The Tricky Case of Czech Reflexives

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Abstract

- In Czech, similarly as in other European languages (Maslova, 2008), the reflexives are highly ambiguous (Karlík et al., 2016).
- Their clitic forms *se/si* and their long forms *sebe/sobě/sebou* serve as lexical and/or grammatical markers (morphology, syntax) with different functions.

A. Reflexives as lexical means

Inherent reflexive verbs:

120 lexemes in VALLEX (out of 2 748)

- reflexives without any apparent lexical or syntactic function,
- only the clitic reflexive forms *se* and *si*,
- both forms *se* and *si* as parts of verb lemmas (lexical morphemes).

  examples: *bát se* 'be afraid', *chovat se* 'behave', *poprat se* 'grabble, fight', *stěžovat si* 'complain'.

Decausativity:

31 lexemes

- lexical process of derivation of decausative verbs (from causative ones),
- classified as derived inherent reflexive verbs,
- only the clitic form *se* as part of verb lemmas (lexical morpheme).

  Petr rozbil vázu.   →   Váza se rozbila (při pádu).
  'Peter broke the vase.'   'The vase broke.'

- lexical process of derivation of inherent reciprocal verbs (from irreflexive ones),
- classified as derived inherent reflexive verbs = derived inherent reciprocals,
- the clitic reflexives *se* and *si* as part of verb lemmas (lexical morpheme).

  examples: *líbat → líbat se* 'kiss', *povídat → povídat si* 'talk'   *72 lexemes*

Other classes of derived reflexives:

- optional reflexive verb lemmas (without explicit syntactic or semantic shifts),
  examples: *myslet (si)* 'think', *naříkat (si)* 'complain', *kouknout (se)* 'look'.
- reflexive verbs expressing some level of satisfaction,
  example: *sedět si* (← *sedět* 'sit').
- reflexives verbs without clear semantic shift (e.g., based on diachronic changes),
  example: *obdivovat se* (← *obdivovat*) 'admire'.   *66 lexemes*

B. Reflexives as a pronoun (in FGD)

Reflexivity:

- reflexives express a referential identity between the valency complementation in the subject position and the valency complementation lexically expressed by the reflexive,
- both the clitic and long reflexives,
- grammatical means,
- reflexives classified as pronouns in FGD (different classification in different theories),
- including so called 'true reflexives' (Karlík et al., 2016), (Veselý, 2018).

  Martin se myje. = Sebe Martin myje(, ale děti ne).
  'Martin washes himself.'   *610 lexemes*

  Martina si koupila koláč. = Sobě si Martina koupila koláč (a dětem koblihy).
  'Martina bought herself a cake.'

Reciprocity:

- reflexives express mutuality (as grammatical means),
- referred to as syntactic/grammatical reciprocal verbs,
- both the clitic and long reflexives.   *1 428 lexemes*

  Jan a Marie se políbili. = Jan políbil Marii a Marie políbila Jana.
  = Sebe Jan a Marie políbili(, ale děti ne).
  'Jan and Mary kissed each other.'

C. Reflexives as an auxiliary/function words

1 715 lexemes

Deagentive and Dispositional Diatheses:

- the clitic *se* as grammatical means for shifting personal agent from the subject position.

  Dělníci staví školu.   →   *Škola se staví.*
  'The workers are building a school.'   'A school is being built.'

  Otec špatně dýchá.   →   *Otci se špatně dýchalo.*

Conclusions

Ambiguity between reflexivity and reciprocity:

- only for reflexives classified as pronouns (type B),
- i.e., for syntactic/grammatical reciprocals allowing for referential identity between one of its valency complementation with the complementation in the subject,
- both reciprocity and reflexivity affect the same pair of valency complementations,
- the reflexive pronoun occupies the same syntactic position (and it corefers with the plural subject).

  *V závěrečném dějství si hráči již více hleděli sebe*recipr/reflex *než kotouče a tak další branka nepadla.*

Combination of reflexivity and reciprocity:

- different pairs of valency complementations are affected,
- two reflexive pronouns occupying different syntactic positions.

  *(Jana a Petr)*ACT *si*recipr-ADDR *o sobě*refl-PAT *často vyprávěli.* ≈ *Jana*ACT *vyprávěla sama o sobě*PAT *Petrovi*ADDR *a zároveň Petr*ACT *vyprávěl sám o sobě*PAT *Janě*ADDR.

  vyprávět: reciprocity of the pair ACT-ADDR;
           reflexivity of the pair ACT-PAT

Haplology:

- a single occurrence of a clitic reflexive form with two different functions (Petkevič, 2013).

  *Špatné stravovací návyky se*lexical+deagent *osvojují velmi brzy.*
  *Sestry si*lexical+pronoun *(navzájem) stěžují na děti.*

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