the fake reflexive in Dutch Type 3 is always an NP that indicates an unpleasant result for the subject, like a bump on the head, a horrible disease, or an accident.

(33) a. Het publiek schrok zich een ongeluk.
the audience startled REFL an accident
'The audience was startled witless.'
b. We werken ons de tyfus.
we work REFL the typhus
'We work our tails off.'
c. Mies twittert zich een beroerte.
Mies tweets REFL a stroke
'Mies tweets her ass off.'

In (33a), the audience winds up as startled as though they've had an accident; in (33b) the subject 'we' can be seen as winding up suffering from typhus; in (33c) Mies might wind up

giving herself a stroke. None of these are to be taken literally; they are meant to indicate high intensity. Thus there is no possibility for a counterpart to any of these with a long reflexive form and/or stress, with a literal reading (i.e., there are no sentences comparable to 25b).

A second reason to keep Dutch Type 3 with a fake reflexive separate from Dutch Type 1 is its resistance to being compositional semantically. At times the NP that co-occurs with the reflexive takes on a special meaning in the construction, making the construction an idiom (as in 34a). Other times the NP is a lexical item that doesn't occur outside the construction type (i.e., it's a *cranberry word* –Trawiński et al. 2008) and for which a proper meaning is (nearly) impossible to give (as in 34b–c).

(34) a. Hij schrok zich een hoedje.
he startled REFL a hat-DIM
'He was startled out of his mind.'

b. Hij werkt zich het schompes.
he works REFL the schompes
'He works his tail off.'

c. Zij werkt zich de rambam.
she works REFL the rambam
'She works her ass off.'

Nobody seems to know (including the main dictionaries of Dutch) what *schompes* or *rambam*[10] means, apart from the fact that they are assumed to be imaginary disease names, while startling oneself 'a little hat' is not easy to explain either.

In some instances it seems that analogy with another expression lies at the source of examples like those in (34). To see what we mean, let's look at another example of an idiomatic intensifying degree resultative: *zich een rotje schrikken* 'oneself a firecracker startle' = 'startle heavily'. The word *rotje* 'firecracker' makes no literal sense in this context. However, there is a common idiom *zich rot schrikken* 'startle oneself rotten' and another common one *zich een hoedje schrikken* (seen in 34a above). Z*ich een rotje schrikken* may have emerged as a contamination of these two idioms.

In both examples like (33) and more idiomatic ones like (34) the NP is headed by the indefinite singular article *een* except when the NP denotes a disease (or quasi-disease) name, in which case the article is singular and definite (*het* for neuter nouns; *de* for singular nouns – where masculine and feminine are conflated).

We also find degree resultatives that fit the pattern of Dutch Type 3 but with a fully referential NP instead of a fake reflexive. This NP is an ordinary direct object of the verb, receiving a theta-role, as in (35). We analyze this as an example of Dutch Type 3 because the second NP within the VP still indicates an unpleasant result for the subject and the same range of unpleasant results. Unlike (35a, b), the example in (35c) contains no disease name, but,

[10] It has been suggested that *rambam* has a yiddish origin, deriving from the acronym of the rabbi Maimonides (Endt & Frerichs 1986), but this suggestion, even if true, hardly helps in understanding the idiom.

instead, the taboo term *de moeder* 'the mother', a recent innovation in informal Dutch. It is not in our Delpher data, but attested on the Internet from 2010 onward.

(35) a. Ze hebben die jongen de tering geslagen.
they have that boy the tuberculosis hit
'They beat the hell out of that boy.'
b. Ik schop je de tyfus.
I kick you the typhus
'I will kick you senseless'
c. Sylvana gaat jullie de moeder slopen.[11]
Sylvana goes you the mother demolish
'Sylvana is going to demolish the hell out of you'

Dutch Type 4: *NP + predicate + verb*.

Dutch has a fourth type that is very much like English Type 4, as seen here:

(36) a. De zeelui schopten de verstekeling verrot.
the sailors kicked the stowaway rotten
'The sailors kicked the living shit out of the stowaway.'
b. Mijn vader sloeg me vaak helemaal verrot.
my father beat me often completely rotten
'My father often beat the tarnation out of me.'

(36) has verbs of contact-by-impact (as we saw for Dutch Type 3 in 35). The particular examples in (36) were chosen specifically to illustrate a degree reading. For other combinations of predicate + verb, such as *kapot slaan* 'kaput hit', there is ambiguity between a literal reading of 'hit something causing it to become broken' and a degree reading of 'hit something hard'. Both English and Dutch make copious use of contact-by-impact verbs in Type 4.

The object in examples like (36) is an argument of the verb, and the sentence is grammatical with or without the degree resultative. However, just as happens with English Type 4, there are some verbs of Dutch that generally do not take an object, yet, in combination with a resultative predicate, an object is licensed, so they can occur in Dutch Type 4 (compare to English examples in 20). The resultative in such instances can be a simple particle (such as *uit* 'out') or a degree resultative. In (37) we see examples with *schelden* 'swear, call names, scold'.

(37) a. De sergeant schold.
the sergeant cursed
'The sergeant cursed.'
b. De sergeant schold de soldaat *(uit).
the sergeant cursed the soldier out
'The sergeant cursed the soldier out.'

[11] www.powned.tv (May 31, 2016).

c. De sergeant schold de soldaat verrot.
the sergeant scolded the soldier rotten
'The sergeant cursed the soldier's head off'

d. De sergeant schold de soldaat de huid vol.
the sergeant scolded the soldier the skin full
'The sergeant cursed the soldier's head off'

The Dutch construction does differ in some ways from the English one, however. For example, English also freely uses many psych verbs in Type 4 (as in *annoy someone to death*), but Dutch has limitations on psych verbs. Consider the verb *ergeren* 'annoy'. This verb can be used as a simple transitive, as in (38), where the experiencer is the direct object.

(38) Annie ergert Marie.
Annie annoys Marie
'Annie annoys Marie.'

Unlike in English, a degree resultative cannot be added:

(39) *Annie ergert Marie groen en geel.
Annie annoys Marie green and yellow
'Annie annoys Marie to the bone.'

Alternatively, *ergeren* can be used with a fake reflexive (the short form only – which cannot receive contrastive stress), where the experiencer is the subject and the entity causing the annoyance is the object of a P, as in (40):

(40) Marie ergert zich aan Annie.
Marie annoys REFL to Annie
'Marie is/gets annoyed at Annie.'

A degree resultative can be added to this structure, so, in contrast to (39), we find (41a), again with the idiom *groen en geel*, as well as (41b), which is ambiguous between a degree and literal reading:

(41) a. Marie ergert zich groen en geel aan Annie.
Marie annoys REFL green and yellow to Annie
'Annie annoys the hell out of Marie.'

b. Marie ergert zich dood aan haar.
Marie annoys REFL dead to her
'Marie is annoyed to death by her.'

Here {*groen en geel/ dood*} is predicated of the fake reflexive and, thus, per force, of the subject. So the structure in (40–41) can be seen as a variant of Type 4. We will call the first

one Dutch Type 4a, and this one Dutch Type 4b: ***fake reflexive + predicate + [P + NP] + verb***.

Psych verbs such as *shockeren* 'shock', *storen* 'bother, disturb', *irriteren* 'irritate' appear only in the simple transitive (as in 38) for the vast majority of speakers, so they do not show up at all in degree resultatives. However, *irriteren* is used like *ergeren* in (40) by a growing group of speakers, although prescriptivists still frown upon this. For us, the interesting point is that those speakers who can substitute *irriteert* 'irritates' in (40), can also do this for (41).

4.2.2 Overview of Dutch types.

In Table 2, we present the four types of degree resultatives we have characterized above.

