

# HE HIMSELF: REDISCOVERING A NON-LOCAL ANAPHOR\*

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## Abstract

*In this paper, we discuss data that were first introduced in a brief but we believe unsettled controversy in Linguistic Inquiry in the late 1980s and early 1990s that has not received much attention since. We analyze the properties of elements like he himself in English, which has to be coreferent with a non-local c-commanding antecedent, provided there is one in the sentence. We take he himself to be the result of the adjunction of himself to he at a certain point in the derivation. After presenting our analysis we discuss its theoretical implications.*

## 1. Introduction

In his squib, Bickerton presents novel data, such as the example in (1), in which the complex element *he himself* is obligatorily coreferent with a non-local, c-commanding antecedent.<sup>1</sup> Bickerton reports that coreference is impossible with the non-c-commanding element *John* and with a discourse element, such as *Bill*. Bickerton claims that *he himself* has some unusual anaphoric properties.

1. [John<sub>i</sub>'s father]<sub>j</sub> thinks that [he himself]<sub>\*i,j,\*k</sub> is smart.

In his response to Bickerton, McKay claims that Bickerton's judgments are "incorrect" (p. 370), and that Bickerton was "misled" (p. 369) by not considering his examples with sufficient context. McKay presents examples similar to those from Bickerton, but with some additional discourse context. In contrast with Bickerton, McKay claims that with the appropriate context, the *he himself* in a sentence like (2) can refer either to the non-c-commanding element *John* or to someone else in the discourse.

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<sup>1</sup> In order to maintain consistency among the various examples presented here, we have abstracted away from many of the precise examples from Bickerton and McKay.

2. Unlike his father, John has gotten excellent grades throughout his educational career and has excelled in every academic pursuit that he has ever attempted. [John<sub>i</sub>'s father]<sub>j</sub> thinks that [he himself]<sub>i,#j,\*k</sub> is smart.

McKay argues that the coreference possibilities of *he himself* are essentially no different from the pronominal *he*, and, as a result, pragmatic considerations determine how coreference is determined for *he himself* in any given context.

Example (3) shows the well-known fact that the pronominal *he* can refer either to *John*, *John's father*, or someone else, depending on the context.

3. [John<sub>i</sub>'s father]<sub>j</sub> thinks that he<sub>i,j,k</sub> is smart.

In this talk, we argue that McKay was wrong to simply dismiss Bickerton's judgments as "incorrect". For some speakers, even with extremely biased context, the possible antecedents for *he himself* seem to be restricted by the syntax. For example, the sentence in (4) shows that for some speakers, *he himself* can only corefer with *John's father*, even though it is dispreferred pragmatically.

4. Unlike his father, John has gotten excellent grades his entire academic career and has excelled in every academic pursuit that he has ever attempted. [John<sub>i</sub>'s father]<sub>j</sub> thinks that [he himself]<sub>i,#j,\*k</sub> is smart.

Bickerton and McKay present data from separate dialects of English. In this talk, we would like to reconsider the facts from Bickerton's dialect and consider additional data as well. We offer an analysis that attempts to capture the distribution and interpretation of *he himself*, and we will discuss some potential implications for Binding Theory.

## 2. "Anaphoric" vs. "emphatic" himself

Before we present the core data in detail, we want to make it explicit what data we intend to account for in our analysis and what data we don't intend to account for. McKay claims that *himself* simply functions as an emphatic pronoun, as in (5) – (7), where *himself* modifies an NP/DP resulting in the meaning, 'NP<sub>i</sub>, and no one but NP<sub>i</sub>'.

5. John himself did it. (Bickerton 1987: 345)  
 6. I gave it to Bill himself. (Bickerton 1987: 345)  
 7. John gave it to Mary himself. (Bickerton 1987: 345)

For the dialects under consideration, the "anaphoric" use of *himself* are distinct from "emphatic" uses of *himself* (Bickerton 1987: 345). At least some speakers of Bickerton's dialect with "anaphoric" *himself* also have an "emphatic" *himself*. In these dialects, the emphatic use seems to require a special intonation contour, which we will represent with small caps *HE HIMSELF*. For these speakers, *HE HIMSELF* has the same coreference properties as those reported for *he himself* in McKay's dialect and, therefore, as for the pronominal *he*. With the appropriate context, emphatic *HE HIMSELF* can be coreferent with a matching non-c-commanding antecedent or with a matching antecedent that is not the closest c-commanding antecedent. For example,

in (8) (cf. (2) and (4) above), in which the context biases reference to *John*, *HE HIMSELF* can corefer with *John*.

