ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH ARTICLES
BY L1 CHINESE AND L1 MALAY ESL LEARNERS

QUEK SOH THENG

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Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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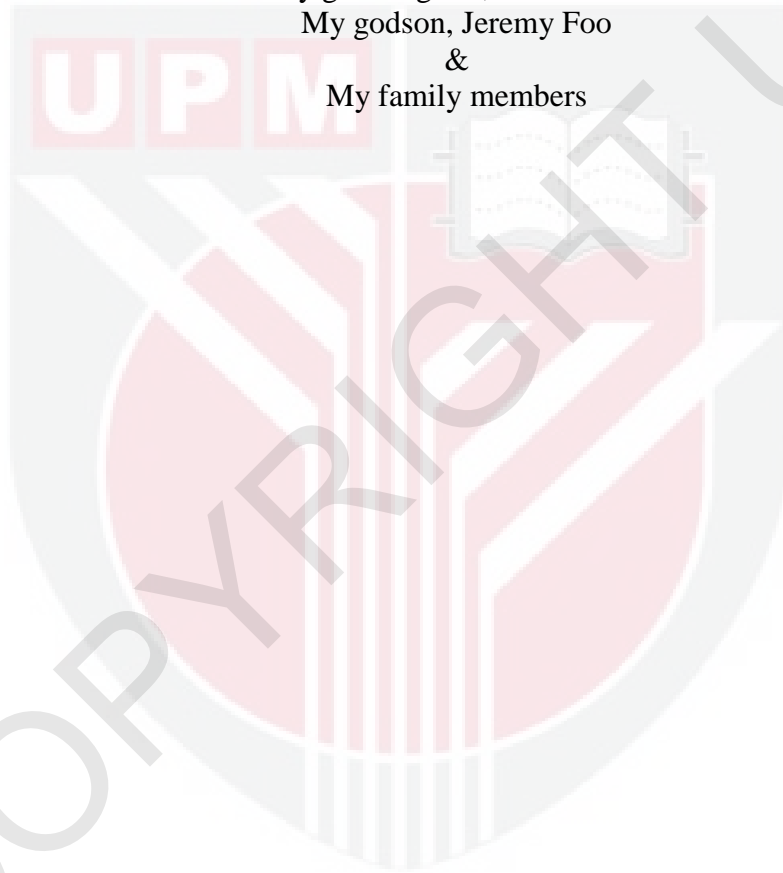
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to:

My husband, Cheah Kiu Lee
My mother, Lew Sou Chan
My late father, Quek Ah Tee
My late grandmother, Low Aye Ken
My sister-in-law, Jules Cheah
My daughter, Serena Cheah
My son, Edson Cheah
My goddaughter, Felicia Foo
My godson, Jeremy Foo
&
My family members

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH ARTICLES
BY L1 CHINESE AND L1 MALAY ESL LEARNERS

By

QUEK SOH THENG

August 2018

Chairman : **Associate Professor Wong Bee Eng, PhD**
Faculty : **Modern Languages and Communication**

It is essential for native or first language (L1) speakers of article-less languages like Malay language and Mandarin Chinese to master the usage of English articles in order to be competent second language (L2) learners. Thus far, many studies have shown that L1 Malay and L1 Chinese ESL learners' inability to grasp the usage of determiners as one of the main causes of unsuccessful acquisition of English in Malaysia. However, limited research has been conducted to address the article acquisition problem in particular hence no consensus has been achieved on how to tackle this problem among the Malaysian ESL learners.

Grounded on the Bickerton's Semantic Wheel Model for Noun Phrases (1981) and Ionin et al.'s Fluctuation Hypothesis (2004, 2008), L2 learners' access to Universal Grammar in setting the correct parameters to acquire the Article Choice Parameter was investigated. The study employed a descriptive, ex-post facto and comparative cross-linguistic quantitative design to determine and compare the level of article acquisition of ESL learners. This study was also conducted to examine the influence and role of semantic features and L1 transfer in the acquisition of English articles by adult Chinese-speaking and Malay-speaking ESL learners with first languages without articles. Seventy-seven (77) L1 Chinese and 116 L1 Malay adult ESL learners at three levels of proficiency, elementary, intermediate and advanced, enrolled in three teacher training institutes were chosen to participate in the study. The participants completed a fill-in-the-article test, a forced-choice elicitation task, a forced-choice written elicited production task, and a picture-based comprehension task.

Using Huebner's (1983) classification system, the statistical analyses of the participants' performance revealed that: (i) L1 Chinese and L1 Malay ESL learners showed similar path of article acquisition despite differences in L1s; (ii) all the six

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groups of the L1 Chinese and L1 Malay scored the highest mean percentages in the Type 4 context type; (iii) the ESL learners' accuracy rates on article usage improved with increased proficiency level.

Based on the predictions of Fluctuation Hypothesis and Article Choice Parameter, it was found that: (i) all the three proficiency groups of the L1 Chinese and L1 Malay learners were aware of the definiteness-based of English articles and showed fluctuation patterns in their article choice; (ii) definiteness and specificity had significant effect on the use of *a* and *the* among the L1 Malay learners; (iii) definiteness and specificity had significant effect on the use of *the* but only definiteness registered significant effect on the use of *a* among the L1 Chinese learners; (iv) only the advanced and intermediate groups of both L1 Chinese and L1 Malay ESL learners exhibited clear distinctions between the use of *the* in the two 'unique' categories and *that* in the 'non-unique' categories; and (v) the advanced and intermediate L1 Chinese and L1 Malay ESL learners showed their awareness in the discourse differences between the plural demonstrative and definites through the use of *those* and *the*.

The L1 Chinese learners' high accuracy rates in the indefinite contexts across the three proficiency groups highlighted the role of L1 lexical transfer and implied that the numeral one *yi* has been fully grammaticalized into an indefinite article whereas the numeral one *satu* or *se* in Malay Language is halfway towards the grammaticalization into an indefinite article. The findings of this study have pedagogical implications including classroom strategies used for the teaching and learning of the English articles, and point to problematic areas that may be encountered by ESL learners as a result of L1 transfer or fluctuation in their interlanguage. Thus, the findings of the study will contribute to the literature in the field of SLA particularly in the Malaysian context.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

PEMEROLEHAN KATA PENENTU BAHASA INGGERIS DI KALANGAN PENUTUR BAHASA MANDARIN DAN BAHASA MELAYU YANG MEMPELAJARI BAHASA INGGERIS SEBAGAI BAHASA KEDUA

Oleh

QUEK SOH THENG

Ogos 2018

Pengerusi : **Profesor Madya Wong Bee Eng, PhD**
Fakulti : **Bahasa Moden dan Komunikasi**

