

Semantic Unity and Constructional Particularity: The French *Se Faire* Construction

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*Proceedings of the Eighteenth Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society: General Session and Parasession on The Place of Morphology in a Grammar* (1992), pp. 143-156

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*The Annual Proceedings of the Berkeley Linguistics Society* is published online via [eLanguage](#), the Linguistic Society of America's digital publishing platform.

SEMANTIC UNITY AND CONSTRUCTIONAL PARTICULARITY:  
THE FRENCH *SE FAIRE* CONSTRUCTION

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0. INTRODUCTION

French, as most other Romance languages, contains many non-coreferential uses of the reflexive. The constructions involved are well-known and are in general studied in the context of mono-clausal or uni-predicate sentences. In this paper, we examine lexicalized uses of the reflexive involving multi-predicate sentences. The relevant entries are exemplified in (1) and (2):

- (1) a. Jean s'est fait tuer hier.  
Jean refl be.pr make.pr kill.inf.act yesterday  
*Jean was killed yesterday* (PSF)  
*Jean<sub>i</sub> made somebody kill him<sub>i</sub> yesterday*  
b. Jean a été tué hier.  
Jean have.pr be.ppt kill.pass yesterday  
*John was killed yesterday*
- (2) Les bons livres se font rares.  
The good books refl make.pr rare  
*Good books are becoming rare* (SSF)
- (3) a. 'La zone bleue [...] s'est vue réduite au tiers de sa surface antérieure'.  
The blue zone [parking zone] refl be.pr see.ppt reduce.ppt to-the third of its surface previous'  
*The parking zone was reduced to a third of its previous area*  
b. 'M. E.M. se voit confier la responsabilité de la fonction publique'.  
Mr E.M. refl see.pr entrust the responsibility of the fonction public  
*Mr E.M. gets the Civil Service Cabinet responsibility*

Although we will touch upon each of these entries, we will focus our attention on the construction exemplified in (1a), which we call the passive *se faire* (PSF) in its non-causative reading, and will address two questions: (i) to what extent the typological markedness of (1a) can be reduced to otherwise motivated typological categories; (ii) to what extent the non-compositionality of (1a) can be reduced to otherwise motivated constructions in French.

1. WHAT IS SPECIAL ABOUT THE PSF

Sentences like (1a) are ambiguous in French. Under one interpretation, they involve a referential use of the reflexive, and mean what the morpheme glosses suggest, i.e. that someone caused something to happen to him. Under the other (PSF) reading, any notion of causation or responsibility is absent. They mean the same for all intents and purposes as their simplex passive counterparts ((1b) for example), and are often used instead of the ordinary passive in colloquial Modern French.

It is crucial to realize that the second, passive-like reading of the PSF is not a watered-down version of the literal or compositional reading of *se+faire*. The literal *se+faire* requires its subject referent to have responsibility for the event. In certain cases, this responsibility might be less salient than the affectedness of the subject referent, as in (4):

- (4) Je me suis encore fait rouler/ avoir.  
I refl be.pr again make.ppt con.inf/ have.inf  
*I got conned again*

but is (probably) still present. Examples (5), however, do not even ascribe an indirect responsibility to the subject referent, and cannot be interpreted literally. Sentences like (5) are therefore genuinely ambiguous and instantiate two different constructions:

- (5) a. Combien de fois nous nous sommes fait mentir par des officiels!  
How.many of times we refl be.pr make.ppt lie.inf by officials  
*How many times have we been lied to by officials!*  
b. Vingt mille personnes se sont fait licencier en l'espace de 3 mois.  
Twenty thousand people refl be.pr make.ppt fire in the space of 3 months.  
La crise se renforce.  
the crisis refl reinforce  
*20,000 people got fired in the last three months. The recession is worsening.*  
c. Quand on s'est fait calomnier par un ami, l'espérance vous quitte.  
When one refl be.pr make.ppt slander by a friend, the hope you leave.pr  
*When you have been slandered by a friend, hope leaves you*

Despite its passive flavor, the PSF differs from the ordinary passive construction in one syntactic respect. The latter requires its subject to correspond to the direct object of an active sentence. In contrast, the subject referent in the PSF can correspond to either the direct or the indirect object of an ordinary active entry of the complement predicate to *faire* (see (6) vs (7)):

