



Icelandic long distance reflexives revisited

Learning **about** them and **from** them since 1975

Höskuldur Thráinsson
University of Iceland
hoski@hi.is
<https://uni.hi.is/hoski/>



Long distance reflexives (LDRs)

Preliminary description:

- LDRs are reflexive pronouns finding their antecedents outside of a local domain (typically a clause in some sense).

(1) **Jón_i** segir [að þú hatir **sig_i**]
John says that you hate REFL

Some issues raised by LDRs:

- The LDR-domain
- The antecedent of the LDR
- The nature of the LDR-elements



Outline

1. Introduction and review: Icelandic LDRs 1975
2. Learning about domains
3. Learning about antecedents
4. Learning about the nature of the reflexive elements
5. Concluding remarks



NELS in Montreal 1975

One of the papers:

- Höskuldur Thráinsson: Reflexives and subjunctives in Icelandic (see Höskuldur 1976 and 1990)

The main claim (1990:289, emphasis added here):

- “... that there is **a reflexive rule** in Icelandic that is sensitive to semantic factors, even rather subtle semantic distinctions. Evidence of this sort is of general theoretical interest, since it might contribute to the correct **universal characterization of reflexives**. First, I introduce some basic facts that suggest that there is a **connection between subjunctives and non-clause bounded reflexives** [= LDRs] [...] showing that there are in fact different types of subjunctives in Icelandic. I then show which of these types has a distribution correlated with that of the [LDRs] [...], thereby shedding some light on the question of **which semantic factors govern the use of the [LDRs]** [...] in Icelandic.”

Comments on the “state of the art” 1975

I the fall of 1975:

- **Binding Theory** (Chomsky 1981) had not been proposed.
- Some linguists had written about the relevance of **discourse phenomena** like “point of view” for “reflexivization” (e.g. Kuno 1972, 1975) but technical terms like **interfaces** did not occur in the linguistic literature.
- Hagège (1974) had written about **logophoric pronouns** in West African languages but I didn’t know about it. Clements (1975) had also written about the logophoric pronoun in Ewe and its role in discourse, but he hadn’t told me about it.
- **LDRs had been reported and described for other languages**, including Japanese (e.g. Kuno 1972, 1975), Latin (e.g. Kühner and Stegmann 1955) and Italian (e.g. Napoli, unpublished paper 1974 that I didn’t know of).
- Nothing had been written about the **syntax of Icelandic reflexives** except for some remarks in handbooks (e.g. Jakob Jóh. Smári 1920:134, Stefán Einarsson 1945:124, who both mention the relationship between long distance reflexives and the subjunctive, but also talk about ‘confusion’ and ‘variation’).

The domains of the LDR 1976

- There are (at least) three types of subjunctives:
 - In **complement clauses of “non-factive” verbs** like *segja* ‘say’, *halda* ‘believe’, *vilja* ‘want’:
 - (1) Jón **segir** [að tveir plús tveir **séu/*eru** fjórir]
John says that two plus two be.SBJV/*IND four
‘John says that two plus two is four.’
 - In **counterfactual conditionals**:
 - (2) Jón **væri** glaður [ef María **væri** hér]
John were.PST.SBJV glad if Mary were.PST.SBJV here
‘John would be glad if Mary were here.’
 - In **certain adverbial clauses**, e.g. conditional clauses w. *nema* ‘unless’ and concessive clauses w. *þótt* ‘although’:
 - (3) Jón kemur ekki [**nema/þótt** María **komi**]
John comes not [unless/although Mary come.SBJV



Domains 1976 ...

- LDRs occur in the tensed **subjunctive complements** of verbs like *segja* ‘say’, *halda* ‘believe’, *vilja* ‘want’:

(1) **Jón**_i segir [að María **elski** **sig**_i]
John says that Mary love.SBJV REFL

- LDRs are unacceptable in the tensed **indicative complements** of “(semi-)factive” verbs like *vita* ‘know’ (more on this below):

(2) ***Jón**_i veit [að María **elskar** **sig**_i]
John knows that Mary loves.IND REFL



Domains 1976 ...

- Counterfactual subjunctives **do not license LDRs:**

(1) **Jón_i væri** glaður [ef María **væri** með ***sér_i/honum_i**]
 John were.PST.SBJV glad if Mary were.PST.SBJV with *REFL/him

- Embedded subjunctives triggered by particular adverbial conjunctions **do not license LDRs:**

(2) **Jón_i kemur ekki** [**nema/pótt** María **bjóði** ***sér_i/honum_i**]
 John comes not [unless/although Mary invite.SBJV *REFL/him



Domains 1976 ...

- **The antecedent** of an LDR in a subjunctive clause can be “**indefinitely far away**”. If the intervening predicates are of the right kind (basically verbs of saying and believing), their subjects can act as antecedents, giving rise to multiple ambiguity:
 - (1) **Jón_i** segir [að **María_j** **telji** [að **Haraldur_k** **vilji**
 John says that Mary believe.SBJV that Harold want.SBJV
 [að Billi **heimsæki** **sig_{i/j/k}**]]
 that Bill visit.SBJV REFL
- **Intervening indicative clauses block LDRs:**
 - (2) **Jón_i** segir [að **María_j** **viti** [að **Haraldur_k** **vill**
 John says that Mary know.SBJV that Harold want.IND
 [að Billi **heimsæki** **sig^{*i/*j/k}**]]
 that Bill visit.SBJV REFL

In (2) only the lowest external subject *Haraldur* is a possible LDR-antecedent (more on this below)



Domains 1976 ...

