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The Middle Voice in Polish: An Attempt at Rehabilitation

Abstract

Polish verb forms occurring with (what was originally) the pronominal clitic *się* constitute a notoriously heterogeneous group of constructions ranging from reflexive proper (*widzi się* 'sees herself/himself') to impersonal (*mówi się* 'they say'). This article deals with middle-voice reflexives, which cover the semantic domain extending between reflexives proper and passives. The Polish types of middle-voice reflexives are first situated on a semantic map reflecting a cross-linguistic analysis based mainly on Slavonic, Baltic and Germanic data. Then an analysis of the different types is given in terms of argument structure. We argue that most of the Polish middle-voice reflexives do not differ from the non-reflexive forms in argument structure but only in the assignment of grammatical relations. They are also characterized by construction-specific semantic modifications (more marked than in the case of the passive). As they are arguably not in the lexicon, a good case can be made for their treatment in terms of grammatical voice. At the same time these constructions are distinct from the passive: both middle-voice and passive constructions are agent-back-grounding devices, but they represent different types of backgrounding.

Keywords

middle voice, reflexive, passive, anticausative, argument structure, grammatical relations

Streszczenie

Segment *się* jest formalnym wykładnikiem w heterogenicznej grupie konstrukcji rozciągającej się od zwrotnych *sensu stricto* (*widzi się* = *widzi siebie*) do bezosobowych (*mówi się*). Dostrzeżenie tej składniowej i semantycznej różnorodności doprowadziło do usunięcia obecnej niegdyś w gramatykach języka polskiego „strony zwrotnej” z nowszych opisów polszczyzny. W niniejszym artykule omawiamy konstrukcje tradycyjnie określane jako medialne (*ciasto się łatwo kroi* itp.). Przedstawiamy mapę semantyczną reprezentowanych w polszczyźnie konstrukcji medialnych, następnie analizujemy ich strukturę argumentową. Pokazujemy, że większość konstrukcji medialnych (poza antykauzatywnymi) nie zmienia struktury argumentowej leksemu i że powstają one w wyniku tak zwanych operacji morfosyntaktycznych (w odróżnieniu od morfoleksykalnych). Można je więc usytuować w ramach kategorii strony, obok *passivum*. Jednocześnie dowodzimy, że konstrukcje medialne nie są odmianą *passivum*: zarówno konstrukcje bierne, jak i medialne reprezentują

„deagentywizację” (*agent-backgrounding*), w obu wypadkach chodzi jednak o różne rodzaje deagentywizacji.

Słowa kluczowe

medium, zwrotność, passivum, anticausativa, struktura argumentowa, relacje gramatyczne

1. Introduction¹

The aim of this article is to shed more light on the nature of Polish middle-voice reflexives, especially on their argument structure and, concomitantly, their lexical or grammatical nature. The notion of ‘middle voice’ will be understood more broadly than is usually the case in publications written in a formal framework (cf., among more recent works, Ackema and Schoorlemmer 2006, and the contributions in Lyngfelt and Solstad 2006). We will understand middle voice reflexives here as the semantic domain extending between active reflexive constructions (*He saw himself in the mirror*) and formally reflexive passive constructions (Italian *Qui si vendono biglietti* ‘Tickets are sold here’; lit. ‘Here tickets sell themselves’). This understanding of the term appears in the functionalist literature, cf., especially, Kemmer 1993, and it is, of course, closer to the original scope of the *mesôtēs* of Classical Greek grammar.

What used to be described, in older grammars of Polish, as the ‘reflexive voice’ (cf. Szober 1953: 271) has virtually disappeared from linguistic descriptions of Polish. This is a natural consequence of a shift in the understanding of voice. The tripartite voice system ‘active : reflexive : passive’, inherited from the analogous voice system of classical Greek (*enérgeia* : *mesôtēs* : *páthos*), had been morphological. It came to be superseded by a syntactic view, in which voice is a reassignment of grammatical relations, additionally but perhaps not essentially encoded in morphology. Apart from this, the category of reflexive forms came to be seen as heterogeneous, which is, in its turn, an inevitable result of historical processes disrupting the original unity of the reflexive gram.² The place of the ‘reflexive voice’ was taken by a miscellaneous collection of items ranging from ‘impersonal constructions’ to ‘reflexive verbs.’

We do not intend to deny the heterogeneous character of the forms and constructions containing what had once been the enclitic reflexive pronoun *się*. Some of its uses are in the lexicon, others are in the grammar. In this article we will concentrate on argument structure as an essential criterion in

¹ We wish to thank two anonymous reviewers whose incisive remarks have allowed us to refine a number of formulations and to take a clearer stance with regard to alternative accounts. We are solely responsible for the remaining shortcomings of the article.

² A term used by authors like Bybee and Dahl (cf. Bybee and Dahl 1989) to refer to a grammatical morpheme. The term is preferable to ‘grammatical category’, as formal and semantic categories are all too often confused in linguistic description.

establishing what is in the lexicon and what is in the grammar. We will show that a sizeable number of constructions with *się* are characterized by a reassignment of grammatical relations and a construction-specific semantic import, without argument structure being affected. This makes them eligible for being included in the notion of grammatical voice and for being recognized as inflectional, unless one chooses to narrow both notions in a way that is, as we will argue, both arbitrary and undesirable.