- (6) a. J'en ai assez! Je me suis fait demander au moins  
I of.it have.pr enough. I refl be.pr make.ppt ask at least  
vingt fois l'heure aujourd'hui.  
twenty times the hour today  
*I've had enough! I was asked the time at least 20 times today*  
b. Il s'est fait couper la parole, à chaque fois qu'il a voulu  
He refl be.pr make.ppt cut the speech, to each time that he have.pr want.ppt  
aborder le sujet.  
approach the subject  
*He was cut off each time he wanted to address the issue*  
c. Je me suis fait léguer \$100.000 par un millionnaire inconnu.  
I refl be.pr make.ppt bequeath.inf \$100.000 by a millionaire unknown  
*I was bequeathed \$100.000 by an unknown millionaire*
- (7) \*J'ai été demandé au moins vingt fois l'heure aujourd'hui.  
I hav.pr be.ppt ask.ppt at least 20 times the hour today

The PSF construction also differs from the English *get oneself* construction, with which English speakers tend to compare the PSF. Examples (8a-b), which correspond to French (5b-c), demonstrate a difference in range between the two constructions:

- (8) a. ??20.000 people got themselves fired in the last three months. The recession is worsening.  
 b. ??When you get yourself slandered by your best friend, hope leaves you  
 c. 20.000 people got fired in the last 3 months. The recession is worsening

In fact, if one were to paraphrase the PSF in English, one would normally use the simple *get*, without a reflexive marker, as in (8c). So, while both the French PSF and the English *get oneself* constructions have a reflexive marker, only the French has a relatively neutral passive function. The English *get oneself V-ed* construction, on the other hand, has a particular and restricted semantics, as R. Lakoff (1971) and Chapell (1980) discuss.

The two constructions differ in another important respect. The verbal complement to the English construction is a passive participle, whereas the complement verb to the French construction is an active infinitive verb form. This difference between the PSF and the *get oneself V-ed* constructions points to the exceptionality of the former. Unlike the English, the French construction passive-like function cannot be directly inherited from any of its parts and requires explanation.

The typological markedness of the French construction can be made even clearer by a comparison with other (more closely related) Romance languages. Italian, Spanish, and Catalan do not have a passive function arising from the combination of causative and reflexive marking, although they do allow such a morphosyntactic combination with a literal reading (see 9-10). This is especially interesting in view of the occurrence of other non-compositional uses of the reflexive without a causative in those languages:

- (9) a. \*Jean se ha hecho arrestar por la policia. (SPANISH)  
 b. \*Jean s'ha fet detindre per la policia. (CATALAN)  
 Jean refl have.pr make.ppt arrest by the police  
 c. \*Giovanni si è fatto arrestare dalla polizia. (ITALIAN)  
 Giovanni refl be.pr make.ppt arrest.inf by.the police  
*John got arrested by the police* (impossible under a PSF interpretation)
- (10) a. \*Me he hecho seguir. (SPANISH)  
 b. \*M'he fet seguir. (CATALAN)  
 I.refl have.pr make.ppt follow  
 c. \*Mi sono fatto seguire. (ITALIAN)  
 refl be.pr make.ppt follow.inf  
*I was followed* (impossible under a PSF interpretation)

The French PSF construction thus brings to the fore a typological problem: how can a passive-like construction arise from the combination of a causative and a reflexive marker, where no marking of the passive function is apparent?

The passive function cannot stem from *faire*. The passive reading does not derive from the combination of literal *faire* and the co-referential use of *se--* as we have seen-- and French has no independently motivated use of *faire* that could plausibly account for the PSF. Two lexicalized uses of *se*, however, stand out as plausible sources of the passive function: *se-moyen* and *se-neutre*. We examine them in turn.

## 2. SE-MOYEN CANNOT EXPLAIN THE PSF

Some non-coreferential uses of reflexive markers have been treated as specialized types of passive cross-linguistically (see Keenan (1985), Langacker and Munroe (1975), Shibatani (1985)). The French reflexive construction exemplified in (11), often called *se-moyen* in the French generative tradition, has also often been related to the passive (e.g. Zribi-Hertz (1982)):

- (11) a. Les artichauts se mangent crus en Italie.  
 The artichoke refl eat raw in Italie  
*Artichokes are eaten raw (generally) in Italy*  
 b. Ce pantalon se lave en deux minutes.  
 This pant (sic) refl wash.pr in two minutes  
*These pants can be washed in two minutes*

It is therefore tempting to hypothesize the PSF derives from the application of *se-moyen* to a complex-predicate involving *faire* and its complement(s). The only recent literature we know of to mention the PSF, Fauconnier (1983), suggests that the construction is another case of a *se-moyen* passive-like construction. Under such a proposal the PSF idiosyncrasy reduces to the unspecified-agent deletion function of the *se-moyen* construction. There are at least two arguments against the assimilation of the PSF to *se-moyen*.

