Renita Silva

Masked Priming in Derivational and Inflectional Morphology: A Comparison between L1 and L2

For some time now, there has been much debate on the mechanisms by which morphologically complex words are processed. The Dual Mechanism Model (Pinker, 1999), posits that there is a dissociation between rule-based forms which are decomposed, such as regular inflections, and associative forms which are stored fully in the lexicon, such as irregular inflections. This model has been based on various studies in L1 showing dissociation between regular and productive processes on the one hand and irregular and unproductive processes on the other. In light of this, Stanners et al. (1979) found that the reaction time to a target word can be facilitated by the presentation of a prime word earlier and specifically that in inflections, regular forms produce full priming while irregulars do not. Furthermore, in terms of derivation, Clahsen (2004) found that morphologically complex adjectives in German with the productive prefix (un-) showed a full priming effect, while only a partial priming effect was found for the unproductive prefix (in-).

Although the Dual Mechanism model can account for much of the extant empirical evidence in L1, it remains to be shown whether it can also account for L2 behaviour. Ullman (2001) proposes an additional aspect in that there are two different memory systems such that the construction of rules is dependent upon procedural memory and associations are dependent upon declarative memory. Based on the Declarative/Procedural Model, Ullman (2001) postulates that there is a difference between L1 and L2, namely that L2 will rely on associative processes using declarative memory while L1 will make use of both memory systems.

In this study, 3 masked priming experiments were used to investigate whether the regular past tense and productive deajectival nominalisations would produce priming effects and whether the L1 (English) and L2 (Chinese) would show the same effects. The results indicate that native speakers show full priming effects for both inflection and derivation indicating that the regular past tense and productive nominalisations are decomposed. However, the L2 showed no priming effects for inflection and reduced priming for derivation which is supportive of the Declarative/Procedural Model.

References


Mikako Sato

Sensitivity to different types of linguistic information in L2 sentence processing: Evidence from Speeded Grammaticality Judgements

Results from previous studies indicate that even learners who demonstrate near-native competence in off-line tasks process the L2 input differently from native speakers (NSs) in real time, or under increased processing pressure (e.g., Felser et al. 2003, Marinis et al. 2004, Papadopoulou & Clahsen 2003). Namely, learners seem to have difficulty accessing (certain aspects of) their L2 knowledge when processing the L2 input in real time.

To further investigate the degree to which L1 and L2 processing of different types of information are affected by added processing pressure, and whether L2 processing is affected by individual proficiency and/or working memory differences, two Speeded Grammaticality Judgement (SGJ) experiments were conducted with Japanese-speaking learners of L2 English and NS controls, complemented by a corresponding off-line task and reading span tests (Daneman & Carpenter 1980, Harrington & Sawyer 1992). Experiment 1 tested learners’ sensitivity to two types of violation in cleft constructions: **Selectional violations** (e.g., *It was the toy / that the babysitter said / the children had excited. *) and **Island violations** (e.g., *It was the toy / that the babysitter saw / the children who enjoyed. *). The materials for Experiment 2 included two kinds of binding violation: **Locality violations** (e.g., *Mary believed / that the dancers / had hurt herself.*) and **C-command violations** (e.g., *The dancers believed / that Mary’s brother / had hurt herself.*). In both experiments, the critical sentences became ungrammatical at the final word. Sentences were presented in three segments (1600ms/segment). Participants were asked to judge as quickly and as accurately as possible whether or not the string was well-formed and meaningful by pressing a corresponding button on a dual box, and reaction time (RT) and accuracy data were collected.

Compared with learners' native-like performance in the off-line task, their considerable 'accuracy drop' in the on-line experiments suggests that they were more strongly affected by added processing pressure than the NSs. Also, we found interactions between Sentence Type and Language (L1/L2) in both the RT and accuracy data. In Experiment 1, while both participant groups were slower to detect selectional violations than island violations, only the L2 learners showed a corresponding difference in accuracy. In Experiment 2, the two groups’ performance showed opposite patterns. While the NSs found locality violations easier to detect than c-command violations, the learners had less difficulty identifying c-command violations. Individual working memory differences correlated only with the NSs’ performance but not with L2 processing. L2 proficiency as measured by the Oxford Placement Test (Allan 1992) only affected processing of semantic (but not structural) violations.

