On *For*-Phrases in English Middle Constructions[*]
Yurika Kambe

1. Introduction

This article deals with *for*-phrases in English middle constructions (henceforth, English middles). Observe the following:

(1) a. This book reads easily for Mary.
b. No Latin text translates easily for Bill.

The sentences in (1a, b) contain *for*-phrases. The aim of the present paper is to show syntactic and semantic status of *for*-phrases in English middles.

The organization of this paper is as follows. Section 2 observes syntactic status of *for*-phrases in English middles. Section 3 examines semantic status of the phrase. Section 4 makes concluding remarks.

2. Syntactic Status of *For*-Phrases in English Middles
2.1. *Stroik (1992, 1995, 1999)*

Stroik (1992, 1995, 1999) points out that external arguments are present in English middles against the analysis of Keyser and Roeper (1984). Keyser and Roeper argue that English middles do not involve the external arguments of transitive verbs. Observe the following:

(2) a. This book reads easily. (English middle)
b. Tom reads this book easily. (transitive sentence)

In (2a), the internal argument of the transitive verb appears in the subject position. The fact that the argument in the subject position is an internal argument is confirmed by the sentence in (2b). In (2b), *this book* appears in the object position where internal arguments of transitive verbs typically appear. Furthermore, the external argument, *Tom* in the subject position in (2b) does not appear in (2a).

Contrary to the analysis above, Stroik (1992, 1995, 1999) contends that English middles involve external arguments. He postulates PRO as external arguments in English middles.[1] To see his argument, consider the following examples:

(3) a. Books about oneself never read poorly.
b. Letters to oneself compose quickly.
c. Arguments with oneself generally end abruptly.

The subject NPs in (3) contain anaphors. Anaphors must have antecedents, and if this condition is violated, the sentences containing anaphors are ill-formed.[2] This fact is shown in (4):

> (4) a. Poirot hurt himself.
>
> b. * Miss Marple hurt himself.

In (4a), the antecedent of *himself, Poirot,* appears in the sentence and it is acceptable, whereas the antecedent of *himself* does not appear in (4b). Hence, the sentence in (4b) is not grammatical. With this in mind, let us return to the cases in (3). In (3), the expected antecedent of *oneself, one,* is not syntactically overt. Nevertheless, the sentences in (3) are all grammatical. To explain these facts, Stroik assumes that covert NP arguments which function as antecedents of *oneself* should exist in the sentences in (3). He, then, postulates PRO as antecedents of the anaphors in (3) in order for the sentences to be acceptable.

Stroik also argues that PRO can be realized as *for*-phrases, which is illustrated in (5):

> (5) Books about oneself read quickly <u>PRO</u>.
>
> ↓
>
> Books about herself read quickly <u>for Mary</u>.

In (5), the *for*-phrase is represented as the overt counterpart of PRO. (For a detailed configuration of English middles, see Stroik (1992, 1995).)

Stroik's argument appears to be plausible to the extent that it can explain why the subject-contained anaphors in (3) are acceptable even without its overt antecedents. However, his analysis on *for*-phrases in English middles is not sufficient in that *for*-phrases in English middles do not share the same syntactic distribution as *for*-phrases in other constructions which are considered to be the realizations of PRO. In the next subsection, we will compare *for*-phrases in English middles with those in extraposed constructions and *tough* constructions and argue that *for*-phrases in English middles are not the realizations of PRO.

2.2. For-*Phrases in English Middles Are Not the Realizations of PRO*
In order to make clear syntactic status of *for*-phrases in English

middles, this subsection compares them with *for*-phrases in extraposed constructions and *tough* constructions, which are exemplified in the following:

    (6)   a.   It is unlikely for John to win.

           b.   This book is easy for Mary to read.

The sentences in (6a, b) are the extraposed construction and the English *tough* construction, respectively. They both involve the *for*-phrases. By comparing the *for*-phrases in English middles with the *for*-phrases in these two constructions, we argue that *for*-phrases in English middles behave differently from those in extraposed constructions, whereas they show the same syntactic behaviors as those in *tough* constructions.