One, in other cases of *se-moyen*, no semantic argument is removed, or altered in any way. That is, in a simple *se-moyen* construction, as in (12), the event-semantic structure of the active and the "middle" are the same, as the coarse semantic representations in small capitals illustrate.<sup>1</sup> The PSF, unlike *se-moyen*, suppresses both the agent and the cause predicate of the alleged input to the reflexive (see (13)). If *se-moyen* were involved in the PSF, one would have to explain why in the case of *faire* alone, *se-moyen* alters the event-semantic structure:

- (12) a. Les artichauts se mangent crus en Italie.  
 b. Les gens mangent les artichauts crus en Italie.  
 The people eat.pr the artichokes raw in Italie  
 [PEOPLE EAT ARTICHOKES RAW IN ITALY]  
 (13) a. Jean s'est fait arrêter par la police hier.  
 Jean refl be.pr make.ppt arrest.inf by the police yesterday  
*Jean was arrested by the police yesterday*  
 [THE POLICE ARREST JEAN YESTERDAY]  
 b. Jean a fait arrêter Marc par la police.  
 Jean have.pr make.ppt arrest Marc by the police  
*Jean made the police arrest Marc*  
 [JEAN MADE THE POLICE ARREST MARC]

Two, when other Romance languages exhibit a clear case of *se-moyen* applied to a Clause-Union structure, the semantics of the resulting sentence differs from that of the PSF. Examples (14) from Italian, and (15) from Catalan and Spanish illustrate this fact:

- (14) La macchina si era fatta riparare a Giovanni/ da Giovanni (Burzio (1986))  
 The car refl be.pst make.ppt repair to Giovanni/ by Giovanni  
*We made Giovanni repair the car/ We had the car repaired by Giovanni*
- (15) a. El coche se ha hecho reparar (SPANISH)  
 b. El cotxe s'ha fet reparar (CATALAN)  
 the car refl have.pr make.ppt repair  
*Somebody got the car to be repaired (by somebody else)*
- (16) \*La voiture s'est fait réparer  
 The car refl be.pr make.ppt repair.inf

All these examples imply an intermediary agent, notably absent with the PSF. The French equivalent (16) is ungrammatical.<sup>2</sup> Here again, the PSF *se* does not behave as an ordinary Romance *se-moyen*.

### 3. IMPOSSIBILITY OF A BLEACHING STORY: VOIR VS. FAIRE

One could answer our arguments against the claim that *se-moyen* is involved in the PSF, by postulating a historical "bleaching" process which first voided *faire* of most of its content. According to this hypothesis, *se-moyen* could be involved in the PSF construction, since a non-causative semantics would be independently attached to *faire*. French would then differ from Italian and Catalan in having a semantically "neutral" use of *faire*, giving rise to the PSF, when *se-moyen* applies.

A first problem with this counter-proposal is that it would leave unexplained the impossibility of *se-moyen* with the ordinary causative meaning of *faire* (see (16)). Any proponent of the involvement of *se-moyen* in the PSF must explain why *se-moyen* is allowed with the allegedly bleached *faire*, but not with the literal *faire*.

There are two other problems with the proposal at hand. First, it conjectures a bleaching process for which there is no independent evidence in any other uses of *faire*. Second, it assumes-- without evidence-- that if *faire* had the right semantics (i.e. none!), *se-moyen* would be able to apply to give rise to the PSF. A comparison between *se faire* and *se voir* demonstrates the frailty of these assumptions.

