

## The puzzle of inherently reflexive predicates: passives and auxiliaries

Antonio Fábregas (University of Tromsø) & Rafael Marín (Université Lille 3)

THE PROBLEM. This talk discusses the nature of the compulsory *se* form of so-called inherently reflexive verbs in Spanish (1; Contreras and Rojas 1972, Masullo 1992, NGRAE 2009: §41.13), which semantically form a heterogeneous class whose common property is that in finite forms they cannot appear without a reflexive pronoun.

- (1) *abalanzarse* 'rush toward', *apropiarse* 'appropriate', *adentrarse* 'go into', *afanarse* 'to toil', *arremolinarse* 'to gather around', *arrepentirse* 'to regret', *atreverse* 'to dare', *contonearse* 'to swagger', *desvivirse* 'to go out of one's way', *dignarse* 'to deign', *empecinarse* 'to insist', *fugarse* 'to escape', *jactarse* 'to boast', *mofarse* 'to mock', *repantigarse* 'to lean back', *ufanarse* 'to boast'

One previously unnoticed property of these verbs is that most of them allow *estar*-passives in Spanish, where the subject is the same one as in the finite version (2a); there are a few, however, that do not allow this periphrastic form (2b). Note that the *se*-form disappears in this passive in the acceptable passives (2a).

- (2) a. X está {arrepentido / condolido / empecinado / adueñado / fugado / repantigado}  
 X is<sup>estar</sup> regretted / pitied / poised / appropriated / escaped / leaned back }  
 b. \*X está {abalanzado / contoneado / dignado / jactado / esforzado / pitorreado}  
 X is<sup>estar</sup> rushed-toward / swaggered / deigned / boasted / tried / mocked }

The existence of these contrasts poses two problems: (i) how can one capture the fact that *se*-pronouns are compulsory in finite forms, but not in (2a)?; (ii) how come the verbs in (2a) allow passives even though the subject there is identical to the subject in the finite form? Through the discussion of these two questions we hope to advance in our understanding of what *se*-forms are.

ANALYSIS 1. INHERENTLY-REFLEXIVE VERBS AS DEFECTIVE VERBS. The fact that a verb like *arrepentirse* 'regret' must have a *se*-form in finite forms, but no *se*-form in a participial construction makes it impossible to make a purely formal generalisation where the root *arrepent-* is only licensed in the context of the reflexive (along the lines of Harley 2014, Arregi & Nevins 2014), because then the root would not be licensed in (2a), where it is perfectly grammatical without a reflexive. Thus, here we explore a semantically based alternative, following the generalisation in (3).

- (3) In inherently reflexive predicates, the verbal layer is defective and the reflexive is necessary in order to license the external argument of the verb.

That is: even though conceptually the root defines a theta role for the external argument, the verb lacks the formal features to license that argument, in contrast to a 'normal' non reflexive verb (4a). The reflexive form is introduced as a syntactic device to license the presence of the argument, explaining that it must agree in number and person with the external argument (4b).

- (4) a. [vP Juan [v cantar<sub>i</sub> [VP t<sub>i</sub>]]]  
 b. [seP Juan<sub>j</sub> [se<sub>j</sub> [vP v arrepentir<sub>i</sub> [VP t<sub>i</sub>]]]]

ANALYSIS 2. THE AUXILIARY IN PERIPHRASTIC FORMS. When the participle is used, note that an auxiliary is necessary. Our claim is that *se* is impossible in this context because here the

auxiliary itself licenses the argument. We follow Camacho (2012) in the claim that *estar* is placed in AspP in Spanish.

(5) [AspP *Juan* [Asp *estar* [VP *arrepentido*]]]

Naturally, the present of this aspectual layer adds an additional meaning to the structure, as in the other cases where an auxiliary is used. This same licensing of the argument through aspect explains the existence of absolute participle structures like (6), on the assumption that they involve aspectual information additional to the participle.

(6) [CP *arrepentido*<sub>i</sub> [AspP *Juan* [Asp  $\emptyset$  [VP *t*<sub>i</sub>]]]

This proposal explains (i) why the *se*-form is banned in participles: the aspectual layer licenses the argument, making the *se*-form unnecessary; (ii) why the passive in (2a) does not change the subject, as the same argument is introduced in both cases, just changing the formal licenser; (iii) why the aspectual interpretation in the forms in (2a) is the one expected from *estar*-passives in Spanish –result state or ongoing state, cf. Fábregas & Marín (2017)–.

ANALYSIS 3. INHERENTLY-REFLEXIVE VERBS AS A HETEROGENEOUS CLASS. So what about the forms in (2b), why are they impossible in *estar*-passives. The core of the analysis is that the verbs in (2b) allow the licensing in (7a), but the licensing in (7b) is impossible given the semantic entailments associated to these roots, which are incompatible with the information added by the passive auxiliary.

(7) a. [seP **Juan**<sub>j</sub> [ **se**<sub>j</sub> [vP *v* *dignar*<sub>i</sub> [VP *t*<sub>i</sub>]]]  
 b. \*[AspP *Juan* [Asp *estar* [VP *dignado*]]]

The inherently reflexive predicates that reject (7b) satisfy (at least) one of the following two conditions: they involve manner control from the part of the external argument (*dignarse* 'to deign', *abalanzarse* 'to rush toward'...) or they are atelic activity predicates (*pavonearse* 'to swagger', *portarse* 'to behave', *mofarse* 'to make fun of'...). These two properties make the entailments associated to the external argument incompatible with those of a passive (8a) and / or the interpretation of the verbal Aktionsart incompatible with the interpretation of the *estar*-passive (8b) in the general case.

(8) a. \*Juan está nadado.  
           Juan is swum  
 b. #El carro está arrastrado.  
           the cart is dragged

CONSEQUENCES. Our analysis suggests that reflexive forms are default devices to license arguments in situations where the verbal structure does not have the formal means to do it autonomously. This is in line with Kayne's (2010) view of *se*-forms as high functional projection associated to the Midfield, as items that interact with the argument structure of verbs.

**Selected references.** Contreras, H. & Rojas, J. N. (1972). Some remarks on Spanish clitics. *LI* // Arregi, K. & Nevins, A. 2014. A monoradical approach to some cases of disuppletion. *Theoretical Linguistics*. // Fábregas, A & Marín, R. 2017. On non-dynamic eventive verbs in Spanish. *Linguistics*.