

MIDDLES IN SLOVENE

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Abstract

In the current Slovene literature, sentences with the morpheme *se* which have an understood human generic or indefinite argument in their interpretation are treated as passives if they display a nominative (e.g. *Šola se obnavlja* ‘The school.NOM is being renovated’) or as impersonal actives if they have no syntactic or morphological nominative – either intransitive (e.g. *Živi se samo enkrat* ‘You only live once’) or transitive with an overt object (e.g. *Šolo se obnavlja* ‘The school.ACC is being renovated’). This paper proposes a reanalysis of the above Slovene sentences as middles, i.e. a class of sentences which lie between the active and the passive because they display the active verb and have a demoted human argument. I show that Slovene personal middles (with a nominative) are not passives because they differ from (periphrastic) passives not only morphosyntactically but also in the interpretation of their understood argument, which must always be human. In addition, I demonstrate that impersonal middles (without a nominative) are not actives because they involve the demotion of a subject role. I argue that Slovene personal and impersonal middles form a single class of middles, sharing unique semantic and syntactic properties which set them apart from passives on the one hand and from actives on the other. On my analysis, both personal and impersonal middles contain the same type of *se* which reduces the human subject role during their derivation.

1. Introduction

This paper¹ is a reanalysis of Slovene sentences with *se* and an understood generic or indefinite human argument as middle sentences. In the current Slovene literature, *se*-sentences with an understood human argument are treated as passives if they display a nominative subject, or as actives if they have no syntactic or morphological nominative. I argue that both types of *se*-sentences are middles, based not only on their semantic and syntactic characteristics, but also on the role of *se* during their derivation. In this paper, middles are defined as the class of constructions which are situated somewhere between the active and the passive because they exhibit formal properties of both constructions; they have active verb forms yet, like passives, they have understood subjects and normally display promoted objects (Stroik 1999, Fagan 1992). In my classification, Slovene middles with a nominative are termed personal middles, while those with no nominative (with or without an overt object) are labelled impersonal middles.² My motivation for treating these sentences as a single construction is the fact that they share crucial semantic and syntactic properties which are not found in (periphrastic) passives or (impersonal) actives. Treating personal and impersonal middles as two distinct constructions fails to explain these apparent similarities. By contrast, treating personal and impersonal middles as a single class of middles, distinct from passives as well as actives, can successfully account for their unique properties and behaviour and enables us to distinguish in a more principled way between Slovene middles, passives and actives. In addition, it enables us to determine the role of *se* and the nature of argument structure modifications during the derivation of Slovene middles.

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² The same terms are used in the literature to refer to German middle constructions: “personal middles” for middles formed from transitive verbs (Fagan 1992) and “impersonal middles” for middles formed from intransitive verbs (Stroik 2006, Fagan 1992).

The paper will answer the following questions: which Slovene sentences are middles and why, how personal and impersonal middles are differentiated from passives and impersonal actives, respectively, and how Slovene middles are derived. The structure of the paper will be as follows. Section 2 will provide a cross-linguistic definition of middles, followed by a typology of Slovene middle sentences and a description of their properties. In section 4 I will propose that *se* in Slovene middles is a role-reducing operator which reduces the subject role in the syntax. This section will also provide a brief comparison between Slovene middles and other sentences with *se* and a discussion of the constraints on Slovene middle formation. In section 5 I will then present arguments against the passive treatment of personal middles and the active treatment of impersonal middles. I will show that there are more similarities between personal and impersonal middles (e.g. the demotion of a human non-specific argument, the auxiliary *dati* ‘give’, the same constraints) than there are between personal middles and periphrastic passives on the one hand and impersonal middles and impersonal actives on the other. Based on this evidence I will argue that Slovene personal middles with a nominative and impersonal middles with no nominative form a single class of middles in Slovene.

2. Middles and their cross-linguistic properties

Across languages, middles share a number of syntactic and semantic properties, such as generic human interpretation, adverbial modification, expressing modality, resistance to agentive phrases and displaying verbs in the 3rd person. However, the only truly universal property of middles, apart from having active verb forms, appears to be the human interpretation of their understood argument. Sentences termed here middles can only describe events that involve human activity and even when they contain predicates that normally describe non-human activities, such as *graditi gnezda* ‘build nests’, they force a human interpretation, as pointed out by Siewierska (1988: 263), Bolta (1988: 122) and Rivero & Milojević Sheppard (2003: 110) (henceforth R&MS). So (1) can only be interpreted to mean that people are involved in the event, rather than birds.

- (1) Gnezda *se* gradijo. (Slovene)³
 nests.NOM SE build.3PL.PRES
 ‘Nests are built. / People build nests.’

Although the human interpretation of the understood argument is also a cross-linguistic characteristic of impersonal passives and impersonal actives, impersonal passives differ from middles morphologically in that they display passive form of the verb, while impersonal actives differ in the syntactic status of their understood argument, which is suppressed, rather than syntactically present as in middles (see (9) below). In addition, most languages with middles (English being an exception) have some form of middle marking – like the morpheme *se* in Slovene.

The other properties typically found in middles across languages cannot be considered universal. First, although the implied human argument in middles is usually interpreted as generic (or arbitrary), meaning ‘people in general’, it can also be interpreted as indefinite,

³ In this paper the morpheme *se*, traditionally referred to as a reflexive morpheme, is glossed as SE rather than *self* because its meaning is reflexive in only one use, termed here reflexive/reciprocal *se*. The same applies to the *se*-cognate morphemes in other languages discussed here; for instance, French *se* is glossed as SE, Russian *-sja* as *-SJA*, etc. Other abbreviations used in this paper are: 1 = first person, 2 = second person, 3 = third person, SG = singular, DUAL = dual, PL = plural, MASC = masculine, FEM = feminine, NEUTER = neuter, PRES = present tense, PAST = past tense, FUT = future tense, COND = conditional, NOM = nominative, ACC = accusative, GEN = genitive, DAT = dative, LOC = locative, INST = instrumental, AUX = auxiliary, PCP = participle, INFIN = infinitive, IMPERF = imperfective, NEG = negation.

meaning ‘somebody’ or ‘some people’ (Fagan 1992 for French) and can even refer to a specific agent, as in Russian (2) (Siewierska 1984: 162).

- (2) Pol myl-sja devockoj. (Russian)
 floor wash.IMPERF-SJA girl.INST
 ‘The floor was being washed by the girl.’

Second, although middles in languages like English and German typically require adverbial modification, middles without adverbials are possible, as shown in (3) (Fagan 1992: 57), and are quite common in some languages, like Romance and Slavonic, as shown in (4) (Zribi-Hertz 1982: 348 in Fagan 1992: 60).

- (3) Glass recycles.

- (4) Cette racine se mange. (French)
 this root SE eat.3SG.PRES
 ‘This root can be eaten.’

Adverbials that usually occur in middles are manner adverbials like *well*, *easily* and *badly*, which describe how the event expressed by the predicate can be carried out with respect to the properties of the underlying object. However, Agent-oriented manner adverbials, such as *quickly*, *slowly* and *carefully*, and Agent-specific adverbials, such as *with the right hand*, which attribute properties to the underlying subject, are also allowed in middles (Stroik 1999: 127-128, 1995: 166-167):

- (5) This book reads slowly for Mary.

- (6) Because of the location of the transmission and the steering wheel, this car shifts best with the right hand.

Moreover, despite the fact that middles often express modality, like (4) above, it does not appear to be inherent in the meaning of middles since they need not involve any modality. They may describe properties of their surface subject rather than the event itself, as shown in German (Fagan 1992: 43):

- (7) Das Buch liest sich wie ein Kriminalroman. (German)
 the book read.3SG.PRES SICH like a detective-novel
 ‘The book reads like a detective novel.’

Similarly, attributing properties to events and to their underlying or surface subjects is not a universal characteristic of middles. Example (8) illustrates that apart from property reading middles can have an event reading, i.e. describing actual events (Zribi-Hertz 1982 in Dobrovie-Sorin 1998: 422, fn. 26):

- (8) Le crime s’est commis ce matin. (French)
 the crime SE-AUX.3SG commit.PCP.SG.MASC this morning
 ‘The crime was committed this morning.’

In addition, it is often argued that middles disallow or tend to resist agentive obliques because the Agent is not syntactically present (Blevins 2003, Ackema & Schoorlemmer 1995,

Zribi-Hertz 1993, Siewierska 1988). This is of course not a universal property of middles since they frequently occur with agentive phrases, such as the instrumental phrase in Russian (see (2)), the *for*-phrase in English (see (5)) and the *par* ‘by’ phrase in Canadian French below (Authier & Reed 1996: 515). This evidence suggests that the understood argument in middles is syntactically present and therefore demoted rather than suppressed.

- (9) Ce costume traditionnel se porte surtout par les femmes.
 this garment traditional SE wear.3SG.PRES mostly by the women
 ‘This traditional garment is worn mostly by women.’ (Canadian French)

Lastly, middles appear to obligatorily exhibit the verb in the 3rd person, as pointed out by Siewierska for middles (reflexive passives in her terms) in Slavonic languages (1988: 245). Fagan (1992: 27, 60), on the other hand, demonstrates that middles may have a non-third person subjects and consequently may exhibit verbs in the non-third person form. The middle in (10), for example, has a 2nd person subject and a verb in the 2nd person reflexive form (Grimshaw 1982: 146, fn. 20 in Fagan 1992: 60).

- (10) Si tu étais une chemise, tu ne te
 if you.SG be.2SG.PAST a shirt you.SG NEG you.SG.ACC
 vendrais pas pour trop cher. (French)
 sell.2SG.COND NEG for too expensive
 ‘If you were a shirt, you wouldn’t sell for too much.’

To sum up, a brief review of cross-linguistic properties of middles has shown that the two properties that all middles have in common are the active form of the verb (with or without special middle marking) and the human interpretation of their understood (demoted) argument.

