

Reflexives markers in Oceanic Languages

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1. Previous views

1.1. A lack of reflexive markers ?

- “[Oceanic languages] have morphological markers used to encode reciprocal and certain other situations, but not reflexive situations” (Lichtenberk, 2000:31).
- “Assuming that reflexivity is inherently related to transitivity, we understand why we do not find morphosyntactic reflexivisation in Samoan: Samoan does not have syntactically transitive clauses” (Mosel, 1991: ‘Where have all the Samoan reflexives gone?’)
- “There is no mark of reflexive, either in the form of a reflexive pronoun or of a reflexive marker on the verb – one simply says *I saw me*” (Dixon, 1988:9).

⇒ Out of context, there are indeed many cases of ambiguity with 3rd persons, due to the frequent absence of obligatory grammaticalized constructions to express reflexivity:

XÂRÂGURÈ (South of the Mainland, New Caledonia)

- (1) nyî xati nyî
 3SG scold 3SG
 ‘He is scolding him/himself.’

NUMÈÈ (Far South of the Mainland, New Caledonia)

- (2) treâ trooke nê kwè nê
 ART.PL dog 3PL bite 3PL
 ‘The dogs are biting them/each other.’

MWOTLAP (North Central Vanuatu)

- (3) Kēy mu-wuh mat kēy
 3PL PERF-hit die 3PL
 ‘They killed each other/themselves.’ (François, 2001:372)

TOQABAQITA (South East Solomon)

- (4) Keero’a keko thathami keero’a
 3DU 3DU like 3DU
 ‘They liked them/each other/themselves.’ (Lichtenberk, 1991:172)

1.2. Confusion between middle markers and reflexive markers

- “In East Futunan, the reflexive meaning is either lexicalised (i.e. expressed by lexically reflexive verbs) or by transitive verbs, the two arguments of which refer to the same entity. The use of *fe-* [reflex of the Proto Oceanic prefix *paRi-] to express a reflexive meaning is not productive” (Moyse-Faurie, 1997).
- “In many Oceanic languages, reflexives/self-directed actions are expressed either by lexically intransitive verbs, or by transitive verbs with coreferential arguments, or by reflexes of *paRi-” (Bril, 2005:32).

Middle domain (Kemmer 1993): “A semantic area comprising events in which the Initiator is also an Endpoint or affected entity”; agent and patient roles are not clearly distinguishable. Mostly concerns grooming actions, movements and change in body positions, spontaneous events and ‘naturally reciprocal’ situations.

Middle situations in Oceanic languages are:

a) either **unmarked** (that is, lexically marked), as in Engl.: The boy stood up, The door opens. Fr.: *Le lait bout*. ‘The milk is boiling’; *Le vin a gelé*. ‘The wine has frozen.’

EAST FUTUNAN (Nuclear Polynesian):

(5) E ma'anu a Malia.
IMPF bathe ABS Malia
‘Malia is washing (up).’

XĀRĀCŪŪ (South of the Mainland, New Caledonia)

(6) nâ xii ri tōôbùtù ri xōyō
1SG shave 3PL put together 3PL marry
‘I am shaving.’ ‘They are meeting.’ ‘They are getting married.’

b) or marked by **reduplication**

EAST FUTUNAN

(7) *selu* ‘to comb’ > *seluselu* ‘to comb one’s hair’
tilo ‘to look through glasses’ > *tilotilo* ‘to look at oneself in a mirror’
lū ‘to swing s.o.’ > *lūlū* ‘to go on a swing’

c) or expressed by a **reflex of the Proto Oceanic prefix *paRi-** (intransitive construction)

EAST FUTUNAN

(8a) e ke vaku le tu'a o lou toe (transitive)
IMPF 2SG scratch ART back POSS your child
‘You are scratching your child’s back.’

