Reflexive markers in Latvian from typological perspective

Traditionally, it is considered that reflexive markers in the Latvian language are the final -s of verbs (mazgāties-s ‘wash oneself’) and in dialects there are also mentioned the elements of prefix that stand between a verb prefix and root (e.g., Couronian subdialects of the Middle Dialect sa-sa-runāt (Standard Latvian sarunātie-s) ‘talk’).

If the system of the Latvian language reflexive markers is viewed from the angle of typology, it should be acknowledged that the system goes beyond the light or the affixation markers of reflexivity i.e. the reflexive final affix -s. The Latvian language possesses the heavy or lexical markers (pronouns sevi ‘oneself’, sev ‘for oneself’) and also the super heavy or double lexical marker (pronoun pats,-i ‘self’ and pronoun sevi ‘oneself’ (or sev ‘for oneself’)). In addition, each of these marker types displays several variations. According to Haiman (1983), Kemmer (1993), Enger& Nesset (1999) the following system of reflexive markers in Latvian can be proposed (each of these marker types displays several variations; on their semantics see also Geniušienė (1987)):

1) **light markers**
   a) post-positive reflexive affix -s (irrespective of the presence or lack of the prefix)

(1) mazgāties-s ‘wash oneself’
    apsietie-s priekšautu ‘to put an apron round oneself’

   b) prepositive reflexive affix -sa- (-si-, -s-) between prefix and root (in Latvian is used only in the Middle Dialect, Couronian subdialects and the High Latvian Dialect)

(2) nuo-sa-mazgāju ‘washed myself’ (Standard Latvian nomazgājo-s)
    pa-sa-vērt ‘to look at’ (Standard Latvian pavēro-s)

   c) the combination of two affixes – prepositional and post positional – -sa- (-si-, -s-)
   ... -s (is used in Latvian only in the Couronian subdialects of the Middle Dialect and in the High Latvian Dialect)
(3) pa-sa-priecātie-s ‘enjoy oneself a bit/have some fun’ (Standard Latvian papriečājo-s)
ap-sa-rauduorī-s ‘break into tears’ (Standard Latvian apraudājo-s)

2) **heavy markers**

a) the combination of the verb and the reflexive pronoun sevi (direct object)

(4) Epazīstu sevi
I know.PRS.1 myself.ACC
‘I know myself’

b) the combination of the verb and the reflexive pronoun sev (indirect objet)

(5) Es ticu sev
I believe.PRS.1 myself.DAT
‘I believe in myself’

3) **superheavy markers**

a) uncorrelated reflexive markers

a₁) the combination of the verb, the pronoun pats,-i and the reflexive pronoun sevi
(direct object)

(6) Es pazīstu pats sevi
I know.PRS.1 self.NOM.M myself.ACC
‘I know myself’

a₂) the combination of the verb, the pronoun pats,-i and the reflexive pronoun sev
(indirect objet)

(7) Es ticu pats sev
I believe.PRS.1 self.NOM.M myself.DAT
‘I believe myself’

b) correlated reflexive markers

b₁) verb + reflexive pronoun sevi + pronoun pašu (both in accusative; direct
object)

(8) Es pazīstu sevi pašu
I know.

‘I know myself’

b2) verb + pronoun pašam (M), pašai (F) + reflexive pronoun sev (both in dative; indirect object)

(9) Es ticu pašam sev
I believe.PRS.1 self.DAT.M myself.DAT
‘I believe myself’

In the examples (6)-(7), the pronoun pats/pati ‘self’ agrees with the subject in gender and number. In Latvian the definite pronoun pats/pati ‘self’ may also agree with the (direct or indirect) object taking the accusative or dative case and shifting the word order to the pronouns (examples (8)-(9)) (Kalnača & Lokmane 2012).

Light (examples (1)-(3)) and heavy (examples (4)-(5)) reflexive markers are cognate in Latvian as they are ethymologically related. Super heavy markers (examples (6)-(9)) are non-cognated and can also be in an agreement with the heavy reflexivity marker in accusative (example (8)) or dative (example (9)) case. Heavy and superheavy reflexive markers represent reflexivization strategies of a minor grammatical importance.

The proposed typological description of reflexive markers in Latvian can be considered as a linguistic novelty.

References