

## On the Resultative Function of the So-called Reflexive Suffixes in Finnish\*

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In the Finnish language there is a so-called reflexive suffix, which is attached to a verbal or nominal stem to derive an intransitive predicate. The reason this suffix is called 'reflexive' is that predicates containing this suffix can apparently convey the same meaning as transitive predicates followed by a reflexive pronoun. For derived verbs to be reflexive, original verbs to which this suffix is attached should be transitive. However, this suffix can be attached to intransitive predicates. In addition, it is not always the case that predicates followed by this suffix convey reflexive meaning, even when original predicates are transitive. Moreover, sentences whose predicate contains this suffix have a parallel relation with the resultative construction. All these things show that the so-called reflexive suffix is not really reflexive. Rather, the function served by this suffix is to add resultative meaning.

Keywords: the Finnish language, reflexive, resultant state, resultative construction

### 1. Introduction

In the Finnish language there are suffixes which convert a verbal or nominal stem to an intransitive predicate. Because of the function they serve, they are traditionally called reflexive suffixes. The suffixes in question are: *-U-*, *-ne-* and some compound suffixes ending in *-U-* like *-tU-*, *-UtU-* and *-VntU-*. The suffixes with the exception of *-ne-* can be attached not only to a verbal but also to a nominal stem. When a reflexive suffix is attached to a verbal stem, the stem is transitive in most cases. This is reasonable because of the two reasons. One is that two arguments are necessary for a predicate to be reflexive. The other is that it is useless to utilize a reflexive suffix in order to derive an intransitive predicate from another intransitive one. But, a reflexive suffix can sometimes be attached to the stem of an intransitive predicate nevertheless. If this is the case, what is the effect of a reflexive suffix attached to an intransitive predicate? The purpose of this paper is to clarify the function of the reflexive suffixes, especially when they are attached to an intransitive predicate.

### 2. Reflexive predicates derived from intransitive ones

According to the previous studies, a reflexive suffix attached to a verbal stem can convey reflexive, automative or passive meaning<sup>1</sup>. 'Automative' means that something happens or happened spontaneously to some entity without a deliberate action by a distinctive agent. Then, one can state that what is common to derived predicates containing a reflexive suffix (reflexive predicates, henceforth) is that an agentive argument is dismissed. Each predicate

corresponding to a reflexive one has an agentive argument, but it is suppressed in the course of derivation. When a reflexive predicate conveys reflexive meaning, an agent and a patient of the corresponding predicate refer to the same entity. This means that in this case an agentive argument is not entirely dismissed even after the derivation of a reflexive predicate. It is still correct, however, that a derived reflexive predicate has only one argument.

The question now arises: If what is said above is true, what makes it possible to derive a reflexive predicate from an intransitive one? Nothing can be dismissed from an original intransitive predicate, since it has only one argument. To answer this question, we should investigate examples containing a reflexive predicate derived from an intransitive one.

As a matter of fact, such predicates are not so many. Predicates listed in Hakulinen et al. (2004: 340) are *elä-yty-ä*, *uppo-utu-a*, *kulke-utu-a*, *istu-utu-a*, *selvi-yty-ä*, *sula-utu-a*, *pala-utu-a* and other few predicates. These predicates together with corresponding original ones are listed below:

(1)	original intransitive predicates		derived reflexive predicates
	<i>elä-ä</i>	'to live'	<i>elä-yty-ä</i>
	<i>uppo-a</i>	'to sink'	<i>uppo-utu-a</i>
	<i>kulke-a</i>	'to go'	<i>kulke-utu-a</i>
	<i>istu-a</i>	'to sit'	<i>istu-utu-a</i>
	<i>selvi-tä</i>	'to become clear'	<i>selvi-yty-ä</i>
	<i>sula-ta</i>	'to melt'	<i>sula-utu-a</i>
	<i>pala-ta</i>	'to return'	<i>pala-utu-a</i>

