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Testing the boundaries of the middle voice: Observations from English and Romanian

Abstract: The middle voice has received ample attention in the literature, yet the precise boundary between middle voice and other related constructions still remains elusive. For example, do sentences like *Mary slept (*herself) well last night* and *Mary washed (herself) thoroughly and expertly* belong to the middle voice or the reflexive domain, or are they simply intransitive one-participant structures? While ambiguity between reflexive and middles has been noted by (Kemmer, Suzanne. 1993. *The middle voice.* Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins.), I show that the problem is more widespread. Depending on the marking patterns available in a given language, such ambiguities can occur between middles and prototypical intransitive one-participant events, or between middles and reflexives. Using data from two languages with distinct marking patterns – English (a language with a reflexive marker but no middle marker) and Romanian (a language with one marker of each type) – I discuss the possibility of distinguishing middles from other related constructions. In English, it is shown that the *him/herself* test can be used to distinguish direct middles from intransitive one-participant events. In Romanian, we see middle and reflexive markers used together in the same construction without contradiction, bringing together both middle and reflexive semantics (as well as marking). In agreement with (Maldonado, Ricardo. 2000. Spanish reflexives. In Zygmunt Frajzyngier & Traci Walker (eds.), *Reflexives: Forms and functions*, 153–185. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins.) and (Manney, Linda. 2001. *Middle voice in Modern Greek: Meaning and function of a morphoyntactic category*. Amsterdam &Philadelphia: John Benjamins.), the account given here supports the view of the middle voice as a unified phenomenon, and following (Maldonado, Ricardo. 2009. Middle as a basic voice system. In Lilian Guerrero, Ibáñez Sergio & Belloro Valeria (eds.), *Studies in role and reference grammar*. México: Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas, UNAM.), the main function of the middle is to profile the core properties of events (but not necessarily to reduce the relative elaboration of participants, as proposed by Kemmer,

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Suzanne. 1993. *The middle voice*. Amsterdam &Philadelphia: John Benjamins.). So, unlike active and passive voice which concern the focusing of various participants (namely, Agents and Patients, respectively), the middle voice focuses the event itself.

Keywords: middle voice, reflexive, intransitive, Romanian, English

1 Ambiguity problems surrounding the middle voice

The middle voice has enjoyed an extensive amount of attention in the linguistics literature so far, from both generative and cognitive approaches (and even combinations of these, see Doron 2003; or Alexiadou and Doron 2012), scrutinizing data in a number of languages. Yet, despite this body of work, a series of key questions remain unanswered. One major theoretical challenge for current theories is to explain what the middle really is, and in particular, (1) what unifies the middle voice as a distinct phenomenon (if anything), and (2) what its relationship with other related constructions might be, specifically, with transitive, reflexive, and intransitive constructions. These questions are by no means new (see discussions in Maldonado 1992; Maldonado 2000; Maldonado 2008; Maldonado 2009; Manney 2001; Smith 2004; others), nor are they easily resolved.

A related challenge comes from the fact that in some languages, it is difficult to distinguish middle voice constructions from other related constructions, namely from intransitive one-participant constructions and from reflexive constructions. The examples given in (1) and (2) illustrate this problem using English and Romanian data, respectively.

In English, it is unclear how to analyse sentences like (1a) and (1b).

(1) a. *He dressed in a huge rush.*   [middle or merely intransitive?]
     b. *He died in his sleep last night.*   [middle or merely intransitive?]

Both (1a) and (1b) instantiate constructions with no direct object which would normally be analysed as straight forward one-participant, intransitive constructions. However, on closer inspection, they exhibit a number of differences. The sentence in (1a), unlike (1b), can be more readily construed as involving two – in this case, coreferential – roles, namely that of an Agent doing the dressing, and of a Patient/Experiencer becoming dressed as a result of the Agent's actions. Secondly, while the participants depicted by the subjects in both (1a) and (1b) are affected by the event to some degree (arguably, being dead has a more

definitive outcome than being dressed), they do not exercise the same amount of control over the event: the participant in (1b) can be understood as having comparatively less volition than that of in (1b), as can be seen by the fact that the verb in (1a) but not that of (1b) can be modified by manner adverb "purposely". We return to these examples in Sections 3 and 4.

Turning now to Romanian, we find a different source for ambiguity. Romanian has a(n) (overt) middle marker *se* (discussed in more detail in Section 4.3) and a separate reflexive marker *pe el însuşi* 'himself'. Example (2a) illustrates the use of the middle marker *se* in a middle construction, and (2b) that of the reflexive marker in a reflexive construction. What is problematic, however, is the use of both markers together in the same sentence, as in (2c). Should the sentence in (2c) be analysed as reflexive or middle (or as something else)?

(2) a. *Marius **s**-a   trezit   foarte devreme.*   [middle]
       Marius MM[1]-PAST wake.PAST very   early
       'Marius woke up very early.'
     b. *Marius va   concura **cu   el**   **însuşi.***   [reflexive]
       Marius will compete with 3P.SG.MASC. EMPHATIC.PRON
       'Marius will compete with himself.'
     c. *Marius **se** admiră **pe el**   **însuşi***   [reflexive or middle?]
       Marius MM admires on 3P.SG.MASC. EMPHATIC.PRON
       'Marius admires himself from head to toe.'

In this study, I take a cognitive linguistics approach to the phenomenon of middle voice and my aim is threefold:

1. to show that certain intransitive English constructions can be analysed as middles, and are in fact what Kemmer (1993) terms "direct middles" (see definition in Section 2), and that these can be successfully distinguished from one-participant intransitive events,

2. to show that in Romanian, reflexive and middle marking can be used together in the same construction, without an internal contradiction (as otherwise assumed by some researchers), showing that the two types of marking priviledge different properties of a given event, and finally,

3. to sketch a unified account of the middle voice (following Maldonado's own goals for Spanish middle voice articulated in his 2000 article), in order to bring closer together what might appear to be disparate middle voice systems, such as those found in languages like English and Romanian.

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1 See Appendix A for a glossary of all abbreviations used.

English and Romanian provide good linguistic case studies for probing the middle voice because they each bring different challenges to theories of this phenomenon, brought about by their distinct marking patterns with regard to the middle voice. Thus taken together, the two languages can help illuminate different gaps in current understanding of the middle voice.

The paper is organised as follows. Section 2 summarises some of the major approaches to the middle voice. Owing to the vast body of work on this topic, only a brief summary is possible here due to practical considerations. Section 3 probes the ambiguity problems introduced above and discusses the nature of the challenge they bring to current theories of the middle voice. Some solutions are offered in Section 4 and a short summary and discussion follows in Section 5.

2 Current approaches to the middle voice

The largest typological study of the middle voice was conducted by Kemmer (1993; 1994). On the basis of more than 70 languages, she defines the *middle category* as a "semantic area comprising events in which (a) the Initiator is also an Endpoint, or affected entity and (b) the event is characterized by a low degree of elaboration" (1993: 243). According to Kemmer, the middle category is a valid cross-linguistic category with the "potential for grammatical instantiation" (1993: 243), with languages differing in their choice of markers. For those languages in which the potential is realised, the number of different markers differs as does their interpretation in discourse.

The middle is closely associated with the *reflexive* and thus often investigated together with it. The major property shared among middles and reflexives is that of a specified coreference of participant roles. In some languages (Romanian, Spanish, Modern Greek and others), the two also share similar marking patterns which goes to explain why they are often treated together – a point I return to later in this section.

