L2 acquisition of definiteness in English: non-target mapping of anaphoricity onto *the*

Previous research has shown that L2 English learners from article-less L1s incorrectly map the semantics of L1 demonstratives (DEM) onto the definite article (DEF ART) *the* (Ionin et al., 2012; Cho, 2016). However, what exactly is mapped still remains unclear. Based on the analysis of the semantics of definiteness, we argue that DEM and DEF ART share the notion of anaphoric familiarity, but they differ in how anaphoricity is computed. Following the Feature Reassembly Hypothesis (FRH) (Lardiere, 2009), we suggest that L2 English learners from article-less L1s map anaphoricity from L1 DEM onto *the* (see Cho, 2016 for a similar claim, but inconclusive findings). We provide evidence for our proposal by testing L1 Chinese and L1 Russian speakers' interpretation of *the* in L2 English.

The semantics of definiteness. Following Birner and Ward (1994) and Schwarz (2009), we argue that the meaning of definiteness is comprised of two notions: familiarity and uniqueness. Cross-linguistic evidence shows that languages differ in how they map these two notions onto forms (Schwarz, 2013). We argue that both familiarity and uniqueness are mapped onto one form *the* in English. In article-less languages, familiarity is mapped onto DEM, while uniqueness is mapped onto bare NPs (Jenks, 2015). Thus, it is the notion of familiarity that DEM and DEF ART have in common.

The notion of anaphoricity. Familiarity expressed by DEM and by DEF ART is most commonly realised in anaphoric, i.e., previous mention, contexts. However, anaphoric familiarity is directed to different antecedents: with DEM, the target NP is anaphoric to the *immediately* salient antecedent in the context (Wolter, 2006); with DEF ART, the target NP is anaphoric to the *most* salient antecedent in the context (Lewis, 1979). This means that both DEM and DEF ART are felicitous in contexts in which the antecedent for the target NP happens to be both most salient and immediately salient, as in (1). In contrast, only DEM are felicitous in contexts with two equally likely potential antecedents, as in (2).

The study. Based on the FRH and the cline of difficulty in feature acquisition (Slabakova, 2009), we predict that L2 learners from article-less L1s initially map the feature [+familiar], which is realised overtly both in the L1 and the L2, from L1 DEM onto *that* and *the* in English. In addition, since the feature [+familiar] is often realised in [+anaphoric] contexts, L2 learners incorrectly map [+anaphoric] onto *the*. In contrast, the feature [+unique], which is realised covertly through bare NPs in the L1 and overtly through *the* in English, is not always mapped onto *the*. This mapping has the following consequences: a) target use of *that* in contexts in which DEM are felicitous, (1) and (2); b) target use of *the* in contexts in which both DEM and *the* are felicitous, (1); and c) non-target use of *the* in contexts in which DEM are felicitous but *the* is not good, (2). In addition, if L2 learners map [+anaphoric] onto *the*, but fail to map [+unique], they will incorrectly allow *the* in indefinite contexts that are [+anaphoric] but [–unique], as in (3). In (3), the target NP is anaphoric to a previously introduced set through being its non-unique part. *The* is infelicitous in (3), as there is neither a salient nor a unique antecedent in the context. We test these predictions with L1 Russian (intermediate (n=23)/advanced (n=18)) and L1 Chinese (intermediate (n=41)/advanced (n=20)) speakers, and 20 English native controls. The participants completed an acceptability judgment task: they had to decide whether a sentence is an acceptable continuation of a given story.

The findings. The L2 learners across all proficiency groups were target-like in accepting *that* in (1) and (2) (Fig. 1). As predicted, the L2 learners were target-like in accepting *the* in (1), but they incorrectly allowed *the* in (2) and (3) (Fig. 2). The L2 learners across all proficiency groups differed significantly from the English natives in accepting *the* in (2) but not in (3). Unexpectedly, the English natives allowed *the* 47% of the time in (2), where it should be infelicitous (Fig. 2). We speculate that the English speakers considered the

last mentioned antecedent in (2) to be salient enough to allow the use of *the*. Overall, our results suggest that L2 English learners from article-less L1s are affected by anaphoricity in their interpretation of *the*. Moreover, the effect of anaphoricity seems to be stronger for L1 Russian speakers than for L1 Chinese speakers, and more persistent in intermediate learners.

