

Focusing on Reflexives

What We Can Learn about Grammar from
Reflexive Pronouns

Byron Ahn

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1 Introduction

2 A Principle of Focus

- Question-Answer Congruence
- Grammar and Focus

3 Focusing on Reflexives

- Reflexivity
- Focused Reflexives
- Analysis: URF and QAC

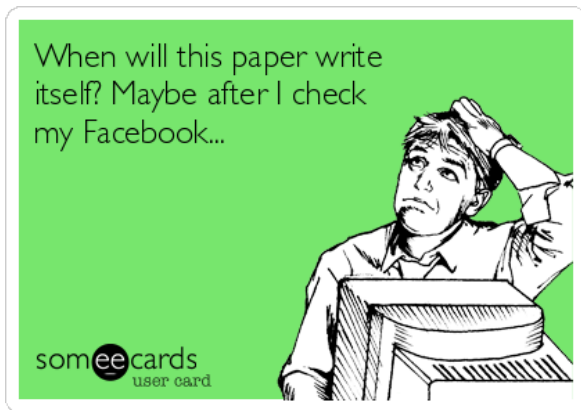
4 Conclusion

Reflexives With Focus Stress

- ◆ Today we'll be talking about reflexive pronouns and the way they interact with focus
 - (1) a. Prove it to **the skeptic!**
(The skeptic should be the one who you prove it to.)
 - b. Prove it to **me!**
(I should be the one who you prove it to.)
 - c. Prove it to **yoursélf!**
(You should be the one who you prove it to.)
(You should be the one who proves it to you.)

- ▶ There are two paraphrases for (1c)! Why?

Some Examples



Some Examples



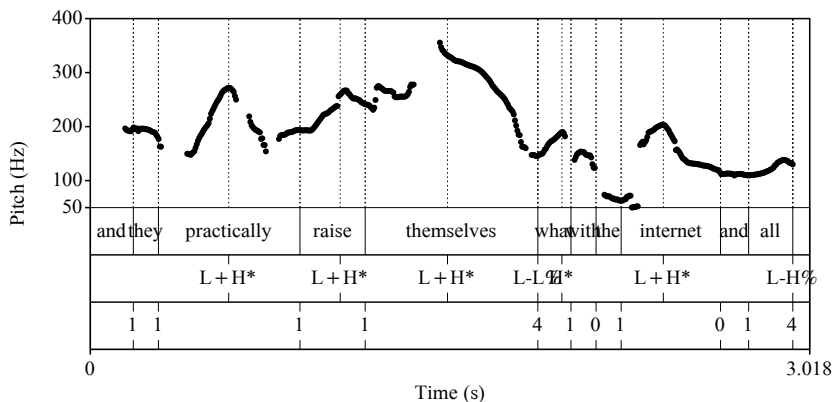
Some Examples



– The Simpsons, S11 E07

Some Examples

The pitch track for this sentence:



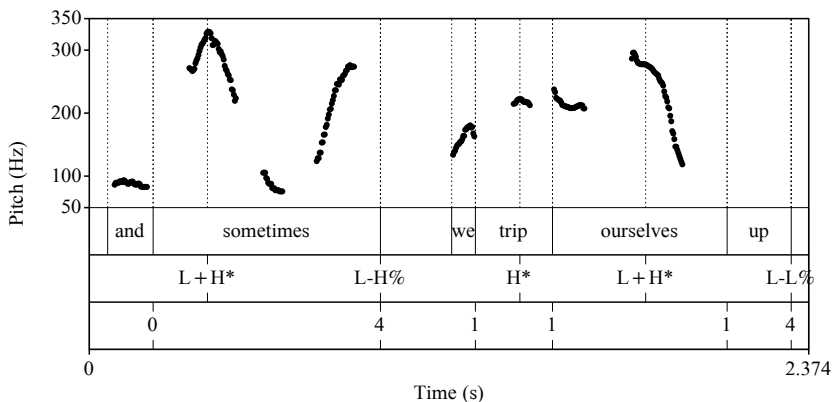
Some Examples



– Liberty Mutual TV Ad

Some Examples

The pitch track for this sentence:



Some Examples

But don't take
our word
for it.