3. Types of Slovene middles and their properties

According to the above definition of middles, I argue that all of the Slovene sentences in (11) through (16) should be treated as middles because semantically, they have an understood/implied human argument in their interpretation and morphologically, they display the active form of the verb. Note also that middles in Slovene obligatorily contain the morpheme *se*. On my analysis, which I will outline in more detail in section 4, all these sentences are derived by a process which involves the demotion of the subject role, optional promotion of the object role and contain the same type of *se* which I refer to as middle *se*.

Depending on whether or not Slovene middles display an overt or morphological nominative, I divide them into personal and impersonal middles – following Fagan’s classification of German middles (1992). The only formal difference between personal and impersonal middles in Slovene is the presence or absence of a nominative and subject-verb agreement. Apart from that, they share all other morphological, syntactic and semantic properties: both display the same type of role-reducing morpheme *se*, can occur with the auxiliary *dati* ‘give’, have a demoted non-specific human argument which can be overtly expressed in the *s strani* ‘on the part of’ phrase, and are subject to the same constraints (see the discussion in 5.3). In the Slovene linguistic literature, personal middles formed from transitive verbs, such as *obnavljati* ‘renovate’ in (11), are usually treated as passive sentences, labelled “passives with *se*” or “*se*-passives” (Marušič & Žaucer 2006, Herrity 2000, Toporišič 2000) in order to differentiate them from periphrastic passives, which will be discussed in

section 5.1. As I will show in section 5.1.1, personal middles are sometimes also termed “middles” (R&MS 2003).⁴

- (11) Šola se obnavlja. (personal middle)
school.NOM SE renovate.3SG.PRES
‘The school is being renovated.’

Impersonal middles, commonly treated as impersonal active sentences in the traditional and recent literature (R&MS 2003, Toporišič 2000), display no nominative, which is why the verb is in a default form without agreement (R&MS 2003: 93). In Slovene, this default form of the verb is the 3rd person singular on finite forms and singular neuter on participles. Impersonal middles are formed from intransitive verbs like in (12) and from transitive verbs with overt objects in a structural case, either accusative as in (13) or genitive of negation⁵ as in (14).

- (12) Živi se samo enkrat. (impersonal middle)
live.3SG.PRES SE only once
‘You only live once.’

- (13) Šolo se obnavlja. (impersonal middle)⁶
school.ACC SE renovate.3SG.PRES
‘The school is being renovated.’

- (14) Šole se ne obnavlja. (impersonal middle)
school.GEN SE NEG renovate.3SG.PRES
‘The school is not being renovated.’

Examples (13) and (14) illustrate that Slovene transitive middles can either display a promoted object in nominative or retain the object in objective case (accusative or genitive of negation). As I will show in 5.2.1 (examples (74-76)), the choice between nominative and accusative/genitive is not associated with any interpretative difference.

Following Fagan (1992) and her classification of German middles, I further divide Slovene middles into plain middles, such as (11-14), and *dati* ‘give’ middles, which contain the auxiliary *dati* ‘give’. The auxiliary *dati* ‘give’ in middles adds a modal meaning of ability

⁴ This study was carried out with the help of the *FidaPlus* corpus maintained by the Faculty of Arts at the University of Ljubljana, and the *Nova beseda* corpus maintained by the Fran Ramovš Institute of Slovene Language at the Scientific Research Centre of the Slovene Academy of Sciences and Arts. To ensure that my conclusions about Slovene middles are based on the actual usage, all examples used in this study are attested, taken from various written and spoken sources, and judged acceptable by Slovene speakers, if not indicated otherwise.

⁵ Slovene genitive has several other functions besides being the obligatory objective case in negative sentences. It is also an inherent (lexical) case used with certain verbs (e.g. *bati se* ‘fear’, *zmanjkovati* ‘run out of’) and prepositions (e.g. *od* ‘from’, *do* ‘until’, *brez* ‘without’); it can denote possession (e.g. *soba mojih bratov* ‘my brothers’ room’) and it occurs as a modifier in certain types of DPs (e.g. *veliko denarja* ‘a lot of money’, *zlom kosti* ‘a fracture of a bone’).

⁶ Even though the accusative and genitive DPs in (13-14) are in the preverbal position, they are syntactically still the objects. Such sentences derive from the so-called inversion, optional movement of the direct object DP, which is a characteristic property of pro-drop languages (Chomsky 1981: 240). In Slovene, which is a pro-drop language, the object in impersonal middles can freely move from the postverbal to preverbal position. It gets case *in situ*, since the verb is not passive and will not absorb case.

or possibility; therefore *dati* ‘give’ middles always involve modality. They are either personal with a nominative, as (15), or impersonal, as (16).⁷

(15) Ta predal se ne da odpreti. (personal *dati* ‘give’ middle)
 this drawer.NOM SE NEG give.3SG.PRES open.INFIN
 ‘This drawer can’t be opened.’

(16) Nekaterih stvari se ne da kupiti.
 some things.GEN SE NEG give.3SG.PRES buy.INFIN
 ‘Some things can’t be bought.’ (impersonal *dati* ‘give’ middle)

This distinction between different types of Slovene middles is set out in the table below.

TABLE 1 Types of Slovene middles

	Personal (with nominative)	Impersonal (with no nominative)
Plain	example (11)	examples (12-14)
<i>Dati</i> ‘give’	example (15)	example (16)

With respect to the other properties found in middles across languages, Slovene middles display the following characteristics:

- their implied human argument may be interpreted as generic (i.e. *ljudje na splošno* ‘people in general’) as in (12), or as indefinite (e.g. *nekdo* ‘somebody’, *nekateri* ‘some people’) as in (11), but cannot refer to a specific Agent
- they can have adverbial modification (like *težko* ‘hard’ below), but do not require the presence of adverbials, as shown for instance in (11) and (15)

(17) Ta pisava se *težko* bere.
 this handwriting.NOM SE hard read.3SG.PRES
 ‘This handwriting is difficult to read.’

- they allow not only adverbials which describe properties of the underlying object, like *težko* ‘hard’ in (17), but also Agent-oriented adverbials, such as *skrbno* ‘carefully’ in (18), and Agent-specific adverbials, such as *z levo nogo* ‘with the left foot’ in (19)

(18) V mednarodni diplomaciji se *skrbno* izbira besede.
 in international diplomacy SE carefully choose.3SG.PRES words.ACC
 ‘In international diplomacy one chooses words carefully.’

(19) Odkar vsa vozila menjavajo prestave s pritiskom na gumb,
 since all vehicles change.3PL.PRES gears.ACC with press on button
 se zavira z *levo nogo*.
 SE brake.3SG.PRES with left foot
 ‘Since all the vehicles have been changing gears with a press of a button, one/everybody brakes with the left foot.’

⁷ The Slovene verb *dati* functions both as a full lexical verb and as an auxiliary. As a full verb it has a number of meanings: besides ‘give’, which is the most common, it can also mean ‘present, award, assign, set, put, let’, etc. As an auxiliary, *dati* is only used in middles, where it does not mean ‘give’ but has a modal meaning of ability or possibility. Nevertheless, I use the verb *give* to gloss the forms of *dati* in middles, and refer to middles with *dati* as *dati* ‘give’ middles.

- they often occur with modal verbs, such as *smeti* ‘may’ in (20), and modal expressions, such as *lahko* ‘can’ in (21), but do not require them, as demonstrated by the examples above

(20) Zdravilo se *smo* izdajati samo na zdravniški
 medicine.NOM/ACC SE may.3SG.PRES issue.INFIN only on doctor’s
 receipt.
 prescription
 ‘This medicine is available on prescription only.’

(21) Pustolovski duh se *lahko* podeduje.
 adventurous spirit.NOM/ACC SE can inherit.3SG.PRES
 ‘A spirit of adventure can be inherited.’

- like French middles, Slovene middles can have a property reading, as in the examples above, and an event reading, like (22) below, which describes an actual event rather than attributing properties to either the underlying object or subject or the event itself

(22) Rešitev se je našla.⁸
 solution.NOM.FEM SE AUX.3SG find.PCP.SG.FEM
 ‘A solution was found.’

- they do not allow the agentive *od* ‘by’ phrase; however, their understood subject may be expressed in the agentive *s strani* ‘on the part of’ phrase, which in Slovene middles is typically used to refer to collectives or entities associated with humans or to a body of people, such as institutions, companies, political parties and other groups of people.⁹ As will be shown in 5.2 (example (65)), the facts about *od* ‘by’ and *s strani* ‘on the part of’ phrases apply equally to personal and impersonal middles

(23) Predlagamo, da se *s strani* države uvedejo
 suggest.1PL.PRES that SE on the-part-of state.GEN introduce.3PL.PRES
 zaščitni mehanizmi.
 protective.NOM mechanisms.NOM
 ‘We suggest that protective mechanisms be introduced by the state.’

- Slovene middles may display underlying objects in non-third person. However, they are normally retained as objects rather than being promoted to subject position, the reason being that Slovene middles with 1st or 2nd person surface subjects are always ambiguous and are more naturally interpreted as active sentences with a reflexive/reciprocal interpretation

(24) Če bi se *jaz* vprašal, bi rekel ja.
 if would SE I.NOM ask.PCP.SG.MASC would say.PCP.SG.MASC yes
 ??‘If I was asked, I would say yes.’
 ‘If I asked myself, I would say yes.’

⁸ All non-present tenses in Slovene are compound tenses formed with the simple forms of the auxiliary *biti* ‘be’ and the so-called *-l* participle, which expresses number and gender. For more information on Slovene verbs and tenses see Herryty (2000, chapter 6).

⁹ The same semantic property is also pointed out for the *poolt*-phrase in Estonian impersonals and the *toimesta*-phrase in Finnish impersonals and passives. When these phrases refer to non-specific agents, they are interpreted as institutions, e.g. *vallavolikogu poolt* ‘by the city council’ (Kaiser & Vihman 2006: 132), or collectives, e.g. *rintamamiesten toimesta* ‘by war veterans’ (Nelson 2003).

