

CONDITIONS ON APPEARANCES OF THE JAPANESE REFLEXIVE PRONOUN: PRAGMATIC APPROACH¹

Sonoko Sakakibara

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

The objective of this paper is to argue against one of the major previous analyses (Kameyama (1984, 1985)) addressing the distribution² of the Japanese reflexive pronoun *zibun*³ and to propose an alternative analysis. Kameyama's analysis presupposes that grammatical relation is a crucial criterion for the antecedent of *zibun*. She claims that the antecedent of *zibun* must be a subject unless as a non-subject it satisfies a certain discourse condition called the "logophoric condition". Several arguments are provided to show that this analysis is not adequate. The arguments are that subjecthood is a sufficient but not a necessary criterion for the antecedent of *zibun*, and that the logophoric condition does not always make correct predictions. As evidence, this paper provides some examples of acceptable non-subject antecedents whose referents do not conform to the logophoric condition, as well as unacceptable examples of non-subject antecedents of *zibun* which do conform to the logophoric condition. As an alternative to the previous analysis, I claim that the use of *zibun* conversationally implicates that a speaker believes that the referent is responsible for or emotionally affected by the action or event described in the proposition represented by the whole sentence containing *zibun*. It is therefore predicted that whenever the speaker believes that the entity to which she is referring is responsible for or emotionally affected by the action or event, *zibun* can be used to refer to the entity. If this prediction is right, it implies that what is crucial for some NP to be a potential antecedent of *zibun* is not the grammatical relation of the NP, but rather the property of the speaker's belief about the relation between the entity represented by the NP and the event/state described. Thus the proposed condition can explain why subjecthood is not crucial. It can also explain why the logophoric condition cannot guarantee the acceptability of all possible non-subject NP antecedents: in some situations where it is not appropriate for a speaker to

¹I am grateful for the help of Georgia Green, and Sara Michael.

²"Distribution" means "when *zibun* can occur and when it cannot".

³*Zibun* means 'self'. It can be used to mean "myself, yourself, herself, himself". *Zibun* does not reflect person or gender. There is no morphological clue on verbs to show person or gender, either.

imply the specific belief described in the condition, even the logophoric condition cannot license the occurrence of *zibun*.

1. Testing the pragmatic use condition.

I propose that the use of *zibun* conversationally implicates that the speaker believes that the referent is responsible for or emotionally affected by the action/event which is described in the proposition represented by the whole sentence containing *zibun*. "Responsible for" is used in the sense that the entity is blameworthy or is praiseworthy for some action or event. The use condition predicts that whenever the speaker believes that the entity to which she is referring is responsible for or emotionally affected by the action or event, *zibun* can be always used to refer to the entity. If the prediction is correct, the use of *zibun* will imply that the speaker believes that the referent of *zibun* is responsible for or emotionally affected by the event or action described by the proposition represented by the whole sentence containing *zibun*. Also, it predicts that when there is some generally held belief that the entity may be responsible for or emotionally affected, if the speaker does not use *zibun* to refer to the entity, the hearer should be able to infer that the speaker believes the entity is *not* responsible or *not* emotionally affected.

In a situation where someone performs an act of generosity, the act is usually praiseworthy. Then, it follows from the use condition that the use of *zibun* in such a situation can imply that the speaker believes that the referent of *zibun* is responsible for the praiseworthy act. For example, *zibun* is used to refer to John in a situation in which John did some praiseworthy act and the speaker praises him for doing it.⁴ Such an example is shown in (1a). (As a convention, I used bold to mark the understood antecedent of *zibun*.)

(1a)

John-ga Mary-ni *zibun-no* lunchi-o watashi-ta-to kii-ta.

-Nom⁵ -Dat self-Gen lunch-Obj hand -Past-Comp hear-Past

'I heard that John handed Mary (lit.) self's lunch.'

If a speaker does not use *zibun* to refer to the person in a situation where the person performs an act of generosity, it also follows from the use condition that a

⁴A situation where John is praised for giving away his lunch is, for example: John, who has not been eating well himself, gave his lunch to a homeless girl, Mary.

⁵"Nom"; nominative. "Dat"; dative, "Gen"; genitive, "Obj"; object, "Past"; past tense morpheme, "Comp"; complementizer.

hearer can infer that the speaker believes the person is *not* responsible for the praiseworthy act. The pronoun *kare* (he) is used instead of *zibun* to refer to John in a situation where the speaker believes that John's generous act is nothing special. Such an example is shown in (1b).

