

Distinguishing reciprocals from reflexives in Kuuk Thaayorre

Alice Gaby

1. Introduction¹

1.1. Background

The semantic and formal features of reflexive and reciprocal constructions have attracted significant attention in recent years (e.g. papers in Nedjalkov, Geniušienė and Guentcheva 2007; Evans et al. forthcoming; Frajzyngier and Curl 2000a and 2000b; and Langendoen and Magloire 2003). Yet whether the categories labelled “reciprocal” and “reflexive” respectively are cross-linguistically comparable remains an empirical question.

In order to investigate these categories (whether as part of a descriptive, typological or theoretical study), it is necessary to first elucidate exactly what is meant by these terms. We might propose that at the semantic core of the reciprocal category is some notion of symmetry (following König and Kokutani 2006). This can be spelt out along the following lines:

Core reciprocal: *the Actor of one instantiation of the event is also the Undergoer of another instantiation of the same event ($A1 = U2$) while the Undergoer of the first instantiation is the Actor of the second ($U1 = A2$), as illustrated by Figure 1.*

¹ The data discussed in this paper was, except where otherwise acknowledged, collected in Pormpuraaw (2002–2005) with the collaboration of my Thaayorre language teachers: Alfred Charlie, Gilbert Jack, Albert Jack, Molly Edwards, Irene Charlie, Freddy Tyore and Elizabeth Norman. I wish to thank the entire Pormpuraaw community (including the Pormpuraaw Community Council) for their generosity and ongoing support for my research. The analysis presented here benefited enormously from the comments and contributions of other participants at the workshop *Reciprocity and Reflexivity – Description, Typology and Theory*, and in particular from the perspicacious comments of the editors of this volume, Nicholas Evans, and two anonymous reviewers. Any remaining faults are of course my own.

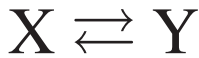


Figure 1.



Figure 2.

Similarly, the following definition of the reflexive category may appear intuitively correct:

core reflexive: *an inwardly directed action; of which a single participant is both Actor and Undergoer ($A = U$), illustrated by Figure 2.*

But is it exactly and only this that is encoded by the so-called “reflexive” and “reciprocal” morphemes in the varied languages of the world?

A cursory inspection of the Thaayorre data would seem to meet expectations of such a mapping from function to form. Specifically, reciprocal semantics as outlined above are typically encoded by constructions containing the verbal suffix *-rr* (cf. [1]), while reflexive semantics are contrastively expressed by constructions containing *-e* (cf. [2]):

- (1) *ngal* *nhaanhath-rr-ø*
 1DU.INCL.NOM/ERG watch.RDP-RECP-NPST
 ‘We two are looking at each other.’
- (2) *ngay* *nhaanhath-e-ø*
 1SG.NOM/ERG watch.RDP-REFL-NPST
 ‘I’m looking at myself.’

A more holistic examination of the data, however, reveals that the reflexive and reciprocal categories are, for Kuuk Thaayorre, less clear-cut. The “reciprocal” suffix *-rr* is found in some descriptions of semantically reflexive – or “inwardly directed” – events (cf. [3]), whilst the “reflexive” suffix *-e* marks some semantically reciprocal – or “symmetric” – events (cf. [4]):

- (3) *pam thono tup ko’o-rr-r* *nhanganut watp*
 man one.NOM IDPH spear-RECP-PST.PFV 3SG.REFL dead
 ‘One man speared himself dead, whack!’ (Hall 1972: 137)
- (4) *pul* *runc-e* *-r*
 2DU.NOM/ERG collide-REFL-PST.PFV
 ‘They two collided with one other.’

I argue here that this falls out from the fact that the categories “reciprocal” and “reflexive” are not a priori defined, but instead represent a range of alternative

segmentations – by particular languages – of a broader semantic domain (as characterized by Lichtenberk 1985; Geniušienė 1987; Kemmer 1993; Gaby 2001; and others). Within a single language, too, alternative constructions may sub-categorize this semantic domain, as Geniušienė (1987) and König and Kokutani (2006) have demonstrated. Correspondingly, the formal apparatus for expressing reciprocity and/or reflexivity in most languages spans a number of semantic subcategories of varying degrees of semantic relatedness (cf. Evans et al. 2002).

For these reasons, the typologist cannot assume a construction labelled “reciprocal” (or “reflexive”) in a particular language to be equivalent to a construction receiving the same label in a second language. While it is likely that there will be some commonality of function, it is also likely that categorial boundaries of the two constructions will differ. It is therefore insufficient to simply identify a “reciprocal” or a “reflexive” morpheme or construction in a particular language. These categories need to be precisely characterized on a language-by-language basis. Only this can be reliable input to cross-linguistic comparison.

This paper represents the first step towards such a typology: an initial exploration of the semantic borders between one language’s nominally “reflexive” and “reciprocal” constructions.

1.2. The language and its speakers

Kuuk Thaayorre is a Paman language spoken in and around the community of Pormpuraaw, located on the west coast of Cape York Peninsula. Although around 300 people still use Kuuk Thaayorre in their daily interactions, decreasing transmission to younger generations, coupled with increasing reliance on English for community business, gives the language highly endangered status.

While some of the data reported here was obtained through elicitation (notably employing video stimuli, cf. Evans et al. 2002), much of it was spontaneously uttered in conversation or narrative. Unless otherwise noted, example sentences were recorded by the author during one of three field trips between 2002 and 2004.

1.3. Relevant linguistic features

Kuuk Thaayorre is typically Australian in displaying pragmatically (rather than syntactically) determined constituent order, coupled with the free (and frequent) ellipsis of core arguments. Despite this, it is a predominantly dependent-marking language, with the grammatical function of arguments signalled by phrase-final nominal case-suffixes and/or pronominal forms.

Nouns are marked for ergative case, but unmarked when functioning as intransitive subject or direct object. Pronouns, on the other hand, have a marked

accusative case, but are unmarked when functioning as transitive or intransitive subject. Following Goddard (1982), I analyze the Thaayorre case system as tripartite, with homophonous nominative and ergative cases in the pronominal paradigm (glossed as “ERG/NOM”), and nominative/accusative syncretism in the case of nouns (“NOM/ACC”).

Derivational morphemes (such as the reciprocal and reflexive) are suffixed to the verb, preceding TAM suffixes.²

2. Morphemes and constructions

2.1. The reciprocal construction

For clarity of exposition, I will reserve the term “reciprocal” for the domain of morphosyntactic expression. In the semantic domain, I will use the term “symmetric” (as proposed by König and Kokutani 2006) to refer to any event type involving (minimally) two participants in which participant A both acts upon participant B and is acted upon by B,³ regardless of formal encoding.

In Kuuk Thaayorre, symmetry can be implied (i.e. formally unmarked, as in [5]) or it can be marked by the reciprocal suffix (as in [6]):

- (5) *pul pam.kunyangkar nhangan-mun kuuk yiik-ø*
 3DU.NOM brother 3SG.POSS-DAT word.ACC say-NPST
 ‘He and his brother are talking (to each other).’
- (6) *ngali pam.kunyangkar ngathan-mun nhaanhath-rr-ø*
 1DU.NOM brother 1SG.POSS-DAT look.RDP-RECP-NPST
 ‘My brother and I are looking at each other.’