(8b) e ke fe-vaku i le kai e namu (intransitive)
IMPF 2SG PREF-scratch OBL ART eat ERG mosquito
‘You are scratching because of mosquito bites.’ (Moyses-Faurie 2007:1522)

DREHU (Loyalty islands): prefix *i-* < POc *paRi-

- grooming or spontaneous actions: *sej* ‘comb’, *i-sej* ‘comb one’s hair’; *cin* ‘shave’, *i-ciny* ‘shave oneself’; *dreuth* ‘burn something’, *i-dreuth* ‘burn (fire)’.
- depatientive function: *xumuth* ‘pinch’, *i-xumuth* ‘to be a pincher’; *drei* ‘obey’, *i-drei* ‘to be obedient’
- collective: *jun* ‘bone’, *i-jun* ‘skeleton’; *koko* ‘yam’, *i-koko* ‘heap of yams’
- reciprocal limited to two participants: *xatua* ‘help’, *i-xatua* ‘help each other’; *aba* ‘kiss’, *i-aba* ‘kiss each other’; *hnim* ‘love’, *i-hnim* ‘love each other’, etc.

d) by **co-reference** between the subject and the possessive determiner of the object-argument

XĀRĀCŪŪ

(9) anyââ cù bwaa-rè
mummy comb head-POSS3SG
‘Mummy is combing her hair.’ (Australian English: ‘Mummy is combing herself’)

e) by **obligatorily object coreferent verbs**

KALIAI-KOVE

(10) i-lua-i ti-lua-ri
3SGS-return-3SGO 3PLS-return-3PLO
‘He returns.’ ‘They return.’ (Counts 1969:75)

XĀRĀCŪŪ

(11) kwé basùù è rōwâ yee nã
water blocked 3SG against bamboo DEIC
‘Water is blocked up because of the bamboo.’

PAAMESE (Vanuatu)

(12) inau nasî nau amutah kail haulu
1SG 1SG.REALIS.happy.1SG 3PL.REALIS.overeat 3PL much
‘I am happy.’ ‘They overeat a lot.’ (Crowley 1982:180)

FIJIAN

- (13) e tirovi koya
 3SG look at oneself 3SG
 ‘He looks at himself (*him) in the mirror.’ (Paul Geraghty, p. c.)

f) “Auto-reflexive” constructions

EAST UVEAN

- (14) kā u ‘alu ‘o faka-mate
 FUT 1SG go COMP CAUS.-dead
 ‘I am going to commit suicide.’

SAMOAN

- (15) na fa’a-pa’ū le teine i le moega
 PAST CAUS.-fall ART girl OBL ART bed
 ‘The girl threw herself onto the bed.’ (Mosel & Hovdhaugen 1992: 18.118)

2. Reflexive markers in Oceanic languages

Reflexive situations: Actions performed on oneself that one usually performs on others; it involves an agent and a patient which happen to refer to the same person; presupposes intentionality; often draws attention to the unexpected nature of the event described.

2.1. Reflexive marker = intensifier (Cf. handout 2bis from preceding day)

- emphatic, restrictive particles (16); preverbal ‘contrastive’ particles (17)

EAST UVEAN

- (16) 'e ina vā'i ia ia pē
 NPAST 3SG laugh ABS 3SG INT
 ‘He is making fool of himself.’

NĒLĒMWA

- (17) Filo xe i xam daa shaxa-e (reflexive)
 Filo TOP 3SG ASS INT couper-3SG
 ‘Filo cut herself.’

- grammaticalized expressions: body parts, denoting singularity, veracity, etc.

2.2. Reflexive marker with few or no intensifying uses**a) Reflexive < (ad)verb ‘return’, ‘again’, backwards’**

New Caledonia: Ajië *yâi*, *tëë*, Iai *hmetu*, Paicî *cōwâ*, Xârâcùù and Xârâgurè *mûgé*, Numèè and Drubea *mwêê*, ‘Orôê *bwiri*, Tîrî *mwâgi*; Vanuatu: Paamese, *-risi* (+ attrib), Mwotlap *lok*; Solomon: Vangunu, Roviana *pule*; Papua New Guinea: Tolai *mule*, Tawala *me-*, Saliba *uyo*; East Timor: Tetun *hika(r)*, etc.