(1b)

John-ga Mary-ni (kare-no) lunchi-o watashi-ta-to kii-ta.
 -Nom -Dat (he-Gen) lunch-Obj hand -Past-Comp hear-Past
 'I heard that John handed Mary (his) lunch.'

If the sentence in (1b) where John is not referred to by *zibun* is used in the situation in which John's action is praiseworthy, the utterance of the sentence will imply that John's action is merely expected as something usual, which suggests that the speaker believes that John does not need to be praised for the act. Although referring to John with *zibun* as in (1a) can imply that the speaker praises John for his act (which suggests that the speaker believes that John is responsible for what he did), (1b) cannot imply that.

At this point, it may be noticed that in the situation where John performs an act of generosity to Mary, it is also possible that Mary could be emotionally affected. Therefore, it is predicted that *zibun* can also refer to Mary in example (1a). Indeed, *zibun* can refer to Mary in (1a) in a situation in which Mary is emotionally affected.

Now let us look at another example that illustrates the same point. In a context where one experiences an embarrassing event, one is usually emotionally affected. In such a context, the use condition predicts that the use of *zibun* can imply that the speaker believes that the referent is emotionally affected. *Zibun* which refers to Mary is used in a situation where Mary is embarrassed. Such example is shown in (2a).⁶

(2a)

John-ga Mary-ni zibun-no ookina lunchi-o watashi-ta.
 -Nom -Dat self-Gen big lunch-Obj hand -Past
 'John handed Mary (lit.) self's big lunch.'

Conversely, in a situation where someone is typically emotionally affected, if a speaker does not use *zibun* to refer to that person, it will imply that the speaker believes that the person is *not* emotionally affected. The pronoun *kanojo* (she) is

⁶The situation where Mary is embarrassed by John's giving her lunch is, for example, Mary does not want John to see her big lunch.

used instead of *zibun* to refer to Mary in a situation where Mary's emotion is not a special issue.⁷ Such an example is shown in (2b).

(2b)

John-ga Mary-ni (kanojyo-no) lunchi-o watashi-ta.
 -Nom -Dat (she-Gen) lunch-Obj hand -Past
 'John handed Mary (her) lunch.'

So far, the use condition is supported by the fact that two of the predictions have been shown to be correct. The predictions are; i) the use of *zibun* will imply that the speaker believes that the referent of *zibun* is responsible for or emotionally affected by some event/action described by the proposition represented by the whole sentence containing *zibun*, ii) when there is some generally held belief that the entity may be responsible for/emotionally affected, if the speaker does not use *zibun* to refer to the entity, the hearer should be able to infer that the speaker believes that the entity is *not* responsible or *not* emotionally affected.

Before proceeding to discuss the secondary prediction of the use condition, a discussion of a possible objection (or misunderstanding) regarding to the use condition is in order. Some people pointed out to me that the use of *zibun* in the following example does not implicate that the entity is either responsible or emotionally affected, and therefore, the condition is wrong.

(3)

A: John-wa doko-ni iru-no?
 -Top⁸ where-at be-Q
 'Where is John?'

B: (John-wa) zibun-no heya-de hon-o yonderu-yo.
 -Top self-Gen room-at book-Obj reading-informing SE⁹
 '(John is) reading a book in his room.'

In example (3), a speaker A is simply asking where John is. A speaker B is giving a genuine answer to the question. In example (3), alternatives to the use of *zibun* include repeating *John* or using a pronoun. Some people tend to avoid repetition, and also avoid using overt pronouns, preferring to use zero-

⁷The situation where Mary's emotion is not a special issue is, for example, John simply handed Mary her lunch since she asked him to do so.

⁸"Top"; topic marker, "Q"; question marker.

⁹"SE"; sentence ending particle.

pronominals. In the second utterance in example (3), in order to give a clear answer to the question of which room John is in, the speakers most likely will use *zibun*. (If there is only one possible room that John can be in, a zero-pronoun is most likely to be used.) Such a use of *zibun* can be 'neutral', namely, *zibun* in a genuine question-answer context can simply mean 'his', and does not give any implication that the speaker believes that the referent of *zibun* is responsible or emotionally affected.

