

AGAINST THE SYNTACTICALLY UNIFORM ANALYSIS OF REFLEXIVE INTRANSITIVES*

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1. Introduction

It is well known and widely accepted that intransitive predicates are classified into two types, unergatives and unaccusatives, based on the syntactic status of their sole argument, i.e. whether it is an external or an internal argument (an initial 1 or an initial 2, respectively, in the Relational Grammar literature; see Perlmutter 1978, Perlmutter and Postal 1984). We also know that there are intransitive predicates interpreted reflexively. Such predicates are intransitive in that they take one syntactic argument,¹ but, being reflexive, they are two-place predicates semantically, i.e. one stands in some relation R to oneself.

When we turn to reflexive intransitives with the Unaccusative Hypothesis, two possibilities arise as to how they are represented syntactically: (A) reflexive intransitives are represented in a syntactically uniform manner, i.e. as either unergatives or unaccusatives, across languages; (B) reflexive intransitives are represented differently, depending on the language under consideration or even within a single language.

Recently, Reinhart and Sioni (1999/to appear; henceforth R&S) have advocated the view that reflexive intransitives are represented syntactically in a uniform manner across languages. Specifically they have proposed that reflexive intransitives are crosslinguistically unergatives. The aim of this paper is to show that reflexive intransitives resist a syntactically uniform characterization across languages, and thus, to argue that Possibility (A) cannot be maintained. Specifically, I will show that there are reflexive intransitives that are unergatives (English) and that there are reflexive intransitives that are unaccusatives (Romance). R&S argue for an unergative treatment of Romance reflexives, which are sometimes claimed to be unaccusative in the literature (Grimshaw 1990, Marantz 1984, Pesetsky 1995, Sportiche 1998 among many others), by claiming that the unaccusative diagnostics which Romance reflexives pass are not true diagnostics and they can be accounted for without reference to the distinction

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¹ This is a simplification, and there are reflexive predicates which take more than one argument, i.e. reflexivized ditransitive verbs. In such cases, the number of syntactic arguments is reduced as a result of reflexivization. However, I discuss reflexive intransitives, as the main question I address in this paper concerns the syntactic status of their sole arguments.

between external and internal arguments. Since their unergative analysis relies on the success of their alternative account of the unaccusative diagnostics Romance reflexives undergo, I will mainly focus on past participle agreement and reject their unergative analysis of Romance reflexives. Specifically, I will show that R&S's alternative account of past participle agreement cannot be maintained and that it is necessary to refer to internal arguments in accounting for past participle agreement.

The organization of this paper is as follows: In section 2, I will briefly show that English has reflexive intransitives that are unergatives. In section 3, I will examine in detail R&S's counterarguments against the unaccusative analysis of Romance reflexive intransitives. Specifically, I will argue against their dismissal of past participle agreement as a test for unaccusativity by showing that their alternative treatment does not cover the whole range of data that needs to be accounted for and makes wrong predictions. Section 4 concludes the paper.

2. Reflexive Intransitive Predicates

2.1. Unergatives: English

English has reflexive intransitive verbs, as in (1).

- (1) John washed/shaved. (\approx John washed/shaved himself.)

There are good reasons to believe that the verbs in (1) are unergatives. First, unergatives, but not unaccusatives, can appear in *way*-constructions, as given in (2) (Goldberg 1997, Jackendoff 1990, 1992 and Marantz 1992 among others).² As shown in (3), the verbs in (1) can appear in the construction, suggesting that they are unergatives.

- (2) a. John danced his way out of the room.
b. *The butter melted its way off the turkey. (Goldberg 1997)
- (3) John washed/shaved his way into a better job. (Alec Marantz p.c.)

Second, resultative secondary predicates can only be predicated of internal arguments, unlike depictive secondary predicates, which can be predicated of external arguments (Simpson 1983, Levin and Rappaport-Hovav 1995; cf. Rappaport-Hovav and Levin 2001). Thus, unaccusative subjects can be the target of resultative predication, while the presence of a “fake object” is required in the case of unergatives, as in (4).