Adalah penting bagi penutur bahasa pertama yang tidak mempunyai kata penentu seperti bahasa Melayu dan bahasa Mandarin untuk menguasai penggunaan kata penentu bahasa Inggeris (*English articles*) demi menjadi penutur bahasa Inggeris yang fasih seperti penutur asli bahasa Inggeris. Setakat ini, banyak penyelidikan telah menunjukkan bahawa ketidakupayaan pelajar-pelajar bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua (BI2) untuk menguasai penggunaan kata penentu ialah salah satu punca kegagalan pencapaian bahasa Inggeris di Malaysia. Waima, penyelidikan terhad dijalankan untuk menangani masalah pemerolehan kata penentu ini menyebabkan belum tercapainya konsensus untuk mengatasi masalah ini secara khususnya. Berdasarkan penyelidikan yang lepas, kaedah para penutur bahasa Mandarin dan bahasa Melayu mengekod kedua-dua penafsiran ketentuan (*definiteness*) dan ketidaktentuan (*indefiniteness*) adalah tidak jelas dan faktor ini mungkin bertindak sebagai penghalang kepada kejayaan pemerolehan kata penentu bahasa Inggeris.

Berasaskan ramalan Model Roda Semantik untuk Frasa Nama oleh Bickerton (1981) dan Hipotesis Berubah-ubah (*Fluctuation Hypothesis*) oleh Ionin et al. (2004, 2008), kajian ini menyiasat akses pelajar-pelajar mempelajari BI2 terhadap 'Universal Grammar' dalam menetapkan parameter yang betul untuk memperoleh Parameter Pemilihan Kata Penentu (*Article Choice Parameter*). Kajian ini bertujuan menentukan dan membanding tahap pencapaian pelajar-pelajar BI2, menyiasat ciri-ciri semantik dan pengaruh kata penentu bahasa Inggeris, terutamanya 'ketentuan' (*definiteness*) dan 'kekhususan' (*specificity*) serta kemungkinan berlakunya pemindahan daripada bahasa ibunda sekiranya wujud persamaan ciri dalam bahasa ibunda dan bahasa kedua dengan Parameter Pemilihan Kata Penentu (*Article Choice Parameter*) dalam proses pemerolehan kata penentu dalam bahasa kedua oleh penutur dewasa bahasa Mandarin dan bahasa Melayu yang mempelajari bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua dan

mempunyai bahasa ibunda yang tiada kata penentu. Seramai tujuh puluh tujuh (77) orang penutur bahasa Mandarin dan 116 orang penutur bahasa Melayu dewasa yang terbahagi kepada tiga tahap kemahiran berbahasa Inggeris iaitu rendah, sederhana dan tinggi daripada tiga institut perguruan telah terpilih sebagai responden dalam penyelidikan ini. Para responden dikehendaki melengkapkan satu ujian mengisi kata penentu, satu ujian pemilihan padanan kata penentu, satu ujian penulisan pemilihan padanan kata penentu, dan satu ujian pemahaman kata penentu berasaskan gambar.

Dengan menggunakan sistem klasifikasi Huebner (1983), hasil analisis statistik responden menunjukkan bahawa: (i) penutur bahasa Mandarin dan bahasa Melayu dewasa mempamerkan lengkok yang sama dalam pemerolehan kata penentu; (ii) keenam-enam kumpulan penutur bahasa Mandarin dan penutur bahasa Melayu memperoleh skor tertinggi dalam konteks Jenis 4; (iii) kadar ketepatan penggunaan kata penentu pelajar-pelajar BI2 meningkat seiring dengan peningkatan kemahiran berbahasa.

Berdasarkan ramalan Hipotesis Berubah-ubah dan Parameter Pemilihan Kata Penentu, hasil data mendapati bahawa (i) ketiga-tiga kumpulan yang berbeza berkemahiran berbahasa menyedari sifat ketentuan kata penentu bahasa Inggeris dan menunjukkan corak berubah-ubah dalam pemilihan kata penentu (ii) ketentuan (*definiteness*) dan kekhususan (*specificity*) memberi kesan yang signifikan dalam pengunaan *a* dan *the* bagi penutur bahasa Melayu; (iii) ciri ketentuan (*definiteness*) dan kekhususan (*specificity*) memberi kesan yang signifikan dalam pengunaan *the* tetapi hanya ketentuan memberi kesan yang signifikan dalam penggunaan *a* di kalangan penutur Mandarin; (iv) hanya penutur bahasa Mandarin dan penutur bahasa Melayu yang mempunyai tahap kemahiran berbahasa tinggi dan sederhana menunjukkan perbezaan ketara antara penggunaan *the* dalam dua kategori unik dan *that* dalam kategori tidak unik (v) kedua-dua penutur bahasa Mandarin dan penutur bahasa Melayu menunjukkan kecaknaan terhadap perbezaan wacana antara dalam kata penunjuk (*demonstrative)* dan kata penentu (*definites*) yang majmuk melalui penggunaan *those* dan *the*.

Pencapaian tinggi pelajar-pelajar Cina BI2 dalam konteks ketidaktentuan (indefinite contexts) menunjukkan kesan pemindahan leksikal bahasa pertama dalam pemerolehan kata penentu bahasa Inggeris oleh penutur bahasa Inggeris (BI2) sebagai bahasa kedua dan memberi implikasi bahawa nombor satu 'yi' telah berubah fungsi menjadi kata penentu tidak tentu sepenuhnya manakala 'satu' ataupun 'se' hanya mengalami proses perubahan separa untuk berfungsi sebagai kata tidak tentu '*a*' dalam penyelidikan ini. Hasil dapatan kajian ini mempunyai implikasi pedagogi terhadap strategi pengajaran dan pembelajaran kata penentu bahasa Inggeris di dalam bilik darjah dan menonjolkan skop bermasalah yang mungkin dihadapi oleh penutur BI2 akibat pemindahan bahasa ibunda atau keadaan berubah-ubah (*fluctuation*) yang menyebabkan kesalahan bahasa antara (interlanguage). Justeru itu, kajian ini menyumbang terhadap literatur dan pengetahuan dalam bidang pemerolehan bahasa kedua (*SLA*) terutamanya dalam konteks Malaysia.