Type	Structure	Example
1	fake reflexive + predicate + verb	*zich slap lachen* 'laugh oneself limpid'
2a	(X's) body part$_1$ + [uit/op X's body part$_2$] + verb	*de longen uit zijn lijf zingen* 'sing the lungs out of one's body'
2b	fake reflexive + body part$_1$ + [uit/op] def. art. body part$_2$] + verb	*zich de blaren op de tong praten* 'talk oneself the blisters on the tongue'
2c	NP + def. art. body part$_1$ + [uit/op def. art. body part$_2$] + verb	*iemand het hemd van het lijf vragen* 'ask someone the shirt off the body'
3	{fake reflexive/ NP} + NP + verb	*zich een bult lachen* 'laugh oneself a lump' *iemand een ongeluk slaan* 'hit somebody an accident'
4a	NP + predicate + verb	*iemand verrot slaan* 'hit someone rotten'
4b	fake reflexive + predicate + [P + NP] + verb	*ergert zich groen en geel aan iemand* 'be annoyed the hell out of by someone'

Table 2: Four types of degree resultatives in Dutch

4.3 Generalizations.

Three generalizations emerge from the English and Dutch data, leading us to a conclusion about the origin of these second-order constructions.

4.3.1 Transitivity.

All degree resultatives occur in a clause with a direct object, whether or not that direct object is fake. We attribute this requirement to the secondary resultative construction itself. That is, nearly all sentences with secondary resultative predicates have a direct object. An exception is seen in (42a), but it has a transitive counterpart, seen in (42b).[12]

[12] Examples like (42b) are never open to a degree interpretation, yet they have certain characteristics in common with degree resultatives. As Mondorf (2011) shows, the English *way*-construction (Jackendoff 1992; Marantz 1992; Israel 1996; Goldberg 1997) was in

(42) a. She wriggled free.
We squirmed loose.
b. She wriggled her way free.
We squirmed our way loose.

Other examples that do not have a transitive counterpart include verb + particle combinations such as *{Piss/Fuck/Bugger off!}*, where an ordinarily telic interpretation can reasonably be called resultative (Cappelle 2007).

Rappaport and Levin (2001) show the untenability of a syntactic account of the fact that resultative predicates in English usually appear in transitive sentences (and, further, of the fact that the resultative is usually predicated of the direct object). Instead, for resultatives in both transitive and intransitive sentences they offer an event-structure account with a theory of the mapping between event structure and syntactic structure. Degree resultatives are properly subsumed under this general account of resultatives.

4.3.2 Argument structure and grammatical functions.

Play between argument structure and how it links to grammatical functions is a thread running throughout degree resultatives. All degree resultatives have a direct object, but that direct object is often not licensed by the verb or may be licensed by the verb but does not satisfy the selectional restrictions put on the object of that verb in sentences without a resultative; the only exceptions are English Type 5 and Dutch Type 4a.

Further, some types typically involve only one argument of the verb – which appears as subject; the fake reflexive in English Type 1 and Dutch Types 1 and 3 is bound by that subject, as is the possessive on the body part in English Type 2 (for those examples in which the possessive is bound) and Dutch Type 2a. (Note that the possessive in Dutch Type 2a is on the object of a preposition, but the relationship of meronymy between the two body parts allows that possessive to extend to the body part that is an object of the verb, as well.) And Dutch

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competition with a reflexive construction in early modern English, both expressing result; next to a verb phrase such as *force oneself into the house* there is *force one's way into the house*. In the one instance, there is a reflexive bound by the subject (similar to English Type 1 and Dutch Types 1 and 3), in the other a possessive, likewise bound by the subject (similar to English Type 2 and Dutch Type 2a). One striking difference between the English and Dutch *way/ weg* constructions is that the latter requires a reflexive (Verhagen 2003), and does not allow a possessive: *Zo blufte zij zich een weg uit Auschwitz* 'so bluffed she REFL a way out Auschwitz' = 'thus she bluffed her way out of Auschwitz.' The relevant participant role, in other words, is most frequently expressed by a possessive in contemporary English and by a reflexive in Dutch. Early modern English was in this regard more like its continental West-Germanic sister languages (Mondorf 2011). The use of locally bound referents in resultative constructions, including the *way*-construction, is much more wide-spread in Dutch and German than it is in English. Our data show the same difference in frequency of locally bound referents between Dutch and English in degree resultatives.

Type 2b has both a fake reflexive and a body part – where the reflexive, which is bound by the subject, acts like a possessive to the body part. Thus the one-place valency of the verbs shines through despite the presence of a direct object.

Additionally, sometimes arguments of the verb link to atypical grammatical functions. For example, in English Types 3 and 6 the argument that usually links to direct object position appears, instead, in object of a P position, while the NP that appears in direct object position is not an argument but, rather, an indicator of degree. And in Dutch Type 2c, a goal argument of a verb of communication that usually appears as the object of a P appears in direct object position. Finally, in English Types 2, 3, and 4, an oblique argument that is usually the object of a P can appear as a possessive or as the object of a different P.

In sum, degree resultatives do not conform to ordinary linkings between argument structure and grammatical function in either language, but the parameters in this play are different for each language.

4.3.3 Body anchored.

Degree resultatives are semantically anchored in the body of the affected argument – where that argument is repeated via a fake reflexive or required coreference of a possessive (English Types 1, 5, and Dutch Types 1, 2b, 3, 4b). Many explicitly mention body parts (English Types 2, 5, and 6b). English Type 6a treats clothing items as inalienable as body parts (Gordon 1986; Chappell and McGregor 1996). (Of course, the body part metaphor can become tenuous at times, as when the LA Times (Aug 20 1983) writes about taxing "the socks off big trucks".) The taboo items found in English Type 3 can be viewed as internal, inalienable body parts (in that they will always belong to that argument, even if they are physically separated). This is clear for bodily effluents (*kick the shit out of NP*) but it is also true for the frequent expletive *hell* (*knock the hell out of NP*), given that we still feel the historical effects of an exorcism here (Hoeksema & Napoli 2008). Likewise, in Dutch Type 3 illnesses like tuberculosis are internal to the body and even nonsense words like *schompes* and *rambam* feel inalienable. The predicates used as intensifiers in English Types 1 and 4 tend to denote properties of the body (*to pieces, blind, sick*) or of the mind (*silly, numb*), but never more extraneous properties (such as *rich, good, sweet, polygamous*). We see the same wholeness in Dutch Type 3, where the second NP of the ditransitive is all-encompassing; an accident, typhus, a stroke—never something incidental such as a hangnail or a stubbed toe.

While diseases may seem like rather different entities from body parts, we note that some recent discussions of inalienable possession have stressed the fact that it covers more than mere body parts, but also properties of mind and body such as happiness or health (cf. e.g. Rooryck 2017).

4.3.4 Emergence of the second-order reading.

Looking at the generalizations about the data, we offer an account for the emergence of second-order readings from literal resultatives.

When a result is extreme in that it hits an absolute endpoint plus it has a holistic effect on the entity it is predicated of, a degree interpretation becomes available simply by virtue of that literal meaning. Body-anchoring assures such a holistic effect and thus predisposes the construction toward allowing a degree reading to emerge.

Further, the play between argument structure and grammatical functions typical of these constructions also contributes to the likelihood of a second-order reading. We certainly can find literal resultatives with objects that are fake, as in (43a), and even with objects that are fake reflexives, as in (43b).

(43) a. She ran the jogger off the road (by swerving her car).
b. She drove herself to distraction.

But the very creativity of using fake objects and fake reflexives pulls us to the margins of what the grammar will allow. We are now in the realm of the non-literal, and that gives us license to associate other readings with a given construction.

5. Historical developments.

We did a diachronic study of intensifying degree resultatives in Dutch and English over the past 200 years. For Dutch, we used the newspaper website Delpher.nl. For English, we used the Corpus of Historical American English (COHA, Davies 2012).[13] Both online corpora allow one to search by decade. For COHA, the decades run from 1810 to 2010, for Delpher we restricted ourselves to the period 1810–1995. (Delpher stops in 1995, so for the last decade, the 1990s, our data represent only a half-decade.) The COHA data are roughly the same in size for all decades (on average 20 million words per decade) with the exception of the first two decades, the 1810s and 1820s, which are 1.2 million and 6.9 million, respectively. For Delpher, the data are more lopsided, with the early decades much smaller than the decades from 1890 onward, and a steep decline in the 1940s and 1950s. However, our claims in this paper concern very robust trends that are affected only marginally by these factors. For example, the 1930s material consists of 3151 tokens and the 1940s material 1509 tokens (the drop is due to paper shortages during the war and in the postwar period). Yet the number of predicate types is 45 in each decade.

