

**On Syntactic and Semantic Properties of
For-Phrases in English Middle Constructions**

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English middle constructions (e.g. *This book reads easily*) are discussed extensively in the literature. However, little has been discussed about *for*-phrases that appear in the construction (e.g. *This book reads easily for Mary*). In this research, we aim to elucidate syntactic and semantic properties of *for*-phrases in English middles.

As for semantic properties of *for*-phrases in English middles, Stroik (1992, 1995, 1999) argues that they represent Agents, i.e. *Mary* in *This book reads easily for Mary* is interpreted as a reader of *this book*. Zribi-Herts (1993), on the other hand, notes that the phrase denotes an Experiencer. To clarify a thematic role of the phrase, following Fillmore (1968) and Jackendoff (1972), we define the notions of Agent and Experiencer as follows. An Agent is an entity that performs an action described by the predicate. Both an animate and inanimate entity can be construed as Agents if they are essentially involved in the event. Therefore, *the book* in *The book helped him and satisfied his mind for the time* is an Agent, because *the book* itself pleases him. On the other hand, Experiencers must be animate entities with senses, judgements or emotion, because Experiencers are entities that undergo a sensory, judgemental, or emotional experience. (e.g. *Mary*/**The theatre fears snake*). If *for*-phrases in English middles express Agents, they could be either animate or inanimate entities. This, however, contradicts the fact shown in (1):

- (1) a. This book reads easily for Mary.
b. * Those shoe chests stow easily for the electric drill.

The contrast shown in (1) suggests that inanimate entities are not compatible with the *for*-phrase. *For*-phrases in English middles, thus, are not interpreted as Agents.

Another piece of evidence to support this view comes from a comparison of *for*-phrases in question and Japanese *nitotte(wa)*-phrase. An English middle like *This book reads easily for Mary* can be translated into Japanese as *Kono honn-wa Mary-nitotte(wa) kanntann-ni yom-eru*. This indicates *for*-phrases in English middles are semantically similar to Japanese *nitotte(wa)*-phrases which are analyzed as a marker of an Experiencer (cf, Sugimoto (2004)). From these observations above, we conclude that semantically, *for*-phrases in English middles are not interpreted as Agents but Experiencers.

Stroik (1992, 1995) contends that syntactically, *for*-phrases in English middles are the realizations of implicit arguments of verbs which he calls PRO_{arb}:

- (2) a. This book reads easily PRO_{arb}.
b. This book reads easily for Mary.

The English middle in (2a) involves PRO_{arb}, while that in (2b) *for Mary* instead.

Following Stroik's argument, one might assume that the PRO_{arb} in (2a) and the *for*-phrase in (2b) have the same syntactic status, but this assumption is not plausible. Consider the following examples:

- (3) a. * For Bill it's unlikely to win.
 b. * It is unlikely to win for Bill.
 c. * For whom is it unlikely to win? (Jacobson (1992:275))
- (4) a. This book reads easily for Mary.
 b. For Mary this book reads easily.
 c. For whom does this book read easily?

According to Chomsky (1977), the *for*-phrases in the extraposed constructions in (3) are analyzed as the realization of PRO, i.e. an equivalent to PRO_{arb}. (For a detailed discussion, see Zribi-Hertz (1993)). As each example demonstrates, the phrase is not topicalized, postposed or *wh*-moved. Unlike those in (3), the *for*-phrases in English middles in (4) can be topicalized and *wh*-moved. Accordingly, we conclude that *for*-phrases in English middles are syntactically not the realizations of implicit argument, namely, PRO_{arb}.

Furthermore, this is confirmed by comparing between agentive *by*-phrases in English passive constructions and *for*-phrases in question. According to Goodall (1997), *by*-phrases are overt counterpart of an implicit argument PRO. He also indicates the following examples:

- (5) A: Will the books be returned?
 B: ?* Yes, they will be _ by John. (Goodall (1997:133))
- (6) A: John said the books would be returned, and
 B: ?* returned they were _ by Mary. (ibid.)

The examples in (5) and (6) show that the *by*-phrase must be included in the ellipsis and fronting, indicating that the phrase is an argument. With this in mind, let us observe the following examples of *for*-phrases in English middles:

- (7) A: Does this luxury Jaeger sell easily?
 B: (?) Yes, it does for veteran shopkeepers.
- (8) A: He said that Mercedes sell easily, and
 B: sell easily they do _ for veteran shopkeepers

In (7) and (8), though the *for*-phrases are left behind, the examples are impeccable. From this, we conclude that *for*-phrases in English middles are not overt counterpart of PRO but they are adjuncts. The contrast shown in (5)-(8) indirectly suggests that *for*-phrases in question have different status from Agentive *by*-phrases.

From the discussion so far, it is elucidated that semantically *for*-phrases in English middles represent Experiencers and syntactically they are not the realizations of PRO_{arb}.