

## Causation and Aktionsart conditions for condensing reflexive constructions with valency shift in German

Yoshiko Ono

(Stolberg/Rheinland, formerly University of Zürich)

In reflexive constructions in German such as (1), the accusative slot is not occupied by an object expected on the basis of the verb semantics but by the agent who changes her/his state after her/his activity:

(1a) *sich satt essen* “to eat one’s fill”

REFL<sub>ACC</sub> full eat

Reflexivization of this type condenses two propositions into one clause, e.g.:

(1b.i) (*etwas*) *essen und sich (dadurch) satt machen*

“to eat (something) and (by doing it) to make oneself full”

(1b.ii) (*etwas*) *essen und (dadurch) satt werden*

“to eat (something) and (by doing it) to become/get full(/satisfied)”

The first proposition corresponds to an activity with **do**, even DO for agentivity, and the second to an accomplishment with BECOME (or with PROC and INGR) for a process of change and a result state (cf. Van Valin 2005/07: 42ff., 2018: 73ff., Osswald 2021: 11ff.). The semantic connector between the two suggests causality, hence CAUSE at least in Dowty’s system (cf. Foley & Van Valin 1984: 37ff., Van Valin 2018: 73, Osswald 2021: 4ff.).

One of the most crucial traits of this reflexive type is the non-omissibility of a complement constituent like *satt* “full” in (1), which represents a secondary predication, in contrast to the canonical usage of a transitive verb with an ordinary object, e.g. *etwas* “something” in *etwas essen* “to eat something”. This type of reflexive constructions might be viewed as a kind of antipassive (cf. e.g. Nedjalkov 1980: 223, Malchukov 2015: 114) in so far as it demotes the original accusative object which is either completely suppressed or may only occur as an oblique (prepositional), e.g. *mit Äpfeln* “with apples”. However, it allows even to reflexivize intransitive verbs which accept no (accusative) object otherwise such as *fasten* “fast”, e.g.:

(2) *sich zu Tode fasten* “to fast to one’s death”

REFL<sub>ACC</sub> to death fast

It is not an impersonalizing intransitive reflexive (like *hier schläft sich’s gut* [here sleep<sub>3.SG</sub> REFL<sub>ACC</sub> it well] “here one can sleep well”) but a personal construction with an agentive subject in the same manner as the transitive counterpart like (1). Demanding a complement like *zu Tode* “to death” as well, its surface pattern parallels the transitive type as (1), so that it suggests that the same type of reflexivization underlies both (2) and (1) rather than that (1) represents antipassivization. Noticeably, verbs like *essen* “eat” allow an objectless, “intransitive” usage (e.g. *er/sie isst* [he/she eat<sub>3.SG</sub>] “(s)he is eating”, cf. Næss 2007: 51ff.) and most verbs found in the reflexive construction of the type (1) belong to this transitivity class (e.g. *trinken* “drink”, *reden* “talk”, *singen* “sing”, *tanzen* “dance”, *schießen* “shoot”).

If the verbs can occur with an accusative object which may be occupied by the reflexive pronoun in the same UNDERGOER role (= canonical reflexive), their reflexivization may lead to ambiguity, e.g.:

(3) *sich reich stechen* “to tattoo {i) oneself / ii) other people} to one’s wealth”

REFL<sub>ACC</sub> rich prick

This is particularly the case if the verbs do not have an objectless usage, e.g.:

- (4) *sich kaputt pflegen* “to destroy oneself by caring for {i) oneself / ii) someone else}”  
REFL<sub>ACC</sub> destroyed care.for

In the interpretation (4.ii) as well as (3.ii), the complement elements *reich* or *kaputt* are indispensable, whereas they are omissible in the canonical reflexives (4.i) and (3.i). Should the latter case be treated separately from the patterns with the shift in valency and object assignment, or may all these reflexives be accounted for uniformly if they have a resultative meaning and a causal relation between the two propositional components?

A further type as in (5) below seems to contradict the accomplishment (or achievement) constraint and the causality condition for the formation of a reflexive with valency shift:

- (5) *sich durch den nassen Herbst lesen* “to read through the wet autumn”  
REFL<sub>ACC</sub> through the wet autumn read

*Lesen* “read” parallels *essen* “eat” in the possibility of objectless usage. Likewise, *durch den nassen Herbst* “through the wet autumn” is indispensable for the reflexive formation, but can it be a complement for secondary predication on the state of the agent resulting from her/his activity? Moreover, may the activity of reading be conceived of as a causal factor of “through the wet autumn” at all? Even the connector & (cf. e.g. Osswald 2021: 10ff.) is not easy to apply, since we can hardly assume two propositions for this content. We cannot even decompose it with BECOME or with PROC and INGR since no entity or action is implied as completed (e.g. as “consumed” in an analogous manner to *eat*). The sole trait which may match the accomplishment property is the wholeness of the autumn expressed by *durch* “through”, which may correspond to boundedness, though the activity of reading need not end within the autumn but may be continued in winter. This differs from e.g. *in* vs. *for an hour* in English. What conditions the formation of the reflexive construction with valency shift exactly? Perhaps all the cases of this reflexive type might be characterized in terms of middle voice traits (cf. Benveniste 1950), but may we assume a generalized semantic/lexical decomposition for them? If we may, should or should not the operator CAUSE be applied in it?

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