8. Unlike his father, John has gotten excellent grades throughout his educational career and has excelled in every academic pursuit that he has ever attempted. [John<sub>i</sub>'s father]<sub>j</sub> thinks that [HE himself]<sub>i,#j,#k</sub> is smart.

At first glance, this suggests that perhaps McKay was “mised” by prosodic factors. However, McKay (1991: 370) explicitly addresses this concern: “the examples considered here do not need special stress.” Therefore, we conclude that we really are dealing with separate dialects. We also note that *he alone* has the same possible antecedents as “emphatic” *HE HIMSELF*, McKay's *he himself*, and the pronominal *he*, as shown in (9).

9. Unlike every other member of his family, John has gotten excellent grades throughout his educational career and has excelled in every academic pursuit that he has ever attempted. [John<sub>i</sub>'s father]<sub>j</sub> thinks that [he alone]<sub>i,#j,#k</sub> is smart.

In short, it appears that in the dialect under investigation there are two *he himself*s: one that is “anaphoric”, and one that is “emphatic”. In this talk, we will focus on the properties of the “anaphoric” *he himself*, not on the “emphatic” *he himself*. In addition to the distinction we make between “anaphoric” and “emphatic” *he himself*, we also assume that the anaphoric *he himself* is qualitatively different from examples where *he himself* functions as a VP-adjunct, as in (10).

10. John did the work himself.

### 3. The core data

As is well known, the sentence in (11) is ungrammatical because the anaphor *he himself* must be locally bound (Condition A), but it is not. Therefore, anaphors, such as *he himself*, are generally restricted from subject positions because they cannot have a local antecedent.

11. [John<sub>i</sub>'s father]<sub>j</sub> thinks that himself<sub>\*i,j,\*k</sub> is smart.

The example from (3) above, repeated here as (12), shows that pronominals, such as *he*, are locally free (Condition B), and coreference to non-local antecedents or discourse entities is possible.

12. [John<sub>i</sub>'s father]<sub>j</sub> thinks that he<sub>i,j,k</sub> is smart.

The example in (13), repeated from (1) above, shows that *he himself*, unlike *he himself* alone, is licit in subject position of the embedded clause, and it must be coreferent with the, non-local c-commanding antecedent *John's father*. As Bickerton (1987: 347) pointed out, *he himself* therefore seems to have hybrid properties of both pronominals and anaphors. On the one hand, *he himself* behaves as a pronoun in that it can appear in subject position, receiving an external theta role, checking Nominative Case, and corefering with a non-local antecedent. On the other hand,

though, *he himself* behaves as an anaphor since it is bound by a c-commanding antecedent. After discussing the relevant examples in detail in the following section, we will provide an analysis in section that attempts to deduce these hybrid properties from independent principles in the grammar.

13. [John<sub>i</sub>'s father]<sub>j</sub> thinks that [he himself]<sub>\*i,j,\*k</sub> is smart.

An interesting property of *he himself* is that it can skip over a c-commanding antecedent if it disagrees in phi-features to corefer with a higher c-commanding antecedent that does agree in phi-features. Example (14) shows that the closest c-commanding antecedent *Mary* disagrees in gender with *he himself*. However, the higher c-commanding antecedent *John's father* agrees in its phi-features with *he himself*. Coreference is possible only between *he himself* and *John's father*. As we saw before, *he himself* cannot corefer with the non-c-commanding antecedent *John*.

14. [John<sub>i</sub>'s father]<sub>j</sub> said that [Mary]<sub>k</sub> believes that [he himself]<sub>\*i,j,\*k,\*l</sub> is smart.

Although *he himself* can skip over a c-commanding antecedent that disagrees in phi-features to corefer with a higher c-commanding antecedent that does agree in phi-features, a c-commanding antecedent that agrees in phi-features with *he himself* cannot be skipped. As shown by (15), coreference is only possible between *he himself* and the closest matching c-commanding antecedent *Bill's brother*. The examples in (14) and (15) show that coreference is established between *he himself* and the closest c-commanding antecedent that agrees in phi-features.

15. [John<sub>m</sub>'s father]<sub>n</sub> said that [Bill<sub>i</sub>'s brother]<sub>j</sub> believes that [he himself]<sub>\*i,j,\*k,\*m,\*n</sub> is smart.

