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## REFLEXIVITY IN PRESENT-DAY ENGLISH

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*The paper deals with the morphological and syntactic aspect of English reflexive pronouns in the [Vtrns + Pronoun reflexive] structure. It is argued that there is no reflexive voice category in English. Instead, reflexivity is purely lexico-semantic category, and the reflexive pronouns either perform the function of a direct or a prepositional complement in a sentence or are lexicalized with the preceding verb.*

**Key words:** analytical form of the verb, direct object, grammaticalization, lexicalization, reflexive pronoun, reflexive voice.

The verbal category of voice is considered to relate the action to its doer. Present-day English grammatical theory usually claims the active and passive voices [15, 159]. However, there are controversial viewpoints on reflexivity, which is the **subject matter** of our study, namely the means of its implementation – [V + reflexive Pronoun] or / and the possibility to define it on grammatical principles, which is **the scope** of our study.

The active voice is considered to express the relation where the subject of the sentence and the semantic agent (or the source of an action) coincide, whereas the passive voice expresses the relation where the subject of the sentence does not coincide with the semantics of the doer of the action [6, 277].

Note that to study reflexivity means to refer to the majority of related linguistic aspects: morphology, syntax, semantics, word formation, lexicology, and phraseology. It all determines the **relevance** of the research. The study is also relevant due to the lack of linguistic insights into issues devoted to the reflexive pronouns and structures in which they are used.

Reflexivity refers to the category of voice, transitivity / intransitivity, and therefore it focuses the attention of the linguists, who work in the sphere of typology, as well as the scholars of the Russian functional grammar school [1; 7]. Reflexive constructions have received coverage relying on the data, originating from many languages, including English, German, Italian, Russian, Bulgarian, Czech, Latvian, Lithuanian, and others. The focus of such form > content directed studies par excellence is reflexive constructions semantics, or just reflexive verbs semantics. Yet, the grammatical category of reflexivity is still the object of discussions in the linguistic literature. The differences in its interpretation are caused by the fact that the [Vtrns + Pronoun reflexive] structure does not meet the criteria which serve to define the active and passive forms of the verb.

Hence, **the aim** of the study is to prove that reflexivity is a lexico-semantic category, therefore there is no reflexive voice in present-day English and reflexive pronouns perform the function of objects in a sentence or they collide semantically with the preceding verb to create a new lexical unit.

Sentences with the reflexive constructions [Vtrns + Pronoun reflexive] serve **the material** of the study.

It should be recalled that there are two approaches to define the category of reflexivity: the semantic one, according to which reflexivity is interpreted as the direction of an action on the doer himself (semantic agent), who is both the subject and the object of this action [2; 9; 10]; and the formal one, which requires the inventory of the corresponding reflexive markers [8; 16].

Thus, speaking about the grammatical category of reflexivity in present-day English presupposes deciding on the status of the reflexive pronoun, namely, whether it is an auxiliary word in combination [Vtrns + Pronoun reflexive] thus wise forming an analytical reflexive form of the verb. This problem requires a morphological insight. Syntactic debatable point regarding reflexive pronouns is their function in a sentence. This issue in today's grammatical studies is represented as the opposition of two points of view. On the one hand, the reflexive pronoun in the combination [Vtrns + Pronoun reflexive] is always a separate member of the sentence, mostly direct object (objective complement [17, 95], or direct complement [13, 57]). On the other hand, the reflexive pronoun is a part of the predicate.

Some linguists [4; 5] insist on the existence of the reflexive voice in present-day English. Yet they agree that some reflexive pronouns can perform a syntactic function of an object in non-reflexive constructions. In this case a linguist should distinguish between the analytical form and free syntagmatic combination of a transitive verb with a direct object, expressed by a reflexive pronoun. This analysis presupposes clarifying the degree of the action object tangibility. This object is explicated by a reflexive pronoun. In cases where the reflexive pronoun refers to the non-tangible object, it is grammaticalization that has taken place [5, 168]. This approach allows the researchers to distinguish two types of reflexive constructions: with the reflexive meaning proper and with the middle-reflexive one. They claim the reflexive meaning proper in cases when the verb expresses an action performed by the agent, and the latter himself is the object of his action (*to warm oneself, to hurt oneself*). In such constructions the object of action is real, therefore the reflexive pronoun functions as the direct object and is not a grammaticalized reflexive marker. The middle-reflexive meaning of the [Vtrns + Pronoun reflexive] construction is observed when the action does not involve an external object, but is triggered on the subject. The middle-reflexive meaning which is considered by these linguists as the reflexive voice is divided by them into two types: (i) the verbs denoting actions which do not exceed the agent's activity sphere and underline his external physical changes or movement (*to speed oneself, to stir oneself, to stretch oneself*); (ii) the verbs denoting the agent's inner condition (*to enjoy oneself*) [4, 139; 5, 167–168].

