

Reflexivization: in syntax or in lexicon

Reinhart, Tanya, and Tal Siloni 2005. The lexicon-syntax parameter: reflexivization and other arity operations, *Linguistic Inquiry* 36.3. 389-436.

The core idea: The grammar includes an active lexicon, which allows the application of derivational operations; reflexivization can happen either in the lexicon (prior to syntax) or in syntax.

Arity operations – operations that affect the *arity* (valency) of a predicate (suppress the syntactic realization of one of the thematic roles of the verb). Arity operations are universal, but the level at which they apply (lexicon vs. syntax) is a parametric choice.

The lex-syn parameter

Universal Grammar allows thematic arity operations to apply in the lexicon or in the syntax.

Reflexive verbs (for R&S) – verbs denoting an action that the Agent argument applies to itself, or, in certain languages, a state of mind the Experiencer argument has with regard to itself; morphologically derived forms that can be paraphrased using reflexive pronouns.

- (1) a. Jean **s'**est lavé. (French)
Jean SE is washed
'Jean washed.'
- b. On **se** opraó. (Serbo-Croatian)
he SE washed
'He washed.'
- c. Ona pomylas'. (Russian)
she washed(REFL)
'She washed.'

The data: French, Hebrew, Russian, etc.

First, we need to ensure that reflexivized predicates in these languages are indeed intransitive, and to check whether they are unergative or unaccusative.

French: *se* is not an object clitic, reflexivized predicates are not transitive.

Argument: Kayne (1975), causative constructions

When the verb embedded under the causative verb *faire* 'make' is a transitive verb, its subject must be introduced by the preposition *à* 'to'. When the lower verb is intransitive, its subject cannot be introduced by *à*.

- (2) a. Je le ferai laver **à** Paul. (French)
I him_{cl} make(FuT) wash to Paul
'I will make Paul wash him.'
- b. Je ferai **se** laver Paul.
I make(FuT) SE wash Paul
'I will make Paul wash himself.'

Pesetsky (1995) and Sportiche (1998): reflexivized predicates in French (and perhaps other languages, i.e. Hebrew, Russian) are **unaccusatives** (*se* replaces the external argument).

Counter-arguments:

In French: *en*-cliticization (*en* can cliticize only out of object position),

- (3) a. Il en est arrivé trois hier soir. (French)
there of+them_{cl} is arrived three yesterday evening
'There arrived three of them yesterday evening.'
- b. *Il s'en est lavé beaucoup dans ces douches publiques
there SE of+them_{cl} is washed many in these showers public
- c. Il s'en est cassé beaucoup dans ce lave-vaisselle.
there SE of+them_{cl} is broken many in this dishwasher
'Many of them broke in this dishwasher.'

In Russian: genitive under negation (only for internal arguments).

- (4) a. Ne objavilos studentov. (Russian)
NEG showed-up students(GEN)
'Students did not show up.'
- b. *Ne pomylos' studentov.
NEG washed students(GEN)
- c. *Ne tancevalo studentov.
NEG danced students(GEN)

→ reflexivized predicates in French, Russian, etc. are **intransitive, unergative** (the external argument 'survives').

Back to **the lex-syn parameter:**

Universal Grammar allows thematic arity operations to apply in the lexicon or in the syntax.

Lexicon: Hebrew, Russian, Dutch, Hungarian.

Syntax: Romance languages, German, Serbo-Croatian, Czech, and Greek.

A given arity operation can reduce (eliminates) a θ -role of the verbal grid altogether, or just disable the syntactic realization of the argument corresponding to this role, while still assigning the role in the semantics (cf. passive voice vs. formation of unaccusatives).

Reflexivization – two available θ -roles are assigned to the same syntactic argument. Reflexivization operation is **not** a reduction operation, but an operation that takes two θ -roles and forms one complex θ -role → **bundling**.

- (5) **Reflexivization bundling**
[θ_i] [θ_j] → [$\theta_i - \theta_j$], where θ_i is an external θ -role.
- (6) **Reflexivization in the lexicon**
a. Bundling: Operation (5) applies on the verb's grid.
b. * Case: The accusative Case feature of the verb is reduced.
+ External mapping (merging) is preferred if possible.
- (7) **Reflexivization in syntax**
*The lexicon interface guideline: the syntactic component cannot manipulate θ -grids.
a. Case: Case is reduced by the appropriate morphology (such as the clitic *se*).
b. Bundling: Operation (5) applies to unassigned θ -roles, upon merger of the external θ -role.

Diagnostics for the parameter setting (lexicon or syntax)

- **Lexicon** languages **do not** allow **ECM** reflexives

Reflexivization of ECM predicates involves θ -roles of two distinct predicates. In the lexicon, there is no relation whatsoever between these predicates. Only the syntax puts them together.

- (8) *Okos-nak gondol-kod-t-unk. (Hungarian)
clever-DAT think-REFL-PAST-I PL+INDEF.OBJ.AGR
(Intended meaning: 'We thought ourselves clever.')
- (9) Peter se smatra [AP pametnim]. (Serbo-Croatian)
Peter SE considers intelligent(INST)
'Peter considers himself intelligent.'
- A **lexical** setting **allows** reflexive **nominalizations** while a syntactic setting seems to disallow them
- (10) a. l'intérêt de Marie pour ce livre
the interest of Marie for this book
'Marie's interest in this book'
- b. Marie s'intéresse à ce livre.
Marie SE interest to this book
'Marie is interested in this book.'
- In **syntax** languages, reflexivization is a **productive** operation; in lexicon languages, reflexivization is limited
 - Reflexivization involving a dative argument (**dative** reflexivization) is possible when the parameter is set to "**syntax**," but seems to be impossible when it is set to "lexicon."
For example, *se* can clearly reduce accusative or dative Case:
- (11) a. Jean s'est acheté une voiture. (French)
Jean SE is bought a car
'Jean bought a car for himself.'
- b. Jean s'est envoyé une lettre.
Jean SE is sent a letter
'Jean sent a letter to himself.'

The lex-syn parameter and other arity operations

1. Reciprocalization ← similar to reflexivization, **bundling**
2. Decausativization – formation of unaccusatives and Subject-experiencer verbs
← not bundling but complete **reduction** of an external role
3. Passives, Impersonals, and Middles ← **saturation**

Passivization involves an arity operation labeled saturation, which saturates the external θ -role by existential closure; that is, the θ -role is assigned to a variable bound by an existential operator. The role targeted by saturation is present at the level of interpretation, for example, it licenses the addition of an Instrument.