The data become a bit more complex and interesting when considering wh-elements extracted from the subject position that c-commands *he himself*. As shown in (16), when the wh-element matches *he himself* in its phi-features, the wh-element is coreferent with *he himself*. In terms of overt elements, *Bill* is the closest matching c-commanding antecedents; the overt wh-element is higher in the structure. However, in this example, coreference can only occur between *he himself* and the wh-element; coreference with *Bill* is blocked. Note, though, that the wh-trace is the closest c-commanding antecedent of *he himself*; before wh-movement, the wh-element was the closest c-commanding antecedent of *he himself*.

16. Who<sub>i</sub> did Bill<sub>j</sub> say t<sub>i</sub> believes that [he himself]<sub>i,\*j</sub> is smart?

The sentence in (17) shows what happens when the wh-element and therefore the wh-trace disagree with *he himself* in phi-features. As expected, the disagreeing wh-trace is skipped, and *he himself* corefers with the closest matching c-commanding antecedent, *Bill*.

17. [What girl]<sub>i</sub> did Bill<sub>j</sub> say t<sub>i</sub> believes that [he himself]<sub>\*i,j</sub> is smart?

Given that *he himself* can only refer to the closest matching c-commanding antecedent, an interesting property of *he himself* emerges in its interaction with quantifiers. For comparison, consider the example in (18), in which the quantifier *everyone* is the subject of the matrix clause, while the pronominal *he* is the subject of the em-

bedded clause. The pronominal *he* can either refer to the subject of the matrix clause or to a discourse entity. As a result, there are two possible interpretations of the sentence in (18), as indicated by the two diagrams below the sentence. In one reading, in which *he* refers to a discourse entity, there is one person who everyone thinks is smart. In the other reading, in which *he* refers to the subject of the matrix clause, *everyone*, the interpretation is that for each person X, X thinks that X is smart.

18. Everyone<sub>i</sub> thinks that he<sub>i,j</sub> is smart.



As we noted above, the possible antecedents of *he himself* are more restricted than those of the pronominal *he*. Whereas the pronominal *he* can refer either to an antecedent within the same sentence or to a discourse entity, when there is a matching c-commanding antecedent, *he himself* can only refer to the closest matching c-commanding antecedent. As a result, in (19), *he himself* can only corefer to the subject of the matrix clause, *everyone*. Therefore, there is only a single possible interpretation of the sentence in (19): for each person X, X thinks that X is smart.

19. Everyone<sub>i</sub> thinks that [he himself]<sub>i,j</sub> is smart.



#### 4. Discourse reference

In the previous section, we established that *he himself* corefers with the closest c-commanding antecedent that matches in its phi-features. The whole picture is somewhat more complicated in that in the absence of a c-commanding antecedent, coreference can be established between *he himself* and a discourse referent or with a non-c-commanding antecedent. For example, the sentence in (21), based on Bickerton's example in (20), has no-c-commanding antecedents, but there are two non-c-commanding antecedents, *Mary* and *Susan*, either of which can corefer with *she herself*.

20. The essays that Mary<sub>i</sub> wrote were things that [she herself]<sub>i</sub> attached little importance to. (Bickerton 1987: 347)
21. The essays that Mary<sub>i</sub> wrote to Susan<sub>j</sub> were things that [she herself]<sub>i,j</sub> attached little importance to.

In addition, Bickerton gives examples, such as the one in (22), in which there is no c-commanding antecedent to *she herself*. As a result, *she herself* can corefer with the discourse entity, *Mary*.

22. A: How will Mary<sub>i</sub> do in the exam? (Bickerton 1987: 346)  
 B: I don't know, but [she herself]<sub>i</sub> says she'll pass.

In these examples involving *he himself* and no matching c-commanding antecedent, syntactic factors cannot determine coreference. As McKay argues, it is reasonable for us to admit that coreference is determined pragmatically. It is important to keep in mind, however, that "The presence of a c-commanding antecedent guarantees that *he himself* will not corefer with a non-c-commanding antecedent even in the same sentence." Similarly, discourse reference is only possible when there is no c-commanding antecedent that agrees in phi-features (Bickerton 1987: 346). As shown in (23), which parallels (22) but adds a c-commanding antecedent, coreference between *she herself* and the discourse entity is impossible; *she herself* can only corefer with the matching c-commanding antecedent.

