

# Compound reflexives: Morphology reflecting semantics

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## 1. Introduction

The prototypical reflexive context according to Faltz 1977 or Kemmer 1993 is a simple clause expressing a two-participant predication in which one participant is a human Agent or Experiencer and the other is a Patient or Stimulus, and in which the two participants refer to the same entity. A productive grammatical device which is obligatorily used to mark coreference in such a context is called reflexive marker.

Among reflexive markers, Faltz distinguishes verbal reflexive (i.e. Russian *-ся*) and NP-reflexive (i.e. Russian *себя*). An NP-reflexive can be monomorphemic (i.e. Dutch *zich*) or polymorphemic (i.e. English *himself*, Dutch *zichzelf*). The major morphological types of polymorphemic (or compound) reflexives are discussed in detail in Faltz's book. The most striking result of the cross-linguistic survey of reflexives is that the components of compound reflexives are the same in genetically and areally unrelated languages. This seems to signal that the structure of compound reflexives is semantically motivated. In the present paper I consider some basic types of compound reflexives trying to capture correlation between their morphological form and their function.

## 2. Basic types of compound reflexives

2.1. Some languages possess reflexive pronouns of the form <anaphoric pronoun + intensifier<sup>1</sup>>, as illustrated by (1a-c) from Irish:

- (1) a. ghortaigh Seán é.  
hurt.PST Sean him  
*Sean hurt him.*
- b. ghortaigh Seán é féin.  
hurt.PST Sean him SELF  
*Sean hurt himself.*
- c. bhí an t-easpag féin i láthair.  
be.PST DET bishop SELF present  
*The bishop himself was present.*

Diachronically, the same situation obtains in English: modern *himself* contains *self* which functioned as intensifier in Old English.

2.2. A considerable number of languages distinguishes between two reflexives — simple and compound, the latter being morphologically based on the former. In Dutch, for instance, the compound reflexive *zichzelf* may be analyzed as <simple reflexive + intensifier>:

- (2) a. Jan zag **zichzelf** / \***zich**.  
*Jan saw himself.*
- b. Jan heeft **zich** / ?**zichzelf** aangekleed.  
*Jan got dressed.*
- c. Jan is **zelf** gekomen.  
*Jan came himself.*

2.3. In many languages, i.e. in Azeri, Kazakh, Tatar, Bengali, Tsakhur, Bagvalal, compound reflexives are reduplicated simple reflexives. Note that in these languages reflexives coincide with intensifiers, as shown by (3b-c) from Tatar.

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<sup>1</sup> I use the term 'intensifier' proposed by Ekkehard König (König 1997)

- (3) a. abdulla □zɣn mak-t□.  
 Abdullah SELF.3SG.ACC praise-PST  
*Abdullah praised himself.*
- b. abdulla □z-□zɣn mak-t□.  
 Abdullah SELF-SELF.3SG.ACC praise-PST  
*Abdullah praised HIMSELF (=It was Abdullah whom Abdullah praised).*
- c. abdulla □zɣ a□ pɣ□ɣr-dɣ.  
 Abdullah SELF.3SG soup cook-PST  
*Abdullah cooked a soup himself.*

This coincidence allows us to consider the reduplicated reflexive as a particular instance of the construction <simple reflexive + intensifier> dealt with in 2.2.

### 3. Functional motivation of compound reflexives

In order to identify semantic characteristics of intensifiers within compound reflexives, let us investigate how the distribution of anaphoric pronouns, simple reflexives and their compound counterparts is determined.

#### 3.1. Syntactic position.

Compound reflexives require antecedents within the same clause, often being used in co-argument position (such as English *himself*). In contrast, simple reflexives (such as Tatar □zɣ) allow antecedents beyond the clause; for anaphoric pronouns (such as Irish *é*) local antecedents are not available.

#### 3.2. Semantics of the predicate.

Compound reflexives are used in the context of predicates implying the high distinguishability of participants of the events referred to, whereas simple reflexives tend to be used in the context of predicates which are semantically intermediate between one- and two-participant events (consider Dutch *zichzelf* vs. *zich* in (2a-b)).

#### 3.3. Emphasis.

Compound reflexives often occur in the so called emphatic reflexive context which implies contrasting and mutually exclusive alternatives, whereas simple reflexives are used in pragmatically unmarked contexts (consider Tatar □z-□zɣn vs. □zɣn in (3a-b)).

### 4. Intensifiers

Many language-specific and typological studies of intensifiers carried on last decade (Edmondson, Plank 1978, Plank 1979, König 1991, 1997, Kemmer 1995, König, Siemund 1996a,b, Lyutikova 1999) has shown that semantic characteristics of these items are very much the same in genetically and areally unrelated languages. Although different submeanings of intensifiers are distinguished, all of them may be subsumed under the following communicative task: to draw hearer's attention to the fact that information about some referent X in a current piece of discourse contradicts his expectations and that, therefore, knowledge about this referent should be modified. Furthermore, intensifiers are specially oriented to a very particular kind of hearer's knowledge about X and expectations based on this knowledge. Let P be a situation referred to by a particular sentence, q be a pragmatic scale representing probability of participating in P. Thus, for example, in (3c), such a scale is associated with the situation 'cook a soup'. Abdullah occupies the lowest position on q, i.e. he is not expected to participate in P. The intensified NP signals that despite expectations X (e.g. Abdullah in (3c)) does participate in P. What is corrected is not a position on the scale, but the probabilistic implication that X does not participate in P.

### 5. Intensifiers building compound reflexives: an explanation

The restrictions on the distribution of compound reflexives identified in section 3 all have to do with the notion of unexpectedness. I argue that the coreference between two clausal participants is unnatural, hence unexpected. This holds especially for the emphatic reflexive context and for the predicates with the high distinguishability of participants, because both of them presuppose non-coreference.

Therefore, the structure of compound reflexives containing intensifiers is not accidental. Intensifiers signal that despite hearer's expectation the referent X participating in the situation

P as Agent or Experiencer participates in this situation also as Patient or Stimulus and that, therefore, the hearer has to correct his expectations.

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