- The subjunctive triggered by (the non-factive) verbs of saying such as like *segja* ‘say’, *halda* ‘believe’, *vilja* ‘want’ can “trickle down” into lower clauses (“domino effect”). Compare (1) and (2):

(1) a. **Jón_i** **veit** [að María **elskar** ***sig_i/hann_i**]
 John knows.IND that Mary loves.IND *REFL/him

b. Þetta **er** stúlkan [sem **elskar** Jón]
 this is.IND the-girl that loves.IND John

c. **Jón_i** **kemur** [ef María **býður** ***sér_i/honum_i**]
 John comes. IND if Mary invites.IND *REFL/him

- The **domino-effect subjunctives appear to license LDRs:**

(2) a. **Jón_i** segir að hann **viti** [að María **elski** **sig_i**]
 John says that he know.SBJV that Mary love.SBJV REFL

b. **Jón_i** heldur að þetta **sé** stúlkan [sem **elski** **sig_i**]
 John believes that this be.SBJV the-girl that love.SBJV REFL

c. **Jón_i** segir að hann **komi** [ef María **bjóði** **sér_i**]
 John says that he come. SBJV if Mary invite.SBJV REFL



Domains 1976 ...

- When non-licensing subjunctives (e.g. counterfactual adverbial) are embedded under a subjunctive-triggering predicate (verb of saying or believing), they can be interpreted as “domino-effect” subjunctives and then LDRs are licensed:

(1) Embedded counterfactual conditional:

- a. ***Jón_i væri** glaður [ef María **væri** með **sér_i**]
 John were.PST.SBJV glad if Mary were.PST.SBJV with REFL
- b. **Jón_i segir** að hann **væri** glaður [ef María **væri** með **sér_i**]
 John says that he were.PST.SBJV glad if Mary were.PST.SBJV with REFL

(2) Embedded adverbial conditional and concessive clauses:

- a. ***Jón_i** kemur ekki [**nema/pótt** María **bjóði** **sér_i**]
 John comes not [unless/although Mary invite.SBJV REFL
- b. **Jón_i segir** að hann **komi** ekki [**nema/pótt** María **bjóði** **sér_i**]
 John says that he come.SBJV not [unless/although Mary invite.SBJV REFL

The antecedents 1976

- Nothing much said about the nature of the antecedents of LDRs in 1976 (1990), except that the relevant subjunctive clauses in some sense express the “point of view” of the higher subject [hence it is typically human] and not, say, a presupposed fact. An interesting point (cf. 1990:300, 305):

(1) **Jón_i** kemur [**fyrst** María **býður** ***sér_i**/honum_i]
 John comes since Mary invites.IND *REFL/him

(2) a. **Jón_i** segir [að hann **komi** [fyrst María **bjóði** **sér_i**]
 John says that he come.SBJV since Mary invite.sbjv REFL
 b. **Jón_i** segir [að **Haraldur_j** **komi** [fyrst María **bjóði** **sér_{i/*j}**]

Haraldur, the subject of ‘come’, cannot be the antecedent of the LDR *sér*. Only *Jón*, the (more distant) subject of ‘say’, can. *Haraldur*’s point of view is not reflected by the subjunctive in the adverbial clause.



The reflexive pronoun

- When LDRs are licensed, they are not “obligatory”, i.e. they are not in a complementary distribution with personal pronouns with the same index (although preferences may vary – and the semantics):

(1) **Jón_i** telur [að María **elski sig_i**/hann_i]
 John believes that Mary love.SBJV REFL/him

A subtle meaning difference is brought out in contexts like the following that strongly favor a bound variable-type (and *de se*) interpretation of the LDR:

(2) a. **Aðeins Jón_i** telur [að María **elski sig_i**]
 only John believes that Mary love.SBJV REFL

Prominent reading: John is the only one who believes: “Mary loves me.”

(3) b. (?)**Aðeins Jón_i** telur [að María **elski hann_i**]
 only John believes that Mary love.SBJV him

Prominent reading: John_i is the only one who believes: “Mary loves John_i” (“accidental coreference” as it were, cf. Höskuldur 2007:468n).





Interim summary

Main points of the 1976 (1990) paper:

- LDRs occur in subjunctive complements.
- Only a certain type of subjunctives correlate with LRDs
- There is no upper limit on the distance between the LDR and its antecedent.
- Intervening indicatives block LDRs.
- Since the relevant type of subjunctive clauses reflect the higher subjects “point of view”, the subjects are typically human.
- LDRs and personal pronouns with the same index are not in complementary distribution, but there appears to be a subtle semantic difference between them.



So ...

What have we learned **about** the following since 1975 and what have we learned **from** studying these phenomena?

