

Nina Vitashenkova

Substitution errors in article use by L1- Russian L2-English speakers

Bachelor's project in BFS

Supervisor: Dave Kush

June 2020

Nina Vitashenkova

Substitution errors in article use by L1- Russian L2-English speakers

Bachelor's project in BFS
Supervisor: Dave Kush
June 2020

Norwegian University of Science and Technology

Contents

Abstract.....	2
Sammendrag.....	3
Introduction.....	4
1. The semantics of English articles	6
2. The role of specificity in article choice in L2 English.	10
3. Alternative account of Ionin et al.'s results	17
4. Syntactic Misanalysis Account.....	24
Conclusion	28
References	30

Abstract

The present thesis investigates two proposals accounting for substitution errors in article production by L1-Russian L2-English learners. These learners, similarly to other L2-English learners from article-less languages, are observed to overuse the definite article *the* in indefinite contexts and overuse the indefinite article *a* with definite noun phrases. One proposal, the Fluctuation Hypothesis, made by Ionin et al. (2004) explains substitution errors by the role of specificity. Specificity is a semantic feature which is grammatically marked by articles in some world languages, but not in English. This semantic feature is believed to be accessible to L2 learners by Universal Grammar similarly to definiteness. By assuming that L2 learners can optionally associate English articles either with definiteness or with specificity, the Fluctuation Hypothesis (FH) offers an appealing account for learners' substitution errors, at least in indefinite contexts (Ionin et al, 2004, 2008, 2009). According to an alternative account by Trenkic (2008) substitution errors with articles in L2 English can be explained by misanalysis of articles as adjectives. On interpreting English articles as lexical items with the referential meanings “definite” or “indefinite”, L2 learners look for objective cues which either confirm or reject the referents' identifiability.

Sammendrag

Denne avhandlingen undersøker to hypoteser som redegjør for substitusjonsfeil i artikkelproduksjon av L1-russiske L2-engelske språkbrukere. Disse språkbrukerne, på samme måte som andre L2-engelske språkbrukere fra språk uten artikler, kan bruke den bestemte engelske artikkelen *the* med ubestemte substantivfraser og den ubestemte artikkelen *a* med bestemte substantivfraser. En hypotese, som heter The Fluctuation Hypothesis, utarbeidet av Ionin et al. (2004) forklarer substitusjonsfeil som påvirket av spesifisitet. Spesifisitet er et semantisk språktrekk som kommer til uttrykk ved hjelp av artikler i noen av verdensspråk, men ikke i engelsk. Dette semantiske språktrekket kan være tilgjengelig for L2-språkbrukere gjennom Universell Grammatikk på samme måte som bestemthet. Ved å anta at L2-språkbrukere kan forbinde engelske artikler enten med bestemthet eller med spesifisitet, tilbyr Fluctuation Hypothesis (FH) en tiltalende forklaring for språkbrukernes substitusjonsfeil, i det minste i ubestemte kontekster (Ionin et al, 2004, 2008, 2009). Ifølge en alternativ hypotese (Trenkic, 2008) kan substitusjonsfeil med artikler i L2 engelsk forklares ved misanalyse av artikler som adjektiver. Når L2 språkbrukere tolker engelske artikler som grammatisk enheter som bærer betydningene "bestemt" eller "ubestemt", leter de etter kontekstuelle tegn som enten bekrefter eller avviser at referenter i diskursen kan identifiseres.

Introduction

In this thesis paper I examine two proposals accounting for article errors made by Russian (L1) learners of English (L2).

Russian language is a language without articles and, therefore, Russian speakers are not familiar with the meaning and function of articles. In acquiring English language these L2 learners, similarly to other L2 learners with article-less L1s, have to understand the rules behind article choice in L2 in order to be able to use English articles, the definite article *the* and the indefinite article *a*, correctly. This, however, has proved to be a challenging task (Master, 2002; Ionin et al.'; Trenkic, 2008; 2009; Butler, 2002). Even the advanced Russian learners of English make errors in article use. They can still produce sentences like (1), in which *the* is used in place of *a* with the noun phrase at hand (underlined).

- (1) When I was living in Ulan-Ude yet unmarried my friends presented me *the small siamese kitten.

[Paraphrase: When I lived in Ulan-Ude and was still unmarried, my friends gave me a small Siamese kitten.]

(Ionin et al., 2004, p. 4)

Russian learners of English can also omit articles in some contexts (2) or oversupply them in others (3).

- (2) *President of *United States has arrived.

- (3) There is no life on *the Mars.

(Chrabaszc & Jiang, 2014)

These article errors have been found to be common for all L2 learners from article-less languages (Ionin, 2004; Butler, 2002; Tryzna, 2009); and to some degree also for L2 learners with articles in their L1 (Chrabaszc & Jiang, 2014; Garcia Mayo, 2009).

This wide occurrence of similar article errors across many languages has encouraged linguists to look for underlying cross-linguistic factors and mechanisms which influence learners' behaviour with respect to article choice. Some linguists take a general view across languages and attribute the main complexity of English articles to the fact that they do not have a one-

to-one form and meaning mapping. Instead, multiple functions – e.g. noun (in-)definiteness, noun countability, noun genericity, noun type (proper versus common), number – are attached to a single morpheme (Butler, 2002; Master 2002; White, 2003). Other linguists focus on the fact that article errors vary depending on the linguistic contexts and theorize about the reason behind it (Liu, Leason, 2002; Ionin et al., 2004; Ionin et al., 2008). Finally, the whole challenge of article acquisition does not get easier if one takes into account that the process of grammaticalization of English articles is claimed to be ongoing, which makes it difficult to come up with general rules for article use in different contexts (Gundel, 1993; Trenkic, 2008; Lyons, 1999). The mechanisms underlying article acquisition that have been suggested are L1- transfer, and Universal Grammar (UG)-mediation, or a combination of both (White, 2003; Ionin et al., 2004; Chrabaszcz & Jiang, 2014; Trenkic, 2008).

Thus, the amount of studies on the acquisition of English articles by L1 learners both with and without articles is vast and many aspects in this field of SLA are still unresolved and give rise to some interesting debates. One such debate concerning article choices made by L2 English learners from article-less languages is the main focus of this thesis. On one side of the debate is the proposal made by Ionin et al. (2004, 2008, 2009) who explain learners' article (mis)use by the effect of specificity, a semantic feature available to L2 learners by UG. On the other side is Trenkic's Syntactic Misanalysis Account (Trenkic, 2007, 2008, 2009) which describes English learners' errors as the result of articles being misanalysed as adjectives. Both accounts are examined and evaluated with respect to Russian learners of English.

