Ability/possibility and stativity: Where is voice?

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Abstract
This paper focuses on adjectival ability/possibility -tos participles in Greek. It is observed that they come from stative structures. Apart from stativity and modality, it is noted that they have more common properties with verbal dispositional Middle voice, such as genericity, arguments’ order, demotion of the agent and emphasis on the dispositional properties of the grammatical subject. Thus, it is suggested that they contain in their structure a Middle voice head, which licenses a generic agent with no control of the action, merged with a Generic operator. Crosslinguistic evidence confirms that ability/possibility meaning arises from stative structures and that ability/possibility structures share the same properties with dispositional Middle.

Keywords: ability, possibility, stativity, dispositional Middle voice, Generic operator, adjectival participles

1. Introduction
Ability/possibility and stative structures are often realized crosslinguistically through the same morpheme. It has been supported that the appearance of the abilitative meaning is determined by the grammatical aspect (Bhatt 2006) or the lexical aspect of the predicate (Travis 2005a, b). Abilitative structures are also supposed to be derived from Voice structures, Passive or Middle (Narrog 2012). In this paper, Greek data provide evidence that abilitative structures in the adjectival domain are stative structures with the same semantic and syntactic properties of Middle Voice, and especially the dispositional Middle, as it is described by Lekakou (2005)1. More specifically, it is shown that abilitative adjectival participles are dispositional generics, like dispositional Middle voice (Lekakou 2005), thus they include a Generic operator in their structure. Furthermore, they always include an agent on the syntactic level, either present or implied, as opposed to stative structures, which do not license

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1 Abilitative meaning in the verbal domain is not discussed in this paper but it is analyzed in Lekakou’s work (2005) on the semantics level regarding dispositional Middle. Lekakou (2005) supports the view that Middle voice has different semantic properties from Passive voice but they share the same structure. In this paper, I adopt Lekakou’s proposal about the semantic properties of dispositional Middle voice, but, contrary to Lekakou, I assume that Middle and Passive voice have distinct syntactic properties.
agentive phrases or adjuncts denoting agents. According to Distributed Morphology, the syntactic theory followed in this paper, the existence of agent indicates that there is a Voice head in the ability/possibility adjectival participles’ structure. Crosslinguistic evidence confirms that ability/possibility is often related to Middle voice.

The paper is structured as follows:

In part 2, theories that link ability/possibility meaning to aspect and voice are presented. In part 3, it is supported that Greek ability -tos adjectival participles have undefined aspect, express genericity and agentivity. In part 4, the common properties of Greek ability -tos adjectival participles and dispositional Middle are presented and it is suggested that the structure of ability -tos adjectival participles contains a Middle voice head merged with a Generic operator. In part 5, crosslinguistic data confirm the linkage between ability and stative structures and present evidence for the common properties between ability structures and dispositional Middle.

2. Ability/possibility, stativity and voice

Ability/possibility is related to both voice and aspect.

According to Narrog (2012), ability/possibility meaning derives from two main categories of voice constructions, Passive, which includes stative, or Middle, which includes spontaneous and reflexive. For example, spontaneous (1a) (Naylor 2005) and stative (2a) (Dubinsky & Simango 1996) constructions usually express ability/possibility (1b, 2b):

(1) na[na.kí.ta]
(1a) “HAPPENED to see”
(1b) “was able to see” (Tagalog language)

(2) Nyemba zi-na-li zo-phik-ika
Beans AGR-PAST-be AGR-cook-IK
(2a) “Beans were cooked.”
(2b) “Beans were cookable.” (Chichewa language)

Apart from voice, modality is, also, related to aspect, grammatical or lexical. Bhatt (2006) proposes that generic contexts produce ability/possibility reading, a fact which is clearly attested in languages with an imperfective/perfective distinction, as in Modern Greek (Bhatt 2006) (3):
In (3a) the perfective form produces the actuality reading, while the modal (ability/possibility) reading arises when be able combines with imperfective aspect and, in this case, no actuality entailment is present (i.e. no actualization of the ability/possibility is asserted) (3b). Bhatt, also, points out that in languages where there is no perfective-imperfective distinction, as in English (4), ability/possibility meaning arises when no actual event is denoted (5b):

(4) John was able to eat five apples in an hour.

