

## Middle as a Basic Voice System

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### 1. Introduction

This paper attempts to offer a view of middle voice as a basic voice system, a view that is in contrast with a wide spread tendency to see middle marking as evolving from reflexive constructions (Kemmer 1993, Lehmann 1995, Faltz 1985 and many others). While it is true that the development from reflexive to middle can easily be found in Indo-European languages, a visit to languages from other families will show that the middle constitutes a category on its own and, in fact, can operate as the base form for other voice patterns. Based on what we can learn from several unrelated languages—mostly languages of Mexico and South America—I will show that even for Spanish and most probably for other Romance languages the existence of a middle system will provide a coherent representation to capture a variety of uses that have been considered exceptional or aberrant deviations from the norm whose best luck is to be listed in the lexicon, as has been the case for traditional analyses (Aid 1973; Alonso and Henríquez Ureña 1953; Gili Gaya 1955; Goldin 1968; González 1985; Grimshaw 1982; Sells, Zaenen, and Zec 1986; Butt and Benjamín 2004; and many others) as well as instructional textbooks (Terrell, Andrade, and Egasse 2006; Canteli Dominicis and Reynolds 1994; King and Suñer 1999; Alonso, Castañeda, Martínez, Miguel, Ortega, and Ruiz 2005 to name a few).

Middle constructions depict actions, events or states pertaining to the subject's own sphere. They contrast with active-direct voice in that they designate a process remaining in the subject's realm instead of being projected to another participant. "The middle voice shows that the action is performed with special reference to the subject" (Smyth 1956:390), in Benvensite's words the subject "is indeed inside the process of which he is the agent" (1950:149). It is an action or state affecting to the subject or her/his interests (Lyons 1968). Voice patterns reflect situation types that contrast clearly with transitive construals. The transitive active corresponds to situations where two participants (most commonly agent and patient) interact (Kemmer 1993, 1994). In contrast, middle voice marking corresponds to situation types implying only the subject. The middle is a construction that focuses on the subject's dominion (Maldonado 1992, 1999).

Most current analyses of middle constructions tend to analyze middles as deriving from a transitive verb via a reflexive construction. The relationship between middle and reflexive markers is evident: both construction types refer to the clausal subject. Yet there are important differences between them. Reflexives involve an action where agent and patient are coreferential. Middles refer to actions or states only involving the subject. The distinction can be observed in the well-known Russian contrast provided by Haiman (1983:796). Example (1a) is reflexive while (1b) is middle:

(1) a. *on utomil sebja.*  
he exhausted RFLX  
'He exhausted himself.'

b. *on utomil-sja.*

he exhausted-MID  
 'He grew weary.'

Kemmer (1993, 1994) analyzes the middle/reflexive contrast in terms of degree of distinguishability. While in the reflexive construction agent and patient can be distinguished, in the middle there is no split representation of the subject. Kemmer has rightly suggested that the fact that the event remains in one participant determines a low degree of event elaboration. Since the subject's action cannot be distinguished from the object's affectedness the event is simplified.<sup>1</sup>

The similarity between reflexive and middle constructions has led analyzers to postulate a path by which middles develop from reflexives. By the distinguishability hypothesis, Kemmer (1993, 1994) suggests two extreme situations with one participant in one pole and two in the other. Reflexives and middles are placed between these two poles, as can be seen from the following diagrams:

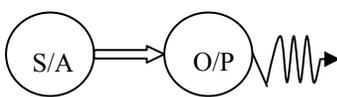


Fig. 1. Transitive

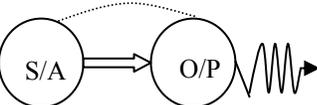


Fig. 2. Reflexive

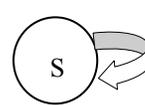


Fig. 3. Middle

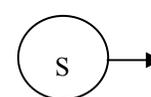


Fig. 4. Intransitive

Reflexives involve a deviation from the transitive as two participants refer to the same referent. These two participants can still be differentiated. In contrast middles do not allow a split representation of the self. One easy way to see this contrast is to assume that reflexives support the representation of the self in a mental space (Fauconnier 1985) whereas middles do not. The following Spanish example illustrates the contrast:

- (2) a. *Me imaginé bailando con Tongolele.*  
 RFLX imagined dancing with Tongolele  
 'I imagined myself dancing with Tongolele.'
- b. *Me imagino que no quieres ir a la fiesta.*  
 MID imagine that not want go to the party  
 'I imagine you don't want to go to the party.'

In the reflexive (2a), my dancing takes place in an image located in the mental space of my imagination. In the middle (2b), there is only a mental experience occurring inside the subject with no additional mental space. The middle is obtained with no distinction among participants. In a similar fashion, Lehman (1995) conceives a long derivation path for the emergence of middles: object > reflexive > impersonal > middle. However the necessary link between impersonal and middle markers is not commonly attested in languages with a middle voice system. In languages where middles and impersonals coexist it is not clear that the impersonal construction constitutes a precondition for middles. Moreover, as this paper provides evidence,

the middle may be the base form for deriving other constructions, especially the reflexive.

In this paper I propose that there may be more than one rational for the existence of the middle construction. While reflexives may be the source for middles in languages whose prototypical event is the transitive construction, for other languages the middle may evolve directly from the transitive without depending on the reflexive and there may even be other languages like ergative ones for which events involving only one participant may be the starting point to derive other constructions. In the latter the middle may be more basic than the reflexive construction. In fact the middle may be a basic construction as it needs not derive from other constructions and may be the source for the emergence of less prototypical constructions in that language. We will look at data from Yucatec Maya (Martínez and Maldonado in press), Tarascan (Nava 2004, Maldonado and Nava 2002) Toba (Messineo 2004), Otomí (Palancar 2002, 2006), Amharic (Shibatani 1998), Balinese (Artawa 1994, Shibatani 2001) to show two points: first, that the middle voice construction needs not derive from the reflexive and second that the middle may be a basic construction. The reflexive construction in many cases will thus be defined as a marked construction deriving either from the transitive or the middle construction.

## 2. Derived non-reflexive middle

Recent work on Yucatec Maya (YM) (Martínez 2006, Martínez and Maldonado in press) has shown that both middles and reflexives develop from active transitive constructions in an independent manner. Reflexive constructions are marked by the possessive marker inflected for person-number plus a reflexive marker *-ba*, as in (3b) which imposes a coreferential reading on a (root or derived) transitive verb as is *ts'ak* 'heal' in (3a). Middle voice constructions are encoded as a CVVC pattern, as in (3c), which is obtained by lengthening the vowel of a transitive active verbal CVC stem *ts'ak* and imposing a high tone on the first vocalic segment *ts'áak* (Ayres & Pfeiler 1997, Briceño 2004, Bricker 1981, Bohnemeyer 2004):

- (3) a. *t-u=ts'ak-(aj)*                      *le peek'-o'*.    Transitive<sup>2</sup>  
 PERF.TRNS-A3S=heal-COMP    DEM dog-DEM  
 'He cured the dog.'
- b. *t-u=ts'ak-(aj)-ø*                      *u=ba.*    Reflexive  
 PERF.TRNS-A3S=heal-COMP-B3S    3S=REF  
 'He cured himself.' (ConChan: 05/2005)<sup>1</sup>
- c. *ø-ts'áak-ø-i(j).*                      Middle  
 PERF.INTR-heal.MID-COMP-B3S  
 'He got better (he became cured).'

In the most transparent cases the reflexive/middle contrast coincides with well known crosslinguistic patterns. In reflexive constructions the subject acts volitionally and with control on the self inducing some change. In contrast, middles highlight the affectedness undergone by the subject as a consequence of some change which s/he undergoes. In the middle construction the change-of-state is not volitionally controlled by the subject. Thus the reflexive construction in (3b) designates the subject's act of using some medicine to get better, while in (3c) the subject's health simply improves with no particular effort.

