

# An Analysis of Get-passives and Be-passives

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Žagar, Sofija

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# **An analysis of *get*-passives and *be*-passives**

Master's thesis

Student: Sofija Žagar

Supervisor: prof. dr. sc. Irena Zovko Dinković

Zagreb, 2024

## DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICITY

I, Sofija Žagar, a graduate of the Linguistics programme at the Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb, declare that the Master's thesis titled 'An Analysis of *Get*-passives and *Be*-passives' is the result of my own research and has been written entirely independently. Furthermore, I declare that no part of the Master's thesis has been directly taken from undisclosed sources or written in an unauthorized manner, and that the text is entirely based on the literature as stated in the references, with due respect to ethical standards of citation and use of sources.

Zagreb, 24/01/2024

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## ABSTRACT

This master's thesis comprises theoretical research on two types of passive constructions used in the English language – *get*-passives and *be*-passives as well as qualitative and quantitative empirical research conducted by the author with English major students, based on recognition of differences between verbs *get* and *be* in passive constructions. The thesis consists of a theoretical framework, i.e. an overview of studies related to passive constructions (particularly, *get*-passives and *be*-passives) followed by the analysis of the author's research. Overall, the thesis primarily focuses on the emergence and occurrence of passives and on the main differences between *get* and *be* in functional grammar, with a higher emphasis on *get*-passives and the notion of grammaticalization it has undergone. The first chapter of the thesis provides a general concise analysis of passive constructions, i.e. what notions are related to passive voice. This chapter particularly relies on present-day English grammar books, with a brief reference to how passives are acquired. There are several classifications of passives proposed by different linguists, that will be epitomized by examples. Situations in which passives are impossible to use are also elaborated in this chapter, as well as the dichotomy between stative passives and dynamic passive and adjectival and verbal passives, ultimately discussing the question of what the term 'true passives' entails. The following chapter in the theoretical part focuses on the two passive forms being the main focus of this thesis: *be*-passives and *get*-passives. At the beginning of the chapter a brief overview of the treatment of *get*-passive as opposed to *be*-passives in grammars will be provided, which will be followed by a rough establishment of differentiations between the two types, based mostly on grammar as well. The chapter ends with a section examining the position of the patient in both types of passives (mostly focusing on the syntactic properties of both passives and patient-related constraints). The next chapter deals with '*get*' as a lexical word and examines the process of grammaticalization. This will consist of corpus data and analysis of the semantic qualities of *get*, with a brief reflection on the interrelation and integration of grammar and lexis. The following chapter outlines *get*-passives from a perspective of research conducted so far, provides an insight into established classifications of *get*-passives, and examines the typical situations, and semantic constraints in which *get*-passives are employed. The theoretical part

finishes with a brief overview of a diachronic approach to get-passives and a discussion on formulaic expressions that contain passive constructions.

The second part of the thesis is a qualitative and quantitative research with English major students from Croatia, who were given a questionnaire and were asked to tell their perception of difference based on whether a sentence contains be-passive or get-passive construction. This is also achieved through a contrastive analysis of their native language, Croatian, through the form of a translation task.

## CONTENTS

### 1. INTRODUCTION

### 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2.1. USE OF PASSIVES IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

#### 2.2. GET-PASSIVES VS BE-PASSIVES

#### 2.3. "GET" AS A LEXICAL VERB

#### 2.4. FRAMEWORK BASED ON SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

#### 2.5. GET-PASSIVES AND FORMULAIC EXPRESSIONS

#### 2.6. DIACHRONIC ANALYSIS

### 3. RESEARCH

#### 3.1. AIMS

#### 3.2. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.3. PARTICIPANTS

#### 3.4. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

### 4. CONCLUSION

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The voice of the verb itself is only one of its features along with aspect, tense, and mood, that has been investigated from various perspectives. Unlike the Croatian language, English contains several varieties of passive constructions that are used in different registers, playing a critical role in emphasizing elements. The types of passives analyzed in this thesis are formed with the verbs *get* (*get*-passives) and *be* (*be*-passives). While *be* is the auxiliary verb most often associated with passive constructions, *get* has always gotten less attention when it comes to explaining passives as linguistic constructions, therefore I decided to investigate it in my thesis. Thus, the topic question my thesis intends to provide an answer to is: What exactly the main differences between the verbs *be* and *get* in passive constructions are, and how they tend to function among people who learn English as a second language (as illustrated in the second part).

This thesis aims to analyze the main principles of passive constructions in the English language, precisely *get*-passives and *be*-passives within a general context of passive constructions in the English language, primarily from its semantic perspective, but also taking into account its syntactic features. The main focus will be on *get*-passives, and in my study, I aim to showcase how *get*-passives emerge and what meanings they convey.

The thesis is divided into two general parts: a theoretical part based on previous studies and the usage-based approach in the grammar of the English language, and my research on the differences in meaning between *get*-passives and *be*-passives conducted through the use of questionnaires given to students. The research was based on the aforementioned theoretical framework, which is subdivided into the following chapters: chapter 1: passives in general, i.e. their use and syntactic features, classification of passives based on arguments, transitivity patterns, and dynamics, chapter 2: reflecting on the main differences between *be* and *get*-passives, mostly focusing on functional aspects, and other qualities concerning arguments, with a contrastive analysis, then chapter 3: analyzing *get* as a lexical verb (involving corpus data), as well as the process of grammaticalization and passivization, i.e. how *get* acquired its grammatical qualities. Chapter 4 that follows observes *get*-passives from various angles in terms of their use and combination with other particles within a sentence. This part is based on scientific linguistic



studies available in the existing scientific literature. This is followed by a brief diachronic overview in chapter 5, which showcases how passives evolved from the period of Old and Middle English onwards, and what constructions were the initial sources of constructions that are elaborated in modern-day grammars and defined as "passives". The majority of examples used in the theoretical part are drawn from Huddleston et al. (2017), Biber et al. (1999), Jespersen (1949), Quirk et al. (1985), Langacker (2008).

Apart from analyzing the occurrence and emergence of passive constructions, the purpose of this thesis is to outline the main differences between *get* and *be* passive, elucidate what is beyond the constructions we see in grammar books, and ultimately prove how these hypotheses (notions of responsibility, dynamic actions, adversity in use of *get*-passive) manifest themselves among Croatian students of English. I have chosen this topic, because, from the perspective of a native speaker of Croatian, a language where passive constructions are not so commonly used, the two types of passive in English seemed to be a fertile ground to investigate the process of grammaticalization.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1. THE USE OF PASSIVES IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

#### 2.1.1. PASSIVES EXPLAINED IN ENGLISH GRAMMARS

In various English grammars, specifically usage-based grammars<sup>1</sup>, verbs are analyzed and explained concerning their various qualities, such as aspect, tense, or voice. The voice of the verb implies active voice or passive voice, which is the focal point of this research. According to Huddleston et al. (2017: 1472): “voice is defined as a system where the contrasting forms differ in the way semantic roles are aligned with syntactic functions, normally with some concomitant marking on the verb.”

As mentioned, English has two main voices: active and passive, even though the discussions considering the grammatical category of voice usually also tackle related notions such as middle voice, reflexive constructions, causatives, etc. that are not the immediate topic of this thesis. In linguistics, the terms "active" and "passive" are assigned based on the roles and functions within clauses conveying an action. (Huddleston et al. 2017: 1472). The linguistic phenomena in this chapter are examined in relation to their morphology and syntax (e.g. subjects of passive verbs, reflexive pronouns, etc.), as well as semantics and pragmatics.

In terms of the sentence form and its syntactic properties, what happens in passive is that the direct object of the corresponding active sentence takes on the syntactic role of the subject of the passive sentence. Conversely, what happens in the passive is the externalization of the object. In passive clauses or sentences, the complement of *by* (also referred to as *by*-adjunct in Biggs, Embick, 2022: 211) corresponds to the subject of the active so the NP refers to the agent to which the adjunct is connected (cf. Huddleston 2017: 678).<sup>2</sup> If this adjunct of agency is overtly expressed, the passive is called long passive and if it's omitted, it is called short passive.

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<sup>1</sup> Usage-based grammars focuses on meaning in use and that structures are results of use, and is associated with semantic dimension

<sup>2</sup> However, the preposition *by* can have many other roles beside conveying the information about the agent in passive sentence. For example in: “*This result was achieved by dubious means*”, a short passive, *by*-phrase

As the short passives lack the *by*-adjunct, it is clear that they can't have an active counterpart, unless the subject of the active sentence is *someone* or some other indefinite pronoun. Also, short passives can be chosen by the speaker if the agent is implied, so there is no need for a specification.

Before the main paradigms and uses of passives are elaborated, it is crucial to outline what semantic roles Agent, Experiencer, Patient, and Theme refer to in grammar books, as this term will be frequently reflected on. The semantic role is defined as a relationship that elements have with the main verb.<sup>3</sup> To put it simply, in linguistic discourse, an Agent is the entity intentionally performing the action of the verb, whereas an Experiencer denotes a living entity experiencing an emotion, state of being, or perception expressed by the verb. On the other hand, the Theme is the entity directly affected by the action, while the Patient is the entity undergoing the action or event denoted by the predicate.<sup>4</sup> Agent is an essential component of an active phrase, so it is used both with actions and states. Huddleston et al. (2017:678) state that the Agent is technically a subject-referent considered to be responsible for the current state. However, during theoretical research, this claim will be challenged by the notion of *get*-passive.

Various grammars of spoken English state that short passive is used to direct the importance to the person or thing that experiences the action (i.e. also called experiencer or undergoer) rather than to the one performing the action (i.e. agent). In example (1)<sup>5</sup> it is clear that the main importance is placed on the noun *house*.

(1) *The house was built in the 17th century.*

In addition, passive constructions are also used when the agent is unknown or isn't relevant to the statement, as shown in example (3), where, just like in example (2) the agent is not

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functions as a means adjunct, just like in the active *They achieved this result by dubious means* (Ward, Birner, Huddleston, 2017: 1427)

<sup>3</sup> The semantic roles involve: Agent, Patient, Theme, Goal, Experiencer, Goal, Benefactive, Source, Instrument, Locative

<sup>4</sup> 5.1.1.1. Semantic Role Lists (<http://elies.rediris.es/elies11/cap5111.htm> used 1st October 2023)

<sup>5</sup> Example taken from <https://www.ef.com/wwen/english-resources/english-grammar/passive-voice/>

mentioned, while the focus is still on the action. This tendency can also be applied in situations when the performer of the action is obvious (3).<sup>6</sup>

(2) *The window was left open.*

(3) *He was arrested (by the police).*

Writers of articles and books (particularly in academic and scientific fields) tend to avoid the use of the pronoun *I*, and either replace it with the term *the author* or a passive construction. These so-called agentless passives are specifically common in academic writing, with the purpose of the omission of a specific researcher. Also, according to the statistics from Biber et al. (1999: 476), passives are especially common in the news. The reason why passives are opted for in journalistic discourse can vary: either the agent can easily be inferred, or otherwise considered irrelevant. For instance, example (4)<sup>7</sup> is an illustration of the former case.

(4) *Dohery was arrested in New York in June.*

It is widely accepted that passive voice is more associated with written (especially academic) forms and, generally, in formal discourse. Furthermore, for stylistic purposes, this construction is often used to put new information at the end of the sentence. Biber et al. (1999: 476) provide an extensive list of verbs and their occurrence in passive voice depending on the register of the text (Table 1).

Passives in academic discourse	Passives in conversation
<i>Be + achieved, associated, defined, expressed, measured, obtained, performed, related; news: be + accused, announced, arrested, beaten, believed, charged, delighted, hit, injured, jailed, killed, named, released, revealed, shot, sold</i>	<i>Be + allowed, finished, involved, left, married, meant, stuck</i>

**Table 1** (Biber et al. 1999: 479)

<sup>6</sup> Examples taken from <https://www.ef.com/wwen/english-resources/english-grammar/passive-voice/>

<sup>7</sup> Example taken from Biber et al. (1999:477)

At the beginning of this research, it is crucial to point out that passive constructions can be combined with various linguistic realizations of verb phrases, such as infinitives (5) and gerunds (6).<sup>8</sup>

(5) *I expect to be surprised on my birthday.*

(6) *The children are excited about being taken to the zoo.*

Concerning infinitives, since passives are related to predicative complements, it is important to point out that infinitives are restricted to a limited number of catenative verbs, such as *decide, desire, hope, prefer, know*, etc., as exemplified below (7)<sup>9</sup>.

(7) *Max was known to be an alcoholic.*

The passive voice is also tightly related to the transitivity patterns of verbs, as that feature determines its syntactic structure. Passive constructions are possible with most transitive verbs, as from these verbs a relationship of the elements can be deciphered. The complements of transitive verbs can also be internalized or externalized. Regarding its form, the simplest way to transform a sentence from active to passive is in monotransitive verbs, providing only one realization, as the clause contains only one object. An example is provided in (8)<sup>10</sup>.

(8) *The hail damaged the car. > The car was damaged by hail.*

The case of ditransitive verbs is somewhat different, as they take on two objects (e.g. *give, send, promise, tell, offer*). Therefore ditransitive sentences can create two different realizations of a sentence, due to the association with dative shift, as shown in (9) and (10).

(9) *He gave me the book.*

*I was given the book. (by him)*

(10) *The book was given to me (by him).*

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<sup>8</sup> Examples taken from <https://www.ef.com/wwen/english-resources/english-grammar/passive-voice/>

<sup>9</sup> Example taken from Huddleston et al (2002:1439)

<sup>10</sup> Example taken from Huddleston et al (2002:1431)

In other words, there are two possibilities of externalization of an object: in (9) a regular passive transition occurs, while example (10) is, in fact, a dative shift of the sentence *He gave the book to me* (S+V+NP+PP). As noted in Huddleston (2017: 1430), the version containing an indirect object externalized is called the first passive (more common both in spoken and written register), while the one with externalized direct object is the second passive.<sup>11</sup> In examples (9) and (10) another critical feature regarding passive constructions can be discerned. Although the syntactical structure of the sentence is altered, namely the position of the subject and the objects, in the second sentence the direct object retains its role. This occurrence is called a retained object by Biber et al. (1999: 128).

When discussing the occurrence of passives as linguistic constructions, it is crucial to point out that there is no specific pronoun for the generic person in English such as e.g. *man* in German: *Diese Gebäude findet man nur in Deutschland = These buildings are found only in Germany*). In Modern English, a generic person is expressed either by a passive construction or by an ordinary personal pronoun (*we, you*), which takes on a generic meaning.

Apart from its crucial role in passive voice, it is important to take into account the other uses of the past participle, e.g. the expression of grammatical aspect and verbal mood. According to Huddleston (2017: 1174), the past participle form of the verb has two uses: perfect and passive. Passives also bear a considerable role in the coherence and cohesion of texts (as they are used in written form rather than spoken (cf. Thompson et al. 2013:2), resulting in an unobstructed flow of information. An example of this property is keeping the subject in longer sentences, as in example (11)<sup>12</sup>.

(11) *He waited for two hours, then he was seen by a doctor, then he was sent back to the waiting room.*

Also, in the passive voice longer expressions are placed at the end of the sentence, which results in easier comprehension of the focal point of the sentence. This is exemplified in (12). The

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<sup>11</sup> The terms are based on the linear position of the relevant object in the active construction (Huddleston et al., 2017: 1430)

<sup>12</sup> Example taken from Swan (2005:414)

sentence (12a) sounds undoubtedly more natural than its active counterpart (12b), where the long clause takes the role of the subject.<sup>13</sup>

(12a) *I was annoyed by Mary wanting to tell everybody what to do.*

(12b) *Mary wanting to tell everybody what to do annoyed me.*

Needless to say, passive forms can occur not only in simple sentences involving a subject, a verb, and an object but also with an embedded finite or non-finite clause. In example (13)<sup>14</sup>, the passive is combined with an infinitive clause subject, and the sentence contains the anticipatory subject *it*.

(13) *It was decided to meet at ten.*

Another point is that passives also convey a speaker's involvement and the agent's relation to an action. The latter can also be noted in the occurrence of the so-called act-related adjuncts<sup>15</sup>. They are often associated with adverbs, separated into two categories: volitional (e.g. *purposely, accidentally*) and subjective (e.g. *carefully, foolishly*), and they can be combined with passive forms, conveying further information about the action. These kinds of adjuncts convey the relation between the agent and the action as exemplified in (14)<sup>16</sup>. In this sentence, the quality of *carelessness* pertains to the agents (*the hikers*).

(14) *The gate was carelessly left open by the hikers.*

In these cases, it is important to note the subject of the sentence (the patient) - as the subject is inanimate (*the gate*), it clearly can't bear a responsibility restricted to animate entities.

When dealing with any multiword construction in terms of verbs, it is important to note that certain verbs are directly followed by another verb (*to*-infinitive, bare infinitive or gerund). Verbs that belong to this group are e.g. *promise, hope, seem, want, keep* etc. These verbs are called catenative verbs and they can also be passivized. Auxiliary verbs are also part of this group and *get* is just as much a catenative verb as *be*. It might be stated that the passivization of

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<sup>13</sup> Example taken from Swan (2005:414)

<sup>14</sup> Example taken from Swan (2005:418)

<sup>15</sup> More about the importance of adjuncts (involving *by*-adjuncts) can be read in Biggs, Embick (2022, 211-254)

<sup>16</sup> Example taken from Huddleston (2002:678)

catenative verbs is delicate since the overall meaning of the sentence is dependent on the passivized verb.

Another phenomenon that should be considered, although much less frequent is the middle voice. This category is left for the end of the chapter, since it is, as the name suggests, an intermediate between the active and passive voice. Also, it is not considered a formal category of voice. As noted in (15)<sup>17</sup>, the form of the sentence itself is active, while the meaning is passive.

(15) *She doesn't frighten easily.*

The occurrence of the middle voice will also be briefly reflected upon in chapter 2.4., concerning its alignment with *get*-passives.

As taught in EFL classes, the passive voice is being formed with the auxiliary verb *be* followed by a past participle. However, this thesis focuses on cases in which the auxiliary *be* is contrasted with the verb *get*, and the difference between the two constructions.

#### 2.1.2. DIFFERENT TYPES OF PASSIVES (ADJECTIVAL AND VERBAL; BARE PASSIVES) AND INFORMATION PACKAGING

In the previous chapter, it has been noted that not all verbs occur in passive form to the same extent. Also, it has been concluded that the passive voice of a verb highly depends on the register. There are numerous classifications of passives (and verbs that are affected by them) but the most relevant aspect appears to be the dichotomy between verbal and adjectival passives.

The passive voice of a verb can also be associated with adjectival forms, due to the semantic nature of past participle which describes the action or a state undergone by the experiencer. These kinds of passives are called adjectival passives. Firstly, it is essential to point out that adjectives as word types can also follow *be* copula<sup>18</sup>, while present participles or past participles follow *be* as a progressive marker. Considering the quality of verbs in this regard, the

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<sup>17</sup> Example taken from Huddleston (2002:306)

<sup>18</sup> *Be* copula = the connecting link between subject and predicate of a proposition



sentences in which an auxiliary verb (in this case *be* as a copular verb) is combined with predicative adjectives (with stative meaning) are more associated with adjectival passives, the qualities of which will be explained later in this chapter. This includes the participial forms such as *delighted* or *excited* as shown in (16)<sup>19</sup>.