In sum, the results are in line with the on-line/off-line discrepancies in L2 processing reported by previous studies (e.g., Felser et al. 2003), and the absence of working memory effects in L2 processing (Juffs 2005). Our finding that the learners were far more strongly affected by added processing pressure than the NSs supports the hypothesis that automatic (‘implicit’) processing routines are less available in the L2 (e.g., Paradis 2004).
Takafumi Maekawa

A linearization-based approach to negative inversion

It has been noted that there is a large class of unbounded dependency constructions (UDCs), including wh-interrogatives (1a) and topicalization sentences (1b).

(1)a. *What* did they handed to the baby?  b. *That* toy, they handed to the baby.

It is claimed that they contain a gap/trace and a separate structure related to it and placed higher in the tree configuration (i.e., A'-movement in P&P/Minimalism and a SLASH mechanism in HPSG). In previous work, negative inversion (NI) is also argued to be a kind of UDCs (Haegeman 2000; Rizzi 1997 etc.).

(2) *Under no circumstances* can we cash cheques.

This paper first provides evidence that NI constructions like (2) do not work in parallel with other UDCs. We then offer an alternative account within the framework of a version of HPSG, so-called Linearization-based HPSG.

The fact that preposed negative expressions do not work in parallel with wh-expressions is illustrated by the pair in (3), which shows that negation is clause-bound while a wh-interrogative is not (Sobin 2003).

(3)a. *Not a penny* did I say that Mary remembered to bring.  b. *What* did Bill say that Mary remembered to bring.

The evidence that NI constructions do not work in parallel with topicalization is that an NI construction does not form an island with regards to a wh-movement while topicalization does.

(4)a. Which books did Lee say that *only to Robin* will she give?  b. *Which books did Lee say that*, to Robin, she will give?

Our proposals are formalized within Linearization-based HPSG, in which linear order is independent to a considerable extent from constituent structure and is analysed in terms of a separate level of ‘order domains’ (Kathol 2000, etc.). First, NI constructions are characterized as a subtype of subject-auxiliary-inversion-phrase, and inherit the constraints imposed on the latter. Second, this construction type (neg-sai-ph) is also subject to its own constraint: a negative expression occurs in the left-peripheral position of the order domain of the clause, no matter which grammatical relation it has, adjunct or complement.

Our analysis can accommodate all the properties of NI constructions we surveyed above, and it also has the following consequences. First, it can deal with NI with a conjunction *nor*.

(5) Mary neither spends her vacations at the seashore *nor* does she go to the mountains. (Culicover 1999)

As a conjunction, nor does not have any unbounded dependency relation or any grammatical relation with other elements in the sentence (see Culicover 1999). However, this does not matter in our analysis since preposing of a negative expression is constrained only in terms of the linear sequence. Second, the constructional constraint on neg-sai-ph can be a platform for representing the construction-particular meanings of NI constructions: first, it always has a sentential scope, and second, it introduces new information (e.g., Sobin 2003).
References


Aya Okamoto

Acquisition of transitive alternation in L2 Japanese by L1 English speakers

This study reports the findings of an experimental study on acquisition of argument structure (henceforth AS) in L2 Japanese. The target construction is transitivity alternation (e.g. John broke the vase vs. The vase broke). While the alternation is semantically constrained in English (Levin and Rappaport Havov 1995), this is not the case in Japanese due to rich but non-productive derivational morphology which affixes to the verb roots (Jacobsen 1992). Consequently, Japanese allows much wider range of verbs to take part in the alternation. Thus, a question arises as how L1 English learners of Japanese acquire the AS of the L2 verbs, which apparently exhibit the same semantics, but whose AS is in fact different from their L1 counterparts.

Since this area is essentially unexplored in L2 Japanese acquisition, there are three general goals for the present study: (1) to characterise the development of the acquisition of AS of the verbs which participate to transitivity alternation by L1 English learners, (2) to investigate whether or not, overpassivizaion error (e.g. *The trains was arrived,) which has been reported in L2 English acquisition with different L1 background learners (Oshita 2000) is also observed in L2 Japanese, and finally (3) effect of overt morphology in L1 and L2 (Montrul 2001).

