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## Anaphors and reflexives\*

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### 1. Introduction

The classical Binding Theory explained the behavior of anaphors as locally A-bound NPs. It had little to say about inherently reflexive predicates like *wash* in *Max washed*. A host of data related to the interpretation of implicit arguments led Williams (1987) to argue that the Binding Theory should be formulated over thematic roles, rather than NP positions. That approach was fleshed out in great detail in Reinhart & Reuland (1993), with strong implications for Tanya Reinhart's work on the content of thematic roles. Reinhart & Siloni (2005, 400) propose a "reflexivization operation [...] that takes two  $\theta$ -roles and forms one complex  $\theta$ -role. [They] call this operation bundling".

There are two puzzling aspects of Reinhart and Siloni's (2005) paper. While they claim that a bundled reflexive role is assigned to a single NP argument, they write that the bundled roles must be dissociated in semantics, even for reflexives formed in the lexicon (*ibid.*, 401). (1) below reproduces their (26c), (27a,b), respectively. Instead of (1b), which we would expect from the syntactic representation in (1a), we get (1c). This is puzzling, because it really undoes the effect of the bundling operation in favor of a bound variable treatment of reflexives. The other puzzling aspect is the lex-syn parameter: Why should some languages lack lexically listed transitive-reflexive pairs of verbs?

- (1)    a.    Syntactic output:  $\text{Max}_{[\text{Agent-Theme}]}$  washed.  
      b.     $\exists e$  [wash(e) & [Agent-Theme](e, Max)]  
      c.     $\exists e$  [wash(e) & Agent(e, Max) & Theme(e, Max)]

In this squib I show that certain contexts appear to favor (1b) over (1c) and explore the consequences of this fact for Reinhart and Siloni's (2005, 408) *lex-syn parameter*.

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\*I offer this squib to Martin Prinzhorn who led me to discover the remnants of meaning and mental representation, and a *no-theory* theory thereof in the spring semester of 1990. I thank my colleagues in Nantes for their help with the French data, and Winnie Lechner, Dominique Sportiche, and the editors for valuable comments.

## 2. The dissociation of roles under focus

I recently came across Sportiche (2014), whose observations amount to dissociating under focus what Reinhart and Siloni analyze as bundled roles.<sup>1</sup> Sportiche uses the ambiguity between strict and sloppy readings of reflexives under focus. The essential part of his paradigm is as follows (his examples (14), (15), (18)). Sportiche observes that French (2a) can be denied as in (2b) and (2c), but not as in (2d)<sup>2</sup>. The two possible answers highlight two different readings of (2a). The strict reading is exemplified by the dialogue (2a)-(2c), where the internal argument is assigned a referent, *Pierre*, and that reference is kept constant in the dialogue. The sloppy reading is exemplified in the dialogue (2a)-(2b). On the sloppy reading, intelligence is attributed to the respective local subject: *Jean* in (2a), *moi* in (2b).

- (2) a. Seul Pierre se trouve intelligent.  
 only Pierre SE finds smart  
 ‘Only Pierre finds himself smart.’
- b. Non, moi aussi je me trouve intelligent.  
 no me too I me find smart  
 ‘No, I find myself smart too.’
- c. Non, moi aussi je le trouve intelligent.  
 no me too I him find smart  
 ‘No, I find him smart too.’
- d. #Non, Pierre me trouve intelligent moi aussi.  
 no Pierre me finds smart me too  
 ‘No, Pierre finds me smart too.’

I suggest restating the strict-sloppy asymmetry of (2) in terms of role-bundling as follows.<sup>3</sup> On the sloppy reading (2a)-(2b), focus is on the argument bearing the bundled reflexive role. Negation of that argument triggers an alternative reflexive proposition. On the strict reading (2a)-(2c), focus is on the argument bearing the sole experiencer role of the main verb. The argument bearing the theme role of the small clause predicate *intelligent* is dissociated from the focus, and therefore remains constant. This shows that the two roles assigned in (2a) are independently accessible, which favors (1c) over (1b).