An outstanding feature of middles in YM is that they always depict an absolute event, one in which energy is not profiled. The event is thus seen as neutral or spontaneous. In (4) the decrease in energy is observed as we go from the transitive (4a), to the reflexive in (4b) where the cat stretches out, to the middle construction in (4c) where the clothes simply sag:

(4) a. *yáan a=sats'-(i)k (l)e suum-o'*  
 OBL A2S=pull-INCOMP DEM rope-DEM

*ka a=k'ax-(i)k (l)e ba'alche'-o'*  
 then A2S=tie-INCOMP DEM animal-DEM  
 'You have to pull the rope to then tie the animal.'

b. *leken uy=áaj-al (l)e miis-o'*  
 when A3S=wake up-INCOMP DEM cat-DEM

*t-u=sats'-(aj) u=ba.*  
 PERF.TR3S=stretch-COMP P3S=REF  
 'When the cat wakes up it stretches out.' (ConChan: 11/2007)

c. *le nook'-o' ø-sáats'-ø-i(j).*  
 DEM garment-DEM PERF.INTR-strech.MID-COMP-B3S  
 'The clothes stretched.' (ConChan: 05/2005)

What is interesting about middles in YM is that they do not conform to general patterns found for the middle. From a typological perspective, Kemmer (1993, 1994) has identified a set of situations where the middle tends to occur across languages. Table 1 extracted from Kemmer (1993) is a sample of what we may expect to find in middle marking:

<b>Grooming or body care</b>		<b>Indirect middle</b>	
Latin	lavo-r 'wash'	Turkish	ed-in 'acquire'
Indonesian	ber-dandan 'get dressed'	Classical Greek	kta-sthai 'acquire for oneself'
<b>Non translational motion</b>		<b>Emotion middle</b>	
Kanuri	tàn-t-în 'stretch one's body'	Guugu Yimidhirr	dumiba-adhi 'get a shock or fright'
Latin	revert-o-r 'turn'	Mohave	mat iθa:v 'be angry'
<b>Chan in body Posture</b>		Hungarian	bán-kod- 'grieve, mourn'
Indonesian	ber-lutut 'kneel-down'	<b>Emotive speech actions</b>	
Guugu Yimidhirr	'daga-adhi 'sit down'	Latin	quero-r 'complain'
<b>Translational motion</b>		Cl. Greek	olophyre-sthai 'lament'
Pangwa	i-nu-xa 'climb up'	Turkish	döv-ün 'lament'
Guugu Yimidhirr	'madha-adhi 'climb up'	<b>Cognition middle</b>	
French	s'en aller 'go away'	Indonesian	ber-pikir 'be cogitating'
		Pangwa	-i-sala 'think over, consider'
		<b>Spontaneous events</b>	
		Indonesian	ber-henti 'come to a stop'

	French	s'evatiouir 'vanish'
	Hungarian	kelet-kez- 'originate, occur'

Table 1. *Basic middle voice situations*

The semantic areas where the middle tends to occur can be characterized in more general terms: **motion** (translational, non-translational and change in body posture), **change of mental state** (cognition, emotive speech and emotion), **spontaneous events** and **self-directed actions** (direct and indirect body care). Of all these categories the one that fluctuates between middle and reflexive marking across languages is self directed actions. The other three tend to get middle marking. What is interesting about the middle system in YM is that it shows notable irregularities from general tendencies of middle marking. First, grooming actions take reflexive not middle marking as is evident from the ungrammaticality of the middle construction in (5b):

- (5) a. *le máak-o' bul k'iin t-u=meyaj-ø*  
 DEM person-DEM all day DUR-A3S=work-INCOMP
- leken k-u=xu(l)-(i)k-ø tu taanaj-e'*  
 then HAB-A3S=finish-INCOMP-B3S in house-DEM
- k-u=chal-(i)k-ø u=ba.*  
 HAB-A3S=rinse-INCOMP-B3S P3S=REF  
 'That person is working all day, when he finishes he washes at home.'
- b. *\*ø -cháal-ø-i(j)*  
 PERF.INTR-rinse.MID-COMP-B3S  
 'He rinsed himself.'

Second, in cases of motion, again it is the reflexive, not the middle, the construction employed to signal that the subject controls his movements. In the first story (6a) the subject's change of position is a routine action as expressed by the intransitive verb. In the second story (6b), the reflexive encodes a fast action that the main character of the story does to avoid being seen by the fox. The middle construction is precluded from both situations:

- (6) a. *ka xol-(l)aj-ø le ko'olel-o'*  
 then kneel-COMP-B3S DEM woman-DEM
- ka jo'op u=payalchi'*  
 then start A3S=pray  
 'Then the woman knelt down and started to pray.'
- b. *ka t-uy=il-aj-ø jun=túul nuxi' ooch*  
 then PERF.TRS-A3S=see-COMP-B3S one=CL old fox
- ka t-u=xol-kin-t-aj-ø u=ba.*  
 then PERF.TRS-A3S=kneel-APL-COMP-B3S P3S=REF

‘Then he saw the old fox and he knelt fast.’ (Flojo: 122)

Third, in cases of change of state again the reflexive contrasts with the intransitive form. In the reflexive construction (7b) the subject makes himself sick in order to avoid going to work. The absolute intransitive is a spontaneous uncontrolled event:

(7) a. *le ko'olel-o' k'oja'an-chaj-i(j)*  
 DEM woman-DEM get sick-COMP-B3S

*ka'abet u=biin-ø jo'.*  
 necessary A3S=go-INCOMP Merida  
 ‘The woman got sick, she needs to go to Merida.’

b. *t-u=k'oja'an-kun-t-(aj)-ø* *u=ba*  
 PERF.TRNS-A3S=sick-VERB-APL-COMP-B3S P3S=REF

*ti'olal ma' u bin-ø meyaj.*  
 to NEG A3S go-INCOMP work  
 ‘He got sick to avoid going to work.’

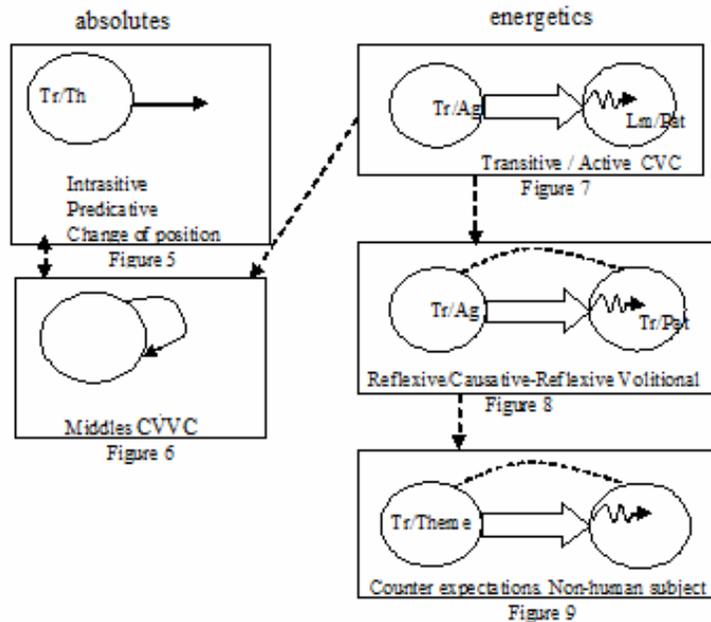
The YM voice system is quite sensitive to the degree of control imposed by the subject. The examples so far offered suggest that the contrast between reflexives and middles precisely resides in the notion of control. While both develop from transitive roots, the reflexive is a case where the subject maintains control of his self-directed actions. In contrast, the middle develops absolute events with no subject control. In fact the middle aligns with the nuclear properties of intransitive verbs and contrast with reflexives in exactly the same manner. Moreover, in cases where both the reflexive and the middle construction can be used, the reflexive implies a reading of unexpectedness as in (8a).<sup>3</sup> Crucially, the middle construction in (8b) would be chosen to depict natural occurrences like a firecracker bursting in the town festivities:

(8) a. *t-u=xik-(aj)-ø* *u=ba le booláador-o'.*  
 PERF.TRNS-A3S=burst-COMP-B3S P3S=RFLX DEM firecracker-DEM  
 ‘The firecracker burst (by itself).’

b. *ø-xiik-ø-ø* *(l)e booláador-o'.*  
 PERF.INTR-burst.MID-COMP-B3S DEM firecracker-DEM  
 ‘The firecracker burst.’

A Cognitive Grammar representation of the system is offered in Figures 5 to 9. There are two polar constructions intransitive and transitive. It is from the transitive root that reflexives and middles develop in a contrastive way. The middle Figure 6 aligns with the intransitive while the

reflexive in Figures 8 preserves the control properties of the transitive. The counter-expectation construal in Figure 9 corresponds to the reflexive construction with a subject unable to preserve control.



Given this analysis there is no way to sustain that the reflexive is the source for the middle. In fact the middle develops from transitive to contrast drastically with the reflexive construction. In YM the middle is a derived construction independent from the reflexive. In the next section we will see other languages where the middle is a non-derived, a basic construction.