My thesis statement is: L1-Russian L2-English learners' substitution errors with articles might be explained by the learners' fluctuation between two semantic features, definiteness and specificity, which are available to learners by UG, or by non-UG based fluctuation between the referential meanings, "definite" or "indefinite", learners can assign to articles upon misanalysing them as adjectives.

The paper is organised as follows:

In section 1, I give a short overview of what semantic features English articles encode (definiteness) and what they do not (specificity) as this is a central issue of my thesis. In section 2, I examine Ionin et al.'s proposal about the role of specificity in L2 article acquisition and its support. In section 3, I consider an alternative account for article choice in Ionin's study suggested by Trenkic, its implications for Ionin et al.'s study and its support for Trenkic's own proposal with respect to article use which I subsequently review in section 4.

In the last section, I summarise the main points made in the two proposals discussed and conclude.

1. The semantics of English articles

English articles are considered to be lexical items whose main function is to encode the semantic feature of definiteness (Lyons, 1999; Gundel et al., 1993; Ionin, 2004). Definiteness is a universal semantic concept related to the identifiability of the referent in discourse. According to literature, “a discourse referent is definite if the speaker intends to refer to it, and expects the referent to be uniquely identifiable to the hearer” (Trenkic, 2009, p. 117). Definiteness can be expressed in a variety of ways cross-linguistically. In English, as it is stated above, it is expressed by overt grammatical markers, the definite article *the* and the indefinite article *a*. But also by other determiners and pronominal forms (Gundel et al, 1993; Lyons, 1999; Trenkic, 2009). In many other languages it is expressed through other lexical, syntactic and pragmatic means. In Russian, a language without articles, several mechanisms are employed to signal that the referent is uniquely identifiable. These include word order, prosody, and the interaction between case and aspect. It can also be done using numerals, such as *один* ‘one’, and demonstratives *этом/том* ‘this / that’ (Cho & Slabakova, 2014; Chrabaszc & Jiang, 2014; Nordanger, 2017).

There are a variety of ways, or context cues, both linguistic and non-linguistic, which help to determine whether a particular referent is definite (uniquely identifiable), such as the referent is present in the physical context of the discourse, the referent has been mentioned earlier in the discourse or the existence and uniqueness of the referent can be inferred either from the linguistic context or from shared knowledge of the world (Lyons, 1999; Ionin et al., 2012; Trenkic, 2008, 2009). There can also be identifying attributes attached to a referent which make him the only one possible referent in a given discourse. If one or several of these criteria are positive the referent might be considered to be definite irrespective of whether it is formally marked in a language as such. In other words, such a referent will be uniquely identifiable both to the English users and to users of all other languages.

This abundance of ways to express definiteness and the fact that the majority of world languages does not have articles, influenced some linguists into questioning whether expressing definiteness is the main function of articles (Hawkins, 2004, Trenkic, 2008). This

function can be secondary in nature while the core purpose of articles is to introduce a noun phrase in discourse.

However, the conventional view on English articles is that they mark whether a particular referent in discourse is definite or indefinite.

In contrast to the definite article, the indefinite English article *a(n)* signals to the hearer that the referent in discourse is not uniquely identifiable. This article can be used in two ways: quantificational and referential. When used in a quantificational way, it denotes that the speaker is talking about one arbitrary member of a class, a non-specific referent whose identity or attributes have no importance in the given discourse (4)

(4) I'm looking for a hat to go with my new coat.

(Tryzna, 2009)

When used in a referential way, *a* denotes that the speaker is not only talking about one entity but also has an intention to refer to it, i.e to tell something about it or in relation to it (5). This intention to refer makes the referent specific in discourse terms.

(5) I'm looking for a hat. I must have left it here yesterday.

(Tryzna, 2009)

In colloquial English the referential *a* can be substituted by a demonstrative determiner *this*, as in (6):

(6) I couldn't sleep last night. A/This dog (next door) kept me awake.

(Gundel, et al, 1993)

One of the main proposals examined in this thesis considers the role of another semantic feature, namely, specificity in article choices by Russian and other learners from article-less languages. Therefore, in the following, I briefly review what specificity is, and its relation to definiteness, as it is presented in SLA literature (Lyons, 1999; Ionin et al., 2004; Trenkic, 2008; Slabakova, 2016).

Similarly to definiteness, specificity is also a semantic concept and a discourse feature related to the status of referents in a communication situation. However, in contrast to definiteness, specificity represents the speaker's perspective only and is about the speaker's intent to refer (Trenkic, 2008). Thus, a referent is specific [+specific] if there is an intention to refer to it which means that this referent has been activated in the speaker's mind as in (5). On the other

hand a referent is non-specific [-specific] if the speaker does not intend to refer to this particular referent as in (4). A specific referent has to be noteworthy in some discourse-related way (Ionin et al., 2004; Slabakova, 2016).

Specificity and definiteness are closely related features, as both reflect the property of uniqueness of the referent activated either only in the speaker's mind (as with specificity) or both in the speaker's and the hearer's mind (as with definiteness) (Ionin et al., 2004; Slabakova, 2016).

Cross-linguistically, two-article languages can encode grammatically either definiteness (like English) or specificity (like Samoan) (Lyons, 1999; Ionin, 2004; Tryzna, 2009). Standard English marks the difference between definite and indefinite noun phrases by *the* and *a*. Referential *this* is considered as a marker of specificity but its uses are restricted to colloquial language (Lyons, 1999; Gundel et al., 1993; Ionin et al., 2004). Samoan has an article *le* for marking specific referents and another article *se* for marking non-specific referents (Tryzna, 2009). On the basis of this observation of article semantics across world languages, Ionin et al. (2004) have proposed the existence of a UG parameter which governs article choices of language users. This UG parameter has become a foundation for a hypothesis, called the Fluctuation Hypothesis (Ionin et al., 2004) which accounts for article errors in L2 English. This hypothesis along with the aforementioned UG parameter will be discussed in detail in section 2.

As for the interaction between specific and uniquely identifiable status of a referent, English noun phrases (NPs) can be classified as follows: [-definite; -specific], [-definite; +specific] and [+definite; +specific], [+definite; -specific] (examples (7 a-d) are adopted from Tryzna, 2009, p. 71).

