

Meaning and Usage of Jibun in Oral Japanese

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Info Artikel

Article History:

Received June 2023

Approved September 2023

Published October 2023

Keywords:

Jibun, Saikikei, Personal pronoun, Spoken language

Abstract

This study analyzes the meaning of using the word Jibun in spoken language taken from the story of a smartphone game entitled "Twisted Wonderland". This study uses conversational data in the game as research data. This study aims to recognize the various meanings and uses of the word Jibun in the Japanese spoken language. This qualitative research uses a descriptive method, which describes the data obtained and concludes the results through categories formed through the results of data description and analysis. Electronic games are data sources, mainly from the Heisei and Reiwa eras up to the time of this research. The result found that the use of the word Jibun as Saikikei, the use of the word Jibun as a personal pronoun, and the word Jibun as a word that refers to a general person. However, compared to the previously studied theory, some differences in usage were found. The use of Jibun as Saikikei in spoken language has differences in the order of subject positions because, in this study, the data used is part of a conversation and uses spoken language, so the word order does not match the standard language.

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E-ISSN xxxx-xxxx

P-ISSN 2252-6250

INTRODUCTION

The characteristics of Indonesians and Japanese have differences and similarities. One of the differences is the order of clauses. Chonan (2017) explains that the order of clauses in Indonesian and Japanese is different. It can be seen in the example below:

Ibu saya membeli sate kambing di pasar.
[np Ibu Saya] [vp membeli ikan] [pp di pasar].

私の母は市場でサテカンビンを買います。
[np 私の母は] [pp市場で] [vpサテカンビンを買います]。

(Chounan, 2017:13-14)

If you look closely, the order of clauses used in Indonesian differs from those in Japanese. It can also be seen that the Japanese use particles as adverbs of the function of the previous words. These characteristics make it difficult for Indonesian learners to understand and use Japanese. In addition to the differences in clause order in Japanese and Indonesian, there are still many differences in other linguistic aspects. The difference in language characteristics that will be the main theme in this research is the difference between first-person pronouns in Japanese and first-person pronouns in Indonesian or Japanese, known as *Ichininshou Daimeishi*. Many types of *Ichininshou Daimeishi* are often used in Japanese. Recorded in the thesaurus of Fukaya et al (2019), there are 41 ways to refer to oneself in Japanese. Some of them are "*Watashi*", "*Watakushi*", "*Atashi*", "*Boku*", "*Ore*", and so on. Some examples of personal pronouns are first-person pronouns, commonly used in Japanese society. However, unlike in Japanese, only two common first-person pronouns exist in Indonesian. They don't have as many functions as Japanese first-person pronouns. The first-person pronouns in the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI) are "*Aku*" and "*Saya*".

Unlike Japanese, there are only two commonly used personal pronouns in Indonesian. Just by looking at the differences in the characteristics and usage of first-person

pronouns, it can be seen that there is a big difference in the characteristics of the Japanese language compared to the characteristics of first-person pronouns in Indonesian. Of course, this is also one of the problems because using first-person pronouns in Japanese has certain conditions and conditions for their use. Not only that, there are other types of first-person pronouns in Japanese that are less common today, and in the learning process, these first-person pronouns are only used in literature lessons, which discuss poetry and stories from the past and use the language of that era. However, in these lessons, the personal pronouns that appear do not have any further usage information, and learners need to learn the meaning and function of the word on their own. Below is a diagram showing the use of first-person pronouns in Japanese.

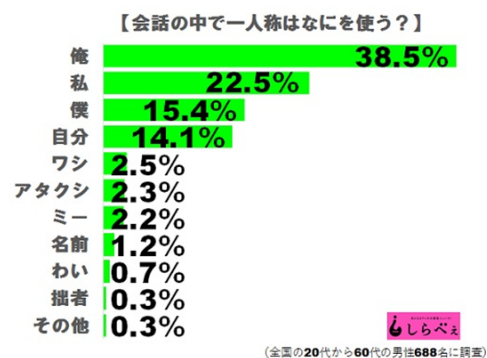


Diagram 1. Personal pronoun usage in Japan
(<https://sirabee.com/2017/03/04/20161068056/>)

The above diagram results from a study conducted by Sato (2017) on personal pronouns used by men during conversations. This result shows that pronouns such as *onore*, *ware*, *wa*, etc. do not enter directly; if anyone uses them, it is no more than 0.3% of the total 688 participants who participated in the questionnaire. This information shows that many personal pronouns in Japanese are not commonly used, so it is widespread that they are not introduced in Japanese textbooks for beginners.