Reflexives and middles both contrast with intransitive one-participant events in that they encompass multiple roles (albeit coreferential ones). They also distinguish themselves from prototypical two-participant events by involving two coreferential roles as opposed to two distinct roles. According to Kemmer (1993), where middles and reflexives differ is with regard to the nature of the coreferentiality of participants. Reflexivity has to do with *coincidental* coreference of participants, such that for example, an Agent (or Initiator) and a Patient (or Endpoint) are coincidentally represented by the same participant; whereas middle-ness has

to do with *expected* coreference of participants: this time, the Agent/Initiator and Patient/Endpoint are *a priori* construed as fused, and it is virtually impossible to conceive of them otherwise. These same distinctions between middles and reflexives can also be found in three-participant constructions, termed indirect middles and indirect reflexives (to contrast with two-participant events which are referred to as direct reflexives and direct middles, respectively). The coreference of participants happens between Agents (Initiators) and Recipients or Beneficiaries (Endpoints). Following Lichtenberk's event schemas involving participants (1985: 20 and; Kemmer 1993: 50–139), we can visually contrast the different situation types as below (equivalent event schemas can be drawn for indirect reflexive and indirect middle constructions).

Figure 1 depicts prototypical two-participant events comprising two distinct participants, A and B, which are represented by different circles. This picture contrasts with the prototypical one-participant event in which we only have one entity and one circle. Like prototypical one-participant events, direct reflexives and body action middles also involve a single participant (participant A). However,
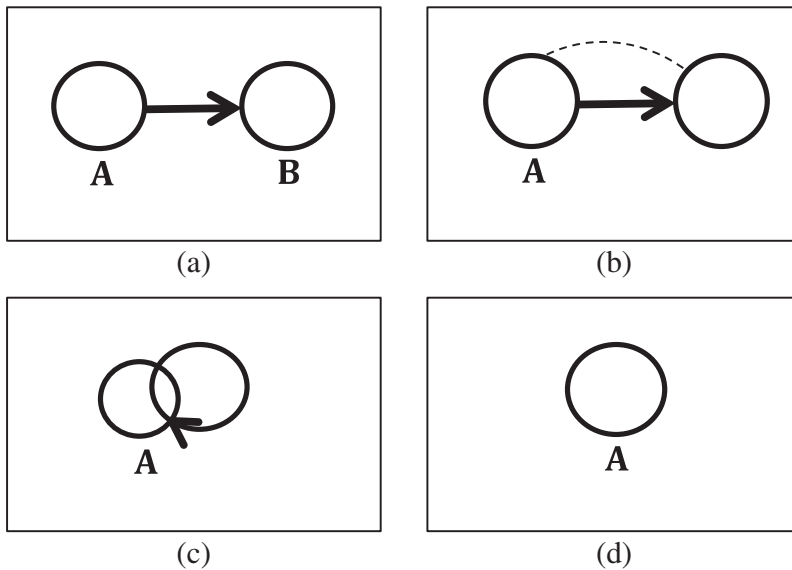
Figure 1: Image schemas for various construction types. (a) Prototypical two-participant event schema (from Kemmer 1993:50); (b) Direct reflexive schema (from Kemmer 1993: 71); (c) Body action middle schema (from Kemmer 1993: 71); (d) Prototypical one-participant event.[2]

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2 My own schema, included here for completion.

both situation types are shown to comprise two circles, rather than one, because they are construed as setting up two roles. In direct reflexives, the two roles are conceptually distinct (indicated by the separation between the two circles) but filled by the same participant (suggested by the dotted line). In body action middles, however, the two roles construed are not conceptually distinct, indicated by the overlapping circles.

Typologically, the middle category is instantiated par excellence by events which a person performs for or to him/herself, prototypically exemplified by events which involve the human body, namely grooming actions (*wash, dress, bathe*), change in body posture (*sit up, kneel, lie down*), and various types of body motion (*stretch out, bow, fly, flee*). These constitute body action middles (Kemmer 1993: 53–70, 1994: 194–202) and come under the umbrella term of direct middles because they involve two-participant roles. They are related to indirect middles (Kemmer's term, 1993: 78–81), which involve three-participant roles, where, in addition to a (distinct) Patient, the Agent and the Recipient (or Beneficiary) role are conceptualised as *naturally* fused (in languages which have a middle voice construction of this type), as in *brush one's teeth, wash one's hands, break one's leg.* The fusion comes about either because the Beneficiary (Recipient) is in a part-whole relationship with the Agent or because they are fully under the Agent's control. Body action middles (or direct middles) and indirect middles both invoke expected coreference of participant roles.

At this point, it is helpful to consider how middles and reflexives are marked. As will be shown here, and following Geniušienė (1987), Kemmer (1993; 1994), Faltz (1985 [1977]), and others (Beck 2000; for Bella Coola [Nuxalk]; Enger and Nesset 1999; for Norwegian; Maldonado 2008; Maldonado 2009; for Spanish; Manney 2001; for Greek; Vihman 2002; for Estonian), languages vary cross-linguistically with regard to marking patterns, both in the number of marking strategies they might have, and in the types of verbs which receive these patterns. Thus investigations of the middle voice usually begin with a semantic approach, in looking for typical verbs that would normally take middle markers, and if/once a middle marker is found, the analysis takes on a syntactic-morphologic nature in which all the construction types that are coded by the middle marker in that language are identified (cf. Kemmer 1993: 267–271).

Languages can have one or two marking strategies in order to signal coreference of participant roles, i.e., *primary* and *secondary marking strategies* (Faltz 1985 [1977]). In Kemmer's terms, one-form languages (English, German, French, Pangwa, Mohave) exhibit one marking strategy, whereas two-form languages (Russian, Romanian, Djola, Icelandic) involve two separate (though in some languages, historically and morphologically related) marking

patterns. Direct and indirect middles are exemplified in (3) and (4), respectively, from two languages which encompass both one- and two-form strategies.

(3)   Direct middles (a) and direct reflexives (b) in English and Romanian
    a. *John washes regularly before meals.*   [English]
       Ion **se** *spală regulat înainte de mese.*   [Romanian]
    b. *John will compete with* **himself**.   [English]
       Ion va concura cu **el însuşi.**   [Romanian]

(4)   Indirect middles (a) and reflexives (b) in English and Romanian
    a. *John washes his hands regularly before meals.*   [English]
       Ion **îşi** *spală mîinile regulat înainte de mese.* [Romanian]
    b. *John sells his car.*   [English]
       Ion vinde maşina **lui însuşi.**   [Romanian]

In languages with one marking pattern, reflexive constructions are coded by means of reflexive pronouns, and middle constructions are either coded by the same reflexive pronouns (e.g., French, Spanish) or are zero-coded (e.g., English).

For languages with two marking strategies, the primary strategy marks a reflexive construction and involves the morphologically longer or syntactically more complex form, termed the *heavy* marker (Kemmer 1993) or SELF-reflexive (Alexiadou et al. 2015). The secondary marking strategy marks a middle construction; this being the *lighter* marker (Kemmer 1993) or the SE-reflexive (Alexiadou et al. 2015). Example (2a) from Romanian instantiates the use of a light marker, and example (2b) that of a heavy marker. Similarly in (5a) Russian has a light marker *–sja* which codes middles, and a heavy marker *–sebja* coding reflexives in (5b). The Russian markers are related to each other but this need not necessarily be the case (for instance, in Romanian the two markers are morphologically unrelated).

