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ON THE VOICE AND STATUS OF THE CONSTRUCTION *DATI* + *SE* + INFINITIVE

This study investigates the Croatian *dati* + *se* + infinitive construction in contexts where it encodes objective possibility. The paper focuses on the relevance of this construction for the typology of voice and discusses its status. While it shares key features with the canonical *se*-middle – such as the realization of the internal argument of the non-finite verb in subject position, the presence of the athematic *se*, and a dispositional modality reading – it diverges structurally through the presence of an embedded non-finite verb. Central to the analysis is the identification of the infinitival component as a passive infinitive, representing a type of non-canonical passive. This structure lacks overt morphological marking typically associated with passives, but allows agentive realization via the re-introduction of the prepositional phrase *od (strane)* + NP_{Gen}. These properties distinguish it from canonical middles and align it with non-canonical passives. Furthermore, the construction exhibits syntactic reduction, supporting its interpretation as a restructuring environment.

1. Introduction

The verb *dati* ‘give’ is a ditransitive verb taking a recipient and a theme argument as internal arguments, beside the agent argument. This can be observed in the example provided in (1) excerpted from the corpus hrWaC 2.2 (Ljubešić and Klubička 2014).

- (1) *Profā_i nam_j je dala test iz kemije_k.*
 Agent Recipient Theme

‘The professor gave us a chemistry test.’

The theme argument sometimes surfaces as a non-finite embedded clausal complement, as exemplified by (2).

- (2) *Da je netko_i meni_j dao PRO_j pisat(i) recenziju, našla bih načina da ih pokopam.*

‘If someone had given me to write a review, I would have found a way to bury them.’

In the literature, (2) is seen as a case of object-control construction whereby the unexpressed implicit subject of the infinitival complement is co-referent with the object from the matrix clause.¹ According to Batinić Angster (2019) biverbal constructions with infinitives in which the matrix verb allows for a permissive reading – such as *dati* ‘let’, *pustiti* ‘let’, *dopustiti* ‘permit’, *ostaviti* ‘leave, let’, *dozvoliti* ‘permit’ – sometimes constitute a restructuring configuration.² These verbs together with their infinitive form a monoclausal-like context allowing for instance long-distance binding of otherwise locally bound elements – e.g. possessive reflexives (Cro. *svoj*), negative polarity items (e.g. Cro. *ništa* ‘nothing’, *nikad* ‘never’, *nijedan* ‘none’).

In contexts with infinitives the verb *dati* ‘give’ appears with the marker *se* in the so-called ‘feel-like’ constructions or involuntary state construction exemplified by (3)³ or in a middle-like construction, such as the one in (4).

¹ On the typology of control-constructions see Landau (2000). For the classification and analysis of Croatian subject- vs. object-control constructions see Gnjatović and Matasović (2013), Gračanin-Yukseš (2019), Batinić Angster (2019, 2024).

² The term restructuring was first used by Rizzi (1976, 1978) to indicate a structure that went through a process responsible of transforming an originally biclausal structure into a structurally simple, monoclausal unit. The term was preserved in generative grammar, although some authors (e.g. Cinque 2004, 2006) assume that restructuring configurations maintain the same structure from the very beginning of derivation and that these do not need to be affected by a process of structural simplification.

³ See Marušić and Žaucer (2016) for an analysis of Slovenian feel-like or involuntary state constructions, addressed also in Lenardič (2024: 13).

- (3) *Ne da mi_i se PRO_i ići na put.*
 ‘I don’t feel like going on a trip.’
- (4) [*Neke mrlje*]_i *ne* *daju* *se* *oprati t_i.*
 some stains NEG give-3PL.PRES SE wash
 ‘Some stains cannot be washed off.’

In the ‘feel-like’ construction exemplified by the Croatian sentence in (3) the implicit subject of the non-finite verb *ići* ‘go’ is co-referent with the matrix experiencer argument surfacing as dative NP exhibiting thus properties of a logical subject (cfr. Kučanda 1998; Belaj 2007), and a quirky case of grammatical subject (Lenardić 2024: 13). In the construction exemplified by (4) the understood object of the embedded transitive infinitive verb *oprati* ‘wash’ surfaces as the matrix subject. The subject *neke mrlje* ‘some stains’ is in fact the internal or notional argument of the embedded non-finite verb *oprati* ‘wash’, that is the logical object of the lower infinitival verb that acts as the complement of the matrix verb *dati* (*se*). The behaviour of the latter will be tackled in the following sections.

1.1. *Dati + se + infinitive: scope of the study*

Among previous considerations of the construction *dati + se + infinitive*, it is worth mentioning that Kunzmann-Müller (1995) considered the usage of the verb *dati* ‘give’ and *davati* ‘give’, recognizing the permissive function of *dati/davati + infinitive*, as well as a particular passive behaviour of its “reflexive” counterpart *dati/dati se + infinitive*, as Kunzmann-Müller (1995: 208) calls it.

Apart from her, Žagar Szentesi (2011) extensively investigated the construction *dati se + infinitive*. Within the framework of a grammaticalization process, Žagar Szentesi observes the de-semanticization of the verb *dati* when followed by a non-finite verb. As a consequence of the semantic bleaching (also known as generalization) resulting from the grammaticalization process, she notices the lack of independence of *dati* in similar contexts and claims that it is semantically dependent on the embedded infinitival verb. Furthermore, the author highlights

its modal character. In her study, Žagar Szentesi identifies several functional variants of the construction *dati (se) + infinitive*:⁴

a) **objective possibility:**

(5) *Ta se mrlja da ukloniti.*

‘That stain can be removed.’

(6) *Ovdje se da živjeti vrlo komotno.*

‘Here it is possible to live quite fine.’

b) **permission:**

(7) *Sestre su nam ipak dale ući u sobu.*

‘Sisters let us come in the room.’

c) **volition:**

(8) *Kako ti se da ustati tako rano?*

‘How CAN you get up so early?’

(9) *Ne da mi se spavati.*

‘I don’t feel like sleeping.’

d) **indirect acting:**

(10) *Gdje mogu dati očistiti vuneni tepih?*

‘Where can I have/get a wool carpet cleaned?’