We did a systematic search of all predicates that we either knew or suspected were involved in intensifier constructions. For COHA, we searched for all verbs that combine with the predicate in question (using lemma-search), for Delpher, unfortunately, no such option is available. Instead, we had to do the search for verbs by hand. (There is a more advanced online historical corpus of Dutch, *nederlab.nl*, but at the time of writing this resource was still being developed.) Delpher is considerably larger than COHA. This is reflected in the fact that we found 4,962 instances (tokens) of degree resultatives in COHA and 28,359 in Delpher. Nonetheless, we found somewhat more variety in predicate types in the English data.

We searched for occurrences of each predicate since 1810, and then made judgments as to whether the constructions they occurred in were open to a degree resultative interpretation. Not all combinations of a resultative predicate and a verb necessarily have a degree reading even when they fit one of the construction types outlined in Section 4. For example, while *dood* ‘dead’ is a common predicate in Dutch degree resultatives today and historically, there

[13] Our Figures 1-3 and Tables 3-9 below are based on data from only these two sources. However, our examples in the text of the paper were drawn from Delpher and COHA plus additional sources.

are many combinations which we view as regular (literal) resultatives, including *doodschieten* 'shoot dead', *doodhongeren* 'hunger to death', *doodvriezen* 'freeze to death'. In the case of *zich doodlachen* 'laugh oneself to death', on the other hand, intensification is the most likely reading. In some cases it is not easy to tell hyperbole apart from literal interpretation without help from the context. For instance, *zich kromwerken* 'work oneself bent' will most likely be a hyperbole when said of a young man who is working hard at his job in advertising, for example, and literal when said of an old farm hand who has done hard physical labor most of his life. An expression like *zich ongans eten* 'eat oneself nauseous' might be used to describe a situation in which so much food was eaten that the eater vomited, but it can also be used to indicate simply that a lot was eaten. In some instances, there was not enough information to tell us whether we had a literal or degree reading. In such instances, the primary criterion we used for interpreting a construction as a degree resultative was the presence of an implication of extreme intensity or amount. Anyone approaching this kind of issue will have to make similar judgment calls.

We divided the two centuries into 4 periods of 50 years each for comparison. We see considerable growth in the number of predicate types, less so in terms of the number of tokens per million words. For COHA, these show fairly random swings in the 19th century (ranging from 3 per million words in the 1840s and 9.2 per million words in the 1810s). On average, we found 7 tokens per million words in the 19th century data, after which we find our data slowly creeping up to 17 per million in the 1990s.

Strikingly, the diachronic corpora show that new, emerging predicates do not replace old ones, but supplement them. That is, the secondary predicates that are in use today in degree resultatives came into use at a certain point in history, but the potential predicates we searched for did not appear at earlier points in history. Further, once a predicate appeared, it kept reappearing. Thus, we witness (near) monotonic growth of the set of predicates that occur in degree resultatives. This is true for both English and Dutch.

For example, for English we note that in spite of the fact that *laugh oneself sick* is attested since 1773 (according to the Oxford English Dictionary), and has since that time had to compete with many newer idioms (*laugh one's head off, laugh oneself limp, laugh oneself into a tizzy, laugh one's socks off, laugh one's booty off*, and so on), there are no signs of it having become obsolete. Only a few expressions have disappeared and those were rare to start with; we cite *worry pallid*, attested in (44):

(44) Because she is worrying herself pallid about you.[14]

Other expressions persisted or evolved into a slight variant, as with *beat {hell/ tarnation} out of X*, which is currently adorned with a definite article: *beat the {hell/tarnation} out of X* (Hoeksema & Napoli 2008).

With respect to Dutch, degree resultatives are first attested around 1600 – a few decades before they are attested for English (as far as we have been able to establish). Presumably, they are somewhat older than the first printed attestations, but it is difficult to say

[14] P.G. Wodehouse, *Laughing Gas*, Penguin, 1961 (originally 1936), page 29.

how much older. Similar to our findings for English, we found few cases that became defunct, as in (45), which is from the 1920s:

(45) Daarover prakkezeeren ze zich half mal.[15]
thereabout ponder they REFL half mad
'They are thinking hard about that."

Note that the use of half mal in (45) confirms our earlier claim that a sense of precision on a scale is the relevant aspect of these AP degree resultatives, not a sense of maximality.

In Figure 1 below, we chart the number of predicates appearing in degree resultatives in English and Dutch for each 50 year period.

In listing the resultative predicates in the figures below, we include the predicate itself along with any material in the degree resultative that is not the verb, a fake reflexive, or an argument of the verb. In other words, for examples with *laugh X's head off* and *laugh oneself silly*, we list *head off* and *silly* as 'predicates.' In this way, we do not count, e.g. *her head off*, *his head off*, *our heads off* as three different predicates – instead counting only lexically-distinct predicates.

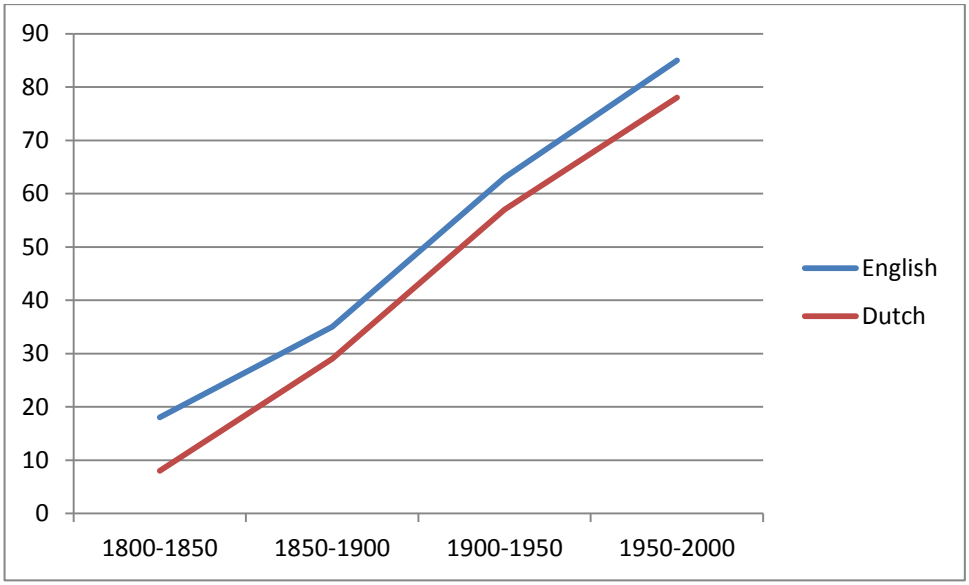

Figure 1: Number of lexically distinct degree-resultative predicates in English and Dutch

In part, the consistent increase in the number of lexical items that serve as secondary predicates in degree resultatives is due to the continuous rise of expletive constructions, both in English and in Dutch over the time span in Figure 1 (Hoeksema & Napoli 2008). For example, *shitless* is a relatively recent addition (1950's), probably based on the earlier, non-taboo, *witless*, in combinations such as *The attack scared us shitless*. Still, the number of new non-taboo predicates in degree resultatives also continuously rose as time passed, such as *out of*

[15] *De Gooi- en Eemlander*, 26 March 1927, page 7.

his/her skull, for which the oldest degree resultative attestation we found was a movie script from 1968 (although more literal attestations can be found earlier):

(46) Woman (laughing): Look at that!
Another woman (laughing): Makes himself right at home!
Man (laughing): Soused out of his skull.[16]

Many other body-part idioms are also fairly new. The English *body-part/clothing off* construction (Capelle 2014, see also section 6.4 below) grows from 0 in the first half of the 19th century, to 3 in the second half of that century, to 7 in the first half of the 20th century and 12 in the second half of that century. If we include in our count variations due to extra adjectives, we get even more (e.g. *worry one's pretty little head off, work one's damn ass off*). In Figure 2 we show the growth of body part removal idioms in intensifying constructions in the two languages.