(5)   a. *Vanja moet-***sja**.
       'Vanja washes himself.'
    b. *Vanja nenavidit* **sebja**.
       'Vanja hates himself.'

                    (from Haspelmath 2008: 40, example 1a, b)

It is important to note that although it has been previously assumed (e.g., Kemmer 1993; Faltz 1985 [1977]; and others) that middle markers are

derived from reflexive markers, this is not always the case, as shown by Maldonado (2009) for languages of Mexico and South America.

Haiman explains the association of the lighter marking strategy with middle voice by means of *economy* (1983), whereas Haspelmath explains it by recourse to frequency of use (2008). That is, the expected coreference of participant roles in middles gives rise to the *economically* motivated tendency in marking patterns noted by Haiman: speakers code with less material (morphologically or syntactically) that which is expected by default (i.e., middles), whereas more material is required to signal the unexpected coreference of roles (here, reflexivity). This pattern is also reflected in Zifpian frequency of use tendencies, as noted in Haspelmath (2008), in that less material is used to code that which is frequently occurring in the discourse, and conversely, more material is used to code that which is infrequently occurring.

According to Kemmer (1993, 1994), where the same marking patterns are used in several constructions (such as reflexives and middles, or middles and prototypical one-participant events), differentiating the relevant constructions from each other involves deciding whether a given event is *normally* or *necessarily* performed for oneself or for one's own interest/benefit. Recall that reflexivity has to do with *coincidental* coreference, whereas middle-ness has to do with *expected* coreference. However, making such decisions is not always straightforward. For example, given that it is plausible (and probably even common) for a person to wash something other than themselves (e.g., "wash the dishes" or "wash the car"), can we say that "washing" comes with a default expectation of coreference between the Agent and Patient? Kemmer would argue that washing a person involves a different process to say washing a car (1993: 60), but then washing a car is also different from washing clothes or washing dishes. This surely does not mean that English has (at least) four different verbs meaning "wash" (or that they each belong to potentially different voicing domains).

Reflexives and middles are linked in important ways to the notion of transitivity. Generative accounts of middles and reflexives classically analyse the middle as a detransitivizing structure, exhibiting a reduction in transitivity or role absorption (e.g., Rosen 1989; Grimshaw 1982; Wherli 1986). But this approach proved problematic; see for instance Maldonado's (2008) suggestion that Spanish middles exhibit an increase not a decrease in transitivity, and also further discussion in Alexiadou et al. (2015). In light of problems with such proposals, Alexiadou et al. (2015) posit an "expletive Voice projection" layer as a means for deriving the various transitivity alternations observed for different verbs in different languages. However, rather unsatisfyingly, current generative accounts maintain the previously held position that "there is no

coherent lexical semantic or conceptual reasoning available as to why an *individual* verb (or verbal concept) in an *individual* language shows up in one class or another" (Alexiadou et al. 2015: 65–66).

In search of a cognitively unifying account of the middle voice, Kemmer (1993) proposes the property of low elaboration of events, as explained in what follows. Kemmer uses Hopper and Thompson's seminal ideas about reflexivity (1980: 277), and suggests that the term "middle" signals an in-between category along a continuum, where a two-participant (or three-participant, in the case of indirect constructions) event is construed and coded as being reduced to a one-participant event (or two-participant event, respectively) (1993: 73). Kemmer locates the heart of the continuum with the notion of *relative distinguishability of participants*, where events which involve two distinct participants have the highest such degree of distinguishability of participants, followed by reflexives which encompass two participant roles that point to the same entity, and by middles, in which the two participant roles are *a priori* fused and virtually indistinguishable from each other, and finally by one-participant events, which by their very nature involve just one single participant. (The principle applies analogously to three-participant events.) Figure 2 summarises this continuum.

| 2-participant event/ | reflexive/ | middle/ | 1-participant event/ |
| 3-participant event | indirect reflexive | indirect middle | 2-participant event |

Degree of distinguishability of participants
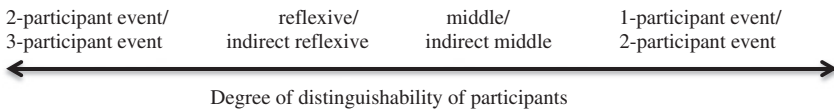
**Figure 2:** Continuum of constructions according to relative distinguishability of participants.

The notion of relative distinguishability of participants is itself not without problems. For example, Smith (2004) argues convincingly that English examples such as those given in (6) cannot be explained by recourse to a reduction in elaboration of events because the use of *himself* cannot facilitate disjoint reference (cf. **The vicar behaved himself, not the bride*). According to him, the use of the heavy marker *himself* has an intensifying role amplifying the meaning of the sentence as a whole and emphasizing that the vicar actually behaved; compare (6a) with (6b) (from Smith 2004: 581, ex. 12a, b and 13). This intensifying aspect has also been linked to Spanish middles by Maldonado, as will be discussed shortly.

(6) a. *For once, the vicar behaved*.
      b. *For once, the vicar behaved himself*.

Another issue is the fact that not all languages exhibit a connection between reflexives and middles, which means that the expected vs coincidental coreference of participant roles may not play such an important role in all languages with a middle voice system. For instance, in Modern Greek, the reflexive and the middle share neither semantic nor morphosyntactic links (Manney 2001: 22). However, according to Manney, the property of low elaboration proposed by Kemmer could be adapted to fit certain subdomains within the Modern Greek middle (with the implication that it cannot apply to all middle construction types). Two key notions characterise the Modern Greek middle, according to Manney (2001: 40): (1) the notion of **self as non-autonomous (her notion of "separation")**, and (2) the **notion of agency being either backgrounded or altogether absent (her notion of "prominence")** [emphasis mine]. Thus in Modern Greek middles, the subject of the construction is construed as exhibiting less separation from a potential direct object, and less prominence as a driving force behind the event.

Because the middle privileges what happened, rather than the responsible parties, it could be understood under the more general property of low elaboration (see discussion in Manney 2001: 22). Manney explains the middle voice in Modern Greek as an intersection of the two notions above, separation and prominence, within a scalar model, with various constructions being located along these scalar properties, represented graphically in Figure 3 (the exact details of the three constructions analysed by Manney are beyond the scope of the current paper and the reader is referred to Manney 2001 for further information).

Figure 3 shows that constructions which are located at one end of the continuum involve subjects exhibiting least prominence and least separation (the Modern Greek inflectional middle) and at the opposite end of the
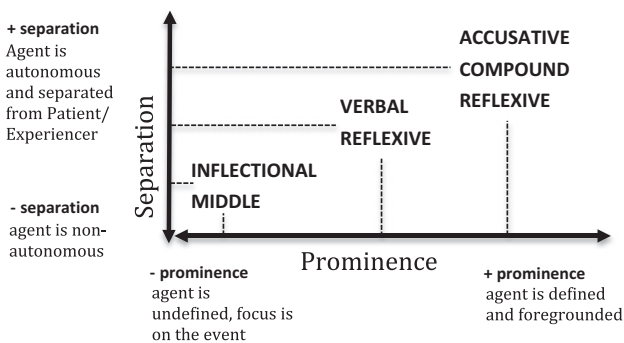
Figure 3: Parameters of the middle voice in Modern Greek.

continuum, they involve the most prominence and most separation (the Modern Greek accusative compound reflexive). Modern Greek verbal reflexives are intermediary between inflectional middles and accusative compound reflexives, exhibiting subjects with comparatively less prominence and separation than those of accusative compound reflexives, but comparatively more prominence and separation than inflectional middles.

