

Form and Function of the Double Definiteness: A Pilot Study of the L2 English Influence on Chinese Learners' L3 Swedish

Research on second language (L2) acquisition of articles has focused on their function (e.g. Ionin, Ko & Wexler 2004) and on the form/representation of the noun phrase (NP) (e.g. Trenkic 2007). Previous studies on third language (L3) acquisition have investigated language combinations where a certain category is functionally and formally similar in two of the learner's three languages, and have aimed to define the degree of influence from the first and second language (L1/L2) on the L3 (see Falk & Bardel 2010 and Jaensch 2013 for overviews). Research on the L3 acquisition of definiteness has reported a positive influence from an L2 with articles (Jaensch 2009; Leung 2007, 2005), at least when definiteness is not obligatorily marked in the L1 (Jaensch 2012). The present study investigates the acquisition of obligatory definiteness in a language combination where the category is absent in the L1 but present in both L2 and L3, albeit expressed differently. In other words, the function is similar in L2 and L3 but the form is not.

Unlike Mandarin, English and Swedish obligatorily mark definiteness and indefiniteness through articles (for a discussion on definiteness in Mandarin, see Snape, Leung & Ting 2006). Whereas English articles occur at the left-edge of the NP, the Swedish definite article is a suffix. In addition, Swedish has a pre-adjectival definite article, yielding the apparently redundant double definiteness construction: *den röda bil-en* 'DEF red car-DEF'. Obviously, an influence from English on learners of Swedish might lead to an overuse of the pre-adjectival article (see Anderssen & Bentzen 2013). However, the L2 English influence on the production of articles in L3 Swedish is not yet investigated (see discussion in Jin, Åfarli and Dommelen 2009). Examining Mandarin-speakers' use of articles in L2 English and L3 Swedish, this study aims at disentangling form and function in the multilingual mind.

Four intermediate Mandarin-speaking learners of Swedish (CEFR level B2), with prior knowledge of English (B2–C1), participated in this pilot study. A production task was designed to elicit approximately 40 NPs (definite/indefinite, modified/non-modified). The learners' production of English and Swedish was tested in different sessions separated by a week. Control data were collected from native speakers of English and Swedish ($n=2 \times 8$).

Preliminary results indicate rare but existent errors in English (L2) article production. In the Swedish (L3) data, function errors are scarce but form errors frequent: both overuse of the pre-adjectival article and omission of the suffix are extensive, e.g. *den djur* 'DEF animals' (target: *djur-en* 'animal-PL/DEF'). As expected, a more proficient use of articles in English coincides with more form errors in Swedish, and the only learner committing function errors (an indefinite form in a definite context and vice versa) in English also makes such errors in Swedish. This entails that, contrary to results from other studies, definiteness is marked more frequently in non-definite contexts than in definite ones, and more frequently with adjectives than without. Consequently, the L2 English influence on L3 Swedish article production appears positive for function but negative for form.

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