*Mihaela Miron-Fulea*[1]

# Reflexive Constructions: Theoretical Aspects and Suggestions for Application

Abstract*: Reflexive constructions represent one of the major areas of the Romanian grammar, serving as fundamentals of the syntactic theory, whether the verb, the sentence, or the structure and conditions of enunciation are concerned.*

*Starting from the empirical observation that the dynamics of the linguistic phenomena cannot be adequately accounted for through a too static and analytical approach, the present paper is concerned with the applied study of the reflexive in Romanian. This orientation allows for a correct approach to issues related to the rapports between various usages and the relationships between reflexive and non-reflexive constructions.*

*Our presentation is exclusively concerned with constructions in which the reflexive form bears a reflexive meaning (i.e. the action done by the subject is oriented towards the subject). Accordingly, we do not address here passive non-pronominal reflexives, passive impersonal and impersonal reflexives, where the reflexive pronoun acts respectively as a passive, passive impersonal (within the passive voice) and impersonal marker.*

Key words: *reflexive construction, reflexive voice, active voice, intrinsically reflexive pronouns, reflexive-pronominal construction*

## 1. On account of the obligatory vs. non-obligatory occurrence of the pronominal component, Romanian reflexive constructions may be grouped into two broad categories: personal constructions with obligatory reflexive and reflexive pronominal constructions.

### 1.1. Personal Constructions with Obligatory Reflexive –

where the occurrence of the 'reflexive' carrier in the accusative or in the dative is the mandatory condition for the actualization of the lexical meaning of the verb. The paradigm of the reflexive pronoun is given below:

[1] Ovidius University of Constanța, Romania

BDD-A3729 © 2012 Ovidius University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 17:58:53 UTC)

| Reflexive pronoun in the accusative | | | Reflexive pronoun in the dative | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pers. | stressed forms | unstressed forms | stressed forms | unstressed forms |
| *1st pers. sg.* | *mă* | *-m* | *îmi* | *mi-* |
| *2nd pers.sg.* | *te* | *-* | *îți* | *ți-* |
| *3rd pers .sg.* | *se* | *-s* | *își* | *și-* |
| *1st pers.pl.* | *ne* | *-* | *ne* | *-* |
| *2nd pers.pl.* | *vă* | *-v* | *vă* | *v-* |
| *3rd.pers.pl.* | *se* | *-s* | *își* | *și-* |

**Observations:**

Owing to the mandatoriness of the reflexive context, these verbs are also known in the literature (in *GALR*:2005) as *intrinsically reflexive verbs* so as to signal the interdependence between the verb and the clitic reflexive pronoun.

Since reflexivity is inherent to the verb, such constructions are neutral with respect to the semantic-syntactic opposition between the reflexive and the non-reflexive.

The following classes of verbs belong to the obligatorily reflexive category:

a. Exclusively reflexive verbs, e.g. *a se afilia (to affiliate oneself), a se aventura (to venture),*[2] *a se bosumfla (to sulk), a se îmbulzi (to throng), a-și închipui (to fancy/imagine), a se îngâmfa (to put on airs), a se lamenta (to wail), a se lăcomi (to be greedy), a se opinti (to strain), a se posomorî (to sadden), a se preta (to lend oneself to), a se răzgândi (to change one's mind), a se recrea (to relax), a se sfii (to shy at; shy away from), a se strădui (to endeavour), a se tolăni (to recline), a se văicări (to wail, to lament), a se zbate (to struggle, to strain),* etc.

**Observations:**

Within this subclass there exist verbs whose reflexive form either implies a reciprocal meaning as well *(a se alia (to ally oneself to), a se ciorovăi (to wrangle), a se ciondăni (to squabble), a se împrieteni (to befriend), a se învecina (to live by), a se înfrăți (to unite), a se sfădi (to quarrel), a se solidariza (to support)*), or is intrinsically impersonal without any reflexive meaning at all (*a se cuveni (to behove), a se întâmpla (to happen), a (i) se urî (to be sick and tired*).

[2] Quite understandably, only a few English verbs are used reflexively with the meaning of their Romanian counterparts.



BDD-A3729 © 2012 Ovidius University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 17:58:53 UTC)

b. Verbs with both reflexive and non-reflexive occurrences, with ensuing differences in meaning. The semantic difference between the two lexemes is formally signalled by the presence or absence of the clitic reflexive pronoun in the accusative or the dative, whose reflexive meaning also helps disambiguate the case.

