

Tracing the Functional Expansion of the Self-pronoun

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0. Introduction

This paper aims to explore the development of various functions of the English self-pronoun in light of their present day constraints, focusing in particular on the reflexive and intensive functions.¹ Starting life as an intensive in Old English (OE), the morpheme *self* came to be fused with pronouns to form the compound self-pronoun which today performs a variety of functions, including intensification and marking reflexivity. After giving a brief outline of this process, I will attempt to pinpoint the constraints on Present Day English (PDE) intensives, showing how this enables us to better understand the function of OE intensives and their extension to a reflexive use. I will then discuss other PDE uses of self-pronouns, suggesting possible origins, and raising questions for further research.

¹ The term "self-pronoun" refers to the morphological forms *himself*, *herself*, *themselves*, etc.

1. Formation of the self-pronoun

In the PDE pronominal system, we have both personal pronouns and self-pronouns, the latter type having, among other functions, the ability to mark reflexivity or intensification. The term "reflexive" is used here to mean a pronoun which is coindexed with a less oblique argument of the same head, as in the following examples:

- (1) a. John_i likes *him_i / himself_i.
 b. Agatha_i relies on *her_i / herself_i.
 c. Mary posted the children's_i drawings of *them_i / themselves_i.

In (1b,c) the preposition can be considered a case marker, making little or no semantic contribution. Thus the self-pronouns are still co-arguments of the subject and the possessive, respectively.

The term "intensive" refers to a self-pronoun which is an appositive to an NP or personal pronoun. As will be discussed in §2, intensives mark either external prominence (i.e. high rank or importance), or discourse prominence and contrast.

- (2) a. The governor himself will be at the rally.
 b. Louise's brother likes downhill skiing, but she herself prefers cross country.

However, OE had only personal pronouns, which unlike their PDE counterparts, could be used as reflexives.

- (3) he hine > ær hwile reste
he him there meanwhile rested
 "he rested (himself) there meanwhile"

[Visser 1963, §432a]

The morpheme *self* served alone as an intensive, apparently with much the same purpose as the PDE intensive.² The following examples are taken from Keenan (1994).

- (4) ond he geseah flone haelend sylfne standan on his godflrymme
and he saw the(acc) Lord self(acc.m.sg.) standing in his divine glory
 [Mart.8; =Keenan's (30)]
- (5) fla forborn flas cyninges heall mid eallum his spedum, ond his sunu awedde, ond
 he sylf ahreofodee...
*then the king's hall burned down with all his treasures, his son went mad, and he
 self(nom.m.sg.) became a leper*
 [Mart.174; =Keenan's (35)]

² This will be explored in more detail in §4.

As these examples illustrate, *self* was usually declined to agree in number, case, and gender with the noun it modified.

The sequence of pronoun+*self* eventually gave rise to the PDE compound self-pronoun, a process which according to Visser (1963) was completed by the 15th century.³ During this time, pronoun+*self* came to be used as a reflexive as well as an intensive. The remainder of this paper will explore this change in function during OE and Middle English (ME) without going into further details of the morphological developments. Thus I will speak of both *self* and self-pronouns with the understanding that the latter is a direct descendant of the former.

2. Constraints on PDE intensives

Ideally, we would like to determine the constraints on OE intensives, but given the subtleties of intensives, it is useful to begin with a precise account of PDE, and compare those results with the available examples in OE texts. In this section I will concentrate on the analysis of Baker (1995), who provides us with just such an explicit set of criteria for the appropriate use of intensives.⁴ His analysis will require some fine-tuning which will result in a more accurate description of the constraints on PDE intensives.

Baker distinguishes between two necessary conditions on intensives; the intensive NP must be contrastive and it must have some sort of discourse prominence. The first condition is stated as follows:

- (6) CONTRASTIVENESS CONDITION: Intensive NPs are appropriate only in contexts where emphasis or contrast is desired.

[=Baker's (19)]

Discourse prominence is a more nebulous concept, related to the centrality of a figure with respect to the rest of the narrative.

- (7) CONDITION OF RELATIVE DISCOURSE PROMINENCE: Intensive NPs can only be used to mark a character in a sentence or discourse who is relatively more prominent or central than other characters.

[=Baker's (24)]

There are several sources of discourse prominence; for example, the intensive NP can refer to the directly responsible agent, as in (8a), or the directly affected patient, as in (8b). In each case, I have underlined the NP with which the intensified NP is being contrasted.

³ See Visser §426-453, Mitchell (1985) §472-500, Ogura (1989), and references therein for details on the complex set of motivations for this change.

⁴ Baker relies primarily on British literature for his data, but also constructs some of his own examples. I will be citing Baker's data, as well as my own excerpts from the Brown corpus and other literature.

- (8) a. The obstacle that Bill tried to set up for the opposing lawyer ultimately caused difficulties for Bill himself.
[=Baker's (29a)]
- b. Of all the people who were in the courtroom yesterday morning, only the defendant herself remained completely calm when the judge handed down her sentence.
[=Baker's (31a)]

In both cases the contrast is with a character or characters who are less directly involved in the relevant scene. Note that it is not necessary for the contrasted NP to appear in the sentence; for example, if the first PP is removed from (8b), the intensive NP is still acceptable since the presence of others in the courtroom may be understood in context.

