Middle Voice and Reflexive in Sidaama

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1 Introduction
According to Kemmer (1988, 1993, 1994, 2003), the middle voice and the reflexive can be compared and distinguished in terms of the parameter of the “relative elaboration of events.” The present study shows that this analysis cannot account for the middle voice and the reflexive in Sidaama (Highland East Cushitic), which show no clear contrast. The middle voice in this language highlights the subject’s experience of the described event, often contrastively to the active voice, although, as Kemmer argues, the reflexive marks unexpected coreference.

Following Haiman (1983), Kemmer contrasts spontaneous events and reflexive events expressed by sentences containing two types of reflexive forms like the Russian -sja and sebja, which exist in some languages, as in (1). She calls a verb affix reflexive like -sja or a clitic reflexive “middle voice,” and a phonologically heavier reflexive, usually a (pro)nominal reflexive, like sebja, “reflexive.”

   he exhausted-MID  he exhausted REFL
   ‘He grew weary.’     ‘He drove his body to exhaustion.’

According to Kemmer, in a language that has two separate forms for the middle and the reflexive, the two forms may or may not be morphologically and historically related. Languages that have a cognate system include Russian, Djola, Surselvan, and Old Norse and its descendants like Icelandic, and those that have a non-cognate system include Classical Greek, Latin, Hungarian, and Turkish.

Like Haiman, Kemmer presupposes that the middle voice and the reflexive show a semantic contrast in any language with morphosyntactic markers of these grammatical categories. She makes the claim that the middle as used for body action events (grooming/body care, nontranslational motion, change in body posture, translational motion) and the reflexive can be compared and distinguished in terms of the “relative distinguishability of event participants.” She characterizes the body action middle by a lower distinguishability of participants as compared to the reflexive, and maintains that although in both middle and reflexive events, the initiator (subject) is also an endpoint (affected entity), the middle is used for events where the initiator is predictably an endpoint, whereas the reflexive indicates unexpected coreference between the initiator and the endpoint, which are treated as more distinguishable entities, i.e., aspects of the same entity. Kemmer claims that such a contrast can be found
between the middle and the reflexive used for other types of situations like indirect situations and logophoric situations. She also contrasts the middle as used for naturally reciprocal events (e.g., ‘embrace,’ ‘wrestle,’ ‘converse’) with constructions with reciprocal markers (e.g., each other in English) in terms of the “relative distinguishability of events,” and argues that the middle construction has a lower distinguishability of events as compared to the reciprocal construction; the middle is used for an event that is seen as a relatively undistinguished whole, whereas the reciprocal is used for an event that is separable into two subevents. Kemmer generalizes different types of distinguishability like the above types to the “relative elaboration of events,” namely “the degree to which the facets in a particular situation, i.e. the participants and conceivable component subevents in the situation, are distinguished” (1993: 208), and characterizes middle semantics by its overarching property of “a low degree of elaboration of events.” Kemmer (1993: 3-4) argues that the treatment of the semantics of the middle voice in terms of “subject-affectedness” (e.g., Lyons 1968) is not precise because it is too broad in that it includes the passive and the reflexive as well as the middle, and also because it is too limited in that it is subsumed under “a low degree of elaboration of events.”

Kemmer (1993: 23-24, 30-39, 210-221) rejects the treatment of the middle voice by the generative linguistic tradition as a meaningless, syntactic detransitivizer, and argues that it is a semantic phenomenon. One of the defects that Kemmer finds in this approach to the middle is its focus on the relationship between intransitive middle-marked verb forms and their corresponding transitive active forms. She claims that such intransitive/middle–transitive/active pairs form just one aspect of the middle phenomena, and that the generative approach is not able to explain the regularities in what types of events are middle marked, and ignores middle-only verbs, verbs with both active and middle forms that have no semantic differences, and transitive middle-marked verbs. Thus, Kemmer focuses on what types of events tend to be middle marked, rather than what semantic contrasts the middle shows with the active.