XÂRÂCÛÛ (South of the Mainland, New Caledonia)

- (18) xûûchî chëi mûgé na è ngê chaa kwââ (reflexive)
 child hit RETURN PAST 3SGO with one stick
 ‘The child hit himself with a stick.’

Tîrî

- (19) nrâ ôi nrî mwâgi
 3SG pinch 3SGO AGAIN
 ‘He pinches himself.’

AJIË (Centre of the Mainland, New Caledonia)

- (20) na rhôoru é tēë
 3SG accuse 3SG again
 ‘He accuses himself.’

SALIBA (Western Oceanic, Papuan Tip, Milne Bay Province)

(21) ya-kita-**uyo**-i-gau

1SG-see-AGAIN-APPL-1SG.OBJ

‘I saw myself.’ (Margetts 1999:334)

b) Reflexive markers of other verbal origin

FIJIAN *vakātaki* ‘be like’

(22) era katī ira **vakātaki** ira na kolī

3PL bite 3PL.OBJ BE LIKE 3PL.OBJ ART dog

‘The dogs are biting themselves.’ (Capell 1941:295)

(23) e moku-ti koya **vakātaki** koya

3SG smack-TR 3SG BE LIKE 3SG

‘He smacks himself.’ (Geraghty, p.c.)

URA (South Vanuatu): *espe* ‘(do) spontaneously’, ‘(do) reflexively’

(24) ir-**espe** n-elei leil

3PL.PAST-do.spon. NMZ-scratch 3PL

‘They scratched themselves.’ (Crowley 1999:220)

FAGAUVEA (Polynesian Outlier, Uvea, Loyalty islands): *pusu* ‘spontaneously’

(25) e **pusu** fuatiaina ie ia a Pol

IMPF SPONT hate.TR ABS 3SG PERS Pol

‘Pol hates himself.’

c) Deictic origin

RAPANUI (Polynesian, Easter island): ‘a ‘anaphoric deictic’

(26) e tai’o ‘a ta’aku puka ‘a (attributive)

NS read RES my book INT

‘I am reading my own book.’ (Du Feu 1996:98)

(27) he aha ia a koe e vananga ena kia koe ‘a (benefactive reflexive)

ART what 3S PERS 2S NS talk there OBL 2S INT

‘What are you doing there talking to yourself?’ (Du Feu 1996:97)

3. The main parameters of variation

3.1. Number of markers for the same function

a) Choice available

In Saliba, Tawala and Māori, between the ‘return/again’ and the ‘alone’ strategies; in Fagauvea between the ‘alone’ and the ‘spontaneous’ strategies; in East Futunan and East Uvean between the ‘true’ and the postposed particles strategies, etc. In Drehu between the postposed particle (28a), the ‘true’ (28b) and the preverbal ‘other’ (28c) strategies:

DREHU (Lifu, Loyalty islands)

(28a) Wamo a xumuthi angeic **kö**.

Wamo IMPF pinch 3SG INT

‘Wamo pinches himself’ (Wamo does nothing else than pinching himself, on his own initiative).

(28b) Wamo a **sipu** xumuthi angeic.

Wamo IMPF TRUE pinch 3SG

‘Wamo pinches himself’ (Wamo does not pretend, he actually does it)

(28c) Wamo a **ketre** xumuthi angeic.