- (7) a. [-definite; -specific]
I'm looking for a hat to go with my new coat.
- b. [-definite; +specific]
I'm looking for a hat. I must have left it here yesterday.
- c. [+definite; +specific]
I want to talk to the winner of the race. She is a good friend of mine.

d. [+definite; -specific]

If you want to talk to the winner, wait until the end of the race

Thus, in English, irrespective of whether a noun phrase is specific or not, in a definite context the definite article *the* is used and in an indefinite context the indefinite article *a(n)* is used, as shown by the examples in (8) and (9) (adopted from Lyons, 1999, p. 167)

(8) Joan wants to present the prize to the winner

(a) ... but he doesn't want to receive it from her. [+specific]

(b) ... so she'll have to wait around till the race finishes. [-specific]

(9) Peter intends to marry a merchant banker

(a) ... even though he doesn't get on at all with her. [+specific]

(b) ... though he has not met one yet. [-specific]

The interaction between definiteness and specificity is considered to be an important factor in article use by L2 English learners from an article-less language background (Ionin et al, 2004). This issue will be discussed in detail in the following section.

2. The role of specificity in article choice in L2 English

One of the most influential studies on substitution errors made by L2-English learners from article-less languages is the study of article semantics in L2 acquisition by Ionin et al. (2004). The theoretical background for their study was Ionin et al.'s proposal of a UG parameter governing article choice in article-based languages, called the Article Choice Parameter (ACP). This proposal was based on the fact that in some languages, like English, articles encode definiteness and in other languages, like Samoan, they encode specificity and also on the findings in SLA research in which learners from article-less languages, like Russian, sometimes substitute *a* with *the* in [-definite; +specific] contexts (10 a, b) and used *a* in place of *the* in [+definite; - specific] contexts (10 c).

- (10) a. When I was living in Ulan-Ude yet unmarried my friends presented me *the small siamese kitten.

[Paraphrase: When I lived in Ulan-Ude and was still unmarried, my friends gave me a small Siamese kitten.]

(Ionin et al., 2004, p. 4)

- b. I lost *the healthy tooth, and I have realized after some time how it was valuable for me. It happened unexpectedly - I bit off the solid sweet and that's all: my nice - facial! - tooth was fractured.

[Paraphrase: I lost a healthy tooth, and I have since then realized how valuable it was for me. This happened unexpectedly: I bit off a solid sweet and that was it; my nice facial tooth was fractured.]

(Ionin et al., 2004, p. 4)

- c. Phone conversation:

Mathilda: Hi, Sam. Is your roommate Lewis there?

Sam: No, he went to San Francisco for this weekend.

Mathilda: I see I really need to talk to him – how can I reach him in San Francisco?

Sam: I don't know. He is staying with a* mother of his best friend – I am afraid I don't know who she is, and I don't have her phone number.

(Ionin et al., 2004, p. 35)

Ionin et al. (2004) theorised that these semantic features, definiteness and specificity, can be two separate sets of the same UG parameter, and as a result of input from a particular L1, one or the other semantic feature would get linked in the learner's mind to the correct grammatical forms, i.e. in English it would be the definite article *the* and the indefinite article *a* which encode (in)definiteness and in Samoan, it would be *se* and *le* which encode (non-)specificity.

With respect to L2 learners from article-less L1s, Ionin et al. (2004) suggested that both settings of the ACP parameter are also available to L2 learners at the initial stage of acquisition. As a result they might interpret English articles sometimes as markers of (in)definiteness and sometimes as markers of (non-)specificity. In practice it means that they will have greater difficulty in choosing a correct article in situations where these two semantic features are in conflict, i.e. when a NP has a specific but not uniquely identifiable referent (11a) or when the referent of a NP is uniquely identifiable but not specific (11b). However, with time and sufficient input from the L2, the learners will start correctly associating English articles with (in)definiteness.

- (11) a. [-definite; +specific] context, marked as indefinite in English, by *a(n)*
Peter intends to marry a merchant banker - even though he doesn't get on at all with her.
- b. [+definite; -specific] contexts, marked as definite in English, by *the*
We can't start the seminar because the student who's giving the presentation is absent
I'd go and find whoever it is, but no-one can remember, and half the class is absent.

(Lyons, 1999, p. 175)

On the basis of the above mentioned considerations, Ionin et al. (2004) proposed a hypothesis to account for article use by L2 learners from an article-less language background. They called it the Fluctuation Hypothesis (FH) (12):

- (12) "The FH for L2 English article choice:
a. L2 learners have full UG access to the two settings of the Article Choice Parameter
b. L2 learners fluctuate between the two settings of the Article Choice Parameter until the input leads them to set this parameter to the appropriate value"

(Ionin et al., 2004, p. 17)

This hypothesis allowed the linguists to make the following predictions about L2 learners' article choice: learners will supply a correct article with specific definites and non-specific indefinites, and fluctuate between using *the* and *a* with definites that are not specific and with indefinites that are specific (see Table 1).

TABLE 1 Predictions for Article Choice in L2 English

	+ definite (Target: <i>the</i>)	- definite (Target: <i>a</i>)
+specific	correct use of <i>the</i>	overuse of <i>the</i>
- specific	overuse of <i>a</i>	correct use of <i>a</i>

(Ionin et.al, 2004, p. 19)

To evaluate these predictions Ionin et al. conducted a study with Russian and Korean advanced learners of English. The participants were given two tasks: a forced-choice elicitation task and a written production task.

The forced-choice elicitation task contained 76 short English-language dialogues. Each dialogue included a target sentence with a gap in place of a missing article. The participants were instructed to fill in the gap with either *a*, *the* or null article (-). All of the target determiner phrases (DPs) were singular where the use of an article is obligatory in English and were placed in object position. In the following examples adopted from Ionin et al. (2004) the target sentence is italicized, and the correct article is underlined.

The four relevant categories of test items are illustrated in (13)-(16), together with predictions with respect to L2 learners' article choice (in bold).

- (13) [+definite; +specific]: explicit speaker knowledge; **correct use of *the***

Conversation between two police officers

Police Officer Clark: I haven't seen you in a long time. You must be very busy.

Police Officer Smith: yes, Did you hear about Miss Sarah Andrews, a famous lawyer who was murdered several weeks ago? *We are trying to find (a, the, -) murderer of Miss Andrews - his name is Roger Williams, and he is a well-known criminal.*

(14) [+definite, -specific]: denial of speaker knowledge; **overuse of a**

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

Rick: Yes, but he's on the phone. It's an important business matter. *He is 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.

(15) [-definite, +specific]: explicit speaker knowledge; **overuse of the**

Phone conversation

Jeweler: Hello, this is Robertson's Jewelry. What can I do for you, ma'am?
Are you looking for some new jewelry?

Client: Not quite - I heard that you also buy back people's old jewelry.