We will focus on the first-person pronoun "*Jibun*" in this research. Based on the studies conducted on the word *Jibun*, two main functions are found in using the word *Jibun*. Chounan

(2017) explains that the word *Jibun* is a word that can redesignate the person who has been mentioned before. The word is called the *Saikikei* function. Chounan (2017) states that *Saikikei* or Reflexive Forms are forms (pronouns) that refer to another noun or pronoun in the same sentence. However, Kigawa (2011) made a study that concluded that using *Jibun* as a first-person pronoun has existed since the *Edo* period in Japan and was only used by army soldiers. The use has become more widespread until today.

In terms of basic Japanese language learning, the word *Jibun* in basic Japanese textbooks such as "Minna no Nihongo", "Sou Matome", "New Approach", and "Marugoto", is only explained in general terms, and no explanation is found regarding the use of *Jibun* as a first-person pronoun. In addition, the example sentences from the above textbooks related to the word *Jibun*, are not the word *Jibun*, which refers to the first person pronoun.

There is not much research on *Jibun* words in Indonesia. Most of the research is conducted by Japanese researchers, such as Takubo (1997), Kigawa (2011), and Kogusuri (2017). Takubo (1997) explains about various kinds of personal pronouns in Japanese. Takubo (1997) also discusses the use of the word *Jibun*. The word *Jibun* can indicate the subject in a sentence, but it does not mean that the word *Jibun* has the same function as personal pronouns or Proper Nouns. Takubo (1997) also explains the use of *Jibun* in the military. Meanwhile, Kigawa (2011) focuses on using *Jibun* as the era changes in Japan. The research took various data from various eras, ranging from the comic "Norakuro" (1931), novels in the Meiji era, and dictionary books before 1945 to the diaries of Japanese soldiers who lived in the Taisho and Showa eras. It can be concluded that from the Meiji to Showa eras, *Jibun* was not only used as *Saikikei*, but also as a first-person pronoun mainly used by soldiers. The terms of use of *Jibun* also changed as the era changed. For example, in the Meiji era, the word *Jibun* was mostly used in the written language variety, but sometimes it was also used in the spoken language.

So far, research on the use of *Jibun* words has tended to fall under other themes such as "kinds of pronouns", "subjects in Japanese", and "the function of *Saikikei* in Japanese". Not many studies focus solely on the function of *Jibun* words. Most of the data used is a collection of previous studies' theoretical observations, observations of soldiers' usage, and comparisons with contemporary usage of *Jibun* words.

Through previous research, it can be concluded that the word *Jibun* has other functions besides being a *Saikikei*. *Jibun* can be used as a personal pronoun, and through the use of *Jibun*, a new nuance can be formed that can only be described through the use of *Jibun*. However, most research on the use of the word *Jibun* does not stand alone, but there is research on other words that have a relationship with the word *Jibun*. This research on the word *Jibun* uses a lot of data from the language used by soldiers and observations of theories and example sentences from previous research.

Regarding the author's search results, the author has not found any research focusing on the function of *Jibun* words other than *Saikikei* written in Indonesian. A small part of the research found by the author describes the function of *Jibun* as a pronominal, but most of the research that the author found said that *Jibun* only functions as *Saikikei*. In addition, Indonesian research tends to focus on first-person pronouns such as *Watashi*, *Boku*, and *Ore*.

Based on the above background, the author will analyze the meaning and usage of *Jibun* in spoken Japanese. For this purpose, the author uses spoken Japanese data from a smartphone game entitled "Twisted Wonderland". The author will use the conversational data in the game as research data. Below are examples of conversation forms in the game.



Picture 1. Examples of conversation forms in the Twisted Wonderland game

Kigawa (2011) states that using *Jibun* as a first-person pronoun relates to the speaker and listener relationship. However, in this game, there are scenes where the main character uses first-person pronouns when talking to people of a higher class. In addition to using the word *Jibun* in conversations in the game, the author chose the data source in the form of this game because it is mentioned that Japanese pop culture is also one factor that affects motivation to learn Japanese. This is illustrated in the survey results of The Japan Foundation (2018).