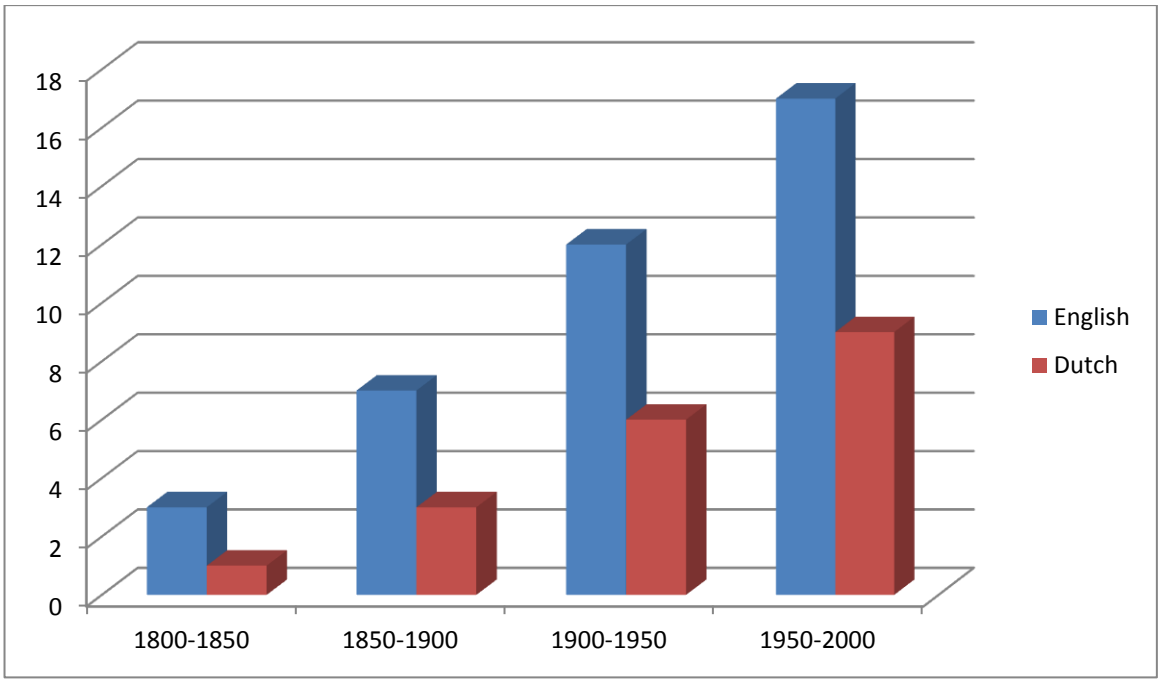

Figure 2: Number of different types of body part removal intensifiers in two languages

However, not all types of degree resultatives increase in type or token frequency throughout the two centuries we are considering. One of the more prominent is of English Type 1 and Dutch Type 4: the predicates *to death/dood*, which peak around 1900 (a little later in Dutch) and then decline a bit (presumably as a result of new competitors stepping in, as suggested in Gyselinck & Colleman 2016b). In Figure 3, we show for these two predicates the number of new verb + intensifier combinations per half century:

[16] The Swimmer, by Eleanor Perry, 1968.

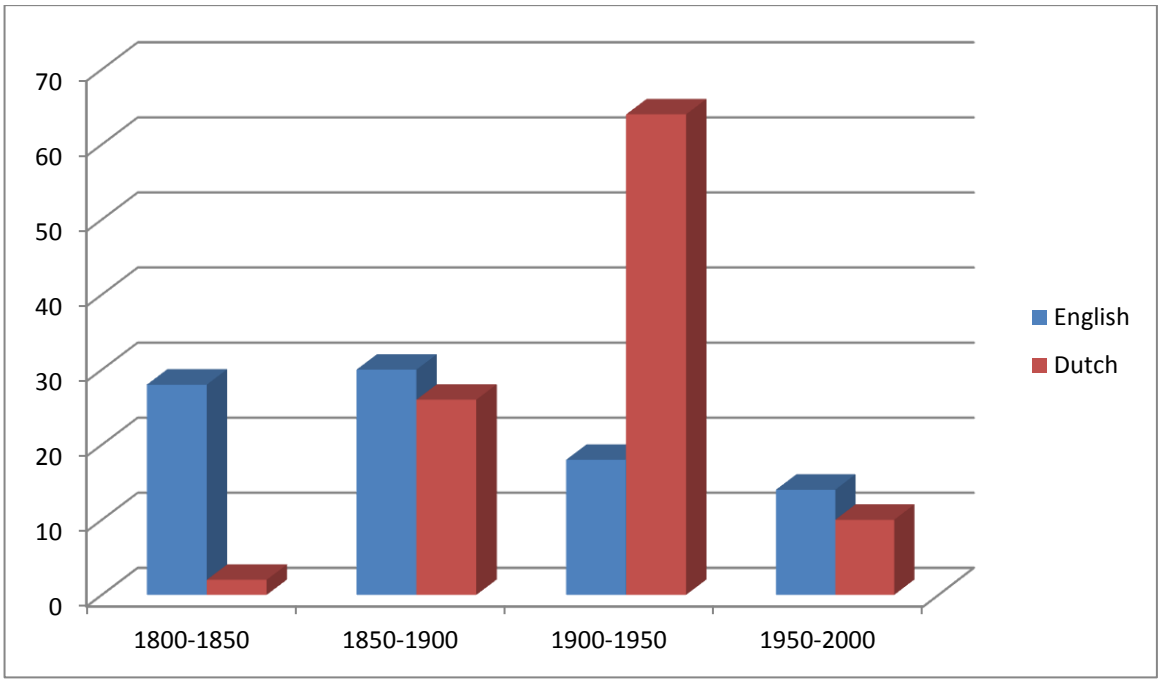

Figure 3: New verb + intensifier combinations (types) per half century for *to death* (in blue) and *dood* 'dead' (in red).

Dutch appears to follow English at a distance. In the first half of the 19th century, we found no clear cases of intensifier uses of *dood* in our Dutch material (but the large scientific dictionary of Dutch, WNT (entry *dood*), mentions four degree resultatives attested from the 17th century onward, e.g. *zich doodschamen* 'to shame oneself dead' = 'to be ashamed to death'). Dutch resultatives with *dood* peak about 1930, and then slowly decline. Hoeksema (2012) notes a similar decline for *dood* as a modifier in Dutch elative compounds (*doodeenvoudig* 'dead simple', *doodeng* 'dead scary') in the second half of the 20th century. Gysselinck and Colleman (2016b) likewise found a decline in productivity of Dutch *dood* resultatives, using different measures (such as the number of unique verb + intensifier combinations divided by number of tokens.[17] This decline seems to be in lockstep with the developments in English and may well represent a much wider trend among intensifier constructions in the (western) European Sprachbund (cf. Haspelmath 2001; Heine & Kuteva 2006); we leave that larger issue to subsequent research. Below we note further similarities between Dutch and English, pointing toward English influence on Dutch.

One area where Dutch and English differ considerably in their degree resultatives is the use of reflexives. Fake reflexives occur in both languages, but Dutch uses them to a much greater extent than English. Our English data have between 8% (1980s) and 18% (1880s) cases with fake reflexives. For Dutch, it varies from 52% (1880s) and 80% (1940s). This preponderance in Dutch may be related to the fact that Dutch has many inherently reflexive verbs, that is, verbs whose reflexive object is not an argument (e.g. *zich schamen* 'be ashamed', *zich generen* 'be embarrassed', *zich ergeren* 'be annoyed', *zich vervelen* 'be bored'), in contrast to English (which has some relatively rare verbs such as *perjure oneself* and *pride oneself* and very little else). Thus when Dutch employs fake reflexives in degree resultatives it

[17] For a list of verbs involved, see Gysselinck and Colleman (2016b).

is availing itself of the already much-used option in the language of having non-argument reflexive objects. Moreover, we should point out that the inherently reflexive Dutch verbs listed above are among the most common verbs to be found with degree resultatives.

6. Verb-predicate collocations.

The variety of combinations of verb plus predicate in degree resultatives has been increasing slowly but steadily over the past four hundred years in both Dutch and English. This growth can be viewed as evidence of the productivity of the various constructions (Capelle 2014; Perek 2016). Certain verbs or semantically-based groups of verbs occur with an ever-growing assortment of predicates, and certain predicates occur with an ever-growing assortment of verbs. A closer look reveals that verbs fall into semantic groups, where an examination of frequent verb groups and frequent predicates offers a greater understanding of why degree resultatives are best viewed as second-order constructions.