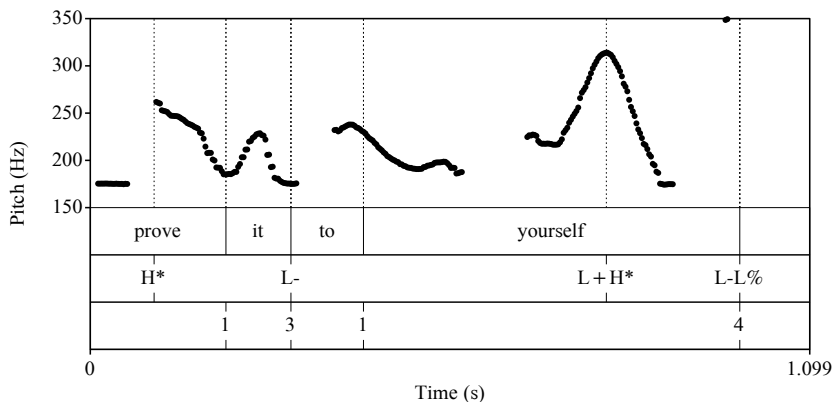


Like any household detergent, keep away from children.

– Purex TV Ad

Some Examples

The pitch track for this sentence:



Why the Big Fuss?

- ◆ This kind of focus usage is productive, and used very often in natural discourse
 - ▶ As a speaker of English, you probably wouldn't even notice anything remarkable about these sentences
 - ▶ In fact, they are very informative about our theory of reflexive pronouns, as well as our theory of grammar

Roadmap

- ◆ This talk will proceed as follows
 - ▶ First: Review our model of Grammar, and investigate focus
 - ▶ Next: Review reflexive structures, and investigate focused reflexives
 - ▶ Finally: Conclude reflexives are more similar between English and French than you might have thought

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4 **Conclusion**

Questions and Answers

- ◆ Notice that the same sentence can have different pronunciation, depending on the question:
 - (2) Q: Who did Jenna mock? [Mock-ee Question]
A1: Jenna mocked Dánnny. [Mock-ee Focus]
A2:# Jénnna mocked Danny.
 - (3) Q: Who mocked Danny? [Mocker Question]
A1:# Jenna mocked Dánnny.
A2: Jénnna mocked Danny. [Mocker Focus]

Questions and Answers

- ◆ It isn't just about subject vs object, but rather about meaning

(4) Q: Who did Jenna mock?

[Mock-ee Question]

A1: Jenna mocked **Dánný**.

[Mock-ee Focus]

A2:# **Jénna** mocked Danny.

A3: **Dánný** was mocked by Jenna.

[Mock-ee Focus]

A4:# Danny was mocked by **Jénna**.

Questions and Answers

- ◆ Here is a robust generalization (Halliday 1967, Krifka 2004, many others)

(5) **Question-Answer Congruence**

The part of the answer that corresponds to the question word must also have focus stress

(6) Q: Who did Jenna mock?

A1: Jenna mocked Dánný.

A2: Dánný was mocked by Jenna.

(7) Q: Who mocked Danny?

A1: Jénna mocked Danny.

A2: Danny was mocked by Jénna.

Semantics and Phonology

- ◆ Question-Answer Congruence (QAC) is a way of saying the way pronounce things must match up with the meaning of things
 - ▶ Semantics and Phonology both express focus
 - ▶ And the ways that they do should be maximally similar

Semantics and Phonology

- ◆ Descriptively, this is enough!
 - ▶ But! Semantics and Phonology are two very different modules of the language faculty
 - We want to know how they can talk to each other
 - ▶ We'll do that by investigating a way in which QAC appears to fail
 - ▶ Before that, we must first understand some basics of Language

Grammar

- ◆ We can think of Grammar as the complete set of mental formulae that tell speakers of a language how to sentences can/can't be formed
 - ▶ Everyone has a deep knowledge of Grammar, even if they don't know it
 - ▶ "The experience of becoming conscious of previously unconscious phenomena is one of the principal joys of linguistic work."