Kemmer attempts to elucidate the semantics of the middle voice and of the reflexive by examining situation types for which they are each used. According to her, middle situation types are as follows: grooming/body care (e.g., ‘wash,’ ‘get dressed,’ ‘shave’), nontranslational motion (e.g., ‘stretch one’s body,’ ‘turn,’ ‘bow’), change in body posture (e.g., ‘sit down,’ ‘kneel down,’ ‘get up’), translational motion (e.g., ‘climb up,’ ‘go away,’ ‘walk’), naturally reciprocal events, indirect middle (e.g., ‘acquire,’ ‘ask,’ ‘choose’), emotion middle (e.g., ‘be/become frightened,’ ‘be/become angry,’ ‘grieve’), emotive speech actions (e.g., ‘complain,’ ‘lament,’ ‘blame’), other speech actions (e.g., ‘confess,’ ‘threaten,’ ‘boast’), cognition middle (e.g., ‘consider,’ ‘remember,’ ‘believe’), spontaneous events (e.g., ‘become larger,’ ‘vanish,’ ‘recover’), logophoric middle (e.g., ‘say/believe/think oneself ...,’ ‘decide/promise/vow to do’), and passive, impersonal, facilitative middle (e.g., ‘be seen,’ ‘sell well,’ ‘read easily’). Kemmer also shows that the reflexive can be used for the following situation types: direct
reflexive (e.g., ‘see oneself,’ ‘admire oneself,’ ‘stab oneself’), indirect reflexive (e.g., ‘cut bread for oneself,’ ‘cook meat for oneself,’ ‘work for oneself’), and logophoric reflexive (e.g., ‘say/believe/think oneself + INFINITIVE’).

Kemmer (1993: 201-211) makes a radial category analysis of these middle and reflexive situation types on the same semantic map, where the reflexive situation types are linked to some of the middle situation types which surround them, and the two kinds of situation types are related to one-participant events, two-participant events, and passive events. Kemmer (1993: 73, 203-204, 210-221; 1994: 209) argues that one dimension of this map represents transitivity, and places direct reflexive events and body action middle events on a transitivity scale, together with one-participant and two-participant events. She claims that direct reflexive events are in the center between one-participant and two-participant events (Hopper and Thompson 1980: 277), whose participants are the least and most distinguished, respectively, and that body action middles are somewhere between one-participant events and direct reflexive events; they are more transitive than one-participant events and are less transitive than direct reflexive events.

Kemmer (1993: 151-210, 222-233) notes that, in the course of diachronic development, a reflexive marker in a two-form system often comes to be used for some middle situation types, and becomes grammaticalized into a middle marker, although the reflexive is not the only source of the middle; as a result, only that marker may come to be used for both middle and reflexive situations and the erstwhile middle marker may go out of use, as has been the case in most Romance languages and some Germanic languages. On the other hand, a one-form language may develop a new reflexive marker, often initially as an emphatic marker, and may eventually become a two-form language. Kemmer argues for the unidirectionality of the development, according to which a reflexive marker can spread into the territory of middle semantics, but a middle marker never goes into the territory of reflexive semantics. She proposes that “of two grammatical categories, the cognitively more primary one is the one that is relatively less grammaticalized” and that “the process of semantic grammaticalization in general consists of extending markers of cognitively more primary categories to serve in the expression of less fundamental categories” (Kemmer 1993: 231).

Kemmer’s theory is based on her examination of 31 geographically and genetically diverse languages (as of 1993; additional 50 languages were investigated in 1994). However, almost no Cushitic language has been investigated in her studies, except that only a few verb forms in Sidaama and Somali are briefly mentioned in her and her associates’ paper (Croft et al. 1987: 180, 182). It is shown later that Kemmer’s theory does not apply to Sidaama.

3 Sidaama middle voice and reflexive
Sidaama (also called Sidamigna/Sidaminya) is a Highland East Cushitic language spoken in South Central Ethiopia. The word order is SOV, and the case-marking is nominative-accusative. Only masculine nouns (e.g., umo ‘head’) in the
nominate and in the genitive are marked with case suffixes. This language is a suffixing language, except for its negative verbal prefix. There are three groups of slots for verbal suffixes: (I) Voice/Reciprocal/Causative, (II) Aspect, Mood, Gerundive, or Infinitive, and (III) Pronominal. The first and third suffix-group slots might not be filled, whereas the second slot must be obligatorily occupied. The passive voice suffix may occur in the first slot, although it is not used completely productively. The active voice is unmarked. Roughly speaking, the aspect suffix, the mood suffix, and the gerundive suffix each inflect for the person/number/gender of the subject. The pronominal suffix in the third slot indicates the person/number/gender of the direct or indirect object; it does not occur when the infinitive suffix fills in the second slot.

The middle voice marker in this language is a derivational verb suffix -d` (allomorphs: -d`, -’r, -’-, -p’, -t’), which goes into the first suffix-group slot. (The epenthetic vowel i is inserted between the consonant-final root and -d` or - ’r.) Some verbs in this language have both active, unmarked forms and middle-marked forms, which may or may not show semantic differences. Some verbs are used only in their active forms and are never marked with the middle suffix, and some are used only in their middle-marked forms and never in their active forms.

The Sidaama middle marker is prevalently used for grooming/body care actions (2a), indirect middle situations (2b), and spontaneous events (2c). It is also fairly common for it to be used for change in body posture (2d), translational motion (2e), emotion middle situations (2f), and emotive and other speech actions (2g). The middle in this language only sporadically marks nontranslational motion (2h) and naturally reciprocal events (2i). It is seldom used for cognition, and does not serve as logophoric middle or as passive, impersonal, facilitative middle.

