

English L2ers' sensitivity to givenness in Korean dative constructions "Category: formal syntax"

We investigate whether adult L2ers of Korean who have knowledge of the *Given-before-New Principle* in their L1 automatically adhere to it in Interlanguage.

It is well documented that the Given-before-New Principle holds in adult speech such that given information is more likely to occupy an earlier position in the sentence (Arnold et al., 2000; Bresnan et al., 2007; inter alia). In the English dative alternation, for instance, the *given-theme* (i.e. direct object (DO)) tends to occur earlier in the prepositional dative (1a), while the *given-recipient* (i.e. indirect object (IO)) tends to occur earlier in the double-object dative (1b).

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| (1) | a. | I gave <i>the toys</i> to children. | Prepositional dative (S–DO–IO–V) |
| | b. | I gave <i>the children</i> toys. | Double-object dative (S–IO–DO–V) |

Choi's (2009) corpus study on Korean dative constructions suggests something similar: The *given-recipient* tends to occur earlier in the canonical S–IO–DO–V order (2a), while the *given-theme* tends to occur earlier in the "scrambled" S–DO–IO–V order (2b).

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|-----|----|------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|----------------|------------------------------|
| (2) | a. | Mia-ka | <i>ku-aitul-eykey</i> | chayk-ul | ponay-ess-ta. | Canonical (S–IO–DO–V) |
| | | Mia-Nom | <i>those-children-Dat</i> | book-Acc | send-Past-Decl | |
| | | 'Mia sent a book to the children.' | | | | |
| | b. | Mia-ka | <i>ku-chayk-ul</i> | aitul-eykey | ponay-ess-ta. | Scrambled (S–DO–IO–V) |
| | | Mia-Nom | <i>that-book-Acc</i> | children-Dat | send-Past-Decl | |
| | | 'Mia sent the book to children.' | | | | |

To test L1-English adult L2ers' compliance with the Given-before-New Principle in Korean, we developed Oral Contextualized Preference Tasks: The *NP task* uses a lexical NP as a given-referent; the *Pronoun task* uses a pronoun as a given-referent. Information status (i.e. givenness) of the two object arguments is manipulated as follows: *given-recipient & new-theme* ("given-recipient condition") vs. *given-theme & new-recipient* ("given-theme condition"). The given-recipient condition results in given-before-new for the canonical order and new-before-given for the scrambled order (see sample item (3a)), while the given-theme condition results in given-before-new for the scrambled order and new-before-given for the canonical order (see sample item (3b)). After each aurally-presented story (accompanied by pictures), participants listen to the canonical and scrambled pair of test sentences (e.g. (2)) and choose their preference. Both tasks include 12 critical items and 12 fillers. Data were collected from 40 L1-English L2ers of Korean and 20 native Koreans. L2ers' proficiency was measured via a Picture-description task.

Results (see Figures 1 and 2): Natives overwhelmingly comply with the Given-before-New Principle, albeit more strongly when given-before-new order aligns with canonical order; their adherence to the Given-before-New Principle is thus modulated by canonical order vs. scrambled order. As for L2ers, they choose the given-before-new order ($\geq 75\%$) in the **given-recipient condition** in both the NP task and the Pronoun task; in the **given-theme condition**, however, they show a preference for the **reversed** information order—new-before-given ($\geq 61\%$) in both the NP task and the Pronoun task.

In sum, these intermediate-to-advanced L2ers of Korean exhibit a strong preference for the canonical order in both the given-recipient condition and the given-theme condition: Canonical order thus 'wins' over the Given-before-New Principle. We discuss the L2 results in light of syntactic complexity, frequency (canonical vs. scrambled orders), null arguments, and proficiency.

Sample Items (NB: bolding and italics for expository purposes only)

(3) NP Task (k=6 per condition)

a. **given-recipient** & new-theme condition

Chelswu liked **his English teacher** very much. **She** explained things in a way that is very easy to understand in a beautiful voice, so he never got bored in class. **She** was always kind and nice to him. So when **she** left for another school, he was very sad. He missed **her** very much.