23. A: How will Mary<sub>i</sub> do in the exam? (Bickerton 1987: 346)  
 B: I don't know, but Susan<sub>j</sub> says that [she herself]<sub>i,j</sub> will pass.

## 5. Analysis

As pointed out in the introduction, the complex *he himself* has properties of both pronouns and anaphors combined. One possible analysis is that *he himself* is a lexical item with idiosyncratic properties, like being able to bind a c-commanding antecedent outside a local domain (roughly Bickerton's approach). However, we believe that the properties of *he himself* follow from more general properties of the grammar.

We propose that *he himself* is not a lexical item but actually a complex form resulting from an adjunction operation. Before we show our analysis, consider (11) again, repeated here as (24):

24. \*[John<sub>i</sub>'s father]<sub>i</sub> thinks that himself<sub>i</sub> is smart.

There are two main reasons why this sentence is ungrammatical. On the one hand, *himself* is an accusative case DP in Spec-TP, which leads to a crash at LF because the Case-F on the DP and the phi-Fs on Tense have not checked/deleted. On the other hand, *himself* is an anaphor, and as such, requires an antecedent in its local domain. Imagine that English happened to have a nominative version of *himself*, something like *herself*. Would the sentence still be ungrammatical because of the binding theory violation? Consider (25) and (26) (discussed in Williams 1994):

25. [John and Mary]<sub>i</sub> think that [each other]<sub>i,j</sub> is smart  
 26. Mary<sub>i</sub> said [her own]<sub>i,j</sub> mother would do it

In these examples, *each other* and *her own* bind an antecedent that is outside of their local domain, which means that binding theory also has to aim at explaining binding properties outside a local domain. It seems reasonable to suggest, then, that (24) above is ungrammatical because of Case, and it actually reflects a gap in the English anaphor paradigm, which has nominative, accusative, and possessive reciprocals, and accusative and possessive reflexives, but no nominative reflexive.

Why does *he himself* have hybrid properties? We propose here that the complex *he himself* is the result of an operation that adjoins himself to *he* at a certain point in the derivation. To be more precise, we propose that adjoining himself to *he* restricts the range of referents that *he* alone would have. Consider (27), for example.

27. John<sub>i</sub> said that he<sub>i,j</sub> is smart.

*He* can refer to any male person, including *John*, given that it has the feature [+pron]. After binding possibilities are evaluated, *himself* is acyclically adjoined to *he* and adds to it the property that it has to be bound by a matching c-commanding antecedent. For this sentence, the only matching c-commanding antecedent is *John*. As *John* is the only antecedent compatible with both *he* and *himself*, obligatory co-reference occurs.

Checking theory and Full Interpretation force us to assume this is an adjunction operation. If it were not so, *himself*, as a DP with accusative case, would need to check its Case-Fs, which obviously cannot be checked in the same domain as the nominative subject's domain. Adjuncts, even when they are DPs, do not have to check Case-Fs:

28. I saw the movie [the other day].

29. He prepared the food [himself].

The idea that the reflexive is inserted in order to restrict the range of possible referents provides us with an explanation of why (30) and (31) below are not acceptable:

30. ?\*I think that [I myself] am smart.

31. ?\*You think that [you yourself] are smart.

In these examples the reference of the pronouns *I* and *you* is already unique, speaker and hearer, respectively. Therefore, the insertion of *myself* and *yourself* results in an unacceptable sentence.

## 6. He himself in non-subject positions

Bickerton (1987: 347) argues that “he himself is confined to positions that are nominatively Case-marked.” This is not the case for all speakers, however. Some speakers do accept sentences like the ones in (32) and (33), where the anaphor is adjoined to an object (accusative) and to the object of a preposition (oblique):

32. [Mary<sub>i</sub>'s daughter]<sub>j</sub> thinks that Sally likes [her herself]<sub>i,j</sub>

33. [John<sub>i</sub>'s father]<sub>j</sub> believes that Bill was thinking about [him himself]<sub>i,j</sub>

The data seems to be clearer in Spanish, perhaps because in this language the pronoun and the reflexive are phonologically distinct (see Baker 1995):

34. María<sub>i</sub> piensa que Luisa<sub>j</sub> se lo dio a ella<sub>i,\*j,k</sub>  
 Mary thinks that Luisa her it gave a her  
 'Mary thinks that Luisa gave it to her.'
35. María<sub>i</sub> piensa que Luisa<sub>j</sub> se lo dio a [ella misma]<sub>i,\*j,\*k</sub>  
 Mary thinks that Luisa her it gave a her self  
 'Mary<sub>i</sub> thinks that Luisa gave it to her<sub>i</sub>.'
36. Juan<sub>i</sub> nos habló de él<sub>i,j</sub> ayer  
 John us spoke of him yesterday  
 'John told us about him/himself yesterday.'
37. Juan<sub>i</sub> nos habló de [él mismo]<sub>i,\*j</sub> ayer  
 John us spoke of him self yesterday  
 'John told us about himself yesterday.'