Jeweler: That is correct.

Client: *In that case, I would like to sell you (a, the, -) beautiful silver necklace. It is very valuable - it has been in my family for 100 years!*

(16) [-definite, -specific]: denial of speaker knowledge; **correct use of a**

Chris: I need to find your roommate Jonathan right away.

Clara: He is not here - he went to New York.

Chris: Really? In what part of New York is he staying?

Clara: I don't really know. *He is staying with (a, the, -) friend - but he didn't tell me who that is.* He didn't leave me any phone number or address.

With respect to my future discussion in section 3, it is important to note that in all of the [+specific] contexts used in this study the specificity of the referent in question is confirmed by the addition of “explicit speaker knowledge” (ESK) (Ionin et al., 2004, p. 64-69) part in which the speaker explicitly states his/her familiarity with the referent by mentioning his/her name or some other important attributes, e.g. physical appearance, as in (13) and (15). Similarly, in the [-specific] contexts the non-specificity of the referent was confirmed in majority of cases by a corresponding ESK in which such familiarity was explicitly denied, as

in (14) and (16). I will get back to this observation in section 3 while in the following I present the findings from Ionin et al.'s (2004) study.

As the group results from the force-choice elicitation task showed both definiteness and specificity of the referent had significant effects on article use for both groups of learners. L1 Russian speakers significantly overused *the* more with [+specific] than with [-specific] indefinites and overused *a* with [-specific] than with [+specific] definites", as illustrated in Table 2 (adopted from Ionin et al., 2004, p. 30).

TABLE 2 Percentage use of articles in different contexts by Russian learners of English

	+ definite (Target: <i>the</i>)	- definite (Target: <i>a</i>)
+specific	79% <i>the</i> , 8% <i>a</i>	36% <i>the</i>, 54% <i>a</i>
- specific	57% <i>the</i>, 33% <i>a</i>	7% <i>the</i> , 84% <i>a</i>

On the individual level, the participants who tended to overuse *the* with [+specific] indefinites had also a tendency to overuse *a* with [-specific] definites. For Ionin et al. it was additional proof that overusing *the* with indefinites is related to overusing *a* with definites, and the root to this problem lies in the semantics of English articles, which might be unclear to L2 learners of English with an article-less L1.

An assessment of the role of proficiency in this linguistic behaviour showed that the more advanced L2 learners make fewer substitutional errors than the intermediate learners. This also supports the linguists' idea that the fluctuation between the two settings of the ACP decreases in tact with increasing proficiency. In other words, with an increasing exposure to the language over time, learners manage to tune their ACP towards the setting which is appropriate in the L2. Both intermediate and advanced learners correctly used the definite article in the [+definite, +specific] contexts and the indefinite article in the [-definite; -specific] contexts as it was predicted would be the case since in these contexts there is no conflict between definiteness and specificity.

Overall, the results from the elicitation test confirmed Ionin et al.'s proposal about the influence of specificity on article choices made by L2 English users with article-less L1s (see

Table 2 above). Both Russian and Korean participants overused *the* in [-definite; +specific] and overused *a* in [+definite; -specific].

In the production task, the learners were instructed to write a 3-5 sentences long narrative while answering some questions provided to them. The questions aimed to elicit a sequence of sentences with both definite and indefinite referents and allow the examination of the learners' production of English articles in a more naturalistic setting. The findings showed that almost all of the definite contexts produced by the participants were [+specific]. The definite article *the* was used correctly in the majority of these contexts. The researchers found almost no overuse of *a* and in a few such instances the link between overuse of *a* and lack of specificity could not be established. Due to insufficient data of *a* overuse with definites, the researchers could not test their hypothesis that overuse of the indefinite article is linked to lack of specificity.

However, there was sufficient data on the overuse of *the* in indefinite contexts, which still allowed the linguists to assess their proposal with regard to the association of the definite article with specificity.

As Ionin et al. report, most cases of *the* overuse were found to occur in indefinite contexts that were likely to be specific (17 a-d).

- (17) a. My husband met us in airport and drove us to our new home. Then we went to our neighbours house for the small party.
- b. When I was a boy, I found a mine (I mean, an armour, from the World War Two). I liked this kind of things, so I kept it initially in the secret place in our yard and then at home.
- c. On Thanksgiving week-end we went to NY for the first time. We took the room in the New-Yorker Hotel and went outside to see the town.
- d. First I arrived in the U. S. at the end of June. It was in New York. I have met a lot of people. I had to stay at the long line in order to get through the custom.

(Ionin et al., 2004, p. 49)

Thus, the result in the production test also confirmed Ionin et al.' predictions for article use with indefinites, i.e. there would be more *the* overuse in [+specific] indefinites than in [-specific] indefinites.

The results from both the elicitation and production test confirmed Ionin et al.'s (2004) proposal about the role of specificity in L2 learners' article use and allowed them to conclude that overuse of *the* with indefinites and overuse of *a* with definites was influenced by

specificity. For Ionin et al. these results also demonstrated that L2 learners have access to both sets of the Article Choice Parameter, definiteness and specificity. And they have considered the fact that both Russian and Korean learners have similar patterns of performance with respect to article choice to be a proof that the (optional) association of *the* with the feature [+specific] is not due to L1 transfer.

Ionin et al.'s (2004) proposal was tested on similar test items in several subsequent studies both with Russian and with other article-less languages. In some cases, as in the study of Ionin, Zubizaretta and Maldonado (2008), an additional support for the Fluctuation Hypothesis was rendered. In this study Russian learners similarly showed overuse of *the* with specific indefinites and overuse of *a* with non-specific definites, exactly as it was predicted. On the basis of new linguistic research on Samoan articles which showed that Samoan distinguishes specificity only with indefinites (Tryzna, 2009), Ionin, Zubizaretta, and Philippov (2009) modified the original Fluctuation Hypothesis as to be more in line with natural languages. According to this modified version, L2 learners' article choice is still influenced by specificity but only in indefinite contexts. On the other hand, overuse of *a* with non-specific definites was now excluded from the FH as a phenomenon with no parallels in natural languages. Yet, as it was found in Ionin et al. (2004, 2008, 2009) L2 learners from article-less languages still made both types of errors, i.e. overuse of *the* with specific indefinites and overuse of *a* with non-specific definites. The latter, as Ionin et al. (2009) suggested, can result from the use of explicit strategies. I turn to this explanation of *a* overuse in more detail in section 4.