The function of objective possibility, as one of the most frequently occurring functions of the construction, is exemplified by (5) and (6). In the case of permission, the act of allowing another person to do something is implied, and in English it is expressed with the verb *let*, as in (7). The function volition is subsumed under (8) and (9) which exemplify willingness to act. The last functional variant – represented by (10) – is interpreted as indirect acting considering that the subject referent consciously prompts someone else to do something. The example has also been recognized in the literature (beside Žagar Szentesi 2011, see also Polančec 2015) as a case of causative-factitive diathesis. Among all the

⁴ The examples are taken from Žagar Szentesi (2011: 303–314) and provided with an English translation.

functions identified by Žagar Szentesi (2011), we will be concerned with the expression of objective possibility of the construction *dati (se) + infinitive* as reported in (5).

In her study, Žagar Szentesi (2011) emphasizes that the functions are intertwined to some extent, as sometimes it is difficult to determine the exact function that examples in their actual usage express. The author also highlights several important aspects of this construction that will be important for the present study. As a consequence of the de-semanticization of the matrix verb, she notices a radical reduction of the formal autonomy of *dati* reflected in a series of properties when denoting a modal function “objective possibility”, for instance that it is no longer a ditransitive verb, or that a characteristic dative argument of *dati* ‘give’ is no longer available, or additionally, that its derivational variability – concerning the addition of affixes – seems to be loosened.

We can exemplify this by modifying the above-mentioned example (5) here repeated as (11). In example (12), which was manipulated regarding the aspect of the verb (*davati_{impf}* instead of *dati_{pfv}*), we can see that the imperfective form of the verb results in unacceptability.

(11) *Ta se mrlja da ukloniti.*

(12) **Ta se mrlja daje ukloniti.*

‘That stain can be removed.’

Žagar Szentesi (2011) also observes that *dati* is restricted to third person subject contexts and acts as a polyfunctional verb that obligatorily takes a lexical non-finite verb as a complement. Moreover, we can also observe that the construction we are concerned with in this paper, i.e. the one denoting objective possibility, is most commonly associated with [-animate] subjects.⁵

Žagar Szentesi (2011) observes constraints regarding properties of the non-finite verb: it needs to fulfil the requirement of being transitive. According to Žagar Szentesi (2011: 307), *se* belongs to the lower infinitival verb. Although we do agree that diachronically it can be analysed as being raised to the higher posi-

⁵ The possibility of occurrence of [+animate] subjects in the *dati + se + infinitive* construction is not excluded, but since their presence can also trigger other readings, the examples involving animate subjects are excluded from the analysis.

tion in the sentence, we believe that synchronically it is fixed along with *dati*. A support for such claim comes from considering clitic climbing in conjunction with *dati* + *se* + infinitive. Clitic climbing is a phenomenon whereby a clitic associated with the non-finite verb climbs up and is pronounced with the higher, finite matrix verb. In such contexts the clitic can usually be pronounced on either position. This is not the case in a sentence such as (11). Consider its version provided in (13).

- (13) **Ta mrlja da ukloniti se.*
 that stains give.3SG.PRES remove SE
 ‘That stain cannot be removed.’

It can be observed that this is not an instance of what is typically conceived as clitic climbing. This shows that synchronically the higher position of the clitic *se* is not only allowed as one of the possibilities of its realizations, but it is the only available position.

1.2. Aim of the study

The aim of this study is to discuss the expression of the objective possibility, as stated in Žagar Szentesi (2011), instantiated by *dati* ‘give’ along with *se* and an embedded non-finite predicate. The properties of the construction *dati* + *se* + infinitive are relevant when considering middle and passive diathesis, voice in general, modality and restructuring. The study is inspired by the discussion of the properties of the German construction *sich-lassen* by Pitteroff and Alexiadou (2012), and Pitteroff (2014), which constitutes an equivalent of the Croatian *dati* + *se* + infinitive construction.

The analysis of the Croatian *dati* + *se* + infinitive construction encompasses a comparison with canonical (*se*-)middles, a comparison of its lower infinitival part with canonical passives, and finally, a discussion concerning the syntactic status of the construction. More specifically, the study will investigate whether the construction under analysis shows aspects of a biclausal or monoclausal configuration.

For the purpose of the present study, a number of examples were extracted from the corpus hrWaC 2.2 (Ljubešić and Klubička 2014) and then manipulated (e.g. via adverbial modification) and judged based on introspection. Throughout the paper, we will comment on the manipulated corpus examples. The list of the selection of the examples extracted from hrWaC and provided with glosses according to Leipzig Glossing Rules is given in Appendix.

2. On the voice of *dati + se + infinitive*

Voice – also known as diathesis or diathesis alternation – traditionally involves active, passive, and the middle voice as an “in-between category” (Belaj 2024: 95). The list of possibilities is not of course exhaustive. In the literature, in addition to these, there are, just to mention some, causative, applicative, circumstantial voice (see for example Polančec 2015). To discuss the voice of the construction *dati + se + infinitive*, it is necessary to compare it with what is known as canonical middle, more specifically Croatian *se*-canonical middle. Other than discussing their shared properties (section 2.1.) we will consider differences between the two constructions (section 2.2.).

2.1. Comparison with canonical middles

In this section we will consider similarities between canonical middles and *dati + se + infinitive*. We will consider properties that the construction under investigation shares with those of canonical middle constructions.

2.1.1. *On some basic structural shared properties*

Canonical *se*-middles, as understood here, refer to constructions (or their interpretations) denoting stative, generic and habitual eventualities (s. Marelj 2004; Oraić Rabušić 2018: 175–177; Batinić Angster 2020: 64–66), or “the prototypical generic constructions” (Belaj 2024: 116), such as (14) and (15).

- (14) *Neke se mrlje uklanjaju bez problema.*
 ‘Some stains remove without any problem.’
- (15)⁶ *Kruh se reže nožem.*
 ‘Bread is sliced with a knife.’

These sentences can be compared with the construction with *dati + se + infinitive*:

- (16) *Neke se mrlje daju ukloniti.*
 these SE stains give.3PL.PRES remove
 ‘Some stains can be removed.’
- (17) *Kruh se da rezati nožem.*
 bread SE give.3SG.PRES slice knife-INST
 ‘Bread can be sliced with a knife.’

One of the most obvious properties that a canonical middle and a construction involving *dati + se* and a non-finite verb share is the structural realisation of the logical object of the non-finite verb as subject of the construction which surfaces on the subject position in the same matrix domain as *dati + se*. Another property of this construction that stands out is the presence of the clitic *se*.

