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GENERAL SESSION AND PARASESSION ON GRAMMATICALIZATION

Berkeley Linguistics Society
Berkeley, California, USA
Eckert, Penelope. In press. Sound change and adolescent social structure. Language and Society.


EMERGENT REFLEXIVES IN SPANISH
Ricardo Mallozado
University of California, San Diego

It has traditionally been claimed that reflexive constructions are to be analyzed as the identification of subject and object with the same participant in an event. It is clear that, while this approach accounts for a restricted pattern of reflexive expressions, it leaves unexplained several classes for which the post analysis has only been to list them in the lexicon. I show that there are several productive patterns of reflexive formation whose internal structures have not yet been explained. I propose that it is necessary to start from a different set of assumptions in such a way that the classic subject/object identification will be seen as only a special instance of a more complex network of symbolic structures. This paper focuses on the dialect of Mexico. Even though there may be differences regarding the behavior of a particular site, the fundamental claim made is to account for all modern dialects of Spanish.

Sentence (1) in an example of a prototypical reflexive *se* formation: sentence (2) departs from this pattern:

(1) Juan se peina 'just combed his hair'
(2) La pelota se cayo de la canasta 'The ball fell down from the basket'

In (1) subject and object are identified as agent and patient with the same participant. It is obvious that (1) cannot be explained in the same manner. Many objects such as seas are incapable of moving by means of their own resources. Obviously, this implies that we cannot claim the presence of an agent and a patient identified with the same participant. We are further unable to say that subject and object correspond to the same entity since the source of INACIAR (neces. 'to fall') is an intransitive verb with only one participant. Since the copular sentential analysis proves to be inadequate, it is clear that a different approach to these matters is necessary. We must first determine the meaning of sentence (2). Let us start by comparing (2) with (3):

(3) La pelota cayo de la canasta

In (3), the falling of the ball is conceived as a natural occurrence that is in agreement with the normal course of events. This would be the case in a basketball game, in which the ball falls from the basket many times during a match. In sentence (2) the ball is expected to remain on the table and its falling constitutes an unexpected action, an event that contradicts a normal expectation. The following examples support this view:
energetic resources in order to induce changes; and (c) natural forces, circumscribed as energy sources that act constantly on any element in space. Interactions between such entities are encoded in language by means of different syntactic structures.

Unexpectedness is a possible reading because the event contravenes the natural conception of a state or an action. Natural events don't take these actions. Here are some examples:

(5) la lluvia era 'baja' bajaran la palma.
   En el otoño, las hojas 'bajan'; caen de los árboles
   'In autumn, the leaves fall from the trees'.

It is natural for rain to fall. In the same manner, leaves normally fall from the trees in autumn. It leaves started falling from trees in the spring, the reflexive se would be used to impose the reading in which the action is conceived as counter to expectation. Crucially, the non-reflexive forra would be ruled out.

(6) En la primavera, las hojas se 'bajan'; cayeron de los árboles
   'In spring, the leaves fall from the trees'.

The contrast between reflexive and non-reflexive formations does not express that the participant is animate or not. The same contrast can be found in processes with animate participants:

(7) el 'se' cabe al agua con toda elegancia
   'I fell into the water with elegance'
(8) el 'se' cabe al agua resistiendo
   'I fell into the water resisting'

Notice that (7) is conceived as an intended event and therefore the reflexive se is ruled out, whereas in (8) the action is accidental and only the reflexive use is correct. We have shown so far that the reflexive se introduces a reading of unexpectedness, but we need to see what the syntactic and lexical assumptions are necessary to describe this phenomenon. I have already been referring informally to the first basic notions:

(9) The continual of unexpected change depends on the canonical conception of the elements involved in the event.

This assumption interacts with Langacker's LEB model (1987a), by which we tend to conceive the world as being populated with discrete objects located in space. None of these objects are capable of moving around and also of inducing movement of other, non-energetic elements in space, mainly through physical contact. We have been dealing with three different kinds of elements: a thing (leaves and ball) conceived as elements incapable of changing location by means of their own resources; the human being conceived as capable of exerting and controlling their own
energy. In such a case, the change of location is not volitional and it constitutes a contradiction of natural expectations. In such cases only the reflexive formation is allowed, as (18) shows. We may not accept, though the notion of accidentality is present, the reflexive form is ruled out itself.

