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## **Cultural evolutionary modeling of patterns in language change : exercises in evolutionary linguistics**

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## Chapter 4

# The syntactic and semantic development of the Dutch verb *krijgen*

### 4.1 Introduction<sup>1</sup>

In their famous dictionary of the German language, the Grimm brothers refer to the German verb *kriegen* as ‘eins der merkwürdigsten wörter unserer sprache, mit mehreren dunklen stellen in seiner geschichte’.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, *kriegen* is quite a remarkable verb: it can be both a main verb and an auxiliary, it can take an agentive subject, an agentive indirect object or no agent at all, and it can be used in the semi-passive construction.

The Grimm brothers most probably would have given the Dutch verb *krijgen* the same description, had they written about Dutch. Not only is *krijgen* a cognate of *kriegen*, the two verbs shows a similarly wide array of use. The Dutch historical dictionary, *Het Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal (WNT)*, the counterpart of the Grimm brothers’ dictionary of German, writes:

Het is vrijwel onmogelijk een volledige opsomming te geven van alle toepassingen waarin *krijgen* wordt gebezigd; een overzicht van het gebruik moge dus volstaan. (*WNT* s.v. *krijgen*)

[It is almost impossible to give a complete list of all uses of *krijgen*; an overview of its usage may therefore suffice]

The rich variation in the present-day use of *krijgen* should be seen as a reflection of its history. As I will show in this chapter, *krijgen* is a textbook example of grammaticalization.

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<sup>1</sup> Parts of this chapter have been published previously in Landsbergen 2006a and Landsbergen 2006b.

<sup>2</sup> The entire phrase is: ‘Es gilt heutzutage für ein niedriges, ja fast für ein pöbelwort, ist aber geschichtlich eins der merkwürdigsten wörter unserer sprache, mit mehreren dunklen stellen in seiner geschichte.’ [It nowadays counts as a humble, yes almost a word for the masses, but it is historically one of the strangest words of our language, with several dark places in its history.]

The history of *krijgen* will be the subject of the next three chapters. The main goal of this study is to see how different quantitative and cultural evolutionary methods can be used as complementary tools in diachronic linguistic research. I argue that such tools may provide extensive additional insight in historic processes and their underlying mechanisms.

In the present chapter, I start by presenting the historical development of *krijgen*, which serves as the basis for the subsequent two chapters. For this, I have performed a conventional diachronic corpus study, which will identify the verb's main syntactic and semantic development from early middle Dutch to present-day Dutch. I will show that *krijgen* has changed from a concrete, agentive verb to a more abstract, non-agentive verb, although some relics of the original use still exist today. I will also discuss how the different present-day auxiliary uses of *krijgen* have come into existence.

Apart from a description of the verb's history, I will also discuss the mechanisms that might have led to the changes. For this, I will mostly focus on the development of the transitive use and the role of the direct object therein.

This last aspect of *krijgen*'s change is also the topic of chapter 5. I will use the findings of the current chapter and apply them to a computer model that simulates the development of *krijgen*'s meaning. The main focus of this chapter is the model itself and the way it deals with the indirect transmission of meaning. I will also discuss the notion of semantic extension versus semantic shift, which is a relevant issue in semantic change in general and in the case of *krijgen* in particular.

In chapter 6, I will present a technique that makes it possible to reconstruct the diachrony of *krijgen* on the basis of synchronic data. This technique is called 'phylogenetic reconstruction' and is generally used in biology and linguistic typology. The goal of the chapter is to introduce this technique to historical linguistic research, and to discuss its merits and pitfalls. I will do so by comparing its results with the results of the diachronic study from the present chapter.

## 4.2 Current and past use of *krijgen*

Before I start with the results of the diachronic corpus study, I will first discuss the synchronic variation of *krijgen* in more detail in this section, and shortly mention what is already known about *krijgen*'s past. Examples (1-10) show most of the common uses of *krijgen* in present-day Dutch:

- 1) Andrew krijgt voor zijn verjaardag een fiets.  
'Andrew gets a bike for his birthday.'

- 2) Zij kreeg een flinke verkoudheid.  
'She got a bad cold.'
- 3) We krijgen morgen beter weer.  
'We are getting better weather tomorrow.'
- 4) Als je rood en blauw mengt, krijg je paars.  
'If you mix red and blue, you get purple.'
- 5) Ik kan nergens de juiste ingrediënten krijgen.  
'I cannot get the right ingredients anywhere.'
- 6) ADO heeft de koppositie in de competitie in handen gekregen.  
'ADO has gained the first position in the soccer league.'
- 7) Tijdens de vlucht kregen we Casino Royale te zien.  
'During the flight we got to see Casino Royale.'
- 8) Als ik je ooit te pakken krijg, heb je een groot probleem.  
'If I ever get you, you have a big problem.'
- 9) De prins kreeg het eerste exemplaar uitgereikt door de directeur.  
'The prince was handed the first exemplar by the director.'
- 10) De AiO kreeg het artikel maar niet afgemaakt.  
'The PhD student could not get the article finished.'

Notice first that in many, yet not all, examples, *krijgen* is translated with English 'get'. Although the verbs are very similar in their use, there is no complete overlap. I will therefore use translations that are as semantically close to the original Dutch sentence as possible throughout this chapter, sometimes using *get*, sometimes using verbs like *obtain* or *receive* or even a totally different construction. See Landsbergen (2006b) for a further discussion about the similarities between the two verbs.<sup>3</sup>

Examples (1-10) give a good impression of the syntactic and semantic variation of *krijgen*. The use in (1), with a 'receiving' meaning and a recipient subject is the most common use for native speakers of Dutch, together with that in (2), in which the subject has a patient role. Examples (1-3, 7, 9) have a clear non-agentive subject, while the subject in (6, 8, 10) is at least partially agentive. Example (5) is somewhat ambivalent. The subject clearly has the intention of obtaining

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<sup>3</sup> The two verbs are apparently unrelated, yet show a similar original meaning and a similar development. This gives rise to the question whether this similarity is due to universal grammaticalization tendencies that are inherent to the type of verb (a basic verb with a 'transfer' meaning), or whether this could be a case of grammatical replication: the transfer of linguistic structure from language to another by contact (Heine & Kuteva 2005).

something, yet the actual act of transfer is carried out by a (implicit) third party. Direct objects can be both concrete (1) and abstract (3-4). In some examples, the direct object becomes the ‘possession’ of the subject, either in an abstract or in a concrete way. Yet this is not the case for examples (2-4, 7, 10), in which *krijgen* does not express a transfer, but rather a change of state.

At the syntactic level, *krijgen* is a main verb in (1-6), and an auxiliary in (7-10). In (9), *krijgen* is an auxiliary of the semi-passive. These four auxiliary uses also differ strongly from each other. Examples (7-8) both have a *te* + INF complement, but (7) has a recipient subject while (8) has an agentive subject. Examples (9-10) also have formal similarities, yet differ in that (9) has a recipient subject and (10) has an agentive subject.

It should be noted that examples (6) and (8) take the compulsory complements in *handen* and *te pakken* respectively. If (6) were used without *in handen*, the unmarked reading would be one of ‘receiving’, with a non-agentive subject, and the same applies when *te pakken* is left out from (8).

- 6) a. ADO heeft de koppositie in de competitie in handen gekregen.  
‘ADO has gained the first position in the soccer league.’  
b. ADO heeft de koppositie in de competitie gekregen.  
‘ADO has been given the first position in the soccer league.’
- (8) a. Als ik je ooit te pakken krijg, heb je een groot probleem.  
‘If I ever get (‘obtain’) you, you have a big problem.’  
b. Als ik je ooit krijg, heb je een groot probleem.  
‘If I ever get (‘receive’) you, you have a big problem.’

With the exception of this construction, *krijgen* has a default non-agentive meaning in its unmarked, transitive use. Only in a limited set of more or less specific constructions it can take an agentive subject. Example (5) should also be seen in this light. Although *krijgen* is used as a bare transitive, its semi-agentive use could be said to be limited to a construction with the modal verb *kunnen*.