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CL	classifier
CRS	currently relevant state (*le*)
EXP	experiential aspect (-*guo*)
PFV	perfective aspect (-*le*)
DUR	durative aspect (-*zhe*, *zài*)
BA	*bǎ*
GEN	genitive (-*de*)
3SG	Third person singular pronoun
PL	plural (-*men*, -*xie*)
2SG	Second person singular pronoun
GM	generic marker (*itu*)
PRE	prefix
DET	determiner
SUF	suffixes
1PL	First person plural pronoun
1SG	First person singular pronoun
PREP	preposition
REL	relative pronoun
CLS	classifier

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background to the Study

The English articles comprise of the indefinite article *a(n)*, the definite article *the*, and the *zero(Ø)* article. Based on a study done by Oxford Online by analysing the Oxford English Corpus of over a billion words (2011), *the* is the most widely used single word in English, followed by the indefinite article *a* in the fifth place. The intricacy and regular use of the English articles indisputably have made these three functional words one of the most difficult structural fundamentals (Chrabaszcz & Jiang, 2014; Ekiert, 2004; García Mayo, 2008; Ionin & Montrul, 2010; Liu & Gleason, 2002; Master, 1987) for the learners of English as a second language (ESL) to master. These unstressed function words are also claimed to be saliency biased and lightweight semantically (Lu, 2001), and as a result become a great threat to the full attainment of the English language for ESL learners.

Articles has often been considered as a challenging grammatical property of English, which is very laborious to teach (Dulay, Burt, & Krashen, 1982) causing even the most proficient learners of English to commit mistakes although the other properties of the language have been acquired. It has been globally acknowledged that second language (L2) learners of English face problems in the usage of articles; however, the main source of their difficulty still remains elusive due to the fact that articles are single morphemes which are laden with multiple overlapping functions (Chrabaszcz & Jiang, 2014).

For more than four decades the L2 English article system acquisition has been the integral point of increasing investigations in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research (Butler, 2002; Guella, Déprez, & Sleeman, 2008; Joolaee & Ghonsooly, 2015; Kubota, 1994; Liu & Gleason, 2002; Master, 1987b; Murphy, 1997; Robertson, 2000; Sun, 2016; Thomas, 1989; Zdorenko & Paradis, 2008; Zhang, 1991). The initial work stems from the renowned semantic wheel for noun phrase reference (Bickerton, 1981, 1984) and Huebner's (1983) work with binary marked features, Hearer's Assumed Knowledge (±HK) and Specific Reference (±SR) which have been extensively adopted in a number of studies (Bickerton, 1984; Butler, 2002; Geng, 2010; Huebner, 1985; Lu, 2001; Master, 1988; Mohamed Taha Ali Hassan, 2011; Parrish, 1987; Wong & Quek, 2007). Using Bickerton and Huebner's framework, a number of studies have found high overuse of *the* with indefinites and overuse of *a* with definites among the L2 learners of English. Many proposals have been made to explain article misuse and errors in L2 English (Huebner, 1983a;Master, 1987; Parish, 1987; Tarone & Parrish, 1988; Thomas, 1989) but no consensus on the cause of the problem has been achieved.

Master's (1990) Binary System, which stresses on classification and identification, and features a 6-point hierarchical scheme is the second approach. Subsequently, a more recent approach to article classification based on two models of semantic universals namely the *de re/de dicto* distinction and the referentiality distinction, has been proposed by Ionin (2003) and Ionin and Wexler (2003, p.150-151). As explained by Lyons (1999, p. 168-169), if the particular entity meets the description within the scope of the noun phrase, it is termed as specific, referential or *de re* reading. If the particular entity has a narrow scope within the scope of the operator, it is termed as non-specific, or *de dicto* reading.

Since then, the role of semantic universals, definiteness and specificity has been widely discussed within the recent generative framework in the acquisition of articles. Ionin, Ko and Wexler, (2004a, p. 12) and Ionin (2003, p.85) claim that articles are used cross-linguistically in languages to signify either definiteness or specificity based on their formulated Article Choice Parameter (ACP). English and Hebrew are examples of languages that divide their articles according to definiteness; they mark both definiteness and specificity whereas Samoan has a specificity-based article system (Ionin, 2003, p. 75; Lyons, 1999).

In addition, White (2003), Ionin and Wexler, (2003, p.1) and Ko, Ionin, and Wexler (2009) postulate that L2 grammars are UG-constrained (Universal Grammar) and both definiteness and specificity are semantic universals accessible to them. Consequently, Ionin, Ko, and Wexler (2004) put forward a semantically-linked parameter of article choice, namely the Article Choice Parameter and grounded on their Fluctuation Hypothesis (FH), assert that fluctuation happens between the semantic parameter settings when the L2 learners have to make their article choice until sufficient input triggers them to the correct parameter(s). Several adult L2 studies (Jaensch & Sarko, 2009; Ko, Ionin, & Wexler, 2010; Montrul & Ionin, 2010, 2012; Sarko, 2008) have confirmed the predictions of the Fluctuation Hypothesis. These studies contributed some evidence to the hypotheses suggesting the acquisition of L2 article replicates the L1 order of article acquisition and supported the possibility of L2 learners having access to the semantic universals. It is proposed that article-less languages like Mandarin Chinese, Malay Language and Japanese do have access to the definiteness feature which is realized in determiners like demonstratives (Lyons, 1999; Momenzade & Youhanaee, 2014; Nik Safiah Karim, 1995). Therefore, L1 Chinese and L1 Malay-speaking learners are predicted to be aware of the feature definiteness and are able to use these articles correctly. The L2 learners' task is to comprehend that this feature is realized using *the* and *a* in English. However, it was argued that these articles were not acquired simultaneously although the definiteness feature is claimed to be congruent with the demonstratives in their first languages.

Although the Fluctuation Hypothesis is supported by a number of studies, it somehow contradicts with (Hawkins & Chan, 1997) Failed Functional Features Hypothesis (FFFH), which has since been updated to the Representational Deficit Hypothesis (RDH) (Hawkins, 2005). RDH predicts that the L2 learners who differ in L1-speaking backgrounds would not be able to acquire non-existing uninterpretable features in their

L1's causing tenacious inconsistencies in their article production. Hence, UG can only be partially accessed by the L2 learners. However, the interpretable features remain accessible during L2 acquisition even though they are not selected during the L1 acquisition. The findings contrast with a number of studies on L2 article acquisition as reported in Ionin, Ko and Wexler (2004), Goto Butler (2002), Tarone and Parrish (1988), and Xu, Shi and Snape (2016) which are consistent with full access to semantic universals through Universal Grammar.

On the contrary, first language (L1) speakers of languages with articles [+Art] like Spanish and Greek, learning English as an L2 do not demonstrate fluctuations between definiteness and specificity (Garcia Mayo & Hawkins, 2009; Hawkins et al., 2006; Snape, García Mayo, & Gürel, 2006; Snape, Leung, & Ting, 2006). The L1-Spanish and L1-Greek speakers performed native-like in the definite contexts due to the similarity in definiteness features of the languages with English. The results of these two L2 groups with L1 encoding definiteness imply that the development of L2 acquisition of articles is affected by L1 transfer.

