

Intervention meets transfer in raising constructions

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Abstract

This study explores whether Japanese-speaking learners of English (JSLE) show intervention effects coupled with transfer effects when they comprehend raising constructions with an experiencer. Previous studies demonstrated that any research on L2 acquisition cannot be completed without examining L1 effects (White 1986). Furthermore, the recent development of the Minimalist Program (Chomsky 1995) has led to renewed interest in the interplay of locality and intervention in L1 acquisition. Given that Japanese does not have English-like raising, therefore, it is interesting to see how JSLEs proceed to acquire the structure of raising across an experiencer, dealing with both intervention and transfer effects.

1. Introduction

Yoshimura et al. (2016, 2017) found that the acquisition of raising is delayed among L2 learners. Particularly, their experimental results showed that low proficiency JSLEs (average TOEIC score=443.36) had a mean correctness rate at 38% whereas high proficiency JSLEs (average TOEIC score=732.92) had a mean correctness rate at 67%.

(1) Jake appeared to Steve to have fun on his business trip.
 Q: *Dare-ga shuccho-no toki-ni tanoshisoodeshita ka*
 who-NOM business trip-GEN time on enjoyed-like Q
 A: **Jake** Steve both I don't know

We noted that JSLEs' poor performance was similar to the delay of A-chain dependency reported in L1 acquisition (Hirsh & Wexler 2007). A question then arose as to whether it is an intervention effect by the experiencer phrase (to Steve in (1)) or the syntactic-semantic complexity of raising that could be responsible for the JSLEs' acquisition difficulty.

This study reports the results of our truth value judgment task questionnaire conducted on the comprehension of the English *seem/appear* construction with an experiencer.

2. Background

A-movement

(2) a. John seems [John to be happy]. (A-movement)
 b. *John seems [PRO to be happy].

Intervention

(3) a. John seems to Mary to be happy.

Scrambling in Japanese

Japanese does not have Raising-to-Subject constructions similar to (2) in English. "Spontaneous verbs" are instead on par with *seem/appear* (Takezawa 1993).

(4) *Mary-ga John-ni totemo sutekini omoeta/mieta*
 Mary-NOM John-DAT very nice seemed/appeared
 'Mary seemed/appeared to John to be very nice.'

According to his analysis (1993, 2006), the dative *ni* marked experiencer *John* moves to [Spec, TP], and the nominative *ga* marked *Mary* is scrambled clause-initially, as in (5).

(5) [_{TP} *Mary-ga* [_{TP} *John-ni* [_{VP} *t_i* [_{TP} *t_i* *sutekini*] *omoeru*]]]

In this view, the *omoe/mie* construction does not involve A-movement for a Case reason (i.e., to be-Case-marked).

3. Previous Studies

Intervention

• Hirsch & Wexler (2008)---L1 acquisition

(6) a. John seems to Mary to be happy.
 b. It seems to Mary that John is happy.

√ a great difficulty with sentences like (6a) around the age of 7.
 √ a proposed analysis of the easiness considering (6b) like (7).

(7) Mary thinks that John is happy.

• Choe (2015)---L2 acquisition

30 Korean-speaking learners of English
 Picture-based Truth Value Judgment Task

√ a significant difference between raised and unraised constructions, as in (8).

(8) a. John seems to Mary to be happy. (41.7%)
 b. It seems to Mary that John is happy. (83.3%)

• Yoshimura et al. (2017)

53 college students=Low Group (n=28, TOEIC=443.36)
 High Group (n=25, TOEIC=732.92)
 18 Native Speakers of English (NS)

(9) Kenji seemed to Mary to be an excellent singer for the school festival.

Q: Who would be an excellent singer at the school festival?

A: **Kenji** Mary both I don't know
 √ a great difficulty among low proficient JSLEs.
 Low Group 40%, High Group 70%, NS Group 99%

A pronominal intervener vs. a lexical DP intervener

• Choe, Deen, & O'Grady (2014)-L1 acquisition
 Participants: native English-speaking children
 (age 3;6 to 6;8, mean=4;3)

(10) a. It seems to him that Donald is short. (88.1%)
 b. Donald seems to him to be short. (66.7%)
 (11) a. It seems to Mickey that he is short. (78.6%)
 b. **He seems to Mickey to be short.** (38.1%)

• Choe & Deen (2015)---L1 acquisition

(12) a. Donald seems to Mickey to be short. (40.9%)
 b. To Mickey, Donald seems to be short. (87.5%)
 c. Bart seems to him to be studying. (81.5%)

√ Children's difficulty with raising cannot be attributed to their grammatical deficits.

√ The operation of raising is essentially intact in child grammar.

√ a processing-based account (Dependency Locality Theory Gibson, 2000) rather than a locality account (Relativized Minimality Rizzi, 1990). (See also Choe & O'Grady 2016).