A more general source of prominence is being the "primary topic of concern." For example, the following is an excerpt from a review of a performance by violinist D'Albert which at one point names him in a list of other composers.

- (9) Works by Dohnanyi, Hubay, Mr. D'Albert himself, and Paganini indicated that the violinist [D'Albert] had some virtuoso fireworks up his sleeve as well as a reserved attitude toward a lyric phrase.
[Brown 180021]

Note that again there is contrast, this time with the other composers, who are more incidental to the story.

Another way to be prominent is to be the subject of consciousness; that is, to be the person whose point of view is being represented. This is the case in the following example from Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*, where Elinor Dashwood is the subject of consciousness.

- (10) She, [Elinor Dashwood] could not but smile to see the graciousness of both mother and daughter towards the very person—for Lucy was particularly distinguished—whom of all others, had they known as much as she, did, they would have been most anxious to mortify; while she, herself, who had comparatively no power to wound them, sat pointedly slighted by both.
[Austen 239; =Baker's (37a)]

Here Elinor is being contrasted with another character whose point of view is not represented.

A common source of prominence is for the intensive NP to be contrasted with something defined relative to it. That is, if the intensive NP is X, then what it is being contrasted with is defined as X's Y.

- (11) On each side of the motor well there's storage for battery, bumpers, line, and spare props with six-gallon gas tanks below. The well itself is designed to take two Merc 800's or 500's if you wish, and there's room for a 25-gallon long cruise gas tank below it.

[Brown 297323]

Here the contrast is between the motor well and the areas defined as being on either side of the well.

So far, Baker's conditions seem correct in that prominence and contrast are the key to the function of intensives. However, the fact that prominence and contrast are separated into two conditions presents a minor problem. Consider the following dialogue:

- (12) Agatha: I wonder what John's been up to.
 Bernice: I don't know; I haven't seen him lately.
 Candice: I saw John yesterday.
 Agatha: You saw Sean yesterday? Who's that?
 Candice: No, I said I saw John (#himself) yesterday.

When Agatha misunderstands, Candice emphasizes the correction, contrasting it with *Sean*. Since John is also the primary topic of concern in this conversation, Baker's conditions for the intensive are met. Yet the inclusion of *himself* yields an anomalous sounding sentence.

Based on this observation, we can conclude that contrast and prominence are not sufficient in and of themselves. Instead, the contrast must be with a member or members of a comparison set consisting of figures which are less prominent in the relevant sense. In (12) the contrast is not with a character who is peripheral to the topic at hand, since Sean may or may not exist. The contrast is rather with the misunderstood version of a name.

This problem with Baker's conditions can be solved by combining them into the following unified constraint:

- (13) INTENSIVE NP CONSTRAINT: (preliminary version)
 Intensive NPs are appropriate only where there is contrast with a member of a relevant comparison set which has less discourse prominence.

This constraint also differs from Baker's in that it leaves out the term "emphasis." To make sure that this does not cause the wrong predictions to be made, we want to check for cases in which an intensive NP could be considered emphatic, but not contrastive.

This situation does in fact arise with another source of prominence not yet discussed—what Baker calls "high external rank." I will refer to this as "external prominence," in contrast with the previously discussed types of discourse prominence. Such prominence relies not on the structure of the discourse, but rather on shared

assumptions about rank at various levels. Deities, religious figures such as saints, and high-ranking politicians are common examples of characters with external prominence.

There seem to be two types of situations in which the intensive emphasizes external prominence. In the first, the intensive NP serves as an exemplar of a quality relevant to the situation, with its appropriateness justified by shared cultural assumptions rather than by contextual clues. For example, the devil may be invoked as the highest member on a hierarchy of evil beings.

- (14) Cried one professor after a few months of Student Schiele's tantrums and rebellion: "The devil himself must have defecated you into my classroom!"

[Brown 166871]

Abstract natural forces may also qualify as having high external rank. In the following example, *life* is referred to as a paragon of persistence, an assumption which the reader may readily accommodate given the context of animals in the wild.

- (15) There is a patience in the wild—dogged, tireless, persistent as life itself—that holds motionless for endless hours the spider in its web, the snake in its coils, the panther in its ambushade...

[London 3265]

In the second type of situation, the externally prominent NP can perhaps be paraphrased as "the one and only X" or "the great X."

- (16) a. The award for volunteer work was presented by President Clinton himself.
b. The children saw Santa Claus himself at the mall.

Again, the intensive NP refers to a figure which has a high rank on some externally available hierarchy. However, note that while the rank has external justification, it must also be contextually appropriate.

- (17) Agatha: Guess who's going to be presenting the award for volunteer work?
Bernice: Who—Mayor Brown?
Agatha: No, Governor Wilson himself!

In the above dialogue, Bernice mentions a figure lower in the political hierarchy than the state governor, so that it is appropriate for Agatha to name the governor as someone whose rank justifies the use of the intensive.

But in (18), Bernice invokes a more extensive hierarchy by mentioning the president.

- (18) Agatha: Guess who's going to be presenting the award for volunteer work?
Bernice: Who—President Clinton?
Agatha: No, Governor Wilson (#himself).

Thus Agatha is no longer able to use the intensive, since the governor is ranked lower on this hierarchy than the president.