The structure of the article is as follows. First, we will discuss the treatment of forms and constructions with *się* in the most recent fundamental work on Polish grammar by Grzegorzczkowska, Laskowski and Wróbel (1998). Then we will give an overview of the constructions with *się*, showing their fundamental historical unity and mutual connections, as well as their properties with regard to argument structure. Finally, we will return to more general considerations, pleading for a notion of voice that also encompasses part of the constructions with *się*.

2. What the grammar says

As this article deals specifically with the Polish material, we must somehow position ourselves with regard to what is expounded in the morphology part of the newest (though no longer quite new) standard work on Polish grammar (Grzegorzczkowska, Laskowski and Wróbel 1998, henceforth: Morf98). This is no easy task in view of the specific view of grammar adopted in this work. First of all, the authors take a very narrow view of inflection: inflectional forms are obligatorily univocal, and compound forms are described as grammatical, but not inflectional (Morf98: 191). This has some undesirable consequences, as we will argue further on. Not surprisingly, Morf98 replaces the traditional, morphologically based notion of voice as *genus verbi* with the syntactic notion of diathesis, i.e. the pattern of assignment of grammatical relations among noun phrases bearing different semantic roles, and its marking in morphology. More controversially, the authors distinguish only two diatheses: an unmarked one, in which the hierarchy of semantic arguments is mirrored by the syntactic hierarchy; and a marked one, in which it is not. As a result of this binary view of diathesis, they apparently lump together under the heading of ‘marked diathesis’ all instances in which the agentive argument is not the syntactic subject: true impersonals, passives (both agented and agentless) and a number of other constructions (Morf98: 189–190). All constructions with *się* are said to represent either the unmarked or the marked diathesis. There is only one construction type featuring *się* that is said to represent the marked diathesis, i.e. the one as in (1) (example from Morf98):³

³ The following abbreviations are used in the grammatical glosses here: ACC – accusative, DAT – dative, FUT – future, GEN – genitive, HORT – hortative, INF – infinitive, INS – instru-

- (1) *We wsi buduje się nowa szkoła.*
 in village.LOC build.PRS.3SG REFL new.NOM.SG.F school.NOM.SG
 ‘A new school is being built in the village.’

All the other types discussed in Morf98 are viewed as representing the unmarked diathesis. This includes, of course, the impersonal construction (example from Morf98):

- (2) *We wsi buduje się nową szkołę.*
 in village.LOC build.PRS.3SG REFL new.ACC.SG.F school.ACC.SG
 ‘They are building a new school in the village.’

Next, Morf98 distinguishes reciprocals (3) and reflexives proper (4) (our examples):

- (3) *Jan i Piotr oskarżają się nawzajem.*
 John.NOM and Peter.NOM blame.PRS.3PL REFL mutually
 ‘John and Peter are blaming each other.’

- (4) *Piotr nie widzi się w tej roli.*
 Peter.NOM NEG see.PRS.3SG REFL in that.LOC.SG.F role.LOC.SG
 ‘Peter does not see himself in that role.’

In such cases the authors argue, quite reasonably, that *się* represents a reflexive-reciprocal pronoun occupying the syntactic position of an accusative object (Morf98: 191–194).⁴ These constructions will not interest us further here.

From the reflexive construction proper Morf98 distinguishes the following two types (examples from Morf98 again):

- (5) *Janek buduje się pod Krakowem.*
 John.NOM build.PRS.3SG REFL near Cracow.INS
 ‘John is building a house for himself near Cracow.’

- (6) *Ewa czesze się u Pana Marka.*
 Eve.NOM dress_hair.PRS.3SG REFL at Mr.GEN Mark.GEN
 ‘Eve has her hair done by Mr Mark.’

mental, IPFV – imperfective, LOC – locative, NOM – nominative, N– neuter, NV – nonvirile, PCLE – particle, PFV – perfective, PL – plural, PRS – present, PST – past, REFL – reflexive, REL – relative, SG – singular.

⁴ Interestingly, the examples used in Morf98 contain grooming verbs, movement verbs and other actions performed on one’s body. The syntactic status of *się* in such constructions is challenged by Kiklewicz (2012). He claims that in such constructions *się* is obligatorily adjacent to the verb and cannot be coordinated with another accusative. In his opinion this is only partly due to *się* being a clitic: In true reflexives *się* can be cliticized on other constituents, e.g. *Nie widzę jednak się w tej roli* ‘lit. I don’t see however myself in this role,’ which is marginally acceptable, while **Nie zranił jednak się w palec* ‘lit. He didn’t hurt however himself in the finger’ is not.

These are called ‘middle-voice constructions,’ a rather surprising use standing in stark contrast to standard terminological usage. Kemmer (1993) uses the term with regard to the whole range of constructions extending between reflexive constructions proper and the passive. In the formal literature, the term is often restricted to what we will refer to below as the ‘facilitative’ construction:

- (7) *Szarlotka się łatwo kroi.*
 apple_pie.NOM.SG REFL easily cut.PRS.3SG
 ‘The apple pie cuts easily.’

Next, we have non-volitional constructions with the agentive argument surfacing as a dative, of the kind

- (8) *Wygodnie mi się siedzi na tym krześle.*
 comfortably me.DAT REFL sit.PRS.3SG on this.LOC.SG.M chair.LOC.SG
 ‘I find it comfortable to sit on this chair.’

