

# ETHL Reflexive Data

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## Data

Many Indo-European languages use a reflexive pronoun derived from Proto-Indo-European *\*s(e)wé*, hence **S**-reflexive. Generally, this pronoun is used specifically for all persons (i.e. Russian) or just 3<sup>rd</sup> person (i.e. Latin).

- (1) a. Ya lyublyu sebya  
I love.1SG REFL  
"I love myself."  
b. On lyubit sebya  
he love.3SG SELF  
"He loves himself." [Russian]
- (2) a. \*Sē/ mē amō  
REFL/ me love.1SG  
"I love myself."  
b. Sē amat  
REFL love.3SG  
"He loves himself." [Latin]

Traditionally, and typologically, most languages exhibit a two way distinction in voice, active and passive, with the passive used to promote the object of a verb to the subject position.

- (3) English Active-Passive  
a. I teach the student. [Active]  
b. The student is taught (by me) [Passive]

Some languages, like Ancient Greek, have a middle voice, somewhere between the two.

- (4) Ancient Greek Active-Middle-Passive  
a. Tòn mathētén didáxō  
the.MASC.ACC student.ACC teach.1SG.FUT  
"I will teach the student." [Active]  
b. Ho mathētés (hup' emou) didakhthésomai  
the.MASC student (by me.GEN) teach.1SG.FUT.PASS  
"The student will be taught (by me)." [Passive]  
c. Tòn mathētén didáxomai  
the.MASC.ACC student.ACC teach.1SG.FUT.MID  
"I will teach the/my student (for my own benefit)." [Middle]

*It seems best to regard the middle as having been, in fact a **mediopassive** or **middle-passive** - capable of expressing either voice depending on the context.*

(Fortson 2011, 90)

A common use of the middle was in forming reflexive verbs. Generally these were unaccusatives (like verbs of grooming), and/or constructions with body parts.

- (5) a. Tēlémakhos... kheīras nipsámenos poliēs halòs eýkhet'  
Telemachus... hands.ACC wash.AOR.PTCP.MID grey.GEN seawater.GEN pray.3SG.IMPF.MID  
Athēnēi  
Athena.DAT

"Telemachus, having washed his (own) hands with grey sea water, prayed to Athena."

[Homeric Greek]

- b. Eṣa śṛṅgāni dódhuvac chíśīte yūthíyo vṛṣā  
this horns.ACC shaking sharpen-3SG.PRES.MID of.the.herd bull

"This one, the bull of the herd, sharpens his (own) horns, ever shaking them, ..."

[Vedic Sanskrit]

(Grestenberger 2018)

Some Indo-European languages can use the middle alone to form a reflexive construction, this is seen in Modern Greek with certain (unaccusative) verbs.

(6) Middle Reflexive

- a. Plénomai, gia na mi ksana - lerothó...  
wash.1SG.MID, for SUBJ NEG again - get.dirty.1SG.PASS  
"I **wash myself** so I don't get dirty again."

- b. Kathe méra prépei na ksurízomai  
every day must SUBJ shave.1SG.MID  
"I have to **shave myself** everyday."

- c. Oúte váfomai oúte stolízomai  
nor paint.1SG.MID nor adorn.1SG.MID  
"I neither **put makeup on myself** nor **adorn myself**."

[Modern Greek]

(From ELEXIS Greek Web 2019)

In Vedic Sanskrit, we see a new reflexive pronoun evolving from the word for body, reminiscent of the body part constructions we saw a moment ago.

This pronoun was used with the middle voice.

- (7) Ánu mr̥kṣīṣṭa tanvām duruktaiḥ  
PRVB injure.3SG.AOR.MID self.ACC slander.INSTR  
"May he injure himself with his slander."

[Vedic Sanskrit]

(Grestenberger 2018)

However, this verbal reflexive is by no means common throughout the language family, and indeed many languages use a pronoun to express the reflexive, with no special verbal form. These languages lack the middle voice, the mediopassive became a regular passive in Latin, and the Slavic languages evolved a periphrastic passive.