(2)  a. mee-t’ ‘get (one’s hair/beard, etc.) shaved’ (ACT: meed- ‘shave’), fitt’-i-d’ ‘comb (one’s hair)’ (ACT: fitt’ ‘comb’), fušši-i-d’ ‘undress oneself’ (ACT: fušš ‘undress’)
    b. huuc’-i-’r- ‘pray/beg for oneself or as one of his/her responsibilities’ (ACT: huuc’ ‘pray/beg’), af-i-d’ ‘get’ (ACT: af- ‘discover, get to know’), a-d’ ‘take, get married to’
    c. huf-i-d’ ‘boil (intr.)’ (ACT: huf’), daak’-i-d’ ‘melt, change into liquid (intr.)’ (ACT: daak’), dimb-i-d’ ‘get drunk’ (ACT: dimb’)
    d. go-t’ ‘lie down,’ huru’-m- ‘squat,’ irk-i-d’ ‘lean against’
    e. ha-d’ ‘leave,’ bu-d’ ‘crawl,’ t’ook’-i-d’ ‘flee from’ (ACT: t’ook’)
    f. č’e’-m- ‘become indifferent,’ hank’-i-d’ ‘become angry’ (ACT: hank’), wajj-i-d’ ‘become afraid’ (ACT: wajj’)
    g. he’-m- ‘backbite,’ wi’-l- ‘cry, grieve,’ bo’-n- ‘boast’
    h. huuc’-i-d’ ‘squeeze’ (ACT: huuc’)
    i. soor-i-d’ ‘exchange’ (ACT: soor- ‘change’)
In (2), the verbs for which no active forms are listed have no active forms, and the active verb forms with no glosses have no semantic difference from their middle counterparts. As Kemmer (1993: 21) points out, middle marking for particular situation types exhibits rather idiosyncratic patterns of distribution. For example, some emotion verbs are middle-only verbs and some have both active and middle forms, as in (2f), whereas there are also emotion verbs that have only active forms (e.g., makkal- ‘become mad,’ šaš- ‘become scared’).

The Sidaama middle suffix has the peculiarity of having the same form as the verbalizing suffix, which derives verb forms from nouns or adjectives: e.g., gulup-p’- ‘knee down’ (guluččo ‘knee’), sikk’-i-d- ‘use a stick for support’ (sikk’iččo ‘stick’), bark-i-d- ‘pillow one’s head on’ (barko ‘pillow’), hag-i-d- ‘become happy’ (hagiirre ‘happiness’), lop-p- ‘become large, grow’ (lowo ‘large’), duu-i-m- ‘become red’ (duumo ‘red’), hara-i-m- ‘become short’ (haraančo ‘short’). This suffix should be distinguished from the middle suffix. However, the distinction is sometimes blurred. Verbs containing the verbalizing suffix do not have unmarked verb forms, and some such verbs may happen to express middle situation types and look middle-marked. In fact, Hayward (1977) treats the verbalizing -i-d as one of the senses of the middle rather than as homophonous with the middle. Furthermore, there is derivation involving verbs and nouns that can take place in the opposite direction; a nominalizing suffix is often attached to the root of a middle-only verb (e.g., ragg-e ‘an inheritance (ragg-i-d- ‘inherit’),’ arg-o ‘a thing that one borrows’ (arg-i-d- ‘borrow’)).

The reflexive marker in Sidaama is the noun umo (‘head’) followed by the possessive pronominal suffix, as shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>ACC</th>
<th>NOM, GEN</th>
<th>ACC</th>
<th>NOM, GEN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1SG</td>
<td>umo-’ya</td>
<td>um-i-’ya</td>
<td>1PL</td>
<td>umo-nke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2SG</td>
<td>umo-kki</td>
<td>um-i-kki</td>
<td>2PL</td>
<td>umo-’ne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3SG.M/F</td>
<td>umo-si/-se</td>
<td>um-i-si/-se</td>
<td>3PL</td>
<td>umo-nsa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Kemmer characterizes, the reflexive marks unexpected coreference: the referent of the NP happens to be the subject rather than any other entity. The reflexive can be used for two prototypical reflexive situation types, direct reflexive situations (4) and indirect reflexive situations (5), as illustrated below.

(4) lat’o umo-se/laše gib-banno
Lat’o REFL-3SG.F.POSS/Lashe hate-IMPRF.3SG.F
‘Lat’o hates herself/Lashe.’

(5) lat’o um-i-se-ra/bule-ra dikko
Lat’o REFL-GEN.M-3SG.F.POSS-DAT/Bule-DAT market
mar-tu

go-PRF.3SG.F

‘Lat’o went to the market for herself/Bule.’