In this type however, the analysis seems to flounder and becomes somehow contradictory: the authors consider these structures as unmarked within the active : passive distinction, but at the same as marked, since the agentive is relegated from its subject position (Morf98: 192).

The list is closed by *reflexiva tantum* (*bać się* ‘to fear’, *podobać się* ‘to please’) and verbs in which *się* is actually a derivational formative (*starzec się* ‘to age’ < *stary* ‘old’). Actually we must add one more type, viz. anticausatives as in (9), though this last group is only indirectly identified as a type of derived lexemes further on:

- (9) *Światła się zapaliły.*
 light.NOM.PL REFL light.PST.NV.PL
 ‘The lights went on.’

What strikes us as strange in this system is the curious asymmetry between the derivational and non-derivational functions of *się*. Morphology is generally divided into a derivational and an inflectional part: the former creates new lexemes, the latter does not. If some uses of *się* are derivational, it should follow that the remaining must be inflectional. The authors of Morf98 decide, however, that inflection exists only within the word. This is done by terminological fiat, and for some reason it is not stipulated that derivation (also called word formation) should be contained within the word as well. The intuition that *się* is not a lexeme (with the exception of instances like (3), (4), where it functions as a reflexive or reciprocal pronoun) is reflected, on the non-derivational side, in the recognition of the ‘grammatical’ nature of *się*. However, as its grammatical nature cannot be syntactic without recognizing *się* as a kind of lexeme after all, the best solution is to recognize it as

inflectional, otherwise one has the feeling that *się*, however much it is in the grammar, is still in limbo.⁵

Even more problematic is the suggestion that the marked diathesis should be passive. This is clearly not the case: in *światła się zapaliły* one could speak of a change in diathesis with regard to *ktoś zapalił światła* ‘somebody lit the lights’ because the correspondence between semantic roles and grammatical relations changes (the patient becomes the subject). But the result is not passive, because the agent is always present in the semantic structure of a passive construction and can also be optionally realized in syntax (*światła zostały zapalone przeze mnie* ‘the lights have been lit by me’), whereas in the construction with *zapalić się* the agent cannot be realized syntactically and is arguably absent from argument structure and from the corresponding event. That is, the anticausative is not passive; and it can be called active only if we assume *zapalić się* and *zapalić* to be different lexemes, with different assignments of the subject. If this is so, then the function of *się* is, in this case, derivational; Morf98, however, recognizes a derivational function only where *się* is used in conjunction with other derivational means, as in *starzec się* from *stary*. If *się* is not derivational, the most obvious conclusion would be that *zapalić się* is a value of the category of voice, alongside the passive; as Morf98 rejects this, constructions with *się* are, in this respect as well, in limbo.

Apart from this general remark a few questions of detail relating to the treatment of *się* in Morf98 must briefly be passed in review. Not surprisingly, the impersonal construction, as in (2), is set apart from the middle-voice constructions we will be dealing with in this article; this construction belongs to what is now recognized as a distinct gram, the impersonal (Malchukov and Siewierska 2011), and its historical links to the other uses of the reflexive marker have been severed. Curiously enough (1) is also assigned to this type, which is impossible: in the construction now described as impersonal the subject position is blocked but semantically interpreted as indefinite or generic and human; apart from this, valency is not affected, and accusative objects are retained (cf. Blevins 2003). All this does not apply to (1), which means that only (2) meets the conditions for being described as impersonal. The construction in (1) could be either passive or anticausative. The passive interpretation is rather unlikely because the reflexive passive is basically non-existent in modern Polish. This is shown by the fact that for verbs that, for reasons of argument structure, cannot derive anticausatives, e.g. three-place predicates such as *dawać* ‘give’ or *nauczać* ‘teach,’ ‘passive-like’ reflexives cannot be derived:

- (10) **W Polsce się uczą języki obce.*
 in Poland.LOC REFL teach.PRS.3PL language.NOM.PL foreign.NOM.PL.NV
 Intended meaning: ‘Foreign languages are taught in Poland.’

⁵ See Kiklewicz (2012) for an overview of alternative proposals.

Therefore it is better to view this as a peripheral use of the anticausative construction. Anticausatives frequently refer to processes initiated by human agency but not requiring further interference from the agent: *Jajka się gotują* ‘the eggs are boiling’ clearly refers to a situation in which somebody has put the eggs to boil. This type of use occasionally spreads to situations where a person has commissioned a service but need not control it further: an author can, for instance, say *Moja książka się drukuje* ‘My book is printing.’ Here, as in the case of *budować się*, the actual agency of some professionals (masons, printers) is immaterial. Linguists seem to be invoking their extralinguistic knowledge of how books and buildings come into being when they claim that this agency should be represented in argument structure. It is only present in reality, but the middle-voice construction ignores it, as is frequently the case. A construction like *The door opened* does not exclude the presence of an agent opening it, but it says nothing about that.

The different ways of marking the patient/theme (its functioning as grammatical subject or not) should also be accounted for in the constructions referring to a state not controlled by the agent (not a very precise formulation, see the discussion of the facilitative type in 3.1): *Ta książka mi się dobrze czyta* and *Dobrze mi się czyta tę książkę*. The problem is, unfortunately, completely ignored in Morf98, which cites only examples with intransitive verbs. We should distinguish two different constructions here, not always interchangeable though obviously functionally related.