The data was gathered via online acceptability picture judgement task adapted from Montrul (2001). Participants were 12 native Japanese speakers and 40 adult L1 English L2 Japanese learners ranging from beginner to advance proficiency. The test items consist of 7 different verb classes: 3 of them were selected according to the pattern of syntactic projection of their argument which differ from English counterparts and the other 4 classes exhibit identical projection patterns to English. Each verb appears twice in both of the intransitive and transitive configurations and the learners were asked to judge the acceptability of a pair of sentences presented in the context of the pictures by using 7-points scale.

The result suggests that (1) unlike L2 English, overpassivization was not restricted to non alternating unaccusatives (e.g. bloom, slip) but also observed in unergative verbs (e.g. laugh, dance) as well and the difference between two classes was not significant. (2) L2 Japanese learner do not seem to transfer their L1 AS automatically to L2, particularly in alternating unaccusative verb class (e.g. break, melt.) and (3) the persistence L1 influence in morphological domain even for advance learners which confirms Montrul (2001)’s finding: non target like affixation can be interpreted as an attempt of spell-out the L1 syntactic feature in L2.

References


Oshita, H. (2001). What is happened may not be what appears to be happening: a corpus study of “passiv” unaccusatives in L2 English Second Language research, 16, 4
The acquisition of English interdentals by Turkish learners: explaining age effects in L2 phonology

The acquisition of the interdental fricative [θ] has received considerable attention in L2 phonology (e.g. Lombardi, 2000; O’Connor, 2002) and the reason for this is two-fold. Firstly, English is a common second language. Secondly, the interdental fricative [θ] is relatively rare cross-linguistically and therefore a marked segment. L2 learners of English are often divided into two groups based on their L1 background: [t]-languages and [s]-languages. Speakers of [t]-languages generally substitute [t] for /θ/, while speakers of [s]-languages substitute [s] for /θ/. Nonetheless, there is a problem with these two language groupings, since previous accounts of differential substitution have often overlooked interspeaker variation.

Nonetheless, Turkish does not possess the interdental fricative [θ] and is often identified as a [t]-language (e.g. Swan, 2001). Nonetheless, the data I provide from Turkish learners of English contradicts the supposition that [t] is the primary pattern. The reason for this unexpected finding is due to the new approach this current study has taken. Unlike previous studies, which have often only looked at adult learners, the current study looks at both child and adult learners. Secondly, the data in this study is not only collected in the form of spontaneous speech but also from controlled speech (i.e. repetition). Thirdly, the present study looks at the acquisition of interdental [θ] not only as a singleton but also as a cluster (e.g. [riθ] for three), in order to examine whether segmental acquisition proceeds cluster development and address wider issues. Fourthly, the data is collected in two points of time in order to identify the developmental paths in L2 phonology.

In this sense, the data I present from Turkish learners of English provides two new findings. Firstly, [t] substitution is the optimal candidate in spontaneous speech for both age groups. It is only in controlled speech in where both age groups fail to follow the primary pattern (i.e. [t] substitution). For instance, children often favour [f] or [s] substitution, while adults favour [t] or [f] substitution, and most importantly avoid [s] substitution. This is an intriguing finding and therefore this paper seeks to identify the reason for these differing substitution patterns, not only between both age groups but also between both tasks. Perceptual difficulty, incorrect phonetic input, and articulatory difficulty stands to be some of the potential factors involved in these differential substitution patterns. Despite these suggestions, the focal point of this paper is to identify whether there are any maturational constraints involved in L2 phonology. The new findings certainly suggest that maturational constraints are involved and therefore deserve a closer examination. The overall analysis of the L2 data is worked out within an Optimality Theoretic approach.

References


L2 acquisition of semantic and morpho-phonological constraints on the English dative alternation by Persian speakers

Verbs belonging to the dative class in English allow both [DP PP] and [DP DP] complements:

(1)a. He gave [DP a present] [PP to his son]  b. He gave [DP his son] [DP a present]

However, there are both semantic and phonological constraints on the [DP DP] ‘double object’ construction. One semantic constraint is that there must be a relation of ‘possession’ between the two arguments (construed broadly):

(2)a. He made a decision for the team  b. *He made the team a decision

A morpho-phonological constraint is that the verb stem must be monosyllabic (or if polysyllabic, have stress on the initial syllable):

(3)a. He faxed the problem to John/*He explained John the problem  b. He faxed John the problem/*He explained John the problem

Persian, by contrast, lacks [DP DP] complements, allowing only equivalents of [DP PP] complements.