² There is some irregularity with respect to the ordering of the reciprocal suffix and the derivational suffixes, such as causative *-(nh)an*. In clauses that combine reflexive and causative morphology, it is always the “inner” affix (i.e. the morpheme closest to the verb root) that applies first, as we might expect from the principles of iconicity (cf. Haiman 1980). The reciprocal suffix, however, appears to both precede and follow the causative suffix without any consequent change in meaning. This topic is explored in more detail in Gaby (2006).

³ Where more than two participants are involved, I will class as “reciprocal” any event in which the majority of participants both act upon, and are acted upon by, other participants. Exactly how the reciprocal semantic prototype should be characterized is an empirical question that is, I believe, yet to be satisfactorily established. The definition given above is, however, a satisfactory heuristic for the purposes of this paper.

The optional “groupwise” enclitic (glossed as ‘GRPW’) is commonly attached to the subject of a reciprocal clause (such as [7]):

- (7) *wakrr*⁴-*∅* *parr*-*r* *ngathan*=*nharr*
 fight.RECP-NPST child 1SG.POSS.NOM=GRPW
 ‘My kids are all fighting.’

The precise function of the groupwise enclitic =*nharr* is unclear at this stage. In addition to marking the subject of a reciprocal clause (as in [7]), this morpheme obligatorily attaches to quantifiers borrowed from English, as seen in (8):

- (8) *nhul* *three*=*nharr* *ngat* *catfish* *kunutha*-*rr*
 3SG.ERG three=GRPW fish catfish.ACC catch-PST.PFV
 ‘She caught three catfish.’

What the two functions seem to share, is that a number of entities are defined with respect to each other, either because there is mutual involvement in the activity described (as in reciprocal clauses such as [7]), or because they are quantified with respect to each other (i.e., the three catfish in [8] are only *three* when considered with respect to each other, not individually). Nevertheless, the exact meaning and distribution of the groupwise enclitic – as opposed to the reciprocal suffix – requires further investigation.

It should finally be noted that the reciprocal-marked verb is often additionally reduplicated. Verbal reduplication is extremely widespread in Kuuk Thaayorre, being used to mark both durative and iterative aspect. There is a particular affinity between iteration and reciprocal events, since the latter typically involve a plurality of subevents and relations. The overlapping distribution of the reciprocal morpheme and verbal reduplication is therefore unsurprising, although each may also occur in the absence of the other.

The Thaayorre reciprocal construction is henceforth defined as any construction containing the suffix *-rr* ‘RECP’. The groupwise enclitic is considered supplementary to this construction, and not of itself definitional of a reciprocal construction.

⁴ Although the verb form *wakrr* ‘fight:RCP’ is historically analysable into the verb root *wak* ‘chase/follow’ and the reciprocal suffix *-rr* ‘RCP’, it is synchronically more appropriate to analyze it as a monomorphemic lexical reciprocal meaning ‘fight’. It is unclear whether reciprocity is synchronically entailed by this predicate; all documented cases of its spontaneous use with a non-singular subject do describe symmetric events, but examination of a larger corpus may provide exceptions to this.

2.2. The reflexive construction

As symmetric events are to the reciprocal construction, so I distinguish semantically “inwardly directed” events from the formal structure of the reflexive construction. In inwardly directed events, two roles are ascribed to the participant or participant group encoded as subject. These are typically Actor and Undergoer (as in *I washed myself*), but may also be Actor and Recipient (e.g. *I sent myself a letter*), Experiencer and Stimulus (e.g. *I heard myself on the radio*), and so on. In Kuuk Thaayorre, inwardly directed events may be signalled by the presence of the reflexive suffix *-e* ‘REFL’ (cf. [9]); the reflexive pronoun (cf. [10]); or both reflexive suffix and pronoun (cf. [11]).

- (9) *kuta ngith pathath-e-ø*
 dog.NOM DEM.DIST bite.RDP-REFL-NPST
 ‘That dog is biting himself.’
- (10) *ngay wash-m rirk-r ngathaney*
 1SG.NOM wash-VBLZ LVB-PST.PFV 1SG.REFL
 ‘I washed.’
- (11) *nhangkanunt kar nhaath-e-ø*
 2SG.REFL like look-REFL-IMP
 ‘You should look at yourself!’

In some reflexive clauses (e.g. [9]), the verb is reduplicated. The relationship between the semantics of verbal reduplication (i.e. duration, iteration) and the reflexive morpheme is less obvious than that between reduplication and the reciprocal morpheme. The co-occurrence of reflexive morphology and verbal reduplication in a particular clause is most likely incidental; the reflexive marker signalling that the action is inwardly directed, and reduplication independently signalling that the event is repeated (or endures) over time.

The reflexive pronominal paradigm, so far attested only with singular number, is formally related to both personal pronouns (in nominative/ergative case) and possessive pronouns. This is evident in the comparison of the reflexive pronouns in the third column of Table 1 with the combined possessive and (nominative) personal pronouns in the first and second columns respectively:

Table 1. Comparison of personal, possessive and reflexive pronouns.

	Possessive Pro	Nominative Pro	Reflexive Pro
1sg	<i>ngathan</i>	<i>ngay</i>	<i>ngathaney</i>
2sg	<i>nhangkan</i>	<i>nhunt</i>	<i>nhangkanunt</i>
3sg	<i>nhangan</i>	<i>nhul</i>	<i>nhanganul</i>

It would seem that the reflexive pronouns are derived from the compounding of possessive pronoun + nominative pronoun. However, phonological reduction at the (erstwhile) morpheme boundary, coupled with vowel shift in the first person form, suggest that the reflexive pronominal paradigm has most likely been in existence for some time, and that these forms are synchronically monomorphemic, rather than productively derived.

Oftentimes, as in example (9) above, the subject of the verbal reflexive clause is in unmarked nominative case, signalling that the clause is intransitive. Other verbal reflexive clauses, however, contain an ergative-marked subject. This is particularly common where the subject is acting upon a part of themselves, where this part is encoded as an accusative direct object. Such clauses (e.g. [12]) appear to be straightforwardly transitive:

- (12) *pam-al ith koow katp<atp>-e-ø*
 man-ERG DEM.DIST nose.ACC hold<RDP>-REFL-NPST
 ‘That man is holding [his] nose.’

It is cross-linguistically common (particularly on the Australian continent) for reflexive and reciprocal clauses to display mixed and/or variable indicators of transitivity (cf. Evans et al. 2007). In Kuuk Thaayorre, there is a strong correlation between explicit reference to the Undergoer (in a separate NP to that representing the Actor) and the ergative-accusative case-frame indicative of transitive clauses. Complicating the analysis of transitivity somewhat, are verbal reflexive clauses containing two unmarked arguments. Such clauses (illustrated by [13], presented with two alternative glosses) arise from the differing patterns of case syncretism in the pronominal paradigm (in which the distinction between nominative and ergative is collapsed) as opposed to nominals (for which both nominative and accusative cases are unmarked).