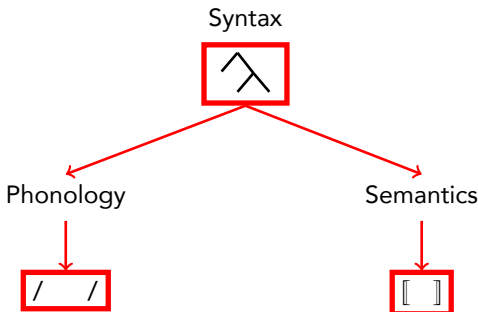
– Prof. Wallace Chafe

Components of Grammar

- ◆ What are the principle components of this mental recipe for Language, and how do they interact?
 - ▶ Three main components
 - ① **Word/Sentence Structure** (Morphology and Syntax)
 - ② **Sound Systems** (Phonetics and Phonology)
 - ③ **Meaning Systems** (Semantics and Pragmatics)
- ◆ Information does not pass freely from each component into the others

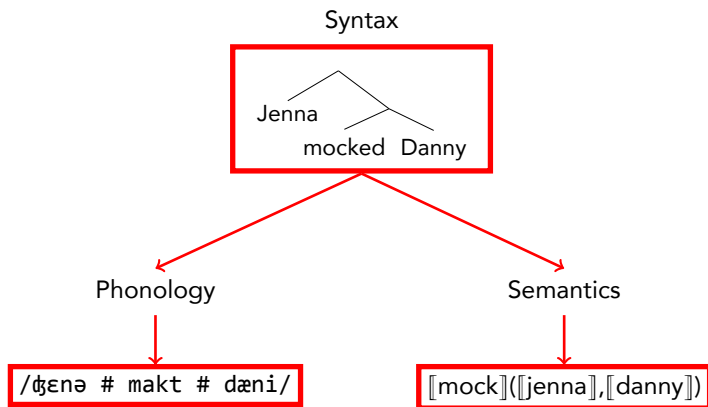
Syntax, Phonology, Semantics

- ◆ Modern generative grammar is typically organized so that Syntax is the input to Phonology and Semantics
 - ▶ Phonology and Semantics do not communicate with each other directly



Example

- ◆ Here is an idealized example

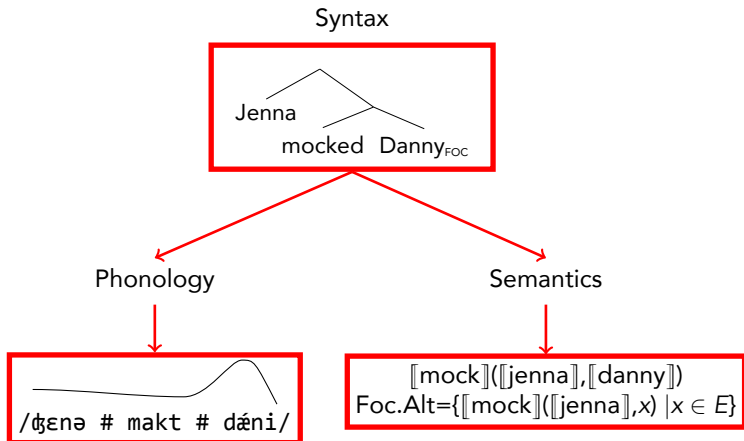


A Question about QAC

- ◆ An obvious question is, if Phonology and Semantics do not communicate, how do we explain apparent shared effects?
 - (5) **Question-Answer Congruence**
The part of the answer that corresponds to the question word must also have focus stress
- ◆ The answer to this question depends on how we represent focus in the grammar
 - ▶ Focus must be represented in Phonology and Semantics... Syntax too?

Focus in Grammar

- ◆ Hypothesis: Focus is marked in Syntax, affecting both Phonology and Semantics (Selkirk 1984, Rooth 1985, Selkirk 2007, Büring 2013)



An Answer for QAC

- ◆ This is the reason QAC is a correct generalization
 - ▶ Semantics and Phonology only share information via the Syntax
 - ▶ Focus interpretation and focus stress are in the same place, because of where focus is represented in the sentence structure

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A Review of Reflexives

- ◆ Before we talk about focused reflexives, let's first review reflexives in general
 - ▶ First: what do we mean by "reflexive"s?
 - ▶ In English, reflexives are the pronouns that end in 'self' or 'selves' (i.e. (8))
 - (8) myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, ourselves, yourselves, themselves
- ◆ A key property of reflexives is that where they can show up in a sentence is highly constrained

A Review of Reflexives

- ◆ For example:
 - (9) a. Kenneth expects you to live forever
 - b. Kenneth expects himself to live forever
 - c. Kenneth expects that you will live forever
 - d. *Kenneth expects that himself will live forever

- ▶ We want to know why it is that reflexive reflexives are licensed in some positions, but not others