(18) Después de que le dispararon el reloj (es) salió la casa.

After it was shot, he ran home.

The context imposes a different conception of the subject of case.

Notice that the act of shooting takes place before the third. Consequently, the act of selling takes place when the third is not considered. The influence of gravity is significant.

Since no particular conflict of forces is being profiled the use of is in inappropriate.

The contrast between the intransitive reflexive and the reflexive formations of this verb is based on the pattern shown in figure 1.

Figure 1 (cf. page 18)

The circle represents the participant. The downward arrow indicates change of location, whereas the downward arrow stands for the strength of gravity. In the upward arrow shows the resisting energy imposed against gravity. This force is canceled by an unspecified force (the line crossing it) and gravity becomes a stronger force (the sign %).

The scheme proposed in figure 1 constitutes the simplest case of this kind of reflexive formation in Spanish. The scheme just proposed is not a semantic idiosyncrasy of this verb. I will claim that in fact, not only is this pattern quite productive in Spanish, but it also follows from a fundamental opposition in absolute and energetic construal as explained by Langacker (1987).

In the absolute construction the event can be either explicit or dynamic but no energy is put in profile. For instance, in the intransitive of falling is basically a simple event.

Since the event is anticipated or contravene one's expectations, the construction can become stronger.

If the event runs in the direction of expectations, the construction will be absolute, but if it runs counter to this action the force of gravity will be more significant. In force-formative terms, it is encoded with the reflexive #2. Langacker (1981b) has shown that the absolute/reflexive contrast in other languages.

In French, non-reflexive verbs that take the auxiliary SUBJ. are absolute, as opposed to energetic verbs that take the auxiliary AUX. have.

Absolute verbs like ELHAR 'arrive', EIZIL 'leave', etc. make no specification concerning the role or the method of location. On the other hand, energetic verbs like CAUCAR 'run', VALAR 'fly', NAGER, signify the manner and rate of location. In a similar fashion, Langacker hypothesizes that the three morphological classes of Cupu, #1 reported by Wulff (1967), are based on the absolute/non-absolute distinctions verbs with the prefix -#1 or volitional and active, while those marked with #2 tend to have the opposite properties. As opposed to these polar absolute verbs with zero marking are energy-neutral, most verbs for states of mind ('be angry'), natural bodily processes ('weep'), behavior of plants, animals, inanimate objects and the weather ('blow', 'rain'), what is crucial is how an event is viewed subjectively. In Cupu, zero forms refer predominantly to processes that run according to the normal course of events, as they are conceived either in the physical domain or in the cultural sphere. If process counts as energetic only when it rises above this baseline (Langacker 1977b).

As opposed to absolute non-reflexive and energetic reflexive constructions are quite productive in Spanish. I will try to show the ways in which the absolute/energetic opposition is manifested in several kinds of intransitive verbs.

(11a) La pelota roda por las escaleras.

The ball rolled down the stairs.

b. Juan roda por las escaleras.

d. Juan se lo hazan pedir.

Juan rolled down the stairs as they had asked him to do in the shooting of the film.

c. j. perez al concierto y (es) roda por las escaleras.

Juan rolled down the stairs.

d. J. se lo (de) roda por las escaleras cuando se tropezó con Ana.

Juan rolled down the stairs when he tripped over Ana.

Examples (11a) and (b) constitute clear cases of absolute construals. They are parallel on a motoric and conceptual level. Since the opposition of forces has been lexicalized in Spanish as a device by means of which absolute construals are transformed into energetic construals. For the same kind of argument, the verb can be either alone or with a reflexive marker, depending on whether the event is anticipated or contravene one's expectations. If the event runs in the direction of expectations, the construction will be absolute, but if it runs counter to this action the force of gravity will be more significant. In force-formative terms, it is encoded with the reflexive #2. Langacker (1981b) has shown that the absolute/reflexive contrast in other languages.

In French, non-reflexive verbs that take the auxiliary SUBJ. are absolute, as opposed to energetic verbs that take the auxiliary AUX. have.

Absolute verbs like ELHAR 'arrive', EIZIL 'leave', etc. make no
(124) León would al ver jugar a su hija
León would al ver que juega a su hija

(T.' smiled when she noticed that J. was looking at her.)

