

Heterogenous structure and prepositional phrase omission in Icelandic figure reflexives

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In Icelandic figure reflexives, the grammatical subject is interpreted as both the AGENT of the verb phrase (such as *Jo* in *Jo squeezed lemon into the tea*) and the FIGURE of an embedded prepositional phrase (such as *lemon* in *Jo squeezed lemon into the tea*). An example of a figure reflexive is given in (1), where *Bjartur* is both the entity that is the AGENT of the *squeezing* and the FIGURE, the entity that gets *squeezed through the crowd*.

- (1) Bjartur tróðst gegnum mannþröngina.
Bjartur.NOM squeezed-ST through crowd.the
'Bjartur squeezed through the crowd.' (Wood & Marantz, 2017:12)

Research Question: What is the argument structure of figure reflexives, and how does it contribute to the reflexive interpretation in sentences like (1)?

Arguments in Context: I argue that Icelandic *-st* figure reflexives are a heterogeneous set that can be divided into three classes, based on the preceding analysis that best accounts for their structure. These analyses include the expletive argument analysis (following Wood 2015), an unergative analysis (as outlined by Labelle 2008 for French *se*, among others), and a derived-subject analysis (as outlined by Sportiche 1990 for French *se*, among others).

I argue for an unergative analysis of figure reflexives involving verbs such as *troðast* 'squeeze' and *böðlast* 'struggle', demonstrating that they do not require PPs (2) and can occur in impersonal passives (3), given that compatibility with impersonal passives is diagnostic of unergatives in Icelandic (Sigurðsson & Egerland 2009). This shows that the figure reflexive interpretation does not depend on the presence of the PP, and that an AGENT role is present in figure reflexives involving these verb roots.

- (2) Bjartur tróðst
Bjartur.NOM squeezed-ST
'Bjartur squeezed (moving himself)'
- (3) Þá var troðast gegnum mannþröngina
then was squeezed-ST through crowd.the.ACC
'Then there was squeezing (of oneself) through the crowd'

An expletive argument analysis best accounts for clauses containing verb roots such as *brjótast* 'break (into/out of)' and *staulast* 'totter (along)', as they require a PP for most speakers and can occur in impersonal passives. For figure reflexives involving these verb roots, the reflexive interpretation arises from a FIGURE role introduced within the PP combining with an AGENT role. A derived-subject analysis best accounts for clauses containing verb roots such as *laumast* 'sneak' and *ryðjast* 'shove', as they do not require a PP and do not allow impersonal passives for most speakers. This means that for figure reflexives involving these verb roots, if the FIGURE role occurs at all, it does not depend on the presence of a PP.

Conclusions: The facts presented support an underspecification analysis of the *-st* morpheme in Icelandic. They are also compatible with the analysis of reflexive clitics as verbal that is outlined in McGinnis (2022). An aspect of this work that is currently undergoing analysis applies telicity tests (compatibility with *in-* and *for-* phrases like *in five minutes* and *for five minutes*) to the set of *-st* figure reflexives. The purpose of this is to further understand the factors that determine the distribution of the verb roots under investigation across these three structural options.

References

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