<sup>1</sup> The discussion of pronouns and their formalization has a rich tradition in generative grammar going back to Postal’s 1966/1970 seminal paper. Cf., Partee (1970) and subsequent work for a discussion of coreference relations, Dimitriadis et al. (2017) for a recent special issue on the grammar of reflexives, and Spathas (2010), Lechner (2012), Sauerland (2013) on their semantics. A test very similar to Sportiche’s is used extensively in Haiden (2005) to distinguish reflexives from reflexive-marked anti-causatives. The limitations discussed in this squib apply equally to Sportiche’s and to Haiden’s tests.

<sup>2</sup> Sportiche marks (2d) with ?? . However, the sentence as such is fully acceptable in isolation. It is deviant in reply to (2a) only. I therefore chose to replace ?? by #.

<sup>3</sup> Notice that the bundling operation can apply in syntax, targeting the roles of different predicates under certain conditions discussed in section 4.1.2 of Reinhart & Siloni (2005).

I will now show that the strict/sloppy ambiguity is not systematic. There are verbs which qualify as reflexive due to the fact that two distinct roles are assigned to the subject, but which disallow the dissociation of those roles under focus.

### 3. Directional auto-motion

If (1c) is the correct interpretation of reflexive constructions, then we should be able to reproduce the strict/sloppy ambiguity with any reflexive verb. Consider reflexive-marked verbs of directional auto-motion.<sup>4</sup> Verbs in this class assign a cause role to the instigator of the motion, and a theme role to the moved object.

- (3) a. Nur Hans hat sich in die erste Reihe gedrängt.  
 only Hans has SE in the first row pushed  
 ‘Only Hans forced himself into the first row.’
- b. Nein, auch Kurt hat sich in die erste Reihe gedrängt.  
 no also Kurt has SE in the first row pushed  
 ‘No, Kurt, too, pushed himself into the first row.’
- c. #Nein, auch Kurt hat ihn in die erste Reihe gedrängt.  
 no also Kurt has him in the first row pushed  
 ‘No, Kurt, too, pushed him into the first row.’
- d. #Nein, er hat auch Kurt in die erste Reihe gedrängt.  
 no he has also Kurt in the first row pushed  
 ‘No, he pushed Kurt into the first row, too.’

Let us first establish that *drängen* in (3a) assigns both an agent and a theme role. This is shown, first, by the fact that reflexive *drängen* has a transitive variant (4a), where the accusative is interpreted as a theme affected by the subject’s action. Second, the acceptability and the reading of (4b) shows that the subject of the reflexive variant must be both an agent and an argument of the directional PP: (4b) means that the pushing was on purpose, but that its result, the subject’s location in the first row, was unintentional. Finally, both the transitive and the reflexive variant of the verb imply that one of its arguments (the object in (4a), the reflexive subject in (4b)) occupies the target location for at least a brief moment.

- (4) a. Hans hat mich in die erste Reihe gedrängt.  
 Hans has me in the first row pushed  
 ‘Hans pushed me into the first row.’

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<sup>4</sup> Reflexive auto-motion verbs are a particularly important class for the *Theta System* because of their status with respect to event perception: While (caused) motion belongs in the domain of *folk physics* (covered by Reinhart’s feature *c*), spontaneous auto-motion is a cue for intentionality (covered by Reinhart’s feature *m*); cf., Haiden (2012). Intentionality in turn appears to be a crucial ingredient of reflexivization, cf., Reinhart (2000), Reuland (2017), and the discussion of French *se déplacer* below.

- b. Hans hat sich unabsichtlich in die erste Reihe gedrängt.  
 Hans has SE unintentionally in the first row pushed  
 ‘Hans unintentionally forced himself into the first row.’