- (4) a. The ice froze (*itself) solid.
b. John laughed *(himself) sick.

² Various lexical-semantic restrictions are imposed on verbs in the *way*-construction, which further narrow down the class of verbs which can appear. See Goldberg (1997) for those restrictions.

When we turn to verbs like *wash* and *shave*, it is impossible for a resultative predicate to be predicated of the subject of a reflexive intransitive, and an object must appear, as shown in (5).

(5) John washed/shaved *(himself) clean.

Note that the verbs in (5) may very well be transitive. However, if their intransitive counterparts were unaccusative, we would expect that the reflexive anaphor need not appear in (5). Thus, the obligatory presence of a reflexive anaphor in (5) suggests that the intransitive verbs in (1) are unergatives.³

Therefore, it can be concluded that English reflexive verbs are unergatives.⁴

2.2. Unaccusatives: Romance

It is well known that Romance reflexive verbs as in (6) behave as intransitive verbs, showing contrasts with verbs with pronominal clitics.⁵ Some researchers have argued that they are unaccusatives (Grimshaw 1990, Marantz 1984, Pesetsky 1995, Sportiche 1998 among many others).

(6)	Jean	se	lave.	<i>French</i>
	Jean	refl	washes	
	'Jean washes.'			

However, in defense of their view that reflexive intransitives are unergatives across languages, R&S argue that Romance reflexives are unergatives like English reflexive intransitives. They provide two arguments for the unergative status of Romance reflexives: first, Romance reflexives do not undergo some of the unaccusative diagnostics identified in the literature; second, the unaccusative diagnostics Romance reflexives undergo are not reliable diagnostics and the fact that Romance reflexives undergo them can be accounted for without referring to internal arguments.

Let us consider the first argument. Romance reflexives cannot undergo *en*-cliticization, one of the unaccusative diagnostics identified in the literature. R&S argue that reflexive intransitives do not pattern with unaccusatives, but rather with unergatives. Specifically, *en*-cliticization is possible with unaccusatives as in (7a), while reflexive intransitives do not allow *en*-cliticization, as in (8a).⁶ (The judgments are R&S's.)

³ Sentences like (i) are possible, but not with the reflexive interpretation, i.e. when someone else washed John (Alec Marantz p.c.).

(i) John washed clean.

⁴ See Reinhart (2000) for an argument from *-er* nominalization (Rappaport-Hovav and Levin 1992).

⁵ For the intransitive status of *se*-reflexives, see Kayne (1975), Wehrli (1986).

⁶ Anne Rochette and Mireille Tremblay independently informed me that (8a) and (8b) are both acceptable to them.

- (7) a. Il en est arrivé trois hier soir.
 it of.them is arrived three yesterday evening
 ‘There arrived three of them last night.’
- b. Il est arrivé trois filles hier soir.
 it is arrived three girls yesterday evening
 ‘There arrived three girls last night.’
- (8) a. *Il s’en est lavé beaucoup dans ces douches.
 it REFL-of.them is washed many in these showers
 ‘Many of them washed in these showers.’
- b. ?Il s’est lavé beaucoup de touristes dans ces douches.
 it REFL-is washed many of tourists in these showers
 ‘Many tourists washed in these showers.’
 (R&S: 11, w/slight modifications)

Note, however, that the above examples involve impersonal constructions, and the validity of *en*-cliticization as an unaccusative diagnostic in this context has been questioned in the literature. Specifically, Legendre (1989, 1990) shows that impersonal constructions with unergatives can undergo *en*-cliticization, as in (9).^{7,8}

- (9) Il en travaillait beaucoup chez Renault.
 it of.them used.to.work many at Renault
 ‘There used to work many of them at the Renault plant.’
- cf. Il travaillait beaucoup de travailleurs émigrés chez Renault.
 it used.to.work many of workers foreign at Renault
 ‘There used to work many foreign workers at the Renault plant.’
 (Legendre 1990: 94)

Since impersonal constructions somehow function to neutralize the distinction between unergatives and unaccusatives, one should test *en*-cliticization with reflexives when impersonal pronouns are not present. In fact, Bouchard (1988)

⁷ Labelle (1992) notes the same point, but she also notes that *en*-cliticization is marginally possible from the postverbal position of an impersonal construction with some unergative verbs and that the possibility is restricted.

