

Long-distance binding of French reflexive *soi* (≈‘one(self)’): first-person oriented empathy

Goal - Should there be different binding domains for anaphors (Wexler & Manzini 1987, a.o.)? and is the domain size correlated with the morphological complexity of anaphors (Pica 1987, Cole et al. 2005, a.o.)? The behavior of French reflexive *soi* is sometimes cited as evidence for positive answers to both of these questions: just like Icelandic *sig*, the morphologically simple anaphor *soi* can be bound, it is claimed, in a larger domain than the morphologically complex English reflexive *x-self* (Pica 1991, a.o.). The research reported here shows that the anaphoric properties of *soi* are in fact unexceptional, once they have been disentangled from its generic and perspectival properties.

Background – Based on sentences in (1), Ronat (1982) claims that *soi*, which requires an indefinite antecedent, is an anaphor strictly obeying Condition A of Binding Theory (Chomsky 1981).

- (1) a. *Personne_i ne vote pour soi_i.* *Nobody_i votes for SOI_i*
b. **Personne_i ne sait que tu votes pour soi_i.* **Nobody_i knows that you vote for SOI_i*
c. **Personne_i n’a laissé ces gens voter pour soi_i.* **Nobody_i let these people vote for SOI_i*

Pica (1984) however observes that *soi* can be long distance bound under the same conditions as Icelandic *sig*, i.e. in infinitive and subjunctive clauses, vs. indicative clauses, as illustrated in (2).

- (2) a. *On_i ne devrait jamais laisser [_{INF} les gens dire du mal de soi_i].* *One_i should never let people speak ill of SOI_i*
b. *Personne_i ne souhaite jamais que [_{SUBJ} les gens disent du mal de soi_i].* *Noone_i ever wishes people speak ill of SOI_i*
c. **Personne_i ne dit que [_{IND} les gens ont pensé à soi_i].* **Noone_i says that people thought about SOI_i*

Drawing on this, Pica hypothesizes that the binding domain of non-compound reflexives is the tensed clause, because they can undergo covert successive cyclic head movement from INFL to INFL through C, which is empty at LF only in infinitives and subjunctives; this movement allows long distance reflexives to be locally bound at LF. As observed by Zribi-Hertz (1990), the contrast between (2c) and (2a-b) is however due to a confound: *soi* does not only require the antecedent to be non-specific, but also universally quantified (and human), as shown in (3) vs. (4) (in standard dialects - variations cannot be reported here). When this factor is controlled for, *soi* can be bound across a tensed clause as in (5).

- (3) a. *{N’importe qui/tout le monde/chacun_i} doit penser à soi_i.* *{Any/every/each}one_i should think of SOI_i*
b. *{Personne/nul/on_i} ne pense plus jamais à soi_i.* *{Nobody/noone/one_i} (n)ever thinks of SOI_i*
(4) a. **Quelqu’un_i aura sûrement pensé à soi_i.* **Someone_i will probably have thought of SOI_i*
b. **Pierre et moi, on_i a travaillé pour soi_i.* **Peter and I, one_i worked for SOI_i*
c. **{Certains/plusieurs_i} pensent d’abord à soi_i.* **{Some_i/several_i} think of SOI_i first*
d. **{Pas grand chose/rien_i} ne peut se recroqueviller sur soi_i.* **{Not much_i/nothing_i} can curl up on SOI_i*

- (5) *On_i espère toujours que [_{IND} les autres ont dit du bien de soi_i].* *One_i always hopes others spoke highly of SOI_i*

Furthermore, Zribi-Hertz (1990, 2007) assumes that *soi* has two variants, one of which is the non-nominative version of *on* (≈ ‘one’) which does not require an antecedent at all, as in (6).

- (6) *La confiance en soi n’est pas toujours innée.* *Confidence in SOI [i.e. self-confidence] is not always innate.*

Instead of assuming such ambiguity, I propose that *soi* is an anaphor that can be exempt from Condition A under conditions related to perspective, as observed for many reflexives from various languages (cf. Mandarin *ziji*: Huang & Liu 2001, a.o.; Icelandic *sig*: Maling 1984, a.o.; English *himself*: Pollard & Sag 1992, a.o.): specifically, *soi* does not have to be locally bound when the empathy locus of the proposition containing *soi* includes the speaker, as will be explained below.

New generalization – Although *soi* is in most cases locally bound (1a; 3a-b), *soi* can also have a long distance antecedent (2a-b, 5), no antecedent (6), or a non-c-commanding antecedent as in (7):

- (7) *Le mal qu’on_i inflige à autrui peut se retourner contre soi_i.* *The harm one_i does to others can turn against SOI_i*

Unlike anaphors like *ziji* or *sig*, the condition for exempting *soi* from Condition A is not simply to be antecedented by a perspective center: even if *on* is the attitude holder (subject of ‘thinks’) in (8b), it cannot antecedent *soi* when it occurs in a different clause, vs. (8a) (unlike German *man*, Kratzer 1997).