To derive a middle reading for (24), the subordinate clause needs to be an impersonal middle with a retained 1st person singular pronominal object, and as a consequence, the verb in the default 3rd person singular neuter form. The verb in the 3rd person form is therefore preferred in Slovene middles, although not obligatory.

- (25) Če bi se mene vprašalo, bi rekel ja.
 if would SE I.ACC ask.PCP.SG.NEUTER would say.PCP.SG.MASC yes
 ‘If I was asked, I would say yes.’

In the following section I will sketch out my unified analysis of all Slovene *se*-sentences with an implicit human argument as middle constructions, which assumes that they are derived by a valency modifying operation which demotes the subject argument to an oblique. In section 5 I will then present arguments in support of my analysis and provide evidence that sentences termed here middles, impersonal as well as personal, represent a single construction based on the role of *se* during their derivation. I will demonstrate that impersonal middles differ from actives in having a demoted argument, and will provide morphological, syntactic, semantic and stylistic evidence supporting the claim that personal middles are differentiated from periphrastic passives.

4. The derivation of Slovene middles

In this section I will outline my analysis of Slovene *se* as an operator which reduces a verb’s role. I will argue that *se* occurring in Slovene middles (personal and impersonal) reduces a subject role at the syntax level and propose that Slovene middle formation involves demotion of the subject and optional promotion of the object. I will also show that the constraints on Slovene middle formation, which are the same for personal and impersonal middles, support the unified analysis of middles I propose. However, in this paper I will not fully work out my own proposal along these lines; for details, I refer the reader to Grahek (2006).

4.1 Types of *se* in Slovene

A unified analysis of Slovene *se* that I propose here assumes that *se* in all its manifestations is a role-reducing operator which reduces one of the roles of a verb or a predicate. Depending on the role that *se* plays during the derivation of sentences, however, we can distinguish four different types of *se*. Thus Slovene displays:

- reflexive/reciprocal *se*, as in (26), which subsumes the true reflexive and the reciprocal (LaBelle 2006 for French), also treated together as the true reflexive in Medová (2007 for Czech)
- inherent *se*, as in (27), which occurs in verbs that have no semantically related non-*se* forms
- middle *se*, as in (28), which corresponds to the type labelled passive middle by Kemmer (1993); it includes the uses often referred to as (reflexive) passive (Siewierska 1984 for Slavonic) and impersonal (Cinque 1988 for Italian)
- causative *se*, which subsumes *se* in constructions expressing spontaneous events: anticausatives, such as (29a) (also termed ergatives (Hale & Keyser 1984) and inchoatives (Grimshaw 1990), and sentences I term internal causatives, such as (29b), generally known as involuntary state constructions and also labelled dative existential disclosure constructions (R&MS 2003 for Slovene and Polish)

- (26) Peter se občuduje. (reflexive/reciprocal *se*)

Peter SE admire.3SG.PRES
 ‘Peter admires himself.’

(27) Peter se smeje. (inherent *se*)
 Peter SE laugh.3SG.PRES
 ‘Peter laughs.’

(28) Zvonik se vidi od daleč. (middle *se*)
 church-tower.NOM/ACC SE see.3SG.PRES from afar
 ‘The church tower can be seen from afar. / One can see the church tower from afar.’

(29) a. Ladja se je potopila (sama od sebe). (causative *se*)
 ship.FEM SE AUX.3SG sink.PCP.SG.FEM (alone.FEM by self)
 ‘The ship sank (all by itself).’

b. Janezu se spi (samo od sebe). (causative *se*)
 Janez.DAT SE sleep.3SG.PRES (alone.NEUTER by self)
 ‘Janez is sleepy (involuntarily). / Janez feels like sleeping (involuntarily).’

(adapted from Rivero & Milojević Sheppard 2003: 137)

The classification of Slovene morpheme *se* proposed in this paper is based on three classifications in the literature (Reinhart & Reuland 1993, Schwartz 1988 and Wehrli 1986) which assume that the role of the reflexive is to reduce/absorb/remove an argument role of the verb. Schwartz (1988) and Wehrli (1986) show that the reduced argument can be either internal, i.e. the undergoer, or external, i.e. the actor. Reinhart & Reuland (1993) and Wehrli (1986) furthermore claim that the reflexive can operate either in the lexicon or in the syntax. Based on these distinctions I propose that the four types of Slovene *se* follow from the interaction of the following two independent features: which argument role *se* reduces and at what level it operates. As illustrated in Table 2, *se* can reduce the object role (reflexive/reciprocal *se*, inherent *se*), or the subject role (middle *se*, causative *se*). Furthermore, *se* can operate in the syntax (reflexive/reciprocal *se*, middle *se*) or in the lexicon (inherent *se*, causative *se*).

TABLE 2 The four types of Slovene *se* as a role-reducing operator

	Reduces the object argument	Reduces the subject argument
Operates on the predicate’s grid (in the syntax)	Reflexive/reciprocal <i>se</i>	Middle <i>se</i>
Operates on the verb’s grid (in the lexicon)	Inherent <i>se</i>	Causative <i>se</i>

This typology of *se* is supported by the Slovene data which show that constructions with different types of *se* display unique semantic and syntactic properties which distinguish them to the exclusion of others. Thus the distinguishing property of reflexive/reciprocal *se* is the ability to be replaced by either a full reflexive pronoun *sebe* ‘self’ or reciprocal pronoun *eden drugega* ‘each other’ or another full DP. Verbs with inherent *se* can be distinguished from other verbs with *se* in that they have no semantically related non-*se* forms that could serve as bases for their derivation, hence sentences containing inherent *se* are the only type of

se-sentences that have no counterpart (basic) version without *se*. If a form without *se* does exist, it represents the same verb (e.g. *jokati (se)* ‘cry’) or an independent lexical item (e.g. *imeti* ‘have’ – *imeti se* ‘feel, get on’). Middles are unique in having an implied (demoted) human argument (not necessarily agentive) which is interpreted as generic or indefinite and can be overtly expressed as an oblique. Lastly, causative *se*, which occurs in anticausatives and internal causatives, differs from other uses in that it reduces only the external argument, which gets deleted in anticausatives and demoted to the indirect object in internal causatives. External and internal causatives are further distinguished by an implied cause in their semantics – interpreted as external in the former and as internal in the latter. Thus the fact that for each use of *se* we can find at least one distinctive property that is not shared by other uses is evidence in support of the proposed classification of Slovene *se*. The above distinction between different types of *se* is given in Table 3.

TABLE 3 Distinguishing properties of the four types of Slovene *se*

	Replaced by a full pronoun or DP	No related non- <i>se</i> base forms	Demoted human argument	Reduced external argument, unspecified cause
Reflexive/reciprocal <i>se</i>	✓	✗	✗	✗
Inherent <i>se</i>	✗	✓	✗	✗
Middle <i>se</i>	✗	✗	✓	✗
Causative <i>se</i>	✗	✗	✗	✓

The unified analysis that I propose for Slovene *se* assumes that the four types of *se* represent a single morpheme *se* in the lexicon, which combines with different classes of base verbs to derive sentences with *se*. On my analysis, *se* is a functional element heading its own functional projection in the sentential structure. On this view, *se* does not have any properties of its own, and only the properties of input verbs and predicates that *se* occurs with determine how *se* will affect their argument structure and what the resulting syntactic structure and its semantic interpretation will be.

4.2 Middle *se*

On the analysis proposed here, then, *se* occurring in middles, the so-called middle *se*, is a role-reducing operator which reduces the subject argument. As I will show in the following sections, the argument that gets reduced during middle formation in Slovene is the highest argument (i.e. the external argument in transitives and unergatives, and the internal argument in unaccusatives). In addition, the reduced argument in middles is always human, interpreted as generic or indefinite, or an entity associated with humans, and it can be expressed as an oblique.

Furthermore, my analysis assumes that the reduction of the human argument in middles takes place in the syntax, i.e. at the predicate’s level. Like other proponents of a syntactic derivation of middles (Stroik 1992, 1995, 1999, 2006, Authier & Reed 1996, Hoekstra & Roberts 1993, Keyser & Roeper 1984, among others), I assume that the human subject argument in middles is not lexically suppressed, but syntactically realised. I argue that, at least in Slovene, the human argument is demoted to an oblique adjunct after the syntactic projection of all semantic arguments of a base verb. One piece of evidence that the human argument is syntactically active in Slovene middles is the fact that they can occur with Agent-oriented and Agent-specific adverbials, as I have shown above. In section 5 I will provide

several pieces of supporting evidence for the claim that the process deriving Slovene middles, impersonal as well as personal, involves demotion of the highest human subject argument.

Despite involving demotion of the subject, Slovene middles, as defined in this paper, differ from periphrastic passives in that they involve only optional promotion of the object. Unlike passives, Slovene middles can have overt structural objects, as we have seen in (13) and (14) (repeated as (30) and (31)) and in the other examples of transitive impersonal middles above. Thus Slovene transitive middles with underlying structural objects always have two variants, one with a surface object and one with a surface subject, which do not differ in semantic interpretation.

(30) Šolo se obnavlja.
 school.ACC SE renovate.3SG.PRES
 ‘The school is being renovated.’

(31) Šole se ne obnavlja.
 school.GEN SE NEG renovate.3SG.PRES
 ‘The school is not being renovated.’

This implies that Slovene middle formation, unlike passivisation, does not involve the detransitivisation of a verb. Consequently, object promotion is optional: it is never required for Case reasons because transitive verbs in middles remain transitive and can still assign case to their objects. Nevertheless, promotion in middles with objects in the accusative or genitive of negation is possible because the underlying subject has been demoted. Since there is no semantic difference between the two variants, speakers’ choice of whether to promote the object or not seems to be determined by two other factors: stylistic choice between a formal and informal varieties, and the salience of the object – speakers are more likely to promote full singular DPs in declarative sentences and less likely to promote pronominal objects, especially non-singular and in genitive of negation (see section 5.2.1 for a more detailed discussion of this variation).