Other researchers have also looked at article choice in L2 English. Schonenberger (2014) in her study of English article use with L1 Russian and L1 German speakers employed the same test items as in Ionin et al.'s (2004). Her results were ambiguous. The more advanced Russian participants showed a patterned fluctuation similar to what was observed in Ionin et al.'s study (2004). However, the participants who were less proficient in English showed non-systematic article misuse. Similar results were demonstrated in a study with Polish learners of English (Tryzna, 2009).

Irrespective of whether or not the fluctuation pattern predicted for L2 learners was confirmed in these studies, the main point relevant for my further discussion is that the test items used were similar to the ones used in Ionin et al.'s (2004) study, in the sense that the most of them contained an ESK part both in [+specific] and in [-specific] contexts. As I shall discuss in the following section, the latter detail was the reason for why Trenkic raised doubts with respect

to Ionin et al.'s conclusions about the role of specificity in article choices by Russian and Korean learners of English.

3. Alternative account for Ionin et al.'s results

Trenkic (2008), upon closer examination of Ionin et al.'s (2004) study, suggested that their results were greatly affected and the conclusions compromised by the way the concept of specificity was operationalized in the study.

For Trenkic it is important to distinguish specificity as “having a referent in mind and intending to refer to it” (Trenkic, 2008, p. 8) from specificity as familiarity with identifying attributes of the referent in question (eg. name or physical appearance) as seems to be the case in Ionin et al.'s (2004) study. In Ionin et al.'s test materials, the explicit statement of this familiarity was used as an indication that the referent is [+specific] (18). On the other hand, the explicit denial of such knowledge was linked to the [-specific] status of the referent (19).

(18) [-definite; +specific]

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 girl from my class - her name is Angela, and she is really nice!

(Ionin et al., 2004, p. 67)

(19) [-definite; -specific]

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 student, but I don't know who it is.

(Ionin et al., 2004, p. 68)

Trenkic points out that treating these two contexts as [+specific] (18) and [-specific] (19) on the basis of the speaker's explicitly stated knowledge or denial of such is questionable. In her

opinion, these examples combine two unrelated factors: the speaker's explicit statement of her familiarity with the referent ("explicit speaker knowledge" (ESK) (Ionin et al., 2004, p. 64-69)) and the speakers' intent to refer (specificity).

Trenkic argues that (19) could also be treated as [+specific] as "[t]here is something noted, hence worthy of note, about the student: it is that the secretary is not aware of who it is" (Trenkic, 2008, p. 15). In Trenkic's opinion this makes the referent *a student* specific in discourse terms. She supports her argument by comparing (19) to another version of the secretary's statement (20):

(20) Professor Peterson can't see you now, she is meeting with a student.

(Trenkic, 2008, p. 15)

For Trenkic, only context (20) is clearly [-specific] in discourse terms. The point being made by this utterance is that the professor is not available, and the particularity of the referent is of no importance. In this sense, Trenkic (2008) points out, the speaker can be said to have no intention to refer.

Trenkic argues that because specificity (as intention to refer) and ESK were conflated in Ionin et al.'s test materials, the learners' article choice could have been influenced by whether familiarity with the referent was explicitly claimed or denied, and not by the semantic feature of specificity. She suggested that the Fluctuation Hypothesis needs to be tested on examples such as (21).

(21) Office gossip

Gina: ... and what about the others?

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

(Trenkic, 2008, p. 9)

This example can be classified as specific (as the speaker has an intention to refer, that is to say something about Peter's fiance), but it also contains an explicit denial of familiarity with the referent.

Trenkic argues that if learners are affected in their article choice by semantic feature of specificity they would overuse *the* in all indefinite contexts irrespective of whether the

knowledge of the referent in question is claimed (as in (18) or denied (as in (21)) by the speaker. However, if learners overuse *the* only in indefinite contexts where knowledge is stated, but not in indefinite contexts where knowledge is denied, then, according to Trenkic (2008), this would suggest “that learners’ article choices are influenced by extra-linguistic considerations and strategies” (p. 9) and not specificity.

To investigate this alternative explanation for L2 English learners’ fluctuation in article choice observed in Ionin et al. (2004), Trenkic (2008) conducted a study which was a partial replication of Ionin et al.’s (2004) study. The participants in Trenkic’s study were native speakers of Mandarin, another language without articles. For Trenkic (2008) these L2 learners are directly comparable to the participants in Ionin et al.’ study (2004) since their Article Choice Parameter could not have been set to either definiteness or specificity - similarly to Russian and Korean learners of English.

Trenkic used the same template as Ionin et al. in their study. The force-choice elicitation task in her study consisted of 24 short dialogues, each with a target NP in singular form. The participants were supposed to fill in a gap in front of the target NPs by choosing between *the*, *a* and no article (-).

Trenkic's (2008) proposal was that L2 learners’ article choice is affected by the stated/denied familiarity with identifying attributes of the referent rather than by the semantic feature of specificity understood as speaker intent to refer. To test this proposal, she designed six test context types in which definiteness, specificity and “explicitly stated knowledge” (ESK), which either confirmed (+ESK) or denied (-ESK) the speaker’s acquaintance with or knowledge of the referent, (*ibid*, p. 12). were in several combinations:

[-definite], [+specific; +ESK]	[+definite], [+specific; +ESK]
[-definite], [-specific; -ESK]	[+definite], [-specific; -ESK]
[-definite], [+specific; -ESK]	[+definite], [+specific; -ESK]

(Trenkic, 2008, p.12)

The following is examples of each context type as presented in Trenkic (2008, pp. 12-13) (22 – 27) (the target sentence is italicized, the correct article is underlined).

(22) [-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!*

- (23) [-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.*

- (24) [-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.*

- (25) [+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.*

- (26) [+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.

(27) [+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.

