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Title: Complexity and Systematicity in Heritage Grammars: The Case of Moroccan Arabic and Persian Heritage Language Acquisition

Abstract:

According to the Interface Hypothesis (IH) proposed in Sorace (2011) grammatical structures at interface are not likely to be acquired completely as they are complex and they integrate multiple linguistic components such as structures involving interface between syntax and pragmatics. It was predicted by the IH that structures at interface present difficulties to learners and are delayed in bilingual acquisition. This study aims at testing the prediction of IH through investigating the complexity of Moroccan Arabic (MA) and Persian (Farsi) (P/F) heritage language acquisition these groups have different immigration histories. Hence our research fits into a larger HL context. In this study we investigate the acquisition of pattern alternation in Moroccan Arabic heritage speakers (HSs) in France (15 participants) and the acquisition of light verb constructions and subject-verb agreement in Persian (Farsi) HSs in the US (10 participants). Regarding MA HSs the purpose is to study if semantic distinction of causativeness passive and reciprocity is lexicalized in the HL through using specified morphological patterns (Basic (P1 CCeC)) (causative (P2 CeCCeC)) (medio-passive (P5 tCeCCeC)) and ( reciprocal (P6 t-CaCeC)). MA learners are faced with multi-tasking as they need to acquire a specific morphological pattern and simultaneously need to conceptualize the semantic function associated with a pattern. The data was collected through a production experiment. Regarding Persian HSs the purpose is to study the interaction of morpho-syntax and morpho-semantics in the production and judgement of light verb constructions and SVA and the constraints affecting them. In the process of acquisition Persian HSs need to choose the correct light verb among different light verbs due to optionality and semantic constraints. Similarly SVA in Persian is not purely syntactic or semantic and is constrained-based. The data were collected through personal interviews questionnaires oral and written tasks and Grammaticality Judgement Test/Correction. Results of Moroccan Arabic HSs showed that semantic distinction realized by pattern alternation is neutralized in the HL. The basic pattern and periphrastic constructions were used predominantly in P5 and P6 targeted data therefore morpho-semantic distinction is neutralized. There were also statistically significant differences among the use of the four patterns. It is likely that the basic pattern is used as a default morphological device because it is unmarked. Results of Persian HSs indicated that HSs produce and judge light verb constructions and SVA similar to monolinguals and similar constraints affect their production. In addition they showed unique features such as using some innovative light verb constructions (i.e. an English preverbal element with a Persian light verb) different light verbs and different SVA. Some other constraints including the SVA rules of the majority language (English) conceptualization of the subject nouns and formal/ informal register etc. affect their production.

Overall MA results show that structures at interface are reanalyzed in the HL in a systematic way and Persian results indicate that the HL system works as an independent and rule-governed variety of Persian which includes its own complex grammatical structures such as interfaces.