For example, Margerie (2011), in a discussion of the very frequent predicate *to death*, notes that it originated as a literal resultative (*starve the peasants to death*), but quite early on, in the 17th century, it added a degree resultative usage, and even what she calls a degree modifier usage (as in her modern example *I am sick to death of Star Wars quotes*). Middle-period degree resultative usages for this predicate involve frequent combinations with negative psychological verbs, including *bore, frighten, scare, annoy* and *hate*. Combinations with positive verbs – as in *love somebody to death*, nowadays fairly common –are not attested in our corpora before 1950. Thus we can see a development over time from a strictly literal reading (*starve*) to a degree reading based on a metaphor (*annoy*) to a reading that is (nearly) exclusively degree (*love*). The second-order construction has become so firmly established by 1950 that it casts aside literalness and no longer even relies on metaphor.

We here present details on three of the most frequently used verb groups and the predicates they collocate with, and on two of the most frequently used predicates and the verbs they collocate with.

6.1. Work-related verbs.

There are many work-related verbs and several predicates appear with them in degree resultatives. Consider first occurrences of *work* itself, as in *work one's fingers to the bone* or *work one's tail off.* While both denote working hard, the former mainly concerns labor involving the hands, such as cleaning, scrubbing, typing, knitting, sewing. A quarterback training hard may be said to be working his tail off, but not to be working his fingers to the bone. This observation is reflected in the set of verbs associated with *one's fingers to the bone* and *one's tail off* (we restrict ourselves to clear degree resultatives, and ignore ones that might be more (nearly) literal in drastic situations, such as *I'll cut your tail off if I ever see you near my daughter again*). Note that for both these predicates, *work* is the most frequent verb in the list of collocates given in Table 3. In fact, the two sets are very similar, with one exception: *freeze* is also relatively common with *one's tail off*, but not with *one's fingers to the bone.* We come back to this verb in the next subsection. In the case of *play {his/ her} fingers to the bone*, it can be said of artists playing a guitar, or some other instrument in which the fingers are the only crucial articulator (e.g. guitar or piano rather than bassoon or trumpet), but not, for

example, of team sports (#*The Sixers played their fingers to the bone*) or of frolicking children (#*We let the kids at our daycare play their fingers to the bone*). That is, while a degree resultative using one's fingers to the bone clearly relies on metaphor, its literal meaning still glimmers. We can also see that degree resultatives are sensitive to polysemy patterning. The uses of *play* that do not combine with *one's fingers to the bone* can collocate unproblematically with other types of resultative predicates, cf.: *The Sixers were playing their tails off, The kids at the daycare were playing their hearts out*. Still other uses of *play* are illustrated by (47a–b).

(47) a. Laurence Fishburne played the hell out of the deranged, crazy and talented Ike Turner in "What's Love Got To Do With It".
b. We played the hell out of that video game.

Dutch has an idiom involving fingers, to wit *zijn vingers blauw* 'one's fingers blue', which may be used for intensifying purposes. Like its English counterpart, it is used with verbs involving hand actions, albeit a different set of verbs from English. In particular verbs of writing and counting (typically counting money, involving manipulation of coins or bills) are involved (we leave out a lot of verbs which appear more infrequently with *vingers blauw*). The examples with *werken* are less common, and sound to our ears less idiomatic. All but one of the 10 examples were from serialized novels or news articles translated from English. We suspect that the originals had the idiom *fingers to the bone*, for which *vingers blauw* is the best Dutch approximation. (In Table 3 and following tables, "#" indicates number of instances found in the data.)

Verb↓ Intensifier→	*# tail(s) off*	*# fingers to the bone*	*# vingers blauw*
dance	1	-	-
drill	1	-	-
run	1	-	-
work / werken	21	48	10
grind	-	1	-
sew / naaien	-	1	1
slave	-	1	-
write / schrijven	-	-	233
pen/ pennen	-	-	18
type / typen, tikken	-	-	25
count	-	-	76

Table 3: verbs collocating with *tail off, fingers to the bone,* and *vingers blauw*

In general, *work* frequently shows up in degree resultatives, and not just with the two English predicates examined in Table 3. In our English corpora it ranks as the third most frequent verb, behind *beat* and *scare*. In our Dutch corpora, *werken* 'work' comes fifth. What is striking about the two English predicates of Table 3 is the strong connection between them and the most basic sense of *work* ('expend effort'). With other predicates, we see a weaker connection to that basic sense. Compare, for example, our data for *one's ass off*. Table 4 shows that there are not only more verbs that collocate with this predicate, but the semantic range of the verbs is greater, including *laugh* and the related verbs *smile, grin*, as well as such

verbs as *lie* and *perjure*, and a few verbs that typically take an object (*bore*, *sue*). The more taboo-like predicate (with *ass* rather than *tail*) is the more productive one in a degree resultative– an expected result given the prevalence of taboo terms in degree resultatives in general. In a few cases, the verb is transitive, and the possessive pronoun in that case is not coreferential with the subject (cf. *He will sue your ass off*).

Verb	#	Verb	#
analyze	1	perjure	1
bawl	1	play	1
bore	1	run	2
calculate	1	sing	1
cheer	1	sprint	1
chew	1	study	1
drill	1	sue	3
fight	1	sweat	1
flatter	1	train	1
freeze	17	tromp	1
giggle	1	wear	2
grin	1	whip	1
laugh	9	work	36
lie	1	write	1
negotiate	1	total	93

Table 4: English verbs collocating with *one's ass off*

For Dutch, the predicates that most often collocate with *werken* 'work' are *uit de naad* 'out of the stitch' and *het schompes* (and see our comments below (34) regarding this item, which has no apparent independent meaning), as shown in Table 5. Other verbs are typically work-related activities (or sports, which may be either a hobby or a job). Perhaps the prominence of *lopen* 'walk' and *rennen* 'run' in this list is odd, until one takes a look at their contexts. It turns out they either concern sports-related running, or they use *lopen/rennen* as a verb meaning not locomotion but work. Here is a typical example:

(48) Je loopt je uit de naad voor deze provincie en dan proberen ze
you walk REFL out the stitch for this province and then try they
je af te schilderen als een ratelslang.
you PRT to paint as a rattlesnake
'You run your ass off for this province and then they try to paint you as a rattlesnake.'

Verb	*# (zich) uit de naad*	*# (zich) het schompes*
werken 'work'	252	4
lopen 'walk, run'	38	2
rennen 'run'	10	-
other (32 and 5 verbs, resp.)	69	7
total	369	13

Table 5: Dutch verbs collocating with *uit de naad* and *zich het schompes*

6.2. *Freeze one's extremities off.*

A statement such as *I am freezing* is ambiguous between a reading where a person is in the process of turning into ice, and a more common reading where the person feels exceedingly cold. The latter reading presumably originally derived from the former as a hyperbole. Nowadays, it is no longer felt to be a hyperbole, hence the need to reinforce it with degree resultatives, usually involving body extremities, as shown in Table 6 below. This may be exacerbated somewhat by the fact that ordinary boosters for *freeze* seem to be in use only for the literal 'turning into ice' reading of the verb, compare:

(49) a. It is freezing hard as rock.
b. #Mary is freezing hard as rock. (cf. Mary is freezing to death.)

In Table 6, we list the nouns in our corpora that fill the X in *freeze one's X off* in degree resultatives only. The nouns listed were found in COHA, but the Internet is replete with just about any bodily extremity in combination with *to freeze off*.

Bodypart	#
arse	2
ass	17
balls	8
buns	4
buts	4
extremities	1
nuts	4
tits	2
total	42

Table 6: nouns that fill X in *freeze one's X off*

The fact that degree resultatives for *freeze* involve extremities is connected to the fact that these may, in fact, literally freeze off occasionally (from frostbite). However, the body parts that most easily freeze, such as ears, toes, or corneas, are not the most popular in the hyperbolic use. Rather, there is a clear preference for taboo terms and mock taboo terms (euphemisms) for more polite conversation (*assets*, *extremities*), which are generally a

common sign of intensification (cf. Napoli & Hoeksema 2009), and hence less likely to be misunderstood as involving the more literal sense of limbs freezing off. Indeed, the usage extends to cases where actual freezing is less likely, such as *freezing one's ass off*. So we see, much as we did in the case of *fingers to the bone* with work-related and other verbs, that the choice of predicates to go with *freeze* in degree resultatives is neither completely arbitrary (otherwise we might also expect *#I am freezing my heart out* or *#I am freezing my lips off*), nor is it completely motivated by probability in real life.

