

# Free reflexives: Reflexives without a sentence-internal antecedent

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## 1. Introduction

Unbound reflexives exist in Icelandic and Faroese in contexts where an “author” or a logophoric center has been established in the discourse, as has been discussed by Maling (1984) and Sigurðsson (1990) for Icelandic, and Barnes (1986) for Faroese. An example of this is given in (1) from Sigurðsson (1990):

(1) Formaðurinn<sub>i</sub> varð óskaplega reiður. Tillagan<sub>i</sub> væri svívirðileg (Ice.)  
*chairman.DEF become.PAST furiously angry proposal.DEF be.SUBJ outrageous*

og væri henni beint gegn sér<sub>i</sub> persónulega. Sér<sub>i</sub> væri sama...  
*and be.SUBJ it aimed against RFLX personally RFLX-DAT be.SUBJ indifferent*

‘The chairman<sub>i</sub> was furiously angry. The proposal was outrageous, and it was aimed against him(self)<sub>i</sub> personally. He (himself)<sub>i</sub> was indifferent...’

Here, the subject in the first sentence binds the two reflexives in the following two clauses. The main finite verbs are in the subjunctive mood in the two following sentences, and as we know, subjunctive marking is usually required for normal long-distance binding. The free reflexives in the example above thus seem to behave like regular long-distance reflexives in Icelandic, i.e. they can be described as logophoric reflexive pronouns. As logophoric reflexives they require an animate antecedent, and this antecedent is in some way the author or origin of the views in the following sentences. This type of logophoric reflexives seems to be rare or completely absent in the Mainland Scandinavian variants, though other types of free reflexives exist. Most notably, free reflexives with a generic interpretation are quite wide spread in Norwegian, especially among younger speakers, as discussed in Lødrup (2007). Further, in Western Jutland in Denmark, a possessive reflexive can have a non-clause mate antecedent that is not animate, though this possessive element may be more accurately analyzed as a regular pronoun, as we will see below.

## 2. Results

### 2.1 Nordic Syntactic Database (NSD)

In the ScanDiaSyn survey, the following two sentences were tested in Norway, Sweden and Finland. Both of them contain an unbound reflexive, a possessive reflexive in (2) and a complex object reflexive in (3), and in both cases, the reflexive has a generic reference, similar to *one (self)* in English.

(2) Sin egen hund er alltid best. (#123) (Nor. [11](#).)  
*RFLX.POSS OWN dog is always best*  
 ‘One’s own dog is always the best one.’

(3) Det som hender alle må en gang hende seg selv. (#122) (Nor.)  
*it REL happen everyone must one time happen RFLX SELF*  
 ‘What happens to everyone else, will eventually happen to one self.’







- (7) Trond<sub>i</sub> ville have at vi skulle snakke om si<sub>i</sub> søster. (W. Jut.)  
*Trond want.PAST have that we should talk.INF about RFLX.POSS sister.*  
 'Trond<sub>i</sub> wanted that we should talk about his<sub>i</sub> sister.'

It is thus possible that a new type of long distance anaphors has developed in the meeting between standard Danish possessive paradigm and the old Western Jutlandic system (i.e., a system that contains the unbound element *si(n)*).

## References

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### Web sites:

- Nordic Atlas of Language Structures (NALS) Journal: <http://www.tekstlab.uio.no/nals>  
 Nordic Dialect Corpus: <http://www.tekstlab.uio.no/nota/scandiasyn/index.html>  
 Nordic Syntax Database: <http://www.tekstlab.uio.no/nota/scandiasyn/index.html>

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[1] In the Swedish part of the survey, a different sentence was used for testing this phenomena: *Sitt eget hus är alltid tryggast* 'One's own house is always the safest one'.