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Knowledge of Reflexives in a Second Language by Margaret Thomas. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1993. 234 pp.

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Generally speaking, everyone fully acquires a first language, and most people can learn another language, although in the latter case, the ultimate speed and level of success can vary dramatically from individual to individual. The impressiveness of first language acquisition is marked by its rapidity, uniformity, and lack of explicit tutoring. Generative linguistic theory, its more current version being known as universal grammar (UG), attributes this marvellous achievement to a biologically-based preprogramming in human beings. UG conceptualizes the knowledge of language as a "grammar." This core grammar is represented by principles and parameters, with principles to account for the constraints found in all human languages and parameters to account for the cross-linguistic variation among different languages.

SLA researchers using UG as a theoretical model ask such questions as: Does UG operate in L2 acquisition, and if so, what is the L2 grammar like? The book entitled *Knowledge of Reflexives in a Second Language* by Margaret Thomas (henceforth MT) is essentially a technical report of a series of experiments on the acquisition of reflexives by L2 learners. The book, underpinned by UG theory, is based on MT's (1991) doctoral study which addresses an important theoretical question in SLA concerning the issue of whether UG principles are accessible to adult L2 learners.

Why reflexives? What do they have to do with linguistic knowledge and therefore with UG principles and parameters? In other words, in what ways are reflexives useful in answering the question this study aims to address? MT devotes Chapter 1 to a discussion of the basics of language acquisition and linguistic theory. Chapters 2 and 3 are explications of a set of UG principles collectively known as "binding theory" which accounts for the referential properties of noun phrases (NPs) by structurally constraining the interpretation of anaphors (e.g., reflexives and reciprocals), pronominals (e.g., pronouns), and R-expressions (e.g., variables). Chapters 4 and 5 describe and discuss the experiments MT carried out to tap L2 learners' knowledge of the reflexives *self* in English and *zibun* in Japanese. The subjects in these experiments are Japanese and Spanish learners of English (the ESL experiment), and English and Chinese learners of Japanese (the JSL experiment). The discussion and conclusion are found in Chapters 6 and 7. MT concludes that the results support the hypothesis that L2 learners observe constraints on reflexives, in the manner

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defined by Manzini and Wexler (1987) in the parameterized Principle A.

I will illustrate in a simplified and brief manner, first, how binding principle A, as discussed by Manzini and Wexler (1987), constrains the interpretation of reflexives in language, and second, how different parametric values are assumed for the interpretation of reflexives in different languages such as those investigated in MT's study, namely, English, Japanese, Spanish, and Chinese.

Binding principle A states that anaphors must be bound. In sentence (1) below, "himself" must refer to John and not to an entity not mentioned in the sentence.

(1) John likes himself.

To be "bound" is to be co-indexed with a c-commanding antecedent. "C-command" refers to a particular structural dominance relationship between nodes in the tree configuration representing the structure of a sentence, and in (1), "John" is a "c-commanding antecedent" of the anaphor "himself." Also, an anaphor must have its antecedent within the same clause. In example (2), the antecedent of "herself" is "Susan" and not "Alice." Although both NPs c-command "herself," "Susan" is in the same clause that contains the anaphor.

(2) Alice thinks that Susan loves herself.[1]

The construct "c-command" is posited as a part of a speaker's innate knowledge of language

As linguistic theory has developed, the relationship between constituents known as "government" becomes crucial to binding. Manzini and Wexler's (1987) revised version of binding principle A reads: An anaphor is bound in its governing category by a proper antecedent. (p. 431) The significance of the revised version is the development of the idea that the binding principles are parameterized. The specific definitions of "governing category" and "proper antecedent" are determined by the parameters of a particular language. The governing category parameter states that a reflexive must be bound within the minimal category which contains the reflexive, its governor, and a c-commanding antecedent, and must have a subject (for English reflexives, for example), or an INFL (for Spanish reflexives), or a Tense, referential Tense, or root Tense (for Japanese and Chinese reflexives), since UG sanctions an array of parametric values that are instantiated differently in different languages.

Going back to sentence (2), note that only the closer NP, "Susan," can bind the reflexive "herself" in English. English and Spanish allow only a local antecedent. In contrast, the Japanese reflexive *zibun* allows either local or long distance binding. This means that in a Japanese translation of (2), either the closer NP "Susan" or the more distant NP "Alice" can be the antecedent of the reflexive. The Chinese reflexive *ziji* also allows either local or long distance binding.