We can notice the way in which the unstressed (short) reflexive pronoun actualizes a different meaning from the one of the corresponding non-reflexive verb in the following examples:

- *a accentua* (to stress: 'to give extra force to a word or syllable when saying it; (fig.) to emphasize') – *a se accentua* (to intensify);

- *a afirma* (to assert: 'to state clearly and firmly') – *a se afirma* (to assert sth: 'to make other people recognize your right or authority'; to make a name for oneself);

- *a afla* (to learn, to hear; to find out) – *a se afla* (to find oneself in a particular position; to be; to lie somewhere);

- *a ajunge* (to arrive) – *a se ajunge* (to succeed in life).

### 1.1.1. Syntactic Patterns

#### 1) Structures with the pronominal form in the accusative

The verbs followed obligatorily by a reflexive in the accusative are always intransitive, i.e. they cannot co-occur with another accusative structure apart from the reflexive (in accordance with the principle that a verb cannot select the same case twice, but only two different cases):

**a) Verb – Subject – Prepositional object**

*a se abține (de la ceva) (to abstain oneself from); a se acomoda (cu ceva) (to adjust oneself to); a se baza (pe ceva/pe cineva) (to rely on sb/sth); a se bizui (în, pe ceva/cineva) (to trust in sb/sth); a se codi (de la ceva) (to shrink from sth); a se erija (în ceva) (to pose as sth); a se eschiva (de la ceva) (to prevaricate); a se înfrupta (din ceva) (to treat oneself to); a se milogi (de cineva) (to beg sb); a se mândri (cu ceva/cineva) (to pride oneself in sb/sth); a se revanșa (față de cineva) (to requite sb); a se sinchisi (de ceva, cineva) (to care sb/sth; to heed); a se teme (de ceva/cineva) (to fear, to dread sb/sth); a se afișa (cu cineva) (to go out with sb); a se alege (cu ceva/cineva) (to be left with sb/sth); a se ocupa (de*



BDD-A3729 © 2012 Ovidius University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 17:58:53 UTC)

*ceva/cineva) (to deal with sb/sth); a se pricepe (la ceva) (to be conversant with sth); a se pronunța (despre, în legătură cu ceva) (to give/state one's opinion on sth)* etc.

**b) Verb – Subject – Indirect object (in the dative)**

*a se deda (cuiva) (to devote oneself to sb); a se jura (cuiva) (to swear to sb)* etc.

**c) Verb – Subject – Adverbial**

*Unde și când m-am ivit în lumină, nu știu /din umbră mă ispitesc singur să cred/ că lumea este o încântare'*
(*I don't know where and when I was born into the light / from the shadow I tempt myself into thinking / that the world is enchanting*) (L. Blaga).

**2) Structures with the pronominal form in the dative**

The verbs which select a clitic reflexive pronoun in the dative can also have a direct object in the accusative:

a) **Verb – Subject – Direct Object,** e.g. *a-și închipui (ceva) (to believe sth; to fancy sth)*;

b) **Verb – Subject – Prepositional Object,** e.g. a-și bate joc (de ceva/cineva) (to mock at sb/sth); a-și da seama (de ceva) (to realize sth).

Depending on the moment such personal constructions with obligatory reflexive entered the Romanian system, we can distinguish:

a) neological structures, e.g. *a se adsorbi (to adsorb), a se aglutina (to agglutinate), a se agrega (to aggregate), a se atrofia (to atrophy), a se eschiva (to prevaricate), a se repauza (to repose) etc; a se accentua (to intensify), a se activa (to activate, to get activated), a se alcooliza (to alcoholize), a se articula (to articulate, to get articulated)* etc.

b) old – regional and popular – structures, e.g. *a se atârna (de cineva) (to hang on to), a se bizui (to trust in), a se boci (to wail), a se căpăta (cu ceva) (to get/obtain sth), a se fandosi (to give oneself airs and graces), a se furișa (to sneak), a se hlizi (to giggle), a se holba (to stare), a se lepăda (to leave off), a se năpusti (to swoop down/upon), a se prăsi (to breed), a se războ*i (to fight), *a se speti (to toil), a se teme (to be afraid), a se uita (to look at), a se văita (to lament)* etc.