Now consider the strict/sloppy paradigm with a reflexive-marked auto-motion verb in German (3). Unlike (2a), (3a) is not ambiguous. Only (3b) is a felicitous reply to (3a). The reason for this judgment is most likely related to the fact that auto-motion verbs like *sich drängen* ‘push forward’ are lexically specified as reflexive predicates whose agent and theme roles cannot be dissociated under focus.

French has reflexive auto-motion verbs, too. Consider the following paradigm: The transitive causative *déplacer* ‘move’ in (5a) alternates with two distinct reflexive-marked uses, one with an unintentional theme-subject (5b), the other one with an intentional agent (5c). Both reflexive-marked uses imply that the subject undergoes a caused change of location. This shows the presence of a theme role. Furthermore, (5c) is agentive, as evidenced by the possibility of a purpose clause, which is incompatible with (5b). I conclude from this that (5c) is an agentive reflexive, while (5b) is a reflexive-marked reduced unaccusative verb. Notice finally that the agentive reflexive *se déplacer* must be lexically listed on its own, because its subject is an agent [+c, +m],<sup>5</sup> unlike the subject of its transitive counterpart, which is a cause ([+c]).

- (5) a. Antoine/ la commotion a déplacé la cargaison.  
 Antoine the shock has moved the cargo  
 ‘Antoine/the shock moved the cargo.’
- b. La cargaison s’ est déplacée (\*afin de faire chavirer le bateau).  
 the cargo SE is moved in-order to make capsize the ship  
 ‘The cargo moved/shifted (\*in order to cause the ship to capsize).’
- c. Antoine s’ est déplacé à Paris (afin de régler ses affaires).  
 Antoine SE is moved to Paris in-order to settle his affaires  
 ‘Antoine went to Paris (in order to settle his affaires).’

Now turn to the strict-sloppy contrast. Notice that the the most salient reading of the predicates in (6) is *go to/make a journey*, which is the most natural way to interpret the self-movement of animates. The judgments indicated apply to this salient reading. I will get back to a different reading in section 4 below. Among the 11 French speakers I consulted, not one accepted (6c) as an answer to (6a). They all accept (6b) on the relevant reading.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup>On the feature notation for thematic roles, cf., Reinhart (2000), Haiden (2005, 2012), and note 4.

<sup>6</sup>A note on the marginality of (6c)-(6d) is in order. When transitive *déplacer* ‘move’ takes an intentional object, it is usually a group-denoting plural. Animate singletons are judged as anomalous in the object of *déplacer*, unless they have a stable location as a salient property (ib). This constraint is trivially satisfied in reflexive contexts, because the reflexive agent is permanently located with respect to itself. It appears that the lack of a sufficiently salient, stable location of the intentional internal argument renders (6c)-(6d) awkward.

- (6) a. Seul Jean-Luc s' est déplacé à la fête de l'Huma.  
only Jean-Luc SE is moved to the festival of l'Humanité  
'Only Jean-Luc went to the festival of l'Humanité.'
- b. Non, Arlette aussi s' est déplacé à la fête de l'Huma.  
no Arlette also SE is moved to the festival of l'Humanité  
'No, Arlette went to the festival of l'Humanité, too.'
- c. #Non, Arlette aussi a déplacé Jean-Luc à la fête de l'Huma.  
no Arlette also has moved Jean-Luc to the festival of l'Humanité  
'No, Arlette has dragged Jean-Luc to the festival of l'Humanité, too.'
- d. #Non, il a aussi déplacé Arlette à la fête de l'Huma.  
no he has also moved Arlette to the festival of l'Humanité  
'No, he dragged Arlette to the festival of l'Humanité, too.'

This behavior is perfectly coherent with what we found for German: certain reflexives do not allow the dissociation of the bundled theta roles under focus. For this class, (1b) appears to be the correct analysis.