A few final remarks are in order with regard to the constructions in (5) and (6). It is obvious that these two examples represent completely different constructions. (6) is, in fact, a properly reflexive variety of a construction referring to the commissioning of services, in which the agency of a craftsperson or professional performing the service is implied but not linguistically expressed in the verb, and only expressed as an adjunct that, strictly, expresses place rather than agent, cf. (11):

- (11) *A po co dziewczynkę czesać u fryzjera?*
 but why little_girl.ACC.SG dress_hair.INF at hairdresser.GEN.SG
<http://www.poranny.pl/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20120520/BIALYSTOK/120529962>
 ‘Why [should one] have a little girl’s hair done at a hairdresser’s?’

Note that (5) is not a reflexive variety of such a construction:

- (12) **Po co budować syna pod Krakowem?*
 why build.INF son.ACC near Cracow.INS
 Intended meaning: ‘Why build a house for your son near Cracow?’

(6) is a non-trivial extension of the reflexive construction, owing its existence to constructions like (10), where a causative relationship is ignored. (5) is also a non-trivial extension, but of another kind: we could characterize it as

metonymic reflexivization. While certain cases of metonymic transfer are trivial (e.g. *wash* in a situation where somebody washes only their hands and face), cases like this are not. Some authors characterize this type as antipassive (for Polish cf. Janic 2014).

3. The semantic map of the middle voice

In the preceding section we have shown that the description in Morf98 is, in part, inadequate. In this section we will show that the different constructions with *się* are not a collection of disparate items, but constitute a relatively homogeneous group of middle-voice constructions covering a semantic domain extending between the reflexive construction proper and the passive. In spite of a certain conceptual unity among middle-voice constructions the subtle semantic shifts leading from one middle-voice type to another also have certain consequences for argument structure that must be taken into account in establishing their place in the language system. Some of them are arguably in the lexicon, others have properties that are universally associated with voice, and which are also broadly compatible with the way in which the authors of Morf98 understand this term.

At the start, we must say that the conceptual homogeneity of the constructions with *się* has certain exceptions. The decision to set the ‘impersonal’ *się* apart from properly reflexive, anticausative and other uses finds a natural motivation in the loss of the impersonal reflexive passive, a process that took place in 18th century Polish; cf. the following example from 16th c. Polish with its modern equivalent:

- (13) *W tym rejestrze nie było wyliczanie*
rzeczy które się jadły albo piły
 thing.GEN.PL REL.NOM.PL.NVIR REFL eat.PST.PL.NV or drink.PST.PL.NV
 ‘In that register there was no list of things that were eaten or drunk.’
 (from Łukasz Górnicki; Pisarkowa 1984: 42)

- (14) *rzeczy, które się jadło albo piło*
 thing.GEN.PL REL.ACC.PL.NVIR REFL eat.PST.SG.N or drink.PST.SG.N

As long as the personal reflexive passive as in (13), was in place, properly reflexive, middle-voice and passive uses formed one continuous semantic zone; the demise of the reflexive passive caused a gap in this continuity. It is not astonishing, therefore, that grammarians should have thought of setting this type of use apart from reflexive *się*, and even to regard the ‘impersonal’ *się* as a distinct indefinite pronoun, a homonym of reflexive *się*, as has been proposed by Zygmunt Saloni (1975). This impersonal type will appear but marginally in our argument.

The decision to relegate anticausatives like *zapalić się* ‘to light up’ (as against *zapalić* ‘to light’) to derivational morphology is not argued in Morf98, but the principal argument that could be adduced in its favour is clear: an anticausative is a one-place predicate as compared to the corresponding two-place transitive predicate. In any framework regarding argument structure as being projected from the lexicon (Generative Grammar was among them until fairly recently) it takes a lexical (presyntactic) rule to change argument structure. Hence the derivational account of anticausatives.

The existence of *reflexiva tantum* like *bać się*, and of verbs in which *się* seems to form a discontinuous derivational morpheme together with some other element (*starzeć się* from *stary*) is an important issue, but it lies outside the scope of this article. In what follows we will concentrate on what we call the middle-voice uses of *się*; we will attempt to show the structure of this semantic domain, and then go on to discuss the place of middle-voice reflexives in the grammar.

3.1. Facilitatives

We will start out from facilitative middles. This is a term introduced by Faltz (1977: 13) and also used by Kemmer (1993) to refer to such uses as (7), repeated for convenience in (15):

- (15) *Szarlotka się łatwo kroi.*
 apple_pie.NOM.SG REFL easily cut.PRS.3SG
 ‘The apple pie cuts easily.’

Facilitative middles (sometimes, as mentioned above, referred to as middles *tout court*) come in several varieties. Syntactically, we can distinguish three. In the first, the patient/theme is the subject; this type is illustrated in (15). In the second, the verb is intransitive and the construction is therefore subjectless:

- (16) *Tu nam się dobrze mieszka.*
 here 1PL.DAT REFL well reside.PRS.3SG
 ‘We enjoy living here.’

In the last type, the verb is, again, transitive, but the construction is nevertheless subjectless and the patient/theme appears as an accusative object:

- (17) *Dobrze mi się czyta artykuły historyczne.*
 well me.DAT REFL read.PRS.3SG article.ACC.PL historical.ACC.PL.M
 ‘I enjoy reading historical articles.’

