

## Acquisition of the Chinese reflexive 'ziji' by Russian and English speakers

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The cross-linguistic variation between English, Chinese and Russian lies in that (i) the English reflexive 'himself' must be bound locally both in finite and non-finite clauses, the Chinese reflexive 'ziji' can be bound either long-distance or locally both in finite and non-finite clauses, whereas the Russian reflexive 'sebjja' must be bound locally in finite clauses but can be bound either long-distance or locally in non-finite clauses; (ii) the Chinese reflexive can only take a subject as its antecedent and so does the Russian reflexive, while the English reflexive can take both a subject and an object as its antecedent.

The main research questions arise as to whether (i) Russian and English speakers are able to acquire the syntactic properties of 'ziji'; (ii) the behaviour of 'ziji' in non-native grammars is constrained by Universal Grammar (UG). A few studies have been done on the acquisition of 'ziji' by English speakers (e.g. Yuan 1998) and no empirical studies have focused on the acquisition of 'ziji' by Russian speakers. The present study is aimed to fill a gap in this research area.

The results of a multiple-choice comprehension task obtained from 48 Russian and 26 English learners of Chinese at beginner, intermediate and advanced proficiency levels indicate that (i) Russian and English learners are able to acquire long-distance binding of 'ziji' both in finite and non-finite clauses; (ii) there is an asymmetry in the interpretation of 'ziji' exhibited both by Russian and English speakers: long-distance binding is more acceptable in non-finite clauses than in finite clauses; (iii) Russian speakers acquire subject-orientation of 'ziji' more easily than English speakers. The interpretation of 'ziji' by non-native speakers is explained by adopting the Relativized SUBJECT analysis (Progovac 1992, 1993). Overall, the findings of the study provide evidence that L1 transfer occurs in second language acquisition and interlanguage grammars are UG-constrained (Schwartz and Sprouse 1996).

### References:

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