

# Give it a try! Comparing *probeer/* *proberen* constructions in Afrikaans and Dutch

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# Outline

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- Goals
- Methodology
- Results
- Conclusions & outlook

# **INTRODUCTION**

# Introduction

## Dutch

- *dat Leen heeft geprobeerd / \*proberen om te dansen.*
  - *dat Leen heeft geprobeerd / proberen te dansen.*
  - *dat Leen heeft \*geprobeerd / proberen dansen.*
- ‘that Leen has tried to dance.’

# Introduction

## Dutch

- *dat Leen heeft geprobeerd / \*proberen om te dansen.*
- *dat Leen heeft geprobeerd / proberen te dansen.*      **IPP-effect**
- *dat Leen heeft \*geprobeerd / proberen dansen.*

‘that Leen has tried to dance.’

- Cf. *dat Leen het heeft geprobeerd / \*proberen.*  
‘that Leen has tried it.’

# Introduction

## Dutch

- *dat Leen heeft geprobeerd / \*proberen om te dansen.* NL/VL
- *dat Leen heeft geprobeerd / proberen te dansen.* NL/VL
- *dat Leen heeft \*geprobeerd / proberen dansen.* \*NL/VL

‘that Leen has tried to dance.’

# Introduction

## Afrikaans

- *dat Theresa (ge)probeer het **om te** dans.*
  - *\* dat Theresa (ge)probeer het **te** dans.*
  - *dat Theresa (ge)probeer dans het.*
- ‘that Theresa has tried to dance.’

# Introduction

## Afrikaans

- *dat Theresa (ge)probeer het **om te** dans.*
- *dat Theresa (ge)probeer dans het.*  
  
‘that Theresa has tried to dance.’
- *dat Theresa dit probeer het.*  
‘that Theresa has tried this.’



# Goals

- Investigate variation in *probeer/proberen* paradigm
  - Variation without difference in meaning
  - Special status of the verb (most verbs opt for one type of infinitival complement)
- Investigate relevant parameters
  - Infinitival complement (*om te, te* or bare infinitive)
  - Past participle vs infinitive
  - For Dutch: NL vs VL, position of the object
- Ultimate goal: find out why Dutch *proberen* is so flexible with respect to verbal complementation?

# Methodology

## Corpus investigation

- Dutch: OpenSoNaR
  - 500M words
  - Written Dutch
  - Different genres

SoNaR-500	%
VL	78.24
NL	15.3
NL/VL	6.46

- Afrikaans: Korpusportaal
  - 150M words
  - Written Afrikaans
  - Different genres

# Queries

- Instances of Dutch *proberen/geprobeerd* and Afrikaans *(ge)probeer* selected by a temporal auxiliary
- Followed by an *om te* infinitive, a *te* infinitive or a bare infinitive
- In main and embedded clauses (introduced by *dat* ‘that’)
  
- Dutch data: only consider data labelled for region (VL versus NL)

**DUTCH**

# Results *proberen*

	NL	VL	Total
<i>Om te</i> infinitive	414 (19.82%)	2103 (44.42%)	2517 (36.89%)
<i>Te</i> infinitive	1674 (80.13%)	2459 (51.94%)	4133 (60.57%)
Bare infinitive	1 (0.04%)	172 (3.63%)	173 (2.54%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>2089 (99.99%)</b>	<b>4734 (99.99%)</b>	<b>6823 (100%)</b>

- Results: manually filtered
- > 200 hits: random sample (200 hits) checked, results extrapolated to estimate frequencies
- 4% of the occurrences with [lemma="proberen"] in both the NL and VL part of the corpus

# Results *proberen*

*Goodness of fit:*

does the (*om*) (*te*) infinitive occur significantly more in Belgian Dutch or Netherlandic Dutch?

<i>om te</i>	NL	VL	Total
Observed	414	2103	2517
Expected	412	2105	2517
<i>te</i>	NL	VL	Total
Observed	1674	2459	4133
Expected	676	3457	4133
<i>inf</i>	NL	VL	Total
Observed	1	172	173
Expected	28	145	173

not significant

( $P = 0.914$ ;  $p \leq 0.05$ )

significant

( $P < 0.001$ ;  $p \leq 0.05$ )

significant

( $P < 0.001$ ;  $p \leq 0.05$ )

# Results *proberen*

	NL		VL	
	<i>proberen</i>	<i>geprobeerd</i>	<i>proberen</i>	<i>geprobeerd</i>
<i>Om te</i> infinitive	0	228	0	346
<i>Te</i> infinitive	64 (21.41%)	235 (78.59%)	120 (43.32%)	157 (56.68%)
Bare infinitive	1	0	172	0
Total	65	463	292	503

- Results: manually filtered
- Only checked hits considered (no estimations)

# Results *proberen te*

- *dat Leen heeft geprobeerd / \* proberen om een boek te lezen.*
- *dat Leen heeft **geprobeerd** / % **proberen** een boek te lezen.*
- *dat Leen een boek heeft **geprobeerd** / **proberen te** lezen.*
- *dat Leen een boek heeft \* **geprobeerd** / **proberen te** lezen.*

‘that Leen has tried to read that book.’