We are concerned now with self-energetic participants. In these cases reactions tend to institutionalize the emotional energy that flows in the event, as it is manifested corporally. The contrast is made clear in (125a) the action is perceived as a natural event. It is only seen as an instance of the emotionality attributed to any human subject the participant uses his own resources to smile. Even though energy is involved, the action counts as non-energetic or as automatic because it is seen as natural. Notice the explanation given for (124) doesn't hold for (125b), in which Tachita's emotional event is reported by her in an unexpected, different intentions (stresslessness, serenity, etc.) may act as antagonistic forces, which the subject participant is unsuccessful at holding back. This emotional behavior comes from a balance of forces situation. In the reflexive form the person is expected to hold back any emotional manifestation. This expectation invokes a neutralizing force that prevents a reaction from emerging when the impulse is stronger than the inhibition the resulting act characterizes the natural course of events and is grammaticalized in Spanish by the reflexive formation. Needless to say the scheme given in figure 1 also represents the structure of these verbs, provided that the conflict of forces is now abstract. A construal in which the resisting force that creates the environment for a reflexive formation can only be equated with desires and expectations is of course found in the language, Tupai, for example, the verb encoger: to shrivel.

(135) a. La lana (ver) encoge 'wool shrinks'

b. Los pantalones de poliéster no (ver) encogen

Polyester trousers don't shrink

c. El suéter de lana (ver) encoge 'wool sweater shrinks'

Even though these trousers are pre-washed, they shrink (unexpectedly).

In (125b) the event is advertised, pero yo no quite nice way if you ask me (ver) encogía 'encogía'

The sweater shrinks on me, but I ignore it and the sweater shrinks.

c. El suéter (ver) encogía 'wool sweater shrinks'

Queen to the set of absolute examples is the fact that they describe the tendencies of different materials to undergo a change in different situations. The view of the facts is done in an absolute fashion, as no particular expectations are imposed by the speaker on the elements involved in each process. In (126a), wool is conceived of as a kind of material that tends to shrink. (126b) shows that the process of shrinking normally doesn't take place with certain kinds of material. The scene is construed objectively, i.e., excluding the speaker's subjectivity from the scope of prediction. Notice that these examples are in present tense, the canonical linguistic strategy for true situations of the type on pág. 128 eso son cuatro 'two plus two equals 4.' One can predict that when the event is construed perfectly it will be tied to a specific set of circumstances which will allow for the speaker's expectations to play a determinant role in the use of it. If clothes shrink as a consequence of a particular set of circumstances the reflexive verb can be used. This is in fact what happens in (125), and in (124) there is a particular social context to which the speaker is not referred to (146), in which the subject's concreteness gives the change of state; in (146), where the afferentness of the speaker is explicitly encoded by means of the ethilical dative.

It shouldn't be surprising to find that the antonym of encoger, encoger, 'to give' and its reflexive counterpart encorarse 'to stretch', would be construed in exactly the same manner:

(155) a. El algodón/la lana cede 'Cotton/wool gives

b. El suéter de lana/de algodón se cede/sea estirado 'The cotton/wool sweater got all stretched out'

The following is a more transparent example of the same kind of construal:

(165) a. El pan es (ver) duro 'The pan runs smoothly on the paper'

b. Por usar el viejo pluma, la tinta se (ver) corrido sobre el papel y ahora no hay manera de borrarla 'Because of using the old fountain pen, the ink ran over the paper and now there is no way to erase it.'

It should be clear that in (165a) the pan does not present any resistance to being manipulated over the paper. The construal is absolute, in (165b) the ink produces an undesired stain on the paper. The resisting force here is the desire for the event not to happen. When such a desire is contradicted the event runs counter to expectations and the energetic reflexive formation is employed. We are now in a position to explain what in traditional grammar has been considered an anomalous case of reflexive constructions. The examples always given for the so-called 'reflexive animals' (Toshiaki 196b) are the following:

(177) El pajaro se (ver) llovido 'The ceiling leaned because of the rain'
Traditional grammars have been unable to explain this kind of sentence since their basic hypothesis is to see them as a departure from a subject–object–classifier–relative–sentence.* In (17) it is clear that the ceiling offers resistance up to the point where the energy exerted by the weight of the water overcomes this resistance. Besides this physical explanation, an assertion that is present is: ceilings are canonically expected to protect the space they cover from the falling of any object, and the dripping of water runs counter to normal expectations. The same explanation holds for example (18). The bathtub’s change of location can only be interpreted as accidental, as the nature of the initiative force causing the process remains unspecified. Common to these examples is the fact that the overpowered agonistic force is an expectation imposed on an inanimate participant capable of undergoing a change based on its own resources. It shouldn’t be surprising to find that traditional grammars show an obvious confusion in the characterization of this kind of construct. Notice that whereas lámparas and salseras are considered deviations from relataless constructions, the following examples are considered departures from passivings: the so-called "pseudo-passives":