Like in periphrastic passives, object promotion in middles is sometimes not possible. This happens when there is no overt element to promote, e.g. in intransitive middles like (12) or in middles with transitive verbs used intransitively, like *kazati* ‘point’ in (32):

(32) S prstom se ne kaže.
 with finger SE NEG point.3SG.PRES
 ‘It’s rude to point.’ Literally: ‘One doesn’t point with a finger.’ (proverb)

Promotion is also not possible when the underlying object cannot be assigned nominative case. This is when the object is:

- a clause (finite as in (33) or non-finite as in (34))

(33) Govori se, da bo But predsednik.
 say.3SG.PRES SE that be.3SG.FUT But president
 ‘It is said that But will be president.’

(34) Obljubilo se je odgovoriti na vprašanje.
 promise.PCP.SG.NEUTER SE AUX.3SG answer.INFIN on question
 ‘They promised to answer the question.’

(Bolta 1988: 126)

- the only object of the verb assigned inherent dative case

(35) *Vsemu se ne bo verjelo.*
 all.DAT SE NEG AUX.3SG.FUT believe.PCP.SG.NEUTER
 ‘Not everything will be believed.’

- a prepositional phrase

(36) *O tem se je veliko pisalo.*
 about this SE AUX.3SG a-lot write.PCP.SG.NEUTER
 ‘A lot was written about this.’

In all of the above cases, when object promotion is either not required or not possible, the middle sentences have the default form without agreement.¹⁰ The crucial point in my analysis of middles is that personal middles showing subject-verb agreement and impersonal middles without subject-verb agreement represent the same construction, derived by the same process and displaying the same middle *se* which reduces the human subject argument. Critically, a middle sentence with the verb in the impersonal form is no less a middle than an impersonal periphrastic passive is a passive. In section 5 I will present empirical evidence and supporting arguments for this unified analysis of personal and impersonal middles. Before I do, I will first discuss constraints on Slovene middle formation, which also confirm the idea that personal and impersonal middles form a single type of construction.

4.3 Constraints on middle formation in Slovene

Slovene middle formation, defined in this paper as a syntactic process during which *se* reduces the subject argument without detransitivising the verb, is a fairly productive process. It can apply to transitive and intransitive verbs, including reflexive verbs and even unaccusative and stative verbs. There seem to be two main requirements on the verbs that occur in Slovene middles: they must have a referential human nominative underlying subject and they must describe non-stative events. What is important to note is that these requirements apply equally to personal and impersonal middles, a fact that supports the

¹⁰ Middles also have the default 3rd person (neuter) form when they display a genitival quantified expression containing an indefinite quantifier (*veliko* ‘a lot’, *malo* ‘little, few’) or a numeral other than 1-4 or numeral ending with digits other than 01-04 (e.g. 0, 5, 16, 100, 1008). Such quantifiers and numerals are always followed by a noun (phrase) in the genitive. They also show syncretism of nominative and accusative case forms, as shown in (i) and (ii), which means it is not possible to tell whether the object is promoted in these cases or not.

(i) *Popilo se je veliko vina.*
 drink.PCP.SG.NEUTER SE AUX.3SG a-lot-of.NOM/ACC wine.GEN
 ‘A lot of wine has been drunk.’

(ii) *Videlo se je pet zvonikov.*
 see.PCP.SG.NEUTER SE AUX.3SG five.NOM/ACC church-towers.GEN
 ‘Five church towers could be seen.’

By contrast, quantified expressions with numerals 1-4 or numerals ending in 01-04 can modify a noun (phrase) in nominative case, as shown in (iii) where the verb agrees with the nominative DP in subject position.

(iii) *Trije zvoniki so se videli v daljavi.*
 three.MASC.NOM church-towers.MASC.NOM AUX.3PL SE see.PCP.PL.MASC in distance
 ‘Three church towers could be seen in the distance.’

present analysis which assumes that both personal and impersonal middles are derived by the same process. Let us examine these two requirements in turn.

The first requirement that verbs undergoing middle formation in Slovene must have a referential subject interpreted as human and in the nominative case implies that middles cannot be formed from the following types of verbs and predicates:

- weather verbs like *snežiti* ‘snow’ in (37), which have non-referential subjects

(37) *Sneži se.
snow.3SG.PRES SE
Intended: ‘People are snowing.’

- verbs and predicates which describe non-human activities, like *pihati* ‘blow’ and *graditi gnezda* ‘build nests’. If such verbs do occur in middles, the sentences receive a human interpretation, as shown in (38) and (1), repeated as (39).

(38) Pihalo se je (od jeze).
blow.PCP.SG.NEUTER SE AUX.3SG (from anger)
‘People were fuming with anger.’

(Bolta 1988: 122)

(39) Gnezda se gradijo.
nests.NOM SE build.3PL.PRES
‘Nests are built. / People build nests.’

- verbs which have non-nominative subjects, such as *zebsti* ‘be cold’, which requires its underlying subject to be in the accusative, as shown in the active sentence (40a)

(40) a. Ano zebe.
Ana.ACC be-cold.3SG.PRES
‘Ana is cold.’

b. *Zebe se.
be-cold.3SG.PRES SE
Intended: ‘People are cold.’

Unaccusative verbs can undergo middle formation in Slovene, as shown in (41) with the verb *umreti* ‘die’. Most of them, however, do not form good middles because they require oblique subjects, like *zmanjkovati* ‘drop off’, which has a genitive underlying subject, as shown in the active sentence (42a):

(41) Od tega se ne umre.
from this.GEN SE NEG die.3SG.PRES
‘One does not die from this.’

(42) a. Ane zmanjkuje.
Ana.GEN drop-off.3SG.PRES
‘Ana is dropping off.’

b. *Zmanjkuje se.
drop-off.3SG.PRES SE

Intended: ‘People are dropping off.’

The second requirement that verbs undergoing Slovene middle formation must describe non-stative events means that the following verbs cannot form good middles in Slovene:

- stative verbs, such as *imeti* ‘have’ in (43), unless they also have a non-stative interpretation, like *videti* ‘see’ in (28) (repeated as (44)), which may describe both a state and an activity, and therefore forms a good middle

(43) *Otroci se imajo.
children.NOM SE have.3SG.PL
Intended: ‘People have children.’

(44) Zvonik se vidi od daleč.
church-tower.NOM/ACC SE see.3SG.PRES from afar
‘The church tower can be seen from afar. / One can see the church tower from afar.’

- passive auxiliaries and copulas, as shown in (45) and (46), unless they have a non-stative interpretation, like the copula *postati* ‘become’ in (47). Rivero (2002: 180) suggests this is because copulas and passive auxiliaries lack situation/event variable, which Slovene middles seem to require

(45) *Od časa do časa se je kaznovano od
from time to time SE AUX.3PL punish.PCP.SG.NEUTER by
prijateljev.
friends.GEN
Intended: ‘From time to time people are punished by friends.’

(46) *Ko se je bilo mlad, se je
when SE AUX.3SG be.PCP.SG.NEUTER young.SG SE AUX.3SG
bilo srečen. (stative)
be.PCP.SG.NEUTER happy.SG
Intended: ‘When people were young, they were happy.’

(47) Kako pa se postane vratar? (non-stative)
how and SE become.3SG.PRES goalkeeper
‘And how does one become a goalkeeper?’

As mentioned at the beginning of this subsection, inherently reflexive verbs, such as *smejati se* ‘laugh’, can undergo middle formation in Slovene, as in (48). This shows that Slovene middles allow two phonologically identical clitics *se* (middle *se*, which reduces the human argument, and inherent *se*, which is an inseparable part of the verb’s lexical entry), of which only one occurs in the surface structure serving for two functions. This phenomenon, termed haplogy, can also be found in other Slavonic languages (Rivero 2004: 11, fn. 6, Zwicky 1977: 16).

(48) Pilo se je, jedlo,
drink.PCP.SG.NEUTER SE AUX.3SG eat.PCP.SG.NEUTER
plesalo in *smejalo*.
dance.PCP.SG.NEUTER and laugh.PCP.SG.NEUTER
‘People were drinking, eating, dancing and laughing.’

If a middle derived from an inherently reflexive verb is ambiguous between two readings (middle and active), as (49) with the verb *boriti se* ‘fight’, it can be disambiguated by adding the auxiliary *dati* ‘give’, which only occurs in middles.

(49) Proti temu se ne bori.
 against this.DAT SE NEG fight.3SG.PRES
 ‘One doesn’t fight against this. / He/she doesn’t fight against this.’

(50) Proti temu se ne da boriti.
 against this.DAT SE NEG give.3SG.PRES fight.INFIN
 ‘This cannot be fought against.’

Above it has been demonstrated that Slovene middle formation is a fairly unconstrained process which can apply to a wide variety of verb classes, with the exception of copulas, passive auxiliaries, verbs with non-referential or oblique subjects and verbs describing states.

To sum up, in this section I have shown that on the analysis proposed in this paper Slovene *se* is viewed as an operator which reduces a verb’s argument, and that *se* occurring in Slovene middles reduces the subject argument in the syntax. In the next section I will discuss evidence in support of the claim that personal and impersonal middles form a single construction.

5. The evidence for a unified analysis of personal and impersonal middles in Slovene

In the present paper I argue for a unified analysis of sentences called here personal and impersonal middles as variants of a single construction, on the basis of their semantic and syntactic properties and the role of the morpheme *se* during their derivation, which was discussed in section 4. In this section I show that impersonal middles also involve subject demotion, that transitive middles with nominatives and those with objects are variant forms, and that personal and impersonal middles share unique properties which distinguish both from passives as well as actives.

