

The antecedent preferences for Mandarin reflexive ziji and ta-ziji

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Background: local and long-distance uses of ziji and ta-ziji

- ► Two 3rd-person sg. reflexives: ziji 'self' and ta-ziji 'himself/herself'
- ► Both *ziji* and *ta-ziji* can have **local** and **long-distance** antecedents. [Pan 1998; 2000; Xu & Runner 2019]
 - (1) Zhangsan; jiu le ziji;/ta-ziji; Zhangsan save ASP self/himself 'Zhangsan saved himself.'
 - (2) Zhangsan; juede [na ben shu jiu le ziji;/ta-ziji;] Zhangsan think that CL book save ASP self/himself 'Zhangsan thought that book saved himself.'

Hypothesis

▶ Puzzle: ziji = ta-ziji → uneconomical!

Parallel in the pronominal domain: **German marked pronouns** the more marked form (d-pronoun) resists referring to the most salient antecedent. [Hinterwimmer & Bosch 2018, Wiltschiko 1998]

► Hypothesis: ta-ziji prefers a less-salient antecedent than ziji.

Our study

- ➤ **Operationalization:** test whether *ziji* and *ta-ziji* differ in antecedent resolution when two eligible antecedents differ in relative saliency.
- ► Four saliency contrasts in Mandarin:
- (i) perspective vs. non-perspective [Hinterwimmer & Bosch 2018]
 - (3) Zhangsan juede Lisi jiu le ziji/ta-ziji Zhangsan think Lisi save ASP self/himself 'Zhangsan thought that Lisi saved himself.'
- (ii) information sources vs. non-information sources [Joshi et al. 2006]
- (4) Ju Zhangsan shuo, Lisi jiu le ziji/ta-ziji
 Based Zhangsan say, Lisi save ASP self/himself
 'According to Zhangsan, Lisi saved himself.'
- (iii) subjects vs. non-subjects [Brennan et al. 1987]
- (5) Zhangsan rang Lisi qu mai ziji/ta-ziji de yanchufu Zhangsan ask Lisi go buy self/himself 's costume 'Zhangsan asked Lisi to go to buy his own costume.'
- (iv) first subjects vs. non-first subjects [Wuyun & Pan 2021]
 - (6) Zhangsan juede Lisi jianxin na ben shu jiu le ziji/ta-ziji Zhangsan think Lisi convinced that CL book save ASP self/himself 'Zhangsan thought that Lisi was convinced that book saved himself.'

Experiment-1: Forced-choice judgments

- ► Within-subject: Participants (N=48) read 16 target sentences (8 ziji; 8 ta-ziji), 8 control sentences with one antecedent, and 4 filler sentences.
- ► Stimuli: A1(salient)... A2(non-salient)...reflexive(ziji/ta-ziji)
- ► Instruction:

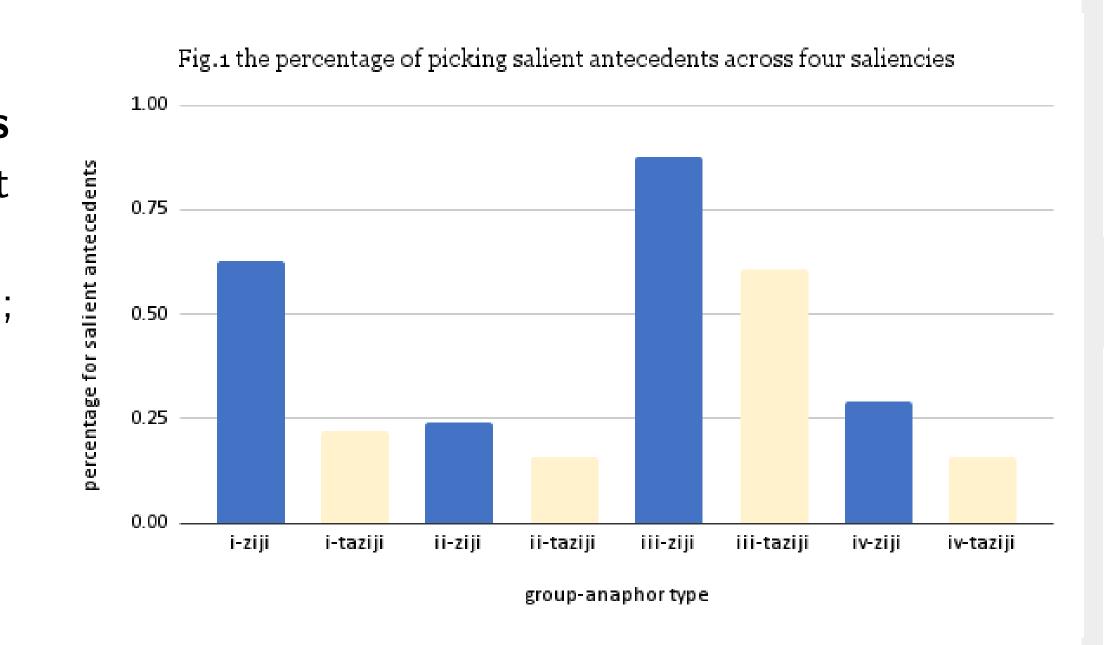
 choose which
 antecedent (A1 or
 A2) is more natural
 for the given
 reflexive.