Contradicting results and cross-linguistic variation found in some research studies which investigated the relationship between L1 transfer and fluctuation among L2 learners in article acquisition have led to the reformulation of the FH (Ionin, Zubizarreta, & Maldonado, 2008). If the article acquisition of L2 learners of languages with articles [+Art] is facilitated by L1 transfer of the definiteness features of the languages, there is a high possibility that L1 transfer also exists among L2 learners of article-less languages regardless of their L1s (Luk & Shirai, 2009, p.742). However, the features that could be possibly transferred by L2 learners with article-less languages remain controversial due to the contradicting results by some research. Following this line of research, this empirical study was conducted to identify the acquisition order of articles, ascertain the accessibility of semantic features through UG and to discover the role of these semantic features and underlying processes in the article acquisition of ESL learners whose L1s are languages without articles, namely L1 Malay and L1 Chinese-speaking learners. The definiteness and indefiniteness notions of English, Malay and Chinese were compared to determine whether the semantic differences between the three languages have led to the successful or incomplete acquisition of articles among the ESL learners.

1.2   Statement of the Problem

English is the second most important language in Malaysia and thus a compulsory subject being taught officially to pupils in all the kindergartens and preschools (which are optional). Students in national type or private schools continue to learn English from seven till seventeen years old formally and their proficiency in English is assessed in all the national examinations. Although English is used widely and students are exposed to English articles as early as four years old in Malaysia, some research show that the English article system specifically the definite article *the* maintains apparently as one of the marked grammatical properties for L1 Malay-speaking learners (Khazriyati Salehuddin, Tan, Marlyna Maros, & Maros, 2006; Nor

Hashimah Jalaluddin, Norsimah Mat Awal, & Kesumawati Abu Bakar, 2008; Wong & Quek, 2007). The acquisition of articles among ESL learners appears to be late due to cultural differences (Shi, 2015, p.1230) and article choice is specifically contextual-based, complex and unpredictable at times (Lu, 2001). L1 Malay and L1 Chinese adult learners make errors in the acquisition of the articles despite early exposure (Wong & Chan, 2008; Wong & Quek, 2007).

Article omission and article substitution are two types of errors detected in the previous studies on L2 article acquisition. Many proposals have been made to justify these error patterns. Such errors show the level of L2 learners' awareness of articles and the representations of articles in their interlanguage grammar (Trenkic, 2008, p.1). L2 grammar is proposed to be constrained by Universal Grammar (UG) and L2 learners are able to acquire features not instantiated in their L1 through UG access (Hawkins, 2004; Hawkins et al., 2006; Ionin & Montrul, 2010; Snape, Leung, et al., 2006; Trenkic, 2008; Xu et al., 2016).

Earlier research on article acquisition focused on the usage of articles in various semantic context types and to determine the acquisition order of the English articles (Butler, 2002; Ekiert, 2004; Huebner, 1983a; Liu & Gleason, 2002; Master, 1990, 1997; Tarone & Parrish, 1988; Thomas, 1989). Recently, L2 learners' ability to set the Article Choice Parameter which is available to them via UG as proposed by Ionin et al. (2004) is the focus of many studies. Comparative studies on L2 learners of various first languages (L1s) without articles [-Art] and with articles [+Art] are carried out to seek the nature of L2 interlanguage, underlying processes and sources of knowledge that govern the L2 learners' article choice in article acquisition (Ionin et al., 2004, 2008; Ko, Perovic, Ionin, & Wexler, 2008; Zdorenko & Paradis, 2008). It is claimed that L2 learners of [+Art] L1s performed significantly better than the [-Art] L1s. Transfer of the definiteness features from the overt article system in their L1s facilitates the acquisition of English articles. A number of studies propose that this is the result of positive influence of L1 transfer on L2 English article acquisition (Chrabaszcz & Jiang, 2014; Crosthwaite, 2014; Ionin, Baek, Kim, Ko, & Wexler, 2012; Ionin et al., 2008; Ionin, Baek, Kim, Ko, & Wexler, 2011; P. Master, 1997; Robertson, 2000; Snape, García Mayo, & Gürel, 2013; Zdorenko & Paradis, 2008). Subsequently, L1 transfer is claimed to take place among L2 learners of L1s with or without articles whereas fluctuation is a process to set the Article Choice Parameter (APC). It has also been suggested that L1 transfer overrides the fluctuation process for L2 learners with [+Art] L1s when there is sufficient input.

On the other hand, learners with [-Art] L1s have difficulties due to the absence of overt article system. Research has been done on a few L1s without articles such as Chinese, Japanese, Turkish, Russian, Korean and Serbian, found that the L2 English learners fluctuate between definiteness and specificity in [-definite, +specific] and [+definite, -specific] contexts. Concluding results from these studies conducted utilizing similar instruments on different respondents but vary from one another have caused confusion and direct comparisons of results across different studies difficult. Chinese, Japanese, Malay, and Korean are topic-prominent classifier languages without overt

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determiners. L1 Chinese L2 English learners are claimed to transfer the definiteness notion from the L1 demonstrative determiners *zhe* this and *nei* that and numeral *yi* one as markers of definiteness and indefiniteness through a process named 'lexical transfer principle' or grammaticalization (Chen, 2003; Snape, Leung, et al., 2006) . The question arises as to whether the hypothesized process of acquisition is similar for all [-Art] L1 regardless of the languages. There is scarcity, if not an absence of information on the L1 Malay and L1 Chinese adult ESL learners' acquisition process of English articles, mainly in the local context to address this language difficulty among the ESL learners. In Malaysia, a few research studies have been done on the usage of articles by L2 learners (Arshad Abd. Samad, 2005; On, Chi Hui @ Yun, 2002; Soo, 2007) and article misuse by learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) (Meena, 2008) which were mainly corpus-based and error analysis (Ho-Abdullah, Jaludin, & Zainudin, 2013; Khazriyati Salehuddin et al., 2006). This study aims to illuminate further this aspect of the L2 article acquisition process by comparing the acquisition of the L2 article system of learners with different [-Art] L1s; for example Chinese, which has been studied for L1 transfer and also access to semantic universals via Universal Grammar, and Malay, which has not been studied, except for a handful of investigations being done on the process of article acquisition per se (Chan & Wong, 2001; Mohamed Taha Ali Hassan, 2011; Wong & Quek, 2007) but no detailed discussion on the effect of article semantic features, L1 transfer and other processes involved have been proposed.

