〔研究論文〕

The Processing Mechanism of a Sentence with a *Kara*-subject Case Marker by Native Chinese Speaker Learning Japanese

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Summary

The present study investigated how native Chinese speakers learning Japanese process Japanese sentences whose subjects are marked with the case particle −*kara*. The particle −*kara* usually indicates the source of a postpositional phrase, but it is occasionally used as a subject marker. We conducted a processing experiment on active transitive sentences whose subjects were marked by either a nominative case -*ga* or a -*kara* with canonical (SOV) or scrambled (OSV) word order to 30 native Chinese speakers learning Japanese with a high Japanese proficiency (passed JLPT N1 level). A LME (linear mixed-effects) modeling showed that main effects of −*ga* and −*kara* case and word order were significant in both reaction times (ms) and accuracy (%). These results indicate that native Chinese speakers process *ga*-marked sentences faster and more accurately than the same sentences marked by −*kara*, and canonical sentences were processed faster and more accurately than the same sentences with scrambled word order. This result supports the gap-filling parsing processing model proposed by (e.g., Frazier 1987). In addition, variables of case and word order showed significant interaction in reaction times. This interaction indicated the *ga*−marked sentences with scrambled order took the longest. This is interesting, because sentences with a subject marked by −*kara* are not explicitly taught to L2 Japanese learners, the participants with high proficiency in Japanese seem to be able to process scrambled ordered sentences with a subject marked by −*kara* like a nominative -*ga* marked sentence, even with a higher average accuracy than 80%.

Key words: case particle, word order, sentence processing, scrambling, gap-filling parsing