Acquisition of Violations of English Principle B by Native Speakers of Japanese or Chinese

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Acquisition of Violations of English Principle B by Native Speakers of Japanese or Chinese

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APPROVED

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Abstract

This work focuses on Principles A and B of Binding Theory as applied to English. While English has a very strict interpretation of Binding Theory, it has a violation of Principle B with sentences with locative prepositional phrases and verb phrases of caused movement or perception.

In contrast, Chinese and Japanese have a very liberal interpretation of Binding Theory. The study is involved with investigating whether or not Japanese or Chinese speakers adapt to the English violation which is typically not taught in a classroom setting, but something acquired through natural exposure.

A custom survey was designed to see if non-native speakers accommodate for the English violation. Thirteen speakers of Chinese and eleven speakers of Japanese participated.

The Chinese and Japanese speakers did adapt to the English interpretations with the violations. Surprisingly, some of the native English speakers did not. There are two conflicting hypotheses: one is that the non-native speakers are using Universal Grammar along with assistance from L1, the other is that they are transferring the parameter value from their L1 to their L2.
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