



Axel Holvoet

Interesting middle-voice grams in Baltic

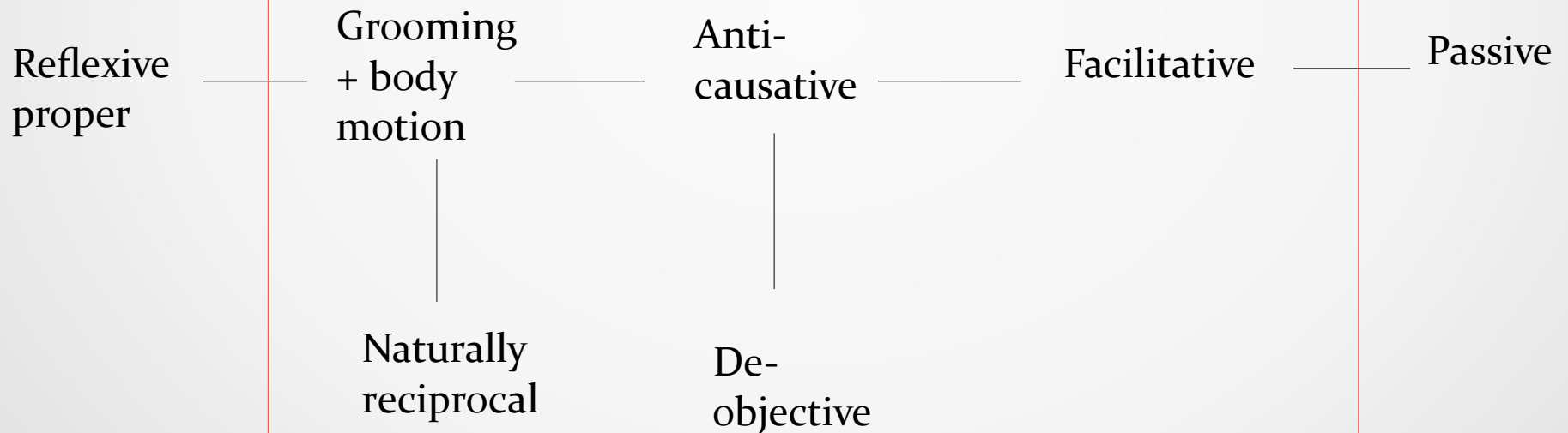
Deobjectives, deaccusatives and ...

Academia Grammaticorum Salensis

Tertia Decima

Salos, 5 08 2016

The Middle Voice



The middle voice

- *je me vois dans le miroir* (reflexive)
'I see myself in the mirror'
- *je me rase devant le miroir* (grooming / body motion)
'I shave in front of the mirror'
- *je me suis assis à la table*
'I sat down at the table.'
- *la porte s'ouvre* (anticausative)
'The door opens'
- *le fromage se tranche facilement* (facilitative)
'The cheese slices easily'
- *l'allemand s'enseigne partout* (passive)
'German is taught everywhere'

Why 'middle voice'

- The middle voice is a semantic domain encompassing many grams such as anticausative, facilitative etc.
- The term 'middle voice' is convenient in many respects, e.g. it allows us to characterize forms that contain an originally reflexive marker but are not reflexive any more, cf.

