

**Summaries of the Papers Read at the Twenty-fourth Annual Meeting of
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English Middles as Categorical Sentences

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The distribution of English middles has been supposed to be explainable in terms of such oppositions as stative/eventive and individual/stage in the literature. This is because, as has also frequently been pointed out, English middles do not describe actual events, which is reflected in the fact that they tend not to be expressed in the progressive aspect or the past tense (see Keyser and Roeper (1984:384-385) for examples).

In this relation, Iwata (1999) makes an interesting observation. He points out that there are cases in which a middle sentence does describe a specific event and, consequently, readily occurs either in the progressive aspect or the past tense:

- (1) a. These bureaucrats are bribing easily. (Iwata (1999:531))
 b. This wall painted easily. (Iwata (1999:538))

Characterizing the middle construction as stative or noneventive, for instance, fails to predict the existence of cases like (1). Why, then, can English middles describe events (as well as states)?

The problem can be resolved if we approach English middles in terms of Kuroda's (1972, 1995) *thetic/categorical distinction of judgments*. Specifically, we propose that English middles are categorical sentences. This can give a straightforward account of why the examples in (1) should be acceptable.

Categorical sentences include both eventive and noneventive sentences, as Kuroda (1995) remarks. Characterizing English middles as categorical sentences therefore means that they can be either eventive or stative. Given this, we can say that there is nothing problematic in (1) to start with. What counts is not whether a middle describes an event or state but whether it successfully represents a categorical judgment.

There are several pieces of evidence for our approach. First, middles can be paraphrased into sentences with *as for*:

- (2) a. This floor {is waxing/waxed} easily.
 b. As for this floor, it {is waxing/waxed} easily.

A categorical judgment consists of two separate acts, one being the act of the recognition of that which is to be made the subject, and the other being the act of affirming or denying what is expressed by the predicate about the subject; a categorical sentence has the subject predicate structure. By contrast, a *thetic judgment* represents the simple recognition or rejection of material of a judgment; a *thetic sentence* is subjectless. The paraphrase relation in (2) parallels closely with the bipartite structure of a categorical judgment.

Secondly, when one translates English middles into Japanese, it is necessary to mark the subject with *-wa*. The middle *This wall paints easily* is translated as *Kono kabe-wa kantanni nureru*, but not as **Kono kabe-ga kantanni nureru*. As Kuroda (1972) argues, the *thetic/categorical distinction* is morphosyntactically reflected in Japanese; the subject of a categorical sentence has to be marked with *-wa*, while that of a *thetic sentence* requires *-ga*. The fact that their corresponding sentences in Japanese have to be marked with *-wa*, though indirectly, suggests that English middles are categorical sentences.

Thirdly, middles with indefinite subjects are judged unacceptable when they are expressed

either in the progressive aspect or the past tense. We will henceforth call this “definiteness restriction.”

- (3) a. {These bureaucrats/*Bureaucrats} are bribing easily. (Iwata (1999:531))
 b. {This wall/*A wall} painted easily.

According to Kuroda (1972:165), “[t]he [referential] subject of a categorical judgment must be definite,” which exactly parallels with the definiteness restriction on English middles observed in (3). Notice also that the middles with indefinite subjects in (3) represent athetic judgment, which contradicts with the judgment specification. Hence their unacceptability.

Fourthly, the definiteness restriction does not obtain in a progressive middle with *these days* or past middle with *used to*:

- (4) a. Bureaucrats are bribing easily these days.
 b. Bureaucrats used to bribe easily (but they’re afraid of the publicity now).

Each example in (4) necessarily receives a habitual interpretation due to the properties of *these days* and *used to*. Habitual sentences always represent a categorical judgment, as (indirectly) evidenced by the fact that the subject of habituals in Japanese has to be marked with *-wa* (e.g. *Uchi-no ko-{wa/*ga} maiasa goji-ni okiru* (“The kid wakes up at five every morning.)). Thus, the middles with indefinite subjects in (4) do not represent athetic judgment, unlike those in (3). Rather, they successfully represent a categorical judgment thanks to the occurrence of the two phrases in question, which is in complete agreement with the judgment specification.

Fifthly, extraction from the subject of a middle is not possible:

- (5) a. Bureaucrats from Tsukuba used to bribe easily.
 b.? [Bureaucrats t_i] used to bribe easily [from Tsukuba]_i.

As argued by Ladusaw (1994), “[a categorical judgment form] has a presupposed subject in the sense that a precondition for making the judgment is that the mind of the judger must be directed first to an individual, before the predicate can be connected to it.” Presupposed elements constitute semantic islands and extraction from them is prohibited (Hirose (2002)). Hence the lower acceptability of (5b).

Sixthly, middles cannot serve as a small clause complement to perception verbs:

- (6) *I saw the floor wax easily. (Keyser and Roeper (1984:386))
 (cf. I believe the floor to wax easily. (Nakau (1991:60)))

Perception verbs are subcategorized for athetic small clause (Basilico (2002)). Middles, representing a categorical judgment, do not satisfy the subcategorization requirement of *see*. Hence the ungrammaticality of (6).

Finally, given an appropriate context, it is possible to omit the subject of middles:

- (7) (Instant cereal advertisement:) Prepare in your bowl ... instantly.
 (van Oosten (1986:84))
 (8) A: How come you’re here?! You had to wax the floor, didn’t you?
 B: Waxed easily!!

Middles are categorical sentences and have the subject predicate structure; the bipartite structure entails that the subject and predicate each counts as a semantic constituent. Thus, it is possible to omit the subject leaving the predicate behind, as in (7) and (8).

We have shown that English middles are best characterized as categorical sentences.