According to Trenkic (2008), if specificity has an impact on learners' article choice then they will opt for the same article in [+specific; +ESK] and [+specific; -ESK] contexts. If, however, learners' behaviour with regards to articles is affected by explicitly stated vs. explicitly denied extra-linguistic knowledge, a similar pattern will appear in [-specific; -ESK] and [+specific; -ESK]. Her predictions (in bold) alongside Ionin et al.' predictions (underlined) are summarised in Table 3 (adopted from Trenkic, 2008, p. 13):

TABLE 3: Predicted article choices in L2 English, if the choice is influenced by the stated/denied familiarity with the referent (in bold), or if the choice is influenced by specificity (Fluctuation Hypothesis) (underlined)

	[-specific; - ESK]	[+specific; + ESK]	[+specific; - ESK]
[-definite] (target: <i>a</i>)	correct use of <i>a</i> <u>correct use of <i>a</i></u>	overuse of <i>the</i> <u>overuse of <i>the</i></u>	correct use of <i>a</i> <u>overuse of <i>the</i></u>
[+definite] (target: <i>the</i>)	overuse of <i>a</i> <u>overuse of <i>a</i></u>	correct use of <i>the</i> <u>correct use of <i>the</i></u>	overuse of <i>a</i> <u>correct use of <i>the</i></u>

As Table 3 illustrates Trenkic's predictions differ from Ionin et al.'s (2004) in exactly two contexts. In the indefinite [+specific, -ESK] context, contrary to Ionin et al., she expects no overuse of *the*. In the definite [+specific, -ESK] context she expects learners to overuse *a*. The result in Trenkic's (2008) study successfully replicated the results with Russian and Korean learners in Ionin et al.'s (2004) study when only [+/- definiteness] and [+/- specificity] was considered. In other words, Mandarin participants were also overusing *the* with [+ specific] indefinites and *a* with [-specific] definites. But when the third factor was taken into account, the results turned out to be quite different. Mandarin speakers overused *the* more in [-definite; +specific; +ESK], than in either [-definite; -specific; -ESK], or, crucially, [-definite; +specific; -ESK]. Similarly, they overused *a* mostly in [+definite; -specific; -ESK] and [+definite; +specific; -ESK] contexts and much less in [+definite; +specific; +ESK].

In other words, the definite article was overused in [-definite; +specific] contexts but only when the knowledge of the referent was explicitly claimed, as in (18). It was not overused in [-definite; +specific] contexts where such knowledge was denied, as in (21). Similarly, the indefinite article was overused only in definite contexts where knowledge of the referent was explicitly denied, regardless whether contexts were specific or non-specific.

These results supported Trenkic's proposal that the article choice of the learners in Ionin et al.'s (2004) was influenced by explicitly stated or denied knowledge of the referent and not by specificity. On the other hand, they contradicted Ionin et al.'s proposal about the role of specificity in L2 article choice. At the same time these results seemed to be in line with Trenkic's (2008) own account for substitution errors in L2 English which I look at in section 4.

On the ground of her observations Trenkic (2008) calls for reclassification of [+definite; -specific] as [+definite; +specific] in Ionin et al.'s study in which case their data could no longer support the claim that learners' article choice is influenced by specificity. She claims that the only suitable conclusion regarding learners' use of articles in this type of task is that it is influenced by the speaker's explicitly stated or explicitly denied familiarity with the referents.

An important implication of Trenkic's (2008) study is that in current and future research of article errors "discourse specificity must not be conflated with explicitly stated knowledge: it must not be operationalised through stating familiarity with noteworthy/identifying attributes

of the person being talked about, nor the lack of specificity as denying such familiarity” (Trenkic, 2008, p. 15).

The issue of how specificity is operationalized in test materials was addressed in Ionin et al.’s subsequent studies (2008, 2009). Ionin, Zubizarreta and Philippov (2009) agreed with Trenkic’s point that specificity has been operationalized in their studies as ESK. However, they defended the use of ESK, which either states or denies knowledge or familiarity with the referent, as “the most common way of establishing specificity [or] lack of specificity” (Ionin et al., 2008, p. 562). They also agreed that the presence of an ESK part, which denies the speaker’s knowledge of the referent, can in principal make the [-specific] contexts ambiguous.

However, as a counter argument they pointed out that native speakers seemed to be similarly affected by the presence of +/-ESK in their classification of indefinite contexts as specific and non-specific (Ionin, 2006). If both L1 and L2 users are affected by explicitly stated/denied familiarity with the referent, then the latter, according to Ionin et al. (2009), can no longer be held accountable for L2 learners’ errors in article choices.

Moreover, Ionin, Zubizarreta and Philippov (2009) refer to independent evidence that L2 learners’ article use is affected by specificity rather than ESK. This was demonstrated in Yang and Ionin study (in Ionin et al., 2004), which partially replicated Trenkic’s (2008) study with addition of an important supplement. The participants were asked to explain why they chose a particular article in each case, in written form. In this study the researches found that L1 Mandarin speakers overused *the* more in [+ESK] than in [-ESK] contexts in line with Trenkic’s (2008) observations. However, as analysis of written responses showed, the statement or denial of ESK did not appear to be the determining factor for the learner’s substitution of one article with the other. This is because the participants’ assumption that the speaker has a particular referent in mind was the most frequent reason (in 69% of responses) given by L2 learners for their overuse of *the*. In contrast, ESK was mentioned only in 9% of responses. Correspondingly, the learners explained their overuse of *a* in [+definite, +specific, -ESK] by the absence of a particular referent.

It is important to note that Trenkic (2008) in principle does not oppose Ionin et al.’s (2004, 2008, 2009) proposal about the role of specificity in L2 learners’ article choice. However, she demonstrates that the way specificity was operationalized in their test items has influenced learners’ decision with respect to articles and, therefore, compromise the conclusions made by the researches. She emphasizes that the role of specificity needs to be tested on test items that do not conflate discourse specificity (as intention to refer) with explicitly stated or denied

knowledge of the referent (Trenkic, 2008). The following examples from Tryzna (2009), (28) and (29), can be suggested as suitable candidates for such test items.

(28) [-definite; -specific]

I'm looking for a hat to go with my new coat.

(Tryzna, 2009, p. 71)

(29) [+definite; -specific]

If you want to talk to the winner, wait until the end of the race.

(Tryzna, 2009, p. 71)

4. Syntactic Misanalysis Account

While putting in doubt the role of specificity in L2 learners' article choice on the ground of ambiguous test items, Trenkic (2007, 2008) offers an alternative account for substitution errors in L2 English, the Syntactic Misanalysis Account. The linguist suggests that L2 learners from article-less L1s persist in misanalysing English articles as nominal modifiers, i.e. as adjectives, and this causes the errors in article production. In the following I give a brief overview of Trenkic's account and Ionin et al.'s (2009) critical comments on it. The starting point of Trenkic's proposal is the assumption that L2 learners can treat articles as lexical items and assign to them referential meanings "definite" and "indefinite" (30):

(30) the: adj, definite (that can be identified)

a: adj, indefinite (that cannot be identified)

(Trenkic, 2008, p. 10.)

According to Trenkic (2008), in this case, these meanings "would be seen NOT as a property of discourse, but as a property related to some factual information on the basis of which the entity being talked about can be identified" (p. 10).