In a bid to unify what are beginning to look like rather different uses of middle marking patterns across but also within languages, Maldonado (2000: 155) suggests that the middle encompasses "a network" in which the marker serves "**to highlight core semantic properties of the verb with which it combines to derive a variety of intensified readings**" [emphasis mine]. This certainly seems to fit the English examples in (7). Sentences such as those below (from Maldonado 2000: 154) might first appear polysemous disparate phenomena coincidentally marked by reflexive Spanish *se*, but Maldonado argues that on closer inspection, they are not. He explains that constructions which take *se* marking in Spanish form a "conceptual network" (2000: 182) and weave together a common "exploit[ation] of focalization of the core properties of the verb" at hand (2000: 182) by "focusing on the pivotal moment of change" in an event (2000: 180).

(7) a. *Adrián se consiguió un empleo maravilloso.*   Benefactive
       'Adrián got a marvellous job.'
     b. *Adrián se leía el periódico de una sentada.*   Completive
       'Adrián used to read the paper in one sitting.'
     c. *Tongelele se bailó una rumba inolvidable.'*   Full involvement
       'Tongelele danced an unforgettable rumba.'

The exact details of the analysis of the sentences like those in (7a–c) are beyond the scope of this paper and the reader is referred to Maldonado's (2000) paper for the full discussion, however, I give in brief a summary explanation of these sentences in what follows. In example (7a), the verb *conseguirse* 'achieve' involves a core benefactive reading. Here, the role of *se* is to focalize this benefactive role and to bring the object closer into "the subject's dominion" (Maldonado 2000: 181). In (7b), the verb *leerse* 'read' encompasses a certain type of consumption which is focally intensified by *se*. Finally, in (7c), *bailarse* 'dance' involves a performative Agent whose performance is maximally intensified by the use of *se*. In sum, Spanish *se* is associated with the enhancement and intensification of the core properties embedded in the semantic underpinning of the verb with which it is used (be they benefactivity, involvement, performance, and potentially others). While different verbs will exhibit different core semantic

underpinnings, what brings the uses of *se* together is this enhancement and intensification of such core properties.

Finally, another distinction relevant to the middle voice is the contrast between absolute and energetic events (Langacker 1991: 389–393). As documented by Maldonado (2008), middles bring about *energetic* (rather than absolute) construals where a certain amount of energy is profiled by the construal of the construction. The energetic reading of middles can be understood as a compression of the event to the specific moment of change. He explains that Spanish *dormir* 'sleep' can occur with or without the middle marker *se*, and the difference in marking patterns corresponds to a difference in energy construals. The middle construction is interpreted as an "energetic change-of-state", whereas the non-middle equivalent does not involve any such dynamism (Maldonado 2008: 22). This property works well towards explaining the different interpretations associated with constructions in which the same verb can occur with or without the middle marker (like Spanish *dormir* 'sleep', *subir* 'climb', *salir* 'come out/go out') and in cases where middles depict change-of-states. However, it is not clear that all middle constructions involve a change-of-state.

To summarize, in a bid to provide a unified account of the middle voice, several proposals have been put forward, based on data from different languages. These place the heart of the middle voice with a low elaboration of events, with the notion of the self as a non-autonomous entity, with the notion of agency being either backgrounded or omitted, with a focalization of core aspects of the event portrayed, or with an energetic rather than absolute construal.

3 Fleshing out the problem

As seen in the earlier examples (1) and (2), problems arise in distinguishing between middles and other related domains where the same marking pattern is used for constructions which encompass different properties.

In languages like English, where we have a single marking strategy, the reflexive construction is marked by the use of reflexive pronouns. Middles, on the other hand, look indistinguishable from intransitive one-participant structures (as we saw in 1a and 1b). Kemmer mentions this ambiguity in her study of the middle voice in regard to indirect middles (1993: 80 and 94). By way of illustration, consider the verb *choose* discussed by Kemmer. She shows how one might conclude that a verb like *choose* would be analysed as a middle construction rather than a reflexive one, owing to the fact that the choosing process is *typically* and *normally* understood to involve deciding for oneself or one's own

benefit. It is of course possible to *choose* something on behalf of somebody else, however, Kemmer contrasts sentences like those in (8) and (9) to expose subtle implications which arise with the verb *choose* but not with the near-synonymous verb *pick out* (1993: 80):

(8)   *I chose the red sweater for Michael.*

(9)   *I picked out the red sweater for Michael.*

In Kemmer's own words, the first sentence exhibits a "greater amount of self-interest" than the second one (1993: 80). It is this self-interest that brings *choose* further into the realm of the middle voice. What is less clear is whether, on the basis of the above reasoning, examples (10) and (11) – which are identical save for their verbs – should be analysed as different constructions.

(10)   *I chose the venue for our wedding day already.*   [indirect middle?]

(11)   *I picked the venue for our wedding day already.*   [non-middle?]

As noted in the introduction, the ambiguity noted by Kemmer for indirect middles applies equally to direct middles. Parallel to (1a) and (1b), consider the sentences in (12a) and (12b). Note that both verbs used below pertain in some way to the human body; this is one of the categories identified by Kemmer to be frequently cross-linguistically middle-marked.

(12)   a. *He turned towards her.*   [middle or intransitive?]
       b. *He leaned over the balcony.*   [middle or intransitive?]

It is interesting to observe that many English grammar (text)books leave out discussions of middle voice, despite exemplifying active voice and passive voice (e.g., Börjars and Burridge 2010; Collins and Hollo 2010; Nelson and Greenbaum 2016; Downing 2015). It is also noteworthy that terminologically we have the "middle *voice*" but not the "reflexive *voice*" (with the exception of Daniliuc and Daniliuc 2000: 200–202).

In English texts where the middle voice does make an appearance, it is presented in opposition to active and passive voice (e.g., Miller 2008: 163–167), but not contrasted with the reflexive (voice?). Texts like Miller (2008) explain the middle voice as being an intermediary category combining properties of both active sentences (namely, active verb forms) and passive sentences (the Patient occurs in subject position and is construed as encompassing both Patient-like and Agent-like properties). Consider typical examples of middle voice given in English grammars:

(13) a. *His thesis read well.*
   b. *The car drives easily.*
   c. *The Crayola markers wash out quickly.*

Examples in (13a–c) involve a Patient or Experiencer subject (*the thesis/the car/the Crayola markers*) construed as encompassing a certain degree of Agenthood, i.e., there is something extraordinarily commendable about the thesis which enable its smooth or pleasant reading. In these examples, the "true" Agents (*the reader/the driver/the person washing the Crayola markers out*) are distinct participants from those encoded by the subjects, and are backgrounded to such extent that they are in fact blocked from being overtly coded.

(14) a. **His thesis read well by John.*
   b. **The car drives easily by John.*
   c. **The Crayola markers wash out quickly by John.*

According to traditional generative accounts of the middle voice, in sentences like 14(a–c), the Agent theta-role is not "projected in the syntax" (Bassac and Bouillon 2002: 29) and the construction is understood as having an intransitivizing role (Grimshaw 1982), whereby the subject or object role becomes absorbed. Another property of such middles is that they are generic statements which cannot be described as tied down to a particular fixed point in time (Bassac and Bouillon 2002), see (15a–c).