#### 4. The remnants of the *lex-syn* 'parameter'

It seems clear that we cannot categorically exclude (1b) as an interpretation of reflexives. Certain reflexive verbs disallow the dissociation of their internal and external roles even under focus. It seems reasonable, too, that the non-dissociability of bundled roles is a property of lexically listed reflexives. The auto-motion examples discussed here are in sharp contrast with Sportiche's paradigm of a syntactically complex reflexive construction, which is systematically ambiguous between the strict and the sloppy reading. This observation is at odds with Reinhart and Siloni's (2005) *lex-syn parameter* which states that grammars make a once and for all choice between the lexical vs syntactic application of reflexivization. As a matter of fact, languages typically have both lexical and syntactic reflexives. The asymmetry is not even rigid with respect to individual lexical entries. Consider the German verb *rasieren* 'shave' in the following paradigm under default intonation, with primary stress on the subject NP.

- (7) a. Nur Hans hat sich rasiert.  
only Hans has SE shaved  
'Only Hans shaved.'
- 
- (i) a. Jean-Luc a déplacé des foules.  
Jean-Luc has moved INDEF.PL crowds  
'Jean-Luc attracted large crowds (to his meetings).'
- b. La maitresse a déplacé mon fils à une table différente.  
the teacher has moved my son to a table different  
'The teacher assigned my son to a different desk.'

- b. Nein, auch Kurt hat sich rasiert.  
no also Kurt has SE shaved  
'No, Kurt shaved, too.'
- c. #Nein, auch Kurt hat ihn rasiert.  
no also Kurt has him shaved  
'No, Kurt shaved him (Hans), too.'

Used as in Sportiche's paradigm (7), the verb *rasieren* patterns with lexical reflexives. Focus on the NP subject in (7a) excludes the dissociation of the bundled roles. Only (7b) can be a reply to (7a). (7c) cannot. Such is not the case when the reflexive pronoun is focused, as in (8). In this configuration, the reflexive pronoun can no longer be a marker of lexical reflexivization. It must be a bound argument that realizes the internal theta-role of the verb. Correspondingly, (8c) is an appropriate reply to (8). (8b) isn't.

- (8) a. Hans hat nur sich rasiert.  
Hans has only SE shaved  
'Hans shaved nobody but himself.'
- b. #Nein, auch Kurt hat sich rasiert.  
no also Kurt has SE shaved  
'No, Kurt shaved, too.'
- c. Nein, er hat auch Kurt rasiert.  
no he has also Kurt shaved  
'No, he shaved Kurt, too.'

I conclude that *lexical reflexivization* cannot be a property of a homogeneous lexical entry *rasieren*. It is a property of one of its uses only.<sup>7</sup>

Similar observations can be made for French. Let us reconsider (6) and imagine a situation where *Jean-Luc* and *Arlette* are security guards assigned to various events. (6) can then be read as dialogues on who changed who's assignment.<sup>8</sup> This is a proxy reading of (6a), because what is moved is not *Jean-Luc*'s self, but his name on the assignment chart. On this reading, both (6c) and (6d) are grammatical, but only (6c) can be a reply to (6a). In other words, (6) (on the proxy reading) behaves exactly like (2). This is not a surprise really, because a proxy reading on the theme argument requires its existence in the syntax. The proxy reading thus shows that the syntactic derivation co-exists with the lexical reflexive for the verb *se déplacer*.

To conclude, it appears that certain, lexically listed reflexive predicates assign a bundled, non-dissociable role to an argument, while syntactically formed reflexives assign two independent roles to a single argument. Crucially, both configurations can coexist in any

<sup>7</sup> Counterexamples to the lex-syn parameter actually abound. For example, Reinhart and Siloni's *Max washed* contrasts with *Max washed himself*. As expected, only the latter allows the dissociation of  $\theta$ -roles, as evidenced by the distribution of object comparative readings, cf., Dimitriadis & Que (2009).

<sup>8</sup> Thanks to Dominique Sportiche for pointing me to this context and the associated readings.



given grammar. The *lex-syn parameter* is therefore not a parameter, but a simple classification of constructions.

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