**BDD-A3729 © 2012 Ovidius University Press**
**Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 17:58:53 UTC)**

Some changes regarding personal constructions with obligatory reflexive occurred during the shift from Old Romanian to Contemporary Romanian:

1) In Old Romanian there used to be a series of personal constructions with obligatory reflexive which selected an accusative – direct object – that belonged to the same lexical class as the verb (viz. the so-called internal object):

'Acie temuru – **să** temere și iuo nu era temere'
(*Here they feared to fear – yet there was no fear)* - (Hurmuzachi *Psalter*).

The construction no longer occurs in Contemporary Romanian.

2) In Old Romanian, verbs with obligatory reflexive used to combine with the dative:

'Cine **se** mândrește lumiei'
*(Whoever prides himself to the world.)* - (Coresi, *Book of Wisdom*),

whereas nowadays these verbs take a preposition: *a se mândri (cu ceva) în fața lumii (to pride oneself in sth to the world).*

In the 16th century, the phrasal verb *a-și bate joc (to mock)* had two versions, habitually in free variation between *a-și bate joc* + prepositional indirect object as in example (a) and *a-și bate joc* + indirect object in the dative as in example (b) below:

a. '*bate-**și** jocu de el*'

(*He was mocked at*) – (Coresi, *Tetraevangelium*)

b. '*a-**și** bate gocu lui*'
(*They mocked him*) – (Hurmuzachi *Psalter*).

In Contemporary Romanian the verb no longer takes another dative apart from the reflexive.

There also exist differences as regards the syntactic unit inventory. Thus:

1) The verb *a se teme (to be afraid)* used to have a non-reflexive, transitive form as well, a teme:

'amu știu eu că temi pre Dumnezeu'
*(Now, I know you fear God)* – (Palia de Orăștie / *The Orăștie Old Testament*)



**BDD-A3729 © 2012 Ovidius University Press**
**Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 17:58:53 UTC)**

2) The verb *a se ivi (to appear)* used to have both reflexive as in (x) and active forms as in (y):

'Lu Hristos, celui ce vru se **me** ivescu slaveei împreuratu pașteți'
*(To Christ, who pleased that I would appear to his glory..).* – (Voroneț *Codex*)

'de elu, deca fu□iu□ întru Ierusalim, iviră arhiereii si bătrânrii'
*(But he, since he was in Jerusalem, the bishops and old men appeared)* – (idem).

As a transitive verb *a ivi* means 'to show':

'Ainte amu spunre și iveaște că de proroci aceștia binre vestiră-se'

*(Now tell the world and show that the prophets told good tidings)* – (ibidem).

3) In Old Romanian some verbs used to have an obligatory reflexive, whereas nowadays they have both a reflexive and a non-reflexive form:

'*Se ceară cu credință, nemică gândindu-**se**, că cela ce **se** gândește aseamănră – **se** undeai Mariei, de vîntu lepădată și vînturîndu-**se**'*
*(Faith alone is required, not ratiocination, for whosoever shall ratiocinate will liken [the incommensurable] – hence Maria, banished to the elements)* – (ibidem).

As regards word order, unlike in Contemporary Romanian, where the pronominal is postposed to the verb only in the gerund, in Old Romanian it could also precede the verb.

Special mention should be made of verbs with obligatory reflexive that belong to everyday language. Comparing everyday and familiar language with its formal version we can notice the following:

- the extension of the obligatory reflexive to verbs that in formal language are exclusively non-reflexive: *a se aluneca (cu mintea)* – in the sense of '*to be driven insane; to ravel'*:

*'și cum ajunge, trage pe nevasta lui Ipat deoparte, îi spune ceva codoșca câte și mai multe, și-o face pe femeie să **se** alunece cu mintea'*
*(As soon as they arrive, the old crone takes Ipat's wife aside and tells her a lot of twaddle, that the poor woman will ravel)* – (Ion Creangă)

- the non-reflexive use of verbs which in formal language are intrinsically reflexive: *a avânta (to rush)* – in popular usage, in the sense of '*pushing someone forward energetically*';



**BDD-A3729 © 2012 Ovidius University Press**
**Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 17:58:53 UTC)**

- the existence of constructions with obligatory reflexive exclusively in everyday familiar language:

*'apoi dă, jupâne Știrul, vorba-i vorbă, eu nu mă cioșmolesc atâta'*
*Well, then, Mr Strul, we can't take a promise back* (Ion Creangă)

*'Se lehămetiseră până și cele două de gura cea rea a babei'*
*Even the two women had grown sick and tired of the old crone's evil talk.* (idem)

*'Ia, mai bine ogoiește-te oleacă'*
*Here, have a drink [of water] to refresh yourself* (ibidem)

*'Ei, apoi să nu te strici de râs'*
*Why, wouldn't one laugh one's head off.* - (ibidem)

## 1.2 Reflexive Pronominal Constructions

comprise verbs which can occur both in a reflexive and in a non-reflexive context, without changing meaning. Accordingly, they participate in the reflexive vs. non-reflexive opposition.