### 3. Basic Middle Voice

As opposed to YM there are languages where middle voice needs not derive from any other voice in the language. I will illustrate such a system first from a set of unrelated languages P'orepecha, Yucatec Maya, Otomi, as well Toba, Amharic and Balinese.

#### 3.1 P'orepecha

P'orepecha (Tarascan) as reported by Nava (2004), Nava and Maldonado (2002) there are clear contrasts between active, passive and middle constructions. The passive marker *-nha* in (9b) contrasts with an unmarked transitive stem *patsa* 'put away' as in (9a):

- (9) a. *Dora patsa-s-ø-ti*                      *Marcos-i-iri tekechu-ni.*  
 Dora keep-PERF-PRES-IND.3    Marcos-GEN horse-OBJ  
 'Dora put away Marcos' horse.'
- b. *Marcos-i-iri tekechu patsa-nha-s-ø-ti*                      (\**Dora-ni jimpo*).  
 Marcos-GEN horse    keep-PASS-PERF-PRES-IND.3    Dora-OBJ by  
 'Marcos' horse has been put away (\*by Dora).'

Transitive constructions involve either root transitive stems or neutral stems made transitive by a

causative marker. Active-causatives and middles also show a clear contrast. The stem *tixa* ‘light’ shows that the distinction between an active-causative and a middle construction is determined by the use of either a causative marker as *-ta* in (10a) or by a middle suffix as *-ra* in (10b):

- (10) a. *tata Pánfilu chkári-ni tixa-ta-s-ø-ti.*  
 HON Pánfilo wood-OBJ light-ACT-PERF-PRES -IND. 3  
 ‘don Pánfilo lit the wood.’
- b. *chkári tixa-ra-s-ø-ti.*  
 wood light-MID-PERF-PRES-IND.3  
 ‘The wood lit up.’

Finally, active-transitive and reflexive constructions also show a clear contrast. Reflexives are most commonly obtained by marking the stem with the suffix *-kurhi*: as shown in (11b):

- (11) a. *Marcosì Dora-ni exe-s-ø-ti.*  
 Marcos Dora-obj see-PERF-PRES-IND.3  
 ‘Marcos saw Dora.’
- b. *Marcosì exe-kurhi-s-ø-ti*  
 Marcos see-RFLX-PERF-PRES-IND.3  
 ‘Mar saw himself.’

Middle voice is marked by a whole set of middle markers pertaining to three classes: attributes, locative events y basic events (normally transitive). To simplify matters I will limit myself to providing a few illustrative examples. Attributive middle markers such as *-pi*, *-mi*, *-xi*, etc. mostly take dependent stems.<sup>4</sup> They designate attributes such as smell *-mi*, texture, shape, consistence, or color *-pi* as in (12):

- (12) *siranta ch'era-pi-s-ø-ti.*  
 paper wrinkle-PRED.MID-PERF-PRES-IND.3  
 ‘The paper got/is wrinkled.’

Now in order to have an active transitive-causative<sup>5</sup> construction the causative marker *-ra* must be added after the middle marker *-pi*, as in (13). The transitive construction is thus derived from the middle, not the other way around:

- (13) *itsì siranta-ni ch'era-pe-ra-s-ø-ti*  
 water paper-OBJ wrinkle-PRED.MID-CAUS-PERF-PRES-IND.3  
 ‘The water wrinkled the paper.’

Further evidence of the same situation is exemplified in (14a). The middle suffix *-ki* designates

‘good quality, matureness’ and similar attributes. In the active transitive construction (14b) the middle marker must be preserved immediately after the stem for the causative marker *-ra* to apply. Failure of keeping the middle marker renders an illegal output as in (14c):

- (14) a. *pare ampa-ki-s-ø-ti.*  
 nopal good-PRED.MID-PREF-PRES-IND.3  
 ‘The nopal got/is good.’
- b. *Dora pare-ni ampa-ke-ra-s-ø-ti.*  
 Dora nopal-OBJ good-PRED.MID-CAUS-PREF-PRES-IND.3  
 ‘Dora got the nopal good (clean).’
- c. \**Dora pare-ni ampa-ra-s-ø-ti.*  
 Dora nopal-OBJ good-CAUS-PREF-PRES-IND.3  
 ‘Dora got the nopal good (clean).’

Locative middle markers present exactly the same behaviour. Locative middles are marked with a rich set of old body-part terms now grammaticized to designate geometrical schematic locations. As (15) shows, in lack of further specification, the locative marker designates the subject’s sphere:

- (15) *Dora chkú-nharhi-s- ø-ti.*  
 Dora sharp pain-forehead.MID-PERF-PRES-IND.3  
 ‘Dora has had sharp pains in the face/eyes.’

As in the case of the attributive middle (16), the transitive locative construction is derived with the causative marker *-ta* following the middle marker. Thus for this verb class the middle is more basic than the transitive construction:

- (16) *kawikwa Marcosi-ni chkú-nharhi-ta-s- ø-ti.*  
 drink Marcos-OBJ sharp pain-forehead.MID-CAUS-PERF-PRES-IND.3  
 ‘The drink gave Marcos a sharp pain in the face/eyes.’

It is not the case that for all classes the middle is the basic form. In what Nava (2004) calls “basic events” (mostly agent-patient interactions) middle and active are mutually exclusive. In (17a) *-mi* marks liquid objects in intransitive middle constructions, while *-ma* does the same job for transitive active ones, as in (17b):

- (17) a. *itsi arhu-mi-s- ø-ti.*  
 water divide-LIQ.MID-PERF-PRES-IND.3  
 ‘The water separated (the clean from the dirty water).’
- b. *Dora arhu-ma-s- ø-tiitsi-ni.*  
 Dora divide-LIQ.ACT-PERF-PRES-IND.3 water-OBJ  
 ‘Dora has put apart the water (from a pond to drink).’

These contrasts are quite productive in P’orepecha and they take several contrastive duplets (-*ta* ACT/ -*ra* MID; -*rhi* ACT versus -*kurhi* MID). A further example is the opposition between -*ta* ACT, -*ku* MID now with locative middle markers:

- (18) a. *Dora ké-nti-ku-s- ø-ti*  
 Dora move-angle-MID-PERF-PRES-IND.3  
 ‘Dora cornered herself down.’
- b. *Marcosì Dora-ni ké-nti-ta-s- ø-ti.*  
 Marcos Dora-OBJ move-angle-ACT-PERF-PRES-IND.3  
 ‘Marcos has cornered Dora down.’

The systematic middle/active contrast constitutes strong evidence that transitive and middle constructions in P’orepecha are equally basic in this class. Given these data it would be wrong to assume that verbal basic stems in Tarascan are transitive. In fact what we have are several sets of basic middle stems as well as a big set of neutral stems that may receive either transitive or middle marking. So far the idea that middles develop from another unmarked construction is not tenable. What about the reflexive? Can it be the basis for the development of the middle? For the sake of simplicity I will provide a few arguments showing that it cannot.

The marked status of the reflexive can be observed from the fact that the reflexive actually follows the middle marker. Since reflexives and middles respond to different conceptualizations it is not common for both markers to co-occur. However, for emphatic purposes the reflexive may appear after the middle as in (19) which is the emphatic version of (18a):

- (19) *Dora ké-nti-ku-kurhi-s- ø-ti.*  
 Dora move-angle-MID-RFLX-PERF-PRES-IND.3  
 ‘Dora cornered herself down by herself.’

The fact that the reflexive -*kurhi* consistently occupies a position external to the middle marker in self-benefactive, causative-reflexive and emphatic-reflexive constructions and in no case does -*kurhi* constitute the base form for deriving other constructions attests for the marked character of the reflexive and for the more basic nature of the middle. A basic Cognitive Grammar representation of the system is provided in Figure 10:

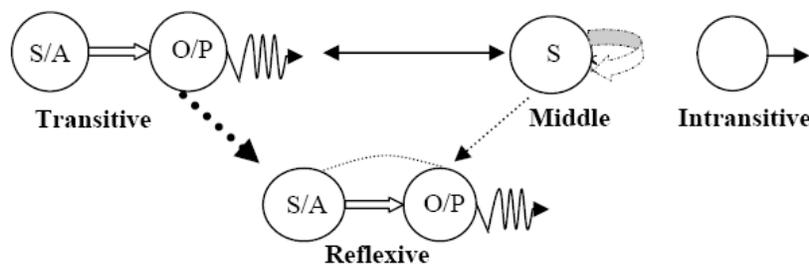


Figure 10. *Non derived middle*

For some classes the middle is as basic as the active transitive and for others it constitutes the basic form for either reflexive or transitive constructions. The reflexive may develop from either the transitive or the middle construction and under no condition is the reflexive the basic form for the middle.

