On the Distribution of *Ownself*
in Singapore English*

Chonghyuck Kim & Zechy Wong
(Chonbuk National University & National University of Singapore)

Kim, Chonghyuck & Wong, Zechy. (2015). On the Distribution of *Ownself* in Singapore English. *The Linguistic Association of Korea Journal* 23(4), 45-62. Singapore English, a variety of English born out of intense contact with other local languages, has a unique self-expression in its lexicon - *ownself*. This self-expression displays partial convergence with its believed source, Chinese *ziji*: Like *ziji*, *ownself* can appear in a non-argument position, where it performs all of *ziji*'s emphatic functions. Unlike *ziji*, however, *ownself* cannot appear in an argument position. This partial convergence presents an apparent problem for substratist theories of creole genesis in contact linguistics (e.g. Lefebvre 1998; Bao 2005), because the theories predict full syntactic and semantic convergence between *ownself* and *ziji*. In this article, we resolve this problem by analysing the peculiar distribution of *ownself* as a consequence of grammatical competition between lexical items with overlapping distributions; *ownself* enters into competition with other self-expressions (e.g., *himself*) in argument position, and loses out in the process. In recent years, competition has been claimed to play a key role in the creation of new grammatical features in contact situations (Mufwene 2003, 2005; Aboh 2009), but the mechanics of such competition have largely remained elusive. Our analysis, to the extent that it is successful, can be construed as one specific way in which competition influences the creation of a new linguistic feature.

Key Words: reflexives, ownself, ziji, Creole, Singapore English

1. Introduction

Singapore English is a variety of English born out of intense contact with the local languages spoken in Singapore, including the Chinese languages (such as Hokkien, Cantonese and Mandarin) and Malay. In its lexicon, there exists a certain self-expression – *ownself* – not found in any other variety of English. The unique presence of this self-expression in Singapore English raises two immediate questions, in (1).

(1) a. What is the origin of *ownself*?
    b. Do theories of creole genesis account for the properties of *ownself*?

Our aim in this paper is to investigate the origin of *ownself* and address the question that it presents to current theories of creole genesis.

We argue in the following section, developing Wee's (2007) suggestion, that *ownself* originates from the Chinese self-expression *ziji*, based on the exact parallel behaviors that they display as emphatic reflexives. In section 3, however, we next show that *ownself* is markedly different from *ziji* in one important respect: While Chinese *ziji* can be used either as an emphatic reflexive or as an argument reflexive, Singapore English *ownself* can be used only as an emphatic reflexive. We show that this partial convergence between *ownself* and *ziji* constitutes a problem to the substratist approach to creole genesis and its derivatives, as currently available in the literature. To resolve the problem of partial convergence, we present our analysis of *ownself* in section 4, which brings together the substratist approach with a principle that governs grammatical competition between lexical items with overlapping distributions – the Elsewhere Condition. Under the proposed analysis, *ownself* enters into competition with other self-expressions (e.g., *himself*) in argument position, and loses out in the process. Our analysis, to the extent that it is correct, entails that grammatical competition must be recognized as an element that plays an active role in the formation of a contact language. Competition has recently been claimed to play a key role in the creation of new grammatical features in contact situations (Mufwene 2003, 2005; Aboh 2009). Our analysis can be construed as one concrete case where competition

influences the creation of a new linguistic feature.

2. *Ownself* and *ziji*

There are a number of empirical reasons to think that *ownself* originates from the self-expression *ziji* found in Chinese,[1] the major local language in Singapore. As Wee (2007) observes, *ziji* displays two distinctive syntactic characteristics – particularly when used as an emphatic reflexive – that set it apart from a Standard English self-expression like *himself*. First, unlike an English emphatic reflexive which can appear in many syntactic positions, as in (2a), Chinese *ziji* typically appears between subject and predicate, as in (3a). In some cases, where an adverb like *every day/always* is present, *ziji* may be separated from subject position, as in (3b), but it can never appear at the end of a sentence like an English emphatic reflexive, as in (3c). Second, while an English self-expression requires the presence of an overt subject in an imperative sentence, as in (2b), *ziji* does not require the presence of an overt subject in an imperative sentence, as in (3d).

