

SVIO NP Determiners' Acquisition in L2 Mandarin Chinese of L1 Korean—Pedagogical Application Study of Mandarin Surface Unaccusativity

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Abstract

Recently there are many researches about the Accusative Hypothesis. Chinese is a kind of language which allows objects following intransitive verbs, however, and such kinds of intransitive verbs taking objects have conditional limitations especially for the determiners which modify the following noun phrases as objects. The unaccusative verbs and the unergative verbs need different features of determiners to modify their noun objects with features of definite, non-definite and specific association to the following noun phrases in Chinese. This paper will focus on this appearance and do some research about the Korean L2 learners of Chinese. In Korean there is no possibility to allow intransitive verbs to carry objects and there are no articles functioned as determiners. So this study tries to find out how the Korean L1 learners of Chinese process definite, non-definite and specific determiners of NP in Chinese SVIO sentence forms. Additionally, this paper has also inspected if there are differences according to the proficiency levels of Korean learners of Chinese while the acceptable test was used as test material. As we can see from the paper results, as the proficiency grows, the Korean L2 learners of Chinese go to a decreasing state of analyzing the intransitive verbs and their determiners of the objects. The results of the study show that the Korean native speakers' ability of identifying and analyzing intransitive verbs and determiners of the objects in Chinese are come from UG to the target language.

Keywords

Chinese SVIO, Accusative Hypothesis, determiners, definite, non-definite, specific, noun phrase, L2 acquisition

1 Previous research - Unaccusative Hypothesis

According to the Unaccusative Hypothesis (Perlmutter 1978), under the theory of the hypothesis, intransitive verbs are categorized into two subclasses: the unaccusative verbs and the unergative verbs, each connected to different syntactic underlying configurations.

Using some universal principles of relational grammar, Perlmutter argues that the single arguments of the unaccusative verbs are internal arguments, whereas the single arguments of unergative verbs are external arguments. After a careful investigation of the semantics unaccusative and unergative verbs, Perlmutter proposes that the unaccusativity-unergativity distinction can be explained semantically, stating that “Initial unaccusativity VS. unergativity is predictable from the semantics of the clause.” The main semantic property of unaccusative verb is unwilling and unvolitional, while that of unergative verb is willing and volitional.

2 Chinese Intransitive Verbs Taking Objects

Chinese intransitive verbs taking objects is a special grammatical experience that had been talked about since 1950s, 20th. Many scholars focused on this special Chinese sentence construction, the classical example is:

Wang Mian qi sui shang si le fu qin. (Xu Zhong ren (1956), Su Fu (1956))

There are some more examples like: (Xu jie (2001))

1. Na ge gong chang ta le yi tu qiang.
2. Ta si le si ke tao shu.
3. Zhe jian gua zi diao le liang ge kou zi.

3 Application: Second Language Acquisition

This research will focus on the acquisition of the intransitive verbs following objects of Chinese intransitive verbs, especially the surface unaccusativity appearance. First we should know that the noun phrases following after the intransitive verbs, either in unaccusative verbs or unergative verbs should be non-definite noun phrase, though the appearance of unergative verbs were not talked in paper while in the paper we only focus on the surface unaccusative construction in Chinese. In fact, unergative verbs are also an important part in Chinese grammar, and unergative verbs and unaccusative verbs share some common features like unergative verbs can also carry NPs in the objects place, and the noun phrase should be non-definite so the research method were chosen to the acquisition of determiners used before the nouns of objects and the decausativity of unaccusative verbs.

And we will try to notice the following questions below:

- a) Do L2 learners of Chinese deal with the unaccusative verbs following objects with necessary determiners effectively in surface unaccusativity sentences ?
- b) Do L2 learners of Chinese act differently when they meet unaccusative verbs adding objects and unergative verbs adding objects ?
- c) Do different proficiency levels of L2 learners of Chinese behave obvious distinction when coming into unaccusative-unergative verbs following objects?

4 Methodology

4.1 Participants

The participants of this research came from the undergraduate department of Chinese in Korea University and Chinese native speakers from KLCC. The total number of testers are 45 ; 5 Korean students from the undergraduate 1st academic year in department of Chinese, 4 were from the 2nd academic year, 12 were from the 3rd academic year, and the last 9 students were from the 4th academic year, and 15 Chinese native speakers from the Korean Language Culture Center in Korea University as the control group.

Our Korean testers were all from the “Committee of Department of Chinese”, the function of this committee is to encourage Korean students from Chinese Department speak Chinese after their class. Parts of the students had joined in the exchange student program in Beijing Teaching College in Chinese, so they can be defined as Adult Chinese Second language Learners CSL, their

proficiency are defined by their score of HSK and their academic year. (because parts of them had tested HSK long before 2 years ago, so the proficiency was mostly defined by their academic year grade, the higher grade the higher proficiency).

Table 1: Participants construction

Testers	No.	Proficiency
1st-2nd academic year	9	Rudimentary
3rd academic year	12	Intermediate
4th academic year	9	Advanced
Chinese native speakers	15	Chinese L1

4.2 Test materials and instruments: Acceptable test

Sentences were divided into to 4 different groups including unaccusative -unergative verbs,

The first group are sentences including an unaccusative verb followed by a noun phrase and the noun is modified by a non-definite determiner.