### 3.2 Other basic systems

In this section I provide evidence from unrelated languages showing two points: that the middles need not develop from reflexives and that middles may be a non-derived base form. Illuminating work by Messineo (2004) on Toba, a Guaycurú language from South America has shown that the middle is not only a very productive form in verb formation but it also constitutes the base form for reflexive constructions. A list of verbs that take the middle as the base form is offered in (20):

- (20)
- |                     |                |
|---------------------|----------------|
| <i>n-qollin</i>     | ‘MID-bend’     |
| <i>n-soqchigiñi</i> | ‘MID-sweat’    |
| <i>n-vi</i>         | ‘MID-arrive’   |
| <i>n-towenek</i>    | ‘MID-remember’ |

More important is the fact that in order to make a reflexive construction the middle marker *n-* must be present. The base form in (21a) and (22a) licenses the derived reflexive with *-lat* in (21b) and (22b). In absence of the middle marker the output is illegal as in (21c) and (22c):

- (21) a. *n-awote.*  
 MID-he love  
 ‘He loves/he is in love.’

- b. *n-awoh- l'at.*  
 MID-he loves-RFLX  
 ‘He loves himself.’

- c. *\*awoh- l'at*  
 he loves-RFLX

- (22) a. *yalawat* ‘kill’

- b. *n-alawah- l'at.*  
 MID-kill-RFLX  
 ‘Commit suicide.’

- c. *\*alawah- l'at*  
 kill-RFLX

The special properties of verbs like ‘love’ and ‘kill’ may suggest a preference for using the middle, however the requirement of having the middle form for the reflexive rule holds even for unquestionable active transitive verbs, such as *rock* in (23b).

- (23) a. *i-shiwek*.  
 ‘He rocks someone.’
- b. *n-shigue-l’at*.  
 MID-rock-RFLX  
 ‘He rocks himself.’

We may conclude that Toba also argues against the traditional view that middles must develop from reflexives.

Otomi as described by Palancar (2002, 2006) is another language where the middle is not derived from the reflexive construction. The amount of lexical classes in Otomi is considerable as they may be sensible to morphophonemic and lexical determination, as explained by Palancar. However besides suppletive, causative, decausative and labile verbs Otomi has an important number of verbs whose base form takes the nasal middle marker. The sample in (24) is a simplified representation of Otomi verbs from Palancar’s study:

(24) Otomi verbal roots

	INTR	TR
Suppletive	<b>dú</b> ‘die’	hó ‘kill’
Decausative	<b>ni-pa-t’i</b> ‘heat’ <b>n-tsi<sup>h</sup>-ti</b> ‘hung from’	pa-ti ‘hit’ tsi <sup>h</sup> -ti ‘swing’
Underived Middle	<b>m-pembo</b> ‘swing’ <b>m-pe-ts’i</b> ‘repent’ <b>m-pin-ts’I</b> ‘turn’	
Polivalent	<b>tsi-di</b> ‘hung’ (i.e. cable)	tsi <sup>h</sup> -ti ‘hung’
Labile	----- ‘break’	<b>m-pú-hni</b> ‘forget’ ----- ‘forget’ ts’o-ni ‘break’
Causative	šo-t’i ‘untie’	šo-?-t’i ‘untie’

The semantic areas where the middle falls are the expected emotional change of state and change of position-location verbs. Palancar shows that 46 out of 72 verbs are clearly denominal. However, the semantics leading to the creation of the novel middle lexeme is not always clear. Here are some clear cases:

- (25) Source Middle
- a. tsü (in) ‘get frightened’ > n-tsU (in) ‘be afraid’
- b. ’ani (tr) ‘ask a question’ > ñ-’ani (in) ‘get informed’
- c. pa’t’i (tr) ‘heat something’ > m-pa’t’i (in) ‘warm oneself’

The source verb in the derivation may be intransitive as in (25a) or transitive as in (25b) and (25c). Of the whole set of verbal forms derivation from an intransitive applies to 30 percent of derived verbs, while transitive sources represent the remaining 70 percent. Palancar (2004) has argued the nasal morpheme in these verbs is not a reflexive. Several arguments support this

analysis. Typical “direct reflexive types” like ‘see oneself’ or ‘hit oneself’ are conveyed by a transitive construction as in the transitive verb *handi* ‘look at/see’ in (26):

(26) a. *dá=hand-ø-a=ma*                      *hmi ka=r*              *ñhe*  
 1.PST=see-3OBJ-B=1POSS      face LOC=SG      mirror  
 ‘I looked at myself in the mirror.’  
 (Lit. ‘I looked at my face in the mirror.’)

b. *dá=ñ-hand-a=ka=r*                      *ñhe*  
 1.PST=M-see-B=LOC=SG      mirror  
 Intended reading: \*‘I looked at myself in the mirror.’  
 Actual reading: ‘I was facing the mirror.’

While the self-centered action, looking at oneself in a mirror, is constructed with the transitive construction, the middle verb does not express the action of seeing oneself. It means ‘face in a certain direction’ and not ‘see oneself’. Moreover reflexives are pronominal markers that inflect for person while the middle marker is only an uninflected nasal prefix. Reflexives are mostly construed based on transitive constructs using pronominal forms while middles correspond in 90% to intransitive forms. Crucially, Palancar shows that as opposed to the pronominal nature of the reflexive, the middle developed historically from an old inflectional marker \*{N} which was first associated with intransitive verbs that depicted imperfective nonpunctual actions typically performed by human beings. The possibility of developing middles from reflexive in Otomi is simply inexistent.

Balinese (Austronesian) as described by Artawa (1994) is another language where the middle is the base form for a considerable a class of verbs. The list provided in (27) is a representative sample:

(27)      *ma-jalan*              ‘walk’  
           *ma-laib*              ‘run’  
           *ma-medih*            ‘become angry’  
           *ma-manes*            ‘become troublesome’  
           *ma-kebyah*           ‘flash’  
           *ma-kudus*            ‘produce smoke’  
           *ma-mongol*           ‘pretend to be deaf’ *bongol* ‘deaf’  
           *ma-mules*            ‘pretend to sleep’ *pules* ‘sleep’

The type of contrast found between middles and reflexives resembles the one found for P’orepecha where the middle is the unmarked form and the reflexive marks a special situation. Thus (28a) is the routine everyday action of putting make up while (28b) designates a situation where make up is being used for a special occasion and applied on the skin with special care:

(28) a. *Ia sedek ma-pupur.*  
 3SG ASP      MID-put-on.powder  
 ‘She is putting powder on her face.’

- b. *Ia sedek mmpur-in awak-ne[N-pupur-in].*  
 3SG ASP put-on.powder-APPL self-3SG.POSS  
 ‘She is putting powder on her face.’

The reflexive construction combines freely with all highly transitive verbs. Example (29a) is an expected result since the reflexive is used for situations involving control and volition. Given that the middle has the opposite properties it is excluded from combining with verbs having high demand of control as in (29b). Yet the reciprocal construction involving two participants working as a unified entity in some action requires the middle not the reflexive as in (30):

- (29) a. *Wayan nyagur awak-ne.*  
 Wayan hit self-3SG.POSS  
 ‘Wayan hit himself’

- b. \**Wayan ma-jagur*  
 Wayan MID-hit

- (30) *Wayan lan Made ma-jaguan.*  
 Wayan and Made MID-fight  
 ‘Mayan and Made are fighting.’

Amharic provides more evidence against assuming a derivation from the reflexive to the middle. In contrast with Balinese, Amharic does allow for the middle to combine with verbs of high degree of transitivity. According to Shibatani (2001) the reflexive develops from a body part noun *ras* ‘head’ which has grammaticized into a reflexive. This form is totally unrelated to the middle marker *-te*. Now the possibility of using two different markers allows very different construals. As expected, controlled acts take the reflexive as in (31a) and uncontrolled spontaneous events take the middle as in (31b):

- (31) a. *Lemma ras-u-n metta.*  
 Lemma self-POSS-3M-ACC hit.PERF.3M  
 ‘Lemma hit himself.’

- b. *Lemma te-metta.*  
 Lemma MID-hit.PF.3M  
 ‘Lemma was hit.’  
 \*‘Lemma hit himself.’

And again routine actions and reciprocals take the middle, not the reflexive marker as attested by examples (32) and (33):

- (32) *lemma te-lač’č’e.*

Lemma MID-shave.PF.3M  
'Lemma shaved himself.'

