

Department of
Linguistics and Modern Languages
語言學及現代語言系

An Empirical Investigation on the Processing and the Interpretation of Mandarin Reflexives

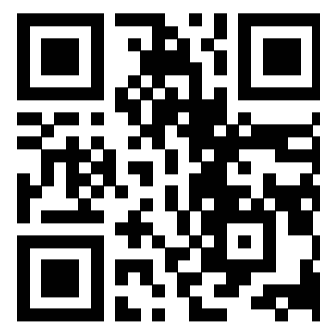
Workshop 1

Prof. Chun-Chieh HSU
National Tsing Hua University

Date: August 11, 2021 (Wednesday)

Time: 1:00pm - 2:30pm

Venue: *Seminar will be conducted via ZOOM



Join the Zoom Meeting

Abstract

In this talk, I will report two studies that used experimental methods to investigate how Mandarin native speakers process and interpret reflexive anaphors. Study 1 examined the asymmetry between *ziji* and *ta-ziji* in Mandarin. Linguistic analyses show that *ziji* allows long-distance binding, whereas *ta-ziji* must be locally bound unless the closest accessible antecedent is non-human (Huang et al. 2009; Pan 1988, etc.). However, such widely-accepted asymmetry between *ziji* and *ta-ziji* has not been attested systematically, and it remains unclear how semantic/pragmatic cues may influence the interpretation of *ziji/ta-ziji*. We utilized both online self-paced reading task and offline multiple choice task to compare the processing and the interpretation of these two reflexives directly. Our findings suggest for a differential yet complex interplay between syntax and pragmatics in online and offline resolution of *ziji* and *ta-ziji*. Study 2 looked into how structural constraints and non-structural cues may affect the online processing of the poly-morphemic reflexive *ta-ziji* in Mandarin. While most previous studies have focused on the processing of *ziji* in Mandarin, very little was known about how Mandarin speakers process *ta-ziji* in real time. It has been argued that, unlike *ziji*, the interpretation of *ta-ziji* basically follows Binding Principle A and is more similar to English himself (Huang et al, 2009), but the semantic properties of the nouns can affect the binding domain of *ta-ziji* (Pan 1998). By adopting Sturt (2003)'s paradigm, we used eye-tracking method to examine whether Principle A is applied immediately during the online processing of *ta-ziji* and how semantic features like gender and noun type may influence the resolution of *ta-ziji*. Our findings suggest that Mandarin speakers apply Principle A in processing *ta-ziji* but only during the late processing stages, and that gender congruity and noun type do play a role in affecting the online resolution of reflexives.

Speaker

Chun-Chieh Hsu is Associate Professor in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature at National Tsing Hua University in Taiwan. Her research has primarily concerned with how complex sentences are processed and acquired in Mandarin Chinese. She is particularly interested in using empirical methods to understand how various kinds of linguistic knowledge (competence) are being employed in people's usage of language (performance), including adult language comprehension and child language acquisition.

All are Welcome

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