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"SELF" IN OLD AND MODERN ENGLISH

Today, English is unique among the Germanic languages in employing a complex expression, made up of personal pronoun+SELF, as reflexive marker also serving as intensifies

The way reflexivity is expressed is one of the many remarkable changes the syntactic structure of English underwent during its history.

In Old and Middle English, the simple personal pronoun was normally used to.express the reflexive relation, as in:

He cwced: Sine stemne icgehire, leof, on neorxnawange, & ic ondrcede me for dam tie ic eom nacod, & ic behyde me. 'And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself' [quoted after 11,6]. *Halde pe wel payed,* hold yourself well paid' [quoted after 10,205]. Only occasionally and in specific contexts was the intensifier SELF, a free form, added as in:

*Christus se dedit pro nobis Crist sealde **hyne sylfne** for us*

[quoted after 11, 96].

This pattern continued to be used throughout the Middle English and into the Early Modern English period before it gave way to the form of reflexive marking with pronoun+SELF.

Further, constructions with a non-argument or pleonastic reflexive pronoun died out representing a set expression with a French loan when the pattern was already quite rare at that stage such as in the following examples:

Hie gewendon heom to pam cynge

'They turned them(selves) to that king' [quoted after 11,71].

He shall repente hym [10, 209],

Reflexivity in the most general sense can be understood as the marking of coreference of subject and object; reflexive pronouns occur syntactically as objects of verbs indicating conference with the subject NP (a nominal antecedent in the same clause) or as complements of prepositional phrases; they are arguments of the verb.

The meaning of X-SELF in an example like *The queen herself declared the bazaar open* is clearly not reflexive and, for lack of a better term, was commonly characterised as „emphatic"; a term which is, as has repeatedly

been pointed out, not only vague but misleading: „it is necessary to distinguish the kind of emphasis signalled by -*self* from other types of emphasis (signalled by, for example, repetition, or constructions like topicalisation or clefting)" [4, 57]; a better term is **'intensifier'**.

The fact that Modern English does not formally distinguish intensifier and reflexive, whereas Old English does, is clearly in need of explanation. SELF underwent a gradual process of losing its independence as a lexical item and becoming fused to the oblique personal pronoun, giving rise to the polysemy of reflexive marker and intensifier noted above:

Old English	Modern English
self, sylf, seolf	x-self
free form (adjective)	bound morpheme
intensifier (postnominal)	element of intensifier
identifier/marker of reference (attributive)	element of reflexive pronoun
	Noun

Further, both focus particles and SELF have positional variability in common, and both can occur more than once in a sentence. Unlike invariant, unstressed focus particles, however, x-SELF displays agreement with its focus and carries stress. x-SELF is also restricted to nominal foci, while particles may occur with a large variety of word classes. Finally, x-SELF generally occurs in a position behind its focus, particles appear before their focus.
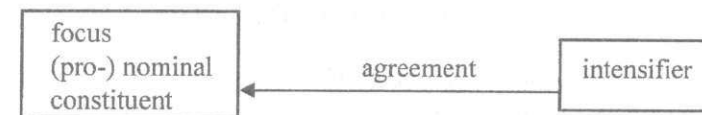
Modern English distinguishes three separate uses of pronoun+SELF, apart from its use as reflexive anaphor indicating co-reference in a local domain, being referentially dependent on some preceding N. They all behave like adjuncts, either to some NP if adnominal or to the VP if adverbal. Siemund assigns all three uses of intensifiers to a common denominator, namely „the ability to structure sets into a central element on the one hand and peripheral elements on the other" [9, 18]. The first term refers to

syntactic, the second to semantic properties of pronoun+SELF in this particular usage.

The example of the **adnominal (centralising)** meaning of SELF is as following.

The minister HIMSELF will receive us.

Adnominal HIMSELF follows its focus and bears stress. There are hardly any syntactic or semantic restrictions on the focus. The NP to which X-SELF is right-adjacent may be subject, object, or complement of a preposition. It may be a proper noun, a common noun or a pronoun, with restrictions applying to pronominal head NPs.

The contribution adnominal HIMSELF makes to the meaning of a sentence is to mark the focus as central in relation to possible alternatives: the Minister HIMSELF - rather than some lesser beings around him- will receive us. The focus accompanied by pronoun+SELF forms the centre among similar entities that are assigned to the periphery. Negation does not affect this meaning of SELF.