*Voir* (to see) functions in some of its uses as a general auxiliary and allows non-literal interpretations. Chocheyras (1968) collected numerous examples of *voir* in the active where it behaves as a semi-auxiliary, and where it retains only partly its perceptual meaning (see (17a)). All such examples involve a Raising-to-Object structure, where NP+VP complements are in general not allowed in French (see 17 b). (18) is another attested example, where *voir* is not used literally:

- (17) a. 'On espère voir s'implanter dans le voisinage d'autres équipements divers'.  
 One hope.pr see.inf refl implant in the vicinity other equipment various  
*We hope to see other various facilities in the vicinity*
- b. \*On espère s'implanter dans le voisinage d'autres équipements divers.
- (18) 'Les autos voient leur marche ralentie'.  
 The cars see.pr their progress slow-down.ppt  
*Cars were slowed down in their progress*

Faced then with reflexive uses of *voir* like (19), for example, it is a viable hypothesis to assume these uses are linked to the existence of a generalized meaning of *voir*, where it does not only refer to a perceptual process, but to some more generic experience:

(19) 'André Bloc, qui fut jusqu'à sa mort, en 1966, l'un des animateurs de l'architecture [...], se voit rendre un hommage tardif...' (example cited by Price (1971)).

A. B. who was until his death in 1966 the one of the driving-force of the architecture, refl see.pr give a tribute late

A. B. who was until his death in 1966 one of architecture's driving force is given a late homage

This account is motivated for *voir*, since there are independently attested examples which do not involve a reflexive and where *voir* seems to have such a "bleached" meaning. But there is no comparable "bleached" use of *faire* outside of the PSF upon which to support the hypothesized "bleaching" process. The explanatory power of the hypothesis is therefore null.

Even for the demonstrably "bleached" *voir*, there is no positive evidence that *se-moyen* applies to *voir* when it takes an infinitival complement. Note that this *se+voir+V<sub>inf</sub>* construction is semantically very restricted, by opposition to sentences involving an AP/Participial complement to *voir* (see (20)-(21)). The infinitival construction is mostly restricted to verbs of giving (literal or metaphorical) and of evaluation (blame, praise...):

(20) a. Tout notre travail s'est vu anéanti par cette misérable erreur.

All our work refl be.pr see.ppt annihilate.pass by this miserable error  
All our work was wasted by this terrible mistake

b. \*Tout notre travail s'est vu anéantir par cette misérable erreur.

All our work refl be.pr see.ppt annihilate.inf by this miserable error

(21) a. La formule s'est vue apprise et répétée par tant de gens

The formula refl be.pr see learn.pass and repeat.pass by so.much of people  
qu'elle n'a plus d'intérêt.

that she not have.pr more interest

The formula was learnt and repeated by so many people that it isn't interesting anymore

b. \*La formule s'est vue apprendre et répéter par tant de gens

The formula refl be.pr see learn.inf and repeat.inf by so.much of people  
qu'elle n'a plus d'intérêt.

that she not have.pr more interest

Given these semantic restrictions, and the independent existence of bleached uses of *voir*, it is unclear that the application of *se-moyen* to *voir+V<sub>inf</sub>* is needed to account for these data.

Alongside this difference, note that the *se+voir+AP/Participial* may involve a raising structure (always possible for *voir*), whereas *se+voir+V<sub>inf</sub>* necessarily involves clause-union. In the latter case, the reflexive marker corresponds to the direct or indirect object of the complement verb, and not to what would be the object of *voir* under a Raising analysis. Clause-union is therefore required to license the reflexive, if one assumes (non-long-distance) reflexives must be bound locally.

Given that ordinary *se-moyen* also does not apply to *faire+V<sub>inf</sub>*, as we have seen, it is best to assume a general prohibition against *se-moyen* (ordinary or not) in clause-union structures. This prohibition patterns with the impossibility of similar valence alternations in modern French. For example, Italian allows passive on clause-union structures, whereas French does not (see (22)-(24); (23) from Burzio (1986)):

- (22) a. \*Jean a été fait blâmer par Marc.  
 Jean have.pr be.ppt make.pass blame.inf by Marc  
 [attempting] *Jean was made to receive blame by Marc*  
 b. \*Jean a été fait tomber.  
 Jean have.pr be.ppt make.pass fall  
 [attempting] *Jean was made to fall*
- (23) La macchina fu fatta riparare a Giovanni/ da Giovanni.  
 The car be.pst make.pass repair to Giovanni/ da Giovanni  
*The car was made to be repaired by Giovanni*
- (24) a. Jean a été vu assis sur le bord de la rivière.  
 Jean have.pr be.ppt see.pass seat.ppt on the edge of the river  
*Jean was seen seating on the bank of the river*  
 b. \*Jean a été vu confier une enveloppe par Marc.  
 Jean have.pr be.ppt see.ppt entrust an envelope by Marc  
 [attempting] *Jean was seen entrusted with an envelope by Marc*

Even in the case of "bleached" *voir*, then, the application of *se-moyen* with the V complementation structure is arguably impossible. Being "bleached" is not a sufficient condition to license the application of *se-moyen* to Clause-Union structures in French.

