Not just algunos, but indeed unos L2ers can acquire scalar implicatures in L2 Spanish

Robert Esposito1

1 Rutgers University

Author note

Department of Spanish and Portuguese

The authors made the following contributions. Robert Esposito: Conceptualization, Writing - Original Draft Preparation, Writing - Review & Editing.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Robert Esposito, 57 US Highway 1. New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8554.. E-mail: [rme70@scarletmail.rutgers.edu](mailto:rme70@scarletmail.rutgers.edu)

Abstract

This study investigates the acquisition of scalar implicatures in Spanish L2 learners through the perception of “algunos” and “unos”, Spanish’s two definite determiners. Although interchangeable in some contexts, “algunos” involves a scalar implicature (SI) “some, but not all”, which may be difficult for L2 Spanish L1 English learners since this distinction is not made for English “some”. I present 40 videos to participants, each of which contains four characters. The videos vary by number of characters performing an action (either 3 or 4 characters). After each video, the participant is presented with a statement about the video and must judge its acceptability. The statements vary by word (algunos or unos) and felicity. If L2 Spanish learners are sensitive to the SI of “algunos”, they will perform like monolingual L1 Spanish speakers. The data was log-transformed and modeled using the R package glmer(), which provided evidence that L1 and L2 Spanish speakers patterned similarly in their judgements. Given this evidence, it appears that L2 Spanish L1 English speakers acquire the scalar implicature from “algunos” and are able to make the relevant distinction between “algunos” and “unos”.

*Keywords:* scalar implicature, syntax, pragmatic, syntax-pragmatic interface, Spanish, L2 Spanish

*Word count:* X

Not just algunos, but indeed unos L2ers can acquire scalar implicatures in L2 Spanish

# Methods

## Participants

200 L1 English L2 Spanish and 200 L1 Spanish participants were simulated. L2 Spanish speakers were simulated as advanced L2 speakers to match the replicated study.

## Material

Participants were exposed to 40 videos in 8 conditions (n=5 per condition).

Each video had four characters. In one condition, three of the four characters performed an action; in the other condition, all four characters performed an action.

After each video, participants were presented with a statement about the video. The statement used either “unos” or “algunos”, and it was either felicitous or not. Participants were asked to judge the truth value of the statement and given a binary choice of “acceptable” or “unacceptable”.

## Data analysis

For our analysis, we used the R package glmer(). We investigated various models, taking into account word used (“algunos” or “unos”), condition (3/4 characters or 4/4 characters), and group (L1 Spanish L2 Spanish).

# Results

## Descriptive

The results are presented descriptively in Figure 1. Visually, L1 and L2 Spanish speakers performed identically. That is, it appears that L2 Spanish speakers accurately compute the “algunos” scalar implicature so that they may accept felicitous and reject infelicitous statements.

## Statistical models

The data was examined using the R package glmer() and nested models. The models compared included group (L1 Spanish or L2 Spanish), word (algunos or unos), and number of characters performing an action (3/4 or 4/4). Participant was added as a random effect.

There was a significant effect of word ( = 0.31, p = 0.00) and number ( = -0.07, p = 0.00), but not group.

# Discussion

The descriptive results and statistical models provide evidence that advanced L2 speakers can acquire scalar implicatures in Spanish. They are able to perceptually differentiate the felicitous and infelicitous situations for “algunos” and “unos”. In the future, investigating the felicitousness of their production of scalar implicatures would be ideal.