

Asymmetries in L2 English Article Omissions with First and Second Mention Definite Referents by L1 Thai Learners

อสมมาตรของการละคำนำหน้านามภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษาที่สอง
กับสิ่งอ้างอิงชี้เฉพาะที่กล่าวถึงครั้งแรกและครั้งที่สองโดยผู้เรียนที่ใช้
ภาษาไทยเป็นภาษาที่หนึ่ง

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Abstract

This research explores L2 English article omissions by 30 advanced L1 Thai learners. It addresses a current debate on whether variable production of L2 functional morphology stems from target-like (Lardiere 1998a; b) or non-target-like syntactic representations (Hawkins and Chan 1997). The data was elicited on a grammaticality judgment task and a translation task designed to compare article production in different contexts. The study predicted that L1 Thai learners would exhibit higher article omissions with second rather than with first mention definite referents in both the production and representation. It is assumed that L2 functional parameters not instantiated in the L1 are unattainable by L1 Thai speakers. In line with Lyons' (1999) notion of definiteness, it is speculated that L1 Thai learners do not possess the feature [Def] in their grammar, causing their article production not to be syntactically motivated. The L2 learners' article use was presumably the effect of referent salience (Trenkic and Pongpairroj 2013), which would be constrained by limited

cognitive resources (Almor 1999). The predictions of the deficit syntax notion were confirmed by the statistical results from a dependent t-test ($p < .001$). As the observed pattern of article omissions is taken to indicate the lack of articles in the learners' grammatical representation, the results contradict the syntax-morphology mapping problem view.

Key words: asymmetries, article omissions, first and second mention definite referents, L2 English, L1 Thai

บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้ศึกษาการละคำนำหน้านามในภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษาที่สอง โดยผู้เรียนนี้ใช้ภาษาไทยเป็นภาษาที่หนึ่งซึ่งมีสมัพริภาพภาษาอังกฤษระดับสูง จำนวน 30 คน งานนี้เกี่ยวข้องกับการอภิปรายในปัจจุบันที่ว่าการผลิตลักษณะแปรหน่วยคำทางไวยากรณ์ในภาษาที่สองเกิดจากรูปแทนทางไวยากรณ์ที่เหมือนเป้าหมาย (Lardiere 1998a, b) หรือไม่เหมือนเป้าหมาย (Hawkins and Chan 1997) ข้อมูลถูกดึงมาจากการทดสอบการตัดสินใจทางไวยากรณ์และการทดสอบแปลที่ออกแบบเพื่อเปรียบเทียบการผลิตคำนำหน้านามในบริบทที่ต่างกัน งานวิจัยนี้คาดการณ์ว่าผู้เรียนที่ใช้ภาษาไทยเป็นภาษาที่หนึ่งจะละคำนำหน้านามกับสิ่งอ้างอิงชี้เฉพาะที่กล่าวถึงครั้งที่สองมากกว่าครั้งแรกทั้งในการผลิตและรูปแทน มีการสันนิษฐานว่าผู้พูดภาษาไทยเป็นภาษาที่หนึ่งจะไม่สามารถรับกรอบค่าทางไวยากรณ์ในภาษาที่สอง (L2 functional parameters) ที่ไม่ปรากฏในภาษาที่หนึ่งได้ การศึกษาคาดว่าผู้เรียนภาษาไทยเป็นภาษาที่หนึ่งไม่มีลักษณะ [ชี้เฉพาะ] ในไวยากรณ์ของตนอันเป็นสาเหตุให้การผลิตคำนำหน้านามไม่ได้เกิดจากไวยากรณ์ ซึ่งสอดคล้องกับแนวคิดเรื่องการชี้เฉพาะ (definiteness) ของ Lyons (1999) สันนิษฐานได้ว่าการใช้คำนำหน้านามของผู้เรียนภาษาที่สองเหล่านี้เป็นผลจากความเด่นของสิ่งอ้างอิง (Trenkic และ Pongpaibroj 2013) ซึ่งจะถูกบังคับโดยเงื่อนไขของทรัพยากรปริธานซึ่งมีขีดจำกัด (Almor 1999) การคาดการณ์ของแนวคิดทางด้าน

ไวยากรณ์ที่บกพร่องได้รับการยืนยันโดยผลทางสถิติจากการทดสอบค่าที่ ($p < .001$) เนื่องจากรูปแบบที่สังเกตได้เกี่ยวกับการละค่านำหน้านามชี้ให้เห็นถึงการไม่มีค่านำหน้านามในรูปแบบแทนทางไวยากรณ์ของผู้เรียน ผลการวิจัยจึงขัดแย้งกับแนวคิดเกี่ยวกับการแทนไวยากรณ์หน่วยคำ

คำสำคัญ: อสมมาตร, การละค่านำหน้านาม, สิ่งอ้างถึงชี้เฉพาะที่กล่าวถึงครั้งแรกและครั้งที่สอง, ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาที่สอง, ภาษาไทยเป็นภาษาที่หนึ่ง

Introduction

Variability in second language (L2) production of functional features refers to L2 omissions and/or substitutions of grammatical morphemes. This phenomenon is notorious among L2 learners, even among adult learners (Lardiere 2000; Prévost and White 2000; Hawkins 2000, 2001; Ionin and Wexler 2002; White 2003a; b; Jiang 2004; White et al. 2004; Ellis 2009; among others). Proposals have been made as to why post-childhood learners encounter considerable problems in producing some aspects of L2 functional features.