2.2.1. *A Comparison with* For-*Phrases in Extraposed Constructions*

    In this subsection, in order to show that *for*-phrases in English middles are not the realizations of PRO contra Stroik's view, we compare *for*-phrases in English middles with those in extraposed constructions.

    As shown in (7a), *for*-phrases in English middles appear at the end of the sentence. As well as the sentence-final position, *for*-phrases in English middles can appear in the sentence-initial position as in (7b).

    (7)   a.   Books about herself read quickly for Mary.

                                   (Stroik (1992:136))

           b.   For Mary this book reads easily.   (Kambe (2004:33))

Unlike the *for*-phrases in English middles, those in extraposed constructions can appear neither in the sentence-final position as in (8a) nor in the sentence-initial position as in (8b):

    (8)   a. * It is unlikely to win for Bill.

           b. * For Bill it's unlikely to win.

           (cf. It is unlikely for Bill to win.)

                                   (Jacobson (1992:275))

As is well known, it is constituents that can be postposed or topicalized. Accordingly, *for*-phrases in English middles are constituents. The above contrast also shows that the *for*-phrases in English middles behave differently from those in extraposed constructions. Thus, the syntactic status of *for*-phrases in English middles and extraposed constructions are distinct.

What is important here is that *for*-phrases in extraposed constructions are analyzed as the realizations of PRO and this is illustrated in (9) (cf. Chomsky (1977) and Nanni (1978)):[3]

(9)   a.   It is unlikely [$_s$ PRO [to win]].

      b.   It is unlikely [$_s$ for John [to win]].

The implicit argument, PRO in (9a), can be realized as the overt counterpart, i.e. the *for*-phrase in (9b).

From the observation above, the syntactic status of *for*-phrases in English middles is different from that of *for*-phrases in extraposed constructions, and therefore, they are not the realizations of PRO. In the next subsection, we will compare *for*-phrases in English middles with those in *tough* constructions in order to reinforce our argument.

2.2.2. A Comparison with For-*Phrases in* Tough *Constructions*

Like *for*-phrases in English middles, those in *tough* constructions can appear in the sentence-final position as in (10a) or the sentence-initial position as in (10b):

(10)   a.   The problem was difficult to solve *for the children.*

      b.   *For the children* the problem was difficult to solve.

      (cf. The problem was difficult *for the children* to solve.)

<div align="right">(Nanni (1978:21))</div>

The *for*-phrases in these two constructions show further similar behaviors. Consider first the *for*-phrases in English middles:

(11)   a.   Mary photographs well (only) for herself.

      b.   Bureaucrats always bribe easily for each other.

      c.   * Mary photographs well (only) for her.

<div align="right">(Stroik (1999:126))</div>

The reflexive and the reciprocal can be involved in the *for*-phrases in (11a, b), while the pronoun cannot in (11c). Let us then observe the *for*-phrases in *tough* constructions, which are exemplified below:

(12)   a.   Mary is easy for herself to photograph.

      b.   ? Bureaucrats are always easy for each other to bribe.

      c.   * Mary is easy for her to photograph.

<div align="right">(Kambe (2004:34))</div>

Like the *for*-phrases in English middles, the *for*-phrase in *tough* constructions can involve the reflexive and the reciprocal in (12a, b), but it cannot involve the pronoun in (12c).

From the observation above, it is elucidated that *for*-phrases in

English middles and *tough* constructions show the same syntactic behaviors. Unlike *for*-phrases in extraposed constructions, *for*-phrases in *tough* constructions are generally analyzed as the non-realizations of PRO (e.g. Jones (1991)). Thus, we can say that *for*-phrases in English middles are the non-realizations of PRO.