In both of these situation types, the reflexive NP stands in paradigmatic contrast to nominals that refer to entities other than the subject.

4 How the Sidaama middle voice challenges Kemmer’s theory

The Sidaama reflexive fits Kemmer’s theory about the reflexive. The Sidaama middle voice may also look unsurprising, as far as situations for which it is used are concerned. However, its meaning cannot be characterized by “a low degree of elaboration of events”; the Sidaama middle voice highlights the subject’s experience of the described event, and often exhibits contrast with the active voice with respect to this property. The subject’s experience of the event is similar to but slightly different from “subject-affectedness” at least in Kemmer’s (1993: 73) terminology, according to which the latter “equates ... to saying that ... the Initiating is the same as the Endpoint entity.”

This section describes how the Sidaama middle highlights the subject’s experience of the event, and provides evidence that the Sidaama middle cannot be characterized by “a lower degree of elaboration of events” than the reflexive.

4.1 How the Sidaama middle voice highlights the subject’s experience of the event

There are mainly five ways in which the Sidaama middle highlights the subject’s experience of the event in contrast to the active. The first one involves grooming/body care actions. Very often, the middle form of a grooming/body care action verb is used when the subject acts on one of his/her own body parts (e.g., (6) as used for the first gloss), whereas its active form is used when the subject acts on another person’s body part (e.g., laše la’o lekka haišš-ii(-se)

‘Lashe washed Lat’o’s feet.’). However, contrary to Kemmer’s (1993: 59) analysis, the parameter of the difference between the middle and the active is not “initiator/endpoint identity.” In Sidaama, the middle expresses the subject’s experience of grooming/body care, rather than the subject’s role both as the agent and as the affected entity. Depending on the type of grooming/body care action, the subject may or may not perform the action himself/herself, as in (6).

(6) laše lekka(-si) haišš-ii-’r-ii

Lashe foot(-3SG.M.POSS) wash-EP-MID-PRF.3SG.M

‘Lashe washed his feet (by himself).’ or ‘Lashe got his feet washed (by someone).’

The middle form of a grooming/body care action verb in a construction like this can often be interpreted in one of the above two ways. Which of the
interpretations is more likely depends largely on how easily the subject can perform the action on himself/herself. Generally, the identical initiator/endpoint interpretation is the norm for grooming/body care actions like (7a), which can easily be performed by oneself on oneself, and the separate initiator/endpoint interpretation is very likely for grooming/body care actions like (7b), which are relatively difficult to perform by oneself on oneself.

(7) a. uddano(-se) (‘clothes(-3SG.F.POSS)’) fušš-i-d- ‘take off her clothes,’
    eredea(-si) (‘beard(-3SG.M.POSS)’) mee-t- ‘shave his beard,’
    danančo(-se) (‘hair(-3SG.F.POSS)’) fitt’-i-d- ‘comb her hair’
    b. umo(-si) (‘head(-3SG.M.POSS)’) mee-t- ‘have his head shaved,’
    danančo(-se) (‘hair(-3SG.F.POSS)’) amat-t- ‘have her hair worked into braids,’
    danančo(-si) (‘hair(-3SG.M.POSS)’) mu-d- ‘have his hair cut’

Hence, the grooming/body care middle in this language is more or less neutral to the agency of the subject, and cannot be characterized by initiator/endpoint identity. The initiator of the action may not be the subject, and may not even be expressed. Moreover, the active form of a grooming/body care action verb, which is usually used for separate initiator/endpoint cases, can also be used for identical initiator/endpoint cases if the noun for that body part is marked with the possessive pronominal suffix (e.g., lašė lekka-si haišš-i ‘Lashe washed his feet (by himself).’). Such a construction always requires the subject to be the agent, but unlike the middle, often indicates the incompleteness or accidentalness of the action; hence, the subject does not fully experience the action as grooming/body care. (As is seen shortly, the middle form can be used for separate initiator/endpoint cases, when the action is performed as one of the subject’s social responsibilities.)

Second, the middle may indicate that the action is performed with some purpose that the subject wants to carry out, as shown in (8). (In (8)-(15) and (17)-(18), the verbs are each presented in the order of their ACT/MID forms.)

(8) lašė buliča š-iivš-i-’r-ii
Lashe antelope kill-PRF.3SG.M/kill-EP-MID-PRF.3SG.M
‘Lashe killed an antelope (MID: for himself; probably, to eat it, perhaps, to protect crops in the field).’