- (8) a. Senātor sē solum intellegit  
senator REFL only understand.3SG  
"The senator only understands himself."

[Latin]

- b. Prezident slishkom lyubit sebya  
president too.much love.3SG REFL  
"The president loves himself too much."

[Russian]

Ancient Greek used both strategies depending on the verb. The reflexive pronoun was formed through *autón* with a pronominal prefix which matched in person, number and gender with its antecedent.

- (9) a. Kai rhípsas tà argýria eîs tón naón, anekhōrēsen, kai apelthōn,  
and cast.down.PTCP the pieces.of.silver into the temple, leave.3SG.PRF, and go.away.PTCP,  
apēnksato (Ø)  
hang.3SG.AOR.MID (REFL)  
"So [Judas] threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself."  
b. Állous éśōsen. Héautòn ou dýnatai sōsai. Basileŷs Israēl estin  
others.ACC save.3SG.PRF. himself NEG be.able.SG save.INF(.ACT). king Israel.GEN is  
"He saved others, (but) he can't **save himself**! He's the king of Israel!" [Ancient Greek]  
(Greek New Testament 2010, Matthew 27:5&42)

Tocharian B makes use of both the middle and a reflexive pronoun to construct reflexive clauses. The reflexive in Tocharian B was *ṣaṇ-āṇm*, a compound of an S-reflexive with "soul".

- (10) a. Läkentaṣṣem klautkemtsa ṣaṇ-āṇm no sū  
 with.suffering.OBL manner.OBL.PERL REFL-soul.OBL but this  
 mrauskästrä  
 be.disgusted.CAUS.PRES.3SG.PRET.MID  
 "Because of the instances of suffering this one makes himself to feel and aversion [to the world]."
- b. Mā su nt = ālyekāśco saṇ-āṇm pällātär  
 not this EMPH = others.ALL REFL-soul.OBL praise.3SG.PRES.MID  
 "No-one praises himself before the others, then."
- [Tocharian B]  
 (Grestenberger 2018)

The early Indo-European reflexive strategies/constructions are given in (11).

- (11) a. Middle + ∅ Ancient Greek, Vedic Sanskrit  
 b. Middle + body (part) Ancient Greek, Vedic Sanskrit  
 c. Middle + S-reflexive Tocharian B  
 d. Active + S-reflexive Latin  
 e. Active + non-S-reflexive Ancient Greek, Prakrit

A logophoric distinction is still found Latin, and other languages, seen in (12).

- (12) Ille tamen cōfitētur plūs sē petere quam dēbeātur, sed satis super -  
 that.man however confess.3SG more **REFL** seek.INF than owe.3SG.SUBJ.PASS, but enough over -  
 que habēre dicit quod **sibi** ab arbitro tribuātur.  
 and have.INF say.3SG what **REFL.DAT** by arbiter.ABL award.3SG.SUBJ.PASS  
 "However, that man confesses that he is seeking more than is owed, but he says that he has enough  
 and more than enough of what is awarded to him by the arbiter."  
 [Latin]  
 (Cic. Q. Rosc. 11)

But what was likely the case is that the middle was probably used more than the active in such constructions.

- (13) a. \*Swé wéydseto/ wéydset  
 REFL see.3SG.PST.MID/ see.3SG.PST.ACT  
 He saw/wanted to see himself
- b. \*Behgúm dégeto  
 arm.ACC burn.3SG.PST.MID  
 "He burnt his (own) arm."
- c. \*Woséytor  
 dress.3SG.MID  
 He dresses himself
- [Reconstructed PIE]  
 (Based on Beekes 2011)

The evolutionary path of the reflexives in languages that retained the middle is something like (14).

- (14) Middle (+ PRN) → Middle + PRN and/or *self* → Middle/Active + (PRN-)*self* → Active + (PRN-)*self*

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