The direct objects of the unmarked or active counterparts of both of the constructions under comparison – the object *neke mrlje* ‘stains’ of the verb *ukloniti* ‘remove’ in (16) and the direct object *kruh* ‘bread’ of the verb *rezati* in (17) – are expressed in the subject position of the construction at stake. At the same time both canonical middles and *dati (se) + infinitive* construction involve the expression of a clitic *se* that can be roughly glossed as ‘self’. A few remarks are in order when *se* is discussed. Albeit it is sometimes considered to be a light counterpart of the heavy or strong form of the reflexive *sebe* ‘himself/herself/itself/themselves’, the *se* vs. *sebe* distinction is not proven to be always accountable for in terms of the dichotomy found between the light vs. heavy forms of personal pronouns (*ga/njega* ‘him’). Whereas *sebe* – being in complementary distribution with personal pronouns and acting as an argument – is taken into consideration

⁶ The example is taken from Belaj (2024: 116).

in the analysis of sentential anaphora, the varied distribution of *se*, its polyfunctionality and lack of argument status leaves it omitted from the analysis of true anaphors (s. e.g. Batinić Angster 2017, 2020). Non-reflexive clitic personal pronouns categorically belong to pronouns notwithstanding the light/reduced form (*ga* vs. *njega* ‘him’), whereas *se* is at times assumed to be a particle, and a middle marker (Belaj 2024: 98; Belaj 2001).

Although a detailed overview and discussion of the differences between *sebe* and *se* is out of the scope of this paper, it is important to note that *se* is an athematic reflexive, lacking some properties typical of arguments (s. Pitteroff and Alexiadou 2012: 214–215 on German *sich*, whose usage is comparable to that of both *se* and *sebe*; concerning differences between *sebe* and *se* s. Oraić-Rabušić 2015, 2018; Batinić Angster 2017, 2020; Belaj 2001, 2024). In other words, *se* lacks a theta-role or a thematic role that is usually assigned by a verb to its arguments. Evidence that favours this view comes from several properties such as the unavailability of coordination, confirmed by the ungrammaticality of (18), the unavailability of the substitution of *se* with an NP or Wh-phrase, exemplified by (19)a. and (19)b. respectively, and the unavailability of its modification as observed in (20).

- (18) **Slik-a se i nju/je ne da podesi-ti.*
 image-NOM se.ACC and her NEG give.3SG.PRES adjust-INF
- (19) a. **Slik-a_i slik-u_i ne da podesi-ti.*
 image-NOM image-ACC NEG give.3SG.PRES adjust-INF
- b. **Što_i slik-a t_i ne da podesi-ti?*
 What image-NOM NEG give.3SG.PRES adjust-INF
- (20) **Slika samo se da podesiti.*
 image-NOM INT SE give.3SG.PRES adjust-INF

‘The image alone can be adjusted.’⁷

As exemplified by (18), *se* cannot be coordinated, which is also expected considering its clitic status. Its substitution with an NP or a Wh – whereby both the NP

⁷ The intensifier *samo* ‘only’ has the scope over *se*.

*sliku*_{acc.} and *t* (that stands for the trace left by Wh-movement) are interpreted as referring to *slika* ‘image’ – yields a grammatically ill-formed sentence as shown in (19) a. and (19) b., respectively. The example (20) proves that the same holds true in case of an attempt of modification of *se* with the intensifier *samo* ‘only’ having the scope over *se*. With the reading according to which it is possible to adjust only that image, the sentence results ungrammatical.

That *se* does not constitute an internal argument, can be attested by the fact that its occurrence is unavailable with a secondary predication (Oraić Rabušić 2018: 66; Belaj 2024: 98–99), with a modification via *kao*-phrase (‘as’-phrase) (Moskovičević 1997: 111; Oraić Rabušić 2018: 67–68, Belaj 2024: 98–99), or in a comparative construction (Oraić Rabušić 2018: 71; Belaj 2024: 98–99). The evidence is provided in the following examples:

- (21) *Slika se*_{*ACC} *ne da* **cijelu*_{ACC}/*cijela*_{NOM} *podesiti*.
 ‘The image cannot (be) adjust(ed) all of itself.’
- (22) *Slika se*_{*ACC} *ne da podesiti* **kao boju*_{ACC}/*kao boja*_{NOM}
 ‘The image cannot be adjusted as colour does.’
- (23) *Slika se*_{*ACC} *da podesiti bolje nego* **boju*_{ACC}/*boja*_{NOM}
 ‘The image can be adjusted better than the colour.’

All of the discussed tests favour the analysis of *se* as lacking argument status, as it has been argued for the canonical middle construction (cf. Belaj 2024). Therefore, the element *se* is not an argument in the construction under investigation in this paper where it occurs along with *dati* ‘give’ in the matrix and higher domain of the sentence.

2.1.2. Shared properties: modification

Other than the structural realisations of the objects of the lower verb as subjects and the presence of *se*, the observed construction shows other similarities with canonical middles, such as compatibility with adverbials denoting genericity, unavailability of progressive readings, and expression of dispositional modality.

According to Belaj (2024: 116), canonical middles are compatible with adverbials denoting genericity or “habituality, like *obično* ‘usually’, *u pravilu* ‘as a rule’, *redovito* ‘regularly’, etc.”. This holds true for the construction *dati + se + infinitive*. Consider the following sentences:

(24) *Ljubav se obično ne da izvagati.*

‘Love usually cannot be measured.’

(25) *Sam film se u pravilu da opisati kao mješavina filmova.*

‘As a rule, the film can be described as a mixture of films.’

(26) *Sloboda se obično ne da zaustaviti.*

‘Freedom usually cannot be stopped.’

(27) *Ako postoji interes i volja, to se znanje da redovito nadograđivati.*

‘If there is interest and will, this knowledge can be regularly upgraded.’

Generally, the expected and most felicitous reading of the construction can be subsumed under the paraphrase such as ‘it is generally/usually the case that...’. For example, we can paraphrase (24) stating that it is generally/usually the case that the love cannot be measured, just like (26), for example, can be paraphrased stating the following: ‘It is generally/usually the case that freedom cannot be stopped.’