One aspect of English commonly known to cause persistent difficulties to L2 learners is English articles (Robertson 2000; Butler 2002; Dirdal 2005; Trenkic 2007, 2008; Ionin, Ko and Wexler 2004; Goad and White 2004; Sharma 2005; Ionin 2006; Snape 2006; among others). Variable production of English articles has also been widely attested among native speakers of Thai (Oller & Redding 1971; Srioutai 2001; Pongpairaj 2004, 2007, 2013; Trenkic and Pongpairaj 2013).

The aim of this article is to investigate variable use of English articles in terms of article omissions in different contexts, i.e. first and second mention definite referential contexts by L1 Thai learners.

The organization of the paper is as follows. Following the introduction, Section 2 discusses two perspectives on L2 variable production of functional features. Section 3 presents the notion of definiteness. Section 4 concerns definite referents in Thai and English. Section 5 looks into previous studies of English article omissions. It is shown why L2 omissions of articles with first and second mention definite referents need to be investigated. Section 6 presents the hypotheses and Section 7 describes the methodology employed to explore omissions in the said contexts. Section 8 presents the predictions. Section 9 discusses the findings and implications based on the theoretical assumptions. Section 10 concludes the study.

Literature Review

1. Two perspectives on L2 variable production of functional features

Two perspectives in generative grammar assume causes of variability in L2 production of functional features. The first view attributes variability to target-like syntactic representations in L2 production whereas the alternate notion postulates that non-target-like syntactic representations cause the said problems.

According to the first perspective, L2 learners' syntax is assumed to be fully specified although L2 functional morphemes are not present in their native language. It is not always the case that inappropriate L2 production means L2 learners' syntax is defective. Variability in production occurs due to problems in accessing the representations or inappropriate mapping between syntax and morphology although L2 learners' grammar is fully specified. L2

acquisition is postulated to be under Universal Grammar (UG) (Chomsky 1986) and occurs due to the learners' innate knowledge. Non-existence of an L2 grammatical feature in the learners' L1 does not lead to failure in L2 acquisition. It is therefore assumed that L2 variable production of functional features occurs on the surface, i.e. morphology, not in the syntactic representations. The Missing Surface Inflection Hypothesis (MSIH) is a hypothesis based on this account (Haznedar and Schwartz 1997; Herschensohn 2001; Herschensohn and Stevenson 2003; Ionin and Wexler 2002; Lardiere 1998a; b; 2000; Prévost and White 1999, 2000; Sorace 2000; White et al. 2004; Bergeron-Matoba 1997; among others).

An illustrative example supporting this hypothesis is Lardiere (1998a). The study showed that the Chinese speaker in the study had problems supplying English past tense marking and agreement of third person singulars. However, she did not seem to have problems with features related to inflection such as nominative case assignments (i.e. subject pronouns) and the position of thematic verbs in negative contexts. It is claimed that, as these features are associated with inflection, appropriate production of these features implies the L2 learner's grammatical representation of English inflection. Therefore, the learner is assumed to possess target-like representation of finiteness despite incorrect production of English past tense marking and agreement of third person singulars on the surface level.

The second perspective attributes L2 variability to syntactic impairment. Unlike the former concept, UG is accessible in L2 acquisition only partially through L1. Any L2 grammatical features not

instantiated in the learners' L1 pose the possibility of failure in L2 acquisition. That is, parameters non-existent in the L1 are presumably unresettable in L2 acquisition. A hypothesis favoring this account is the Failed Functional Features Hypothesis (FFFH). (Tsimpli and Roussou 1991; Smith and Tsimpli 1995; Hawkins 2001, 2003; Hawkins and Chan 1997; Beck 1998; Tsimpli and Stavrakaki 1999; Franceschina 2002; Hawkins and Liszka 2003; among others).

A representative research work in support of this concept is Hawkins and Liszka (2003). It was found that L1 Chinese learners' incorrect production of English past tense inflections was due to the non-existence of the feature [+past] in L1 Chinese. However, the Japanese and the German learners in the study did not seem to have this problem probably because of instantiations of this syntactic parameter in the two L1 languages. It is therefore concluded that, due to non-existence of this functional feature in Chinese, it is unattainable for L1 Chinese speakers and therefore the Chinese speakers' underlying representations of the English past parameter are non-target-like.