In their turn, such constructions may be classified as: reflexive pronominal constructions proper, reflexive and reciprocal pronominal constructions, and reflexive and possessive pronominal constructions.

### 1.2.1 Reflexive pronominal constructions proper:

the reflexive pronoun, which functions as either a direct object (in the accusative) or an indirect object (in the dative), is referentially identical with the subject (in the nominative).

Two ways of checking the capacity of the reflexive pronoun of functioning as either direct or indirect object are doubling the reflexive by a stressed form in the accusative (with the morpheme *pe*) or in the dative and the transitivity of the verb:

a) direct object (in the accusative):

*'Unu-i Ochilă pe fața pământului, care vede toate și pe toți altfel de cum vede lumea cealaltă, numai **pe sine** nu **se** vede cât este de frumușel'*
*There's only one Big-Eye in the world, who can see everyone and everything differently than everyone else does, only himself as such an unseemly fellow he cannot.* - (Ion Creangă)



**BDD-A3729 © 2012 Ovidius University Press**
**Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 17:58:53 UTC)**

*'Știu bine că am să **mă** recitesc [**pe mine** însumi] în acest caiet, ce va fi un document ilizibil, fără să mă văd [pe mine însumi], fără să mă reamintesc [pe mine însumi]'*
*I know it for a fact that I am going to re-read myself in this notebook, which is going to become an illegible document, without seeing myself, without remembering myself.-* (E. Ionescu)

b) indirect object (in the dative):

*'Sunt sigur că a învățat undeva privirea aceasta pătrunzătoare, **își** spuse [**sieși**] Ștefan; este, poate, privirea finală din rolul pe care și-l pregătise [sieși] acum'*
*I am certain that he has learnt that penetrating gaze somewhere, Ștefan said to himself; it may well be the final gaze of the part he had prepared for himself now.-* (M. Eliade)

*'Tot ceea ce se uită și nu vreau să uit, să pierd, să alunece, ar trebui să scriu aici ca să-**mi** reamintesc [**mie** însumi] ca să mă citesc'*
*I should write down here everything that can be forgotten and I wouldn't want to forget, to lose, to let slip away, I should write down here so as to remind myself to read myself.-* (E. Ionescu).

### 1.2.2 Reflexive and reciprocal pronominal constructions:

the reflexive form has both a reflexive meaning (viz. the orientation of the object group towards the subject group) and a reciprocal meaning (viz. the action is done simultaneously by two or more subjects, each one of them being affected by the action done by the other one(s), or each one of them ascribing the action to the other subject(s)). In such constructions, the direction of the action goes outwardly from and returns to affect the participants in the action, so that the roles of subject and direct object alternate; thus:

X și Y ***se*** cunosc. □=□ {(X cunoaște pe Y) și (Y cunoaște pe X)}.

*(X and Y know each other)* *(X knows Y)* *and (Y knows X)*

The clitic reflexive pronoun can have the following syntactic functions:

a) direct object (in the accusative) – when selected by a transitive verb with the same selection restrictions for both the direct object and the subject:

*'La miezul nopții am stins luminile și, cu figurile albăstrite de ecranul T.V., ne-am pupat și am băut din vinul prost de Alimentara'*



**BDD-A3729 © 2012 Ovidius University Press**
**Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 17:58:53 UTC)**

*(At midnight we turned off the lights and, faces blue from the TV screen [reflection], we kissed and drank the cheap wine from the grocery)* - (M. Cărtărescu);

*'Și cu toate acestea ne măcelărim de atâtea luni de zile'*
*(Despite all this, we've been butchering each other for months on end)* - (L. Rebreanu);

b) indirect object (in the dative) – here the reflexive clitic is selected by either a transitive or intransitive verb with the [+ Animate] selection feature for the indirect object and the subject; semantically, the clitic is the obligatory marker of reciprocity:

'*Ce făceau, ce-și spuneau, iată ce aș fi vrut să aflu'*
*(What they were doing, what they were telling each other, that's what I would have liked to find out)* - (M. Cărtărescu);

*'Noi nu mai suntem nici prieteni, nici dușmani, nu ne mai declarăm război, nici nu ne mai împăcăm'*
*(We are neither friends nor enemies any longer; we neither wage war on each other nor make peace with each other any longer)* - (D. Anghel);

Optional supplementary markers of the reciprocal meaning are the pronouns *unul pe altul/celălalt; unul altuia/celuilalt* (*(to) each other*) and the adverbs *reciproc, mutual* (*reciprocally, mutually*). The reflexive and reciprocal pronominal constructions engage in a chain of remote co-referentiality made up of three terms: multiple subject – reflexive – supplementary reciprocal pronominal/adverbial markers.

**Observations:**

1) The verbs used in such constructions enter into the reciprocal as in example (x) vs. non-reciprocal opposition as in (y), as they can also occur in non-reflexive and non-reciprocal constructions:

***S**-au căutat până s-au găsit.*
*(They looked for each other until they found each other)*

*A căutat-o până a găsit-o.*
*(She looked for it until she found it).*

2) The verbs for which reciprocity is inherent semantically do not belong here, e.g. *a se alia (to ally oneself to), a se asemăna (to resemble), a se certa (to fight with each other), a se căsători (to marry), a se înrudi (to be related), a se învecina (to live by), a se solidariza (to support),* etc.



**BDD-A3729 © 2012 Ovidius University Press**
**Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 17:58:53 UTC)**

Depending on the possibility vs. impossibility of perfect synonymy between the reflexive and reciprocal pronominal construction, on the one hand, and a reflexive construction (of the type *X se V cu Y*), on the other, we can distinguish between:

a) reflexive and reciprocal structures which are perfectly synonymous with a prepositional reflexive construction:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Ionuț și Andrei **se** cunosc.* | <=> | *Ionuț **se** cunoaște cu Andrei.* |
| *Ionuț and Andrei know each other.* | | *Ionuț refl.SE knows with Andrei* |
| | | *'Ionuț knows Andrei'.* |

b) structures where such synonymy is not the case:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Ionuț și Andrei **își** vorbesc.* | <=> | **Ionuț **își** vorbește cu Andrei.* |
| *Ionut and Andrei Refl.Dat. talk* | | *Ionuț Refl.Dat. talks to Andrei.* |
| *Ionuț and Andrei talk to each other.* | | *Ionuț talks to Andrei* |

As can be seen, synonymy with a prepositional structure can occur only in the case of reciprocal reflexives in the accusative.

### 1.2.3. Reflexive and possessive pronominal constructions:

the reflexive form has apart from the reflexive meaning (viz. the possessive noun phrase is oriented towards the object possessed), also a supplementary possessive meaning (the subject possesses the object or has the trait that is affected by the action). The possessive meaning can be highlighted by the repetition of the clitic reflexive pronoun in the dative by means of a possessive adjective:

***'își** striga cumnații [săi] în plină stradă, cu porecle potrivite și hazlii'*
*(he'd call his brothers-in-law funny suitable nicknames in the street)* - (P. Ispirescu)

*'aștepta hotărât să-și câștige dreptul lui'*
*(he was waiting, determined to earn his due)* - (idem)

The actualized syntactic patterns are as follows:

a) Verb – Subject – Attribute in the possessive dative (in school grammars)/ Possessive complement (in GARL:2005/2008) – Direct object



**BDD-A3729 © 2012 Ovidius University Press**
**Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 17:58:53 UTC)**

***'mi** pusei piciorul pe bordura de ciment a grilajului, îmi înnodai șireturile deja înnodate, îmi scuturai manșetele care nu aveau nimic'*
*(I raised my leg on the cement ledge of the fence, laced up my already laced shoes, and then shook off my impeccable turn-ups)* - (M. Preda)

b) Verb – Subject – Attribute in the possessive dative (in school grammars)/ Possessive complement (in GARL:2005/2008) – Prepositional object

*'el **își** căută de drum, întrebând din om în om unde șade Dumnezeu'*
*(He went on his way, asking everyone where God lived)* - (Ion Creangă)

*'Du-te și caută-**ți** de treabă'*
*(Go mind your own business)* - (M. Sadoveanu)