The "proper antecedent" parameter specifies whether the antecedent of a reflexive must be a subject.[2] In English and Spanish, reflexives may be bound by a subject or a non-subject (e.g., an object). In Japanese and Chinese, only the subject may serve as an antecededent. English and Japanese instantiate different "proper antecedent" parametric specifications. Thus, we can understand why MT chose for her experiments the target reflexives in English and Japanese and the four groups of L1 speakers of English, Japanese, Spanish, and Chinese. This design will fill out the experimental paradigm with learners whose L1s have different parametric settings from those of the target languages.

Is UG accessible to adult L2 learners? MT answers the question by examining the learners' interpretations of reflexives in the L2. MT's three hypotheses are as follows:

Hypothesis A: UG is unavailable. L2 learners do not consult UG principles and parameters to constrain coreference relations between anaphors and antecedents. Instead, they may concern themselves with astructural considerations such as pragmatics or adopt strategies such as "minimal distance" to interpret anaphors in the L2.

Hypothesis B: UG is available as instantiated in L1. The interpretation of anaphors in the L2 is limited to the parameter settings of the L1. L2 learners will make mistakes if the parametric values of the L2 and L1 are different and will not make mistakes if they are the same.

Hypothesis C: UG is fully available. Coreference relationships are constrained by the parameters sanctioned by UG. Learners may employ the subset principle[3], or let the L1 mediate in some complex manner, while the learners re-set parameters as defined by UG.

In the ESL experiment (described in Chapter 4), the subjects are adult learners of English with either Japanese (n=70) or Spanish (n=62) as a native language, and the control group (n=21) is composed of native speakers of English. They were asked to complete a multiple-choice comprehension task to resolve anaphors in English. There were five types of test sentences, with English reflexives in different syntactic structures (three tokens of each type). These sentence types together weave an intricate checking mechanism for structural interpretations and minimal distance strategies (Hypothesis A), L1 parametric instantiation (Hypothesis B), and parameter re-setting (Hypothesis C).

A Type I sentence contains a complement clause, in which there are two candidate antecedents for the reflexive--a local NP and a long distance NP. Both are subject NPs, which c-command and precede the reflexive. (Japanese allows either local or long-distance binding; English and Spanish allow local binding only.)

A Type II sentence contains a relative clause. Of the two candidate antecedents, one is the subject of the matrix clause, and the other the subject of the relative clause. The reflexive appears in the matrix clause. Taken together, Types I and II test Hypothesis A for astructural interpretation and Hypotheses B and C for the definition of the governing category.

Type III sentences are simple clauses. The two candidate antecedents are the clausal subject and a non-subject NP. Type III investigates L2 learners' proper antecedent parameter settings. (Japanese allows only subject antecedents; Spanish allows subject or non-subject antecedents.)

Type IV sentences are simple sentences which investigate whether an NP with a lexical subject defines the governing category for a reflexive. The reflexive appears inside a "picture NP" with a lexical subject. One candidate antecedent is the lexical subject of the picture NP, and the other is the matrix subject. Both c-command and precede the reflexive. (The governing category parameter setting in both Japanese and Spanish sanction binding by either antecedent NP in Type IV, whereas English permits only an NP with a lexical subject.)

In Type V sentences, the reflexive appears inside a prepositional phrase which in turn is a complement of a direct object NP. One candidate antecedent is an indirect object which c-commands the reflexive. The other is the object of an additional PP complement of the direct object. (MT discusses the theoretical difficulties in this case of non-c-command (cf. pp. 79-80, 179-181)).

After a careful and meticulous analysis of the data, MT concludes that these data provide evidence for UG-sanctioned grammars of anaphora among L2 learners. Moreover, she points out that Hypothesis C is challenged in the case of Type IV sentences. The control group does not unanimously maintain the unmarked governing category parameter setting as predicted and learners' "clausal subject only" responses are not accounted for (cf. pp. 97-99). In Type V sentences, there are inadequacies in the definition of c-command, or the configurational analysis assumed (cf. p.99 for patterns of response.)

To address these remaining issues, MT undertakes a second study on the Japanese reflexive *zibun* (the JSL experiment). The JSL experiment (described in Chapter 5) parallels the ESL experiment. In the JSL experiment, the subjects are adult learners of Japanese with either English (n=34) or Chinese (n=8) as a native language. There is also a control group (n=10) of native speakers of Japanese. Subjects were asked to complete a multiple-choice comprehension task to interpret the reflexive *zibun*. There were three types of test sentences, Types VI, VII, and VIII, with four tokens in each Type.