(5a) Yesterday, John was able to eat five apples in an hour. (past episodic)

(5b) In those days, John was able to eat five apples in an hour. (past generic)

According to Bhatt, in both types of languages, with and without perfective-imperfective distinction, ability/possibility structures should contain a generic operator which is responsible for the modality. Travis (2005a, b, 2010) points out that Bhatt’s proposal works well for languages where the ability/possibility reading comes from additional grammatical aspect, but not for other languages where the ability/possibility reading comes from the lexical aspect of the root. She argues that the ability/possibility reading comes about in particular contexts, determined, sometimes by grammatical aspect, as Bhatt suggests, but sometimes also by the nature of the root itself. Thus, she suggests that in some languages ability/possibility reading is available in unbounded situations, and that it is parasitic on the achievement reading.

Regarding adjectival participles in Greek, I propose that they are not related to a specific aspect, either grammatical or lexical, but ability/possibility meaning arises when no actuality reading is present, thus, they should contain a generic operator, as in English.
3. Ability/possibility adjectival participles in Greek

There are three major types of adjectival participles in Greek (Anagnostopoulou 2003; Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 2008; Samioti 2015; those which express a state resulting from a prior event and are realised through the stative morpheme -\textit{menos}\(^2\) (6) and those which are realised through the stative morpheme -\textit{tos} and express either pure state (7) or ability/possibility (8):

(6) agapi-menos loved
(7) agapi-tos loved
(8) agapi-tos lovable

Stative -\textit{tos} adjectival participles lack event implications and they denote, what has been called by Markantonatou et al. (1996), “a characteristic state”. Sometimes, the same -\textit{tos} participle is ambiguous between characteristic state (7) and ability/possibility (8).

3.1 Aspect in ability/possibility -\textit{tos} participles

Contrary to -\textit{menos} morpheme, which is always attached to perfective aspect, -\textit{tos} morpheme does not combine with a specific grammatical aspect (Samioti 2015). More specifically, -\textit{tos} morpheme combines with perfective (9), as well as with imperfective aspect (10), and, sometimes, grammatical aspect is not easily specified, as there are cases of double formations (11):

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<td>or-o</td>
<td>see (Ancient Greek)</td>
<td>ora-tos</td>
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<td>vion-o</td>
<td>live something</td>
<td>vio-tos</td>
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<td>(11)</td>
<td>tragud-o</td>
<td>sing</td>
<td>tragud-istos - tragud-itos</td>
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<td>kent-o</td>
<td>embroider</td>
<td>kent-istos - kent-itos</td>
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<td></td>
<td>tiganiz-o</td>
<td>fry</td>
<td>tigan-istos - tigan-itos</td>
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\(^2\) Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou (2008) state that -\textit{men-} could be regarded to be a Voice marker (not a stativizer), as this affix was used in Classical Greek for the formation of the middle and passive participle. However, -\textit{men-} cannot be argued to spell-out agentive voice with -\textit{menos} participles which do not license agentive prepositional phrases (target state participles). Moreover, internally caused verbs that never combine with Voice can form -\textit{menos} participles.
busul-o crawl busul-istos - busul-itos crawling

-tos morpheme, also, creates nominals, which are incompatible with grammatical aspect (12):

(12) pagot-o ice-cream
    ifan-to web
    spart-o ulex
    zaharot-o sweet

Furthermore, -tos morpheme attaches freely to verbal bases of any lexical aspect (according to Vendler’s classes 1957 and Dowty’s tests 1979) and ability/possibility -tos adjectival participles are formed by verbs that belong to any semantic class (as classified by Levin 1993). More specifically, they come from psych or cognitive verbs (13), change of state verbs (14), change of possession (15), measure or assessment (16), movement (17), verbs of perception (18) etc. (see Samioti 2015 for more details).

