

Reflexive possessive

This form aims to gather comparable information about a broad number of languages, since grammars are heterogeneous in their reporting of the feature.

The form consists of sentences to be translated from English into the language of expertise of the informant. It will probably turn out that some specific sentences are not representative of the phenomena under the scrutiny.

I tried to use terminology that is as theory-neutral as possible.

I call "reflexivisation" any situation where two participant roles expressed in a sentence are fulfilled by the same referent. In some systems, reflexivisation may take the form of a valence-reducing operation on predicates. In others, special referring expressions are used in the morphosyntactic locus of one of the two participant roles and signal coreference with another participant role. I call such special expressions "reflexive forms", be they independent pronouns, affixes, or some other kind of expression.

If the language of expertise has a reflexivisation strategy but no reflexive forms, many of the questions will not return useful information.

To represent the coreferential elements, I use subscript letters appended to the relevant word: when two elements are coreferential, they bear the same subscript letter.

For example, in the sentence *Paul_i thinks that he_i is clever*, the letter *i* means that the only possible referent for *he* is *Paul*.

I call a "possessive form" any marker (adjective, bound morpheme, pronoun, article, etc.) referring to a possessor in the broadest sense of the term.

This form has been created to document the constraints on the reflexive possessive in my PhD thesis.

It could be relevant to address the same questions concerning the non-possessive pronouns. For instance, in addition to asking whether the possessive is the same (in object function/position) when referring to the subject or not (sentence 5/6), one can ask whether the pronoun (in object function/position) is the same referring to the subject or not, with sentences like the following:

- (1) Paul_i hurts himself_{i/*j}.
- (2) Paul_i hurts him_{j/*i}.

0. General questions

0.1. Alignment

How would you translate the following sentences?

- (1) Paul eats an apple.
- (2) Paul sleeps.

If these sentences are not representative of the default alignment in the language, feel free to change the problematic lexical item and outline the reasons.

0.2. Article

- (3) Paul eats an apple
- (4) Paul eats the apple.

Is the article mandatory in your language?

0.3. Gender system

How many grammatical genders does your language have?

1. Possession: reflexive and disjoint forms

How would you translate this sentence without using a contrastive/emphatic form of the possessive?

- (5) Paul_i is reading his_i book.
- (6) Paul_i is reading his_j book.

In each sentence (if they are different), what is the morphosyntactic category of the possessive (adjective, genitive pronoun, etc.) ?

2. Morphological features

2.1. Agreement with the possessor

2.1.1. Disjoint possessor	2.1.2. Bound possessor
Does the nonreflexive possessive agree with the possessor in :	Does the reflexive possessive agree with the possessor in :
- Person I read his book vs. I read your book	- Person I _i read my _i book vs he _i reads his _i book
- Gender I read her book vs. I read his book Does it concern all persons?	- Gender Jane _i reads her _i book vs. Paul _i reads his book _i Does it concern all persons?
- Number I read his book vs. I read their book Does it concern all persons?	- Number I _i read my _i book vs. we _i read our _i book Does it concern all persons?

2.2. Agreement with the possessum

2.2.1. Disjoint possessor	2.2.2. Bound possessor
Does the nonreflexive possessive agree with the possessed noun in : <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Gender Fr: mon _[masc] chat _[masc] vs. ma _[fem] souris _[fem]	Does the reflexive possessive agree with the possessed noun in : <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Gender
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Number mon _[sg] chat _[sg] vs. mes _[plur] chats _[plur]	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Number
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Case	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Case

3. Optionality in the use of the possessive form

Is the possessive form obligatory?

Is it easier to omit the possessive form in some specific constructions or with specific lexical classes?

(In the translation equivalent to *I read the book*, can the absence of possessive be interpreted as a (first person) possessive?)

What happens if the possessed noun :

- is a body part noun
(7) I raised my/the hand.
- is a kinship term
(8) I saw my/the mother.
- belongs to other lexical classes?

What happens if the verb is a nontranslational motion (to turn), grooming, actions performed with body parts?

In languages where the possessive form can be omitted,

Does the absence of a possessive form correspond to a preferred interpretation of possession by the subject?

Does the absence of a possessive form correspond to a preferred interpretation of possession by another argument than the subject?

4. Distribution of reflexive vs. nonreflexive possessive

Are reflexive and nonreflexive possessives in strict complementary distribution?

In languages where the norm is well established, are there any discrepancies between norm and usage?

Is the distribution sensitive to:

- the antecedent's person (for example, mandatory for 3rd persons only)

- word order (for example, the reflexive form is less used if the antecedent is postverbal)
 - construction type (for example, in noncanonical argument structure constructions, the distribution of the reflexive is more flexible)
 - the antecedent's animacy (for example, the reflexive form is less used when the antecedent is inanimate)
- the possessum's animacy (for example, the reflexive form is more used when the possessum is inanimate)

5. Possible antecedent of reflexive possessive

Can the reflexive possessive be bound by another argument than the subject?

- By any argument ?
- By all arguments in a thematic position/preverbal position?
- By a non-subject experiencer?
- By a nonlocal subject?

How would you translate these sentences?

Paul_i knows that his_i son is clever vs. Paul_i knows that his_j son is clever

Paul_i knows that Peter_j loves his_j son vs. Paul_i knows that Peter_j loves his_i son

Paul_i asked Peter_j to introduce his_j mother. vs Paul_i asked Peter_j to introduce his_i mother.

6. Reflexive possessive in subject function

Can the reflexive possessive belong to a subject NP ?

If yes, to which argument does this possessive refer?

- to a local non-subject?
- to a non-local subject?

7. Other meanings/interpretations of possessive forms

When the reflexive and nonreflexive possessives are in (more or less) free variation, does the use of one of them have an emphatic meaning?

8. Compatibility with a distributive interpretation

Is the use of the **reflexive possessive** compatible with a distributive interpretation?

Can the sentence

Children_n read their_{[reflex]_n} books

be interpreted as

The child₁ reads his₁ book + The child₂ reads his₂ book + ... The child_n reads his_n book
and/or

The child_i read their_(1+n) books ?

Is the use of reflexive non-reflexive compatible with a distributive interpretation?

9. Compatibility with a reciprocal interpretation

Is the use of reflexive possessive compatible with a reciprocal interpretation?

Can the sentence

Children_n read their_{[reflex]_n} books

be interpreted as

Child_i reads his_j book + Child_j reads his_i book (Children read each other's book).

Is the use of reflexive nonpossessive compatible with a reciprocal interpretation?

10. Imperfect overlapping of antecedent and possessive

Is it possible to use the reflexive/non reflexive possessive if the possessive's antecedent overlaps only partially the subject's referent?

[My father and me]_i love our_{i+x} language.

11. Coordination (X_i and his_i Y)

To translate the following phrase, would you use the reflexive or nonreflexive possessive?

Peter_i and his_i father (came yesterday ...)