

# Ukrainian Middle Constructions: Agent Marking, Aspect and Adverbial Modifiers in Native Speaker Judgements

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## Theoretical Background

- Middle constructions express facilitation or ease of action without a clear agent
- East Slavic languages mark middles using reflexive suffixes like *-ся*
- Ukrainian combines *-ся* with adverbials like *легко*, *добре* to denote facilitation
- Oblique experiencers (*мені*, *у мене*) express the subject's domain or perspective
- Overt agents may appear in non-canonical roles
- Aspectual and lexical variation influences middle interpretation

## Methodology & Sources

### Survey tool & materials:

3-part questionnaire in Google Forms with Ukrainian middle constructions differing in:

- oblique subject (*мені*, *у мене*)
- adverbial modifier (*легко*, *сам*)
- aspect (*perfective*, *imperfective*)

### Participants:

The study included native speakers of Ukrainian aged 18 to 65. The sample consisted of 72.5% women and 27.5% men, representing all regions of Ukraine as well as members of the Ukrainian diaspora.

## Research Questions

- Which features influence the choice between *мені* and *у мене* in Ukrainian middle constructions?
- What is the relationship between verbal aspect (*perfective* vs. *imperfective*) and the preference for *мені* or *у мене*?
- Which verb classes are more likely to occur with *мені* or *у мене*, and what patterns emerge from their distribution?
- Can *у мене* and *мені* be used interchangeably without changing the meaning?

## Results & Conclusions

- *У мене* → external/spatial context, control/tools (*У мене легко відчиняються двері/The door opens easily for me*)
- *Мені* → internal facilitation, habitual/mental state (*Мені легко спиться/I sleep well*)
- *Легко* → default middle marker for general facilitation
- *Сам* → rare, episodic, denotes spontaneity
- Perfective + *у мене* → completed, controlled events
- Imperfective + *мені* → processual, experiencer-centred actions
- Case and aspect align with type of facilitation and agency perception

## Comparative Use of *мені* and *у мене* in Ukrainian Middles

| Feature            | <i>У мене</i>                                   | <i>Мені</i>                                     |
|--------------------|---|---|
| Type of experience | Spatial, episodic, object- or tool-related      | Internal, habitual, cognitive                   |
| Preferred aspect   | Perfective                                      | Imperfective                                    |
| Focus              | Possession or contrast                          | Subjective state or facilitation                |
| Typical verbs      | <i>помитися</i> (wash), <i>продатися</i> (sell) | <i>спатися</i> (sleep), <i>писатися</i> (write) |