(13) a. latreftos adorable
    b. katanoitos perceivable

(14) dialitos dissolvable
(15) eksoflitos payable
(16) metritos countable
(17) kinitos movable
(18) oratos visible

Thus, characteristic state or ability/possibility -tos participles are not linked to a specific aspect; therefore, they are not differentiated from each other by either lexical or grammatical aspect.

Taking into account that -tos adjectival participles do not express specific grammatical or lexical aspect, but rather an undefined one (see Samioti 2015 for more details), I propose that ability/possibility meaning in tos adjectival participles is produced only in generic contexts, as Bhatt (2006) argues for English. More specifically, as application of the actuality test reveals, ability/possibility -tos participles do not refer to an actual event, thus they are generic (19, 20, 21a), contrary to characteristic state -tos participles (21b):

(19) I storia tou Petru ine pistefti ala den tin ehi pistepsi kanis akomi.
the story of Peter is believable but not it have believed no one yet
“Peter’s story is believable but nobody has believed in it yet.”

(20) Afto to asteri ine orato apo ti gi ala den to ehi di kanis akomi. 
this the star is visible from the earth but not it have seen no one yet
“This star is visible from earth but nobody has seen it yet.”

(21a) Ithele na ine katanoitos alla den ton katanoise kanis akomi. 
wanted to be understandable but not him understood no one yet
“He wanted to be understandable but no one understood him yet.”

(21b) I prosthesis tou itan katanoi *alla kanis den tis katanoise akomi. 
the intentions his were understood but no one not them understood yet
“His intentions were understood but no one understood them yet.”

Furthermore, ability/possibility -tos adjectival participles license an agent, which receives an arbitrary interpretation (22):

(22a) Afto to vivlio ine efkolodiavasto apo ta pedia/apo olus. 
this the book is easily-read by the children /by everyone
“This book is easily-read by children /by everyone”.

(22b) H tampela ine orati *apo ti Maria/apo tus pezus/apo olus. 
The sign is visible by the Mary/ by the pedestrians/by everyone
“The sign is visible by Mary/ by the pedestrians/by everyone.”

The arbitrary interpretation of the agent confirms the generic meaning of the abilitative participles. Since ability/possibility adjectival participles are generic, they should contain a Generic operator in their structure, as Bhatt (2006) suggests for English.

3.2 Agentivity in ability/possibility -tos participles

Apart from genericity, another property that differentiates stative -tos participles from ability/possibility -tos participles is agency. More specifically, ability/possibility -tos participles license agent which is realized through by-phrases (23a), manner adverbs\(^3\) (efkola) (24a) and instrumental phrases (25a), while characteristic state -tos participles do not license agent (23b-25b):

\(^3\) Actually, there are two types of manner adverbials: manner adverbs that modify the visible result such as schlampig ‘sloppily’, and manner adverbs that modify the initiator of the action such as vorsichtig ‘carefully’ (Anagnostopoulou 2003, Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 2008 for discussion).
The presence of agent indicates that there must be a Voice head in the structure of ability/possibility -tos adjectival participles. According to Alexiadou, Anagnostopoulou & Schäfer (2006) voice is responsible for the introduction of the external argument and bears features relating to agentivity, and manner. Different features of Voice are involved in the formation of causatives, passives and anticausatives. The presence of +/-agentive features is responsible for the licensing of agent and causer external arguments in active and passive constructions. Specifically, agentive Voice (Voice [+AG]) licenses agents (and instrumental PPs) and, if it is passive, the relevant thematic role is implicit in the structure. In the case of ability/possibility -tos adjectival participles I suggest that a Middle Voice head licenses the agent and not a Passive Voice head.