In traditional and recent Slovene literature the term middles is not normally used. *Se*-sentences with a nominative, such as (11), (15), (17) and (22-23), are typically treated as a subclass of passives, while *se*-sentences with no nominative, such as (12-14), (16) and (18-19), are considered impersonal actives.

Two questions therefore arise from these observations: (a) how are personal middles differentiated from passives and (b) how are impersonal middles differentiated from actives? Below I make a comparison between Slovene middles, periphrastic passives and impersonal active sentences without an implied human argument, which shows that both personal and impersonal middles in Slovene share crucial properties which set them apart from periphrastic passives on the one hand, and from impersonal actives on the other. Treating personal and impersonal middles as two distinct constructions cannot account for these facts, while treating them as middles (i.e. a single construction distinct from passives as well as actives) enables us to distinguish them in a more principled way from other sentences with *se* and from periphrastic passives.

In the following subsections I show how personal middles and impersonal middles differ from passives and actives respectively, which properties are shared by both personal and impersonal middles, and how this evidence supports my unified analysis of middles.

5.1 Personal middles vs. periphrastic passives

Undoubtedly, there is parallelism between Slovene personal middles and personal periphrastic passives. They both contain an overt or morphological nominative, a verb which agrees with the syntactic subject in person, number and gender, and an implicit argument, i.e. the understood subject, which can be expressed as an agentive oblique. However, this does not mean that they are exactly the same thing. Despite their similarities they differ not only morphologically, but also semantically, syntactically and even stylistically.

Let us first consider the morphological difference. As we have seen in the embedded clause in (23), repeated here as (51), Slovene middles always require the active verb form and the morpheme *se*, while periphrastic passives always display the passive auxiliary *biti* ‘be’ and passive participle in *-n/t*, as shown in (52) (Toporišič 2000: 502).

- (51) Predlagamo, da se s strani države uvedejo
 suggest.1PL.PRES that SE on the-part-of state.GEN introduce.3PL.PRES
 zaščitni mehanizmi. (middle)
 protective.NOM mechanisms.NOM
 ‘We suggest that protective mechanisms be introduced by the state.’

- (52) Sin je bil pohvaljen od očeta. (passive)
 son.NOM AUX.3SG be.PCP.SG.MASC praise.PCP.SG.MASC by father.GEN
 ‘The son was praised by his father.’

Semantically, both middles and passives are argued to express so-called “passive actions”, where the understood subject is placed in the background. However, there is a crucial difference in the interpretation of this subject argument. In Slovene middles, the understood subject is always non-specific and must be interpreted as human (generic or indefinite) although it need not be agentive; it can be a Recipient or Benefactive, as in (53) containing the verb *dobiti* ‘get’. By contrast, the understood subject in passives may be specific, as in (52), and it can be non-human. As shown in (54), passives, unlike middles, allow their underlying subjects to be interpreted as natural Forces or Causes (e.g. *potres* ‘earthquake’). When human, however, the understood subject in passives, unlike in middles, is always agentive.

- (53) Tu se je dobil najboljši kebab v Berlinu.
 here SE AUX.3SG get.PCP.SG.MASC the-best kebab.MASC.NOM in Berlin.LOC
 ‘Here one could get the best kebab in Berlin.’ (middle)

- (54) Policijska postaja Bovec je bila porušena
 police station.FEM.NOM Bovec AUX.3SG be.PCP.SG.FEM demolish.PCP.SG.FEM
 (ob potresu). (passive)
 (at earthquake)
 ‘The Bovec police station was demolished (during the earthquake).’

The syntactic difference between Slovene middles and passives regards the use of the auxiliary *dati* ‘give’ and the properties of their agentive phrases. Unlike middles, periphrastic passives cannot occur with *dati* ‘give’ which adds the modal meaning of ability or possibility, as illustrated in (55).

- (55) *Sin je bil dan pohvaliti
 son.NOM AUX.3SG be.PCP.SG.MASC give.PCP.SG.MASC praise.INFIN

od očeta.
 by father.GEN
 Intended: ‘The son could be praised by his father.’

Furthermore, middles disallow the *od* ‘by’ phrase and allow their understood subjects, referring to non-specific humans, to be expressed only in the *s strani* phrase, as shown in (51). By contrast, passives allow the *od* ‘by’ phrase, as in (52), as well as the *s strani* ‘on the part of’ phrase. In passives, the *s strani* ‘on the part of’ phrase can refer either to specific volitional Agents, as in (56), or to collectives and entities associated with humans, as in (57).

(56) Ta zadeva je bila sprožena že
 this issue.FEM.NOM AUX.3SG be.3SG.FEM raise.PCP.SG.FEM already
s strani mojega predhodnika. (passive)
 on the-part-of my predecessor.GEN
 ‘This issue has already been raised by my predecessor.’

(57) Naša stališča so bila napadana
 our views.NEUTER.NOM AUX.3PL be.PCP.PL.NEUTER attack.PCP.PL.NEUTER
s strani različnih ideologov. (passive)
 on the-part-of various.GEN ideologists.GEN
 ‘Our views were attacked by various ideologists.’

Finally, middles and passives in Slovene also differ in register. While middles are regularly found in informal as well as formal speech and writing, passives are mainly typical of formal writing and speech, and are considered rather stilted.

The comparison between Slovene personal middles and periphrastic passives has revealed significant differences, mainly in the interpretation of their underlying subjects: while passives allow their understood subjects to be non-human Forces or Causes, middles allow only human understood subjects. The two types of sentences also differ in the use of the auxiliary *dati* ‘give’ (which is only allowed in middles) and the properties of their agentive phrases (i.e. middles do not allow the *od* ‘by’ phrase). These differences are difficult to explain if middles and passives are to represent a single construction. I propose that they should not be treated the same; only periphrastic passives are true passives, while personal middles, together with impersonal middles, form a distinct construction.¹¹

5.1.1 Personal middles in the Slovene linguistic literature

Personal middles with nominative DPs are most often treated as passives in the Slovene literature, traditional and generative (R&MS 2003, Toporišič 2000, Herrity 2000). In addition, R&MS (2003: 100) distinguish between sentences like (58), which they label passives, and sentences like (59), which they label middles.

(58) Ta hiša se je hitro zgradila. (passive, R&MS 2003)
 this house.SG.FEM.NOM SE AUX.3SG fast build.PCP.FEM.SG
 ‘This house was built fast.’

(59) Ta knjiga se lahko bere. (middle, R&MS 2003)
 this book.SG.FEM.NOM SE easy read.3SG.PRES

¹¹ In sections 5.2 and 5.3, where I discuss the arguments for the unified treatment of personal and impersonal middles, I will also show that Slovene middles and passives do not have the same constraints on their formation – in Slovene, passivisation is a more constrained syntactic process than middle formation.

‘This book reads easily.’

It is not clear why (58) and (59) should represent two distinct constructions, since there is no formal distinction between the two. Both have a nominative DP in subject position which governs agreement with the verb (3rd person singular on the auxiliary in (58) and finite verb in (59), and feminine singular on the participle in (58)).

Comparing the two sentences, one may assume that the distinction is based on the differences in either tense or aspect or the event versus property reading. So based on these distinctions, a passive sentence would be one in the past tense, with a perfective verb and an event reading. By contrast, a middle sentence would be one in the present tense, with an imperfective verb and a property reading. However, R&MS’s example (repeated here in (60)) (2003: 96) provides a counterexample for such distinction. (60) is treated by R&MS as passive, although it is in the present tense, has an imperfective verb and a property reading.

(60) Starši se ubogajo. (passive, R&MS 2003)
parents.NOM SE obey.3PL.PRES
‘Parents are obeyed.’

It seems to me that we can see the influence of English in R&MS’s differentiation between middles and (reflexive) passives in Slovene. It is true that English middles cannot have an event reading, while passives can, so Slovene “eventive” sentences like (58) (termed middles in this paper) can only be translated in English by a passive. However, French middles, for instance, can have an event reading, so a French equivalent of (58) would be *La maison s’est construite rapidement*, i.e. a middle. In the same vein, due to the fact that English middles normally require adverbial modification, sentence (60) is translated in English by a passive, which does not require an adverbial, although it could be translated by a middle in some other language, say French. I assume, as already mentioned above, that Slovene middles, like French middles, can occur without adverbials and have a property and event readings, therefore sentences like (58), (59) and (60) are all treated as (personal) middles in this study, displaying all the properties of middles discussed above, and contain the same use of middle *se*, as described in section 4.

5.2 Impersonal middles vs. impersonal active sentences

In this subsection I discuss the main arguments in the literature for the active treatment of sentences termed here impersonal middles, and present several counterarguments based on the data from Slovene and cross-linguistically. I show that the active treatment of Slovene impersonal middles runs up against several problems and is unable to explain why impersonal middles differ from actives as well as periphrastic passives in the same way as personal middles. If we treat impersonal middles as middle constructions, however, these facts can be accounted for.

There are four main reasons in the literature for treating impersonal middles as active sentences in which no subject demotion has taken place. First, verbs in impersonal middles are argued to be active because impersonal middles formed from transitive verbs retain structural objects. The inability of accusative objects to be promoted thus supports the idea that the subject has not been demoted in the first place nor has the verb been detransitivised (Blevins 2003: 8, 19, R&MS 2003: 93). Second, impersonal middles disallow or tend to resist the use of agentive phrases, which suggests that there is no demoted subject argument that could be expressed as an oblique adjunct (Blevins 2003: 485, 492). Third, the understood subjects in impersonal middles receive “an indefinite human interpretation” (Blevins 2003: 488-489, 495), which conflicts with the explicit expression of an Agent and further suggests

that the Agent has been suppressed (i.e. not syntactically realised) rather than demoted. Finally, impersonal middles are treated as actives because they are supposed to exhibit the syntactic and semantic indefinite human nominative subject *se/si*, which can bind anaphors, and is often equated with the indefinite subject like the English *one*, German *man*, French *on* and Italian *uno* (R&MS 2003: 92-93, 106-107, Bolta 1988: 119, 122).