(2) a. (Jack is the last person who would sleep at work, but tonight⋯)
   Jack (*himself*) will (*himself*) sleep at work (*himself*).
   b. *(You) yourself do the homework.
(3) a. Ta   *ziji*   chi   fan.
   3sg   self   eat   rice
   'S/He is eating rice by him/herself.'
   b. Ta   mei   tian   *ziji*   chi   fan.
   3sg   every   day   self   eat   rice
   'S/He eats rice by him/herself every day.'
   c. *Ta   mei   tian   chi   fan   *ziji*.
   3sg   every   day   eat   rice   self
   'S/He eats rice by him/herself every day.'

---

1) The word *ziji* is from Mandarin Chinese, which we use exclusively in this article. We have consciously not made a distinction between Mandarin and the other Chinese dialects spoken in Singapore; such a distinction would not affect our analysis.

d. (Ni)   *ziji*   chi   fan.
    (2sg)   self   eat   rice
    '(You) eat rice by yourself.'   (Wee 2007: 371)

We find the distinctive syntactic characteristics of *ziji* mirrored in the distribution of Singapore English *ownself*; Wee's examples for *ownself* in (4) below correspond exactly to his examples for *ziji* in (3).

(4) a. He *ownself* open the door.   (Wee 2007: 361, (2a))
    b. He always *ownself* sweep the floor.   (Wee 2007: 365, (13a))
    c. *The boy got paint the house *ownself*.   (Wee 2007: 365, (15a))
    d. (You) *ownself* do the homework.   (Wee 2007: 366, (16))

Wee also notes that *ownself* shares a distinctive semantic characteristic of *ziji*. Emphatic *ziji* differs from a Standard English emphatic reflexive in that English emphatic reflexives allow an 'additive' reading, as in (5a), while Chinese *ziji* only allows an 'exclusive' meaning, as in (5b-c). That is, the English sentence in (5a) can be true even if John had not done all the painting work by himself, but for (5b) to be true, John must have painted the wall without help. If John does receive help from others, as in (5c), the sentence becomes unacceptable.

(5) a. John *himself* painted the wall, (even though others helped him).
    b. Yue-han   *ziji*   you-le   qiang-bi.
        John   ziji   paint-PERF   wall
        'John himself painted the wall.'
    c. *Shui-ran   you ren bang ta,
        Even though   have people help him,
        Yue-han   hai-shi   *ziji*   you-le qiang-bi.
        John   still   ziji   paint-PERF wall
        'Even though other people helped him, John himself painted the wall.'   (Example (a) adapted from Wee (2007: 368))

Singapore English *ownself* behaves on a par with *ziji*, as Wee's (2007: 368) example in (6) shows.

(6) Ali *ownself* paint the house, (*even though other people help him).

Based on the above parallels between *ownself* and *ziji*, Wee (2007: 370) speculates that 'ownself is quite likely to be based on Chinese ziji'. Wee has not gone as far as to claim that *ownself* is indeed from *ziji*, because his main concern was not to argue for their relationship. Wee's statement, however, need not remain as a speculation. Let us add to Wee's observation further similarities between *ziji* and *ownself* which will provide enough ground to conclude that *ownself* originates from *ziji*.[2]

Wee illustrates the 'exclusive' meaning of *ziji* and *ownself* with examples like (5c) and (6), where the reflexives are construed, roughly, as 'without getting help'. This illustration, however, is not fully satisfactory, because *ziji* also regularly denotes a number of other senses under the broad 'exclusive' meaning. These other senses of emphatic *ziji* are illustrated in (7) – 'by one's own will' in (7a), and 'without a cause, or by itself' in (7b). These senses are quite unique to Chinese *ziji*, in that they cannot easily be expressed by English reflexive forms.

