

On Invariant Prominence

J. Howell

It is uncontroversial that languages have linguistic units which exist solely to signal prominence: e.g. pitch accents or discourse particles. In this talk, we consider whether a language may have a linguistic unit which exists solely to *be* prominent.

Our focus is a construction called the adnominal emphatic reflexive (e.g. *himself* in the DP *he himself*). We reject the claim by an increasing number of scholars (e.g. Eckardt 2001, Hole 2002, Gast 2006, Constantinou 2014) that the adnominal emphatic reflexive (henceforth AER) in English and related languages is invariably focused.

Drawing on contrasts like *the Associate Provost* and *the Provost himself* in (1), these authors propose that what *himself* contributes semantically is an identity function; it is invariantly focused in order to evoke a set of (ranked) discourse alternatives (e.g. {Associate Provost, Deans, Chairs, ...}); and it always has prosodic prominence. We formalize their semantics in the \sim notation of Rooth (1992).

(1) The Provost himSELF will chair the committee, not just the Associate Provost.

(2) [the Provost [himself]_F will chair the committee] \sim]

We present empirical evidence from 235 naturally-occurring examples and laboratory-elicited examples from more than 30 speakers. In addition to cases like (1), English speakers need not place sentence focus on AER *himself* and, under the appropriate discourse context, English speakers may place sentence focus on any part of an utterance containing AER *himself*. Focus is in most cases realized with a nuclear pitch accent; in Figure 1 this is schematized for several focus configurations with a topline F0 contour.

Following König (1991), Siemund (2000) and Bergeton (2004), we instead analyze the AER as a focus-sensitive operator with DP-scope. Alternatives of the operator are ranked according to a contextually-salient ordering relation; this is the pragmatic contribution of the AER. In addition, we allow that a second focus operator at the clause level may associate with a focus on the AER: this gives us the reading which Eckardt and others wish to capture (cf. 3,4).

(3) [[[the Provost]_{F1} \sim 1] [himself]_{F2} will chair the committee] \sim 2

(4) a. $\llbracket \text{himself}(x) \rrbracket^f = \llbracket \lambda x_e. [x=x] \rrbracket^f = \{ \lambda x.(x) \mid u \in D \langle ee \rangle \}$

the set of functions from x to other individuals

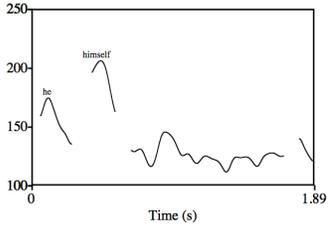
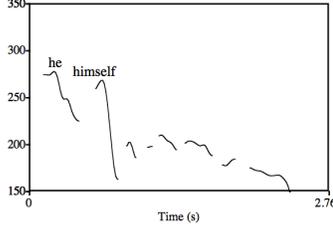
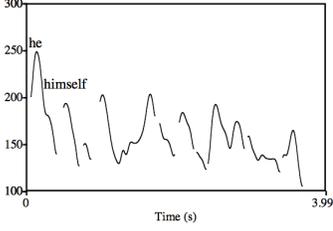
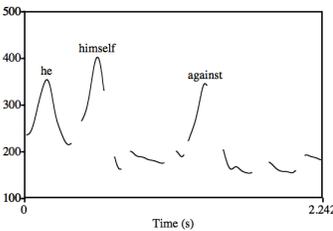
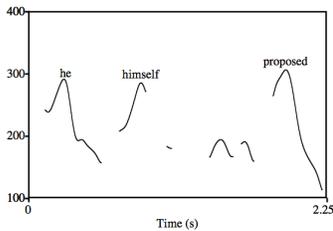
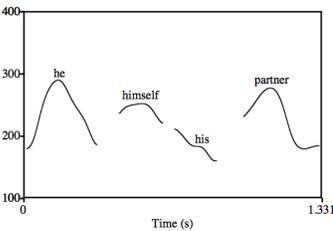
b. $\llbracket \text{himself}(\text{the Provost}) \rrbracket^{f,g} = \{ \text{ASSISTANT-TO}(\text{the Provost}), \text{NOMINEE-OF}(\text{the Provost}), \text{WIFE-OF}(\text{the Provost}), \text{etc.} \}$