The analysis that we presented in the previous section can be extended to these examples as well. In (32), for example, *her* alone could refer to *Mary*, *Mary's daughter*, or some other woman. Adjoining *herself* to *her* forces coreference with the closest matching c-commanding antecedent that *her* alone can have. Notice that *her herself* cannot refer to *Sally* here, because that would violate Binding Theory Principle B, which we assume is evaluated before *herself* is adjoined. Actually, these sentences constitute evidence that it is the reflexive that is adjoined to the pronoun and not the other way around. If this were true, the reflexive would bind the local antecedent, and then adjoining the pronoun would contradict this, since the local antecedent is actually the only element the pronoun cannot bind.

## 7. Theoretical implications of our analysis

In our analysis, we have been tacitly assuming two stages in the process of (co)reference assignment. First, 'classic' Binding Theory evaluates/assigns the possible coreference possibilities for the elements that were cyclically inserted in the derivation, and the result of this evaluation cannot be contradicted, only restricted. There is actually independent evidence that supports this idea. Consider the examples in (38) and (39):

38. John<sub>i</sub> took a picture of him<sub>i</sub>/himself<sub>i</sub>  
 39. John<sub>i</sub> read a book about him<sub>i</sub>/himself<sub>i</sub>

In (38), only *himself* can refer to *John*, because it's part of a complement. Both the pronoun and the anaphor are possible, however, when they are part of an adjunct, as in (39). This means that Binding Theory cannot make predictions about pronouns or reflexives inserted by adjunction.

But what regulates then (co)reference assignment for adjuncts (i.e., after the cycle)? What syntactic relation(s) is/are relevant at this second stage? We propose here that there must be another set of Binding principles to account for coreference assignment after the cycle. In (39), for example, *him*, apart from referring to *John*,



could refer to any other male referent in the discourse, or to a higher masculine singular DP if there were one. *Himself*<sub>i</sub> however, can only refer to *John* in this sentence. Returning now to the phenomenon we are exploring, the [pronoun + reflexive] complex does not behave in the same way as a regular anaphor would do.

There are two main differences: First, a regular anaphor (i.e., an anaphor inserted cyclically in the derivation) cannot bind a DP if there is another DP that is closer. If the anaphor and the closest DP do not match then the result is an ungrammatical sentence. Conversely, the *he himself* complex binds the closest matching antecedent. In other words, there appears to be a kind of intervention effect in the cycle that disappears at this second stage. Examples (40) and (41) illustrate this contrast very clearly:

40. \*[John and Mary]<sub>i</sub> think that Bill<sub>j</sub> believes that [each other]<sub>i,j</sub> is smart  
(cf. ok John and Mary think that each other is smart)
41. [John and Mary]<sub>i</sub> think that Bill<sub>j</sub> believes that [they themselves]<sub>i,j</sub> are smart

Second, a regular anaphor must always be bound. If there is no feature matching between the anaphor and its antecedent, the sentence is ungrammatical. In the case of *he himself*<sub>i</sub>, if a suitable antecedent is not found, it can refer to a discourse entity. Examples (42) and (43) illustrate this. These sentences are intended to be the answer to something like *how will Mary do in her exam?*

42. \*I don't know, but herself says she will pass.
43. I don't know, but [she herself] says she will pass.

## 8. Conclusion

In this paper, we have analyzed the interesting properties of elements like *he himself*<sub>i</sub> in English. We have argued that the Bickerton-McKay controversy was unsettled for the simple reason that they were talking about two different dialects of English. We agreed with Bickerton in that *he himself*<sub>i</sub> has to be coreferent with a non-local *c*-commanding antecedent but we offered an analysis which is not based on 'unusual' properties of the lexical item *he himself*<sub>i</sub>. Instead, we proposed an adjunction operation and tried to link the properties of *he himself*<sub>i</sub> to more general properties of adjuncts and their interaction with Binding Theory principles.

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