- (33) *wiss-očč-u te-nekakkes-u.*  
dog-PL MID-bite.REC.PF-3PL  
'The dogs bit each other.'

Finally, it is the middle not the reflexive the marker that extends to derive an intransitive decausative construction, where the agent is allegedly deleted, as in (34):

- |      |                |                           |
|------|----------------|---------------------------|
| (34) | Transitive     | Decausative               |
|      | <i>keffete</i> | <i>te-keffete</i> 'break  |
|      | <i>ellese</i>  | <i>te-mellse</i> 'return' |

The data so far seen support the claim that middles may constitute a basic type of conceptualization. In a variety of languages the middle is a basic, non-derivative form and it constitutes the basis to derive either reflexive or transitive constructions. In other languages it  derive from transitive stems but in none of the cases seen here does it evolve from the reflexive. As pointed out by Johanna Nichols (personal communication at the conference) the general tendency to see middles as developing from reflexives as if it were an almost universal phenomenon may be misguided from the assumption that all languages follow the general pattern of Indo-European languages. While I agree with her observation, I would like to take a step forward and suggest that even for Indo-European languages the unidirectional assumption that middles develop from reflexives is not all correct. The following section addresses such an issue.

#### 4. Spanish middles

The idea that the middle may be a basic form has already been pointed out by Manney (2000) for Modern Greek. A revision of so called "Spanish Reflexives" (Maldonado 1988, 1993, 1999a, 1999b, 2000) has shown that most uses of the clitic *se* (*me* 1<sup>st</sup>, *te* 2<sup>nd</sup>, *nos* 1<sup>st</sup> pl *os* 2<sup>nd</sup> pl) receive a natural explanation as middle. The number of cases where it can actually be claimed that the middle develops from a reflexive in Spanish is quite reduced. I will limit myself to showing the general areas where the middle emerges and I will stress the fact that an analysis in terms of reflexivity or argument loss is inadequate for Spanish. I will suggest that an approach to *se* from the perspective of the internal coherence of a middle system will show that instead of "losing" there is an increase in energy and involvement which has not been captured from previous analyses.

I have already suggested that reflexives provide a split representation of the subject as in (35) and that they are naturally expressed in mental spaces repeated here for convenience as (36):

- (35) *Está bien que lo respetes, pero es más importante que te respetes.*  
'It is all right that you respect him, but it is more important that you respect yourself.'

- (36) *Me imaginé bailando con Tongolele.* [reflexive]  
'I imagined myself dancing.'

I have also pointed out that middle constructions involve no split representation. They convey an event happening within the subject's dominion (Maldonado 1992, 1999). An example of *imaginar* in a middle construction is provided in (37) where *me* refers to an internal mental image of a probable action and not to a separate representation of the self:

- (37) -¿Vas a ir a la fiesta?  
 'Are you going to the party?'  
 - *Me imagino que sí.* [middle]  
 Intended reading: 'I think so' [\*I imagine myself so]

An evident argument contrasting middles and reflexives in Spanish is that only reflexives, not middles, take *sí mismo* expansions. Example (38) is the emphatic expansion of the reflexive in (35). Now from (39) it can be observed that middles do not take *mismo* expansions. (39) is the ungrammatical correspondent of (37):

- (38) *Es cierto, lo respetas a él, pero no te respetas a ti mismo.*  
 'It is true, you respect him, but you don't respect yourself.'
- (39) \**Me imagino a mí mismo que sí.*  
 MID imagine to my self that yes

It makes sense that middles don't take *mismo* expansions. To the extent that the middle depicts events that happen within the subject there is no way to split the representation of the subject and that of the self. Thus becoming sad is something we undergo not something cause ourselves to undergo. In the same manner, we don't use our hand and arms to get ourselves in a standing position. We simply transmit energy internally to stand up. Thus the ungrammaticality of the examples in (40) is predicted:

- (40) a. \**Me puse triste a mí mismo con lo que dijiste.*  
 'I became sad to myself with what you said.'
- b. \**Me paré a mí mismo.*  
 'I stood up.'

The syntactic consequences of the two construals are also predicted. Instead of having an agent acting on a patient the subject is an experiencer, that in most cases enacts actively some change of state. The following cognitive grammar representation is offered to illustrate the contrast. The reflexive has the same basic representation of the transitive construction with the exception is the dotted line of correspondence connecting subject and object to signal coreferentiality. In contrast the middle has only one participant undergoing some change.

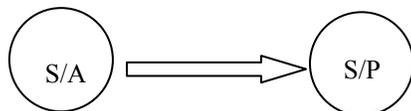


Figure 11. Reflexive

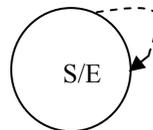


Figure 12. Middle

An evident property of the representation for the middle is that as opposed to the transitive and the reflexive there is only one participant. It is well known that middles easily overlap with intransitives since both construction types involve one participant (Kemmer 1993). What in some languages is expressed with an intransitive verb, in others it may take a middle marker. The contrast of English with other languages is well known. Middle markers are represented in boldface:

- (41) English *wash*  
 Latin *lavo-r*  
 Spanish *lavar-se*

Spanish illustrates this phenomenon in finer detail. A vast number of middle constructions as in (42a) can only be derived from the intransitive verb (42b). This can be observed from the ungrammaticality of (42c-d) where neither the transitive nor the reflexive counterpart exists:

- (42) a. *Juan se cayó al piso.*  
 ‘Juan fell down on the floor.’  
 b. *Juan cayó al piso.*  
 ‘Juan fell on the floor.’  
 c. \**Juan cayó a Pedro.*  
 Intended reading: ‘Juan fell Pedro down.’  
 d. \**Juan se cayó a sí mismo.*  
 Intended reading: \*‘Juan fell himself down.’

These cases have been treated in Spanish grammars as exceptional or even aberrant cases from a general reflexive pattern (Alonso and Henríquez Ureña 1953, Gili Gaya 1955, Goldin 1968, González 1985, King and Suñer 1999). The question is whether actually the middle develops conceptually from the reflexive construal. As recently shown by Gutiérrez Ordóñez (ms.) the historic evolution is quite different. Gutiérrez Ordóñez shows that the use of the term “passive” for the Latin suffix *-r* in verbs like *amor*, *amabar*, *amabor*, etc. is wrong since such suffix served at least four functions passive, middle deponent verbs, reflexive (corporal self care) and impersonal. As is well known the *-r* suffix was lost as all the final consonants were dropped in the evolution from Latin to Romance. There was a considerable number of adjustments in the system to cope with such loss. The passive took the Latin periphrastic construction which entered the Spanish language as *ser* ‘be’ + past participle.

The old reflexives *vestior*, *tondeor*, *lavor*, etc. took the active form with the personal and the

reflexive pronouns: *Ego me lavo, Tu te lavas, Ille se lavat*. Crucially, the old middles took the same pattern. Thus the use of the reflexive pronoun was a strategy that covered the loss of both reflexives and middles as shown in Table 2:

<b>Reflexive</b>	<b>Reflexive with reflexive pronoun</b>	<b>Middle</b>	<b>Middle with reflexive pronoun</b>
<i>-lavor</i>	<i>-me lavo</i> ‘I wash’	<i>-terreor</i>	<i>-me asusto</i> ‘I get scared’
<i>-lavaris</i>	<i>-te lavas</i> ‘You wash’	<i>-terreriis</i>	<i>-te asustas</i> ‘You get scared’
<i>-lavatur</i>	<i>-se lava</i> ‘He washes’	<i>-terretur</i>	<i>-se asusta</i> ‘He gets scared’

Table 2. *Reflexive and middles in Latin*

Moreover the reflexive was also used for passive and impersonal constructions. Given these facts it cannot be claimed that the reflexive construction itself was established as such and then it extended to middle and then to other functions. No one would claim for example that the reflexive was first established and then it extended to passive or to impersonal. What can be observed is that the reflexive was a strategy employed to cover a wide range of functions as the multifunctional suffix *-r* was lost. Consequently it equally covered reflexives, middles, non-periphrastic passives and impersonals. The internal organization of each construction may be independently motivated.