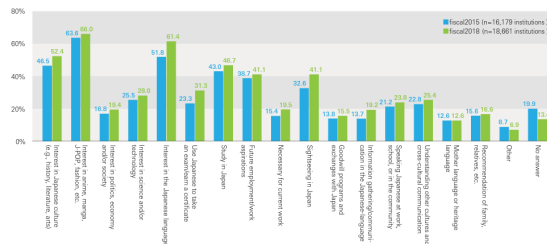


Diagram 2. Objectives of learning Japanese

The diagram above shows that 66% of Japanese language learners started learning Japanese because of their interest in Japanese pop culture, such as comics, anime, music, etc.

METHOD

This research use descriptive qualitative research methods. According to Djajasudarma (1993: 8) in Apryanti (2020: 14), the qualitative descriptive method is a method that describes data symptoms as they are. The descriptive method is a method that aims to make a description, namely to make a description, painting systematically, factually, and accurately about the data, characteristics, and relationships of the phenomena under study. With this method, this research needs data that shows the

use of *Jibun* words in Japanese sentences and the percentage of *Jibun* word functions in the data obtained. Therefore, a descriptive observation method is needed in this research.

The research use electronic games as data sources, mainly from the Heisei and Reiwa eras up to the time of this research. Then, through all the collected data, the author will record the source, function, year of publication, and additional information. (For example, adding the name of the character and the age or grade of each character who utters the sentence used as data), and then comparing it with the word functions taught in textbooks, especially textbooks generally used in Indonesia.

This study also uses data collection methods in the form of non-participant observation results. Emzir (2016:40) states that the researcher becomes an audience to the research topic through non-participant observation. Through this data collection technique, research can be conducted by observing the situations in which the word *Jibun* is used and can analyze the function of the word *Jibun* by examining the circumstances and situations that make the word used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Through the results of data analysis, several new things were found that have never been explained in previous studies. Most of the data collected shows the use of the word *Jibun* without using the subject before or after the word so that the meaning of the word *Jibun* in the sentence can only be understood if you understand the context of the story beforehand. However, since there is no category for such *Jibun* word usage, this study will categorize sentences with such *Jibun* usage according to the word's meaning. Before entering the analysis of the meaning of the word *Jibun*, the following are the percentages of the analysis of the use of the word *Jibun* as *Saikikei* in the story "Twisted Wonderland".

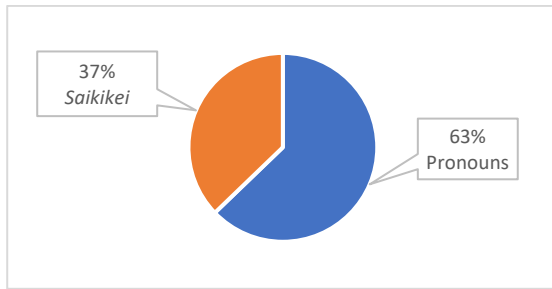


Diagram 3. Use of Jibun as Saikikei (Jibun database)

From the above diagram, it is found that 37% of *Jibun* words are used as *Saikikei*, and 63% of *Jibun* words do not fit the category of use as *Saikikei*. Here are example sentences that show the above 2 groups.

(A) あの赤毛のチビ暴君！自分がハートの女王にでもなったつもりかよ。
 Ano akage no chibi boukun! *Jibun* ga haato no joo ni demo natta tsumori ka yo.
 The little red-headed tyrant of the world! Do you think you're the Queen of Hearts?
 (Twisted Wonderland, chap. 1 bag. 18, 2020)

(B) はっ、よく言うぜ。自分のためにやっただろ、お前は。
 Ha, yoku iu ze. *Jibun* no tame ini yatten daro, omae wa.
 Ha, you say that a lot. You're doing it for your own good, you know.
 (Twisted Wonderland, chap. 2 bag. 14, 2020)

Sentence (1) is the second example of sentence variation that uses the word *Jibun* as *Saikikei* whereas in a sentence (1A), the noun that refers to the subject is 赤毛のチビ暴君 (the red-haired rough runt) and comes before the word *Jibun*. Meanwhile, sentence (1B) uses the second person pronoun *Omae* (you) as the subject and is written after the word *Jibun*.

The function of the word *Jibun* in the sentence

Furthermore, the author analyzes the data based on its function in the sentence. The results can be seen in the diagram below.