(19) Se le (él) torció el tobillo. "The tree got twisted"
(20) Se le (é) seco el arbol. "The tree dried out"

From our perspective, such division is inadequate. Suffice it to say that they are also constructed in an agonistic fashion: the agonistic force is always a natural expectation and the antagonistic force is in general terms highly schematic. The following schema represents the internal composition of this set of verbs:

Figure 1 (top, page 18)

The warp line inside the circle "represents the change undergone by the participant, it specifies the stronger force in the left-to-right angle with the sign '⇒', and the expectation being overwritten in the right-to-left angle with the sign '⇒'.

If this interpretation is correct, we may be in a position to explain the contrast between the next couple of sentences:

(21a.) El papa de Juan murió. "Juan's father died!"
(21b. El papá de Juan se murio. "Juan's father died"

Barcia has analyzed sentence (b) as a case in which the subject is doubly mentioned by the verb ending and by the clitic se. The effect of double mention is that only the particular participant involved in the event absorbs all the available 'functions' (logical 'subject' and logical 'object') and excludes the possibility of having an 'external' agent. A kidnapper asking for 'ransom might threaten a father as follows:

(22) Me das 6,000 $ a hijo mío. "Give me 6,000 $ or your son will die!"

Be 'implies that the dying is the exclusive affair of the son" (1975b). Even though Barcia's analysis is highly suggestive, it proves inadequate not only for clitics but also for the set of energetic constructions given previously. Inanimate elements cannot act on their own accord to produce a change. They do not qualify as being simultaneously logical agents and patients. Therefore the event must be induced by external forces. Instead of claiming that se rules out all external forces, I claim that it allows such forces to act but at the same time it blocks the possibility of making a specific participant responsible for their action. This analysis can account for the iconic interpretation of examples like the following:

(23) Me das 6,000 $ a hijo si mueras en mis manos. "Give me 6,000 $ or your son will die in my hands"

Some initiative force drives the event in such a way that it overwhelms a resisting expectation. However, the stronger initiative force cannot be identified with a specific participant. It can only be represented in highly schematic terms. We know that somebody (this speaker in this case) drives the event as the sole subject phrase suggests, and yet the use of the makes the identity of the participant as being unknown. These concepts allow us to characterize the absolute/energetic contrast. In the absolute ISRC, the act of dying is seen objectively as a change of state in which no particular subjective expectations are included:

(24) Don Rico murió suavemente, su quedó dorado y se desgastó
(25) Cuando don Rico murió, su hijo ya tenía treinta años. When S. K. died, his son was already thirty years old.

It is well acknowledged in the literature that agonistic implies a high level of accessibility, i.e., the speaker's expectations play an important role in the construct, as they constitute the agonistic forces overwhelmed by the undesirable happenings:

(26a.) Don Rico se murio sin que su hijo pudiera hablar con él. "Don Rico died without his son being able to talk to him"
(26b. A Juan se (él) le murió su papá. "To John died his father" "John's father died on him"

Similar to escena la tinta, what constitutes the energetic
situation in (2b) is the fact that death causes when some other participant didn’t expect it to happen. Implicit in the meaning of (2b) is the want for it to be, i.e., to don (2). It is also explicit because of the passive marker in that Juan is affected by his father’s death in (2b). The absolute/energetic contrast also allows us to explain the difference between ABADEAR and ABADEAR.*

(27) Juan (ex) apareció en televisión por primera vez ayer ‘J. was on television for the first time yesterday’
(28) En el (27), la cabeza del bebé fue lo primero que (ex) apareció ‘In that childbirth the head of the baby was the first thing that appeared’
(29) Juan se (ex) apareció en la fiesta sin invitación ‘J. showed up at the uninvited party’
(30) El vaso se (ex) apareció en su cuarto en la noche ‘The vase ‘were’ showed up in his room in the night’