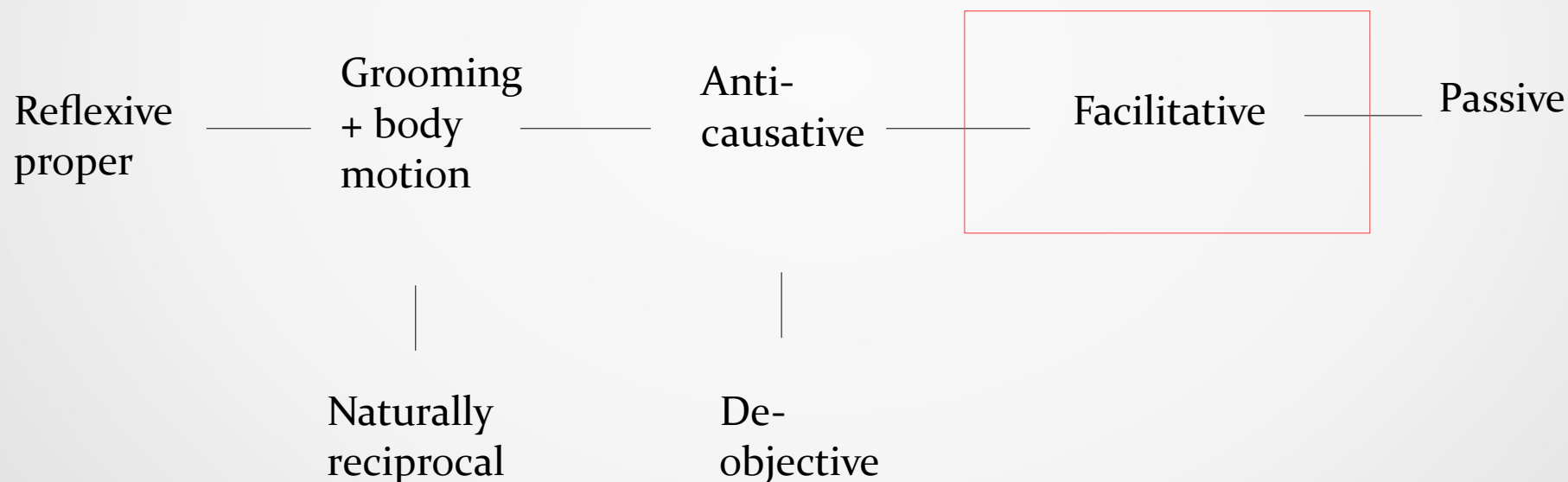
Russian

<i>*Ja</i>	<i>vižus'</i>	<i>v</i>	<i>zerkal-e.</i>
I.NOM	see.PRS.1SG-RFL	in	mirror-LOC

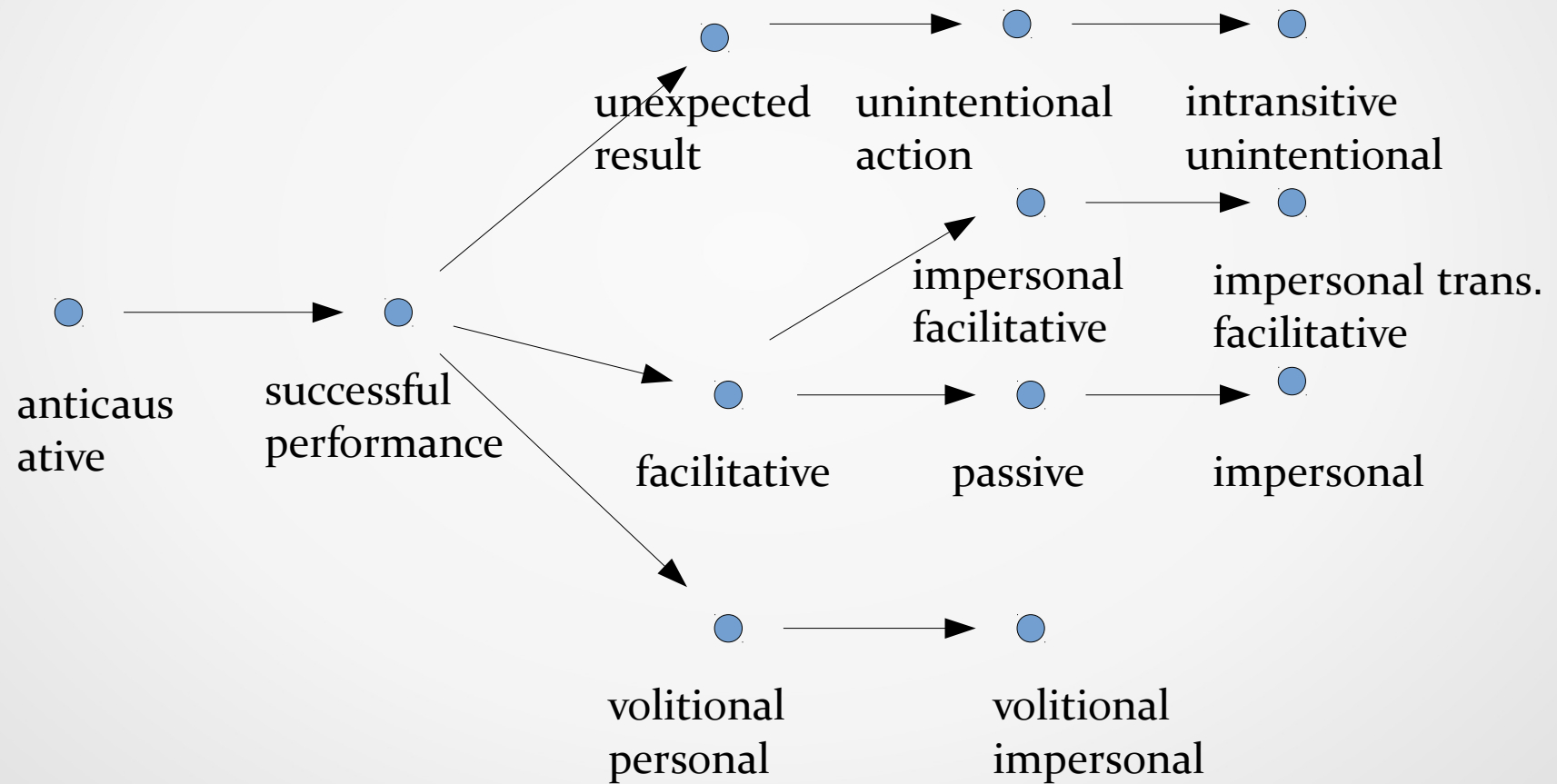
Intended meaning: 'I see myself in the mirror.'