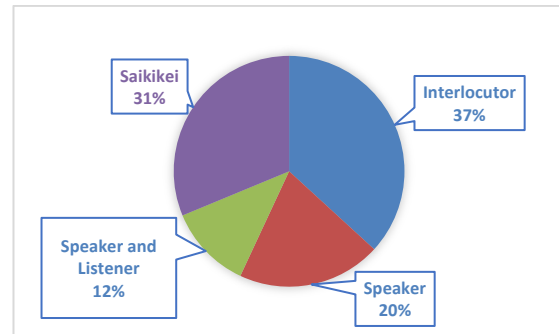


Diagram 4. Functions of the word Jibun in Sentence (Jibun database)

The diagram shows that only 31% of the uses of the word *Jibun* as *Saikikei* match the earlier characteristics, namely having a subject before or after the word *Jibun* in the sentence. In addition, the author divides the use of *Jibun* words that do not have a subject before or after the word *Jibun* into three parts. The first is the word *Jibun*, which refers to other people in general and speakers of the word simultaneously. There are 12% of these uses. Below is an example of the usage of the word *Jibun*.

評価基準は、歌唱力とダンス技術。そして、自分たちに似合う曲を選んでいるか。
 Hyouka kijun wa, kashou ryoku to dansu gijutsu. Soshite, *Jibun* tachi ini niau kyoku o erabeteiru ka.

The evaluation criteria are singing and dancing skills. And are they able to choose songs that suit them?
 (Twisted Wonderland, chap. 5 bag. 24, 2020)

Furthermore, there is the word *Jibun*, which is used to refer to the speakers themselves as much as 20%. The following is an example sentence of the use of the word *Jibun*.

ところで自分が帰るための方法は.....?
 Tokoro de *Jibun* ga kaeru tame no houhou wa.....?

By the way, how do I get myself to leave:?
 (Twisted Wonderland, chap. 2 bag. 4, 2020)

The remaining 37% use the word *Jibun* to refer to an interlocutor as a 2nd or 3rd person pronoun.

The analysis process above shows that the use of the *Saikikei* function arising in the data has a slightly different variation from the *Saikikei* function theory presented by Chounan (2017). In addition to the *Saikikei* function, another function of *Jibun* words found in previous research is the use of *Jibun* words as personal pronouns. Then, a slightly different finding with the research that has been studied, namely the function of *Jibun* words to indicate people in general. The next section will discuss all the characteristics and details of the analysis.

As described above, *Jibun* words with a structure that matches the characteristics of using the *Saikikei* function account for 37% of the data, a total of 45 sentences. The sentences that fall under this criterion have a word that describes the person that the word *Jibun* refers to in the same sentence. After conducting the analysis process, the author found a variety of uses of the word *Jibun* as *Saikikei*, which, when viewed in structure, is slightly different from the pre-existing theory. The following is an example of a sentence where the word *Jibun* before the subject of the sentence is a no-no because it will confuse the listener to distinguish the subject that the word *Jibun* refers to.

(A) 自分_i が、太郎_i を批判した。

Jibun i ga, Tarou i o hihan shita.

Myself I criticized Taro i.

(B) ナオミは、太郎_i に自分_i の役割を話してある。

Naomi wa, Tarou i ni *Jibun* i no. yakuwari o hanashite aru.

Naomi has told Taro i about her role.

(Iida 1996:183)

However, in the results of this study, we found many studies that used the word *Jibun* before mentioning the subject in question.

(A) はっ、よく言うぜ。自分のためにやっ
てんだろ、お前は。

Ha, yoku iu ze. *Jibun* no tame ini yatten daro, omae wa.

Ha, you say that a lot. You're doing it for your own good, you know.

(Twisted Wonderland, chap. 2 bag. 14, 2020)

(B) 自分の力だけでそんなモン作るなんてやるじゃねえか、アイツ。

Jibun no chikara dake de sonna mon tsukureru nante yaru jyanee ka, aitsu.

He's really good at making such a thing by himself, isn't he?

(Twisted Wonderland, chap. 3 bag. 6, 2020)

Both sentences use the word *Jibun* before mentioning the second-person pronoun or the sentence's subject. The data analysis found that the word *Jibun* used before the mention of the subject also has certain conditions and structures.

Sentence 5 (a) uses the word "Omae" to indicate the subject of the sentence, and sentence 5 (b) uses the word "Aitsu" to indicate the subject. Both sentences use personal pronouns to refer to the subject. However, although the structure of the position of the pronoun is at the end of the sentence, it does not mean that the personal pronoun should be positioned at the end of the sentence. The position of the personal pronoun can be moved forward, and the sentence will be more in line with the Japanese structure of SOP (Subject-Object-Predicate). Word order, like the sentence in example no. 5, can only be formed in conversation and not in formal language because it does not match the order of the standard Japanese language structure.