(7) a. Ta *ziji* gei-le   na-ge ren   qian, xian-zai you shuo qian
        She self give-PERF that person money, now again say money
        bei   tou   le.
        PASS   stolen   PERF
        'She gave that person money of her own free will, but now says the money was stolen.'
    b. Men   *ziji*   kai   le.
        Door   self   open   PERF
        'The door opened by itself.'

Given that the exclusive meaning of *ziji* can be realized in a range of different but related senses, we would expect *ownself* to have the same range of senses if the latter lexical item were based on the former. This expectation is borne out; all the senses of *ziji* can be conveyed by *ownself*, as the parallel between (7) and (8) shows.
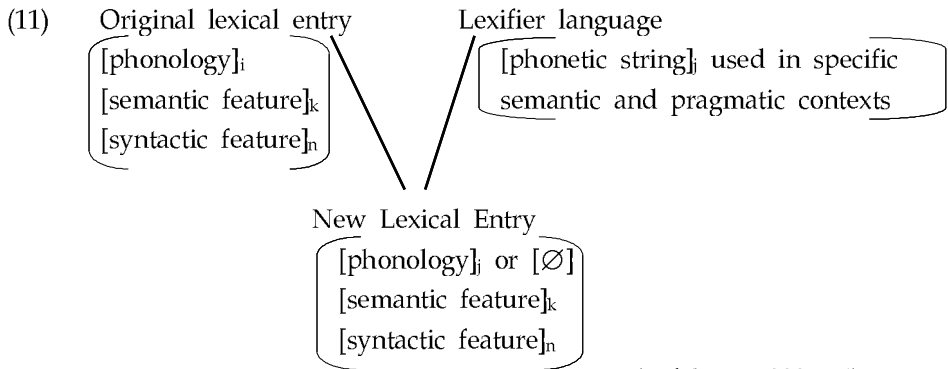
---

2) Wee's article is the only work on ownself in Singapore English.

(8) a. She *ownself* gave the man money, but now say the money got stolen.
   b. The door *ownself* open.

Li and Thompson (1981) note two additional distinctive properties demonstrated by Chinese *ziji*. One is that *ziji* can be used in the sense of 'one' to express a general truth in the form of a proverb, as in (9a). Another property is that in a complex sentence with more than one verb, *ziji* can occur either before the first verb or the second one, inducing a different meaning in each case, as in (9b) and (9c).

(9) a. *ziji*   zhuan   qian   *ziji*   hua.
       self   earn   money   self   spend
       'If one earns money, then one can spend it.'
   b. wo   *ziji*   yao   qu.
       I   self   want   go
       'I myself want to go (i.e., it is I who want to go).'
   c. wo   yao   *ziji*   qu.
       I   want   self   go
       'I want to go by myself (i.e., no one else should go.)'
                                       (Li and Thompson 1981: 139)

These properties of *ziji* are also found in *ownself*; *ownself* can be used in the sense of 'one', as in (10a); and in a complex sentence with two verbs, it can induce a meaning difference, depending on its attachment site, as shown in (10b) and (10c).

(10) a. *Ownself* earn money, *ownself* spend.
          'If one earns money, then one can spend it.'
      b. I *ownself* want to go.
          'I myself want to go (i.e., it is I who want to.)'
      c. I want to *ownself* go.
          'I want to go by myself (i.e., no one else should go.)'

Morphological consideration of *ziji* and *ownself* reveals further similarities.

First, both of them are composed of two discrete parts; *ziji* is composed of *zi* and *ji*; and *ownself* of *own* and *self*. Second, both of the reflexive forms are devoid of phi-features such as number, person, and gender. Third, *ownself* is a form one can easily obtain from the translation of *zi* and *ji*, which in English literally mean *own* and *body* respectively.

Based on the extensive similarity between *ziji* and *ownself* examined in this section, we conclude that *ownself* indeed emerged in Singapore English under the influence of Chinese *ziji*.

3. Mapping *ziji* onto *ownself* and a problem

In contact languages, many lexical items which have the appearance of lexifier words behave like local words. This phenomenon, seen to be a consequence of substratum transfer, is standardly assumed to arise through a formal process called relexification (Musyken 1981; Lefebvre and Lumsden 1994; Lefebvre 1998). Relexification is a process that combines the pronunciation of a superstrate (lexifier) word with the semantic and syntactic properties of the corresponding substrate (local) word, as illustrated in (11).

