The Role of Explicit Instruction on Article Acquisition in L2 English

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ABSTRACT

Article errors are widely documented amongst L2 learners of English, and instruction rarely leads to improved accuracy (Snape and Yusa, 2013). Generative SLA research has demonstrated an effect of specificity for learners whose L1s do not have articles. Much of this research has tested Ionin's Fluctuation Hypothesis (2003), which predicts that learners will overuse *the* with indefinite specifics and *a* with definite non-specifics. Currently, specificity is not taught to learners of English. This study investigates the effect of delivering such instruction.

Three groups of low-intermediate L1-Chinese learners of English (n=50) were tested before and after a teaching intervention. The Specificity Instruction group was taught about definiteness and specificity using linguistically-informed materials developed in consultation with practising English teachers. The Standard Instruction group received instruction on the definite/indefinite contrast using standard teaching materials. Meanwhile, the No Instruction group was not taught about articles. Testing consisted of an untimed written elicitation task, a timed judgment task and a sample of writing.

All groups showed similar levels of improvement in accuracy on the elicitation task. Results for the timed judgment task differed between the groups. The No Instruction and Standard Instruction groups made significant improvements whilst the Specificity Instruction group demonstrated no significant change. Article accuracy in the written work of all groups, however, tended to reduce between the two time points, possibly as learners began to focus on other aspects of their writing.

I propose that the new instruction on specificity competed with what learners had previously been taught about definiteness and caused the lack of effect. Despite this null result at group level, individual results for the judgment task showed that learners in the Specificity Instruction group tended to improve with indefinite specific contexts, possibly due to the linguistically-informed instruction.

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

This thesis has not previously been submitted for any degree other than Doctor of Philosophy of the University of York. It is hereby confirmed that the thesis comprises my original work, except where otherwise stated. All contributions from external sources have been acknowledged and explicitly referenced.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Article errors are a well-documented feature of Second Language (L2) English for learners with a variety of first languages (L1s). This thesis investigates whether explicit instruction about article use, based on the findings of generative second language acquisition (SLA) research, has an effect on article accuracy amongst Chinese learners of English. Frequent errors with English articles by L2 learners take three forms: article misuse, article omission and the overuse of articles. The first, article misuse, is when an L2 learner uses a definite article when a native English speaker would typically use an indefinite article or vice versa (see example 1). Article omission occurs when an article is not used in an obligatory context, as demonstrated in (2). Finally, the overuse of articles, as seen in example 3, occurs when an article is used in a context where a native speaker would typically use a zero article. These examples are from the written work of L1 Chinese students at Sheffield Hallam University.

1. Tomorrow I going shopping because I need to buy <u>the</u> new suit.
   Article misuse: Definite article (underlined) used instead of an indefinite article.

2. The students studying in ____ different country can broaden their horizons.
   Omission of obligatory indefinite article.

3. Some claims from <u>the</u> critics think that <u>the</u> television may have a mild influence.
   Article overuse: definite articles (underlined) used in contexts that typically require a null article.

In the last decade there has been a great deal of generative SLA research into the acquisition of the English article system by learners with different L1s. Much of this work has tested the Article Choice Parameter (ACP) proposed by Ionin (2003) for languages with two articles. The ACP is a semantic parameter which contrasts languages such as English, which select articles on the basis of definiteness, with languages such as Samoan, which select articles on the basis of specificity. The four contexts which arise as a result of the distinction between definiteness and specificity can be seen in examples 4–7, taken from Lyons (1999:167).

4. [+definite, −specific]

   Joan wants to present the prize to **the winner** – but he doesn't want to receive it from her.

5. [+definite, +specific]

   Joan wants to present the prize to **the winner** – so she'll have to wait around until the race finishes.

6. [−definite, +specific]

   Peter intends to marry **a merchant banker** – even though he doesn't get on with her at all.

7. [−definite, −specific]

   Peter intends to marry **a merchant banker** – though he hasn't met one yet.

For languages with two semantically distinct articles, the definiteness setting of the ACP, as found in English, causes one article to be used in definite contexts and another in indefinite contexts. The specificity setting, on the other hand, accounts for languages that have separate articles for use in specific and non-specific contexts respectively. As such, both settings are universally possible and Ionin presents evidence that L2 learners have access to parameter settings which are not instantiated in either the L1 or the L2 (2003:21). The ACP states that languages with two articles must take either the definiteness setting or the specificity setting and Ionin (2003) argues that when a learner has no knowledge of articles from their L1, they will begin by sometimes selecting articles on the basis of specificity, and other times on the basis of definiteness. The Fluctuation Hypothesis (FH: Ionin, 2003:23), which is related to the Full Access theory of L2 acquisition (Schwartz and Sprouse, 1994; 1996), argues for a fluctuation between possible parameter settings until such time as there is sufficient evidence available in the input for learners to select the correct setting.