*'**Își** vedea de spălat, în timp ce copiii **își** vedeau de joacă'*
*(She went on laundering, while her children went on playing)*

c) Verb – Subject – Attribute in the possessive dative (in school grammars)/ Possessive complement (in GARL:2005/2008) – Direct object – nominal attribute in the genitive:

***Își** rupse buzunarul hainei*
*(He tore his coat pocket)*

***Își** îndoise colțul caietului*
*(He dog-eared his notebook)*

***Își** agățase tivul rochiei*
*(She picked a hole in the hem of her dress)*

d) Verb – Subject – Attribute in the possessive dative (in school grammars)/ Possessive complement (in GARL:2005/2008) – Adverbial – Direct object – (nominal attribute in the genitive):

***Și**-a pus pe cap pălăria lui Andrei*
*(He donned Andrei's hat)*

***Și**-a pus în picioare pantofii fratelui său*
*(He put on his brother's shoes)*

***Și**-a luat în ajutor o femeie*
*(He took a housekeeper)*



**BDD-A3729 © 2012 Ovidius University Press**
**Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 17:58:53 UTC)**

e) Verb – Subject – Attribute in the possessive dative (in school grammars)/ Possessive complement (in GARL:2005/2008) – Modifier in the dative:

*Nu-**și** credeau ochilor*
*(They couldn't believe their eyes)*

Depending on the inherent nature of the object possessed, we may distinguish between reflexive and possessive pronominal constructions which express inalienable possession and those which express alienable possession.

a) Inalienable possession is characteristic of those constructions where the object possessed denotes parts of the human body, items of clothing, and physical or mental states:

*'Bietul om **își** mușcă buzele'*
*(The poor fellow bit his lips)* - (P. Istrati)

*'**Îmi** îmbrăcai blana și căciula de astrahan'*
*(I put on my fur coat and his astrakhan hat)* - (idem)

*'Adesea **își** păcălește foamea citind cu lăcomie'*
*(He often cheats his hunger by reading greedily)* - (ibidem).

We can also find the inalienable dative linked to a prepositional adverbial, where the presence of the direct object appears to be mandatory:

*'Gavrilescu **își** puse pălăria pe cap și o urmă posomorât'*
*(Gavrilescu put on his hat and followed her in a sullen mood)* - (M. Eliade)

*'Vă cer iertare, adăugă stânjenit, așezându-**și** pălăria pe măsuță'*
*("I apologize", he added ill-at ease, placing his hat on the coffee table)* - (idem).

b) Alienable possession appears in constructions where the object possessed refers to entities with which it creates temporary associations:

*'Călăreții o luară înainte [...] jucându-**și** caii cu coamele împodobite'*
*(The riders set off first ... straining their horses with decorated manes)* - (P. Istrati)

*'În schimb, **își** umplea mereu paharul cu vin și sifon'*
*(In the stead of which he refilled his glass with wine and soda)* - (M. Eliade).

Depending on the compatibility vs. incompatibility with another dative apart from the possessive dative, we may distinguish between:



**BDD-A3729 © 2012 Ovidius University Press**
**Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 17:58:53 UTC)**

a) reflexive and possessive pronominal constructions whose verb can combine with another dative, e.g. *a citi ceva cuiva (și-a citit povestea copiilor) (to read sth to sb: she read her story to the children), a consacra ceva cuiva (și-a consacrat viața teatrului) (to devote sth to sb/sth: she devoted her life to the theatre), a da ceva cuiva (și-a dat stiloul colegului) (to lend sth to smb) (he lent his pen to his colleague),* etc.

b) reflexive and possessive pronominal constructions which only take the possessive dative, e.g. *a-și afuma (to smoke [one's ham]), a-și amăgi (to deceive [one's hunger]), a-și aresta (to arrest [one's own son]), a-și așeza (to set/place [one's hat]),* etc.