#### 4. DEAGENTIVE-SE AS A SOURCE FOR THE PSF?

We now turn to *se-neutre*, which we call the deagentive-*se* to stress its semantic function. We show that deagentive-*se* gives a constructional motivation to the PSF semantics, but that the PSF cannot be subsumed as just an instance of the deagentive construction. An example of the simple deagentive construction is presented in (25), and a diagram of the alternation is shown in (26):

- (25) a. Jean a cassé la branche.  
 Jean have.pr break.ppt the branch  
*Jean has broken the branch*  
 b. La branche s'est cassée.  
 The branch refl be.pr broke.ppt  
*The branch broke*
- (26) a. V  
 [CAUSE [<sub>EVENT</sub> INCHOATIVE [STATE]]]  
 b. V<sup>+REFL</sup>  
 [<sub>EVENT</sub> INCHOATIVE [STATE]]
- (27) a. *faire*  
 [CAUSE [<sub>EVENT</sub> AGENT... ]]  
 |  
 PP<sub>par</sub>
- b. *faire*<sup>+REFL</sup>  
 [<sub>EVENT</sub> AGENT... ]  
 |  
 PP<sub>par</sub>

Assuming the PSF involves deagentive-*se* would automatically account for the difference in semantics between the PSF and ordinary causatives, as a comparison between the diagrams (26) and the diagrams (27) corresponding to sentences (13) demonstrates. In both cases, the cause predicate and its agent are removed, and a reflexive marker codes this removal.<sup>3</sup>

Syntactically, if the PSF is the combination of a periphrastic causative and a deagentive-*se*, nothing else needs to be stated, given the rest of French grammar. We know that clause-union effects the merging of two argument structures, as work in

Relational Grammar has convincingly shown (see, for example, Aissen and Perlmutter (1983), Fauconnier (1983), Davies and Rosen (1988)). We therefore expect that, *ceteris paribus*, deagentive-*se* will apply to the merged argument structure, as it does with semantically comparable lexical causatives.

Moreover, there is independent evidence that deagentive-*se* can apply to a periphrastic causal construction. Consider the examples (28):

- (28) a. Jean Marais se fait vieux.  
 J. M. refl make.pr old  
*J.M. is becoming old*  
 b. Les bons disques se font, ces temps-ci, plus rares que les bons livres.  
 The good records ref make.pr rare these days more rare than the good books  
*Good records are becoming, these days, rarer than good books*  
 c. L'air se raréfie en montagne.  
 The air refl rarefy.pr in moutain  
*The air is rarefied in the mountains*

- (29) a. *faire*<sub>+REFL</sub>  
 [CAUSE [<sub>EVENT</sub> INCH [STATE ]]]  
 |  
 AP  
 b. *faire*<sub>+REFL</sub>  
 [<sub>EVENT</sub> INCH [STATE ]]  
 |  
 AP

We will call the construction exemplified in (28 a-b) the Stative *se faire* (SSF) construction. The function of the reflexive marker in (28b) where it applies to *faire+rare* is identical to its function in (29c), where it applies to the lexical causative *raréfier*. The deagentive construction is only sensitive to the presence of the relevant causative semantics, and not to the morphosyntactic expression of this semantics. It applies in cases where the final state is lexically incorporated in the verb, as well as in cases where it is expressed by an AP (the two alternating entries for *faire* are given in (29)).<sup>4</sup> Other things being equal, then, deagentive-*se* should be able to apply to the clause-union *faire*.

In short, the semantic relationship between analytic causatives and the PSF is the same as that between lexical causatives and the simple deagentive construction. Moreover, accounting for the PSF with the general deagentive construction would simplify the grammatical description of French by avoiding multiple distinct constructions -- the syntax of the PSF could be predicted from other parts of French grammar. However, as the next section shows, the PSF cannot simply result from the superimposition of the causative and deagentive constructions.