⁸ Legendre (1990) also notes that impersonal constructions with reflexives can also undergo *en*-cliticization, in conflict with the judgments reported by R&S.

- (i) Il s’en est dénoncé [trois mille t] ce mois-ci.
 it REFL-of-them is denounced threeousand this month
 ‘Three thousand of them denounced this month.’

Legendre notes that (i) is possible for all speakers who accept the corresponding impersonal sentence without *en*-cliticization.

discusses such cases, and, as he shows, there are examples where reflexives are incompatible with *en*-cliticization, as in (10a).

- (10) a. ?*Le président s'en paie un bon salaire.
the president REFL-of.it pays a good salary
'The president of it pays himself a good salary.'
- b. Le président de cette compagnie se paie un bon salaire.
the president of that company REFL pays a good salary
'The president of that company pays himself a good salary.'
- (Bouchard 1988: 42)

However, he also notes that the facts are divergent. The following example similar to (10a) is marginally acceptable.

- (11) ??Beaucoup s'en détestent les uns les autres, de ces gens.
Many REFL-of.them hate the one the others of these people
'Many of these people hate one another.'
- (Bouchard 1988: 42)

Thus, it is not clear at all whether *en*-cliticization is impossible with reflexives or not. If this is indeed the case, the unergative analysis can straightforwardly account for this incompatibility, while something else must be responsible for it under the unaccusative analysis.

As for the second argument against the unaccusative treatment of Romance reflexives, R&S claim that auxiliary selection and past participle agreement are not reliable diagnostics for unaccusativity. Before examining their claim in detail, let us first see why they are considered to be unaccusative diagnostics.

First, auxiliary selection is a phenomenon where an auxiliary in compound tenses alternates between HAVE and BE, depending on various factors.⁹ A characteristic of auxiliary selection noted in the literature is its sensitivity to the argument structure of the base predicate: if BE is selected as an auxiliary, then the base predicate does not have an external argument; if the base predicate has an external argument, then HAVE is selected as an auxiliary, as depicted in (12).^{10, 11} Thus, HAVE is selected for unergatives and transitives, as illustrated in (13a) and (14a), respectively, while BE is selected for unaccusatives and passives, as in (13b) and (14b), respectively.

⁹ HAVE and BE are neutralized cover terms for auxiliaries across languages, e.g. Italian *avere* and *essere*, French *avoir* and *être*, etc.

¹⁰ The term 'base predicate' is rather loosely employed here. If one assumes a distinct head which selects an external argument (e.g. *v* in Chomsky 1995, Voice in Kratzer 1996), then the selection of an external argument is not entirely a matter of a 'base predicate', but of the head selecting an external argument and the inherent semantics of the base predicate (Marantz 1997).

¹¹ This test only works in one way, and, when HAVE is selected, we cannot decide whether a verb is unaccusative or unergative. This is because languages differ as to the class of verbs with which BE is selected. For instance, raising predicates in French select HAVE, while those in Italian select BE.

- (12) a. AUX [VP DP_{EXT} V (DP_{INT}...)]
 ↓
 HAVE
- b. AUX [VP V DP_{INT} ...]
 ↓
 BE

(13) a. Giovanni **ha** telefonato. *Italian*
 Giovanni has telephoned
 ‘Giovanni has telephoned.’

b. Giovanni **è** arrivato.
 Giovanni is arrived
 ‘Giovanni has arrived.’ (Burzio 1986: 53)

(14) a. L’artiglieria **ha** affondato due navi nemiche.
 the-artillery has sunk two ships enemy
 ‘The artillery has sunk two enemy ships.’

b. Due navi nemiche **sono** affondate.
 Two ships enemy are sunk
 ‘Two enemy ships have sunk.’ (Burzio 1986: 54)

Due to this sensitivity to the presence or absence of an external argument, the process can be used as a test for unaccusativity when it is applied to an intransitive predicate. Specifically, if BE is selected, then the base predicate is an unaccusative.