(16) *We are delighted with the result.*

It should be noted that there is considerable overlapping between adjectives and past participle forms, such as in the case of *worried*, in example (17)<sup>20</sup>. Here, the lexeme *worried* is an adjective, as there is no trace of an agent. Moreover, due to a lack of context, the sentence lacks the inference of the agent.

(17) *They were very worried.*

Also, certain verbs are highly dependent on the context, and on the presence of the agent, such as *frozen* or *broken* (as pointed out by Biber et al., 1999:476). It might present some difficulties to classify verbs as these, as they are mostly interpreted as stative, yet the agent can be inferred, as a causer of a certain state, as in example (18)<sup>21</sup>. In this case, depending on the context, *be* is either observed as a *be*-passive (if the emphasis is put on the act of breaking,) or a complex intransitive (if *broken* denotes a state, i.e. is an adjective). Also, these kinds of verbs belong to the category of ergative verbs, in which the agent is not marked, and they can be both transitive or intransitive. It is, in fact, an active construction with a passive meaning (associated with middle voice).

(18) *The spell was broken.*

Nonetheless, there are a few ways in which it can be unambiguously proven whether a passive is verbal or adjectival, in terms of this classification. The first one is the possibility of replacing the auxiliary verb *be* with complex intransitive verbs such as *seem*, *become* or *remain*,

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<sup>19</sup> Example taken from Biber et al. (1999:476)

<sup>20</sup> Example taken from Huddleston et al. (2002:1436)

<sup>21</sup> Example taken from Biber et al. (1999:476)

automatically blocking the possibility of passivization due to the lack of agentivity.<sup>22</sup> Another way to disclose an adjectival passive is the possibility of a modification by *very* or *too*. The third method is attaching a negative prefix (*un-*, *im-*, *in-*, *ir-*). If these criteria are met, then the passive can be classified as an adjectival, as neither of these properties is present in verbal passives. On the other hand, what is typical of verbal passives, is that their meaning unquestionably matches with the corresponding active, as proven in (19)<sup>23</sup>.

(19) *Everyone criticized her. → She was criticized by everyone.*

This leads to another notion: namely, if the sentence contains a *by*-complement, an action (and an agent) is implied, so the adjectival-passive test is failed. Still, there tend to be some ambiguities. Huddleston et al. (2017) puts forward the case of *married*. Accordingly, the lexeme *married* is different in all of the realizations in terms of describing an event or a context. In (20a), *married* is ambiguous due to the dichotomy between dynamic and stative verbs, which is discussed in section 2.1.3. Example (20b) is verbal as it denotes an action, and (20c) is, respectively, clearly adjectival, as it denotes a state of being married.<sup>24</sup> Considering the matters above it can be concluded that adjectival passives indeed denote a state which is a result of a previous event. The notion of adjectival passives is further elaborated in Chapter 2.2. and 2.4. focusing on the nature of *get*-passives.

(20a) *They were married.*

(20b) *They were married last week in London.*

(20c) *Hardly anyone knew that they were married – that they had been for over ten years.*

The adjectival passives are also noteworthy in an aspect of a predicative complement (which is broader than an object), either taking an adjectival passive or a noun phrase. Particularly, the

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<sup>22</sup> Only AdjP's can occur as complements to the verb *go* in the sense "remain" (*It went black* is acceptable, *go here* means "become, turn", not "remain" (Huddleston et al.,2017:1439)

<sup>23</sup> Example taken from Huddleston et al. (2002:1438)

<sup>24</sup> Examples taken from Huddleston et al. (2002:1436)

term adjectival passives only refers to predicative complements (and it should be noted that only verbs can take complements).

From Huddleston's notions (2017:253), it can be concluded that predicative complements characterize property, while objects denote a specific person or a thing. A predicative complement, unlike an object, does not correspond to the subject of a (related) passive clause. All things considered, the overall voice system gives way to different alignments and realizations available at complements of arguments. The blurry line between adjectives and past participles still remains a matter of discussion in present-day research, therefore it is a rather large field to investigate. Essentially, as proposed by Huddleston and Pullum (2002:1436), passives in the strict sense are always verbal, more specifically, the term *be*-passive is restricted to clauses in its dynamic interpretation, i.e. to clauses in which *be* is a catenative verb taking a bare verbal passive as a complement.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, passive voice essentially involves the change of the position of the subject and object of the active sentence. Therefore, if there is no object in the active sentence, it can't be transferred to the passive voice, as it would lack a subject. As explained in Biber et al. (1999:482), some verbs typically take a post-verbal complement clause rather than a direct object noun phrase, which makes passive options difficult to form, such the example (21)<sup>25</sup>.

(21) *He's also agreed to deal with a few other things*

When situations in which passive voice can't be used are examined, it is first to be noted that whether or not a verb can take on passive constructions is primarily determined by the nature of the verb itself. In section 2.1.1 passive constructions have been examined concerning their transitivity pattern. As passives are highly determined by the object of the sentence (or a clause), it may be undoubtedly concluded that intransitive verbs can't be involved in passive constructions, as they entirely lack an object. This test has also been conducted in my research in the second part of the thesis.

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<sup>25</sup> Example taken from Biber et al (1999:482)

However, some transitive verbs are rarely used in passive voice. According to the list from Biber et al. (1999: 476), verbs such as *agree, climb, dare, exclaim, guess, hate, have, hesitate, joke, lack, let, like, love, mind, pretend, quit, reply, resemble, survive, swear, thank, try, undergo, want, watch, wish, wonder, yell* occur in less than 2% of cases in passive form. This is ascribed to the fact that these verbs often take a post-verbal complement rather than a direct object (usually being a noun phrase), which automatically prevents the possibility of passives, as shown in example (22)<sup>26</sup>.

(22) *I pretended to be another friend.*

This is typically the case with monotransitive verbs.

Biber et al. (1999: 481) also make an account of certain single-object prepositional verbs that are also used to the same extent as the verbs in the previous category, and this group of verbs involves *agree to/with, apologize to/for, belong to, bet on, come across/for, compete with, cope with, correspond to, glance at, laugh about/at, listen to, look at/like, participate in, smile at, stay with, talk about/to, wait for/with*.

On the other hand, some verbs occur in a passive voice more often than in an active voice, for instance, certain two-object prepositional verbs, as the preposition can denote a relation between the two objects, such as *associate X with Y, link X to/with Y* (Biber et al. 1999:482).

Apart from the verbs that are more likely to occur in the passive voice, there is a group of those that are restricted to passive, either generally or with a specific type of complementation, as exemplified in (23)<sup>27</sup>.

(23) *Kim is said to be a manic depressive.*

The verb *say* can usually occur in active and passive form (*The word is said*), but when combined with an infinitive followed by an object clause, it is restricted to passive.

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<sup>26</sup> Example taken from Biber et al. (1999:482)

<sup>27</sup> Example taken from Huddleston et al. (2002:1435)

Another separate category of passive constructions is the so-called bare passive. The name of this type of passive derives from the fact that it occurs on its own, i.e. it is not preceded by an auxiliary verb. In addition, bare passive is also a part of certain fixed phrases, such as in example (24)<sup>28</sup>.

(24) *All things considered, we're lucky not to have been sued for a lot more.*

As it can be concluded from the examples, bare passives can also be long passives or short passives. The passive clauses with bare passives are always non-finite and, therefore always restricted to subordinate positions.<sup>29</sup>

The following and final section of this chapter focuses on another pragmatic aspect of passives, referred to as information packaging. As the term suggests, information packaging denotes how information is delivered, or precisely packaged in a sentence or a wider context. "It is the structuring of sentences through syntactic, prosodic, or morphological means that arises from the need to meet the communicative demands of a particular context or discourse" (Vallduvi, Engdahl, 1996: 460). Information packaging can be canonical or non-canonical. This aspect derives from the fact that sentences can have different syntactic counterparts in which the meaning (truth condition) is not changed. In other words, as explained in Huddleston et al. (2017: 1365): "the syntax enables different ways of 'saying the same thing', with the various versions differing in the way the content is organized informationally".

A critical feature pertaining to both information packaging in general, and specifically the use of passives, and discourse is the dichotomy between old information and new information. What is referred to as 'old information' is the information that is already known both to the speaker and the collocutor, and it contrasts with 'new information', that is unfamiliar and newly introduced. The new information is usually 'the focus', and the old 'the focus-frame'. In practical terms, information packaging (involving the relationship between old and new information) is also related to the relevance of long passives. When giving information, the newest usually comes

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<sup>28</sup> Example taken from Huddleston (2002:1430)

<sup>29</sup> The passive main clauses must contain either *be* or *get*.

at the end of the statement, as shown in (25)<sup>30</sup>, where the focus is placed on *my grandmother*. Hence it is considered to be the new information in the sentence. It is crucial to point out that this aspect of old vs. new information is highly dependent on the context.

(25) *It was painted by my grandmother.*

In terms of short passives, although the subject can be discourse-old or discourse-new, there is no internalized complement in the sentence, so the difference between the active sentence and the short passive is that the information about the agent is omitted.

### 2.1.3. DYNAMIC AND STATIVE PASSIVES AND AMBIGUITIES

In this chapter, I examine the dichotomy between stative and dynamic verbs, and their passive forms, as these theories are of high importance in the elaboration of *get*-passives and their relation to their counterpart in this research – *be*-passives. This issue has already been tackled in the previous chapter as the distinction between verbal and adjectival passive is considerably determined by it. Throughout this research, I primarily focus on finite constructions due to my research with students. To begin with, stative verbs can occur with both short passives and long passives, and adjectival passives result in stative interpretations (i.e., if the verb phrase is labeled as adjectival passive, it is stative). Conversely, verbal passives are associated with dynamic verbs. As its name suggests, stative passives describe the state resulting from an action, rather than the action itself, which can be seen in example (26)<sup>31</sup>. On the other hand, dynamic verbs/dynamic passives refer to an action rather than a resulting state, as in (27)<sup>32</sup>.

(26) *Andy may be adopted or something like that*

(27) *It was stolen from my car.*

However, this dichotomy is also a matter of interpretation and a broader semantic frame. As in the case of the dichotomy between adjectival and verbal passives, there are also some

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<sup>30</sup> Example taken from Swan (2005:414)

<sup>31</sup> Example taken from Biber et al. (1999:936)

<sup>32</sup> Example taken from Ibid.

ambiguities regarding the dynamic and stative verbs, whose interpretation is also dependent on the context. This is evident from example (28)<sup>33</sup>.

(28) *The village was surrounded by troops from the First Battalion.*

This sentence can have both a stative and a dynamic reading. The dynamic reading would infer that the troops moved into the position, while a stative reading implies that they were already in that position. So, in this case, it is hard to tell whether the verb is dynamic or stative, mostly because the sentence lacks context. In cases like this adverbials are of high importance.<sup>34</sup> This dichotomy has a notable impact on the relation between *get*-passives and *be*-passives. Ultimately, as already pointed out, the two dichotomies are interrelated in the way that adjectival passives indeed have the function of a predicative complement of a dynamic verb (*become, get*).

Nevertheless, some verbs are impossible to create short passive from. These are the verbs in which the agent has a critical role in constructing the overall meaning and making the focal point of the sentence comprehensible. One of the verbs that belong to that group is the verb *influence*. *I am influenced by all kinds of things* is a completely meaningful and comprehensible sentence, which is not the case with the sentence *I am influenced*, without the *by*-phrase. On the other hand, examples such as (30) and (31) make a completely meaningful utterance without the explicit agent.

## 2.2. GET-PASSIVE VS. BE-PASSIVE

### 2.2.1. GET-PASSIVE IN ENGLISH GRAMMARS

As widely known, *get* is a lexical verb with multiple meanings which will be elaborated in chapter 3.3. When it has the role of a lexical verb, *get* is followed either by a direct object or by a predicative complement. Still, *get* can also have a functional, i.e. grammatical role, namely as an alternative of *be* auxiliary in passives, being followed by a past participle or a predicative

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<sup>33</sup> Example taken from Huddleston et al.(2002:1438)

<sup>34</sup> E.g. adding the aspectual adjunct *still* to either the passive or the active version forces the stative reading (Huddleston 2017:1438)

complement. As mentioned in the Introduction, this thesis particularly focuses on why passive constructions with *get* are worth considering and what makes them specific. This chapter notes the significant properties of *get*-passives and occurrences related to them as explained in grammars used for this thesis.

Primarily, *get* is a catenative verb, which means that it can be followed by another verb. On the other hand, *get* can also be viewed as a copular verb, implying its potential substitution with *become*. As pointed out in Huddleston (2017: 1440), besides being a catenative verb in an expanded passive, *get* can also be a head of a complex intransitive verb, and the predicative complement in the latter construction can have the form of an adjectival passive. Just like in regular *be*-passives, the agent can be explicit (long passives) or implicit (short passives). Also, the dichotomy between verbal and adjectival passive is substantially related to *get*-passives as such, where *get*-passives are more associated with actions, thus they have a more verbal reading.

Example (29) epitomizes a case of an adjectival passive with *get* as a head verb. That the passive is adjectival rather than verbal is proven by the fact that it is modified with *very*, which doesn't occur in the example (30).<sup>35</sup>

(29) *They got very frightened.*

(30) *They got frightened.*

Therefore, (30) could be classified either as an adjectival or as a verbal passive, depending on the context. In the latter case, the subject may be the experiencer of an action undertaken by the implicit agent and thus equivalent to short passive, while in the former case, the construction can have the same interpretation as *They became afraid*. As noted in Huddleston et al. (2017:1440), ambiguities between verbal and adjectival passives, however, arise much more often with *be* than with *get*, due to the properties of the verb. Namely, passives with *get* usually imply an activity rather than a state, unlike *be*-passives which can imply both as shown in (31a) and (31b).<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Examples taken from Huddleston et al. (2002:1441)

<sup>36</sup> Examples taken from Ibid.



(31a) *The window was broken.*

(31b) *The window got broken.*

*Get*-passives usually have a verbal interpretation, however as stated previously, *get* can also be followed by an adjective (see example (29)). The clearest cases of adjectival passives with *get* involve gradable adjectives, as shown above. However, there are certain exceptions, such as *lost* in (32)<sup>37</sup>, as there are no varying degrees of *being lost*. This can also be interpreted as ‘become lost’, which specifically focuses on the ergative/inchoative aspect of *get*.

(32) *The children got lost in the woods*

As in regular *be*-passives, the type of passive (verbal or adjectival) doesn’t merely depend on the verb itself but also the context, as can be seen in (33a) and (33b).<sup>38</sup>

(33a) *My coat got caught in the door.*

(33b) *Tom got caught in the girls’ dormitory.*

Sentence (33a) is understood as ‘became caught’, which denotes a result, while (33b) as ‘was apprehended’, which denotes an action. A similar contrast can be seen in (34a) and (34b), with the verb *marry*, which is one of the most frequently used verbs with *get*, according to COCA and BNC. (34a) can be interpreted as adjectival, while (34b) focuses on the act of being married with a *by*-adjunct denoting the agent who performs the action.<sup>39</sup>

(34a) *They are getting married at the week-end.*

(34b) *They are hoping to get married by the bishop.*

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<sup>37</sup> Example taken from Huddleston et al. (2002:1441)

<sup>38</sup> Examples taken from Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Examples taken from Ibid.

### 2.2.2. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN *BE*-PASSIVES AND *GET*-PASSIVES

The previous chapter outlined some common notions of *get*-passives regarding their use as described in the grammar books referred to in this thesis. Another fruitful way to examine the grammatical and semantic nature of the verbs used in passive formation is the method of contrastive analysis. The two verbs will first be compared on a syntactic basis.

Essentially, both *be* and *get* are catenative verbs that take a bare passive complement. Furthermore, both of them can also be interpreted as lexical verbs. The main syntactic difference between the two verbs is the way they occur in sentences, and generally, the properties related to their form. The verb *be* is an auxiliary verb while *get* is not. Auxiliaries often denote the same kinds of meaning as inflections, while syntactically being separate words. Whether a certain verb is auxiliary or not, is proven through a test examining the so-called NICE properties, identified by Huddleston (1976: 333-334), who checks the properties of a verb with respect to negation, inversion, code, and emphasis. Both *get* and *be* can also be copular verbs, that take a predicative complement.

Concerning sentence formation and discourse, *be* is more frequent and more likely to be used with long passives (with an internalized complement) (Huddleston et al. 2002:1442), than *get*. *Get*-passive is less likely to occur in academic style (i.e. it is considered to be quite informal in comparison with its *be* counterpart). As stated in some grammars (e.g. Huddleston et al. 2002:1442), *get*-passives are restricted to dynamic verbs. As evident from example (35)<sup>40</sup>, in most instances *get*, as opposed to *be*, doesn't fit well with stative verbs.

(35) *Obviously, the manager is feared by most of the staff.*

This quality of *get*-passives helps in the interpretation of sentences that might be ambiguous in the case of *be*-passives (in an attempt to determine whether a verb is dynamic or stative), since *be*-passives can have both a dynamic and a stative interpretation.

The next tenet applying to *get*-passive is that it is more conducive to an agentive interpretation of a subject. In other words, *get* is used when the speaker aims to assign an

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<sup>40</sup> Example taken from Huddleston (2002:1442)

agentive role to the subject-referent in a certain situation. This is connected to the notion of subject's responsibility (i.e. agentivity) which is further elaborated in chapter 2.4. The agentive property of *get*-passive is evident in (36)<sup>41</sup>.

(36) *She managed to get transferred to the finance department.*

Here, it is clear that the subject-referent had a role in getting transferred, potentially by working hard. Additionally, the verb *manage* is in its active form. If *get* was replaced by *be*, it wouldn't be implied that the result is achieved due to the actions of the subject-referent. In this regard, it can be noted that *be*-passives have a more passive interpretation.

Another important point that distinguishes *get*-passives from *be*-passives are the clauses involving adversity or benefit. In particular, this implies that *get*-passives tend to represent situations having either adversative or beneficial effects on the subject rather than being completely neutral. *Be*-passives on the other hand have a more neutral reading. This is shown in the examples (37a) and (37b).<sup>42</sup>

(37a) *Kim got sacked.*

(37b) *Kim got promoted.*

In most cases, *get* and *be* are grammatically interchangeable, yet there are considerable exceptions. The notion of adversity and benefit is also present in non-finite phrases, such as in (38a,b,c)<sup>43</sup>, where *be*-passive is not acceptable.

(38a) *We saw Kim get mauled by my brother's dog.*

(38b) \**We saw Kim be mauled by my brother's dog.*

(38c) *We saw Kim mauled by my brother's dog.*

Here the only option after the perception verb *see* (followed by a non-finite clause) is the verb *get* (as a passivized complement of *see*) as in (38a), whereas (38b) would be grammatically

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<sup>41</sup> Example taken from Huddleston et al. (2002:1442)

<sup>42</sup> Examples taken from Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Examples taken from Ibid.

incorrect. The alternative to *get mauled* can only be the bare passive (38c), which leads to the conclusion that in cases of grammatical discrepancy, bare passive is more likely to be permitted than *be*-passive.