(15) a. * *His thesis read well last year according to the examiners.*
   b. **The car will drive easily by anyone who loves speed.*
   c. *?The Crayola markers washed out quickly when I was young.*

Finally, as seen in (13), the English middle construction requires the presence of a manner adverb, though not just any adverb will be acceptable (for example, **His thesis read completely/fully/carefully*). Because they share with passive constructions a promotion of the Patient role out of the direct object position and into subject position, sentences like those in (13) are termed here "middle passives". They do not constitute the prototype of the middle voice, and not all languages use middle voice to code such examples (e.g., African languages such as Bari and Bassa; cf. Heine 2000).

The discussion of English middles in grammar books makes no reference to reflexive constructions. Presumably, reflexive constructions are understood as special cases of active transitive constructions, in which two participant roles are (unexpectedly) connected to the same individual/entity (and of

course, still very much distinguishable, more distinguishable than the two roles involved in middle constructions). However, the lack of mention of reflexive constructions in voicing descriptions such as those given in English misses the wider point that in some languages, reflexive constructions and middle constructions share certain semantic and formal properties. This is not to say that middle constructions cannot be understood at all without taking into account reflexive constructions, but given their close connection, this appears to be a regrettable act. Having said that, in languages where the middle voice is overtly signalled, the connection between reflexives and middles is perhaps over-emphasized.

Romanian is precisely the kind of language where middles and reflexives are overtly signalled. Unlike English but like other Romance languages, in Romanian, the connection between reflexives and middles is foregrounded and the two constructions are at times conflated. In this system, middles are marked by what Romanian grammars term the reflexive pronoun *se* (Avram 1986; Bărbuță et al. 2000; Dindelegan 2013; Daniliuc and Daniliuc 2000; Vasilescu 2013), which can also be realised as a clitic (Dindelegan 2013: 399)[3]. Reflexives are marked by the emphatic pronoun forms *însuşi*[4]. Like Turkish and Latin, the two Romanian markers are not morphologically related. At first glance, it might appear odd to use the term "reflexive pronoun" as a marker of middle constructions, but upon closer inspection, we will see that *se* occurs in what some classify as reflexive constructions (see Section 4.3).

Despite the separate marking patterns, Romanian presents us with its own ambiguity problems related to the middle voice, as illustrated by (16a) and (16b) and seen also in the earlier sentences in (2a−c). At first glance, the two sentences

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3 Romanian has number and person agreement in reflexive pronoun forms: *mă* (SG., 1P), *te* (SG. 2P), *se* (SG. and PL. 3P), *ne* (PL. 1P), *vă* (l. 2P).

4 Romanian has gender, number and person agreement in its emphatic pronoun forms:

PERSON	NUMBER	GENDER	
		FEM.	MASC.
1 person	SG.	*însămi*	*însumi*
	PL.	*însene*	*înşine*
2 person	SG.	*însăți*	*însuți*
	PL.	*însevă*	*înşivă*
3 person	SG.	*însăşi*	*însuşi*
	PL.	*înseşi*	*înşişi*

appear very similar, but they differ in that (16b) allows the emphatic pronoun *pe ea însăşi* alongside the use of *se*, whereas (16a) does not. The question which arises in Romanian is how should (16a) and (16b) be classified? Furthermore, how should we analyse constructions involving both *se* + *pe ea însăşi*, and more pressing, how can they be reconciled with accounts of the middle voice which propose a division of labour between reflexive and middle markers?

(16) a. *Maria* ***se*** *obişnuieşte cam greu cu   singurătatea.*
       Maria MM get.used.to rather hard with loneliness
       'Maria gets used to the loneliness with difficulty.'
    b. *Maria* ***se*** *convinge că   trebuie să evite zahărul.*
       Maria MM convince that must   to avoid sugar
       'Maria convinces herself that she needs to avoid sugar.'

4 Towards some solutions

Two possible avenues open themselves up as ways towards solving the ambiguity problems exemplified in Section 3. From a usage-based perspective, a corpus could be used to ascertain frequencies of use and show that certain verbs tend to occur in constructions depicting coreference of the relevant participant roles more readily than non-coreference (e.g., verbs which are middle marked). A sketch of this kind of analysis is given by Haspelmath (2008). He gives frequencies of a handful of verbs in English and German which occur in different situation types, showing that a lighter marker is associated with a more natural (or expected) coreference of participants (i.e., middles), whereas a heavier form is used to mark constructions in which such coreference of participants is less expected and more unusual (i.e., reflexives) (cf. Haspelmath 2008: 44).

An advantage of this approach is that it can help identify large-scale patterns common to many (or most) languages, illuminating consistencies in the ways in which humans tend to conceptualize various events (similar to those demonstrated for causative constructions in Haspelmath et al. 2014). Going by frequencies of use, we might find that body action events do not constitute the archetype category of middle voice after all (see a discussion to this end of Estonian in Vihman 2002: 140).

Aside from the laborious process involved, the frequency of use approach has the downside that we would need to work verb by verb, which could bring difficulties in knowing where to begin the search for prototypical middle-marked verbs within a given language.

A different tack towards a solution to the problem is to investigate marking patterns and ask: how far can we push these in order to disentangle constructional ambiguities? It is this direction that will be explored here.

4.1 Brief clarification of terms

Before scrutinizing marking patterns in more detail, a clarification in terminology is in order. Following Lichtenberk's (1994) lead in contrasting, reciprocal semantics, reciprocal markers and reciprocal constructions within the reciprocal domain, we will similarly be distinguishing between middle semantics, middle markers and middle constructions within the middle domain. The same will also apply within the reflexive domain, regarding the terms reflexive semantics, reflexive markers and reflexive constructions. Hence the notion of *middle semantics* will be used to refer to situations which exhibit semantic properties associated with middle voice constructions. *Middle marking* on the other hand refers to overt markers that participate in middle marking constructions. Finally, a *middle construction* is understood to be a construction which encompasses both middle semantics and middle marking (in languages which have overt middle markers). The important point here is the fact that in some languages, middle constructions involve middle semantics but not overt middle marking. The same distinctions apply analogously for the reflexive domain, and involve the notions of *reflexive semantics, reflexive markers* and *reflexive constructions*. Spelling out the precise use of each term helps to distinguish between the semantics and the marking patterns of a given construction.

4.2 Distinguishing intransitive/one-participant events from middles in English

In a bid to disentangle intransitive one-participant events from middles in English, I follow Maldonado's (2009) use of Spanish *mismo* 'him/herself' for Spanish. In Spanish, reflexives allow *mismo* 'him/herself', but middles do not. While Maldonado applies this test in a language which has an overt middle marker (*se*), I show below that the same tool can also be used in a language like English, where there are no overt middle markers. In English, intransitives allow the emphatic *him/herself* (in what becomes a reflexive construction), but like Spanish, middles do not. Returning to the earlier sentence pairs in (1a and 1b), we can see that they exhibit a difference with respect to the use of *himself*:

(17)　a. *He dressed in a huge rush.*　　[intransitive] cf. *He dressed himself in a huge rush.*

　　　b. *He died in his sleep last night.*　[middle] cf. **He died himself in his sleep last night.*

As analogously argued by Maldonado for Spanish, it makes sense that middle constructions in English should block the use of *him/herself*. In (17a), the verb *dress* encompasses a split representation between the Agent role depicted by the subject and the Patient role of the object. The overt marking of the object Patient is grammatical here because the verb *dress* can readily be construed as involving two separate participant roles: a person doing the dressing, and one being/ becoming dressed as a result. This renders (17a), namely *He dressed in a huge rush*, an intransitive one-participant event. In contrast, in (17b), the verb *die* does not allow this same split representation of the Agent subject, which is in line with the middle voice.

