Differential Object Marking in Persian as L2: Transfer or Access to Universal Features?

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Differential Object Marking in Persian and Romanian

The semantic parameter which distinguishes DOM in Persian from DOM in Romanian < the role of animacy < animacy scale (Aissen 2003)

Human > animate > inanimate

Specificity/referential stability is the trigger of DOM in both Persian and Romanian (Karimi 1990, 1997; Ghomeshi 1997, Farhadi & von Heusinger 2003) < referential stability scale (Farhadi & von Heusinger 2003)

Proper names, definite pronouns > definite DPs > partitives > indefinite DPs

- referentially stable (RS): proper names (PN), definite pronouns (pron), definite DPs
- referentially non-stable (RNS): partitives, indefinite DPs

Current Study

Research Questions

- is there L1 transfer of the animacy constraint in the DOM learning process?
- do L2 learners have full access to the prominence scales that underlie DOM choice cross-linguistically?

Test sentences (animate) direct object Test sentences (animate) direct object

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Nr</th>
<th>Age range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beginners</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19-25 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20-38 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>24-34 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native controls</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24-45 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results: DOM and animacy

animate inanimate

BEGINNER INTERMEDIATE ADVANCED CONTROL

BEGINNER INTERMEDIATE ADVANCED CONTROL

Results: DOM and referential stability

referentially stable referentially non-stable

Pron & PN Definite Partitive Indefinite Pron & PN Definite Partitive Indefinite Pron & PN Definite Partitive Indefinite Pron & PN Definite Partitive Indefinite

Results: DOM, animacy and referential stability

Conclusions

- no difference between acceptance rate of with [-animate] (M=19.00, SD=3.359) and with [+animate] (M=10.24, SD=3.450) direct objects (strong correlation between the two, r=0.82, p=0.01)
- correlation between acceptance rate of with [-animate] and with [+animate] direct objects within each condition (C1: r=0.60, p=0.01, C2: r=0.71, p=0.01, C3: r=0.59, p=0.01, C4: r=0.55, p=0.01) and with each L2 learner group, beginners included (r=0.82, p=0.01) ⇒ no L1 transfer of the animacy constraint
- DOM preferentially accepted with RS DPs overall (M=11.83, SD=3.252) vs. RNS DPs (M=8.41, SD=4.196), irrespective of animacy
- DOM preferentially accepted with RS DPs from the beginning of the learning process; beginners preferentially accept DOM with RS (M=11, SD=2.055) vs. RNS DPs (M=8.6, SD=3.204) (t(10)=2.256, p=0.05); no difference between responses to definite DPs vs. Pron & PN with either the beginner or the intermediate group; no difference between responses to partitives vs. indefinite DPs with beginners but the difference is significant with the intermediate group; partitives (M=4.5, SD=2.175) vs. indefinite DPs (M=2.57, SD=2.138) (t(14)=3.335, p=0.005) ⇒ referential stability guides the L2 learning of DOM ⇒ access to the referential stability scale

References


Ghomeshi, J. 1997 Topics in Persian VPs, Linguist 120 (3): 133-147.

Karimi, S. 1990 Obliqueness, specificity, and discourse functions: in Persian, Linguistic Analysis 20 (3-4):139-191


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