An inability to set the ACP, therefore, is argued to be a temporary[1] cause of learners' fluctuations between correct and incorrect usage of articles in the absence of sufficient input (Ionin, Ko and Wexler, 2004; Ionin, Zubizarreta, and Bautista

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[1] Based on the results of her research, Ionin (2003) argues that parameter setting in the domain of article choice is possible for at least some learners.

Maldonado, 2008). However, Hawkins et al. (2006) question whether the patterns of fluctuation uncovered by Ionin, Ko and Wexler (2004; henceforth IKW) apply to individual interlanguage grammars, whilst Trenkic (2007) argues that although definiteness is signalled by the definite article, it is not necessarily encoded by it. These authors offer alternative explanations for the variable patterns of article use demonstrated by many L2 learners of English, and their theoretical explanations will be discussed further in Chapter 3. However, what is not in doubt is that the English article system presents a problem for many L2 learners.

It is widely accepted that both input and L1 transfer play an important role in L2 acquisition. Under a parameter resetting viewpoint such as that suggested by Ionin's ACP, instruction is not believed to trigger L2 development (White, 2003a). However, there appears to be little empirical support for the claim that instruction does not influence article choice. Anecdotally, many English teachers report that instruction rarely helps learners to overcome these difficulties. IKW (2004:56) go a step further, clearly stating that "textbook instruction alone is insufficient for mastery of article use". They reject a strategy-based explanation resulting from explicit instruction to account for the patterns of article misuse that they uncover, and instead attribute their results to the ACP. The argument from IKW (2004) is that teaching materials suggest several different strategies to learners, not all of which account for the patterns of errors found when there is a mismatch between definiteness and specificity.

However, the role of explicit instruction on phenomena governed by the ACP has not been fully explored. The aim of this thesis is to discover whether a change to the way that articles are taught can have a measurable effect on article accuracy amongst L2 learners of English. Such a result could provide empirical support either for, or against, the claim that instruction does not affect article acquisition. One of the shortcomings of standard teaching materials is that they teach about definiteness but not specificity. For example, Murphy (1994:142) gives the explanation and examples in (8).

8. We use **the** when we are thinking of one particular thing. Compare **a/an** with **the:**

> Tom sat down on a chair. (perhaps one of many chairs in the room)
> *but* Tom sat down on **the** chair **nearest the door**. (a particular chair)

By explaining that the definite article is used when thinking of a particular object, these examples show why learners could overgeneralise the rules regarding article use and therefore misuse the definite article in all specific contexts, even those which are obligatorily indefinite. Whilst there is a valid methodological argument for simplifying the rules of article use for low proficiency learners, it is possible that this attempted simplification could be a cause of learner error. Therefore, part of this study has involved the creation of teaching materials to be used by one group of learners. These new materials more closely match the linguistic information about articles which many teachers are unaware of, and the need to clarify that definiteness is different from specificity has had a direct influence on their design.

The hypothesis is that instruction on definiteness and specificity will lead to a reduction in article misuse in a way that standard instruction on articles will not. It is predicted that there will be a period following the instruction when learners' understanding of the English article system will improve and this will be represented by a significant change in the accuracy rates of article use amongst this group of participants. If the hypothesis is supported, there will be a valid argument for closer links to be established between L2 acquisition researchers and language teachers. This thesis, therefore, will examine the role of explicit instruction on article accuracy amongst L2 learners of English, and determine whether form-focused instruction on the role of definiteness and specificity in English articles can be beneficial to learners whose L1 does not have an article system. The main research questions are as follows:

9. **Research Question 1.** Will explicit instruction on definiteness and specificity have an effect on article accuracy amongst L2 learners of English?

10. **Research Question 2.** Will linguistically-informed instruction lead to greater gains than standard instruction?

11. **Research Question 3.** Will improvements in article accuracy be short term, or more durable?

These questions will be further developed in Chapter 5, but the hypothesis is that explicit instruction will lead to short term improvements in article accuracy, and that

linguistically-informed instruction on definiteness and specificity will have a measurable effect on learners' accuracy when contrasted with any gain which follows standard instruction on definiteness. The participants are 50 low-intermediate level learners of English taught and tested in a UK university. They are all L1 speakers of Mandarin Chinese, a language with no overtly marked article system.

