Antipassive, Anticausative, Reflexive: Phases and Reflexive Morphology

In several languages, reflexive morphology (RM) on the verb appears not only in reflexive constructions but also in antipassive and anticausative constructions (see (A)) (Geniušienė, 1987, Lidz 1996 and others). I argue that RM appears for phase-theoretic reasons. What unifies all these constructions is that the argument position of the VP remains unsaturated at the point in the derivation when the strong phase (Chomsky 2001) induced by the light verb $v$ (Chomsky 1995, Kratzer 1996) sends off the VP for LF interpretation. Without RM, the VP contains an unsaturated argument position and the derivation runs afoul of the following condition.

(1) All individual argument positions must be saturated at LF.

Reflexive morphology is present because it existentially closes (EC) the argument position of the verb, saturating the argument position of the verb within the VP and allowing the structure to comply with (1).

The Antipassive: The antipassive shows the operation of existential closure most transparently.

Here, the light verb $v$ has the agent NP in its specifier position and takes the VP as its complement. There is no NP within VP. Without RM, the structure is as follows.

(2) $[[v \text{Juan} [ v \text{VP confiesa} ] ] ]$

Since $v$ introduces a strong phase, its complement VP will be sent off for LF interpretation. Following Kratzer (1996), the VP is interpreted as $\lambda x \lambda y [\text{confess}(x)(y)]$. Since there is no NP in VP, the individual argument position associated with this verb (the $x$) will not be saturated, violating (1).

(3) $[[v \text{Juan} [ v \text{ClP se [VP confiesa]} ] ] ]$

In (3), RM is generated as the head of a CliticPhrase (ClP) that takes the VP as its complement. When the light verb is introduced, its complement will be ClP. Since the RM allows for EC, this structure is interpreted as $\lambda e \exists x [\text{confess}(x)(e)]$. There is no unsaturated individual argument, in compliance with (1).

The Reflexive: The reflexive construction is structurally similar to the antipassive.

(4) $[[v \text{Juan} [ v \text{ClP se [VP ama]} ] ] ]$

There is no NP within VP, like the antipassive; the NP that comes to saturate the argument of the verb is the external argument generated in $\text{vP}$, outside of VP. The reflexive clitic is present to saturate the argument position of the verb by existential closure. How, then, can the external argument saturate the argument position of the verb? I argue that the light verb $v$ also allows for two other semantic processes. First, it allows for Existential Disclosure (DIS) (Dekker, 1993, Rivero and Sheppard 2003), which removes the existential quantifier. This does not run afoul of (1), as DIS occurs beyond the VP. Second, it allows for a process of Argument Identification (AI), a generalization of Kratzer’s (1996) Event Identification (EI). In Kratzer’s approach, the light verb $v$ is associated with a theta role predicate that introduces the external argument and an event argument. With EI, the event argument introduced by the verb is identified as the same event argument introduced by the theta role predicate of $vP$. With AI, not only are the event arguments identified as the same, but also the individual arguments. Because of AI, the NP in the specifier of $vP$ can saturate both argument positions through functional application (FA), giving the reflexive interpretation (see (B)).

The Anticausative: Borrowing from Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou (2004), I consider that the anticausative structure involves a functional projection that combines with and stativizes a $vP$ that carries no agentivity features, generating its target state (Kratzer 2000). This functional projection introduces an NP that saturates the argument position of the VP (contra Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou 2004).

(5) $[vP \text{el vaso RESULT } [vP \text{vP rompio} ] ] ]$

There is no NP within VP; like the reflexive construction, the NP that comes to saturate the argument position in VP is in a different phase. Thus, when the light verb $v$ is reached, the argument position of the verb will not be saturated. We need reflexive morphology to saturate the argument position. As with the reflexive case above, further along in the derivation, the light verb existentially discloses the argument position of the VP, allowing the higher up NP to saturate the verb’s argument.

This study gives a unified explanation for the occurrence of RM without adopting a level of argument structure (as in Lidz 1996). It also requires cyclic interpretation while the structure is being built; if it is the entire structure that is sent for LF interpretation, there would be no unsaturated argument position and no need for RM. This analysis, then, supports a phase-based view of syntactic derivations.
(A) Warrungu (Tsunoda, 1988)

a. kaya+0 kipa+kali+0
   father+ABS shave+REFL+P/P
   Father is shaving someone.

b. kaya+0 kipa+kali+0
   father+ABS shave+REFL+P/P
   Father is shaving himself.

c. yuri+0 watyu+kali+n
   kangaroo+ABS cook+REFL+P/P
   The kangaroo is cooked.

Lituanian (Geniušienė, 1987)

a. Šu-o kandžio-j-o-si
   dog-NOM bite-PAST.3.P.-RM
   The dog bit (was in the habit of biting).

b. Jon-as ap-si-rengė
   Jonas-NOM PREF-REFL-dressed
   Jonas dressed himself.

c. Žied-ai skleidžia-si
   flower-NOM.PL blossom-out-RM
   The flowers were blossoming out.

Spanish (Mascullo 1987)

a. Juan se confiesa
   John REFL confesses
   John confesses.

b. Juan se ama
   John REFL love
   John loves himself.

c. El vaso se rompio
   the vase REFL broke
   The vase broke.

(B)