(i) 철수는 그 선생님께서 편지들을 보냈어요. given-before-new [IO-DO]

(Chelswu sent *his teacher letters*.)

(ii) 철수는 편지들을 그 선생님께서 보냈어요. new-before-given [DO-IO]

(Chelswu sent *letters* to *his teacher*.)

b. **given-theme** & new-recipient condition

Chelswu hates **carrots**. Today at lunch time when he opened his lunch, he found that his mom had put in **lots of carrots**. When Chelswu has **carrots** left over, his mom always scolds him. So he thought of a way to empty the lunch box without eating **them**.

(i) 철수는 친구들에게 그 당근들을 주었어요. new-before-given [IO-DO]

(Chelswu gave friends the carrots.)

(ii) 철수는 그 당근들을 친구들에게 주었어요. given-before-new [DO-IO]

(Chelswu gave the carrots to friends.)

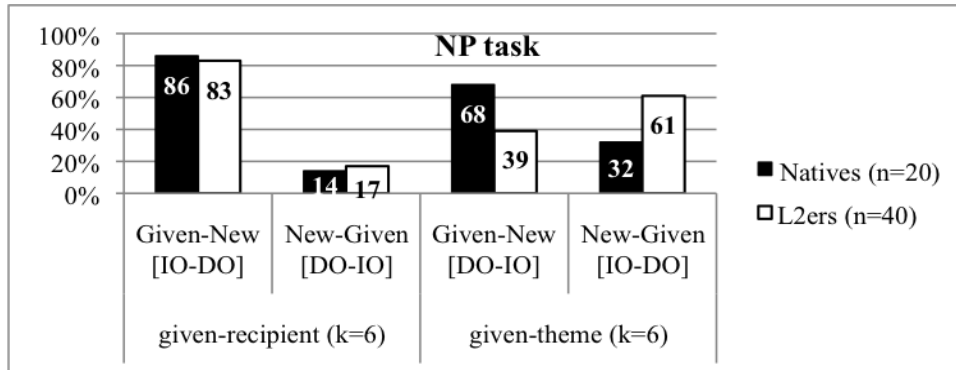


Figure 1. Preference by condition (%) in NP task

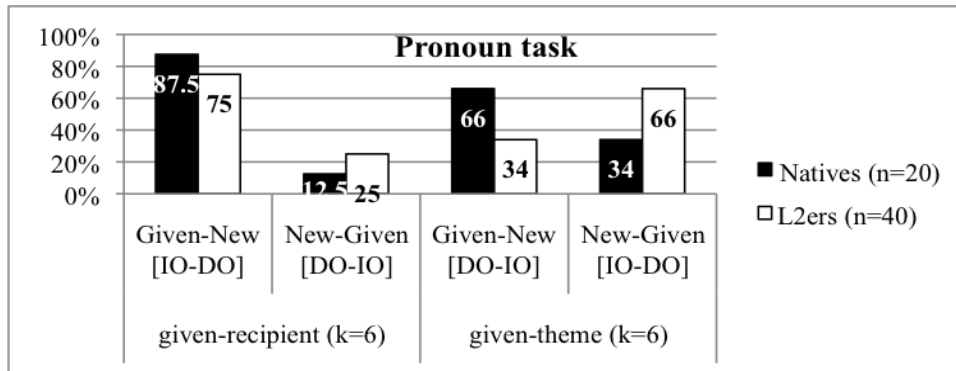


Figure 2. Preference by condition (%) in Pronoun task

References

Arnold, J. E., Wasow, T., Losongco, T., & Ginstrom, R. 2000. Heaviness vs. newness: The effects of structural complexity and discourse status on constituent ordering. *Language*, 76, 28-55.

Bresnan, J., A. Cueni, T. Nikitina & H. Baayen. 2007. Predicting the dative alternation. In G. Boume, I. Kraemer & J. Zwarts, eds., *Cognitive foundations of interpretation* (pp. 69-94). Amsterdam: Royal Netherlands Academy of Science.

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