The Middle Voice

Holvoet, Axel, Marta Grzybowska & Agnieszka Rembiałkowska. 2016. Middle voice reflexives and argument structure in Baltic. In: Axel Holvoet & Nicole Nau, eds., *Voice and Argument Structure in Baltic*, Amsterdam-Philadelphia: Benjamins, 2015, 181–209.

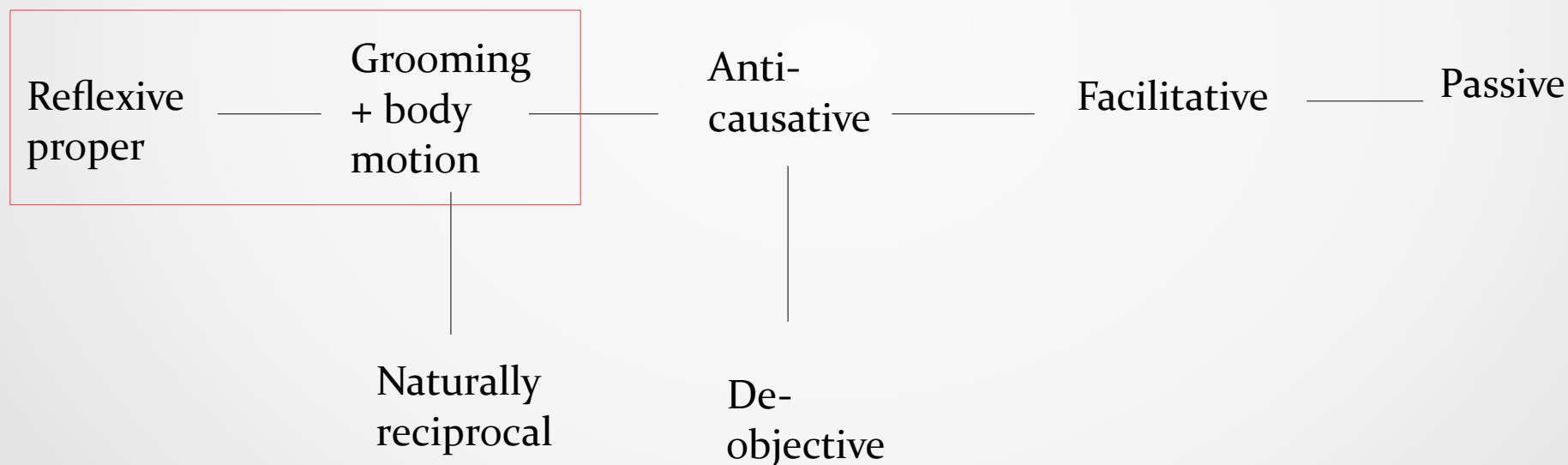


Zooming in on the facilitative middle



Next time I will talk about ...