Following Hawkins (1994) and Wolter (2003, 2006), it is presumed that the similar computation of uniqueness/maximality is shared by the definite article and demonstrative determiners. However, the concept of definiteness is differentiated by comparing the specific area to which uniqueness is formed and interpreted by L2 learners. For example, if *the pencil* signifies the particular pencil in the certain context, *that pencil* indicates the particular pencil in the instantaneous visible position. It has been argued that Korean *ku* has grammaticalized some of the functions associated with the definite determiner while still maintaining its characteristics of a demonstrative determiner as proposed for distal demonstrative *nage* in Chinese (Huang, 1999) Parallel to Korean *ku*, L1 Malay-speaking learners and L1 Chinese-speaking learners are found to use demonstratives determiners such as *itu*, *nei* 'that' and *ini*, *zhe* 'this' to signify the relative proximity of a particular salient referent (Huang, Li, & Li, 2009; Ionin et al., 2012; Lin, 2013; Nik Safiah Karim, 1995; Nik Safiah Karim, Farid M. Onn, Hashim Hj. Musa, & Abdul Hamid Mahmood, 2006). The above facts pose a learning challenge to the L1 Malay and L1 Chinese ESL learners, whether contexts in Malay or Mandarin Chinese which are compatible with *itu* or *nei*, are compatible with *the* or *that* only, or with both, in English. In this aspect, this study examines how L1 Chinese and L1 Malay ESL learners compute definiteness and demonstratives as they are proposed to share the same central semantics of uniqueness and whether the ESL learners transfer the definiteness notions from their L1s to represent semantic universals.

Most of the studies conducted found that L2 learners have difficulty in acquiring the accurate use of articles in English and misuse articles due to the lack of input, contextual knowledge on article use, and the complexity of article usage and rules.

In order to acquire and master the correct usage of articles, L2 learners' awareness and knowledge of the semantic features of articles, noun countability and their interpretation of uniqueness and maximality for denoting definiteness are essential. For English L2 learners with article or article-less first languages, their L1s have been suggested to affect their article acquisition. More confusion arises when not only definiteness but the semantic feature, specificity, which was first introduced in the 1960s, is claimed to affect the L2 article choice (Jaensch & Sarko, 2009; Katunar & Gnjatovi, 2013; Ko, Ionin, & Wexler, 2006; Ko et al., 2009). Definiteness and specificity which are proposed to be accessible to L2 learners through UG require learners' ability to distinguish the presupposed background knowledge that is shared or unshared between the speaker and hearer in order make the correct article choice. Snape, Leung, and Ting (2006, p. 136) found that L1 Chinese in their study unexpectedly did not fluctuate between definiteness and specificity in [-definite, +specific] and [+definite, -specific] contexts and overused *a* in [+definite, +specific] contexts (17%). As L1 Chinese and L1 Japanese are [-Art] languages, FH predicts that learners from both languages should fluctuate. The Chinese's performance was well ahead the Japanese. In this case, definiteness is grammaticalized into a grammatical property more rapidly among L1 Chinese as compared to the L1 Japanese. The grammaticalization process of definiteness in Chinese has been hypothesized to be at the endstate whereas for the Malay, this has yet to be investigated.

There are conflicting results, particularly on the underlying processes, function and effect of semantic features (specifically definiteness and specificity) and L1 transfer in article acquisition of L2 learners with article-less L1 backgrounds. L1 Chinese learners in this study are also learning Malay at the same time as English. In such contexts, English might turn out to be the L2 or L3. Leung (2007) has argued that L3 acquisition must not be treated or analysed simply as another L2 acquisition because transfer for L1 Chinese learners does not necessarily come from L1 alone but also L2 or both. Due to the contradicting results from the previous studies, this study sought to find out whether L1 Malay as compared to the L1 Chinese ESL learners , both speakers of article-less languages, have access to UG and display variability in their article choice and article accuracy. The effect of the binary semantic features, namely definiteness and specificity, and the role of linguistic processes specifically L1 transfer and fluctuation on L2 article acquisition are some of the issues addressed in the study.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

By comparing the findings for both L1 Malay and L1 Chinese ESL learners, the study sought to determine whether there are differences in patterns and processes of acquisition of the English articles by learners with different L1s, that share the characteristic of being article-less.

As Liu and Gleason (2002, p. 3) have pointed out that L2 learners have to master the discourse and referential limitations of Noun Phrases in order to acquire the correct use of English articles. Hence, the knowledge of semantic features such as definiteness and specificity which are proposed to be accessible to L2 learners through Universal

Grammar is the key to the knowledge and mastery of articles (Ionin et al., 2004; Snape & Yusa, 2013; Whong, Gil, & Marsden, 2014). This study set out to determine the level of article acquisition focusing only on the definite article *the* or indefinite article *a*, and the presence and effect of semantic linguistic features namely definiteness and specificity on article misuse among the L1 Malay and L1 Chinese adult ESL learners.

This study also aims to explore the relationship between first languages and article accuracy levels, and to determine if first language transfer occurs and affects the use of English articles among the L1 Malay and L1 Chinese-speaking ESL learners. From the findings, some suggestions for the teaching and learning of English articles are given.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The main objectives formulated for the study are as follows:

a) To identify and compare the level of article acquisition of article use by L1 Malay and L1 Chinese ESL learners.
b) To determine whether L1 Malay and L1 Chinese ESL learners have access to both settings of Article Choice Parameter through Universal Grammar.
c) To determine and examine the patterns of article use in the four main [±definite, ±specific] contexts by the L1 Malay and L1 Chinese ESL adult learners.
d) To determine the role of L1 transfer on the usage and computation of the definite and demonstrative accounts among the L1 Malay and L1 Chinese ESL learners.

1.5 Research Questions

This study sets out to investigate and compare cross-linguistically the L2 article use and article acquisition by Malay-speaking and Chinese-speaking ESL learners, and to determine the effects of semantic universals and first language transfer to this process. Based on the purpose and objectives discussed, the following research questions are formulated for the study:

Both Mandarin Chinese and Malay language are [-Art] languages. In Ekiert's (2004) study on Polish (an [-Art] language) ESL and EFL learners, both advanced and low proficiency learners registered similar patterns of acquisition orders. Based on Ekiert's (2004) study, it was hypothesized that the elementary, intermediate and advanced L1 Malay and L1 Chinese ESL learners will show similar patterns of article acquisition based on their article use regardless of their first languages.

1.   To what extent do the accuracy rates in article use and level of article acquisition (based on context types) of the L1 Malay and L1 Chinese adult ESL learners at three levels of proficiency differ?

Article Choice Parameter (ACP, introduced in section 1.6.3) proposed that English is a language with articles which are definiteness-based. Based on ACP, if the ESL learners have access to UG and can encode the semantic features, [+definite] and [+specific], they are predicted to use *the* in the [+definite] and *a* in the [-definite] context types correctly. The second question was formulated in order to determine the ESL learners' ability to acquire the Article Choice Parameter.