Second, past participle agreement is a process whereby past participles (and passive participles) display agreement in gender and number with an internal argument, as in (15).

(15) Maria **è** venut-a alla festa.
 Maria(F.SG) is come-F.SG to.the party
 ‘Maria came to the party.’

Descriptively, past participle agreement in Romance is induced by movement (i.e. A-movement and direct object cliticization), and agreement holds between a past participle and an internal argument, as in (15) and (16).^{12,13} Although there are

¹² *Wh*-movement in French optionally triggers past participle agreement. I assume that A-movement triggers past participle agreement in this case.

¹³ The following examples do not appear to involve movement of an internal argument, but past participle agreement takes place. (i-a) is an impersonal passive and (i-b) is a psych verb with a dative subject.

(i) a. Ultimamente si sono costruit-e/*-o molte case.
 lately IMP are built-F.PL/-DEF.AGR many houses(F.PL)
 ‘Lately, many houses have been built.’

differences among varieties as to, say, the optionality of agreement, no varieties allow a past participle to agree with an external argument.¹⁴ That is, no past participle can agree with the subject argument of an unergative or a transitive verb, and in such cases, past participles show default agreement, i.e. in masculine singular, as illustrated in (17).

- (16) a. Maria è stat-a/*-o assunt-a/*-o. (cf. French¹⁵)
 Maria(F.SG) is been-F.SG/-DEF.AGR hired-F.SG/-DEF.AGR
 ‘Maria has been hired.’
- b. L’ ho vist-a/*-o¹⁶
 3F.SG I-have seen-F.SG/-DEF.AGR
 ‘I have seen her.’
- (17) a. Maria ha/*è dormit-o/*-a.
 Maria(F.SG) has/is slept-DEF.AGR/-F.SG
 ‘Maria has slept.’
- b. Maria ha/*è comprat-o/*-a i libri.
 Maria(F.SG) has/is bought-DEF.AGR/-F.SG the books
 ‘Maria has bought the books.’

As is clearly shown by the contrast between (16) and (17), past participle agreement is a process targeting an internal argument irrespective of the transitivity of a predicate, whereby transitives and unaccusatives are singled out, excluding unergatives. Hence, it can be used as an unaccusative diagnostic when it is applied to intransitive predicates.

Moreover, the process of past participle agreement can be accounted for by a theoretically sound analysis: if we assume agreement to be a morphological reflex of a syntactic, spec-head relation of an agreement projection, as depicted in (18). Specifically, an internal argument, generated below Agr_{pp}P, can pass through SpecAgr_{pp}P on its way to the ultimate landing site, i.e., SpecTP, SpecCP and T for A-movement, *wh*-movement and cliticization, respectively. On the other hand, an external argument, generated higher than Agr_{pp}P, can never pass through Spec

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- b. A Gianni è sempre piaciut-a la musica.
 DAT Gianni be.3SG always pleased-F.SG the music(3F.SG)
 ‘The music always pleased Gianni.’

For the purposes of this paper, I adopt a movement approach to past participle agreement and do not address the question of how past participle agreement obtains in these examples. Note, however, that internal arguments trigger past participle agreement in these cases as well.

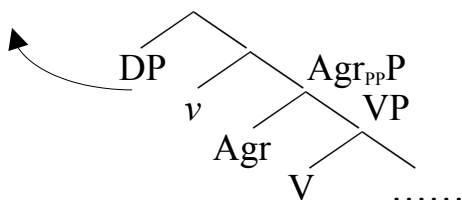
¹⁴ Dative arguments cannot enter into agreement either. See Belletti (1999).