4. Ability/possibility adjectival participles and dispositional Middle Voice
Following Alexiadou & Doron (2012) and Alexiadou (2012), I propose that ability/possibility -tos adjectival participles should have a Middle Voice head in their
structure, as they possess the same properties with dispositional Middle. More specifically, according to Alexiadou & Doron (2012) and Alexiadou (2012), there are two non-active Voice heads in the syntax, a middle one and a passive one. These two non-active Voices are the morphological realization of two distinct syntactic voice heads, generating Middle and Passive clauses respectively. The Middle Voice head is crosslinguistically interpreted as anticausative or dispositional Middle with distinct interpretation from the Passive one.

Dispositional middle have specific semantic and syntactic characteristics, which are also attested in ability/possibility -tos adjectival structures. Semantically, dispositional Middle denotes modality (ability/possibility) (Fagan 1992) (26a), genericity (Dahl 1975; Keyser & Roeper 1984; Lekakou 2005, among others) (27), as it is shown by the ungrammaticality of phrases expressing specific event, and stativity (Ackema & Schoorlemmer 2005), since it shares properties with stative verbs (28), such as ungrammaticality of progressive (29a), of imperative (29b) or as a complement of perception verbs (29c):

(26a) “John runs 50 miles without ever stopping.”

means

(26b) “John can run 50 miles without ever stopping.”

(27) Yesterday, the mayor bribed easily, according to the newspaper.

(28a) * This bread is cutting easily.

(28b) * Cut easily, bread!

(28c) * I saw this bread cut easily.

(29a) * John is resembling Mary.

4 According to Alexiadou & Doron (2012) and Alexiadou (2012), while both the Middle Voice-head, $\mu$, and the Passive Voice-head, $\pi$, derive intransitive verbs, as they only allow the merge of the root’s argument into the derivation and prevent the realization of the external argument as a subject, they do so in different ways. The Middle-Voice head $\mu$ modifies the root by reclassifying it with respect to its requirement for an external argument. Moreover, the Middle Voice-head $\mu$ does not introduce its own argument and it does not require the participation of an external argument if the root is semantically transitive. However, depending on the root, it sometimes allows the verb’s external argument to be included in the derivation (as in the case of dispositional Middle), and sometimes to be identified with one of the internal arguments (as in the case of reflexives). The Passive Voice-head $\pi$, on the other hand, doesn’t modify the root; rather it introduces an external argument, or it requires the insertion of the head $v$ while preventing the actual syntactic insertion of the argument. Furthermore, the Passive distinguishes itself from the Middle Voice by always requiring the participation of an external argument, irrespective of the specification of the root. Thus, the Passive Voice-head is clearly distinguished from the Middle Voice head by introducing its own argument. This is an argument with independent reference, and it is not anaphoric to any other argument of the verb. In the case of both Voice heads, the external argument is a default agent, unless required by the root.
Syntactically, in dispositional Middle there is a specific arguments’ order, namely the grammatical object is promoted to the subject’s position (30), the presence of instrumental phrases (31), of modal adverbs, like easily (31, 32a, 32b), and of prepositional phrases denoting the agent through by (32a) or for (32b) phrase, depending on the language) (30):

(30) This book reads well.

(31) The window opens easily with a knife.

(32a) Afto to vivlio metafrazete efkola apo mikra pedia. (Greek)
     this the book translates easily by young children
     “This book is translated easily by young children.”

(32b) This poem translates easily for Peter.

Lekakou (2005) suggests that the specific arguments’ order is due to the fact that the understood object is ascribed a dispositional property (Fellbaum 1986; Iwata 1999; Dowty 2000; Lekakou 2005, among others), meaning that the promoted object is responsible for the action, as it is shown in (33, 34):

(33) This car drives well…
(33a) ... because the suspension is engineered well.
(33b) ?? ... because we’re driving on smooth pavement.

(34) The clothes wash with no trouble because...
(34a) ... they’re machine-washable.
(34b) * ... I have lots of time.

