

The binding properties and distribution of long-distance reflexives in Latin

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Latin makes frequent use of long-distance reflexives (LDRs), that is, reflexive pronouns in a subordinate clause that are bound by an antecedent in a superordinate clause. In this talk I will explore the binding properties and distribution of Latin LDRs, based on data collection from the classical Latin subcorpora of the PROIEL corpus. The findings from this corpus study are supplemented by examples cited in the grammatical literature. I will focus primarily on the personal reflexive *se*.

The most common environment for LDRs in Latin is complement clauses to speech or thought predicates, as in (1 a). Such complements are normally either accusatives-with-infinitives or subjunctive clauses. However LDRs may also occur in other clause types, such as the indicative relative clause in (1 b):

- (1) (a) *Ubi_i ... magnopere orabant [ut sibi_i auxilium ferret].*
Ubi_i.nom greatly entreated.ind that refl.dat help.acc brought.subj
'The Ubi_i (a tribe) entreated with insistence that he should bring them help.'
(Caes. B.G. 4.16.5)
- (b) *Epaminondas_i ... ei [qui sibi_i ex lege praetor*
Epaminondas.nom him-dat who-nom refl.dat from law-abl praetor-nom
successerat] exercitum non tradidit.
succeeded.pluperf.ind army-acc not transfered.ind
'Epaminondas did not transfer the army to the one who had succeeded him as a
praetor according to the law.' (Cic. inv. 1.55)

Benedicto 1991 analyzes Latin long-distance reflexivity as a case of syntactic binding, drawing on the same syntactic mechanisms as are used for local binding of reflexives. Unlike the standard accounts in Latin grammars, she does not make reference to mood or to reported speech, and she can therefore give a unified analysis of examples such as (1 a) and (1 b). However, her analysis makes predictions concerning both the distribution and the binding properties of LDRs which are not borne out in the data I have collected.

Firstly, her analysis predicts that LDRs do not occur in clauses directly adjoined to the verb of the clause containing the antecedent, only in complement clauses or adjuncts to nominal or clausal complements. In my data collection from the PROIEL corpus, there are indeed examples of LDRs in adverbial clauses adjoined to the verb of the antecedent's clause, such as the one given in (2). In this sentence an LDR occurs in a conditional clause within a purpose clause. The antecedent is Caesar, the unpronounced subject of both the matrix clause and the purpose clause. Examples from the grammatical literature confirm that LDRs can in fact occur in a quite wide range of non-complement positions.

- (2) *... castella communit, [quo facilius, [si se invito*
strongholds.acc fortify.ind.sg so that more easily if refl.abl unwilling.abl
transire conentur], prohibere possit].
cross-over.inf try.subj.pl prevent.inf can.subj.sg
'[Caesar] fortifies the strongholds, so that he can more easily prevent them if they try to
cross over against his will.' (Caes. B.G. 1.8.2)

Secondly, Benedicto claims that the antecedent of an LDR is either an agentive subject or, when such a subject is lacking, a thematically prominent argument or a topicalized constituent. I will show that thematic prominence and topicalization cannot account for all examples of LDRs with non-subject antecedents. In (3) (an example from Kühner & Stegmann 1914, 609) the antecedent of the LDR is deeply embedded in another constituent:

- (3) *Elogium recitasti de testamento Cn. Egnati patris; ...*
 clause.acc recited.2p from testament.abl Gnaius.gen Egnatus.gen father.gen
[idcirco se; exheredasse filium]
 therefore refl.acc disinherit.perf.inf son.acc

‘You read a clause from the testament of the father of Gnaius Egnatus [which said] that he therefore had disinherited his son’ (Cic. Clu. 135)

There do not seem to me to be any syntactic restrictions on antecedents for LDR.

Non-subject antecedents to LDRs do pattern together in other respects, however: LDRs in complements to speech and thought predicates typically have non-subject antecedents when the subject of the speech or thought predicate is not the actual originator of the thought or discourse expressed, e.g. when a message is conveyed on behalf of someone else, as in (3), or in the case of a passivized speech verb. On the basis of these facts, I argue that Latin LDRs are a special kind of indexical pronouns with a semantics close to *logophors*. Logophors are pronouns which occur in reported contexts, i.e. in clauses expressing the thought or discourse of someone other than the external speaker, and which refer to the originator of the reported discourse or thought. Some languages have special pronouns for this purpose, but cross-linguistically it is quite common to use the reflexive pronoun (Clements 1975, Schlenker 2003). A logophor will often be subject-oriented, as the originator of the reported discourse or thought typically is a superordinate subject. However, non-subject antecedents are expected to occur when a speech verb is passivized or when a message is conveyed on behalf of someone else.

The logophoricity hypothesis also captures the distribution of LDRs to a large extent: Complements of speech and thought predicates constitute by far the most frequent environment for LDRs, and LDRs also occur in relative clauses and adverbial clauses which, in some sense, express someone’s thought, such as the purpose clause in (2). Such clauses normally have subjunctive mood. However, not all examples are equally easy to account for: LDRs also occur in clauses which do not have a reported interpretation, e.g. in the indicative relative clause in (2), although such examples are quite rare. While my data is too limited to make strong claims, I tentatively suggest that non-reported clauses containing LDRs express *empathy*, the external speaker’s identification with a sentence-internal protagonist, a suggestion partly inspired by Bertocchi 1994. LDRs in this environment refer to the protagonist whose perspective the external speaker adopts. Empathy-oriented LDRs would not be a quirk of Latin: This phenomenon is also attested in Japanese (c.f. Oshima 2007). If my suggestion can be shown to be correct, the behavior of Latin LDRs will be interesting also in a cross-linguistic perspective.

References

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