Similarly, it is important that the hierarchy exist for at least some of the people in the text or dialogue. In (16b) the intensive is justified because we can imagine that the children place Santa Claus high on a list of powerful or influential figures in their lives. This is why the following sounds odd:

(19) The teenagers saw Santa Claus himself at the mall.

Once children reach a certain age, we know that Santa Claus becomes demoted in their pantheon of heroes.

In both types of cases, whether the intensive NP marks an exemplar of a quality or an individual with certain prestige, it might be argued that an implicit contrast exists between the high-ranking figures and the figures which rank below them. In this case, we could simply remove the word "discourse" from the constraint in (13) and have a reasonably accurate constraint covering both discourse and external prominence.

But it would be misleading to characterize contrast as a necessary condition on intensives with external prominence. Instead, any contrastiveness seems to be an incidental byproduct rather than the speaker's intention, since it cannot be divorced from the notion of high rank in the first place. On the other hand, an NP with discourse prominence can be referred to without any such contrast being implied.

Furthermore, in the next section I will argue that there is independent evidence for a distinction between discourse prominence and external prominence. Thus there is no need to conflate these two types of intensives to begin with. Instead, the constraint in (13) can be augmented as follows:

(20) INTENSIVE NP CONSTRAINT: (final version)

Intensive NPs are appropriate only where:

- (a) there is contrast with a member of a relevant comparison set which has less discourse prominence, or
- (b) the referent is understood to have the highest rank on a relevant hierarchy of external prominence.

This distinction between two types of prominence is further supported by both synchronic and diachronic evidence, to be discussed in the following section.

3. Evidence for two distinct types of prominence

3.1 Synchronic evidence

In PDE, intensives with external prominence can be shown to behave differently than those with discourse prominence. First, Baker observes that it is impossible for more than one NP to be an intensive within a short passage; only one NP at a time is able to have discourse prominence.

- (21) a. Do you want to speak to Barbara, or would you rather deal with Martha?
 b. Do you want to speak to Barbara herself, or would you rather deal with Martha?
 c. Do you want to speak to Barbara, or would you rather deal with Martha herself?
 d. ??Do you want to speak to Barbara herself, or would you rather deal with Martha herself?

[=Baker's (41)]

Thus either Barbara or Martha can be interpreted as having discourse prominence, but not both in the same passage.

However, the following attested example shows that two intensive NPs are possible if one has external prominence.

- (22) Those social, civilizational factors not rooted in the human spirit of the group, ultimately cease to exist. Civilization itself—tradition—falls out of existence when the human spirit itself becomes confused.

[Brown 525005, 525017]

The first intensive NP is being contrasted with the "social, civilizational factors" mentioned in the first sentence, and gains discourse prominence by virtue of its contrast with something defined in terms of it. The second intensive NP is not being contrasted, but has external prominence as an abstract concept, like that in (15). The result is a piece of prose which may not be stylistically appealing, but is admitted by the grammar in a way that (21d) is not.

While only one figure may have discourse prominence within a given passage, we would expect it to be possible in principle to have more than one intensive NP with external prominence. To my knowledge there are no attested examples, but the following sentence certainly sounds better than (21d).

- (23) In Alfred's vision of the apocalypse, everyone good and evil was assembled together, from Christ himself right down to the devil himself.

Thus Baker's observation seems to be correct, but only if limited to intensives with discourse prominence rather than external prominence. This difference in behavior suggests that the two types of prominence should be treated as distinct.⁵

3.2 Diachronic evidence

There is also evidence that the original function of the intensive *self* was to mark external prominence, and that the marking of discourse prominence followed later. The former function was by far the most common in OE, according to Keenan's data. In his corpus, he finds that almost all (71 out of 74) full NPs modified by an intensive refer to the holy trinity, a superhuman figure, or a person of high rank. Below are two examples of full NPs with external prominence.

- (24) ond he geseah thone haelend sylfne standan on his godthymne
and he saw the Lord self standing in his divine glory
 [Mart.8; =Keenan's (30)]
- (25) menn tha gearwiath clane wununga on heor heortum Criste sylfum
men who prepare a clean habitation in their hearts for Christ self
 [BIHom.VI.73; =Keenan's (31)]

Neither of these examples appears to involve contrastiveness, just like the PDE intensive NPs with external prominence. Interestingly, only about half of all intensified pronouns (34 out of 77) refer to an exalted figure, a fact that will be returned to in the next section.

The distribution of intensives suggests that their primary function was to mark external prominence, perhaps periphrastically. Both Keenan and Peitsara find that local object binding is much more likely to be expressed by a self-pronoun in religious texts, in OE and ME respectively. Peitsara believes this is related to the general use of periphrases in religious texts to affect a solemn tone. Other such periphrastic conceits include the unemphatic *do*-periphrasis, pleonastic *that* with subordinators, and lengthened prepositions. Thus the use of self-pronouns was strongly linked to a sense of formality, even after they had come to mark reflexivity as well as to intensify. This is consistent with the hypothesis that intensive *self* had its start simply marking external prominence.

In the following section the development of OE intensives into markers of discourse prominence will be examined in some detail.

⁵ Another potential source of evidence lies in the intonational differences between the two (pointed out to me by Carl Pollard, p.c.). I will leave this line of inquiry open for future research.