- the domains of LDRs of the Icelandic type
- the possible antecedents of such LDRs
- the nature of the reflexive elements (the LDRs themselves vs. other reflexives)

BT and reflexive elements in Icelandic

Verbs (predicates) seem to fall into three classes w.r.t. the type of reflexive element they take as complement (see e.g. Sigríður Sigurjónsdóttir and Hyams 1992:366–368, Höskuldur 2007:464–465):

- **Inherently reflexive verbs** only take the simplex reflexive:
 - (1) **Jón_i** mismælti **sig_i**/***sjálfan sig_i**/***hann**.
John misspoke REFL/*self REFL/*him
- **Naturally reflexive verbs** ('shave'-type verbs) take a simplex reflexive complement or a non-reflexive complement. The complex reflexive is only OK as a complement if emphatic (contrastive):
 - (2) **Jón_i** rakaði **sig_i**/**SJÁLFAN sig_i**/**hann**.
John shaved REFL/SELF REFL/him
- **Naturally disjoint verbs** ('give'-type verbs) take a complex reflexive complement or a non-reflexive complement. The simplex reflexive sounds very odd:
 - (3) a. **Jón_i** gaf ***sér_i**/**sjálfum sér_i**/**henni** **bók í jólagjöf**.
John gave *REFL/self REFL/her book for Christmas
 - b. **Jón_i** kaus/elskar ***sig_i**/**sjálfan sig_i**/**hana**.
John voted-for/loves *REFL/self REFL/her



Binding and reflexive elements in Icelandic

Two preliminary points:

- The complex reflexive *sjálfan sig* seems to be a well-behaved anaphor that needs to be locally bound, whereas the simplex *sig* does not seem to be so restricted, as we have seen:

(1) **Jón_i** segir [að þú **elskir** **sig_i**/***sjálfan sig_i**]
John says that you love.SBJV REFL/*self REFL

- Note that although *elska* ‘love’ is a naturally disjoint verb, it only takes the complex reflexive as a complement when there is a local binder (as on the preceding slide). When the complement is an LDR it has to be simplex. This holds generally for disjoint verbs, e.g. *kjósa* ‘elect, vote for’:

(2) **Jón_i** heldur [að þú **hafir** kosið **sig_i**/***sjálfan sig_i**]
John believes that you have.SBJV voted-for REFL/*self REFL



Some questions raised by BT

BT raised a number of new questions about LDRs, or helped reformulate and sharpen them, e.g. about

- the domains of LDRs of the Icelandic type
- the possible antecedents (binders?) of such LDRs
- the nature of the reflexive elements (the LDRs themselves and other reflexives)



Learning about the domains

Syntactically definable binding domain of LDRs?

- A possibility: LDRs are actually anaphors in the BT-sense. They just seem to be **bound in an unusually large domain**:

Domain counterexample (cf. Halldór Ármann Sigurðsson 1986, 1990:316, referring to Banfield 1982): No syntactic bounding, no syntactic antecedent visible, hence no syntactic binding:

- (1) **Formaðurinn_i** varð óskaplega reiður. Tillagan **væri** svívirðileg
 the-chairman became furiously angry the-proposal were.PST.SBJV outrageous
 og **væri** henni beint gegn **sér_i** persónulega.
 and were.PST.SBJV it aimed against REFL personally
Sér_i **væri** sama ...
 REFL were.PST.SBJV indifferent



Domains ...

A similar domain counterexample (cf. Halldór 1986, 1990:317):

- (1) María var alltaf svo andstyggileg. Þegar Ólafur **kæmi**
Mary was always so nasty when Olaf came.PST.SBJV
segði hún **sér** áreiðanlega að fara ...
said.PST.SBJV she REFL undoubtedly to leave

In a novel, (1) could be preceded by something like (2) to set the stage and establish the relevant “center of consciousness” (cf. Höskuldur 1991:62):

- (2) Hann; lá einn í myrkrinu og hugsaði. María var ...
he lay alone in the-dark and thought. Mary was ...

So: Icelandic LDRs need not be bound within a syntactically definable domain (or so it seems) – thus they must be different from anaphors.

Domains ...

The role of the subjunctive:

- The relationship is not mechanical – only some subjunctives appear to license LDRs, i.e. those that represent “the thought, speech, and perception of individuals other than the speaker-narrator” (Clements 1975:169 on **logophoricity**). This includes the subjunctive complements of “verbs of saying and believing”.
- Halldór Ármann Sigurðsson’s “I-dialect” (1990:313, I = indicative): LDRs can also occur in **some** indicative complements, e.g. of the (semi-) factive verbs *vita* ‘know’ and *sjá* ‘see, realize’:

(1) **Jón_i** veit /sér [að María **elskar** **sig_i**]
John knows/sees that Mary loves.IND REFL

(1) is * in the (more common) S-dialect (subjunctive dialect), as already noted.



Domains ...

Additional comments on the I-dialect:

- Maling (1984:236, n. 5) **found some informants** who accepted LDRs in the **indicative complement** of *vita* ‘know’ and also **cites such an example** from 19th century novel.
- Jakob Jóh. Smári (1920:135) mentions **a few 19th century examples** of LDRs in **indicative complements** (but calls them ‘wrong’).
- LDRs are apparently not common in Old Icelandic, but there they **occur in indicative complements** as well as subjunctive ones (cf. Eiríkur Rögnvaldsson 2005:613, Halldór Sigurðsson 1990:313).
- The extensive syntactic variation survey IceDiaSyn (Icelandic Dialect Syntax) **confirmed the existence of the “I-dialect”** (or variation w.r.t. the acceptance of LDRs in indicative complements): Over 40% of the subjects accepted an LDR in the complement of *vita* ‘know’ (only a little over 20% of the oldest age group, though – cf. Höskuldur Thráinsson and Strahan 2015:163, 167).



Domains ...