　　Using the reflexive pronoun *him/herself* test, we can ascertain that examples in (18) are all middles (on the basis of the ungrammaticality of the reflexive pronoun), whereas those in (19) are intransitive one-participant events.

(18)　English middle constructions
　　　a. *He leaned (*himself) over the balcony.*
　　　b. *Maria slept (*herself) until 10am.*
　　　c. *Obama thought (*himself) about the election.*
　　　d. *The girl laughed (*herself) at the silly clown.*
　　　e. *John looked (*himself) outside the window.*

(19)　English intransitive, one-participant events
　　　a. *The flower turned (itself) towards the sun.*
　　　b. *The child washed (herself) in front of the mirror.*
　　　c. *The student imagined (himself) passing the exam.*
　　　d. *The car propelled (itself) across the tarmac.*
　　　e. *Wearily, he sat (himself) down on the bench.*

　　The analysis of *dress* in (17a) as an intransitive and of *die* in (17b) as a middle may seem somewhat counterintuitive, given that *dress* can be used transitively but *die* cannot. However, the reflexive pronoun *her/himself* test can be used with verbs that encompass both transitive and intransitive semantics, as shown in (18) and (19).

　　While the analysis proposed so far assumes that in English, constructions which marked by a reflexive pronoun are (necessarily) reflexive constructions, it seems that this may not be the full story. Consider the verb *drink*. In some

contexts, the verb can be used in a middle construction (see 20a), but it can also take part in a reflexive construction, as in (20b). However, (20b) differs from the above sentences in (19) in the fact that it does not have an associated intransitive structure (cf. 20c).

(20) a. *He drank (*himself) heavily until closing time.* [middle construction]
  b. *He drank himself into oblivion/silly.*   [reflexive construction?]
  c. **He drank into oblivion/silly.*   [intransitive construction]

We return to this example below, but first compare it with Siemund's (2010) examples in (21a) and (22a) (his examples 10a and b, p. 800). Siemund (2010; 2014) classifies these as middles not as reflexives, despite the reflexive pronoun marker.

(21) a. *Mary absented herself from work.*   [reflexive]
  b **Mary absented her brother from work.*

(22) a. *Paul prides himself on his spaghetti.*   [reflexive]
  b. **Paul prides his sister on his spaghetti.*

What sets these types of sentences apart from (actual) reflexive constructions is the obligatory use of the reflexive pronoun: leaving it out leads to ungrammaticality. Note that unlike (21a) and (22a), the sentences in (19a–e) do not actually require the reflexive pronoun. Siemund argues that conceptually, the construction exhibits a reduction in participant roles coupled with full affectedness of the Initiator subject. The reduction in participant roles is corroborated by examples (21b) and (22b), respectively, which show that no external (non-coreferential) argument can be realised with such verbs.

In light of examples (21) and (22), one might ask: is (20b) a reflexive or a (new incoming) middle construction? Apart from differences with regard to construal (the sentence in (20b) does not exhibit a reduction in participant roles), there is also one difference in formal properties between (20b) on the one hand, and (21a) and (22a) on the other. While all three sentences share the constraint of the obligatory reflexive marker, unlike the verbs in (21a) and (22a), the verb in (20b) does allow an overt direct object depicting a Patient role in a transitive construction: *He drank the whiskey*. There is one caveat, however, while the verb allows the direct object, the construction does not: **He drank the whiskey into oblivion/silly*.

Siemund argues that English is undergoing a change-in-progress whereby reflexive pronouns are grammaticalizing as middle markers. If he is indeed

correct, it would seem that against traditional predictions, the heavier marker is becoming a middle marker, possibly because of an absence of a light form in English. On the other hand, having middle markers which originate from reflexive markers is not at al uncommon.[5] While in general, the reflexive forms remain largely optional (Siemund 2010: 828), Siemund's work suggests that over time, English marking patterns may potentially shift from coding one-participant events and middle constructions in the same way, to coding middle constructions and reflexive constructions by the same formal means (thereby also shifting the ambiguity problems).

4.3 Distinguishing reflexives and middles in Romanian

We now turn our attention to Romanian, a two-form language in which we find overlap between middle constructions and reflexive constructions. As we saw in examples (2), (3), (4) and (16), in Romanian, the middle voice involves the various forms of the middle marker *se* (following terminology in Cornilescu 1998; Calude 2004; Calude 2007). Like Spanish, Romanian has a well-developed middle voice system in that the middle marker takes part in a wide array of middle constructions: direct and indirect middles, medio-passives, *se*-inchoatives, and impersonal middles (see Calude 2007 for examples and discussion).

Romanian verbs which take middle marking fall in two classes: verbs which necessarily take middle markers and cannot occur without them (*se osteni* 'tire out', *se rumeni* 'to toast or turn brown', *se uita* 'look around'), and verbs which optionally allow these (*se gândi* 'think', *se simte* 'feel'). Many verbs have two variants, one which occurs with the middle marker and one which occurs without it, and these variants exhibit semantic differences, for example, the verb *ocupa* means 'fill' or 'pre-empt' but the verb *se ocupa* means 'to deal with' or 'to concern oneself with' (these latter forms might be termed "semantically derived middle verbs" paralleling Geniušienė's term "semantically derived reflexive verbs", 1987: 25–30).

As noted earlier, in Romanian, the (direct) middle construction takes the marker *se* (see 23), and the reflexive construction takes the emphatic pronoun *însuși*, in what Faltz terms a compound reflexive (1985 [1977]: 49) consisting of the preposition *cu* 'with' (or *pe* 'on' or *în* 'in' depending on the verb used) which takes the accusative pronoun as its object together with the emphatic pronoun (see example 24). However, as discussed earlier in relation to examples (2c) and

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5 One of the anonymous referees suggests this might be construed as a "weakening", as noted in Russian earlier: *sebja* (reflexive marker) → *sja* (middle marker).

(16b), Romanian also exhibits a productive construction which is similar to the Modern Greek accusative compound reflexive (Manney 2001). It consists of a verb that takes the middle marker *se* and the compound reflexive *cu ea însăși*, as exemplified in (25)[6].

(23) *Ioana **se** așează pe scaun.*
      Ioana MM sit   on chair
      'Ioana sits [down] on a chair.'

(24) *Marcel concurează **cu   el   însuși.***
      Marcel competes   with 3P.SG.MASC. EMPHATIC.PRON
      'Marcel competes against himself.'

(25) *Maria **se** convinge **pe ea/sine   însăși.***
      Maria MM convince on 3P.SG.FEM. EMPHATIC.PRON
      'Maria convinces herself.'

Example (25) is problematic on two accounts. First, against the earlier proposal in Calude (2004), it rejects explanations of the middle based on the principle of low elaboration of events because it seems contradictory for a construction to exhibit, on the one hand, low separation of participant roles through naturally expected coreference of participants (signalled by the use of *se*), and on the other, coincidental coreference of participants (signalled by the emphatic pronoun *însăși*). Although other middle phenomena found in Romanian can be successfully explained by recourse to low elaboration of events (see Calude 2007), the examples above cannot, and thus require some alternative explanation. Second, it is unclear how this construction should be analysed: as middle or as reflexive. Based on Kemmer's (1993) survey, the presence of the middle marker would automatically lead to its categorization as a middle construction. However, the account given in Calude (2004) classifies it on a continuum between reflexives and middles, as does Manney's (2001) work on an equivalent structure in Modern Greek.

One clue towards solving the first problem comes from the observation that in constructions comprising the middle marker together with the emphatic pronoun, the emphatic pronoun is (typically) optional and can be left out, cf. (26).