4. A closer look at OE intensives

The function of the OE intensive is often simply described as "emphatic"; Mitchell cites Penning (1875:20), Wülfing (1890:i, §239,242), Farr (1905:22,25), and Quirk and Wrenn (1958:72) as all agreeing on this point. But the data suggest a slightly more complex picture.

Recall that Keenan found the following distribution among instances of intensive *self* in his OE corpus:

| referent has... | external prominence | discourse prominence |
|--------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| full NP | 74 | 3 |
| pronoun | 34 | 43 |

Table 1: Distribution of *self* in OE

If the primary function of *self* was to mark external prominence, then the question is why it would also be used with personal pronouns with undistinguished referents. I would suggest that in using *self* in apposition with personal pronouns whose referents had high status, another more utilitarian function emerged, that of clarification of reference.

- (26) *tha forborn tha cyninges heall mid eallum his spedum, ond his sunu awedde, ond he sylf ahreofodee...*
then the king's hall burned down with all his treasures, his son went mad, and he (him)self became a leper

[Mart.174; =Keenan's (35)]

Note that the appositive not only marks the high status of the referent, but also alerts the reader that it is the king rather than the king's son who is being referred to. It would not be a very big step from there to the present use of appositives. Rather than necessarily indicating high status, the intensifier would mark a pronoun whose referent is the most prominent individual in the discourse, contrasting it with other potential referents.

This is in fact already the case in (27).

- (27) *Abraham sodlice ymsnad hys sunu Ismahel on thone ylcan daeg, swa swa God him bebad. & he sylf weard ymsniden fla he waes nygan & hundnygantig geara.*
Abraham verily circumcised his son Ishmael on the same day as God bade him, and he (him)self was circumcised when he was nine and ninety years old.

[ÆGen16.24; =Keenan's (50)]

All of the characters involved have special status as biblical figures, with God having the highest status. Yet it is Abraham as the main character whose pronominal representation is marked with *sylf*, in contrast with his son Ishmael.

From there the intensive's function would extend to prominent full NPs which were being contrasted. Thus the original function of the intensifier as a marker of external prominence has remained, with no requirement of contrast, as in (24) and (25). The extended function has been to mark the contrast of a discourse prominent NP. In both cases, if a pronoun was being modified in OE, it potentially had the ancillary function of disambiguating pronominal reference.

This secondary function has been recognized in PDE intensives as well. For example, Bickerton (1987) points out that in the following dialogue, the appositive restricts the antecedent of the pronoun to Susan:

- (28) A: How will Mary_i do on the exam?
 B: I don't know, but Susan_i says that she_{ik} / she_{uk} herself will pass.
 [=Bickerton's (5)]

Since it is Susan's point of view which is being taken in B's report, the constraint in (20) accurately predicts that the intensive is appropriate; presumably Susan is being contrasted with the other exam takers. It is possible that Mary could also have discourse prominence, perhaps as the primary topic of concern, but there is not enough context to establish this. There is also no one in the context that Mary could be contrasted with.

Bickerton claims that it is the c-commanding potential antecedent which blocks coreference with *Mary*, but McKay (1991) shows that this cannot be right by adding some more context to the dialogue.

- (29) A: Mary_i has been concerned about her friends. Susan_i said that several were going to fail the course, and Susan might be right. But Mary should think more about her own work. How will Mary do on the exam?
 B: I don't know, but Susan_i says that she_{ik} / she_{uk} herself will pass.
 [=McKay's (10)]

McKay asserts that the difference lies in the establishment of a comparison set for Mary by adding other students to the context, and I would agree. The implication is that Susan is aware of the whole situation. (making B's statement relevant to A's question), and thus is contrasting Mary, the primary topic of concern, with the other students in the course. Alternatively, the intensive pronoun could still refer to Susan as the subject of consciousness if she was contrasting herself with both Mary and the rest of the students. Thus, depending on the particular context, the intensive does have the potential to disambiguate a pronoun's reference.

In general, the PDE functions of intensive *self* appear to have emerged by the end of OE; marking external prominence, marking discourse prominence and contrastiveness,

and clarifying pronominal reference when the other conditions are met. In the next section the emergence of the self-pronoun as a reflexive marker will be discussed in light of these developments.

5. From intensive to reflexive

Now that we have clarified the functions of the intensive and their development, it is possible to reexamine the emergence of the self-pronoun as a reflexive. What feature or features of the intensive allowed its function to be extended to that of marking local object-binding? It has been commonly assumed (Levinson 1991, Faltz 1985, Peitsara, among others), that the shared characteristic of intensives and reflexives is "unexpectedness" or "remarkability." This stems from the observation that self-pronouns were first used as reflexives with verbs where the coreference is marked.

I will argue that this analysis is slightly inaccurate. In order to have a more precise account of this development, we should take care not to equate unexpectedness with either contrast or external prominence. Levinson (p.31), for example, lists as a feature of intensives "a contrastive, contrary-to-expectation element," as if the two terms described the same situation. Similarly, Peitsara (p.299) interprets the use of self-pronouns to denote Christ as partly due to the fact that "anything done by Christ is a remarkable act," a statement which misses the generalization we arrived at previously about the marking of external prominence.

