Pronoun interpretation with referential and quantificational antecedents in SLA
Eun Hee Kim
University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign

Well-established findings in native language (L1) acquisition research are that children know that a reflexive must take a local (i.e., clause-mate) antecedent in accordance with Principle A of Binding Theory by age three, yet allow a pronoun to take a local antecedent, in apparent violation of Principle B (e.g., Chien & Wexler, 1990; Clackson et al., 2011). It is also observed that children are more likely to accept a local antecedent for a pronoun when it is referential (1a) than when it is quantificational (1b). One explanation for this asymmetry is that children’s errors are due not to lack of Principle B, but to lack of Rule I, under Reinhart’s framework which posits two distinct interpretational methods for pronouns – variable binding and coreference – and additional pragmatic rule (Rule I) specifying the contexts where the coreferential reading cannot be obtained (Reinhart, 2006). In contrast to the L1 acquisition research, studies exploring pronoun acquisition in second language (L2) acquisition are quite scarce, and show contradictory findings. Some studies have shown that adult L2 learners have little difficulty with L2 pronouns, correctly disallowing clause-mate antecedents (White, 1998; Patterson et al., 2014), whereas others have found that clause-mate antecedents are incorrectly allowed by L2 learners (Lee & Schachter, 1997; Kim et al., 2015). Given that the difficulty with pronouns has been observed only in studies with L1-Korean L2-English learners, it is possible that the properties of Korean pronouns may affect the acquisition of English pronouns by L1-Korean L2-English learners. Therefore, this study aims to 1) examine L2 learners’ pronoun interpretation with various types of antecedents, and 2) explore the possibility that incorrect acceptance of pronouns with local antecedents is due to L1-transfer from Korean.

Both L1-Korean L2-English learners and native speakers of English (control group) completed a Truth Value Judgment Task with story contexts, in English. Additionally, to assess L1-transfer effect, the learners were tested on the Korean version of the TVJT as well (at least two weeks elapsed between learners’ participation in English vs. Korean experiments). The TVJT crossed antecedent type (referential vs. quantificational) with distance (local vs. non-local), as in (2). Preliminary results from 13 L1-Korean L2-English learners and 26 English native controls have been analyzed (data collection is ongoing).

English TVJT (Figure 1): the L2-learners overaccepted local referential antecedents for pronouns (2a), but not local quantificational antecedents (2b), similar to findings reported in L1 acquisition research. Moreover, L2 learners were at chance in accepting non-local quantificational antecedents (2d), probably because they were allowing the possibility of the local referential antecedent. Korean TVJT (Figure 1): the Korean speakers performed very similarly in Korean as in English, allowing local referential antecedents but not local quantificational antecedents. This seems to be due to the fact that Korean speakers use coreference as a primary interpretive mechanism for overt pronouns, suggesting that Rule I may be inoperative in Korean. This would have affected how they interpret English pronouns, and hence we conclude that overacceptance of local antecedents for pronouns in SLA is a result of L1-transfer.
(1) a. Mama bear is touching her. (children’s interpretation: her = Mama bear)
b. Every bear is touching her. (children’s interpretation: her ≠ Every bear)

(2) TVJT

**Sample story** for local referential antecedent: Sally, Megan and Tiffany go to the same school as Jessica. They don’t like Jessica because they think she is too confident about herself. She always considers herself to be a great person, which they don’t agree with at all. And Jessica has a rather poor opinion of the other girls, which doesn’t help. One day, their teacher asked why the three girls don’t like her and they explained why.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type Distance</th>
<th>Referential antecedent</th>
<th>Quantificational antecedent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local</strong> (embedded subject)</td>
<td>a. Every girl said that [<strong>Jessica</strong>i thought highly of <strong>her</strong>j]. (Motun sonye-ka [<strong>Jessica</strong>i-ka kunyej-lul taytanhakey yekinta]-ko malhayssta.)</td>
<td>b. Jessica said that [<strong>every girl</strong>j thought highly of <strong>her</strong>j]. (Jessica-ka [motun sonyej-ka kunyej-lul taytanhakey yekinta]-ko malhayssta.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-local</strong> (matrix subject)</td>
<td>c. <strong>Jessica</strong>i said that [<strong>every girl</strong>j thought highly of <strong>her</strong>j]. (Jessicai-ka [motun sonye-ka kunyej-lul taytanhakey yekinta]-ko malhayssta.)</td>
<td>d. <strong>Every girl</strong>j said that [Jessica thought highly of <strong>her</strong>j]. (Motun sonyej-ka [Jessica-ka kunyej-lul taytanhakey yekinta]-ko malhayssta.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* The bolded NPs in the test sentences indicate the antecedent that the pronoun takes. For Korean TVJT, Korean names are used both in the stories and the test sentences. The sample test sentences used in Korean TVJT are given in parenthesis.

**Figure 1:** Mean percentage of TRUE responses of each condition by native speakers of English tested in English (NS) and Korean-speaking learners of English tested in English (L2-Eng) and Korean (L2-Kor)