The use condition does not predict that the use of *zibun* must reflect a particular belief of the speaker. It claims that the use of *zibun* 'conversationally' implicates (Grice 1975) a certain belief of the speaker. That is, when the hearer believes that the speaker does not have any reason to imply something, namely, there is no reason for hearer to imagine that the speaker intended something more than she said, a conversational implicature will not arise. When do people use implicature? They do so when they want to communicate in a less than straightforward way for any one of a variety of reasons. An utterance will not implicate anything when a hearer and a speaker mutually believe that the speaker has no reason to communicate in non-straightforward way. Therefore, the use of *zibun* will not implicate anything when the hearer and the speaker mutually believe that the speaker has every reason to communicate straightforwardly. The use of *zibun* in (3) is a such example, in a situation where A stopped by to say hi to John and simply asked one of his friends, B, which room John is in (since his fraternity house has several rooms where John could possibly be). There is no reason for A to imagine that B intends with his response to communicate anything more than the information of which room John is in. Therefore, A will interpret the utterance; '*zibun-no heya* (self's room)', as meaning 'his room' without making any other inference.

2. Problems of previous analysis and alternative explanations.

This section presents Kameyama's (1984, 1985) analysis, as well as two types of data which show that the analysis is not adequate. I will show how the use condition explains the data which Kameyama's analysis cannot explain.

Kameyama (1984, 1985) claimed that the antecedent of *zibun* must be a subject¹⁰ ("subjecthood condition", following Kuno (1973)). However, she was

¹⁰In Kuno (1973, 1980) and Kameyama (1984), the definition of the "subject" includes semantic subjects, not only surface subjects. For example, in the causative construction below, *John* is the

also aware that there are obvious counterexamples to the subjecthood condition. For example, in (4), either *Taroo* or *Hanako* can be the antecedent of *zibun*, although *Taroo* is not a subject.

(4)

Hanako-wa Taroo-kara [zibun-ga kat-ta koto]-o kii-ta. (Kameyama 1984:230)
 -Top -from self-Nom win-Past Comp-Obj hear-Past
 'Hanako heard from Taroo that (lit.) self (=Hanako/Taroo) won.'

In order to explain the acceptable antecedent relation between *zibun* and the non-subject NP *Taroo* in (4), Kameyama proposed that the antecedent of *zibun* must be a subject, however, a non-subject NP may also be licensed as an antecedent of *zibun* if the referent of the non-subject NP has a certain discourse property called the logophoric property. Namely, the logophoric condition was proposed to account for "exceptions" to the subjecthood condition. A referent has the logophoric property when the referent is a source of information, or the referent's feelings are described in the sentence. In example (4), *Taroo* is the source of the information, therefore, *Taroo* is a logophoric individual (a referent who has the logophoric property).

There are two problems for this analysis. One is that the data shows that the antecedent of *zibun* can be a non-subject NP even when it does not have the logophoric property. And the other problem is that not all non-subject NPs which satisfy the logophoric condition can be acceptable antecedents of *zibun*.

These problems can be solved by the pragmatic use condition. It follows from the use condition that whenever a speaker believes that the entity to which she is referring is responsible for, or emotionally affected by the action or event, *zibun* can be used to refer to the entity. This means that the crucial property for some NP to be an antecedent of *zibun* is the speaker's belief about the relation between the entity represented by the NP and the event/state described. Therefore, it follows that the grammatical relation of the antecedent of *zibun* is not crucial. It also follows that if the speaker believes that the referent is *not* responsible or *not* emotionally affected, even the logophoric condition cannot license an NP to be the referent of *zibun*.

surface subject, and *Mary* is the semantic subject of the embedded clause. Since *John* and *Mary* are both "subjects", they both can be the antecedent of *zibun*.

[John-wa [Mary-ni zibun-no heya-o soojis]-ase-ta]
 -Top -Dat self-Gen room-Obj clean-Caus-Past
 'John made Mary to clean (lit.) self's room.'

2.1 Subjecthood condition and the use condition.

The first problem of Kameyama's analysis is that the antecedent of *zibun* can be a non-subject NP even when it does not have the logophoric property. I will present an example of non-subject NP antecedent whose referent does not satisfy the logophoric condition. The use condition on *zibun* predicts that a non-subject NP can be the antecedent of *zibun* even when it does not conform to the logophoric condition, as long as the speaker wants to imply that she believes that the entity which she is referring to is responsible or emotionally affected. For example, in the sentence shown in (5), *Mary* is not a subject nor a logophoric individual (she is not a source of any information, nor her feeling is described), yet *zibun* can refer to *Mary* naturally in a situation in which *Mary* is being criticized by someone for not doing her part. In such a situation, referring to *Mary* with *zibun* implies either that the speaker is blaming *Mary* (which suggests that the speaker believes that *Mary* is responsible for understanding her role in the group better), or the speaker is sympathizing with *Mary* (which suggests that the speaker believes that she is emotionally affected).