- (13) *ngay punth inh yak-e-r*
 1SG.ERG arm.ACC DEM.SPRX cut-REFL-PST.PFV
 ‘I cut myself on the arm.’

There are two possible analyses of such clauses. Firstly, they might be analyzed as instances of the transitive reflexive construction, containing an unmarked ergative subject argument (in this case, *ngay* ‘I’) and an unmarked accusative direct object (in this case *punth inh* ‘this arm’). Secondly, the two noun phrases could be analysed as forming a single argument through same-case (nominative) apposition. The apposition of noun phrases representing Part and Whole of a single entity is common in Kuuk Thaayorre (as discussed extensively in Gaby 2006), but there is a crucial difference between the representation of Part and

Whole in reflexive clauses such as (13), and an argument composed of Part and Whole NPs apposed in the same case. In an appositional construction, the same relationship obtains between the predicate and both Part and Whole. That is to say, the predicate has scope over the Whole referent inasmuch as the involved Part is taken to stand for the Whole (hence the Part cannot be affected or agentive without the Whole also being affected or agentive by implication). Accordingly, in (14) the dog enters the jar inasmuch as its head does:

- (14) *kuta nhul paant glass-ak rok-r*
 dog.NOM 3SG.NOM head.NOM glass-DAT enter-PST.PFV
 ‘The dog put his head into the jar.’

In reflexive clauses such as (13) above, however, the Whole referent plays a very different role to the Part argument. Indeed, the Whole (as Actor) acts upon the Part (as Undergoer). Clauses (13) are accordingly analyzed as transitive, with the Whole subject in unmarked Ergative case and the Part object in unmarked accusative case. There thus is quite a neat correspondence between ergative subject marking in reflexive clauses with two overt arguments (representing Whole and Part of a single entity – as in [12] above) and nominative subject non-marking in reflexive clauses with a single overt argument (as in [9’]):

- (9’) *kuta ngith path<ath>-e-ø*
 dog.NOM DEM.DIST bite<RDP>-REFL-NPST
 ‘That dog is biting himself.’

Reflexive constructions in which Whole and Part are distinctly specified are transitive; here the subject referent is conceived of as saliently distinct from the object referent they act upon, whilst their overlapping reference is signalled by the presence of the reflexive suffix. A reflexive construction containing only a single subject argument, however, is syntactically intransitive. Only one entity is involved in the event, but the fact that they are involved in this event in two ways (and therefore assigned two distinct theta roles) is signalled by the reflexive suffix.

2.3. Emphatic pronouns

The principal function of the Thaayorre emphatic pronouns is to focus attention on the participant(s) encoded as subject, in contrast with other potential actors. This is exemplified by (15) and (16), the latter being particularly explicit in contrasting the participants represented by both the subject pronoun *peIn* ‘3PL.NOM’

and the emphatic pronoun *pelnpelnr* ‘3PL.EMPH’, with the alternative group of would-be (or, rather, should-be) actants represented by *nhipnhipr* ‘2DU.EMPH’:

- (15) *ngampampr=p thangkangka-rr raak min-im*
 1PL.EMPH=FOC laugh.RDP-PST.PFV thing good-ABL
 ‘It was all of us laughing about those good things.’ (Hall 1972: 306)
- (16) *peln=th, pelnpelnr rirk-m, nhipnhipr riic-m*
 3PL.NOM=FOC 3PL.EMPH LVB-PST.IPFV 2DU.EMPH run-PST.IPFV
 ‘It was them, they were all working, you two ran off.’ (Hall 1972: 306)

An emphatic pronoun may also be called for in cases where semantic features of the participant encoded as subject make it an unlikely Actor (i.e. contrasting the actual Actor with the type of Actor that might be expected by the addressee). The presence of the emphatic pronoun here rules out any alternative external Actor, and can thus result in the quasi-reflexive interpretation of simple intransitive clauses such as (17).

- (17) *mimp ith nhulnhulr thaariic-r*
 cloth.NOM DEM.DIST 3SG.EMPH tear-NPST
 ‘That piece of material is tearing up itself.’⁵

In (17) the speaker describes a video clip of a piece of cloth lying on a table, slowly (and spontaneously) tearing down the middle (Bohnenmeyer et al. 2001). There are no other people or objects present in the frame, so (thanks to the wonders of video technology), the tearing of the cloth is achieved in the complete absence of external causation. This is reflected also by the consultant’s subsequent translation of her Thaayorre response; *that piece of material is tearing up itself*. The same clause minus the emphatic pronoun would be translated as something like: *that piece of material tore*, implying some external Force.

Reciprocal clauses can also be associated with emphatic pronouns for the following reason: the verbs of reciprocal clauses such as (17) are highly transitive, describing actions that typically proceed from an Actor to a highly distinct Undergoer. Since reciprocal clauses pair such verbs with only a single argument, the involvement of additional Actor(s) might be expected.⁶ The inclusion of an emphatic pronoun in such clauses, then, rules out this expected involvement of other Actors. In example (18), for instance, the inclusion of the emphatic pro-

⁵ Double quotation marks are used in the translation line of example sentences to signify that the translation is given in the consultant’s own words.

⁶ This holds also for the verbs of many reflexive clauses.

noun reinforces the reciprocal interpretation of the clause by stressing that it is just the one group of men who are both questioning and being questioned. The potential involvement of other unmentioned participants is ruled out by *pelpelr* ‘themselves’.

- (18) *pelpelr=nharr rangkank-rr-nam pam*
 3PL.EMPH=GRPW question.RDP-RECP-PST.IPFV man.NOM
ith
 DEM.DIST
 ‘Those men were questioning each other they were.’ (Hall 1972:107)

The three emphatic pronominal forms collected to date are presented in Table 2. Like the reflexive pronouns, these clearly resemble the nominative forms of the respective personal pronouns. In this case, though, it seems that the emphatic pronoun forms were derived via reduplication of the personal pronoun plus suffixation of *-r* (origin unknown). Again, though, the process of derivation most likely occurred some time ago, as some phonological reduction is evident.

Table 2. Comparison of personal and emphatic pronouns.

	Nominative Pro	Emphatic pronoun
3sg	<i>nhul</i>	<i>nhulnhulr</i>
3pl	<i>peln</i>	<i>pelpelr ~ pelnpelnr</i>
1pl:incl	<i>ngamp</i>	<i>ngampampr</i>

3. Distinguishing reciprocals from reflexives

Having established the basic morphosyntax of reciprocal and reflexive constructions, Section 3 now moves to consider their respective semantic/functional ranges. It has been hitherto assumed that the semantics of the two constructions are clear, consistent and distinct. Such an assumption is bred by the formal and semantic contrast between clauses such as (1) and (2) above, and (19) and (20) here:

- (19) *ngali muul-thurr werk-rr-r*
 1DU.EXCL.NOM/ERG white.ochre-INST rub-RECP-PST.PFV
 ‘We two painted each other with white ochre.’
- (20) *ngali muul-thurr werk-e-r*
 1DU.EXCL.NOM/ERG white.ochre-INST rub-REFL-PST.PFV
 ‘We two painted ourselves with white ochre.’