In the historical evolution of reflexive markers, the three types just mentioned represent three successive development stages. The facilitative type

arises, first of all, in a variety with the patient/theme in subject position, as in the anticausative type from which it derives (in a way to which we will turn further on). In the next stage, the type extends to intransitives, and only then the subjectless use extends, again, to transitive verbs. The subjectless type illustrated in (17) is characteristic of Polish only, and it seems to be gradually ousting the type in (15). At the present stage, the two constructions are not quite synonymous. While it is probably always possible to replace a construction like (15) with one of type (17), the reverse is not true. It would be impossible to replace (18) with (19):

(18) *Autobus MPK, tutaj dobrze się czyta książki.*
 bus.NOM.SG here well REFL read.PRS.3SG book.ACC.PL
http://www.myrss.com.pl/detal_244525_autobus_mpk_tutaj,300.htm
 ‘The MPK buses: it’s good to read books here.’

(19)* *Autobus MPK, tutaj dobrze się czytają książki.*
 bus.NOM.SG here well REFL read.PRS.3PL book.NOM.PL

(18) crucially involves ambient circumstances whereas the properties of the object are irrelevant. Probably information structure and definiteness are important as well. The construction with the accusative seems to be the expansive one, the use of the original structure with the nominative being retained only when certain specific factors support it.

Arguments in sentences like (15) occur in three varieties, which, with Carlson (1977), we will call kind-level, individual-level and stage-level varieties. (15) illustrates the individual-level variety, which, focusing as it does on the properties of the patient/theme, usually has a generic agent (in kind-level uses it would always have a generic agent). A stage-level reading is also possible, and, in this case, the agent must be specific and will also usually be syntactically realized; if it is not, it will be contextually retrievable.

(20) *Szarlotka mi się łatwo kroi.*
 apple_pie.NOM.SG me.DAT REFL easily cut.PRS.3SG
 ‘I am finding it easy to cut the apple pie.’

If a perfective verb is substituted for the imperfective one, only the stage-level reading is available and the agent will likewise be specific:

(21) *Szarlotka mi się łatwo pokroiła.*
 apple_pie.NOM.SG me.DAT REFL easily cut[PFV].PST.F.SG
 ‘I found it easy to cut the apple pie.’

There has been some discussion on such agents, more specifically with reference to Germanic (English, German and Dutch), cf. Stroik (2006). While in Germanic such *for*-PPs are rare and they often sound awkward, in Polish

the corresponding datives are frequently used. Such differences in relative frequency are not by themselves significant: even with passives, for which the retention of the agent in argument structure is universally accepted, its realization in the form of agent phrases is a matter of language-specific preferences, and it may even be barred from syntactic realization, as in Latvian. If, in the constructions we are dealing with here, such datives are at all possible, then this is strong evidence for their retention in argument structure, unless one should succeed in proving that these agents are, in fact, first eliminated from argument by a lexical rule and then optionally reintroduced as datives of interest not licensed by the verb (the position taken in Ackema and Schoorlemmer 2006). On the latter interpretation the systematic coreferentiality of agent and dative of interest must be taken to be a pragmatically determined fact (but see note 5 for the discussion of an alternative view).

We don't contest the fact that, in origin, the dative occurring in sentences like (20) is a dative of interest, but in origin only. Our contention is that at the moment when the anticausative construction extends to facilitative situations, the dative of interest is reinterpreted as an agent. In our view this is corroborated by the ambiguity of sentences like

- (22) *Sznurowadła mi się w końcu rozwiązały.*
 shoelace.NOM.PL me.DAT REFL at last undo.PST.NV.PL
 (i) 'Finally my shoelaces came loose'
 (ii) 'Finally I succeeded in undoing my shoelaces.'

This sentence is not vague but ambiguous between two readings: an anticausative one in which the shoelaces get undone by themselves and the dative is not an agent but a pure dative of interest; and a facilitative one in which the agent has invested some time and energy in undoing their shoelaces and these have finally succumbed to their efforts. The reading implying agency requires the dative to be an agent. An agent being indeed notionally indispensable, the claim that the dative is actually reintroduced by a dative-of-interest construction is correct only in the diachronic sense. Of course, the middle-voice reflexive could spread from the anticausative type to the constructions discussed here thanks to a certain fiction: the action is performed so easily that it seems to emanate from the patient/theme, without noticeable effort on the part of the agent. In principle, one could therefore envisage an extended anticausative interpretation of these middles, with the dative representing a dative of interest, the agentive status of the participant being ignored. Further on, however, we will discuss constructions with middle-voice reflexives where the anticausative interpretation can no longer seriously be envisaged, and a dative coinciding with an agent or experiencer is often obligatorily present, which makes it unlikely that they could be treated as datives of interest. This means that an

equally strong case can be made for interpreting the dative as an agent rather than a dative of interest here as well.

Like the anticausative type, the telic facilitative type illustrated by (15) and (17) above is, as the examples show, bi-aspectual, i.e. it exists in varieties with both imperfective and perfective verbs, the former allowing of kind-level, individual-level and stage-level uses, whereas the latter has only stage-level uses. This lack of aspectual specialization is connected with the type of predicates occurring in this particular type of use, viz. accomplishments. But it is also possible to substitute a verb of another aspectual class for the accomplishment verb, e.g. *nosić* ‘wear’, which is a state predicate even though transitive:

- (23) *Bawełna* *dobrze się* *nosi.*
 cotton.NOM.SG well REFL wear.PRS.3SG
 ‘Cotton wears well.’