Indicative blocking and the domino effect (Eiríkur Rögnvaldsson 1986:92):

- (1) a. ***Jón_i veit** [að þú **vilt** hitta **sig_i**] (* for speakers of the S-dialect)
John knows that you want.IND meet REFL
- b. **Jón_i vonar** [að þú **viljir** hitta **sig_i**] (OK for all)
John hopes that you want.SBJV meet REFL
- (2) a. ?Ég held [að **Jón_i viti** [að þú **viljir** heimsækja **sig_i**]] (Eiríkur gives ??)
I think that John know.SBJV that you want.SBJV visit REFL
- b. Ég held [að **Jón_i voni** [að þú **viljir** heimsækja **sig_i**]] (better for many)
I think that John hope.SBJV that you want.SBJV visit REFL

For speakers of the S-dialect, the domino-effect makes LDRs in the complement of *vita* ‘know’ passable. For speakers of the I-dialect they are fine either way.



Domains ...

Interim summary about the LDR domains:

- What is important is that the “point of view/perspective ...” of the antecedent be represented in the clause containing the LDR. The **presence of the (right type of) subjunctive is a sufficient signal** of this for all speakers.
- For speakers of the S-dialect the presence of the (right kind of) subjunctive is a **necessary** point-of-view signal. For speakers of the I-dialect the indicative complements of predicates like ‘know, see’ can also be interpreted as representing the relevant point of view.
- For this reason we find an **Indicative Blocking Effect in the S-dialect** but not (or not as clearly at least) in the I-dialect.

Learning about the antecedents

NPs taking clausal “complements”:

Some take subjunctive complements, others indicative complements but can take subjunctive complements following the negation

- | | | | | |
|--------|--------------------|----|------------------------------------|----------|
| (1) a. | [Skoðun Siggu] | er | [að þetta sé / * er | í lagi] |
| | opinion Sigga’s | is | that this be.SBJV/*is.IND | OK |
| b. | [Vandamál Siggu] | er | [að þetta * sé / er | bilað] |
| | problem Sigga’s | is | that this be.SBJV/*is.IND | broken |
| (2) a. | [Vandamál Siggu] | er | ekki [að þetta sé | bilað] |
| | problem Sigga’s | is | not that this be.SBJV | broken |
| b. | [Vandamál Siggu] | er | ekki [að þetta er | bilað] |
| | problem Sigga’s | is | not that this be.IND | broken |

A continuation like “því það er ekki bilað” ‘because it isn’t broken’ creates a contradiction in the case of (2b) but not in the case of (2a): The speaker “takes responsibility” for the truth of the **indicative** complement.

Antecedents ...

Non-c-commanding antecedents of LDRs:

- (1) [*Skoðun* **Siggu_i**] er [að **sig_i** **vanti** hæfileika] (Maling 1984)
opinion Sigga's is that REFL lack.SBJV talent
- (2) a. *[*Vandamál* **Siggu_i**] er [að **sig_i** **vantar** hæfileika]
problem Sigga's is that REFL lack.IND talent
- b. *[*Vandamál* **Siggu_i**] er ekki [að **sig_i** **vanti** hæfileika]
problem Sigga's is not that REFL lack.SBJV talent

Note that although the subjunctive is legitimate in (2b) (cf. above), it does not “license” an LDR.

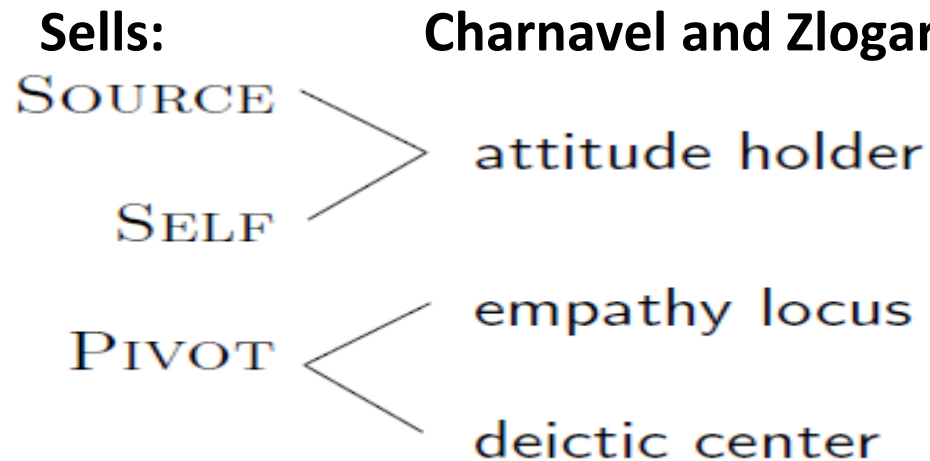
Reason: The complement of *vandamál Siggu* does not represent the **point of view of Sigga as a perspective holder**, not even when it is in the subjunctive, whereas the complement of *skoðun Siggu* in (1) does



Antecedents ...

A brief intermezzo about logophoricity:

- Halldór Ármann Sigurðsson (1986/1990):
The speaker is the “primary ego” of an utterance (narration). LDRs reflect a “secondary ego’s” point of view (a third person SELF).
- Sells (1987) and Charnavel and Zlogar (2016:86):
Logophoricity can be divided into three subtypes:



These subtypes figure differently in different languages – and even between dialects/idolects of the same language.



Antecedents ...

Icelandic *sig* can also behave as a local anaphor, taking a c-commanding antecedent that does not have to be animate and logophoricity doesn't come into play (see e.g. Sigríður and Hyams 1992:366–368, Eiríkur 1986, Höskuldur 2005:539):

- (1) a. **Jón_i** rakaði **sig_i**
 John shaved REFL
- b. **Petta vandamál_i** minnir stöðugt á **sig_i**.
 this problem reminds (us) constantly of REFL
- c. [**Skoðun Sigg_i**]_j minnir stöðugt á **sig^{*i/j}**]
 opinion Sigga's reminds (us) constantly of REFL

So what does this mean? Why do reflexives inside infinitival complements and even tensed (e.g. subjunctive) complements appear to be exempt from the binding conditions that hold for identical-looking locally bound reflexives?