2. Definiteness

According to Hawkins (1991), definiteness is assumed to be a universal concept. Some languages syntactically mark this concept (e.g. English, German and Samoan) to indicate establishment of referents in discourse while others do not (e.g. Thai, Japanese and Russian). Definiteness has been discussed mostly in relation to languages with articles. Hawkins (1991: 414) assumes that the definite article signals "a referent exists and is unique in a pragmatically

delimited set (or a P-set) in the universe of discourse mutually manifest to the speaker and the hearer on-line.” Note that this claim is employed only with languages containing definite articles. According to Trenkic (2002), this assumption can be applied to definite referents in languages without articles. The definition can therefore be used with definite referents which are grammatically marked and those which are conceptually signaled.

3. Definite referents in Thai and English

Based on the notion of definiteness presented in Section 4, this section discusses how definite referents are conceptually expressed in Thai and how such referents are syntactically signaled in English.

Definite referents in Thai

Thai is an isolating language or a non-inflecting language. Articles, which are formal markers of definiteness, do not exist in the language. Most of the Thai nominals occur in a bare form. Interpretations of definite features or identifiability of referents are usually via contexts. Put simply, a Thai referent is generally semantically and pragmatically inferred as definite or indefinite through relevant discourse contexts (Lekawatana 1969; Stein 1981; Smyth 2002; Iwasaki and Ingkaphirom 2005; among others). For example,

(1)

student PROG³ walk go school

‘The student is walking to the school.’

³ ‘PROG’ refers to ‘Progressive’.

(in a context where there is only a student and a school in the scene)

(2)

Nid buy cupboard come CL² one and table come CL⁴ one

she put cupboard in kitchen and table in bedroom

‘Nid bought a cupboard and a table. She put the cupboard in the kitchen and the table in the bedroom.’

In (1), the referents ‘student’ and ‘school’ are definite since it is clear from the scene that there is only one referent each. In (2) the referents ‘cupboard’ and ‘table’ are indefinite when they were mentioned for the first time and definite when they were mentioned for the second time.

Definite referents in English

As the research explores article omissions with first and second mention definite referents in English, this section concerns these two types of definite referent in the language. The two definite referent types in English are anaphoric and non-anaphoric referents. A second mention definite or an anaphoric referent is a type of referent which has been introduced in the preceding linguistic context, usually by the indefinite article, i.e. a(n) + NP, and mentioned again by the definite article, i.e. the + NP. Therefore, anaphoric or second mention definite descriptions can be traced back to their NP antecedents. The two NP referents thus “corefer” (Poesio & Vieira 1998: 186) or “cospecify” (Sidner 1979).⁵ For example,

⁴ ‘CL’ refers to ‘Classifier’.

(3) Mary looked at *a doll house* and a teddy bear in a toy shop. She really liked *the teddy bear*.

According to Lyons (1999), the anaphoric NP referent “the teddy bear” exists and is unique in a pragmatically delimited set in the universe of discourse mutually manifest to the speaker and the hearer on-line. This second mention definite referent (*the* + NP) is preceded by the antecedent introduced in the previous discourse set with the indefinite linguistic encoding (*a* + NP).

A first mention definite or a non-anaphoric referent is a type of referent introduced for the first time by the definite marker, i.e. *the* + NP. Unlike the second mention definite referent whose definite status is determined by an anaphoric, this referent obtains its identifiability via context or extra-linguistic factors. These factors include immediate situation use, larger situation use (or non-immediate situation use), and associative anaphoric use (Hawkins 1978, 1991), as shown:

- (4) a. Pass me *the pepper*, please (at a dining table).
b. *The conductor* was brilliant in the symphony orchestra concert last night.
c. Have you seen this *movie*? *The sound effects* are spectacular.

The definite referents, i.e. “the pepper”, “the conductor” and “the sound effects” exist and are unique in a P-set in the universe of discourse mutually manifest to the speaker and the hearer on-line. In

⁵ Such anaphoric use is referred to as “reference backward” in Halliday & Hasan (1976: 7) and “retrospective grounding” in Givón (2005: 126).

(4a), the NP referent “the pepper” is definite through immediate situation use as it is physically co-present (Clark and Marshall 1992:38) between the interlocutors in the scenario of utterance. In (4b), the NP referent “the conductor” is determined to be definite through larger situation use because it is based on general knowledge (i.e. encyclopaedic or cultural knowledge) that there is only a single conductor in a symphony orchestra.⁶ Between the interlocutors, this definite use is “globally accessible” (Givón 2005: 102). In (4c), the NP “the sound effect” is definite through associative anaphoric use as it conjures up an association between a part and its components (or a trigger and its associates (Chafe 1972; Clark 1975; Loebner 1985). The referent “this movie” associatively links with “the sound effects”. In other words, the mention of the former triggers or activates reference to the latter.⁷

4. Previous studies on L2 English article omissions with first and second mention definite referents

There are a number of research works on the acquisition of L2 English articles. Since this paper explores L2 English article omissions with first and second mention definite referents, this section reviews research on this issue.

