

## The landscape of middle constructions

The topic of this course is the so-called (personal) middle construction, exemplified from English in (1):

(1) This fabric washes easily.

Personal middle constructions are normally viewed as an argument structure alternation, and occur in several Indo-European languages (including Romance and Germanic languages, as well as Greek); however, across languages middles do not exhibit the same morphology, nor do they behave in the same way syntactically. In terms of morphology, some languages do not mark middles at all (English, Dutch), others employ a reflexive clitic or pronoun (French, German), and yet others rely on non-active verbal morphology (Greek). In terms of syntax, in some languages middles are syntactically indistinguishable from passives, while in others they pattern with unergative structures; in the former type of language, the implicit Agent is syntactically active, while in the latter it is not. On the basis of the lack of cross-linguistic uniformity, a semantic approach to middles will be pursued, according to which middles qualify as a special kind of generic sentence, namely dispositional generics. We will extend the discussion to (apparent) challenges to the semantic approach, namely impersonal middles as in (2) from German, and adjunct middles, as in (3) from Dutch.

(2) Hier tanzt es sich gut.

here dances it REFL well

'One dances well here.'

(3) Deze schoenen lopen prettig.

these shoes walk nicely

'One walks nicely in these shoes.'