

Long distance reflexives in Singapore Malay: An apparent typological anomaly

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Abstract

There are a variety of properties which are believed to be associated with long distance reflexives. These include the requirement that the reflexive form be monomorphemic, subject orientation, and blocking by subjects intervening between the reflexive and its antecedent (in appropriate languages). Malay long distance reflexives have been claimed to contradict the expected typological correlations. We argue that Malay does not constitute a genuine counter example because, on closer examination, what appear to be long distance reflexives are in fact instances of a form which is indeterminate between a local reflexive and a pronoun.

Keywords: agreement, anaphora, binding domain, c-command, complex sentences, locality, long distance reflexive, Malay, pronoun, reflexive, syntax

1. Long distance reflexives and the parameterizing of the Binding Theory

An important topic in the recent generative literature on bound anaphora has been the examination and analysis of differences among languages in locality restrictions on reflexives. While this topic has clear typological implications, to the best of our knowledge, it has not been discussed in the typological literature. To take a well known case, reflexives in English require local (roughly, clausemate) antecedents while in Mandarin Chinese the antecedent can be non-local, any number of clauses from the anaphor:

- (1) **Poirot_i thinks that Mary hurt himself_i.*
- (2) *John_i believes that Bill_j said that Tom_k shaved himself_{*i/j/*j/k}.*
- (3) *Zhangsan_i renwei Lisi_j zhidao Wangwu_k xihuan ziji_{i/j/k}.*
Zhangsan thinks Lisi knows Wangwu likes self
'Zhangsan thinks Lisi knows Wangwu likes him/himself.'