### 5. SEMANTIC CONSTRAINTS ON THE PSF

First, the overall semantic-type of the caused-event in the simple deagentive and the PSF are different. The PSF requires the complement verb to denote a dyadic event, as the impossibility of unaccusatives and unergatives in examples (30) show. The simple deagentive, on the other hand, applies to inchoative events. The two event-types are mutually exclusive. We could subsume both event-types under the more general category of dynamic event. But we would still need further principles to explain the impossibility of unaccusatives with the PSF.

- (30) a. \*Jean s'est fait tomber (impossible under PSF interpretation).  
 Jean refl be.pr make.ppt fall (UNACCUSATIVE)  
*John got fallen*  
 b. \*Jean s'est fait courir  
 Jean refl be.pr make.ppt run (UNERGATIVE)  
*John got ran*

Moreover, if the PSF were a simple application of the deagentive construction to a *faire* entry, we would expect other Romance languages to countenance the PSF by applying their common deagentive construction to their common causative construction. But they do not appear to do this in the way French does. They countenance the SSF (see (31)), but not the PSF, as we have seen in (9)-(10):

- (31) a. Jean Marais se hace viejo. (SPANISH)  
 b. Jean Marais s'ha fet vell. (CATALAN)  
 c. Jean Marais si è fatto vecchio. (ITALIAN)

The deagentive construction of other Romance languages critically distinguishes between inchoatives and dyadic event-types. The evidence of event-types therefore suggests that the PSF and the deagentive-*se* cannot be subsumed as one construction.

Second, simplifying somewhat for the moment, the subject of the PSF construction is required to be animate. This semantic constraint is not found with the simple deagentive construction (see (33b)):

- (32) a. \*Mon sandwich s'est fait manger par ce salaud de Jean.  
 My sandwich refl be.pr make.ppt eat.inf by this bastard of Jean  
*My sandwich was eaten by John, the bastard*  
 b. \*L'arbre s'est fait couper par le bûcheron hier.  
 The tree refl be.pr make.ppt cut by the lumberman yesterday  
*The tree was cut by the lumberman yesterday*  
 (33) a. \*Le sucre s'est fait dissoudre.  
 The sugar refl be.pr make.ppt dissolve.inf  
*The sugar was dissolved (by somebody)*  
 b. Le sucre s'est dissous.  
 The sugar refl be.pr dissolve.ppt  
*The sugar dissolved*

The semantic constraint is not found either with the causative construction. Only when combined with a COREFERENTIAL *se--* which in itself requires an animate subject-- does the periphrastic causative constrain its subject to be animate:

- (34) Les pluies torrentielles de ces derniers jours nous ont fait annuler le picnic.  
 The rains torrential of these last days we have.pr make.ppt cancel the picnic  
*The torrential rains of the last few days made us cancel the picnic*  
 (35) \*La pluie s'est fait maudire par les vacanciers.  
 The rain refl be.pr make.ppt curse by the holiday-goers  
*The rain, made the holiday-goers curse it,*

If the PSF were simply the combination of a periphrastic causative and a deagentive construction (which is a non-coreferential use of the reflexive marker), we would not expect the presence of such a constraint.

It might be objected that this constraint is only pragmatic or some surface filter. To assess to what degree native speakers attach this constraint with this specific construction, we conducted a survey of 27 native speakers of French. In this study, there were 37 sentences. Some were ordinary passives, some were PSFs. Speakers were asked to rank each sentence on a scale from 1 (unacceptable) to 4 (natural French). Speakers generally accepted PSF sentences with inanimate subjects far less than corresponding sentences with animate subjects. On the other hand, this distinction had no visible effect on the acceptability of ordinary passives, (see (38) for the results, and sentences (36)-(37)) for some sentences used to assess the difference):<sup>5</sup>

