

### Passives of Reflexive Verbs

(i) Reflexive (and reciprocal) verbs typically do not passivize. However, German (1) and Icelandic (2) allow Passives of Reflexive verbs (PoRs). (1, 2) are impersonal passives lacking a nominative DP. Other languages do not form PoRs even if they have impersonal passives and so-called SE-reflexives (e.g. Dutch or, for most speakers, Norwegian). I show that PoRs challenge most theories of reflexivity and argue that SE-reflexives are subject to core syntactic licensing via  $\phi$ -feature AGREE with a local antecedent. PoRs are licensed if a language makes Default Agreement available not only for unvalued T but also for SE-reflexives with unvalued  $\phi$ -features.

(1) weil sich hier täglich gewaschen wird (2) Það var baðað sig á laugardögum  
 as SE<sub>ACC</sub> here daily washed is expl. was bathed SE<sub>ACC</sub> on Saturdays

(ii) Icelandic PoRs are discussed in the context of the ‘new passive’ (Maling & Siggurjónsdóttir [M&S] 2003). But the Icelandic PoR is not a genuine ‘new passive’ as it is accepted by most speakers who reject the latter (e.g. Eythórssón 2008). German PoRs are examined in Plank (1993) and Vater (1995), among others. For both languages, questionnaire studies confirm the following generalization: Only *inherently reflexive* verbs (John wonders SE/\*Mary) and *naturally reflexive* verbs (John washes SE/Mary) form PoRs; the latter “carry inherent in their meaning the lack of expectation that the two semantic roles they make reference to will refer to distinct entities” (Kemmer 1993). *Naturally disjoint* verbs (John kills Mary/SE) are rejected in PoRs.

(iii) PoRs raise four theoretical questions that turn out to be problematic for many current theories of reflexivity. **Q1:** How can the reflexive pronoun get **accusative case**? Note that Icelandic reflexives inflect for case and German reflexives arguably have case as they are replaced by case-inflected pronouns with 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person antecedents (3a). **Q2:** What is the **antecedent** of the reflexive? **Q3:** Why are PoRs acceptable only with **inherently** or **naturally reflexive** verbs? **Q4:** Why don’t **other languages** (with impersonal passive and SE-anaphor) have PoRs?

(iv) As to Q2, one could suggest that PoRs are hidden transitives with a covert subject (see [M&S]) or that the implicit argument of passives can antecede the reflexive. Both hypotheses give no answer to Q3. Since the implicit argument of passives behaves in all other respects similar across languages, the second hypothesis can also not answer Q4. German provides a further counter-argument: German PoRs combine with *by*-phrases which can even introduce 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronouns (3b). While subject and object agree in Person and Number in the active (3a), no agreement between the *by*-phrase and the object is possible in PoRs (3b); instead, the 3<sup>rd</sup> person reflexive is obligatory. We must conclude that the reflexive in PoRs is not syntactically bound by its semantic antecedent but gets default realization.

(3) a. Nur wir waschen uns / \*sich hier täglich (active reflexive)  
 only we wash us.acc / SE.acc here daily  
 b. Nur von uns wird sich / \*uns hier täglich gewaschen (PoR, Plank 1993)  
 only by us is SE.acc / \*us.acc here daily washed

(v) An unaccusative analysis of reflexive verbs (e.g. McGinnis 1998) is untenable for German and Icelandic. An account that derives all types of reflexive verbs by a Reflexivization process bundling the internal with the external  $\theta$ -role (Reinhard & Siloni 2005) cannot account for Q3 and Q4 (and Q1, especially because these authors assume that the reflexive pronoun acts as a case absorber). Doron & Rappaport Hovav [D&RH] (2007) propose that only inherently and naturally reflexive verbs are derived by a process of (lexical) Reflexivization, while all other reflexive verbs involve anaphoric binding in the syntax. While Q1 and Q4 remain open, their theory seems to answer Q2 and Q3: PoRs involve a marker of Reflexivization, not an anaphor subject to Principle A of the Binding Theory. D&RH take Reflexivization to be a lexical process that identifies a verb’s external with an internal  $\theta$ -role; as a result only one argument with a complex  $\theta$ -role (agent + theme) is merged in the syntax. But the domain of both inherent and natural reflexivity exceeds the verbal co-argument domain, as shown for example by (4a, b) involving a possessive reflexive pronoun. Only (4a) is acceptable, arguably because (4a) but not (4b) involves a naturally reflexive relation. But a possessor cannot enter a lexical process with a verb’s external  $\theta$ -role. That both agent and theme of naturally reflexive verbs can be

focused independently both in the active (5a) and in the passive (5b) also suggests that no identification of  $\theta$ -roles has taken place (cf. Labelle 2008 and D&RH for exactly this argument in the active); instead, the agent and the theme must be realized independently in the syntax.

