

# Cross-Linguistic Influence and Developmental Patterns in Reflexive Pronoun Use Among Monolingual, Bilingual, and Trilingual Children

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## Abstract

Chinese employs compound reflexives (e.g., *ta-ziji*) adhering to local binding principles, and bare reflexives (*ziji*) exhibiting syntactic and semantic flexibility (e.g., logophoric, intensifier, generic pronoun, (Wang & Pan, 2021), whereas English reflexives primarily function as locally bound anaphors but permit extended logophoric/intensifier uses in long-distance contexts (Charnavel, 2019). Previous studies show that monolingual Mandarin children achieve adult-like local and long-distance interpretations by age four (Li, 2024), while English monolinguals master reflexives by five (Chien & Wexler, 1990). This study examines 5,299 reflexive utterances from 476 monolingual, bilingual, and trilingual children (1;0–6;9) and caregivers across 19 CHILDES corpora. Results show Chinese bare reflexives emerge earliest (1;7), followed by Chinese compound reflexives (1;11) and English reflexives (2;4). Chinese reflexives are used as local anaphoric quite late (2;6), possibly attributed to low frequency in input (< .005%). Multilingual children acquiring English alongside Chinese exhibit English-like local-binding preferences in their Chinese bare reflexives.