Canonical middles in English are known for their incompatibility with the progressive aspect (Riemer 2010: 321; see also Pitteroff 2014: 35). In Croatian, therefore, adverbials like *sada* ‘now’, *upravo* ‘at this very moment’ (Belaj 2024: 116) are unacceptable. A modification forcing a progressive reading to *dati (se) + infinitive* construction results in infelicitous sentences:⁸

(28) #*Ljubav se upravo sada / u točno ovom trenutku ne da izvagati.*

‘Right now / In this exact moment, love cannot be measured.’

⁸ The hash sign indicates semantic anomaly.

(29) #*Sam se film upravo sada / u točno ovom trenutku da opisati kao mješavina filmova.*

‘Right now / In this exact moment, the film can be described as a mixture of films.’

(30) #*Sloboda se upravo sada / u točno ovom trenutku ne da zaustaviti.*

‘Right now / In this exact moment, freedom cannot be stopped.’

(31) #*Upravo sada / U točno ovom trenutku to se znanje da nadograđivati.*

‘Right now / In this exact moment, this knowledge cannot be upgraded.’

Such modifications operated on the examples with *dati* + *se* + infinitive result in semantically odd and degraded sentences, as shown by (28)–(31).

2.1.3. *Shared properties: dispositional modality*

There is one more similarity between the two compared constructions. It concerns their modal meaning. It has been acknowledged by several scholars (e.g. van Oosten 1977; Condoravdi 1989; Lekakou 2005; Pitteroff 2014; Lenardič 2024) that a canonical middle is associated with modality. According to van Oosten (1977), the properties of the subject of a middle, which is in fact the logical object, are such that the subject is understood to be responsible for the expressed eventuality. This is assumed under what the author calls *The responsibility condition* (van Oosten 1977). This kind of inherent property or quality of subject is explained in terms of dispositional modality, which seems to be relevant, as shown by Pitteroff and Alexiadou (2012) and Pitteroff (2014) (building on Condoravdi 1989; Lekakou 2005), for the interpretation of German *sich-lassen*.

Like in the case of German, we claim that its equivalent construction in Croatian *dati* + *se* + infinitive shares with canonical middles this property. It involves non-episodic generic statements about a property of the subject-referent. Furthermore, this explains the compatibility with adverbials implying generic readings.

This construction instantiates dispositional modality whereby a property is assigned to the subject, which is the internal argument of the embedded verb (see Lekakou 2005; Pitteroff 2014; Lenardič 2024). For this kind of modality is claimed to be subject-oriented. Consider the sentence (32) a. and its paraphrase provided in (32) b.

(32) a. *Prošlost se da samo iznova interpretirati.*

‘The past can only be reinterpreted.’

b. *Prošlost je takva da, kada je se interpretira, može je se samo iznova interpretirati.*

‘The past is such that, when people interpret it, they can only reinterpret it.’

Taking into consideration the sentence (32) a., we can state that its interpretation corresponds roughly to b. (s. Lenardič 2024 on Slovenian dispositional middle constructions). In case of dispositional modality, it is a property of the subject that needs to facilitate the eventuality, and not an external factor.⁹ Therefore, the statement holds “in virtue of” or “because of” the property related to the subject (s. van Oosten 1977; Lekakou 2005; Pitteroff 2014: 41-43; Lekakou and Pitteroff 2018, Lenardič 2024: 9). This can be observed considering the example (33) a. with its potential continuation provided in (33) b. and (33) c.

(33) a. *Prošlost se da samo iznova interpretirati...*

‘The past can only be reinterpreted...’

b. *...zato što je prošlost takva da je se može samo iznova interpretirati.*

‘...because the past is such that it can only be reinterpreted.’

c. *#...zato što je povjesničari ne znaju interpretirati.*

‘...because historians do not know how to interpret it.’

Only the continuation given in (33) b. is acceptable for (33) a., whereas the continuation given in c. is judged as unacceptable: ‘The past can only be reinter-

⁹ See Lekakou (2005: 68) for a specification of “disposition ascriptions”.

preted not because historians do not know how to interpret it, but because the past is such that it can only be reinterpreted.’

Applying this test to one of the other examples excerpted from the corpus (see (34) a.), we can observe the same pattern regarding the available interpretation:

(34) a. *Taj jezik uopće se ne da sabiti u kalupe hrvatskog jezika...*

‘That language absolutely cannot be compressed into the molds of the Croatian language at all...’

b. *...zato što je taj jezik takav da ga se uopće ne da sabiti u kalupe hrvatskog jezika.*

‘...because that language is such that it cannot be compressed into the molds of the Croatian language.’

c. *#...zato što ga netko (drugi) ne može sabiti u kalupe hrvatskoga jezika.*

‘...because someone (else) cannot compress it into the molds of the Croatian language.’

In other words, according to the interpretation of the sentence (34) a. – paraphrased as ‘That language absolutely cannot be compressed into the molds of the Croatian language because that language is such that it cannot be compressed into the molds of the Croatian language, not because someone (else) cannot compress it into the molds of the Croatian language.’ – there is no external factor contributing to the eventuality described in the sentence or an external referent that can be seen as responsible for the eventuality at stake, as the eventuality is the property of the subject itself, that is its disposition.

2.2. Canonical *se*-middle and *dati* + *se* + infinitive at the crossroads

Notwithstanding a great deal of similarities between them, as was discussed in section 2.1., taking a closer look on the two constructions, looking beneath their surface structure and interpretation, we become aware of the fact that the canonical *se*-middle constructions and *dati* + *se* + infinitive construction differ substantially. One of these differences concerns the aspectual properties of the verbs involved in the two constructions.

Whereas canonical middles impose restrictions regarding aspectual properties of predicates and do not accept achievement verbs (Riemer 2010: 321), but only accomplishments and activities (Fagan 1992; Pitteroff and Alexiadou 2012; Pitteroff 2014), the *dati + se + infinitive* construction can involve achievements, too. That explains the grammaticality of (35), and the ungrammaticality of (36).

(35) *Sloboda se ne da zaustaviti.*
 ‘Freedom cannot be stopped.’

(36) **Sloboda se ne zaustavi.*
 ‘Freedom does not stop.’

Another important point of difference revolves around the preference regarding the perfective vs. imperfective aspect marked morphologically on Croatian verbs. A canonical middle reading is available with imperfective verbs, whereas perfective counterparts are ruled out, or at least it can be said that the canonical middle reading is ruled out in case of realization of a perfective verb. *Dati* itself is a perfective verb, whereas the embedded infinitive can appear in both perfective and imperfective form.