Antecedents and LDRs

A proposal (cf. Charnvel and Zlogar 2016, Charnavel and Sportiche (in press) among others):

The apparently “exempt” LDRs are not really exempt from binding condition A. They are in fact locally bound by an invisible operator (or an implied subject in the context of this operator), cf. the following (my emphasis):

- seemingly exempt anaphors are [e.g. in English], in fact, not exempt, but locally bound by silent logophoric operators; that’s why they have the **same form as plain anaphors standardly subject to Condition A** (Charnavel and Zlogar 2015:83).



Antecedents and LDRs

- The appearance of long distance binding and exemption from BT Condition A comes from the presence of intermediate silent logophoric operators that function as (or introduce/license) local binders (Charnavel and Sportiche, in press).
- [More specifically]:
The subject argument PH (for perspective holder) of OP_{LOG} acts as a local, Condition A compliant, binder for the anaphor, and is coreferential with or bound by the superficial antecedent of this exempt anaphor, as

(32) Krafa **Jóns_k** til okkar er [PH_k [OP_{LOG} að styðja sig_k við þessar aðstæður]].
 request John's to us is to support-INF REFL with these conditions
 'John_k's request from us is to support him_k in this situation.'



Antecedents and LDRs

A comment on the “local logophoric binder” proposal(s):

- Note that the LDRs in Icelandic are always simplex when they “seemingly” have a long distance antecedent (or even a non-visible one), also with verbs (predicates) that require a complex reflexive when there is a visible local binder (the naturally disjoint verbs, cf. above).



Antecedents and LDRs

Systematic alternation of local *sjálfan sig* and long distance *sig* (emphatic *sjálfan sig* omitted).

(1) **Sigmundur_i** kaus ***sig_i/sjálfan sig_i**
Sigmund voted-for *REFL/self REFL

(2) a. **Sigmundur_i** lofaði mér_j [að **PRO_i** **kjósa** ***sig_i/sjálfan sig_i**]
Sigmund promised me to vote-for.INF REFL/self REFL
b. **Sigmundur_i** bað mig_j [að **PRO_j** **kjósa** **sig_i/*sjálfan sig_i**]
Sigmund promised me to vote-for.INF REFL/*self REFL

(3) **Sigmundur_i** fullyrðir [að þú **hafir** kosið **sig_i/*sjálfan sig_i**]
Sigmund claims that you have.SBJV voted-for REFL/*self REFL

So it is actually not the case that long distance anaphors always have “the same form as plain anaphors standardly subject to Condition A” (Charnavel and Zlogar 2015:83).



The reflexive elements

The inventory:

1. The simplex *sig*:
 - a. Locally bound as the complement of **inherently reflexive** verbs
 - b. Locally bound as the complement of **naturally reflexive** ('shave'-type) verbs
 - c. Complement of **all kinds of verbs in long distance contexts**

2. The complex *sjálfan sig*:
 - a. Locally bound as the complement of **naturally disjoint** ('give'-type) verbs.
 - b. Possible as the locally bound complement of naturally reflexive verbs when emphatic (contrastive)

Inventory of reflexive elements

- The reflexive possessive *sinn*, can be **locally bound** or function as a **long distance reflexive** (even in subject position):

- (1) a. **María_i** tók bókina **sína_i**/***hennar_i**
Mary took book REFL-POSS/*her.GEN
b. Ég tók bókina ***sína_i**/**hennar_i**
Mary took book *REFL-POSS/her.GEN

- (2) a. **María_i** segir [að bókin **sín_i**/**hennar_i** komi út á morgun]
Mary says that book REFL-POSS/her.GEN come.SBJV out tomorrow
b. **María_i** segir [að ég hafi tekið bókina **sína_i**/**hennar_i**]
Mary says that I have.SBJV taken book REFL-POSS/her.GEN
c. **Aðeins María_i** telur [að ég hafi tekið bókina **sína_i**/**hennar_i**]
only Mary believes that I have.SBJV taken book REFL-POSS/her.GEN
where the reflexive possessive most naturally gives a bound variable reading and the genitive of the personal pronoun an “accidental coreference” reading



The dual role of elements

Two well known sets of facts:

- 1st and 2nd person pronouns can be locally bound in Icelandic. This is so because Icelandic does not have 1st and 2nd person reflexives like English does. Hence 1st and 2nd person pronouns “double” as reflexives (anaphors) in Icelandic but not in English:
 - (1) a. **Ég** rakaði **mig** og **þú** rakaðir **þig** líka.
b. ***I** shaved **me** and **you** shaved **you** too.
- 3rd person possessive pronouns can be locally bound in English. This is so because English does not have reflexive possessive pronouns like Icelandic does. Hence 3rd person possessive pronouns (or genitives) double as reflexive possessives (anaphors) in English but not in Icelandic:
 - (2) a. **John_i** took **his_i** book.
b. ***Jón_i** tók bókina **hans_i**.

The dual role of elements

More examples of a dual role (ambiguities, underspecification ...)