This type of situation seems to correspond to what is traditionally called an “indirect situation” (Smyth 1956[1920]). According to Kemmer (1993: 74-81), there are two kinds of indirect situations, indirect middle situations and indirect reflexive situations; the former involve events where the subject and the recipient or beneficiary are normally or necessarily the same entity, whereas the latter involve unexpected coreference between the subject and the recipient or
beneficiary. As Kemmer (1993: 80) notes, the distinction between the two kinds of indirect situations is not rigid. However, like Ancient Greek, Sidaama uses the middle for indirect situations extensively, and even for those situations which are typically regarded as indirect reflexive situations. This is because the middle in this sense concerns the subject’s experience of a subsequent event rather than the expected identicalness of the subject and the recipient or beneficiary. I will return to this later. Other examples are shown below. The examples include perception verbs whose middle forms signify the subject’s more purposeful and active involvement in perception than its active counterpart.

(9) \textit{walčo} (‘door’) \textit{fan-/fa-}-'n- ‘open the door (MID: to move into or out of the house, etc.),’ \textit{girbaabbe} (‘bamboo umbrella’) \textit{amad-/ama-d-} ‘hold the bamboo umbrella (MID: to protect oneself from rain),’ \textit{maala} (‘meat’) \textit{mur-/mu-d-} ‘cut meat (MID: to eat it),’ \textit{buna} (‘coffee’) \textit{su’nis-/su’nis-i-d-} ‘smell (MID: actively),’ \textit{odo} (‘news’) \textit{mač’iš-/mač’iš-i-d-} ACT: ‘hear or listen to the news’ / MID: ‘listen to the news carefully’

A third way in which the middle highlights the subject’s experience of the event is to show that the action is performed as one of the subject’s social responsibilities. The subject performs an action which he/she is expected to carry out regularly or on a particular occasion as one of his/her responsibilities in his/her family or community, and whose non-execution would get other family or community members into trouble and make himself/herself feel guilty.

(10) \textit{laše wasina lekka haišš-ii/haišš-i-} ’r-ii
Lashe guests foot wash-PRF.3SG.M/wash-EP-MID-PRF.3SG.M
‘Lashe washed the guests’ feet (MID: as one of his social responsibilities).’

In Sidaama culture, the division of labor in the family between men, women, and children is rigidly defined, and they are responsible for different sets of cooperative duties. Thus, when the middle expresses the subject’s performance of the action as one of his/her responsibilities in his/her family, the middle-marked verb often restricts the subject to a certain type of family member who is typically expected to do the job; for example, the subject of the middle version of (10) is normally a child. More examples in which the middle expresses this sense are shown below, where the first three are women’s duties, the next three are men’s, and the last two are usually children’s.

(11) \textit{sagale} (‘food’) \textit{k’iš-/k’iš-i-d-} ‘prepare food,’ \textit{saada} (‘cow’) \textit{t’uur-/t’uu-d-} ‘milk the cows,’ \textit{waa} (‘water’) \textit{dirr-/dirr-i-d-} ‘fetch water,’ \textit{t’awo} (‘field’) \textit{hawur-/hawu-d-} ‘plow the field with oxen,’ \textit{gidee} (‘crop’)

- 8 -
gambas/-gambas-i-d- ‘gather the crop,’ weese (‘ensete’) kaas/-kaas-i-d- ‘to plant ensete,’ mine (‘house’) f-/f-i-d- ‘sweep the house,’ lalo (‘cattle’) allaal-/allaal-i-l- ‘take care of the cattle’

Fourth, the middle may express the subject’s experience of adversity. The subject is adversely affected by an event where something that the subject possesses or someone to whom the subject is related undergoes the action passively.

(12) **bule midaano(-se)**
Bule clay.cooking.pot(-3SG.F.POSS)
hiik’-itu/hiik’-i-d-u
break(tr.)-PRF.3SG.F/break(tr.)-EP-MID-PRF.3SG.F
ACT: ‘Bule broke the/her clay cooking pot (accidentally or intentionally).’
/ MID: ‘Bule’s clay cooking pot broke on her (She or someone else may have broken it accidentally, or it may have been broken naturally without an agent).’

This middle construction may look similar to the passive or facilitative middle construction. In both, the agent of the action is not expressed. However, they are different. In the passive or facilitative middle, the event participant expressed as the subject of the middle-marked verb could be expressed as the object of the active verb. In the above construction, on the other hand, the event participant expressed as the subject of the middle-marked verb is emotionally affected by the event, but is not the patient. Other examples are shown below.

(13) **uddano(-si) (‘clothes(-3SG.M.POSS)’) hutt’o-aana (‘fence-top’) dar-/da-i-d-** ACT: ‘tear his clothes on the fence’ / MID: ‘tear his clothes on the fence; it is to his detriment,’ rodo(-se) (‘brother(-3SG.F.POSS)’) ṕ-/ṕ-i-d-
ACT: ‘kill her brother’ / MID: ‘her brother dies on her,’ mada(-si) (‘wound(-3SG.M.POSS)’) kis-/kis-i-d- ACT: ‘touch his wound’ / MID: ‘have his wound touched; it is to his detriment’

Fifth, the middle form of an emotion or emotive action verb often expresses the subject’s stronger emotive experience than the active form of the same verb.