2.   Does fluctuation occur in the acquisition of English articles by L1 Malay and L1 Chinese adult ESL learners?

Spanish L2 learners of English do not fluctuate between the features [±definite, ±specific] because Spanish has morphological indicators to establish those distinctions, similar to English. In light of the predictions of possible errors by English L2 learners whose L1s are article-less [-Art] as proposed by Ionin et al. (2004), the following third question was posed for the study due to the effect of specificity notion.

3.   What are the most common incorrect uses (in terms of *the* and *a* overuses in specific/non-specific definite and indefinite contexts) of English articles by the L1 Malay and L1 Chinese ESL learners of three levels of proficiency? What are the patterns of article use found in the article acquisition of L1 Chinese and L1 Malay ESL learners?

Demonstratives and definites are claimed to be closely related and share the same central of uniqueness. Since Mandarin Chinese and Malay are article-less languages with demonstratives, it is hypothesized that there is a possibility of L1 transfer of demonstrative determiners in the interpretation of definiteness by Malay and Chinese-speaking L2 learners. The following fourth research question was formulated to find support for the likelihood of transfer overriding fluctuation.

4.   How do L1 Malay and L1 Chinese ESL learners compute and distinguish definite and demonstrative accounts in the use of *the* in singular and plural contexts?

1.6   Hypotheses

Based on the research objectives and research questions, the hypotheses formulated for the study are:

H1:   The advanced learners for L1 Malay will obtain higher accuracy rates compared to the intermediate and elementary groups in the five contexts types.

H2:   The advanced learners for L1 Chinese will obtain higher accuracy rates compared to the intermediate and elementary groups in the five contexts types.

H3:   There is no difference in the accuracy rates for each context type for the L1 Malay and L1 Chinese learners across proficiency levels.

H4:   The advanced learners for L1 Malay will obtain higher accuracy rates compared to the intermediate and elementary groups for *the* use in the [+definite, +specific] and *a* use in the [-definite, -specific] contexts.

H5:   The advanced learners for L1 Chinese will obtain higher accuracy rates for *the* use compared to the intermediate and elementary groups in the [+definite, +specific] and *a* use in the [-definite, -specific] contexts.

H6:   There is no difference in the accuracy rates for *the* use in the [+definite, +specific] and *a* use in the [-definite, -specific] contexts for the L1 Malay and L1 Chinese learners across proficiency levels.

H7:   The elementary learners for L1 Malay will obtain higher percentage of *a* overuse in the [+definite, -specific] and *the* overuse in the [-definite, +specific] contexts compared to the intermediate and advanced groups.

H8:   The elementary learners for L1 Chinese will obtain higher percentage of *a* overuse in the [+definite, -specific] and *the* overuse in the [-definite, +specific] contexts compared to the intermediate and advanced groups.

H9:   There is no difference in the accuracy rates for *a* overuse in the [+definite, -specific] and *the* overuse in the [-definite, +specific] contexts between the L1 Malay and L1 Chinese learners across proficiency levels.

H10:   The advanced learners for L1 Malay will overuse *the* in specific [-definite] more than non-specific [-definite] and overuse *a* in the non-specific [+definite] than specific [+specific] contexts.

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1.7   Theoretical Perspective

For this study, the theoretical framework adopted covers L2 learners' ultimate attainment and generative linguistics processes involved in the article acquisition of the ESL learners. Traditionally, a considerable number of article acquisition research start with classification of semantic contexts for the use of articles by L1 learners based on Bickerton's work (Bickerton, 1981, 1984). To date, Bickerton's Semantic Wheel for Noun Phrases remains as one of the most influential and extensively utilised models in the research involving developmental sequence of article acquisition, focusing on the identification of contexts in which articles appear. For the initial part of the study, Bickerton's framework is employed to compare the ultimate attainment and influence of L1 in the article acquisition use by comparing the article accuracy rates between L1 Malay and L1 Chinese, looking at the acquisition orders of the five context types (refer to section 2.4.1 for further explanations) tested and determine the more problematic article, specifically *the* or *a*. On top of that, the ESL learners' article accuracy rates are used to determine their awareness of English being a language with definiteness-based articles.

Correspondingly, in the generative second language acquisition (SLA) research, the accessibility of UG in L2 acquisition and role of L1 are the two most vital issues being investigated rigorously (White, 2003, p. 33). Concentrating solely on article acquisition, Ionin (2003, p. 32) proposes a semantic parameter of article choice and contends that fluctuation causes the adult L2 learners' systematic patterns of article misuse while L2 learners access the different parameter settings of definiteness and specificity. In accordance with the main objectives, the second framework adopted for the study is based mainly on Fluctuation Hypothesis and Article Choice Parameter proposed by Ionin et al. (2004, 2008 & 2012). This framework is the most suitable framework as this study is carried out in comparison with Ionin et al.'s (2003, 2004, 2008 & 2012) work. As Ionin et al. have pointed out, this framework holds that the settings Article Choice Parameter (see section 1.6.3) are accessible to L2 learners and L1 transfer would influence the accuracy rates of their article choice in the article acquisition process if their first languages have articles. Hence, this study sets out to determine if Malay and Chinese-speaking learners of English have access to Article Choice Parameter and are influenced by their L1s in the acquisition of articles, as Mandarin Chinese and Malay language are article-less and thus definiteness and specificity are not spontaneously encoded.

Through this approach, the question whether L2 learners of article-less languages have access to the relevant feature(s) or transfer the similar feature(s) or notion(s) from L1 might be answered. Due to differences of parameter settings between L1 and L2, this study hypothesized that ESL learners essentially fluctuate to reset their parameter setting to acquire a second language, explaining the differences in accuracy rate between the learners of three levels of proficiency. In the light of the Fluctuation Hypothesis and Article Choice Parameter, the study reflects the likelihood of the definiteness notion being transferred from the ESL learners' L1s, but is expressed using demonstratives instead of articles. In order to successfully acquire the target L2 article features, fluctuation happens within the ESL learners' interlanguage till

sufficient input leads them to the appropriate parameters. By adopting both approaches, namely the Bickerton's Semantic Wheel Model (Bickerton, 1981) and Fluctuation Hypothesis (Ionin, 2003; Ionin et al., 2008) on the same group of respondents, it is hoped that the ESL learners' zones of importunate difficulty in article acquisition that may be due to cross-linguistic variability can be determined.

1.7.1 Bickerton's Semantic Wheel Model for Noun Phrases (1981, 1983)

For decades, the English article system has long been a captivating topic for linguists, not only for its intricacy in usage but also the rigour involved in analysing it. Some earlier studies (Christophersen, 1939; Jespersen, 1933) have made significant contributions to our understanding of the issue, however Bickerton's (1981) work is undoubtedly the most notable and profoundly influential, as it opens the door to a new and unique systematic approach of analysing the use of the English article system. Therefore, the first theoretical approach on article acquisition adopted in this study is Bickerton's (1981) Semantic Wheel for Noun Phrase (NP) reference, marked by the features, [±Specific Referent (±SR)] and [±Assumed Known to the Hearer (±HK)]. According to Bickerton (1981, p. 134), two binary discourse features of referentiality govern the English articles usage: (a) whether a noun is a specific referent (±SR), and (b) whether the hearer knows the referent (±HK).

Based on such an analysis, NPs fall into four basic semantic types that determine article use. The classification below is taken from Huebner (1983) and Thomas (1989): (i) Type 1 [−SR, +HK], known as generics where definite *the,* indefinite *a,* or zero article *Ø* is used, (ii) Type 2 [+SR, +HK], known as referential definites where the definite *the* is required, (iii) Type 3 [+SR, −HK], where the indefinite *a* or, if the noun is plural, zero article *Ø* is called for, and (iv) Type 4 [−SR, −HK], where the indefinite *a* or, if the noun is plural, zero article *Ø* is required. On top of these four types, Thomas (1989) and Butler (2002) added Type 5 which is known as idioms and other conventional uses where the definite *the*, indefinite *a*, or zero article *Ø* is used, is also included in this study (see section 2.4 for further discussion) to obtain a more complete picture. Figure 1.1 shows Bickerton's Semantic Wheel Model, which has been extensively adopted in a number of later studies (Huebner, 1983; Master, 1987a; Parrish, 1987; Tarone & Parrish, 1988; Thomas, 1989).

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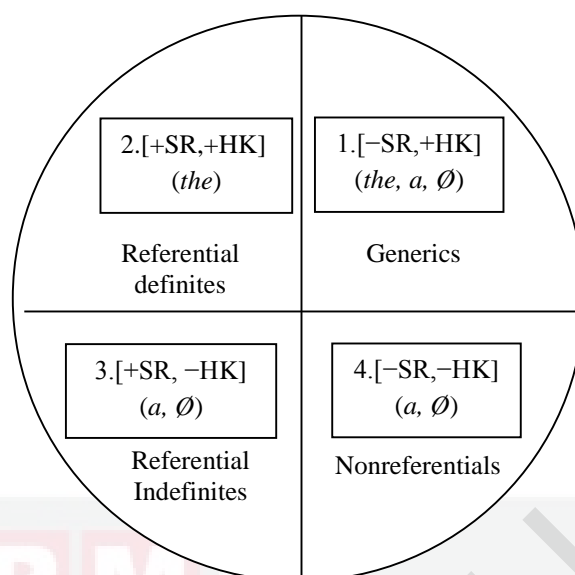
Figure 1.1 : Bickerton's Semantic Wheel for Noun Phrase Reference
(from Huebner, 1983, p.133)

1.7.2   The Fluctuation Hypothesis (2003, 2008)

The research on parameter setting in L2 acquisition offers vast data and varied results. The first finding of Finer and Broselow (1986) showed evidence that L2 learners have access to parameter settings instantiated neither in their L1s nor L2s. Secondly, the L2 learners clearly exhibited optionality to parameter settings in certain domains. The L2 learners' performance suggests that they occasionally appear to accept one setting of the parameters and sometimes another. These findings give support to the view that L2 learners have full access to Universal Grammar (UG) (Epstein, Flynn, & Matohardjon, 1996; Schwartz & Sprouse, 1996).

Following Ionin (2003) and Ionin et al.'s (2003) proposal on article semantics, Ionin et al. (2004, p. 16) suggested an explanation for the inconsistency in the L2 learners' use of articles in articles acquisition. Learners may go hither and thither between numerous settings until the sufficient input provided leads them to the appropriate parameters. They proposed the Fluctuation Hypothesis as specified in (1), a single hypothesis that encapsulates both the findings (see Finer & Broselow, 1986) and could explain the variability in L2 learners' production of articles and parameter setting account.

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(1) The Fluctuation Hypothesis for L2 acquisition:
- L2 learners have full access to Universal Grammar (UG) principles and parameter-settings.
- L2 learners fluctuate between different parameter-settings until the input leads them to set the parameter to the appropriate value.

(Ionin et al., 2004, p. 16; Ionin, 2003, p. 23)

Initially, Ionin et al.'s studies were mainly on L2 learners whose L1s are without articles. Fluctuation Hypothesis was then reformulated to address the contradicting results and cross-linguistic variation to illustrate the relationship between L1 transfer and fluctuation in article acquisition that occurred among L2 learners whose L1 has articles such as Spanish (Ionin et al., 2008, p. 560). The L1-Spanish L2-English learners' high accuracy in article choice provides evidence of L1 transfer at the level of article semantics which contributed to their native-like performance (Ionin et al., 2008). On the contrary, the L1-Russian learners showed signs of fluctuation and seemed to learn through a combination of UG-access and input processing. In order to explain the use of articles among these L2 learners , two possibilities were proposed for the study are as stated below in (1) and (2).

1)   Fluctuation overrides transfer
     All L2 learners should fluctuate between definiteness and specificity in their L2-article choice.
2)   Transfer overrides fluctuation
     L2 learners whose L1 has articles transfer article semantics from their L1 to their L2. L2 learners whose L1 lacks articles exhibit fluctuation.

(Taken from Ionin et al., 2008, p.560)

The first possibility suggests that all L2 learners fluctuate between specificity and definiteness despite their L1s. The L2 learners whose L1 has articles should transfer article semantics from L1 to their L2, according to the second possibility. This would explain the difference in accuracy between the L1 Spanish and L1 Russian L2 learners.

The Fluctuation Hypothesis encompasses the article acquisition process of Malay and Chinese-speaking ESL learners of three proficiency levels who are hypothesized to have full access to the article choice parameters. The L1 Malay and L1 Chinese ESL learners in this study are predicted to perform like the L1-Russian learners as both are also L2 learners with article-less L1 languages. Based on this approach, advanced Malay and Chinese ESL learners might perform native-like if they have enough input to steer them towards accurate article choices and there is a possibility of L1 transfer at the semantic level of articles even though their L1's have no articles.