### 2.3. PROPERTIES OF THE VERB *GET*

In the previous chapter, the differences between the *be*-passives and *get*-passives were analyzed according to different grammars of the English Language. It is important to pinpoint the main characteristics of the verb *get*, as the properties of *get*-passive are mostly determined by those of the lexical verb *get* and passives in general. *Get* can have an agentive or a receptive meaning. Kim (2012:453) notes that the prototypical verb *get* is a transitive predicate taking on two or arguments - the subject undergoes a certain process denoted by the second complement. Nevertheless, a crucial aspect when dealing with *get*-passives is the process of grammaticalization it has undergone. In terms of *get*'s role in the sentence, there are two syntactic forms: transitive/causative and ergative/inchoative, which are considered to be possible sources of *get*-passives (Wanner 2009:92). Thus, this chapter briefly examines the relevant properties of the verb *get*.

#### 2.3.1. THE USES OF VERB "GET"

As the use of the verb *get*, especially in *get*-passives, is not completely the same in BrE and AmE, both BNC and COCA were included in this research.<sup>44</sup> It is widely known that *get* as a lexical verb can have multiple meanings and that it is frequently used in many formulaic expressions and phrases. Furthermore, the meanings of *get* are also dependent on the context. According to Wanner (2009: 88) and her reference to Biber et al. (1999), *get* is the second most common lexical verb.

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<sup>44</sup> British National Corpus and Corpus of Contemporary American English

According to online dictionaries (Cambridge Dictionary and Merriam Webster) from a semantic perspective *get* can be understood as an equivalent to 'obtain, possess or receive'.<sup>45</sup> To continue, *get* can also be interpreted as 'buy' or 'earn', or 'collect'.<sup>46</sup> Another common use of *get* is as an alternative to 'catch' or 'take', which is mostly used with transportation means. The next meaning of the verb '*get*', according to the research is 'to reach', 'to come', 'to arrive', 'to go' and 'cause to move'.<sup>47</sup>

The following use of the verb *get* is related to what is referred to as ergative verbs.<sup>48</sup> Namely, *get* can also be used as an alternative of *become*. Here *get* indicates the affection by something and marks a change of a state, which is typical of inchoatives. However, it is not always interchangeable, for instance with subject complements that are nouns (*To become a nun vs To get a nun* don't have the same meaning).

Furthermore, in terms of syntax, *get* is frequently used as the head verb in phrasal verbs, in combination with a preposition or an adverb. In the case of phrasal verbs, lexical verbs no longer bear their denotative meaning. Some of the other commonly used phrasal verbs with the verb *get* are: *get across, get around, get on, get out, etc.*

*Get* gradually lost connection to its lexical meaning, so this chapter mainly focuses on the primary features of the verb and how it underwent the process of grammaticalization, in order to be used as a functional verb.

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<sup>45</sup> Cambridge Dictionary (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/get> used 12.1.2024.)

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Merriam-Webster (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/get> used 12.1.2024.)

<sup>48</sup> Ergative verbs are verbs that can be both transitive and intransitive (the subject of the intransitive verb can be the object of the transitive form of the same verb, e.g. *The bell rang.*)

Inchoative verbs are verbs that indicate a change in state or the beginning of an action or a state, thus they are also known as inceptive verbs (e.g. *The apples ripened – The apples became ripe.*)

Catenative verbs are verbs that link other verbs (they occur in combination with other verbs, e.g. *promise, help, want* etc)

### 2.3.2. GRAMMATICALIZATION: INTEGRATION OF LEXIS AND GRAMMAR

After having established some of the common meanings of the verb *get*, it can be stated that it has a lexical and a grammatical aspect. There is no doubt that the lexical properties of *get* have a considerable impact on the way it is used in grammar. That is why Ruhlemann (2007: 111) points out that *get*-passive is observed as an illustration of lexical grammar (lexis is an integral aspect of grammar). Furthermore, Ruhlemann (2007: 121) points out that syntax is also driven by grammar, precisely, speakers possess concepts they aim to convey and must make communicative decisions, using essential lexical items, which are manifested in syntactic structures that grammatically accommodate them. It has been noted that short passivization (as part of grammaticalization) implies a demotion of an agent in favor of the foregrounding of other elements.

*Get* is considered to be a semi-grammaticalized verb, which implies that its meaning is mostly dependent on the syntactic context (Wanner 2009: 89). As mentioned earlier, one of the main properties of the verb *get* is that it is a catenative verb. Essentially, *get* is neither a passive marker nor a dummy verb. Furthermore, as opposed to *be*, it can be combined with an intervening and inserted noun phrase, as seen in the example below (39)<sup>49</sup>, where *hair* is inserted in the sentence.

(39) *I get my hair cut once a month.*

Another example illustrates a reflexive pronoun between *get* and a lexical verb (40)<sup>50</sup>.

(40) *I got myself exempted from guard duties.*

What both of these sentences have in common, is that the agent (*I*) caused something to happen, which is denoted by *get* (as it will be seen in the next chapter). Both constructions are explicitly agentive, i.e. the initiative of the subject is emphasized. All these examples are linked to the notion of goal.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Example taken from Huddleston et al. (2002:1443)

<sup>50</sup> Example taken from Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> An interesting point about different conceptions of goal can be read in McIntyre (2005)

It should be pointed out that volitionality is also a notable aspect of *get* structures. Moreover, in syntactic terms, the verb *get* can present restrictions on other arguments. This is dependent on the nature of the *get* in the context (whether it is an inchoative, causative, passive marker, or verb of possession).

### 2.3.2.1. Causatives

A crucial type of use of *get* when dealing with grammaticalization is causative. Generally, it is still a matter of debate whether it was the causative constructions or inchoatives that had a critical role in the development of *get*-passives. The semantics of *get* denotes a connection of the verbs *cause (act)* and *become*. Hence the term causative.

Causatives are explained in a way that an agent has control over an affected entity (it usually has a material connotation) or the agent moves the entity in a position in which it can be used (McInytre 2005: 412). A prime example of causative and its syntactic properties is provided below (41)<sup>52</sup>.

(41) *John got* <sub>IP</sub>[[*his students*] [*to work on another topic*]]

The causative structure entails an external agent, typically expressed as the subject, which notes an action affecting a noun phrase. The subject of *get*-passive, in fact, corresponds to the object of causative *get*. Causative *get* can be followed by an adjectival or a verbal complement, as noted in examples (42a),(42b)<sup>53</sup>.

(42a) *We can get everybody engaged.*

(42b) *"I'll get it taken care of," Lily offered.*

It can be concluded that in causative *get* constructions (especially evident in this case) there are two agents – the agent of the causative verb and the implicit agent of the participle (passive verb).

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<sup>52</sup> Example taken from Wanner (2009:92)

<sup>53</sup> Example taken from Wanner (2009:99)

In terms of syntax, causatives match with both object-particle order and particle-object order<sup>54</sup>. Needless to say, in causatives *get* can't be replaced with *be*. Causative *get* is mostly associated with intransitive *get*-passive, but they must be followed by a complement.

Also, these examples indicate the possession constraint. In most cases, the verbs used in causatives denote the completion of an action (*get the house inspected/ get the shoes made*). Kim (2012: 453) notes that causatives can have an embedded passive clause (*He got the paper finished*) or active clause (*She got the police arrest him*). Some causatives are associated with the so-called hindrance reading<sup>55</sup>, as in (43)<sup>56</sup>. This specific sentence has two possible interpretations depending on the context. Firstly, it can have a hindrance reading, where negation is equaled with inability, and secondly, it can mean that the subject decided not to act in a certain way.

(43) *They didn't get their clothes off.*

Still, if there is an adverbial clause at the end of the sentence that denotes an intention, the interpretation can only be habitual or agentive as in (44)<sup>57</sup>. In cases like this, *get* can also be replaced by *take* due to the context.

(44) *The band members get their clothes off on stage to attract publicity.*

According to Wanner (2009: 90) causative *get* was the source of ergative *get*, probably through a process of argument deletion.

As mentioned earlier, *get* bears a resultative quality, which pertains to motion intuition, elaborated on by McIntyre (2005:410). In fact, the resultative quality of *get* is tightly linked to causative construction, as it denotes a state that is a result of an action, and it affects the experiencer.

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<sup>54</sup> Particle-object order reduces to the ability of particles to incorporate into a verb McIntyre (2005: 430)

<sup>55</sup> Hindrance reading implies a difficulty in completing an action

<sup>56</sup> Example taken from McIntyre (2005: 411)

<sup>57</sup> Example taken from McIntyre (2005: 411)



### 2.3.2.2. Inchoatives/ergatives

It has already been pointed out that *get* frequently has an inchoative interpretation, meaning that it marks the beginning of an action. This statement can be connected to the aforementioned notion of causatives in which *get* denotes a resultant state, involving the beginning. Furthermore, inchoative also denotes the completion of an event, so the verbs involved are often telic: according to Fleisher (2006: 243), ‘telic eventuality’ comprises the onset and the state, as shown in (45). So, inchoatives are not exclusive constructions, and are frequently interrelated with others, with many borderline cases. Namely, inchoatives are often connected to perfective aspects due to their salience in bringing about a resultant state.

(45) *He got (onset) acquainted with them (state)*

Essentially, inchoatives are based on the semantics of *become* (cf. McIntyre 2005: 14). Additionally, inchoative *get* can also be compared to other verbs that have an inchoative quality such as *remain* (which, however, can’t denote an onset but only a state). Inchoatives developed from the aspect of motion of the verb *get* and they particularly mark a change of state rather than an event. A syntactic form of an inchoative *get* can be illustrated by (51)<sup>58</sup>.

(46) *Mary got* <sub>SC[NP PP[into trouble]]</sub>

Inchoative *get* essentially has one internal argument which can be a small clause or an infinitive. Furthermore, inchoatives can be followed by both an adjectival and a verbal complement, as shown in (52a) and (52b)<sup>59</sup> respectively.

(47a) *My sister and I were alone for so long I began to get frightened.*

(47b) *Public inequities of gender, race, or class get transferred into private relations.*

However, Fleisher (2006: 225) denies this proposition and claims that inchoative *get* can only be followed by an adjectival participle, therefore the example (47b) is ambiguous.

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<sup>58</sup> Example taken from Wanner (2009: 92)

<sup>59</sup> Examples taken from Wanner (2009: 96)

The subject of inchoative *get* is not necessarily animate, thus it is not implied to be responsible of the event. The difference between an inchoative and a *get*-passive is marked by the impossibility of an active counterpart in the former. Nonetheless, inchoatives (as they may be interpreted as alternative expressions of *become*), can be closely associated with adjectival passives with *get*, as seen in (48)<sup>60</sup>. The same meaning could be conveyed by a causative (*John got Mary invited*).

(48) *Mary got invited.*

Furthermore, McIntyre (2005:403) notes some arguments for understanding *get* as an inchoative of *have*: firstly, hindrance-specialization, and secondly, making the subject responsible for the result. Just like in causatives (where other affected entities are involved alongside the subject), the subject is responsible for the start of a situation. In order to note the differences between the causative and the inchoative uses of *get*, it is convenient to provide examples (54a) for the former, and (49b) for the latter.<sup>61</sup>

(49a) *John got the lion in the cage.*

(49b) *The lion got in the cage.*

The main difference between the two sentences lies in the nature of the relation (which is causative in the case of causatives but not in inchoatives), and in hindrance-specialization. It is ostensible that in these sentences the substitution with *have* is less likely to occur, especially in (49b), where it would be meaningless.

It has been noted that hindrance-*get* is commonly considered as an inchoative of *have* (*begin to have*). Thus, it can be stated that in this case, the subject is the initiator of the resultant state, with no reference to (external) causing events. Overall, the use of *get* in inchoatives has been shown to be more frequent than in causatives, according to the FROWN corpus (cf. Wanner 2009: 103).

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<sup>60</sup> Example taken from Wanner (2009: 93)

<sup>61</sup> Examples taken from McIntyre (2005: 413)

## 2.4. GET-PASSIVES

There are two main tendencies when doing research of *get*-passives. The first one regularly observes the construction as passive, a dynamic counterpart to *be*-passives (this is the traditional approach). The second tendency doesn't consider *get* as a passive at all, due to the verb's multifunctionality. This leads to pragmatic consequences that don't occur in *be*-passives. In this context, the *get*-passive is linked with other voices, such as the middle reflexive form, for example. Ruhlemann (2007: 113) points out that the *get*-construction is explored in terms of the distribution across registers, its association patterns, and the discourse factors governing its use. Toyota (2008:174) notes two possible sources of the *get*-passive: first is the inchoative *get* followed by an adjective (the verbs *become*, *come*, *go* started to appear in constructions after *weorðan*<sup>62</sup> disappeared in the Middle English period), and a reflexive causative followed by a past participle (see more in 2.6.). Fleisher (2005: 225) sides with the first source, and claims that it occurred in cases where the inchoative *get* took an adjectival or verbal passive participle as a complement, and where the aspect was perfective.

Collins (1996: 45) points out the occurrence of two kinds of *get*-passives: prototypical *get*-passive, as (50a) (mostly followed by a *by*-adjunct and easily converted into active), and peripheral *get*-passive (not allowing an implicit agent) as (55b).

(50a) *I got phoned by a woman friend to come to dinner.*

(50b) *And sometimes I find when I start reading, I get motivated.*

Before further analysis, it should be pointed out that *get*-passives are not only determined by the qualities of the main verb but also by the interactions among different grammatical elements (e.g. subject control or speaker's perspective, various pragmatic aspects and focus in the action). Ultimately, Collins (1996: 44) lists three perspectives from which this construction can be examined: stylistic, regional, and diachronic.

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<sup>62</sup> OE: *weorðan* = become; *beon/wesan* = be

#### 2.4.1. CLASSIFICATION OF *GET*-PASSIVES

Kim (2012: 439) proposed a classification of *get*-passives based on corpus analysis in order to provide a comprehensive overview of this construction. The examples in this chapter are all taken from Kim (2012: 439-440)

The first type is the so-called central passive, whose active counterpart has identical meaning, as seen in (51). Also, even if it is absent, the agent can be inferred. This is the most common type of *get*-passive. Other verbs (participles) that belong to this group are *caught*, *paid*, *arrested* etc. In most cases *get* can be replaced by *be*.

(51) *A woman got phoned by her daughter who was already on the plane.*

The second type is psychological passive, which has both verbal and adjectival properties. An example of a psychological passive is (52), where the verb *got* can be replaced by some other catenative verb, such as *felt*. On the other hand, the passive form can be preceded by a modifier. The same applies to the participles *encouraged* or *excited*.

(52) *I got frustrated by the high level of unemployment.*

The third type is the reciprocal/reflexive *get*-passive (see in 2.4.3.) This type has an active intransitive counterpart, which denotes a resulting state. An example of this type is shown in (53). These reflexive constructions are often viewed as fixed phrases that tend to occur together.

(53) *She never got herself dressed up for work.*

The next type is the adjectival *get*-passive (54). This type is significant because of the absence of a relationship with an active counterpart as well as one with the agent. This type involves participles such as *involved*, *lost*, *stuck*, *married*, *entangled*, *acquainted*, etc.

(54) *His clothes got entangled in sewer equipment.*

It is clear that *His clothes entangled* or *His clothes got entangled by someone* would be unfitting and ungrammatical. Furthermore, Quirk et al. (1985: 161) exclude *get married* and *get dressed* from the class of *get*-passives because *get* is a 'resulting copula' and the participle is stative (cf. Collins 1996: 47).

The last type proposed by Kim (2012) is the formulaic *get*-passive. In this case, the verbal properties are lost in favor of idiomatic, as in (55). Other examples involve constructions such as *get rid of*, *get started*, *get used to*.

(55) *I got fed up with sitting in front of my computer.*

#### 2.4.2. CORPUS DATA

The abovementioned classification of *get*-passives by Kim (2012) was entrenched in a corpus analysis undertaken during his research. He (2012: 447) notes that the most common verbs that occur in *get*-passive constructions are *get rid*, *marry*, *catch*, *start*, *pay*, *involve*, *do*, *dress*, *hit*, *elect*, *fire*, *arrest*, *lay*, *kill*, *kick*, *carry*, *throw*, *pick*, *hook*, *burn*, *turn*, *knock*, *call*, *make*, *send*, *pass*, *suck*, *mix*, *blow*. Also, Ruhlemann (2007: 114) mentions a set of peripheral passives, such as *started*, *lost*, *done*, and *mixed*, which can have the properties of both passives and inchoatives.

In terms of the features of *get*-passives found in corpus research carried out by Svartvik (1996), 92% of central *get*-passives were agentless (cf. Collins 1996: 46). Furthermore, 67.4% of *get*-passive convey an adversative implicature, while 23.4 % bear a beneficial implicature, and the remaining 27 % are neutral (cf. Collins 1996: 52).

In the previous chapter three different perspectives for an analysis of *get*-passive were outlined. The corpus-based research also takes into account regional variations. Thus, according to BROWN and LOB, *get*-passive is mostly used in Australian English, it has increased in British English after 1961, and has drastically risen in American English in the last 30 years, which might be ascribed to motivation by linguistic non-conservatism (Collins 1996: 54).

### 2.4.3. RECIPROCAL AND REFLEXIVE *GET*-PASSIVES

As Toyota (2008: 176-183) states, *get*-passives are derived from reflexive causatives (*get oneself* + past participle). The subject of the clause gradually lost overall control over the action, which resulted in a passive reading (Toyota 2008:176). In syntactic terms, reflexive pronouns are, in fact, direct objects (particularly in *get*-causatives with past participles). Furthermore, the reflexive pronoun *oneself* can provide the clause with a middle voice interpretation. In fact, reflexive expressions evolved a passive role by losing their control over the action.

Collins (1996: 49) separately points out a category of complex reflexives, an example of which taken from the corpus data is provided below (61). In this case, *get* takes non-finite complementation.

(56) *But you also got yourself promoted to lieutenant.* [LOB-N19-1871]

Complex reflexives explicitly attribute the source of the process to some action performed by the subject-referent (Collins 1996: 49). From the historical point of view, the link between causative and inchoative *get* was achieved through the reflexive use of *get*, which is technically a causative passive construction.

### 2.4.4. *GET*-PASSIVE: ADJECTIVAL VS. VERBAL

*Get* can be followed by adjectives or predicative clauses as complements. It remains a catenative verb regardless of what kind of complement it is followed by.