- 3rd person nominative pronouns (*hann* ‘he’, *hún* ‘she’ ...) do not have nominative reflexive counterparts. Hence they can double as reflexives, e.g. long distance (cf. also Thórhallur, Anton and Einar 2016, Anton, Einar and Thórhallur 2016:74):

(1)a. **María_i** segir [að **hún_i** **hafi** lesið bókina]
Mary says that she.REFL/NON-REFL have.SBJV read the-book

b. **María_i** segir [að Jóni **leiðist** **hún_i**]
Mary says that John.DAT be-bored-by.SBJV she.REFL/NON-REFL

(2) a. **Aðeins María_i** segir [að **hún_i** **hafi** lesið bókina]
only Mary says that she.REFL/NON-REFL have.SBJV read the-book

b. **Aðeins María_i** segir [að Jóni **leiðist** **hún_i**]
only Mary says that John.DAT is-bored-by.SBJV she.NOM.REFL/NON-REFL

Bound variable reading easy to get in (2) = an argument for NOM *hún* as a REFL



The reflexive elements

A popular claim (e.g. Faltz 1977, Pica 1987, Reuland and Koster 1991):

Long distance reflexives are typically **simplex** and **not complex**:

- Icelandic *sig* vs. *sjálfan sig* Dutch *zich* vs. *zichself*,
- Italian *se* vs. *se stesso* Chinese *ziji* vs. *taziji*,
- Japanese *zibun* vs. *zibun-zisin* Korean *caki* vs. *caki-casin*
- Norwegian *seg* vs. *seg selv* etc.

(1) **Zhangsan_i** renwei [Lisi_j hai-le **ziji_{i/j}** / **taziji_{*i/j}**] Chin
 Zhangsan think Lisi hurt REFL/himself

(2) **Jon_i** bad oss_j [PRO_j snakke om **seg_i** / ***seg selv_i**] Jon asked us talk.INF about REFL/*himself

A revised claim: In a language that has both simplex and complex reflexives, the complex variant typically not function as an LDR. If true, this calls for an explanation.





Reflexive elements

Well known facts:

- The simplex reflexive *sig* in Icelandic is unspecified for gender and number – hence it does not agree with its antecedent:

- (1) a. Strákurinn/stelpan/barnið þvoði **sér**
 the-boy.M/the-girl.F/the-child.N washed REFL
- b. Strákarnir/stelpurnar/börnin þvoðu **sér**
 the-boys.M.PL/the-girls.F.PL/the-children.N.PL washed REFL

- Although the possessive reflexive *sinn* in Icelandic inflects for gender and number, it does not agree with its antecedent but only locally with “the thing owned” :

- (2)a. Strákurinn/stelpan/barnið tók bókina **sína**
 the-boy.M/the-girl.F/the-child.N took the-book REFL POSS
- b. Strákarnir/stelpurnar/börnin tóku bókina **sína**
 the-boys.M.PL/the-girls.F.PL/the-children.N.PL took the-book REFL POSS





The reflexive elements

The complex reflexives, on the other hand, agree with their antecedent in gender and number (the *self*-part does):

- (1) a. Strákurinn elskar **sjálfan** sig
b. Stelpan elskar **sjálfa** sig
c. Barnið elskar **sjálft** sig
the-boy.M/the-girl.F/the-child.N loves self.M/F/N REFL

- (2) a. Strákarnir elska **sjálfa** sig
b. Stelpurnar elska **sjálfar** sig
c. Börnin elska **sjálf** sig
the-boys.M.PL/the-girls.F.PL/the-children.N.PL love self.M/F/N REFL

A question:

- Could this morphological difference between the simplex *sig* and the complex *sjálfan sig* be responsible for their distributional difference?



The reflexive elements

A proposal (for various formal implementations see e.g. Burzio 1991, Reuland 2005, Schäfer 2012 and references cited there):

- There is a close relationship between **binding** and **agreement**. Ordinary binding involves an agreement relation between a c-commanding antecedent and the anaphor.

An additional proposal (cf. Schäfer 2012):

- In the absence of a c-commanding binder, some languages allow a **default agreement rule** to license the anaphor (value the phi-features).



The reflexive elements

A possibility not discussed by Schäfer (2012):

- The Icelandic LDR *sig* and (the possessive reflexive) *sinn* can be licensed by a **default agreement rule** because of their “default” form (default (or no) phi-features).
- The Icelandic complex reflexive *sjálfan sig* (*sjálfa sig*, *sjálft sig* ...) needs to agree with a proper antecedent because it has non-default phi-features.

A prediction:

- Since the complex reflexive *seg selv* in Norwegian is actually invariant in the modern language (shows no agreement with an antecedent anymore), it would not be surprising if it could figure as a LDR, just like the simplex *seg* can.



The reflexive element

Contrast between Norwegian and Icelandic:

- (1) Hun_i har en rutine **hun_i** synes fungerer godt for **seg selv_i** (No)
she has a routine she thinks works well for REFL self
(cf. Lødrup 2009:116)
'She has a routine that she thinks works well for her'

- (2) Hún_i er með rútinu sem **hún_i** telur [að **virki** vel fyrir ***sjálfa sig_i**] (OK **sig_i**)
she has a routine that she thinks that works well for self REFL



The reflexive element

The **reflexive passive** in Icelandic (cf. Halldór Ármann Sigurðsson 1989:355n, Hlíf, Thórhallur and Einar Freyr 2011, Schäfer 2012, Thórhallur, Anton and Einar Freyr 2016):

- Standard assumption: Typically works with inherently reflexive and naturally reflexive verbs, hardly (if at all) with naturally disjoint verbs:

(1) a.	Það	var	leikið	sér	allan	daginn
	there	was	played	REFL	all	day
b.	Það	var	baðað	sig	á	laugardögum
	there	was	bathed	REFL	on	Saturdays
c.	?*Það	var	kosið	sjálfan sig	í	dag.
	there	was	voted-for	self REFL		today





The reflexive element

Schäfer's account (2012:237, 243) of the reflexive passive (informally stated):

- Some languages can formally repair a violation of Principle A via the **Default Agreement Rule** that results in a default valuation of the phi-features. However, the formally repaired structure is acceptable (i.e., easily interpretable) only if the underlying predicate/event is conceptualized as inherently or naturally reflexive.



