

Passives of Reflexive Verbs, Impersonal Passives and Default Agreement

(i) Reflexive verbs typically do not passivize. However, German (1) and Icelandic (2) (and Lithuanian) 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 (e.g. Dutch). I argue that PoRs are licensed if a language makes Default Agreement available not only for unvalued T but also for SE-anaphors with syntactically unvalued ϕ -features.

- (1) weil hier sich täglich gewaschen wird
because here REFL.ACC daily washed is
- (2) Það var baðað sig á laugardögum
expl. was bathed REFL.ACC on Saturdays

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 (Eythórsson 2008). German PoRs are examined in Plank (1993) or Vater (1995). The following generalization emerges for both languages: PoRs are possible only with *inherent reflexive* verbs (John wonders REFL/*Mary) and *naturally reflexive* verbs (John washes REFL/Mary); 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/REFL) are typically rejected in PoRs.

(ii) PoRs raise four theoretical questions that turn out to be problematic for all current theories of reflexivity. **Q1:** How can the reflexive pronoun get **accusative case**? Icelandic has a case-inflected reflexive paradigm and German reflexive pronouns clearly have case as they are replaced by a case-inflected pronoun with 1st/2nd person antecedents (3a). **Q2:** What is the **antecedent** of the reflexive in PoRs? **Q3:** Why are PoRs acceptable only with **inherent** or **naturally reflexive** verbs? **Q4:** Why don’t **other languages** with SE-anaphor allow PoRs?

(iii) As to Q2, one could suggest that PoRs are hidden transitives with a covert external argument (see [M&S]) or that the implicit argument of passives antecedes the reflexive. Both hypotheses give no answer to Q3, the second to Q4. German provides a further counter-argument: German PoRs combine with *by*-phrases which can even introduce 1st/2nd 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 3rd person reflexive is obligatory. We must conclude that the reflexive in PoRs is not syntactically anteceded by its semantic antecedent; it gets default realization.

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

(iv) An unaccusative analysis of reflexive verbs (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 θ -role (Reinhard & Siloni 2005) cannot account for Q3 and Q4 (and Q1). Doron & Rappaport Hovav [D&RH] (2007) propose that only inherent 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 semantically identifies a verb’s external with an internal θ -role. But the domain of 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 an NP-possessor cannot enter a lexical process with a verb’s external θ -role. That both, agent and theme of naturally reflexive verbs can independently be focused in the

active (5a) and in the passive (5b) also suggests that no identification of θ -roles has taken place (cf. Labelle 2008, D&RH 2007).

(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 in the.pool

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

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

(v) I argue that ALL SE-reflexive verbs involve an anaphor; inherent and natural reflexivity is post-syntactically determined. Anaphoric binding is based on a syntactic AGREE-relation between a DP-antecedent and the anaphor, the latter a set of a D-feature plus unvalued ϕ -features (Burzio 1996, Reuland 2001). The antecedent probes down the tree and values the ϕ -features of the anaphor (see below for an alternative). At PF, the anaphor is spelt-out with the ϕ -features of the antecedent. At LF, the AGREE-relation is interpreted as semantic binding.

(vi) In PoRs, the anaphor lacks a DP-antecedent. Leaving interpretation aside, PoRs should crash for formal reasons. This prediction is correct for most languages, but it is incorrect for German and Icelandic. A similar problem arises already in simple impersonal passives without an anaphor (*Hier wird getanzt* - Here is danced). No DP is available to value the ϕ -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 2007). DA is a last resort mechanism to avoid a crash at the interfaces.

(vii) I argue the situation in PoRs is similar but more complex, thereby accounting for the observation 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 Woolforth 1999). In German and Icelandic, the unvalued 'T-anaphor' chain can be rescued by DA (Q2). Other languages (e.g. Dutch) can realize DA only on T but not an agreement-chain involving the head T and an anaphoric D-element (Q4). Since the anaphor cannot be semantically bound, a successful interpretation at LF needs conceptual backing; this is provided if the vP denotes an event that is conceptualized as inherently or naturally reflexive (Q3). To derive accusative on the anaphor, I propose a case theory that relates aspect of a dependent case approach with the idea that agreement with T is involved in case-determination (cf. Marantz 1991, Baker & Vinokourov 2009). Nominative is default case 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. The higher DP that valued T gets default case. In PoRs, there is no DP available to value T. Instead, T is valued by DA. This is enough to trigger dependent case on the variable (Q1).

(viii) Cases like (4), where an anaphor is embedded in a PP or DP require a shift in perspective. I propose that unvalued anaphors probe the tree upwards (cf. Baker 2008). In the active counterpart of (4), the anaphor agrees with and gets valued by the subject DP. In (4), the anaphor agrees with T and DA formally rescues this agreement chain.

Selected References: Baker, M. 2008. *The Syntax of Agreement and Concord*. Cambridge University Press • Doron E. & M. Rappaport Hovav 2007. Towards a Uniform Theory of Valence changing Operations. *Proceedings of IATL 23* • Kemmer, S. 1993. *The middle voice*. John Benjamins • Labelle, M. 2008. The French Reflexive and Reciprocal *se*. *NLLT* 26:833-876 • Reuland, E. 2001. Primitives of Binding. *LI* 32, 439-492.