Wamo IMPF OTHER pinch 3SG

‘Wamo pinches HIMSELF.’ ([Someone else pinches himself and] Wamo, too, is able to pinch himself)

In Kwaio, between the body part and the ‘image’ strategies:

KWAIO (South East Solomon)

(29a) *ngai a aga-si-a labe-na naa ilonunu*
 3SG.FOC 3SG see-TR-3SGO BODY-POSS.3SG LOC mirror
 ‘He saw himself in the mirror.’ (Keesing 1985:167)

(29b) *Ngai e aga-si-a lakanisi a-na naa ilonunu.*
 3SG.INDEP 3SG see-TR-3SG image POSS-3SG in mirror
 ‘He saw himself in the mirror’ (lit. he saw (it) his image in the mirror.’ (id.)

3.2. Position in sentence

The position of the reflexive markers varies according to their origin, and to their degree of grammaticalisation.

3.2.1. Fixed position

- reflexive markers preposed to the predicate: contrastive particle (cf; (17))
- reflexive markers always postposed to a pronominal argument: directionals, deictic, etc.

3.2.2. Various positions

Markers of common semantic origin may take different fixed positions according to the language:

- ‘alone’: preverb (Fagauvea) vs. postposed pronominal adjunct (Fijian, Māori)
- ‘return/again’: postverb (Saliba, Roviana, Vangunu, Xârâcùù) vs. postposed pronominal adjunct (Tîrî, Xârâgurè, Māori).
- bound nouns: preposed to the verb (Iaai, Anejoñ) vs. postposed to the pronominal argument (Lolovoli).

⇒ In a language where a marker expressing reflexivity is liable to occupy different positions, the situation is always less ambiguous (more reflexive) when the marker is a pronominal adjunct than when it is an (ad)verb.

Reflexive markers as well as intensifiers can never occupy an argument position by themselves.

3.2.3. Reflexive marking on ergative arguments

East Futunan, Tokelauan, and Tuvaluan provide a counterexample to Faltz's claim (1985: 28) that “it is always the object or patient noun phrase which exhibits any special marking for reflexivization”:

EAST FUTUNAN

(30) *Na ako'i le tagata e ia fa'i.*
 PAST teach ART man ERG 3SG INT
 ‘The man taught himself.’

TOKELAUAN

(31) *Kua vavae kehe koe e koe lava mai nā mea a tō kāiga.*
 PERF separate away 2SG ERG 2SG INT from ART.PL thing POSS 2SG.POSS family
 ‘You have cut yourself off from the affairs of your family.’ (Tokelau dict. 1986: 427)

3.3. Iconicity

DREHU

(32a) *angeic a xumuthi nyën* (*angeic a xumuthi angeic)
 3SG IMPF pinch 3SG(child)
 ‘He pinches him.’

(32b) *angeic a ketre sipu xumuthi angeic kö* (or: *nyën a ketre sipu xumuthi nyën kö*)
 3SG IMPF other true pinch 3SG INT
 ‘He pinches himself.’

4. Conclusion: There are reflexive markers in Oceanic languages!

The fact that reflexive markers have been overlooked is due to two main reasons:

(i) In Oceanic languages, markers used as intensifiers or to express typical reflexive situations also fulfil other functions either as content words (verb, noun, adverb, etc.) or grammatical morphemes (deictic, directional, restrictive particle).

(ii) In contrast to the grammaticalized and compulsory use of middle and reciprocal markers, markers expressing reflexive situations are seldom obligatory, even if they are typically required by third person arguments.

(iii) All the constructions expressing prototypical reflexivity encountered in Oceanic languages are transitive and the unique participant is encoded twice. The intensifier marks the coreference between the subject and the pronominal object, in a transitive construction.

(iv) In Oceanic languages, reflexive markers on the one hand and middle/reciprocal markers on the other hand are not historically related.

⇒ Implicational Generalization: “If a language uses the same expression both as an intensifier and as a reflexive anaphor, this expression is not used as a marker of derived intransitivity”.

(König 2001:752).

(v) Concerning the directionality of change: Suzanne Kemmer's statement “If there is a middle and it does not express reflexivity, this is due to loss” doesn't seem to be acceptable as far as Oceanic languages are concerned.

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