Abstract

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Structures that are neither quite active nor passive, or neither quite transitive nor intransitive, are often marked morphologically. In Swedish, the typical markers are reflexives and so-called deponents. The latter are formed by an s-suffix on the verb, which is also used in passives and derives historically from the reflexive sig. This article explores the inventory of reflexive and deponent constructions in Swedish.

Based on an investigation of some 400 reflexive verbs and 200 deponent verbs in a major Swedish dictionary, a Construction Grammar account of reflexives and deponents is presented. Approximately 30 reflexive and deponent constructions are identified and characterized according to formal, syntactic, and semantic properties. Together, these constructions cover a wide array of more or less transitive and more or less active functions, where the reflexive or deponent element typically assigns a Patient role with the subject and/or serves to relativize transitivity.

The constructions are typically semiproducive, neither fully general nor restricted to specific verbs, and the distinguishing characteristics cannot be ascribed to a single linguistic level but consist of a combination of phrasal, lexical, and morphemic features. As for the reflexive and deponent elements as such, these are analyzed as three different morphemic constructions, one reflexive pronoun and two s-suffixes (of which one is identical to the suffix employed in s-passives).

Keywords: construction, reflexive, deponent, transitivity, voice, diathesis, middle, Swedish.