This study includes two test groups: one group were taught articles using standard grammar materials from textbooks, and the other group were taught about definiteness and specificity based on newly created materials. There is also a control group who received instruction on a separate, unrelated grammar point. The study applies a pre-test/post-test research method, with explicit grammar instruction given between the two tests. In addition, a delayed post-test was administered to a subset of participants several months after instruction finished in order to measure the durability of any improvements to article accuracy which may be detected after the first post-test. White (1991) used a similar pre-test/post-test methodology in order to measure the effect of explicit instruction on word order. The current study tests a semantic parameter and, despite the differences to White's study, this is a valid method to measure improvements over a short period of time which has been regularly repeated within the literature on instructed SLA.

The structure of this document is as follows. Chapter 2 gives the background of how definiteness and specificity are represented in English and Chinese, Chapter 3 is a literature review of previous studies in generative SLA which examine article use. There follows a second review of literature from instructed SLA which supports the role of instruction in L2 acquisition. This chapter also discusses current grammar teaching materials for article instruction. Chapter 5 is the methodology chapter, which gives a profile of the participants as well as a detailed explanation of the tasks used for the pre-test and post-test, and information about the instruction delivered to each group. It also provides an overview of the new teaching materials which were created to teach specificity to one group of participants. The research questions given above are refined and added to in Chapter 5 along with a presentation of the hypotheses. Chapter 6 presents the group results for each of the three tasks, and the following chapter makes a closer examination of the results of individual learners for a subset of the data which needed to be explored in more detail. Finally, Chapter 8 provides a summary of the results needed to either support or reject the hypotheses

and discusses the implications of these findings. It also considers the limitations of the study and finishes by presenting outstanding questions and suggesting directions for future research.

The overarching aim of this thesis is to apply the results from generative SLA research to the language classroom and measure whether changes to the way that articles are taught to L2 learners of English can improve accuracy. In addition, the venture of bringing linguistically-informed materials to teachers not trained in linguistics forms an integral part of this study. It is recognised that there is a need for links between theoretical SLA research and pedagogy (Whong, Gil, and Marsden, 2013a) and this study was conceived as a response to recent calls for closer engagement between these areas. By working with practising English teachers who have no background in formal linguistics, it has been possible to develop new teaching materials that they are happy to use with their students. Therefore, the success of this project cannot be judged on the results alone and the process of consulting teachers during the materials development has already formed links which, it is hoped, can be strengthened with future projects.

2. LINGUISTIC BACKGROUND

Definiteness and specificity are two important properties of the nominal domain, and both can be overtly marked in the morphology of languages with an article system. The definite and indefinite distinction can be made within every nominal context, regardless of whether definiteness is formally marked, whereas specificity is often discussed in relation to indefinite noun phrases only (Trenkic, 2008). Both definiteness and specificity are described as 'discourse related' features by IKW (2004:5) and both concepts have been the topic of much debate within the fields of semantics and pragmatics.

This chapter will define and explain the terms definiteness and specificity. There will be an overview of some of the differences in how these terms are presented in the literature, as well as an outline of how definiteness and specificity are operationalised in the current thesis. Examples of English and Mandarin Chinese will be presented with a consideration of how definiteness and specificity operate in these languages. English and Chinese represent the L2 and L1, respectively, of the participants in the current study. This chapter is not intended to provide a comprehensive outline of all of the grammatical, semantic and discourse-pragmatic properties of definiteness and specificity because such a detailed description would go beyond the scope of the current study. Rather, the aim of this chapter is to situate the concepts of definiteness and specificity, as taught to the participants in the current study, within the wider field of SLA, and to provide essential background to Chapter 3 which will review many of the studies that have investigated the L2 acquisition of the English article system.