4. Present Study

Method

• Participants: 68 JSLEs (college students) (mean TOEIC=629)
 *20 JSLEs were excluded
 7 native English-speaking (NE) adults
 • Truth Value Judgment Task Questionnaire

Design

Lexical DP experiencer		Pronominal experiencer		Fillers	
fronted (n=6)	in-situ (n=6)	fronted (n=6)	in-situ (n=6)	(n=16)	
YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
3	3	3	3	3	8

Sentence Types

Type I

(13) a. Martha thinks that Kenny learns Japanese well.
To Martha, Kenny appears to learn Japanese well. (YES)
 b. Takashi thinks that Aki looks happier than Rui.
To Ai, Takashi seems to be happier than Rui. (NO)

Type II

(14) a. Jennifer thinks that Hanako is smarter than Ai.
Hanako seems to Jennifer to be smarter than Ai. (YES)
 b. Mickey Mouse saw Minnie run faster than Goofy.
Mickey appears to Minnie to be running faster than Goofy. (NO)

Type III

(15) a. John was a reporter and he thought that Virginia had a lot of money.
To him, Virginia seemed to be rich. (YES)
 b. Saki is the trainer for two brothers, Hisashi and Kento. She thinks that Hisashi works out harder than Kento.
To her, Kento appears to work out harder than Hisashi. (NO)

Type IV

(16) a. Amy is Robert's guest. He thought she ate well, and looked full.
Amy appeared to him to be full. (YES)
 b. Masaru is Yui's friend, and he thinks that Yui looks unhappy.
Yui seems to him to be happy. (NO)

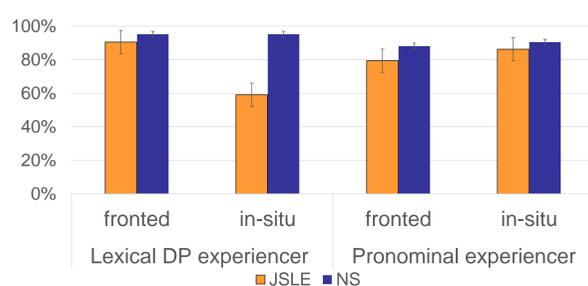
Predictions (Partially based on Choe & Deen (2016))

• Type II is the most difficult, Type IV is the second most difficult, and Types I and III are equally easy.

Results

Table 1 Mean accuracy in each condition by group

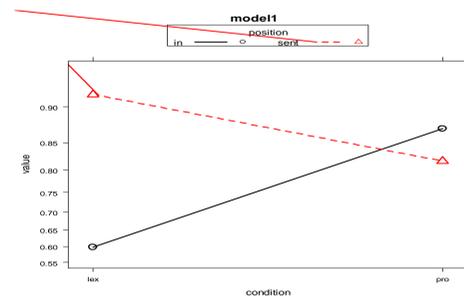
	Lexical DP experiencer		Pronominal experiencer	
	Fronted	in-situ	fronted	in-situ
JSLE	90.5	59.1	79.4	86.3
NS	95.2	95.2	88.1	90.5



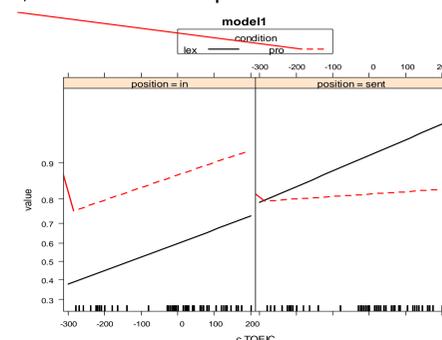
Analysis

A regression analysis was conducted to assess the association between the positions (fronted/in-situ) and the conditions (lexical DP/pronominal experiencer) as predictors for the comprehension task. Our findings are:

(i) Significant interactions emerged between the positions and the conditions, as shown in Graph 1.



(ii) Significant main effects obtained by the position and the condition, as shown in Graph 2.



5. Discussion & Conclusion

These findings indicate that unlike the NS adults, the JSLEs encountered the strongest intervention effects with the lexical DP experiencer in situ, but did not show the intervention by the pronominal experiencer in situ, like the NS adults. Furthermore, the raising structure with a fronted pronominal experiencer remained difficult relative to that in situ as their English proficiency improved.

Our first finding confirms that intervention effects cannot be a syntactic phenomenon in the comprehension of raising constructions. Our second finding suggests that JSLEs face difficulty in understanding fronted pronominal experiencers due to the absence of overt pronouns like English *he* in Japanese (Hoji 1991).

(17) a. *Dare_i-mo-ga* [_{pro}/_{zubun_i}/**kare_i*-ga *kurasu-de* everyone-NOM self he-NOM class in itiban *kashikoi* to] *omotte-iru* first smart COMP think-is
 b. Everyone_i thinks that he_i is the smartest in his class.

6. Further Issues

One important issue remains for further research. We need to investigate whether locality responsible for intervention effects is indeed a performance-based account by considering how learners, L1 and L2, can behave in the production of raising constructions with a lexical DP experiencer vs. a pronominal experiencer.

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