The following sentences exemplify the perfective embedded contexts:

(37) *Neke mrlje nisu se dale do kraja ukloniti.*
 ‘Some stains could not be completely removed.’

(38) *Trake za depilaciju nisu se dale skinuti do kraja pa je tetak danima hodao po svijetu sa ljepljivom nadlakticom...*
 ‘The depilation strips could not be completely removed so my uncle walked around the world for days with a sticky upper arm...’

(39) *Karoserija se ne da odijeliti od lokomotive.*
 ‘The bodywork cannot be separated from the freight car locomotive.’

(40) *to se riječima ne da opisati niti postoji misao ili definicija koja može tako nešto objasniti.*
 ‘Words cannot describe it, nor is there a thought or definition that can explain such a thing.’

The embedded infinitives in imperfective form are present in the following examples:

- (41) *Ja mislim da je to samo dio slagalice koja bi se dala lijepo slagati u raspravi.*

‘I think that it is only a part of the puzzle that could be put together nicely in a discussion.’

- (42) *Ako postoji interes i volja, to se znanje da nadograđivati jer biljaka ima jako puno.*

‘If there is interest and will, this knowledge can be upgraded because there are a lot of plants.’

Canonical middles involve one predicate, whereas the construction *dati* + *se* + infinitive involves a verbal complex. Other differences arise from the passive-like behaviour of the lower, non-finite part of the construction.

3. On the voice of the infinitival portion of the construction: a non-canonical passive

The construction *dati* + *se* + infinitive can be divided into two parts. Whereas the verb *dati* and *se* along with the subject – which is the internal and notional object of the infinitive – constitute its higher part, the core of its lower part is the infinitival verb. In this section we will claim that the infinitival lower part shares some properties with passive. Moreover, we will argue that it constitutes a so called non-canonical passive. In order to tackle this argument, it is necessary to define the passive voice. Let us set straight the difference between active and passive voice.

The sentence (43) exemplifies active voice, whereby the agent argument exhibits subject grammatical relation, and the Theme (and in other cases Patient) argument functions as a direct object.

- (43) *Ministarstvo vanjskih poslova je poslalo Bigarellija u Zadar.*

‘The Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent Bigarelli to Zadar.’

The active voice given in (43) has been constructed on the basis of the example in (44) instantiating a passive voice excerpted from the corpus hrWac 2.2. (Ljubešić and Klubička 2014). In the passive voice the internal argument – direct object of the verb *poslati* ‘send’ – occupies the subject position, whereas the Agent is introduced by a prepositional phrase *od (strane) + NP_{Gen}*. The passive counterpart of (43) is reported in (44) a. and can be represented as it is in (44) b.

- (44) a. *Bigarelli je poslan u Zadar od strane Ministarstva vanjskih poslova.*
 b. [T/IP *Bigarelli_i je* [VP *poslan t_i u Zadar od strane Ministarstva vanjskih poslova.*]]

‘Bigarelli was sent to Zadar by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.’

Canonical passive voice is characterized by several features, the most salient of which are (cfr. Legate 2021: 158; Wurmbrand, Kovač and Lohninger 2021; Alexiadou and Schäfer 2013: 2–4; Polančec 2015): a) agent demotion or suppression, b) object promotion to subject, and c) a particular morphological marking. The first one on the list – **agent demotion or suppression** – refers to the agent being semantically present but not syntactically as an NP in its characteristic position. Instead, the agent is either interpreted as an existential ‘someone’ or associated with an oblique phrase. In Croatian the oblique phrase is optionally manifested as *od/od strane-NP_{Gen}*. **Object promotion to subject** is the next property on the list, which covers for the fact that in passive voice constructions the Patient argument raises from its object position to the subject position. In generative grammar terms, and according to the standard Principle and Parameters view, the direct object via raising to Spec, T/IP gets nominative Case, satisfying the Case filter. Considering the property of Passive is characterized by **a particular morphological marking** in that the verbal morphology is distinct from the morphology present in active voice. This is manifested in Croatian by a periphrastic construction consisting of an auxiliary and passive participle (cfr. Polančec 2015). In generative grammar according to the standard Principle and Parameters generative grammar framework (cfr. Alexiadou and Schäfer 2013: 2), the passive suffix on the participle is assumed to absorb the accusative Case and the external theta-role of the verb as the object raised from its object position to the subject position.

Canonical passives are characterized by passive morphosyntax. In the *dati* + *se* + infinitive construction, namely in its lower part, passive morphosyntax is absent. The ungrammaticality of the examples (45) and (46) proves that passive morphology – a periphrastic formation of the passive (the auxiliary *biti* ‘be’ + the passive participle) in a non-finite embedded-like complement to *dati* is unacceptable.

- (45) **Sam film se da biti opisan kao*
 itself movie SE give.3SG.PRES be described as
mješavina filmova.
 mixture.NOM movies.GEN

‘The movie itself can be described as a mixture of movies.’

- (46) **Ako postoji interes i volja, to se znanje*
 if there is interest and willingness, this SE knowledge
da biti nadograđivano.
 give.3SG.PRES be upgraded

‘If there is interest and will, that knowledge can be upgraded.’

Passives are characterized by the involvement of non-overt arguments, often referred to as implicit arguments (s. Bhat and Pancheva 2017, for a typology of implicit arguments in syntax). Although there is no consensus on their status and presence in the syntactic component, implicit arguments are claimed to be syntactically real in passives because they take part in syntactic processes, such as the availability of a *by*-phrase, compatibility with agentive adverbs, disjoint reference reading, unavailability of inchoative verbs (Alexiadou and Schäfer 2013: 3–4; Wurmbrand, Kovač and Lohninger 2021). In order to prove their syntactic reality, linguists came up with a series of tests that verify their activity. In what follows we will use these diagnostics to prove the passive status of a construction.

Although suppressed, the Agent argument in passives can be syntactically activated, that is reintroduced via *by*-phrase (Pitteroff and Alexiadou 2012: 219):¹⁰

¹⁰ The examples (47)–(48) are based on the English examples with verb *sink* given in Pitteroff and Alexiadou (2012: 219).

(47) *Gusari su potopili brod.*

‘Pirates sunk the ship.’

(48) *Brod je potopljen (od gusara).*

‘The ship was sunk (by pirates).’

The same holds true for *dati + se + infinitive*, as it can be observed by the grammaticality of the following examples, manipulated by the reintroduction of the agent through the PP *od + NP_{Gen}*:

(49) *Sam film se da opisati od kritičara kao mješavina filmova.*

‘The film itself can be described by critics as a mixture of films.’