⁶ Clark and Marshall (1992: 35) refers to this kind of knowledge as “generic community membership knowledge”.

⁷ Givón (2005: 102) refers to this kind of definite description as “frame-based”. Some languages use different linguistic encoding for anaphoric and non-anaphoric referents. For example, in Lakota, there are two types of definite articles: an anaphoric article and a non-anaphoric article (Lyons 1999: 159-60).

Previous studies found omissions of English articles in the two definite contexts by L2 learners from different native languages. Robertson (2000) studied L2 English article production by L1 Chinese speakers. It was reported that the learners tended to omit the definite article with second more than with first mention definite descriptions. It was postulated that second mention definite contexts were more pragmatically redundant than the first mention definites due to the previous introduction and thus retrievability of definiteness in contexts.

In a similar vein, Trenkic (2002) reported asymmetric patterns of article omissions with first and second mentions among native speakers of Serbian. The learners were assumed to omit the definite article more in subsequent mention definites when identifiability of referents is recoverable. Žegarac (2004) explored the L2 English data from Trenkic (2002) and attributed the article omissions to saliency of second mention definites with respect to redundancy. The L1 Serbian learners possibly employed such pragmatic strategies with English article use.

Sharma (2005) also found higher omissions of “the” in subsequent than in first mention definite referents by L1 Indian/L2 English speakers.⁸ Redundancy of identifiability of referents is postulated to be the cause of the article omissions.

It is worth noting that previous research seemed to report the same tendency. That is, the definite article is omitted at a higher rate in second than in first definite descriptions due to contextually

⁸ The L1 in the study was the Indo-Aryan dialect.

pragmatic redundancy. The results from these studies were obtained from production data only. None experimentally explored definite article omissions in the two definite contexts from L2 learners' grammatical representation. By adopting the two contrasting notions discussed in Section 2 (i.e. the target-like and the non-target-like syntactic representations), the current research filled in the gap by addressing whether asymmetries of English article omissions with two definite referent types would be exhibited among L1 Thai speakers in both production and representation.

Hypotheses

Two hypotheses based on the two opposing perspectives were tested. Each made a different prediction of L2 English article production in the two definite contexts by L1 Thai learners.

H1 (the target-like syntactic representation): Variability in L2 English article production with first and second mention definite referents is attributed to syntax-morphology mapping problems, not non-target-like syntax.

H2 (the non-target-like syntactic representation): Variability in L2 English article production by L1 Thai speakers results from deficit syntax, not from accessing problems.

Methodology

Participants

Thirty advanced L1 Thai/L2 English learners participated in the experiment. Their English proficiency was determined by the Oxford Placement Test (Allan 2004). They were first-year students of

Chulalongkorn University from the Faculty of Commerce and Accountancy, the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Political Science. They had been studying English for a minimum of 9 years and a maximum of 14 years. Their mean age was 17;8. Biographical details of the participants and their OPT scores are shown in Table 1 (See Appendix C on biographical details and OPT scores of the participants):

Table 1 Biographical details of the L1 Thai participants

Participants	Age			Number of years of instructed English			Oxford Placement Test scores		
	range	mean	SD	range	mean	SD	range	mean	SD
Advanced L1 Thai learners (n = 30)	16-19;3	17.81	.69	9-14	11.5	2.5	150-164	156.83	4.56

Materials

Two tests were designed to explore definite article use in first and second mention definite contexts: a grammaticality judgment test and a translation test.

1. The Grammaticality Judgment Test

A grammaticality judgment test (GJT) is generally employed to look into the learners' underlying knowledge of syntactic structures. The learners' grammatical representations are accessible indirectly via their grammatical intuitions (Sorace 1985: 240). In this study, the GJT was used to reflect the L1 Thai learners' mental knowledge, i.e. linguistic competence of English definite article use in first and second mention definite contexts.

The GJT contained 30 items. 12 items were on the use of the article “the” in the two definite contexts (6 each). In each definite context, 3 items were on the correct use and the other 3 were on the incorrect use of the definite article. The other 18 items were distractors on different English grammatical aspects. Each sentence consisted of one underlined part and the learners were asked to judge whether it was grammatical or ungrammatical. All the items were arranged in random order (See the GJT in Appendix 1). Examples of test items in the GJT are shown in (5) and (6).

(5) The team won again. Now people are crazy about the goalkeeper.

(6) The boy has a computer and a radio in his bedroom. He prefers working on computer.

Item 5 shows the correct use of the definite article in the first mention definite context while the inappropriate use of the definite article in second mention definite contexts is presented in item 6 where ‘the’ was omitted.

2. The Written Translation task

A written translation task was designed to elicit English article use in the controlled contexts: first and second mention definite contexts. The objective was to look into the learners’ article production.

There were 12 sets of Thai texts, 6 spots of which contained English translation requiring the use of the definite article in first mention definite contexts and the other 6 spots were for second mention definite contexts.