- (36) a. Eric: Dis donc! Cette table est sale.  
 Say then (sic)! This table be.pr dirty  
*Look! This table is dirty*  
 Marc: (MEAN: 3.7) Oh oui! Elle a été salie par les peintres, je crois.  
 Oh yes! she have.pr be.ppt dirty.pass by the painters, I think.pr  
*Yes. It has been dirtied by the painters*
- b. Eric: Dis donc! T'as vu! Cette table est sale.  
 Say then (sic). you have.pr see.ppt. This table be.pr dirty  
 Marc: (MEAN: 1.4) Oh oui! Elle s'est fait salir par les peintres, je crois.  
 Oh yes. She refl be.pr make.ppt dirty.inf by the painters I think.pr  
*Yes. It has been dirtied by the painters*
- (37) a. (MEAN: 1.7) J'en ai assez. A chaque fois que je visite la France, mon portefeuille se fait voler.  
 I of.it have enough. to each time that I visit the France my wallet refl make.pr steal  
*I've had enough. Every time I visit France, my wallet is stolen*
- b. (MEAN: 3.7) J'en ai assez. A chaque fois que je visite la France, je me fais voler.  
 I of.it have enough. to each time that I visit the France I refl make.pr steal  
*I've had enough. Every time I visit France, I'm robbed*
- (38) +anim Pass      -anim Pass  
 3.5                    3.67  
 +anim PSF        -anim PSF  
 3.33                   1.76

Moreover, some sentences involving inanimate subjects receive a higher mean score (between 2.3 and 2.9). This higher mean corresponds to a dialect split. These inanimate sentences are accepted by many speakers, while they remain unacceptable for the rest. Examples with their average scores are given in (39):

- (39) a. (MEAN: 2.9) Notre nouvelle campagne de publicité s'est fait remarquer par le public.  
 Our new campaign of ad refl be.pr make.ppt notice by the public  
*Our new ad campaign was noticed by the public*
- b. Eric: Ben, qu'est-ce qu' il t'est arrivé?  
 Ben what is it that it you be.pr happen.ppt  
*What happened to you?*
- Marc: (MEAN: 2.7) Ma planche de surf s'est fait renverser par la vague,  
 My board of surf refl be.pr make.ppt turn.over.inf by the wave

avant que je puisse en atteindre le sommet.  
before that I can.subj of.it reach the crest

*My surfboard was turned over by the wave before I could reach the top*

c. (MEAN: 2.3) J'en ai assez! Mon journal s'est encore fait arroser.

I of.it have.pr enough. my newspaper refl be.pr again make.ppt water.inf  
*I've had enough! My newspaper got sprinkled again*

For speakers who accept these sentences, the animacy constraint appears to be extended to allow inanimate subjects when this inanimate subject is affected in such a way that in its changed state it affects a relevant animate entity. So, in (39c), the subscriber to the journal will not be able to read it. In (39a), the ad agency or the patrons of the agency will get noticed, if the ad gets noticed.<sup>6</sup>

Both the consistency of the animate/inanimate distinction, and its selective extension prove that this constraint cannot be pushed away under the pragmatic rubric. It is part of the conventional meaning associated with the PSF.

Third, there are other semantic constraints on the PSF which do not bear on either ordinary passives or on the compositional causative-reflexive. The data are rather murky, but the generalization seems to be that the overall sentence must refer to an activity which affects the subject referent. This constraint leads to the relative unacceptability of sentences with psych-verbs or psychological state verbs as complements to *faire*. Psych-verbs are bad in general, since in their most ordinary interpretation they refer to a (causal) state rather than an activity:

- (40) ??Marc s'est fait agacer par son frère.  
Marc refl be.pr make.ppt irritate.inf by his brother  
*Marc was irritated by his brother*
- (41) ??Marc s'est fait vexer par la remarque de Paul.  
Marc refl be.pr make.ppt offend.inf by the remark of Paul  
*Marc got offended by Paul's remark*

Similarly, psychological verbs as states cannot be given a PSF interpretation:<sup>7</sup>

- (42) \*Marc s'est fait craindre par tout le monde.  
Marc refl be.pr make.ppt fear by all the world  
*Marc was feared by everybody*
- (43) \*Marc s'est fait haïr par tout le monde.  
Marc refl be.pr make.ppt hate by all the world  
*Marc was hated by everybody*

Note that as soon as the verb profiles the agentivity within the event, the PSF interpretation is more acceptable:

- (44) a. J'en ai assez de me faire contrarier!  
I of.it have.pr enough of refl make.inf bother.inf  
*I'm fed up with being bothered*
- b. Je me suis fait humilier!  
I refl be.pr make.ppt humiliate.inf  
*I've been humiliated*