¹⁵ The participial form of the passive auxiliary in French, *été*, does not display agreement, as opposed to the Italian counterpart. This could be related to the fact that *été* selects *avoir* as an auxiliary.

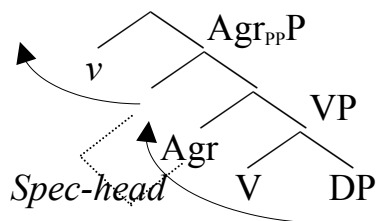
¹⁶ Past participle agreement is optional with first and second person clitics in Italian, while it is generally optional with DO clitics in French.

Agr_{ppP}, as a result of which a past participle shows default agreement, i.e., in masculine singular.

(18) a. External argument



b. Internal argument



Since auxiliary selection and past participle agreement are not reliable unaccusative diagnostics for R&S, they need to give an account of them without making recourse to the distinction between external and internal arguments. Thus, they argue that ‘[t]he behavior of participle agreement is a consequence of the choice of auxiliary. And auxiliary selection, in turn, is an intricate matter, which is not yet well-understood, although it has received much attention in the literature. (e.g. Ackema 1995, Everaert 1996, Friedemann and Sioni 1997, Hoekstra 1984, Reinhart 1996) At any rate, clearly, the simplest procedure to determine whether reflexives in French and Italian use *be* due to their unaccusative character or due to different factors is first to submit their subject to syntactic tests that discriminate between external and internal arguments.’ (R&S 1999: 8)

If, as R&S claim, past participle agreement is triggered by the choice of auxiliary, not by movement of an internal argument, then we can indeed dispense with reference to internal arguments in an account of past participle agreement. Construing their claim in such a way that it makes predictions, either (19a,b) or (19b) should hold as the relation between auxiliary selection and past participle agreement.

- (19) a. If an auxiliary is HAVE, past participle agreement does not take place.
 b. If an auxiliary is BE, past participle agreement takes place.

Note that R&S do not show that reference to internal arguments is insufficient in accounting for auxiliary selection and/or past participle agreement, but it is clear that their unergative analysis hinges on the success of their alternative account of the relation between auxiliaries and past participle agreement. In the next section, I will examine (19) in detail, focusing on past participle agreement in relation to auxiliaries and show that the relation between past participle agreement and auxiliary selection cannot be characterized as such. In so doing, I will also show, using Italian and Majorcan data, that it is necessary to refer to internal arguments to account for past participle agreement, and at the same time I will provide evidence that Romance reflexives are unaccusatives.

3. Auxiliaries and Participle Agreement

A close scrutiny at the relation between auxiliary selection and past participle agreement shows that both (19a) and (19b) are incorrect: there are cases where past

participle agreement takes place, but HAVE is selected and also cases where past participle agreement does not take place, but BE is selected. Let us consider (19a) and (19b) in turn.

First, (19a) is falsified by examples with direct object clitics or *wh*-objects, as in (16b) above, since past participle agreement takes place with HAVE selected as an auxiliary. However, it may be the case that R&S suppose that only (19b) holds: if an auxiliary is BE, then past participle agreement takes place. If so, there is no problem with the aforementioned cases where past participle agreement takes place with HAVE selected, although it remains unclear what triggers past participle agreement in those cases unless reference to internal arguments is made.

Next, consider (19b). This is true as far as French is concerned. However, Italian impersonal constructions, where BE is selected, seriously undermines (19b), as illustrated in (20).

- (20) a. Si è telefonat-o/*-i. Unergative
 IMP is called-DEF.AGR/-M.PL
 ‘One has called.’
- b. Si è mangiat-o/*-i due castagn-e. Transitive
 IMP is eaten-DEF.AGR/-M.PL two chestnut-M.PL
 ‘One has eaten two chestnuts.’
- c. Si è arrivat-i a casa Unaccusative
 IMP is arrived-M.PL at home
 ‘One has arrived at home’

(D’Alessandro 2001)

Past participle agreement does not take place with transitives and unergatives, as in (20a) and (20b), respectively, while it does take place with unaccusatives, as in (20c). If we assume (19b), it is unclear why the default agreement form results in (20a) and (20b). Moreover, the contrast between (20a,b) and (20c) shows that it is necessary to assume that the distinction between external and internal arguments is at work; otherwise, the agreement patterns in (20) would be left unexplained.