In such pairs, the contrast between the formal structure of reciprocal and reflexive clauses (in particular, the suffixes *-rr* ‘RECP’ and *-e* ‘REFL’) correlates neatly with the semantic contrast between symmetric and inwardly directed events respectively. It is not always so straightforward, however. Section 3.1 presents a range of inwardly directed events marked by the reciprocal suffix, while Section 3.2 presents some symmetric events marked by the reflexive suffix.

3.1. Inwardly directed events marked by reciprocal morphology

It is difficult to imagine a more clearly inwardly directed event than that described by (3) (or indeed [21]):

- (3') *pam thono tup ko'o-rr-r nhanganut watp*
 man one.NOM IDPH spear-RECP-PST.PFV 3SG.REFL dead
 ‘One man speared himself dead, whack!’ (Hall 1972: 137)
- (21) *paanth-u thamr nhanganut thiik-rr-r*
 woman-ERG foot.ACC 3SG.REFL break-RECP-PST.PFV
 ‘The woman broke her own feet.’

In (3) (repeated above), an action that would typically be directed towards another individual (i.e. ‘spearing’) is instead directed towards the subject himself. In (21) the subject directs a typically object-directed action towards a part of her own body. Yet both events are described by reciprocal-marked verbs.

Examples (22)–(25) similarly employ reciprocal morphology, despite there being no implication of symmetry in the event. To the contrary, in each the subject’s actions are orientated towards or reflect back upon themselves (as entailed by the inclusion of reflexive pronouns in [22] – [24]):

- (22) *ngamp yirryirram nhanganut kunanpun-rr-nan*
 1PL.INCL.NOM each 3SG.REFL report-RECP-GO&.NPST
nhangun
 3SG.DAT
 ‘We each will give an account of ourselves to Him.’ (Hall 1972:392)
- (23) *nhunt riiran nhangkanunt kaar=p kunk*
 2SG.NOM alone 2SG.REFL NEG=FOC alive
than-an-rr-nancnh
 stand-CAUS-RECP-GO&.SBJV
 ‘You can’t rescue yourself all alone.’ (Hall 1972:392)

- (24) *ngay ngathaney mungk-an-rr-r merrethen*
 1SG.ERG 1SG.REFL consume-CAUS-RECP-PST.PFV medicine.ACC
 ‘I made myself swallow the medicine.’ (Hall 1972:392)
- (25) *nhunt koorkorr thaat pirk-rr-ø ngathun*
 2SG.NOM behind.RDP wide push-RECP-IMP 1SG.DAT
 ‘Move to one side for me.’

In none of these examples is it immediately obvious why reciprocal morphology is used to encode such events normally associated with reflexive constructions.

3.2. Symmetric events marked by reflexive morphology

Conversely, (4) (repeated below) and (26) – both elicited by video stimuli (van Staden et al. 2001) – exemplify the use of reflexive morphology to encode seemingly symmetric events. Note that it is the second clause of (26) (describing the back-to-back position of the storytellers) that is reflexive-marked.

- (4') *pul runc-e-r*
 2DU.NOM collide-REFL-PST.PFV
 ‘They two collided with one other.’
- (26) *pul kuthip mi'im-r, mut_thongkan*
 3DU.ERG story.ACC tell-PST.PFV back.ACC
reerek-e-ø
 give.RDP-REFL-NPST
 ‘They two were telling stories, standing back-to-back.’
 (‘They give one another their back.’)

The video clip described in example (4) shows a man walking towards a stationary woman, colliding with her as he passes. Example (26) describes a video clip of two men standing back to back (facing opposite directions), both of whom are talking and gesticulating. Neither of these are obvious instances of an actor directing their action towards themselves. Rather, the two events share more with typically “reciprocal” scenes. This is true also of the following:

- (27) *pul mut-u thaa.yooyongk-e-ø*
 3DU.NOM back-DAT lean.RDP-REFL-NPST
 ‘They are leaning (on each other) back to back.’

- (28) *peln korpn nhaanhath-e-ø*
 3PL.ERG louse.ACC look.RDP-REFL-NPST
 ‘They are checking (each other) for lice.’⁷
- (29) *pul nhaanhath-e-ø*
 3DU.NOM look.RDP-REFL-NPST
 ‘They are looking at each other.’

Interestingly, most clauses in which a symmetric event receives reflexive coding involve only two participants. This is not a necessary condition, however, as (28) shows. Crucially, though, in none of these examples does a single participant direct their own actions towards themselves, as we would expect of a reflexive-marked clause.

4. Refining the definitions

The examples discussed in Section 3 make it clear that the semantic characterizations of reciprocity (or “symmetric” events) and reflexivity (or “inwardly directed” events) offered in Section 1.1 are inadequate to account for the full range of Thaayorre data. With a view to providing such an account, the present section explores the semantics and functional ranges of the relevant morphemes in more detail. Section 4.2 identifies four senses encoded by the reciprocal suffix, while Section 4.3 identifies five senses encoded by the reflexive suffix. Although I assume these senses to be etically distinct, I make no claims here as to whether the reciprocal and reflexive morphemes are polysemous or vague in encoding them. This chapter merely aims to more precisely locate the semantic boundaries of the two morphemes within a broader semantic space. The etic senses of which this space is composed are identified through the cross-linguistic examination of semantically related categories (e.g. by Lichtenberk 1985; Geniušienė 1987; Kemmer 1993; and Gaby 2001), with each sense being formally distinguished from the others in at least some languages. This substantialist approach (Lindstedt 2001) follows in the tradition of Dahl (1985, 2000 and elsewhere) and Bybee’s (1988) investigation of tense, aspect and mood categories in the languages of the world.

Before delving into the semantics of reciprocal and reflexive verbal suffixes (in Section 4.2 and Section 4.3 respectively), Section 4.1 is concerned with the

⁷ This utterance was prompted by a video clip of three people sitting one in front of the other, such that A checks B’s hair for lice and B checks C’s hair. A’s hair is not checked, and C does not check anyone’s hair.

exact function of the reflexive pronoun. This is particularly important given its presence in both reflexive-marked and reciprocal-marked clauses.

4.1. Reflexive pronoun

It was noted in Section 2.2 that reflexive pronouns may occur in either the presence or absence of the reflexive suffix *-e*. Further, Section 3.1 presented several cases of the reflexive pronoun combining with the reciprocal suffix (examples [3] and [22]–[24]). In each of these instances, we may assume that the reflexive pronoun is not redundant, but expresses some meaning that contributes to the interpretation of the construction as a whole. This core meaning that remains constant through all uses of the reflexive pronoun can be summarized as in (30):

(30) **Reflected action** – *the Actor is affected by their own actions*

This characterisation holds across all uses of the reflexive pronoun. For instance, clauses expressing “oblique reflexivity” (i.e. where some oblique role – such as Beneficiary, Location, Source, etc. – is ascribed to the subject participant in addition to the Actor role) are not marked by the reflexive suffix (since the subject participant is not an Undergoer), but are almost always marked by the reflexive pronoun. This makes sense, since although the subject participant does not take on an Undergoer role *per se*, they are affected by their actions, either to their benefit (as in [31]) or detriment (as in [32]):

(31) *ngay ngok mi'irr ngathaney*
 1SG.ERG water.ACC pick.up.PST.PFV 1SG.REFL
 ‘I got myself some water.’