The main research question pursued in this study is whether L1 Persian speakers can acquire these constraints when they learn English as an L2. The interest of this is that the constraints are underdetermined by input. Given that verbs like give, send, tell freely allow an alternation between [DP PP] and [DP DP] complements, there is no positive evidence to tell learners that the semantically similar donate, dispatch, recount are ungrammatical with [DP DP] complements. If learners are sensitive to these properties, this is consistent with them having access to innately determined knowledge (Universal Grammar).

The study reported here tested L1 Persian speakers of L2 English at three proficiency levels: elementary (n=18), intermediate (n=25), advanced (n=22). The L2 speakers and 14 native controls completed a grammaticality judgement task involving dative constructions with both to and for prepositions. The data were analysed to see if the learners have acquired both the semantic and phonological constraints. Results show that while the elementary subjects recognise that English allows ‘double object’ [DP DP] complements, they have not acquired the constraints on its distribution. The advanced subjects, however, show much greater sensitivity to the constraints. The implications of these findings for the claim that L2 speakers’ grammars are constrained by UG will be discussed.
Miriam Urgelles Coll

Towards a Formal Semantic Theory of Discourse Connectives

In this paper, I will present ongoing research on discourse connectives such as *anyway* which are particles whose main function is to connect discourse. Discourse participants use them to integrate different rhetorical relations between utterances such as the case of *indicating a relation of Contrast* (Asher and Lascarides, 2003). The same relation can be marked by different discourse markers; similarly, the same discourse marker can mark different types of rhetorical relations.

One of the most influential accounts dealing with discourse connectives is given by Schiffrin (1987) who views discourse markers as integrators of structural, semantic, pragmatic, and social factors. These particles operate at different levels in discourse both locally and globally. In the framework of Relevance Theory, it is said that discourse connectives function as markers of relationships or connections between different units of discourse. The difference between semantics and pragmatics which they set implicate different cognitive processes.

The syntactic approach I employ to deal with discourse markers is HPSG. Ginzburg (2001) has hypothesized about how HPSG deals with semantics and pragmatics. HPSG is relevant in a theory of discourse because it provides a framework in which all levels of grammar can be integrated.

I exemplify the approach with an analysis of *anyway* in which it is used as a pointer of the end of a discussion of a particular topic or a closing of a digression, as we can observe in the following example:

(1) I saw Gloria last night. She was wearing a wonderful pink dress with a beautiful pattern in the back. She looked fantastic on it. **Anyway**, Gloria told me she has recently quit her job.

Phonologically, *anyway* has a marked stress and a characteristic rising intonation which determine an inflection point where one topic is abandoned in favour of another. The synsem value of *anyway* is not particularly relevant because anyway does not affect truth-conditions.

The attribute of CONTEXT is the most important part of a discourse marker AVM. This includes BACKGROUND which has restrictions on indices and/or psoas; it also contains mental modals of the discourse participants of what it is left underspecified which is null in the case of *anyway*. This connective is a primary indexical that connects two sets of psoas which correspond to the previous and the following utterance and it establishes a relation between the two, and even higher up in the discourse, since one sentence will not keep the same Question Under Discussion (QUD) as the following one. **Anyway** denotes a change of the QUD in the discourse.

The relevance of discourse markers and their function inside discourse structure and discourse meaning is a certainty. The effects that these particles have upon the interpretation of discourse is the interest of my further research and my intention is to expand the work integrating HPSG as a syntactic theory with SDRT as a discourse theory.

References


Since communicative language teaching (CLT) emerged in the 70s, many language teachers and language trainers have embraced the approach with delight and feel that they have found the panacea to unsuccessful, and frustrating, scenarios of language learning in their classrooms.