The Dutch cognate of English *freeze* is *vriezen*. The literal 'turn into ice' interpretation may be intensified by a resultative CP, thus it is not among the types found in Table 2 (which are limited to secondary predicates).

(50) Het vriest dat het kraakt.
it freezes that it cracks/squeaks
'It is freezing cold.'

In other words, 'it freezes so hard that it produces cracks' (or creaky noises). *Vriezen* cannot be used in discussions of extreme cold in animate beings, unlike English *freeze*, which may well be why degree resultatives do not occur.[18] In contrast, the cognate verb *frieren* in German is much more like English *freeze*; it can be used with animate subjects to indicate extreme cold, and, accordingly, degree resultatives occur commonly with this verb, particularly taboo-related ones.[19]

(51) Die Freunde frieren sich die Eier ab.
the friends freeze refl. the eggs off
'The friends are freezing their nuts off.'

(52) In Canada friert man sich den Hintern ab
in Canada freezes one refl. the posteriors off
"In Canada you freeze your ass off."

[18] The standard way of saying that one is cold in Dutch is *NP het koud hebben* 'NP it cold have' = 'NP is cold.' The semantically important predicate in this construction is syntactically secondary: that is, the verb is a dummy and the AP *koud* is the property predicated of the subject. Other constructions with *hebben* and various other APs include *het druk hebben* 'it busy have' = 'be busy', *het moeilijk hebben* 'it tough have' = 'have a hard time'. Just as in English, the presence of the secondary predicate precludes the addition of a resultative (literal or degree). Instead, intensification is via ordinary adverbs, e.g. *het erg koud hebben* 'it very cold have' = 'be very cold'.

[19] The verb *bevriezen* (consisting of the same root plus the prefix *be-*) can take an animate subject and can be used in hyperbole: *Ik bevries zowat* 'I am almost turning into ice'. We might therefore expect it to allow degree resultatives. In fact, however, *be*-verbs resist co-occurrence with resultatives (Hoekstra, Lansu, & Westerduin 1987), and we have found no examples with *bevriezen*. We note, however, that we have found a few examples of *be*-verbs with resultatives, including degree resultatives, as in:
De man is helemaal te pletter bestraald (the man is completely to pieces radiated = 'The man was radiated to bits.' (from the magazine *Libelle* 12 February 2016, p. 50).

6.3.Head-related activities.

A common predicate in degree resultatives is *one's head off*, which occurs with a range of verbs (though not *freeze*), as seen in Table 7. Again, we focus on degree readings only, so the many cases of chopping, tearing, blowing, cutting, lopping, knocking, or ripping someone's head off in our corpora are not included.[20]

Verb	#	Verb	#
bark	7	roar	1
bawl	11	run	1
bitch	1	scowl	1
cry	2	scream	30
dance	2	screech	1
drink	4	shout	4
eat	16	shriek	2
giggle	3	sing	4
holler	8	smoke	1
hustle	1	sneeze	5
laugh	36	talk	26
lie	10	work	14
listen	1	worry	4
neck	1	yap	2
paint	1	yawn	2
play	2	yell	23
publicize	1		
ring	3	Total	231

Table 7: verbs collocating with *one's head off*

The verbs in Table 7, diverse though they are, mostly represent actions performed with the head, such as yelling, talking, crying, singing, and smoking. Only a few do not fit this pattern, such as *work* and *paint*. It is possible that for some speakers, *working one's head off* is a more socially acceptable alternative to the more common *working one's ass off*. This is certainly what the following exchange from the online corpus of American soap opera dialogues suggests:

[20] Some of these excluded instances have a strongly hyperbolic flavor, e.g. when someone threatens to bite another's head off. Yet this does not, in our opinion, constitute an intensification of the verb *bite*. To see the distinction we are making, contrast that situation to the case of biting one's own head off, rather than another's, the former of which might be used with a degree reading. For example, when a dog gets a bone to gnaw on, we might say *Fido can bite his head off now*. The degree reading emerges here: Fido can bite to his heart's content.

(53) Will: Wow, um... I mean, thank you. This is incredible. I'll do your company proud, Mr. DiMera. I'll work my ass – I'll work my head off.
Stefano: Or both.[21]

There are also a few cases of psych-verbs in Table 7: *puzzle, worry, wonder*. These are atypical – occurring only once each. Thus, although they involve mental activity, and could hence be seen as an activity of the head, they take a backseat to activities of the head that can be detected from the outside, such as *laugh, scream, talk.*

The classification of head-related-activity verb is not standard in linguistics, unlike the classifications of psych-verb or verb-of-motion. Yet we are not surprised to find it helpful in circumscribing the set in Table 7 rather well. As we noted in the case of *fingers to the bone* and *freeze one's extremities off*, the literal sense of verbs and the literal sense of the predicates they collocate with can affect the appropriateness of the collocation in idiomatic degree resultatives. Indeed, sometimes, the fact that degree resultatives are related to ordinary (literal) resultatives may lead to puns, such as the following, where *they* refers to the Islamic State (IS):

(54) I'm sure they will love you too – they will probably love your head off! [22]

Dutch does not have degree resultative idioms comparable to *one's head off.* In general, talk about severed heads is less common in the Dutch corpora, including the more literal cases comparable to English *I'm gonna blow your head off*, although these are grammatical when actual decapitation is described; compare (55) to (56):

(55) a. *De baby schreeuwt zijn hoofd eraf.
the baby screams his head off
'The baby is screaming his head off.'
b. De beul hakt zijn hoofd eraf.
the executioner hacks his head off
'The executioner is chopping off his head.'

6.4. *the {Clothing/ body part} off NP*.

In Table 1, we distinguished English Type 6a from English Type 6b. The former involves clothing (*the socks off NP*); the latter, body parts (*the ears off NP).* There is a marked difference between the verbs that appear in these two subtypes. In our corpora, psych-verbs that typically place their experiencer argument in direct object position (*annoy, bore, charm, frighten, scare, shock, terrify, wow*, the group called *Amuse* verbs[23] in Levin 1993) are common in degree resultatives only with the clothing expressions, such as:

[21] Episode of *Days of our lives*, aired 2010-07-26, from the *Corpus of American Soap Operas.*
[22] http://www.michaelsmithnews.com/2015/02/christine-milne-to-isis-when-recreational-beheading-beckons-try-social-cohesion-instead.html (accessed December 16, 2015).
[23] Levin (1993: 191) lists another class as Admire verbs, which have experiencer subjects. Levin does not list resultatives as an option for these verbs, but some of them appear in resultative constructions other than those in English Type 6. Compare: *love somebody to death, respect the hell out of someone.* It should be noted that the class of resultatives we consider here is larger than the one considered by

(56) I think we could bore the pants off the viewers if we did something of that kind.[24]

That is, this type of psych-verb was most common with English Type 6a sentences, as seen in Table 8.

BODY PART	#	% psych-verbs with experiencer typically in DO
arse/ ass off	97	1%
butt off	23	-
ears off	12	-
head off	248	2%[25]
tail off	24	-
CLOTHING		
pants off	65	35%
socks off	9	56%
shirt off someone's back	24	-[26]

Table 8: body parts and clothing for English Type 6 by psych-verbs versus all others

Why can we bore, shock or charm the pants or socks off people but not the ears or head off them? Certainly, there are multiple other ways to intensify such verbs: *annoy the hell out of someone, annoy someone to death*. We don't know why subtype 6a is so rare with these psych verbs.

What we do find interesting, and worth noting, is that the group of psych verbs with experiencer objects acts as a unified group in selecting subtype 6b over 6a, to the extent that they appear at all in one of the type 6 constructions.

6.5. Thinking long and hard.

By and large, the set of verbs involved in Dutch degree resultatives is similar to the set employed in English. However, verbs of thinking present a major difference between the two languages. While these verbs occur with degree resultatives only rarely in our English corpora, they are robustly attested in degree resultatives of Dutch Type 1, mostly with the secondary predicate *suf* 'drowsy, stupid'. Examples are given in (58).

