

The Prosody of Emphatic Reflexives in English

English uses the same word for a reflexive argument (**RA**) and an emphatic reflexive (**ER**); (1a) and (1b-d), respectively. This paper will explore the prosody of ERs, using it as a tool to probe the ER's syntactic and semantic properties.

- (1) a. John hit **himself**.
- b. John **himself** read the book yesterday.
- c. John read the book **himself** yesterday.
- d. John read the book yesterday **himself**.

Experiment 1

ERs can be placed relatively freely in a sentence; we will focus on the following three syntactic positions – an Adjacent Emphatic (**AE**), a Post-VP Emphatic (**PVE**), and Sentence-Final Emphatic (**SFE**); (1b), (1c) and (1d), respectively. Given this syntactic variation, experiment 1 explores whether the prosodic properties of ERs are consistent *within* ERs through a production task. Each participant is given 48 short scripts – 24 with ERs and 24 fillers. Sentences are broken down according to the sentence's verb type and the ER's syntactic position (Table 1). Participants are asked to familiarize themselves with script, then read the script twice, as naturally as possible. Each of the test sentences is labeled by two people, using the MAE_ToBI conventions. [1]

Initial results of the testing reveal that, across syntactic positions, ERs consistently have a L+H* pitch accent. Unlike AEs and PVEs, SFEs always have a phonological phrase break between them and the rest of the sentence. Note, when a PVE is placed after an object-promoting verb (**OPV**) – unaccusative, passive, etc. – the sentence is, at face value, ungrammatical (2). However, when presented with sentences like (2b), some subjects produce grammatical-sounding utterances by inserting phonological phrase breaks on either side of the PVE.

- (2) a. ✓Our teacher was drinking **himself**.
- b. *Our teacher arrived **himself**.

Results from experiment 1 offer insight into the ER's syntax and semantics. First, the ER's consistent L+H* pitch accent suggests that ER's semantic function(s) must induce contrastive focus. Second, the fact that SFEs need phonological breaks is evidence that they are more parenthetical than AEs and PVEs. Moreover, this fact suggests that there are two syntactic structures for ERs – one whereby PVEs are bad after an OPV, and one whereby the ER is parenthetical (like SFEs).

Experiment 2

Though ERs and RAs are segmentally identical (i.e. /himself/ can be used as an ER or as an RA), they differ vastly from one another in syntactic and semantic properties. ([4], [5]) Previous literature ([2], [3]) has stated that, unlike RAs, ERs are infelicitous without prosodic prominence. Experiment 2 is designed to confirm this intuition. In it, participants will be given 48 scripts – 12 with ERs, 12 with RAs and 24 fillers. All sentences will have contexts whereby the subject is focused by context. RAs are expected to never have a pitch accent, ERs are expected to always have a L+H* pitch accent.

The data show that (A) whatever logical form ERs have, they must induce contrastive focus, and (B) whatever syntax ERs have, they must be able to have a status similar to parentheticals.

	Adjacent (AE)	Post-VP (PVE)	Sentence Final
Transitive	x4	x4	x4
Object Promoting	x4	x4	x4

Table 1: Experiment 1 Test Conditions

References

- [1] M. Beckman and J. Hirschberg. The ToBI annotation conventions. ms, OSU., 1994.
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- [4] E. König and V. Gast. Reflexive pronouns and other uses of self-forms in English. In Reflexives and Intensifiers: The use of Self-forms in English, 2002.
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