# Results *proberen te*

## Position of object: terminology

- *dat Leen heeft **geprobeerd** een boek **te** lezen.* PP + obj  
*extraposition*
- *dat Leen een boek heeft **proberen** **te** lezen.* Obj + INF  
*IPP*
- *dat Leen een boek heeft **geprobeerd** **te** lezen.* Obj + PP  
*3<sup>rd</sup> construction*
- *dat Leen heeft % **proberen** een boek **te** lezen.* INF + obj  
*IPP + cluster interruption*

‘that Leen has tried to read that book.’

# Results *proberen te*

	NL	VL	Total
PP + obj (extraposition)	212 (70.90%)	157 (56.68%)	369 (64.06%)
obj + INF (IPP)	64 (21.40%)	120 (43.32%)	184 (31.94%)
obj + PP (3rd construction)	23 (7.69%)	0	23 (3.99%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>299 (99.99%)</b>	<b>277 (100%)</b>	<b>576 (99.99%)</b>

- Only checked hits with an object considered (576/1323)
- 3rd construction: only in NL, but in general uncommon  
→ interaction between position of object and morphological form of *proberen*
- Factors that trigger variation, especially in NL?  
→ future work

**AFRIKAANS**

# Results *probeer*

	<i>probeer</i>	<i>geprobeer</i>	Total
<i>Om te</i> infinitive	6228 (47.07%)	145 (95.39%)	6373
<i>Te</i> infinitive	0	0	0
Bare infinitive	7004 (52.93%)	7 (4.61%)	7011
<b>Total</b>	<b>13232 (100%)</b>	<b>152 (100%)</b>	<b>13384</b>

- 14.7% of the constructions with lemma *probeer*
- Analogy with unambiguous verbs taking a bare infinitive (e.g. *kom* 'come', *bly* 'continue') → *probeer* = INF in those constructions
- Analogy with other verbs taking an (*om*) *te* infinitive (e.g. *begin* 'begin', *help* 'help') → *te* infinitive replaced by an *om te* infinitive
- *geprobeer*: colloquial form? Factors that trigger variation?  
→ future work

# **CONCLUSIONS & OUTLOOK**

# Comparison

	Dutch	Afrikaans
<i>Om te</i> infinitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Form of <i>proberen</i>: PP</li> <li>• No significant difference NL - VL</li> </ul>	Form of <i>probeer</i> : ambiguous between INF and PP
<i>Te</i> infinitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Form of <i>proberen</i>: PP/INF</li> <li>• More PP in NL; more INF in VL</li> <li>• Significantly more frequent in NL</li> <li>• Internal variation (region, position of the object, verb form)</li> </ul>	unattested
Bare infinitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Form of <i>proberen</i>: INF</li> <li>• Only in VL</li> </ul>	Form of <i>probeer</i> : ambiguous, but probably INF

# Conclusion

- Dutch *geprobeerd* may select a *te* infinitive or an *om te* infinitive
- Dutch *proberen* may select a *te* infinitive or a bare infinitive
- Influenced by lectal variation (NL vs VL), the form of *proberen* and the position of the object
- Afrikaans *(ge)probeer* is more rigid than Dutch
- Dutch flexibility is most prominent in constructions where a *te* infinitive is selected
- NL > VL > AF

# Future work

- Investigate intralingual variables, such as:
  - Category of the verbal complement selected by *proberen/probeer*
  - Length and type of object (pronominal, (in)definite etc.)
  - Influence of negation
  - ... (suggestions? 😊)
- Investigate interlingual variables, such as:
  - Register
  - Dialectal differences in Dutch (SAND)
- Comparison to other verbs allowing different complementation patterns (e.g. DU *beginnen* ‘begin’, *durven* ‘dare’; AF *begin* ‘begin’, *aanhou* ‘continue’)



# Thank you!

**Questions or suggestions?**

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