The data, however, do not support the above claims. First, the lack of promotion of objects in impersonal middles does not necessarily mean that there has been no demotion of the subject. As pointed out by Blevins, a similar situation can be found in subjectless passives like German (61) – they do not promote objects, even though they demote subjects, simply because there is no obvious element to promote (2003: 477).

- (61) In der Küche wurde (von vielen Leuten) geraucht. (German)
 in the kitchen AUX.3SG by many people smoke.PCP
 ‘There was smoking (by many people) in the kitchen.’

The same can be argued for Slovene impersonal middles formed from intransitive verbs such as (12), repeated as (62). Like in impersonal passives, the absence of promotion of the object (simply because there is no object to promote) does not rule out demotion of the subject.

- (62) Živi se samo enkrat. (intransitive impersonal middle)
 live.3SG.PRES SE only once
 ‘You only live once.’

I take a step further by extending this view to impersonal middles formed from transitive verbs which retain their structural objects, such as (13) with the accusative object (repeated as (63)). By definition, verbs in middles have the active form, so verbs in transitive impersonal middles remain transitive and retain their case-assigning properties. Thus, the absence of object promotion in (63) need not indicate that subject demotion has not taken place. Object promotion is simply not required, because the verb can assign case to its object.¹²

- (63) Šolo se obnavlja. (transitive impersonal middle)
 school.ACC SE renovate.3SG.PRES

¹² The same variation is also found in some Croatian varieties, as reported by Blevins (2003: 504-505). Sentences with a nominative coexist with alternative constructions where the underlying object remains in the accusative, as demonstrated in (i) (adapted from Browne 1993:333):

- (i) Knjiga / knjigu se piše. (Croatian)
 book.NOM / book.ACC SE write.3SG.PRES
 ‘The book is being written.’

A similar situation, analogous to Slovene and Croatian middles, is exemplified by Slovene internal causatives, illustrated in (29b), which also have two variants when formed from transitive verbs; one with a promoted underlying object, as in (ii), and one with an object that does not get promoted, as in (iii) (R&MS 2003: 147):

- (ii) Pila se mi je voda.
 drink.PCP.SG.FEM SE I.DAT AUX.3SG water.NOM.FEM
 ‘I felt like drinking water.’
- (iii) Pilo se mi je vodo.
 drink.PCP.SG.NEUTER SE I.DAT AUX.3SG water.ACC.FEM
 ‘I felt like drinking water.’

država ‘state’ in (51)). Furthermore, Kaiser & Vihman (2006: 135) point out that Finnish agentive *toimesta*-phrases in impersonals may sometimes refer to ‘indirect’ Agents, interpreted merely as initiators of an action; therefore these phrases cannot be reliably used to test the presence of a demoted argument in Finnish. In Slovene, however, *s strani* ‘on the part of’ phrases normally refer to an actual direct Agent of an action. Thus in Slovene, the use of agentive phrases contradicts the active treatment of impersonal middles and cannot be used to distinguish syntactically between personal and impersonal middles.¹⁴

The third problem with the active treatment of impersonal middles is that an indefinite human interpretation of the understood argument, another essential property of active impersonals according to the literature, is not restricted to impersonals (i.e. sentences with a suppressed subject). Blevins (2003: 480-481) notes that subjectless passives with demoted subjects like German (61) above also have an indefinite human agentive interpretation. Blevins concludes that an indefinite human interpretation must therefore be conventionally associated with a subjectless form of personal verbs, irrespective of the syntactic source of the subjectlessness (2003: 481, 489). In his terms, therefore, the suppressed argument in impersonals as well as the demoted argument in subjectless passives are both interpreted as referring to an indefinite human agent. If that is the case, however, an indefinite human interpretation cannot be employed to distinguish between suppressed and demoted arguments. Applying this to Slovene impersonal middles, we can conclude that an indefinite human interpretation of the understood argument is not evidence that they are active sentences in which no demotion has taken place, because the understood argument in impersonal passives, which do involve demotion, is also interpreted as an indefinite human, e.g. *ljudje* ‘people’ or *nekdo* ‘someone’:

- (66) Na dve stvari je bilo opozorjeno. (passive)
 on two things.FEM.ACC AUX.3SG be.PCP.SG.NEUTER warn.PCP.SG.NEUTER
 ‘Two things were pointed out.’

Finally, I will discuss several empirical facts that present a problem for the claim that the morpheme *se* in Slovene impersonal middles is the overt semantic and syntactic subject pronoun denoting the human argument. The first problem is the fact, also noted in Siewierska (1984: 175) for Italian and Spanish, that there are no ready criteria in Slovene to determine whether *se* in impersonal middles is a subject because *se* does not display the distributional characteristics of subject pronouns, but rather those of clitics. However, as in Italian and Spanish, subject clitics do not exist in Slovene. So treating *se* in impersonal middles as the only instance of a subject clitic in the language would not fare well empirically.

Another problem for the analysis of *se* as the subject is the results of the judgement elicitation task carried out on 166 Slovene speakers, which show that there is no compelling evidence for the presence of a syntactic binder for anaphors in Slovene impersonal middles (Grahek 2006: 378-386). Speakers report that middles with the possessive anaphor *svoj* ‘self’s’ like (67) are ungrammatical (it is acceptable for 36.05% of the speakers) and that middles allow the other subject-oriented anaphor *sebe* ‘self’ only marginally at best (52.06%

¹⁴ The fact that Slovene periphrastic passives allow *s strani* ‘on the part of’ phrases as well as *od* ‘by’ phrases, while middles allow only *s strani* ‘on the part of’ phrases, does not indicate the absence of subject demotion in middles because it can be accounted for in semantic rather than syntactic terms. *Od* ‘by’ phrases refer only to specific Agents (e.g. *od očeta* ‘by the father’), while *s strani* ‘on the part of’ phrases can refer to specific Agents (e.g. *s strani mojega predhodnika* ‘on the part of my predecessor’) and non-specific Agents, such as collectives and entities associated with humans (e.g. *s strani države* ‘on the part of the state’). Since the human argument in middles is by definition indeterminate (i.e. non-specific), middles can only occur with *s strani* ‘on the part of’ phrases. Thus it is this semantic restriction on the agentive phrases that determines that middles disallow *od* ‘by’ phrases, rather than the lack of subject demotion.

of the speakers).¹⁵ This suggests that there is no subject in [spec,AgrSP], the usual subject position in Slovene, or in any other position that could bind subject-oriented anaphors. This is evidence that there is no subject element in Slovene impersonal middles, either overt or covert, so the morpheme *se* cannot be the overt subject.

- (67) **Svojih* prijateljev se tako ne tretira.
 self's friends.GEN SE thus NEG treat.3SG.PRES
 Intended: 'One doesn't treat one's own friends like that.'

(adapted from R&MS 2003: 107)

- (68) ??*Sedaj* se misli samo na *sebe*.
 now SE think.3SG.PRES only on self.ACC
 'Nowadays people only think of themselves.'

(adapted from R&MS 2003: 106)

More evidence against the treatment of *se* as a subject is the fact that Slovene impersonal middles allow agentive *s strani* 'on the part of' phrases, in which case *se* cannot be the overt indefinite human subject in these sentences, a point also made by Siewierska (1984: 176-177) for Italian, where *si*-clauses allow agentive *da* 'by' phrases.

Lastly, treating the reflexive morpheme in impersonal middles as an indefinite syntactic subject equivalent to indefinite pronouns, such as the English *one* and French *on*, may be problematic for the languages that exhibit both. German and Italian, for instance, have impersonal middles with reflexives (*sich* and *si* respectively) alongside sentences with indefinite pronouns (*man* and *uno* respectively). The question arises whether the two pronouns really should be treated as a manifestation of the same phenomenon and whether the reflexive really should be viewed as a syntactic subject of an active sentence, especially in the light of its lack of subject-like properties.

Slovene evidence therefore shows that none of the phenomena discussed above (i.e. retained structural objects, the behaviour of agentive phrases, the indefinite human interpretation and the presence of *se*) either give support for the active status of impersonal middles or refute subject demotion during their derivation. In this paper I argue that impersonal middles are not active sentences. Instead, they form a distinct construction together with personal middles. By treating impersonal and personal middles as a single class of middles, we can explain why they display crucial similarities. Before I turn to consider these similarities, however, I would like to address in more detail how impersonal middles with overt objects, such as (63), have been treated in the Slovene linguistic literature.

5.2.1 Impersonal middles with overt objects in the Slovene linguistic literature

Since Slovene impersonal middles with overt objects exist alongside personal middles with nominatives, the explanation of their derivation represents a particular challenge for generative as well as traditional linguistics. In the Slovene literature personal middles with nominatives, such as (64), repeated as (69), are treated as a type of passives, while impersonal middles with overt objects, such as (63), repeated as (70), are treated as active sentences

¹⁵ The fact that *svojih* 'self's' is in the sentence-initial position does not appear to play a role in the ungrammaticality of (67). Sentence-initial possessive anaphors are perfectly acceptable in active sentences, as shown in (i), although they do not follow their referent. Word order in Slovene is relatively free, and as explained in fn. 6, objects can freely move from the postverbal to preverbal position in a sentence with pro.

- (i) *Svojih* torb čakam.
 self's bags.GEN wait.1SG.PRES
 'I'm waiting for my (own) bags.'

(R&MS 2003, Herrity 2000: 162). Slovene linguists, traditional and generative, therefore draw a parallel between periphrastic passives and personal middles and regard both types of constructions as passives, referring to personal middles as “passives with *se*”.