Experiment-1 results

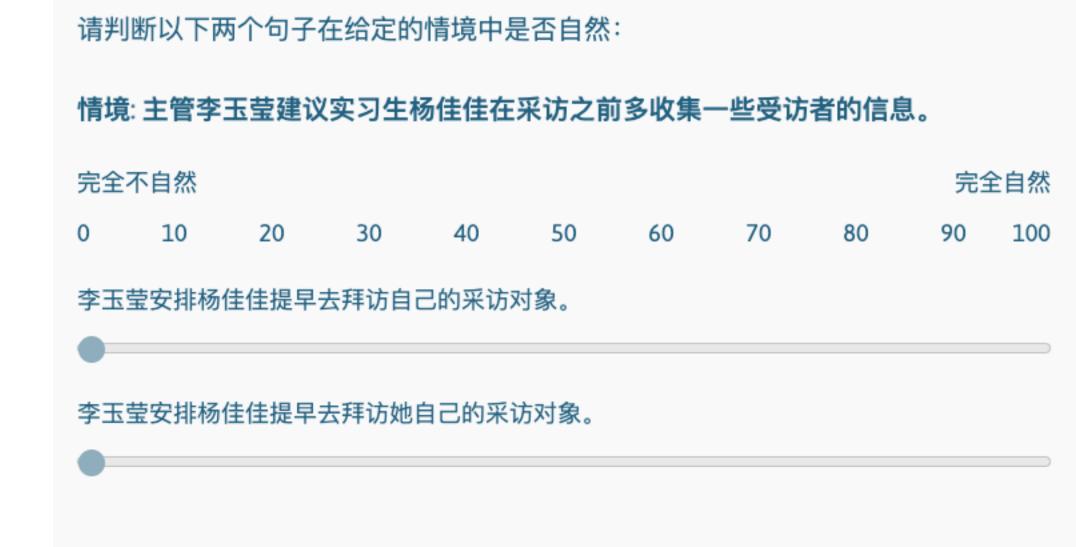
ziji is more likely to take salient-antecedents than ta-ziji

➤ Variations across groups: significant in type-(i),(iii) and (iv)(c-command); not significant in type-(ii) (p=0.41; no c-command).