This meaning of X-SELF is likely to form the historically prior as well as the core meaning of the focus particle X-SELF. At least X-SELF in adverbial- inclusive use is closely connected with the adnominal use: *I'm a bit short MYSELF = I MYSELF am a bit short, TOO.*

More precisely, the meaning of adnominal X-SELF can be stated as follows [9, 192],

Adnominal intensifiers structure a set into a central element X and peripheral elements Y.

a. X has a higher position than Y in a hierarchy

b. X is more significant than Y in a specific situation

c. Y is defined in terms of X

d. X is the centre of perspective (logophoricity).

The relation between the central element X and the peripheral elements Y may take the form of one of the four specific relations listed above, as illustrated by the following examples:

a. *The Pope himself does not know what to do.*

b. *Most of the passengers suffered light injuries. The driver himself was killed.*

c. *Adam s wife was picking apples, Adam himself was peeling them.*

d. *He was not particularly tall, a little taller than Jemima herself perhaps* [quoted after 2],

Following Baker [1, 80], Siemund differentiates situational and organisational centres as possible foci of adnominal SELF. Organisational centres are centres in their own right and not in need of further justification, they occupy their position due to extra linguistic factors and independent of the current context of discourse. Situational centres, on the other hand, receive their prominent role within and from a specific context and constellation.

Adnominal SELF places hardly any selectional restrictions on its focus; the NP it intensifies may denote human or non-human referents.

Like adnominal intensifiers, **adverbial** X-SELF in both its inclusive and exclusive use is always in association with an NP, though not a member of it. Adverbial X-SELF never occurs adjacent to the NP with which it shows agreement and is best analysed as belonging to the VP, or more precisely, as a VP-adjunct or an endocentric expansion of the VP. It mainly occurs in typical adverb positions, e.g. sentence-final and between auxiliary and main verb. Siemund demonstrates, however, that they do hardly behave like other adverbs, and suggests the term 'focusing adverb' as the least unfitting label because of their association with an NP, their carrying stress and their semantic property of evoking alternatives [9, 78].

The focus of **adverbial inclusive** X-SELF has to be the subject denoting a human referent; in terms of thematic roles, the focus is an EXPERIENCER. X-SELF appears as part of the VP rather than the NP headed by the focus.

Could you lend me ten pounds? - I'm sorry, but I am a bit short MYSELF.

The utterance containing the intensifier could be paraphrased with additive focus particles *as I am a bit short, too* or *I am also a bit short.* With this utterance, the speaker is in fact including herself among the set of contextually given possible alternatives to her own person, therefore the label 'inclusive' to specify the semantics of this particular use of SELF.

Again X-SELF places special emphasis on its focus, but only within a narrowly defined context: X-SELF assigns prominence to the focus compared with the periphery which is given by the immediate context.

In case of **adverbial exclusive** X-SELF, the focus has to be an animate, agent subject, but not necessarily human.

The girls painted the flat THEMSELVES (=on their own, without help).

The action denoted by the VP must be capable of being carried out by other agents as well, otherwise an exclusive interpretation of the focus particle is blocked: like in the phrase *Paul is snoring himself* the action of snoring cannot be assigned alternatively to somebody else; therefore the focus particle bears the inclusive meaning *(Paul also snores).*

The questions now are which of the above-mentioned meanings were already present in the older stages of the language, to be more exact in Old English.

Mitchell classifies Old English SELF as 'pronoun/adjective' and further categorizes it as an 'indefinite' belonging to the subgroup of 'words marking identity and the contrary' together with quantifiers like *eall* 'all', *ilea* 'the same' etc. self may precede or follow its head N just as other adjectives (though preposing was more common for adjectives) do, and it follows the usual rules of adjectival inflection, alternating between weak (indefinite) when the NP is introduced by a definite article or demonstrative and strong (definite) if not [6, 187]. Unlike adjectives, SELF cannot be compared, and it „can be used both dependently and independently" [6, 103], that is either with a noun or instead of a noun; SELF alone in nominative case occurs when a pronoun subject is left unexpressed in paratactic sentence structures.