Here, a perfective variety is obviously impossible because the verb is atelic. This atelic type seems to be a transition to the passive use of reflexive verbs – a type which, as can still be seen in modern Russian, where the reflexive passive has survived, is always imperfective. The reason why the atelic subtype of facilitative middles should be regarded as transitional to the passive is that in the case of atelic predicates a certain accumulation of the action is necessary to justify the claim that a certain type of action involving an object runs smoothly, e.g. it typically requires a minimum period of wearing to state that an item of clothing wears well. As ‘wears well’ implies ‘is worn’, the shift to passive function is easy here.

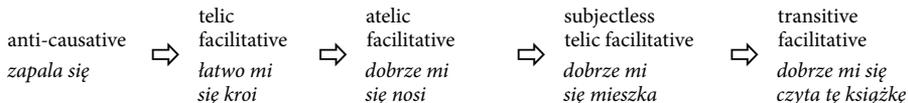
But the difference with regard to (15) does not lie merely in aspectual properties. (23) refers to a property of cotton inducing a certain state affecting an experiencer wearing it, but there is no reference to a process affecting the cotton; an anticausative interpretation is therefore impossible here. This has certain consequences for the interpretation of datives as in (24):

- (24) *W tym sezonie* *wyjątkowo* *dobrze* *mi* *się* *noszą*
 in this season exceptionally well me.DAT REFL wear.PRS.3PL
 ubrania *w* *sportowym* *stylu.*
 dress.NOM.PL in sports_like.LOC.SG.M style.LOC.SG
 <http://www.styloly.com/2014/06/sporty-casual.html>
 ‘This season I particularly enjoy wearing sports-like clothes.’

Here the interpretation of the dative as a non-licensed dative of interest would entail an anticausative reading of the verb, which is not available. Suppression of the dative does not eliminate its referent from semantic structure: it only becomes generic. Clearly, the argument structure of the verbal form in (23) does not differ from that of the verb *nosić* in any other form or context, viz. it is a two-place predicate.

Let us here recapitulate the development, taking into account both semantic and syntactic shifts:

Figure 1: The development from anticausative to facilitative function



With reference to the last two types, *dobrze mi się mieszka* and *dobrze mi się czyta tę książkę*, it should be obvious that the above observations on argument structure hold for them as well. The dative represents an argument of predication, and if this argument is not overtly expressed, it receives a generic interpretation and is still present in semantic structure. This shows clearly how these two types of constructions differ from the impersonal construction illustrated in (2), where the original subject, though present in argument structure, is obligatorily eliminated from syntactic structure and can certainly not reappear as a dative argument, cf. the deviant character of (25):

(25) **Tego mi się nie robi przyjacielowi.*

This point had already been convincingly argued by Brajerski (1979).

The line of development shown in Fig. 1 reflects shifts not only in argument structure but also in aspectual properties. Whereas the anticausative and the telic facilitative type exist in two aspectual varieties, the facilitative types with atelic verbs emerging from them are only imperfective. But there are also extensions from the anticausative type that lead to perfective types of use, and these are the ones we now turn to.

3.2. Non-volitional types

Extending from the perfective variety of the telic facilitative type there is a type of use expressing a result contrary to the one expected.

(26) *Chciałam pierś z kurczaka zrobić [...]*
 want.PST.1.SG.F breast.ACC.SG from chicken.GEN.SG make.INF
ale wyciągnęły mi się żeberka
 but pull_out.PST.NV.PL me.DAT REFL rib.NOM.PL
to niech już będą.
 so HORT PCLE be.FUT.3PL

http://www.mamusie.net/forum,marcoweczki_2012,118,164390.html,str=6306

‘I wanted to make chicken breast [...] but I pulled out spare ribs, so let’s have that.’

The perfective variety of the telic facilitative type refers to a situation combining conscious agency with a successful accomplishment which is partly independent from human volition as it depends on the properties of the object, instrument etc. The conscious agency component remaining unchanged, the outcome may, however, be other than planned, and it is to this suddenly revealed unforeseen outcome that sentences like (26) refer. An imperfective counterpart would probably be (pragmatically) infelicitous because the extension in time associated with imperfectivity would also entail the possibility of correction. Hence the predominantly or exclusively perfective character of this type.

In sentences like (26) the unexpected event is parasitic on a certain type of conscious agency, but the marking used in it may further shift to situations in which the whole event is characterized as non-volitional. This often happens in the case of verbs denoting speech acts or mental acts, for example:

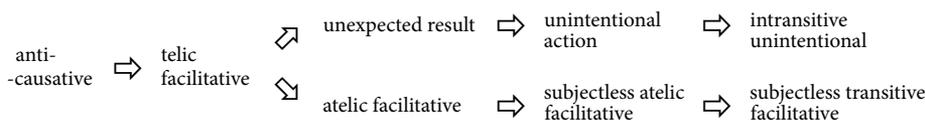
- (27) *Tak w przyplywie nocnego optymizmu,*
 so in fit.LOC.SG nightly.GEN.SG.M optimism.GEN.SG
pomyślało mi się,
 think.PST.N.SG me.DAT REFL
że może znajdzie się ktoś znający odpowiedź na pytanie, które ciekawi mnie od dłuższego już czasu.
<http://www.mbank.pl/forum/watek,726257,visa-vs-mastercard,1.html>
 ‘In a fit of nocturnal optimism, I somehow thought that perhaps somebody would be found who would know the answer to the question that had been puzzling me for a long time.’