*Get*-passives can be both verbal and adjectival, but in both cases, they denote dynamic events. Adjectival *get*-passive essentially doesn't contain an external agent argument, as noted earlier. In other words, no agent can be perceived as having a role, because adjectival *get*-passive refers to a state resulting from a process. As it has been noted in 2.3., adjectival *get*-passives can easily be associated with inchoatives (i.e. *to get frightened*), especially in sentences with a focus on the condition of subject referent and with no implicit agent reading, which is typical of adjectival passives. In fact, adjectival participles are considered to be complements of an inchoative *get*, and verbal participles of passive *get*. Also, there are certain borderline cases, as

(57)<sup>63</sup>. In this case, an implicit agent is present (someone who helped John get involved), and also the verb *get* can be replaced with *become*, and *involved* can be modified by an adverb.

(57) *John got involved in the project very quickly.*

It should not be left out that verbal *get*-passives developed later than adjectival *get*-passives.

#### 2.4.5. ADVERSITY VS. BENEFIT

It has already been mentioned that *get*-passive is associated with a negative effect on the subject referent (also named *get*-adversative by Toyota (2008)). However, it can also denote a fortunate outcome or effect on the subject, as shown by (58) and (59). Neither example has a completely neutral meaning, it is either positive or negative.

(58) *She got promoted.*

(59) *She got hurt.*

Due to this quality *get* is often combined with negation (particularly negative imperatives of the form *don't get...*).

According to Toyota (2008: 168), adversative readings can have two indicators: lexical (the meaning of the main verb), and syntactic (resulting from a construction, such as *get*-passive). This feature of *get*-passive might be connected with its subjective nature, i.e. the animacy of the subject. If the subject is animate, it is more likely to be affected by the verb. However, if the subject is inanimate, the entities that are affected are the people whom the meaning concerns, as in (60)<sup>64</sup>.

(60) *Jane's bike got stolen.*

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<sup>63</sup> Example taken from Wanner (2009:96)

<sup>64</sup> Example taken from Fleisher (2005: 249)

A critical point to tackle here is control, whose presence or absence can highly influence the interpretation of a sentence or a clause. In these terms, sentences can be passive-related (without control) and causative-related (with control).

#### 2.4.6. DYNAMIC VS. STATIVE VERBS

It has already been noted in section 2.2.2. that *get*-passives are used with dynamic actions, as opposed to *be*-passives, and that they rarely occur with stative verbs, which is why example (61)<sup>65</sup> sounds ungrammatical.

(61) *It got believed that the letter was a forgery.*

Another explanation for why this sentence is ungrammatical might be that perception verbs can hardly denote an activity. However, the debate on the stativity or agentivity of perception verbs is outside the scope of this thesis.

The fact that *get*-passive is preferred with dynamic actions is ascribed to the high degree of effectuality (Downing 1996: 187). Nonetheless, stative verbs, such as those indicating mental processes like cognition, perception, and affection, may occur in contexts where notions of causation and/or responsibility are contextually justified (Downing 1996: 203). This quality of *get*-passive is even more evident in combination with adverbs of frequency such as *always*, *constantly* etc.

The fact that *get*-passive occurs with imperative more than *be*-passive can also be ascribed to this property.

#### 2.4.7. GET-PASSIVE: RESPONSIBILITY AND CONTROL OF THE SUBJECT REFERENT

Another important notion related to *get*-passives is the control of the subject. This is tightly linked to the resultivity. Lakoff (1971) emphasizes the considerable involvement of the

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<sup>65</sup> Example taken from Kim (2012: 452)



subject in *get*-passives (cf. Wanner 2009: 107). This quality of *get*-passive which denotes that the subject has a considerable extent of control (i.e. responsibility) over the action is referred to as subject responsibility. This is also reflected in the frequent absence of the overt agent. Downing (1996: 197) notes that this involvement of medium refers to partial responsibility for “causing oneself to be treated in a certain way or to undergo a certain action”. This derives from the 'receptive' meaning. As quoted by Downing (1996: 197) Hatcher (1949: 436) points out:

“If the agent of the passive action is rarely named as such, this must mean that his role in the action is subordinated: that the agent does not completely dominate the situation — the subject himself having a chance to modify or determine, in some way or to some degree, what happens to him.”

The reason why this notion of responsibility is associated with *get*-passives is that it is connected to causative *get*, as in the sentence *He got himself fired* (Thompson et al. 2013: 3). This might explain why the subject of *get*-passive is generally animate. According to Lasnik and Fiengo (1974), a passive sentence formed with *get* implies patient control, while the same sentence formed with *be* implies agent control (cf. Thompson et al. 2013: 3).

This quality of *get*-passive is inherently dependent on the context. The property of subject responsibility is connected both to the dynamic quality of *get*-passive and affectedness condition. This is additionally exemplified in (62a), (62b)<sup>66</sup>.

(62a) *He was shot by the riot police.*

(62b) *He got shot by the riot police.*

In these sentences, there is a difference in the source of intention, yet the overall meaning is quite similar. The situation is different in examples (63a), and (63b), with the inclusion of the adverb *deliberately*.<sup>67</sup> Apart from the syntactic remark that the adverb precedes *got*, and follows *was*, there is a difference in the meaning of these two sentences. In (63a) the adverb *deliberately* refers to the police, while in (63b) the subject acted deliberately in a way to be shot.

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<sup>66</sup> Example taken from Toyota (2008: 156)

<sup>67</sup> Example taken from Ibid.

(63a) *He was deliberately shot by the riot police.*

(63b) *He deliberately got shot by the riot police.*

This is also connected to the fact that context has a crucial role in intensifying this interpretation, as in (64)<sup>68</sup>. Just like in the previous example, the adverbial *on purpose* also contributes to the overall sense.

(64) *She hated playing hockey and got injured on purpose so as to stay out of the match.*

In chapter 2.2. it has been pointed out that the responsibility of the subject is one of the basis for differentiating the syntactic and semantic aspects of *get*-passive and *be*-passive. In the examples below (65a, 65b)<sup>69</sup> it is evident that in *be*-passive the subject has less control over the action. In both variants the agent is implicit, but the subject of the clause is perceived as somewhat responsible for the event.

(65a) *Mary was shot on purpose, the bastards!*

(65b) *Mary got shot on purpose, the bastards!*

In cases like these, Arresse (1999) introduces the term ‘partial responsibility’ (cf. Thompson et al. 2013: 3). The subject of the passive sentence in this particular phenomenon is also referred to as ‘secondary agent’ due to its responsibility (Wanner 2009: 86). The *get*-passive’s property of the responsibility of the subject might derive from the lexical meaning of *get* (*acquire*). Needless to say, in example (65b) what mostly contributes to the interpretation of responsibility is the adverbial (*on purpose*), just like the examples (63a, 63b). Otherwise, responsibility wouldn’t be decipherable. In fact, adverbials of manner are quite common with *get*-passives. In (65a) the adverbial refers to the action undertaken by implicit agent, and not the subject referent.

What is also worth mentioning in this chapter is the connection with reflexive pronouns. Namely, reflexive *get*-passive has an intense role in delineating the responsibility of the subject,

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<sup>68</sup> Example taken from Downing (1996: 199)

<sup>69</sup> Examples taken from Wanner (2009: 103)

as may be seen in (66a, 66b)<sup>70</sup>. In (66a) the subject responsibility is not quite obvious, unlike in (66b). Another reason for this is the fact that (66b) is not a passive, but a causative construction. The construction that contributes to the sense of subject responsibility is causative *get* combined with a reflexive pronoun.

(66a) *Mary got shot*

(66b) *Mary got herself shot.*

Another specific quality of *get*-passive is mentioned in 2.2. was the absence of an agent, which can be because the agent is pragmatically inferable, unknown, or irrelevant. This is particularly related to the notion of agentivity and subject control, since in many cases, there is no need for an explicit agent, which may lead to impersonalization. This is a specific quality of *get*-passive, as the subject of passive voice is inherently not in control, quite the contrary. According to Toyota (2008: 158), there is a hint of responsibility with a human subject over reflexive activity.

#### 2.4.8. RESULTATIVE ACTION

The basis for resultative action has already been explained in 2.2.2., so this section focuses on practical examples. Resultative meaning is mostly associated with causatives. It has been noted that resultative reading suggests an outcome derived from the agent's action, which concerns the patient. An example of resultative meaning is illustrated in (67)<sup>71</sup>.

(67) *He got hurt.*

The sentence denotes a state which is the result of an action, and a material process can also be discerned.<sup>72</sup> This notion of resultative action is further illustrated by (68a) and (68b)<sup>73</sup>.

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<sup>70</sup> Examples taken from Wanner (2009:86)

<sup>71</sup> Example taken from Downing (1996: 184)

<sup>72</sup> Downing (1996: 186) notes three different processes: material (such as *follow* or *make*), which denotes a process of doing (it can be subdivided into dispositive or creative); mental (such as *like*, *watch*, *see*, *hear*), denoting perception, affection and cognition; and relational (such as *own*, *play*, *take*), which is frequently used in passive forms and consists of three subcategories: behavioural, verbal and existential.

<sup>73</sup> Examples taken from Alexiadou (2011: 18).

(68a) *The mailbox got empty.*

(68b) *The mailbox got emptied.*

The difference between these two sentences lies in the fact that *empty* is an adjective (so *get* is understood as a copular verb), while *emptied* denotes an action (passive sentence). The subject (*the mailbox*) is affected by the event described by the complement of the verb *get*. In example (68b) it is clear that someone has emptied the mailbox, i.e. undertaken an action over the object. Conversely, in example (68a) the sentence means the the mailbox became empty.

“Resultativeness” implies that an action that has been done can’t be undone, and that the patient is somewhat responsible for it (cf. Thompson et al. 2013: 3).

The subject of *get*-passive is changed as a result of the action. However, a pre-existence of the subject is compulsory. That is why example (69)<sup>74</sup> sounds incorrect.

(69) \**The letter got written by you.*

Also, *get*-passives can't be combined with verbs of creation. In terms of its resultative quality, *get*-passive contains a causative relation that contributes to a resultant state. This is evident in example (70)<sup>75</sup>. The meaning of this sentence is that something caused John to be hurt.

(70) *John got hurt on his way home.*

Considering this quality, example (71)<sup>76</sup> sounds incorrect as there is no resulting state concerning the subject. The resultant state implies the endpoint of an action, which is not the case here. In other words, verbs involved in *get*-passives are usually telic.

(71) \**The poem got read by a choirboy.*

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<sup>74</sup> Example taken from Kim (2012: 443)

<sup>75</sup> Example taken from Kim (2012: 444)

<sup>76</sup> Example taken from Kim (2012: 444)

Evidently, the notion of resultant state, also pertains to *by*-adjuncts, because the acceptability of *by*-phrases in *get*-passives is restricted to cases of results and effects made by an agent.

Furthermore, *get*-passive can indicate that a certain event was made possible due to the inherent qualities and nature of the subject. This can be seen in (72)<sup>77</sup>. The event was possible because of something that the subject did or possessed.

(72) *John got promoted last week.*

It must not be forgotten that *get*-passive is often followed a particle that denotes the completion of an action, hence it is common with phrasal verbs, as seen in the example below (73)<sup>78</sup>.

(73) *I mustn't get caught up in this absurd idea.*

#### 2.4.9. FOCUS AND VIEWPOINT

The notion of information packaging has already been elaborated in chapter 2.1., and it can be stated that it serves to convey meaning in a specific way, by putting emphasis on an important element. Thus, it is an essential tool for manipulating focus. Even though it tackles passives in general, a brief overview of its relation with *get*-passives should be provided.

Information structure involves many properties such as topicality or givenness (a relation between the old, i.e. given, and the new information). Focus can also be observed in a wider discourse. In *get*-passives focus is divided between the Patient and the Agent.

Furthermore, the acceptability of *get*-passive is higher if the patient is focused via clefting, whereas the likelihood of *be*-passives being influenced by patient-related focus is smaller.

The resultant feature of *get*-passive is also related to the standpoint of the speaker. Particularly, the subject can be affected by the viewpoint of the speaker (if an emphasis is on the result), depending on both physical and psychological conditions.

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<sup>77</sup> Example taken from Toyota (2008: 157)

<sup>78</sup> Example taken from Kim (2012: 450)

Subject animacy has already been mentioned earlier with regard to responsibility and control of the subject in *get*-passives. Subject animacy is interrelated with other elements in a sentence. As Toyota (2008: 160) states, transitive verbs that subcategorize for an inanimate object must have an animate subject.

With regard to viewpoint ('subjective viewpoint'), researchers were less in agreement. Toyota (2008: 162) made a clear reference to a subjective viewpoint, and its relevance to the relationship between the agent and the event, by referring to linguists that dealt with this issue in the following way:

"Lakoff (1971) interprets it as the speaker's attitude towards the event, especially in the circumstance that a speaker is actually involved in or affected by the event, while for Stein (1979: 58), Hatcher (1949), and Chappell (1980), Vanrespaille (1991: 97–99) and Downing (1996: 200–2), it means the speaker's opinion on the event without his/her direct involvement."

*Get*-passive has the capacity to express additional pragmatic features, empathy or sentiment. It can convey a speaker's involvement or reflect their attitude. Occasionally, the construction can convey the speaker's intention as well, depending on the context. On top of that, one's opinion, along with the context, may reflect on the affectedness condition, primarily with the subject (cf. Kim 2012: 449). Apart from the context, the extent of the salience of the speaker is dependent on the nature of the Medium's referent. Additionally, animate subjects also play a critical role in how readers or speakers associate themselves with the subject – sentences with animate subjects can provide a more personal interpretation. Human and generally animate subjects are more common with *get*-passives, which is why *get*-passives are considered to bear subjective viewpoints more than *be*-passives. Furthermore, the speaker's involvement is interrelated with the patient's responsibility.

## 2.5. DIACHRONIC APPROACH

This chapter provides a concise overview of *get*-passive through the course of the history of the English Language, to give the reader a deeper understanding of how it emerged and why it is used in specific situations nowadays

Before the chapter narrows its attention to *get*-passives, some facts and postulates about passives, in general, should be discussed at the beginning. First, it is crucial to elaborate the notion of stative passives. According to Frajzynger (1978: 153) in Old English, the initial stative form consisted of the periphrastic passive, featuring a past participle and the non-stative passive was indicated by phrases like "to come to be" or "to get to be," with "get" eventually becoming the predominant auxiliary for expressing non-stative passive constructions in Modern English, while a nominal sentence provided a suitable structure for expressing stative passive forms. This initially expressed an orientation towards the patient and the meaning resulting from previous events or actions. Old English passive was mostly stative and dynamic constructions evolved later over time. The present-day English passive is, indeed, derived from an earlier adjectival construction (which was the already mentioned periphrastic construction). Also, through the development of perfect constructions (*have*), it started to express the resulting state (and an orientation towards the actor). In other words, the emergence of the *have*-perfect made it possible for the earlier *be*-perfective to be reanalyzed as the passive (Toyota 2008: 16). The occurrence of progressive passive in modern English is an indication of grammaticalization of the *be*-passive as more verbal (Toyota 2008: 16). Stative constructions mostly had human subjects, and the necessity of a change of subject animacy cooccurred with the development of passive constructions towards a verbal type. In 2.1.1. it has been stated that passives are important for making constructions impersonal. In Old English, however, this was achieved through the use of indefinite pronouns (with politeness as the main purpose).

The major change of viewpoint happened during the Middle English period and signaled the grammaticalization of the verbal passive (Toyota 2008: 16).

Toyota (2008: 16) further claims that in Old English, there were two auxiliaries denoting passives: *beon/ wesan* as *be* and *weorðan* as *become* (which was dynamic until 1500's). The earliest example of *get* dates back to 1596:

*How to get cleere of all the debts I owe.* (1596 SHAKS. Merch V. 1: 134)

The first documented meaning of *get* is noted to be *to obtain* and according to Gívon and Yang (1994: 130) the precursor of *get*-passive was causative (cf. Wanner 2009: 89):

“The first step in the development towards the *get*-passive was an increase in semantic and syntactic complexity through the addition of a beneficiary (*get something for somebody*). The next step was that the additional phrase did not have to be a beneficiary, it could also have locative meaning (*get something somewhere*).”

The second wave of the development of *get*-passives resulted in an ergative use of *get*. This development also started from reflexive forms, essentially causative, and by that time the reflexive pronoun was deleted. The first attested use of the proper *get*-passive with a dynamic interpretation reaches back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century (1652), and is shown in the following example taken from Wanner (2009: 97):

(74) *A certain Spanish pretending Alchymist ... got acquainted with foure rich Spanish merchants.* (1652 GAULE Magastrom. 361) (OED *get*, v. 34b)

The dynamic quality is also discernible in (75)<sup>79</sup> from a few decades later. A century later *get*-passive started to be associated with subject responsibility, as noted in example (76)<sup>80</sup> from 1731.

(75) *I am resolv'd to get introduced to Mrs Annabella* (Powell, *A Very Good Wife*, 1693. II.i p. 10 from the ARCHER Corpus)

(76) *You may not only save your life, but get rewarded for your roguery* (1731 Fielding 1.446)

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<sup>79</sup> Example taken from Fleisher (2005: 227)

<sup>80</sup> Example taken from Fleisher (2005: 227)



As quoted by Toyota (cf. Toyota 2008: 150): “in terms of the overall grammaticalization of *get*-passive, Strang (1970) claims that it took place in the late 18th century and Denison (1993) suggested that it was in the 19th or 20th century”. Nonetheless, the emergence of *get*-passive occurred later than the increase in the dynamic type of *be*-passive in Middle English. What is certain is that the frequency of *get*-passive increased after 1800’s. Fleisher (2006: 227) selects two stages in the development of the passive *get*: before 1760<sup>81</sup> the participles that could occur as the complement of *get* were restricted to those that could be interpreted adjectivally, while later this restriction was dropped. Denison (1993: 433) also points out that the earlier examples often involve idiomatic phrases, such as *get rid of* (cf. Toyota 2008: 150). Phrases like *get rid of* also represent an intermediate stage, as is the middle voice, in the development of passives. With regard to the origins of passive constructions with *get*, Toyota (2008: 174) proposes two theories: an inchoative *get* followed by a predicative adjective and a reflexive causative. The former is what turned into a passive auxiliary *get* (followed by a past participle), while in the latter the passive emerged from a non-passive construction. Also, the latter theory has a more evident subject control over the action (due to the decrease in passive quality). *Get*-passives without subject control were popularized only in present-day English. According to the theory of reflexive causatives as origins for *get*-passive, Toyota (2008: 176) established a sequence: the process started with the emergence of causative *get*, followed by the development of causative reflexive form *get oneself*, which evolved into a causative reflexive complemented with a past participle on its way to *get*-passives. The major changes were primarily evident in purpose-type causatives.<sup>82</sup>

The theory presented in 2.2., stating that *get* is a dynamic counterpart of *be*, is problematic from a historical perspective, since the *be*-passive has developed from a more stative to a more dynamic construction, with many different aspects to consider (subjective viewpoint, subject responsibility, animacy of the subject).