When used like a pronoun, SELF is usually declined strong. Usually, SELF immediately follows its focus.

The loss of inflectional morphology which affected SELF as well was already apparent in late Old English, where forms like *sylfan* or *selven* occur. *Self(en), selue(n)* occur in ME without being indicative of case or number distinctions, with {-s}-plurals becoming the rule around 1530 [8, 283],

Old English did not differentiate between adnominal/adverbial and adjectival/attributive intensifiers: SELF could be used as a possessive intensifier synonymous with *agen* 'own'. *Agen,* however, was restricted to possessive use; it is related to the Old English verb *agan* 'to own, possess', and developed in early Middle English to *awe, owe,* to later become *own.*

The **attributive** use of SELF, modifying a head N, is not frequent:

That in that selve grove, swoote and greene [quoted after 2, 86],

„Thy selve neighebor wol thee despise"   [quoted after 2,115].

And herto I adde yit this thing: that right as whanne that I woot that a thing is, it behoveth by necessite <u>that thilke selve thing</u> be; and eek whan I have knowen that any thing schal betyden; so byhovith it by necessite that thilke same thing betide; [quoted after 2,64].

As *he knoweth right well, who at his being here sawe her SELF visage*
[quoted after 2, 117],

They Gormandize at their selfe pleasures   [quoted after 2, 137],

The relevant meaning of SELF here may be paraphrased as 'uniqueness, singularity, inalienableness'. If SELF is possessive, it expresses that something uniquely belongs to someone. In a construction with a demonstrative or determiner, patient structure. Both subject NP and pronoun are marked as centre to the exclusion of possible alternative values which facilitates the coreferent reading. In Old English, SELF typically intensifies the simple reflexive of verbs denoting

SELF intensifies the N singled out by the determiner, intensifying the singularity, uniqueness of the entity denoted by the N.

König and Siemund note that intensifiers „always enforce a referential interpretation of the NP with which they are in association"[5, 42], which is also true of attributive SELF.

As *adnominal SELF* it typically interacts with the most unique referent conceivable in the socio-historical context of the Old and Middle English period, namely God. The expression *swa swa god sylf eweed* or *swa swa Drihten sylf eweed* 'as God himself said' is practically formulaic in the works of /Elfric.

SELF typically intensifies a noun denoting a person of high standing, either because they are unique and their position unquestionably given, such as God, the devil, or because they occupy a high rank on the social scale, such as kings, bishops, apostles etc. (SELF is more frequent in religious than in secular texts, which could be due either to a) a close adherence to the Latin original, from which most ecclesiastical texts were translated, and which required the translation of 'ipse', or b) to the main protagonists of Christian texts, namely God, the devil, saints). If the focus of SELF is a noun, it almost invariably refers to God or Christ, as has been noted by all studies on the subject [6; 10], If the focus is a pronoun, the link between the intensifier and its focus is less obviously determined by the semantics of *self.* To use Siemund's [9] terminology, a pronominal focus does not have to be an organisational centre, but can be a situational centre arising from the discourse context:

SELF was already used in Old English after reflexive pronouns, e.g. *Darius ...wolde hiene selfne forspilla,* 'Darius ...wanted to destroy himself [quoted after 2, 141],

The addition of SELF removes the ambiguity between the coreferent and the disjoint interpretation of the pronoun in argument position. Adnominal SELF structures a set of entities into a centre and a set of alternatives that are peripheral to it: destroying is normally done by an agent to something or somebody else, the agent thus forming the centre and the set of possible patients the periphery. Without SELF, the more likely interpretation of the sentence would be that subject NP and pronoun are disjoint. By intensifying the pronoun, SELF signals that the referent designated by the pronoun is central, thereby reversing the expected agent-acts-upon-

an acitivity that is prototypically directed at somebody else, such as *kill, destroy, hang, murder, drown,* and other unpleasant activities one does not normally do to oneself.

The completed research adds some information to the explanation of the reflexivity phenomenon and its synchronic development in the English language. It helps trace down the exact changes the meanings of SELF underwent starting as early as in the Old English period. It also leads to a future analysis of the same phenomenon in the Middle English period which will then help create a complete scheme of the synchronic changes of the meanings of SELF during the whole period of the existance of the language.

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