The last type is an extension of the one in (27), but only in the syntactic sense, viz. it is based on intransitive verbs:

- (28) *Zasnęło się naszym bohaterom nad pytaniami*
 fall_asleep.PST.N.SG REFL OUR.DAT.PL hero.DAT.PL over questions.INS.PL
do quizu.
 for quiz.GEN.SG
<https://pl-pl.facebook.com/tubajki/posts/671212482986849>
 ‘Our heroes somehow fell asleep over the quiz questions.’

Let us call these three typically perfective types the ‘unexpected result’, ‘unintentional action’ and ‘intransitive unintentional action’ type. We can now complete the schematic representation: a partial semantic map for middle-voice reflexives is offered in Fig. 2:

Figure 2: Partial semantic map for middle-voice reflexives



From an internal Polish point of view it may not be obvious why all these types of use should be set apart, and why, for instance, the perfective variety of the telic facilitative type and the unexpected result type should not be considered contextual varieties of one and the same type of use. The motivation for this description is cross-linguistic and is presented in an investigation using the semantic map method and taking into account Baltic, Slavonic and Germanic facts (Holvoet, Grzybowska and Rembiałkowska, 2015). According to the semantic map method, two types of use are set apart if they are expressed differently in at least one language.

The intransitive unintentional action type is particularly revealing with regard to argument structure. Intransitive verbs like *zasnąć* represent one-place predicates. It is not plausible that whatever operation is reflected in the reflexive formation could reduce those verbs to zero-place predicates, with the experiencer subsequently reintroduced in the form of a dative of interest.⁶ In fact the dative is obligatory here, as it is the only argument of predication. Reflexivization does not change argument structure at all: the reflexive forms also represent one-place predicates, the only difference being that the unique argument receives another type of encoding.

4. Questions of argument structure

The above overview leaves us with no fewer than seven types of middle-voice that differ from the anticausative type in that they retain the argument structure of the verbal lexeme but rearrange the assignment of grammatical functions (the agent goes into the dative though it may remain unexpressed when generic

⁶ An alternative way of reintroducing the agent is devised by Rivero, Arregui and Frąckowiak (2010). These authors derive sentences like (27), (28) but also (15), (16) by successively embedding an impersonal *się*-construction as in (2) first in a modal phrase and then in an applicative phrase introducing the dative argument. The impersonal or 'indefinite' *się* introduces a variable bound by an argument in a higher phrase, and thus the uncomfortable assumption that in (27) and (28) a dative adjunct expands a zero-place predication is avoided. But an applicative argument is by definition (as the authors acknowledge) an additional item not part of the argument structure of the verb, so that the role of the dative NP cannot be restricted to just binding the variable introduced by *się* in the TP. Agent/higher argument and 'applicative argument' must be identical, which contradicts the very notion of applicative.

or contextually retrievable), and add a specific semantic element relating to factors independent of human control, that is, the inherent properties of an object or ambient state, or involuntary agency.

As, on the other hand, there is no reason to deny that part of the reflexive forms are in the lexicon, reflexives appear as a split category, the marker *się* acting sometimes as an inflectional and sometimes as a derivational morpheme. The main candidate for derivational status is, of course, the anticausative type. Anticausativization would be, in Sadler and Spencer's (2001) formulation, a morpholexical operation, whereas the types to the right of it would be morphosyntactic. This dichotomy reflects the assumption that argument structure is projected from the lexicon, an assumption now challenged from two sides. On the one hand, in Generative Grammar, where the view of argument structure as projected from the lexicon was firmly established until recently, an 'exo-skeletal' view of argument structure has now been formulated (cf. Borer 2003 on endo-skeletal and exo-skeletal views of argument structure). The lexeme being reduced to a mere root, argument structure is created in syntax, and the notion of morpholexical operations as distinct from morphosyntactic ones does no longer have any sense. A more moderate and realistic view, advocated in Construction Grammar, has it that lexemes provide a basic argument structure that can be constructionally modified and expanded. Within this constructional view of argument structure, we can distinguish a 'mainstream' variety imposing a monotonicity condition on constructions, which means that constructions may not delete arguments (cf. Kay 2005), and a more radical variety without monotonicity requirement, represented by Goldberg (1995). It is not obvious that, on the assumption that anticausatives are somehow derived from the corresponding transitives, this operation could be described as monotonic, though an attempt in this direction is made by Koontz-Garboden (2009).⁷ The possibility of including anticausatives among morphosyntactic middle voice operations depends, therefore, on the weight we attach to the monotonicity requirement.

Another thing that seems to set anticausatives apart from the middle-voice type we have focused upon in this article is the direction of derivation. For the facilitative and non-volitional types discussed above the obvious direction of derivation is from non-reflexive to reflexive (*czytam książkę* → *książka się dobrze czyta*). For anticausatives and the corresponding transitives this is not so obvious.

⁷ Koontz-Garboden argues that derived anticausatives have the same event structure as the corresponding transitive verbs, that is, they contain a CAUSE component. With regard to argument structure a monotonic interpretation is achieved by assuming that anticausativization is an instance of reflexivization. This, however, is rather an implausible assumption: there are obvious diachronic links between the markers of reflexivity and anticausativization (the latter arising from the former), but where the two co-exist, they can be shown to be different (cf. Polish **Drzwi otworzyły siebie* 'The door opened itself').