The reflexive element

Schäfer's argumentation (2012:244):

- With inherently reflexive verbs, it is conceptually clear that the anaphor has to depend semantically on the referent acting as external argument. Naturally reflexive events carry the strong conceptual expectation that the argument position realized by the semantically unbound reflexive pronoun is covalued with the external argument of the same event [...] Naturally disjoint verbs or contexts do not provide any such conceptual clue about how to interpret the variable, and this is the reason, I argue, why they typically do not enter the formation of [reflexive passives].



The reflexive element

A proposal:

- The complex *sjálfan sig* requires a local binder, but the binder need not be visible. It can e.g. be an arbitrary *PRO* or the implicit arbitrary subject (*pro?*) of the New Impersonal/Passive (NIP, cf. Maling and Sigríður Sigurjónsdóttir 2002):

- (1) a. [Að **PRO**_{arb} kjósa **sjálfan sig**] er alveg eðlilegt.
 to vote-for self REFL is completely natural
 ‘To vote for oneself is completely natural.’
- b. %það er **pro** drepið **sjálfan sig**
 there is killed self REFL
 ‘People kill themselves’
 (Hlíf Árnadóttir et al. 2011:48, Thórhallur et al. 2016)

% = only accepted by NIP-speakers





The reflexive element

A proposal, contd.:

- The simplex *sig* and *sinn* do not need a local antecedent. Hence they can occur in long distance contexts without any syntactic binder – and in reflexive passives.

An additional example of a reflexive passive:

- (1) Það var alltaf farið í sparifötin **sín** á sunnudögum.
there was always put on good-clothes REFL POSS on Sundays
'People always put on their good clothes on Sundays.'



Concluding remarks

Some things we have learned **about** Icelandic LDRs since 1975:

- that they can have a non-c-commanding antecedent
- that they do not even need a syntactically visible antecedent
- that the presence of a subjunctive is not a necessary requirement for an LDR for all speakers
- that it is only the simplex reflexives and not the complex ones that can be LDRs in Icelandic



Concluding remarks

Some things we have learned **from** Icelandic and other LDRs (and other reflexives) since 1975:

- We have learned a lot about the limits of Binding Theory
- We have learned about the interaction of discourse and semantics with syntax (point of view, perspective ...)
- We have learned about the the interaction of anaphors and pronominals and the role that the inventory of reflexive elements can play in that respect (ambiguous or underspecified forms ...)
- We have learned that the morphological make-up of reflexives, including their featural specifications, can influence their distribution

References

- Anton Karl Ingason, Einar Freyr Sigurðsson and Thórhallur Eythórsson. 2016. Veik fornöfn í afturbeygðri þolmynd [‘Weak pronouns in the reflexive passive’]. *Íslenskt mál* 38:51–81.
- Banfield, Ann. 1982. *Unspeakable Sentences*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, Boston.
- Burzio, Luigi. 1991. The Morphological Basis of Anaphora. *Journal of Linguistics* 27:81–105.
- Charnavel, Isabelle, and Chrissy Zlogar. 2016. English Reflexive Logophors. *Proceedings of CLS* 51:83–97.
- Charnavel, Isabelle, and Dominique Sportiche (in press). Simplex Yet Local. To appear in NELS 47.
- Chomsky, Noam. 1981. *Lectures on Government and Binding*. Foris, Dordrecht.
- Clements, George N. 1975. The Logophoric Pronoun in Ewe. *Journal of West African Languages* 10:141–177.
- Eiríkur Rögnvaldsson. 1986. Some Comments on Reflexivization in Icelandic. In Lars Hellan and Kirsti Koch Christensen (eds): *Topics in Scandinavian Syntax*, pp. 89–102. Reidel, Dordrecht.



References

- Eiríkur Rögnvaldsson. 2005. Setningafræðilegar breytingar í íslensku [‘Syntactic changes in Icelandic’]. Chapter 5 of Höskuldur Thráinsson 2005: *Setningar*, pp. 602–635. Almenna bókafélagið, Reykjavík.
- Faltz, Leonard M. 1977. *Reflexivization. A Study in Universal Syntax*. Doctoral dissertation, Berkeley. [Published 1985 by Garland, New York.]
- Hagège, Claude. 1974. Les pronoms logophoriques. *Bulletin de la Société de Linguistique de Paris* 69:287–310.
- Halldór Ármann Sigurðsson. 1986. Moods and (Long Distance) Reflexives in Icelandic. *Working Papers in Scandinavian Syntax* 25.
- Halldór Ármann Sigurðsson. 1989. *Verbal Syntax and Case in Icelandic*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Lund, Lund. [Reprinted 1992 by Linguistic Institute, University of Iceland, Reykjavík.]
- Halldór Ármann Sigurðsson. 1990. Long Distance Reflexives and Moods in Icelandic. In Joan Maling and Annie Zaenen (eds): *Modern Icelandic Syntax*, pp. 309–346. *Syntax and Semantics* 24. Academic Press, San Diego. [Slightly revised version of Halldór 1986.]
- Hlíf Árnadóttir, Thórhallur Eythórsson and Einar Freyr Sigurðsson. 2011. The Passive of Reflexive Verbs in Icelandic. *Nordlyd* 37:39–97.