The reason that self-pronouns came to be used as reflexives, the commonly accepted argument goes, is that like the intensives, they are marking a situation in which the referent is unexpected. However, as Baker cites König (1991:89) as pointing out, nothing we know about intensives suggests that one of their functions is to signal unexpectedness per se. Recall that in §2 the following constraint was determined.

(30) INTENSIVE NP CONSTRAINT: (final version)

Intensive NPs are appropriate only where:

- (a) there is contrast with a member of a relevant comparison set which has less discourse prominence, or
- (b) the referent is understood to have the highest rank on a relevant hierarchy of external prominence.

This is not to say that the intensive may not incidentally mark an NP with an unexpected referent.

- (31) Ed was always bragging about how much money he made. Yet not only was Ed's mother seen picking up food from the local charity, but Ed himself was known to use food stamps at the grocery store.

Note that in (31) Ed is both discourse prominent and contrasted with his mother. It is also unexpected that Ed would use food stamps on a large income.

However, if the referent is only unexpected, but not contrastive, then the intensive is no longer appropriate.⁶

- (32) Ed was always bragging about how much money he made. Yet Ed (#himself) was seen using food stamps at the grocery store.

In Peitsara's detailed study, she confirms previous assertions that throughout ME, locally bound personal pronouns were most common with verbs for which coreferential arguments were the rule rather than the exception. In particular, these verbs were either "essentially reflexive" or "predominately reflexive."⁷ The first type includes verbs with pleonastic objects, such as *go*, *bethink*, *repent*, *govern*, *obey*, and *busy*.

- (33) *homward he him spedde*
he sped homeward

[Chaucer 359k]

- (34) *This knight avyseth him and sore syketh*
This knight pondered and sighed wretchedly

[Chaucer 372w]

Most of these verbs, such as the two above, have lost this pleonastic object in PDE.

The predominately reflexive verbs occur most frequently with coreferential arguments, but also allow a non-coreferential object, and include *shave*, *arm*, *clothe*, and *bless* ("cross oneself").

- (35) *And cladde him as a povre laborer*
And [he] clothed himself as a poor laborer

[Chaucer 551k]

On the other hand, Peitsara finds that self-pronouns were more often used to mark coreference on the "accidentally reflexive" verbs, those which generally have non-coreferential arguments. These include verbs denoting destructive or undesirable behavior (*deceive*, *kill*), as well as recommendable actions (*understand*, *offer*, *overcome*). Context naturally plays a role; locally bound pronouns which refer to exalted figures, or which are contrastive tend to be expressed as self-pronouns.

Having carefully examined the functions of intensives, we can now interpret Peitsara's findings in terms of their transition to reflexives. First, the use of self-pronouns

⁶ This example can be improved by imagining a contrast between Ed and the people he brags to. In fact, it is difficult to construct an isolated example in which there is no way to construe some sort of contrast.

⁷ Peitsara uses the term "reflexive verb" as an abbreviation for "the reflexive use of a verb"; i.e. one in which the objects are coreferential. In the case of the essentially reflexive verbs, however, the object is pleonastic and thus not referring.

both contrastively and with externally prominent referents marks a direct extension of their intensive functions.

As for the verbs denoting either destructive or recommendable behavior, there are two observations to be made. First, the verb's subject frequently represents a directly responsible agent, while the direct object will be the most directly affected patient.⁸ Since each has the same referent, two of the conditions requisite for discourse prominence will often be met within the context of the verb's action, when only one is actually necessary.

It is also natural that essentially reflexive and predominately reflexive verbs generally did not take a self-pronoun. Essentially reflexive verbs do not even have a referential object, thus there is no referent to have prominence or to be contrasted. It is conceivable that the objects of predominately reflexive verbs were treated as pleonastic as well, given that they often alternated with a middle voice construction in which the object was deleted. For example, Visser (§161) finds many verbs in ME (such as *bathe*, *clothe*, *conform*, *humble*, *submit*, and *pride*) which appear both with and without a reflexive object, and have a reflexive interpretation. At any rate, there was no need to disambiguate the reference of the object of a predominately reflexive verb, since the coreference was understood to be the unmarked case.

6. Further developments

So far we have seen that the original function of the intensive *self* as marking external prominence has been expanded to allow it to mark discourse prominence and contrast, as well as local object-binding. As is typical of semantic change, these developments have been additive, with the result that all of the steps represent a function still present in PDE. These developments are summarized below.

(36) HYPOTHESIZED DEVELOPMENT OF *SELF*:

- STEP 1: *self* marks external prominence on NPs and pronouns
- STEP 2: *self* disambiguates reference of externally prominent pronouns; there is implicit contrast with other potential referents
- STEP 3: *self* disambiguates reference of discourse prominent pronouns; there is implicit contrast with other potential referents
- STEP 4: *self* marks discourse prominence and contrast on full NPs
- STEP 5: *self* disambiguates reference of locally bound objects; referent is typically externally prominent and/or discourse prominent and contrastive

By no means do these steps represent all of the PDE functions of the self-pronoun. It is not within the scope of this paper to fully examine the remaining functions and their origins, but a representative sample will be discussed below.

⁸ See, for example, Dowty (1991).

6.1 Locally free reflexives and their relatives

Baker focuses a great deal of attention on what he terms "locally free reflexives" (LFRs) in British literature.⁹ These are self-pronouns which are not locally bound, although they may be subcategorized for.