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<sup>81</sup> An arbitrary cut-off point (Fleisher 2006: 231)

<sup>82</sup> Toyota (2008) provides a detailed overview of changes that purpose-type causatives have undergone throughout the history of the English language in *Get-passive: Possible sources in Diachronic Change in the English Passive*, Lund University, Palgrave Studies in Language History and Language Change, 2008, pp. 177-181

In terms of the chronological variations of *get*-passives and *be*-passives, Thompson et al. (2013: 2) referred to Mair and Leech (2006) that point out a decline in the use of *be*-passives over time, as well as a rise in the use of *get*-passives (particularly after the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century), which indicates an apparent shift in written English toward the norms of spoken language (as it has been noted that *get* primarily occurs in spoken language). The use of *get*-passive has been steadily increasing in the last 30 years, as opposed to *be*-passive, the use of which has declined (Kim 2012: 438). The importance of social context has grown and has a considerable role in this phenomenon since *get*-passives tend to be more present in the language of people from lower social classes and less educated.

### **3. RESEARCH**

In the first part of this thesis, the main tenets of passive, particularly *get*-passive and its differences from *be*-passive have been elaborated. This paved a path to further empirical research in order to test how this phenomenon and the theories, established by linguists used as a reference in the previous part of this thesis, function among non-native, but highly proficient English speakers, i.e. how speakers differentiate the semantics of the two catenative and copular verbs used in passive constructions.

In this part, I will first refer to the participants and methods used in this empirical research. This will be followed by a description of the aim of the research, and ultimately, the results will be analyzed (descriptively and graphically) and compared to the tenets established in the first part. At the end of the thesis we provide the questionnaire given to participants.

#### **3.1. PARTICIPANTS**

In order to check the phenomena established in the previous part I conducted a research in May, 2023 at my faculty with the help of professor Irena Zovko Dinković and professor Anđel Starčević. The group that was tested consisted of 104 first-year students (undergraduate programme) of the English Language and Literature at the Faculty of Humanities and Social

Sciences in Zagreb. English was their second language, but their language skills were advanced as they are enrolled in English Language and Literature studies programme. As they had taken the course Contemporary English Language 1, they had a certain amount of metalinguistic knowledge as well. The research was undertaken during the class *English Syntax 1: Word Classes*.

They still hadn't analyzed passive voice in class with their professor (prof. Anđel Starčević), so they didn't contemplate the syntactic and semantic differences between *get*-passive and *be*-passive during research, but based their answers simply on what sounded more natural and coherent to them.

The native language of the inquired students was Croatian (apart from five of them who were on an Erasmus Student Mobility, and therefore couldn't do Task 2, but their answers weren't affected by Croatian interference). The students worked individually, so the answers reflected their concept of passive unburdened by external factors (e.g. answers of other students or hints by the lecturer).

### **3.2. METHODOLOGY**

The empirical research was a combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis. It was conducted in the form of a questionnaire (see Appendix 1). Each student got an identical form, and they were given 25 minutes at the beginning of the class to complete it. The questionnaire didn't examine their metalinguistic knowledge but was rather based on their language perception (in order to check how the notions discussed in this thesis function in practice).

The questionnaire was divided into three parts. The first part consisted of a pair of two sentences. One of them contained *get*-passive, and one of them *be*-passive. Both of the sentences were grammatically correct, but the students had to elaborate on the difference between the meaning or pragmatic constraints of them. First, they were asked whether or not the sentences had the same meaning, and then they were supposed to explain their answer. They also had to determine which sentence sounded more natural to them. They could either provide

a translation (and in that way show the difference) or explain in their words. There were six pairs of sentences.

The second part was only for Croatian speakers, so altogether there were 99 results taken into account. In this part, they were asked to provide a translation of 6 sentences, that contained either *get*-passive or *be*-passive. The sentences were also based on the dichotomy of dynamic and stative verbs, and adjectival and verbal passive. In this part, certain answers were left empty, as it will be seen in the analysis (see 3.4.2.). This was based on the cross-linguistic approach, i.e. whether the passives in English are necessarily passives in Croatian. The sentences were not the same as in task 2, but they were classified according to the same properties.

The third part of the research was related to passives in general. This was the shortest part. The students were given a task to determine whether the use of passive is acceptable or not. This segment consisted of five brief passive sentences, where verbs were put in the passive voice, but the acceptability or unacceptability was based on the properties elaborated in chapter 2.1. of the theoretical framework. The sentences were also different from those in the previous tasks, in order to avoid potential confusion.

After the students had completed the questionnaires, I compared their answers to the theoretical framework and noted them in the graphs shown in Chapter 3.4. I also set aside the questionnaires of Erasmus students as they weren't completely accurate (specifically referring to the cross-linguistic section). In Task 1, the answers were classified on the basis of their reference (e.g. action vs. state). Unanswered tasks were also marked, as well as those in which a student couldn't tell the difference. In the analysis of Task 2, a few representative translations were drawn, where a connection to the discussed notions could be discerned. There were not many varieties, as the examples were quite unambiguous. Ultimately, in Task 3 the possibility of passivization has been examined, through which I did a quantitative analysis. However, most of the students realized when a sentence was ungrammatical.

The sentences used in the questionnaire were taken from online corpora, such as BNC and COHA.

### 3.3. AIMS

Through this research, I aimed to prove the theories based on the notions elaborated in the first part of the thesis using practical examples. I have chosen this group, as their English skills are highly proficient, but they still don't have sufficient metalinguistic knowledge to be able to linguistically contemplate on the properties of *get*-passive and *be*-passive, which wouldn't show accurate answers. Therefore, the students relied on what sounded natural to them and what they had encountered in written or spoken language.

The sentences in Task 1 contained some properties (dynamic verbs, responsibility, resultative action, etc.) mentioned in 2.4. The aim of this task was to test whether the students would be able to recognize this pattern, when the sentence was contrasted with a *be*-passive counterpart. Also, in 2.2., it has been pointed out that in certain cases *get*-passive is more suitable than *be*-passive and vice versa. Therefore, in the same task they had to determine which variations sounded more natural to them. As mentioned earlier, the aim of Task 2 was to see how these differences affect translation to Croatian. Through this task, I aimed to test what the equivalent for constructions with *get*-passives and *be*-passives would be in Croatian (considering all the qualities of the two constructions). These answers could also provide some clarification for the answers in Task 1. Ultimately, in Task 3, I aimed to examine whether the students without an explicit theoretical awareness related to restrictions of passive (such as the connection of passives and the transitivity pattern) would be able to recognize in which situations and contexts *get*-passives, *be*-passives or even passives in general were acceptable or, conversely, unacceptable. This was eventually compared to theoretical framework.

Ultimately, my own research with first-year students of the English Language and Literature served as support for the theories I have explained in the previous part, i.e. as practical evidence. Also, it was interesting to mark how many answers were expected or unexpected.

### 3.4. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

In this section, I provide an analysis of answers I gathered through the survey. I made a graph of each task, providing all the options the students had noted. I also took into consideration the answers marked as "I don't know". First the students had to decide which sentences sounded more natural to them (which is analyzed in the Table 1), and later explain whether the meaning of the sentence changes, and if so, in what way.

**Task 1:**

1. a) *Well, I worked in Johnny Walkers, and when I worked in there at that time, when you get married you had to leave, that was their policy.*
- b) *Well, I worked in Johnny Walkers, and when I worked in there at that time, when you are married you had to leave, that was their policy.*

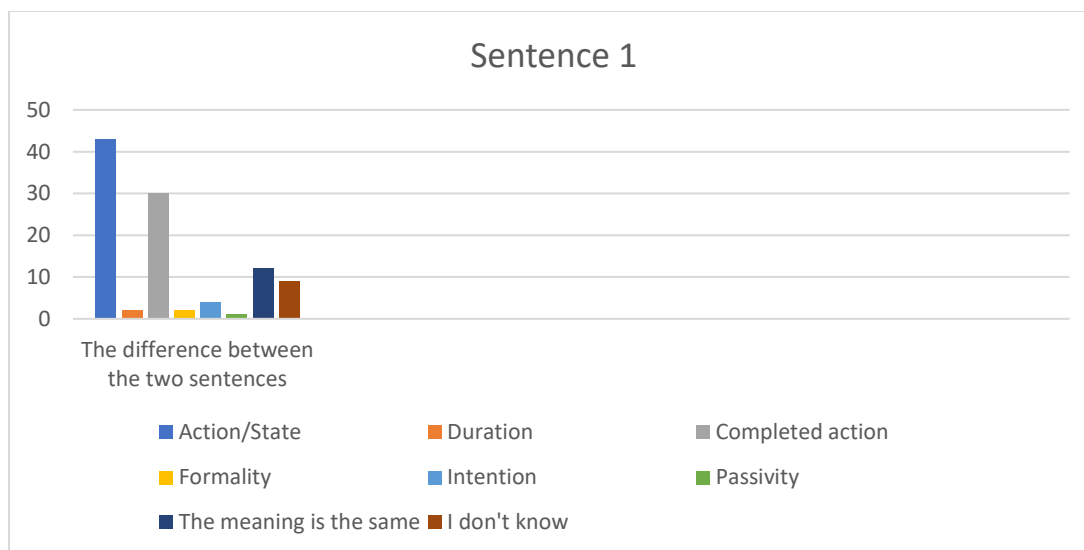
(Source information: TITLE: Oral history project: interview (Leisure). 3 partics, 411 utt; DATE (1985-1994)

Which sentence sounds more natural?

<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>Both</b>	<b>No answer</b>
94%	3 %	1,5%	1,5%

In sentence 1, a great majority of students (91 of them, 94%) noted that sentence (a) was more natural. Only 1,5% didn't provide an answer to this question. The aspects in which the sentences are different (according to students) are visualized in the following graph and explained below.

Is the meaning of the sentences the same? Explain your answer.



As expected, most of the students (in particular 43 of them, 41 %), recognized that the difference of the two sentences lies in the dichotomy of action and state (dynamic and stative verbs). This indicates the quality of *get*-passive proposed in 2.4., elaborating on the dynamic property of the verb. In other words, the students who marked this difference, provided an explanation that *get married* denotes an action of having a wedding, while *be married* denotes a state (in this case a relationship status). This is also related to the classification of verbal and adjectival passives, to which the differences between the two constructions are connected. As noted in the first part of the thesis, *married* can be both an adjective preceded by a copular verb and a participle verb preceded by an auxiliary. Furthermore, *get married* can also be interpreted as an inchoative (*become*). This is also linked to the second most common answer: that the emphasis in the sentence containing *get*-passive denotes the completion of an event (30 students, 29%). In 2.4., it has been mentioned that *get*-passive is often combined with telic verbs, implying the endpoint of an action. *Get married* is a dynamic verb phrase, and denotes that an event took place, but its dynamic quality also indicates its completion.

Other answers (4% or less) involved difference in intention (*get*-passive is given an interpretation of emphasizing the intention), duration (the variation with *be*-passive denoted a longer span of time) and the fact that in *be*-passive the subject was more likely to undergo a state (noted as “passivity”). The difference of formality was surprisingly low in this task, due to the

context. Out of 104 students only 12 noted that the meaning is the same, and 9 didn't know how to answer.

Overall, the most significant difference in this sentence was, as expected the dynamic vs. stative interpretation.

2. a) *Vanessa got promoted to program director.*

b) *Vanessa was promoted to program director.*

(Source information: <https://learningenglish.voanews.com/a/the-passive-voice-with-get-/4839624.html>)

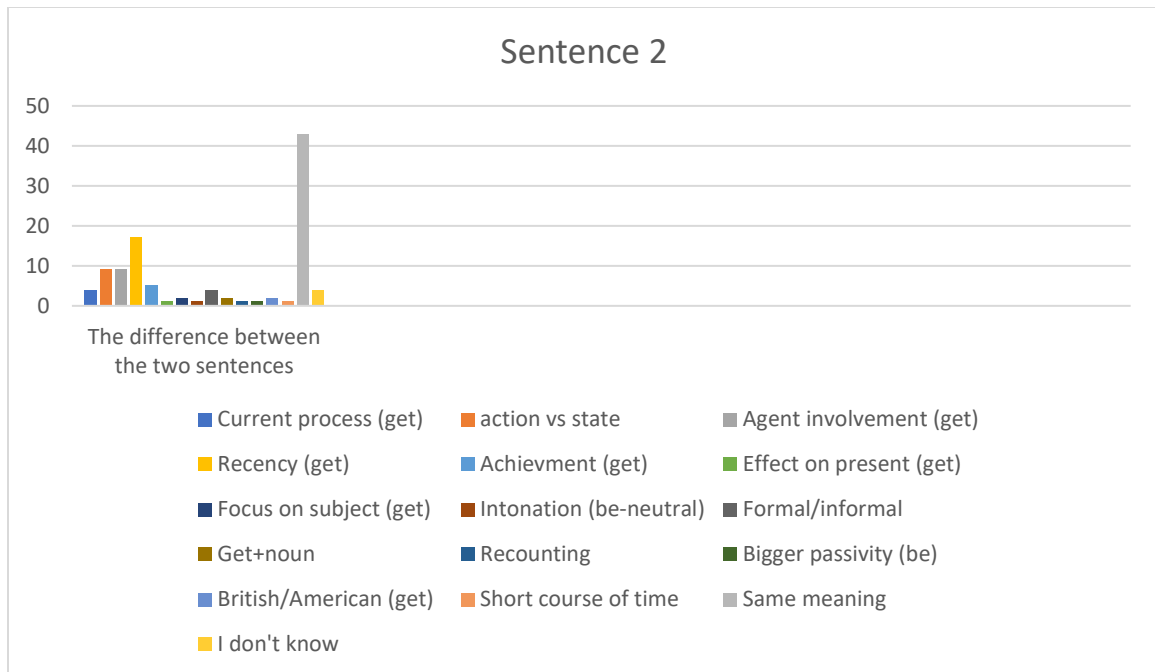
Which sentence sounds more natural?

A	B	Both	No answer
43%	35%	21%	0,1%

Unlike the previous sentence, the answers were versatile in this case, due to the fact that *promoted* is used with both *get* and *be*, depending on the context and focus. There were more participants (43%, 45 of them) who wrote that the version with *get* sounded more natural. 35% of them marked *be*-passive as more convenient. 21% of the participants stated that both versions sound equally natural, which was expected due to the nature of the verb *promote*, which is essentially dynamic. Out of 104 participants, only 1 of them left this question unanswered.

Is the meaning of the sentences the same? Explain your answer.





Discernibly, there were multiple answers provided as an explanation to the question whether the meaning of the two sentences was different or same. This is ascribed to the nature of the verb *promote*, which, as opposed to *marry*, is commonly found in combination with both *be* and *get*. It is a dynamic verb regardless of the context.

However, most of the participants (41%, 43 of them) noted that the meaning was essentially the same. Those who considered that the meaning was different provided a vast variety of answers. The most common (17 answers out of 104, 17%) was that the difference is in the fact that sentence (a) implied the recency of an event and its connection to the present state. However, this might be connected to the informality of the use of *get* rather than *be*. This is related to another similar answer provided by one participant who stated that the sentence with *get*-passive emphasizes the effect on the present. Hereby, a parallel can be drawn with the notion of the resultant state of *get*-passive elaborated in 2.4. The notion of action vs. state (dynamic and stative event) and responsibility of an agent were equally present (9 answers for each). While *be promoted* refers to a passive state (someone, i.e. the patient undergoes this event), and thus the verb is more adjective-like, *get promoted* refers to the process in which the subject is responsible for the result, even though its semantic role is a patient. In other words, it can be explained in a way that Vanessa did something in order to be promoted. The third answer (5 participants, 5%)

in the survey was that the difference is in the emphasis on achievement. This is related to both subject responsibility and hindrance reading. In other words, Vanessa worked hard enough to get promoted regardless of difficulties.

The rest of the answers involved (less than 4%): *get* considered as a process that is still going on, focus on the subject (related to information packaging), the variant with *be*-passive as more neutral, as well as more formal; in terms of syntax a few students noted perceiving *get* as being more often combined with a noun (*get a promotion*), due to the lexical meaning of *get* ('obtain'). A few students also noted that *be*-passive is more associated with narration. This could be connected to the fact that *be* is used more in written language than *get*. Also, it was explained that the sentence with *be*-passive has greater "passivity" than *get*, which could be ascribed to the fact that *get* is an inchoative and catenative verb as well (*Vanessa got promoted* could be interpreted as 'Vanessa became promoted'). A few students also noted that the difference is merely in the greater use of *get*-passives in AmE than in BrE, which has been discussed in 4.4.2. Also, there was one answer pointing out that *get* refers to an exact point in time.

Four participants didn't answer this question or wrote 'I don't know'.

3. a) *The whole town got snowed in.*

b) *The whole town was snowed in.*

(Source information: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/british-grammar/get-passive>)

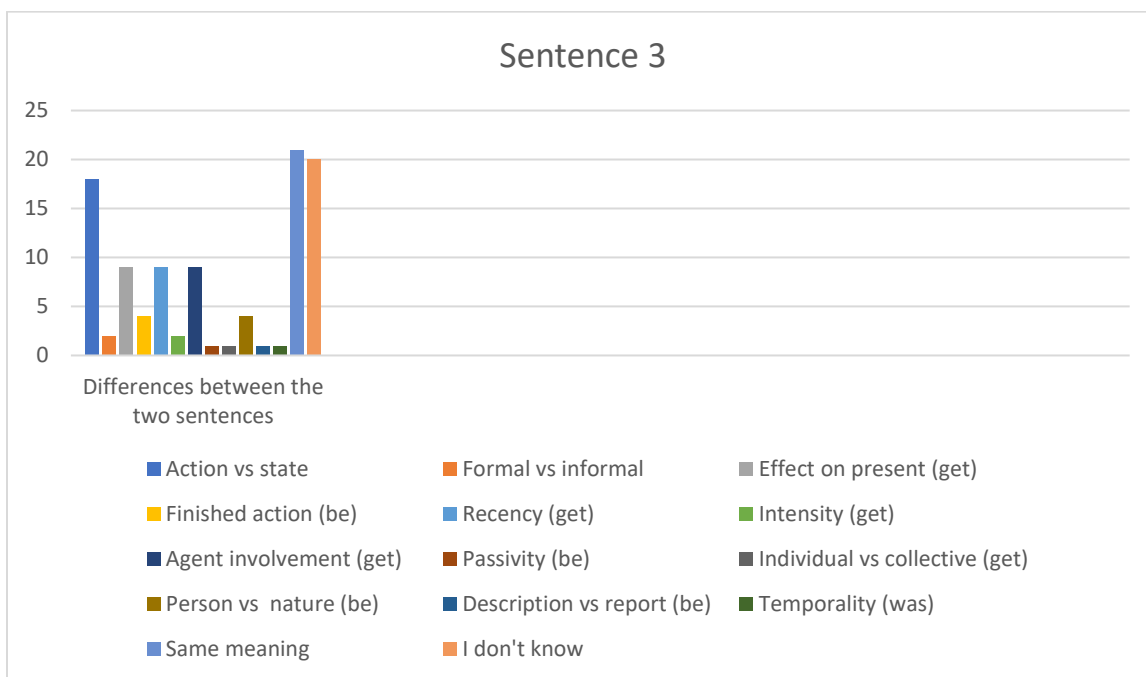
Which sentence sounds more natural?

