It is commonly accepted that reflexives can develop from emphatic pronouns. For instance, English *himself* is a reanalysis of the reflexively used 3rd person pronoun and the adjective *self/sylf* ‘same’ added for emphasis (e.g. van Gelderen 2000). In this talk, I look at two contemporary constructions, in which an emphatic adjective similar to *self* is used to identify the most prominent reference in the context.

1. **Mental deixis.** The first construction is illustrated in (1). In (1), the contribution of the emphatic reflexive *samj* ‘self-M.SG.NOM’ is a confirmation by A that among Peters A is talking about the one B mentions.

   (1) A: Do you remember Peter? He called me yesterday.
   B: Which Peter? Peter who threw the party last week?
   A: On samj.
   he self-M.SG.NOM
   ‘That’s the one.’ (lit. He himself.)

   Intriguingly, *samj* ‘self-M.SG.NOM’ in this sense cannot be added to the 1st and 2nd person pronouns:

   (2) a. *ja samj
       I self-M.SG.NOM
   b. *ty samj
       you self-M.SG.NOM

   Applying Kaplan’s (1977 and subsequent works) theory of contexts, I propose to treat *samj* in such constructions as a ‘mental deixis’ particle, that elevates the 3rd person pronoun to the status of *a priori* specified 1st and 2nd pronouns as in *a priori* true sentences, such as *I exist* and *I am here now*.

2. **Self-superlatives.** The second construction is *self*-superlatives, in which the idea of superlativity is expressed using an emphatic reflexive pronoun instead of a specialized degree word, cf. (3-a) with (3-b):

   (3) a. *self*-superlatives
   (i) **Russian**
   sam-aja interesnaja kniga
   ‘the most interesting book’
   (ii) **Latvian**
   pats labais cilveks
   self good-DEF man
   ‘the best man’
   (iii) **Lithuanian**
   pats gerasis
   self good-DEF
   ‘the best’
   
   b. *most*-superlatives
   (i) **Russian**
   nai-bolee interesnaja kniga
   ‘the most interesting book’
   (ii) **Latvian**
   vis-zil-ák-ais
   all-blue-COMP.DEF
   ‘the most blue’
   (iii) **Lithuanian**
   kreiv-iaus-ia
   crooked-COMP.DEF,ACC
   ‘the most crooked’

   There is a number of syntactic properties that distinguish *self*-superlatives from *most*-superlatives. I identify these properties and propose an analysis of *self*-superlatives based on the interaction of the emphatic reflexive pronoun and a definiteness marker.

   **PROPERTIES OF self-SUPERLATIVES.** *Self*-superlatives differ from *most*-superlatives in that they i) are formed with an emphatic reflexive pronoun, rather than a degree morpheme, ii) can appear with synthetic superlatives, iii) are obligatorily definite, iv) cannot modify short-form adjectives (in Russian) and v) are unidirectional, i.e. they lack a *least*-counterpart. These properties show that the *self*-morpheme does not quantify over degrees and modifies a noun...
rather than the adjective. This makes it impossible to extend the classical analysis of most-superlatives (e.g. Heim 1999) to self-superlatives.

**Decompositional Analysis of self-Superlatives.** I propose that the emphatic self adds the ‘exclusive’ meaning, as it would in its regular uses (e.g. König et al. 2001, Weiss 2006). I argue that most uses of self\(_{EMPH}\) can be subsumed under the umbrella ‘exclusive’ meaning, as in (4-a). The definiteness marker restricts the comparison set to a set of entities familiar from the discourse, see (4-b). For Russian, I argue that the role of the definiteness marker is played by the agreement morpheme. The argument is based on diachronic and synchronic evidence, including the fact that in some contrastive cases the agreement morpheme gives rise to the so-called ‘definiteness effects’.

\[(4)\]
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{a. } & [\text{self}_{EMPH}]^{M,G} = \lambda P \lambda x . P(x) \land \neg \exists y [y \neq x \land P(y)] \\
\text{b. } & [\text{DEF}]^{M,G} = \lambda C \lambda R \lambda z . R(z) \land z \in C \text{ (where } C \text{ is a set of entities salient in the discourse)}
\end{align*}
\]

Both morphemes have semantics independently motivated for their uses outside of superlative constructions. The interaction of self\(_{EMPH}\), and DEF yields the superlative interpretation, as shown in (5).

\[(5)\]
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{a. Miša kupil sam-uju interesnuju knigu.} & \quad \text{Russian} \\
\text{Misha bought self-DEF interesting book} & \text{‘Misha bought the most interesting book.’} \\
\text{b. } & [_{S} \text{ Misha} \left[ v_{P} \text{ bought } \exists d \left[ \text{FamP self } [\text{FamP DEF-C } [\text{NP d-interesting book }]]]]\right]] \\
\text{c. composing FamP:} & \\
& [\text{FamP}] = \\
& \lambda x . \text{book}(x) \land \text{interesting}(x) \geq d \\
& \land x \in C \\
& \land \neg \exists y [y \neq x \land \text{book}(y) \land \text{interesting}(y) \geq d \land y \in C] \\
& \text{adj + noun contrib. of DEF} \\
& \text{a book in a familiar set interesting to some degree and there is no other book in this} \\
& \text{set interesting to the same degree} \\
& \text{contrib. of self}_{EMPH} \\
& \text{The proposed analysis provides the denotation of self-superlatives that is equivalent to most-} \\
& \text{superlatives and accounts for all the properties of self-superlatives.} \\
& \text{The two contractions discussed in this talk broaden the perspective of how emphatic adjectives} \\
& \text{are used to achieve a contextually unique reference.}
\]

**References**