

Issues relating to reflexives

Tania E. Strahan

The University of Iceland, NORMS

This collection of six papers emerged from the conference *Relating to Reflexives*, held in April 2009 at the University of Iceland in Reykjavík. Some of these papers were presented at the conference in more or less the form here, others have been substantially revised and have been added to with brand new data, while others are contributions from inspired audience members!

The purpose of the conference was to collect ideas about the connections between reflexives, other anaphors and other noun phrases; reflexivisation and different kinds of prominence; and combinations of reflexives, syntactic domains, lexical and sentential ‘semantics’, and parsing. As with many topics of linguistic interest, the Scandinavian languages with their dialects and sociolects provide a fertile ground for this kind of comparative work, although this collection extends further than Scandinavia, with the inclusion of Spanish as well as English in the languages studied.

The papers in this volume cover topics ranging from reflexives which occur in nominalisations, pronouns with local antecedents, the question of whether reflexivisation rules should be centred around the reflexive itself or its antecedent, the development path of different active and passive constructions with reflexivisation as a stepping stone from one to the other, and the question of whether reflexives are semantic arguments or not, an issue which three papers of the current volume address. In addition, given the focus in this volume on data-driven analyses, an effort has been made by the authors to include the data that they analyse in appendices, to allow the reader to confirm the conclusions drawn, and to add to the growing body of publicly available corpora of reflexives.

This volume begins with Gísli Rúnar Harðarson’s inspection of Short-distance pronominals. This paper presents data from both Faroese and Icelandic concerning the failure of Principle B to apply to pronominals in PPs in these languages, producing instances of pronominals with local antecedents. The data comes from grammaticality judgements, and provides an intriguing challenge to any analysis that requires pronominals to be free in some minimal domain. It is an interesting paper in this set, since it deals with constructions that are often viewed from the perspective of reflexives, with pronominals being an afterthought. Instead, here, the pronominals take the front seat.

Next comes a joint contribution by Hlíf Árnadóttir, Thorhallur Eythórsson and Einar Freyr Sigurðsson looks at several new constructions in Icelandic that involve reflexives, focussing in particular on the development of the Reflexive Passive. This construction is similar to the New Passive in which the active subject is omitted, but the active object remains in non-nominative case. This

paper reports on findings from large-scale surveys and from their own corpus-based research of Icelandic journals and magazines since the nineteenth century, concluding that the argument status of the reflexive as either a semantic or syntactic argument of the verb is crucial to the acceptability of the reflexive in the various passive constructions.

Jóhannes Gísli Jónsson argues that reflexive *sig* is an argument in Icelandic. His paper is comparable to Ismael Teomiro's paper in that both consider the issue of inherent reflexivisation, i.e. predicates such as *monta sig* 'boast' and *barma sér* 'complain', where the reflexive cannot normally be replaced by any other nominal phrase. They also both draw similar conclusions, although the focus of their articles is very different. Jónsson, drawing on evidence from Icelandic showing that these reflexives are assigned a theta-role and that they are assigned case-features in the same way as other nominal phrases, reaches the conclusion that Icelandic *sig* is always an argument, even with inherently reflexive verbs, and this entails that reflexive verbs in Icelandic are always transitive. Ismael Teomiro, drawing on Spanish, reaches the conclusion that inherently reflexive verbs undergo an internal argument reduction operation in the lexicon, and that the requirement of the syntax for two arguments results in a last-resort change to the lexical entry of the verb. This results in both the reflexive and its antecedent being interpretable as two separate semantic elements, although Teomiro says that this is actually an epiphenomenon.

The issue of long-distance reflexives (LDR) is a well-researched topic, but there are still new aspects to consider. My contribution to this collection is a reappraisal of the standard analysis of LDR from a construction described as the domain in which a reflexive must or may find its antecedent, to a construction in which potential antecedents signal that they are available to be referred to with a reflexive. Evidence in both Icelandic and Faroese indicates that viewing at least LDR in this 'opposite direction' is not only desirable, but also achievable within the framework of Lexical-Functional Grammar.

Finally, in his paper, Björn Lundquist explores the issue of nominalisations containing reflexives in both Swedish and English. In a nominal phrase like *the hanging of the suicidal patient*, the hanging cannot be interpreted as being carried out by the patient, that is, this nominal phrase is necessarily non-reflexive. In Lundquist's analysis, the event-structure of verbs which are nominalised in this way are decomposed into two subevents, each of which has its own event-structure, which is carried through into the nominalisation. These event-structures carry information about each of the participants involved and thus give crucial information about the reflexivisation possibilities of the nominalisation.

This volume has been many years in the making, and presents an eclectic collection of approaches to the issue of accounting for reflexivisation. This was exactly the purpose of the conference in 2009, namely to bring together different

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viewpoints on this well-researched topic, and I think the present collection lives up to this goal as well.

Tania E. Strahan, Sydney, Australia, August 2011.