The following sentences contain one of the reflexive predicates in (1) above. That is:

- (2) Satapäinen- $\phi$  yleisö- $\phi$  elä-yty-i näytelmä-än  
 with hundred heads-NOM audience-NOM live-REFL-PST play-ILL  
 juhlasali-n upea-ssa miljöö-ssä.  
 festival hall-GEN splendid-INE milieu-INE  
 In the splendid milieu of the festival hall the audience of about one hundred put their souls into the play.
- (3) Kirjailija- $\phi$  uppo-utu-i vuosituhanne-n takaise-en  
 author-NOM sink-REFL-PST a thousand years'-GEN behind-ILL  
 elämä-än.  
 life-ILL  
 The author was absorbed in the life thousand years ago.
- (4) Islanni-n tulivuorenpurkaukse-n tuhka-a kulke-utu-i  
 Iceland-GEN volcanic eruption-GEN ash-PART go-REFL-PST  
 Suome-en.  
 Finland-ILL  
 The ashes from the volcanic eruption in Iceland reached far away to Finland.

- (5) Viisivuotias- $\phi$  poika- $\phi$  keskeytt-i leikki-nsä ja  
 five-year-old-NOM boy-NOM leave off-PST game-3SG.PX and  
 istu-utu-i ruokapöytä-än.  
 sit-REFL-PST dining table-ILL  
 The five-year-old boy left the game off and sat at the dining table.
- (6) Valtamere-llä kaksi- $\phi$  kuukaut-ta ajelehti-nut- $\phi$   
 ocean-ADE 2-NOM month-PART drift-PST.PTCP-NOM  
 selvi-yty-i syö-mä-llä lokke-j-a.  
 become clear-REFL-PST eat-3INF-ADE sea gull-PL-PART  
 The one who had drifted in the ocean for two months survived by eating sea gulls.
- (7) Kolme- $\phi$  yhtiö-tä sula-utu-i maailma-n suurimma-ksi  
 3-NOM company-PART melt-REFL-PST world-GEN largest-TRA  
 alumiini-n tuottaja-ksi.  
 aluminium-GEN manufacturer-TRA  
 Three companies were united to become the largest aluminium manufacturer in the world.
- (8) Liikenne- $\phi$  terrori-isku-sta kärsi-nee-lle lentokentä-lle  
 traffic-NOM attack of terrorists-ELA suffer-PST.PTCP-ALL airport-ALL  
 pala-utu-i normaali-ksi.  
 return-REFL-PST normal-TRA  
 The traffic to the airport paralyzed by the attack of terrorists recovered normally.

What is important to note is that each of the reflexive predicates in (2)–(5) and (7)–(8) is followed by an oblique argument marked in the illative or translative case. The illative is the case that indicates the terminal point of a movement and the translative is the case referring to the resultant state of a mutation. This means that sentences containing a reflexive predicate listed in (1) indicate a telic situation leading to a definite terminal point. This is also true of the sentence (6), even though the reflexive predicate is not followed by an oblique argument. In this sentence we can consider the drifter's survival to be the terminal point of the described situation. Thus, we can safely state that what is described in the sentences (2)–(8) is not a movement or a mutation itself but a resultant state caused by it. As a matter of fact, this can be proved by the description of the reflexive predicates listed in (1) in a Finnish-English dictionary<sup>2</sup>. That is:

- (9) *elä-yty-ä* 'to put one's soul (into)'  
*uppo-utu-a* 'to become absorbed (in)'  
*kulke-utu-a* 'to be carried (to)'  
*istu-utu-a* 'to sit down (at)'  
*selvi-yty-ä* 'to get over'  
*sula-utu-a* 'to merge (into)'

*pala-utu-a* 'to be restored'

Let us now compare the sentences (2)–(8) on one hand and sentences containing a reflexive predicate derived from a transitive one on the other hand. In the latter type of sentence, a reflexive predicate can indicate a resultant state brought about by a designated action. For example, in the sentence (10), the predicate is derived from a transitive predicate *pukea* 'to dress' and the sentence shows a resultant state after she had dressed herself. That is:

- (10) Hän- $\phi$  puke-utu-i hienosti.  
 she-NOM dress-REFL-PST neatly  
 She dressed herself neatly.