(32) *plate ulp nhanganul thiika-rr*
 plate.ACC DEM.APRX 3SG.REFL break-PST.PFV
 ‘That kid broke his own plate.’

The reflexive pronoun is also found in most cases where an inwardly directed event receives reciprocal marking (e.g. examples [3] and [22] to [24]). The semantic contribution of the reciprocal suffix to such clauses will be explored in Section 4.2. It is clear, though, that the reflexive pronoun here clarifies that the subject/Actor is affected by their own action, as opposed to being affected by a participant they are reciprocally acting upon.

This section has shown that a monosemous definition of the reflexive pronoun (as given in [30]) is adequate to account for all instances of its use. The reflexive

pronoun thus makes a clear, and often pivotal, contribution to any clause that contains it.

4.2. *-rr* ‘RECP’ and associated senses

The various functions of the reciprocal suffix are less easily unified than those of the reflexive pronoun. In contrast, I argue, *-rr* ‘RECP’ spans several clearly distinct functions. Each of these functions will be explored in turn in the following subsections. To avoid confusion *-rr* will be glossed simply as ‘RECP’ in all example sentences.

4.2.1. *Core reciprocal*

The Actor of one instantiation of the event is also the Undergoer of another instantiation of the same event type (i.e. A1 = U2) while the Undergoer of the first instantiation is the Actor of the second (U1 = A2).

Firstly, *-rr* can encode what I term the “core reciprocal”; the type of reciprocal most typically associated with symmetric events. This is illustrated by examples (1) and (19) above, and is considered too straightforward to require further discussion.

4.2.2. *Co-participation*

Participants act with respect to one another.

The second sense with which *-rr* may be used I term “co-participation”.⁸ This entails a number of actants participating in the same event alongside one another. Further, for an event to be classified “co-participatory”, the action of each participant must be orientated with respect to the other participant(s); there must be *mutual engagement* in the activity, not a series of independent actions. The involvement of multiple Actors is not incidental, but affects the very nature of the event. This can be seen in (33), an event-type characterized as “naturally reciprocal” by Kemmer (1993: 18):

- (33) *ngamp* *pungk.ko'o-rr-nan*
 1PL.INCL.NOM gather-RECP-GO&.NPST
 ‘We’ll all meet up.’

⁸ In previous versions of this paper, and elsewhere, I labelled this reciprocal subsense “coparticipatory”. Given its strong similarity to the “co-participation” construction described by Creissels and Nougier-Voisin (this volume), however, I have chosen to adopt their terminology in order to avoid the unnecessary proliferation of terminology.

It is not felicitous to utter (33) of a group of participants acting independently (at different times, directions and/or places). Rather, their actions must be carefully coordinated in order to have their paths coincide; this results from each orientating themselves with respect to the others.

Creissels and Nougier-Voisin (this volume) discuss a very similar “co-participation” construction in Wolof. They identify three subtypes of co-participation (“unspecified co-participation”, “parallel co-participation”, and “reciprocal co-participation”). Thaayorre clauses such as (33) above might best be characterized as parallel co-participation, given that “two or more participants share the same role” (Creissels and Nougier-Voisin this volume: ■■■). Other Thaayorre clauses better approximate unspecified co-participation, which involves “two or more participants that may assume distinct roles, but the construction by itself leaves open the precise role assumed by some of them, and role recognition crucially relies on lexical and/or pragmatic factors” (Creissels and Nougier-Voisin this volume: ■■■). This is evident in the following Thaayorre example:

- (34) *pul* *yoorr* *yith-rr-r* *iirrkuw* *rump-un*
 3DU.NOM today lead-RECP-PST.PFV to.west beach-DAT
 ‘Those two went together to the beach today.’ (Hall 1972:108)

It is highly unlikely that this pair of Actors would either take turns in leading the other, or would both lead and be led simultaneously. Instead, by choosing to represent the event by means of a reciprocal construction, the speaker asserts that an event of (mutually-orientated) leading occurred between the two participants, but that the precise assignation of roles is unimportant. A crucial component of the Thaayorre co-participation sense that is absent from Creissels and Nougier-Voisin’s definitions, however, is the fact that participants must orientate their actions with respect to one another.

4.2.3. *Asymmetric*

The subject’s involvement in the activity entails the converse involvement of another participant(s) whose role in the event is differentiated from that of the subject.

The asymmetric sense, like co-participation, entails the mutual orientation of two or more participants. A key difference between the two, is the grammatical function with which the participants are encoded. In intransitive co-participation clauses, all core participants are encoded as subject, whilst in the transitive asymmetric clauses only a subset of participants are represented as subject, while others are encoded as direct object (cf. [35]).

- (35) *pam-al ulp nhunh paanth ulp koorr*
 man-ERG DEM.APRX 3SG.ACC woman.ACC DEM.APRX behind
waak-rr-ø nhul
 follow-RECP-NPST 3SG.ERG
 ‘That man is following along behind that woman.’

The above example sentence was uttered in response to a video clip (Evans et al. 2002) in which a woman was walking down a corridor, repeatedly looking over her shoulder for a man who was clandestinely following her. The crucial point here, is that both the woman being followed and the following man are playing an active role in the event; each continually monitoring the actions of the other. A more straightforward case of unilateral following would most likely be encoded by a straightforward transitive clause involving the underived verb *waak* ‘follow’.

The grammatical encoding of involved participants as separate arguments (as opposed to all key participants being encoded as subject in co-participation clauses) reflects an important semantic difference between the asymmetric and co-participation senses. Namely, participants in asymmetric events are differently involved in that event, adopting mutually dependent but converse roles in a single activity. These distinct roles of the participants are made prominent by their encoding as separate arguments (subject and object), unlike in co-participation clauses where the different roles the participants play are obscured by their representation as part of an unindividuated subject argument.

4.2.4. *Pluractional*

Event is internally composed of multiple subevents.

Following Newman (1990), I use the term “pluractional” to label semantic plurality of the event encoded by the verb. The pluractional use of the Thaa Yorre reciprocal suffix is illustrated by example (22), repeated here:

- (22’) *ngamp yiirryirram nhanganul kunanpun-rr-nan*
 1PL.INCL.NOM each 3SG.REFL report-RECP-GO&.NPST
nhangun
 3SG.DAT

‘We each will give an account of ourselves to Him.’ (Hall 1972:392)

The event encoded by (22) involves distribution over both participants and subevents. The multiple participants are encoded by the plural pronoun, while the multiple events of reporting are encoded by the pluractional use of reciprocal marking on the verb. The fact that the participants are reporting on themselves

rather than each other (as the reciprocal morphology would suggest), is made clear by the inclusion of the reflexive pronoun. It is particularly interesting that the singular form of the reflexive pronoun is used in (22), in conjunction with the adverb *yiirryirram* ‘each’ (or ‘severally’) to refer to a plural number of Actors. A more accurate translation of this clause, then, would be something like ‘we will each of us report on himself to Him’, the individuation of each member of the subject group by the singular reflexive pronoun and *yiirryirram* ‘each’ reinforcing the multiplicity of events marked by *-rr*.