(5)

John-ga Mary-ni zibun-no yakuwari-o hanashi-ta.
 -Nom -Dat self-Gen role-Obj tell -Past
 'John told Mary of (lit.) self's role.'

If John is merely reading out some of the responsibilities for a new researcher *Mary*, as part of a routine tour of the research plant, (5) will sound too personal and serious. In such a case, the sentence in (6) in which a personal or zero pronoun instead of *zibun* is used to refer to *Mary*, is more appropriate.

(6)

John-ga Mary-ni kanojyo-no/atarashii researcher-no yakuwari-o hanashi-ta.
 -Nom -Dat she -Gen/ new researcher-Gen role-Obj tell -Past
 'John told Mary of her/new researcher's role.'

Mary is again not a subject nor a logophoric individual (she is not a source of any information, nor are her feelings described) in (7), yet the non-subject NP can be the antecedent of *zibun* in a situation where *Mary* has special feeling toward her house. In such situation, referring to *Mary* with *zibun* implies that *Mary* felt she was deprived of something when the man received ownership of the house from her, which suggests that the speaker believes that *Mary* is emotionally affected by giving up ownership.

In a situation in which Mary is not emotionally affected nor responsible for (blameworthy for, or praiseworthy for) selling her house, the utterance of (7) sounds odd, since the use of *zibun* can give an inference that she is emotionally affected.

(7)

Sono mishiranu otoko-wa Mary-kara zibun-no uchi-no kenri-o uketo-tte itt-ta.
 the stranger man -Top -from self-Gen house-Gen right-Obj received go-Past
 'The man received from Mary the ownership of (lit.) self's house and left.'

Therefore, the arguments provided in this section showed that the claim that the antecedent of *zibun* must be a subject is not necessarily true. The occurrences of non-subject NP antecedents which have no logophoric property were presented as counterexamples. They are acceptable as long as the speaker believes that the referent of the non-subject NP is responsible for or emotionally affected by the event or action. This supports the prediction that what is crucial to explain the appearance of *zibun* is the speaker's belief about the relation between the entity and the event/state described, but not the grammatical relation of the NP.

2.2 Logophoric condition and the use condition.

The second problem of Kameyama's analysis is that even the logophoric condition cannot license some occurrences of *zibun* if the speaker believes that the referent is *not* responsible for or is *not* emotionally affected by the action or event described in the proposition represented by the whole sentence containing *zibun*. It is inappropriate to refer to an entity with *zibun* when a speaker believes the entity is *not* responsible or *not* emotionally affected by the action/event, even though the entity has the logophoric property. In the following example, Mary is a source of information, therefore, according to the logophoric condition, *Mary* can be referred to by *zibun*.

(8)

John-ga Mary-kara zibun-ga ka-tta koto-o kii-ta. (Kameyama, 1984)
 -Nom -from self -Nom win-Past Comp-Obj hear-Past
 'John heard from Mary that (lit.) self won.'

However, if the sentence in (8) is uttered in a situation where Mary won in a lottery something really trivial which she does not care about, and someone else bought her the lottery ticket (therefore she is not responsible for winning), the use of *zibun* sounds odd. Since what Mary won was really a trivial thing, the speaker most likely believes that Mary is not emotionally affected by winning it. Nor she is responsible for winning it since it was not she who entered the lottery. Therefore, the use of (8) in such a context sounds odd since it does not conform to the pragmatic use condition. However, uttering the sentence in (8) is appropriate in a situation where Mary is emotionally affected, for example, if she won something she really wanted to have for a long time.

Therefore, the argument has shown that it is not the logophoric condition which licenses the appearance of *zibun* in the utterance of the sentence in (8), but it is rather the speaker's belief about the relation between the entity represented by the NP and the event/state described which is licensing it.

3. Conclusion

The present discussion showed that the inadequacy of the previous claims that the antecedent of *zibun* must be a subject unless it satisfies the logophoric condition. The alternative proposal presented was that the use of *zibun* conversationally implicates that a speaker believes that the referent is responsible for or emotionally affected by the action or event described in the proposition represented by the whole sentence containing *zibun*. The arguments provided in this paper showed that subjecthood is not a crucial criterion for the antecedent of *zibun*. They also showed that it is not the logophoric property of the referent of non-subject NP that licenses the appearances of non-subject NP antecedents of *zibun*. Any non-subject NP can be the antecedent of *zibun* as long as a speaker believes that its referent is responsible for or emotionally affected by the event or action described. It is the property of the speaker's belief about the relation between the entity represented by the NP and the event or state described, and not the grammatical relation of the antecedent nor a logophoric property, that licenses the occurrence of *zibun*.

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