As Lekakou (2005) states, if the semantics of middles is essentially the ascription of a dispositional property to the otherwise internal argument, it follows that this argument will have to surface in syntactic subject position. Moreover, it follows that the Agent will be demoted: the dispositionality component of the middle interpretation requires that what occupies the subject position is the subject of the dispositional predicate.

The aforementioned properties of dispositional middle are attested in ability/possibility -tos adjectival participles, as well (Samioti 2015). Apart from the
generic meaning that was discussed in 2.1, -tos participles denote modality (ability/possibility) (35):

(35) I tabela ine orati.

the sign is visible

“The sign is visible (=can be seen)”

Furthermore, the understood object is ascribed a dispositional property. For example, in (36) the sign is visible not because the pedestrians exhibit any specific properties but because the properties of the sign are such that the pedestrians can see it, such as its position or its size.

(36) H tampela ine orati apo tus pezus/apo olus.

the sign is visible by the pedestrians/by everyone

“The sign is visible by the pedestrians/by everyone.”

Regarding the syntactic features, ability/possibility adjectival participles license easily adverbs (37), agentive prepositional phrases 5 (38a by phrases) / (38b for phrases), and instrumental phrases (39):

(37a) I istoria tu Petru ine efkola pistefti.

the story of Peter is easily believable

“Petre’s story is easily believable.”

(37b) Afto to asteri ine efkola orato.

this the star is easily visible

“This star is easily visible.”

(38a) To mathima ine efkola katanoito apo olus.

The lesson is easily perceived by everyone

The lesson is easily perceived by everyone.”

(38b) To mathima ine ekolonoito gia ta pedia.

the lesson is easily-understood for the children

“The lesson is easily understood by the children.”

(39) To aeroplano ine orato me kialia.

the airplane is visible with binoculars

“The airplane is visible with binoculars.”

5 For the exact semantics of for-phrases with ability/possibility adjectival participles see Samioti (2015).
The aforementioned semantic and syntactic similarities of ability/possibility -tos adjectival participles with dispositional Middle suggest the existence of a Middle Voice head combined with the Generic operator. The Generic operator in ability/possibility -tos adjectival participles should have the same properties as Lekakou (2005) suggests for the Generic operator for dispositional Middle in Greek. More specifically, Lekakou (2005) proposes that dispositional Middle sentences belong to the class of dispositional generics, meaning that they are subject-oriented, ‘in virtue of’ generalizations, and they employ a VP-level generic operator. Finally, ability/possibility adjectival -tos participles, being stative but with no specific aspect, should contain a stative Aspect head in their structure, expressed through the -t-morpheme.

Thus, the structure proposed for ability/possibility -tos adjectival participles is the following\(^6\) (40):

\[
(40) \quad \text{AspP} \\
\text{Asp}_\text{stative} \quad \text{Voice}_\text{μ} \text{P}^7 \\
\text{Voice}_\text{μ} \quad \text{PP (Agent)} \\
\text{GEN} \quad \text{vP} \\
\text{v(event)} \quad \text{Root}
\]

\[\text{[AspP[Asp}_{\text{stative}} \text{Voice}_\text{μ} \text{P} \text{[Voice}_\text{μ} \text{[GEN vP [v(event) Root]] PP}_{\text{Agent}}]]}\]

5. Crosslinguistic evidence

Differentiated from Narrog (2012), I suggest that, crosslinguistically, ability/possibility meaning derives from two main categories of stative structures,

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\(^6\) This is the structure of ability/possibility-tos adjectival participles which licenses an agentive prepositional phrase (apo-phrase). There are more ability/possibility-tos adjectival participles with different structures, as it is presented in Samioti (2015).

\(^7\) Following Alexiadou & Doron (2012) and Alexiadou (2012), the VoiceμP stands for the Middle Voice head.
either from result or pure states. The basic evidence comes from morphology across languages, as very often, abilitative meaning is realized through a stative morpheme.