It should be noted that similar (iterative and durative) aspectual categories are marked by reflexive/reciprocal morphology in other Australian languages (see Gaby 2001 for further discussion).

4.3. *-e* ‘REFL’ and associated senses

The reflexive suffix spans five distinct senses. The first, “core reflexive” sense can be characterized as follows:

4.3.1. *Core reflexive*

Inwardly directed action, (each) single participant is both Actor and Undergoer.

This sense is intended to include cases in which (each) participant acts upon themselves as a whole, as exemplified by (2) and (11) above. As discussed in Section 2.2, events in which a participant acts upon a part of themselves – rather than their whole self – are constructionally distinguished from the core reflexive (these “partitive object” reflexives are discussed further under Section 4.3.2). Clauses like (9) – repeated below – are classified as examples of the core reflexive, even though it is reasonable to assume that the dog is biting a subpart of itself (e.g. its leg) rather than itself as a whole.

- (9) *kuta ngith pathath-e-ø*
 dog.NOM. DEM.DIST bite.RDP-REFL-NPST
 ‘That dog is biting himself.’

Crucially, though, the event described in (9) is depicted by the speaker as affecting the whole dog as Undergoer. If they had instead specified the leg as the target of biting, the clause would have been classified as an example of the partitive object reflexive sense.

4.3.2. *Partitive object*

Inwardly directed action, (each) Undergoer is a subpart of the Actor that acts upon it.

The actions of Whole on Part are semantically distinguished from the core reflexive sense and labelled “partitive object” by Geniušienė (1987) and, following her, Gaby (2001). Example (36) illustrates the Thaayorre partitive object construction, wherein Actor Whole and Undergoer Part are encoded as distinct arguments (subject and object respectively) in a standard transitive clause. The inclusion of the direct object’s reference within that of the subject is signalled only by the reflexive morpheme suffixed to the verb.

- (36) *ngay muth rint-e-ø*
 ISG.ERG back.of.neck.ACC cook-REFL-NPST
 ‘I’m warming my neck (to get rid of a bad dream).’

4.3.3. *Collective reflexive*

Activity carried out internally to the subject group, at least one member of which is both Actor and Undergoer.

The third sense with which the reflexive suffix is used, I term “collective reflexive”.⁹ Here, two or more participants are engaged in an activity, but their respective roles are underspecified. Whilst this use of the reflexive suffix entails that both Actor and Undergoer roles are ascribed to the group of participants encoded as subject (as is also true of many of the senses associated with *-rr* ‘RECP’), it also entails that at least one of these participants is both Actor and Undergoer of a single subevent. This can be illustrated by example (20), which was used above to illustrate the core reflexive sense. However, the same Thaayorre utterance can also be used in the description of a collective reflexive event, and as such is repeated here:

- (20’) *ngali muul-thurr werk-e-r*
 IDU.EXCL.NOM/ERG white.ochre-ERG rub-RECP-PST.PFV
 ‘We two painted each other with white ochre.’

⁹ In earlier versions of this paper, as elsewhere, I applied the term “group reflexive” to this sense. However, given its similarity to the collective reflexive construction discussed by Gast and Haas (this volume), I have chosen to re-label this sense in the interests of terminological consistency.

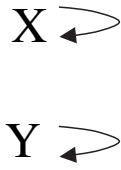


Figure 3.

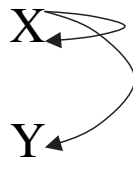


Figure 4a.

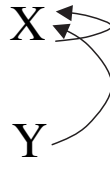


Figure 4b.

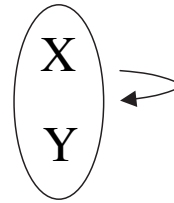


Figure 5.

A strictly core reflexive interpretation of (20) would entail that each participant paints himself with white ochre (as diagrammatically represented in Figure 3). However, the same clause could be interpreted as collective reflexive, describing an event in which a single person paints both himself and a second person (Figure 4a) or – equally felicitously – an event where a single person is painted *by* both themselves and a second person (Figure 4b). It is interesting to note that these latter, collective reflexive senses are better rendered by the English reciprocal construction (as in the translation of [20']) than by the reflexive.

The principal difference between the collective reflexive and a core reflexive clause with plural subject, can be summarized as whether reflexivity is applied to the subject group as a whole (collective reflexive; Figure 5), or to each individual within the subject group (core reflexive, Figure 3). The collective reflexive sense, as schematized in Figure 5, is in fact vague as to the exact relations that may hold between individuals within the subject group. Taking a group of two participants, for example, it is possible that each member of the group both acts and is acted upon (as in the core reflexive, Figure 3), or that just one member acts upon both themselves and the other member (Figure 4a), or that both members act upon just one member of the group (Figure 4b). The number of possible subrelations of course expands geometrically with any increase in the number of group members. Reflexivity thus applied to an entire group, without specifying the exact relationships that hold between members of that group, may well prove a bridging context for the extension of reflexive constructions to encode the reciprocal category, or the reverse (cf. also Heine and Miyashita this volume).

Kuuk Thaayorre is not novel in extending its reflexive construction to encode this collective reflexive category. Gast and Haas (this volume) document numerous examples of collective reflexivity in Germanic and Romance languages, wherein a reflexive relation holds for an entire group, rather than for an individual. This also helps to explain the reflexive coding of examples (4) and (28) above (and revisited under Section 5). In both these examples, two different roles are assigned by the reflexive-marked verb to the non-singular subject. Unlike a core reflexive clause, however, these two roles are not attributed to

each of the participants involved. Rather, there is some vagueness as to which participant plays which role.

There is also some similarity between collective reflexivity and co-participation, as defined by Creissels and Nouguier-Voisin (this volume, cf. Section 4.2.2 above). Both of these event types involve a plurality of participants engaged in an event with at least two roles, without assigning particular roles to individuals.

These notions of “collective reflexivity” and “co-participation” will contribute below to an account of why the seemingly symmetric events discussed in Section 3.2 are encoded by the reflexive construction.

4.3.4. *Medio-passive*

Focus on Undergoer; Actor backgrounded.

The fourth function of *-e* is to background the Actor participant in order to focus attention on the Undergoer. This is labelled “medio-passive” (following Geniušienė 1987), and is illustrated by the following example:

- (37) (*pam kuthirr pilun yongkerr nhangun Jesusak thurma*)
 ‘Two men were hanging [crucified] on either side of Jesus.’
nhul Jesus werngka yongk-e-nham
 3SG.NOM Jesus.NOM middle hang-REFL-PST.IPFV
 ‘Jesus was hanging in the middle.’ (Hall 1972:137)

The hearer should infer from (37) that an external Actor was responsible for the hanging (as Jesus is unlikely to have hung himself), but that the identity of this Actor is insignificant in comparison to the affect on the Undergoer.