(50) *Prošlost se ama baš nikako ni od koga ne da izbrisati.*

‘The past cannot be erased by anyone.’

(51) *Prošlost se da samo iznova interpretirati od povjesničara.*

‘The past can just be reinterpreted by historians.’

(52) *slika se da podesiti od bilo koga tko je to u stanju napraviti da svakome odgovara.*

‘The image can be adjusted by anyone who is able to make it work for everyone.’

(53) *Ako postoji interes i volja, to se znanje da nadograđivati od svih koji o tome žele znati više.*

‘If there is interest and will, this knowledge can be upgraded by everyone who wants to know more about it.’

(54) *Sloboda se ne da zaustaviti ni od koga.*

‘Freedom cannot be stopped by anyone.’

In this construction, agent-oriented modifiers, such as *namjerno* ‘intentionally, deliberately’, *pažljivo* ‘carefully’, *svjesno* ‘consciously, knowingly’, *s pozornošću* ‘with attention’, *promišljeno* ‘thoughtfully’, are also available confirming the presence of an agent:

(55) *Sam film se da s pozornošću opisati kao mješavina filmova.*

‘The film can be carefully described as a mish-mash of films.’

(56) *Prošlost se da samo iznova pažljivo interpretirati.*

‘The past can only be carefully reinterpreted.’

(57) *slika se da namjerno podesiti da svakome odgovara.*

‘The image can be deliberately adapted to everyone.’

(58) *Ako postoji interes i volja, to se znanje da svjesno i promišljeno nadograđivati.*

‘If there is interest and will, this knowledge can be consciously and thoughtfully upgraded.’

(59) *Sloboda se ne da svjesno zaustaviti.*

‘Freedom cannot be consciously stopped.’

Canonical passives – more specifically verbal passives – trigger the so-called disjoint reference effect. According to some scholars (Alexiadou and Schäfer 2013; Wurmbrand, Kovač and Lohninger 2021), the self-action interpretation (self-implicature) of the verb is unavailable, thus confirming the presence of the external argument. *Dati (se) + infinitive* shares a disjoint reference effect with verbal passive, thus (60) a. cannot be interpreted as stated in c., that is as if the journalism itself could not distinguish journalism from organized lies. The interpretation is such that it is someone else other than journalism itself that cannot distinguish journalism from organized lies.

(60) a. *Novinarstvo se više ne da razlikovati od organizirane laži.*

‘Journalism can no longer be distinguished from organized lies.’

readings:

b. *Someone other than journalism cannot distinguish journalism from organized lies.*

c. *#Journalism itself cannot distinguish journalism from organized lies.*

In passive alternation causative verbs are available, while inchoative verbs are not. The dichotomy is usually showed by a distinction between the Croatian

verbs *potopiti* which is the causative version of ‘sink’ (61) and *potonuti* as the inchoative version of ‘sink’ (62). Whereas (61) is well-formed, (62) is not acceptable. Furthermore, the passive participle form of inchoatives, such as *potonut* from *potonuti* are unavailable in Croatian.

(61) *Brod je potopljen od protivnika.*
 ‘The ship was sunk by the enemy.’

(62) **Brod je potonut od protivnika.*
 ‘The ship sank by the enemy.’

Dati + se + infinitive shows the same property: whereas the sentence with a causative *potopiti* ‘sink’ (63) is grammatical, its version with inchoative *potonuti* ‘sink’ (64) is judged ungrammatical.

(63) *Brod se ne da potopiti.*
 ship SE NEG give.3SG.PRES sink.CAUS
 ‘The ship cannot be sunk.’

(64) **Brod se ne da (po)tonuti.*
 ship SE NEG give.3SG.PRES sink.INCH

Going back to our corpus examples, we can take into consideration again example (60) a. with *razlikovati* ‘distinguish’ as the lower verb. The sentence (60) a. is a well-formed sentence in which the embedded verb is acceptable because it is causative. We can try and manipulate this sentence by replacing the causative verb *razlikovati* ‘distinguish’ with an intransitive, inchoative verb such as *nestati* ‘disappear’. The outcome of this manipulation in (65) would be judged as ill-formed.

(65) **Novinarstvo se više ne da nestati.*
 ‘Journalism can no longer disappear.’

To summarize, only one of the hallmark properties of passives – passive morphology – is unavailable in the construction under analysis. The clause embedded by *dati* otherwise shows passive alternation properties. In the literature (Alexiadou and Schäfer 2013; Pitteroff 2014; Legate, 2021: 158), such structures are called non-canonical passives. They lack one or more common properties of pas-

sive alternation, such as its characteristic morphological markers (Haspelmath 1990), which manifests in Croatian via the presence of the passive participle (Polančec 2015). The non-finite complement in this construction can be defined as a morphologically unmarked passive, a passive infinitive (Pitteroff and Alexiadou 2012; following Reis 1976 and Fanselow 1987 on complements of passive causatives). In passive and passive-like constructions agents are not overt, but unlike traditional views, a number of linguists (e.g. Bhatt and Pancheva 2017; Landau 2010; Kovač 2022) argue against their absence from the syntax. In fact, it seems reasonable to claim that they are indeed syntactically active, although covert, as it has been shown by many tests (availability of PP ‘by-phrases’ etc., see also Kovač 2022).

Some of the properties of the lower infinitival part of the construction – such as restrictions imposed on the infinitival verbal element (transitivity) or the availability of the syntactic reintroduction of the Agent argument through the PP *od strane* + NP_{Gen} – make it look like any other passive. At the same time, the construction does not admit the realization of one of the most notable morpho-syntactic characteristics of the passive – a periphrastic verbal construction with auxiliary and passive participle typical for Croatian passives. As for the theoretical assumptions regarding the structure of the lower part of this construction, we can support the analysis put forward by Pitteroff and Alexiadou (2012) for *sich lassen*. Adopting Embick’s (2004) stance on passive, according to which AspP is responsible for licensing the passive participial, which is absent in the infinitival part of the *dati* + *se* + infinitive construction, we can argue against interpreting it as an AspP. It could be rather considered a passive VoiceP, which doesn’t introduce the external argument overtly.