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1.7.3 Article Choice Parameter

Ionin, Ko and Wexler (2004, p.3) proposed the Article Choice Parameter (ACP) that consists of binary discourse-related semantic features, specificity and definiteness, which play an essential role in article specifications cross-linguistically. Mosel and Hovdhaugen (1992, p. 259) showed that Samoan has two articles: the article *le* which is used with specific singular Determiner Phrases (DPs) regardless of its definiteness feature while *se* is used with non-specific singular DPs. By comparing English articles to data from Samoan articles discussed by Mosel and Hovdhaugen (1992, p. 259 - 270), Ionin et al. (2004) proposed the Article Choice Parameter (for two-article languages), a parameter governing article choice. The parameter provides two possible options for two-article languages, either Setting I or II, based on definiteness or specificity (refer to (1)).

(1)   The Article Choice Parameter (for two-article languages)
        A language that has two articles distinguishes them as follows:
        Setting I : Articles are distinguished on the basis of specificity.
        Setting II : Articles are distinguished on the basis of definiteness.

                                                                    (Ionin, 2003, p. 79)

Setting I is for languages which divide articles based on specificity. One article will be used with all [+specific] DPs, [+definite] and [-definite], and a different article for all [-specific] DPs, [+definite] and [-definite]. Samoan is an example of the language which adopts the Setting I, marks *le* as [+specific], uses *se* in [–specific] contexts, and does not mark any article for definiteness. Standard English, (in the absence of *this*) use *the* to mark [+definite], and *a* in [-definite] contexts, and does not mark any article for specificity (Ionin et al., 2004). In line with UG, Ionin et al. claimed that adult L2 learners from article-less languages still have access to the parameters governing article choice, and hence will fluctuate between the different settings of the parameters until the input leads them the target value (definiteness). Even though the L2 learners cannot transfer any morphology knowledge of articles from their native languages, the universal semantics of articles help to trigger the language-specific morphological expressions of definiteness.

1.8   Scope and Limitations of the Study

The focus of this study is limited to the trainee teachers from four selected training colleges in Kuala Terengganu, Negri Sembilan and Kuala Lumpur. These four colleges are the target of the study based on the availability of L1 Chinese-speaking trainees needed for the study. There are only 7 out of all the 16 teacher training colleges with L1 Chinese-speaking trainees. Hence the result of the research is only generalizable to the targeted population. Another setback is due to the limitation of the production data collected. The production data in particular might tell us only about the ESL learners' preference and not their underlying grammar. Due to this

reason, comprehension measures are included in conjunction with the production measures to tap on learners' judgements more accurately.

1.9   Significance of the Study

The rampant rise of research on the second language acquisition of articles throughout the past five decades has highlighted the importance of articles as a grammar property cannot be denied or overlooked. Without the mastery of this grammatical property specifically, the ultimate acquisition of English as a second language for ESL learners especially in Malaysia will be incomplete. It is hoped that the findings of this study will contribute to a better understanding of the acquisition process of the English articles, which in turn will lead to more effective teaching and learning of the whole English article system to overcome the problems faced by the Malaysian ESL learners. The pedagogical implications drawn from the findings will also provide insights to ESL educators on the writing and preparation of teaching and learning materials for this aspect of English grammar, particularly in the local context.

1.10   Definitions of terms

The following terms introduced in the study are explained based on the focus of the research and literature involved for better and further understanding on the topic concerned.

Bare plural, demonstrative plural and definite plural

These three terms are used in the picture-based comprehension task which is the fourth instrument used in the study. The term "bare plural" refers to noun phrases (NP) with no determiners; for example, "two apples" while the "demonstrative plural" stands for plural expressions of the form "these NP"; for example, "those bananas". Next, the term "definite plural" is used for plural expressions of the form "the NP" such as "the knives" (Ionin, 2003)

Referent

A referent is a concrete thing or concept that is being referred to, so an actual chair would be the referent of the word 'chair'. An example (taken from Fodor & Sag, 1982, p. 359):

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).

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In the case of (a), the speaker has a particular referent (man) in her mind who proposed but in (b), it is more likely that the speaker is unaware of who the referent (man) is in the bathroom. However, in both sentences, the 'man' exists in the actual world and hence is the referent mentioned by the speaker.

Definiteness [+definite]

The speaker and hearer presuppose the existence of a unique individual (referent) in the set denoted by the NP and reflects the state of knowledge or mind of both speaker and hearer.

If a Determiner Phrase (DP) of the form [D NP] is [+definite], then the speaker and hearer presuppose the existence of a unique individual in the set denoted by the NP.

Taken from Ionin et al. (2004, p.5).

Specificity [+specific]

The speaker intends to refer to a unique individual in the set denoted by the NP and considers this individual to possess some noteworthy property, which reflects the state of knowledge or mind of the speaker only.

If a Determiner Phrase (DP) of the form [D NP] is [+specific], then the speaker intends to refer to a unique individual in the set denoted by the NP and considers this individual to possess some noteworthy property.

Taken from Ionin et al. (2004, p.5).

1.11 Summary

The level of article acquisition, the uses and misuses of the English articles, the role of semantic features such as specificity and definiteness in the process of article acquisition among L1 Chinese and L1 Malay adult ESL learners; and the possibility of L1s lexical transfer from the semantics of demonstrative determiners (namely 'nei', 'itu', *that* and *those*) to denote definiteness are the main focus of this study. As a general background of the thesis, this chapter presents the detailed overview of the previous and ongoing debates on topics from which the objectives and research questions of the study have surfaced. Next, the statement of the problem and purpose of the study are laid out, followed by a detailed discussion on the theoretical perspective of the study namely, the Bickerton's semantic wheel for noun phrase and Ionin et al.'s Fluctuation Hypothesis and Article Choice Parameter. In addition, the limitations, the significance of the study and the definitions of some terms used in the thesis are included in this opening chapter to give a clearer picture and facilitate the understanding of this study.

1.12   Outline of the thesis

The outline of the remainder of the thesis is organised as follows. Chapter 2 begins with the discussion on the three approaches which are linked with Universal Grammar (UG) access to L2 acquisition. Next, a review of the previous empirical research on L2 acquisition of English articles in different noun phrase environments for the past decades based on the Bickerton's wheel for noun phrases and followed by Ionin's Fluctuation Hypothesis are presented. The analysis of the definiteness, indefiniteness and demonstrative semantic descriptions of the Mandarin Chinese, Malay language and English Language are presented in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 begins with the description of the research design and conceptual framework of the study. Next, the respondents of the study are introduced, followed by the research instruments, the pilot study and lastly the procedures of the data collection process are described. Chapter 5 reports all the results from the data analysis of the four instruments including the descriptive and inferential statistics for the control group and both L1 Chinese and L1 Malay ESL learners, displayed in the forms of tables, bar charts and line graphs described in detail. These are followed by the discussion based on the research questions of the study. To conclude the thesis, Chapter 6 provides some implications and directions for future research that are related to L2 learners' article choice, transfer and fluctuation in article acquisition are highlighted.

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