(14) **bule gagaso-se gan-te/ga-’n-i-te**
Bule chest-3SG.F.POSS hit-GRN.3SG.F/hit-MID-EP-GRN.3SG.F
wi-’l-itu
cry-[MID]-PRF.3SG.F
‘Bule beat her chest (MID: with deep sympathy or sorrow), and cried.’
This applies to cases such as the following.

(15)  
\begin{align*}
  \text{dadill}/\text{dadill-i-d}^- & \quad \text{‘worry (MID: for a long time or recurrently),’} \\
  k’\text{att’ar}/\text{k’att’a-d}^- & \quad \text{‘complain (MID: bitterly),’} \\
  \text{gobba (‘country’)/aga-d}^- & \quad \text{‘protect the country (MID: with sincerity or enthusiasm),’} \\
  k’\text{aak’o-ya} & \quad \text{(baby-1SG.POSS) sunk-/sunk-i-d^- ‘kiss my baby (MID: with more affection)’}
\end{align*}

So far, it has been shown that the Sidaama middle highlights the subject’s experience of the event in various ways. The different manifestations of this core notion of the middle can be caught only in comparison with the active. An analysis of middle semantics in terms of situation types alone would obscure the senses that the middle marker carries.

This section has focused on verbs whose active and middle forms show various semantic contrasts. How about other types of middle-marked verbs, that is, middle-only verbs and verbs with active and middle forms that have no semantic differences? The semantic property of highlighting the subject’s experience of the event seems to apply at least to middle-only verbs, which tend to be used for cases where the event is conceptualized as inherently highlighting the subject’s experience. Verbs with both the two forms that have no semantic differences should probably be situated in a historical development between having contrastive active and middle forms and having only single forms (either middle or active forms only). However, this remains to be tested with diachronic data in order to go beyond mere speculation.

4.2 Evidence that the Sidaama middle voice cannot be characterized by “a low degree of elaboration of events”

There are a couple of pieces of evidence that show that the Sidaama middle voice cannot be characterized by “a low degree of elaboration of events.” First, although Kemmer claims that the middle-reflexive contrast like the one exhibited by the Russian sentence pair in (1) is found recurrently across two-form languages (1993: 62-65, 2003: 114), the middle and the reflexive in Sidaama show no such contrast.

The only situation types in which the two occasionally appear to be contrastive are indirect situation types. The same verb may be used with the middle marker or with the reflexive marker for indirect situations, as in (16a) and (16b). However, this is not because the middle and the reflexive contrast with respect to one type of relative elaboration of events, the relative expectation of coreference between the subject and the recipient or beneficiary.

(16)  
\begin{align*}
  \text{a. lat’o uddano doo-d-itu} \\
  \text{Lat’o clothes choose-MID-PRF.3SG.F} \\
  \text{‘Lat’o chose clothes for herself (to put them on).’}
\end{align*}
b. lat’o um-i-se-ra uddano
   Lat’o REFL-GEN.M-3SG.F.POSS-DAT clothes
   door-tu choose-PRF.3SG.F
   ‘Lat’o chose clothes for herself (not for anybody else).’

The middle in (16a) is used when Lat’o chose clothes for the sake of a subsequent action that she wanted to carry out, normally putting on the chosen clothes, which could but does not have to be explicitly described. The reflexive in (16b) is used to show that the beneficiary was the subject rather than any other person.

In fact, the middle marker and the reflexive marker can cooccur (e.g., lat’o um-i-se-ra uddano doo-d-itu ‘Lat’o chose clothes for herself (to put them on and not for anybody else)’). Such cooccurrence of the middle and the reflexive is possible also for other situation types, as in (17) and (18). This further supports that the middle and the reflexive in Sidaama are not contrastive.

(17) laše umo-si t’agis-ii/t’agis-i-’r-ii
   Lashe REFL-3SG.M.POSS treat-PRF.3SG.F/treat-EP-MID-PRF.3SG.F
   ACT: ‘Lashe treated himself with medicine (by himself).’ / MID: ‘Lashe got treated with medicine (by someone).’ or ‘Lashe treated himself with medicine (by himself).’
(18) lat’o umo-se faars-itu/faars-i-d-u
   Lat’o REFL-3SG.F.POSS praise-PRF.3SG.F/praise-EP-MID-PRF.3SG.F
   ‘Lat’o praised herself (MID: strongly).’