4.3.5. *Deagentive*

(Elided) Effector is non-existent or irrelevant, focus on the impact on Undergoer.

Related to the medio-passive, is the deagentive use of the reflexive suffix. Here again, the Undergoer is made prominent at the expense of the Actor. The deagentive sense, however, does not imply the existence of an agentive Actor that is simply too unimportant to be represented as subject. Instead, the effect on the Undergoer is likely either to have been caused by some inanimate Force, or to have spontaneously/accidentally occurred without the involvement of any external Actor or Force, as in (38):

- (38) *minh ith kirk-an runc-e-r*
 meat.NOM DEM.DIST spear-LOC collide-REFL-PST.PFV
 ‘Wallaby got speared [by colliding with a spear leaning on a rock].’

5. Distinguishing *-rr* from *-e*; revisited

There is significant overlap between the core semantics of the reciprocal and reflexive morphemes. Both describe events in which each participant both acts and is acted upon, and accordingly in both the event primarily impacts upon the participant encoded as subject. What distinguishes them, then, is the fact that each participant encoded as reflexive subject is both Actor and Undergoer of the same subevent, whereas reciprocal subject participants are Actors and Undergoers of different subevents (cf. also Maslova this volume).

The kinds of non-core functions associated with both reciprocal and reflexive morphology tend to involve underspecification of the role-to-participant mapping. They differ in emphasis, however. The employment of the reflexive suffix in the description of accidental events, for instance, can be associated with the more general phenomenon of Actor-backgrounding seen in the medio-passive and deagentive senses (Section 4.3–4.4). Reciprocal morphology instead emphasizes the plurality of subevents and relations between participants.

Having more precisely characterized the senses with which the various reflexive and reciprocal morphemes are used, we may now return to the seemingly problematic examples encountered in Section 3. To begin with, the following were given in Section 3.1 as illustrations of inwardly directed events marked by the reciprocal suffix *-rr*:

- (3’) *pam thono tup ko’o-rr-r nhanganul watp*
 man one.NOM IDPH spear-RECP-PST.PFV 3SG.REFL dead
 ‘One man speared himself dead, whack!’ (Hall 1972:137)
- (21’) *paanth-u thamr nhanganul thiik-rr-r*
 woman-ERG foot.ACC 3SG.REFL break-RECP-PST.PFV
 ‘The woman broke her own feet.’
- (24’) *ngay ngathaney mungk-an-rr-r merrethen*
 1SG.ERG 1SG.REFL consume-CAUS-RECP-PST medicine.ACC
 ‘I made myself swallow the medicine.’ (Hall 1972:392)

As noted earlier in this section, reflexive coding can be used to de-emphasize the Actor and/or agentivity. This is inappropriate for these three clauses, which all focus on a highly agentive subject. Example (21) describes the highly un-

usual event of a woman deliberately taking her feet in her hands and breaking them. The more usual scenario of a woman breaking her foot accidentally (e.g. by treading on uneven ground or dropping something heavy on it) would be described either by a reflexive construction (with deagentive sense) or by the intransitive verb *rumparr* ‘break’. The highly marked nature of the scene described, then, is matched by the employ of a marked construction; the reciprocal suffix (linking both Actor and Undergoer roles to the subject) plus reflexive pronoun (entailing that the subject is affected by her own action). The dual use of reciprocal suffix and reflexive pronoun emphasize the agentivity of the participant that is simultaneously Actor and Undergoer, in a situation where an external agent would be expected. Example (24) similarly describes a scene in which the addressee is likely to expect an agent other than the one referred to by the subject pronoun. To describe a typical scene of medicine-taking, the base transitive verb *mungk* ‘eat/drink’ would most likely be used. The expression of force – by means of the causative suffix *-an* – suggests that another participant caused the speaker/subject to ingest the medicine. The fact that in (24) it is the speaker who is (agentively) acting upon himself is thus pragmatically marked, and this is once again signalled by the use of the reciprocal suffix (marking the highly agentive subject that contrasts with the expected agent) coupled with the reflexive pronoun (entailing that it is the speaker who is affected by his own action).

The coupling of reciprocal suffix and reflexive pronoun is also evident in (23) and (22):

(23') *nhunt riiran nhangkanunt kaar=p kunk*
 2SG.NOM alone 2SG.REFL NEG=FOC alive
than-an-rr-nancnh
 stand-CAUS-RECP-GO&.SBJV
 ‘You can’t rescue yourself all alone.’ (Hall 1972:392)

(22') *ngamp yirryirram nhanganul kunanpun-rr-nan*
 1PL.INCL.NOM each 3SG.REFL report-RECP-GO&.NPST
nhangun
 3SG.DAT
 ‘We each will give an account of ourselves to Him.’ (Hall 1972:392)

Like (21) and (24), the reciprocal suffix appears to mark the subject referent of (23) as an unlikely agent. This makes sense, since the very purpose of (23) is to declare the impossibility of coreferent rescuer and rescuee.

It is less clear, however, that the subject referents of (22) are unlikely agents.¹⁰ Instead, the reciprocal suffix here seems to be operating with its pluractional sense, as was discussed in Section 4.2.4.

The final example given in Section 3.1, is most similar to the asymmetric sense of the reciprocal suffix:

- (25') *nhunt koorkorr thaat pirk-rr-ø ngathun*
 2SG.NOM behind.RDP WIDE push-RECP-IMP 1SG.DAT
 'Move to one side for me.'

The addressee is, by means of this utterance, asked to move himself with regard to another participant (the speaker). His (requested) action is thus defined with respect to the spatial relationship between the two participants, and carried out to the potential benefit of the speaker. So, although the physicality of the movement is restricted to a single individual, and only that individual is encoded as subject, (25) encodes this movement as a change in the relationship between participants, brought about by an action that is taken with respect to the mutual orientation of these participants. The converse position of the speaker (represented as an oblique object *ngathun* 'for me'), is entailed by the respective position of the addressee. It is this converse relationship that is marked by the reciprocal suffix.

Example (4) was presented in Section 3.2 as an example of reflexive morphology marking a symmetric event:

- (4') *pul runc-e-r*
 2DU.NOM collide-REFL-PST
 'They two collided with one other.'

This example combines features of both the collective reflexive and medio-passive senses of *-e*. What these have in common, is the lack of specificity with which the Actor is identified (i.e. Actor-backgrounding). Like collective reflexive events, (4) describes a scene in which one member of the subject group is responsible for an action that affects both members (i.e. causes a collision by walking into the second participant). Like a medio-passive clause, there is no attribution of blame: the focus in (4) is not on the cause of the event, but rather on its effect on the two participants encoded as subject. There is therefore no distinguishing of the individual roles played by participants, and the event is implied to be accidental.

¹⁰ The only feature of the event described in (22) that would make the subject participants unlikely agents, is the fact that "reporting" is most usually an other-directed activity (especially in the missionary context of utterance).

