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Intensifiers and Reflexive Pronouns in English and Mandarin Chinese

A Contrastive Study

0. Introduction

0.1 Aim of the Study

Based on recent findings in typology, this study is dedicated to *a comprehensive and in-depth* contrastive analysis of intensifiers and reflexive pronouns in English and in Mandarin Chinese. In accordance with this aim, the three key terms of the title, reflexive pronouns, intensifiers, contrastive analysis, require detailed comments and explanations.

Following the lead of work done by König, Siemund, Gast etc. (1991, 2000a, b, c, 2002), I will keep the term 'reflexive pronoun' (anaphor) for the reflexive use, but use the term 'intensifier' for the emphatic use of formally identical expressions in the two languages[1]. For the purpose of my contrastive study of English and Mandarin Chinese, the term 'identity expression' is used as a comparative concept and cover term for both languages:

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IDENTITY EXPRESSIONS

Intensifiers   reflexive pronouns

[Engl. *self*-forms] [Mand. *Zìjǐ*]

[German *selbst*]   [German *sich*]

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0.2 A General Picture

The conflation and identity of reflexive pronouns with either intensifiers or middle markers is a wide-spread phenomenon in the world's languages. As studies have revealed in the relevant map in the World Atlas of Language Structures (WALS: http://wals.info/), the relationship between reflexive pronouns and intensifiers can be taken as one of the criteria in distinguishing types of languages. In a wide variety of languages, reflexive pronouns and intensifiers are not formally differentiated and can only be distinguished on the basis of distributional, pro-

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1   As mentioned in Siemund (2000: 2), terminologies such as 'intensifiers', 'emphatic reflexive' and others are used for similar expressions, but the term 'intensifiers' is also covering 'languages in which intensifiers and reflexives are formally distinguished' Siemund (2000: 2).

sodic and semantic criteria; whereas in some other languages, reflexive pronouns and intensifiers are formally differentiated and intensifiers can be used to reinforce reflexive pronouns. In English, for example *self*-forms can be used both as reflexive pronouns and as intensifiers. In other languages, by contrast, reflexive pronouns and intensifiers are formally differentiated and intensifiers can be used to reinforce reflexive pronouns. For instance, in German *'sich selbst'*, *sich* is a reflexive pronoun while *selbst* is an intensifier. On the other hand, there seems to be no language where the same form manifests all three uses as an intensifier, a reflexive and a middle marker. As is claimed by König & Siemund, 'If a language uses the same expression both as intensifiers and as reflexive pronouns, this expression is not used as a middle marker or marker of derived intransitivity' (cf. König and Siemund 2000a: 59). The following example shows, languages like English never use reflexive pronouns in middle constructions, while this is clearly possible in German:

(1) *Die   Tür   öffnete   sich.*
      the   door   opened   REFL
      ‚The door opened.‘

Reflexive pronouns in English are defined in terms of their morphological make-up in the major handbooks of English grammar, as combinations of a pronominal element agreeing with a noun phrase in the same clause, and of the morpheme *self* inflecting for person, number and gender in its complex forms. To quote from the latest major reference grammar of English (Quirk et al. 1985: 1483ff.; Biber et al. 1999: 342ff.; Huddleston & Pullum, 2002: 1483ff):

> *Reflexive pronouns are inflectional forms of the personal pronouns, formed morphologically by the compounding of* self *with another form.*
>
> (Huddleston et al. 2002: 1483)

This means that all *self*-forms are assigned to one and the same category by many grammarians, and a distinction is drawn between a reflexive use and an emphatic use (non-reflexive use) of such forms. Illustrations can be seen in the following examples:

(2) a. *But, a little further, where White ladder joined Tweed, and with the nearest of the English encampments liable to come into view within the next mile or so, he could no longer restrain* himself. *[BNC,* CD8*1665]*   [reflexive use]
(2) b. *He* himself *is moved to relieve his distress, but why should my imaginative simulation move me to do the same? [BNC,*CB1*290]*   [emphatic use]

English is in this sense quite special among European languages in not drawing distinction between reflexive pronouns and intensifiers. Other European languages such as German, Romance or Slavic make such a distinction. "Within the

bounds of Central and Western Europe only Finnish, Hungarian and the Celtic languages illustrate a similar identity of reflexive pronouns and intensifiers, and influence from Celtic has often been suggested as a possible cause for identical coding of reflexives and intensifiers in Modern English" (Siemund 2002: p. 251).