#### *The semi-passive and resultative constructions*

Example (9) shows the so-called ‘semi-passive’ use of *krijgen*. This construction typically consists of verbs like *aanbieden* ‘to offer’, *uitreiken* ‘to hand out’, *overhandigen* ‘to hand over’, and *voorschotelen* ‘dish up’: verbs that describe a specific kind of transfer. Its characteristics are described in Royen (1952), Hoekstra (1984) and Broekhuis & Cornips (1994). Historically, the semi-passive seems to be a relatively new construction in Dutch. Royen (ibid.: 259) mentions a first occurrence in 1907:

- 11) Ze moest nog lessen betaald krijgen, Godfried ook.  
 ‘She still had to get paid classes, and Godfried as well.’  
 (Duykers, Rosa 189 (example from Royen 1952: 259))

The semi-passive differs from the regular passive in that not the direct but the indirect object of the active construction becomes the subject:

- 12) a. *active*  
 De rector reikt de diploma’s uit aan de scholieren.  
 ‘The principal hands out the diplomas to the students.’
- b. *regular passive*  
 De diploma’s worden door de rector aan de scholieren uitgereikt.  
 ‘The diplomas are handed out to the students by the principal.’
- c. *semi-passive*  
 De scholieren krijgen de diploma’s uitgereikt door de rector.  
 ‘The students get the diplomas handed out by the principal.’  
 (all examples from Landsbergen 2006a: 158)

Hoekstra (1984: 71) has noted that the participant that has the agent role can be expressed with two different prepositions in the semi-passive construction, *door* ‘by’ and *van* ‘from’:

- 13) Zij kregen van/door de KNVB nieuwe grensrechters toegewezen.  
 ‘They were assigned new linesmen by the KNVB.’  
 (example from Hoekstra 1984: 71)

An explanation for this phenomenon lies in the ambivalent nature of the semi-passive construction. In regular transitive constructions of *krijgen*, the source role is expressed in an adjunct phrase with the preposition *van* ‘from’ (14). In regular passive constructions, this is done with the preposition *door* ‘by’ (15). Since the semi-passive construction can be interpreted as a mixture of both constructions, it is not strange that both prepositions can be used interchangeably<sup>4</sup>.

- 14) Het meisje kreeg een brief van haar oma.  
 ‘The girl got a letter from her grandmother.’

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<sup>4</sup> Hoekstra (ibid.) gives a formal explanation for this phenomenon. In the case of *van*, the PP-phrase is an argument of *krijgen* rather than being part of the small clause: *Zij [[kregen] van de KNVB] [nieuwe grensrechters toegewezen]*. However, the ‘giver’ can also be expressed as an argument in the small clause, in which case *door* is the usual preposition used in combination with participles: *Zij [kregen] [[door de KNVB] [nieuwe grensrechters toegewezen]]*.

- 15) De brief werd gestuurd door haar oma.  
‘The letter was sent by her grandmother.’

Returning to examples (1-10), there is another auxiliary use of *krijgen* that is formally identical to the semi-passive, in that it also takes a direct object and a present participle:

- 10) De AiO kreeg het artikel maar niet afgemaakt.  
‘The PhD student could not get the article finished.’

However, a closer look shows that there are both syntactic and semantic differences between the two constructions. In the semi-passive construction, the agent role is expressed by an oblique phrase that may also be absent. In the construction in (10), the agent role is expressed by the subject, and therefore, an indirect object is not possible. On the semantic level, the meaning of the semi-passive construction can still be described as an act of transfer (16). The construction in (10) has a very different meaning, in which the subject changes the state or location of the direct object (17). I will refer to this use as the resultative construction.

- 16) *semi-passive construction*  
[SUBJ is given DIR OBJ in manner PART (by OBL)]
- 17) *resultative construction*  
[SUBJ changes DIR OBJ in manner PART]

This use has been called ‘the new *krijgen*’ by Van der Horst (2002: 174). In a short article, he describes this apparently new use of *krijgen*. Consider the following examples:

- 18) Het kind krijgt zijn eten niet naar binnen.  
‘The child cannot get his food inside him.’
- 19) De AiO kreeg zijn abstract afgekeurd.  
‘The PhD-student’s abstract was rejected.’
- 20) Hij krijgt zijn computer niet gestart.  
‘He cannot get his computer started.’
- 21) De lezer vraagt zich af hoe hij dit eiwit zo snel geklopt krijgt.  
‘The reader wonders how he gets the egg white whipped so fast.’  
(example from Van der Horst 2002: 175)

Van der Horst notices that in the middle of the twentieth century, examples such as (18-20) are used. In these examples, *krijgen* can be combined with a complement which has the form of a prepositional phrase or an adverbial phrase, with an agentive subject (18). These complements can also be participles (19-21). At first, the action described in them is not performed by the subject: in (19), the PhD-student is not rejecting the abstract himself, but someone else has done this instead. Gradually, examples start to appear that are ambiguous with regards to who is performing the action. Example (20) can either mean ‘he does not succeed in that he starts up the computer’ or ‘he does not succeed in having the computer start up’, with the two examples having the subject and the direct object performing the action respectively. Only in the 1990s of the twentieth century, examples like (21) start to appear, in which the subject clearly is the one performing the action. It is in this last step that *krijgen* can be considered a proper auxiliary.

Although this scenario is not implausible, we will see that the corpus data I will discuss in the next section do not support it. Instead, there seems to be a development that is reverse to what Van der Horst proposes: a change from the use with the subject performing the action to a use in which the subject is not performing the action. Also, the development seems to have started much earlier than the twentieth century.

Regardless of this, Van der Horst makes the very interesting observation that the use of *krijgen* as in (21) can be taken as a new auxiliary that would ‘complete’ part of the Dutch auxiliary system: where *worden* ‘to become’ has the meaning ‘to get into a state of being’, *krijgen* has the meaning ‘to get into a state of having’. The relationship between *worden* and *zijn* is analogous to that between *krijgen* and *hebben*.

- 22) *worden* : *zijn*  
*krijgen* : *hebben*

Van der Horst explicitly states that this auxiliary use of *krijgen* is not a finished process, and that it is not even sure if it will ever become a full auxiliary. Indeed, the ambivalent status of *krijgen* in this construction can be shown by two simple tests. First, Dutch verb clusters allow scrambling as long as a verb remains in final position, but with *krijgen*, this leads to a questionable sentence (23c-d).

- 23) a. Hij wil zijn mailtje morgen verstuurd hebben.  
 b. Hij wil zijn mailtje morgen hebben verstuurd.  
 ‘He wants to have his email sent by tomorrow.’



- c. Hij wil zijn mailtje morgen verstuurd krijgen.
- d. ?? Hij wil zijn mailtje morgen krijgen verstuurd.  
'He wants to get his email sent by tomorrow.'

The fact that *verstuurd* 'sent' cannot be put at the end of the sentence seems to suggest that it is not interpreted as a verb but rather as an adjective. This, in turn, would make *krijgen* the main verb of the sentence instead of the auxiliary. This can also be shown by the possible positions of *krijgen* in three-word clusters: *verstuurd* cannot be put in the middle of the cluster or at the end, but has to precede it (24).

- 24) a. ...dat hij zijn mailtje verstuurd heeft gekregen.
- b. ?? ...dat hij zijn mailtje heeft gekregen verstuurd.
- c. ?? ...dat hij zijn mailtje heeft verstuurd gekregen.  
'...that he has got his email sent.'

In a similar way, the auxiliary status of *krijgen* in the semi-passive can also be questioned. In (25-26), it is the participle *uitgereikt* 'handed out' that does not always behave like a full main verb.

- 25) a. De student heeft het diploma uitgereikt gekregen.
- b. ?? De student heeft het diploma gekregen uitgereikt.  
'The student was handed out the diploma.'
- 26) a. De student zal het diploma morgen uitgereikt moeten krijgen.
- b. ?? De student zal het diploma morgen moeten krijgen uitgereikt.  
'The student will have to be handed out the diploma tomorrow.'

This behavior of *uitgereikt* is an indication that in the semi-passive as well, *krijgen* should not be considered a full auxiliary. Rather, its syntactic properties can better be described by treating it as a main verb to which a participle (*uitgereikt*) is added to specify the kind of transfer.

This is in line with the explanation of the origin of the German semi-passive with *kriegen* by Kuteva (2004: 39). She states that the German semi-passive has come into existence by a process of specification, in which an adjectival participle is added to an initially transitive structure, and *kriegen* should still be considered a full main verb. Interestingly, *kriegen* differs from *krijgen* in that its semi-passive use has grammaticalized further. The construction in (27) is ungrammatical in Dutch (28).

- 27) Dann kriege ich immer geschimpft.  
'Then I always get scolded.'  
(example from Lehmann 1991: 516-517 [see Kuteva 2004: 39])

- 28) \*Dan krijg ik altijd uitgescholden.  
‘Then I always get scolded.’

The semi-passive shares some of its characteristics with *te* + INF, in that the thematic roles of the two constructions are assigned to the syntactic roles in a similar way. The passive characteristics of the *te* + INF construction were also observed by Hoekstra (1984: 69-70). The main difference between the two is that the subject of the infinitive in the *te* + INF construction is the subject of *krijgen* (29), while the subject of the participle in the semi-passive is another participant (which is possibly implicit) (30).

- 29) De studenten kregen het diploma te zien.  
‘The students got to see the diploma.’  
≈ ‘The students saw the diploma.’
- 30) De studenten kregen het diploma uitgereikt.  
‘The students were handed out the diploma.’  
≈ ‘Someone handed out the diploma to the students.’