- (8) a. *Là-bas en Grèce, on_i garde confiance en soi_i.* *Over there in Greece, one_i remains confident in SOI_i*
b. **Là-bas en Grèce, on_i pense que l’Europe a peur de soi_i.* **Over there in Greece, one_i thinks Europe fears SOI_i*

But this is possible in 9b where *soi* includes the speaker vs. 8b: exempt *soi* must be speaker-inclusive.

(9) a. Ici en France, on_i a confiance en soi_i. *Here in France, one_i has confidence in SOI_i*

b. Ici en France, on_i pense que l'Europe a besoin de soi_i. *Here in France one_i thinks Europe needs SOI_i*

This means, I argue, that the conditions for exemption of *soi* are also related to perspective (just like for other reflexives), but in a different way due to its specific generic properties: exempt *soi* must express a generalization based on first-person identification (cf. English *one*: Moltmann 2006, Malamud 2012).

Analysis – Specifically, I hypothesize that *soi* encodes three properties: (i) genericity: its antecedent must be a non-specific universal quantifier; (ii) anaphoricity: it must be locally bound; (iii) empathy (Kuno 1987; cf. Moltmann's 2006 'simulation'): the speaker empathizes, i.e. identifies, with its referent; this explains the human requirement, and the difference of meaning that arises in sentences like (8a) (cases of speaker-exclusion) when *on/soi* ('one') is replaced by third person *ils/eux* ('they').

Importantly, the empathy locus (entity identified with) must be distinguished from the experiencer of empathy (entity identifying with). In the case of *soi*, the experiencer of empathy has to be the speaker (unlike cases of taste predicates, Pearson 2012: the subject of the *identify with* relation can shift): in (10) Janis cannot identify with *on* antecedent *soi*; only the speaker could (in right contexts, i.e. if Greek).

(10)*Janis dit qu'en Grèce, on_i pense que l'Europe a peur de soi_i. **Janis says that in Greece, one_i thinks Europe fears SOI_i*

In that sense, *soi* is first-personal. In fact, just like first-person *me*, *soi* does not have to be read *de se*, while *soi-même* (lit. SOI-same, ≈ 'oneself') has to, like *moi-même* (≈ 'myself'); consider dream contexts:

(11) On_i rêve parfois qu'on est [un monstre]_k et qu'on_k lance une attaque contre {soi_{i/k} / soi*_{i/k}-même}.

*One_i sometimes dreams that one is [a monster]_k and one_k launches an attack against {SOI_{i/k} / SOI*_{i/k}-same}*

(12) Je_i rêve parfois que je suis [un monstre]_k et que je_k lance une attaque contre {moi_{i/k} / moi*_{i/k}-même}.

*I_i sometimes dream that I am [a monster]_k and I_k launch an attack against {me_{i/k} / myself*_{i/k}}*

However, the empathy locus for *soi* does not have to include the speaker, unless – crucially – *soi* is not locally bound (cf. 9b vs. 8b). This is explained if we suppose that the anaphoric properties of *soi* are in this case fulfilled by a silent empathy operator (cf. logophoric operator, Koopman & Sportiche 1989, Sundaresan 2012, a.o.) including the speaker (cf. Kuno 1987: the speaker is highest on the empathy hierarchy), which corefers with the antecedent and locally binds *soi*. When *soi* is locally bound by the generic antecedent, the empathy locus can include the speaker as in (3) where the speaker empathizes with the generic antecedent in including himself in the generalization, but it does not have to as in (8a) where the speaker empathizes with the generic antecedent by simply taking his perspective. So the (non) obligatory inclusion of the speaker in the empathy locus, and thus in the antecedent, crucially distinguishes between locally bound *soi* and exempt *soi*; this relates its anaphoric behavior to other anaphors that are exempt from Condition A when encoding specific perspectival properties.

Finally, this perspective-based explanation of exemption of *soi* is corroborated by the strong intervention effects exhibited by exempt *soi* as in (13) (Sportiche *et al.* 2014; cf. 1b), akin to blocking effects shown by Mandarin *ziji* because of perspective conflicts (Huang & Liu 2001).

(13) Aujourd'hui, on_i pense que la nation/*tu a(s) besoin de soi_i. *Today, one_i thinks that the nation/*you need SOI_i*

This explanation cannot hold for (14b) as the speaker has to be included in the empathy locus (cf. 9b vs. 8b). The deviance of (14b) (M. Hollande speaking) vs. (14a) is due, I argue, to a Condition B-like effect between *je* and speaker-inclusive *soi* (cf. ban on partial overlap: **j'ai besoin de nous* 'I need us').

(14) a. Partout où je vais, on_i aime me_{k≠i} parler de soi_i. *Wherever I go, one_i likes telling me_{k≠i} about SOI_i*

b. *En France, on_i aime sentir que je_{k≠i}'ai confiance en soi_i. **In France, one_i likes feeling that I_{k≠i} need SOI_i*

Conclusion – As commonly observed with anaphors, French reflexive *soi* must be either clause-bound or anteceded by a perspective center; but the specific generic and first-person oriented properties of *soi* impose specific properties on that perspective center: it should be an empathy locus including the speaker. A crosslinguistically uniform binding domain regardless of morphological complexity, as required by parsimony, is thus still a viable option: conditions for exemption only rely on perspective.