However, as will be mentioned in the section on the methodology of my study, a description of languages in terms of what is known as 'descriptive categories' is not sufficient for establishing the proper basis for a cross-linguistic comparison, since a cross-linguistic comparison needs as its basis the creation of comparative concepts, identifying comparable phenomena across languages and formulating cross-linguistic generalizations (cf. Haspelmath 2010). To put such theoretical knowledge into the practice of my comparative work means that defining reflexive pronouns cannot be done on the basis of the same criteria that are relevant for Mandarin Chinese.

We find the same double use of the relevant forms, both as reflexive pronouns in the strict sense of the word and as emphatics if we turn to the corresponding domain in Mandarin Chinese ((pronoun) + *zìjǐ*). In other words, like many other languages, Turkic, Indic, Finnish and, of course, English, Mandarin Chinese uses identical form for both reflexive pronouns and for intensifiers, as in the following examples:

(3) a. *[...]* *tā$_i$* *jiù* *shì* *zhè-yang* *yí* *ge* *rén,* *yí-bèi-zi* *yě*
      3.SG ADV be such one CLASSIFIER person lifetime yet
    bù *kěn* *duō* *tán* *tā-zìjǐi.*[2]
    no want much talk REFL

                                [reflexive use]

    'He is just someone who does not like to talk about himself all his life.'
    他就是这样一个人，一辈子也不肯谈论他自己。

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2   Due to the ways reflexive pronouns in Mandarin Chinese are used, it is necessary to mention here as well as in the later part of the dissertation, as complementary to the corpus based analysis, that alternative choices of reflexive pronouns could lead to the alternation to the meaning of the sentence. In this example, the choice of tā-zìjǐ is strictly in agreement with the subject, which means there is no other possibility that the reflexive pronouns might find the antecedent than the subject within the sentence. However, the antecedent of the reflexive pronouns can either be identical to that of tā-zìjǐ, or it could also be the speaker found in the speech situation when tā-zìjǐ is replaced by zìjǐ. It is also worth mentioning that if tā-zìjǐ is substituted by tā-běnrén, the situation of antecedent is found to be exactly the same. Whereas if tā-zìjǐ is replaced by běnrén, reflexivity is no longer there because běnrén then picks up the speaker in the speech situation as its possible referent. The later part of the dissertation will have particular focusing on the resemblance as well as differences in the uses of zìjǐ, běnrén as well as their complex forms.

(3) b *Zhāng-bǎi-chuān*ᵢ   *xīn*   *lǐ*   *shí-kè*   *zhǐ*   *huāng* *zhe*
NAME   heart inside time   only   put   PROGRESSIVE
qún-zhòng, wéi-dú *méi-yǒu*   *tā-zìjǐ*ᵢ
mass   only no   REFL

                                                      [reflexive use]

   ‚Zhāng-bǎi-chuān puts everyone in his heart except himself.'
   张百川心里时刻只装着群众，唯独没有他自己。

(3) c. […], *yuè-fū* *shū*   *tā-zìjǐ* *qiān*   *dǎo*   *wàn*   *shì*   *jù*
         NAME   UNCLE INT   move island TEN-THOUSAND thing have
bèi,   *dàn*   *tā*   *bù*   *xiǎng* *zì*   *jiā*   *qiǎo-rán* *lí-qù.*³
ready but   3.SG NO   WANT   INT   home   quiet   leave

                                                     [intensifier use]

   'Uncle Yuè-fū himself had got everything ready for moving the island, but
   he did not want to leave alone without telling anyone.'
   岳父叔他自己迁岛万事具备，但他不想自家悄然离去。

This double use of 'identity expression', as we will call them independently of a specific use provides a clear basis for the contrastive study between the two languages. We notice at this point that English and Mandarin Chinese differ in this domain from the majority of European languages, in which reflexive pronouns manifest a completely different type of double use, i.e. as (i) reflexive pronouns and as (ii) middle markers, i.e. markers of derived intranstivity (Kemmer 1995 Geniušienè 1987, König 2001, König & Gast 2007a).

The comparative basis of our contrastive study can therefore be established, by selecting all uses of *self*-forms and all expressions in Mandarin Chinese that can be used either as reflexive pronouns or as intensifiers (emphatics). We can expect that there will be a large overlap in the uses of these expressions, even though there will also be clear differences. We will thus use the term 'identity expression' as a comparative concept in the sense of Haspelmath (2010).

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3   Distribution is not a decisive factor in distinguishing the sub-types of an intensifier in Mandarin Chinese. In other words, an intensifier occurring immediately after the subject can be either in its adnominal use or adverbial exclusive use. One way to distinguish them is to put such sentences into negative forms. However, in some cases, even the use of negation cannot manage to disparate the two uses. Meaning instead of distribution is the fabric factor in judging an intensifier in Mandarin Chinese. This is contrary to English, in which both distribution as well as meaning are decisive factors.