Levin. However, our findings support Levin's claim that resultatives are sensitive to the two subclasses of experiencer verbs discussed here. (There is a third group, with PP complements, which we have nothing to say about here.)

[24] Ronald Reagan's reaction to Walter Mondale's suggestion they should have a dozen or so TV debates for the 1984 presidential elections.

[25] There were 5 cases of *worry* with *one's head off* in COHA. They all involve intransitive *worry*, e.g.

(i) Now don't worry your head off any more about mortgages and loans, Emily.

What seems to be ruled out are transitive cases with intensifier predicates:

(ii) That worries me. *In fact, it worries my head off.

[26] While we have no examples of psych verbs from COHA for this particular expression, they are easy to google:

(i) Getting a person to remove their footwear on a hot, damp day is no small achievement, but Jeff Goldblum could charm the shirt off your back (give him 15 minutes longer). [*The Independent*, July 21, 1993]

(58) a. Ik heb mij suf gedacht en kan geen uitweg vinden.
I have REFL stupid thought and can no way out find
'I have been racking my brain and can find no way out.'

b. Ze piekerden zich suf.
they pondered REFL stupid
'They pondered long and hard.'

c. Hij prakkizeerde zich suf, zonder een antwoord te vinden.
he deliberated REFL stupid without an answer to find
'He deliberated hard, without finding an answer.'

The Dutch predicate *suf* is sufficiently frequent in our material to lend itself to a diachronic study. While the earliest occurrences are all collocated with verbs of thinking, which makes sense, given its meaning 'drowsy', we see a gradual expansion to other categories of verbs; first verbs such as *zoeken* 'seek' or *studeren* 'study', which likewise hint of mental activity, but then in the course of the 20th century further expansion to a wide range of other verbs such as *werken* 'work', *kankeren* 'complain', *lachen* 'laugh'. Table 9 summarizes our corpus data for this predicate.

Period	# (tokens)	% verbs of thinking
1800	3	100%
1850	88	78%
1900	571	88%
1950	785	56%
2000[27]	76	13%

Table 9: Dutch Type 1 degree resultatives with the predicate *suf*

The first occurrences can be viewed as ambiguous between a degree reading and a literal result reading, the two being hard to distinguish for verbs of thinking. They form a 'critical context' in the sense of Diewald (2002): a context compatible with a regular interpretation as well as a new grammaticalized interpretation. The increase in frequency in the second half of the 19th century suggests that the degree reading takes hold in that period. The spread to other types of verbs (that do not involve mental activity), finally, signals that the degree interpretation has become dominant, and the original non-intensifier resultative meaning no longer prevents the predicate *suf* from combining with verbs denoting actions not normally viewed as drowsiness-inducing, such as laughing or complaining.

The paucity of examples in English and Dutch of regular, non-degree resultatives is probably a pragmatic matter, having to do with the fact that thinking about something does not usually affect the state it is in. However, they are not strictly ruled out, and regular resultatives are attested. For instance, (59) is adapted from an internet posting:

[27] Our Delpher data do not include 21st century data, so we added 76 occurrences of *zich suf* from the newspaper database LexisNexis, period 2015 – October 27, 2017.

(59) Ze denkt alles kapot.
She thinks all kaput
'She destroys everything by overthinking it.'

A book by the Dutch comedian Toon Hermans is called *Ik denk me blij* 'I think myself happy', with positive, uplifting poetry. In (60), we offer an example of our own, with a different verb of thinking, *mijmeren* 'muse, ponder':

(60) Hij mijmerde zich in slaap.
He mused self in sleep
'He mused himself to sleep'

In English, the use of resultatives with verbs of thinking is rare as well, but still possible:

(61) a. In one myth, Tepeu and Quetzalcoatl think everything into being.[28]
b. In order to increase the level of your happiness, you must learn the following techniques that will help you think yourself happy.[29]

So the use of degree resultatives with verbs of thinking is not entirely unexpected, in Dutch and in English. Degree resultatives with verbs of thinking in English are illustrated in (62) below:

(62) a. I don't want to think it to death.[30]
b. Don't you think I've thought my bloody brains out over it?[31]
c. [W]e can think ourselves into a tizzy[32]

In conclusion: verbs of thinking allow for resultatives. Degree resultatives are more common than regular resultatives, due to language-external reasons, in particular the fact that thinking rarely causes a change of state in the object of the thought.

7. Similarities across degree resultatives and other evaluative constructions.

In many cases, degree resultatives are simply hyperbolically understood resultatives; metaphors which have become fixed expressions. The predicates in these expressions may (but need not) be extended to other verbs where the origin metaphor does not make as much sense. For instance, Dutch *zich te barsten eten* 'eat (oneself) to (the point of) bursting' is a hyperbole, while the newer combination *zich te barsten ergeren* 'annoy oneself to burst' = 'be annoyed to bursting' makes less sense as a metaphor, but is easily understood via analogy to the earlier cases with *eten* 'eat'.

[28] www.gaia.com , accessed April 2, 2018.
[29] www.goodrelaxation.com , accessed April 2, 2018.
[30] Line from *All My* Children, aired March 7, 2011, taken from the Corpus of American Soap Operas.
[31] From COHA.
[32] From COHA.

Metaphor and analogy cannot account for all instances, though. We also have instances where the presence of a taboo expression or term of abuse seems sufficient to provide the kind of oomph needed for intensification (Napoli & Hoeksema 2009). Consider one of the newest Dutch combinations: *zich de takken ergeren* 'annoy oneself the branches/ twigs' = 'be royally pissed-off'. To English ears (or Dutch ears 50 years ago), this combination does not make a lot of sense. However, we can begin to see the light when we consider the affixoid *takke-* 'twigs' meaning 'horrid, awful'. This seems to come from *takkewijf* 'branches woman', presumably used originally to denote an old hag (*wijf* is a derogatory term for women in present-day Dutch, similarly to how Old English *huswif* 'housewife' became the derogatory *hussy* in English, Romaine 1999: 94) collecting firewood, which became a term of abuse for any woman (attested since 1984, according to Van der Sijs 2001). Very quickly, the initial part *takke-* became a general pejorative affixoid, as in *takkeherrie* 'awful noise', *takkeschool* 'lousy school', *takkebende* 'fucking mess', etc. As is not uncommon for this kind of expressive item, it may easily jump to another construction (Napoli & Hoeksema 2009 offer a variety of cases), and so around 2010 *de takken* 'the twigs, branches' shows up in degree expressions:

(63) Ik heb me jaren de takken geërgerd aan de manier waarop de
I have me years the branches annoyed to the manner whereon the
herdenking van D-Day [..] in beeld is gebracht.
commemoration of D-Day [..] in view is brought
'For years, I have been annoyed as hell about the manner in which the commemoration of D-day is depicted [on TV].'[33]

Similar observations hold about the many terms for diseases found in Dutch. They were first used in maledictions (*Krijg de tering, smiecht* 'get tuberculosis, you jerk') and in pejorative compounds (*teringherrie* 'tuberculosis' = 'damned noise'), and then were recruited by the degree resultative construction, as well as by negative polarity constructions (cf. Hoeksema 2001 for some discussion).

8. Some predictions of our account.

We have treated degree resultatives as historically deriving from regular resultatives by semantic reanalysis. Unlike what is often suggested in the literature, they are more than a mere bunch of idioms. They show productivity (as argued by Capelle 2014), and form an increasingly important alternative to adverbs of degree. Nonetheless, they will never be able to completely replace adverbs of degree, due to inherent structural limitations. The most important of these is a ban on particle verbs.

Both in English and Dutch, particle verbs do not take part in resultative constructions (Kayne 1985, Keyser & Roeper 1992, Neeleman & Weerman 1993). Particle verbs, if they are gradable, may be modified by adverbs of degree. Using the *Lassy Groot* corpus, via the interface PaQu (Odijk et al., 2017), we counted the verbs most commonly modified by the Dutch degree modifiers *zeer* 'very', *erg* 'very', *nogal* 'rather' and *flink* 'strongly'. The top fifteen verbs were *verschillen* 'differ', *lijken op* 'look like', *uiteenlopen* 'differ', *uitbreiden*

[33] *NRC Handelsblad*, September 7, 2012, Book section, page 4.