A Review of Reflexives

- ◆ Why study reflexives?
 - ▶ Not because it's a particularly pressing issue in the world at large
 - ▶ But because every language exhibits grammatical constraints on how referential expressions (like reflexives) are distributed
 - ▶ So exploring reflexives act as a window into the architecture of Language

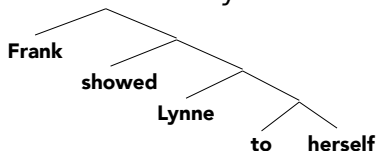
Types of Reflexives

- ◆ We can boil down past research on reflexives to two main findings:
 - ① Certain grammatical relationships must hold between reflexives and their antecedent.
 - ② ... but only sometimes. Reflexives do not behave uniformly, even within a language.
- ◆ To understand reflexives, we must account for both of these facts.
 - ▶ **Goal:** formalize the appropriate conditions for
 - ① while accounting for ②

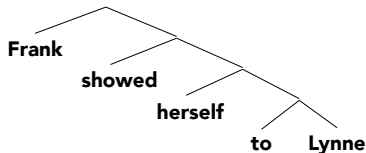
Reflexive Types: Whirlwind Review

- ◆ For some reflexives, being c-commanded by its antecedent is critical

(10) a. Frank showed Lynne to herself



b. * Frank showed herself to Lynne



Reflexive Types: Whirlwind Review

- ◆ For certain other reflexives, c-command does not obviously matter
 - (11) a. Frank showed Lynne to a clone of herself
 - b. Frank showed a clone of herself to Lynne

- ◆ Yet these same reflexives still require an antecedent in the sentence
 - (12) a. * Frank showed me to a clone of herself
 - b. * Frank showed a clone of herself to me

Reflexive Types: Whirlwind Review

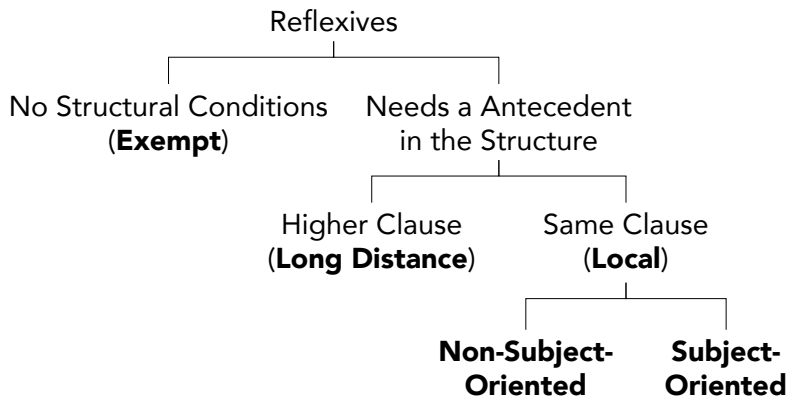
- ◆ Finally, there are reflexives for which there need not be any pronounced antecedent in the sentence
 - (13) a. How about you?
 - b. How about yourself?

Reflexive Types: Whirlwind Review

- ◆ In addition, some reflexives must be in the same clause as their antecedent
 - (14) a. Roberta watched [Werner burn himself]
 - b. *Roberta watched [Werner burn herself]
- ◆ Though others (which require antecedents) can be in different clauses (in some dialects)
 - (15) a. Roberta watched [the fire burn herself]
 - b. *I watched [the fire burn herself]
- ◆ (Another example from television)
 - (16) You hired [someone to investigate yourself]?

A View of Reflexive Types

- ◆ After reviewing these and other facts, there are at least this many types of reflexives



A View of Reflexive Types

- ◆ Recall the generalizations we saw earlier
 - ① Certain grammatical relationships must hold between reflexives and their antecedent.
 - ② ... but only sometimes. Reflexives do not behave uniformly, even within a language.
- ▶ The grammatical relationships that matter depend on the type (①), as we just saw

A View of Reflexive Types

- ◆ Many languages use a unique word / morpheme / construction for Local Subject-Oriented Reflexives

- (17) a. Jacques **s'** assigne à Henri
Jacques assigned himself to Henry
"Jacques assigned himself to Henry"
- b. Jacques assigne Henri à **lui-même**
Jacques assigned Henry to himself
"Jacques assigned Henry to himself"

- French uses *se* for **LSOR** cases, whereas it uses *lui-même* for **others** (Charnavel&Sportiche 2014)
- ▶ We find that English distinguishes LSOR and non-LSOR as well

Back to Focused Reflexives

- ◆ Reflexives bearing focus stress are semantically ambiguous, unlike non-reflexives
 - (1) a. Prove it to the skeptic!
(The skeptic should be the one who you prove it to.)
 - b. Prove it to me!
(I should be the one who you prove it to.)
 - c. Prove it to yoursélf!
(You should be the one who you prove it to.)
(You should be the one who proves it to you.)