(11)   Original lexical entry   Lexifier language
        [phonology]$_i$ [phonetic string]$_j$ used in specific
        [semantic feature]$_k$ semantic and pragmatic contexts
        [syntactic feature]$_n$

                    New Lexical Entry
                    [phonology]$_j$ or [∅]
                    [semantic feature]$_k$
                    [syntactic feature]$_n$
                                            (Lefebvre 1998: 16)

Using this substratist approach to the creation of a new lexical item in a contact language, we can formalize the emergence of *ownself* in the way shown in (12).

(12)   A substratist analysis of *ownself*

Lexical entry for Chinese *ziji*

[tsɯtsi]$_i$
[semantic feature]$_k$
[syntactic feature]$_n$

Lexical entries for English *own* and *self*

[əʊn]$_j$ [sɛlf]$_j$

Lexical Entry for Singapore English *ownself*

[əʊnsɛlf]$_j$
[semantic feature]$_k$
[syntactic feature]$_n$
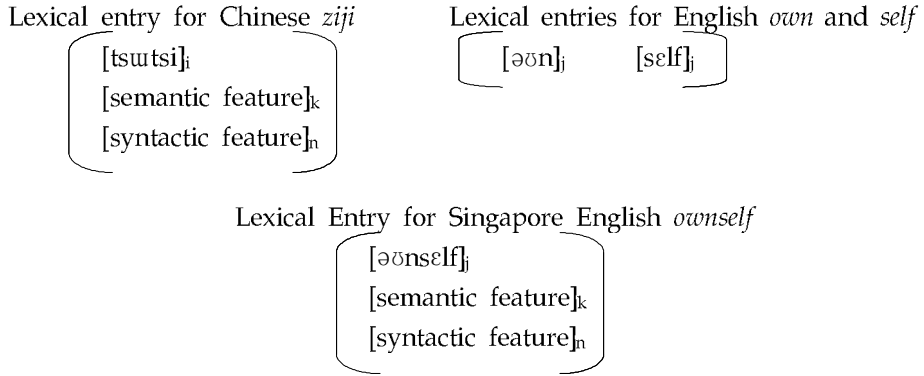
Under the substratist analysis envisaged in (12), the emergence of *ownself* in Singapore English is construed as an outcome that results from adding the pronunciations of the English words *own* and *self* to the lexical entry of Chinese *ziji*, replacing the original pronunciation. In other words, *ownself* is analysed as none other than Chinese *ziji* disguised in an English form. An immediate consequence of this analysis is that we can explain, in a simple and concise manner, why *ziji* and *ownself* display the parallels observed in the previous section – they behave alike because they share all their properties except pronunciation. This is a welcome result. To the best of our knowledge, there is no alternative theory that can better capture the observed parallels between *ownself* and *ziji*. We therefore conclude that relexification is an important linguistic process that plays an active role in the creation of a new lexical item and that it is a primary factor involved in the emergence of *ownself* in Singapore English.

However, there is a non-trivial problem with the substratist analysis in (12). The problem is that it predicts *ownself* to behave 'exactly' like *ziji*. This prediction is largely true, as we have seen from the parallels observed in the previous section, but it is not quite accurate, because *ownself* differs from *ziji* in one crucial way. Observe the contrast between (13) and (14). As is well-known, *ziji* can freely serve as an argument in a sentence: It can appear in subject position, as in (13a), in object position, as in (13b), or in the object position of

a preposition, as in (13c). Unlike *ziji*, however, *ownself* is unable to occur in any of the argument positions, as first reported by Wee (2007). (Both *ziji* and *ownself* can be used in adverbial position as an emphatic reflexive, as in (13d) and (14d), of course.)