(4) a. *Það var haldið með [sínu liði]* (Icelandic, M&S 2002)  
 it was held with SELF's team

'People supported their own team'

b. \**Það var oft kaffært [bróður sinn] í sundlauginni*  
 it was often dunked brother SELF's in.the.pool

(5) a. *Am Morgen wäscht sie sich immer SELBER* (German)  
 at morning washes she SE always self (✓ agent focus, ✓ theme focus)

b. *Am Morgen wird sich immer SELBER gewaschen*  
 at morning is SE always self washed (✓ agent focus, ✓ theme focus)

(vi) I argue that ALL SE-reflexive verbs involve an anaphor; inherent and natural reflexivity is post-syntactically determined on the basis of conceptual knowledge about the events expressed in the vP. Anaphoric binding is based on a syntactic AGREE-relation between a DP-antecedent and an anaphor, the latter a set of unvalued  $\phi$ -features (e.g. Burzio 1998, Reuland 2001, Chomsky 2008). I propose that the anaphor probes the tree upwards for an antecedent that values its  $\phi$ -features (see Baker 2008 or Wurmbrand 2010 a.o. for upwards probing). This AGREE-relation is evaluated at the interfaces. At PF, the anaphor is spelt-out according to the  $\phi$ -features of the antecedent. At LF, the AGREE-relation is interpreted as semantic binding between the probing anaphor and the goal-DP.

(vi) In PoRs, the anaphor lacks a DP-antecedent. Leaving interpretation aside for a moment, PoRs should crash for purely formal reasons. This prediction is correct for most languages, but it is incorrect for German and Icelandic. But note that a similar problem arises already in simple impersonal passives without an anaphor (*Hier wird getanzt* - Here is danced). No DP is available in (6a) to value the  $\phi$ -features of T. In some languages (e.g. German, Icelandic, but also Dutch), Default Agreement (DA) saves the derivation of impersonal passives: T gets valued and realized with default features (e.g. Ruys 2010). DA is a last resort mechanism taking place before Transfer that avoids a crash at the interfaces. I argue that the situation in PoRs is similar but more complex (6b), thereby deriving that languages with PoRs are a subset of the languages with impersonal passives. T probes and agrees with the anaphor but since both are unvalued, no valuation can take place (cf. the *anaphor agreement effect* in Woolford 1999). In German and Icelandic, the unvalued 'T-anaphor' chain can be rescued by DA (Q2). Other languages (e.g. Dutch) can apply DA only to bare T (deriving 6a) but not to a complex agreement-chain between a head and an anaphor (as needed for 6b) (Q4). (Note that stipulating a covert expletive would make it hard to derive the difference between German/Icelandic and Dutch.)

(6) a.  $[_{TP} T_{\phi} [_{auxP} aux_{pass} [_{VP} V_{pass} [_{VP} dance ]]]$  (impersonal passive)

b.  $[_{TP} T_{\phi} [_{auxP} aux_{pass} [_{VP} V_{pass} [_{VP} wash REFL_{\phi} ]]]$  (PoR)

In German and Icelandic, (6b) survives syntactically. But since the anaphor cannot be semantically bound, a successful interpretation needs conceptual backing; this is only provided if the vP denotes an event that is conceptualized as inherently or naturally reflexive (Q3). That is, while at LF the internal argument of a PoR is still unbound ( $\lambda y. \exists x. [x \text{ washes } y]$ ) our conceptual knowledge about washing events (naturally reflexive) drives the strong expectation that the agent and the theme are identical. This leads to a successful reflexive interpretation ( $\exists x. [x \text{ washes } x]$ ). To derive accusative on the reflexive, I propose a post-syntactic (PF) case theory that relates aspects of a dependent case approach with the idea that agreement with T is involved in the determination of morphological case (cf. Marantz 1991, Baker & Vinokurova 2009). Nominative is default and accusative is dependent case. But accusative is not dependent on a nominative DP in the same local domain (NOM  $\rightarrow$  ACC) but accusative is realized on a DP if *something else* valued local T (valued T  $\rightarrow$  ACC). In transitives, T is valued by the closest DP and, therefore, a lower DP in the same local domain gets marked with dependent case at PF. The higher DP that valued T gets default case. PoRs lack a DP that could value T. Instead, T is valued by DA. This is enough to trigger at PF dependent case on the reflexive (Q1).