#### *Linking the present variation to the past*

The use of *krijgen* with an agentive subject seem to be a reflection of the original meaning of the verb, which had an almost exclusive agentive meaning. According to the Middle Dutch Dictionary (MNW), *krijgen* (then spelled *crigen*) originally had both an intransitive and a transitive use. The intransitive use had the meanings ‘to fight’, ‘to proceed to’ and ‘to strive for’, which probably derived from the noun *crijch* ‘effort’, ‘stubbornness’, ‘fight’, ‘war’ that was also current in Middle Dutch. *Crijch*, later spelled *krijg*, has become extinct in present-day Dutch, but still exists as a bound morpheme describing military activities: *krijgsmacht* ‘military force’, *krijgsraad* ‘court-martial’ and *krijgsgevangene* ‘prisoner of war’.

The transitive use of *krijgen* in Middle Dutch is described in the MNW as ‘to obtain with effort’, ‘to win’, ‘to persuade someone’ and the not necessary agentive meaning ‘to contract, to catch’ when combined with objects such as *schande* ‘shame’ and *angst* ‘fear’.

In Middle Dutch, the verb *gecrigen* is also in use. It is almost similar in use to *crigen*, with the addition that *gecrigen* can also be used with a complement, in which case it gets the meaning ‘to get someone from somewhere’ or ‘to get someone to do something’.

According to the *Woordenboek der Nederlandse Taal* (WNT), which roughly describes the period 1500-present, the sense of effort has gradually disappeared from the meaning of the verb. This led to the use of the verb as it is known today, in

which the subject becomes the possessor of something (either in a concrete or abstract way) without his or her action or even intention.

The main development of the verb *krijgen* seems to be clear from the descriptions in the historical dictionaries. In the next section, I will take a closer look at this development and try to get a better understanding of the mechanisms behind it.

### 4.3 Exploring *krijgen*'s history: a corpus study

#### *Data collection*

For the diachronic study of *krijgen*, I collected 1276 sentences from the period 1300-2000, which roughly covers the periods of Middle Dutch, Modern Dutch and present-day Dutch. Data collection was done using two electronic corpora, the *CD-ROM Middelnederlands* (MNW, 1300-1500) and the electronic version of the *Woordenboek der Nederlandse Taal* (WNT, 1500-1979). The former is a collection of medieval texts, both prose and poetry, and both religious and worldly. The latter also consists of non-fiction texts such as newspaper articles and scientific works.

Although present-day Dutch is commonly considered a homogeneous language, especially in written sources, the same cannot be said about earlier stages of Dutch. Middle Dutch is a collective name for a number of dialects that were spoken and written in the region that is now covered by the Netherlands and parts of Belgium: Brabantian, Hollandic, low Saxon, Limburgish and Flemish (De Vooys 1970: 34-40, Van der Wal 1992: 108-121). These dialects sometimes differed quite significantly in their phonetic, morphologic and syntactic characteristics.

Two other complicating factors that are well known among all those doing diachronic research are genre and dating. Both corpora embody different genres, and there are often considerable linguistic differences between them. This is mostly due to differences in register; some texts are a strong reflection of spoken language while other texts use a more 'elevated' style. Also, texts in rhyme should be treated with caution because their language might be affected by the poetic license of the writer.

'Dating' is problematic because it sometimes cannot be determined when exactly a text has been conceived. Even if a date is known, one can still be dealing with a rewriting of an earlier work, in which case it is unknown how much the scribe altered the original work.

For the research presented here, I have chosen not to distinguish between genres or dialects, but to use all available uses of *krijgen* and to assume that the large sample size would lead to a reliable picture of the general development of the

verb. Also, I will discuss certain characteristics of genres on the way. As for dating, I will use the dates given by the two corpora, and group the sentences by century.

From both corpora, I collected all instances of the lexemes *krijgen* and *gekrijgen* with their different spellings. *Gekrijgen* was added because it was found that it was already almost synonymous with *krijgen* in Middle Dutch, and because it has been gradually replaced by *krijgen* since then. From all these instances, I randomly selected around 200 sentences per century. When referring to the ‘corpus’, I am referring to this collection of sentences.

*Krijgen* (and *gekrijgen*) have been spelled in many different ways over the centuries. These differences do not only reflect changes in orthography (such as the replacement of ‘c’ by ‘k’ in the 17th century), but also a phonological change: *crigen* in Middle Dutch was pronounced [kri:çən], while probably around the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century, the [i:] changed into [ɛi]. German *kriegen* still has the original vowel.

For reasons of clarity, I will use the spelling *krijgen*, even when discussing Middle Dutch use. This means that its spelling in the text might differ from that of the examples, especially in the older examples.

#### *Decline of the intransitive*

From the general introduction of the use of *krijgen* in present-day Dutch and the descriptions of its use in earlier stages, it is clear that somewhere on the way, the intransitive use of *krijgen* must have become extinct.

The MNW (s.v. *crigen*) gives three different meanings of the intransitive use: ‘to fight’, ‘to proceed to’ and ‘to strive for’, and all three meanings are indeed found in 14<sup>th</sup> century sentences in the corpus (31-33).

31) *to fight*

Here, wil nicht met u cryghen, was yr spricht, das is waer.  
‘Lord, I do not want to argue with you. What you say, is true.’  
(Haagse liederenhandschrift; 1390)

32) *to proceed to*

Doen hi sach, dat met nide die viande al ten hertoge creghen, woude hi hen met crachte jeghen.  
‘When he saw that the enemy proceeded to the duke with passion, he wanted to oppose them with force.’  
(Jan van Heelu - Rymkroniek; 1395)

33) *to strive for*

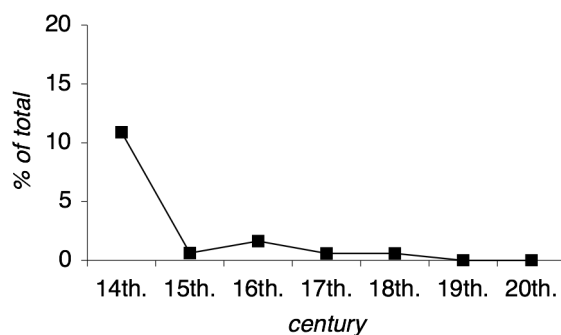
Hier beghint een eewich hongher die nummermeer vervult en wert. Dat es een inwindich ghiren ende crighen der minnender cracht [...].

‘Here starts an eternal hunger that is never fulfilled. It is an inner longing and striving of the loving force.’

(Jan van Ruusbroec - Die gheestelike brulocht; 1335)

century	intransitive use
14th.	16 / 156
15th.	1 / 159
16th.	3 / 183
17th.	1 / 167
18th.	1 / 167
19th.	0 / 194
20th.	0 / 250

**Table 1.** Number of intransitive sentences with *krijgen* per century, compared to the total number of sentences per century in the corpus.



**Figure 1.** Relative number of intransitive sentences with *krijgen* per century.

These intransitive uses of *krijgen* do not remain in use for very long. Although it is generally considered that the intransitive use of *krijgen* has preceded the transitive, its use is already not highly frequent anymore in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and disappears almost completely after that (table 1 and figure 1). The last intransitive sentence in the corpus dates from 1721. Another indication that the intransitive use is already on its way out in the 14<sup>th</sup> century is that a majority of the examples are found in the works of only two authors, Jan van Ruusbroec (*Dat rijcke der ghelieven*, *Een*

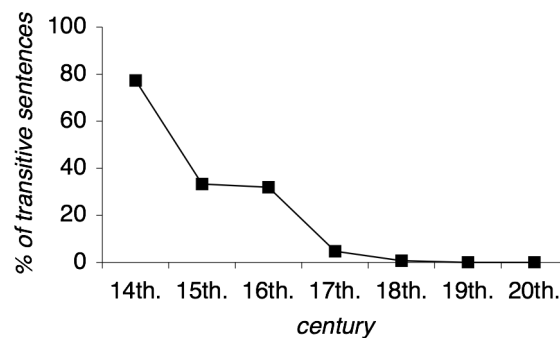
*spiegel der eeuwigher salicheit, Vanden XII beghinen* and *Die gheestelike brulocht*) and Jacob van Maerlant (*Spiegel Historiae*). Intransitive use with the meaning ‘to strive for’ is only found in Ruusbroec’s works. Later examples (from 1688 and 1721) are from a bible translation and a work that uses biblical language, and should not be considered standard.

#### *Decline of gecrigen*

It is assumed (in the historical dictionaries MNW and WNT) that originally, *krijgen*, without the perfective prefix *ge-*, was used intransitively, and *gekrijgen* was used transitively, but examples from the 14<sup>th</sup> century show that *krijgen* is already being used as a transitive as well in that period. The loss of the prefix *ge-* is not restricted to *krijgen* alone, it is a common process in the transition from Middle Dutch to Mo-

century	use of <i>gekrijgen</i>
14th.	92 / 119
15th.	47 / 141
16th.	55 / 172
17th.	7 / 148
18th.	1 / 145
19th.	0 / 171
20th.	0 / 221

**Table 2.** Number of uses of *gekrijgen* per century, compared to the total number of transitive sentences per century in the corpus. Instances in which *gekrijgen* is the past participle in a sentence were left out, because this is the participle of both *krijgen* and *gekrijgen*.