Axel Holvoet. Forthcoming. Reflexive permissives and the middle voice. To appear in: *Baltic Linguistics* 7



Permissives and curatives

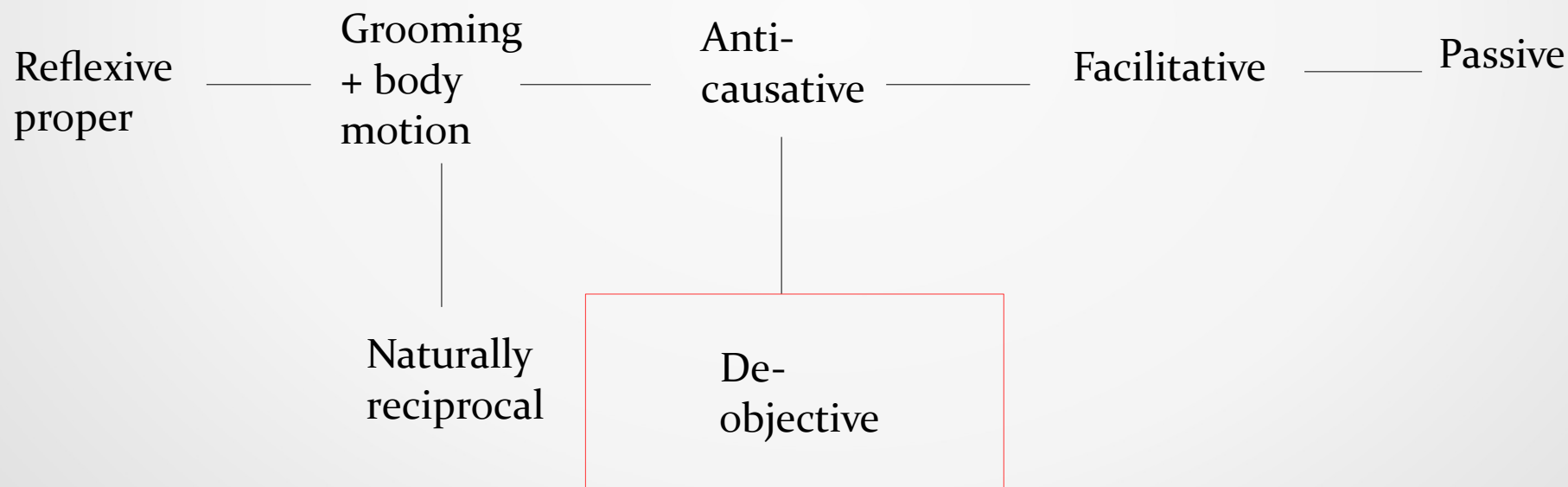
Permissive
Latv. *ļaujas
pierunāties*
'allows himself to
be persuaded'

Curative
Lith. *nusiskuto
pas kirpėjā* 'he
had a shave at
the barber's'

Reflexive
proper

Grooming

In this talk I will concentrate on ...



Deobjectives

The classroom example:

Russian

Sobak-a *kusaet-sja*
dog-NOM.SG bite.PRS.3SG-RFL

‘The dog bites.’

- Patient suppressed
- Agent treated as intransitive subject (a marked option in languages with ergative alignment)

Terminology

- Antipassive: has associations with voice and ergativity (the antipassive is a mirror image of the passive, backgrounding P rather than A; in a language with ergative alignment the antipassive replaces the default alignment P/S with A/S)
- Terms evoking no associations with voice:
 - Deobjective
 - Objectal suppressive (Mel'čuk)
 - Depatientive (Lichtenberk)
 - Absolute (absolute RV in Geniušienė)
 - Deaccusative—refers to constructions where the object is not suppressed but assumes oblique marking

The object of this talk

- I will concentrate on middle-voice reflexives whose marking has a deobjective or deaccusative (antipassive) function
- I will mainly base myself on Latvian data
- I will attempt to explore the conceptual links between objective and deaccusative reflexive-marked verbs and other types of middle-voice reflexives.