In all these examples an element that was not there before appears in the scope of predicacion. It should be clear that the only difference is that in the reflexive construction the presence of the participant in the setting is not expected. This analysis is not restricted to intransitive verbs. It can also account for reflexive constructions with transitive counterparts. Following the William & Zal model, by which some energetic entity may induce movement of other elements in space mainly through physical contact, I assume that in a prototypical finite clause, the subject is an agentive energy source which transmits energy through an action chain to an energy sink which is encoded by the object. Prototypical absolute transitive processes are schematized as follows:

Figure 3 (cf. page 18)

The clitic se is used in Spanish to produce sentences that depart from this basic scheme and I am not sure what it does in that case. In any case, I will limit myself to discussing the most productive pattern in Spanish:

(31a) El ratero ahogó al anciano ‘The thief drowned the old man’
(31b) El anciano se (ex) ahogó ‘The old man drowned’

The transitive sentence is construed following the prototypical pattern of an action chain in agreement with a force dynamics situation in (31a). The diagram for (31a) shows the object resisting the influence of gravity to keep afloat. Then the subject rataro incurs enough energy to overwhelm the internal energy of the subject that the reflexive formation can take place. The removal of agency and the existence of the unspecified initiative force make the event unexpected. For AHOGAR, also represents the structure of accidental verbs like ESTALLAR ‘explode oneself’, REPETIR ‘repeat oneself’, and CORRER ‘burn oneself’, are prototypical examples of this productive construal.

The complexity of the network of ‘reflexive’ construals in Spanish overwhelms the limitations of this paper. Notice finally internal force, such as fatigue, or by some external unspecified stronger energy. Contrast the following scheme with the one proposed for the transitive construal (action chain).

Figure 4 (cf. page 18)

Based on these diagrams we may identify three basic ways in which the reflexive tends to depart from the prototypical action chain schema: 1) whereas the cause of the action is the agent in the transitive sentence, in the reflexive AHOGAR the cause is not specified; 2) in the reflexive use, a force Dynamics situation in which the resisting force is either canceled or overwhelmed is some unspecified force is present; 3) even though ABADEAR is a patient, a participant downstream in the energy flow, he is encoded as the subject, instead of the object of the sentence. This is a highly productive construal in Spanish verbs like DESIMPLAR ‘deflate’, DESCARGAR ‘put out of order’, DESPARRAMAR ‘wear out’, CORRER ‘break’, GOLPEAR ‘bend down’, are prototypical cases.

(32a) Juan rompió la taza ‘J. broke the glass’
(32b) La taza se (ex) rompió ‘The glass broke’

The integrity of the cup is maintained based on some internal energy. When this energy is overwhelmed by a stronger unspecified force, the reflexive force is used. There are verbs that allow either the energy source or the energy sink to be put in profile:

(33a) Juan estragó el coche ‘J. crashed the car’
(33b) El coche se (ex) estragó ‘The car was crashed’

Sentence (33c) is construed following the pattern of AHOGAR. The patient is profiled as a subject and the initiator of the event is not encoded. (33c) is more interesting, because Juan could meet the requirements to be a volitional agent and patient in subject position, but what he does is to remove volitionality. The lack of volitionality determines the construal of accidental events. The human being is prototypically conceived as being in control of his acts, despite the existence of distractors. It is when an internal or an external unspecified distractor overwhelms the internal energy of the subject that the reflexive formation can take place. The removal of agency and the existence of the unspecified initiative force make the event unexpected.
that intransitive absolutes in which no energy is profiled (figure D) become energetic by adding a schematic frame and at the same time transitive (figure D1) become energetic by eliminating the volitional/activity characteristic of the action chain construal. With these two strategies polar opposite constructions coincide in the same results: the energetic scheme proposed in figure C.

\[ \text{Figure 1} \]
\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{caer/rodar} \\
\text{caerse/rodearse} \\
\text{nonreirse/encogerse}
\end{array}
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\[ \text{Figure 2} \]
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\[ \text{Figure 4} \]
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\text{figure S}
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\[ \text{Figure 5} \]
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\begin{array}{c}
\text{S/ABS} \\
\text{absolutive}
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To further enrich our understanding, in the next section we will explore the role of absolutes in the Spanish language, focusing on the intricate balance between energy and causality. Absolutes can be seen as a tool to highlight the inherent activity in a construction, much like the energetic schemes proposed in previous figures.


