

On the status of reflexive and reciprocal clitics in Italian and Serbian

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Despite the amount of literature dedicated to the problem, the status of Romance and Slavic reflexive and reciprocal clitics remains as yet unsolved. The approach argued for in this paper relies on the analysis of Alsina (1996), in that it assumes that verbal forms containing reflexive and reciprocal clitics are intransitive, with both of the verb's original arguments implicitly retained and mapped onto a single syntactic function. Exemplifying the proposed analysis on data from Italian and Serbian, and using the formal apparatus of LMT, the paper offers a novel perspective on the issue, relying more explicitly on the Proto-Role approach of Dowty (1991) and arguing that reflexives and reciprocals should be studied jointly if a comprehensive analysis of the Romance and Slavic clitics is to be attempted.

Clitics are dominant reflexive and reciprocal markers in most Romance and Slavic languages, and as such they have been studied from a variety of perspectives. One of the issues that remain controversial concerns the status of clitic-marked forms with regard to transitivity. Most lexicalist (Grimshaw 1982, Sells et al. 1987) and many other approaches (Marantz 1984, Reinhart and Siloni 2005) argue for an intransitive view, in which clitics are analysed as morphological markers of the verb's reduced valence. However, there is a lot of disagreement as to whether the verb forms with clitics are unaccusative or unergative. If they are unaccusative, this means that their external argument is suppressed and their internal argument is consequently promoted to a subject (Marantz 1984, Grimshaw 1990). If, however, verbal reflexives are unergative, their internal argument is suppressed and the subject simply remains the only argument present in the syntax (Grimshaw 1982, Reinhart and Siloni 2004). Convincing crosslinguistic evidence is available for both views, e.g. the unaccusative-like behaviour of Italian reflexives and reciprocals with respect to auxiliary selection, and their unergative-like status in *ne*-cliticisation, making the data highly contradictory.

The analysis adopted in this paper, based on Alsina (1996), does not assume a reduction of either argument, and instead it proposes that both predicate's arguments remain present and are mapped onto a single syntactic function, due to the clitic having the structure *si/se* $\langle [\dots]_{\text{I}} [\dots]_{\text{I}} \rangle$. Recast in terms of LMT, this approach can be represented as in (1).

(1) θ -structure:	Agent Patient
a-structure: <i>difendersi</i> _{REFL=REC}	$\langle \text{Arg1}_1 \text{ Arg2}_1 \rangle$
	$[-\text{o}] \quad [-\text{r}]$
f-structure:	SUBJ ₁

As argued by Alsina (1996), by assuming that both arguments are implicitly kept, this view explains the seemingly paradoxical behaviour of the clitic forms. In other words, the verb retains the potential to exhibit both unaccusative and unergative behaviour depending on the syntactic context: with phenomena sensitive to the presence of an internal argument, and insensitive to the involvement of an external argument, clitic reflexives and reciprocals behave like unaccusatives; by contrast, when the phenomenon is dependent upon whether the argument is an external or an internal one, their unergative properties manifest themselves.

Moreover, assuming that the processes of reflexivisation and reciprocation involve the same type of mapping, shown in (1), we argue that this analysis best explains the fact that reflexives are more closely related to unaccusatives, and reciprocals to unergatives. Namely, it is a crosslinguistic fact that reflexive-marked verbs that take single semantic participants are unaccusative, i.e. they subcategorise for a Patient (e.g. *popeti se* 'climb' or *naljutiti se* 'get angry' in Serbian), while reflexive-marked verbs that obligatorily have two semantic participants (an Agent and a Comitative) are unergative (e.g. *pomiriti se* 'reconcile' in Serbian). In consequence, we argue that there exist two parallel continua, one leading from proper clitic-marked reflexive forms to unmarked unaccusatives, and the other from clitic-marked reciprocal forms to unmarked unergatives. The 'reductionist' approaches to clitics would have to postulate the reduction of a different argument in the two cases, which would be contrary to the empirical evidence showing that reflexives and reciprocals pattern together with respect to split intransitivity related phenomena; on the other hand, the approach in (1) can provide a straightforward explanation for this fact.

Our position is formalised using the Proto-Role view of the predicates' thematic roles, introduced by Dowty (1991), and incorporated in LMT by Zaenen (1993) and Ackerman and Moore (2001). The basic assumption is that proper reflexive forms such as the Italian *vestirsi* or the Serbian *obučiti se* 'get dressed' encode a situation in which the participant is to an equal degree a Proto-Agent (P-A) and a Proto-Patient (P-

P). A related situation is one in which the input verb selects a P-A and a P-P, but in the clitic-marked reflexive form its semantics is changed with respect to the original meaning; this is the case, for instance, with the verb *buttarsi* in Italian or *baciti se* in Serbian ('throw oneself'), where throwing somebody else and throwing oneself out the window do not entail exactly the same action, and where the reflexive clitic is not interchangeable with a stressed reflexive pronoun (cf. Kayne 1975). In this case the verb loses some of its agentivity and its participant is more prominently a P-P than a P-A (i.e. it has a higher number of P-P than P-A entailments). Lastly, the participant loses all of the agentivity, and with it also the reflexive marking, reaching plain unaccusative verbs such as *arrivare/stiçi* 'arrive'. A simplified schema is shown in (2) for the Italian verbs *vestirsi* 'dress', *buttarsi* 'throw oneself' and *arrivare* 'arrive'.

(2) Reflexive → unaccusative

θ -structure:	P-A	P-P	P-A ⁻	P-P ⁺	P-P
a-structure:	<i>vestirsi</i> $\langle \text{Arg1}_1 \text{ Arg2}_1 \rangle$	<i>buttarsi</i> $\langle \text{Arg1}_1 \text{ Arg2}_1 \rangle$	<i>arrivare</i> $\langle \text{Arg1} \rangle$		
	[-o]	[-r]	[-o]	[-r]	[-r]
f-structure:	SUBJ ₁		SUBJ ₁		SUBJ

With reciprocals, the process goes in the opposite direction, and the property that is progressively lost is patienthood. Proper reciprocals such as *baciarsi/poljubiti se* 'kiss' imply an equal degree of agenthood and patienthood; if the input verb takes a P-A and a P-P, but with a somewhat changed meaning (as in the case of *vedersi/videti se* meaning 'meet up, get together', rather than the literal 'see each other'), agenthood becomes more prominent, reaching the maximum in plain unergatives such as *collaborare/sarađivati* 'collaborate', which still must have two semantic participants, but which express the non-subject ones as comitative arguments rather than objects. This is illustrated in (3), for the Italian verbs *baciarsi* 'kiss', *vedersi* 'meet up' and *collaborare* 'collaborate'.

(3) Reciprocal → unergative

θ -structure:	P-A	P-P	P-A ⁺	P-P ⁻	P-A
a-structure:	<i>baciarsi</i> $\langle \text{Arg1}_1 \text{ Arg2}_1 \rangle$	<i>vedersi</i> $\langle \text{Arg1}_1 \text{ Arg2}_1 \rangle$	<i>collaborare</i> $\langle \text{Arg1} \rangle$		
	[-o]	[-r]	[-o]	[-r]	[-o]
f-structure:	SUBJ ₁		SUBJ ₁		SUBJ

In addition to being a new piece of evidence for the intransitive non-reductionist position on reflexive and reciprocal clitics, this proposal also speaks in favour of a non-atomic approach to thematic roles, fully compatible with LFG's view of verbal argument structure.

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