- (37) a. She perceived him soon afterwards looking at herself, and speaking familiarly to her brother...
 [Austen 253; =Baker's (10d)]
- b. The Miss Dashwoods had no greater reason to be dissatisfied with Mrs. Jennings' style of living, and set of acquaintance, than with her behavior to themselves, which was invariably kind.
 [Austen 183; =Baker's (15a)]

According to Baker, LFRs are subject to just the same constraints as intensives. In the above examples, each referent is the subject of consciousness in its respective passage, and each is being contrasted with the referents of the underlined NPs. The self-pronoun is essentially equivalent to a pronoun followed by an appositive.

This results in one of the most interesting aspects of LFRs from a historical point of view—their ability to have independent reference. Reflexives, the most common instantiation of self-pronouns, are by definition coindexed with another argument, and thus referentially dependent. And intensives, being modifiers, are not referring at all. Thus it would be interesting to discover the details of the LFR's introduction to English, as it constitutes a significant addition to the self-pronoun's repertoire.

The use of the self-pronoun alone is quite possibly the result of avoiding the repetition that would occur if *her herself* or *them themselves* were used.¹⁰ This type of phenomenon has also been noted by Stemberger (1981). If this was the case, then the question is, when was the pronominal head dropped? Baker claims that LFRs are found only in British English, but is not explicit about whether they occur in certain dialects or registers of British speech as well as literature. If they can occur in speech, or if they could at some point in the past, then did they at any time appear in American English? And how does this relate to the timing of the elision of the pronominal head?

In searching for the answers to these questions, we also want to take into consideration the use of self-pronouns in contrastive predicates, a use which seems to simply be a sub-type of LFR, although Baker does not state this explicitly. The contrastive predicates are the ones headed by terms like *except*, *like*, *as*, *but*, or *than*. The

⁹ Baker uses the term "reflexive" to refer to what is here called a self-pronoun, nonetheless recognizing that LFRs are not reflexives in the sense used here.

¹⁰ In this regard, it is also interesting to note that while in ME the subject pronoun was not always overt, the intensive could still show up on its own. In other words, *he himself* was sometimes expressed as *himself*, something which might have facilitated the development of LFRs as a productive phenomenon.

individual conjuncts of coordinate NPs may also be considered contrastive with respect to one another.

- (38) a. John wants to hire someone as smart as himself.
 b. Bridget feels that Todd is more skilled than herself.
 c. According to the mayor, investigators have spoken with both herself and her secretary.

Unlike the LFRs in (37), these are acceptable in American English (AmE) as well as British English (BrE), although they may be perceived as formal or stilted. One of the differences between the two is that the LFRs in (37) are selected by a head with a less oblique argument also present. In (37a), *look* has as its arguments both (*at*) *herself*, and the less oblique *him*, while in (37b), *behavior* has (*to*) *themselves* and the less oblique *her*.

In (38), however, the pronoun can be analyzed as not being selected by a head with a less oblique argument. According to Pollard and Sag (1994), in (38a,b) the whole phrases *as himself* and *than herself* constitute the arguments of the respective comparative predicates, so that the pronouns themselves do not have any coarguments. Similarly, in (38c), the head *speak* selects the entire coordinate NP as an argument, not the individual conjuncts. For ease of exposition, I will be referring to the former situation as "locally o-commanded" and the latter as "locally o-free," using terminology from HPSG.¹¹

Pollard and Sag claim that this is part of a larger generalization about where non-locally bound self-pronouns can occur in AmE. As long as a self-pronoun is locally o-free, it is acceptable given that the appropriate non-syntactic conditions are met. This has the effect of unifying the self-pronouns in (38) with those in picture NPs (to be discussed further in §6.2).

However, Baker objects to this analysis, on the basis of his belief that not all speakers who use self-pronouns in picture NPs also use them in contrastive predicates. Instead, he suggests that the American speakers who use the LFRs in (38) simply have a few idiosyncratic rules which allow them to be used in these very specific contexts. This usage reflects the remnants of the more general distribution of LFRs in BrE.

Baker is very likely correct that the more general British and the more restricted American uses of LFRs are related, given that they have the same constraints and that one is a subset of the other. But there is support for the argument that the LFRs in AmE are not simply fossilized remnants, but productively available in locally o-free environments.

This support comes from examples of LFRs in other contexts in AmE:

¹¹ See Pollard and Sag (1994) for precise definitions of these terms.

- (39) John swears that he didn't find a snake next to Mary, he only found one near himself.

In this variation on the common "snake" example the self-pronoun is in a PP adjunct, and is locally o-free because that adjunct has no less oblique argument. It meets the definition of an LFR in that it refers to a discourse prominent person (in this limited context) and is contrasted with another referent, *Mary*. Unless a better analysis exists, this type of pronoun is evidence of the productive use of LFRs in locally o-free contexts other than contrastive predicates.

Again taking a diachronic perspective, it would be enlightening to know how and when this restriction on locally o-commanded non-reflexive self-pronouns arose. In AmE this restriction has virtually no exceptions (but see the discussion of hypercorrective self-pronouns below), leading us to wonder if this has always been the case in AmE.

