**INTRODUCTION:**

By examining novel data, we motivate a syntactic reanalysis of the theory of clausal reflexive objects in English. We primarily focus on data involving agentivity focus in reflexive clauses, but will also explain the distribution of broad-focus pitch accents in reflexive clauses.

**BACKGROUND:**

The location of pitch accent realization in a focus domain has long been researched, and it has been shown that the syntactic structures feed the prosody. [2, 4, 7, 9] In English, focus marking falls on the primary stressed syllable of the most deeply embedded word of a syntactically F-marked constituent. In this way, it has been shown that (1a–d) may be entirely homophonous, despite the large variation in focus domain. Moreover, (1e) would be an *infelicitous response* to any of the other questions, as “bought” is not the most deeply embedded word in any of those domains.

(1) a. [John bought **BOOKS**]_F (“What happened?”)
b. John [bought **BOOKS**]_F (“What did John do?”)
c. John bought [**BOOKS**]_F (“What did John buy?”)
d. John [**BOUGHT**]_F books. (“What did John do to books?”)

**AGENTIVE FOCUS:**

We expect that the answer to an agent-oriented wh-question should have focus realized within the agent constituent; this is the general case, as in (2).

(2) A: Who wrote the old books?
   a. B: [John’s **SISTER**]_F wrote the old books. (agent focus)
   b. B: The old books were written [by John’s **SISTER**]_F (agent focus)

However, compare the non-reflexive clause in (3a) to the reflexive ones in (3b) & (3c), the pitch tracks for which are given in (4a) & (4b), respectively.

(3) A: Who lowered Liam into the cave?
   a. B: **MARIA** lowered Liam into the cave. (subject focus, non-reflexive clause)
   b. B: **LIAM** lowered **HIMSELF** into the cave. (double focus, reflexive clause)
   c. B: Liam lowered **HIMSELF** into the cave. (reflexive focus, reflexive clause)
   d. #B: **LIAM** lowered himself into the cave. (subject focus, reflexive clause)

(3b) may seem to suggest dual focus is necessary. However, to achieve a felicitous agent-focus interpretation, focus-marking the subject is not required (3c), whereas focus-marking the reflexive is required (3d).

This reflexive-agentivity connection is most clearly understandable when focus alternatives ([8]) are very clear, as in (5). The focus alternative in (5a) is another agent/cause for the event of the twin towers blowing up; it is strikingly infelicitous to focus-mark the subject only (5b).

(5) a. The twin towers didn’t blow **THEMSELVES** up.
   b. #**THE TWIN TOWERS** didn’t blow themselves up.

Relating a reflexive object and agentive focus interpretation is not naïvely straightforward, especially given the fact that the reflexive object is widely assumed to be outside of the syntactic domain of agentivity (which is the focus-marked domain in these cases). Furthermore, this is
especially problematic given the fact that there is an argument in the subject position, which by assumption is the position for the agent of a reflexive clause.

**Analysis:**

This data pattern can be captured by calling into question the syntactic assumptions on reflexivity, given the robustness of the theory of focus domains. Reflexivity has been suggested to be tied semantically to voice ([3], [5]); here we take the hypothesis one step further, and make self the Voice head. Specifically, self is the Voice\(^0\) ([6]) that defines clausal reflexivity and also licenses the agent. The object pronoun, as a weak pronoun clitic, moves to incorporate onto the Voice head, evacuating the VP.

(6) VoiceP
    DP
      Voice [+agent]
        [+refl]
          V hit DP
            John himself

This theory accurately predicts that only clausal arguments can bear this kind of agentivity focus – that is, an indirect object (7) can bear it, but the object of a picture NP cannot (8):

(7) A: Who introduced John to Mary?
    B: John introduced HIMSELF to Mary. (√ Agent focus)

(8) A: Who ruined the picture of John?
    B: #John ruined the picture of HIMSELF. (*Agent focus)

This also predicts other prosodic data (9), which indicates that reflexives are introduced outside of the domain of VP-focus.

(9) A: What did John do?
    a. B: John [VP HIT himself]\(_F\) himself. (VP focus)
    b. #B: John [VP hit himself]\(_F\) HIMSELF.

Assuming reflexive objects are quite high, the VP-focus domain would not include the reflexive, predicting the (in)felicity of (9a/b).

**Conclusion:**

Clausal reflexivity is introduced in Voice\(^0\), thus solving two independent prosodic issues. Moreover, linking reflexivity to a functional head makes English and languages such as Swahili or French appear more similar. Though English also employs Nself for non-clausal reflexives, these must be different syntactic animals in the way that Romance se and Germanic sich are.

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**References**