However, a reflexive predicate corresponding to a transitive one does not always indicate a result of some deliberate action by a human agent. Take the following for example:

- (11) Puu- $\phi$  kaat-u-i myrsky-ssä.  
 tree-NOM fell-REFL-PST storm-INE  
 A tree fell in the storm.

In this sentence, somebody's deliberate action is not intended. What is described is the fact that a tree fell down because of the storm. Moreover, in the following sentence the causative event which made many boats broken is not mentioned obviously, though the reflexive predicate *hakka-utu-a* is derived from a transitive predicate *hakata* 'to chop'. That is:

- (12) Use-i-ta vene-i-tä hakka-utu-i rikki  
 many-PL-PART boat-PL-PART chop-REFL-PST to pieces  
 rantakiviko-i-hin.  
 stone on the shore-PL-ILL  
 Many boats were chopped up to pieces against stones on the shore.

All these things make it clear that what is shown by adding a reflexive suffix to a verbal stem is not reflexivity but rather resultativity. To put it in another way around, reflexive predicates are available only in sentences where some resultant state is relevant to the described situation.

### 3. Resultant state described by 'reflexive' predicates

In the Finnish language a resultant state can be described by impersonal passive sentences. Take the following two sentences for example:

- (13) Tarvi-tta-va-n materiaali-n hankki-minen- $\phi$   
 need-PASS-PRES.PTCP-GEN material-GEN get-NMLZ-NOM  
 osoitta-utu-i hankala-ksi tehtävä-ksi.  
 show-REFL-PST difficult-TRA task-TRA  
 To get necessary material was shown to be a difficult task.

- (14) Varsova-ssa    osoite-tt-i-in                    miel-tä                    aborttikielto-a  
 Warsaw-INE    show-PASS-PST-PASS    opinion-PART    ban on abortion-PART  
 vastaan.  
 against  
 In Warsaw an opinion against ban on abortion was manifested.

The predicate of the sentence (13) is a reflexive predicate which is derived from the corresponding transitive one *osoittaa*. On the other hand, the same transitive predicate is inflected to the impersonal passive form in the sentence (14). What counts as a resultant state in the former sentence is the fact that the task in question turned out to be difficult, while the fact that an opinion against ban on abortion was manifested can be treated as a resultant state of the described event in the latter sentence. It is impossible, however, to exchange these two predicates with each other. It is true that both sentences are lacking an agentive argument, but in the latter sentence active human participants are strongly entailed. The reason these two predicates are not interchangeable lies in this fact. This does not mean that the described situation of the former sentence is absolutely spontaneous. Even in this sentence it is inevitable that some participants were engaged in some kind of investigation in order to draw the conclusion. But the fact that some investigation was conducted is completely out of focus and irrelevant to the semantic content of the sentence (13).

The same is also true of the following sentence. That is:

- (15) Aiemmin    matkapuhelim-i-a                    valmista-nut                    yritys- $\emptyset$   
 before    mobile telephone-PL-PART    make-PST.PTCP    company-NOM  
 hake-utu-i                    konkurssi-in.  
 apply-REFL-PST    bankruptcy-ILL  
 The company which made mobile telephones before sought bankruptcy protection.