2.2.3. *Summary*

Thus far, we have observed that *for*-phrases in English middles are syntactically distinguished from those in extraposed constructions, whereas *for*-phrases in English middles show the same syntactic behaviors as those in *tough* constructions. This is further supported by the following contrasts:

(13)　a.　For whom does this book read easily?

　　　b.　* For whom is it unlikely to win? (Jacobson (1992:275))

　　　c.　For whom is the rock easy to move?　　　(ibid.)

In terms of *wh*-movement, the *for*-phrase in the English middle in (13a) shows the different behavior from that in the extraposed construction in (13b), while it shows the same behavior as that in the *tough* construction in (13c). Through the comparison of *for*-phrases in English middles with those in extraposed constructions and *tough* constructions, it is thus revealed that *for*-phrases in English middles are not the realizations of PRO.

3.　Semantic Status of *For*-Phrases in English Middles

In this section, we investigate the thematic role of NPs in *for*-phrases in English middles and verify that they are interpreted as Experincers. As for the NPs in *for*-phrases in English middles, it is argued that they are interpreted as either Experiencers (e.g. Zribi-Hertz (1993)) or Agents (e.g. Stroik (1992, 1995, 1999)). In the following subsections, after showing the definitions of Experiecers and Agents, we will argue that *for*-phrases in English middles are interpreted as Experiecers.

3.1.　*Definitions of Experiencers and Agents*

The notions of Experiencers and Agents are defined as follows (cf. Fillmore (1968), Jackendoff (1972) and Gruber (1976)):

(14)　a.　<u>Experiencer</u>:

　　　　　A thematic role posed on the argument that undergoes a sensory, judgmental, or emotional experience.

b.   Agent:

A thematic role posed on the argument that performs an action described by the predicate of a sentence.   It is, thus, essentially involved in the event.

The definitions in (14) have two implications.   Firstly, not only animate entities as in (15a) but also inanimate entities as in (15b) may be Agents as long as they are essentially involved in events described by predicates.   This is empirically supported by the following examples:

(15) a.   Tony brings me a cup of coffee...

   b.   If mascara brings tears to your eyes, then take a look at new Intense Colour Mascara, from RoC.

(The British National Corpus (BNC))

In (15a), it is *Tony* who actually brings a cup of coffee to the speaker. Likewise, *mascara* in (15b) actually brings tears to the hearers' eyes, i.e., it damages the hearers' eyes.   In these sentences, both *Tony* and *mascara* are interpreted as Agents.   Thus, inanimate entities, as well as animate entities, can be Agents.

Secondly, inanimate entities are not theta-marked as Experiencers, while animate entities can.   The reason is that the former, but not the latter, have sensor, judgments or emotion. According to Maruta (2001), psychological verbs like *fear*, *love* require external arguments to be Experiencers.   Then, it is expected that animate entities can be external arguments of such verbs, while inanimate entities cannot.   This expectation is borne out:

(16) a.   Mary fears snakes.

   b.   * The old house fears terminates.

As shown in (16a), the animate entity, *Mary*, is perfectly compatible with the predicate *fear*, while in (16b), the inanimate entity, *the old house*, is not.   The unacceptability of (16b) lies in the fact that *the old house* does not have senses such that it is impossible for *the old house* to fear terminates.   Thus, Experiencers must be inanimate.

3.2.   For-Phrases in English Middles as Experiencers

As is often pointed out, English middles do not typically describe events and they are expressed in the simple present tense (e.g. Keyser and Roeper (1984)), Fellbaum (1985), Fegan (1988) among others):[4]

(17) a. Bureaucrats bribe easily.

(Keyser and Roeper (1984:381))

b. ? Yesterday, the mayor bribed easily, according to the
newspaper.   (Keyser and Roeper (1984:384))

The English middle in the simple present tense is acceptable in (17a), while the English middle in the past tense is not in (17b). The past tense reflects that the event described by the predicate actually happened at a certain point in the past and thus the unacceptability in (17b) shows that English middles do not describe events that really happen. Recall that Agents are defined as entities which are involved in events. Thus, it is assumed that NPs in *for*-phrases in English middles should not be interpreted as Agents.