**Figure 2.** Relative use of *gekrijgen* in transitive sentences in the corpus per century.

der Dutch. *Ge-* originated as a Gothic prefix *ga-* meaning ‘together’ (still found in examples like *gebroeders* ‘brothers’), but gradually turned into a marker of perfectivity (Van Loey 1970: 159-160). Due to loss of stress it has disappeared from the non-perfective use of many verbs (*gelukken* > *lukken* ‘to succeed’, *gelijken* > *lijken* ‘to be alike’), while it has remained present in participles where it still had a clear perfective function (Van Loey *ibid.*: 115). Apart from this, the quick downfall of the intransitive *krijgen* has probably had an accelerating effect on the loss of *ge-* in *gekrijgen*, since the necessity to formally distinguish between the two meanings was no longer present. As figure 2 shows (with the absolute data in table 2), *gekrijgen* has gradually been replaced in the transitive use by *krijgen*, and this process seems to be completed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

#### *Decline of the agentive subject*

Apart from the intransitive use, 14<sup>th</sup> century *krijgen* has two other main uses: (1) a ‘bare’ transitive (34), which is the unmarked transitive use with a subject and a direct object, and (2) a transitive use in combination with a complement with a resultative meaning (35).

- 34) Daer ne was sward geen so goet, al had Walewein gecregen.  
 ‘There was no sword so good, as the one Walewijn had gotten into his possession.’  
 (Roman van Moriaen; 1300)
- 35) Het staet so onderwilen, dat ment niet uutgecrigen en mach [uit het oor], om dat so diepe es daerin gesteken met onwisen handen.  
 ‘It is sometimes the case, that one cannot get it out of the ear, because it has been put in there by unsteady hands.’  
 (Cirurgie, Boek III-V; 1353)

These uses are related in their sense of ‘effort’ the subject has to make in order to obtain something. In (34), the direct object, a sword, becomes the possession of the subject. In (35), this sense of possession is less strong but the subject does obtain control over the direct object and changes its location. At this point, it is useful to look at the development of *get*, which occurs in a similar resultative construction. It has been argued that this construction has developed from the transitive use in a series of steps (Givon & Yang 1994, Gronemeyer 1999). First, an optional indirect object (*us*) was possible in the benefactive use of *get*, giving a causative meaning (36). Locative complements become possible by considering the benefactive object as a target location of the direct object (*to God* in 37).

- 36) Get us som mete and drynke, and make us cheere  
 ‘Get us some food and drinks, and make us happy.’  
 (1340-1400; example from Gívon & Yang 1994: 123)
- 37) For with that orison sche getyth to god ful many soules that were in oure  
 power fast befor.  
 ‘For with that prayer she gets to God many souls that had been firmly in our  
 power.’  
 (1470-1500; example from Grönemeyer 1999: 24)

For *krijgen*, it is possible that the locative complements of (35) have developed according to a similar scenario, and this must then have happened before 1300. The only argument against this scenario is that the benefactive use of *krijgen* that is needed as a first step occurs very rarely in the corpus, with a first occurrence in 1569 (38).

- 38) Jck creegh hem (een fles wijn) om nyet, vry sonder betalen.  
 ‘I got him a bottle of wine for free.’  
 (Med. V. A. 1938, 126; 1569)

I will discuss the further development of the resultative construction in more detail later on, and now focus on the gradual loss of subject agentivity.

The three main uses of *krijgen* in the 14<sup>th</sup> century that I have mentioned so far all have a clearly agentive subject. This again, is in line with a noun ‘effort’ as origin, and the verbal derivative ‘to make an effort’. However, already in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the transitive is also used with subjects that show different degrees of agentivity:

- 39) *Partial agentivity*  
 Heete speciën, machmense ghecrichen, ... sijn goet dan (voor de  
 gezondheid),  
 ‘Hot herbs, if one can get them, ... are good for the health.’  
 (Jacob van Maerlant – Heimelijkheid der Heimelijkheden.; 1300)
- 40) *Possible agentivity*  
 “Twi wasic,” seit hi, “ie geboren. In gecreech nie geval, noch nembermeer  
 hebben ne sal.”  
 ‘“Why was I ever born,’ he said. “I never got any luck, nor will I ever have  
 it.”’  
 (Roman van den riddere metter mouwen; 1300)



- 41) *No agentivity*  
 Elc criget loon na sijnre verdient.  
 ‘Everyone gets what they deserve.’  
 (Samenspraak van scalc en clerck; 1350)

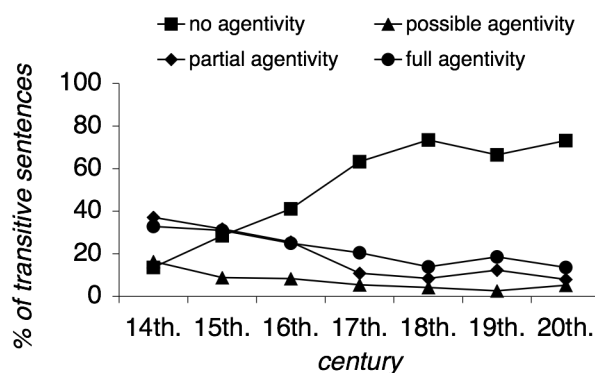
In (39), it is the subject’s intention to obtain the herbs, but, in a standard reading, the actual transfer is done by another person. In (40), *geval* ‘luck’ is an object that cannot simply be ‘obtained’, but a reading is possible in which the subject makes an effort to get it. Only in (41), it is hard to detect any possible agentivity of the subject. At most, the subject has the desire or hope to get the object. Other examples of this latter type are sentences in which objects are used that have a negative effect on the subject, such as *zoene* ‘punishment’, *beteringhe* ‘fine’. Together, four degrees of agentivity can be distinguished (42):

- 42)           1                   2                   3                   4  
 full agentivity > partial agentivity > possible agentivity > no agentivity

This division can be used to see how the use of *krijgen* changes over the centuries. I leave the intransitive use, which should be considered fully agentive, out of the further discussion because of its marginal frequency, and restrict myself to the transitive use, with and without complements. Figure 3 (with the absolute data in table 3) shows the development of the four types of agentivity from 1300-2000.

century	no agentivity	possible agentivity	partial agentivity	full agentivity
14th.	19 / 140	23 / 140	52 / 140	46 / 140
15th.	45 / 158	14 / 158	50 / 158	49 / 158
16th.	74 / 180	15 / 180	46 / 180	45 / 180
17th.	105 / 166	9 / 166	18 / 166	34 / 166
18th.	122 / 166	7 / 166	14 / 166	23 / 166
19th.	129 / 194	5 / 194	24 / 194	36 / 194
20th.	183 / 250	13 / 250	20 / 250	34 / 250

**Table 3.** Use of the four different types of agentivity in transitive sentences (both ‘bare’ transitives and transitives with complements) in the corpus.



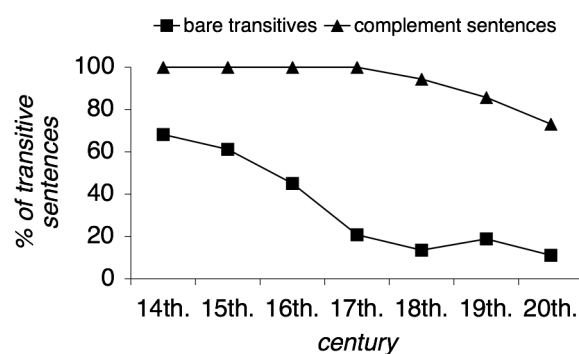
**Figure 3.** Relative use of the four different types of agentivity in transitive sentences (both ‘bare’ transitives and transitives with complements) in the corpus.

Immediately obvious is the sharp increase of sentences that have no subject agentivity, rising from 14 percent in the 14<sup>th</sup> century to 73 percent in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The three uses with lesser or more subject agentivity all show a gradual decrease in frequency over time. However, their frequencies are already quite low in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Does this mean that 14<sup>th</sup> century *krijgen* was already not that agentive? I argue against this, from the four types of agentivity I distinguish here, only one is clearly not agentive. The types I have labeled ‘fully agentive’ and ‘partial agentive’ (with examples of their use in 38 and 39) lumped together make up almost 70 percent of the sentences in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and this number decreases to about 11 percent in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Of the sentences labeled ‘possibly agentive’ it is hard to determine whether they should be considered agentive or not. It is likely that their interpretation is largely dependent on the prototypical use of transitive *krijgen*. This would mean that 14<sup>th</sup> century speakers of Dutch would have interpreted their use as agentive, while current speakers would interpret it as non-agentive.