*Zhangsan duan le zhi shou.
Zhangsan broke a hand.

The second group are sentences including an unaccusative verb followed by a noun phrase and the noun is modified by a definite determiner.

*Zhangsan duan le na zhi shou.
Zhangsan broke that hand.

The third groups are a sentence including an unergative verb followed by a noun phrase modified by a non-definite determiner.

Men wai Zhan le yi xie ren.

The fourth groups are sentences including an unergative verb followed by a noun phrase modified by a definite determiner.

*Men wai zhan le na xie ren.

The acceptable test uses the measure of “Acceptable” and “Unacceptable”. Most sentences are with familiar words in case the unpredictable distraction in this test happen because of the unknown words for L2 learners. All the five groups of sentences were changed into random orders in order to avoid the indication of totally right or

wrong in one group. The time of test was about 20 minutes, all testers completed their test independently.

4.3 Analysis and Results

Table 2: Accuracy of participants analyzing 4 types of groups

	Group1	Group2	Group3	Group4
RUD	53.3%	60.0%	73.3%	53.3%
MID	85.0%	75.0%	55.0%	90.0%
ADV	46.7%	13.3%	26.7%	66.7%
Native	85.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The rudimentary students did well in the four types of groups of analyzing objects' determiners and intransitive verbs' identification, (all above 50%) the ability still grows when the learners reach to the intermediate level, however, the ability of justifying the incorrectness of definite determiner after the unergative verbs' still increasing, (except group 4, all get down under 50% accuracy) to this is a confusing part for explanation. More astonishing, their ability about analyzing these intransitive verbs carrying objects' grammar in Chinese fossilized or to say, largely backward when they reach to the high advanced proficiency level.

Actually, the group 1 and 2; group 3 and 4 are counter test about unaccusative and unergative verbs with NP, students all show fluctuation of ability of analyzing intransitive verbs, especially when the analyzed unaccusative verbs, the trend of unfolding. We also can get from the test that during the intermediate level, learners can analyze it almost all correct, up to 90% of accuracy. The more interesting and confusing is that though they can tell what is wrong, they can't tell what is right.

In summary, Korean CSL learners come to a down-folding state of analyzing these features, after a fluctuation from low ability level to intermediate level, and go the advanced level, the ability finally reaches extremely low state, this appearance is similar both in the analyze of unaccusative verbs and unergative verbs by Korean CSL learners. As proficiency grows, the Korean L2 learners of Chinese go to a decreasing state of analyzing the intransitive verbs and their determiners of the objects, the intermediate learners dealt better than both rudimentary learners and advanced learners. The intermediate Korean CSL learners show best in the procession of unaccusative-unergative verbs adding objects and the determiners reacquired before the noun.

5 Conclusion

Surface accusativity is a common appearance in Chinese, we analyzed the forms of surface unaccusativity construction that shown in Chinese by Chomsky's generalized grammar and we also probed the reason why this appearance is obvious in Chinese, we also associated the features that the unaccusative verbs that carry NPs, the production of decausativization in the Chinese subject causativized sentence will lead us to the future study. There are also many other theoretical explanation about Chinese Surface Unaccusativity appearance and Chinese SViO, some research use language economy principle, base on Chinese is a kind of free word order construction, and cognitive studies, like Talyor said that with the development of language, transitive verbs gradually intervene intransitive verbs and most by using preposition words. In CSL and CFL learning and teaching process, the probe the deep reasons of surface unaccusativity in Chinese can benefit more from this appearance both for L2learners and teachers. Teachers and students could get more hints from this appearance in Chinese both for western students and Asian students.

Like in our study in this paper, because for Korean L1 learners, it has no articles in their L1, and there is no SViO in Korean, so we can conclude that this part of ability is from UG, not the L1 transfer, but why their ability of this decreased in advance level, is still a question. It can not exclude the possibility that when learners reach advanced level, they should read more books in their progress of learning Chinese, the information they have gotten include many context and semantic discourse, like some contents have already ingrained in their brain, it may be influence their judgment and analyze the grammatical sentences, but why the native speakers all did right was a paradox. As the limited condition, L1 learners of L2 Chinese acquisition have the setting of the Article Choice Parameter, like English or French, have not been included in this research. But as in English, the syntactical system is SVO, and can not have the pattern like SViO, so research for the Korean L2 learners of Chinese of the unaccusative-unergative verbs have generalized outcome in this aspect. If there were more data from other language speakers and more higher proficiency Korean native speaker of Chinese as second language from more different cultural and education background the reason why the ability of identifying and analyzing intransitive verbs and determiners of the objects in Chinese is fluctuated to decreasing state finally, and if there is possibility that the fluctuation will climb up again will be the subject for the further studies. However, since the accuracy of rudimentary low-ability

learners grasp this grammar well with less input than the advanced learners, so we can get the hypothesis that the ability are come from UG to the target language.

Moreover, Korean language is not a free order language, there are case markers to decide and indicate the word order and semantic meanings of sentences, Korean language appear obvious distinction with Chinese while the word-order is important both in unaccusative verbs taking objects and unergative verbs taking objects in Chinese. So the word order with intransitive verbs taking objects in Chinese for Korean L2 learners of Chinese is a left meaningful research for future.

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