An outstanding feature of the middle construction in Spanish is that it covers basically all the range of situations described by Kemmer in her typological study (1993) Compare Table 3 with Table 1 page XX:

<b>SELF DIRECTED ACTIONS</b>	
<b>Routine actions:</b>	<i>Lavarse</i> ‘wash’, <i>peinarse</i> ‘comb’
1. <b>Interaction limited to body part or inalienable possession</b> ~ grooming or body care	
2. <b>Self-benefit actions</b> ~ benefactive middle	<i>Conseguirse</i> ‘get’, <i>allegarse</i> ‘obtain’.
3. <b>Full exploitation (Maldonado 2000)</b>	<i>comerse</i> ‘eat up’, <i>beberse</i> ‘drink up’, <i>leerse</i> ‘read up’, <i>aprenderse</i> ‘learn by heart’ <i>saberse</i> ‘know by heart’
<b>CHANGE-OF-STATE FOCUS (ASPECT)</b>	
<b>Energetic-dynamic (Maldonado 1988, 1989, 1993, 1999)</b>	
4. <b>Non-translational motion</b> ~ change in body posture	<i>Pararse</i> ‘stand up’ <i>sentarse</i> ‘sit down’ <i>voletarse</i> ‘turn’, <i>estirarse</i> ‘stretch out’
5. <b>Change in location</b> ~ translational motion	<i>Irse</i> ‘leave’, <i>subirse</i> ‘get on top of something’, <i>meterse</i> ‘go into’
6. <b>Internal change (emotional)</b> ~ emotional reaction middle	<i>Alegrarse</i> ‘gladden’ <i>entristecerse</i> ‘sadden’, <i>enojarse</i> ‘become angry’
7. <b>Verbal actions manifesting emotions</b> ~ emotive speech actions	<i>Quejarse</i> ‘complain’, <i>lamentarse</i> ‘lament’
8. <b>Internal change (mental)</b> ~ cognition middle	<i>Acordarse</i> ‘remember’, <i>imaginarse</i> ‘imagine’

9. <b>Changes of state whose energetic source is not identified</b> ~ spontaneous events	<i>Romperse</i> ‘break’, <i>quebrarse</i> ‘crack’, <i>cerrarse</i> ‘close’, <i>abrirse</i> ‘open’ etc.
--	---

Table 3. *Spanish Middle Voice*

To facilitate understanding the wide range of meanings found in Spanish middle voice I have divided those constructions involving **self directed actions** as opposed to those focusing on some **change-of-state**. With respect to self directed actions I will leave aside the discussion of whether grooming actions are reflexives or middles. I will assume against the Hispanic tradition that “grooming” are routine actions falling naturally in the terrain of the middle. As for ways of accounting for change-of-state focus most analyses have assumed a deletion approach where either the subject or the object are cancelled by the clitic *se*. There are unquestionable advantages in assuming such analysis. For instance, in anticausative constructions we can see that the agent FN<sub>1</sub> is deleted to let FN<sub>2</sub> become the subject as in (43):

Argument deletion rule: FN<sub>1</sub> V FN<sub>2</sub> > Ø FN<sub>2</sub> *se* V

- (43) *Juan abrió la puerta.* > *La puerta se abrió.*  
‘Juan opened the door.’ > ‘The door opened.’

Yet such rule is not applicable for cases of motion like (44), emotional reaction like (45) or for what I have called full exploitation middles (Maldonado 2000) as in (46):

- Motion \* Ø FN<sub>2</sub> *se* V  
(44) *Juan subió la montaña.* > *Juan se subió a la mesa.*  
‘Juan went up the mountain.’ > ‘Juan got on the table.’

- Emotional reaction \* Ø FN<sub>2</sub> *se* V  
(45) *La música alegró al abuelo.* > *El abuelo se alegró con la música.*  
‘Music made grandpa happy.’ > ‘Grandpa became happy with the music.’

- Full exploitation  
(46) *Paulette sabe francés.* > *Paulette se sabe la canción.*  
‘Paulette knows French.’ > ‘Paulette knows the song by heart.’

In none of these constructions is it the case that an argument has been deleted. Subject and object remain and yet the clitic *se* is inserted to derive a middle meaning. Now in Role and Reference Grammar a much more refined analysis has been proposed by González Vergara (2006 and this volume). According to González Vergara *se* is the morphemic manifestation of a lexical change where the sentence logical structure is modified by diminishing the prominence of the actor, the most Privileged Syntactic Argument. Consequently, the undergoer if present is profiled. All uses of *se* are accounted for by this general rule. The generalization is powerful and well motivated. It applies in different ways depending on the verb *Aktionsart*. For reasons of space I cannot do enough justice to such creative proposal. I will limit myself to providing the general way in which the rule applies and to show the need for an alternative view (see the author’s contribution in this volume for a fuller representation of the RRG analysis). The general rule applies across the board. It is a general instruction to underspecify the higher element in the hierarchy in logical

structure. The difference between this and other formal approaches is subtle but significant. It is not that the argument that is deleted it is only left underspecified. Rule (47) is the most schematic representation of more specific rules. It actually accounts for all constructions in (48).

(47) **pred'** (x, y) ↔ **pred'** (Ø, y)

- (48) a. reflexive passive: *Se construyeron muchos edificios.* ‘Many buildings were built.’  
b. reflexive impersonal: *Se acusó a Pedro.* ‘Someone accused Pedro.’  
c. middle: *Esa puerta se cierra fácilmente.* ‘The door closes easily.’  
d. intrinsic *se*: *Pedro se levantó.* ‘Pedro stood up.’  
*Juan se acostumbró.* ‘Juan got used to (doing something).’

An important consequence of such a rule is that the construction gains sentence focus. The whole clause content, as opposed to the actor or other relevant participant, is seen as new information. While the analysis is creative and accounts for a wide range of data I must underline a few problems that can be solved by assuming a middle representation as a basic form. The general rule applies nicely to cases (48a-c), however there is no underspecified element in (48d) unless it is claimed that it is the object what is being underspecified. But if this is the case then the difference between deleting an argument and underspecifying it is not at all clear.

This problem is even stronger in the case of the second application of the rule since it applies to activities, more specifically, to verbs of creation, consumption and motion. What the rule does is to produce an *Aktionsart* change: activities become what González Vergara calls “active achievements”. This is obtained by underspecifying the actor and selecting a secondary argument as obligatory. This selected argument restricts the scope of the verb and transforms its *Aktionsart*. In the case of verbs of consumption and creation the secondary argument subsumes the role of undergoer and gains prominence. The rule may also select a referential element lower in the hierarchy as is the source *la casa* ‘home’ in (49):

(49) *Pedro se fue de casa.*  
‘Pedro left home.’

One can infer that in verbs like *bajar* ‘go down’ and *caer* ‘fall down’ the rule selects the goal. Now what is not clear is how the rule underspecifies an argument in (49) or, for that matter, in (50) where all the elements either from the transitive or the intransitive source are still present. *Pedro* is no less the subject-actor in any of these examples.

- (50) a. *Pedro se bebió una cerveza.*  
‘Pedro drunk up a beer.’  
b. *Pedro se supo la lección.*  
‘Pedro learned the lesson by heart.’

In the RRG analysis *Pedro* is reinterpreted as the subject-undergoer. Notice however that the



change from the transitive *Pedro bebió una cerveza* or *Pedro supo la canción* is one of transitivity increase. The action of the subject is perfectly agentive. The only real change imposed by *se* is that the object is totally affected by the subject/agent's action. (I will provide a partial yet sufficient analysis of this construction below).

Even more problematic is the type of reading obtained in these cases does not coincide with what would be expected from a rule that underspecifies the actor. Notice that in the first application of the rule in examples (48a-c) the event loses transitivity and becomes more generic. This is not what happens in (49) to (50). In fact the opposite meaning is obtained. While focusing on the source in (49) the event is also seen as more dynamic. A different type of dynamism is observed in (50) where the construction signals that the subject controls not just a part but the whole direct object.

Based on previous work (Maldonado 1988, 1993, 1999) I suggest that middles construct energetic events which contrast with absolute ones. Energetic events are defined by Langacker (1991: 389–393) as construals where some type of energy is profiled. Absolutes have the opposite properties; they depict neutral events where no energy is profiled. French may be a language where such contrast is evident. Absolute events with no energy being profiled take the auxiliary *être* 'be'. In verbs like *aller* 'go', *venir* 'come', *arriver* 'arrive' no speed or manner of locomotion is put forward and *être* 'be' is consistently chosen as the proper auxiliary. Energetic verbs take the auxiliary *avoir* 'have' as they present the opposite configuration, they profile speed and manner of locomotion: *courir* 'run', *nager* 'swim', *voler* 'fly' and so on. This type of contrast can be seen in a variety of languages.