Note that participle agreement results in masculine plural in (20c). This agreement pattern is in conformity with the fact that *arb* elements are masculine plural in Italian (Cinque 1988).¹⁷ The fact that a copula results in default agreement can be explained if we assume that impersonal clitics do not have person features.

Interestingly, impersonal constructions with reflexives show the same agreement pattern as unaccusatives do, as in (21) below.¹⁸

¹⁷ Adjectives show the same agreement pattern in impersonals.

- (i) Si è facilmente nervos-i.
 IMP is easily nervous-M.PL
 ‘One is easily nervous.’ (Manzini 1986: 242)

¹⁸ The clitic sequence *si si* is not available, and the impersonal clitic is neutralized to *ci*, which is independently available in Italian as a 1st person plural clitic. See Bonet (1995) for an analysis.

- (21) Ci si è accusat-i
 IMP REFL is accused-M.PL
 ‘We accused ourselves/each other.’

This fact strongly suggests that Romance reflexives are unaccusatives.

Exactly the same conclusion can be reached by considering past participle agreement in HAVE-only languages. In particular, languages like Majorcan provide evidence that it is necessary to refer to internal arguments in accounting for past participle agreement.

HAVE-only languages can be classified into three types with respect to the possibility of past participle agreement: (i) No agreement (Portuguese, Romanian and Spanish), (ii) optional agreement with transitive objects (Catalan) and (iii) optional agreement with transitive objects and unaccusative subjects (Majorcan). The fact that past participle agreement takes place in HAVE-only languages does not, in itself, immediately argue against R&S’s claim in (19), since it might be the case that R&S intend their claim to be restricted in its scope, applying to languages with auxiliary selection, but not to languages without auxiliary selection (i.e. HAVE-only or BE-only languages). However, R&S’s claim runs into trouble when we turn to languages like Majorcan. As mentioned above, transitive objects and unaccusative subjects enter into past participle agreement in Majorcan, as in (22). This forcefully shows that reference to internal arguments is necessary to account for past participle agreement, and, importantly, R&S’s claim in (19) has no way to account for the examples in (22), regardless of how it is construed.

- (22) a. Ells l’han comprat-Ø/-a. [comprata > comprada]
 they 3F.SG-have bought-DEF.AGR/-F.SG
 ‘They have bought it.’
- b. Sa nina ha rigut-Ø/*-a. [riguta > riguda]
 The girl has laughed-DEF.AGR/-F.SG
 ‘The girl has laughed.’
- c. Sa nina no ha vingut-Ø/-a. [vinguta > vinguda]
 The girl not has come-DEF.AGR/-F.SG
 ‘The girl hasn’t come.’ (Joana Rosselló p.c.)

Moreover, reflexives in Majorcan optionally show past participle agreement, as in (23), thereby suggesting that they are unaccusatives.

- (23) Na Maria s’ha cremat-Ø/-a [>cremada] a la cuina.
 Maria(F.SG) REFL-has burned-DEF.AGR/-F.SG in the kitchen
 ‘Maria has burned herself in the kitchen.’ (Cortés 1993)

To sum up, R&S’s alternative account of past participle agreement is shown to be false on empirical grounds, and it is necessary to refer to internal arguments to account for past participle agreement. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that past

participle agreement in Romance is a reliable test for unaccusativity, and this in turn leads us to conclude that Romance reflexives are unaccusatives.

4. Conclusion

We have seen that English has reflexive unergatives, while Romance has reflexive unaccusatives. Taking these points together, it is concluded that it is impossible to characterize reflexive intransitives in a syntactically uniform manner.

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