In (26), too, the reflexive morpheme marks the event as being carried out internally to the subject group, implying that the precise assignation of roles to participants within that group is of little importance:

- (26') *pul kuthirr mi'im-r mut_thongkan*
 3DU.ERG story.ACC tell-PST.PFV back.NOM/ACC
reerek-e-ø
 give.RDP-REFL-NPST
 'They two were telling stories standing back to back.'
 ('They give one another their back.')

Both examples of reflexive-marked symmetric events share a focus on an event that occurs between two individuals (and which is dependent on their mutual involvement), without distinguishing the respective contributions of the individuals to the event.

The employment of *-e* to mark apparently symmetric events appears to be favoured where three conditions are met: (a) the occurrence of the event depends on each of the participants playing a particular role; (b) there is a blurring of the individual roles played by participants; and (c) there is close contact between the participants. The fulfilment of these three conditions can be seen in example (27):

- (27') *pul mut-u thaa.yooyongk-e*
 3DU.NOM/ERG back-DAT lean.RDP-REFL
 'They are leaning (on each other) back to back.'

If either of the participants was not leaning in the appropriate direction, they would not be able to support each other as described (satisfying condition [a]); there is no distinction made between the roles played by the two participants (condition [b]); and the close physical contact between them (as their backs are touching) satisfies condition (c).

Similarly, the event described by (28) is dependent on the mutual cooperation of participants (both delousers and delousees), the description is vague as to who is removing lice from whom, and there is close physical contact:

- (28') *peln korpn nhaanhath-e-ø*
 3DU.ERG louse.ACC look.RDP-REFL-NPST
 'They are checking (each other) for lice.'

Example (29) is slightly different. There is still an emphasis on mutual involvement and close contact, but the blurring of roles is less significant than for (28):

- (29') *pul* *nhaanhath-e-ø*
 3DU.NOM look.RDP-REFL-NPST
 'They are looking (into) each other('s eyes).'
- (39) *pul* *meer-e* *nhaath-rr-r*
 3DU.NOM/ERG eye-ERG look-RECP-PST.PFV
 'They looked at each other (one after the other).'

If we compare (29) to a reciprocal clause like (39), the crucial difference is the fact that in (29) the two participants look into each other's eyes. This is significant for two reasons. Firstly, making eye contact is dependent upon the mutual cooperation of participants, who must both look in the right place at the right time (condition [a]). Secondly, although they are not in close physical contact, sustaining eye contact over a period of time is quite an intimate act (especially in Thaayorre culture, which favours the avoidance of eye contact in most contexts). The condition of "close contact" is thus also satisfied.

We might ask ourselves how the three conditions proposed here relate to the reflexive coding of a symmetric event. I propose the following hypothesis: these conditions (mutual involvement; blurring of roles; close contact) favour a perspective from which the (plural) participants are viewed as a single homogeneous set, rather than being individualized. This, then, relates back to the "collective reflexive" sense, in which the actions of the participant group as a whole are directed back upon that participant group. In Section 4.3.3, it was suggested that the collective reflexive could be schematized as follows:

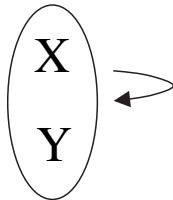


Figure 5.

In light of examples such as (4) and (26)-(29), we might extend this characterization of "group reflexivity" to include cases in which participants act only upon each other (traditionally conceived "reciprocal" events), as follows:

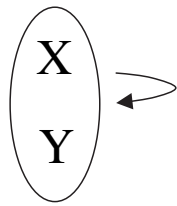


Figure 6a.

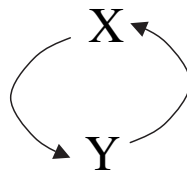


Figure 6b.

6. Conclusions

Events traditionally categorized as “reflexive” or “reciprocal” are in Kuuk Thaayorre encoded by two Thaayorre suffixes: the first of which may be used to describe core reciprocal events, but also some inwardly directed events; while the second may be used to describe core reflexive events, but also some symmetric events. This paper has looked beyond the standard glosses “reciprocal” and “reflexive” in order to more precisely identify the semantic composition of the morphemes involved. Detailing the specific “subsenses” encoded by these morphemes (each of which extends into the grey area between the core reflexive and core reciprocal) accounts for apparently anomalous uses of reflexive and reciprocal morphology. But with these myriad event types encoded by just two morphemes, how is the addressee to correctly infer the nature of an event so described? In addition to context (e.g. preceding discourse, background knowledge), a number of morphosyntactic cues reduce or eradicate ambiguity. To begin with, the presence of a reflexive pronoun entails an inwardly directed interpretation, regardless of verbal marking. Hence examples (3) and (22)–(24) in Section 3.1 could not be misinterpreted as describing symmetric events, despite their being marked by the reciprocal suffix.

Reflexive-marked clauses with a singular subject unambiguously describe inwardly directed events, while reciprocal-marked clauses with a singular subject must have an asymmetric interpretation. There is also a strong tendency for reflexive-marked clauses with a dual number subject to describe the mutual, intimate, within-group events discussed under Section 5.

The picture painted here is of a set of interlinked semantic categories that operate across a broader “reflexoid” domain. The grammaticalization of a single morpheme, expanding from a more restricted functional range (e.g. core reflexive alone) to a much broader one (e.g. as a “middle marker” in Kemmer’s 1993 sense), has been well-documented (see, e.g., Geniušienė 1987, Kemmer 1993, Heine and Reh 1984, Lichtenberk 1985, Gaby 2001). What is particularly in-

teresting about the Thaayorre case, then, is its providing us with a rare snapshot of bi-directional semantic extension in this domain. Two distinct morphemes, one encoding the core reciprocal and one the core reflexive, are simultaneously expanding their functional ranges to include more and more semantic categories in the “grey area” between their two poles. Speakers describing events that fall within this grey area (e.g. a highly agentive subject performing an inwardly directed action, or two participants co-contributing to an intimate symmetric event in which their respective roles are unimportant) can choose between the two morphemes according to which features of the event they wish to emphasize. On the one hand, there is a strong (and conservative) association between the reflexive suffix and inwardly directed events, and between the reciprocal suffix and symmetric events. On the other hand, the reciprocal morpheme has come to be associated with plurality of subevents and relations, whilst the reflexive morpheme has come to be associated with the lowering and/or de-emphasizing of agentivity, and the depiction of the subject participant group as a single entity. The polysemy of these two morphemes (coupled with their combinatoric potential with other constructional elements, such as the reflexive pronouns) thus affords the Thaayorre speaker considerable freedom and descriptive subtlety in representing symmetric and inwardly directed events.

These Thaayorre data highlight the danger of applying a simple label to a grammatical or semantic category without articulating its precise functional range. They are thus pertinent to both descriptions of other languages and typological studies of these and other domains, supporting the substantialist approach taken by Dahl (1985), Bybee (1988) and others. The boundaries around categories such as the reciprocal and reflexive are neither typologically universal nor diachronically stable; an event-type coded by the reflexive morpheme of one language may be described by a reciprocal construction in another language. The terms “reciprocal” and “reflexive” must therefore be empirically defined according to language-internal criteria if they are to yield germane results.

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