

Reflexivity and middle constructions in Dutch and English

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1. Introduction

- (1) The category verb is a derivative category
(Hoekstra 1996:42)

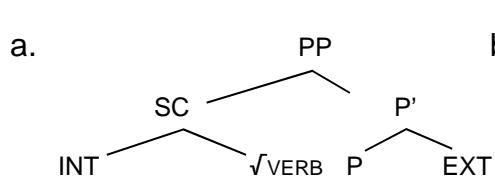
- (2) v [$\sqrt{\text{ROOT}}$]

- (3) This book reads easily

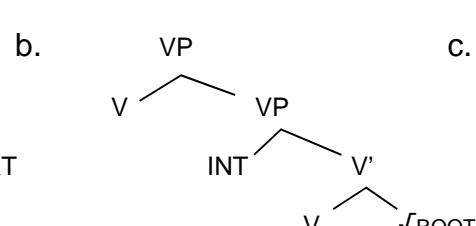
- (4) [√READ easy]
(Zwart 1998)

- (5) **G** [$e : \text{book}(x)$, $\text{read}(e)$, $\text{Patient}(e, x)$] [$\text{easy}(e)$]
 (Condoravdi 1989)

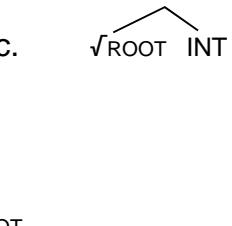
- (6) Where's the internal argument?



(Hoekstra 1996)



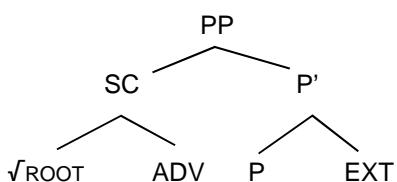
(Hale & Keyser 2002)



(Zwart 1998)

- (7) A verbal root functioning as a subject is thematically opaque.

- #### (8) Hoekstra style middle configuration:



- ### (9) Middles alternating with antipassives

- a. Dit boek leest lekker
this book reads well

b. Het leest lekker **in/met** dit boek
it reads well in/with this book

- (10) The subject in middle constructions is an external argument ('owner' or causer or circumstantial agent)

2. Why the subject is not an internal argument

- (11) a. the existence of nonargument middles (12)
b. the antipassive connection (9)/(13)
c. not with unaccusatives (14)
d. restrictions on complementation (15)-(17)
e. auxiliary selection (Ackema & Schoorlemmer 1995)(18)
f. aspectual restrictions (19)
- (12) Deze zaal vergadert lekker
this room hold a meeting good
~'This is a nice room for meetings.'
- (13) a. Dit boek verkoopt/*koopt lekker
this book sells/buys good
b. Het verkoopt/*koopt lekker met dit boek
it sells/buys good with this book
» no 'antipassive' → no middle
- (14) * Dit gas ontploft lekker
this gas explodes good
- (15) *effected objects*
a. * Deze oplossing bedenkt gemakkelijk
this solution thinks out easy
b. # Deze boterham smeert gemakkelijk
this sandwich smears easy
not: It is easy to make this sandwich
OK: It is easy to apply butter to this slice of bread
c. This poem writes easily: cf. Het schrijft gemakkelijk **aan** zo'n gedicht)
- (16) *double objects*
a. Dit boek verkoopt (*taalkundigen) gemakkelijk
this book sells linguists easy
b. Dit boek verkoopt gemakkelijk aan taalkundigen
this book sells easy to linguists
- (17) *resultatives*
a. * Deze borden zetten lekker op tafel
these plates place good on table
b. * Bureacraten kopen gemakkelijk om
bureaucrats buy easy off
'Bureaucrats bribe easily.'
c. Deze schoenen lopen lekker (*scheef)
these shoes walk good oblique
- (18) Dit boek heeft/*is altijd lekker gelezen
this book has/is always good read:PART

- (19) *activity, hence no end point, hence no internal argument*

 - a. John stopped reading the book → John did not read the book
 - b. The book stopped reading well → The book did read well

accomplishment verbs have the properties of activity verbs when used in middle constructions

NB, tests apply equally well to Dutch, German and English.

3. Reflexivity in middle constructions

- (20) Dependency relations are sisterhood relations

(21) John loves himself

» dependency not between *John* and *himself*

- (22) Reflexivity is a relation between a subject and its sister ('predicate')

- (23) [John] \leftrightarrow [heard himself agree with Reinhart & Reuland]

- (24) ways of expressing the dependency

 - a. object NP (25)
 - b. object pronoun (21)
 - c. clitic (26)
 - d. verbal morphology (27)
 - e. secondary predicate (28)

- (25) en tooñ-ii **koye** men (Peul)
 we harm-ASP heads our
 'We have harmed ourselves.'

- (26) Maks **se** kupa (SerBoCroatian)
Max REFL bath
'Max bathes.'

- (27) umukoôbwa á-r-íi-reeb-a (Kinyarwanda)
girl SU-PRES-REFL-watch-ASP
'The girl is watching herself.'

- (29) *zich/sich* is not an internal argument, but a marker of reflexivity of the predicate

- (30) Das Buch liest **sich** leicht
the book reads RFFI easy

» German middles involve self oriented predicates

- (31) *no nonargument middles*

* Das Bett schl鋑t sich gut
the bed sleeps REFL well

- ### (32) *self orientation*

A predicate **P** is self oriented (S.O.) if missing information of **P** is provided by the owner of **P** (i.e. the subject)

- (33) Jean [se lave]_{s.o.}
 John REFL wash

 - *se lave* misses an internal argument
 - *Jean* is the owner of the predicate
 - *Jean* is interpreted as the internal argument

- (34) Das Buch [liest sich leicht]_{s.o.}
 the book reads REFL easy

 - *liest sich leicht* misses an internal argument
 - *das Buch* is the owner of the predicate
 - *das Buch* is interpreted as the internal argument

- (35) English has a zero reflexive (Roeper & Keyser 1984, Steinbach 2002)

- (36) *development of inherently reflexive verbs in English*

	Middle English	Modern English	Dutch
motion verbs	<i>hasten hym</i>	<i>haste</i>	<i>zich haasten</i>
cognition verbs	<i>remembren hym</i>	<i>remember</i>	<i>zich herinneren</i>
psych verbs	<i>deliten hym</i>	<i>delight</i>	<i>≈zich verheugen</i>
behavior verbs	<i>beren hym</i>	<i>behave</i>	<i>zich gedragen</i>
pseudo-reflexives	<i>strecchen hym</i>	<i>stretch</i>	<i>zich uitstrekken</i>

- (37) Middles in English: like German, but zero realisation of reflexivity marker

» self orientation, no adjunct middles

- (38) Middles in Dutch: no reflexivity, no self orientation, adjunct middles OK.

- (39) *classification of middle constructions*

PREDICATION OVER ✓VERB	SELF ORIENTED	LANGUAGE
+	+	English, German
+	-	Dutch
-	+	Ancient Greek

- (40) haireo-mai dorpon (Ancient Greek)
take-MED:1SG meal:ACC
'I am choosing/enjoying my meal.'