### 5.1 Ability/possibility from result state meaning

In *Creek* the structure with the -ii- stative morpheme merged with middle voice -k- morpheme denotes either stative result of an event (41), when combined with perfective aspect, or ability/possibility to do something (42), with imperfective aspect (Hardy 1988, 1994):

(41) is- awana-k-ii-s
inst-tie up(Ø g.)-MID-st-ind⁹
“It’s tied up.” (Hardy 1994)

(42) ca-tonoof-k-os-ii-t-oom-s
1Sii-bruise(1.g.)-MID-dim-st-nom-aux-ind
“I bruise easily.” (Hardy 1988, Hardy 1994)

In Tagalog, the structure with the stative *ma-* morpheme denotes either the accidental result of an event (43), when combined with perfective aspect, or the ability/possibility to do something (44) with imperfective aspect:

(43) nakakain ako ng lamok
MA-KA.PERF.eat. 1S.NOM CASE mosquito
“I managed to/accidentally ate a mosquito.” (Mills 2005)

(44) nakakaka¹¹kain ako ng lamok
MA-KA. IMP.eat 1S. NOM CASE mosquito
“I am able to eat a mosquito.” (Mills 2005)

In Malagasy, the structure with the *maha-* morpheme denotes either the result of an event (45) (Phillips 2006; Travis 2010) or ability/possibility (46):

(45) mahadinika ISolange fa ma-nao ny akanjo mena I Haingo.
maha-examination Solange that wear DET dress red Haingo
“Solange notices that Haingo is wearing a red dress.”

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⁸ American Indian language.
⁹ Ø g = zero grade, st = stative, MID = middle voice, ind = indicative, 1 = first person
¹⁰ Austronesian language.
¹¹ Progressive aspect is realized through reduplication.
¹² Austronesian language.
In Malay\textsuperscript{13}, \textit{ter-} is a verbal prefix which forms stative verbs with accidental meaning (Sneddon et al. 1996; Krafft 2010; Chung 2011 (47):

\begin{enumerate}
\item[(46)] mahadinika ny gazety Faly rehefa mangina.
\text{maha-examination DET paper Faly when silent.}
\text{“Faly can examine the newspaper only in silence.”}
\end{enumerate}

Ability/possibility is also realized through the same prefix (48):

\begin{enumerate}
\item[(47)] Lelaki itu ter-tangkap (oleh) polis.
\text{man that TER-catch (by) police}
\text{“The man was mistakenly arrested by the police.”}
\end{enumerate}

\begin{enumerate}
\item[(48a)] Kini arteri yang buntu terpintasi.
\text{“Nowadays blocked arteries can be bypassed.”}
\item[(48b)] Apa pekerjaan itu terselesaikan?
\text{“Can that work be finished?”}
\end{enumerate}

(48b) \text{(Sneddon et al. 1996)}

\textbf{5.2 Ability/possibility from pure stative meaning}

Ndebele\textsuperscript{14} -\textit{ek}- morpheme is stative, creating intransitive verbs from transitives (Khumalo 2009) (49):

\begin{enumerate}
\item[(49)] Isivalo savaleka.
\text{isi-valo sa-val-ek-a}
\text{7-door SC-shutVR-STAT}\textsuperscript{15}
\text{“The door closed.”}
\end{enumerate}

These structures express either state (50a) or ability/possibility (50b) (Khumalo 2009):

\begin{enumerate}
\item[(50a)] thanda \textquotesingle love\textquotesingle
\item[(50b)] thandeka \textquotesingle be lovable\textquotesingle
\end{enumerate}

In Chichewa\textsuperscript{16}, -\textit{ik} formations are often ambiguous between the meaning of stativity (in a STATE of being V) (51i, 52i) and ability/possibility (ABLE to be V) (51ii, 52ii) (Dubinsky & Simango 1996):

\begin{enumerate}
\item[(51i)] thanda
\item[(52i)] thandeka
\item[(51ii)] thanda
\item[(52ii)] thandeka
\end{enumerate}

\textsuperscript{13} Indonesian language.
\textsuperscript{14} Bantu language.
\textsuperscript{15} VR=Verb Root, SC=Subject Concord
\textsuperscript{16} Bantu language.
(51) Nyemba zi-na-li zo-phik-ika
beans AGR-PAST-be AGR-cook-ik
i. “The beans were cooked.”
ii. “The beans were cookable.”