Trenkic (2008) points out that while misanalysing English articles as lexical items which either carry the meaning "definite" or "indefinite", L2 learners may apply explicit strategies, that is they might be looking for objective proofs of the referent's identifiability. These could be the physical presence of the referent, or that the referent was previously mentioned. It may also be the presence or absence of ESK. Her point is that L2 learners' understanding of

“definiteness” is linked to the learners’ intuition about whether a referent can be identifiable on the common sense understanding of this word rather than the referent’s existence and uniqueness mutually shared by the discourse participants. When assessing the referent’s identifiability, the learner may apply all these different criteria at the same time. In cases where the criteria would converge on the same outcome - “can be identified” or “cannot be identified”, the learner would choose one article or the other consistently. On the other hand, in cases where there is a conflict between the criteria, the learner is expected to fluctuate in article choice. In Trenkic’s opinion this is “what seems to be going on in Ionin et al.’ forced elicitation task and how their result can be interpreted” (Trenkic, 2008, p. 11). She demonstrates it on the examples from Ionin et al.’s study (31) and (32):

(31) [-definite; +specific]

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 girl from my class - her name is Angela, and she is really nice!

(Ionin et al., 2004, p. 67)

(32) [-definite; -specific]

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 student, but I don’t know who it is.

(Ionin et al., 2004, p. 68)

In (31) the referent of *girl from my class* is not physically present and has not been mentioned in the previous discourse. So, according to these criteria, the referent is not identifiable and thus should be marked by *a*. But the speaker provides additional information about the referent: her name and her personality. This information makes the referent identifiable and can prompt the learner to use the definite article *the*. Thus, according to Trenkic (2008), in this context the learner might fluctuate between the indefinite article and the definite article. In contrast, Trenkic points out, in (32), there is no conflict between criteria; the student is not there physically, he was not mentioned earlier and the speaker denies familiarity with the referent. All criteria that the learner could apply converge on the conclusion: this referent is

not identifiable. As a result the learner will not fluctuate between articles and supply the correct article - a.

Trenkic can partially support this assumption with the findings in her study with Serbian learners of English (2007). In this study she found that Serbian learners omitted articles more with nouns that were adjectivally modified than with unmodified nouns (e.g. the same learner might correctly say *the mug* but also say *blue mug* instead of *the blue mug*). Trenkic proposes that learners can misanalyse the definite article as bearing the meaning “definite”, i.e. one which could be identified. Then, she suggests, they will deem the article to be unnecessary in situations when another lexical element with more informative power, as an adjective *blue* in the above example, is present in the context. Moreover, in linguistic situations when the L2 learners’ cognitive resources are not exhausted by other acquisitional tasks, they will use both the article and the adjective and produce the correct noun phrase *the blue cup*. However, in situations, when cognitive resources are under strain, L2 learners might opt for producing *blue cup* as an equally informative in terms of identifiability but less resource demanding option.

Ionin et al. (2009) question the validity of Trenkic’s proposal on the ground of little or no direct evidence that speakers of other languages without articles can consider English articles to be adjectives. They also consider that her explanation based on L2 learners’ cognitive resources is of a rather general character and not necessarily tied to articles being misanalysed as adjectives.

To summarize all of the above, Ionin, Zibuzaretta and Philippov (2009) agree with Trenkic to a certain degree that L2 learners employ an explicit strategy in their article use paying attention to the presence or absence of ESK in a given context. They disagree with her that this is related to articles being misanalysed as adjectives. For them it is rather related to L2 learners’ (mis)understanding of the relation between specificity and definiteness. They argue that L2 learners can for example employ an explicit strategy “use *the* when the speaker has a particular referent in mind, use *a* when the speaker does not have a particular referent in mind” (Ionin et al, 2009, p. 355). In such cases they are bound to overextend the specificity distinction to definiteness, and use *the* with specific indefinites and *a* with non-specific definites, as it was shown in Ionin et al.’s studies (2004, 2008, 2009).

This, however, does not contradict in their opinion the role of specificity in L2 learners’ article use. Ionin et al. (2009) propose the coexistence of two processes which take place in L2 learners’ minds when they choose an article. The learners have access to the ACP and can, therefore, misinterpret the definite article as a marker of specificity. They can also apply

explicit strategies for assessing the status of a given referent, for example scan the linguistic context for any explicit information about the referent. As Ionin et al. (2009) point out, in indefinite contexts both access to semantic universals and the presence of ESK have the same result: overuse of *the*. In contrast, in definite contexts these two determining forces can pull L2 learners in two different directions, especially when the learners associate explicitly denied knowledge of the referent ([-ESK]) with the lack of a particular referent in the speaker's mind (Ionin, et al., 2009).

Conclusion

L1-Russian L2-English learners can use *the* in place of *a* and vice versa with non-generic singular count nouns. They can for example opt to use *the* with a noun phrase whose referent is specific but not uniquely identifiable, as in (1) repeated here as (33). These learners can also use *a* in place of *the* with definite but not specific referents as in (34).

- (33) When I was living in Ulan-Ude yet unmarried my friends presented me **the* small siamese kitten.

[Paraphrase: When I lived in Ulan-Ude and was still unmarried, my friends gave me a small Siamese kitten.]

(Ionin et al., 2004, p. 4)

- (34) Phone conversation:

Mathilda: Hi, Sam. Is your roommate Lewis there?

Sam: No, he went to San Francisco for this weekend.

Mathilda: I see I really need to talk to him – how can I reach him in San Francisco?

Sam: I don't know. He is staying with a* mother of his best friend – I am afraid I don't know who she is, and I don't have her phone number.

(Ionin et al., 2004, p. 35)

These types of article errors seem to be neatly described by L2 learner's optional association of English articles with specificity as it was proposed by Ionin et al. (2004, 2008, 2009). Specificity is a semantic feature which is grammatically marked by articles in some world languages, similarly to definiteness. This semantic feature is believed to be accessible to L2 learners by Universal Grammar as an alternative to the definiteness setting of the Article Choice Parameter. By assuming that L2 learners can optionally associate English articles either with definiteness or with specificity, the Fluctuation Hypothesis (FH) offers an appealing account for learners' substitution errors, at least in indefinite contexts (Ionin et al., 2004, 2008, 2009). But a closer analysis of the data supporting the FH gives rise to some doubts. For instance, it remains unclear to what extent the test items employed in the FH studies measure the effect of specificity and not the effect of explicitly stated or denied knowledge (+/-ESK) of the referent. This issue appears to be important as this effect was shown to be significant in other studies (Trenkic, 2008; Ionin et al., 2009). On the one hand, [+ESK] can make a context clearly specific, or non-specific in case of [-ESK]. But on the

