Domains and presuppositions of Chinese ziji ‘self’ in its adverbial exclusive uses

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Chinese reflexive ziji ‘self’ can function as a modifying intensifier. And in the adverbial uses, it can express various exclusive meanings, illustrated in (1)-(5):

(1) A: Did Lisi send the letter for Zhangsan?
   B: Meiyou, Zhangsan ziji ji-le xin  anti-substitute (non-delegation) reading
      No, Zhangsan ZIJI send-PERF letter ‘No, ZS sent the letter himself.’

(2) A: Did Xiaoming’s mom walk him to school?
   B: Meiyou, Xiaoming jintian ziji qu shangxue  anti-assistive reading
      No, Xiaoming today ZIJI to go-to-school ‘No, XM went to school by himself today.’

(3) A: All the team members wrote the team assignments together.
   B: Cai bu-shi, Zhangsan changchang ziji xie xiaozu zuoye  anti-group reading
      CAI not-true, Zhangsan often ZIJI write team assignment
      ‘It’s not true. Zhangsan often wrote team assignments alone.’

(4) A: What is Zhangsan doing?  anti-plurality (isolated) reading
   B: Zhangsan yizhi dou ziji zai da dian-wan
      Zhangsan continuously DOU ZIJI PROG play electronic-game
      ‘Zhangsan has been playing video games alone.’

(5) Meiyou-ren re, Zhangsan momingqimiaodi ziji ku le  anti-causative reading
    No-one provoke, Zhangsan inexplicably ZIJI cry PERF
    ‘No one provoked him. Inexplicably, Zhangsan cried by himself.’

Ziji conveys an anti-substitute reading in (1) (to inform that the subject NP Zhangsan, instead of Lisi, sent the letter), expresses an anti-assistive reading in (2), negates group actions assumed in the context in (3), emphasizes an individual action in (4), and signals the lack of any external cause in (5). Even though the readings are not the same on the surface, they all refute the idea that the event described holds true for some other entity in the context, such as Lisi in (1) or the whole team in (3). In other words, they all have some sort of exclusive sense.

The wide range of exclusive uses of Chinese ziji is in contrast with the more limited uses of some well-studied intensifiers (for example, German selbst has the uses in (1) and (2) only, as pointed out in Hole (2005)). And with the wide use of ziji, we have to reconsider one important property claimed for exclusive intensifiers: centrality. Centrality requires that the associate of an exclusive intensifier takes the most central role in the event. For example, in the question “Who, among Zhangsan and Lisi, sent the letter?”, it is not good to reply “*Zhangsan sent the letter himself”, as neither Zhangsan nor Lisi takes a more central role for the letter-sending event. To account for the centrality property, in the spirit of Eckardt’s (2001) focus analysis for intensifiers, Constantinou (2014) proposes that the focused self- intensifier denotes an identity function to get a central entity (such as the letter’s owner in a

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1 Mysteriously ziji also has limited inclusive uses, which seem to work better for stative VPs. Although it is preferable to have one semantics for all the adverbial uses, the inclusive uses are left for further study.
letter-sending event), while its focus semantic value denotes a set of peripheral functions to get “more peripheral entities” in an event-related responsibility/benefit/malefit scale. But this proposal is problematic. Consider (3) for instance. In (3), the associate of *ziji* does not take the most central role in a responsibility scale. Instead, the team mentioned in the context does. Therefore, we propose an alternative analysis as follows. *Ziji* adjoins to Voice’ as assumed in Hole (2005) (as for cases (1-4)) or to Cause’ (to derive an anti-causative reading as in (5)), and the so-called centrality property results from its triggering of a semantic presupposition, underlined in (6), where Rooth’s (1992) focus theory and Kratzer’s (1991) ordering source for modality are assumed. In (6), *ziji* presupposes that a particular time is picked (by a choice function f) before the utterance time t₀, and at that time, a particular person is picked (by another choice function f’) among the set ||ziji|| froth given in (7), such that this person is most expected to be true for the event uttered. We will use the P-family test (cf. Chierchia & McConnell-Ginet 1990) to support the existence of presuppositions in all sentences with adverbial *ziji*. And such presuppositions will rule out cases where no one is most expected to perform the actions. Moreover, such presuppositions often invoke the consideration of responsibility, as the responsible ones are often most expected to perform the events.

(6) ||ziji|| = λP: P ∈ D<e, <ɛ, t>,  oper ∃f  ( ∀w’ ∈ MAX<, q was a reasonable expectation at f(t’): t’ < t₀) in w, p is known in w at f(t’): t’ < t₀) at t₀ in w’). P

(7) ||ziji|| = { λP<e, <ɛ, t>, ϕ, ϕx[P(x) ∨ P(y)]: y ∈ De ∧ C(y)} (e is the type for event entities)

Crucially with “C(y)” in (7), the alternatives to be considered must be contextually relevant entities, which are illustrated in (8) for the cases in (1)-(5), where the most expected ones in the contexts are underlined, and ↑ is a group operator proposed in Landman (2000). In the examples, (1) is a case where Zhangsan per se was originally expected to perform the action; (2) is a case where the group consisting of XM’s mom and XM was originally expected to perform the event; and in (4) it was expected that Zhangsan played the game alone, and the isolation gets emphasized through the contrast between this sole agent and plural agents.

(8) (1): ||ziji|| = {Zhangsan, Lisi}; (2): ||ziji|| = {Xiaoming, ↑(Xiaoming⊕Xiaoming’s mom)};

Suppose that the relevant domain for (3)-(5) is {ZS, a, b}: (ZS = Zhangsan)

(3): ||ziji|| = ||ziji|| = {ZS, ↑(ZS⊕a⊕b)}; (4): {ZS, ZS⊕a, ZS⊕b, ZS⊕a⊕b};

(5): ||ziji|| = {ZS, a, b, ZS⊕a, ZS⊕b, a⊕b, ZS⊕a⊕b}

As illustrated, the focus semantics of *ziji* may be involved with different sorts of sets. And with the presupposition in (6) and the Exh operation in Chierchia, Fox, & Spector (2009) over *ziji*-sentences, *ziji* can have its various exclusive readings derived with a sense of centrality. Furthermore, the selection of domains for exhaustivity is influenced by the semantics of VPs as well as world knowledge. Consequently, exclusive intensifiers like *ziji* seemingly have the so-called agentivity property, as claimed in Hole (2005, 2008) and Tsai (2008).