What should not count as deobjectives

- Say (2004) applies the notion of antipassive to

Ja zažmuri-l glaz-a
I screw.up-PST.M.SG eye-ACC.PL

Ja zažmuri-l-sja
I screw.up-PST.M.SG-RFL
'I screwed up my eyes.'

- He also posits a productive (quasi-inflectional) 'antipassive' type):

Vy tam sami zavernetes'
2PL.NOM there self-NOM.PL wrap.up.FUT.2PL-RFL
'Will you wrap up your purchases yourself?' (lit. 'will you wrap yourself up?')

Reflexives and metonymy

- However, reflexives and ‘grooming-type’ middles often involve metonymy:

He buttoned himself up.

= He buttoned up his coat.

Latv.

Es saķemmējo-s.

I comb.PST.SG-RFL

‘I combed my hair.’

- Some forms of metonymy are widespread in reflexives, esp. in the sphere of inalienable possession (body parts, items of clothing)

Reflexives and metonymy

- Some extensions yield comical effects and can be used only in a jocular fashion:

Polish

Powieś się w szafi-e.

Hang.IMP.2SG RFL in cupboard-LOC

‘Hang yourself (i.e., your coat) in the cupboard.’

What should not count as deobjectives

- Russian verbs like *zavernut'sja* 'wrap up one's own purchases' also exploit extensions of the metonymic relation
- True antipassives/deobjectives should involve patients that are conceptually distinct from the agent.
- 'Metonymic' reflexives or middles (i.e. reflexives and middles reflecting in which the metonymic relation is stretched) are a transition to deobjectives (antipassives), but are not in themselves deobjective.

grooming ————— extended ————— deobjective
metonymic
relation

Deobjectives: some widespread views

- Deobjectives are sometimes said to be inherently habitual: cf. Haspelmath & Müller-Bardey on the ‘potential deobjective’: “potential deobjectives [...] occur only in irrealis or generic sentences, never in specific realis sentences”.
- This is probably an undue generalization, cf. Geniušienė (1987): “Absolute RVs imply either an indefinite [...] or generalized [...] Patient, which results in the development of the modal potential meaning in absolute RVs when they come to denote a habitual activity as a particular permanent characteristic of the Agent”.

Characterizing use

- There might be a statistical preponderance of individual-level and kind-level uses over stage-level uses, but the latter also occur:

On-a *bryka-l-a-s'*, *carapa-l-a-s'*, *kusa-l-a-s'*,
3-NOM.SG.F kick-PST-F-RFL scratch-PST-F-RFL bite-PST-F-RFL
pytajas' *osvobodi-t'* *golov-u*, *zaža-t-uju*
try-CVB disengage-INF head-ACC.SG squeeze-PPP-ACC.SG.F
pod *myšk-oj* *Magd-y*.
under place.under.arm-INS PN-GEN

'She kicked, scratched and bit, trying to wriggle free her head which Magda held squeezed under her arm.' (N. N. Španov, NKRJa)

Characterizing use

Kind-level use, Latvian

<i>Garāž-ā</i>	<i>lamāja-s</i>	<i>pat</i>
garage-LOC.SG	swear.PRS.3RFL	even
<i>ieturēt-āk-ie</i>	<i>cilvēk-i,</i>	
restrained-COMP-NOM.PL.M.DEF	person-NOM.PL	

[*bez šīm burvestībām, jūs neko neatskrūvēsiet*].

‘In the garage even the most restrained people swear—without these magical words one cannot even turn a screw loose.’

Stage-level use, Latvian

<i>Krievij-as</i>	<i>pārstāv-is</i>	<i>Eirovīzij-as</i>
Russia-GEN.SG	representative-NON.SG	Eurovision-GEN
<i>tiešraid-ē</i>	<i>rupji</i>	<i>lamājā-s.</i>
live.broadcast-LOC.SG	coarsely	swear.PST.3-RFL

‘Russia’s representative swore coarsely during a live Eurovision broadcast.’

Characterizing use

A language may also have mainly the stage-level use:

Kindergarten Polish

<i>Proszę Pani,</i>	<i>on</i>	<i>się</i>	<i>kopie</i>	<i>(przezywa...)</i>
Miss	he	RFL	kick.PRS.3SG	call.names.PRS.3SG
'Miss, Miss, he's kicking / calling names ...'				