Back to Focused Reflexives

- ◆ The interpretation in (18b) is unlike the others
- (18) Prove it to **yoursélf!**
 - a. **You** should be the one who you prove it to.
 - b. **You** should be the one who proves it to you.
- ▶ We'll call (18b) the Unexpected Reflexive Focus (URF)
- ▶ (18b) means something similar to focus on the subject

Back to Focused Reflexives

- ◆ URF occurs where you would normally focus the subject, even though the reflexive is the object

(19) Q: Who mocked Danny? [Mocker Question]

A1: # Danny mocked **Dánnny**.

A2: **Dánnny** mocked Danny.

(20) Q: Who mocked Danny? [Mocker Question]

A1: Danny mocked **himsélf**.

A2: # **Dánnny** mocked himself.

- ◆ Only reflexives seem to give us this kind of unexpected location for focus stress
 - ▶ Because of Question-Answer Congruence

Back to Focused Reflexives

- ◆ Are examples of URF just an exception to QAC?
 - ▶ Hypothesis: focusing an anaphor can be like focusing its antecedent
 - Because of the way reflexives come to refer to their antecedents (Spathas 2010)
 - ▶ Prediction: focusing any reflexive should give an interpretation focusing its antecedent

Hypothesis Testing: Subjects vs Objects

- ◆ This works when the antecedent is a subject

(21) Q: Who __ assigned Ken to Angie? [Assigner Question]

A1: Angie assigned Ken to hersélf. [✓URF]

A2: Ángie assigned Ken to hersélf. [Dual Focus]

- ▶ The “dual focus” pattern is different from the URF pattern
- ▶ URF doesn't have any focus stress on the antecedent, but the Dual Focus pattern does

Hypothesis Testing: Subjects vs Objects

- ◆ URF does not involve focus stress on the antecedent
- ◆ Because URF of this, the subject does not need to be pronounced in URF

(22) A: Assign Ken to me.

B1: No! Assign Ken to yoursélf.

[✓URF]

B2: No! Yóu assign Ken to yoursélf.

[Dual Focus]

- ▶ Dual Focus, does require a pronounced subject
- ▶ We will see that the Dual Focus pattern can occur in places that URF cannot

Hypothesis Testing: Subjects vs Objects

◆ What if the antecedent is an object?

(23) Q: Who did Angie assign to Ken? [Assign-ee Question]

A1:# Angie assigned Ken to himsélf. [#URF]

A2: Angie assigned Kén to himsélf. [Dual Focus]

(24) A: Assign me to myself.

B1:# No! Assign yourself to yoursélf. [#URF]

B2: No! Yóu assign yourself to yoursélf. [Dual Focus]

- ▶ **URF is not possible with an object antecedent**

Subjects Only

- ◆ This finding is critical!
 - ▶ URF cannot be as simple as “focused reflexive means focused antecedent”
 - ▶ Instead, the antecedent must be the subject
 - ▶ This sounds like the LSOR reflexive in French, *se*!
 - ▶ Is the reflexive in URF constructions the same type of reflexive as French *se*?

Hypothesis Testing: Movability

- ◆ A general property of language is that things move around in the syntactic structure, but that movement is constrained
 - (25) a. Liz devoured something else quickly.
 - b. What else did Liz devour ___ quickly?
 - c. Liz devoured [cheese and something else] quickly.
 - d. *What else did Liz devour [cheese and ___] quickly?

- ◆ It is impossible to move out of a coordinate structures ("cheese and what else")

Hypothesis Testing: Movability

- ◆ French *se* also appears to have moved
 - (26) a. Jacques assigne Jeanne à Henri
 - b. Jacques *s'* assigne ___ à Henri
 - c. Jacques assigne [Jeanne et Claire] à Henri
 - d. * Jacques *s'* assigne [Jeanne et ___] à Henri

- ◆ LSOR reflexives like *se* move, and cannot move away from a coordinate structure

Hypothesis Testing: Movability

- ◆ URF reflexives also cannot occur in a coordinate structure

(27) Q: Who was talking to [Sebastian and Emma]?