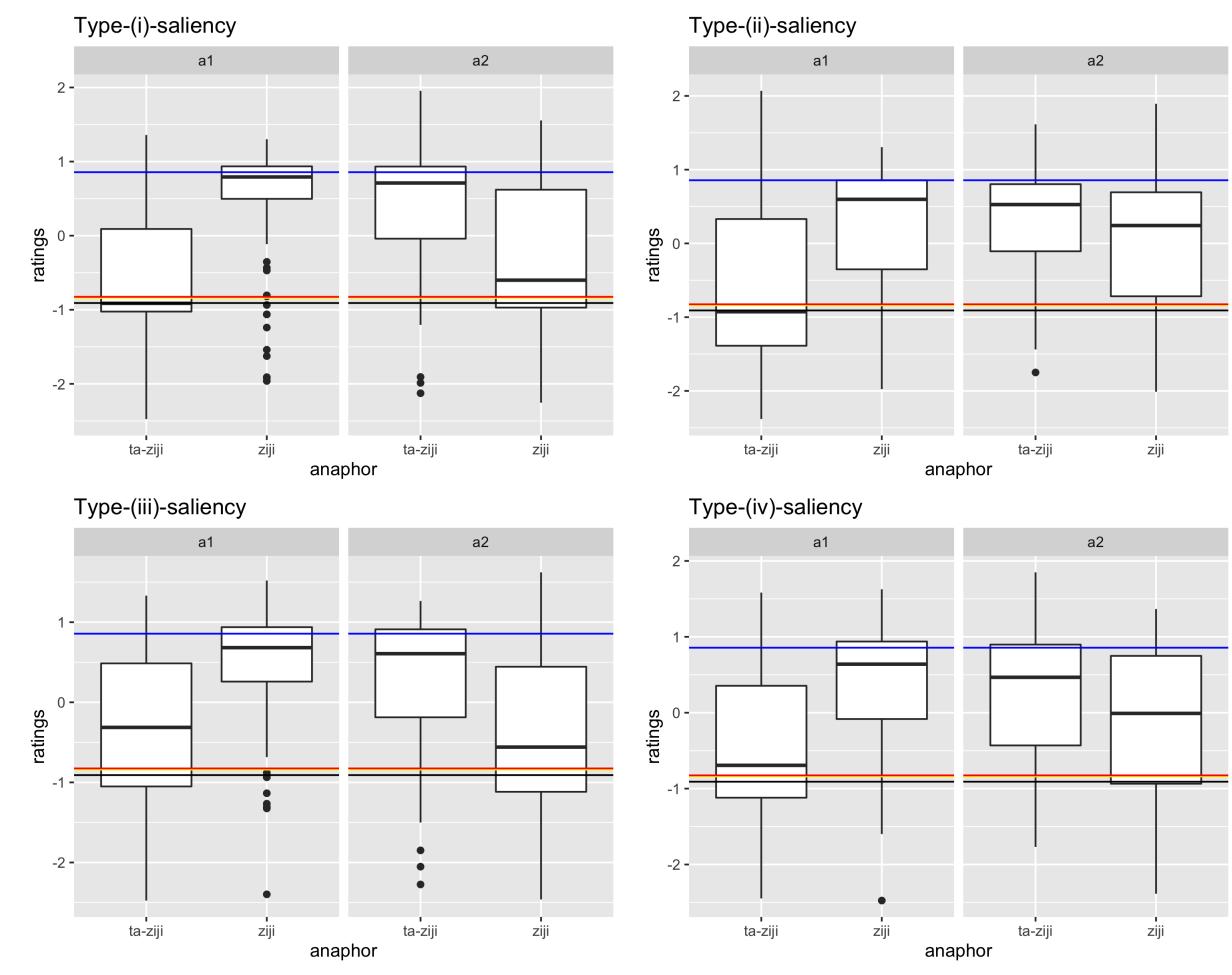
Experiment-2: Naturalness judgments

- ➤ Within-subject: Participants (N=50) rated the naturalness of two sentences in the given context using slider bars.
- ➤ Controls: grammatical, semantically odd, pragmatically odd, and ungrammatical sentences.
- Stimuli:
 Side-by-side
 sentences with the
 contexts that
 favored the salient
 antecedent or the
 non-salient
 antecedent.



Experiment-2 results





► Main effects: ANAPHOR (p<0.001), CONTEXT (p<0.001) and ANAPHOR-CONTEXT (p<0.001) on Z-scored naturalness ratings.

Conclusions and discussions

ziji prefers salient antecedents while ta-ziji prefers non-salient antecedents.

► Parallel pattern as the pronominal domain

More complex, less salient

► Effect is sensitive to saliency type

Syntax-pragmatics interaction in antecedent resolution

An alternative explanation: not saliency but locality

▶ All A2 happens to be more local to reflexives than A1.

More complex, more local?

- c.f. study showing that *ta-ziji* shows a significantly weaker locality bias effect than *ziji*. [Dillon et al. 2015]
- ► More examples teasing apart saliency and locality are needed.

References

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