Type VI is similar in structure to Type I. *Zibun* appears in non-subject position inside a finite subordinate clause. The two candidate antecedents, the long-distance matrix subject and the local subordinate clause subject, c-command *zibun*. English selects the unmarked governing category parameter setting of local binding; Japanese and Chinese permit either, but while Japanese native speakers prefer long-distance binding for *zibun* , Chinese native speakers prefer local binding for *ziji*.

Type VII, like Type III, investigates learners' setting of the proper antecedent parameter. *Zibun* appears as a genitive inside of a dative or an accusative NP in a simple clause. One candidate antecedent is either the topic NP or the subject NP; the other candidate is an accusative, dative, or oblique case

NP. English selects either a subject or a non-subject setting; Chinese selects the subject-only setting, which is also the preference of native Japanese speakers.

Type VIII investigates L2 learners' sensitivity to the requirement that antecedents c-command anaphors. A Type VIII sentence is a simple clause with a genitive determiner inside the subject NP. *Zibun* appears as a genitive determiner inside a dative or accusative NP. The head of the subject NP c-commands *zibun*.

MT concludes that the results of the JSL experiment do not contradict Hypothesis C of the ESL experiment. However, she points out that the results have generated questions which require further investigation. For example, what is the role of the L1 grammar in L2 parameter setting (cf. Hypothesis B)? English and Chinese speaking L2 learners differ in their interpretations of *zibun* in ways suggestive of L1 influence. In Type VI sentences, where *zibun* appears in tensed subordinate clauses, English speaking learners of low/mid proficiency level bind *zibun* locally; the advanced English-speaking learners either bind *zibun* locally or permit local or long-distance antecedents. Can it be assumed that the learners are re-setting parameters to approximate that of the L2? In Type VII, some English speakers allow either a subject or non-subject antecedent, but no Chinese speaker consistently allows non-subject antecedents to bind *zibun*, a fact arguably due to a similar grammar of the Chinese reflexive *ziji*.

Half the Chinese speaking learners permit only long-distance binding (which Hypothesis C does not predict) and the native speakers also prefer long distance binding in Type VI. It is plausible that preferences not constrained by UG-sanctioned parameters interact with formal constraints in the binding of *zibun*. Responses to Type VI present a challenge to Hypothesis C. The comprehension task records subjects' preferences, rather than their underlying grammars. Also, the experimental data do not always distinguish between preferences and parameter settings. This happens in both experiments. For example, the preferences for local binding for Type I sentences may reflect true UG constraints for some learners or a dispreference of long distance binding for others. While such a preference is plausible, under-reporting of every admissible interpretation of a reflexive can be induced by sentence types not exhaustively reflecting all possible coreference possibilities that the learners' grammars generate. For example, Type VI and Type VII sentences may exaggerate the incidence of responses not sanctioned by UG, and Type VIII sentences may understate the incidence of non-UG-sanctioned responses. MT points out that the subject pool in the JSL experiment is small and the subjects' proficiency is not defined systematically in every case. Thus, the data do not fully represent the possible range of L2 learners' coreference judgment.

Cross-linguistic studies in first or second language acquisition can do service to theory by supporting or refuting the claims the theory makes. MT's study, in addition to contributing to the body of understanding of the working of binding principle A in finite subordinate clauses, has made prudent statements on UG and at the same time poses a challenge to it. The book is not primarily a technical

report. In the first three chapters, MT gives rich and lucid explications on language acquisition and linguistic theory vis-à-vis adult second language learning and UG (Chapter 1: Language acquisition and linguistic theory), the binding theory (Chapter 2: Constraints on the Interpretation of Anaphors) and research on anaphoric acquisition (Chapter 3: Acquisition of Constraints on Anaphors). The statistics are modest, not intimidating. There are appendices at the end of each chapter, and notes, references, and an index at the end of the book. It would be useful if the tables and appendices were also listed.

MT is admirably explicit in presenting theoretical basics, experimental intricacies and an interpretation of the data. I recommend the book especially to those advanced graduate students taking an interdisciplinary approach to the study of linguistics, who are attracted to linguistic theory but who are nonetheless put off by the language of formal linguistics. The readers will find MT's control of linguistics delightful.

NOTES

[1] Example (10) in MT Chapter 2

[2] The unmarked setting is "clausal subject only."

[3] The subset principle, as proposed in Berwick (1985), is a plausible principle of general learning which states that whenever a learning system is confronted with an option that would increase the class of objects that the system to be attained can deal with, the system will always make the most conservative guess to cover the data. A subset principle for language learning is proposed by Wexler and Manzini (1987) from which derive parameters with certain preset values dictated by universal principles of markedness. Such a parameter model of language learning sets out in advance all the possible grammars if they are in a subset/superset relation, and makes it possible for them to be innately ranked.

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