A	B	Both	No answer
28%	52%	14%	6%

Similar as in the previous sentence, the answers to the first question were rather versatile. Most of the participants stated that the sentence with *be*-passive sounded more natural than the

sentence with *get*-passive. This might be due to the fact that *snowed in* is a participle that denotes a state, so automatically it is associated with *be*-passive rather than *get*-passive. 28% of the students answered that *get*-passive sounded more natural, and 14% that they are both natural to the same extent. 6% of the students left this question unanswered or wrote 'I don't know'.

Is the meaning of the sentences the same? Explain your answer.



The explanations of these sentences were particularly interesting as there were different explanations occurring in a high number, although there was a considerable number of answers marked as 'I don't know' (19%), which I ascribed to the ambiguity of the verb phrase *snowed in*, which can both be adjectival and verbal. The truth condition might be the same (as stated by 20% of participants), but it doesn't imply that the overall circumstances are.

The participants mostly discerned the difference in the dichotomy of action and state. Namely, the phrase *got snowed in* denotes and puts an emphasis on the action (has a dynamic interpretation), and the phrase *was snowed in* a state in which the town was. There was an equal number of participants who wrote that the verb phrase *got snowed in* indicates recency (as in the previous sentence) more than the sentence with *be* counterpart, that it emphasizes the result on present and eventually, that it is associated with a considerable involvement of an implied

agent. This is specific as *snow* as a verb denotes a state and is intransitive, but with a preposition *in*, it indicates that the action has an agent. In other words, agency is more notably present in sentence (a), than in sentence (b). In the previous sentence, participants connected *get*-passive to the completeness of the action, however in this case this quality is attributed to *be*-passive. It can be concluded that this notion is not firmly established, as it is not proven to be a reliable indicator and property of any of these forms. Furthermore, it mostly depends on the context, not on the copular verb. Four students (4%) had a particularly interesting and plausible explanation, which could be partly connected to the importance of the agent mentioned earlier – the sentence with *get*-passive denotes that the agent is animate (human), while *be*-passive that it is nature itself. In 2.2. and 2.4., it has been pointed out that in most cases the agent (the external argument) of *get*-passive is animate. There were a few answers that marked the difference in the intensity of the occurrence (*being snowed in*), which can also be connected to the focus and subjective viewpoint elaborated in 2.4.9. The rarest answers (1%) were that the difference between the sentences was spotted in an emphasis that the patient underwent an action, the connection of action in *get*-passive to a collective (similar to the notion of animate agent), than in *be*-passive, and eventually, the use of *get*-passive to report an event and *be*-passive to describe or narrate.

Ultimately, this sentence provided numerous different explanations referring to various aspects, but only half of them were in alignment with my theoretical framework (action vs. state, the importance of an animate agent and resultant action).

4. a) *My letter got published.*

b) *My letter was published.*

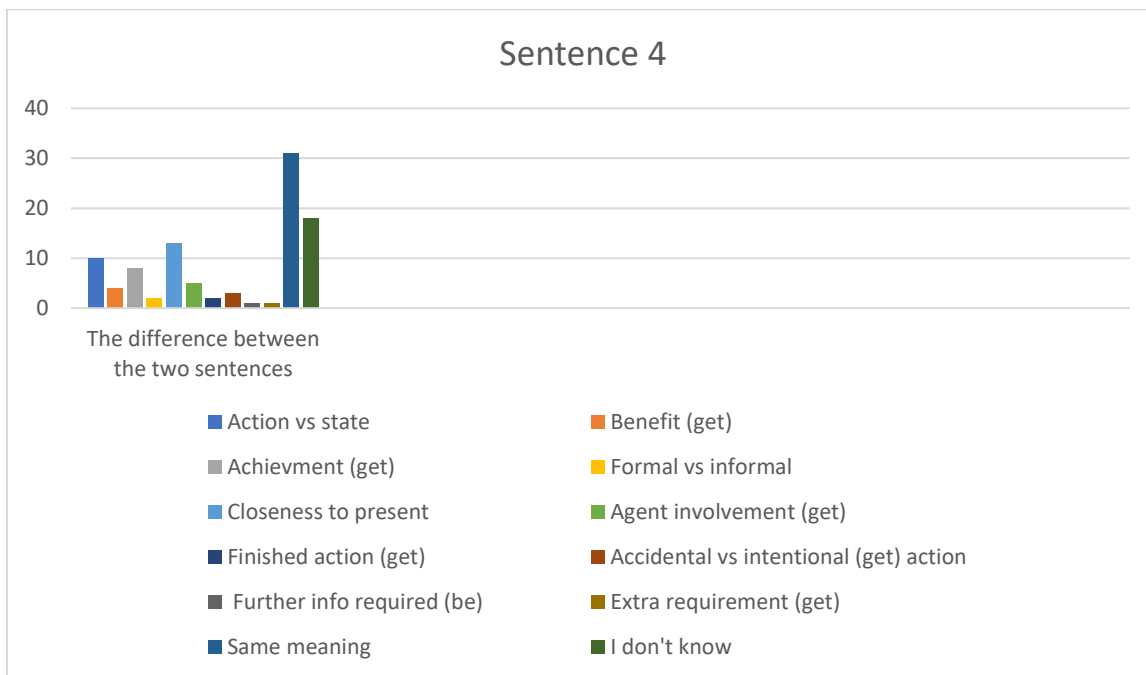
*(Author's example based on articles)*

Which sentence sounds more natural to you?

A	B	Both	No answer
35%	43%	19%	3%

As in sentence 2, there was a tight race between (a) containing *get*-passive and (b) containing *be*-passive, since both expressions can be commonly found in language, however, the one with *be* turned out to be more expected, i.e. natural according to the participants (43% vs. 35%), possibly due to the focus on the patient undergoing an action, while the action is out of their control. 19% of the students marked that both sentences were natural in their way. Only 3% of participants left this question unanswered.

Is the meaning of the sentences the same? Explain your answer.



Due to the clearness and simplicity of the sentence, and lack of additional context it doesn't come as a surprise that most of the students wrote that the meaning was the same. Also, some participants got confused by the similarity of two sentences, and therefore left the questions unanswered or wrote 'I don't know'.

The participants (13%) mostly perceived the difference between the two sentences in closeness to the present. In other words, the sentence containing *get*-passive is more likely to be

connected to the present state, i.e. it is perceived as recent. Precisely, according to the answers, *get published* might imply that the action has been done recently, while the variant with *be*-passive only points out that the action was done at some point. The second most frequent answer (10%), referred to the dichotomy between action and state. Similar to the previous example (*get snowed in* vs. *be snowed in*), when saying *get published* the speaker points out the action (and the process of it) that takes place, while *be published* denotes a state that the patient undergoes (it can also be interpreted as *be in the state of published*). This explanation is followed by the one that marked the difference in the fact that *get* implies a completed achievement, which could contribute to the interpretation of getting over with the action. Surprisingly, only 5% of participants noted the difference in the emphasis on an animate agent, which is implied in the sentence containing *get*-passive. Namely, the first sentence implies that animate agents have a contributing role in the action, in other words, the importance of inferred agents is considerable. The overall sentence doesn't provide explicit agents, but due to the construction, it is easy to infer them. This quality connected to *get*-passive has been pointed out in chapter 2.2. The rarest explanation (less than 4%) discerned the difference in the connotation: *be*-passive is more neutral than *get*-passive, due to which advantage can be discerned in the statement, as elaborated in chapter 2.4. when dealing with the notions of adversity and benefit associated with passives with *get*. In other words, *get published* has a more positive and emotional connotation than its *be* counterpart. The difference was also observed in the intention – *get*-passive infers that the action was more intentional than with *be*-passive, which is closely linked to the responsibility of the subject and its control, while the sentence containing *be*-passive could have a connotation of taking place accidentally – then completeness of the action (as mentioned in 2.2, the action with *get*-passive should mark an endpoint, thus *get published* implies the process and the endpoint), the necessity of additional information with *be*-passive, possibly due to the lack of agency and extra requirement (the subject had to complete an additional requirement or task in order to have his letters published, this is also connected to the notion of intention and responsibility).

Even though most of the students eventually claimed that the meaning of the sentences was the same, it was the relationship between the subject (or more precisely the person who

possesses them, as explained in 2.2) and the action it had undergone that is different. Overall, the students recognized the distinctive traits of *get*-passive despite most of them writing that the meaning of two sentences was the same.

5. a) *Go and get checked out at the medical centre.*  
b) *Go and be checked out at the medical centre.*

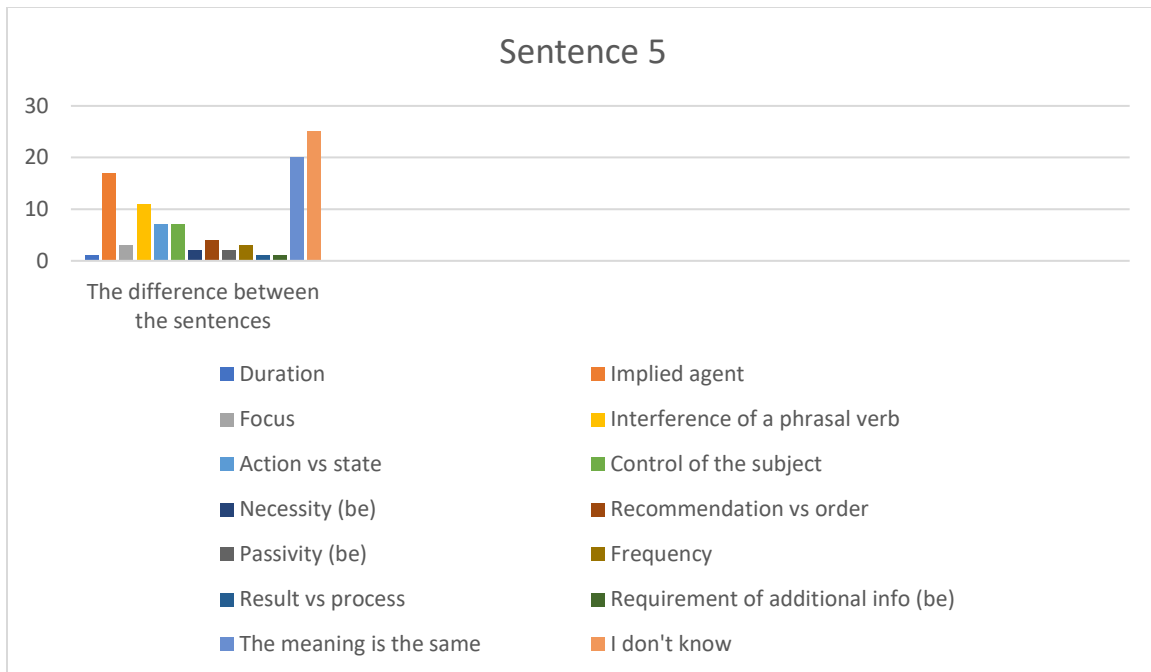
(Source: COCA)

Which sentence sounds more natural to you?

A	B	Both	I don't know
100%	0%	0%	0%

As evident in the table, it was pretty clear to students that the sentence with *get*-passive sounds way more natural. Some of them even noted that *be checked out* does not sound grammatical. Such a clearly defined answer indicated that the sentences imposed a strict context (considering that they mentioned that the action took place at the medical center, so it must be done by someone else, in this case, a professional, but one still had control over going there), and the phrase was somewhat fixed.

Is the meaning of the sentences the same? Explain your answer.



Due to the fact that *be checked out at the medical centre* sounds unusually rare, and hard to conceptualize, most of the student wrote that they didn't know the difference, as the second sentence sounds unnatural. Also, the students who wrote that the meaning was the same also wrote (in the previous section) that the sentence sounded unnatural, so they couldn't even consider the differences.

However, some answers provided a comprehensive insight into the main tenets which contributed to differentiating the two sentences. The most common was, as expected, the difference in the importance of the agent. Even though the sentences didn't have a *by*-adjunct, an agent was implied. Furthermore, just like in sentence 3 (*The town got snowed in*), the implied agent is animate (human), due to the agency of the construction. The second most common answer (11%) was the confusion with the phrasal verb *to check out*<sup>83</sup>, which has multiple meanings. Many of the uses of the phrasal verb *check out* occur with *be*, and their meaning is not connected to the denotative meaning of the lexical verb *check*, unlike in this example.

The third most common answer (7% each) involved the dichotomy of action and state and the control of the subject. The former is much lower than in the previous examples, where it was

<sup>83</sup> <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/check-out>



the main basis for differentiation of the two sentences, but in this case, this quality is not accentuated as much as the importance of the agent. The control of the subject is associated with its responsibility, and the combination of an active verb in the sentence (*Go and get checked out*) enhances this. Furthermore, the sentence is written in the imperative, which also bears a connotation for a certain responsibility undertaken by the subject. This leads to yet another answer present in the analysis – the intensity of imperative and recommendation. It has been noted in 2.2 and 2.4 that the imperative, especially in negative constructions (*don't get involved*), was particularly common with *get*-passive. However, in this case, the students (4%) noted that the variation with *get*-passive bore a connotation of recommendation, whereas they perceived the *be*-passive construction to be more restricted to regular imperative as such. In other words, *Go and get checked out at the medical centre* sounds more personal and, therefore, can be associated with recommendation. The answers that were low in quantity (3% or less) stated that the difference lay merely in the frequency (or in the fact that the second variation, with *be*-passive, sounded unnatural), which didn't reveal much of the reasons why this would be the case. Further differences were noted in the more passive character of *be* passive, which lacks agentivity (it is emphasized that the subject will undergo an action), linked to the notion of focus on the patient, and ultimately in duration (*be checked out* signifies a longer span of time), necessity (*be checked out* signifies necessity) and requirement of additional information in case of *be*-passive (as in the previous sentence). Surprisingly, only one person noted the difference in the result and the process (in *get checked out* the result is emphasized, as noted in 2.4), but this might be connected to the notion of duration of the *be checked out* verb phrase.

Overall, even though the first section of the task (determining which sentence sounded more natural) was simple, the second provided various answers, some of which were a subjective reflection of the participants' concept of *be*-passive and *get*-passive.

6. a) *I have to get dressed before eight o'clock.*

b) *I have to be dressed before eight o'clock.*

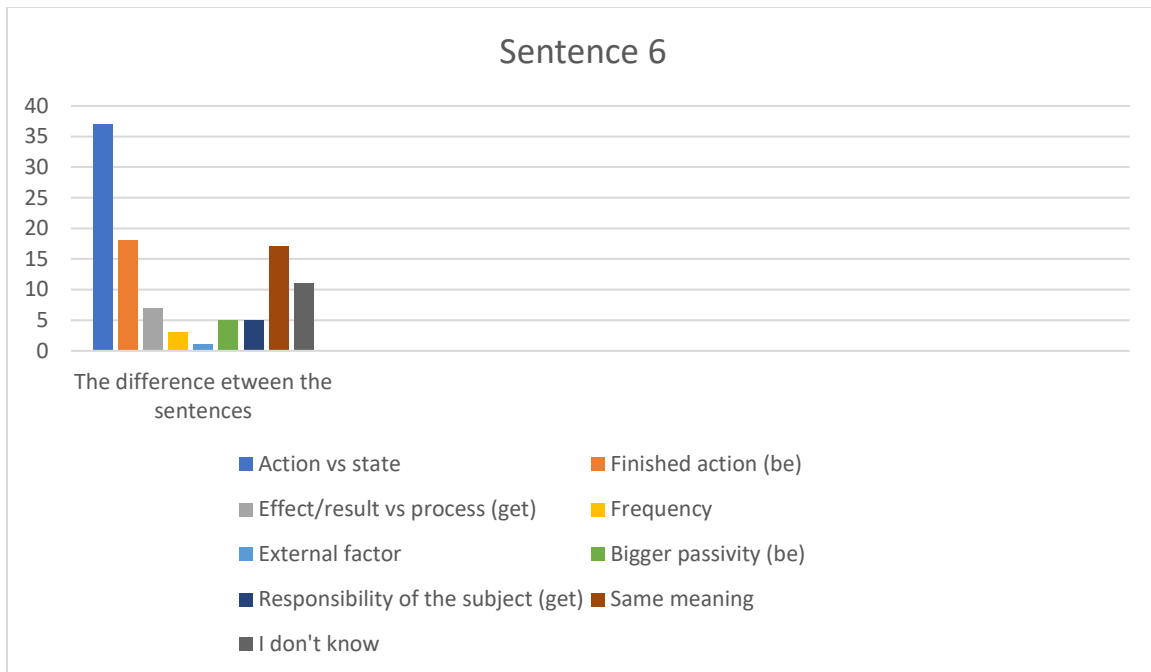
*(Author's example based on articles)*

Which sentence sounds more natural to you?

A	B	Both	I don't know
71%	13%	1%	15%

Evidently, most of the participants (71%) recognized that the construction (a) *get dressed* often occurs together, and thus noted it to be more natural, especially due to the context, while 13% of them chose (b). A relatively low number of participants wrote 'I don't know' (possibly due to the fact that *get dressed* is a very popular construction according to corpus research), or that both sounded equally natural (since the difference is mostly seen in the frequency in which the construction occurs, which will be reflected on in the following section).

Is the meaning of the sentences the same? Explain your answer.



In this sentence the dichotomy of action versus state was plainly evident, since the verb phrase *get dressed* is considered to be one of the most common uses of *get + past participle* according to corpus analysis in 2.2, and 2.4. Out of all the participants, 36% of them wrote that the difference between the two sentences was that *get dressed* is an action that takes place at some point in time, while *be dressed* denotes a state of wearing clothes. This is the second highest percentage of participants opting for a single answer (after the first sentence, where 41%, i.e. almost half of the examined group voted for the dichotomy of action and state as well, as *get married* also belongs to one of the most frequent uses of *get-passive*). Also, it should be pointed out that this particular example can also be interpreted as an inchoative, and the first variation can denote a state but is interpreted as ‘end up in the state of’, instead of ‘be in the state of’, which also indicates a dynamic event.

The second most common answer was that *be dressed* implies that the action was finished completely. The endpoint of an action is usually associated with *get-passive*, so in those terms, this is not in alignment with the theoretical framework in the first part of the thesis, however since *be dressed* denotes a state, it can be connected to the properties of *dressed* as an adjective, and this adjective can't be gradable (*very dressed*). In other words, a subject is either dressed or not. The third most common answer was the relation of final result (i.e. state) and

process. This is connected to both of the aforementioned notions, as a process implies a dynamic verb, whereas a final result is more related to a state (this should not be mixed up with a resultant state elaborated in 2.4, which denotes a result that an action has on the subject, with their direct or indirect involvement). Also, *be*-passive is once again more associated with passives in general, and I noticed this in some answers that provided a Croatian translation. 5% of participants wrote that they wouldn't translate the former version (with *get*-passive) as a passive at all, but rather as a reflexive active (*obukao se*). The second part of the questionnaire particularly focused on this. Also, 5% of the participants noted the higher responsibility of the subject in the version with *get*-passive, which is clear as the subject is assumed to have undertaken the action of dressing. This can be paralleled to the notion elaborated in the first part, where this sentence could be expressed as an intransitive verb (*I have to dress*), or a reflexive causative (*I have to get myself dressed*). Only 3% of the students noted that the difference was merely in the frequency of the verb phrases, i.e. *be dressed* sounded unnatural, as it is not as common as its *get* counterpart, and only 1% noted that they discerned that sentence (b) implied that someone else dressed the subject. Out of 104 participants, 17% wrote that the meaning was the same, which was unexpected due to the high number of answers marking the difference in action and state, and 11% wrote that they didn't know how to explain the difference.

