

I. INTRODUCTION

Italian conveys reflexive and reciprocal meanings using the same form:

- (1) Alex e Bob **si** criticano
 Alex and Bob **si** criticize-3pl
 'Alex and Bob criticize themselves/ each other'

⇒ **Vagueness or ambiguity?**

DETERMINING VAGUENESS OR AMBIGUITY

► **Identity test** (Zwicky & Sadock 1973; Cruse 1999)

- (2) #Alex and Bob are wearing a **light** coat
 (if: Alex's coat is light colored and Bob's coat is light weight)
 → **ambiguity**

- (3) Alex and Bob are **children**
 (if: Alex is a girl and Bob is a boy)
 → **vagueness**

- (4) **???**Alex, Bob, Carl e Dan **si** criticano
 A B C and D **si** criticize-3pl
 (if: A and B criticize themselves and C and D criticize each other)

Do Italian *si*-construction allow this 'mixed' interpretation?
 Yes → vagueness
 No → ambiguity

► **Previous studies:** constructions that allow reflexive and reciprocal interpretations are claimed to allow a 'mixed' interpretation (thus to be *vague*) in Cheyenne (Murray 2004), Romance and German (Cable 2014).

II. PROPOSAL

- Italian, 'mixed' readings emerge with verbs that have a **lexical reflexive** entry: verbs like *shave* or *wash* which do not require the agent and the patient to coincide (see IIIa-b)
- 'Mixed' readings are not available with transitive verbs (see IV)
 → *si*-constructions are *ambiguous* between reflexive and reciprocal interpretations.

III. LEXICAL REFLEXIVITY

a. PASSIVE-COLLABORATIVE INTERPRETATIONS

Lexical reflexive verbs do not require the agent and the patient to coincide:

- (5) Alex shaves (5) Alex, Bob and Carl shave
 (6) Alex **si** rade (8) Alex, Bob e Carl **si** radono
 A **si** shave A B and C **si** shave
 'Alex shaves (himself)' 'A, B and C shave (themselves/each other)'

- the subject is shaved by an unspecified agent, while being collaborative = Passive Collaborative (**P-Co**)
- in a plural form, the P-Co reading holds for each individual denoted by the subject, thus allowing a 'mixed' reading

b. IDENTIFYING LEXICAL REFLEXIVES IN ITALIAN

► **Causative construction** (Doron & Rappaport Hovav 2009)

- (9) a. Ho fatto (***si**) criticare/ ammirare/ punire (***si**) Alex
 aux made criticize/ admire/ punish Alex
 'I caused Alex to be criticized / admired/punished'
- b. Ho fatto (***si**) radere/ lavare / depilare (***si**) Alex
 aux made shave / wash/ depilate Alex
 i. 'I caused Alex to be shaved/washed/depilated'
 ii. **'I caused Alex to shave/wash/depilate'**

V. CONCLUSIONS

- Empirical support for the proposal: only lexical reflexive verbs allow mixed interpretations in *si*-constructions
- The effect of lexical reflexivity could hold cross-linguistically, so it should be taken into account in further research.

REFERENCES

Cable, S. (2014). Reflexives, reciprocals and contrast. *Journal of semantics* ♦ Cruse, D. A. (1999). *Meaning in Language*. Oxford University Press ♦ Doron, E. & Hovav, M. R. (2009). A unified approach to reflexivization in Semitic and Romance. *Brill's Journal of Afroasiatic Languages and Linguistics* ♦ Murray, S. E. (2008). Reflexivity and reciprocity with(out) underspecification. In *Proceedings of Sinn und Bedeutung* ♦ Zwicky, A. M., & Sadock, J. M. (1973). Ambiguity tests and how to fail them. *Syntax and semantics*.

IV. QUESTIONNAIRE

TVJT, written stories accompanied by a sentence with a *si*-construction to be judged TRUE or FALSE

► materials

Two types of verbs:

- 5 **transitive** verbs: *votare* 'to vote', *ammirare* 'to admire', *criticare* 'to criticize', *punire* 'to punish', *premiare* 'to give a prize'.
- 5 **lexical reflexive** verbs: *lavare* 'to wash', *depilare* 'to epilate', *vestire* 'to dress up', *truccare* 'to apply make up', *pettinare* 'to comb'.

Two scenarios:

• **P-Co** scenario: a story with an individual A who has an action performed on herself by another person, while being collaborative.
 The story was accompanied by a sentence of the following form:
 'A **si** verb'.

• **'mixed'** scenario: a story with four individuals A, B, C and D, of which two are carrying out an action on themselves while the other two are carrying out an action on each other. The story was accompanied by a sentence of the following form:
 'A, B, C and D **si** verb'.

► participants

527 native Italian speakers, 373 selected (100% accuracy on fillers)

► procedure

- run online with LimeSurvey;
- each session contained 5 target and 10 filler items;
- between-subjects design: each participant exposed to each verb at most once and only in one scenario.

► results (acceptance in %)