(26) *Maria **se** convinge ușor.*
      Maria MM convince easily
      'Maria convinces herself easily.'

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6 See Appendix B for more Romanian examples.

But what is the semantic difference between (26) and (25)? In (26), Maria's agency role is downplayed and the action is highlighted, occupying the focal centre of attention (the emphasis is on what happened, not who initiated it). However, in (25), Maria's agency is increased and she is construed as more likely to be responsible for the event, while at the same time, her role as object is brought into focus, providing a split representation of "Maria as Agent" and "Maria as Experiencer". Further evidence of Maria's agency in (25) and her comparative lack of Agency in (26) comes from the fact that (25) allows the adverbial *fără să vrea* 'against her will/without meaning to', whereas (26) does not.

(27)   *Maria **se** convinge uşor fără   să vrea.*
       Maria MM convince easily without to want
       'Maria convinces herself easily without meaning to.'

(28)   **Maria **se** convinge **pe ea/sine** însăşi   fără   să vrea.*
       Maria   MM convince on 3P.SG.FEM. EMPHATIC.PRON without to want
       'Maria convinces herself without meaning to.'

The emphatic pronoun fulfils this precise role of bringing attention to the differentiated role of Experiencer, as distinct from the Agent. This interpretation parallels arguments put forward for Spanish and Modern Greek by Maldonado (2008) and Manney (2001), respectively.

Further support for this analysis can also be observed from the fact that only transitive verbs (e.g., *cita* 'cite', *lupta* 'fight', *salva* 'save', *acuza* 'accuse', *vedea* 'see', *aude* 'hear', *alunga* 'banish') allow the emphatic pronoun alongside the middle marker; intransitive verbs do not, cf. (29).

(29)   **Ioana **se** aşează pe scaun **pe ea**   însuşi.*
       Ioana MM sit   on chair on 3P.SG.FEM EMPHATIC.PRON
       'Ioana sits [down] on a chair.'

Note also that the use of *se* and *însuşi* is conditioned by the verb and its semantic and formal properties, but not by the presence or absence of one or the other marker. Romanian exhibits verbs which take *se* but disallow *însuşi*, as in (29) (e.g., intransitive verbs but also certain transitive verbs like *tăia* 'cut' or *înţepa* 'puncture'), verbs which take both markers (as in 25), and verbs which take *însăşi* but disallow *se*, as in (30).

(30) *Ioana (*se) vorbește **cu   ea/sine   însăși.**
Ioana MM talks   with 3P.SG.PRON EMPHATIC.PRON
'Ioana is talking to herself.'

The examples above suggest that the middle voice in Romanian does not specifically involve a lower elaboration of events or a reduction in participant roles but rather, it functions as a means for highlighting and focusing the event portrayed. In middles, it is neither Agent nor Patient which capture the main point of focus in the construction, but the very event or action discussed. This helps to reconcile the presence of the two markers together, working side by side in a construction which fruitfully profiles two (unrelated and non-contradicting) aspects of interest, namely (1) the event itself, and (2) the agentive role of the subject as a differentiated, split self.

Examples (31) and (32) further illustrate the use of the middle marker together with the emphatic pronoun in naturally occurring data.

(31) *El   **se** împotmolește peste tot   în propria sa umbră*
3SG.MASC MM get.stuck   everywhere in own   his shadow
*până ce ajunge să **se** înnece **în el   însuși**.*
until   gets   to MM drown in 3P.SG.MASC. EMPHATIC.PRON
'He gets stuck everywhere in his own shadow until he drowns in himself.'
(source: Novel *Agonia erosului și alte eseuri* by Byung-Chul Han, 2014)

(32) *Un om   trebuie să **se** învingă **pe el   însuși***
a   man must   to MM defeat on 3P.SG.MASC. EMPHATIC.PRON
înainte de a-i   învinge pe alții.
before of to-them defeat   on others
'A man has to defeat himself before he can defeat others.'
(source: Romanian proverb, http://statusbun.com/?s = 371)

In (31), the understood Experiencer subject of the verb *înneca* 'drown' is presented as drowning in himself (rather than in a body of water which is otherwise assumed to be the case). As in (25), the emphatic pronoun opens up the overt mention of the Location role and brings it into focus by highlighting its separation from other roles in the sentence. In the associated middle construction *El s-a înnecat aseară* 'He drowned last night', the event of drowning is foregrounded and its malefactivity amplified, and here, the Location is understood as being some kind of body of water (even if it is not explicitly coded). Contrary to

explanations linking middles to expected coreference of participant roles, the middle construction does not posit such expected coreference in participant roles at all, in fact, quite the opposite: here, there is no coreference of participants since the subject is not understood to be drowning in himself. It is only when the emphatic pronoun is used that the referent of the Location becomes co-referential with that of the Experiencer.

In (32), the subject *un om* 'a man' takes the role of both Agent and Patient (the entity being defeated) as specified by the emphatic pronoun. Leaving out the emphatic pronoun shifts the focus to the action (backgrounding both the Initiator Agent and the Endpoint Patient), but renders the sentence pragmatically questionable and possibly not acceptable for all speakers. This is a rare case where the reflexive marker is obligatory, due to the fact that the verb *învinge* 'defeat' typically involves an animate Agent subject and a separate (non-coreferential) Patient object (the sentence in 32 is acceptable as a proverb but arguably not productively used in everyday language).

I now return to the second problem, namely how to categorize constructions which encompass both markers. There are a number of ways forward: (1) one is to follow Kemmer (1993) and assign all constructions which receive middle marking to the middle domain, and therefore label them as middle constructions; (2) another is to follow Manney (2001) and Calude (2004) and posit a continuum between middles and reflexives. I follow Calude (2004) in proposing the term *reflexive emphatic middles* on the basis of the use of the middle marker and the associated middle semantics involved (namely, the foregrounding of the event itself).[7] However, I am hesitant to propose a continuum between reflexives and middles because the term "continuum" posits an opposition between middles and reflexives, and I do not see the reflexive emphatic middle as an intermediary construction type between middles and reflexives (with the implication that it is neither middle, nor reflexive). Instead, I interpret the reflexive emphatic middle to be *both* a kind of middle and a kind of reflexive by combining marking patterns and semantic interpretations from both construction types. The analysis of examples like (25), (31), and (32) as reflexive emphatic middles aptly captures the two properties realised in such constructions, namely, their middle character which profiles the event discussed, and the function of drawing out the split representation of self, whose two roles are marked as coreferential via the emphatic pronoun.

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7 One of the anonymous referees suggests the term "middle emphatic" which encapsulates the middle qualities encoded by the middle marker but also the inheritance of a weaker-version of "borrowed" reflexive semantics (the notion of the split representation of the self) from the reflexive marker.
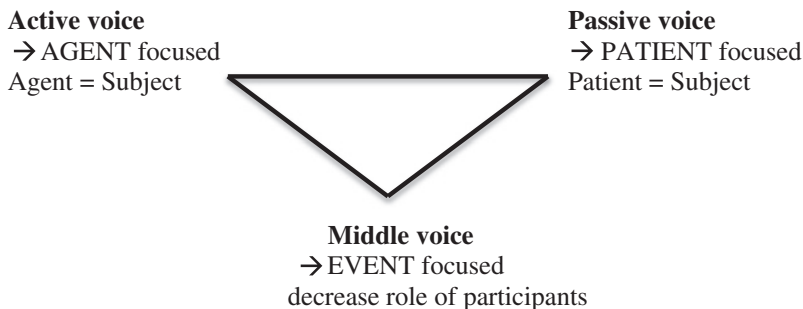
5 Discussion and conclusion

The current paper argues that in English, a one-form language, we can success-fully separate direct middles from intransitive one-participant structures by using the English equivalent of the *mismo* 'him/herself' test proposed for Spanish by Maldonado (2009). In positing the category of a direct middle in English, the analysis provided here sketches a view of the middle voice by recourse to a lack of split in representation of the self, along the lines of the separation scale proposed by Manney (2001).