This example is similar to the first sentence, as *married* and *dressed* are at the top of the list of verbs (participles) used with *get* according to BNC and COCA, and they share some similar properties such as action versus state. However, in this case the participants didn't notice the difference in completion.

## **Task 2**

In the second task the students were given six different sentences, which they had to translate into Croatian. The sentences were different from those in previous task. The results helped me in perceiving in what way the passive in one language influences the other, and more particularly, how these translations could indicate the difference in the relationship of subject and action. This part of the research was cross-linguistic. It involved only 99 participants, as five of the 104 participants were not native speakers of Croatian. The sentences involved either a *be*-

passive or *get*-passive construction. The results are ranked according to frequency in which they occurred in the questionnaire.

**1. *My favorite cup was broken.***

(Source: <https://learningenglish.voanews.com/a/the-passive-voice-with-get-/4839624.html>)

There were not many translations provided for this sentence, but they can be separated into three variations:

*a) Moja najdraža šalica je bila slomljena.*

This sentence is a direct translation from the English sentence and was the most common translation in the questionnaire. It contains a *be*-passive construction, which is translated as a direct equivalent. The sentence doesn't have an explicit agent, so it can be interpreted as a verbal (if it implies an action) or an adjectival passive (if it denotes a state or a quality), even though it can't be modified. In both cases, the translation is suitable, as Croatian also involves these two types (Vlastelić 2005: 127). In addition, the sentence doesn't contain any trace of subject responsibility (or control), and is completely passive and impersonal. The focus is not on the process of breaking the cup, but on the final state. However, due to the lack of context further properties which would contribute to the analysis can't be inferred. Still, due to the overall meaning of the sentence, it is evident that it denotes a negative outcome, even though it was not combined with *get*-passive.

*b) Moja najdraža šalica se razbila/slomila.*

This is the second most frequent variation provided as a translation to the first sentence. Evidently, the translation is not quite literal in terms of syntax, as the Croatian equivalent doesn't contain a passive form, as in translation (a). In this case, the passive form from the previous variation is replaced by a medial construction (*se razbila/slomila*), or the so-called *se*-passive (Silić, Pranjković, 2007: 196) in the form of a reflexive construction. This type of translation would be even more accurate if the original sentence contained *get*-passive, as the statement 'Moja šalica se slomila' refers to a dynamic action or responsibility. However, in English, as elaborated in chapter 2.2, responsibility is associated with animate subjects, which 'cup' clearly isn't. It has

been noted that in cases of inanimate subject, the responsible entity might be the person who either controls or possesses it. The notion of responsibility and dynamics may not be implied as easily in Croatian, as pseudo-reflexives occasionally replace passive forms, when the focus is on the action rather than on the subject.

c) *Najdraža šalica mi je slomljena.*

This was the rarest translation in the questionnaire. It is fairly similar to the first variation, in terms of focusing on the state and being translated as a passive, however, the tense is not the same. This might indicate that it is not as much a direct translation of the passive sentence in English as in the first variation, as it doesn't retain the tense. This might indicate that the focus is on the state of being broken. Furthermore, the insertion of a personal pronoun in dative (*Najdraža šalica mi je slomljena*) conveys both a trace of possession and a subjective viewpoint.

## **2. *Women don't get invited to these things as often as men.***

(TITLE: Misfortunes of Nigel. Pitt-Kethley, Fiona. P Owen, 1991, pp. 67-173.  
2793 s-units; DATE: 1985-1994)

This sentence resulted in a lot more variation than the previous one, but the differences in translations were quite meticulous when comparing it to sentence 1. This might be due to the presence of a *get*-passive construction, which provides a wide range of translation possibilities due to its complex and abundant properties examined in the previous section. The translations are ranked according to the number of participants opting for them.

a) *Žene nisu pozvane na ovakve stvari kao muškarci.*

This was the most common translation provided for the sentence. The Croatian equivalent of the sentence is in passive voice and it's translated in the same way as *Women are not invited to these things as often as men*. Therefore, the differences between *be*-passive and *get*-passive are not accurate in this translation. This translation might occur due to the nature of the participle form *invited*. The verb phrase *get invited* refers to a state which is a result of someone doing an action. In the case of this variation of translation, the participants didn't perceive this to such an extent as in the following translations, where the differences between

the two passive forms were discerned. In other words, most of the students perceived that the sentence was not different from the *be* counterpart which may be concluded from the translation they provided. Furthermore, it was interesting to see that the students didn't find it necessary to translate the adverb *often*, probably because they realized that it wasn't the focus of the research, so they paid attention to the overall sense of the sentence.

b) *Žene ne zovu na ovakve stvari kao muškarce.*

This is an interesting way to translate the sentence, and surprisingly most of the students who provided this translation also noted that the difference between *be*-passive and *get*-passive was based on the responsibility of the subject or on the implication of an outer (implied) agent. It can be discerned that this sentence in Croatian not only avoids the passive construction but utilizes an impersonal construction, i.e. a generic third-person singular associated with impersonal. In other words, the sentence is actually translated as an active (which can also be connected to the notion of agency associated with *get*-passive and agent involvement), only with an impersonal agent, which can refer to particular people (whose identity is omitted) or a collective. Still, the personal pronoun is not explicitly stated as it would be in English, as in Croatian the pronoun can also be inferred from the suffix of the verb (*Oni ne zovu žene na ovakve stvari kao muškarce* vs. *Žene ne zovu na ovakve stvari kao muškarce*). Also, the verb in the Croatian equivalent can also mean 'call'.

c) *Žene ne pozivaju na ovakve stvari kao muškarce.*

The sentence is technically the same variation as the previous one, however, the verb *pozivaju* is much more semantically restricted (it can only mean *invite*), and denotes an onset of the activity. This was the third most common answer, i.e. translation that translates *get*-passive as active rather than passive, due to its agency.

d) *Žene se ne pozivaju na ovakve stvari kao muškarci.*

At first glance, and in terms of voice this sentence seems quite similar to the previous two variations (especially sentence (c)). However, it is discernible that in the Croatian equivalent, the sentence contains a reflexive pronoun *se*, which indicates a certain extent of agency associated

with *get*-passive as mentioned earlier. As in the previous sentence, the verb in the sentence is literally translated as ‘invited’ and not ‘called’. Furthermore, the inclusion of a reflexive pronoun *se* in the sentence so as to render an active reading and responsibility of the subject has already been elaborated in the variation of the first sentence (*Moja najdraža šalica se slomila/razbila.*). However, the difference between this sentence and sentence 1c is that in this one the subject is animate, while in the earlier example it was inanimate, and eventually responsibility or control is associated with animate entities.

e) *Žene se ne zovu na ovakve stvari kao muškarci.*

In terms of form, it can be discerned that sentence (d) is in the same relation to sentence (c) as sentence (e) is to sentence (b). Actually, the only difference between the sentences (both containing the verb form *zovu* rather than *pozivaju*) is that sentence (e) also contains the pseudo-reflexive pronoun *se*.

f) *Muškarce se češće poziva na ovakve stvari nego žene*

This is an example of a completely indirect translation (in comparison with previous translations). This would actually be a translation of the sentence *Men get invited to these things more often than women* (considering that *get*-passives are agentive and are often translated and even interpreted as active). In fact, the truth condition stays the same as in all of the previous sentences, so semantically the sentence is the same, however, the entities in the sentence had their position change. So, the sentence is changed more in a stylistic than in a grammatical way. The focus is no longer on the women (who are not invited as often as men), but on men (who are invited more often than women). Even though it was interesting to examine this translation in terms of general translating practices, the variations don’t provide any new practical evidence of the differentiation of *get*-passive and *be*-passive.

g) *Žene su rjeđe pozvane na ovakve stvari nego muškarci.*

Unlike in the previous example, the focus is once again on women. A remarkable difference in this version lies in the comparative form of the adjective. The original sentence contains a construction *not as often as*, which could be interpreted as *more rarely*. The means of



the translation are purely stylistic rather than grammatical or semantic. This occurrence is also associated with information packaging (as well as the previous translation). Interestingly, as opposed to the previous sentence, this one is completely passive, and is, in fact, the closest to the translation of the sentence *Women are more rarely invited to these things than men* (*be-passive*). However, apart from this, there are no major distinctive traits of *get-passive* illustrated through this example, that haven't already been examined. So, this variation, just like the previous one, served more as an insight into the general practice of translating passive sentences and/or comparative sentences from English to Croatian.

*h) Žene ne budu pozvane na ovakve stvari kao muškarci.*

This sentence is specific, in terms of an insertion of a separate construction in Croatian which doesn't occur in English. Namely, it is what is called the Second Future tense in Croatian. It appears that the construction with *get-passive* is translated into Croatian as the Second Future tense (*budu*). However, in Croatian, this doesn't denote true future time, but rather a tendency or an action that takes place often enough to be considered habitual. It is also discernible that in this construction in Croatian the variation *budu pozvane* ('get invited'), as opposed to *su pozvane* ('are invited') denotes that something takes place recurrently. Furthermore, this translation also uses a regular passive form, as in the previous example and examples (g) and example (a). As in some of the previous examples (particularly (a), (b), (c), (d), and (e)) the adjective in the comparative (*as often as*) is not translated, as it can be inferred from the context. However, if the context is not known to the reader, this can be confusing.

*i) Žene nisu pozivane na ovakve stvari kao muškarci.*

At first glance, it might seem as if this translation is the same as translation (a). Both of them focus on women and contain regular passive voice. However, it can be discerned that their main (and only) difference is that in this example, the passive verb (participle form) *pozivane* is perceived as still in the process (thus the imperfective form of the verb is used), while in example (a), the verb *pozvane* is perfective, and can therefore be interpreted as a more stative and adjective-like form.

*j) Žene ne bivaju pozvanima na ovakve stvari kao muškarci.*

This was the rarest translation of them all, and evidently sounds as stylistically determined. It is quite similar to sentence (a), but the first part of the sentence is different, notably in the form of the verb *to be*. The verb *bivaju* denotes a regular experience of women not being invited to certain occasions in comparison with men. As opposed to sentence (a) containing the verb phrase *nisu pozvane* ('are not invited'), the construction in this sentence *ne bivaju pozvane* ('don't get invited') marks a gradual development of the action or its progress.

Overall, this sentence provided the largest number of variations of Croatian equivalents. They were mostly in passive form (as it would also occur in the *be*-passive constructions), however, in some of them the students translated the *get*-passive construction as a pseudo-reflexive *se* as it denotes the agency and responsibility of the subject referent. The students got mostly confused by different ways to translate the participle *invited* (*nisu pozvane*, *nisu pozivane*, *ne bivaju pozvanima*) because of the variety in the conceptualization of this action.

**3. "Liz, don't you think there's something suspicious about this guy's ringing up right away to ask if we got chosen for the show?"**

(Source: Leslie Carroll, Reality Check. Ballantine, 2003; <https://www.thoughtco.com/get-passive-grammar-1690898>)

This sentence provided less variation than the previous one. As it was quite long, I underlined the part of the sentence on which they should focus the most (which I am going to examine). Also, in this analysis, I didn't observe the overall translation of the sentence, as it is beyond the scope of my thesis, but rather the specific part containing the *get*-passive. In other words, if someone translated the first part of the sentence in a specific way, I didn't examine why it would be so. Furthermore, in the analysis *per* each translation below, I noted only the underlined part, the rest only served as context, but did not determine the way the sentence was analyzed. Ultimately, I realized that the result would be the same if I had put only the second part of the sentence in the questionnaire. Overall, there were only a few participants who didn't provide an answer or wrote 'I don't know'.

a) *...jesmo li izabrani za show?*

In the English sentence, the connotation would be ostensibly different if *get chosen* (a process with a result) was replaced by *be chosen* (a state of an entity). However, in the Croatian passive form, the dynamic quality of the action is determined by the verb. This can be seen in this particular example, which the majority of participants wrote down. *Got chosen* is translated as *izabrani* ('chosen'). The same translation would probably have been provided if the original sentence in English was *to ask if we were chosen for the show?*. In other words, the construction in the equivalent sentence in Croatian rather focuses on the state of being chosen (as an adjective), which refers to the present time. To sum up, in this particular example, the students mostly focused on the state of being chosen.

b) *...jesmo li bile odabrane?*

The difference between this variation and the previous is in the use of the auxiliary verb *to be* (past form) preceding the past participle (*bile odabrane*). This denotes that the action took place in the past, but the result of it is still existent and is relevant for the present, which is one of the main tenets of *get-passive*. However, the auxiliary verb in the past *bile* can also denote an inchoative followed by an adjectival passive. As opposed to the previous version of the translation, this one particularly focuses on the fact that the action with an effect on the patient was undertaken by somebody.

c) *...jesu li nas izabrali?*

This version of the translation can be paralleled to the translations (b) and (c) in the second sentence (*Women don't get invited to these things as often as men. - Žene ne zovu/pozivaju na ovakve stvari kao muškarce.*). To be exact, both sentences are active and there is an implication of a third person (agent) doing the action. In other words, as in the translations of the second sentence, a generic third-person plural takes place and marks an action. As in the previous example containing this phenomenon, the pronoun is not explicitly stated but is marked in the inflection of the verbs *jesu* and *izabrali*. *Nas* ('us') is a direct object, i.e. the patient, which would be externalized in the passive sentence (as in (a) and (b)), and the subject is the generic third-person plural. This translation wouldn't be as accurate if the original sentence contained *be-passive* instead of *get-passive*, due to not-so-emphasized agency.

d) ... *jesmo li dobile ulogu?*

This translation is problematic for the same reasons as translation (f) of the second sentence (*Women don't get invited to these things as often as men. - Muškarce se češće poziva na ovakve stvari nego žene*). The provided translation is formally quite different from the original, but due to the semantic and pragmatic aspects, it is acceptable as a translation. In this sentence, the syntactic layout is altered, due to the the nature of language (Croatian doesn't utilize passives as much as English in general). Nonetheless, a very significant occurrence can be discussed in this particular example. Namely, in section 2.3.1 of the theoretical framework of my thesis, different uses of *get* as a lexical verb have been analyzed. In this particular case, the participants recognized the use of *get* as an equivalent to *obtain*. Also, this would be the most direct translation of the phrase *to get a part*.

Even though this sentence provided fewer varieties of translation in comparison with the previous ones, all the examples are significant in their own way, similarly as in sentences 5 and 6. So, although there wasn't a large number of different translations, the variations reflected the participants' awareness of this passive construction. From each of them, some properties of *get*-passive could be examined. Notably, the translations of this sentence are adjectival passive, verbal passive, active with a generic pronoun, and the lexical use of the verb *get*.

#### **4. *She managed to get transferred.***

(Author's example based on grammars)

Just like the second sentence, this one provided a wide range of translations, and some of them are different in certain minor details. Only a few students left this sentence unanswered or wrote 'I don't know'. Essentially, the participants didn't have many problems with this sentence and it was unambiguous. The sentence contains a verb phrase with a catenative verb (*manage*), so it combines different properties of *get* both as a lexical and a catenative verb.

a) *Uspjela se prebaciti.*

As in the previous cases, this translation contains a reflexive construction, which denotes the subject's effort and responsibility. In other words, this sentence provides an interpretation that she managed to jump to a higher position due to something she had done and worked for. This is the most accurate use of a reflexive as an alternative to *get*-passive. In the first sentence, it was used with an inanimate subject. As it denotes the responsibility of the subject referent, it sounds less natural and common in combination with inanimate entities. In the second sentence it can be inferred from the context that the subject (*women*) is not truly in the control of the action, so it was not the most suitable equivalent. However, in this case, the subject is animate, and it can be inferred that one has a considerable role in being given a higher position at work. Here the importance of the subject's responsibility is marked by the context, and also the verbs. In chapter 2.3., a hindrance specialization has been pointed out as well, which may be connected to this particular example.

b) *Uspjela je biti prebačena.*

This sentence translates the *get*-passive construction in the same way as *be*-passive (*biti prebačena*). However, the active voice of *uspjela* 'managed' indicates the agency of the subject referent, which would otherwise lack, especially in Croatian which doesn't have two variations of passive (*get*-passive and *be*-passive), so the only interpretation of the passive is that the patient undergoes an action or its effect. The agency and responsibility can't be rendered as in *get*-passive.

c) *Uspjela je dobiti prebačaj.*

Similar to example (d) of the fourth sentence (...*if we got chosen for the show*), in this case the participants translated the verb *get* as a lexical verb with the meaning *obtain* or *receive*. Therefore, the sentence is active and contains a catenative verb *manage* combined with the verb *get*. It has been elaborated in the theoretical framework that there are some verbs in English, that are active in form, but passive in meaning (*get* or *receive*).

d) *Uspjela je da je premjeste.*

This version of the translation was specific as the verb phrase was followed by a clause rather than a complement. This sentence appears much more colloquial than the original English one and the previous versions of translations. This sentence also implies an external agent (*they*) who takes an action that has an effect on the patient. Interestingly, the matrix clause is active, and denotes the responsibility of the subject, even though it implies a different agent.

e) *Osigurala je premještaj.*

This version of the translation is a more indirect equivalent. This would be the most exact translation of *She ensured a promotion*. Syntactically the sentence is different, but the pragmatic aspects remain the same. However, the emphasis is also different. In the original sentence, the emphasis is on the effort, whereas in this case the effort is only inferred. The verb *managed* is not translated literally, while the verb phrase *get promoted* is translated as a noun (*premještaj* 'transfer'). Ultimately, the sentence indicates the responsibility of the situation, which is one of the main concerns of *get-passive*, but also provides an insight into general practices of translating from English to Croatian.

f) *Prebacili su je.*

This example also illustrates a more indirect approach to translation. However, it also serves as an indicator of the agency of an implied agent (*they*), marked by the auxiliary verb. The whole sentence in English is perceived as dynamic, and, in fact, the matrix clause is also active. Therefore, it doesn't come as a surprise that the participants recognized this aspect and translated the sentence as fully active. However, the Croatian equivalent written by the participants doesn't convey any information of the relationship between the object/patient (who was transferred) and the act of being transferred. It can't be discerned whether the patient was responsible for the action, or merely underwent the action (or was affected by it) taken by someone else. Therefore, it can be stated that this version of the translation lacks some important information that could be discerned in the original English example.

g) *Uspjela je u tome da bude prebačena.*

This sentence is fairly similar to version (d), because it also consists of the verb *uspjela* 'manage, succeed' in the matrix clause, and an embedded clause instead of a complement. The difference between this sentence and sentence (d) is that the former contains the verb phrase *bude prebačena* ('be transferred') in passive, rather than active as in example (d). Furthermore, in example (d) an external agent is implied, whereas in the case of (g) the subject is interpreted as being responsible, mostly because of the verb *manage*, but also because the overall construction denotes completion of an action. This sentence can be analyzed as *She managed to be transferred*, while sentence (d) can be analyzed as *She managed to be affected by the act of transfer*. In other words, in this case, the act done by the agent (or agents) is not emphasized as in (d).