There are three pieces of evidence that support the assumption above. Firstly, Agentive *by*-phrases cannot appear in English middles.[5] Observe the following example:

(18)   * This door opens easily by John.

(Langacker (1991:334))

If *for*-phrases in English middles were Agents, they could be substituted for Agentive *by*-phrases. Nevertheless, Agentive *by*-phrases cannot appear in English middles as shown in (18). Thus, an Agentive entity is not compatible with English middles.

Secondly, the NPs in *for*-phrases in English middles have to be animate, as exemplified below:

(19) a. That book reads quickly for Mary.

b. No Latin text translates easily for Bill.

(Stroik (1992:131))

(20) a. * This door opens easily for the wind.

b. * Those shoe chests stow easily for the electric drill.

In (19a, b), the *for*-phrases in the English middles involve animate entities, i.e. *Mary* and *Bill*, and the sentences are grammatical. In (20a, b), on the other hand, the *for*-phrases contain inanimate entities, i.e. *the wind* and *the electric drill*, and the sentences are not grammatical. Thus, *for*-phrases in English middles are only compatible with animate entities. Here, two possibilities are given. One is that NPs in *for*-phrases in English middles are interpreted as animate Agents and the other is that they are interpreted as Experiencers. The former possibility is immediately denied because

as we have argued above, an Agentive entity is not compatible with English middles. There is no good reason that denies the latter possibility, however. Thus, we assume that NPs in *for*-phrases in English middles are Experiencers.

Thirdly, *for*-phrases in English middles can be translated into Japanese *ni-totte(wa)*-phrases, as in (21):[6]

(21) a. This book reads easily for Mary.

b. Kono hon-wa Mary-nitotte(wa) kantan-ni
This book-Top Mary-for easily
yom-e-ru.
read Poss-Present

The English middle in (21a) is translated into the Japanese sentence in (21b). According to Nomura (1984), Morita and Matsumoto (1989), and Sugimoto (2004), Japanese *ni-totte(wa)*-phrases are theta-marked as Experiencers. Thus, the *for*-phrase in (21a) is synonymous with the Japanese Experiencer-marker, *ni-totte(wa)* phrase in (21b). Hence, *for*-phrases in English middles are interpreted as Experiencers.

From these three reasons above, we conclude that NPs in *for*-phrases in English middles are not interpreted as Agents but Experiencers.

4. Concluding Remarks

In this paper, we have observed syntactic and semantic properties of *for*-phrases in English middles. Syntactically, *for*-phrases in English middles are not the realizations of PRO based on the comparison of *for*-phrases in English middles with those in extraposed constructions and *tough* constructions. Semantically, *for*-phrases in English middles are not interpreted as Agents but Experiencers.

NOTES

[1] Since PRO is phonetically null, the external arguments are not represented overtly. For a precise definition of PRO, see Stroik (1992, 1995).

[2] For the more technical definition of this condition, see Chomsky (1981), Haegeman (1994), Reinhart and Reuland (1991), among others. In this paper, we will not go into a detailed discussion on the condition, because it is not crucial for the present argument.

[3] *For*-phrases in extaposed constructions are analyzed as complementizers. (cf.Chomsky (1977), Bresnan (1972), Nanni (1978), Haegeman (1994) etc.)

[4] However, Iwata (1999) mentions that some English middles do describe actual events, showing that some English middles are acceptable either in the past tense and in the progressive aspect:

(i)   a. Grandpa went out to kill the chicken for a dinner, but the chicken he selected didn't kill easily.

        b. These bureaucrats are bribing easily.

(Iwata (1999:530-531))

As he admits, the English middles in (i) are exceptional. Furthermore, it is not clear at this point whether or not *for*-phrases can appear in such exceptional English middles. We will leave the question open.

[5] According to Nakau (1994), a preposition, *by*, expresses Agents lexically. For a detailed discussion, see Nakau (1994).