Reflexive voice finds no recognition in traditional grammar. However, some its representatives in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including Poutsma [14] raised the question of its existence, believing that the reflexive pronouns, though they perform the function of a direct object in a sentence, are devoid of semantic significance. It was mentioned that transitive verbs and reflexive pronouns could form a free syntagmatic phrase – transitive-reflexive, but intransitive verbs – intransitive reflexive (definitions after Poutsma). O. Jespersen when referring to the category of reflexive voice, appealed to the concept of verb valency, saying in particular that reflexive verbs are observed exclusively in cases when they are unable to be used with any other object, rather than a reflexive pronoun (e.g.: *to pride oneself*) [3, 231].

We assume that the traditional grammar representatives acknowledged the reflexive voice in English by analogy with some other European languages. Indeed, later it was discovered that there are certain reasons: semantics of reflexive constructions, special dependence of reflexive pronoun from the verb semantics on the one hand, their binding with the sentence subject on the other. Reflexive pronoun, for instance, functions as a direct object like other objects, but it can also either trigger the action on the agent, or completely change the lexical meaning of the verb.

Herein we insist that present-day English verbs do not have reflexive voice forms, and there is no grammatical reflexive voice category; the combination of a verb with a reflexive pronoun is not an illustration of the analytical verb paradigm. We recognize only those analytical forms that are substantiated

by complete paradigms. By contrast, the [Vtrns + Pronoun reflexive] structure is not a part of the verbal paradigm, since it cannot be opposed to the active or passive voice units both structurally and semantically. A sequence of [Vtrns + Pronoun reflexive + *and / or / not* + NP] type proves that a reflexive pronoun, like any other NP performs the function of an object. The grammatically correct sentence *Next week I expect myself and my wife to get promoted* is an example of consequent symmetric coordinate reflexive and non-reflexive objects. It attests to the full lexical meaning of *myself*. In case of an analytical reflexive form *myself* would be completely or partially derived of its lexical meaning.

Thus from the syntactic viewpoint reflexive pronouns preceded by a verb are either a separate member of the sentence — a direct or prepositional object (complement), — or a part of complex object (Objective with the infinitive).

Considering reflexive pronouns from the morpho-semantic perspective it seems problematic to define their function, which is to denote the object of an action — the patient. It is problematic due to the ambiguity of the reflexivity surface structure. For instance, some verbs are able to explicate reflexive semantics in the appropriate context without a reflexive pronoun (e.g.: *dress, wash, etc.*). However, it should be noted that implicitly reflexive constructions are not widely used in present-day English [17, 95]. The language inventory also includes a number of phrasal verbs that denote changes in time and movement, which can be followed by personal pronouns and here with indicate the identity of the subject and object. e.g.: *She wrapped the coat around her.*

On the other hand, a technically reflexive [Vtrns + Pronoun reflexive] construction may be devoid of reflexive semantics, as it is in the following word combinations: *to enjoy oneself, to find oneself, to help oneself*. These vocabulary units demonstrate lexical merge of its immediate constituents. The assertion introduced by some linguists [4, 139; 5, 172]) about grammaticalization of the reflexive pronoun and grammatical merge of the items into an analytical form in such combinations appear to be false. Should grammaticalization be taking place, the reflexive pronoun would add reflexive semantics to the verb meaning. It is obviously missing in such units.

In case of lexicalization, the elements create an entirely new language unit which cannot be split into immediate components, whilst a grammaticalized element is used in the new status with a number of units [11, 36]. The latter is not observed in English as far as reflexive pronouns are concerned, since they are not used with all verbs and not even with all transitive verbs. Therefore we insist that it is lexicalization that caused the emergence of the language units in question (*to enjoy oneself, to find oneself, to help oneself etc.*).