Three decades on, how well has CLT been applied to primary English classrooms? This session will present a piece of empirical research finding carried out in an EFL setting, namely Taiwan, and examine to what extent CLT has been adapted to teaching English vocabulary. The presentation begins with a brief introduction to current English language teaching (ELT) in Taiwan. It then moves on to present two extracts from classroom observations, which took place at state primary schools in Taiwan in 2002. Bearing principles of CLT in mind (Brown 2000; Harmer 2001; Richards and Rodgers 2001), the extracts will be analysed and evaluated in relation to teaching vocabulary and to primary school children.

The results of the analysis show that primary EFL teachers do not practise CLT in the form in which it is described in the literature. Signs of the audio-lingual method still can be seen. Referring to the literature on CLT (Burnaby and Sun 1989; Karavas-Doukas 1996; Widdowson 2004), possible reasons why EFL teachers are not ready to take CLT on boarding its purest form will be discussed. This presentation finishes by drawing implications for ELT in EFL contexts.
Evgenia Kounnapi

Language policy and language practice: the case of Cyprus

The issue of the use of standard/non-standard varieties in classroom has preoccupied linguists and educationalists for many years. Some bring forward arguments in support of the use of dialects or non-standard languages whereas others question their suitability as mediums of instruction. In multidialectal settings, choosing a language for instruction is never an easy matter because many factors need to be considered. The scope of this study is to examine the situation in Cyprus, where the official language of instruction is Standard Modern Greek (SMG) whereas the mother tongue of the students is the Greek Cypriot Dialect (GCD). On the basis of the results obtained from an attitudinal study of primary teachers, the practice of using SMG officially and a GCD-mixed system unofficially is examined and assessed. An attempt has been made to explore the feasibility of introducing a mixed system of both varieties alongside SMG in the educational system of Cyprus. The study most specifically focuses on the linguistic attitudes of Greek Cypriot primary teachers towards the use of a mixed code of both varieties during their teaching. The main instruments for the collection of information are:

a. questionnaires and
b. observation

This paper will close by arguing that every day language practice in schools does not comply with the official language policy.
A study of conversational styles in paired speaking assessments: does candidates’ proficiency-level make any difference?

Studies of oral testing have suggested a great desirability for the introduction of a paired testing format, where non-native test-takers are paired and examined together. Accordingly, the format has become a popular tool to assess oral communication ability. This introduction, however, has also caused concern about how the pairing of test-takers should appropriately be conducted, since paired interlocutor characteristics could be significant variables influencing one’s performance (McNamara, 1996; Fulcher, 2003). Particularly, examination boards and some teachers seem to consider the proficiency of interlocutors as the most important factor in determining performance on the paired tests (Foot, 1999), despite the fact that little is actually understood about the effect (Iwashita, 1996). Hence, the present study addresses the following research questions:

1) Are conversational styles of dyads different between same-proficiency level pairs (SPL pairs) and different-proficiency level pairs (DPL pairs)?

2) Are dyadic interactions with different-ability speakers asymmetrical? If so, to what extent and how are they asymmetrical?

Data were collected from 12 sessions of SPL pairs and 12 sessions of DPL pairs in which advanced and intermediate learners of English simulated the collaborative part of the Cambridge Certificate in Advanced English (CAE) examination. All the sessions were video-taped and transcribed following Conversation Analysis (CA) conventions (Atkinson and Heritage, 1984), and then both quantitatively and qualitatively analysed about three components of conversational styles: *interactional contingency, goal-orientation* and *quantitative dominance* (following Young and Milanovic, 1992; Young, 1995; Kormos, 1999; Dimitrova-Galaczi, 2004).

The results revealed that whilst the proficiency of the paired interlocutor may have a small impact on the element of interactional contingency, there are many more similarities than differences between SPL and DPL pairs. Moreover, although the analysis of DPL pairs suggested that advanced candidates might be slightly more goal-oriented and spoke more than paired intermediate partners, the level of variability was not big enough to differentiate interactional styles of SPL and DPL pairs. Additionally, this research discovered that some candidates helped their partners in their dyadic interactions, and the accommodative behaviours contributed to produce balanced conversational styles. All in all, the presence of different proficiency levels in paired tests may not be as serious a concern as anticipated, and the findings encourage us to continue to employ the paired format as a useful mode of oral assessment.