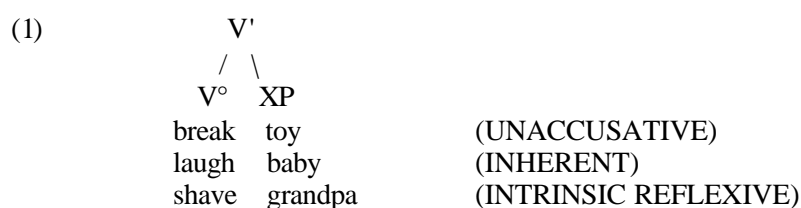


**Maturation of argument structure:
A lexical account of reflexive constructions with clitics in child Polish**

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This paper applies the theoretical approach to unaccusativity and unergativity of Hale and Keyser (1993, 1998) to the acquisitional pattern of reflexive constructions with clitics in Polish. I extend the empirical investigation of child Polish presented in Rivero and Goledzinowska (2001). In that study, the speech of the five children from the CHILDES corpus, aged 0;10 to 3;6, revealed a uniform developmental pattern (MacWhinney 2000, Weist et al. 1984, Weist and Witkowska-Stadnik 1986). Following an initial omission stage of the clitic *sie* in all reflexive construction types, the clitic emerged first in unaccusatives (*zabawka zepsula sie* ‘the toy broke REFL’), in inherents (*dzidzius smieje sie* ‘the baby laughs REFL’), and intrinsic reflexives (*dziadus goli sie* ‘grandpa shaves REFL’). The next stage saw the clitic in extrinsic reflexives (*skaleczyl sie* ‘he cut himself_{REFL}’), impersonals (*tam sie nie chodzi* ‘one_{REFL} does not go there’), datives (*mnie sie nudzi* ‘I REFL am bored’), and reciprocals (*widza sie* ‘they see each other_{REFL}’). Borer and Wexler’s (1987, 1992) Unique External Argument Proto-Principle (UEAPP) was proposed as a maturational account for the observed patterns. The UEAPP states that there exists a bi-unique relationship between a predicate and its (external) argument. Thus, according to the UEAPP, the first constructions uttered will be those in which the verb is associated with a unique argument. This is precisely what happens as the children acquire *sie* constructions: unaccusative, inherent, and intrinsic reflexive constructions all involve one syntactic participant in the action depicted by the verb, and emerge first.

I propose that the early emergence of unaccusative, unergative, and intrinsic reflexive structures attributed to Borer and Wexler’s Proto-Principle can be reduced to the structural properties of the developing lexicon. My proposal rests on Hale and Keyser’s hypothesis (1993, 1998): lexical relations, such as the argument requirements of a verb, are expressed through a structure that is purely syntactic. Two basic structural relations are the building blocks of argument structure: the Head-Complement relation and the Head-Specifier relation. There are no functional projections inside the lexical specifications themselves. Before maturing into the target grammar, a verbal entry in the child’s lexicon projects a maximally simple structure, a sister complement:



Holding the view that there exists one verb concept per lexical entry (the Lexicon Uniformity Principle, as in Reinhart 1996), I do not distinguish between the lexical entries for the transitive and the intransitive alternants of the early verbs. They all subcategorize for one VP-internal argument. Importantly, the sentential subject is not part of the lexical specification of the verb, but appears as a consequence of general syntactic principles, such as Chomsky’s (1982) Extended Projection Principle or case assignment requirements (Hale and Keyser 1993, 1998). In case of the intransitive alternants, which surface with the reflexive clitic *sie*, as in *zabawka_{SUBJ} zepsula sie* ‘the toys_{SUBJ} broke REFL,’ the unique argument raises to the subject position. Nonetheless, its unique sister relation with the verb remains overtly marked through the clitic. In the child’s lexicon, the structural relation in (1) exists also in verbs not reflexivized in the

adult grammar, giving rise to an interesting overapplication of *sie*, such as in **plywala sie* ‘*she swam REFL’ (Cf. adult: *plywala* ‘she swam’). It is only once the child’s grammar matures that more complex structural relations form in the lexicon and more complex, two-argument constructions appear.

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