Characterizing use

- “The use of a prototypical transitive verb entails that the event denoted by that verb causes a change of state in the object participant [...] The semantic function of the antipassive is to cancel such an entailment” (Polinsky 2004)
- The potential character of the deobjective (antipassive) is therefore entirely on the side of the object: deobjectives are noncommittal as to the actual affectedness of an object.
- The notion that deobjectives must be ‘potential’ also with regard to the subject argument’s agency rests on a misunderstanding.
- A statistical preponderance of habitual readings seems to be typical of a certain class of verb describing physical behaviour; they are used in describing a person’s (animal’s) character.

Activity uses

- With other lexical groups the reflexive derivation achieves different effects, e.g. certain Latvian verbs oscillating between accomplishment and activity verbs are atelicized, the object is backgrounded and the verb refers to a person's activity within a socially sanctioned occupation:

velēt 'wash (clothes on washing-board)' → *velēties* 'do one's washing'

Ķēķ-ī *bija* *vann-ā* *samērk-t-as* *drēb-es:*
kitchen-LOC be.PST.3 tub-LOC soak-PPP-NOM.PL.F clothes-NOM

māt-e *šodien velē-sie-s,* *dzīvos* *pa āru.*

Mother-NOM today launder-FUT₃-RFL live-FUT₃ outdoors

'In the kitchens clothes have been soaked in a tub: **Mother is going to do her laundering today**, she will be busy outdoors.' (Saulietis)

Activity uses

lāpīt ‘mend (clothes)’ → *lāpīties* ‘do one’s mending’

Miz-as *māt-e* *sēdēja* *pie* *maz-a*
PN-GEN.SG mother-NOM.SG sit.PST.3 at small-GEN.SG.M
gald-iņ-a.. *un* *lāpījā-s.*
Table-DIM-GEN.SG and mend.PST.3-RFL

‘Mother Miza was sitting at a little table and was doing her mending.’
(Saulietis, cited from LLVV)

- Such uses illustrate a possible shift from the metonymic to the deobjective type: ‘mend one’s own clothes’ (P belongs to the agent’s personal sphere) → ‘do one’s mending’ (activity within the agent’s habitual sphere of occupation)

grooming → extended metonymy → deobjective

Deaccusatives

- Deaccusative reflexives (Geniušienė's term) have overt objects but the usual accusative marking is replaced with oblique marking.
- Geniušienė's examples refer to surprisingly idiosyncratic instances like
Elle moquait tout le monde.
Elle se moquait de tout le monde.
Sie fürchteten den Wolf.
Sie fürchteten sich vor dem Wolf.
- I will restrict my discussion to reflexive verbs
 - Denoting physical actions
 - With prepositional marking clearly reflecting a type of thematic role (spatial or instrumental)corresponding to English constructions like *plough away at : plough.*

Local deaccusatives

- The object is marked as a PP with prepositions like *pa* ‘over, along, through’, *ap* ‘about, around’, *pie* ‘near, at’:

Aiz gara laika šķirstīju dažād-us vec-us
out of boredom leaf.PST.1SG various-ACC.PL old-ACC.PL

žurnāl-us...

weekly-ACC.PL

‘Out of boredom I was leafing all kind of old weeklies.’

[*Mana muzikālā garlaicība ir nonākusi līdz tam, ka es tagad*]

šķirstos pa visād-iem the best albums of 2011 (so far)
leaf-PRS.1-RFL through various-DAT.PL.M

list-iem

list-DAT.PL

‘My musical boredom has reached such a degree that I now leafing about in all kinds of ‘best albums of 2011 (so far)’ lists’

Common features

- Backgrounding of an unidentified patient and low affectedness of an identified patient (an obligatory argument) are clearly distinct features, but both are among Hopper and Thompson's features of low semantic transitivity.
- Cf. Cooreman (1994, 67): "The antipassive which is used for semantic /pragmatic reasons is best described as indicating a certain degree of difficulty with which an effect stemming from an action by A on an identifiable O can be recognized"
- This type is therefore conceptually related to the deobjective type but differs from it by reintroducing an object (an obligatory argument of predication), though with oblique marking reflecting ineffectual agency.

metonymic → deobjective → deaccusative

A further type

An interesting type is observed with surface-contact (impact) verbs. They show alternative constructions:

Ag (NOM) Instr (PP) Pat (ACC)

Ag (NOM) Them (ACC) Loc (PP)

He hit the ball with his stick.