Finally, the constraint is not solely determined by the lexical semantics of the verb, but rather by the properties of the overall scene (see (45a) vs (45b)):

- (45) a. ??*Marc s'est fait lire un passage d'Autant en emporte le vent hier.*  
*Marc was read a passage from Gone with the Wind*  
b. *Marc s'est fait lire ses droits par le policier, quand il l'a arrêté.*  
*Marc was read his rights by the policeman*

Despite the complexity of these data, the mere presence of another semantic constraint affecting the PSF, but not ordinary passives, causatives, and simple deagentives, points to the autonomous existence of the PSF construction in the grammar of French.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The PSF is a distinct construction of modern French. It does not derive from the superimposition of a periphrastic causative and an independently motivated reflexive construction and is subject to specific semantic constraints. One of its constraints, the animacy of the subject referent, is shared by coreferential *se+faire*. It is therefore best to hypothesize the PSF construction historically evolved from coreferential *se + faire* and is not derived from *faire + non-coreferential se*. The question remains: why did the PSF construction develop in French alone? We know of three relevant facts which as a set seem unique to French.

First, in some discourse contexts, speakers may use the literal *se+faire* to focus on the affectedness of the subject referent with little concern about the degree of its responsibility (see the idiomatic (4)). Second, many uses of the French reflexive marker are not associated with a distinct role. Among these uses, the deagentive-*se* construction specifically removes responsibility of an agent. As such it can serve as an analogical basis for reanalyzing literal *se+faire*. Third, the passive function of *se+faire* in French inversely correlates with the absence of a full-fledged passive-like use of the reflexive marker with uni-predicate clauses, as is commonly found in other Romance languages. The extent to which these three factors are explanatory remains to be determined. Nonetheless only French seems to have all three. It is therefore tempting to conjecture that these factors are linked to the presence of this typologically exceptional construction.

## ENDNOTES

\* We would like to thank Hana Filip, Paul Kay, Knud Lambrecht, and Laura Michaelis for their help. Thanks also to Giulia Centineo, Sara Gesuato, Sylvie Lotz, Ricardo Muñoz-Martin, as well as twenty-seven (mostly unknown) French speakers for their consultant advice.

1. The alternation between active and *se-moyen* entries only concerns the mapping of (common) event-semantics to (distinct) syntax, and possibly discourse structure. In fact, this event-semantics preservation underlies the frequent typological classification of *se-moyen* as a passive construction (see op.cit.).
2. This example is ungrammatical under a PSF interpretation as well, because of a semantic constraint discussed below.
3. Note that the *par*-phrase codes the agent of the complement verb, not that of *faire*. It is therefore licensed by the clause-union structure independent from the application of deagentive-*se*.

4. Note that the ordinary causative entry is already marked for the reflexive. This is necessary since *faire*, when it subcategorizes for an AP must have coreference between the affected entity and the subject. When there is no coreference, French uses *rendre* as a causative verb (see (i-iii) for the relevant contrast):

i. Marc s'est fait humble.

Marc refl be.pt make.ppt humble

*Marc made himself humble*

ii. \*Marc a fait Jacques humble.

Marc have.pr make.ppt Jacques humble

iii. Marc a rendu Jacques humble.

Marc have.pr give.back.ppt Jacques humble

*Marc made Jacques humble*

The fact that the relevant *faire* entry is already reflexively marked does not prohibit a deagentive construction from applying. The deagentive construction only requires the resulting structure to be reflexively marked. If the entry is already marked, the deagentive application will simply result in a structure morphologically identical to the non-deagentive entry.

5. Two out of 27 speakers showed no difference at all between animate and inanimate subjects. It is possible that the constraint is subject to dialectal variations.

6. Sentence (37a) and (32) are rated low by all speakers. Inanimate sentences that are acceptable to many speakers all involve an inanimate still present after the event to serve as an instrument affecting an animate patient. Sentences that will not result in an available instrument for this further effect on an animate entity appear universally unacceptable. The exact nature of this extension needs more precise determination.

7. Some speakers accept (43), but reject other sentences involving psychological state verbs. For us, all such sentences are acceptable only if some responsibility lies with the subject referent. In other words, it is only acceptable when read as a compositional *se faire*. Further study is needed to assess the extent of dialectal variation on this point.

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