The analysis of reflexive emphatic middles in Romanian led the conceptuali-zation of the middle voice away from the property of low elaboration of events and closer to what Maldonado terms the "focalization of the core properties of the verb" (2000: 180). Put simply, in order to account for data found in Romanian constructions exhibiting both middle markers and reflexive markers, I suggest that instead of drawing attention to participants, the middle voice privileges events. The exact nature of how those core properties of an event might be profiled varies from verb to verb, depending on what attributes are salient for each specific verb.

But where does that leave the goal of proposing a unified account of the middle voice? The position presented in this paper is that indeed, it is still possible to view the middle voice as a unified phenomenon whose overarching function is to profile events (over participants), but the precise manner in which this profiling is achieved varies from language to language, and even within individual lan-guages, across middle construction types, for example, direct middles versus middle passives in English. In some languages, profiling the events comes at the expense of backgrounding the agency of Agent subjects (e.g., in certain Modern Greek constructions), or in some form of reduction in participants (as found in English direct middle). In other cases, profiling events is achieved through the backgrounding, collapsing or altogether omitting of otherwise distinct participant roles, for instance, in English middle passives or Romanian medio-passives (cf. Calude 2007). While the property of low elaboration of events itself does not lie at the heart of the middle voice, the property of relative distinguish-ability of participants certainly remains relevant for some languages and in certain middle constructions (see for instance, Siemund 2010, 2014; Peitsara 1997 for its applicability in certain English examples).

The middle voice remains in opposition to active and passive voice. The active voice is primarily concerned with the interests of the Agent and perspectivizes the event from its vantage point by placing the Agent in subject position. The passive voice focuses on the Patient and perspectivizes the event from its vantage point, placing the Patient in subject position. The middle voice, however, has little

concern for participants and, in contrast to both actives and passives, it perspectivizes the event itself. In accordance with this function, middle constructions can exhibit a reduction in participant roles but this is not their main function – it is merely a consequence brought about by the focus on the event and away from participant roles. This is summarised diagrammatically in Figure 4.

Active voice   **Passive voice**
→ AGENT focused   → PATIENT focused
Agent = Subject   Patient = Subject

Middle voice
→ EVENT focused
decrease role of participants

Figure 4: Voicing distinctions: Active, passive and middle.

One might wonder, why does the middle voice look so different from different linguistic vantage points? English language textbooks exemplify the middle voice as being in opposition to active and passive constructions, as seen in the earlier examples (13a–c), exemplified below for convenience.

(33)   a. *His thesis read well.*
      b. *The car drives easily.*
      c. *The Crayola markers wash out quickly.*

On the other hand, in many Romance languages (Spanish, French and Romanian), the middle voice is exemplified as being in opposition to reflexive constructions. I would like to suggest that the reason for this disparity has to do with the fact that in a language like say English, direct middles do not look – at least, at first glance – all that different from intransitive one-participant structures, and hence, they do not make good candidates for exemplifying the phenomenon of middle voice. In contrast, examples such as those in (13/33) instantiate more clearly the departure of the middle voice from both active and passive voice, thereby making them more appealing for grammar textbooks. In contrast, in languages with overt middle markers, like Romanian, Spanish, German, and French, the direct middle construction makes for clear exemplification of the kinds of structures which instantiate the middle voice because of its overt middle marker.

This paper posits that no matter how the middle voice is exemplified, the core unifying property of the middle is to highlight and focus core properties of the event portrayed. So while accounts like that of say Radden and Dirven (2007) explaining sentences similar to those in (13/33) as involving "enabling conditions" (2007: 289–291) might be correct, they do not touch on the main function that such constructions actually fulfil. The enabling conditions which allow the backgrounding of an Agent and the foregrounding of the Patient are just a manifestation of the means by which the middle voice is able to implement the focusing of the core properties of the event. Put simply, while there might be a reduction in participant roles in order to allow for the successful profiling of the events itself, the reduction is only a means towards the (greater) end, and does not constitute this "end" in itself.

In this paper, I hope to have shown that:

1. The *him/herself* test proposed by Maldonado for Spanish can be fruitfully applied in a one-form language like English, to distinguish between direct middles and intransitive one-participant structures. English direct middle constructions (such as *Maria slept all night long*) profile the core properties of the verb by means of collapsing participant roles into a single undifferentiated entity (which does not leave room for the construal of a split representation of self). In other English middle constructions (such as *The car drives well*), the profiling of the verb is achieved by backgrounding and omitting the role of the Agent (which is physically distinct from the Patient).

2. The Romanian middle voice exhibits reflexive emphatic middles which use both middle markers and reflexive markers, in which the markers work together to foreground two separate aspects of interest: (1) the core properties of the verb involved (achieved through the use of the middle marker *se*); and (2) the coreferentiality of the subject's two distinct representations of the self (achieved through the emphatic pronoun *însuși*). The use of both markers does not bring about a contradiction because they each have distinct (and not incompatible) functions.

3. In agreement with other analyses of the middle voice, this paper argues in favour of a unified account of the phenomenon, whose primary function is that of profiling a given event and its core properties. This function is compatible with the property of relative distinguishability of participant roles but this property is not always present in all middle voice constructions (or even in all languages which exhibit middle voice phenomena). Contrary to other accounts of middle voice, it does not constitute the overarching unifying function of the middle voice, but merely instantiates a possible strategy employed in certain constructions to achieve the wider unifying function of the middle, namely that of profiling core aspects of a given event.

Appendix A. Glossary of abbreviations

1/2/3P	first/second/third person
EMPHATIC PRON.	emphatic pronoun
FEM.	feminine
MASC.	masculine
MM	middle marker
PAST	past tense
PL.	plural
SG.	singular

Appendix B. Additional examples from Romanian

Romanian middles

1. *Ion s-a desenat uitîndu-se în oglindă.* — John drew himself [by] looking in the mirror.
2. *Ion s-a dezamăgit aşa de repede.* — John became discouraged quickly.
3. *Ion s-a speriat de uriaş.* — John got scared by the giant.
4. *Maria se vede in oglindă.* — Maria sees herself in the mirror.
5. *Maria s-a citat adeasea.* — Maria has cited herself often.
6. *Maria se luptă din greu.* — Maria is fighting hard.
7. *Maria se luptă cu Marius.* — Maria is fighting with Marius.

Romanian reflexive emphatic middles

8. *Ion s-a desenat pe el însuşi azi dimneaţă.* — John has drawn himself this morning.
9. *Ion s-a dezamăgit pe sine însuşi.* — John has disappointed himself.

10. *Ion s-a speriat de sine însuşi trântind uşa.*	John scared himself slamming the door.
11. *Maria se vede pe sine însăşi în oglindă.*	Maria sees herself in the mirror.
12. *Maria s-a citat pe sine însăşi adeasea.*	Maria has cited herself often.
13. *Maria se luptă cu sine însăşi.*	Maria is fighting hard with herself.

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