He hit his stick against the fence.

Viņš sit bumbiņ-u ar nūju.

He hit.PRS₃ ball-ACC with stick-ACC

Viņš sit nūj-u pret led-u.

He hit.PRS₃ stick-ACC against ice-ACC

A further type

- A difference appears when the instrument/medium becomes subject:

Branches hit against the window.

<i>Zar-i</i>	<i>sita-s</i>	<i>pret</i>	<i>log-u</i>
branch-NOM.PL	hit.PRS ₃ -RFL	against	window-ACC.SG

- At first sight, such a reflexive derivation, in which the agent is eliminated from argument structure and a patient/theme become subject, is reminiscent of the anticausative derivation.

<i>Ezers</i>	<i>savus</i>	<i>viļņus</i>	<i>sita</i>	<i>pret krastu.</i>
Lake-NOM	RPO-ACC.PL	wave-ACC.PL	hit-PST. ₃	against shore

‘The lake hits its waves against the shore.’

<i>Viļņ-i</i>	<i>sitās</i>	<i>pret krastu.</i>
Wave-NOM.PL	hit.PST. ₃ -RFL	against shore

‘The waves hit against the shore.’

A further type

- However, this derivation is probably not anticausative: ‘surface-contact verbs’, as opposed to ‘change-of-state’ verbs, derive no anticausatives (Fillmore 1970):

the window broke (change-of-state verb)

**the window hit* (surface-contact verb)

- Of course, Fillmore means there is no anticausative derivation putting the object of impact into subject position. But an anticausative derivation putting the medium of impact into subject position would also be unexpected: the medium of impact moves but this is non-translocational motion; there is no change of state (in the sense of a change in location) as in a typical anticausative.

A further type

- Structures with the medium of impact in subject position, as in *The branches hit the roof*, do not normally result from a syntactic operation that could be compared to the anticausative.
- Languages that use reflexive marking for anticausatives do not have reflexive forms here:

Polish

Gałązk-a *uderzyła* (**się*) *o* *okno.*
twig-NOM.SG hit-PST-F.SG RFL against window.ACC

- So could the reflexive derivation be deaccusative?

A further type

A deaccusative interpretation would imply a derivation of the type

?*Zar-i* *sit* *log-u*.
branch-NOM.PL hit.PRS.3 window-ACC.SG

‘Branches hit the window.’

→ *Zar-i* *sita-s* *pret* *log-u*.
branch-NOM.PL hit.PRS.3-RFL against window-ACC.SG

‘Branches hit against the window’

- The first construction, however, though probably not impossible, is hardly used.

A further type

- This pattern occurs with other verbs, e.g. *skalot* ‘rinse, flush; wash, flow over’:

Viņš skalo trauk-us ar ūden-i.
he rinse.PRS.3 dish-ACC.PL with water-ACC

‘He rinses the dishes with water.’

Ūden-s skalo krast-us.
water-NOM rinse.PRS.3 bank-ACC.PL

‘The water washes the banks.’

Ūden-s skaloja-s ap krast-iem.
water-NOM wash.PRS.3-RFL about bank-DAT.PL

‘The water washes the banks.’

A distinct type?

- Even if it is possible to describe reflexives like *skaloties* as deaccusatives deriving from the varieties with the instrument / medium as subject, it should be noted that
 - There is no idea of ineffectual agency, and indeed no agency at all;
 - Emphasis shifts to an instrument/medium and its spatial relationship to the object of impact;
 - Usually there are no constructions with animate agent subjects alongside them, though there are exceptions (e.g. *kāds dauzās pie durvīm* ‘sb is banging at the door’ : *viļņi dauzās pret krastu* ‘waves bang against the shore’)
- A distinct type—deagentive-deaccusative—?

A distinct type?

