

Accounting for article interpretation in L2 English by L1 Japanese adult and child learners

Kazumi Yamada
(Kwansei Gakuin University)

An influential study is Ionin, Ko, and Wexler (2004) (IKW) where the Article Choice Parameter (ACP) was proposed with the Fluctuation Hypothesis (FH) for explaining L2 learners' semantic knowledge of English articles. IKW (2004) argued that L2 learners can access the ACP while they fluctuate between the definiteness and the specificity settings of the ACP.

In previous work, Yamada and Miyamoto (2010) (Y&M) examined the acquisition patterns displayed by adult and child Japanese speakers of English within the framework of the ACP. The group level data, obtained using a forced-choice elicitation task, showed that the child L2 learners overused definite article *the* in a [-definite, +specific] context, as predicted in Ionin et al. (2004) and found in previous child L2 acquisition studies (IKW, 2004; Zdorenko & Paradis, 2008, 2011). The adult L2 learners, overall, chose the correct option with definites and indefinites. The results from Y&M (2010) are consistent with IKW's (2004) findings.

However, other L2 studies pointed out that either the status of the ACP as a theoretical construct or the validity of an ACP itself is unclear. For example, Hawkins et al. (2006) analyzed their data at the individual level and found no fluctuation in their L2 learners' English article selection. Trenkic (2008) stated that how specificity played a role in IKW's (2004) data needed to be observed more carefully. Receiving these indications, the current study re-analyzed the L2 data in Y&M (2010). We discuss the implication of the findings obtained in re-analyzed data for the ACP and FH.