In this sentence the process leading to bankruptcy is implied indeed, but what is focused on is the fact that the company ended up to bankruptcy. What is important to note is that the predicate *hakeutua* in the sentence above can be replaced with the impersonal passive form of the corresponding transitive predicate *hakea*. That is:

- (16) Aiemmin    matkapuhelim-i-a                    valmista-nut                    yritys- $\emptyset$   
 before    mobile telephone-PL-PART    make-PST.PTCP    company-NOM  
 hae-tt-i-in                    konkurssi-in.  
 apply-PASS-PST-PASS    bankruptcy-ILL  
 The company which made mobile telephones before sought bankruptcy protection.

These two sentences (15) and (16) have almost the same meaning indeed, but there is still a slight difference between them. The difference is that involvement of human agents is slightly more evident in the latter sentence.

We should admit that whether agentive participants are irrelevant or not is a matter of degree. Then, it is difficult to classify all the sentences into the two groups on the basis of relevance of agentive participants. It is also true, however, that sentences can be allotted to the

scale ranging from fully agentive to weakly agentive description. When the described situation is not agentive enough, a reflexive predicate is a suitable predicate. In other words, reflexive predicates are the more appropriate for sentences where agentive participants are less relevant.

Let us now compare the following pair of sentences. That is:

(17) Hän- $\phi$  puk-i itse-nsä hienosti.  
 she-NOM dress-PST oneself-3SG.PX neatly  
 She dressed herself neatly.

(18) Hän- $\phi$  puke-utu-i hienosti.  
 she-NOM dress-REFL-PST neatly  
 She dressed herself neatly. (= (10))

These two sentences convey almost the same meaning again. However, in the former sentence with an ordinary transitive predicate followed by a reflexive pronoun, the action performed by the agent is more emphasized than the resultant state. On the other hand, in the latter sentence with a so-called reflexive predicate, what is focused on is not the agentive action which is not overly expressed but the resultant state caused by it. In other words, the latter sentence does not necessarily convey reflexive meaning, although it has indeed a parallel relation with the former sentence, which is clearly reflexive. If this is the case, it would not be appropriate to call the predicate of the sentence (18) 'reflexive' in the first place.

As a matter of fact, the following sentence containing a 'reflexive' predicate cannot be regarded as reflexive.

(19) Kärppä- $\phi$  pure-utu-i saalii-nsa kurkku-un.  
 ermine-NOM bite-REFL-PST prey-3SG.PX throat-ILL  
 The ermine bit firmly on the throat of a prey. (Koivisto 1995: 41)

In this sentence what the ermine bit is not itself. At the same time, what is focused on is not an agentive action. It is true that the subject *kärppä* is the agent of the entailed action, but what is described in this sentence is a situation where the ermine was clung to the throat of a prey. If one would like to describe the entailed agentive action, one should employ the corresponding transitive predicate *purra* as in the following sentence.

(20) Kärppä- $\phi$  pur-i saalii-nsa kurkku-a.  
 ermine-NOM bite-PST prey-3SG.PX throat-PART  
 The ermine bit the throat of a prey.

In this sentence the target to which the agentive action is directed is marked in the partitive case, one of the cases available for the object.

#### 4. Another type of sentences containing a 'reflexive' predicate.

We should not overlook that there is another type of sentences containing a 'reflexive' predicate. In the examples treated above a resultant state is expressed by an oblique argument

in the illative or translative case. However, it is not true of the following sentences. That is:

- (21) Helsingi-n            Kallio-n                    perjantainen- $\phi$     räjähdys- $\phi$   
 Helsinki-GEN    Kallio district-GEN    Friday-NOM    explosion-NOM  
 joht-u-i            talouskaasu-sta.  
 lead-REFL-PST    cooking gas-ELA  
 The Friday's explosion in Kallio district of Helsinki was caused by cooking gas.

- (22) Ison-Britannia-n    EU-äänestykse-stä    aihe-utu-i            jyrkkä- $\phi$   
 Great Britain-GEN    EU vote-ELA            cause-REFL-PST    steep-NOM  
 pudotus- $\phi$     osakemarkkino-i-lla.  
 drop-NOM    stock market-PL-ADE  
 Steep drop in the stock market was caused by the EU vote of the Great Britain.