As the participants had to translate vocabulary and employ different grammatical items in the task, they should not be aware that they were being tested on definite article use. Because of this, distractor items were not required. Like the GJT, the variables of the targeted NP referents in the translation task were all kept constant, i.e. concrete, countable and singular for compatibility (See the Written Translation task in Appendix 2). For example,

(7)

look book REL⁹ I just bought FP¹⁰ friend I COP¹¹
person design cover

‘Look at the book I just bought. My friend is the one who designed the cover.’

(8)

I always have torch one CL and fan one CL in
handbag

I use torch to find thing many in place dark and
use fan when weather hot

‘I always have a torch and a fan in my handbag. I use the torch to find things in the dark and the fan when it is hot.’

⁹ ‘REL’ refers to ‘Relativizer.’

¹⁰ ‘FP’ refers to ‘Final particle.’

¹¹ ‘COP’ refers to Copular.’

In (7) the referent ‘cover’ is definite although it has not been mentioned before. It is world knowledge that a book usually has a cover. In (8), the referents ‘torch’ and ‘fan’ are indefinite for the first mentions and definite for the second mentions.

The two tasks were administered in a classroom environment. The translation papers were distributed to the participants first. The reason why the translation test was conducted first was to prevent the learners from seeing the use of English definite articles in the two definite contexts in the GJT. The L2 learners were given 15 minutes to do the test and to hand in the paper once they finished it. Then, they were allowed to have a break for 15 minutes before doing the GJT, whose time limit was 20 minutes. It is worth mentioning that for both tasks, the learners were instructed to do each item as quickly as they could, and not to revise and/or correct their answers. The objective of having the L2 participants do the experimental tasks under time constraints was to lessen their chance of resorting to metalinguistic knowledge (Bialystok 1979; Krashen 1982; Han and Ellis 1998; Ellis 2003, 2005).

In each task, each L2 learners’ total number of incorrect answers was added up. The incorrect judgment items in the GJT and the incorrect definite article production were calculated relative to the total number of contexts where “the” with first and second mention definite referents were supposed to appear.

The statistical method employed was a dependent t-test (i.e. a paired-samples t-test). The t-test was used to determine the significance of the participant group’s grammatical misjudgments and

ungrammatical production of English definite articles with first and second mention definite referents (See details in Section 7).

Predictions

Based on the hypotheses in (4), the predictions were as follows:

1. If the assumption of the target-like syntactic representation notion is correct and variability in L2 English article production with first and second mention definite referents is attributed to syntax-morphology mapping problems, the following predictions could be made:

(a) L1 Thai learners will not exhibit asymmetric patterns of English article omissions in first and second mention definite contexts in their production.

(b) L1 Thai learners will not exhibit asymmetric patterns of English article omissions in first and second mention definite contexts in their representation.

2. If the assumption of the non-target-like syntactic representation notion is correct and variability in L2 English article production by L1 Thai speakers results from deficit syntax, the following predictions could be made:

(a) L1 Thai learners will exhibit asymmetric patterns of English article omissions in first and second mention definite contexts in their production.

(b) L1 Thai learners will exhibit asymmetric patterns of English article omissions in first and second mention definite contexts in their representation.

Results and Discussion

The results on grammatical misjudgments in the omissions of the English definite article with first and second mention definite referents from the GJT were compared across types and the distribution of the misjudgments is shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Omissions of the English definite article in first and second mention definite contexts by L1 Thai learners from the GJT

Participants	First mention definites				Second mention definites			
	proportions	%	mean	SD	Proportions	%	mean	SD
Advanced Thai learners (n = 30)	38/180	21.11	1.27	.151	77/180	42.78	2.37	.122

Individual learner proportions of grammatical misjudgment scores out of the 12 obligatory contexts for first and second mention definite contexts (6 contexts each) were calculated into percentages. The result showed a higher omission rate for second than for first mention definite referents, i.e. 42.78 % and 21.11%, respectively. That is, the L2 participants tended to misjudge the definite article use with second mention definites at much higher rates than those with first mention ones (See the test items of correct and incorrect use of the definite article in the two definite contexts in Appendix 1).

To determine the significance of the contribution of first and second mention definite NP referents to judgment of article omissions, a dependent t-test (or a paired-samples t-test) was performed on judgment of article omissions in the two definite context types.

On average, the learners misjudged article omissions with second mention definite descriptions ($M = 2.37$, $SE = .12$) more than in first mention definite descriptions ($M = 1.27$, $SE = .15$). The difference was significant $t(29) = -7.50$, $p < .001$, $r = .81$.