(13) a. Zhangsan shuo   *ziji*   kanjian-le Lisi.
          Zhangsan say   self   see-Perf   Lisi
          'Zhangsan said that he saw Lisi.'   (Huang & Liu 2000: 168)
     b. Zhangsan xihuan   *ziji*.
          Zhangsan like   self
          'Zhangsan likes himself.'
     c. Zhangsan liu-le   dan-gao gei   *ziji*.
          Zhangsan keep-PERF cake   PREP   self
          'Zhangsan kept some cake for himself.'
     d. Zhangsan *ziji*   shao   cai.
          Zhangsan self   cook   food
          'Zhangsan cooks food himself (as opposed to anyone else cooking for him).   (Li and Thompson 1981: 138)

(14) a. *John said that *ownself* like Mary.
     b. *John likes *ownself*.
     c. *John kept some cake for *ownself*.
     d. John *ownself* cook food.

The substratist analysis in (12) fails to account for this difference between *ziji* and *ownself*. Of course, this failure does not mean that the substratist analysis is wrong; in fact we believe the analysis must be right, given the extent of the observed parallels between emphatic *ziji* and *ownself*. Rather, the difference means that relexification cannot be solely responsible for the emergence of *ownself*, and that there must be something else, some kind of independent mechanism, that is also involved in the creation of *ownself*. It is thus necessary to incorporate such a mechanism in a theory of creole genesis, in addition to relexification, to explain the distribution of *ownself*.

In the literature, Bao (2005) proposes one such mechanism, the Lexifier

Filter, which can work in tandem with relexification.

(15) Lexifier Filter[3)]
Morphosyntactic exponence of the transferred system conforms to the (surface) structure requirements of the lexical-source language.

To rephrase somewhat informally, (15) says that the lexifier filter rules out the Chinese morphosyntactic properties of a Singapore English lexical item as ungrammatical if they do not conform to the grammar of Standard English. This, in effect, means that the lexifier filter functions as a mechanism that produces Singapore English words that partially converge with Chinese words while being consistent with the surface grammar of Standard English.

The partial convergence between *ziji* and *ownself*, however, cannot be due to the lexifier filter. The rule that governs the distribution of English self-expressions is Principle A of the binding theory in (16), as stated by Chomsky (1981: 188) (or some modified version of it, e.g., Reinhart and Reuland's (1993) Principles).

(16) Principle A: An anaphor is bound in its governing category.

If we assume, following the spirit of the lexifier filter, that *ownself* is subject to Principle A, we may indeed successfully rule out the case where *ownself* occurs in subject position, as in (14a), as a violation of the principle; it is ungrammatical for the same reason *himself* is ungrammatical in subject position, as in (17).

---

3) Bao's (2005) theory of creole genesis consists of two mechanisms – system transfer and the lexifier filter. System transfer is a mechanism that brings an entire subgrammatical system from a substrate language to a contact language. Although he does not make a commitment as to whether system transfer is carried out through relexification, we assume that it is done through relexification. In a later article, Bao (2009) explicitly argues against relexification and proposes an alternative mechanism based on usage-based grammar. As far as our discussion is concerned, however, his new mechanism is no better than relexification in that it also fails to explain why *ownself* does not occur in the argument position. Hence, we will use the more widely used notion, relexification, in our discussion of *ownself.*

(17) *John said that himself likes Mary.

But there is nothing we can say about the case where *ownself* occurs in object position, as in (14b) and (14c), as the principle incorrectly predicts *ownself* to be licensed in object position, on a par with *himself* in (18).

(18) a. John likes *himself.*
       b. John kept some cake for *himself.*

Clearly, some principle other than the lexifier filter must be at work to rule out *ownself* in object position.

4. Grammatical Competition: Elsewhere Condition

We propose the elsewhere condition in (19) as a principle that governs the distribution of *ownself* in Singapore English.

(19)   The Elsewhere Condition
        If a contact language acquires lexical item A and lexical item B realizing the same category C, the lexical items A and B enter into competition to realize category C. The lexical item that spells out more of C's features wins the competition.