The energetic nature of Spanish middles comes from the fact that the event is compressed to the crucial moment of change. Event compression may take place in several ways. Most commonly we don't see the subject acting on the object, only the object change-of-state is being focused. Here the coincidence with González Vergara is considerable. Now to the extent that our attention centers on the change-of-state undergone by the only participant in the clause the event is seen as short, rapid or even abrupt. Contrast the absolute intransitive uses of the following motion verbs with their energetic middle counterpart. The reading for (51b) is one of abruptness.:

- (51) a. *La pelota salió de la canasta*  
'The ball came out of the basket.'
- b. *La pelota se salió de la canasta.*  
'The ball went out of the basket.'

That the absolute is not short or abrupt can be seen from the fact that natural and slow processes as that of the sun coming out cannot take middle marking (52b):

- (52) a. *El sol sale.*  
'The sun comes out.'
- b. \**El sol se sale*

The gradual trajectory along a path is also construed as absolute (53a) while the energetic middle focuses on the actual moment where the subject leaves some location (53b), a source focus as

suggested by Ibañez (2005) and González Vergara (2006):

- (53) a. *Quiero ir al cine.*  
'I want to go to the movies.'
- b. -¿*Está el doctor?* 'Is the doctor here?'  
-*Ya (\*Ø) se fue.* 'He already left.'

The same explanation takes effect in the dominion of time. For *dormir*<sup>6</sup> 'sleep' the long sleeping path along the night is coded by the absolute while the energetic change-of-state is marked by the middle:

- (54) a. *Michael durmió toda la noche.*  
'Michael slept all night.'
- b. *Johanna se durmió en mi charla.*  
'Johanna fell asleep in my talk.'

It is rather evident that this is a matter of construal. The middle marker needs not be used in all situations. From (55) it can be seen that the option is context dependent. We can either see the whole process of change from sleep to vigil or, alternatively, we may focus on the crucial moment of change. Without further specification both options are possible, yet only the dynamism of the energetic middle can highlight the crucial point in which the (sudden) change from sleep to vigil takes place. Crucially the dynamic reading of abruptness is more naturally associated with the middle construction not so clearly with the intransitive in (55):

- (55) *Juan Carlos se (??Ø) despertó abruptamente gritando de terror.*  
'Juan Carlos woke up abruptly screaming in terror.'

Dynamicity is an expected effect for the middle construction. To the extent that the event is condensed in one participant the action is seen as fast, immediate and even abrupt as in (56b):

- (56) a. *Adrián subió la montaña en dos horas.*  
'Adrián went up the mountain in two hours.'
- b. *Cuando apareció la rata Tachita se (\*Ø) subió a la mesa (de un salto).*  
'When the rat showed up Tachita got on the table (in one jump).'

The focusing function of the middle energetic as contrasting with the intransitive absolute is represented in Figures 14 and 15. The middle as centered in the subject participant condenses the event to depict an event reduced in time as depicted by the small square:

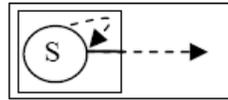


Figure 14. *Energetic*

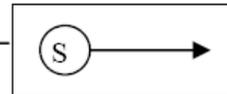


Figure 15. *Absolute*

There is a further extension obtained from the focusing function of the middle marker. Events marked for the middle can provide a reading of counter-expectations. While (57a, b) depict natural events as rain falling or a ball falling in a basketball game, the case of (57c) contradicts the natural conceptualization of humans as normally being in a standing position. The unexpected loss of control is marked by the middle energetic marker:

- (57) a. *La lluvia cae.*  
 ‘Rain falls.’
- b. *La pelota cayó en la canasta.*  
 ‘The ball fell into the basket.’
- c. *El borracho se cayó.*  
 ‘The drunkard fell down.’

The issue of expectations can be seen in further examples. Dying can be seen either as a natural biological phenomenon as in (58a,b), or it can correspond to an event that the speaker did not expect to happen as in (59):

- (58) a. *Don Nico murió suavemente, se quedó dormido y ya no despertó.*  
 ‘Don Nico died softly, he fell asleep and he didn’t wake up.’
- b. *Cuando don Nico murió, su hijo ya tenía treinta años.*  
 ‘When Don Nico died his son was already 30 years old.’
- (59) *Don Keño se murió sin que su hijo pudiera hablar con él.*  
 ‘Don died before his son could talk to him.’

A strong argument proving that the middle encodes the speaker’s expectations is that the use of the dative marker *le* which represents the subjective affectedness of *Juan*—the external possessor of *papá*—requires the use of the middle marker as in (60a). In its absence the output is ungrammatical, as in (60b):

- (60) a. *A Juan se le murió su papá.*
- b. \**A Juan le murió su papá.*  
 ‘As for Juan his father died on him.’

The emergence of expectations can be seen as a natural consequence of the focusing function of the middle. As attention is concentrated in the actual change-of-state there is no information about the set of circumstances that bring about the event whose happening comes as an

unexpected occurrence. We can see that this event type is even more energetic as it involves not only suddenness but it also the speaker's viewpoint.

Middles of emotional reaction also involve an energetic construal. In these verbs there is an external impulse determining an experiencer human reaction. Some impulse (la música in 62a) operates as the subject while the human experiencer takes dative marking. The dative marks an experiencer undergoing some change. Now what the middle does is to increase the degree of participation of the human experiencer as it becomes the subject of the middle construction. Notice that while only in the middle construction (61b) and (62b) the clitic *me* agrees in person with the verb marking (See Maldonado 1999 for a more detailed explanation of this construction):

- (61) a. *Los niños me ponen nervioso.*  
 'The kids make me nervous.'
- b. *Me pongo nervioso con los niños.*  
 'I get nervous with the kids'
- (62) a. *La música lo puso triste.*  
 'The music made him sad'
- b. *Se puso triste con la música.*  
 'He became sad with the music.'

The dative construction indicates that the experiencer simply suffers some affectedness, the middle highlights that s/he actively enacts an emotional change. In (62a) what kids do is what is important, while in (62b) the way I react at kids is really what matters.

Whether the middle contrasts with the intransitive, whether it is in opposition with the dative of emotional reaction the middle imposes an increase either in participant involvement, or in speed. It may also incorporate the speaker's expectations. Either from the intransitive (Figure 19) or from the emotional reaction construction (Figure 17) we move to the middle (Figure 18). In the middle construction we have a compressed event where the change-of-state is in focus and the degree of participation increases.

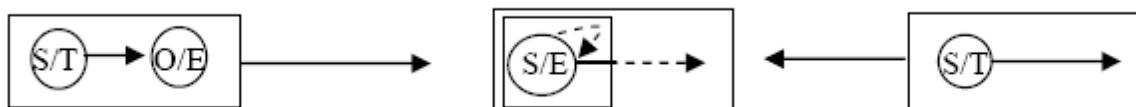


Figure 17. *Emotional reaction*

Figure 18. *Energetic Middle*

Figure 19. *Absolute*

Another area where the middle involves increase of energy is the case of the **full exploitation middle**, a construction where the subject maximally exploits the object (Maldonado 2000). Verbs of consumption *comer* 'eat', *fumar* 'smoke', *beber* 'drink', *tragar* 'swallow,' etc. and its abstract manifestation of consumption predicates *saber* 'know', *aprender* 'learn' the subject not

only brings the object into her/his dominion as other verbs do (*tomar* ‘take’, *agarrar* ‘grasp’, *comprar* ‘buy’, *conseguir* ‘get’) but also exploits it in different ways. Crucially, the use of the clitic *se* highlights the fact that the whole object is consumed. Thus, in (63b) and (64b), the respective utterances entail that *Victor* ate the whole portion of meat and that *Adrian* has read the whole paper. It is also implied that they both accomplished it in a short span of time. The transitive construction without *se* remains neutral about both the total affectedness of the object and the time efficiency of the middle construction:

- (63) a. *Victor sólo comió un poco de carne.*  
‘Victor only ate some meat.’
- b. *Victor se comió la carne (en tres minutos).*  
‘Victor ate the (whole) meat (in three minutes).’
- c. \* *Victor se comió la carne y quedó un poquito.*  
Intended reading: ‘Victor ate up the meat and there is some of it left.’
- (64) a. *Adrián leyó el periódico con cuidado.*  
‘Adrian read the paper with care.’
- b. *Adrián se leía el periódico de una hora.*  
‘Adrian would read the (whole) paper in one hour.’

The contrast is parallel to the lexical difference in English between *drink* and *drink up*, where the particle entails **full exploitation**. One could claim that the clitic *se* is nothing but an aspectual marker that changes activities into accomplishments. This conclusion would be wrong, however, since the meaning imposed by *se* is quite more specific. It can take imperfect as well as perfect and the restrictions follow the properties of highly transitive constructions<sup>2</sup>.