In the above description, I have not considered possible differences in distribution of the agentive subject use between different sentence types. However, a distinction can be made between sentences like *het zwaard krijgen* ‘get the sword’ (ex. 34) and *iets uit het oor krijgen* ‘get something out of the ear’ (ex. 35). I will refer to the former type as ‘bare transitives’ and to the latter as ‘complement sentences’. It turns out that the decline of agentive subject use was initially restricted to bare transitives. Only since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, complement sentences start to occur with non-agentive use: *iets te zien krijgen* ‘be shown something’ and *iets aangeboden krijgen* ‘get offered something’, the semi-passive construction. Figure 4 on the next page (with the absolute data in table 4) shows the different development of both types of *krijgen*.

century	subject agentivity in bare transitive sentences	subject agentivity in complement sentences
14th.	90 / 132	8 / 8
15th.	93 / 152	6 / 6
16th.	73 / 162	18 / 18
17th.	30 / 144	22 / 22
18th.	20 / 148	17 / 18
19th.	30 / 159	30 / 35
20th.	23 / 208	31 / 42

**Table 4.** Subject agentivity (both partial and possible agentivity) in transitive sentences, shown per transitive sentence type: bare transitives and complement sentences.



**Figure 4.** Relative number of sentences with subject agentivity (both partial and possible agentivity) in transitive sentences, shown per transitive sentence type.

As figure 4 also shows, agentive subjects have not completely disappeared from the bare transitive use of *krijgen* in 20<sup>th</sup> century Dutch. Instead, their occurrence seems to have stabilized at a low frequency since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. They appear with fully agentive subjects (43-44) and sentences with partially agentive subjects (45-46).

- 43) „Nú? Om dézen tijd?” riep hij verbaasd, zijn horloge uit zijn vestzak krijgend.  
 ‘ “Now, at this time?” he said surprised, getting his watch out of his waistcoat-pocket.’  
 (Mooy, *Maalstr.* 2, 152; 1928)

- 44) Ik zette mij plat en ik zei bij mezelf: „Nu zullen ze toch moeten vlammen om mij nog te krijgen.”  
 ‘I sat down and said to myself: “Now they will really have to do their best to get me.”’  
 (Standaard; 1963)
- 45) Het bleek ..., dat men onmogelijk reproduceerbare waarden kan krijgen.  
 ‘It turned out ... that it is impossible to get reproducible values.’  
 (Bartstra, Refractometr. Vetbep. 17; 1937)
- 46) Hij bezat de verontrustende gave zelfs van totaal vreemden dingen op crediet te kunnen krijgen.  
 ‘He possessed the disturbing gift of being able to get things on credit even from total strangers,’  
 (Clare Lennart, Serenade 129; 1951)

For most 21<sup>st</sup> century speakers of Dutch, example (43) sounds a bit odd. Instead, its meaning would be paraphrased as in (43’), with the verb *pakken* or *halen*, both with the meaning ‘to take’.

- (43’) „Nú? Om déze tijd?” riep hij verbaasd, zijn horloge uit zijn vestzak pakkend/halend.  
 ‘ “Now, at this time?” he said surprised, getting his watch out of his waistcoat-pocket.’

However, (43) could also be interpreted in a different way, as a transitive sentence with a locative complement:

- (43’’) „Nú? Om dézen tijd?” riep hij verbaasd, zijn horloge uit zijn vestzak krijgend.  
 ‘ “Now, at this time?” he said surprised, while succeeding in removing the watch from his pocket.’  
 (Mooy, Maalstr. 2, 152; 1928)

As such, the sentence is perhaps less ungrammatical for present-day speakers, yet still not fully grammatical. I will come back to this issue later, when discussing the development of the complement sentences.

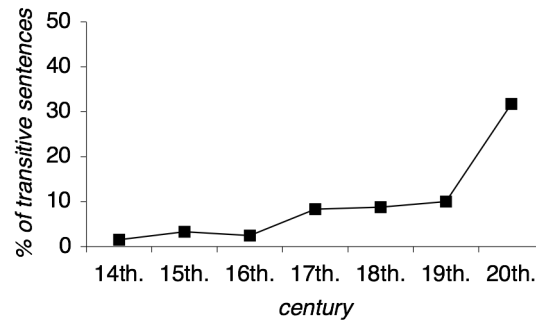
The only fully agentive, transitive use of *krijgen* that has remained in use in present-day Dutch is that of (44). Its use is restricted to a very specific construction in which the direct object is usually a person that is being caught against his or her will, and the construction has an exclamative intonation:

- 47) Form: [SUBJ DIR OBJ (*nog wel*) *krijgen*]  
 Meaning: [get a person against his/her will]  
 Prosody: [stress on *krijgen*, exclamation]

The loss of subject agentivity in bare transitives over time correlates with other phenomena. First, there is a gradual increase in the use of inanimate subjects (48-49), as can also be seen in figure 5 (with the absolute data in table 5 shown below).

century	inanimate subjects
14th.	2 / 132
15th.	5 / 152
16th.	4 / 162
17th.	12 / 144
18th.	13 / 148
19th.	16 / 159
20th.	67 / 208

**Table 5.** Number of sentences with inanimate subjects in bare transitive sentences per century. Personifications are counted as animate.



**Figure 5.** Relative number of sentences with inanimate subjects in bare transitive sentences per century.

- 48) ‘t Engels Fregat de C. ... (wier) soodanigh ... getroffen, dat 3 schooten onder water kreeg, en gants reddeloos was.  
 ‘The English frigate C. was hit in such a way, that it got three shots under water, and was past recovery.’  
 (Holl. Merc. 18; 1673)

- 49) Dit word gezeid van wijn die door lang wan gelegen te hebben een smaak naar het vat krijgt.  
 ‘This is said of wine that acquires the taste of the barrel after having laid half full for a long time.’  
 (Halma; 1729)

Second, as mentioned earlier, direct objects start to appear that cannot be combined well with an intentional, agentive subject (50-51).

- 50) Doe ghecreech ic van u *sulc eenen hurt*, dat mijn dryakelbusse wiert ghesturt.  
 ‘Then I got *such a push* from you, that my box of antidote was thrown over.’  
 (Keuren van de ambachten; 1441)
- 51) Doen cregen wy *een moye coelte uyten zuyden*, also dat men onse riemen in leyde, ende maeckten seyl.  
 ‘Then we got *a nice breeze from the south*, so that we shipped the oars and prepared the sails.’  
 (O.-I. e. W.-I. Voyag. 1, 72 c; 1598)

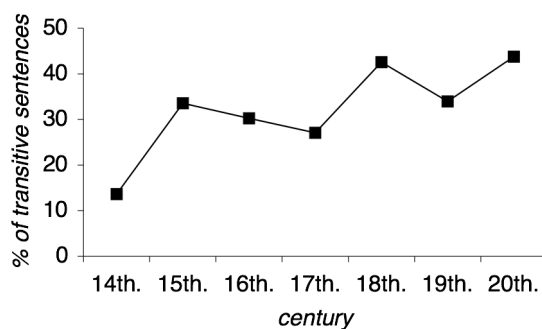
In order to get a better understanding of the mechanisms behind the loss of agentivity, it is revealing to take a closer look at two classes of objects: objects that describe states or conditions of the subject, like ‘disease’, ‘impression’ and ‘appetite’ (52), and those that describe mostly abstract transfer like ‘answer’, ‘consent’ and ‘order’ (53).

- 52) Hij kreeg er (in het kamp) al gauw *malaria en dysenterie*, [maar] vocht er niet tegen,  
 ‘He soon got malaria and dysentery at the camp, but did not fight it.’  
 (Oriëntatie 23-24, 3; 1949)
- 53) De scheepswerf „Voorwaarts” in Hoogezand kreeg van haar *opdracht* voor de bouw van een „botel”.  
 ‘The shipyard “Voorwaarts” in Hoogezand got her order to build a “botel”.’  
 (Ons Zeew. 58, 12, 14 b; 1969)

Over time, there is a slow increase in the use of objects denoting states, from around 13 percent in the 14<sup>th</sup> century to 43 percent in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (figure 6 and table 6 on the next page). This type of objects is therefore already present when *krijgen* still has a mainly agentive meaning, although the prototypical objects denoting states (such as the ones mentioned earlier) do not allow for an agentive reading.

century	objects denoting states
14th.	18 / 132
15th.	51 / 152
16th.	49 / 162
17th.	39 / 144
18th.	63 / 148
19th.	54 / 159
20th.	91 / 208

**Table 6.** Number of sentences with objects denoting states in bare transitive sentences.



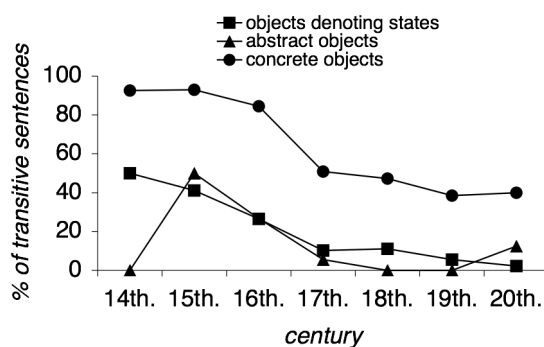
**Figure 6.** Relative number of sentences with objects denoting states in bare transitive sentences.