The condition in (19) is not new. It is a slight variation of a well-known principle that has been recognized since at least Anderson (1969) and Kiparsky (1973) as a universal principle that governs many morphophonological phenomena. It has also recently been shown to play important roles in the domain of syntax (e.g., Neeleman and Szendröi, 2007). Our claim in (19) is that the elsewhere condition should also be recognized as a principle that governs and determines the emergence and fate of an innovative lexical item in a contact language. In the literature, there are many versions of the elsewhere condition. Our formulation is a modified version of Neeleman and Szendröi's (2007), reproduced in (20).
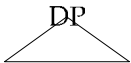
(20)   All else being equal, a phonological realization of a category C
        that spells out more of C's features takes priority over a
        phonological realization that spells out fewer features.

To show how the elsewhere condition in (19) works, we need to postulate
what feature sets reflexive forms spell out. Our postulated spell-out rules for
ownself and *himself* are given below:

(21)   Spell-out rule for ownself
        [DP –pronominal, +anaphor]   ⇨   /ownself/

(22)   Spell-out rule for himself/herself/etc.
        [DP ɸ, –pronominal, +anaphor] ⇨ /himself, herself, etc./

In our rules, we assume that both *himself* and *ownself* target the category
DP, the maximal projection of a nominal expression, as their spell-out domain.
Further, we assume that they both, as reflexives, spell out the features
[-pronominal, + anaphor], the features Chomsky (1981) adopts to define
reflexives. The difference between the two lexical items is that *himself*
phonetically realizes the phi-features (represented by ɸ) contained in a DP,
while *ownself* does not phonetically realize phi-features, even if the DP it targets
contains these features.

To illustrate, let us suppose that English syntax generates the structure in
(23) for a reflexive, where phi-features are generated along with the features
[-pronominal, +anaphor].

(23)   DP

            [ɸ, -pronominal, +anaphor]

This structure satisfies the rule in (21) because it is a DP that contains
[-pronominal, +anaphor]; it also satisfies the rule in (22), as the structure
contains [ɸ] as well as the [-pronominal, +anaphor] features. Since the structure
satisfies the structural descriptions of the spell-out rules in both (21) and (22),

it can be, in principle, spelt out either as *ownself* or *himself*. Of the two possible forms, however, it is *himself* that always wins the competition; *ownself* loses out under the elsewhere condition in (19), because *himself* spells out more features than *ownself*. To summarize, the elsewhere condition in (19) interacts with the spell-out rules in (21) and (22) to yield the prediction in (24) concerning the distribution of *ownself*.

(24) *Ownself* is blocked wherever a reflexive form with full specification of phi-features, e.g., *himself*, is licensed.

And this is precisely what is observed in Singapore English.

Consider the case where *ownself* occurs in object position, whose examples are reproduced in (25a, b).

(25) a. *John likes *ownself*.
     b. *John kept some cake for *ownself*.

These sentences violate the elsewhere condition, because *ownself* is used in a position where an alternative form like *himself* can be used. As such, they are rendered ungrammatical. If *himself* can be used in place of *ownself*, then it must be used, because *himself* is the form licensed by the elsewhere condition. This explains the clear grammaticality of (18), reproduced here as (26).

(26) a. John does not like *himself*.
     b. John gave the book to *himself*.

As for the case where *ownself* is used in subject position, as in (14a), repeated here as (27a), we can indeed rule it out using Bao's (2005) lexifier filter; all reflexive forms in English are subject to Principle A and thus both Singapore English (27a) and Standard English (27b) are ungrammatical.

(27) a. *John said that *ownself* like Mary.
     b. *John said that *himself* like Mary.

One potential problem for our analysis of *ownself* in subject position is the proverbial examples in (9a) and (10a), repeated here as (28), in which *ownself* is allowed despite the fact that it is used in subject position.

(28) a. *ziji*   zhuan   qian   *ziji*   hua.
       self   earn   money   self   spend
       'If one earns money, then one can spend it.'
    b. *Ownself* earn money, *ownself* spend.
       'If one earns money, then one can spend it.'