Furthermore, if we compare the number of words with the lexicalized reflexive pronoun in English and other European languages, German in particular, the latter comprises a considerably greater number of them (e.g.: *sich beeilen, sich wundern, sich schmen, sich ereignen, etc.*). Since the English reflexive pronouns are relatively “younger” than their German cognates (German reflexive pronouns developed from the Common Germanic *sih* in contrast to English reflexives which date back to not more than ten centuries), it means the former had less time for lexicalization. The difference is indicative of English reflexive pronouns having full semantic value [12, 231] thus, in our opinion, making their grammaticalization impossible at the present stage of the English language development. Therefore, reflexive pronouns in English do not serve auxiliary words to create an analytical reflexive voice form. Instead, they are vocabulary items with a full lexical meaning in constructions like [Vtrns + Pronoun reflexive].

To assume that [Vtrns + Pronoun reflexive] construction is an analytical form of the verb is impossible due to the heterogeneity of their complementary capabilities. In some cases, reflexive pronoun preceded by a verb, especially by a so-called ditransitive verb denotes not an object of an action but the addressee, i.e. performs the syntactic function of the indirect object. O. Popova suggests defining such constructions as comodal [5, 164]. E.g.: *She made herself some coffee*. Such a differentiation is an additional evidence that the [V + Pronoun reflexive] construction is not grammaticalized.

To admit the possibility of reflexive pronouns semantic fadeout and further grammaticalization in reflexive constructions, would mean the appearance of new nominal category in the analytical reflexive voice form of the verb (e.g.: *helps himself*) — gender, and a semantic category — person / non-person. Besides, the category of number gets a new explication way. These changes would disrupt the well-established views and approaches in the system of verbal categories in English grammar.

Furthermore, if we assume that the combination of a transitive verb with a reflexive pronoun be an illustration of an analytical reflexive voice form, we would have to admit the same in regard to the synonymic intransitive verbs followed by a reflexive pronoun. E.g.: *to tell oneself — to say to oneself*. However, these prepositional constructions are definitely not analytical forms, but free word combinations.

Thus, everything stated above illustrates special character of the [V + Pronoun reflexive] combination, however, we do not find enough data to prove the existence of the analytical forms of the verb to explicate

reflexivity. In sentences like “*She expressed herself*” the verb is used in the active voice form, and the reflexive pronoun performs the function of a direct object. In cases where the [Vtrns + Pronoun reflexive] combination is characterized by certain idiomatic features (e.g.: *to find oneself, to help oneself, to enjoy oneself*), it is a lexical rather than grammatical fusion of the immediate constituents that has taken place.

However, the controversy within the scope of all possible [V + Pronoun reflexive] constructions and the ability of reflexive pronouns to change the meaning of verbs not only in cases where their semantic content makes it possible, but also where reflexivity is not inherent (e.g.: *to argue with oneself*), suggest new **perspectives for further research**. It is possible to approach the problems concerning reflexive pronouns to obtain the answer to the question, whether the reflexive construction is not a voice form, but a special type of reflexive verbs which can modify their semantics. Provided that, reflexive verbs would occupy a specific place in the field structure of the verbs, that is, would be their reflexive variant. Such an approach to the issue from the semantic point of view offers wide opportunities for further research.

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У статті розглядаються морфологічний і синтаксичний аспекти англійських зворотних займенників у структурі [Vtrns + Pronoun reflexive]. Стверджується, що в сучасній англійській мові граматичної категорії зворотного стану не існує. Натомість зворотність — категорія лексико-семантична, а зворотний займенник виконує у реченні функцію прямого чи прийменникового додатка або виступає з попереднім дієсловом як лексикалізована одиниця.

**Ключові слова:** аналітична форма дієслова, граматикалізація, лексикалізація, зворотний займенник, зворотний стан, прямий додаток.

*В статье рассматриваются морфологический и семантический аспекты английских возвратных местоимений в структуре [Vtrns + Pronoun reflexive]. Делается вывод, что в современном английском языке грамматической категории возвратного залога не существует, а возвратность — категория лексико-семантическая. При этом возвратные местоимения в предложении либо функционируют как прямое или предложное дополнение, либо сливаются лексически с предыдущим глаголом.*

**Ключевые слова:** аналитическая форма глагола, грамматикализация, лексикализация, возвратное местоимение, возвратный залог, прямое дополнение.