An experimental investigation of a three-way classification of the Japanese reflexive zibun: A preliminary study

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The ultimate goal of the present study is two-fold: (i) to clarify the interpretation process (grammatical vs. extra-grammatical) of the Japanese reflexive zibun based on data obtained by eye-tracking experiments conducted with Japanese native speakers; (ii) to provide empirical grounds for acquisition of reflexive expressions by comparing the data collected from Japanese native speakers with those from L2 Japanese learners and heritage speakers.

As is well known, zibun allows both local and long-distance (LD) binding interpretations. Some previous work treats zibun as a lexical anaphor which can be bound by a local or LD antecedent by undergoing LF operator raising, (e.g., Katada, 1988; Aikawa, 1993). In another proposal, zibun is claimed to have two kinds, one is a reflexive anaphor and the other is as a logophoric pronoun (Abe, 1997). In a more recent analysis, zibun is categorized into three different types: reflexive zibun, which is locally bound as a coargument of its antecedent, empathic zibun, which is bound by the participant the speaker empathizes with and identifies with the most, and logophoric zibun, bound by a logophoric individual (e.g., Hirose, 2002; Oshima, 2004; Kishida, 2011).

What we cover in this talk is preliminary, tentative and loose-ended, but it attempts to outline the road to the above mentioned goal. We discuss the three-way classification of zibun and report the results of preliminary offline tasks investigating native speakers’ interpretations of empathic zibun and logophoric zibun. The results reveal that empathy and logophoricity, which involve extra-grammatical processes, play a role in the interpretation of zibun.

References
