Interpretations of KARE with the quantifier antecedents by Turkish speaking learners of Japanese

Bárty Kahraman, Aydin Özbebek, & Mineharu Nakayama
University of Tokyo/JSPP, Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University & The Ohio State University/NINJAL

Abstract

This paper discusses Turkish speaking learners of Japanese’s interpretations of overt pronouns (OP). It reports the results of an experiment employing a multiple choice task. It is well-known that Japanese OPs such as kare cannot have a plural variable (BV) reading (Suwa & Hoji 1983; cf. the Overt Pronoun Constraint (OPC) (Montaibetti, 1984)). Kanno’s (1997) data supports the OPC, but Masumoto (2008) and Pimentel & Nakayama (2012a, b) do not, regarding English speaking learners of Japanese. Kahraman & Nakayama (2013) investigated Turkish speaking learners of Japanese and also found that those with lower proficiency accepted the BV interpretation of the OP, contra Kanno. However, Kahraman & Nakayama’s task was a truth value judgment task whereas Kanno’s experimental task was a multiple choice task. Thus, this study employed the same task as Kanno’s and Pimentel & Nakayama’s (2012b). Our results show that Turkish learners with the lowest proficiency (the second year Japanese group) accepted the BV reading 21% of the time. This finding is different from those in Pimentel & Nakayama (2012b) and Kahraman & Nakayama (2013). There are three possible explanations for the difference: a) the task difference was a factor, b) L1 transfer was at work, and c) even those with the lowest proficiency in this study had already acquired the knowledge that Japanese OPs cannot take quantifier antecedents.

Background

Kanno (1997) reports that English speaking learners of Japanese accepted the BV readings (i.e., took quantifier antecedents) of null pronouns 82% of the time while those of OPs only 13% of the time. 

Dare ga pro, PC o tsukatta to itta no to dare 82%
Dare ga kare ga pro PC o tsukatta to itta no to kare dare 13%

"Who said he used the PC?"

This was interpreted as evidence for obeying the OPC. However, Pimentel & Nakayama (2012b) report that their English speaking JFL learners with comparable proficiency to Kanno’s study, accepted the BV readings with OPs 58% of the time. Pimentel & Nakayama (2012b) considered L1 transfer as a possible reason because English has only OPs and they allow the BV interpretations. Kahraman & Nakayama (2013) reported that, intermediate and some advanced Turkish speaking Japanese learners could not appropriately interpret the OPs. If they had employed L1 transfer they would have correctly interpreted Japanese OPs. Since they did not, it was interpreted that they would have followed the default strategy that assumed that all pronouns can have the BV reading. However, it is not clear if the previous results are due to the default strategy or if the task influenced the pronoun interpretation in L2 Japanese.

Present Study: Hypotheses

A multiple choice task is used to uncover the reason for the previous results, i.e., whether Turkish learners adopted the default strategy or if the task difference influenced their pronoun interpretations.

Hypothesis 1: If Turkish learners employ the default strategy then they allow kare/kare ga pro, PC o tsukatta to itta no to kare dare 13%
Hypothesis 2: If Turkish learners do not employ the default strategy then they correctly demonstrate that kare/kan o no zy cannot have the BV reading, i.e., the results in Kahraman & Nakayama (2013) were due to the task influence.

Task

A multiple choice task in questionnaire form, the same task as in Kanno (1997) and Pimentel & Nakayama (2012b).

Materials

Type 1: 3 sentences containing the QNP antecedent dare with an overt pronoun.
Dare ga sensyu kare ga waaporo o tukatta to itten zy dusu kya.
Who said that he used the word processor last week?

C: Dare ga sensyu waaporo o tukatta to itten zy dusu kya?
Who do you suppose used the word processor last week?

a) same as dare
b) another person
c) both (a) & (b)

Type 2: 3 sentences containing the QNP antecedent dare with an empty pronoun.
Dare ga kare ga waaporo o tukatta to itten zy dusu kya?
Who said that he used the word processor last week?

a) same as dare
b) another person
c) both (a) & (b)

Type 3: 5 sentences containing the QNP antecedent dono X mo with an overt pronoun.
Dono dorabaa mo depaato no ma de kare ga takuisi o tomeru to itte imasu kya.
Every driver says that he will stop the taxi in front of the department store.

a) Dare ga takuisi o tomeru to itte imasu kya?
Who do you suppose stops the taxi?
a) same as dono dorabaa mo b) another person
c) both (a) & (b)

Type 4: 5 sentences containing the QNP antecedent dono X mo with an empty pronoun.

Type 5: 5 sentences containing a referential NP antecedent with an overt pronoun.

Kanno’s sentences were arranged in the middle of the questionnaire in the same order of sentence type as they appeared in our study, but here we discuss only the results of Type 1 and 3 sentences.

Participants

- 4 levels of 49 Turkish speaking JFL learners at a university in Japan
- 10 2nd year (approximately QNP 4 level 4)
- 17 3rd year (approximately QNP 3 level 4)
- 5 4th year (approximately QNP 2 level 2)
- 5 5th year (approximately QNP 1 level 1)
- 20 Native speakers (NS) of Japanese from Pimentel & Nakayama (2012b)

Results

Percentage results of both Type 1 and 3 sentences combined showed that the 2nd year group had the lowest proficiency with an acceptance percentage of 21% of the BV interpretation. This finding is different from what Pimentel & Nakayama (2012b) and Kahraman & Nakayama (2013) found, but in accord with Kanno’s claim.

Discussion

Our results are similar to Kanno’s (1997) (the lowest proficiency group of English speaking learners evoked erroneous QNP interpretations 13% of the time), but different from Pimentel & Nakayama’s (2012b) (the lowest proficiency group of English speaking learners evoked erroneous QNP interpretations 58% of the time).

• Both Wh-question QNPs (dare) and the universal quantifier dono X mo evoked correct interpretations though the latter seemed a little difficult.
• The number of correct rejections of answer (a) were not very different across the learners.
• The discrepancy between Kahraman & Nakayama’s and our study here suggests the task difference (i.e., the truth value judgment task was more difficult).
• The discrepancy between Pimentel & Nakayama’s and our study here suggests an L1 difference (i.e., English has only OPs while Turkish has both OPs and null pronouns, and Turkish OPs behave like Japanese OPs with respect to the BV reading).

The latter two above suggest the following possibilities:

a) Our learners with the lowest proficiency employed L1 transfer, or
b) Our learners with the lowest proficiency had already acquired the characteristics of Japanese OPs. (Thus, not all learner groups differed on their response rates.)

At this stage, we cannot differentiate the above two possibilities as to which is more plausible to explain the current results.

Conclusion

Turkish JFL learners did not have problems with BV readings with kare/kan o no zy in either Type 1 or Type 3 sentences, when a preceding context was not provided.

This is consistent with Hypothesis 2.

Our lowest level may have already acquired the characteristics of Japanese OPs (kare/kan o no zy).

Given the different results from Kahraman & Nakayama (2013), further investigation is necessary in Turkish speaking learners of Japanese.

It may be appropriate to employ two different tasks in the same study, using the within subject design, so that the influence of the task difference can be controlled.

The number of participants in the lowest proficiency level was small in this study. More learners should be tested.

References


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