

# A Squib on the Benefactive/ Experiencer PP in English\*

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The benefactive/experiencer PP which consists of the preposition *for* and the NP denoting the animate benefactive/experiencer object (s) co-occurs with the *tough* adjective, as follows:

- (1) a. The book is difficult for me.
- b. For me, this task is easy.

The benefactive/experiencer PP (henceforth, BEPP) usually shows up in the position immediately following the *tough* adjective, as in (1a), and in the sentence-initial position, as in (1b). This squib will be concerned with the syntax and semantics of the BEPP.

Let us start by considering the semantic properties of the BEPP following a *tough* adjective. It has sometimes been argued that *tough* adjectives should be divided into two groups:

- (2) difficult, easy, hard, tough, ...
- (3) bad, dangerous, good, pleasant, ...

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This dichotomy has an obvious intuitive support. For example, Nanni (1978) notes that the adjectives in (2) describe "the work or effort involved in an activity" and those in (3) express "the value or benefit involved in some activity." In addition to this semantic contrast, there is another contrast between the two groups of *tough* adjectives:

- (4) a. ??Sailing is hard for John, though he doesn't think so.  
b. Sailing is good for John, though he doesn't think so.

(Dry (1977))

It seems reasonable to suppose that the example (4a) is unacceptable since the main clause implies John's point of view (henceforth, POV) and consequently is contradictory to the subordinate clause. On the other hand, (4b) is acceptable because the main clause implies not John's POV but some benefit to John, and can be consistent with the subordinate clause. This shows that the BEPP following a *tough* adjective can be ambiguous between the POV and the benefit readings.

Next let us examine how the BEPP behaves in the sentence-initial position. Consider the following examples:

- (5) a. ??For John, sailing is hard, though he doesn't think so.  
b. ??For John, sailing is good, though he doesn't think so.

Now it is possible to argue that these examples are unacceptable for the same reason given above for (4a). Then, the BEPP in (5b) cannot be ambiguous in the sentence-initial position: it is John's POV that the BEPP expresses there.

This fact supports the claim made by Sato and Kishida (2009) that the syntactic derivation of examples with an experiencer argument involves a projection named *Point-of-View Projection* (POVP) on top of ordinarily postulated functional projections such as Tense Phrase (TP). The BEPPs in (5) occupy [Spec, POVP] and express John's POV.

Sato and Kishida also argue that POV expressions undergo covert movement into [Spec, POVP] at LF. This also allows us to account for the following examples with an adjective belonging to the group (2):

- (6) a. Pictures of *himself* are difficult for *John*.  
 b. Books about *herself* have become easy for *Mary*.

(Pesetsky (1987))

Note that in each of the sentences there is no place into which to reconstruct the subject NP containing the reflexive.

The BEPP seems to behave in the same way as the so-called scene-setting expression:

- (7) a. For John, how easy is it to read the book?  
 b. It is easy to read the book, for John anyway.  
 (8) a. In Ben's office, who is the absolute dictator?  
 b. Rosa is riding a horse, in Ben's picture anyway.

(Reinhart (1976))

If this reasoning is correct, the POV analysis may be applied to the scene-setting expression.

Now let us consider the structural properties of the BEPP immediately following the *tough* adjective. At first glance, this BEPP seems to be selected and licensed by the *tough* adjective. Notice also that other types of adjectives, such as Class A and Class S adjectives in the sense of Silva and Thompson (1977), do not co-occur with the BEPP:

- (9) a.\*You are kind for me.  
 b.\*Bad eyesight is common for me.

This speculation, however, is not correct. The BEPP and the *tough* adjective do not constitute an AP, as shown by the following examples:

- (10) a.\*How difficult for me will the puzzle be?  
b.\*Hard for me is what Professor Suzuki is.

The ill-formedness of the examples above suggests that the BEPP is located outside of the AP headed by the *tough* adjective and the former is not selected by the latter.

One might claim that the BEPP is an adjunct, but this claim is not empirically borne out. Consider the following sentences:

- (11) a. Who will the puzzle be difficult for?  
b. Who is it hard for even to be polite to us?  
(Langendoen and Pullum (1977))

The BEPP tolerates the extraction of its object NP, and this demonstrates that the BEPP is not an adjunct but a complement.

A remaining possibility is that the BEPP is selected by the copula *be*. This analysis is a viable one. First, it presupposes that the BEPP lies in the VP headed by the copula. This is confirmed by the following examples:

- (12) a. Will the puzzle be difficult for our children?  
b. Yes, it will [<sub>VP</sub>  $\phi$  ].  
c. No, it will not [<sub>VP</sub>  $\phi$  ].

Second, the analysis predicts that the BEPP may occur away from a *tough* adjective, and this prediction is correct, as the following sentences show:

- (13) a. This is an easy book for John.  
b. Jiro was a tough negotiator for them.

And third, the analysis implies that the occurrence of the BEPP depends on the presence of the copula *be*. This is also confirmed by the following examples:

- (14) a. Mary found John to be easy for her to please.  
b.??Mary found John easy for her to please.

These observations allow us to conclude that the BEPP is a complement selected by the copula *be*.

To sum up, this squib has argued that the sentence-initial BEPP occurring with a *tough* adjective occupies [Spec, POVP] and denotes the point of view of its object, and that the BEPP is a complement selected by the copula *be*.

## References

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