That the anticausative could be basic and its transitive counterpart derived was already suggested by Gołąb (1968); for more recent discussion cf. Alexiadou, Anagnostopoulou and Schäfer (2006). On the inflectional view of the middle voice which we are suggesting here there is nothing very problematic about such differences in markedness or apparent direction of derivation: these differences would be more of a problem if we wanted to posit a uniform *derivational* relationship, with *się* as a derivational morpheme. Still, as the picture of the middle voice we have drawn above is one of a series of morphosyntactic operations on non-reflexive verbs, it seems tempting to explore the possibility of extending this to anticausatives. Here we have two types of cases. Two-place predicates entailing a causative relation have rather predictable anticausative counterparts, cf. *przewrócić się* ‘to tumble,’ *zapalić się* ‘to light up, to start burning,’ *powiększyć się* ‘to increase,’ *oddalić się* ‘to move away,’ etc. And the anticausative is, of course, productive: given the verb *tabloidyżować* ‘to become tabloidized,’ the meaning of the anticausative *tabloidyżować się* is one hundred per cent predictable. But many predicates can, by definition, have no anticausative counterpart, e.g. three-place predicates like *dać* ‘to give,’ *podać* ‘to hand’ can yield no regular anticausative because they do not refer to a process affecting an object but rather to types of social interaction. The outcome of reflexivization is, in the case of *podać*, the (now obsolete) motion verb *podać się* ‘to lean (forward),’ basically an unpredictable shift though lexical typology could probably discover a number of typical paths occurring in such cases. It is clear from the start that anticausativization can apply only to verbs with a certain event structure, just as pluralization can apply only to basic/unshifted count nouns. The degree of semantic irregularity and unpredictability of reflexive forms has never been investigated, and we do not know whether it is much greater than, for instance, in the formation of plurals.

5. Reflexive voice operations

Whatever we make of that part of the reflexive-middle spectrum that can raise the clearest claims to derivational status, viz. anticausatives and the types contiguous to them on the semantic map of middle-voice reflexives, there is a whole series of constructions with different semantic effects but retaining the argument structure of the verbal lexeme. At the same time they change the assignment of grammatical functions, encoding the agent (experiencer) by means of a dative and (in certain but not all cases) promoting the patient/theme to subject position. We can distinguish several such operations which are subject to lexical restrictions but whose semantic effect is perfectly predictable. All these operations belong to a common semantic domain corresponding to what has traditionally been described as the middle voice, but this does not necessarily mean that it is possible or desirable to single out a semantic invariant. In terms of constructions,

we have not one but several constructions – not necessarily seven, as two types of use distinct from a cross-linguistic point of view may well be captured by a common rule or construction from a language-internal point of view.

Though there is probably not much sense in returning to a tripartite voice system conceived as an inflectional category in a correlational system of the structuralist type, we see no reason why the constructions dealt with here should not be dealt with in the context of voice, on a par with the passive. Formally, the means are homogeneous, and there is no one-to-one correspondence between a formal category and a type of semantic and syntactic effect. Constructions with *się* were used in an (agentless, but still canonical) passive construction in Old Polish; that is, by themselves constructions with *się* can be either a value of the category of voice or something different (e.g. a derivational marker). On the other hand, the existence of a formal opposition between allegedly passive participles and other, non-passive forms is not a sufficient foundation to base a voice opposition on. As Kibort (2012) argues, the so-called passive participles are not really passive by themselves: *przygotowany* means not only ‘that has been prepared by someone’ but also ‘that has prepared himself or herself’ – in the latter meaning it is related to the middle-voice *przygotować się* ‘prepare, get prepared’ (cf. *uśmiechnięty* ‘smiling’ from *uśmiechnąć się*). The construction *został przygotowany* ‘was prepared’ becomes unequivocally passive, but this is achieved through periphrasis. That is, the binary diathetic opposition proposed in Morf98 is not correlated with any inflectional category; the passive is no better in this respect than the forms with *się*. One can define it independently of inflection, but then a binary distinction is not fine-grained enough. In order to avoid these inconsistencies, it would be better to operate with a purely semantico-syntactic notion of voice (or, if one prefers, diathesis, for this would amount to the same) encompassing operations changing the assignment of grammatical relations without affecting argument structure (the possibility of having voice operations also affecting argument structure but sufficiently productive and predictable to be recognized as grammatical rather than lexical also deserves to be considered). Passive and middle-voice operations would then represent different options within the domain of voice, and to what extent one recognizes their inflectional character is a separate problem.

Within a voice system thus conceived we could, of course, subsume both marked values – passive and middle – under a more generalized value of ‘marked diathesis.’ But within this supercategory we would still have to distinguish two subtypes, a middle and a passive one. The functional motivation for these two subtypes is different, though in both cases it belongs to the notional domain of voice. The role of the marked diathesis is to background agents (or other highest-ranking arguments), but this is done along different dimensions. It is often said that passives are not highly relevant to meaning (in the truth-conditional sense), but they often reflect differences in information structure and in

construal (in the Langackerian sense, cf. Langacker 1993), or saliency of certain features of a situation. Middle-voice operations play on another aspect of backgrounding – they are not concerned with saliency but with agency in the sense of control. In an ontological sense, semantic roles remain constant across voice operations, but conceptually the degree of agency may be diminished. In other words, passives and middles background agents in different ways.

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