'expand', *waarderen* 'value', *lijden* 'suffer', *toenemen* 'increase', *afwijken* 'deviate', *houden van* 'love, like', *loven* 'praise', *veranderen* 'change', *bewonderen* 'admire', *opvallen* 'strike, be noticeable', *variëren* 'vary' and *tegenvallen* 'disappoint'. Of these, 6 are particle verbs, or 40%. These 6 verbs occur 755 times with one of the aforementioned modifiers. In the much larger newspaper corpus of Delpher, which we used for our corpus study of Dutch degree resultatives, we found only two examples of degree resultatives with particle verbs:

(64) Niet lang had hij dat gewichtig ambt bekleed, waarin hij zich suf kon optellen
Not long had he that important position had wherein he self stupid could add
en aftrekken, toen de malaria hem te pakken kreeg.[34]
and subtract, when the malaria him to grab got
'Not long had he had that important position, in which he could add and subtract himself stupid, when malaria got hold of him.'

(65) Deze leeft zich ongans uit in stofjes en staaltjes zonder zich om een
This lives self sick out in materials and samples without self for a
inhoudelijke betekenis te bekommeren[35]
substantive content to concern
'This one knocks himself out in materials and samples without any concern for substantive content.'

Especially the second example strikes us as rather bad, while the first one is somewhat better. The reason we find most compelling for this difference in acceptability was offered to us by an anonymous referee. The verbs of interest in (64), *optellen* 'add' and *aftrekken* 'subtract', can appear easily with or without an object, so they can license the secondary predicate *zich suf* 'self stupid'. Other examples of verbs offered by our referee that can optionally, if marginally, take an object and can license the secondary predicate *zich AP* include *optreden* 'perform on stage', *afdingen* 'talk down the price of something', *afkijken* 'cheat by spying during an exam', *overgeven* 'vomit', *voorzingen/spelen* 'demonstrate how something should be sung/played' (?*dat hij zich suf optreedt/ afdingt/ afkijkt/ overgeeft/ voorzingt* 'that he is performing (etc.) himself silly'). In contrast, the verb of interest in (65), *uitleven* 'live out = to go wild, to knock oneself out' (seen in the discontinuous *leeft* plus *uit*) requires a fake object, being inherently reflexive. Under normal circumstances it is impossible for two co-occurring resultative secondary predicates to share the same (fake) object; hence (65) is unexpected (and awkward).

Our overall main point here is that the number of particle verbs in our Dutch material is close to zero, whereas gradable particle verbs are actually very common. The situation in English is comparable. Gradable particle verbs abound, but not with degree resultatives. Our material does not contain any cases of resultatives with particle verbs.

Small differences in degree resultatives between Dutch and English have to do with more basic lexical differences. The English verb *love* is found a fair amount of times with degree resultatives (*I love you to death / to pieces, they love the hell out of soccer*), but the Dutch counterparts generally are not. The only Dutch counterpart to English *love* that accepts a

[34] From *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad,* March 13, 1909. Note that both *optellen* 'add' and *aftrekken* are particle verbs in this example.
[35] From *NRC Handelsblad*, Feb 15, 1982.

degree resultative that has come to our attention is the obsolete verb *beminnen* (*hij bemint haar (helemaal) kapot* 'he loves her (completely) broken').[36] This verb is straightforwardly transitive. In contrast, other Dutch counterparts to English *love* either involve *houden van* 'love, like' which takes a prepositional complement, and is excluded from degree resultatives, or *liefhebben* 'sweet-have = love', which is a complex verb, similar to a particle verb. We have noted some cases of verbs with prepositional arguments partaking in degree resultatives (cf. 4.1.1 above), e.g. *talk something to death*, but these involved verbs which may occasionally be used (with the same interpretation) as transitive verbs (*let's talk syntax*). For Dutch *houden van*, on the other hand, there is no semantically related transitive use. The verb *houden* means 'hold, keep', and has no connection to the concept of loving or liking. So we conclude that verbs with PP, rather than DP, objects, may occasionally take part in degree resultatives, provided that the relation between the verb and the PP object is semantically transparent.

9. Conclusions.

In this paper, we present an overview and classification of resultative constructions in Dutch and English with a primarily intensifying function. Our classification is based on the transitivity (or intransitivity) of the verbs involved, and the syntactic make-up of the resultative predicates. By bringing together a variety of constructions, we try to show just how pervasive and varied the use of resultatives is for the expression of degree. In doing so, we set the stage for a diachronic study of the phenomenon. One of the main points of this paper is that the degree readings have not always been around, but have developed in the course of the last several centuries.

By introducing the concept of second-order constructions, we have attempted to relate resultative constructions with degree readings. The degree readings do not come for free with the resultative interpretation. We propose that the meaning associated with a first-order construction is overwritten in a second-order construction by a different meaning that arises from reinterpretation of some instances of the first-order construction. Subsequently, the second-order construction may spread toward novel combinations (e.g. from *scare somebody to death* to *love somebody to death*). Such developments may not be that common in syntax, but they are very common in morphology. A compound may be reinterpreted as an affixoid plus a host, after which the affixoid becomes productive and possibly turns into an affix, or through debonding, into an adjective (De Vries 1920–1922; Booij 2010; Van Goethem & Hüning 2015, inter alii).

All the English and Dutch degree resultatives we have come across exhibit a corresponding literal resultative – as expected with our analysis. However, as an anonymous referee pointed out, German appears to have a construction entirely parallel to Dutch Type 4b with degree resultatives that lacks literal resultatives (Oppenrieder 1991; Wunderlich 1997; Müller 2002: 216), as in Müller's example *Er freute sich dumm und dusselig über das Buch* (he pleased himself stupid and daft over the book = 'He was pleased as punch about the book'). If degree resultatives went through a spurt of popularity in German starting in the mid-1800s, as

[36] The fact that *beminnen* can license a degree resultative is surprising in light of the fact that verbs with the *be-* prefix generally resist resultatives, as noted in footnote 18.

they did in Dutch and English, the rapid proliferation of degree resultative interpretations could have led to experimentation of degree interpretations with new structures that didn't otherwise allow resultatives. That is, just as the second-order construction may spread toward novel lexical combinations, the second-order reading may impose itself on novel constructions. While we have not examined the history of degree resultatives in German, Dutch Type 4b first occurs in the corpus reported on here in the 1860s – which would give some plausibility to our suggestion if German historical patterns are comparable.

We presented a number of case studies (for both Dutch and English) in which we compare the verbs that associate with a given predicate. Some of the resultative predicates studied here combine with a narrowly circumscribed and semantically coherent set of verbs, while others engage in a variety of combinations in which the verbs show little or no semantic coherence, apart from gradability. This general situation is rather like that of degree adverbs, some of which select a small semantically coherent group of modified elements (adjectives or verbs), while others combine more broadly (cf. Hoeksema 2005).

We have noted that the transitivity status of the verb that is to be intensified determines whether fake reflexives and subject-oriented possessives are used. While Dutch and English mostly act alike in this regard, there is one main difference: Dutch has a large class of inherently reflexive verbs. Such verbs are syntactically transitive, but semantically intransitive in the sense that their object does not have a theta role.

Using large diachronic corpora (COHA and Delpher), we traced degree resultative constructions in Dutch and English over a period of two centuries (1800–2000), during which they grow considerably, both in token frequency and in type diversity. In many of these changes, English seems to be leading, and Dutch following at a close distance. At the same time, Dutch shows a few innovative traits of its own, such as the use of disease names in degree resultatives. This ties in with the more general proclivity of Dutch swearing to employ names of contagious diseases (cf. Nübling & Vogel 2004). In this respect, Dutch differs not only from English, but also from German and the northern Germanic languages.

While both Dutch and English attest some degree resultatives as early as the 17th century, it is not until the period studied here that they become an important feature of the two languages, especially in the more informal registers. At the same time, we see a rapid increase of taboo terminology in these degree resultatives, primarily from the domains of religion, death, excretions and sex. In this respect, degree resultatives resemble adverbs of degree and minimizing polarity items, which show similar developments (Napoli & Hoeksema 2009). In all such uses, taboo terms have a strengthening, not a mitigating effect. It remains to be seen to what extent languages outside of the group of West-European languages have degree resultatives. The literature on resultatives is vast, but on the topic of degree resultatives there is still much to be done.

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