(52) Mbale zi-na-li zo-sw-eka
Plates AGR-PAST-be AGR-break-ik
i. “The plates were broken.”
ii. “The plates were breakable.”

In Swahili\textsuperscript{17}, along with the simple stative meaning, \textit{-ik} creates structures with potential/ability/possibility reading (53) (Dimitriadis & Seidl 2003):

(53) vunja to break vunjika to be breakable / to be broken
pika to cook pikika to be cookable / to be cooked
hesabu to count hesabika to be countable / to be considered
funga to fasten, close fungika to be closeable / to be closed
fikiri to think fikirika to be thinkable / to be thought about

In English, \textit{-able} adjectives denote either state (54a) or ability/possibility (54b):

(54) agreeable
(54a) pleasant, pleasing
(54b) able to be accepted by everyone

The aforementioned crosslinguistic data confirms the assumption that ability/possibility meaning derives from stative structures, which denote either result state or pure state.

5.3 Ability/possibility structures and dispositional Middle
I suggest that ability structures, coming from either result or pure stative structures, have common semantic and syntactic properties with dispositional Middle voice, suggesting the existence of a Middle voice head combined with a Generic operator.

More specifically, apart from the fact that ability/possibility structures coming from result state structures are linked to stativity and modality, they display the property of agentivity. However, the agent does not control the action, similar to what was previously discussed about dispositional Middle (part 4). Phillips (1996) and Travis

\textsuperscript{17} Bantu language.
notice that in ability structures in Malagasy the result comes about not so much because of the ability of the agent but because the circumstances are such as to allow the agent to achieve his goal, as in (55) the fact that the rock was not solidly wedged into the ground, but was loosely resting on top:

(55)  Naitulak ni Ben ang bato

na-push GEN Ben Nom rock

“Ben managed to push the rock.”

Furthermore, ability/possibility structures are usually generic (46) and the understood object denotes a dispositional property (Mills 2005 for Tagalog) (56):

(56)  nakakain ang lamok

AIA18.IMP.eatNOM mosquito

«ANYONE is able to eat this mosquito/Mosquitoes are edible»

Ability/possibility structures coming from pure stative structures share properties with dispositional middle, as well, such as stativity, genericity, modality (ability/possibility) (59 for English, Dimitriadis & Seidl (2003) for Swahili) and an agent realized through prepositional phrases, as in (58) (Khumalo 2009 for Ndebele), usually generic, as in (59a) (Quirk et al. 1985 for English -able adjectives):

(58)  Inkukhu yaqumeka ngengqamu.

iN-kukhu ya-qum-ek-a ngengqamu

9-chicken 9-qumVR-STAT-FV with a knife

“The chicken was cutable with a knife.”

(59a) The comet was observable by anyone owning a powerful telescope.

(59b) The comet was observable ?by John.

The aforementioned properties of ability/possibility structures, found in dispositional Middle as well, lead to the conclusion that they might contain a Middle voice head licensing an agent, and a Generic Operator responsible for the genericity.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, it was supported that ability/possibility meaning in the adjectival domain in Greek arises in stative structures which contain a Middle voice head merged with a

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Generic operator. The Middle voice head licenses an agent with properties similar to the agent found in dispositional Middle, having no control of the action and usually being generic. The relation of ability/possibility structures with stative structures and dispositional Middle is attested crosslinguistically.

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