Finally, there is another use of self-pronouns which is evidently related to LFRs, and generally considered hypercorrective by prescriptive grammarians. For the speakers that use them, they appear most frequently in coordinate NPs. The following examples are from the OJ Simpson criminal and civil trials.

- (40) a. Detective Phillips, this purports to be a telephonic communication between a deputy coroner by the name of Paul Willis and yourself, and I'll ask you if you recognize the voices at some point, okay?
[OJS 2/16, 1891]
- b. Myself and Ms. Mazzola were the ones who were collecting the items of evidence away from the body.
[OJS 11/5, 269]
- c. There is an extensive colloquy between himself and counsel in which he refers to one glove that he saw at the foot of Ron Goldman and he says that repeatedly, and yet taking one statement out of context they seek to draw inferences from it.
[OJS 1/24, 783]

As these examples show, the self-pronoun may be in first, second, or third person, in a subject or an object, and can be the first or the second conjunct. The first two self-pronouns here fit the profile of an LFR, since they refer to a subject of consciousness (the speaker or hearer), and are in a coordinate NP, which can be considered a contrastive environment. But in (40c), the referent of *himself* is not as easily construed as discourse prominent; he is neither directly responsible nor affected by an action, and is not the primary topic of concern (which instead seems to be the opposing legal team the speaker is attacking).

The hypercorrective self-pronoun is also common in other locally o-free environments such as those in (41), including the passive *by*-phrase.

- (41) a. Q. And who was present?
A. Just myself.

[OJS 1/15, 3731]

- b. The copy is a digitized copy that was made by myself to reduce some background noise, hiss sounds.

[OJS 11/20, 131]

- c. A. Yes. We had dinner together at LaQuinta Hotel.

Q. Just the two of you?

A. No; it was a party of, I would guess, ten people.

Q. Friends of both of yourself [sic]?

[OJS 12/3, 5622]

The first example is construable as an LFR, since there is contrast between the speaker and others who were not present. But the lack of contrast in (41b,c) shows that these are not LFRs.

It is even possible for this self-pronoun to appear in a locally o-commanded position, although this is much less common.

- (42) a. As the Westec sergeant was passing myself, I stopped him and I said, "is there anybody that's supposed to be at home now," ...

[OJS 3/10, 1912]

- b. Please hand your tickets to myself as you board the plane.¹²

[United Airlines flight attendant]

The self-pronoun is locally o-commanded in (42a) by the subject (*the Westec sergeant*), and in (42b) by the implicit second person subject.

As was noted above, the American LFRs in (38) have a formal ring to native speakers. Most likely, the people who produced the utterances in (40)-(42) were attempting a high register by using as many self-pronouns as allowed by the grammar, plus a few that might otherwise be considered impossible because of their locally o-commanded position.

In particular, these self-pronouns tend to be in the first person. This could be related to the fact that first person pronouns always represent a subject of consciousness, and therefore meet the discourse prominence requirement for LFRs. Thus they are the most familiar to these speakers as a "formal pronoun."

¹² Thanks to Frederick Parkinson for passing this example on to me.

It is not certain whether these hypercorrective self-pronouns will continue to spread among speakers, or whether their syntactic distribution will be further extended into locally o-commanded positions. Either way, they show us that their formal connotation continues to play a role in the development of self-pronouns, just as it did in OE.

6.2 Picture NPs

Like LFRs, self-pronouns in picture NPs may also be referentially independent, but the constraints on their distribution are further removed from those of intensives. For some time it has been recognized that self-pronouns in picture NPs require their referent to be some sort of subject of consciousness. The following examples from Cantrall (1974) show that if a referent is unaware of the circumstances, a self-pronoun does not sound acceptable.

- (43) a. Funny stories about himself won't restore Tom to good humor.
 b. *Funny stories about himself won't restore Tom to life.

[=Cantrall's (13),(14)]

Cantrall notes that (43b) is improved if one believes that Tom's spirit is hovering nearby, underscoring the fact that Tom's point of view must be available for the self-pronoun to be used.

Similarly, Kuno (1987) constructs examples showing that the referent of the self-pronoun must be construable as the experiencer of the situation being described. (The judgments below are Kuno's.)

- (44) a. ?The minister was worried by the fact that there were pictures of himself with a prostitute in circulation.
 b. *The minister was implicated by the fact that there were pictures of himself with a prostitute in circulation.

[=Kuno's (11.12)]

In (44a) the verb *worry* suggests that the minister's point of view is being taken, making the self-pronoun acceptable, while the objective presentation of information in (44b) has the opposite effect.

Furthermore, the self-pronoun does not need an antecedent within the sentence, as the following attested example shows.

- (45) After the meeting, Rama returned to his latest project: staging a national, six-month, six hundred and fifty thousand dollar "Zen" seminar promotional campaign. The effort included the placement of a two-page spread in the Sunday New York Times. One page was a photo of himself; the other advertised his free talk on Zen and success at Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center.

[Laxer 7507]

This passage concerns cult leader Rama's plans, and is presented from his point of view. These kinds of examples show that the reference of self-pronouns in picture NPs is determined entirely by non-syntactic factors.

While the final word is yet to be said about the constraints on self-pronouns in picture NPs, point of view and subjects of consciousness are a recurring theme in their analyses. This constraint is most likely related to the discourse prominence constraint for intensives, although we cannot rule out the possibility that it arose independently without first knowing exactly how and when picture NPs took their present form. As with the LFRs, further research is needed to determine their origins, and their relationship with other self-pronoun developments.