*h) Riješila je da bude prebačena.*

This was a rather specific version of the translation, and it occurred only once. The use of this sentence would be quite restricted as opposed to the use of the verb *uspjela* 'managed'. The sentence is, in terms of syntax, similar to the previous one, but the main verb is more limited in meaning. Namely, *riješiti* 'decide, determine' can't be used in as many contexts as *uspjeti* 'manage, succeed', because it implies that there is an issue that 'she had to solve, and she managed to do it'. In other words, an even higher degree of hindrance can be discerned in this case.

*i) Uspio joj je prebačaj.*

Nominalizations are quite common in Croatian, especially in standard language, yet the sentence doesn't conform to the norms of standard language but rather reflects daily use. In this sentence, there is only one verb phrase, as the equivalent of *get transferred* was simply nominalized. This sentence is a free translation, as it focuses on the meaning in the target language. It is discernible that in English the literal equivalent of this sentence would sound unnatural due to the nature of the verb (e.g. the verbs *manage* or *succeed* are catenative verbs and require another verb as part of the phrase).

It has been noted that this sentence provided various options of translation, but the most important aspect was to retain the responsibility of the subject (marked by the active verb

*managed*) and the involvement of the agent (marked by the semantic properties of the verb phrase *get transferred*). Also, the reason why there were so many options of translation was the construction of the verb phrase, which combined an active and a passive (*managed + to get transferred*).

#### **5. Our car was stolen last night.**

(Source information: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/british-grammar/get-passive>)

This sentence examined how the students perceived a sentence containing *be*-passive, and a dynamic activity. I chose the sentence with *be*-passive on purpose so as to gather different answers in terms of the semantic aspects of the sentence. A *be*-passive construction has already been presented in the first example, however as opposed to the past participle *broken*, which can have adjectival and verbal interpretation, *stolen* is much more likely to be understood as a verbal form, and therefore be classified as a verbal passive, with an implied agent.

##### *a) Naš auto je ukraden sinoć.*

The majority of participants wrote this as an equivalent to the sentence in English. The fact that the sentence only consisted of a subject and a verb (passive construction) resulted in fewer variations than in the previous sentence. The sentence is translated literally, and the translation sounds natural. Also, the reason why so many participants used a passive equivalent in translation is due to the properties of *be*-passive that are more likely to be translated as passive (in Croatian) than an active counterpart or a medial passive. The sentence marks the current state of an entity that has been affected by an action taking place in the past (*last night* 'sinoć'). The verb *steal* is dynamic, and the emphasis of the sentence was placed on the patient rather than the agent. Also, the sentence could be easily converted into active, but the agents are only implied (there is no *by*-adjunct).

##### *b) Sinoć su nam ukrali auto.*

This was the second most commonly written translation. It is discernible that, in this case, the participants recognized the dynamic quality of the verb, and therefore assigned an



importance to the action. The translated sentence was transferred into an active voice, which is possible only with verbal passives. However, it can be noted that in the first sentence (*My favorite cup was broken*), which had the same syntactic pattern, no one translated the sentence as active, which might be either due to the properties of the verb or to their higher focus (the translations by participants might have been more literal at the beginning, as they paid more attention to the structure). Another critical feature of this translation is inserting a third-person plural, which has already been noted in previous examples containing *get*-passive. This is a general reference to unknown, or unspecified, agents. This could also be replaced with *netko* 'someone', as illustrated in example (d).

c) *Sinoć nam je auto bio ukraden.*

This version of translation is fairly similar to version (a), but the only difference is in the tense of the verb phrase. This is, indeed, the most accurate and literal translation of the sentence, as in the original (in English), the verb phrase is in the past simple (*bio ukraden* 'was stolen'). Since the action has an effect on the present, most of the participants wrote the sentence in the present tense, but in this case, they might have been influenced by the adverbial *last night* 'sinoć'. It can be stated that in this case, the participants focused on the state that resulted from an action (which is a characteristic not only of *get*-passive but of dynamic passives in general, which more frequently but not exclusively occur as *get*-passives, as explained in chapter 2.2). They also found the information that it took place in the past quite important, as it was marked by an adverbial of time.

d) *Netko nam je ukrao auto sinoć.*

This translation is particularly similar to version (b), but with one noteworthy difference: the agent. Just like sentence (b), this translation consists of a verb phrase in active voice, which might be due to the semantic aspects, particularly the agency of the verb *steal*, and also due to the nature of the target language. In this case, as well, the main point was to retain the same meaning rather than to focus on syntax, as it is a unique system inherent to a language. Furthermore, it can be discerned that, as opposed to sentence (b), where there was a generic third-person plural (marked by the auxiliary verb and the suffix of the main verb), the agent in

this sentence is an unknown agent marked by an indefinite pronoun *netko* 'someone'. Unlike using generic third-person plural, this can indicate that the agent is still somewhat important, but their identity is unknown, due to certain reasons.

Overall, the number of participants who converted this sentence into active was quite high, which I would assign to the dynamic properties of the verb. It can be compared to the first sentence, which contained a pseudo-reflexive (*se razbila*) rather than a generic pronoun.

#### **6. *The trees in the garden got damaged in the wind.***

(Source information: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/british-grammar/get-passive>)

This sentence was the last in the second part of the questionnaire, and I deliberately put it after a *be*-passive, to see if there would be any remarkable difference in terms of the verb phrase. What both sentences have in common is the fact that the subject referent is inanimate. However, this one has additional information on the circumstances. Overall, the results (the translations to Croatian) have been classified into four different groups, and most of them could serve as evidence supporting the theories presented in the theoretical framework.

##### *a) Vjetar je oštetió drveće.*

This was the most frequent translation in the questionnaire, which was not surprising due to the use of *get*-passive in the original sentence. By this time the students might have figured out the difference between the two constructions, after having been exposed to it through different tasks examining the two types of passive verb phrases. Particularly, the sentence is converted into active voice, and it only consists of a subject, verb, and (direct) object. The subject (also the agent) of this variation is *the wind*. In the original sentence *The trees in the garden got damaged in the wind*, *in the wind* is an adverbial phrase that has the function of providing additional information about the event. Precisely, what the subject is in this sentence, indicates the circumstances under which the damage happened, and contributes to the overall context. Even though in *get*-passive the agent is usually considered to be animate (as also noted by participants in the third sentence of Task 1), and subject responsibility or control can't be applied in this case, the participants who translated the sentence this way recognized the agency in the adverbial phrase *in the wind*. However, this only serves as context for the event, it can't be reliably stated

that the wind did the damage. There could also be an unknown animate (human) agent who did the damage in the wind. Still, due to the given context and the overall sentence, this interpretation is semantically accurate.

b) *Drveće je oštećeno zbog vjetra.*

This translation kept the sentence in passive voice, and it is thus syntactically quite similar to the original sentence. The only part of the sentence that has been changed (but still consistent in terms of context) is the adverbial phrase. The original *in the wind* ('na vjetru') has been translated as *because of the wind* ('zbog vjetra'), so, in this case, it serves as a causal adverbial phrase, denoting the cause of the action. It can be concluded that the wind is the source of the action.

c) *Drveće/Stabla se oštetilo u vjetru.*

In this translation, the participants used a reflexive construction in order to assign an action to the subject. It has been noted that this was a common way to translate *get*-passive constructions into Croatian, but the reason why this translation is only in the third place is that the subject is animate, and thus can't be assigned a responsibility, unlike the fourth sentence, where it was translated in this way by the majority of the participants (*She managed to get transferred – Uspjela se prebaciti*). Since the subject which was the patient, became also the agent through the insertion of the reflexive pronoun *se*, the sentence automatically acquired an active connotation.

d) *Drveće je ostalo oštećeno od vjetra.*

This translation was the rarest and can be compared to example (c) in the fourth sentence. However, in this case, *get* is perceived as a copular verb 'become to be damaged' (whereas in the fourth sentence, it was perceived as an alternative expression to *obtain*). Thus, the inchoative property of the verb *get* elaborated in chapter 2.3. can also be discerned in this case. However, the adverbial phrase is changed in this case, but it still denotes the source of the action.

Overall, the translations mostly involved fronting the source of the action (*wind*), and due to the inanimacy of the elements, the sentence was also often kept in the passive. Evidently, as opposed to the previous sentence, this case shows that considerable emphasis was placed on the action.

To sum up, the translations of passives in this part of the questionnaire could be grouped into three major categories (according to the answers provided).

- a) Retaining the passive form (more likely to occur with *be*-passive)
- b) Translating the sentence as active with an implied agent or a generic pronoun
- c) Translating the sentence as an active with a reflexive pronoun which denotes the responsibility (more likely to occur with *get*-passive)

### **Task 3**

This part of the questionnaire was the shortest and essentially examined the accuracy of the passives and the compatibility of passive voice with certain verbs. In other words, in this part, the participants had to decide whether the passive construction sounded natural (and also correct or incorrect). The task consisted of five sentences, in which the passive was used with various types of verbs (transitive, intransitive, dynamic, stative). Some sentences were ambiguous on purpose. The following sentences are all modified examples from BNC and COCA.

#### **1. *My dog was slept all day.***

This sentence tested whether first-year students would realize that the passive can't be used with intransitive verbs, as pointed out in 2.1. This sentence was evidently ungrammatical, therefore 100% of students (104 out of 104) labeled it as incorrect.

#### **2. *The speaker got believed.***

This sentence is specific, as the verb *believe* is a verb of cognition that can hardly be used with *get*-passive. In addition, it is also a stative verb (there is no process going on) rather than dynamic, and therefore less likely to be used with *get*-passive. 94 % of participants claimed that it was incorrect, which equals 98 of them. Four out of the remaining six claimed it was correct, which indicates that in some cases the sentence sounds right (probably depending on the context), while two participants didn't provide an answer.

### **3. *The documents got signed.***

This sentence turned out to be ambiguous, probably because the students perceived the form *signed* as not being connected to a process. Thus, 6% of participants (5 of them) might have considered that there couldn't be a starting and an endpoint of an action and thus marked it as incorrect. However, *sign* denotes an activity that takes place and has an effect on the subject, so the majority, 94% stated that the sentence is correct.

### **4. *The mail gets delivered every day.***

In this case, the answers were debatable, too. It would be more natural to use *be*-passive with this verb, as the action doesn't mark an endpoint of an activity, but denotes a dynamic activity instead. Thus 95% (99 out of 104) of students marked the sentence as correct, and the remaining 4% as incorrect. Only one student didn't provide an answer. Some of the participants might have been confused by the adverbial of time, which indicates that an action is recurring.

### **5. *The child was seated on the chair.***

This sentence was correct, as it might have been interpreted as 'make someone sit', or more precisely 'place a child on the chair' by most of the students. Furthermore, it is also more common with *be*-passives, especially because the subject doesn't have responsibility for the action. Most of the students, 95% (99 out of 104) stated that the sentence was correct, while the remaining 4% might have gotten confused with the resemblance to the verb *sit*, and therefore might have interpreted the sentence as a variation of 'The child was sitting on the chair'. Again, only 1 student didn't provide an answer.

### 3.5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The overall results of my research conducted with first-year students have proven that most of the theories that have been presented in the theoretical part of this thesis were discernible in practice. Some of them, such as the use of *get*-passive with dynamic verbs, responsibility of the subject, adversity, and emphasis on the agency (involvement of the implied agent) were especially evident in the answers of the participants. The part of the first task when the students had to show which part of the sentence sounded more natural provided the most consistent answers. The second task served as a practical reflection on how the main tenets of *get*-passives affected the translation, and different versions of translations for particular sentences gave a comprehensive insight into the pragmatic and semantic nature of the *get*-passive and *be*-passive constructions. Also, the students who translated a passive sentence in English as an active one in Croatian, often answered in Task 1 that the difference between the two sentences was either the responsibility of the subject or the dichotomy of dynamic and stative verbs. To sum up, the most frequent difference observed by the students was precisely the use of *get*-passives with actions and *be*-passives with states, and the rarest observed difference was the one in registers, as it didn't change the semantic aspects of the sentences in question.

### 4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be stated that *get*-passives simultaneously belong to multiple categories due to the numerous features they obtain. Precisely, this construction is associated with various other grammatical constructions such as reflexives, causatives, inchoatives, and ultimately, *get* as a lexical verb. Moreover, throughout the grammars *get*-passives are not only viewed as passives, and, in fact, there are different theories of what the construction is derived from. Precisely, as noted through the chapters, *get*-passive is a fairly recent construction, which has developed from inchoative or reflexive causative. The construction could, therefore, be observed as a passive through comparison with *be*-passives, as is the case in this thesis. To sum up, the whole thesis underlined a stark contrast between *be*-passive, based on the following tenets: a) *get* passive is used with dynamic verbs rather than stative (i.e. it has a more verbal

intepretation) as opposed to be-passives, b) get passive is often associated with positive or negative interpretation (as well as the subject's involvement) rather than neutral, which is usually connected with be-passive, c) get passive also might indicate the responsibility of the subject referent (i.e. subject control), which can be connected to the fact that many students wrote that they feel that the variation with be-passive (in Task 1), is more likely to be interpreted as passive, than the variation with get-passive, which was often translated either as a regular active or (more often) a sentence with a pseudo-reflexive pronoun, d) get-passive also puts an emphasis on a result that an action had on a certain subject referent (according to the research this was further emphasized by the connection with animate source of an action), and this notion has often been associated with causatives, e) as mentioned previously, get-passive is often connected to a subjective viewpoint and focus which affects the overall interpretation of the relationship between the arguments and the action taking place. Also, even though both get and be are copular and catenative verbs, get is not an auxiliary verb. It should be pointed out that the lexical meaning of the verb (obtain, possess, become, reach, buy, collect, receive, succeed etc), so it has an influence on the grammaticalization of the verb, that turned into a functional when combined with another lexical verb. Thus, to gain a comprehensible insight into the difference between the two types of passives contrasted here, a difference between the two catenative verbs should be outlined. Moreover, what can also serve as an indicator of grammaticalization of this construction is the diachronic approach which proposed two main theories: get passive emerged either from an inchoative 'have' followed by a predicative adjective or from a reflexive causative. With regard to diachronic approach it should also be pointed out that a rise in get-passive has occurred in the last century.

However, it should be noted that these chapters and the analysis of *get*-passive from various approaches open up a wide array of questions. Moreover, the results of the questionnaires showcased that the theories proposed in grammar books and papers are definitely mirrored in practice and reinforced my theoretical framework. Ultimately, the construction of *get*-passive is a fertile ground to investigate from a cross-linguistic perspective.





## APPENDIX 1

### PASSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS IN ENGLISH

#### ZADATAK 1/ TASK 1

UPUTE: Pročitajte pažljivo sljedeće parove rečenica, te odgovorite na pitanja ispod. Razlike možete **opisati** svojim riječima ili tako da obje rečenice **prevedete** na hrvatski jezik.

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the following pairs of sentences, and answer the questions below. You can **describe** the differences in your own words or by **translating** both sentences into Croatian.

1.

a) Well I, I worked in Johnny Walkers, and when I worked in there at that time, **when you get married you had to leave, that was their policy.**

b) Well I, I worked in Johnny Walkers, and when I worked in there at that time, **when you are married you had to leave, that was their policy.**

Koja vam rečenica zvuči prirodnije?

Which sentence sounds more natural to you?

Is the meaning of the sentences the same? Explain your answer.

Je li značenje dviju rečenica isto? Obrazloži svoj odgovor.

2.

a) **Vanessa got promoted to program director.**

b) **Vanessa was promoted to program director.**

Koja vam rečenica zvuči prirodnije?

Which sentence sounds more natural to you?

Is the meaning of the sentences the same? Explain your answer.

Je li značenje dviju rečenica isto? Obrazloži svoj odgovor.

3.

**a) The whole town got snowed in.**

**b) The whole town was snowed in.**

Koja vam rečenica zvuči prirodnije?

Which sentence sounds more natural to you?

Is the meaning of the sentences the same? Explain your answer.

Je li značenje dviju rečenica isto? Obrazloži svoj odgovor.

4.

**a) My letter got published.**

**b) My letter was published.**

Koja vam rečenica zvuči prirodnije?

Which sentence sounds more natural to you?

Is the meaning of the sentences the same? Explain your answer.

Je li značenje dviju rečenica isto? Obrazloži svoj odgovor

5.

**a) Go and get checked out at the medical centre.**

**b) Go and be checked out at the medical centre.**

Koja vam rečenica zvuči prirodnije?

Which sentence sounds more natural to you?

Is the meaning of the sentences the same? Explain your answer.

Je li značenje dviju rečenica isto? Obrazloži svoj odgovor

6.

a) I have to get dressed before eight o'clock

b) I have to be dressed before eight o'clock

Koja vam rečenica zvuči prirodnije?

Which sentence sounds more natural to you?

Is the meaning of the sentences the same? Explain your answer.

Je li značenje dviju rečenica isto? Obrazloži svoj odgovor

### ZADATAK 2/ TASK 2 (Only for Croatian students)

UPUTE: Pročitajte rečenicu i napišite prijevod

1. My favourite cup was broken.
2. Women don't get invited to these things as often as men.
3. "Liz, don't you think there's something suspicious about this guy's ringing up right away to ask if we got chosen for the show?"
4. She managed to get transferred.
5. Our car was stolen last night.
6. The trees in the garden got damaged in the wind.

### ZADATAK 3/ TASK 3

UPUTE: Pročitajte rečenice i zaokružite svoj odgovor/ Read the sentences and circle your answer

1. My dog was slept all day. A) correct B) incorrect
2. The speaker got believed. A) correct B) incorrect
3. The documents got signed. A) correct B) incorrect
4. The mail gets delivered every day. A) correct B) incorrect
5. The child was seated on the chair. A) correct B) incorrect

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## BIOGRAPHY

Sofija Žagar was born on 15<sup>th</sup> November 1997 in Zagreb. She graduated from high school Pazinski Kolegij Klasična Gimnazija in 2016.

In 2016 she started her undergraduate studies in English Language and Literature and Art History at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Rijeka, where she was an active member of English Language and Literature and Art History student organizations, and helped in organizing conferences, workshops and projects. She completed her undergraduate studies in 2020, when she enrolled in Master studies in English Language and Literature and Art History at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb, which she finished in 2024, by defending theses under the supervision of prof. Irena Zovko Dinković, PhD and prof. Maja Zeman, PhD.

In 2022, she spent a semester at the University of Graz (Interamerican studies). She finds great pleasure in both of her studies (TEFL teaching, translating, linguistics and guiding museum tours).

She has a B2 certificate in German, and fluently speaks Hungarian.