- (69) Šola se obnavlja. (personal middle)
 school.NOM SE renovate.3SG.PRES
 ‘The school is being renovated.’
- (70) Šolo se obnavlja. (impersonal middle with an object)
 school.ACC SE renovate.3SG.PRES
 ‘The school is being renovated.’

Slovene prescriptive tradition favours middles with nominatives. Consequently, personal middles with nominative DPs are regarded as standard forms, as opposed to impersonal middles with accusative/genitive DPs, which are considered colloquial and unacceptable in formal varieties (Toporišič 1982: 245, 2000: 357, Gradišnik 1967: 489-490, Breznik 1934: 139). Since it is generally believed that periphrastic passives in Slovene can only be personal, i.e. displaying a nominative DP in subject position, middles, which are treated as a type of passives, are likewise expected to display a nominative DP. The existence of impersonal middles with overt objects alongside personal middles appears to be seen as an unnecessary variation in the language, so personal middles are favoured due to their apparent formal similarity to periphrastic passives (i.e. having a nominative), while impersonal middles with objects are considered to be a later innovation or a borrowing (Toporišič 2000: 357, 503).

Empirical evidence, however, does not support these claims. First, Slovene periphrastic passives can be impersonal when formed from predicates with prepositional objects, in which case they have an impersonal form, i.e. they have no nominative and show no subject-verb agreement. This fact was first pointed out by Orešnik (1986/87: 150) (see (71)) and is also supported by the data, as shown by attested example (66), repeated as (72).

- (71) Pridobljeno je bilo na času. (impersonal passive)
 gain.PCP.SG.NEUTER AUX.3SG be.PCP.SG.NEUTER on time.LOC
 ‘Time was gained.’ Literally: ‘It was gained on time.’
- (72) Na dve stvari je bilo opozorjeno.
 on two things.ACC.FEM AUX.3SG be.PCP.SG.NEUTER warn.PCP.SG.NEUTER
 ‘Two things were pointed out.’ (impersonal passive)

Slovene periphrastic passives also show an impersonal form when their underlying object is a clause, as in (73). Such passives have no nominative, since the clausal argument cannot be assigned case, and show no subject-verb agreement.

- (73) Rečeno je bilo, da so
 say.PCP.SG.NEUTER AUX.3SG be.PCP.SG.NEUTER that be.3PL.PRES
 odnosi med državama dobri. (impersonal passive)
 relations.MASC between state.FEM.DUAL good.MASC.PL
 ‘It was said that the relations between the (two) states were good.’

The existence of impersonal periphrastic passives in Slovene has an important implication for the analysis of Slovene sentences I term middles. If personal middles are treated as passives by analogy with Slovene periphrastic passives, which are believed to be

only personal in form (Toporišič 2000: 358-359), the fact that impersonal passives exist in Slovene suggests that the presence or absence of a nominative cannot be the motivation for grouping personal middles with periphrastic passives on the one hand, and impersonal middles with actives on the other. I argue instead that just like personal and impersonal periphrastic passives form a distinct construction of passives, personal and impersonal middles form a distinct construction of middles characterised by middle *se* which reduces the human argument during their derivation. My motivation for treating personal and impersonal middles as a single construction is the fact that they both display properties (discussed in the following section) which are not shared by either passives or actives.

Second, evidence from Slovene also refutes the claim that middles with overt objects may be a later innovation in the language. Some old sayings and proverbs, such as (74), have a form of an impersonal middle with an overt object. This may in fact suggest that middles with objects predate not only personal middles but also periphrastic passives, which, compared to middles, are fairly unproductive and stilted in Slovene.

- (74) Greh se pove, *grešnika* pa ne.
 sin.NOM/ACC SE tell.3SG.PRES sinner.GEN but NEG
 ‘The sin is told, the sinner is not.’ (proverb)

In the generative Slovene literature (R&MS 2003, Bolta 1988), personal middles like (60), repeated as (75), are treated as passives with an implicit argument, while impersonal middles with objects like (76) are treated as impersonal active sentences with nominative indefinite *se* which signals the external argument. In the examples below this distinction is also indicated in R&MS’s translations: (75), which is labelled passive, is translated by a passive, while (76), which is labelled active, is translated by an active.

- (75) Starši se ubogajo.
 parents.NOM SE obey.3PL.PRES
 ‘Parents are obeyed.’

- (76) Starše se uboga.
 parents.ACC SE obey.3SG.PRES
 ‘People obey parents.’

(R&MS 2003: 96)

However, R&MS’s intuition is not supported by Toporišič (2000) and Blevins (2003), who argue that there is no interpretative difference at all between middles with nominative DPs like (75) and their variants with overt objects like (76). In Slovene, these sentences truly are variant forms. The fact is that every personal Slovene middle has an impersonal variant with a retained object, which has exactly the same semantic interpretation. We have seen in section 3 that *Šola se obnavlja* ‘The school.NOM is being renovated’ can have the variant with the accusative object (*Šolo se obnavlja* ‘The school.ACC is being renovated’), while *Ta predal se ne da odpreti* ‘This drawer.NOM can’t be opened’ can have a variant with the object in the genitive of negation:

- (77) *Tega predala se ne da odpreti*
 this.GEN drawer.GEN SE NEG give.3SG.PRES open.INFIN
 ‘This drawer can’t be opened.’

The only distinction made in the Slovene literature is sociolinguistic in nature. As already noted, middles with nominatives are considered standard and are favoured by Slovene grammarians, while middles with objects are considered colloquial and inappropriate in formal speech and writing. This distinction, however, is only prescriptive, because speakers use impersonal sentences with overt objects in all varieties. Although impersonal middles with overt objects are not favoured by the prescriptive tradition, they are commonly used in speech and writing, formal as well as informal. They are even found in academic texts, as shown by an example taken from a non proof-read version of an academic paper – *določen cilj* ‘certain goal’ is the object of the embedded middle clause because there is no verbal agreement.

- (78) Srečamo se s simuliranjem poraženca z namenom,
 meet.1PL.PRES SE with simulating loser with aim
 da bi se lažje doseglo *določen cilj*.
 that would SE more-easily achieve.PCP.SG.NEUTER certain goal.ACC.MASC
 ‘What we see is a simulation of a loser in order to achieve a certain goal more easily.’

Middles are also more likely to retain their objects when they are pronominal as in (79), in the genitive of negation as in (80) or both as in (81). It seems that pronominal and/or genitive forms of objects are less obtrusive, i.e. less salient, and it is therefore less natural to promote these types of objects to subject position.

- (79) Predlagala bi, naj se tudi *njih* ostriže.
 suggest.PCP.SG.FEM would let SE also they.ACC cut-hair.3SG.PRES
 ‘I would suggest cutting their hair as well.’

(Gradišnik 1967: 490)

- (80) *Ljubezni* se ne da kupiti za denar.
 love.GEN SE NEG give.3SG buy.INFIN for money
 ‘Money can’t buy you love.’

- (81) Pri nas se *je* v trgovinah ne dobi.
 with us SE 3SG.FEM.GEN in shops NEG get.3SG.PRES
 ‘Here (in Slovenia) you can’t get it in shops.’

In fact, middles with objects are sometimes even preferred by speakers when the variant with a nominative would be ambiguous. Below it is shown that personal middle (82) with a (human) syntactic subject is ambiguous between a middle and active (reflexive) readings, while its variant (83) with an object has only a middle reading.

- (82) Bogovi se častijo.
 gods.NOM SE worship.3PL
 ‘Gods are worshipped. / Gods worship themselves.’¹⁶

- (83) Bogove se časti.
 gods.ACC SE worship.3SG
 ‘Gods are worshipped.’

¹⁶ Like sentence (82), (75) with a nominative DP is ambiguous between a middle reading ‘Parents are obeyed’ and a reflexive reading ‘Parents obey themselves’, so speakers may prefer to use (76) with the overt object, which is not ambiguous, when the meaning is not clear from the context.

The Slovene evidence shows therefore, that theoretically, any transitive middle can retain its structural object. I suggest this is because middles are active in form, so they preserve their case-assigning properties. The object movement in middles is thus optional: possible, because the underlying subject has been demoted, but not required. However, retaining the object in a middle does not yield any differences in interpretation, so middles with nominatives and middles with objects are variant forms.

In this study, I treat sentences like (75) and (76), repeated as (84) and (85), as one class, on syntactic and semantic grounds, because this yields a more principled analysis. I argue that sentences like (84) and (85) should both be treated as middle constructions containing middle *se*, which reduces the human argument during their derivation, and sharing crucial semantic and syntactic properties that define both as middles, i.e. a construction distinct from passives as well as actives. Sentences (84) and (85) are variant forms which do not differ in interpretation. In my opinion, both can be translated in English by either an active or passive, as indicated below.

(84) Starši se ubogajo.
 parents.NOM SE obey.3PL.PRES
 ‘Parents are obeyed. (R&MS 2003) / People obey parents.’

(85) Starše se uboga.
 parents.ACC SE obey.3SG.PRES
 ‘People obey parents. (R&MS 2003) / Parents are obeyed.’

The syntactic distinction between (84) and (85) suggested by R&MS (2003) must be therefore influenced by English. Since English does not have middles without adverbials or impersonal middles, R&MS translate the above examples with English sentences that are not only closest in meaning but which can also best reflect the use of case in Slovene examples (i.e. the nominative in the passive and the accusative in the active). If translated in another language, say Polish or Italian, the translations would be, like in Slovene, a personal and an impersonal middle respectively. Blevins (2003: 478) points out that influence of English can be discerned in a similar way in the passive classification of Balto-Finnic impersonals.

Moreover, Siewierska (1984: 177-180) observes a similar situation in the treatment of Italian *si*-clauses either as active or passive (termed middles in this paper). She gives examples of sentences cited in Lepschy & Lepschy (1977):

(86) Si sono comprate due penne. (active)
 SI AUX.3PL buy.PCP.PL two pens
 ‘One has bought two pens.’

