Acquisition of fake-reflexive pronouns: L2 specific properties and unergative-unaccusative distinction

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The current study has centered on the acquisition of fake-reflexive pronouns as indeterminate constituent of fake-reflexive resultatives by Persian EFL learners to shed lights on the process of acquisition of L2 specific properties. The study investigated the knowledge of L2 speakers on the distribution of a fake-reflexive form found in some resultatives in English which are not instantiated in their L1, not taught explicitly, and seems difficult to infer from input. Such properties can be argued to be acquired on the basis of UG Hypothesis. The study also investigated whether unergative-unaccusative different syntactic configurations in resultative constructions can be successfully acquired or not.

To this end, 68 Persian EFL learners (34 intermediate and 34 advanced) completed an acceptability judgment task. Likewise, five native speakers acted as the control group. The results of various mixed between-within ANOVAs indicated overgeneralization of syntactic configurations of unaccusative verbs in resultatives for both classes of intransitive verbs, i.e. unergatives and unaccusatives. Persian L2ers faced learnability problems in acquiring the distribution of fake-reflexive pronouns. It seems that the acquisition of such resultative properties demand learning of various idiosyncrasies in line with the tenets of construction grammar. The unsuccessful acquisition of L2 specific properties and unergative-unaccusative distinction held verification for both intermediate and advanced Persian learners.

Ultimately, the human feature of subject appeared to affect the difficulty of fake-reflexive resultatives for native speakers, as they considered that RP predication of unergatives with non-human subjects is possible without fake-reflexive objects. The study offers implications for the process of second language acquisition.

References


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