An important property of the construction is that full exploitation also entails full subject involvement. In some dialects of Latin American Spanish full involvement has extended to verbs of effected object and even to verbs of action implying creation:

- (67) a. *Se echó una cena deliciosa.*  
‘He made a delicious dinner.’
- b. *Tongolele se bailó una rumba inolvidable.*  
‘Tongolele danced an unforgettable rumba (with all her might).’

The middle marker not only indicates that the object is of good quality but also that the subject is highly involved as in (67a) and highly expressive as in (67b).

The involvement increase is also clearly attested in the Spanish middle system not only for transitive verbs of consumption but for emotion. The clitic *se* consistently designates a higher degree of subject involvement as in (68b). Without *se* the feeling is neutral as in (68a). Notice that adverbial phrases reducing the subject’s involvement would be incompatible with the use of the middle marker, as in (68c):

- (68) a. *Juan compadeció a los muchachos.*  
 ‘Juan felt pity for the young men.’
- b. *Juan se compadeció de los muchachos.*  
 ‘Juan felt pity for the young men.’
- c. ??*Juan se compadeció de los muchachos sin mayor compromiso.*  
 ‘Juan felt pity for the young men without major compromise.’

Finally the ground is set to account for deponent verbs which in traditional grammars are simply listed as lexical reflexives. While there is no question that these verbs can only be construed with the middle marker, the meaning is consistent with what the middle designates. Spanish deponent verbs designate energetic readings. From (69a-c) it can be observed that the subject deeply participates in the emotional act and the absence of a middle marker the output is not grammatical:

- (69) a. *Juan se (\* $\emptyset$ ) arrepintió de sus tonterías.*  
 ‘Juan regretted his foolish acts.’
- b. *Juan se (\* $\emptyset$ ) jactó de sus buenos resultados.*  
 ‘Juan bragged of his good results.’
- c. *Juan se (\* $\emptyset$ ) quejó de la política económica.*  
 ‘Juan complained about the economic policy.’

These verbs were  transitive in early Spanish until the XVII century where the optional use of *se* became obligatory as the high degree of the subject’s involvement lexicalized in the verb. That the physical manifestation of an emotional feeling is not only volitional but intense can be seen from the fact that using manner adverbials like *con desgano* ‘unwillingly’, *sin realmente sentirlo* ‘without really feeling it’ render the construction unacceptable:

- (70) a. \**Juan se jactó de sus buenos resultados con desgano.*  
 Intended reading: ‘Juan bragged about his good results unwillingly.’
- b. \**Juan se quejó de la política económica con desgano.*  
 Intended reading: ‘Juan complained about the economic policy unwillingly.’

Moreover the intense involvement of the subject can be seen from the fact that the middle construction can take volitional modifiers:

- (70) *Juan se quejó de la política económica cuidadosa/agresivamente.*  
 ‘Juan complains about the economical policy carefully/aggressively.’

These facts argue against the claim that the clitic *se* is a reflexive marker or that it can be reduced to an argument deletion marker. Instead they show that the middle marker depicts a high degree of energy which may be presented in terms of subject involvement in the event. In cases where the participant involvement increase is not present either the event is dynamic as it signals speed and suddenness or it introduces the speaker's expectations. The increase is now on the part of the conceptualizer.

## 5. Conclusions

In this paper I have tried to show that middle voice can be a basic construction in different languages of the world. I have argued against the widespread assumption that the middle necessarily develops from a reflexive construction. From a set of unrelated languages I have provided evidence that the middle may be a basic construction. As such, it can be the basis for the development of other constructions. One perfectly good candidate to derive from the middle is precisely the reflexive construction as shown by Toba, P'orepecha and Amharic. In other languages the middle may in fact develop from transitive roots as in Yucatec Maya and Otomi but this development has no relation with the reflexive construction at all. Balinese and Amharic corroborate the view that reflexives and middles are totally independent being the middle a more basic construction. I have also tried to show that the idea that the middle develops from the reflexive is not only an Indo-European story but more importantly a simplified misinterpretation of Indo-European languages. Based on Spanish I have shown that the rule by which either the subject or the object are deleted by the clitic *se* to obtain a decausative or a reflexive construction is a gross overgeneralization that loses the core function of the middle marker. While the subject may be downplayed, as nicely put forward by González Vergara (2006), what is crucial about the clitic *se* is that it fulfills the expected middle functions found across the languages of the world. As I have proposed elsewhere (Maldonado 1992, 1999) the middle compresses the event into one participant and it focuses on the crucial moment of change-of-state to obtain an energetic event. The increase in speed and suddenness of the action is but one manifestation of the energetic projection of the middle event. The higher degree of involvement of the experiencer in full involvement transitive constructions and in verbs of emotion and emotional reaction is another manifestation of this phenomenon. The emergence of the speaker's expectations is no less a good manifestation of an energetic event. Finally given this view, deponent verbs need not be listed as exceptions. They are the crystallized lexicalizations of a well attested pattern in the language where either the conceptualizer or the subject's involvement in the event determines a particular view of events in everyday life.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> This in fact may be the grammaticization path followed by middle markers depicting inchoative events (Langacker 1992, Maldonado 1992), as in (ib):

- (i) a. *Adrián rompió la taza.*  
Adrian broke the cup  
'Adrian broke the cup.'
- b. *La taza se rompió.*  
the cup MID broke  
'The cup broke.'

Instead of assuming that the middle marker is simply a detransitivization device with no meaning-- as has been suggested by a number of formal approaches --the middle marker develops an inchoative interpretation from the core middle value as it simply focuses on the change-of-state undergone by the subject (Maldonado 1992, 1999). Event simplification develops thus from the core schematic representation of the middle marker.

<sup>2</sup> In this paper we will use the following abbreviations; A: A series (ergative), APPL: applicative, B: B series (absolute), CAUS: causative, COMP: completive, DEM: demonstrative, DUR: durative, HAB: habitual, INCOMP: incompletive, INTR: intransitive, MID: middle, P: possessive, PERF: perfective, RFLX: reflexive, S: singular, TRNS: transitive, =: bound morpheme, 1, 2, 3: 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> person.

<sup>3</sup> The accidental reading is obtained by having a reflexive construction with an inanimate subject. See Martínez and Maldonado (in press) for an account of accidental reflexives in YM.

<sup>4</sup> These are stems that require a formative marker before getting inflection.

<sup>5</sup> For a description of transitive and causative constructions in Tarascan see Maldonado and Nava 2002.

<sup>6</sup> One problem with González Vergara's analysis is the overwhelming tendency to analyze most verbs as deriving from a transitive source even in cases where the intransitive source is a closer relative. For instance *dormir* 'sleep' and *despertar* 'awake' are not treated in the same manner. While *dormir* is a decausative obtained from the transitive by the general rule, *despetar* is an aspectual derivation by the second application of the rule. The implication is that *dormir* has a transitive counterpart while *despertar* does not. His arguments to defend such contrast are not convincing. The behavior of both verbs is exactly the same: the middle use contrasts with the intransitive base form not with the causative one. The contrast between *dormir* and *despertar* is related to the natural length of *dormir* and the shorter period of *despertar*. Yet the import of the middle marker is exactly the same.

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<sup>1</sup> In brackets we include the date and interview from which examples are extracted

<sup>2</sup> Notice that the clitic itself is not responsible for the aspectual change. From the examples in (1a, b) it can be seen that there are accomplishments without *se*:

- (1) a. *Sacó de la bolsa la última torta y la comió despacio.*  
'He got the last cake from his bag and ate it slowly.'  
b. *El viejo bebió un trago a pico de botella y le nacieron unas llamas en las pupilas.*  
'The old man drank a sip from the bottle and little flames came out of his pupils.'

Full exploitation middles apply only to accomplishments; thus most of the properties of accomplishments must be met in the full exploitation construction. While the restrictions on the object noun are stringent, aspect is more flexible. The event tends to be perfective as in (63b) or (64b) but imperfective events are also possible, as in (2a, b):

- (66) a. *Se estaba comiendo la carne cuando oyó un disparo.*  
'He was eating his meat when he heard a shot'  
b. *Don Nico se bebía su tequila antes de comer.*  
'Don Nico would drink his tequila before supper'

As for the object, it must meet every property expected for accomplishments. For a whole thing to be totally affected it must be clearly identified, isolatable and easy to manipulate. The object must be bounded and individuated although it needs not be specific, thus mass nouns and generics are out (\**Se tomó café* 'He drank up coffee', \**Se comió tortillas* 'He ate up tortillas')