The results on English definite article omissions in first and subsequent mention definite contexts from the written translation task are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Omissions of the English definite article in first and second mention definite contexts by L1 Thai learners from the written translation task

Participants	First mention definites				Second mention definites			
	proportions	%	mean	SD	Proportions	%	mean	SD
Advanced Thai learners ($n = 30$)	38/180	21.11	1.23	.935	71/180	39.44	2.57	.898

Individual learner proportions of English article omission scores out of the 12 obligatory contexts for first and second mention definite contexts (6 contexts each) were calculated into percentages. The result showed a higher omission rate for second than for first mention definite referents, i.e. 39.44 % and 21.11%, respectively. Similar to the results from the GJT, in the written translation task, there was a tendency for the L1 Thai learners to omit ‘the’ with second mention definites at a much higher rate than that with first mention ones. (See appropriate use of the definite article in the two definite contexts in the test items in Appendix 2).

To determine the significance of the contribution of first and second mention definite NP referents to judgment of article omissions, a dependent t-test (or a paired-samples t-test) was performed on judgment of article omissions in the two definite context types.

On average, the learners omitted English definite articles with second mention definite descriptions ($M = 2.57$, $SE = .16$) at a higher rate than with first mention definite descriptions ($M = 1.23$, $SE = .17$). The difference was significant $t(29) = -7.10$, $p < .001$, $r = .80$.

Examples of incorrect use of the definite article are shown in (9) and (10) below:

(9) *Look at the book I just bought. My friend designed cover.

(10) *I always have a torch and a fan in my handbag. I use torch to find things in darkness and fan when the weather is hot.

In (9) the definite article was omitted. This might be because the L1 Thai learners probably thought it was clear that a book has one cover and so there is no need to use an article. In (10), when the referents 'torch' and 'fan' were mentioned for the second time, the articles were omitted. This was probably because the L2 learners assumed that the two referents were recoverable from the context as they were already mentioned. So, using only the two referents without articles was sufficient.

The results from the GJT task showed variable production of English articles by L1 Thais in terms of article omissions. Although article omissions appeared in both definite context types, it is worth observing that the article omission rate tended to be significantly higher with subsequent than with first mention definite descriptions

contexts, $p < .001$. Figure 1 demonstrates L2 English article omissions in 1st & 2nd mention definite contexts in GJT and WWT by L1 Thai learners.

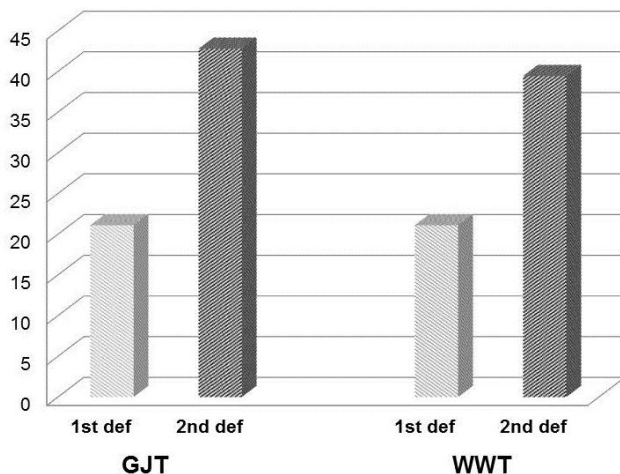


Figure 1 L2 English article omissions in 1st & 2nd mention definite contexts in GJT and WWT by L1 Thai learners.

The first prediction of the fully specified syntax is that L1 Thai learners will not exhibit asymmetric patterns of English article omissions in first and second mention definite contexts in their production. As for the impaired syntactic view, it predicted the opposite. As the L1 Thai learners omitted the definite article at significantly higher rates in the second than the first mention definites, the output from the written translation task contradicted the first prediction of the target-like grammatical representation but confirmed the non-target-like one.

In a similar vein, the results from the GJT, which focused on the learners' article underlying grammatical representation, also exhibited asymmetries in English article omissions in the first and second mention definite contexts. The omission rates in the two contexts from the two tasks were at a significant level. The second prediction of the target-like syntactic representation was falsified whereas that of the non-target-like grammars was confirmed.

According to the target-like grammatical notion, L2 learners' syntactic representation is assumed to be intact and problems in the production of functional morphemes possibly occur due to syntax and morphology mapping or accessing problems. Based on this concept, if the L1-Thai speaking learners had possessed correct syntax of definiteness in their representation, asymmetrical omissions of the English definite article should not have been exhibited in both the production and the representation tasks. That is, although variable production of the definite article occurred in the production, definite article omissions should have occurred with both definite referent types at significant levels.

As far as the judgment task is concerned, the learners should have judged the use of the English "the" appropriately no matter whether it appeared in a first or a second mention definite context as the learners' L2 English article use was assumed to be syntactically triggered. The specified syntax notion therefore could not explain the same patterning of definite article omissions that occurred in both the production and the representation tasks.

Both predictions of the non-target-like syntactic representations were borne out by the results. Considering the data from both the production and the representation tasks, what was crucial was the statistically asymmetric patterns of definite article omissions. The hypothesis of the non-target-like grammatical representations, i.e. that variability in L2 English article use with first and second mention definite referents is attributed to deficit syntax is therefore confirmed.