Depending on the combination compatibility with a genitive, we may distinguish between:

A. constructions which exclude another genitive:

*'Vădastra **își** sporea volubilitatea cu cât trecea timpul'*
*(Vădastra was growing more and more voluble with the passage of time)* - (M. Eliade)

*'Dar omul era cu chef și-**și** smulse brațul, făcând un pas în cameră'*
*(But he was now being tipsy, so he tore off his arm when he paced in the room)* - (idem)

B. constructions which are compatible with the genitive:

*'Fiecare **își** are enigma destinului'*
*(Each one of us has the mystery of their fortune)* - (P. Istrati)

*'**Mi**-am pierdut uzul rațiunii'*
*(I've lost my reason)* - (I. L. Caragiale)

*Să-**și** vadă buzunarul hainei rupt, s-ar supăra*
*(He'd grow sad to find his jacket pocket torn off).*

Only a relatively small number of constructions can modify a transitive verb whose direct object shows semantically an inalienable possession of the object possessed (realized as a genitive of belonging) by the subject of the reflexive and possessive pronominal construction.

Depending on the degree of connection between the components, we may distinguish between:

a) constructions whose components maintain their semantic and syntactic characteristics, which represent free groups of lexemes:



**BDD-A3729 © 2012 Ovidius University Press**
**Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 17:58:53 UTC)**

*'Fusese găsită asupra unui disperat care **își** tăiase beregata'*
*(It had been found upon a poor wretch who had committed suicide)* - (P. Istrati)

*'El nu-**și** poate lăsa cuptorul să vină la bâlci'*
*(He cannot leave his oven in order to come to the fair)* - (idem)

b) constructions whose components, although syntactically autonomous, have semantic variations, so that the meaning of the construction is never the sum total of the meaning of its components:

***'Își** bătea degeaba buzele Iusufache'*
*(Iusufache was talking to no avail)* - (E. Barbu)

*'Prea **v**-ați arătat arma, sfâșiind această țară'*
*(Too much have you shown your true colours, wrecking this country)* - (M. Eminescu)

c) Constructions whose components work grammatically as one syntactic unit with a unitary meaning, thus becoming idiomatic phrases:

*'Faci să-**mi** ies din minți'*
*(You're driving me crazy)* - (M. Eminescu)

*'**Și**-a pierdut capul că a fost prins în camera unei servitoare'*
*(He lost his temper for being caught in the room of a maid-servant) - (I. Vinea).*

## Suggestions for parsing

In Romanian, a construction formed by the *unstressed reflexive pronoun + verb* is reflexive.

In a reflexive construction:

A. The verb is in the PASSIVE VOICE, formed with the reflexive clitic *se*, if it allows the insertion of the agentive complement ("by x") – the reflexive-passive voice.

B. The verb is in the REFLEXIVE VOICE, if:

1. The verb is intrinsically reflexive, i.e. it takes the obligatory reflexive pronoun *se* (there is only the reflexive form, but *no* non-reflexive one as well).



**BDD-A3729 © 2012 Ovidius University Press**
**Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 17:58:53 UTC)**

2. There exist both a non-reflexive and a reflexive form, but the lexical meaning they actualize is different as a function of the presence or absence of the reflexive clitic.

C. The verb is in the ACTIVE VOICE, if – irrespective of the presence or absence of the reflexive clitic – the lexical meaning which the verb actualizes stays the same; the reflexive structure is called in this case *pronominal reflexive construction*.

Such structures can be classified thus:

1. Pronominal reflexive constructions proper, when the reflexive clitic can be repeated in its corresponding stressed form.

2. Reflexive and reciprocal pronominal constructions, when the reflexive clitic is doubled in *reciproc (reciprocally), mutual (mutually), unul pe altul/unii altora (each other)* etc.

3. Reflexive and possessive pronominal constructions, when the verb also governs (apart from the first two constructions) a nominal, and the reflexive clitic is doubled either by a personal pronoun in the genitive – *lui (his), ei (hers), lor (theirs)* – or by a possessive adjective which modifies the nominal.

## References

Guțu Romalo (coord). *Gramatica limbii române (GALR)*. București: Editura Academiei Române, 2005/2008.

Pană Dindelegan, Gabriela (coord). *Gramatica de bază a limbii române (GBLR)*. București: Editura Academiei Române, 2010

Pană Dindelegan, Gabriela. *Sintaxa grupului verbal*, Brașov: Aula, 1999.

Pană Dindelegan, Gabriela."Din nou despre diateză. Considerații pe marginea soluției adoptate în noua gramatică academică". *Studii de gramatică și de formare a cuvintelor. În memoria Mioarei Avram*, Marius Sala (ed), București: Editura Academiei Române, 2006: 332-339.



**BDD-A3729 © 2012 Ovidius University Press**
**Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 17:58:53 UTC)**

BDD-A3729 © 2012 Ovidius University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 17:58:53 UTC)