Another piece of evidence against “a low degree of elaboration of events” as the property of the Sidaama middle voice is that Kemmer’s claim that the morphosyntactic intransitivity of the middle voice is a formal manifestation of a low degree of elaboration of events (1993: 210-217) does not hold for the Sidaama middle, which never changes the morphosyntactic transitivity of a verb. Sidaama verbs are consistently morphosyntactically either transitive or intransitive both in their active and middle forms; this language has no verbs like (1) whose active forms are transitive and middle forms are intransitive. Kemmer (1993: 21-22) claims that the distributions of active and middle forms are often predictable from the situation type. For example, middle-marked verb forms for the following situation types typically have active counterparts, which are transitive: body care, nontranslational motion, change in body posture, indirect middle, naturally reciprocal event, spontaneous event, and emotion middle. However, Sidaama has no such transitive/active–intransitive/middle pairs. In fact, Croft, Shyldkrot, and Kemmer’s (1987: 182) description of the middle form haišš-i-d’ (wash-EP-MID) as an intransitive verb of grooming is incorrect; like the active form haišš-, it is transitive and cannot be used intransitively.
Furthermore, the Sidaama middle does not show any consistent behavior with respect to semantic transitivity, and provides no evidence for the transitivity scale like the one discussed earlier. Semantic transitivity cannot be defined only in terms of participant distinguishability; there are other parameters, including volitionality and agency (Hopper and Thompson 1980). The Sidaama middle exhibits different characteristics with respect to at least these two parameters. The subject’s volitionality may depend on the relationship between the subject and the type of the event, especially whether the event is favorable or unfavorable to the subject. The middle expresses higher volitionality than the active in the case of the middle for purposeful actions, and the middle cancels out volitionality in the case of the adversative construction. When an action is performed as one of the subject’s responsibilities, that responsibility can help increase volitionality. The agency of the subject is usually dependent on the meaning of the verb. However, the subject is never an agent when the middle expresses the subject’s adversative experience, and the subject’s agency is essentially irrelevant to the middle marking for grooming/body care actions. Therefore, the Sidaama middle exhibits no consistency concerning semantic transitivity.

The present section has shown that the middle and the reflexive in Sidaama are not contrastive categories, and that middle semantics in this language should be characterized by its highlighting of the subject’s experience of the event. The question is: Is this peculiar to Sidaama (and its neighboring languages), or does it apply to other languages? However, answering this question perfectly is well beyond the scope of the present study. Assuming that Kemmer’s theory works with the middle voice in other middle-marking languages, the following section speculates about why the Sidaama middle came to have such a semantic property, by examining the diachronic developments of the middle and the reflexive in Sidaama and other Eastern Cushitic languages.

5 The diachronic development of the middle and reflexive markers in Sidaama and other Eastern Cushitic languages

According to Hayward (1977, 1984), the middle marker in proto-Cushitic was a prefix t- . Some Cushitic languages, for example, Afar (Eastern Cushitic), Beja (Northern Cushitic), and Burji (Highland East Cushitic), still retain this prefix in a limited number of verbs (e.g., Afar: - (o) tt-obb- ‘listen, hear for one’s own benefit’ (Hayward 1977: 208); Burji: dirk ’ ‘return’ (Hudson 1976: 272)). Sometime during the development of proto-Eastern Cushitic, some dialects started to use d-, while others continued to use t-. Later, the middle came to be marked with a suffix, -d or -t, and the prefix gradually shifted to the suffix. All modern Eastern Cushitic languages have -d, -t, or a variant of one of these as their middle-marking forms. As the suffix dominated the prefix in middle-marking, the middle suffix merged with the verbalizing suffix, which had the forms of *-aad/*-aat/*-aan and *-ood/*-oot/*-oon in proto-Eastern Cushitic (Hayward 1984: 94).
The prefix *t-* in proto-Eastern Cushitic may have been used also as a reflexive marker, as is suggested by the following example of the Irob dialect of Saho: *-t-i-gidif* ‘to kill oneself’ (Hayward 1984: 85). However, it is not certain from this alone how widespread such a use of the prefix was. Moreover, the suffix *-d’or -t*, perhaps in combination with a personal pronoun, seems to have been used also as a reflexive marker, as the following example of Baiso suggests: *wadalla isii lagad-ata- era* ‘The young man killed himself’ (Compare: *wadalla duulo lagad-era* ‘The young man killed a hippopotamus’) (Hayward 1984: 83), although it is not clear whether the personal pronoun (*isii*) is obligatory in such a usage.

