

Acquisition of Overt Pronoun Constraint in L2 Turkish by Adult Korean Speakers

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Abstract : The aim of this study is to investigate the acquisition of Overt Pronoun Constraint (OPC) by adult Korean L2 Turkish speakers in order to find out how constraints regulating the syntax of null and overt subjects are acquired. OPC is claimed to be a universal feature of all null subject languages restricting the co-indexation between overt embedded pronoun and quantified or wh-question antecedents. However, there is no such restriction when the embedded subject is null or the antecedent is a referential subject. Considered as a principle of Universal Grammar (UG), OPC knowledge of L2 speakers has been widely tested with different language pairs. In the light of previous studies on OPC, it can be argued that L2 learners display early sensitivity to OPC constraints during their interlanguage grammar development. Concerning this, the co-indexation between overt embedded pronoun o (third person pronoun) and referential matrix subject is claimed to be controversial in Turkish, which poses problems with the universality of OPC. However, the current study argues against this claim by providing evidence from advanced Korean speakers that OPC is universal to all null subject languages and OPC knowledge can be accessed with direct access to UG. In other words, the performances of adult Korean speakers on the syntax of null and overt subjects are tested to support this claim. In order to test this, OPC task is used. 15 advanced speakers and a control group of adult native Turkish participants are instructed to determine the co-reference relationship between the subject of embedded clause, either overt pronominal o or null, and the subject of the matrix clause, either quantified pronoun and wh-question or referential antecedent. They are asked to select the interpretation of the embedded subject, either as the same person as in the matrix subject or another person who is not the same person in the matrix subject. These relations are represented with four conditions, and each condition has four questions (16 questions in total). The results claim that both control group and Korean L2 Turkish speakers display sensitivity to all constraints that OPC has, which suggests that OPC works in Turkish as well.

Keywords : adult Korean speakers, binding theory, generative second language acquisition, overt pronoun constraint

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