A1: #Emma was talking to [Sebastian and hersélf].

[#URF]

A2: Émma was talking to [Sebastian and hersélf].

[Dual Focus]

- ▶ **URF is not possible when the reflexive can't move**

Movable Reflexives Only

- ◆ Another critical finding!
 - ▶ URF reflexives must move
 - ▶ Maybe this movement is related to why they can only refer to the subject (Ahn 2014)
- ◆ This is additional evidence that the reflexive in URF constructions the same type of reflexive as French *se*

What's Missing Here

- ◆ What I haven't shown you
 - ▶ Why URF has the interpretation it has
 - ▶ How that's related to the fact that URF requires (i) the reflexive to be able to move, and (ii) its antecedent to be a subject
 - ▶ It's in the appendix!

URF and LSOR in English

- ◆ Conclusion: URF is only possible with LSOR reflexives
 - ▶ This is an important step for understanding the following two aspects reflexivity
 - ① Certain grammatical relationships must hold between reflexives and their antecedent.
 - ② ... but only sometimes. Reflexives do not behave uniformly, even within a language.
 - ▶ This means even English distinguishes LSOR and non-LSOR, and **Grammar treats LSOR as different**

Meaning of URF Reflexives

- ◆ URF only arises in cases with LSOR reflexives
 - ▶ Hypothesis: LSOR reflexives have a different meaning in the Semantics than other reflexives
 - Their meaning is essentially “me and the subject are the same”
 - ▶ Other non-LSOR reflexives don't have this meaning in the Semantics
 - They don't require a subject to be identical to

URF and QAC

- ◆ Let's go back to our URF data

(28) Q: Who mocked Danny?

[Mocker Question]

A: Danny mocked himsélf.

[URF]

- ▶ Focusing the LSOR anaphor in (29) is a way of saying "Actually, the mocker of Danny is [the same as the subject (Danny)]_{Foc}"
- ▶ This is why URF is impossible when the the antecedent of the reflexive is not the subject
- ▶ **The location of semantic focus and the location of focus stress is identical** – QAC is still the correct description

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QAC Maintained

- ◆ English URF is only possible with LSOR reflexives
 - ▶ Because of what LSOR reflexives mean
 - ▶ QAC is still correct
 - Because focus is marked in Syntax which goes to both Semantics and Phonology

LSOR Across Languages

- ◆ Many languages distinguish LSOR and non-LSOR reflexives in obvious ways
 - ▶ e.g. Danish, French, Inuit, Japanese, Kannada, Lakhota, Russian, Shona, Tɔrɔ sɔɔ
 - ▶ English does too, but in less obvious ways
- ◆ LSOR is must arise from some core part of Grammar, as it is attested in a huge number of languages
 - ▶ Not all languages show this obviously, and but closer investigation can uncover its effects

Thank you!

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Appendix

- ◆ The URF meaning only arises in contexts where reflexivity is focused information

(29) Q: Who embarrassed Jenna?

A1: # Jénna embarrassed herself.

[#Subject Focus]

A2: Jenna embarrassed herself.

[URF]

(30) Q: Who embarrassed herself?

A1: Jénna embarrassed herself.

[Subject Focus]

A2: # Jenna embarrassed herself.

[#URF]

- ◆ What is F marked is the semantic reflexivity function

Appendix

- ◆ This function may be instantiated by the anaphor (as said here) or by an abstract silent head (Ahn 2014)
 - ▶ The semantic reflexivity that is focused in URF is only in derivations where the reflexive moves to a position associated with grammatical voice
 - Generalization: LSOR reflexives in the world's languages are unavailable in the passive voice – URF is also unavailable in passive voice
 - Conclusion: LSOR reflexives depend on a specific non-passive voice head, which causes the movement

Appendix

- ◆ This movement leads to subject-orientation
 - ▶ Because of the semantics of the reflexivizer
 - ▶ This necessitates that reflexive anaphors aren't universally reflexivizing functions
 - They only behave as such in LSOR contexts
 - ▶ LSOR derivations have two atoms of reflexivity: the anaphor and a reflexive voice
 - This derives why reflexivity can appear as an argument pronoun, a verbal suffix, or both in the world's languages

Appendix

The derivation defended in Ahn 2014:

