

INTERLANGUAGE USE OF ENGLISH ARTICLES:
A CASE STUDY OF CHINESE, JAPANESE, AND KOREAN
SECOND-LANGUAGE SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH

By

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To Mom and Daddy

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I thank my parents, who encouraged me to keep working for my education. Specially, I appreciate Dr. Virginia LoCastro, my advisor, who gave me great support throughout my study.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

L1	First-languages
L2	Second-languages
SLA	Second language acquisition
UG	Universal Grammar
SR	Specific reference
HK	Hearer knowledge
Art	Article system

Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School
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This pilot case study examined the use of English articles by adult second-language (L2) speakers ($N = 8$) whose first language (L1) does not have any article system: Chinese, Japanese and Korean. The data collection consisted of the participants undergoing two 10-minute interviews, one with a native speaker of English and the other, with a non-native speaker of English to assess their use of English articles in spoken language. Prior to the interviews, the participants took a grammatical judgment test to assess their ability to use articles in written English in a monitored context. The findings show that the length of residency in the United States did not affect their article use. However, the frequency and accuracy of article use were influenced by whether the interviewer was a native or nonnative speaker of English. Further, the study demonstrated that the Chinese participants used articles more correctly than the two other language groups. All three of the groups employed the definite article more correctly than they did the indefinite article.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

My research interest, first of all, arose from my personal experience as a second-language speaker of English. I wondered why it was so difficult to learn the correct use of English articles and what was the actual system of English articles internalized by native speakers of English. These interests became stronger by an anecdote with Dr. Richard Larson, who was my advisor in my undergraduate degree program. From his teaching experience of graduate students from China, Japan, and Korea, Chinese graduate students figured out the correct use of English articles faster than did Japanese and Korean students. Since I heard about Dr. Larson's experience, I have wondered how these three-language groups used English articles and what interlanguage system they had for English articles.

From the previous research, I found that English articles have been one of the most difficult and confusing areas for second-language learners of English (Hueber 1985; Parrish 1987; Thomas 1989; Ionin and Wexler 2002; Ionin *et al.* 2004). In particular, it is axiomatic that the learners of English whose native language does have articles rarely acquire the correct use of English articles even though they are advanced speakers of English. Three well-known languages which do not have articles are Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. It is not hard to find cross-linguistic studies about the English article system of Chinese or Japanese second-language learners of English (Robertson, 2000; Kubota, 1994; Shimamune and Jitsumori, 1999; Muranoi, 2000; Butler, 2002; Trademan, 2002; Lang, 1999) while it was rare to find ones about English article use of Korean second-language learners (Ionin *et al.*, 2004; Nassaji and Swain, 2000; Lee, 1999). The use of English articles has been under-researched about Korean

second-language learners of English. Furthermore, there has not been one previous research study comparing and contrasting the English article use of the native speakers of these three languages (Chinese, Japanese, and Korean) as second-language users of English. Even though a few studies collected data from these three language groups, they did not focus on the comparison and contrast of their article use. They used the data from these groups to compare and contrast article use with another language group whose first-languages (L1) have articles, such as Spanish, Arabic, and Dutch (Thomas, 1989; Zdorenko and Paradis, 2008).

This paper reports on a case study which takes a cross-sectional approach about the use of English articles by these three language groups as second-language speakers of English. This study will focus not on the second-language learners' acquisition of English article system, but on the use of English articles by three language groups as non-native speakers of English. In other words, it will be a descriptive study about the use of English articles by adult second-language users of English of those three L1s.

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 briefly introduces two main theoretical approaches in second language acquisition (SLA), i.e. cross-linguistic approach (language transfer) and developmental approach (interlanguage), about English articles. These approaches are found in the previous literature that investigated the use and misuse of English articles by second-language users. The cross-linguistic approach particularly seeks reasons for the difficulties in the correct use of English articles by second-language speakers of English while the developmental approach

looks at the systematic developmental use of English articles by second-language (L2) speakers.

Chapter 3 presents a theoretical framework about English article system and the functions of articles for native speakers of English (Huebner, 1983; Ionin and Wexler, 2002; Ionin *et al.*, 2004). Following the description of English native speakers' article system, the chapter presents how previous research has discussed the use of English articles by L2 speakers.

For theoretical framework of English article system by native speakers, some previous studies are discussed. In the early period, Huebner's one-year longitudinal study (1983) about English article system is a useful place to start. Hueber presented semantic notions of English articles with two features: [\pm SR] (specificity of reference) and [\pm HK] (hearer knowledge). Depending on these features, there were four different contexts. They are explained in the following chapter. This study had been influential before Ionin and her colleagues suggested a new model of classification of articles (2002, 2004). For the recent studies, Ionin and Wexler (2002)'s study challenged the previous semantic feature ([\pm SR] and [\pm HK]) framework, and suggested a classification of articles based on three features: referentiality, definiteness, and existence in the world. Ionin *et al.* (2004) drew on the cross-linguistic parameter of article use based on Universal Grammar (UG) perspective. They provided a theory-based view of the knowledge of the use of English articles internalized by native speakers.

Chapter 3 further presents previous studies about English article system of nonnative speakers from the three language groups, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, to see how the same functions and system of native speakers are enacted in the

interlanguage of the three language groups. Throughout the discussion of the earlier research, the main issues and evidence of the interlanguage system and functions of English articles are elaborated. First of all, there are two theoretical hypotheses about the use of English articles by L2 speakers: Fluctuation Hypothesis by Ionin *et al.* (2004) and an alternative hypothesis, misanalysis of articles as adjectives by Trenkic (2008). The Fluctuation Hypothesis is based on UG approach; L2 speakers whose L1s are either with articles or without articles have accessibility to semantic parameters of articles just as L1 speakers do. However, their knowledge of article system fluctuates over the developmental stages of articles. In contrast, Trenkic (2008) is concerned with L1 transfer in the use of English articles by L2 speakers whose L1s were article-less. Trenkic's study found that L2 speakers whose L1s had demonstratives (*this/ that*) associated English articles with referential or lexical meaning. Therefore, in the development of articles, L2 speakers tended to use English articles like adjectives because of their L1 background of demonstratives. It caused L2 speakers to make errors in the use of English articles. The choice of L1 English article use is dependent on context in discourse while the use of demonstratives is based on lexical meaning like adjectives.

After presenting these two models of English article use by L2 speakers, I discuss previous cross-sectional studies about each L1 background from the three language groups to show what the studies found regarding the use of articles by these groups.

In Chapter 4, subjects of the three language groups and methods of data collection are explained for this case study. Chapter 5 presents the collected data focusing on the use of English articles by each language group in terms of the

interlanguage perspective. In the last chapter, potential research questions are proposed for future research.

To review, there are four questions that are discussed in this pilot study:

1. How has SLA theoretically understood the system of English articles by second-language speakers whose native languages do not have articles, specifically Chinese, Japanese, and Korean? To pursue the question, two theoretical SLA approaches are presented.
2. What is the English article system? What are the functions of the article use by native English speakers presented in previous studies? For this question, Hueber's (1983) semantic notions and Ionin and her colleagues' (2002, 2004) studies are reviewed.
3. How have previous studies examined the use or misuse of English articles by the three language groups? What did they find about it?
4. How do the collected data in this case study correspond to the findings of previous studies?

CHAPTER 2 THEORETICAL APPROACHES: LANGUAGE TRANSFER VS. INTERLANGUAGE

Second language acquisition (SLA) has focused on how adults learn a second-language (L2) and use it. Some main theoretical issues have been why adults have difficulties in the acquisition of a second-language and why they show different patterns in the acquisition of second-language from those in the acquisition by native speakers whose first-language (L1) is the target language. There are two different theories about these issues in SLA: a cross-linguistic approach vs. a developmental approach.

Cross-Linguistic Approach (Language Transfer)

Throughout the history of SLA, a cross-linguistic approach has been in the main stream since 1950s. The cross-linguistic approach concerns first-language interference in the process of second-language acquisition. Depending on first-language background of second-language learners, their efforts, errors, and patterns of use vary in the language production. Some SLA researchers strongly supporting the cross-linguistic approach believe that every phenomenon of SLA could be explained by L1 transfer (Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Jarvis, 2000; Myers, 1992).

L1 transfer in the acquisition of L2 has two different subcategories: positive transfer vs. negative transfer. Positive transfer means that L1 background actually has a positive influence in the L2 acquisition processes. In contrast, negative transfer means that L1 background interferes in the process of the L2 acquisition. For example, it is axiomatic that second language users of English who have an article system in their first-language acquire English articles faster and use them more correctly than others who have article-less native languages. The second-language speakers of English who have articles in their L1 have a positive transfer from L1 to L2 while the non-native

speakers of English with the article-less native language background have negative transfer from L1 to L2. The negative transfer is synonymous with language interference. Because of this L1 interference, the L2 speakers of English have difficulties and require more efforts and time to acquire the target language.

Many studies have investigated L1 transfer, specifically positive or negative transfer based on comparisons of the use of English articles by L2 speakers of English from L1 background with articles and without articles (Anderson, 1977; Master, 1988; Thomas, 1989; Odlin, 1989; Murphy, 1997; Trademan, 2002). Odlin classified the various potential effects that cross-linguistic similarities and dissimilarities could have. below presents Odlin (1989, 35-36)'s classification.

- 1) Positive transfer
- 2) Negative transfer
 - (a) Underproduction - includes avoidance (deliberate underproduction to avoid making errors)
 - (b) Overproduction
 - Production errors includes substitutions (the use of native language forms in the target language), calques (errors that reflect very closely a native language structure), and alternation structures (for example, hypercorrections)
 - Misinterpretation native language structures can influence the interpretation of the target language messages, sometimes leading to something very unlike a native speaker interpretation
- 3) Differing lengths of time for acquisition: considers the cumulative effects of cross-linguistic similarities and differences on the acquisition process (consider the length of time needed to achieve a high degree of mastery of a language)

Anderson's (1977) early study investigated errors of articles produced by Spanish L2 speakers of English. He concluded that many errors of English articles were due to

L1 interference. Even though Spanish has articles as English has, Spanish article system is different from English article system. Because of this difference, Spanish L2 speakers of English omitted an article or misused the definite article, *the* in indefinite contexts where their L1, Spanish required a definite article. In this study, L1 Spanish had a negative transfer to L2, English.

Master (1988) analyzed the article use of 20 L2 speakers of English. These subjects were divided into two subgroups; one group whose L1s did not have articles (Chinese, Japanese, and Russian), and the other group whose L1s had articles (Spanish and German). Master (1988) found that these two groups showed a different developmental sequence of English articles; one group whose L1s did not have articles showed a sequence of $\emptyset \rightarrow the \rightarrow a$ while the other group whose L1s had articles showed a sequence of *the*/ $\emptyset \rightarrow a$. Master did not mention which group developed English article system faster than the other. Therefore, Master claims it is difficult to tell whether L1s have a positive transfer or a negative transfer to L2, English. However, his study indicates that L1 transfer plays a critical role in the development of L2 grammar.

Thomas's (1989) study investigated 30 adult L2 speakers of English whose L1s had either articles [+Art] (Greek, Spanish, Italian, French, and German) or not [-Art] (Japanese, Chinese, Korean, and Finnish). Both [-Art] and [+Art] groups showed more accurate use of the definite article, *the*, than of the indefinite article, *a*. However, the average of the accuracy of use of *the* showed that [-Art] group was less accurate (81%) than [+Art] group (97%). In addition, [-Art] group produced more \emptyset than [+Art] group in the contexts which required *a* or *the* in English. This quantitative study indicates that article-less L1s have a negative transfer effect in the production of English articles.

Based on the evidence from the studies in SLA, there is a clear division regarding of the effect of the L1 languages of the participants in the studies. Even though there may be what appears to be obvious L1 influence on L2 acquisition, the cross-linguistic approach may try to apply L1 transfer to all phenomena in SLA (Thomas, 1989; Trademan, 2002). However, some phenomena cannot possibly be explained only by L1 transfer; Thomas' (1989) study, first, showed that both [-Art] and [+Art] groups showed more accurate use of the definite article, *the*, than the indefinite article, *a*. According to the cross-linguistic approach, these two groups should have shown different results in terms of accuracy of the use of the definite article. Trademan's study (2002) found similarities in the use of English articles by Spanish L2 speakers and Japanese L2 speakers even though the L1 background of these two groups is different; Spanish has an article system while Japanese does not. For example, both groups had difficulties in the correct use of the indefinite article *a(n)*. If there is only L1 transfer to explain the phenomena in SLA, as the cross-linguistic approach assumes, in Trademan's study (2002), the Spanish and Japanese L2 speakers should not have shown similarities in the use of English articles.

According to Gass and Selinker (1983), L1 transfer is a necessary factor to consider because it has been obvious that, depending on L1 backgrounds, the acquisition of L2 could be different in terms of acquisition time and levels of difficulty in L2 structure. However, it cannot be the only significant factor in SLA as shown in Thomas' (1989) and Trademan's (2002) studies. In addition to L1 transfer, there are other factors to examine in SLA such as motivation, types of instruction, and L2 speaker's aptitude. Unlike cross-linguistic approach, developmental approach focusing

on language system over developmental stages has recently been supported by many studies (Huebner, 1985; Ionin *et al.*, 2004).

Developmental Approach (Interlanguage)

First of all, the term “interlanguage” should be defined. It was first introduced by Selinker (1972). According to Selinker’s definition (1972), interlanguage is the language of L2 learners, and he hypothesized that L2 learners’ language is systematic.

Interlanguage does not have idiosyncratic patterns or errors. The developmental patterns of interlanguage would be predicted by its systematic rules. The interlanguage approach is based on human’s innate language mechanism proposed by Chomsky (1959). Butler (1999) pointed out that the errors made by L2 speakers were seen as evidence of the process of target language learning because these errors were based on the L2 speakers’ rule-governed systems. Therefore, since interlanguage was introduced in SLA (Selinker, 1972; Corder, 1978), SLA studies have focused on the investigation of L2 speakers’ output as evidence of their own systematic grammar. Huebner pointed out “synchronic variability may be a manifestation of diachronic change (1985, p.144)”. In other words, variability in interlanguage may be systematic during each developmental period.

The L1 backgrounds of Huebner’s (1985) and Master’s (1987) subjects were different: Hmong, Chinese, Japanese, and Russian. However, the data collected from these subjects showed similar patterns of development for English articles. According to Huebner’s (1985) and Master’s (1987) studies, L2 users of English overgeneralized *the*. Huebner referred this overgeneralization of *the* to as “the-flooding”. His study (1985) reported that “the-flooding” gradually disappeared in specific and indefinite contexts, during the developmental stages of articles. In addition, Huebner (1985) observed that

the indefinite article was used for contexts that did not require any article, or as a hesitation marker. (Huebner did not provide any data as an example for this observation.) However, over time, the L2 speakers of English began to use *a* in appropriate contexts: [+SR, -HK] (specific indefinite nouns): e.g., *She had a great birthday party for her three-year old son last Saturday*, and [-SR, -HK] (non-specific indefinite nouns): e.g., *She saw a cat*. Huebner (1985) found that *a* appeared later in contexts after *the* has been acquired by L2 speakers. At the last stage, L2 speakers understood the use of zero article, \emptyset . Huebner (1985) and Master (1987) claimed that *the* was associated with the semantic feature of Assumed Known to Hearer ([+HK]), rather than of Specific Reference ([+SR]) in the use of English articles by the L2 speakers. In addition, both studies found from the data that their L2 speakers rarely produced correct articles for generic contexts, which had the feature of [-SR, +HK]. In other words, L2 speakers did not use *the* in contexts that generically required articles. For example, in the context, *the United States*, the L2 speakers often omitted the definite article. Therefore, they would say “United States” without *the*.

Researchers (Lee *et al.*, 1994; Trenkic, 2008; Robertson, 2000) who supported the theory of interlanguage did not ignore L1 transfer in SLA. They admitted the influence of L1 to L2 acquisition as a necessary factor to be investigated (Lee *et al.*, 1994; Trenkic, 2008; Robertson, 2000). They claimed that the use of English articles by L2 speakers showed systematic rules over a range of developmental stages. However, their system and functions of English articles are influenced by their L1 background. In other words, they included both perspectives in one.

Further, the interlanguage approach supported the Theory of UG accessibility of the semantic features of articles by L2 speakers whose L1s were article-less (Ionin *et al.*, 2004). This perspective was mainly supported by Ionin and her colleagues. According to their theoretical framework, two-article system is, in general, based on two semantic features: specificity and definiteness. Depending on the language, the two articles are associated with either specificity or definiteness. Within this hypothesis, L2 speakers whose L1s are article-less have access to the two semantic features of articles during SLA just as English native speakers do during L1 acquisition even though they do not have any grammatical items corresponding to the articles of L2 English (Ionin *et al.*, 2004). However, during the developmental stages, the L2 speakers are confused by the system and functions of articles. Therefore, they first misuse the articles, but eventually to varying degrees they correctly use them. Ionin *et al.* refers to this as “fluctuation”. This “Fluctuation Hypothesis” was proposed by Ionin *et al.* (2004). It is discussed later in detail in Chapter 3.

In this chapter, the two main theoretical approaches in SLA were discussed: the cross-linguistic vs. developmental approaches. Recently, the developmental approach has been supported by SLA researchers, Ionin and her colleagues. This approach assumes that L2 speakers have their own language system which is referred to as interlanguage and their errors are rule-governed. On the other hand, the cross-linguistic approach assumes that L1 transfer is the critical factor in SLA, and the errors made by L2 speakers are not systematic, but idiosyncratic.

CHAPTER 3 FUNCTIONS AND SYSTEM OF ENGLISH ARTICLES

This chapter presents the previous literature about the functions and system of English articles as used in every talk by both native L1 speakers and non-native L2 speakers. First of all, the theoretical backgrounds of English article system and functions for L1 speakers are presented (Hueber, 1983; Ionin and Wexler, 2002; Ionin *et al.*, 2004). The developmental sequence of L1 English articles is, then, described from the previous literature (Brown, 1973; Zehler and Brewer, 1982; Cziko, 1986).

Hueber's semantic notions of articles (1983), first, are explained. Huebner's semantic explanation of articles is referred to as "Semantic Wheel". Huebner's (1983) notion of articles was prompted by Bickerton's study (1981). In a recent study, Ionin and her colleagues (2002, 2004) developed the argument of semanticity of English articles and provided their own classification of articles: "Models of Article Classification" (2002) and "Article Choice Parameter" (2004). Huebner's semantic features and Ionin and her colleague's classification of articles are helpful in understanding English article system and functions of L1 speakers.

Following the literature on the theoretical background of English articles of L1 speakers, the developmental sequence of L1 English articles is discussed. Brown's (1973) research was the first longitudinal study about the acquisition of English morphemes including the articles by L1 children. Then, Zehler and Brewer (1982) carried out a cross-sectional investigation of child developmental stages of English articles as L1 speakers. Further, Cziko's (1986) study proposed four developmental stages of English articles by native speakers, using Huebner's semantic features.

In the following sections, some earlier studies about the system and functions of English articles by the three language groups (Chinese, Japanese, and Korean) are presented. In addition, two theoretical models of the use of English articles by L2 speakers are discussed: Fluctuation Hypothesis (Ionin *et al.*, 2004) and misanalysis of articles as adjectives as an alternative model (Trenkic, 2008).

Native Speaker's System and Functions of English Articles

Huebner's (1983) study, first of all, may be the earliest, seminal study about English articles. Ionin and her colleagues' studies (2002, 2004) have been considered as more recent influential SLA studies about English articles (Trenkic, 2008).

Early Studies of English Articles: Huebner (1983)

Huebner's one-year longitudinal study examined three contexts-obligatory, optional, and ungrammatical-for articles. These contexts are defined by two features: [\pm HK] and [\pm SR]. [\pm HK] is whether or not information can be assumed to be known to the hearer while [\pm SR] is whether or not reference was specific. Huebner presented a semantic wheel based on these two features to represent the semantic field of noun phrases. The semantic wheel was taken from a personal discussion with Bickerton (1981). Bickerton briefly introduced semantic meanings of English articles in his book "Roots of Language (1981)". Huebner developed the semantic wheel based on Bickerton's initiative idea of English articles. According to the semantic wheel (Figure 3-1), English articles of native speakers appear in four contextual environments: (a) generic nouns: [-SR +HK] (*a, the, \emptyset*); (b) non-referential nouns: [-SR -HK] (*a, \emptyset*); (c) referential indefinite nouns: [+SR -HK] (*a, \emptyset*); and (d) referential definite nouns: [+SR +HK] (*the*).

2. +SR -HK Non-referential nouns	1. -SR +HK generic nouns
3. +SR -HK referential indefinite nouns	4. -SR -HK Referential definite nouns

Figure 3-1. Semantic wheel for noun phrase reference. (Huebner 1983, 133)

For generic nouns, native speakers use *a*, *the*, or do not use any article: *Birds fly*. Non-referential nouns mean nonspecific indefinite nouns. In this case, native speakers use *a* or do not use any article: *She likes cats*. The third category, referential indefinite nouns are first-mentioned nouns. Like the second category, *a* is used or none of the articles is used for the third environment: *She has a house in Gainesville. The house is small, but pretty*. The fourth environment for referential definite nouns allows only *the*: *I am busy with the midterm on Monday*. Based on Huebner's semantic framework of articles, Thomas (1989) presented the various environments of English articles, and examples for each (Table 3-1). The table was from Thomas (1989)'s study.

Table 3-1. Environments for the appearance of *a*, *the*, and \emptyset

Features	Environment	Articles	Example
[-SR +HK]	Generic nouns	<i>a</i> , <i>the</i> , \emptyset	\emptyset <i>Fruit</i> flourishes in the valley. <i>The Grenomian</i> is an excitable person. <i>A paper clip</i> comes in handy.
[-SR -HK]	Nonreferential nouns attributive indefinites nonspecific indefinites	<i>a</i> , \emptyset	Alice is <i>an accountant</i> . I guess I should buy <i>a new car</i> .
[+SR -HK]	Referential indefinites first-mention nouns	<i>a</i> , \emptyset	Chris approached me carrying <i>a dog</i> . (<i>The dog</i> jumped down...)

Table 3-1. Continued

[+SR +HK]	Referential definites previous mention	<i>the</i>	(Chris approached me carrying <i>a dog</i>) <i>The dog</i> jumped down and started barking.
	specified by entailment		I approached his front door and rang <i>the bell</i> .
	specified by definition		<i>the latest crisis; the top drawer</i>
	unique in all contexts		<i>The moon</i> will be full tomorrow.
	unique in a given context		Among employees: <i>the boss</i> ; among classmates: <i>the midterm exam</i>

(Thomas 1989, 337)

Huebner's semantic wheel of noun phrases was introduced in 1983; Huebner did not explain each contextual environment in detail, and he did not provide various environments for each. However, Thomas (1989) adopted his work and provided specific environments and examples for English articles. Therefore, Thomas contributed to a clearer understanding of Huebner's semantic features of articles.

In sum, Huebner classified English articles based on two features: *specific reference* and *hearer's knowledge*. From these two features, four different contextual environments are available for native speakers: (1) generic nouns: [-SR +HK] (a, the, \emptyset); (2) non-referential nouns: [-SR -HK] (a, \emptyset); (3) referential indefinite nouns: [+SR -HK] (a, \emptyset); and (4) Referential definite nouns: [+SR +HK] (the). Huebner's (1983) study provided a theoretical framework for English article system and functions in contexts later developed by Thomas (1989).

Recent Studies of English Articles: Ionin *et al.* (2002, 2004)

The studies of L1/ L2 English article system by Ionin and her colleagues such as Wexler, and Ko have been considered important in SLA. Their research was based on Universal Grammar (UG) approach to find a parametric system of articles. Ionin and her

colleagues developed Huebner's semantic features of English articles, the two-way classification of articles, and provided their own re-classification of articles, which was a three-way classification of articles (2002). In their study (2004), Ionin *et al.* proposed a parametric system of articles in languages having two articles like English: *a*, or *the*. The following section presents their argument and theoretical framework about English article system and functions of native speaker's article use.

Ionin and Wexler (2002): Models of article classification

Ionin and Wexler's (2002) article presented terminology of article interpretation as shown in Figure 3.2 (Ionin and Wexler 2002, 2). For the semantic meaning of English articles, there are definiteness, referentiality, and the distinction of *de re* and *de dicto*. Their paper pointed out that there were terms available for the semantic notions of English articles, but the previous research oversimplified these terms to provide basic definitions.

Much previous literature used a two-way classification of articles: specific reference [\pm SR] and hearer's knowledge [\pm HK] (Cziko, 1986; Huebner, 1983; Thomas, 1989). However, Ionin and Wexler (2002) devised a three-way classification of articles: definiteness (hearer's knowledge), referentiality (speaker's intention), and existence in the world (*de re* reading). Their paper did not discuss the obligatory omission of articles (\emptyset). Instead of using specific reference [\pm SR], Ionin and Wexler specially used different terms for it, *de re* and *de dicto*; the *de re* reading is synonymous with specific reference [\pm SR]. The *de re* reading applies when a noun has its specific referent in our world. The *de dicto* reading is available for a noun without any specific referent [$-$ SR]. According to the examples (1a - 1c), definite nouns are interpreted with the *de re* reading and they

are assumed to be known to hearer (*the cat* in (1a)). Indefinite nouns are necessarily assumed to be unknown to hearer and their interpretation can be either *de re* (*a cat* in (b)) or *de dicto* (*a cat* in (1c)).

- 1 a) saw a cat yesterday. The cat was drinking milk. [de re, hearer knowledge]
 b) Rosalyn has a cat. [de re, no hearer knowledge]
 c) I would like to own a cat (any cat will do). [de dicto, no hearer knowledge]

(Ionin and Wexler 2002, (1a) to (1c))

1. Definiteness: a DP is definite iff its referent is known to both speaker and hearer, and is unique in the contextually relevant domain. Otherwise, the DP is indefinite.
 (a) definite: "I read a book. The book was interesting."
 (b) indefinite: "I read a book yesterday."
2. Referentiality: an indefinite DP is referential iff the speaker has its referent 'in mind' and intends to refer to it. Otherwise, the DP is quantificational.
 (a) referential indefinite: "I read an interesting book, which my cousin gave me."
 (b) quantificational indefinite: "Mary read a book (but I don't know which one)."
3. The *de re* / *de dicto* distinction: an indefinite DP is *de re* iff it is not in the scope of an operator such as an intensional verb, a modal, or negation². Otherwise, the DP is *de dicto*.
 (a) *de re* indefinite: "I'd like to meet a famous writer – I really like her books."
 (b) *de dicto* indefinite: "I'd like to meet a famous writer – any famous writer will do."

Figure 3-2. Definitions of terminology for article interpretation (Ionin & Wexler 2002, 1)

Ionin and Wexler considered referentiality as an important feature to classify articles in English because of the argument about the ambiguity of indefinite nouns between a referential and a quantificational reading by Fodor and Sag (1982), as shown in the following examples (2a-b). This distinction was considered important to figure out the difference between *de re* and *de dicto* readings of indefinite nouns such as (1b) and (1c). To explain this distinction, Ionin and Wexler adopted Fodor and Sag's examples.

2. a) A man just proposed to me in the orangery (though I'm much too embarrassed to tell you who it was).

b) A man is in the women's bathroom (but I haven't dared to go in there to see who it is).

(Ionin and Wexler, (2a) and (2b) originated in Fodor and Sag, exx.(7) and (8))

In (2a), the indefinite noun *a man* is a particular individual in the world while in (2b), *a man* is a quantificational expression, which is similar to a noun with a quantifier: *every man*. Based on Fodor and Sag's argument, it was claimed "Referential indefinites must be *de re*: if the speaker intends to refer to a particular individual, that individual must exist in the world. However, quantificational indefinites may be either *de re* or *de dicto*" (2002, 3). In other words, referentiality (specificity) requires that a specific individual is in the speaker's mind. When the individual who the speaker mentions is known to hearer, the individual is labeled as obligatory referential. Therefore, this definite noun requires *the*. When the individual who is a particular one in speaker's mind is not known to the hearer, s/he is a referential indefinite noun. Therefore, this noun requires *a*. A non-referential indefinite noun is quantificational; there is no speaker's intention for the noun, which means that this noun is not particular in the speaker's mind. The quantificational (or non-referential/ non-specific) indefinite nouns may exist or not exist in the world; depending on its existence in the world, they can be read as *de re* or *de dicto*. Therefore, they require *a*. The three-way classification of English articles is provided in Table 3-2.

Table 3-2. Three-way classification of English article

article use in English	definiteness (hearer's knowledge)	referentiality (speaker intent)	existence in the world (<i>de re</i>)
<i>the</i>	+	+	+
<i>a</i>	-	+	+
<i>a</i>	-	-	+
<i>a</i>	-	-	-

(Ionin and Wexler 2002, 3)

Ionin, Ko, and Wexler (2004): Article choice parameter

This 2004 paper proposed specificity to interpret English indefinite nouns. As explained in the previous section, indefinite nouns may be referential or quantificational. When the indefinite nouns are referential, the speaker picks up a unique individual. When the indefinite one is quantificational (non-referential), the speaker does not mention a particular one. This stance distinguishes between referential and quantificational indefinites based on specificity. In other words, specific indefinites are referential like *a man* in (1) while non-specific indefinites are quantificational like *a man* in (2); (1) *Last night a man proposed me at the bar.* (2) *I want to have a cat.* Ionin *et al.* proposed a two-way classification of articles based on specificity and definiteness based on two features, specific reference and hearer's knowledge as many early researchers (Cziko 1986, Huebner 1983, and Thomas 1989) had done. However, they developed a theoretical argument about articles based on specificity and definiteness to explain languages having two articles such as Samoan and English. The two-way classification in this cross-linguistic perspective proposed the article choice parameter. According to the parameter of article choice, articles with a definite/indefinite article in languages are based on either definiteness or specificity. For instance, both Samoan and English have two articles. However, the articles of each language are based on a different semantic feature. In Samoan, articles are based on specificity, rather than definiteness while English articles are based on definiteness. Table 3-3 presents the article choice parameter.

Depending on either specificity or definiteness, Ionin *et al.* proposed two settings: Setting I and II. Setting I is the interpretation of articles based on specificity - i.e. Samoan. Setting II concerns the interpretation of articles based on definiteness. That is

Table 3-3. Article choice parameter: possible UG options (Ionin, Ko, and Wexler 2004, 7)

Noun type	Setting I (Samoan)	Setting II (English)
Non-specific indefinites	Non-specific	Indefinite
Specific indefinites	Specific	
Definites		definite

English. Figure 3-3 specifically presents cross-linguistic article systems, English vs. Samoan. It shows different article systems between a language with two articles based on specificity like Samoan and a language with two articles based on definiteness like English.

Article systems with definiteness setting (e.g. English)

	+definite	-definite
+specific	<i>the</i>	<i>a(n)</i>
-specific	<i>the</i>	<i>a(n)</i>

Article systems with specificity setting (e.g. Samoan)

	+definite	-definite
+specific	<i>le</i>	<i>le</i>
-specific	<i>se</i>	<i>se</i>

Figure 3-3. Cross-linguistic article systems (Trenkic, 2008, 6)

In English, definiteness makes native speakers choose which article is required, either *the* or *a*. Definite contexts requiring *the* can be interpreted as either specific or non-specific as are indefinite contexts requiring *a*. In contrast, in Samoan, specificity decides which article is required, either *le* or *se*. Specific contexts requiring *le* can be interpreted as either definite or indefinite as are non-specific contexts requiring *se*. The study did not provide any specific examples for Samoan. To understand the two

different article systems of Samoan and English, I present an example in English as the following:

3 (a) She likes a man who has a mansion in Long Island.

In this example, the noun *man* is specific and indefinite. Therefore, in English, the indefinite article is used. However, in Samoan, the specific article *le* is used.

Developmental Sequence of L1 English Articles

As mentioned before, Brown's (1973) study was the first longitudinal study of the acquisition of English articles by L1 children. Brown observed English articles used by three children from 18 months old to 44 months old. His subjects overused the definite article *the* in [+SR, -HK] contexts at one developmental stage. In other words, this study showed that the children at this stage did not seem to attend to any hearer's knowledge. Brown (1973) cited that Piaget's (1926) "egocentrism stage". His study also found that the children did not make any errors of English articles in [-SR, -HK] contexts, which were nonspecific for both speakers and hearers. From the examination of the data, this study proposes that L1 children seem to be able to distinguish specificity and non-specificity of nouns from a very early stage, that is, 18 to 20 months.

A second study by Zehler and Brewer (1982) observed the use of English articles by 20 L1 children of English in two age groups: (1) 10 children from 28 months old to 35 months old, and (2) 10 children from 36 months old to 41 months old. Zehler and Brewer (1982) found the inappropriate use of *the* by their subjects just as Brown (1973) found. However, Zehler and Brewer (1982) had a different view of the incorrect use of *the* by L1 children from that of Brown (1973); Zehler and Brewer (1982) suggested L1 children misused *the* because they overextended the semantic knowledge of articles while Brown (1973) assumed that L1 children had an inability to take the hearer's

perspective into account. Zehler and Brewer found developmental sequences of the article system: Stage I: the initial use of *a*/∅. Stage II: the beginning of the use of *the*. Stage III: overuse of *the* in non-specific contexts.

Cziko (1986) proposed four developmental stages of English articles by native speakers (Table 3-4), using Huebner's semantic features. According to Cziko's proposal, first-stage children used *a* or *the* for all referential nouns with [+HK] and [-HK]; however, they did not use any article with nonreferential nouns. In Stage 2, children

Table 3-4. Proposed four stages in the L1 acquisition of English articles

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
[-SR +HK] Generics	*∅	<i>a</i>	<i>a</i>	∅, <i>a</i> , <i>the</i>
[-SR -HK] Nonreferential nouns attributive indefinites nonspecific indefinites	*∅	<i>a</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>a</i>
[+SR -HK] Referential indefinites first-mention nouns	<i>a</i> , * <i>the</i>	* <i>the</i>	<i>a</i> , * <i>the</i>	<i>a</i>
[+SR +HK]	* <i>a</i> , <i>the</i>	<i>the</i>	(* <i>a</i>), <i>the</i>	<i>the</i>

(Cziko 1986, 881)

began to use *the* for nouns with [+SR] and *a* for nouns with [-SR]. At Stage 3, they started recognizing the difference between [+HK] and [-HK]. At the last stage, children used the articles as adults did, at approximately two to four years of age (Cziko, 1986, p. 896).

Non-Native Speaker's System and Functions of English Articles

This section presents previous research about English article system and functions of L2 users whose L1s do not have articles, specifically Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. The researchers adopt the interlanguage perspective to study the system and functions of English articles by these L2 speakers. Before discussing it, two

theoretical models are presented: the Fluctuation Hypothesis by Ionin *et al.* (2004) and an alternative model, that is, English articles misanalyzed as nominal modifiers by Trenkic (2008). These models show how L2 speakers of English whose L1s are article-less enact the concepts of English articles.

Theoretical Models for The Use of English Articles by L2 Speakers

Fluctuation Hypothesis (Ionin *et al.*, 2004) is an influential theory to show how L2 speakers understand English articles and why they produce errors. Trenkic's alternative model (2008) specifically explains the error production and use of English articles by L2 speakers whose L1s are article-less.

Fluctuation Hypothesis

Based on the parameter of article choice (Ionin *et al.*, 2004), Ionin *et al.* predicted L2 speakers had full accessibility to the parameter. In other words, L2 speakers of English whose L1s are article-less can access the native English speaker system in two settings: Setting I, based on specificity like Samoan, and Setting II, based on definiteness like English. During the interlanguage development of English as L2, the L2 speakers fluctuate between the two different settings until they can set up the appropriate setting for English. To test this hypothesis, Ionin *et al.* collected data from intermediate/advanced L2 speakers whose L1s were Russian and Korean; both L1s lack articles. Ionin *et al.* found that their participants fluctuated in their production of English articles between definiteness and specificity. For example, the L2 speakers overused *the* in [-definite, +specific] contexts, and *a* in [+definite, -specific] contexts. However, they always used an appropriate article in contexts whose features (definiteness and specificity) were the same value. In other words, the L2 speakers correctly used English articles in definite and specific contexts or indefinite and non-

specific contexts. For example, the L2 speakers correctly used *the* in [+definite, +specific] contexts. Table 3-5 presents the Fluctuation Hypothesis.

Table 3-5. Cross-linguistic article use and fluctuation of L2 English (Ionin *et al.*, 2004, 257)

	Setting I Samoan	Setting II English	L2 English: fluctuation
Nonspecific indefinite		<i>a</i>	
specific indefinite			overuse of <i>the/a</i>
Definite		<i>the</i>	

Alternative model: Articles as adjectives

Trenkic (2008) pointed out that earlier literature showed evidence that article-less languages treated demonstratives as adjectives (Lyons, 1999; Corver, 1992; Zlatic, 1997; Trenkic, 2004). Based on that argument, Trenkic hypothesized that L2 speakers whose L1s were article-less misanalyzed English articles as adjectives like demonstratives in their L1s. Trenkic proposed these L2 speakers of English used *the* and *a* as adjectives. In other words, the L2 speakers of English understood the articles based on referential meanings. However, Trenkic pointed out that it would be problematic for the L2 speakers to use English articles correctly because they analyzed English articles as adjectives based on referential meanings (=lexical meanings). More appropriately, L1 English article use is based on discourse meanings. In other words, English articles are assigned functions based on the context. For the correct use of articles, the speakers must understand how L1 discourse is structured. Trenkic provided one example from Butler's study (2002, p459) to show how the L2 speakers associate the use of English articles with adjectives.

- a) For example, the world's first novel, called *The Tale of Genji* was written almost 1000 years ago by the Japanese nobleman...
- b) "This was written by Shikibu Murasaki. Because this woman is specific, it should be *the*."

In this example, (a) shows the learner's article choice on a test, and (b) is his metalinguistic reflection on the choice. The Japanese L2 speaker used the definite article for the noun *Japanese nobleman* in (a). After the test, the participant was asked to answer why s/he used *the* in (a). From the data, Trenkic found that the L2 speaker did not see definiteness "in terms of the referent's existence and uniqueness relative to mutually manifest cognitive environment (Trenkic, 2008, p11)". Instead, as shown the metalinguistic reflection (b), the Japanese subject understood the semantic meaning of the definite article based on factual information. The subject used the definite article for the noun *Japanese nobleman* because *Japanese nobleman* is a specific person whose name is Shikibu Murasaki. This subject understood English articles based on their lexical meanings rather than discourse meanings. In other words, s/he understood the definite article having specific and factual meaning. However, English native speakers use the based on discourse meanings. Therefore, in the context of (a), the indefinite article is required. Trenkic claimed that the L2 speakers of English analyzed the articles based on factual information rather than information from discourse. This misanalysis causes L2 speakers of English to make errors.

Chinese L2 Users of English

The study of Lee *et al.* (1994) was an eighteen-month longitudinal project examining the development of English articles, especially definite article use by three six-year-old Chinese children. This study found that the subjects first acquired the use of the definite article, *the*, and then, produced English demonstratives, *this/ that* in the

contexts which required articles in English. At the same time, the Chinese L2 speakers of English often used the demonstratives, *this/that*, as place-holders. In other words, the demonstratives were used as hesitation markers or fillers in discourse. These L2 speakers tended to use the demonstratives for referential nouns which had the semantic feature of [+HK]. At the last stage, the subjects appropriately used the definite article, *the*.

Lang's (1998) study was a twenty-one-month longitudinal case study investigating the development of articles in the spontaneous speech of a nine-year-old Chinese boy. This study examined *a*, *an*, *the*, and \emptyset while most studies examined *a*, *the*, and \emptyset . Lang found that the subject overused *the* while he rarely used *an*. The data showed more accurate use of the indefinite article, *a* (97.7%) than the use of the definite article, *the* and \emptyset (84.6%). Lang, consequently, proposed a developmental sequence of articles as $a \rightarrow \emptyset \rightarrow the \rightarrow an$.

Trenkic (2008) examined 43 Mandarin Chinese second language speakers of English. Trenkic's (2008) study found the overuse of *the* in indefinite contexts and of *a* in definite contexts. In this study, an additional feature, explicitly stated knowledge [\pm ESK] was used as well as [\pm specificity] and [\pm definiteness]. Therefore, there were six contexts: (1) [-definite], [+specific; +ESK], (2) [-definite], [-specific; -ESK], (3) [-definite], [+specific; -ESK], (4) [+definite], [+specific; +ESK], (5) [+definite], [-specific; -ESK], (6) [+definite], [+specific; -ESK]. Trenkic explained six contexts with an example. An example of each context is given below (Trenkic, 2008, p.12-p.13).

(1) [-definite], [+specific; +ESK]: The speaker has a specific referent in mind, and she explicitly states that she knows the identity of the person being talked about.

Gary: I heard that you just started college. How do you like it?

Melissa: It's great! My classes are very interesting.

Gary: That's wonderful. And do you have fun outside of class?

Melissa: Yes. In fact, today I'm having dinner with (a, the) girl from my class-her name is Angela, and she is really nice!

- (2) [-definite], [-specific; -ESK]: The speaker does not have a specific referent in mind, and she explicitly denies that she knows the identity of the person being talked about.

At a university

Professor Clark: I'm looking for Professor Anne Peterson.

Secretary: I'm afraid she is busy. She has office hours right now.

Professor Clark: What is she doing?

Secretary: She is meeting with (a, the) student, but I don't know who it is.

- (3) [-definite], [+specific; -ESK]: The speaker has a specific referent in mind, but she explicitly denies that she knows the identity of the person being talked about.

Office gossip

Gina: ...and what about the others?

Mary: Well, Dave is single, Paul is happily married, and Peter...he is engaged to (a, the) merchant banker, but none of us knows who she is, or what she's like.

- (4) [+definite], [+specific; +ESK]: The speaker has a specific referent in mind, and she explicitly states that she knows the identity of the person being talked about.

Paul: Do you have time for lunch?

Sheila: No, I'm very busy. I am meeting with (a, the) president of our university, Dr. McKinley; it's an important meeting.

- (5) [+definite], [-specific; -ESK]: The speaker does not have a specific referent in mind, and she explicitly denies that she knows the identity of the person being talked about.

Bill: I'm looking for Erik. Is he home?

Rick: Yes, but he's on the phone. It's an important business matter. He's talking to (a, the) owner of his company. I don't know who that person is - but I know that this conversation is important to Erik.

- (6) [+definite], [+specific; -ESK]: The speaker has a specific referent in mind, but she explicitly denies that she knows the identity of the person being talked about.

Paul: Will Bob join us for lunch?

Sheila: No, he's very busy. He is meeting with (a, the) director of his company. I don't know who that person is, but he will decide whether Bob gets his promotion or not.

Trenkic specifically found that the Chinese L2 speakers of English overused *the* more in [+specific; +ESK] indefinite contexts than in either [-specific; -ESK] indefinite contexts or [+specific; -ESK]. In addition, they overused *a* more in both [-specific; -ESK] and [+specific; -ESK] definite contexts, than in [+specific; +ESK] contexts. From the results, Trenkic found the use of English articles by the Chinese L2 speakers was based on explicitly stated knowledge, not the feature of specificity. Contrary to Ionin *et al.*'s claim, this study found that there was no evidence that specificity had a significant effect on L2 article choices. Trenkic's study supported the view of L2 speakers' misanalysis of articles as adjectives; the Chinese L2 speakers misinterpreted English articles as adjectives.

Robertson (2000) examined 18 Mandarin Chinese L2 speakers of English who were postgraduate students. The use of the definite article was more accurate (79.7%) than the use of the indefinite article (72.1%) as found in Huebner's (1985) study. Robertson explained the Chinese L2 speakers tended to omit articles because of the influence of their L1 grammar; in Chinese, subject and object pronouns can be omitted if they are pragmatically redundant, or if they are coreferential with the topic (Robertson, 2000, 158). This study suggested that the omission of articles seemed to be systematic because the subjects did not use any article for the second and subsequently coreferential nouns when they used an article for the first mentioned noun; "*I want you to write a line, horizontal line* (Robertson, 2000, 162, (45))". Robertson also found that the subjects used demonstratives, *this/that* and the numeral, *one* as markers of definiteness and indefiniteness because of their L1 background. To support his findings, Robertson cited Huang's (1999) study; Huang found that Chinese L2 speakers of

English used English articles associated with the Chinese demonstratives, *zhei* 'this' and *nei* 'that', or the numeral, *yi* 'one'. These demonstratives take on some of functions of the definite article, *the*.

In sum, the previous literature about the use of English articles by Chinese L2 speakers of English suggests some common findings. First of all, these studies support the interlanguage approach and, at the same time, admit L1 influence as a necessary factor to be investigated. Chinese L2 speakers of English appear to have systematic rules of article use from the errors they make. The errors they make are derived from the L2 speakers' L1 background. Chinese does not have articles, but it has demonstratives and a numeral that take on some functions similar to English articles, indicating definiteness and indefiniteness. Therefore, Chinese L2 speakers use the definite article, *the*, more correctly than the indefinite article, *a* (Lee *et al.*, 1994; Robertson, 2000). In addition, they associate semantic meaning of English articles with demonstratives of Chinese (Lee *et al.*, 1994; Trenkic, 2008; Robertson, 2000). Their interpretation of English articles as adjectives occurred in the use of English articles by Chinese L2 speakers. Therefore, the L2 speakers use demonstratives, *this/that*, or the numeral, *one*, in the contexts where require English articles (Lee *et al.*, 1994; Robertson, 2000).

Japanese L2 Users of English

Kaku (2006) studied five adult Japanese L2 speakers of English to investigate the semantic relationship between Japanese demonstratives and English articles. Kaku cited Kuno's (1973) study to explain semantic features of Japanese demonstratives, *sono* '(of) that' and *ano* '(of) that over there'. Kaku summarized the definition of the demonstratives given in Kuno's (1973) study; "*sono* is used for something that is not

known personally to either the speaker or the hearer or has not been a shared experience between them while *ano* is used for something that both the speaker and the hearer personally know or have experience in (Kaku, 2006, 64).” Therefore, the demonstrative *sono* has [+referential] and [-definite] while *ano* has [+referential] and [+definite]. From the data analysis, Kaku (2006) found that the Japanese L2 speakers of English associated the English definite article *the* with referentiality. This study also found that the subjects used the English indefinite article *a* in a 100% correct way. This finding is different from the findings of Chinese L2 speakers in Lee *et al.*'s (1994) and Robertson's (2000) studies; the Chinese L2 speakers used *the* more correctly than *a*. Based on the results from a translation task to elicit the English definite article *the*, the Japanese L2 speakers of English did not translate *the* with the Japanese demonstrative *ano* even though both *the* and *ano* shared the same features: [+referential] and [+definite]. Therefore, this study indicated that the Japanese demonstrative *ano* carries a different semanticity from the English definite *the*. In addition, it indicated that the Japanese L2 speakers of English know the semantic difference between *the* and *ano* even though the researcher did not discuss the difference further.

Butler (1999) investigated the use of English articles by 80 Japanese L2 speakers of English. The 80 subjects were divided into four groups: three Japanese groups living in Japan, based on their proficiency level (J1 to J3), and one Japanese group living in the U.S.(J4). Butler found from the analysis of interview data that approximately half of the subjects in the lower proficiency group (J1) associated *the* with the Japanese demonstrative *sono* '(of) that'. These subjects did not understand the concepts of [±SR] and [±HK]. Mostly they had difficulties with the distinction between these two features of

articles. This study pointed out that Japanese L2 speakers of English associated specific reference with the definite article *the*, no matter what the proficiency levels were. Butler also found that the subjects tended to overuse *the* as other studies found from L2 speakers of English whose L1s were various: Chinese, Hmong, Korean, and Russian (Hueber, 1985; Master, 1987; Trenkic, 2008; Ionin *et al.*, 2004).

Butler also tested 80 Japanese L2 speakers of English to see what errors they made for the use of English articles and why they made the errors in 2002. In this study, Butler found that the L2 speakers at lower proficiency levels used English articles based on rules that had been taught by their teachers, and through textbooks. Three rules are the following (Butler, 2002, 464):

- 1 When an object or event is specific, *the* is used.
- 2 When an object or event is introduced for the first time, *a* should be used, but when the same object or event is mentioned for the second time, *the* should be used.
- 3 When a noun or noun phrase is countable, *a* is used; if it is uncountable, *a* cannot be used.

This study pointed out that this way of education for English articles was one of the reasons that the Japanese L2 speakers made errors in the use of English articles. The L2 speakers applied these rules for the use of English articles based on memorization without understanding the semantic notions of [\pm SR], [\pm HK], and countability of nouns. These rules led the L2 speakers to associate *the* with a specific reference, and *a* with a singular countable noun. This study also found that the Japanese L2 speakers of English tended to look at whether there was a modifier attached to the noun to determine the specificity of reference. In other words, the subjects relied heavily on the syntactic cues, not on the semantic or contextual cues. When nouns have modifiers, *the*

is automatically used for the nouns. In addition, this study explained that the errors in the use of English articles came from lack of a clear understanding of noun countability. Most English nouns can be countable or uncountable depending on the context. However, the subjects in this study showed that they had difficulties to understand the countability of English nouns when they made errors with articles. Even though the advanced L2 speakers detected [\pm HK] better than the lower or intermediate speakers did, they still had difficulties with it.

Korean L2 Users of English

Lee's (1999) study focused on the deletion rate of the English articles in 49 Korean L2 speakers of English. Lee explained that in Korea, English article system was learned in the traditional descriptive grammar framework. In other words, Korean L2 speakers of English memorize the rules for the use of English articles. Lee pointed out that this grammar-translation method for English article system did not help the L2 speakers to acquire the use of articles because the rules of articles described in grammar did not reflect generalized conventions in the intuition of English native speakers, but show some variable environments for English articles. Lee investigated the article use in a spontaneous written task. The results showed that the subjects had a high level of written language proficiency in the use of articles. This study also found that the subjects tended to delete the articles more when they were preceded by an adjective or an adverb than when it was preceded by a noun. In other words, when a noun has a modifier, the subjects tend not to use the articles.

Nassaji and Swain's (2000) study examined two adult Korean L2 speakers of English to study negotiated help provided within the L2 speaker's zone of proximal development. The data collected in this study showed that the subjects failed to use the

indefinite article *a* in the construction 'such + a(n) + adjective + singular noun'. This error was found in the data of the subjects in Lee's (1999) study.

Ionin *et al.*'s (2004) study examined the use of English articles by 38 Korean and 50 Russian L2 speakers of English. This study found that the Both Korean and Russian subjects overused *the* in specific indefinite contexts. The Korean subjects outperformed the Russian subjects in the use of English articles. This study suggested that the Korean subjects received intensive English instruction, while the Russian subjects came from a wide variety of backgrounds.

In sum, the findings of the article use by three language groups seem have some similarities. The previous literature supported the influence of L1 background. These studies indicated that the L2 speakers of English made systematic errors in the use of English articles because their L1 did not have article system. When they had demonstratives in L1, the L2 speakers tended to associate the semantic features of English articles with the meanings of the demonstratives (Lee *et al.*, 1994; Butler, 1999; Robertson, 2000; Kaku, 2006). In other words, the article use was often based on the feature of specificity. Therefore, when nouns were followed by adjectives, the L2 speakers tended to use the definite article (Lee, 1999; Nassaji and Swain, 2000; Butler, 2002; Trenkic, 2008). Secondly, these articles showed that the L2 speakers overused the definite article in specific contexts (Hueber, 1985; Butler, 1999; Ionin *et al.*, 2004; Trenkic, 2008).

In the following chapters, the data collected for this pilot study is analyzed. The characteristics in the article use of participants from three language groups are

discussed to see whether or not the errors of the participants correspond to the findings of the previous studies.

CHAPTER 4 METHODOLOGY

Participants

The participants in the pilot study were all graduate students at University of Florida: 3 Chinese, 2 Japanese, and 3 Korean graduate students. I chose graduate students as subjects in this study to investigate the interlanguage system and functions of English articles by L2 users of English. The international graduate students were not considered to be L2 learners of English because they had high proficiency of English to pursue academic research. I planned to collect data from three participants for each L1 background. However, it was not possible to collect data from three Japanese L2 speakers within the limited time. Therefore, Japanese subjects were only two. Gender was not a considered factor considered to influence the use of English articles, as shown in previous research about Korean L2 speakers of English (Lee, 1999). Therefore, the number of females and males was not even. Most of the participants were females: five females and three males. The age range was from 20 to 35. The average length of residency in the United States was two and half years; for Chinese students, 2.3 years, for Japanese students, 2.5 years, and for Korean students, 3 years as shown in Table 4-1.

Table 4-1. The length of residency in the United States

Number	Chinese	Japanese	Korean
1	C1: 3 years	J1: 4 years	K1: 4 years
2	C2: 2 years	J2 : 1 year	K2: 4 years
3	C3: 2 years		K3: 1 year
Average	2.3 years	2.5 years	3 years

The subjects began learning English when they were around 10 to 12 years old in foreign language environments in their country. Before coming to the United States,

they had one-year or two-year experiences at intensive language programs in English speaking countries such as New Zealand or Canada. All the participants, except one Korean male student (K2), were confident about speaking English for conversation. The K2 student who has been in the U.S. for four years was shy and introverted. He was mostly passive in the interview while the other participants were active talkers and they considered themselves extroverted. For instance, the K2 student never asked a question in the interview while the others were involved in the conversation by asking questions to the interviewer. Their major research areas were varied; chemistry, medical, linguistics, computer science, and journalism.

Instruments of Data Collection

This study focuses on the interview data. However, the participants took a grammatical judgment test to see their knowledge of English articles in a written test format. The results of this test will be compared with the results of the interview. The questions are about articles, prepositions, and verb conjugations. The type of questions is fill-in-the-blank. There are 11 questions about English articles. The test is provided in Appendix.

Before collecting the data, it was assumed that the data production in interviews would vary depending on whether or not the interviewer was a native speaker of English. Therefore, the participants were engaged in two informal interviews: one with an English native speaker and the other with a L2 speaker of English. Each interview took less than 10 minutes. The interviews were tape-recorded. Each interviewer avoided asking the same questions to the subjects to make sure that the answers were not repeated. The topics included such topics as family, cultural shock, friends, study, academic plans, and life in the United States. After the interviews, all the participants

were asked some follow-up questions; (a) how much comfortable or nervous they feel in the interview with a native speaker and a non-native speaker of English. (b) whether or not they believe that their English becomes better in the interview with the native speaker than with the L2 speaker.

Classification for Coding

In this study, I focus on specific differences in the use of English articles, *a(n)* and *the*. This study as a descriptive case study looks at the use and misuse of the articles in the interview data. To see these, the data is analyzed in four different contexts based on two features [\pm Specific] and [\pm Definite], which were used in Ionin *et al.*'s (2004) studies.

The four contexts are as the following:

- 1) [-definite], [+specific]*a*
- 2) [-definite], [-specific]*a*
- 3) [+definite], [+specific]*the*
- 4) [+definite], [-specific]*the*

Based on these four categories, the use of articles will be analyzed and presented in the following chapter the kinds of errors the participants make, and whether or not there are some common tendencies among the participants who have the same L1 background.

CHAPTER 5
DATA ANALYSIS

Grammatical Judgement Test

Before the interviews, the participants took a short grammatical judgement test. It took less than 10 minutes for the participants, except the K1 and K2 subjects, to take the grammatical test. It took about 13 minutes for K1 to take the test. The K2 subject spent about 15 minutes to take it. The K1 and K2 subjects thought the test was not easy while the others thought it was easy. The test scores of the participants are shown as the following (Table 5-1):

Table 5-1. Scores of grammatical judgment test

Number	Chinese		Japanese		Korean	
	length of residency	score (11)	length of residency	score (11)	length of residency	score (11)
1	3 years	C1: 10	4 years	J1: 10	4 years	K1: 3
2	2 years	C2: 9	1 years	J2: 10	4 years	K2: 9
3	2 years	C3: 10			1 year	K3: 8
Average	2.3 years	9.7	2.5 years	10	3 years	6.7

As shown in Figure 4.2, Japanese L2 speakers got the highest score, 10 out of 11 while Korean L2 speakers got the lowest score, 6.7.

Chinese L2 Speakers of English

C1, whose test score was 10, misused articles in the context of [-definite], [-specific]. The question was as follows:

- (1) ____ fact that money orders can usually be easily cashed has made them ____ popular form of payment.

The subject of C1 used the correct article for the first blank, which was the definite article *the*. However, for the second blank, she did not use any article. The context has the semantic features [-definite] and [-specific]. Therefore, it requires the indefinite article *a*.

C2, whose test score was 9, also made the same error as C1 did in indefinite context. She did not use any article.

(2) ____ vegetables are ____ excellent source of vitamins.

The first context is indefinite and nonspecific, so it does not require any article. C2 marked the blank with a cross (X) to indicate that it does not require articles. For the second blank, she also put a cross in it. However, it requires the indefinite article, *a*. The second error C2 made was the use of the demonstrative *that* for the context of [+definite], [+specific].

(3) She knows ____ tallest person in the world. ____ man is actually her close friend.

Both the first and second blanks are contexts requiring the definite article *the* because they are definite and specific. C2 knew that the second context required *the*, so she did not use *a*. Instead of using *the*, she used the demonstrative, *that*.

C3 misused English articles in the indefinite, specific context of (2): ____ excellent source of vitamins. The context requires the indefinite article *a*, but she used the definite article *the*.

Japanese L2 Speakers of English

J1 did not use any article in the second context of (1): ... *has made them* ____ *popular form of payment* requiring *a* as C1 did not use one, either.

J2 made the same error as C3 made in the second context of (3). Instead of using the definite article *the*, she used the demonstrative *that* for the definite, specific context.

Korean L2 Speakers of English

K1, whose test score was 3 out of 11, used the second person genitive pronoun, *your* for the definite contexts requiring *the* such as (3) and (4).

(4) I saw _____ cat. Suddenly, _____ cat started meowing.

For the second blank in (4), K1 used *your* instead of *the*. As similar with this error, he used the third person singular genitive pronoun *its* for the definite context in (5).

(5) _____ first article of _____ United States Constitution gives Congress _____ power to pass laws.

For the first and second blanks, K1 correctly used the definite article *the*. However, for the third blank, he used *its*. This subject often used genitive pronouns for the definite contexts. For the second contexts of (2): _____ excellent source of vitamins, and (1): _____ popular form of payment requiring the indefinite article *a*, the subject used *the* as C3 did. These two contexts are indefinite and specific. It could be assumed that K1 is confused about the semantic features between definiteness and specificity. He never used the indefinite article. He only correctly used the definite article for contexts generically requiring *the*. For example, for the first and second contexts of (5): _____ first article of _____ United States Constitution, K1 used *the* correctly. Probably, he memorized the noun phrases requiring *the* as a chunk.

K2 spent about 15 minutes to take the test; his score was the highest among the Korean L2 speakers. For the definite, nonspecific context in (5), K2 used the indefinite article. For the indefinite context not requiring any article in (2): _____ vegetables, he used the definite article.

K3 did not use articles for the contexts requiring articles *a* or *the* such as (1): ... has made them ____ popular form of payment requiring *a* and (5): ... gives Congress ____ power to pass laws requiring *the*.

The test scores were not related to the length of residency in the United States. For instance, the Korean L2 speaker who had been in the United States for four years scored 3 out of 11 while the Japanese and Korean L2 speakers who stayed for one year scored 9 and 8. The Chinese L2 speakers who stayed in the United States for two years scored higher than the Korean L2 speakers.

All the subjects correctly used *the* for the context generically requiring the definite article. C3 and J2 used the demonstrative *that* for the definite context requiring *the* while K1 used a genitive pronoun *your* or *its*.

Interview Data

This section presents the analysis of data from two interviews. The participants had two interviews because it was assumed that their speaking production could be different depending on the interviewer's native language. Therefore, they had one interview with a native speaker of English and the other with a L2 speaker of English. I, first, present the interview data with the native speaker of English. Then, the interview data with the L2 speaker of English is discussed. To show the percentage of correctness for English articles, the total number of required articles was counted in the contexts. The total number of correct articles by L2 speakers was also counted, and then, it was divided by the total number of the required articles.

$$\frac{\text{Total number of correct articles}}{\text{Total number of required articles}} \times 100$$

Chinese L2 Speakers of English

C1, whose test score was 10 out of 11, misused English articles in the interview with the native speaker of English. First of all, in the test, she did not make any errors for the generic contexts such as *the United States* and *the first time*. However, in the interview, she dropped the definite article *the* in these contexts. In the indefinite contexts requiring *a*, she also dropped it. The examples are as the following (a):

(a) I don't really have ___ idea now, but I'm ___ Taiwan student...I like to teach in ___ college.

The given contexts in (a) are indefinite, nonspecific, so the indefinite article is required. However, she did not use any article. The series of dots (...) indicates the length of silence of about 2 seconds.

C1 habitually used the indefinite article after *like*.

(b) My old sister was always like, like a, she was bossy...it's not optional. It's like a necessary.

C1 used the indefinite article with *like* as a chunk.

The total number of articles used by C1 was 17 in the interview. The percentage of C1's correct use of English articles was 63% in the interview with the native speaker of English. However, when she had the interview with the L2 speaker of English, she used articles more frequently, 41 times. The correctness of article use was much higher than the other interviews. It was 93%. There was no misuse of the definite article while the indefinite article was often dropped in the indefinite, unspecific contexts:

(c) It was ___ very small school.

(d) We still have ___ accent.

(e) I don't know yet because you are required to have ___ visa if you want to stay in different country, for example, in the United States.

The three blanks (c-e) require *a* because the contexts are indefinite, nonspecific. However, C1 did not use any article for these contexts. C1 perfectly used *the* in the interview (100%) while she correctly used 83% of the indefinite article *a*.

C2, whose test score was 9 out of 11, used articles 17 times in the interview with the native speaker of English while she used them 22 times with the L2 speaker of English. The percentage of correct use of articles was 76% with the native speaker, and 82% with the L2 speaker of English. C2 misused the indefinite article more than the definite article.

(f) I went to the city to get ___ BA. I was ___ English major. I can't use it as ___ academic language.

(g) I don't have ___ Decal.

The four blanks in the data (f-g) require the indefinite article, but C2 did not use any article. On the other hand, the definite article was correctly used in the context. Only one misuse of *the* was found in the data: "my father believes that I should have the brighter future in America." The context requires *a* because it is indefinite and nonspecific. As C1 used *a* after *like*, C2 also used it in the same pattern: "she can like a six, or less fewer hours to sleep."

C3 used articles more frequently than C1 and C2. The frequency of article use was similar in both interviews: 35 articles with the native speaker and 39 with the L2 speaker of English. C3 also used the definite article more correctly than the indefinite article. She used *the* correctly, except one error in the generic context requiring *the*: in the United States. In this generic context, she did not use *the*. In addition, she used *the* as a filler or hesitation marker in the interviews.

(h) Because there many many, uh, students who are, who are studying abroad here the, the, after graduation go back.

(i) We have the Chinese Student Association, and the, the, the, the, the volunteers does to to the airport...I don't know how find a way to change the, the, the word.

C3 never used *a* as a hesitation marker or filler in the data (h-i) while she did *the*. The indefinite article was misused in various contexts. It was dropped in the indefinite, nonspecific context such as “I want to go back China to find a position in ___ university”. For the definite, nonspecific context requiring *the*, C3 used *a*: “to pick up on a first day we were here, then we met each other”. C3 used the indefinite article for the uncountable noun *practice*: “It's a good practice”. C3 correctly used 86% articles in the interview with the native speaker of English and 87% with the L2 speaker. There was not much of a gap between the two interviews while the other subjects showed more correct use of articles with the L2 speaker of English.

In sum, the Chinese L2 speakers used the definite article more correctly than the indefinite article. Two of the subjects habitually used the indefinite article after *like* in conversation. They tended to omit the indefinite article in the contexts requiring it. They used the articles more correctly and more frequently with the L2 speaker of English than with the native speaker in the interviews.

Japanese L2 Speakers of English

J1 omitted the definite article for the second-time mentioned nouns.

(a) I'm in a PhD program in biomechanics. This is my third year, and my second year in ___ PhD program.

The noun *PhD program* after the blank in (a) was mentioned in the previous sentence. Therefore, it requires the definite article. However, J1 omitted it.

J1 omitted the indefinite article for indefinite contexts.

(b) I'm ___ shy person.

(c) I'm ___ graduate student.

The contexts of (b) and (c) require the indefinite article. However, J1 did not use *a* in these contexts' just as the other subjects did not use them, either. On the other hand, J1 correctly used the articles in the generic contexts such as *the United States* and *a lot of*. The percentages of the correct use of articles were 74% (19 articles) with the native speaker and 82% (11 articles) with the L2 speaker in the interviews. However, these percentages do not seem to show that J1 used the articles better with the L2 speaker of English because he used the articles more frequently with the native speaker. Therefore, it seems that the more J1 used the articles, the less correctly he used them.

J2 omitted the definite/ indefinite articles in the contexts requiring them.

(d) It was ___ great system.

(e) I was kind of used to ___ environment.

(f) It was ___ high school.

The contexts of (d) and (f) require the indefinite article because they are indefinite and specific. On the other hand, the context of (e) requires the definite article because she explained the environment before the sentence of (e). Therefore, it is definite and specific in the discourse. However, J1 did not use the articles in the contexts.

J2 used the indefinite article with plural nouns.

(g) We had a classes in English.

The indefinite article is used before countable nouns to indicate the nouns are singular. In this case, the indefinite article can be replaced with *one*. Therefore, it cannot be used with plural nouns like (g). However, J2 mismatched the article with the following noun in the number agreement. This kind of error occurred among the Korean participants, but not among the Chinese ones.

J2 used the articles more correctly with the L2 speaker (86%) than with the native speaker of English (63%) in the interviews. J2 also used the articles more frequently with the L2 speaker (28) than with the native speaker (8). Therefore, like the Chinese subjects, J2 used the articles more correctly and more frequently when she had the interview with the L2 speaker of English than the native speaker.

Korean L2 Speakers of English

The numbers of article used by K1 in two interviews were almost same: 38 articles with the native speaker of English and 31 articles with the L2 speaker of English. The percentages of the correct use of articles in the two interviews were 50% with the native speaker and 74% with the L2 speaker. They do not show that K1 used the articles more correctly with the L2 speaker than with the native speaker of English because he used them less frequently in the interview with the L2 speaker as J1 used. This subject scored 3 out of 11 in the grammatical judgment test, which was the lowest among the participants. The interview data of the subject also showed the weakest use of English articles. First of all, K1 overused the definite article in the interview. He habitually misused *the*. The errors of the overuse of *the* seemed to be systematic. K1 constantly used *the* after the conjunctions such as *and*, *and then*, and *but* as the following (a-b):

(a) We like both hang out together and then, the we like watching the movies, and then, the like sports. But the right now, he is in Japan, Tokyo.

(b) And the we don't have common culture because of that.

Secondly, K1 used *the* as a hesitation marker as C3 used. When he thought what to say next, he used *the* as a filler in the data (c-e).

(c) That's okay, but the, uh, ...the hard part is, I guess, once we know each other like other people...the, the, you're, are you from the Boston?

(d) Basically, he is not a, the, the, basically, he went to the Japan like two years ago.

(e) Because the, the, the, for my case, I am engineering students.

K1 also used the definite article for proper nouns already mentioned in previous discourse. When he mentioned the proper nouns for the first time in the discourse, the subject did not use *the* as shown in the data (f) and (h).

(f) One of the first place to visit to __ U.S was Boston.

(g) Are you from the Boston?

(h) He is in Japan.

(i) He went to the Japan like two years ago.

In the interviews, K1 talked about Boston where his first visiting city in the United States. When he began to tell his visit, K1 did not use *the* before Boston in (f). However, after he talked about his visit and the Red Sox, the subject used *the* before the proper noun Boston as shown in (g). When he also mentioned Japan for the first time in (h), he did not use *the*. After talking about his brother studying in Japan, he used *the* before Japan in (i). In addition, the subject omitted *the* for the generic context requiring the definite article such as *the United States* as shown in (f).

For the use of the indefinite article, K1 made one error as shown in (j).

(j) There's a some stuff like guy stuff.

It is assumed that the subject K1 did not know the noun *stuff* is uncountable, which means that *a* cannot be used in the context.

The second Korean subject K2, who scored 9 out of 11 for the grammatical judgment test, used English articles much less with the native speaker (8 articles) than with the L2 speaker (31 articles). He talked more with the L2 speaker than with the native speaker of English. The results of the interview data did not correspond to the result of the test. In the interview with the native speaker, K2 correctly used 75% of the

articles while in the interview with the L2 speaker, he correctly used 58% of them. It seemed that the more articles he used, the less correctly he used them. The correctness of the article use in the written test is much better than in the interview which is spontaneous conversation. K2 used the articles better with the native speaker than with the L2 speaker while the other participants used them better with the L2 speaker.

K2's misuse of English articles shows similar characteristics with K1's. Firstly, K2 used the definite article for the proper nouns mentioned the second time as K1 did.

(k) I will go back to Korea.

(l) Finally, I will go back to the Korea after two or three years work experience.

In the data of (k), the proper noun *Korea* was mentioned for the first time in the discourse. On the other hand, when he mentioned Korea for the second time, K2 used *the* before the noun. His misuse of *the* is same with the misuse of K1 in (f-i).

He used the definite article more correctly than the indefinite article. He often omitted the indefinite article in indefinite, non-specific context such as (m).

(m) I'm not ___ very diligent guy.

The noun phrase in (m) is indefinite and non-specific, so it requires the indefinite article. However, K2 did not use any article there.

K2 misused the indefinite article more frequently than the definite article. First of all, he used the indefinite article before adjectives or adverbs.

(n) It's a helpful.

(o) I think most native speakers speak a very fast.

(p) Because they speak a slower than native speakers.

(q) Listening part is a better, but speaking part is a worse.

In the data (n-q), K2 used the indefinite article before adjectives such as *helpful*, *slower*, *better*, and *worse* or adverbs such as *very*.

K2 used the indefinite article before uncountable nouns such as *chance*, *lunch* and *Korean* as K1 used in (j).

(r) I don't have a much chance to talk in English.

(s) We have a lunch together.

(t) I think I use a Korean more than English.

In (r), the noun *chance* is uncountable, so the quantifier *much* is used. However, the indefinite article was used for the uncountable noun phrase *much chance*. In (s) and (t), the nouns *lunch* and *Korean* are uncountable, which do not require the indefinite article. However, K2 used *a* for these contexts.

K2's interview data showed that his use of the indefinite article did not match with the number agreement of countable nouns.

(u) They give more salary because a living expenses are expensive there.

(v) I have a some academic job in Pusan.

In (u), the indefinite article was used with the plural nouns. On the other hand, in (v), K2, first, failed to agree the number between the plural quantifier *some* and the countable noun *job*. In addition, the indefinite article was used before *some*.

The data (r-v) indicate that subject K2 has difficulties with understanding the notion of noun countability, the use of quantifiers, and the semantic concept of the indefinite article.

K3, whose score was 8 out of 11 for the grammatical judgment test, spoke longer with the L2 speaker than with the native speaker of English. Therefore, the number of articles used in the interview with the L2 speaker was 25 while 11 articles were used in

the interview with the native speaker. The more she used the articles, the less correctly she used them as K2 did. She correctly used 91 % of the articles with the native speaker while she did 88% of them with the L2 speaker.

K3 misused the definite article, or omitted the indefinite article for the indefinite, nonspecific contexts.

(w) I am planning to get a job or going to the school.

(x) I guess ___ very good place to study.

In (w) and (x), the nouns *school* and *place* are indefinite. However, K3 used the definite article in (w), and in (x) she did not use any article.

In sum, the results of the interview data with the Chinese participants correspond to the results of the grammatical test while the results of the other language groups do not. The three Chinese L2 speakers of English used the articles more correctly than the other language groups as shown the results of the interview data and test scores. The more they used the articles, the more correctly they used them in the interviews. However, the one Japanese (J1) and the three Korean participants used the articles less correctly when they used them more frequently. In other words, the more these participants used the articles, the less correctly they used them. The Japanese and Korean subjects seemed to have difficulties with understanding the relation between the indefinite article and the noun countability while the Chinese subjects did not.

The three language groups had some results in common; they tended to omit the indefinite article in indefinite contexts. In addition, they failed to use the indefinite article *an* in contexts. Instead of *an*, they used *a*. Generally speaking, they used the definite article better than the indefinite article. Lastly, in general, they did not have any problem with the use of the articles in generic contexts.

CHAPTER 6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Discussion

In this chapter, I discuss how the findings of the participants correspond to the results of the previous literature for the three language groups.

Chinese L2 Speakers of English

The studies of Lee *et al.* (1994), Robertson (2000), and Huang(1999) claimed that Chinese L2 speakers of English used the demonstratives *this/that* or the numeral *one* in contexts requiring the articles. However, these studies did not discuss why the Chinese subjects did not use the definite article, rather than the demonstratives in definite contexts. In this case study, one Chinese (C2) L2 speaker of English used the demonstrative *that* for the context requiring the definite article: *She knows the tallest person in the world. That man is actually her close friend.* C2 used the demonstrative *that* for the noun *man* requiring *the* in the prescriptive grammatical test.

Much previous research such as Lee *et al.* (1994), Robertson (2000), and Huebner (1985) found that Chinese L2 speakers first developed the use of the definite article, and then the indefinite article. The three Chinese subjects in this study showed the same pattern with these previous studies. They used the definite article more correctly than the indefinite article. In particular, C1 perfectly used the definite article although she correctly used the indefinite article only 83% of the time. However, Lang found the reverse developmental order of English articles. In Lang's study (1998), the Chinese L2 speaker, first, acquired the indefinite article, and then, the definite article. It was the only study about this developmental order of English articles of a Chinese L2

speaker. Lang collected data from the Chinese L2 speaker who lived in the States. It may be the reason that the results of this study are different from the other studies

Lee *et al.* (1994) mentioned that the demonstratives were used as place holders. Unlike the study of Lee *et al.*, the Chinese subject C3 used the definite article *the* as a hesitation marker or a filler in conversation. It was not clear what a place holder meant in the study of Lee *et al.* (1994) because the study did not provide examples related to it. When C3 repeatedly used *the* in the data (h) and (i), she seemed to look for a word or think about what to say. Therefore, this use of *the* is categorized as a hesitation marker or a filler in this case study. The same use of *the* was also found with the Korean subject K1.

Trenkic found from his 43 Chinese participants that they overused *the* in indefinite contexts and *a* in definite contexts. In this study, the three Chinese subjects tended to omit the indefinite article in required contexts and they correctly used the definite article like native speaker of English. In other words, they did not use any article in indefinite contexts, but left it blank unlike Trenkic's findings. In addition, they did not overuse *the* in indefinite contexts as Trenkic found in his study (2008). It is assumed that these three Chinese participants understood the semantic functions of the definite article. On the other hand, all three Chinese subjects seemed not to have acquired the use of the indefinite article like native speakers of English. Therefore, when they had indefinite contexts, they chose not to use any article in the contexts. Robertson (2000) explained the high frequency of the use of zero article based on the findings from his 18 Mandarin Chinese L2 speakers of English. He assumed that their native language background influenced the omission of articles in indefinite contexts. In Chinese, subject and object

pronouns can be omitted if they are pragmatically redundant, or if they are coreferential with the topic (Robertson, 2000, p.158). According to his observation, the omission of articles seemed to be systematic because the articles were omitted for the second and subsequent coreferential nouns while they were used for the first mentioned nouns. However, this systematic pattern was not found in the three Chinese subjects in this study. They tended to omit the indefinite article in indefinite contexts. Unsystematically, it was correctly used in some indefinite contexts.

All the Chinese participants incorrectly used *an*. When indefinite contexts required *an*, the participants used *a*. Some examples for it are the following:

- (a) I am *a/an* only child in my family.
- (b) I was *a/an* English major.
- (c) I don't really have *a/an* idea now.

In sum, the three Chinese L2 speakers of English seem to have acquired the use of the definite article and partially the indefinite article. They did not distinguish between *a* and *an* as variants of the indefinite article. Therefore, it is assumed that the developmental sequence of articles for these Chinese subjects is *the* → *a* → *an*. Lang (1998) also proposed that the use of *an* was acquired later by Chinese L2 speakers.

Japanese L2 Speakers of English

The studies of Kaku (2006) and Butler (1999) discussed the relation between Japanese demonstratives *sono/ano* and the definite article *the*. The Japanese demonstratives have [+specificity]. Butler found that Japanese subjects used *sono* for the definite article. From this finding, the researcher claimed that Japanese L2 speakers understood the definite article with [+specificity] because of their L1 background. One

(J2) of the Japanese subjects in this case study used the demonstrative *that* for definite contexts as presented in the previous chapter. It corresponded to the findings of previous research by Kaku (2006) and Butler (1999). However, interestingly it was not found in the interview data of J2.

Butler found (2002) that Japanese subjects used *the* for nouns following modifiers. The 2002 study supported the findings of the previous research (Butler, 1999); Japanese L2 speakers associated *the* with their Japanese demonstratives having [+specificity]. When nouns have modifiers, they become specific. Therefore, Japanese participants tend to use *the* for these modified nouns. However, my Japanese subjects did not make any errors like this. The reason may be that Butler tested Japanese subjects at a lower proficiency level. My subjects are considered not as L2 learners of English, but as L2 users of English as fluent as native speakers of English. Butler, in the 2002 paper, pointed out that Japanese subjects made errors in the use of English articles because of their lack of a clear understanding of noun countability. J2 made this kind of error in the data (g): *We had a classes in English*. It is assumed that this mismatch of the indefinite article with the plural noun *classes* is related to the lack of understanding noun countability. It is well-known that Japanese as well as Koreans are not sensitive to the distinction between singular and plural nouns. Therefore, Japanese L2 speakers have difficulties with understanding noun countability in English as evidence on two data with J2.

The Japanese participants used the definite article more correctly than the indefinite article, just as the Chinese ones did. The sequence of the correct use in the articles by the Japanese L2 speakers is the same with the Chinese L2 speakers: *the* →

a → *an*. The two Japanese subjects made errors in the use of *an*; *I am a/an only child*. They used *a* in this example requiring *an*.

Like the Chinese subjects, the Japanese participants often omitted the indefinite article in indefinite contexts. It is not clear that this omission of the indefinite article comes from L1 transfer as Robertson proposed (2000) about Chinese L2 speakers. First of all, it seems not to be systematic. In other words, the omission of *a* in indefinite contexts is not consistent among the subjects. I could not find any linguistic characteristics in the contextual environments supporting the omission of the indefinite article. For example, the omission of the indefinite article often occurred in nouns modified by adjectives in Chinese L2 speakers. However, the errors of Japanese subjects did not show any systematic patterns. These errors seemed idiosyncratic. However, it is clear that the acquisition of the indefinite article has not been completed by both Japanese and Chinese L2 speakers in this study.

On the other hand, the errors in the use of articles may come from the background of English education. Butler suggested that the errors of article use by Japanese L2 speakers came from the way English articles are learned at school. According to Butler (2002), Japanese L2 learners of English memorized basic rules for the use of articles without understanding the semantic notions of [\pm specificity] and [\pm definiteness] for the articles, and noun countability in English. This proposal is related with Trenkic's explanation of articles. Trenkic pointed out this similar problem in the assumption of L2 speakers' analysis of articles as adjectives (2008). Trenkic (2008) explained that English articles were not based on lexical or referential meanings while adjectives were based on them. In morpho-semantic perspectives, the demonstratives in Chinese,

Japanese, and Korean are based on lexical meanings. They function as modifiers like adjectives to indicate certain referential meanings for following nouns. However, the choice of articles in L1 English is based on context. Therefore, it is impossible to figure out the use of articles within a single sentence extracted from a whole conversation. In this point of view, the L2 speakers whose native language has no articles, but demonstratives like Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, have difficulties with the acquisition of English articles. Therefore, they make errors in the use of articles such as the overuse of *the*, or the omission of *a* in indefinite contexts.

Korean L2 Speakers of English

Lee (1999) pointed out the same problem with Korean L2 speakers' errors in the use of English articles as Butler (2002) and Trenkic (2008). Lee explained that Korean L2 speakers memorized rules for the use of articles as Japanese L2 speakers did. In Lee's study, it was first pointed out that the memorization of the rules did not help the Korean L2 speakers to acquire the use of English articles. As Butler explained (2002), Lee also mentioned that these rules did not reflect on the semantic notions of the articles internalized by native speakers of English, but they just showed some variable environments for the articles. The errors made by two Korean subjects, K1 and K2 in this study, support the Lee's proposal. K1 and K2 seem to overgeneralize one of the rules for the use of English articles; the definite article is used for the second mentioned nouns. They applied this rule for proper nouns such as country names in the data of (g), (i), and (l). Here is one of the examples:

(h) He is in Japan.

(i) He went to *the* Japan like two years ago.

In this pair, (h) is the first mentioned sentence and (i) is the second mentioned one in the interview. When the country *Japan* was first-mentioned, it did not have an article. However, when it was second-mentioned, *Japan* followed the definite article. This error indicates that the Korean subjects K1 and K2 memorized the rule of the definite article use and overgeneralized it for the proper noun *Japan*. Huebner (1985) referred to this overgeneralization of *the* as “*the*-flooding”.

As Butler (2002) and Lee (1999) pointed out, K1 and K2 seemed hardly to understand the semantic notions of English articles and noun countability. They misused the indefinite article before uncountable nouns such as *stuff* and *Korean* (language) and quantifiers such as *some* and *much* as shown in the data of (j), (r), (t), and (v). They even used the indefinite article for plural nouns such as *living expenses*. These errors indicate that these two Korean subjects had not acquired English articles even though they have been in the United States for 4 years.

The Korean participants often omitted the indefinite article in indefinite contexts as the Chinese and Japanese participants did. The use of English articles by K1 and K2 seems far worse than the other language groups. K1 and K2 made many errors in the use of *the* while the Chinese and Japanese subjects correctly used it like native speakers.

Lee (1999) found that Korean L2 speakers tended not to use articles before nouns modified by adjectives. The three Korean participants in this study did not show this kind of tendency because they correctly used the indefinite article in those environments; *I got a high score*, *California is a good place to live*, and *I am a big brother*. As shown with these three participants, the nouns are modified by the adjectives such as *high*,

good, and big. The subjects correctly used the indefinite article. However, K2 interestingly misused the indefinite article. He used only the indefinite article before adjectives or adverbs without following nouns as shown in the data of (n-q). One of the examples is (n) *It's a helpful*. K2 used *a* before the predicative adjective *helpful* not followed by any noun.

One Chinese and the two Japanese subjects used the demonstrative *that* for definite contexts. Even though Korean has demonstratives like the other languages, the Korean participants did not use demonstratives in definite contexts.

The Korean L2 speakers used the definite article better than the indefinite article as the other language groups did. They failed to use the indefinite article *an* correctly like the other subjects. The sequence of the correct use in the articles by the Korean L2 speakers is the same with the Chinese and Japanese L2 speakers: *the* → *a* → *an*.

Effect of Interviewers

This case study found commonalities in the three language groups. First of all, all the participants had acquired the use of the definite article faster than the use of the indefinite article. Of the two indefinite articles *a/an*, none the subjects had acquired the use of *an* yet. It seemed hard for them to acquire the correct use of *an*.

In particular, the Chinese L2 speakers used English articles more correctly than the Japanese and Korean participants; there was a correlation between the articles and correctness in the interview data. On the other hand, the Japanese and Korean participants used the articles less correctly when they used them more often. Even though the Japanese graduate students scored as high as the Chinese ones in the grammatical judgment test, their use of English articles in the interviews was not as

good as the Chinese ones. In other words, the Chinese subjects showed similar results both in the written test and in the interviews while the Japanese did not. On the other hand, the results of the written test among the Korean subjects corresponded to the results of the interview data. This case study also indicates that the length of residency in the United States is not a factor for the acquisition of English articles. J2, who had stayed in the U.S for one year, used the articles much correctly than K1 and K2 who had stayed for four years. Other factors should be considered for further study. For instance, the frequency of personal contact with native speakers of English could be a factor when L2 speakers stay in the States.

After the interviews, all the subjects were asked some follow-up questions to see the relation between their use of articles and their level of comfort or stress in the interviews. For follow-up questions, all the subjects were first asked how comfortable they were in the interviews with the native speaker and with the L2 speaker of English. All of them, except K1, felt more comfortable in the interview with the L2 speaker of English like themselves. They mentioned that they felt nervous, less confident, worried about their English when they had the interview with the native speaker of English. In addition, they were also asked whether or not they believed that their English was better in the interview with the native speaker than with the L2 speaker. All the subjects answered that they felt their English was better with the L2 speaker. They agreed that their level of worry and nervousness seemed to affect their English in conversation. In fact, their interview data showed a relationship between their nervousness and English ability. First of all, in the interview with the native speaker of English, the L2 speakers often used hedges or fillers such as *well* and *um*. They had long or short pauses in their

utterances more often. These linguistic behaviors indicate their lack of confidence and their worry about English. They seemed to be a relationship between the number of times that they used the articles in the utterances and their (dis)comfort level. In general, when the subjects had the interview with the native speaker of English, they used the articles less often than in the interview with the L2 speaker. For example, C1 used the articles 17 times with the native speaker while she used them 41 times with the L2 speaker. Similarly to C1, C2 used 17 articles with the native speaker and 22 times with the L2 speaker. In the case of C3, 35 articles were used in the interview with the native speaker and 39 ones were used with the L2 speaker. The Japanese and Korean subjects showed similar results with the Chinese ones. Furthermore, the Chinese participants used the articles more correctly with the L2 speaker of English than with the native speaker; C1: 63% with the native speaker vs. 93% with the L2 speaker, C2: 76% vs. 82%, and C3: 86% vs. 87%. This result seems to indicate that there is a relation between the use of articles and the interviewers.

Conclusions

Even though the number of the participants for each language is small, the results of the use of English articles in this case study correspond to the findings of previous research. First, there is evidence the L2 speakers of English had difficulties understanding the semantic notions of English articles. In particular, for the use of the definite article, these L2 speakers seemed influenced by their L1 background. Therefore, they associated *the* with demonstratives as shown in the interview data of C3 and J2. In addition, the omission of the indefinite article in indefinite contexts was also found in this study. Lastly, some previous research found that a sequence of acquisition

of English articles: *the* → *a* → *an*. The participants in this pilot case study seemed to show the same developmental pattern as that found in previous studies. Therefore, it is possible to hypothesize that L2 speakers of English whose L1s are article-less first acquire the definite article rather than the indefinite article. For the variants of the indefinite article between *a* and *an*, *an* is hardly used in indefinite contexts by the L2 speakers of English. It seems to be the last to be used correctly. This hypothesis needs to be investigated in further research.

Future Research

This case study demonstrates that the Chinese L2 speakers of English used the articles more correctly than the other language groups. This result needs to be further studied in future research with larger number of subjects to make the result reliable. It should be investigated what factors affect the article use of Chinese L2 speakers in comparison with Japanese and Korean L2 speakers. In addition, the participants of the three language groups showed a pattern in the use of English articles. All the subjects, in general, used the definite article more correctly than the indefinite article. No previous studies provided a reason for it. Therefore, it is not clear what kind of factors affect this pattern in the use of the articles. However, Lee (1999) and Butler (2002) pointed out a possible reason for it: the practice of English articles being based on memorization of rules may influence the learners. Even though these studies mentioned this possible factor, they did not provide further discussion or investigation. Therefore, the correlation between the use of English articles and educational training can be a topic for further study. If future research demonstrates this relationship, it can explain reasons for the developmental pattern (*the* → *a*) in the L2 speakers' article use and it could help to

improve teaching methods of English articles for L2 learners. In addition, the subjects in this study showed that the level of (dis)comfort seemed to affect the article use in spoken language. There are some other factors that may influence L2 speakers' acquisition of articles such as L1 background, and amount of interaction with native speakers of English. There is no single study about the assumptions. Therefore, this case study presents possible topics to be investigated on the acquisition and use of English articles.

APPENDIX
GRAMMATICAL JUDGMENT TEST

1. I saw _____ cat. Suddenly, _____ cat started meowing.
2. Yesterday I _____ driving down the road, and suddenly, a big dog (to run) _____ out of the bushes and jumped onto the roof of my car.
3. I need to talk _____ the owner of this store - Ms. Greene.
4. She knows _____ tallest person in the world. _____ man is actually her close friend.
5. A man just proposed _____ me under the apple tree (though I'm much too embarrassed to tell you who it was).
6. Some animal activities, such _____ mating, migration, and hibernation have a yearly cycle.
7. Star Wars was (to write) _____ and (to direct) _____ by George Lucas.
8. In his animated films, Walt Disney (to create) _____ animals that talk and act like people while (to retain) _____ their animal traits.
9. _____ first article of _____ United States Constitution gives Congress _____ power to pass laws.
10. New York City is famous _____ Broadway shows and it makes people excited _____ visit the city.
11. Refrigerating meats (to retard) _____ the spread of bacteria. However, they need to be (to keep) _____ in the refrigerator for a long time.
12. _____ fact that money orders can usually be easily cashed has made them _____ popular form of payment.
13. She is interested _____ arts while her husband is fascinated _____ cars.
14. _____ vegetables are _____ excellent source of vitamins.
15. The city of Montreal (to cover) _____ over 70 square miles. Mt. Hood _____ in the state of Oregon.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

She was born in Seoul, Korea. She received her associate degree in Seoul. Before starting her second school life in the United States, she had been an English teacher for elementary and middle school students in a private institute. She enjoyed her teaching, but the more she taught English, the more she wanted to study about language, language acquisition, teaching methods, and education. Therefore, she decided to start another school life in the United States.

She came to the States in 2002. She received her bachelor's degree in linguistics at Stony Brook University Long Island, New York. In 2008, she got into the University of Florida for graduate studies. She enjoyed studying second language acquisition, pragmatics, and discourse analysis which were the focus of this thesis. She received her Master of Arts degree from the University of Florida in the summer of 2010.

Besides the school work, she loves to do oil paintings. It is her meditation and complete happiness. Another hobby is making necklaces and earrings. These hobbies enrich her life and keep her up for study.