However, I have shown that already in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, *krijgen* is not exclusively agentive anymore. Sentences with non-agentive meaning make up around 14 percent of the total transitive sentences. It could be possible that the objects denoting states are found with non-agentive meaning. However, this is not the case. In exactly half of the sentences, objects denoting states are combined with more or less agentive subjects in the 14<sup>th</sup> century (54-55). This can also be seen in figure 7 (and table 7).

- 54) Hoe si best sonder meer wigen *haren pays* mogen gecrigen.  
 ‘How they can get their peace without any more effort.’  
 (Spiegel Historiael; 1315)
- 55) Est dat ghi wilt den rechten weg te volcomenheden gaen, soe piint u boven al te gecrighene *zuiverheit van herten*.  
 ‘If you want to take the right way of perfection, then do your best to gain purity of the heart above all.’ (Horologium; 1340)

century	objects denoting states	abstract objects	concrete objects
14th.	66 / 132	0 / 132	122 / 132
15th.	63 / 152	76 / 152	141 / 152
16th.	43 / 162	43 / 162	137 / 162
17th.	15 / 144	8 / 144	73 / 144
18th.	17 / 148	0 / 148	70 / 148
19th.	9 / 159	0 / 159	61 / 159
20th.	5 / 208	26 / 208	83 / 208

**Table 7.** Development of the number of agentive (full, partial and possible) subjects in sentences with different kinds of objects in bare transitive sentences.



**Figure 7.** Relative number of agentive (full, partial and possible) subjects in sentences with different kinds of objects in bare transitive sentences.

This unexpectedly high percentage does not hold long; over time, the proportion of sentences with objects denoting states and agentive subjects decreases dramatically, making way for the non-agentive use. A similar development takes place with objects denoting abstract transfer, only one century later (see figure 7). Initially, there are no sentences with abstract objects, but in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, objects like *respijt* ‘extension of time’ and *wille* ‘consent’ (56) appear. Later, objects like *antwoord* ‘answer’ and *opdracht* ‘order’ start to appear.

- 56) Ic sal u tot eenen wive trouwen. Ic hope het en sal ons niet berouwen. Ic heb ghecreghen algader *mijnder moeder wille ende vader*.  
 ‘I will marry you to be my wife. I hope we will not regret it. I have obtained my mother’s and father’s consent.’  
 (Roman van Jonathas ende Rosafiere; 1495)



Like with the objects denoting states, we initially find a high percentage of objects that are combined with an agentive subject (50 percent in the 15<sup>th</sup> century), but a sharp decline in this use over time. However, this trend starts about a century later than is the case for the objects denoting states. On the other hand, the decline in frequency of agentive subjects in sentences with abstract objects takes place at a higher speed, thereby making up for the later start. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the percentage of agentive subjects combined with abstract objects is already lower (5.5 percent) than those combined with objects denoting states (10.3 percent).

Concrete objects used are objects such as *geld* ‘money’, *potlood* ‘pencil’ and *mensen* ‘people’, and are used in combination with *krijgen* throughout the whole corpus. Interestingly, the distribution of agentive subjects differs strongly from that of both abstract objects and objects denoting states (see figure 7). Although there is a clear decrease in agentive subjects over time, this tendency has started later than for both other object types, and also seems to have stabilized at a higher rate than the other two uses. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, concrete objects are still combined with subjects that show some degree of agentivity in 40 percent of the sentences.

Summarizing, transitive *krijgen* shows a loss in the use of agentive subjects over time, but this loss is unevenly distributed over the different direct objects it is combined with. Of the three main groups of objects, objects denoting states started to be used with non-agentive subjects first, followed by abstract objects around a century later, and concrete objects another two centuries later. This order seems to suggest that the loss of agentivity of *krijgen* has originated in the use with objects denoting states, and from there has spread to other uses as well.

Of course it is hard to determine cause and effect from examples alone. The semantic change of *krijgen* could have been initiated by another mechanism, and this could have affected the objects used with the verb. But what goes against this is the uneven distribution of agentive subjects among the different kinds of objects. If *krijgen* had started to lose its agentivity in a way in which the objects played no causal role, an even, or at least more even distribution of agentive subjects would be expected among the objects than was found.

The hypothesis raises two related questions: (1) how exactly did this change take place, and (2) why has this change originated in the use with objects denoting states?

Let us say that *krijgen* at one point, probably in the mid 13<sup>th</sup> century, was a fully agentive verb with the meaning ‘obtain with effort’. This entails a use with objects that are compatible with this meaning: objects like ‘storm’, ‘beating’, ‘critique’ or ‘blushes’ were not possible, but objects like ‘castle’, ‘sword’ and ‘food’ were. It is in this context that examples like (57-58) start to appear, in which we find the obtaining of a state by an agentive subject, mostly in Christian contexts.

- 57) Op dat wy overmids inwendigher oefeninghen *ghestadicheit van herten* mochten crighen ende onsen lieven Heer aenhanghen.  
 ‘So that we by means of inner practice can obtain stability of the heart and join our Lord.’  
 (Brugman; 1400)
- 58) Dieselve leerre scrijft aldus mede: “Met pinen gekrijcht hi *gesondichede*, wien die quale so hout verblent, dat hi hem selven ne siet no kent”.  
 ‘That same doctrine also writes: “With hardship he, who is kept so blinded by the disease, that he sees nor knows himself, gets healthy”’  
 (Spiegel der sonden; 1440)

However, such mental or physical states are not typical objects that are obtained with intention and effort like a castle or a sword. Instead, they are usually obtained without any intention, let alone effort. It is likely that this particular aspect of states has played a crucial role in the semantic change of *krijgen*. Although states were initially used with agentive subjects, the nature of the direct object led to a less agentive interpretation. This might have specifically occurred when the context was not disambiguating, as in (59).

- 59) So began si te dencken op die salicheit hare sielen want si en hadde gheen hope weder te crighen *ghesontheit des lichaems*.  
 ‘Thus she started to think about the salvation of her soul, because she had no hope of obtaining physical health again.’  
 (Marialegenden en –exempelen; 1479)

This process led to a changing role for the other participant that could appear in an oblique phrase. Initially, this participant had a source role: an object was obtained from the other participant. As the subject gradually lost its agentivity, this gave way for the other participant to take over this active role. Many examples in the corpus are ambiguous with regard to the roles of the subject and the (sometimes implicit) other participant (60-61). Only (62) has a clear non-agentive subject.

- 60) Als David inden sonden vel, hy bekende sijn misdade, hy riep an God, hi bat ghenade, soe langhe dat hi creech verdoen.  
 ‘When David fell into sin, he confessed his crimes, he called to God, he prayed for mercy so long until he obtained forgiveness.’  
 (gedichten Hildegarsberch; 1470)

- 61) (=56) Ic sal u tot eenen wive trouwen. Ic hope het en sal ons niet berouwen. Icheb ghecreghen algader mijnder moeder wille ende vader.  
‘I will marry you to be my wife. I hope we will not regret it. I have obtained my mother’s and father’s consent.’  
(Roman van Jonathas ende Rosafiere; 1495)
- 62) Den XIXen ende XXen februarij creghen de ghues ghoede tijdinghe.  
‘On February 19th and 20th, the rebels received good news.’  
(v. Vaernewijck, Ber. T. 2, 125; 1567)

#### *Development of the complement construction*

Earlier, I mentioned that 14<sup>th</sup> century *krijgen* can be used as an intransitive verb, a bare transitive verb and a transitive verb with a complement, such as (63-65).

- 63) (=35) Het staet so onderwilen, dat ment niet *uut*gecrigen en mach [uit het oor], om dat so diepe es daerin gesteken met onwisen handen.  
‘It is sometimes the case, that one cannot get it *out of the ear*, because it has been put in there by unsteady hands.’  
(Cyrurgie, Boek III-V; 1353)
- 64) Op dat ic Gelloene mach enechsijns *te campe* gecrigen.  
‘So that in some way I can get Gelloene to fight me (litt. ‘get Gelloene *at a fight*’).’  
(Roman der Lorreinen; 1340)
- 65) Mocht sine *in haren arm* ghecrighen, hine souts haer niet swighen.  
‘Should she get him *in her arms*, he would not conceal anything from her.’  
(Borchgravinne van Vergi; 1350)

These complements are all locative, they describe the movement of a person or object from or to a certain location. It is not until the 15<sup>th</sup> century that complements start to occur that describe locations that should be interpreted as figurative rather than literal locations such as *in his hand* (66).