6.3 Locative PP arguments

As we have seen, in PDE local object binding must be marked with a self-pronoun. This is generally true whether there is a direct object or an object in a PP argument:

- (46) a. John_i likes *him_i / himself_i.
 b. Mary_i relies on *her_i / herself_i.
 c. Mary_i talked with John about *her_i / herself_i.

However, locative PP arguments behave differently in that they generally allow either a personal pronoun or a self-pronoun.

- (47) a. John_i put a coat around him_i / himself_i.
 b. Lori_i put the candles around her_i / herself_i to keep the mosquitoes away.
 c. Patrick_i spilled the coffee all over him_i / himself_i.
 d. Cindy_i tattooed a little angel on (?)her_i / herself_i.

Part of an explanation for this could be that the locative PP sometimes forms an independent predicate which has the verb's direct object as its subject. Thus the PP's object is not always locally bound by the verb's subject.

Rather than go any further into the details of a syntactic account of this distribution, I will instead note some pertinent facts about the connotations of the self-pronoun for native speakers. Kuno suggests that the use of the self-pronoun in these contexts signals that the referent is a "target" of the verb's action. By this he means perhaps among other things) that the referent is either more physically involved in the action, or is the goal of an intentional action.

In Golde (1998) I conduct an extensive survey of native speakers, testing their reactions to the naturalness of each pronoun in various contexts.¹³ My results indicate that intentionality does not play a role in acceptability, but that the more physically involved a referent is in the action, the more acceptable speakers find the self-pronoun to be.

For example, subjects found the self-pronoun in a sentence like (47a) to be more natural than that in (47b). In the former, John is more physically involved because he ends up in contact with the blanket, while in the latter, Lori only has brief contact with the candles during their placement. These kinds of contrasts show that it is not the verb which is affecting choice of pronoun, but the context.

In terms of the overall development of self-pronouns, one question is where the connotations of physical involvement arose for these locative PP objects. While there may be no definitive answer, the most likely connection is with the reflexive use of self-pronouns. Since reflexives are by definition part of the verb's argument structure, then if the verb represents some physical action, the reflexive will denote a physically involved referent:

(48) John killed / maimed / poked / hit / stepped on / rubbed / tickled / scratched himself.

When the self-pronoun is used in (47), it already resembles a reflexive in that it has an antecedent within the minimal clause. Thus hearers may infer that the choice of a self-pronoun over a personal pronoun is intended to invoke another feature of reflexives, their referent's physical involvement in the verb's action.

It would also be useful to know more about the development of clause-bound self-pronouns in PPs. Most research up to this point has focused on self-pronouns as the direct objects of verbs (e.g. Ogura and Peitsara). One question that still needs to be addressed is whether these locative PP arguments have always allowed both types of pronoun to be clause-bound, and whether there has always been a preference for self-pronouns in the more physically involved contexts. It is conceivable that the personal pronoun has been generally preferred in the past, and that the use of the self-pronoun to connote physical involvement is a new development. Clarifying the history of pronouns in this position will be difficult, due to the relative infrequency of this exact configuration, but will potentially illuminate other aspects of the development of self-pronouns as well.

¹³ Other variables mentioned in this paper as affecting acceptability of self-pronouns, such as point of view and contrast, were held constant by embedding the relevant sentences in dialogues.

6.4 The big picture

We have by no means exhausted the functions of PDE self-pronouns,¹⁴ but the preceding discussion should be sufficient to demonstrate that many questions remain if we are to map out their development. Furthermore, I believe that it would ultimately be a mistake to attempt to trace the development of one function while ignoring the development of others. While the various uses of self-pronouns may be considered syntactically and semantically distinct, there is significant overlap of certain features, such as prominence, contrast, and local binding.

This overlap is reminiscent of the morphological "constellations" discussed in Janda and Joseph (1995). A constellation is defined as a grammatical construct which captures the fact that certain morphological rules may have striking similarities to one another which affect their historical development, yet are not similar enough to be collapsible into one basic rule. In the case of self-pronouns, we may find that we are dealing with a sort of lexical constellation. While the wide variety of functions served by self-pronouns precludes their being captured by a single lexical entry, the use of one self-pronoun, say the intensive, may still have the power to influence the development of another self-pronoun, perhaps the picture NP type. Only further research will reveal whether this is the case, but it remains an important possibility, and is a good reason for investigating the development of self-pronouns as a group rather than in isolation.

7. Conclusion

This paper has examined the extension of the *self* morpheme from intensive to reflexive, and hypothesized a sequence of small steps leading to this change. In doing so, I have illustrated the need for precision and clarity when dealing with complex functions like intensification. The further developments of self-pronouns, such as LFRs and picture NP objects, also involve subtle constraints requiring careful investigation. With future research, we may be able to identify those constraints as well, and use them to help trace the development of the myriad PDE uses of self-pronouns.

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¹⁴ For example, we should not overlook the adverbial use (*John talked to Mary himself*), the "possessive+self" use (*John is finally back to his old self*), or various idiomatic uses (*John did it by himself*, *Determination in (and of) itself isn't enough*).

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