According to the non-target-like syntax notion, as a determiner is non-existent in languages not containing articles, it could pose a negative impact on the L2 learners' definite article use in the two contexts with respect to both representation and production. This syntactic category is not possibly transferable from the learners' native language into L2 English, and thus unresettable. It is then postulated that definite article use in first and second mention contexts is not syntactically based. This is in line with Grannis (1971: 275), which claimed that L2 learners of English often find English definite article use problematic particularly in cases where the learners' L1 does not contain this linguistic marker.

As the L1 Thai participants are assumed not to possess the syntactic category determiner in their grammatical representation, they probably have to resort to a particular strategic decision in both judging and producing articles in the two definite contexts. It is assumed that L2 article omissions tend to occur more with more salient referents than less salient ones.

The results seemed to be in line with those in the previous research (Robertson 2000; Trenkic 2000, 2002; Žegarac 2004; Sharma

2005). Previous studies on L2 English article omissions with first and second mention definite referents tended to attribute the asymmetrical article omissions to recoverability of contexts as well as redundancy of the definite marker. Explicit definiteness marking is redundant with salient referents. The definiteness marking is presumably redundant in second mention, but not in first mention definite contexts. As subsequent mention definite referents are information-redundant, they are more easily accessible than contextually non-redundant and thus less retrievable first mention definites (See Section 5).

However, Trenkic and Pongpairaj (2013) questioned the explanation of the referent salience based on redundancy of definiteness marking in different definite contexts. Firstly, referent salience is “a transient state: relatively inconspicuous referents may quickly gain prominence to become the most salient ones, while the previously salient referents fade away” (153). However, the data on asymmetric L2 article omissions from the previous research were all derived from offline data, i.e. not in real time. What is more, pragmatic redundancy of articles is indicated to occur in most contexts (see Hawkins 2004). So, uneven redundancy in different definite contexts might not be a convincing explanation (See detailed discussions in Trenkic and Pongpairaj 2013).

As discussed in 4.2, although both first and second mentions exist in the pragmatic set between the interlocutors, while anaphoric referents are imposed by linguistic encoding into discourse with former activation in discourse via reference to textually activated

referents (i.e. a definite referent matching with a previous indefinite one), a non-anaphoric referent is implicated via extra-linguistic contexts. It is likely that definiteness of referents via linguistic contexts is more salient than that through non-linguistic ones as they have already been activated on the surface level of the texts. Second mention definite referents are therefore considered more salient in memory than first mention definite ones.

Trenkic and Pongpairaj (2013) employed an online task to explore whether the salience effect is real by keeping constant the redundancy of definiteness marking. In this way, such redundancy was teased apart.¹² The results indicated that the L2 learners' article use was influenced by the effect of referent salience in discourse models. The results from Trenkic and Pongpairaj (2013) therefore "corroborate previous offline data suggestive of the salience effect for the learners but point against the view that this is due to the redundancy of definite marking" (34).

It is therefore assumed that L2 learners' article use would depend on the effect of referent salience in discourse models to explicitly mark the identifiability status of discourse referents. Referents that are more salient in memory (i.e. second mention definites) trigger higher rates of article drops than less salient ones (i.e. first mention definites). The effect of referent salience in discourse models would be constrained by limited cognitive resources (Almor 1999). That is, the number of cognitive resources employed for

¹² The instrument was an animated film called 'FishFilm', developed by Tomlin (1995).

Details of the materials and design in Trenkic and Pongpairaj 201

marking the identifiability of definite referents in the two definite contexts is not similarly shared. While more salient referents tend to be constrained by limited cognitive resources in memory, less salient ones need less, leading to higher article omissions with second mention definites (more salient) than first mention ones (less salient).

This is in accordance with Jarvis (2002), who claims that a tendency for L2 learners from languages without articles is to omit articles in contexts where the definite meaning is more salient.

Conclusions

The results from both the production task, i.e. the written translation task and the representation task, i.e. the GJT supported the deficit syntactic representation concept. The asymmetric patterns of article omissions occurred in both the L1 Thai learners' production and representation. Non-existence of the category determiner in the learners' grammars exerted negative influence and thus posed problems with L2 English article use. It was postulated that the learners employ the effect of referent salience in their judgment of article use in the two definite contexts. Such a strategy would be constrained by the L2 learners' limited cognitive resources. The result was the asymmetries evidenced. The target-like grammatical representation notion was contradicted as it could not account for the asymmetrical omissions of the definite article in the learners' production and representation. The exhibited phenomenon from the study has some implications for the issue of the causes of variable production of functional morphology among L2 learners.

As far as pedagogical implications are concerned, L2 learners

should be more exposed to contexts where the English ‘the’ is used with the two types of definite referents so they can apply the usage to real communication appropriately.