[6] Abbreviation indicates as follows: Top=Topic and Poss=Possibility.

REFERENCES

Bresnan, John (1972) *Theory of Complementation in English Syntax*, Doctoral dissertation, MIT.

Chomsky, Noam (1977) "On Wh-Movement," *Formal Syntax*, ed. by, P. Culicover, T. Wasow, and A. Akmajian, 77-132, Academic Press, New York.

Chomsky, Noam (1981) *Lectures on Government and Binding*, Foris, Dodrecht.

Fagan, Sarah (1988) "The English Middle," *Linguistic Inquiry* 19, 181-203.

Fellbaum, Chiristiane (1985) "Adverbs in Agentless Actives and Passives," *CLS* 21, 21-31.

Fillmore, Charles J. (1968) *Lexical Entries for Verbs*, D.Reidel, Dordrecht.

Gruber, Jeffery S. (1976) *Lexical Structures in Syntax and Semantics*, North-Holland, Amsterdam.

Haegeman, Liliane (1994) *Introduction to Government and Binding Theory*, Blackwell, Oxford.

Iwata, Seizi (1999) "On the Status of Implicit Arguments in Middles," *Journal of*

60

Linguistics 35, 527-553.

Jackendoff, Ray S (1972) *Semantic Interpretation in Generative Grammar,* MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass:

Jacobson, Pauline (1992) "The Lexical Entailment Theory of Control and the Tough Construction," *Lexical Matters,* ed. by A. Sag. and A. Szaboksi. 268-299, CLSI, Stanford.

Jones, Charles (1991) *Purpose Clauses: Syntax, Thematics, and Semantics of English Purpose Constructions,.* Kluwer, Dordrecht.

Kambe,Yurika. (2004) *On the Syntactic and Semantic Properties of* For-*Phrases in English Middle Constructions,* unpublished MA thesis, University of Tsukuba.

Keyser, Samuel J. and Thomas. Roeper. (1984) "On the Middle and Ergative Constructions in English," *Linguistic Inquiry* 15, 381-416.

Langacker, Ronald W. (1991) *Foundation of Cognitive Grammar*, Vol 2., Stanford University Press, Stanford.

Maruta, Tadao. (2001) "Psych-Verb," *The Taishukan Contemporary Dictionary of English Constructions,* ed. by H. Nakamura, Taishukan, Tokyo.

Morita, Ryouyuki and Masae. Matsumoto (1989) *Nihongo Hyougen Bunkei,* ALC, Tokyo.

Nakau, Minoru (1994) *Principle of Cognitive Semantics*, Taishukan. Tokyo.

Nanni, Deborah L. (1978) *The Easy Class of Adjectives in English,* Doctoral dissertation, University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

Nomura, Takeshi (1984) "*Ni-totte, Ni-Oite, Ni-yotte*," *Kokugo-gaku* 3:10, 60-66.

Reinhart, Tanya and Eric. Reuland. (1991) "Anaphors and Logophors: An Argument Structure Perspective," *Long Distance Anaphora.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 283-321.

Stroik, Thomas. (1992) "Middle and Movement," *Linguistic Inquiry* 23, 127-137.

--- (1995) "On Middle Formation: A Reply to Zribi-Hertz," *Linguistic Inquiry* 26, 165-171.

--- (1999) "Middles and Reflexivity," *Linguistic Inquiry* 30, 119-131.

Sugimoto, T. (2004) "Hukugou Kaku-Jyoshi *Ni-totte* ni tsuite," *Bungei-Genngo Kenkyuu: Gengo-Hen* 44, 79-100.

Zribi-Hertz, Anne. (1993) "On Stroik's Analysis of English Middle Constructions," *Linguistic Inquiry* 24, 538-589.

Corpus

The British National Corpus (http://www.hcu.ox.uc.ul/BNC/)

Doctoral Program in Humanities and Social Sciences
University of Tsukuba
jazzyyurika@hotmail.com