4. On the status of the construction

The construction under analysis in this paper is a biverbal construction, consisting of a finite verb and a non-finite verb, a $V_{\text{finite}} + V_{\text{non-finite}}$ construction. Previous studies on such constructions in Croatian – whereby the second verbal element is an infinitive (Batinić Angster 2019, 2024) – show that they can have a twofold behaviour. Although having two verbal elements, some of them

behave as simple sentences or single syntactic units, that is as syntactically coherent constructions exhibiting a number of properties typical for single events and clause-union (Aissen and Perlmutter 1976; Roussou 2009). As it has been noted in many studies of such cases (e.g. Givón 1980; Cristofaro 2003; Stiebels 2007; Wurmbrand 1998, 2003 and her collaborators, e.g. Wurmbrand et al. 2020; Kovač, Wurmbrand and Lohninger 2022; Wurmbrand and Lohninger 2023), a degree of syntactic coherence correlates with the meaning a matrix predicate has. Cross-linguistically, a high degree of syntactic coherence is confirmed in constructions involving modal, aspectual, implicative, motion and causal verbs.

In Croatian, it has been found (Batinić Angster 2019, 2024) that subject-oriented verbs embedding infinitives that pattern with monoclausal properties are modals, aspectuals and implicatives, and to a certain extent also ditransitives, i.e. object control verbs with permissive meaning. These complex predicates exhibit properties such as: exhaustive control, preserved synonymy under passivization, matrix licensing of negative polarity items (NPI), unavailability of finite complementation, temporal uniformity (Batinić Angster 2019, 2024).

Taking Cinque's (1999, 2004, 2006) and Grano's (2015, 2017) stance, grounded in the cartographic research program within generative grammar, matrix verbs taking infinitives realize specific positions or functional heads in the hierarchy of functional projections, and only verbs corresponding to positions below the head Tense – according to the hierarchy of functional projections developed by Cinque (1999) – can participate in restructuring. A portion of Cinque's (1999: 106, 2006: 12), hierarchy is given here:

- (66) MoodP_{speech act} > MoodP_{evaluative} > MoodP_{evidential} > ModP_{epistemic} > TP_(Past)
 > TP_(Future) > MoodP_{irrealis} > ModP_{necessity} > ModP_{possibility} > ModP_{alethic} >
 AspP_{habitual} > Asp_{repetitive} > AspP_{frequentative} > ModP_{volitional} > AspP_{celerative} >
 TP_(Anterior) > AspP_{terminative} > AspP_{continuative} > AspP_{retrospective} > AspP_{proximative} >
 > AspP_{durative} > AspP_{generic/progressive} > AspP_{prospective} > ModP_{obligation} >
 ModP_{permission/ability} > AspP_{completive} > VoiceP > AspP_{celerative(II)} > AspP_{repetitive(II)}
 > AspP_{frequentative(II)}*

Considering that the matrix verbal component *dati + se* denotes objective possibility when taking infinitives¹¹ and assuming that $\text{Mod}_{\text{possibility}}$ is placed below Tense, we could expect that *dati + se + infinitive* participates in a monoclausal configuration. This could be diagnosed using a series of tests (see Batinić Angster 2024), one of them concerning the unavailability of distinct temporal modification. We know that monoclausal structures are characterized by temporal uniformity (see Marušič and Žaucer 2006; Grano 2015, 2017) or “single deictic Tense” (Krapova and Cinque 2018: 156), which is why we cannot place one event twice on the timeline. Batinić Angster (2024: 84) exemplifies it with the following sentence, which is judged as ill-formed due to the use of two opposing temporal adverbs – *sutra* ‘tomorrow’ and *prekosutra* ‘the day after tomorrow’:

(67) **Sutra će profesor ispitati studente prekosutra.*

‘Tomorrow professor will examine the students the day after tomorrow.’

When we apply this test to the infinitive taken by *dati + se* – s. (68) and (69) – we observe that distinct temporal specification of the infinitive introduced by *dati + se* is inadmissible and that the complement is either tenseless, or temporally dependent on the temporal specification in the matrix domain (see Pitteroff et al. 2018 for similar verbs), or anaphoric. In other words, the complement clause is untensed or tenseless [–T]:

(68) **U 19. stoljeću to se znanje nije dalo nadograđivati dva stoljeća poslije.*

‘In the 19th century, this knowledge could not be upgraded two centuries later.’

(69) **Karoserija se sada ne da odijeliti sutra od lokomotive teretnih kola.*

‘Now the body cannot be separated from the freight car locomotive tomorrow.’

Considering that we cannot confirm the availability of an independent temporal interpretation of the non-finite complement, we can state that the construction $\text{dati}_{\text{finite}} + se + \text{V}_{\text{non-finite}}$ is characterized by a monoclausal structure. In terms of restructuring, the infinitival complement can be seen as configuring a kind of

¹¹ Pitteroff and Alexiadou (2012: 221) states for *lassen* that “the modal force possibility is hard-wired into its lexical semantics”.

complex predicate or clause-union with its antecedent *dati (se)* with modal reading, that we have identified as an instance of dispositional modality.

5. Concluding remarks

Adopting the analysis of *sich lassen* by Pitteroff and Alexiadou (2012) and Pitteroff (2014), we took into consideration the behaviour of its equivalent construction in Croatian instantiated by the verb *dati* ‘give’ and followed by the middle marker *se* and a non-finite verb. We have identified that the subject of that construction is in fact the internal argument of the embedded non-finite verb, namely its logical object. A comparison of this construction with canonical middles was followed by a comparison of its lower infinitival portion with canonical passives. Finally, we came to the conclusion that this construction exhibits some properties of a restructuring configuration.

The study shows that this construction instantiates a dispositional modality expressing non-episodic generic statements about a property of the referent of the subject (cfr. Pitteroff and Alexiadou 2012; Pitteroff 2014; Lenardić 2024). We argued that it displays some properties of canonical middles – such as the expression of the internal argument of the non-finite verb in the subject position of the construction, the realization of the clitic *se*, the availability of the same kind of modification, and the interpretation of the construction as an expression of dispositional modality – while differing from them in several peculiarities. The formal structure, characterized by a higher degree of complexity considering that it involves two verbal elements, differs. At the same time, the realization of the agent, which, although unrealized or covert at the surface, can overtly reappear in a PP *od (strane)* + NP_{Gen}. In canonical middles, on the other hand, the agent cannot be activated. We especially focused our attention on the embedded portion of the clause characterized in the first place by the presence of infinitive. More particularly, we claimed that the embedded-like or lower part of the construction displays some properties of passive alternation, instantiating a kind of non-canonical passive called passive infinitive. This passive infinitive portion of the clause lacks passive morphology, it is tenseless, showing a reduced size, which is explained in terms of restructuring.