Example test items in the acceptability judgment task (note: target NPs were not italicised in the actual task)

Condition	Example test item	Target
Partitive definite: the target NP is anaphoric to the immediately salient/most salient antecedent	(1) Ken went to a small art gallery last weekend, and it had nine paintings. They were very unusual, and he looked at one of the paintings for a long time. • Finally, he bought *the/that painting* for his wife.	both *the* and *that* acceptable
Two-referent definite: the target NP is anaphoric to the immediately salient antecedent	(2) Simon enjoys cycling, and last year he bought two bicycles. One of the bicycles was heavy and difficult to ride. But the other bicycle was very light and easy to ride. • He rode *the/that bicycle* to work every day.	*that* but not *the* acceptable
Partitive indefinite: the target NP is anaphoric to a set through being its non-unique part	(3) Betty decided to get a kitten, so she went to a pet shop. The pet shop had five kittens, and she played with them for a while. • Then she chose *the kitten*.	*the* not acceptable

Figure 1: Acceptance of *that*

Figure 2: Acceptance of *the*
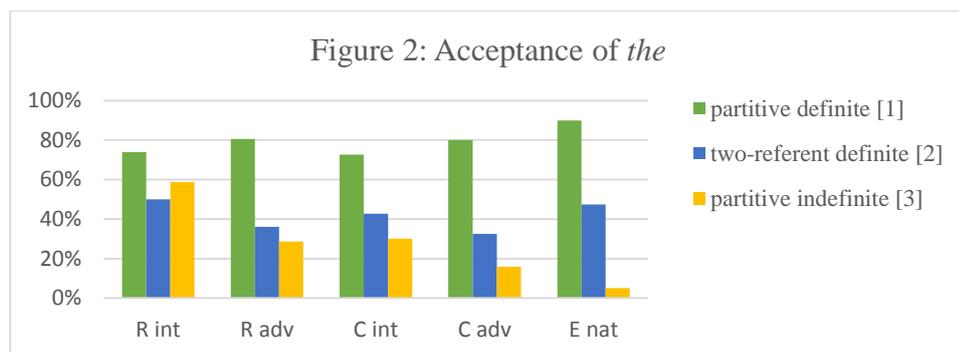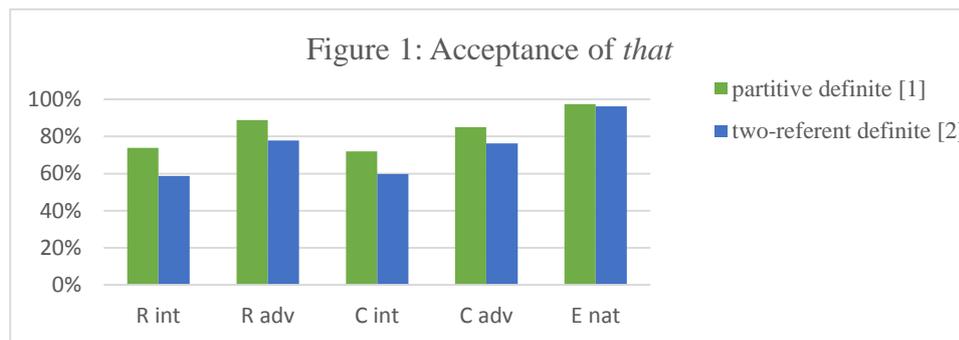
References: Birner B. and Ward G. (1994) Uniqueness, familiarity, and the definite article in English. BLS 20, 93-10. Cho, J. (2016) The acquisition of different types of definite noun phrases in L2-English. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 1–16. Ionin, T., Baek, S., Kim, E., Ko, H., & Wexler, K. (2012). That's not so different from the: Definite and demonstrative descriptions in second language acquisition. *Second Language Research*, *28*(1), 69–101. Jenks, P. (2015) Two kinds of definites in numeral classifier languages. In Sarah D'Antonio, Mary Moroney & Carol Rose Little (eds.), *Proceedings of salt 25*, 103–124. Lardiere D. (2009) Some thoughts on the contrastive analysis of features in second language acquisition. *Second Language Research,* 25, 173-227. Lewis, D. (1979) Score-keeping in a language game. In Semantics from different points of view, ed. Rainer B¨aurle, Urs Egli, and Arnim von Stechow. Springer-Verlag. Schwarz F. (2009) Two types of definites in natural language. Open Access Dissertations: 122. Schwarz, F. (2013) Two kinds of definites cross-linguistically. *Language and Linguistics Compass 7*, 534–559. Slabakova R. (2009) Features or parameters: which one makes second language acquisition easier, and more interesting to study? *Second Language Research,* 25, 313-324. Wolter L. (2006) That's that: The semantics and pragmatics of demonstrative noun phrases. Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of California at Santa Cruz, CA, USA