***Jibun* as a personal pronoun**

Apart from being a *Saikikei*, *Jibun* can also be a personal pronoun. This usage is considered different from the use of *Jibun* as a *Saikikei* because, in sentences that use *Jibun* as a personal pronoun, no word indicates the subject either before or after the *Jibun* word so that to find out who the *Jibun* word refers to, the listener needs to know the context of the sentence. Both what events are happening and who is the speaker of the word and the interlocutor. The following diagram shows the number of uses of the word *Jibun* as a first-person, second-person, and third-person pronoun.

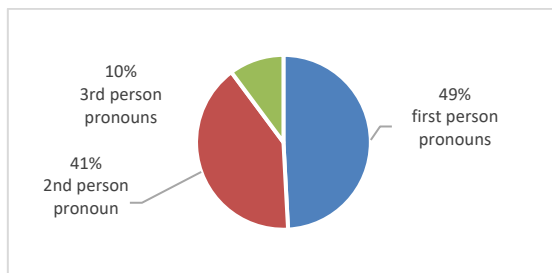


Diagram 5. Use of Jibun as a Personal Pronoun (Jibun database)

The diagram shows that the use of first-person pronouns is the most common use compared to the other two, reaching 49%. In addition, there is the use of the word *Jibun* as a second-person pronoun, which reaches 41%, and the use of third-person pronouns, which reaches 10%. The following are sample sentences from the data that show *Jibun* as a first-person pronoun.

(A) 結局、過去の自分を認められず、否定し続けていただけだった。

Kekkyoku, kako no *Jibun* o mitomerarezu, hitei shi tsuzuketeita dake datta.

After all, I could not admit to my past self and kept denying it.

(Twisted Wonderland, chap. 3 bag. 38, 2020)

(B) ところで自分が帰るための方法は...
...?

tokoro de *Jibun* ga kaeru tame no houho wa.....?

By the way, how do I get myself to leave:?

(Twisted Wonderland, chap. 2 bag. 4, 2020)

The two sentences in example no. 6 above are sentences spoken by the main character in the game Twisted Wonderland. The main character in this game is not characterized because the storyteller wants the player to be able to imagine the main character himself and does not want to use words that give a feminine or masculine image.

The following sentences use the word *Jibun* to refer to the opposite person or can be said to be a second-person pronoun. Like the previous section, no word points to the subject in question

in the sentence below. So, it is necessary to know the context of the sentence that occurred before the sentence was said.

(A) 馬鹿な真似をした自分を恨むんですね。

Baka na mane o shita *Jibun* o kuyamun desune.

You hate yourself for doing something stupid.

(Twisted Wonderland, chap. 0 bag. 13, 2020)

(B) あっトレイ先輩にてつだってもらうのはナシだから！自分で苦労しろ！

Aa, Trey senpai ini tetsudatteromaru n owa nashi dakara! *Jibun* de kurou shiro!

Oh, and don't ask Trey to help you! You have to do the hard work yourself!

(Twisted Wonderland, chap. 1 bag. 26, 2020)

Some of the *Jibun* words in the results of this data analysis show a use of the word *Jibun* that refers to a person who is not present in the conversation. Just like using the word *Jibun* as a first and second-person pronoun, knowing the intended subject in using the word *Jibun* as a third-person pronoun requires knowledge of the context of the previous event. The following sentences use the word *Jibun* to refer to people who are not the speakers or interlocutors.

(A) ルール違反を肯定すれば、ルールによって造られた自分の全てを否定することになる.....ってこと？

Ruuru ihan o koutei surebam ruuru ni yotte tukurareta *Jibun* no subete o hitei suru koto ni naru..... tte koto?

Are you saying that if you affirm a rule violation, you are denying everything about yourself that was built by the rules?

(Twisted Wonderland, chap. 1 bag. 19, 2020)

(B) 自分が支配者に.....？

Jibun ga shihaisha ini.....?

He became the ruler...?

(Twisted Wonderland, chap. 4 bag. 28, 2020)

In addition to being a *Saikikei* function word and a personal pronoun, the word *Jibun* can

also refer to a general person, meaning that the speaker considers the statement in the sentence to apply to everyone and not just to one specific person. Here are some examples of sentences that use the word *Jibun* but do not have a specific person to refer to.