As a reviewer points out, however, (28b) need not be construed as a counter example to our analysis. *Ownself* here is not used as a reflexive but as a generic pronoun. As such, it is not subject to Condition A and thus can be used in subject position. Even if we analyze *ownself* in (28b) as a reflexive in subject position, it does not pose a threat to our analysis. As the only example where *ownself* appears in subject position, (28b) can be regarded as an exceptional case. The fact that (28b) is a frozen expression, a proverb, seems to allow it to bypass Condition A.

Now that we have seen why *ownself* is banned from argument positions, let us turn to consider the use of *ownself* as an emphatic reflexive. On the surface, *himself* and *ownself* appear to occupy the same position when they are used as emphatic reflexives. It is therefore tempting to expect *himself* in (29a) to block *ownself* in (29b).

(29)   a. The principle *himself* came to our party.
       b. The principle *ownself* came to our party.

But this expectation is merely a result of the illusion of surface identity. In reality, emphatic *himself* in preverbal position is a post-nominal adnominal expression which is part of the subject (see Ahn (2010)), whereas preverbal *ownself* (like *ziji*) is an adverbial expression which is part of the VP, as represented in (30).

(30)   a. [The principal *himself*] [VP came to our party.]
       b. [The principal] [VP *ownself* came to our party.]

Because it is part of the subject, which is a constituent, *himself* can be moved with the rest of the subject, as in (31a). However, the same movement is impossible for *ownself*, as shown in (31b), as it is not part of the preceding subject but is instead part of the following VP.

    (31)   a. The person who came to our party was the principal *himself*.
            b. *The person who came to our party was the principal *ownself*.

The co-occurrence of *himself* and *ownself* in (32) also shows that the two emphatic reflexives occupy different syntactic positions.

    (32)   The principal *himself ownself* came to our party.

Here, *himself* is a conventional adnominal emphatic reflexive used to emphasize the nominal the principal, while *ownself* is used as an adverbial emphatic reflexive to emphasize the manner of the action performed, [*coming*] *to our party*. This is similar to the 'use [of] both a ^{dp}ER [adnominal] and a ^{vp}ER [adverbial] with the same DP referent" noted by Ahn (2010: 2) (ER = emphatic reflexive).

    (33) Liz's cast members ^{dp}*themselves* are running the show ^{vp}*themselves*.

    Given that English emphatic *himself* never occurs in preverbal position, emphatic *ownself* does not enter into competition with *himself*, and is thus allowed to occur freely in this position, exhibiting all the semantic properties of Chinese *ziji*. In other words, the elsewhere condition in (19) has no effect on the use of *ownself* as an emphatic reflexive, as the competing *himself* is always banned from occurring in preverbal position by an independent constraint.

    Before concluding, it is worthwhile to note an interesting phenomenon that may constitute another argument for our approach to *ownself*. In our analysis, the notion of grammatical competition plays a central role, where 'competition' is determined by the degree of phonetic realization of phi-features. An important consequence that naturally follows from the analysis is that a third form of reflexive in Singapore English which does have its phi-features spelt out, if it exists, is predicted to freely occur in argument position, because

himself would not be able to block it. Interestingly, quite a number of Singapore English speakers produce exactly these reflexive forms, such as *his ownself* and *my ownself*, formed by adding possessive pronouns to *ownself*. And these speakers use the reflexives in argument positions, as shown in (34).[4]

(34) a. Probably your kid is not as brilliant as many of the other students, and therefore, causes him to have doubt about *his ownself*.
      b. A: Are you getting ukulele lessons?
         B: No, I'm giving *my ownself* lessons.
      c. Why do we do it? We got to ask *our ownself*.
      d. At the end of the day, it is up to *your ownself* to grasp the idea.

While it is unclear why these third reflexive forms are not used as widely as *himself* or *ownself*, the pattern of their use in (34) is precisely what our analysis predicts to hold.

(35) summarizes our discussion in this section.