- 66) Aldus hielden si haer lant, tot dat die hertoge van Brabant, [...] titel, wapene, ende lant al weder creegh *in sijn hant*.  
‘Thus they kept their land, until the duke of Brabant [...] got title, weapon and land back in his possession again (litt. ‘back *in his hand*’).’  
(Brabantsche yeesten; 1432)

As a next step, adjectives denoting states first appear in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (67), and soon after, a specific type of adjective, the adjectival participle, appears as well (68-

69). Adjectival participles are adjectives derived from verbs, and therefore, this marks an important step in the development of *krijgen* as an auxiliary.

67) Ende so daer de eene Sluetel niet op en paste, sy mochte eene andere versoecken [...] dat sy het Slot *op* crege.

‘And because the key did not fit, she tried another one, so that she got the lock *open*.’

(Marnix, Byenc; 1569)

68) Desen dach waren eenige ruyteren uyt Heusden naer des viants leger gereden [...] ende rencontreerden eenige voeragiers, daeraf sij eenigen *gevangen* cregen.

‘On this day, some horsemen had ridden from Heusden towards the enemy’s army, and encountered some freebooters, of which they took some prisoner (litt. ‘of which they got some *caught*’).’

(Duyck, Journ.; 1600)

69) Sij [...] konden haar drank niet als met een gemeen Herbergs vuur *ontdoid* krijgen.

‘They could not get their drink *defrosted* like they would with an ordinary fire at the inn.’

(Selds. Walvisv. 52; 1684)

These examples can be interpreted in two ways: as ‘to get a person/object in a V-ed state’ and ‘to V a person/object’. In the latter interpretation, the main activity described in the examples is reduced to that of the complement, which is a first indication of a reanalysis of *krijgen* from main verb to auxiliary. This would mean that (68-69) can be regarded as the first examples of what Van der Horst (2002) calls the ‘new *krijgen*, in which case this use is much older than the early 1990s which was originally proposed (Van der Horst *ibid.*: 176). A schematic representation of this process is given in (70).

70) Auxiliation cline of *krijgen*

*krijgen* + PP (location) > *krijgen* + PP (state) > *krijgen* + AP (state) > *krijgen* + PART (state)  
 Vf + complement > > > AUX + Vf

This new, aspectual use of *krijgen* has not replaced the original resultative constructions with complements denoting locations or states. In present-day Dutch, the latter type is still productive (*ik krijg die spijker niet uit de muur* ‘I can’t get that nail out of the wall’, *het kind krijgt zijn bord niet leeg* ‘the child can’t get his plate empty’). It is in these constructions that the subject has kept at least some of the agentivity of the original *krijgen*. However, over time, some more idiomatic

complement use of *krijgen* has developed in which the agentivity of the subject seems less strong than in the examples given above, such as *in het verzicht/oog krijgen* (71-72), *in zicht krijgen*, *onder zijn hoede krijgen*, *in het vizier krijgen* (73). I assume that these were originally used with an agentive subject, but have gradually lost some, but not all, of this agentivity, possibly under the influence of the development of the transitive use. Since there are very few examples of this particular use in the corpus, this has to remain a hypothesis.

- 71) Zo de Kogel te laag [...] gevallen is, dan laat ik het Stuk agter in de Broek zo veel neerzakken, tot dat ik [...] wederöm myn begeerde punt B *in 't Verzicht* kryg.  
‘If the ball has fallen too low, I will lower the piece in the back of the sail until I get my wanted point B in sight again.’  
(v. Kinsbergen, Zeem.-Handb. 2, 5, 154; 1782)
- 72) Bij een bocht van den weg, krijg ik de eerste rietvelden *in het oog*.  
‘At a curve in the road I get the first reed lands in sight.’  
(v. Moll, De Natuur, 281 b; 1896)
- 73) De twee luchtvloten krijgen elkaar *in 't visier!*  
‘The two airfleet get each other in sight.’  
(Natuur en Vernuft 1, 41 b; 1916)

An interesting characteristic of both the resultative use and the aspectual use of *krijgen* is that they seem to be used mostly in negative contexts, and are often combined with the modal verb *kunnen* ‘can’, although both elements are by no means obligatory. Semantically, it is questionable whether both uses should be considered fully agentive in present-day Dutch. Its use in the imperative sounds rather odd (74).

- 74) a. ??Krijg de soep opgegeten!  
‘Get the soup eaten!’  
b. ??Krijg je bord leeg!  
‘Get your plate empty!’

And the same is the case when the construction is embedded as a complement of verbs such as *beloven* ‘to promise’ (75).

- 75) a. ??Ik beloof je de soep opgegeten te krijgen.  
‘I promise you to get the soup eaten.’  
b. ??Ik beloof je mijn bord leeg te krijgen.  
‘I promise you to get my plate empty.’

The question is whether the resultative use of *krijgen* has always been not fully agentive but rather ‘pseudo-agentive’, or whether this is a later development. A major problem is that examples like the ones above do not occur in the corpus, and that, of course, their grammaticality cannot be tested with constructed examples. Still, I would argue for a scenario in which the agentivity of *krijgen* has weakened over time. I have shown that *krijgen* has a highly agentive origin and that the resultative construction has already been present from this early stage on. Where the transitive use of *krijgen* has lost almost all its agentivity over the centuries, it seems most likely that this has had its effect on the resultative construction as well.

#### *Development of the non-agentive complement use*

There is considerable variation among the different auxiliary uses of *krijgen* with respect to subject agentivity. The auxiliary use in the resultative construction [*krijgen* DIR OBJ PARTICIPLE] has developed from the complement construction in which at least part of the subject agentivity of *krijgen*’s original use has remained present. However, subject agentivity is absent in two other auxiliary uses (76-77, repeated from above).

- 76) (=7) Tijdens de vlucht kregen we Casino Royale te zien.  
‘During the flight we got to see Casino Royale.’
- 77) (=9) De prins kreeg het eerste exemplaar uitgereikt door de directeur.  
‘The prince was handed the first exemplar by the director.’

The construction [DIR OBJ *te* INF *krijgen*] first occurs in the corpus in the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (78). Although *krijgen* can be interpreted as either ‘receive’ or ‘take’, the latter is the most probable because of the adjunct time phrase. The next occurrence in the corpus has a clear non-agentive subject (79).

- 78) Die 't ambacht kan, krygt de neering, zei de snyder, en hy kreeg een paar kousen in de Paaschweek *te verzoolen*.  
‘He who knows the craft gets customers, said the tailor, and he was given a pair of stockings to resole in the Easter week.’  
(Tuinman 1, 261; 1726)
- 79) Hier krijgt men op zijn best alle dagen ééne schotel vruchten *te zien*.  
‘At its best one is shown one fruit dish on all days here.’  
(J. v. Lennep, Lev. v. D. J. v. L. 1, 237; 1806)

I argue that this construction has originated in a process of specification, in which a *te* + INF adjunct has been added to the phrase to clarify the reason for the transfer of

the direct object to the subject. In (78), this reason is to let the tailor resole the stockings. In (79), the reason ('to look at the fruit dish') has moved to the background and the main meaning of the adjunct phrase is better described as specifying the manner in which the transfer takes place (seeing instead of actual transfer).

Apart from this specifying function, the *te* + INF adjunct also disambiguates the sentence with respect to the thematic roles. This might have been a helpful tool in the period when this construction comes into use. *Krijgen* is already mostly used with non-agentive subjects in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century (figure 4). However, *krijgen* still has mostly agentive subjects when combined with concrete objects (figure 9). When speakers wanted to express a non-agentive subject with a concrete object, such as in (78-79), it is therefore not surprising that they used adjuncts like *te* + INF for disambiguation.

The other 'auxiliary' use of *krijgen* with a non-agentive subject is the semi-passive construction. Its first occurrence in the corpus is from 1920 (80).

- 80) 's Avonds kreeg zij, keurig in enveloppe, f 50 thuisgestuurd.  
'At night, she got sent home fifty guilders, nicely in an envelope.'  
(Naeff, Veulen; 1920)

In order to understand how and why this construction came into existence at this time, let us look again at some examples of the aspectual use of *krijgen*:

- 81) Ook kreeg zij [...] haar borden nog *gewasschen* en haar pannen *geschuurd*.  
'Also she got her plates *washed* and her pans *scrubbed*.'  
(Schart.-Ant., Sprotje 2, 44; 1909)
- 82) Mijnheer Pardoes zat als verwezen en durfde waarlijk niet zeggen dat zijn éénige bijdrage 't half geld was waarvoor hij de advertentie had *geplaatst* gekregen.  
'Mr Pardoes was dismayed and did not dare to say that his only contribution was that he got the advertisement *placed* for half price.'  
(Ned. Volksalm.; 1859)
- 83) Het ophouden te arbeiden, ten einde zekere eischen *doorgevoerd* te krijgen, of zekere eischen der werkgevers te weerstaan.  
'Stopping their work, in order to get certain demands *carried out*, or to withstand certain demands by the employers.'  
(Levit.-Polak, Diam.; 1908)

In these examples, the subject carries out an action to produce the result indicated by the participle. However, the examples differ with respect to the subject of the

participle. In (81), the subject of *krijgen* is also the subject of the participles *gewassen en geschuurd* ‘washed and scrubbed’. In (82-83), on the other hand, the subject of *krijgen* has *someone else* carrying out the respective actions of placing the advertisement and carrying out the demands.