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Appendix:

- (1) *Neke mrlje nisu se dale do kraja ukloniti.*
some stains not.are SE give.PTCP.F.PL up_to end.GEN.SG remove.INF
'Some stains could not be completely removed.'
- (2) *Ljubav se ne da izvagati.*
love SE not give.PRS.3SG weigh.INF
'Love cannot be measured.'
- (3) *Sam film se da opisati kao mješavina filmova.*
INT film SE give.PRS.3SG describe.INF as mixture film.GEN.PL
'The film itself can be described as a mixture of films.'
- (4) *Prošlost se ama baš nikako ne da izbrisati, ona se da samo iznova interpretirati.*
past SE PART really in_no_way not give.PRS.3SG erase.INF she SE give.PRS.3SG only anew interpret.INF
'The past can under no circumstances be erased, it can only be reinterpreted.'
- (5) *Ako postoji interes i volja, to se znanje da nadograđivati jer biljaka ima jako puno.*
if exist.PRS.3SG interest and willingness, that SE knowledge give.PRS.3SG build.INF because plants have very much
'If there is interest and will, this knowledge can be upgraded because there are a lot of plants.'

- (6) *Sloboda se ne da zaustaviti.*
 freedom SE not give.PRS.3SG stop.INF
 ‘Freedom cannot be stopped.’
- (7) *Trake za depilaciju nisu se dale skinuti do kraja pa je tetak danima hodao po svijetu sa ljepljivom nadlakticom...*
 strips for depilation not.are SE give.PTCP.F.PL remove.INF up_to end.GEN.SG
 so uncle day.INS.PL walk.PTCP.M.SG across world with sticky upper_arm
 ‘The depilation strips could not be completely removed so my uncle walked around the world for days with a sticky upper arm...’
- (8) *Slika je kristalno čista, boje su žive, slika se da podesiti da svakome odgovara.*
 image is crystal clear, colours are alive, image SE give.PRS.3SG adjust.INF
 that everyone.DAT.SG fits
 ‘The image is crystal clear, the colours are live, the image can be adjusted to make it work for everyone.’
- (9) *Taj jezik uopće se ne da sabiti u kalupe hrvatskog jezika.*
 that language at_all SE not give.PRS.3SG compress.INF into molds Croatian.
 GEN.SG language.GEN.SG
 ‘That language cannot be compressed into the molds of the Croatian language at all.’
- (10) *Karoserija se ne da odijeliti od lokomotive teretnih kola.*
 body SE not give.PRS.3SG separate.INF from locomotive.GEN.SG freight.ADJ.
 GEN.PL car.GEN.PL
 ‘The body cannot be separated from the freight car locomotive.’
- (11) *Nama je valjda jasno da novinarstvo, ako se više ne da razlikovati od organizirane laži, predstavlja zločin.*
 to_us is I_guess clear that journalism, if SE more not give.PRS.3SG distinguish.INF from organized lies, represents crime

‘I guess it’s clear to us that journalism, if it can no longer be distinguished from organized lies, is a crime.’

- (12) *to se riječima ne da opisati niti postoji misao ili definicija koja može tako nešto objasniti.*

that SE word.INS.PL not give.PRS.3SG describe.INF nor exists thought or definition that can so something explain.INF

‘Words cannot describe it, nor is there a thought or definition that can explain such a thing.’

- (13) *ja mislim da je to samo dio slagalice koja bi se dala lijepo slagati u raspravi.*

I think that is it only part puzzle.GEN.SG that could SE give.PTCP.F.SG nicely put_together.INF in discussion.LOC.SG

‘I think that it is only a part of the puzzle that could be put together nicely in a discussion.’

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O stanju i statusu konstrukcije *dati + se + infinitiv*

Cilj je rada analizirati hrvatsku konstrukciju *dati + se + infinitiv* u slučajevima kada se njome izražava objektivna mogućnost (v. Žagar Szentesi 2011). U radu se raspravlja o stanju i statusu konstrukcije oslanjajući se na istraživanja Pitteroff i Alexiadou (2012) te Pitteroff (2014) o obilježjima njemačkoga *sich-lassen* ‘dati se’. Pokazuje se da je konstrukcija važna u kontekstu istraživanja glagolskoga stanja jer dijeli obilježja s kanonskom ili standardnom *se*-medijalnom konstrukcijom, od koje se istodobno razlikuje po nekim svojstvima poput složenoga rečeničnog ustrojstva s glagolom u infinitivu kao sastavnicom. Od obilježja koja dijeli s medijalnim stanjem izdvajaju se: izražavanje unutarnjeg argumenta infinitivnoga glagola na položaju subjekta konstrukcije, realizacija klitike *se* koja nije glagolski argument, dostupnost iste vrste modifikacije i tumačenje konstrukcije kao izraza dispozicijske modalnosti. U radu se posebna pozornost pridaje infinitivnom dijelu konstrukcije koja je morfološki neoznačena pasivna konstrukcija. Riječ je o pasivnom infinitivu kao posebnoj vrsti nekanonskoga pasiva (usp. Pitteroff i Alexiadou 2012; Alexiadou i Schäfer 2013; Pitteroff 2014; Legate 2021: 158;). S jedne strane, nedostaju neka uobičajena svojstva pasivne alternacije, poput karakteristične morfološke oznake (Haspelmath 1990), koja se u hrvatskome očituje kao glagolski pridjev trpni u perifrastičnoj konstrukciji s pomoćnim glagolom (Polančec 2015). S druge je strane omogućeno uvođenje vršitelja putem prijedložne skupine *od (strane) + NP_{Gen}*, što je karakteristično za pasiv za razliku od kanonske medijalne konstrukcije. Osim opisa nekanonskoga pasiva infinitivne dopune, razmatra se njezin sintaktički status (v. Batinić Angster 2019, 2024); uočava se redukcija te se konstrukcija potvrđuje kao slučaj restrukturiranja.

Ključne riječi: infinitiv, glagolsko stanje, pasiv, medijalno stanje, restrukturiranje, modalnost

Keywords: infinitive, voice, passive, middle, restructuring, modality