- Compared to transitive verbs involving surface contact, the operation is agent-removing:

V Ag (NOM) Them (ACC) Loc (PP)
(*Sit nūju pret ledu* ‘sb hits the stick against the ice’)

V-RFL --- Them (NOM) Loc (PP)
(*Nūja sitas pret ledu* ‘The stick hits against the ice’)

- Compared to intransitive verbs involving surface contact, the type is deaccusative:

V Them (NOM) Loc (ACC)
(*Ūdens skalo krastu* ‘Water washes the shore’)

V-RFL Them (NOM) Loc (PP)
(*Ūdens skalojas ap krastu* ‘Water washes the shore’)

More examples

slaucīt ‘sweep, towel dry’

slaucīties ‘towel oneself dry’

slaucīties ‘sweep (along sth)’

slauka

sweep.PRS.3

rokas

hand-ACC.PL

dvielī

towel-LOC.SG

Pupi viņām karājās starp priekškājām

un ejot gandrīz slaucījās gar zemi.

and walk-CVB almost sweep.PST.3-RFL along ground-ACC

‘The dugs hung between their fore feet, and often reached almost to the ground as they walked.’ (from the Latvian translation of *Gulliver’s Travels* by A. Johansons)

More examples

mazgāt ‘wash’

mazgāties ‘wash (oneself)’

mazgāties ‘wash, flow over sth’

Ausm-a *mazgājā-s* *ap* *māju*
daybreak-NOM wash.PST.3-RFL about house-GEN.PL
pakš-iem.

corner-DAT.PL

‘The (light of) daybreak washed the corners of the houses.’

(Jānis Veselis, *Tīrumu ļaudis*, 1928)

Link to anticausatives

- The medium-deaccusative is not strictly anticausative as it does not denote a change of state;
- As an agent-removing device it is related to the anticausative, but differs from it in several crucial respects;
- An intermediate type between the deagentive-deaccusative and the anticausative can be found in verbs of filling and covering, often described as converse reflexives (Maskaliūnienė 2015, Wiemer & Grzybowska 2015).

Filling and covering verbs

Saul-e *piepilda* *istab-u* *ar* *gaism-u.* (1)
sun-NOM fill.PRS.3 room-ACC with light-ACC.3

‘The sun fills the room with light.’

Gaism-a *piepilda* *istab-u.* (2)
light-NOM fill.PRS.3 room-ACC

‘Light fills the room.’

Istab-a *piepildā-s* *ar* *gaism-u.* (3)
room-NOM fill.PRS.3-RFLwith light-ACC

‘The room fills with light.’

- The converse relation holds between (2) and (3), but (2) is not relevant to the interpretation of the reflexive derivation, for which the comparandum is (1)

The link to deagentive deaccusatives

- Deagentive deaccusatives and reflexive filling-covering verbs both derive from structures denoting dispersed motion of a medium over a surface/space, cf.

	<i>skalo</i>	<i>kāj-as</i>	<i>ar</i>	<i>ūdeni</i>
	rinses	foot-ACC.PL	with	water
<i>ūdens</i>	<i>skalo</i>	<i>kāj-ās</i>		
water-NOM	rinses	foot-ACC.PL		
	<i>piepilda</i>	<i>tvertn-i</i>	<i>ar</i>	<i>ūdeni</i>
	fills	tank-ACC.SG	with	water
<i>ūdens</i>	<i>piepilda</i>	<i>tvertn-i</i>		
water-NOM	fills	tank-ACC.SG		

The link to deagentive deaccusatives

- The difference consists in that filling-covering verbs are characterized by a holistic entailment, i.e. the dispersed motion leads to the impact object becoming completely full/covered;
- This holistic entailment transforms a surface-contact predicate into a change-of-state predicate and enables the object of impact, now an incremental theme, to become a subject in a kind of anticausative derivation.
- The derivation is still not typically causative as it reflects a valency decrease $3 \rightarrow 2$ rather than $2 \rightarrow 1$, unless one assumes that the 'filler' argument oscillates between argument and adjunct status, as suggested by Jackendoff 1990 (which seems an attractive explanation as it provides an account for other 'converse reflexives' as well).

The link to deaccusatives

Mamma skalo traukus ar ūdeni.
Mum rinses the dishes with water

Saule pilda istabu ar gaismu
The sun fills the room with light

Ūdens skalo krastu
Water washes the shore

Gaisma pilda istabu
Light fills the room

?

Istaba pildās ar gaismu
The room fills with light

Conceptual links