(35) a. object *ownself*   blocked by Elsewhere Condition
      b. subject *ownself*   blocked by Lexifier Filter (CA)
      c. emphatic *ownself*   no blocker

5. Conclusion

In this article, we have highlighted both the importance and limitations of the traditional substratist approach for studying the nature of novel lexical items in Singapore English. We began by tracing the roots of Singapore English *ownself* in Chinese *ziji*, drawing out their syntactic and semantic similarities to affirm the

---

4) A reviewer suggests an extension of our analysis of *ownself* and *ziji* to *his ownself* and *ta-ziji*. While this suggestion is perfectly logical and sensible, it is somewhat difficult to do the extension in practice, mainly due to the fact *his ownself* is only used by some speakers of Singapore English. We will have to first wait and see how the use of *his ownself* develops in Singapore society before we make an attempt to do the suggested extension.

central role that substratum transfer plays in the creation of such new lexical items. We next examined significant differences that also exist between *ownself* and *ziji*, revealing the incapability of current formulations of the relexification process to fully explain the properties of *ownself*. Finally, we suggested that the principle of grammatical competition, as embodied in the Elsewhere Condition, can work in tandem with the traditional relexification mechanism to provide a satisfactory and comprehensive explanation for the behaviour of *ownself* in Singapore English. As we have noted in the article, this Elsewhere Condition is a well-established universal principle that has been demonstrated to play an important role in many kinds of linguistic phenomena. We therefore believe it to be fully applicable beyond the Singaporean linguistic environment, and expect it to prove relevant in analyses of other contact languages as well.

References

Aboh, E. (2009). Competition and selection: That's all. In E. O. Aboh & N. Smith (Eds.), *Complex processes in new languages* (pp.317-344). Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Ahn, B. (2010). *Syntactic Configurations of Emphatic Reflexives*. Ms. Retrieved September 12, 2015 from http://www.byronahn.com/papers/Ahn-PBChandout.pdf?ckattempt=1.

Anderson, S. (1969). *West Scandinavian Vowel Systems and the Ordering of Phonological Rules*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. MIT. Boston, MA.

Bao, Z. (2005). The aspectual system of Singapore English and the systematic substratist explanation. *Journal of Linguistics* 41(2). 237-267.

Bao, Z. (2009). One in Singapore English. *Studies in Language* 33(2). 338-365.

Chomsky, N. (1981). *Lectures on Government and Binding*. Dordrecht: Foris.

Kiparsky, P. (1973). 'Elsewhere' in Phonology. In S. Anderson and P. Kiparsky (Eds.), *A Festschrift for Morris Halle* (pp. 93-106). New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Lefebvre, C., & John, L. (1994). *Relexification in Creole Genesis*. Unpublished manuscript.

Lefebvre, C. (1998). *Creole genesis and the acquisition of grammar: The case of*

Haitian creole. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mufwene, S. (2003). Competition and selection in language evolution. *Selection* 3. 45-56.

Mufwene, S. (2005). Language evolution: The population genetics way. In G. Hauska (Ed.), *Gene, Sprachen, und ihre Evolution* (pp. 30-52). Regensburg: Universitaetsverlag Regensburg.

Musken, P. (1981). Half-Way between Quechua and Spanish: The Case for Relexification. In A. R. Highfield and A. Valdman, (Eds.), *Historicity and variation in creole studies* (pp. 52-79). Ann Arbor Ml: Karoma.

Neeleman, A., & Szendröi, K. (2007). Radical Pro Drop and the Morphology of Pronouns. *Linguistic Inquiry* 38(4). 671-714.

Reinhart, T., & Reuland, E. (1993). Reflexivity. *Linguistic Inquiry*, 24(4). 657-720.

Wee, L. (2007). Singapore English x-self and ownself. *World Englishes* 26(3). 360-372.

Chonghyuck Kim
Department of English Language and Literature
College of Humanities, Chonbuk National University
567 Baekje-daero, deokjin-gu
Jeonju-si, Jeollabuk-do 561-756 Korea
Phone: 82-63-270-3209
Emai: chonghyuck@jbnu.ac.kr

Zechy Wong
Department of English Language and Literature
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Block AS5
7 Arts Link, Singapore 117570
Email: ellkc@nus.edu.sg
Phone: 65-6516-6036
Email: zechywong@gmail.com