other hand, it makes the results ambiguous in terms of the source of fluctuation. More studies where this issue is resolved are needed in order to strengthen the proposal that specificity can influence article choices by L2 learners. It is equally unclear whether substitution errors can be explained by misanalysis of articles as adjectives, as it was proposed by Trenkic (2008). This account has little empirical support cross-linguistically and seems to be based on general assumptions with respect to learners' cognitive processes. What unifies both accounts is an agreement that explicit strategies can play a role in L2 learners' article choice (Ionin et al, 2009; Trenkic, 2008). Learners' use of explicit strategies in identifying the status of the referent can explain the overuse of *a* with definite noun phrases and as such perfectly co-exists with the FH which can only account for the substitution errors in indefinite contexts. On the other hand, explicit strategies are also an important part of Trenkic's Syntactic Misanalysis Account. On interpreting English articles as lexical items with the referential meanings "definite" or "indefinite", L2 learners look for objective cues which either confirm or reject the referents' identifiability. Explicitly stated/denied familiarity with the referent (ESK) is one of those cues. More studies involving different languages without articles will help to clarify whether L2 learners indeed misanalyse articles as adjectives.

With respect to Russian learners of English, both accounts seem to be quite acceptable. The importance of specificity in L2 article choice was demonstrated in studies with Russian learners. The empirical support for the Syntactic Misanalysis Account comes from a study with L2 learners whose L1 was Serbian, a language which is in many ways similar to Russian.

To sum up, L1-Russian L2-English learners' substitution errors in article production might be explained, as a result of the learners' optional association of English articles with the semantic feature of specificity rather than definiteness as both are assumed to be available to L2 learners by Universal Grammar. On the other hand, these learners might misanalyse articles as adjectives and assign to them referential meanings, "definite" or "indefinite". This can result in overuse of *the* in indefinite contexts where explicit information confirms identifiability of the referent, or in overuse of *a* in definite contexts where unidentifiability of the referent is explicitly stated. Future studies on Russian learners' article choice in specific and non-specific contexts without explicitly stated information with respect to referent's identifiability, and research on whether or not Russian learners can indeed misanalyse articles as adjectives can give more empirical support to either one or the other account. For now, there is no sufficient proof to assume one of these accounts to be the most convincing one.

References

- Butler, Y. G. (2002). Second language learners' theories on the use of English articles: An analysis of the metalinguistic knowledge used by Japanese students in acquiring the English article system. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 24(3), 451-80. Retrieved from <https://search.proquest.com/docview/62300393?accountid=12870>
- Chrabaszcz, A., & Jiang, N. (2014). The role of the native language in the use of the English nongeneric definite article by L2 learners: A cross-linguistic comparison. *Second Language Research*, 30(3), 351–379. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267658313493432>
- Cho, J., Slabakova, R. (2014). Interpreting definiteness in a second language without articles: The case of L2 Russian. *Second Language Research*, 30(2): 159-190.
- García Mayo, M.P. (2009) Article choice in L2 English by Spanish speakers. In Hawkins, R., & García Mayo, M. del P. (eds.), *Second Language Acquisition of Articles : Empirical Findings and Theoretical Implications*, 13-35. John Benjamins Publishing Co
- Gundel, J., Hedberg, N. & Zacharski, R. (1993). Cognitive status and the form of referring expressions in discourse. *Language* 69: 274-307
- John A. Hawkins. (2004). *Efficiency and Complexity in Grammars*. OUP Oxford.
- Hawkins, R., & García Mayo, M. del P. (2009). *Second Language Acquisition of Articles : Empirical Findings and Theoretical Implications*. John Benjamins Publishing Co.
- Ionin, T., Ko, H., & Wexler, K. (2004). Article Semantics in L2 Acquisition: The Role of Specificity. *Language Acquisition*, 12(1), 3-69. Retrieved March 15, 2020, from www.jstor.org/stable/20011566
- Ionin, T. (2006). This is definitely specific: Specificity and definiteness in article systems. *Natural Language Semantics*, 14(2), 175-234. Retrieved from <https://search.proquest.com/docview/85639459?accountid=12870>
- Ionin, T., Zubizarreta, M. L., Maldonado, S. B. (2008) Sources of linguistic knowledge in the second language acquisition of English articles. *Lingua* 118(4), 554-576 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lingua.2006.11.012>
- Ionin, T., Zubizarreta, M. L., & Philippov, V. (2009). Acquisition of article semantics by child and adult L2-English learners. *Bilingualism*, 12(3), 337-361. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S1366728909990149>
- Lyons, C. (1999). *Definiteness*. Cambridge University Press.
- Liu D and Gleason J (2002) Acquisition of the article the by nonnative speakers of English: An analysis of four nongeneric uses. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 24: 1–26.
- Master, P. (2002). Information structure and English article pedagogy. *System*, 30(3), 331-348. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0346-251X\(02\)00018-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0346-251X(02)00018-0)

Nordanger, M. (2017) The encoding of definiteness in L2 Norwegian: A study of L1 effects and universals in narratives written by L1 Russian and L1 English learners. Doctoral thesis. University of Bergen.

Schönenberger, M. (2014). Article Use in L2 English by L1 Russian and L1 German Speakers. *Zeitschrift Für Sprachwissenschaft*, 33(1), 77–105. <https://doi.org/10.1515/zfs-2014-0003>

Slabakova, R. (2016). *Second language acquisition*. Oxford University Press USA – OSO.

Trenkic, D. (2007). Variability in second language article production: Beyond the representational deficit vs. processing constraints debate. *Second Language Research*, 23(3), 289-327. Retrieved from <https://search.proquest.com/docview/85684806?accountid=12870>

Trenkic, D. (2008). The representation of english articles in second language grammars: Determiners or adjectives? *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, 11(1), 1-18.
doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S1366728907003185>

Trenkic, D. (2009) Accounting for patterns of article omissions and substitutions in second language production. In Hawkins, R., & García Mayo, M. del P. (eds.), *Second Language Acquisition of Articles : Empirical Findings and Theoretical Implications*, pp. 115-143. John Benjamins Publishing Co

Tryzna, M. (2009) Questioning the validity of the Article Choice Parameter and the Fluctuation Hypothesis. In Hawkins, R., & García Mayo, M. del P. (eds.), *Second Language Acquisition of Articles : Empirical Findings and Theoretical Implications*, pp. 67-86. John Benjamins Publishing Co

White, L. (2003). *Second Language Acquisition and Universal Grammar* (Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
doi:10.1017/CBO9780511815065