(A) 卑怯な手だって、自分の力のうちだろ？

Hikyōu na te datte, *Jibun* no chikara no uchi daro?

Even a cowardly move is within your power, right?

(Twisted Wonderland, chap. 2 bag. 30, 2020)

(B) 自分より強いヤツに勝つために、頭(ココ)があるんだろ。

Jibun yori tsuyoi yatsu ni katsu tame ni, koko ga arun darou.

That's why there's this to win from someone stronger than yourself.

(Twisted Wonderland, chap. 3 bag. 19, 2020)

Meaning of the word *Jibun*

Before looking at the meaning of the word *Jibun*, we need to know what the word *Jibun* is. According to Fukaya et al. (2019:17), *Jibun* is a word that refers to 'me' and is mostly used by men to lower themselves in front of the other person. Lexically, it can be said that the word *Jibun* is a word that refers to the speaker. The following diagram shows the percentage distribution of the use of the word *Jibun* when viewed from the meaning of the word *Jibun* in the sentences in the data.

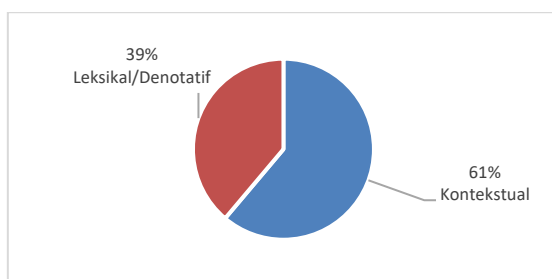


Diagram 6. Use of the word *Jibun* according to its meaning (*Jibun* database)

Through the data analysis process, the word *Jibun* has two meanings in its use, namely

lexical or denotative meaning, which is the meaning in accordance with the meaning of the word itself when viewed from the dictionary meaning and contextual meaning, namely the meaning of the word *Jibun* which changes according to the context in the sentence. The contextual meaning of the word *Jibun* is as a second or third-person pronoun. As a second or third-person pronoun, the word *Jibun* does not match the meaning in the dictionary, which is a word that refers to 'me'. Below is an example of a sentence that uses the word *Jibun* with contextual meaning.

自分の力を周りに示せる機会を棒にふるなんざそれこそバカだ。

Jibun no chikara o mawari ni shimeseru kikai o bou ini furu nanza sore koso baka da.

To throw away an opportunity to show one's power to those around one is to be an idiot.

(Twisted Wonderland, chap. 3 bag. 6, 2020)

The following are example sentences using the word *Jibun* with contextual meaning as a *Saikikei* function word.

レオナくん、前に自分で言ってたじゃん？試合中の攻撃は校則違反じゃないって。

Leona kun, mae ni *Jibun* de itta jyan? Shiai chuu no kougeki wa kousoku ihan jyanaitte.

Leona, you said it yourself before. You said before that attacking during a game is not against school rules.

(Twisted Wonderland, chap. 2 bag. 28, 2020)

Meanwhile, the meaning of the word *Jibun*, which has a lexical meaning and a denotative meaning, refers to the meaning of the word *Jibun* when it stands alone, namely "I".

CONCLUSION

Through this research, we found the use of *Jibun* as *Saikikei*, *Jibun* as a personal pronoun, and *Jibun* as a word that refers to a general person. However, compared to the previously studied theories, some differences in usage were found. The use of *Jibun* as *Saikikei* in spoken language

has differences in the order of subject positions in its use because in this study, the data used is part of a conversation and uses spoken language so that the word order does not match the standard language.

In addition, there are several other uses of *Jibun* besides *Saikikei*, such as personal pronouns and *Jibun* words to express statements that apply to general people. The use of *Jibun* as a personal pronoun has been studied in previous research, especially the first-person pronoun used in the army and the second-person pronoun used in the Kansai dialect. However, this study found that *Jibun* can also refer to a person who does not present with the speaker or listener. *Jibun* can also refer to people in general if the speaker assumes that the statement made is a common thing that other people do or have in general.

In addition to being a *Saikikei* and a personal pronoun, there are also various ways of using the word *Jibun*, which can be distinguished through the meaning that the word *Jibun* has in the sentence. The word *Jibun* has a denotation meaning, which is the lexical meaning meaning 'I', and contextual meaning, meaning that changes according to the context, which is the second and third person pronouns following the subject.

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