(87) Si sono viste due stele. (passive)
 SI AUX.3PL see.PCP.PL two stars
 ‘Two stars have been seen.’

(88) La verità non si può sempre dire. (active or passive)
 the truth NEG SI can always tell.INFIN
 ‘One cannot always tell the truth. / The truth cannot always be told.’

Siewierska points out that there is no obvious reason why (86), but not (87) should be treated as passive, since in both cases the DPs govern agreement with the auxiliary and the

participle. It appears that this is another example of English influencing the distinction between related constructions in a language, especially if we consider (88), which has two English translations, active and passive, and is accordingly labelled as active or passive.

In her study on the passive in Slavonic, Siewierska (1988) shows that constructions comparable to Slovene examples (84) and (85) can have both passive and indefinite human interpretations, irrespective of whether their DP is in the nominative, as in (89), or accusative, as in (90). She indicates that both sentences can be translated by either a passive or an active with an indefinite human subject, just as I argue for (84) and (85).

(89) Kuća se gradila dva mjeseca. (Serbo-Croatian)
 house.SG.FEM.NOM SE build.PCP.SG.FEM two months
 ‘The house was built in two months. / They built the house in two months.’
 (Siewierska 1988: 259)

(90) Owe przesady dzisiaj inaczej się interpretuje. (Polish)
 these prejudices.ACC today differently SIĘ interpret.3SG.PRES
 ‘These prejudices are interpreted differently nowadays. / One interprets these prejudices differently nowadays.’
 (Siewierska 1988: 262)

We can infer from this evidence that neither the intransitivity of the verb nor the lack of nominative case marking or verbal agreement should necessarily preclude us from treating what is termed here personal and impersonal middles as one and the same construction, as also argued by Siewierska (1984: 175) for Italian *si*-sentences.

It has been shown above that none of the reasons suggested in the Slovene literature for the distinction between personal middles with nominatives and impersonal middles with objects are supported by Slovene evidence: the absence of a nominative does not preclude impersonal middles from forming the same class of construction with personal middles, while the usage reveals that middles with objects, like personal middles, are used in all varieties and even preferred in some contexts. Indeed, there is more evidence that middles with nominatives and middles with objects form a single construction; not only are they variants with exactly the same semantic interpretation, but they also share other semantic and syntactic properties which set them apart from passives as well as actives. These properties will be discussed in the following subsection.

5.3 Similarities between personal and impersonal middles

I argue for the unified treatment of personal and impersonal middles in Slovene, because treating the former as passives and the latter as actives (which is the current approach in the Slovene literature) cannot account for several facts about these sentences in Slovene. As I have already pointed out, Slovene personal and impersonal middles display crucial similarities, so treating them as two distinct constructions cannot explain this parallelism.

Impersonal middles differ from personal middles only in the lack of object promotion, and as a consequence have no nominative case marking and no verbal agreement, but share all other characteristics. As in impersonal periphrastic passives, the lack of a nominative in impersonal middles does not imply that they must be active sentences. In Slovene, personal and impersonal middles share morphological, semantic and syntactic properties which distinguish them both from periphrastic passives on the one hand, and from personal and impersonal actives on the other.

For example, unlike actives and passives, personal and impersonal middles always require *se* with the active form of the verb. I argue that *se* in personal and impersonal middles

is middle *se*, which reduces the subject role of a base verb at the predicate's level, i.e. after the verb has projected all of its semantic arguments into the syntax (see section 4). By contrast, active sentences can only display inherent *se*, an inseparable part of a lexical entry (e.g. *smejati se* 'laugh'), or reflexive/reciprocal *se*, which can be replaced by a full pronoun or another DP. Passives, on the other hand, never display *se*. Below it is shown that personal middles without *se* result in an ungrammatical sentence, while impersonal middles without *se* are only grammatical on the active reading with a specific Agent.

(91) *Šola obnavlja.
school.NOM renovate.3SG.PRES

(92) Slabo živi.
badly live.3SG.PRES
'He/she lives badly.'

Second, personal and impersonal middles differ from both actives and passives in that they can co-occur with the auxiliary *dati* 'give', which introduces the modal notion of ability or possibility (in actives and passives, *dati* 'give' can only be a full lexical verb).¹⁷

(93) Ta predal se da odpreti.
this drawer.NOM/ACC SE give.3SG.PRES open.INFIN
'This drawer can be opened.'

(94) Tako se ne da delati.
thus SE NEG give.3SG.PRES work.INFIN
'One cannot work like this.'

Moreover, as shown below, personal and impersonal middles differ from actives in that they always involve an understood human argument, which can be overtly expressed in an agentive *s strani* 'on the part of' phrase when it refers to a collective or an entity associated with humans. (96) also shows that the human argument in middles cannot bind subject oriented anaphoric expressions, such as *sebe* 'self' and *svoj* 'self's'. By contrast, actives can only display locative *s strani* 'from' phrases, as illustrated in (97), and always contain a potential syntactic binder for anaphors.

(95) Predlagamo, da se s strani države uvedejo
suggest.1PL.PRES that SE on the-part-of state.GEN introduce.3PL.PRES
zaščitni mehanizmi. (personal middle)
protective.NOM mechanisms.NOM
'We suggest that protective mechanisms be introduced by the state.'

(96) S strani Telekom se je *sebi preprosto
on the-part-of Telekom.GEN SE AUX.3SG self.DAT simply
odklopilo telefon. (impersonal middle)
disconnect.PCP.SG.NEUTER telephone.ACC
'Telekom simply disconnected the telephone for *themselves.'

(97) S strani države načrta za dvorec nikoli nismo

¹⁷ Sentence (93) can be analysed as a personal or impersonal middle, due to the fact that the masculine noun *predal* 'drawer' shows syncretism of nominative and accusative forms in the singular.

on the-part-of state.GEN plan.GEN for mansion never AUX.NEG.1PL
 prejeli. (active)
 receive.PCP.PL

‘We never received the plan for the mansion from the state.’

Unlike in passives, the implicit argument in personal and impersonal middles must always be interpreted as human generic (*ljudje* ‘people’) or indefinite (*nekdo* ‘someone’), and need not be an Agent – it can be a Benefactive, as in personal middle (53), an Experiencer, as in personal middle (98) below, or a Patient, as in impersonal middle (99), formed from the unaccusative verb *umreti* ‘die’. By contrast, the implicit argument in passives, as has been shown in 5.1, can be specific and non-human, and must always be agentive when it refers to humans.

(98) Posledice so se čutile še dolgo časa.
 consequences.FEM.NOM AUX.3PL SE feel.PCP.PL.FEM still long time.GEN
 ‘The consequences could still be felt for a long time.’

(99) Tako hitro se ne umre.
 so quickly se NEG die.3SG.PRES
 ‘One does not die so quickly.’

Both personal and impersonal middles are also subject to the same constraints on their formation. As shown in section 4.3, Slovene middles cannot be derived from copulas, passive auxiliaries, verbs with nonreferential or oblique subjects and verbs describing states. If impersonal middles were active sentences, they would not have these constraints. Similarly, if personal middles were passive sentences, we would not expect them to have different constraints from periphrastic passives, which in Slovene can only be derived from predicates with overt underlying object DPs (e.g. *pohvaliti sina* ‘praise his son’ in (52)), predicates with prepositional objects (e.g. *opozoriti na dve stvari* ‘point out two things’ in (66)) and predicates with clausal objects (see (73)). Moreover, periphrastic passives, unlike middles, can be formed from verbs which allow their underlying subject to be a natural Force or Cause, i.e. non-human.

In sum, this section has discussed the evidence that, contrary to what is claimed in the literature, Slovene personal and impersonal middles form a single class of middle constructions which differ from passives (always require their implicit argument to be human) and from actives (have a demoted argument) and share other unique properties which set them apart as a distinct construction: they always require an active verb with role-reducing middle *se*, can occur with the modal auxiliary *dati* ‘give’, allow the agentive *s strani* ‘on the part of’ phrase, which can only refer to collectives and entities associated with humans, and are subject to the same constraints.

6. Conclusion

In this paper I have argued that middles in Slovene are sentences which have the active verb form with *se* and an understood human argument. According to this definition, Slovene middles subsume not only personal middles with a nominative, but also impersonal middles with no nominative, formed from both intransitives and transitive verbs with overt objects. In the current Slovene literature (R&MS 2003 and Toporišič 2000, among others), personal middles are most often treated as passives, while impersonal middles are treated as actives. Contrary to this view, I have provided evidence that in Slovene there is more similarity between personal and impersonal middles than there is between personal middles and

(periphrastic) passives on the one hand, and impersonal middles and (impersonal) actives on the other. I have shown that unlike periphrastic passives, Slovene personal middles allow the auxiliary *dati* ‘give’, disallow the *od* ‘by’ phrase and allow only human non-specific underlying subjects. These differences could not be explained if personal middles and periphrastic passives represented a single class of construction. Furthermore, I have demonstrated that unlike impersonal actives, Slovene impersonal middles involve subject demotion and do not contain an overt human subject because they allow agentive phrases and cannot bind anaphors. By contrast, personal and impersonal middles share unique properties. For instance, unlike passives and actives, both personal and impersonal middles require that their understood argument is interpreted as human generic or indefinite, allow the auxiliary *dati* ‘give’ and allow agentive *s strani* ‘on the part of’ phrases which refer exclusively to collectives and entities associated with humans. Moreover, personal and impersonal middles have the same constraints on their formation, which we would not expect if impersonal middles were active. I have therefore argued for a unified analysis of Slovene personal and impersonal middles as a single construction, distinct from passives as well as actives. In this way, the apparent similarities between personal and impersonal middles and their unique properties can be accounted for. In line with my analysis of Slovene *se* as a role-reducing operator, I propose that Slovene middles (personal and impersonal) contain the same type of *se*, termed here middle *se*, which reduces the highest human argument in the syntax by demoting it to an oblique adjunct.

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