In these sentences (21)–(22) not an oblique argument but a nominative argument expresses a resultant state of the described situation. Moreover, a cause that leads to the result is indicated by an oblique argument in the relative case.

It is worth noting that these two sentences have some similarities with the resultative construction, which is called *tulosrakenne* in Finnish<sup>3</sup>. Take the following for example:

- (23) Perhee-n            toise-sta-kin            poja-sta    tul-i            kiekko-n  
 family-GEN    second-ELA-too    son-ELA    become-PST    discus-GEN  
 maailmanmestari- $\phi$ .  
 world champion-NOM  
 The second son of the family also became the discus world champion.

In this sentence the nominative argument refers to the status achieved by the referent of the relative argument and the achieved status can be considered to be a kind of resultant state. Moreover, this sentence can be paraphrased as follows:

- (24) Perhee-n            toinen- $\phi$ -kin            poika- $\phi$     tul-i            kiekko-n  
 family-GEN    second-NOM-too    son-NOM    become-PST    discus-GEN  
 maailmanmestari-ksi.  
 world champion-TRA  
 The second son of the family also became the discus world champion.

This sentence conveys almost the same meaning as the sentence (23) but the achieved status is expressed by an oblique argument in the translative case and the person who achieved the designated status is indicated in the nominative case.

These two examples (23)–(24) show that a resultant state caused by a change of state can be expressed in two different ways. It is important to note that the same can be applied to a resultant state that is described in sentences containing a 'reflexive' predicate. In the sentences (2)–(8), (10)–(13), (15), (18) and (19) it is indicated by an oblique argument, while in the sentences (21)–(22) an argument marked in the nominative case indicates a resultant state. What is described in these sentences is not necessarily a change of state indeed. But a resultant

state is always relevant to the described situation of these sentences, even when not a change of state but a causal relationship is described.

Thus, we can safely state that sentences containing a so-called 'reflexive' predicate have a parallel relationship with the resultative construction. This fact would also support the claim that the predicates in question are not really reflexive but rather resultative.

## 5. Concluding remarks

From what has been said above, the following three points have become clear:

- 1) The so-called reflexive suffix can be attached to the stem of an intransitive predicate.
- 2) Sentences containing a reflexive predicate express a resultant state of the described situation. Agentive participants are irrelevant to the meaning conveyed in these sentences.
- 3) Sentences containing a reflexive predicate have a parallel relation with the resultative construction, in which a resultant state is expressed.

On the basis of these observations, we can conclude that the so-called reflexive suffix is not really reflexive. The function this suffix serves is to express a resultant state of the described situation.

## Notes

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- 1 On the so-called reflexive suffixes of the Finnish language, see Hakulinen et al. (2004), Koivisto (1991), Kulonen-Korhonen (1985) and Siitonen (1999), for example. On the discussion about the derivation of reflexive predicates in general, see Koontz-Garboden (2009) and Levin & Rappaport-Hovav (1995), for example.
  - 2 Hurme, Raija, Riitta-Leena Malin & Olli Syväoja, 1984. *Uusi Suomi-englanti suursanakirja*. Porvoo: Werner Söderström Osakeyhtiö.
  - 3 On the relationship between sentences containing a reflexive predicate and those which can be classified as examples of the resultative construction, see Sakuma (2016). In the present paper, the term 'resultative construction' is used in a more restricted sense. It refers only to *tulosrakenne*, in which the source of a mutation is marked in the elative case.

## Abbreviations

ADE—adessive	ALL—allative	ELA—elative	GEN—genitive	ILL—illative
INE—inessive	INF—infinitive	NMLZ—nominalizer	NOM—nominative	PART—partitive
PASS—passive	PL—plural	PST—past	PTCP—participle	PX—possessive suffix
REFL—reflexive	SG—singular	TRA—translative		

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