On the other hand, the (pro)nominal reflexive markers developed differently in different proto-Eastern Cushitic dialects (or different Eastern Cushitic languages). The reflexive markers in Modern Eastern Cushitic languages show great variation: even other languages in the Highland East branch have reflexive markers formally and etymologically different from the Sidaama reflexive: *iss* in Burji, *de* in Gedeo (Darasa), *gag* in Hadiyya, *gagu* in Kambata (Hudson 1976: 261) (words for ‘head’ in these languages are *muga*, *umo*, *horoore*, and *bok’uta*, respectively). Thus, Modern Eastern Cushitic languages developed their language-specific reflexive markers independently of the middle to the extent that, as a result, the two grammatical categories are highly differentiated from each other, whether proto-Cushitic had a one-form system where the prefix was a reflexive marker as well as a middle marker or not.

Kemmer argues for the unidirectionality of the development of a middle marker, whereby the middle never spreads into the reflexive semantic areas. According to Hayward (1977: 219-221), however, the use of the middle suffix for indirect situations (including what are usually regarded as indirect reflexive situations) emerged more recently compared to other uses of this suffix, for example, its uses for grooming/body care actions and spontaneous events; only some modern Cushitic languages use the middle suffix for indirect situations. Hence, on Kemmer’s semantic map, the middle appears to have shifted into part of the reflexive semantic areas (indirect reflexive situations). If this is the case, it challenges Kemmer’s argument for the middle as an internally coherent semantic category. Such development occurred because the middle and the reflexive do not contrast with each other in terms of the relative elaboration of events; the middle expresses the subject’s performance of the action with the purpose of realizing a subsequent event, whereas the reflexive expresses coreference between the subject and the recipient or beneficiary.

This leads to the question: Can one assume that middle semantics is the same across middle-marking languages? Kemmer (1992) argues that some grammatical categories are more prototypical than others: transitive and intransitive are the most prototypical, and reflexive is somewhat prototypical, whereas middle is less prototypical, because only some languages mark this category. Languages exhibit much greater variation in middle-marking than in the
marking of more prototypical categories. Kemmer demonstrates this by showing how different languages mark different sets of middle situation types with their middle markers. However, middle semantics itself may differ depending on the language. In the case of Sidaama, the middle is so differentiated from the reflexive that the two categories show no contrast. The homonymy of the middle suffix with the verbalizing suffix may also contribute to the property of the Sidaama middle. When the verbalizing suffix derives a verb form from a noun, the verb form usually expresses the subject’s interaction with the referent of the noun form in a typical way. When the verbalizing suffix derives a verb form from an adjective, the verb form expresses the subject’s state change. Sidaama speakers may find a motivated relation between the middle -ǎ and the verbalizing -ǎ, and regard them as polysemous rather than homophonous.

According to one of Haiman’s (1983) two functional motivations, “iconic motivation,” conceptual distance and formal distance, conceptual independence and formal independence, and social distance among interlocutors and message length are each iconically correlated. Kemmer (1993: 230-231, 240-241) carries Haiman’s iconicity principle further, and proposes a correlation between conceptual/semantic substance and formal substance; because a middle marker has less conceptual/semantic substance and less phonological substance than a reflexive marker, the more conceptual/semantic substance, the more formal substance, and vice versa. Thus, she claims that the grammaticalization of a reflexive marker into a middle marker is not only morphosyntactic grammaticalization but also semantic grammaticalization, by which semantic bleaching occurs. However, there is no evidence for the premise that the middle marker in a language has less conceptual/semantic substance than the reflexive marker in that language. It is difficult to decide how to measure conceptual/semantic substance, but Kemmer (1993: 230) assumes that the middle and the reflexive are both “abstract and grammatical,” and that the parameter for conceptual/semantic substance is the “degree of elaboration of events.” However, if closed-class forms generally have less conceptual/semantic substance than open-class forms, and if the more closed-class-like a form is, the less conceptual/semantic substance it has, one could claim that the reflexive has less conceptual/semantic substance than the middle. According to Talmy (1978), closed-class forms express topological, topology-like, or relativistic concepts, unlike open-class forms, which express non-topological, absolute, or fixed concepts. The reflexive signals coreference, the sameness of the referents, and whether or not two entities are the same is a topological notion. On the other hand, as a less prototypical grammatical category, the middle can exhibit less topological characteristics, unlike more prototypical categories such as the transitive, the intransitive, and the reflexive, which are highly schematic. The semantic development of the middle in Eastern Cushitic may be better characterized as “subjectification” (Traugott 1995) than as semantic bleaching. The uses of the Sidaama middle require the speaker’s subjective knowledge about the relationship between the subject and the event.
6 Conclusion
The present study has shown that the Sidaama middle highlights the subject’s experience of the event, and cannot be characterized by a “low degree of elaboration of events.” The middle often contrasts with the active, and the reflexive contrasts with other nominals. In order to answer the question of whether middle semantics is the same or different across middle-marking languages, it is necessary to systematically compare the semantic differences between the middle and the active in various languages.

Abbreviations


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