References

- Bergeton, Uffe. 2004. *The Independence of Binding and Intensification: Volume 1*. PhD Dissertation: USC.
- Constantinou, H. (2014). *Intensifiers: Meaning and Distribution*. PhD Dissertation: UCL.
- Eckardt, Regine. 2001. Reanalyzing 'selbst'. *Natural Language Semantics* 9.
- Gast, Volker. 2006. *The Grammar of Identity: Intensifiers and Reflexives in Germanic Languages*. Routledge: Florence, KY, USA.
- Hole, Daniel. 2002. Agentive selbst in German. In: Katz, G., Reinhard, S. & Reuter, P., eds. *Sinn und Bedeutung* 6.
- König, Ekkehard. 1991. *The Meaning of Focus Particles: A Comparative Perspective*. London: Routledge.
- Rooth, Mats. 1992. A theory of focus interpretation. *Natural Language Semantics* 1, 75-116.
- Siemund, Peter. 2000. *Intensifiers in English and German: A Comparison*. Routledge: NY.

On Invariant Prominence

Figure 1

A. Focus on <i>himself</i> (Predicted)	B. Focus on subject	C. Focus on sentence
<p>— — — —</p> <p>[The Provost [himself]_F will chair the committee]~</p>	<p>— — — —</p> <p>[[The Provost himself]_F will chair the committee] ~</p>	<p>— — — —</p> <p>[The Provost himself will chair some committee]_F~</p>
<p>E.g. Will the Provost's assistant chair the committee?</p>	<p>E.g. Who will chair the committee?</p>	<p>E.g. What's new?</p>
		
<p>Context: Lee's wife has dementia. He contributed a story to a fundraising book. Interviewer: Your friend had the story of his wife. Editor: When we first started talking about it, I don't think Lee knew that <u>he himself was going to be involved in this way</u></p> <p>Salient antecedent: 'Lee's fellow volunteers were involved in this way'</p>	<p>Bill James pioneered Sabermetrics, giving us many new statistics through which to look at players and teams. And in the process, <u>he himself has become part of baseball legend</u></p> <p>Salient antecedent: 'Something is part of baseball legend'</p>	<p>Governor Dean: And [McCain] thinks the solution to the economic problems that we have is to cut corporate taxes. I mean, the guy is completely out of touch with where Americans are. Interviewer: Well, Governor, to be fair <u>he himself has said on multiple occasions he knows nothing about economics</u></p>
D. Double focus: <i>himself</i>, predicate	E. Double focus: subject, predicate	F. Sentence-internal focus: subject
<p>— — — —</p> <p>[The Provost [himself]_F will [chair]_F the committee] ~</p>	<p>— — — —</p> <p>[[The Provost himself]_F will [chair]_F the committee] ~</p>	<p>— — — —</p> <p>[[The Provost himself]_F ~] and his committee</p>
<p>E.g. The Provost's assistant will appoint the committee, and ...</p>	<p>E.g. The President will appoint the committee, and...</p>	
		
<p>We began this discussion, again, by citing Mike Huckabee, who didn't directly answer the question that was asked him ["What would Jesus do about the death penalty?"], but maybe that's because it was politically dangerous for him. As it turns out, <u>he himself is very much against the death penalty</u></p> <p>Salient antecedent: 'Huckabee's supporters are in favor of the death penalty'</p>	<p>The anti-torture guy voted against the same torture ban that <u>he himself had proposed</u></p> <p>Salient antecedent: 'Someone did something to the torture ban'</p>	<p>[Roy Spencer]'s the guy you brought before Congress. [...] he's the guy that for ten years gave us, gave the world, wrong data that <u>he himself and his partner</u> had to go back and fix.</p>