References

- Höskuldur Thráinsson. 1976. Reflexives and Subjunctives in Icelandic. *NELS* 6:225–239.
- Höskuldur Thráinsson. 1990. A Semantic Reflexive in Icelandic. In Joan Maling and Annie Zaenen (eds): *Modern Icelandic Syntax*, pp. 289–307. *Syntax and Semantics* 24. Academic Press, San Diego. [A slightly revised version of Höskuldur 1976.]
- Höskuldur Thráinsson. 1991. Long Distance Reflexives and the Typology of NPs. In Jan Koster and Eric Reuland (eds): *Long Distance Anaphora*, pp. 49–75. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Höskuldur Thráinsson. 1992. A Note on Underspecification and Binding. *Harvard Working Papers in Linguistics* 1:71–90.
- Höskuldur Thráinsson. 2005. *Setningar*. Handbók um setningafræði [‘Sentences. A handbook on Syntax’] Editor and main author Höskuldur Thráinsson, co-authors Eiríkur Rögnvaldsson, Jóhannes Gísli Jónsson, Sigríður Magnúsdóttir, Sigríður Sigurjónsdóttir and Thórunn Blöndal. Íslensk tunga III. Almenna bókafélagið, Reykjavík.
- Höskuldur Thráinsson. 2007. *The Syntax of Icelandic*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.



References

- Höskuldur Thráinsson and Tania Strahan. 2015. Fornöfn [‘Pronouns’]. *Tilbrigði í íslenskri setningagerð. II. Helstu niðurstöður – Tölfræðilegt yfirlit* [‘Variation in Icelandic syntax. I. Main results – a statistical overview’], pp. 155–176. Málvísindastofnun Háskóla Íslands, Reykjavík.
- Jakob Jóh. Smári. 1920. *Íslensk setningafræði*. Bókaverzlun Ársæls Árnasonar, Reykjavík. [Reprinted 1987 by Linguistic Institute, University of Iceland, Reykjavík.]
- Kühner, Raphael, and Carl Stegmann. 1955. *Ausführliche Grammatik der lateinischen Sprache I–II*. Gottschalk, Leverkusen.
- Kuno, Susumu. 1972. Pronominalization, Reflexivization and Direct Discourse. *Linguistic Inquiry* 3:161–195.
- Kuno, Susumu. 1975. Three Perspectives in the Functional Approach to Syntax. *Papers from the Parasession on Functionalism*, pp. 276–336. Chicago Linguistic Society, Chicago.
- Kuno, Susumu. 1987. *Functional Syntax: Anaphora, Discourse and Empathy*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Lødrup, Helge. 2009. Animacy and Long Distance Binding in Norwegian. *Journal of Nordic Linguistics* 32 (1):111–136.



References

- Maling, Joan. 1984. Non-Clause Bounded Reflexives in Modern Icelandic. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 7:211–241. [Slightly revised version of Maling 1982.]
- Maling, Joan, and Sigríður Sigurjónsdóttir. 2002. The New Impersonal Construction in Icelandic. *Journal of Comparative Germanic Linguistics* 5:97–142.
- Napoli, Donna Jo. 1974. Reflexivization Across S in Italian. Paper presented at the winter meeting of the LSA.
- Pica, Pierre. 1987. On the Nature of the Reflexivization Cycle. *NELS* 17:483–499.
- Pollard, Carl, and Ivan A. Sag. 1992. Anaphors and the Scope of Binding Theory. *Linguistic Inquiry* 23:261–303.
- Reuland, Eric. 2005. Agreeing to Bind. In Hans Broekhuis, Norbert Corver, Riny Huybregts, Ursula Kleinhenz and Jan Koster (eds): *Organizing Grammar. Linguistic Studies in Honor of Henk van Riemsdijk*, pp. 505–513. Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin.
- Reuland, Eric, and Jan Koster. 1991. Long-Distance Anaphora: An Overview. In Jan Koster and Eric Reuland (eds): *Long Distance Anaphora*, pp. 1–25. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.



References

- Reuland, Eric, and Sigríður Sigurjónsdóttir. 1997. Long Distance ‘Binding’ in Icelandic: Syntax or Discourse? In Hans Bennis, Pierre Pica and Johan Rooryck (eds): *Atomism and Binding*, pp. 323–340. Foris, Dordrecht.
- Schäfer, Florian. 2012. The Passive of Reflexive Verbs and its Implications for Theories of Binding and Case. *Journal of Comparative Germanic Linguistics* 15:213–268.
- Sells, Peter. 1987. Aspects of Logophoricity. *Linguistic Inquiry* 18:445–481.
- Sigríður Sigurjónsdóttir and Nina Hyams. 1992. Reflexivization and Logophoricity: Evidence from the Acquisition of Icelandic. *Language Acquisition* 2:359–413.
- Stefán Einarsson. 1945. *Icelandic. Grammar. Texts. Glossary*. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.
- Thórhallur Eythórsson, Anton Karl Ingason and Einar Freyr Sigurðsson. 2016. Explicit Realization of Weak Arguments. *NELS* 46 (1):277–286.