For future research, it might be worth exploring L2 learners’ English definite article use in other definite contexts, including comparisons of L2 learners’ English article use in both definite and indefinite contexts.

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Appendix 1

Grammaticality Judgment Test

Instructions: Indicate whether the underlined word/phrase in each item is correct or not. Please make a correction in cases where it is considered incorrect.

• Items with first mention definite NP referents:

• Correct use of the definite article

1. The team won again. Now people are crazy about the goalkeeper.

2. The little girl must be hiding in the kitchen.

3. What a beautiful bedroom you have! Where did you buy the wardrobe?

• Incorrect use of the definite article

4. The computer is working but I have problems with mouse.

5. After class, the teacher asked a student to lock door.

6. There must be something wrong with my car. I cannot use brake.

• Items with second mention definite NP referents:

• Correct use of the definite article

7. I left a book and an umbrella in the coffee shop. I got the book back, but not the umbrella.

8. I brought a ball and a doll for my dog. He chose to play with only the ball.

• Incorrect use of the definite article

9. Laura just came back from the department store. She bought a watch and a hat. She gave watch to her mom and hat for herself.

10. The boy has a computer and a radio in his bedroom. He prefers working on computer.

Note: The items are shown according to definite NP referent types with correct and incorrect use of the definite article. Distractors are excluded. In the test, all the items are arranged randomly.

Appendix 2

Written Translation Test

• Instructions: Translate the following sentences into English.

1. ดูหนังสือที่ฉันเพิ่งซื้อสิ เพื่อนฉันเป็นคนออกแบบปก
2. พบกันที่โรงแรมตอนเที่ยงนะ ฉันจะรอคุณที่ล็อบบี้
3. ฉันมักจะมีไฟฉายหนึ่งอันและพัดหนึ่งเล่มในกระเป๋า ฉันใช้ไฟฉายเพื่อหาของต่างๆ ในที่มืดและใช้พัดเมื่ออากาศร้อน
4. เขาใช้โทรศัพท์ฉันและทำจอแตกโดยบังเอิญ
5. ฉันซื้อตุ๊กตาดาวหนึ่งกับลูกบอลมาลูกหนึ่งจากร้าน ฉันให้ตุ๊กตากับหลานสาวและให้ลูกบอลกับหลานชาย
6. ตอนนี้ประธานกำลังเดินขึ้นไปบนเวทีเพื่อที่จะกล่าวสุนทรพจน์
7. หลังจากคอนเสิร์ตจบลงเมื่อคืนนี้ ฉันโชคดีมากที่ได้จับมือกับวาทยากร
8. ฉันลองเสื้อแจ็กเก็ตตัวหนึ่งและสเวตเตอร์ตัวหนึ่งในร้านนั้น ในที่สุดฉันตัดสินใจซื้อแจ็กเก็ตแต่ไม่ซื้อสเวตเตอร์
9. เธอช่วยหยิบโค้กกระป๋องหนึ่งจากตู้เย็นให้ฉันหน่อยได้ไหม

Note: Appropriate translations are shown below. The items are classified according to definite NP referent types.

• Items with first mention definites:

1. Look at the book I just bought. My friend was the one who designed the cover.
2. Let's meet at the hotel at noon. I'll wait for you at the lobby.
4. He used my phone and then accidentally broke the screen.
6. The chairperson is now walking up to the stage to give a speech.
7. After the concert ended last night, I was so lucky to shake hands with the conductor.
9. Could you bring me a Coke from the fridge?

• Items with second mention definites.

3. I always have a torch and a fan in my handbag. I use the torch to find things in

the dark and the fan when it is hot.

5. I bought a doll and a ball from that shop. I gave my niece the doll and my nephew the ball.

8. I tried a jacket and a sweater in that shop. Finally I decided to buy the jacket but not the sweater.

Appendix 3

Biographical data and Oxford Placement Test scores of the participants

Participants	Age	Number of years of instructed English	Natural exposure to English	OPT scores
1	18;2	12	-	163
2	17;5	12	-	161
3	18;5	10	-	155
4	18;8	12	3 months	152
5	18	12	3 months	161
6	16.1	12	-	166
7	17;9	14	-	159
8	17;11	14	-	156
9	18	10	6 months	159
10	17;4	12	-	168
11	18	12	-	163
12	17.3	14	-	167
13	18;2	10	3 months	157
14	18;1	11	1 month	153
15	18;8	10	-	159
16	17;9	12	-	161
17	17;11	12	1 month	158

Participants	Age	Number of years of instructed English	Natural exposure to English	OPT scores
18	18;3	12	6 months	165
19	18;5	12	-	164
20	18;2	10	-	155
21	18;3	12	3 months	155
22	17;4	11	-	161
23	18;1	10	-	162
24	18;6	10	-	159
25	18;2	14	-	168
26	17;9	14	-	164
27	18;3	12	-	159
28	17;11	11	-	156
29	17;9	14	-	155
30	18;1	14	1 month	165

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