In the corpus, the latter construction appears later than the former, which makes it probable to consider the latter an extension of the ‘new *krijgen*’: one in which the grammatical subject is still the agent, but in which it is no longer the subject of the participle. Although this step does not immediately change the agentive role of the subject, it does open the door for possible ambiguity. Note that in this light, it is not clear whether (84) is really a semi-passive or an ambiguous case of the ‘aspectual use of *krijgen*’, without more knowledge of the context.

- 84) Ze moest nog lessen betaald krijgen, Godfried ook.  
 ‘She still had to get paid classes, and Godfried as well.’  
 (Duykers, Rosa 189; 1907 (example from Royen 1952: 259))

This reanalysis is made possible by the split between the subject of *krijgen* and the subject of the main verb. This creates an extra argument role, and the agentive role shifts from the subject of *krijgen* (in reading 85i) to this new argument (in reading 85ii), the subject of the main verb. Reading (85iii) represents the state in which the grammatical subject ‘he’ is no longer given an agentive interpretation.

- 85) Hij kreeg de advertentie geplaatst.  
 ‘He got the advertisement placed.’  
 i. He succeeded in having the advertisement placed.  
 ii. He succeeded in having the advertisement placed (by someone).  
 iii. Someone placed the advertisement (for him).

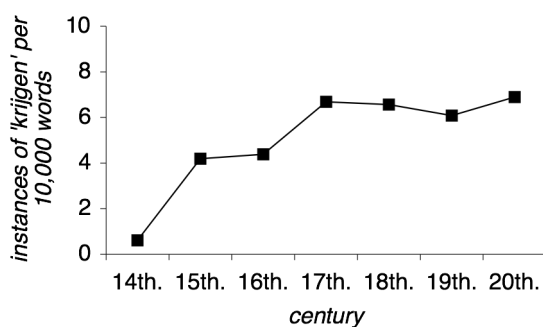
This last step is not a coincidence, but a consequence of the semantic change that the verb *krijgen* has undergone by the beginning of the twentieth century. The subject of *krijgen* has lost its agentivity in almost all transitive uses, except for the resultative constructions. When the agentive role shifts to the subject of the main verb, the subject of *krijgen* gets the role it also has in the transitive use, that of recipient. This process might be considered a case of ‘combined analogical pressure’, a term coined by Givón & Yang (1994: 130) for the similar case of the development of the *get-passive*. The main point of using this term is to stress that the development of the new form, in this case the semi-passive with *krijgen*, cannot be attributed to one ‘parent’ construction, but rather to two. The formal similarities between the transitive use and the auxiliary use most probably will have reinforced this process.



*Increase in the frequency of use*

Grammaticalization of a linguistic item usually leads to an increase in the frequency of use of the item. This is due to the fact that by processes of semantic bleaching and extension, the item can be used in a much wider array of contexts than when it still had lexical status. In the design of the corpus study of which I have discussed the results above, a study of the increase in frequency is not possible. In my data collection, I have randomly reduced all the instances of *krijgen* to around 200 per century. Another obstacle was the fact that the WNT-corpus consists of single sentences serving as examples for the entries throughout the dictionary. However, for a frequency study it would be necessary to have a large body of texts from which the occurrences of a single lexeme in different time periods can be measured.

In order to get a better understanding of the development in the frequency of use of *krijgen*, I have therefore carried out a separate frequency study, apart from the study above. A major practical problem was that there is not one historical corpus of Dutch that covers the period 1300-2000 in which each century is represented comparably in text size. I have therefore created a collection of texts from this period from two sources that were electronically available: the CD-ROM *Klassieke Literatuur*, a collection of Dutch literary texts from the period 1300-1900, and the DBNL<sup>5</sup>, an online resource of Dutch language and literature. The collection consisted of texts from all genres, with roughly comparable amounts of words for each century (over 500,000 on average). Next, I searched for all instances of the lexemes *krijgen* and *gekrijgen* in all their different spellings. Figure 8 shows the results.



**Figure 8.** Frequency of the lexemes *krijgen* and *gekrijgen* per century in a 3,500,000 word corpus.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.dbnl.nl/titels/titels.php?c=15&s=c>

Figure 8 shows that the frequency of *krijgen* has increased dramatically since the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The sharpest increase occurred between 1300-1600. On the basis of the graph alone, it is hard to say whether the frequency of use has since then stabilized, or that it has continued to increase at a much slower rate. The latter seems to fit better with the continuing generalization process of the verb, which has given rise to new uses such as the ‘new *krijgen*’, the semi-passive, and shows a strong increase in the use of inanimate subjects in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (figure 5). The relatively low frequency of *krijgen* in the 19<sup>th</sup> century is somewhat surprising. One explanation could be that this period in Dutch literature is characterized by the use of a high-register kind of Dutch. Possibly under the influence of German (see Grimm’s quote in the beginning of the chapter), *krijgen* was considered ‘lower standard’ and replaced by synonyms like *bekomen* and *ontvangen*.

#### 4.4 Discussion and conclusions

Present-day Dutch *krijgen* is a verb with a rich past. In this chapter I have given a detailed overview of how it has developed from its Middle Dutch use to the present. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, *krijgen* is used in intransitive, transitive and complement constructions. These uses are all highly agentive, although the transitive use of *krijgen* already shows different degrees of agentivity. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the intransitive use has become almost completely extinct. The transitive shows a sharp decrease in agentive use, a process that will continue until at least the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This change occurs similarly with an increase in the use of objects that denote subject states. The decrease in agentivity of *krijgen* seems to take off in this particular use, followed by abstract objects a century later. The use with concrete objects does not seem to lose its agentivity until the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the use of inanimate subjects starts to increase, while the non-agentive use of transitive *krijgen* continues to expand. The complement use of *krijgen*, on the other hand, is still fully agentive. By the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the change from agentive to non-agentive seems to slow down. Most transitive use has now become non-agentive, although agentive use still lives on. Around this time, the first non-agentive complement sentences start to appear, which marks the beginning of the semi-passive.

Between the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the transitive use of *krijgen* is rather stable, with only the number of inanimate subjects still increasing. During this time, the auxiliary uses of *krijgen* start to develop. Except for the resultative construction, these uses have a non-agentive meaning. The original agentive meaning also lives on in a restricted number of specific transitive uses.

In a time span of less than 700 years, *krijgen* has undergone typical grammaticalization processes such as semantic bleaching and extension (e.g. Verhagen 2000b, Heine & Kuteva 2002, Hopper & Traugott 2003). Bleaching has probably been triggered by the use of direct objects denoting states of the subject. While these objects were initially combined with an agentive subject, their nature allowed a less agentive interpretation. This possibly has led to a loss of subject agentivity in the local context of objects denoting states, after which the process soon spread to other objects as well. Earlier, I mentioned that the initial use of objects denoting states with agentive subjects is found mainly in Christian contexts. An interesting question is therefore whether this specific context has played a crucial role in the development of *krijgen*, or that the change would have also taken place without it. Unfortunately, it is impossible to support either of these theories at this point, and a more thorough study is needed in order to do so.

It is probable that the loss of subject agentivity led to a reanalysis of the role of other participants (later expressed as indirect objects) from source to agent in specific contexts. Gradually, *krijgen* turned from a verb with a specific, lexical meaning ('to obtain, to get into possession') to a verb with an aspectual, ingressive meaning ('to get into a state of having').

The loss of semantic content is paralleled by an increase in the frequency of use. It can be argued that the latter process is a result of the former, although it is impossible to prove. In this scenario, the 'bleached' *krijgen* could be used in new contexts, such as those in which possession did not play a role (*we krijgen goed weer* 'we are getting good weather'), in which the object was negative for the subject (*hij kreeg griep* 'he got the flu') and, in general, with inanimate subjects. This extension of use has led to an increase in the frequency of use. However, it should be noted that the sharpest increase in frequency seems to have occurred between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century, while the strongest change to non-agentive use seems to have started slightly later.

The (semi-) auxiliary *krijgen* finds its origin in the transitive use with locative complements. When participles started to be used in these complements, they were at some point reanalyzed as the main verb of the phrase, turning *krijgen* into an auxiliary.

Development of new use did not mean an automatic disposal of the old: the grammaticalization of *krijgen* has progressed gradually and most of the various stages in the process are co-existing today. The locative complement construction from which most auxiliary use developed is still in use, and *krijgen*'s agentive past remains present in very restricted contexts.

The development of *krijgen* shows the typical process that change in general and grammaticalization in particular starts in highly local contexts (Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca 1994: 11, Traugott 2003). On the other hand, the development of

the semi-passive seems to suggest that the semantics of the different uses of *krijgen* were not totally isolated from each other. Instead, they seem to have intertwined, with the semi-passive as a result.