2.1. DEFINITENESS

Definite noun phrases (NPs)[2] are not restricted to those that use the definite article, but also include demonstratives, possessives and pronouns. One important property of definiteness is that it is an element of interpretation in all the world's

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[2] The term NP has been used throughout the thesis to reflect its use in much of the literature reviewed here. This does not mean that the author rejects the DP hypothesis (Abney, 1987), which states that determiners head noun phrases and the NP is a complement. Since this chapter deals predominantly with article semantics, the use of NP instead of DP is not intended as a comment about the phrasal structure of determiners and nouns. Rather, it reflects the long history of the debate surrounding the nature of definiteness and specificity, much of which began before the theory of phrase structure developed from NP to DP.

languages, regardless of whether they formally mark the definite/indefinite distinction (Trenkic, 2008). For the majority of languages, this is a question of pragmatics, and even those languages that overtly mark definiteness differ in exactly which definite contexts require an article. Trenkic (2008:5) attributes this variation to the slow and gradual grammaticalisation process, during which a demonstrative typically develops into a definite article. She also states that the "absence of one-to-one correspondence between definite contexts and overt definiteness marking may present a particular difficulty in second language learning" (2008:5), a point I will return to later in this thesis. This section provides an overview of some of the ongoing debates about what definiteness is and how it is best defined and described. It will discuss definiteness in the most general sense and provide examples from English. In terms of the current study, only notions of definiteness as applicable to either English or Mandarin Chinese are relevant. Of particular interest is the contrast between these two languages with regard to how definiteness operates, and the impact this contrast may have on Chinese learners of English when they are acquiring and using articles in the L2. Definiteness in Chinese will be discussed in Section 2.1.1.

Lyons (1999) begins his comprehensive overview of definiteness by pointing out that there is no general agreement about the difference in meaning between NPs which use the definite and indefinite articles, but two of the major components of meaning are 'familiarity/identifiability' and 'uniqueness/inclusiveness'. A commonly used definition of simple definites (i.e. those that use the definite article in English) is that they refer to a particular object or individual, and this definition is still widely used in pedagogy, as exemplified in the introduction to this thesis. Lyons points out the weakness of this definition and states that a definite NP instead signals an awareness of what is being referred to by both the speaker and the listener (1999:3), meaning that it is shared knowledge about the referent of an NP that marks the phrase as definite. This does not mean, however, that all definite NPs are referential, and referentiality is discussed in more detail below (see example 14).

Abbott (2006:124) states that four properties "lay some claim to expressing the essence of definiteness" and these are uniqueness, familiarity, strength, and specificity. The first two properties have been the source of much debate in the literature, with Lyons (1999:253) stating that uniqueness, or the more general term inclusiveness tends to be preferred by logicians and semanticists whereas familiarity,

or identifiability, is a pragmatic term. A brief overview of uniqueness and familiarity is provided in this section, and there will also be clarification of the difference in meaning between uniqueness/inclusiveness and familiarity/identifiability. Lyons (1999), however, believes that uniqueness and familiarity, and the semantic and pragmatic accounts of definiteness more generally, do not completely define this concept. He instead offers a grammatical account of definiteness which includes discussion of the DP hypothesis and a claim that definiteness and person could be treated as a single grammatical category. However, the instruction on definiteness and specificity which is delivered to one group of participants in the current study is based on the work of IKW (2004) who support a semantic definition of definiteness, to be outlined at the end of this section. Therefore, an outline of grammaticalisation and Lyons' proposal is not required in order to set the context for this research.

Abbott explains that uniqueness as a "characterization of the difference between definite and indefinite NPs" (2006:125) emerged with the work of Russell (1905). According to this classic characterisation, in order for a referent to be identified as unique there must also be a presupposition that there is a referent. The famous Russellian sentence is given in (12).

12. The King of France is bald.

Lyons (1999, citing Russell 1905) explains that there are three propositions represented by example 12. The first, which Lyons refers to as the existential clause, states that there is a King of France. The second proposition is the uniqueness clause, and this states that there is only one King of France. Finally, the third proposition states that it is this individual (the King of France, who exists and of whom there is only one) who is bald. Lyons goes on to explain that it is the existential clause, and therefore the presupposition that there is a referent, rather than the concept of uniqueness that has caused the most debate in the literature. Abbott (2006) further explains the source of this debate by stating that the existential and uniqueness propositions are believed to be different to the third (baldness) proposition precisely because they are presupposed. Ionin (2006:189) defines presupposition as "a statement presupposed to be true by *both speaker and listener*" and it will be discussed in more detail below. Referentiality is another important element of uniqueness, with Abbott (2006:129) pointing out the importance of

distinguishing between referring to something uniquely and "asserting that a description applies uniquely". In other words, use of the definite article does not imply that there is only one unique entity in existence; rather it asserts that it is possible to identify a unique referent for the NP. The issue of whether or not definite NPs are indeed referential will be evaluated further in a later paragraph.

Hawkins (1978) argues against uniqueness by emphasising a definition in which uniqueness only applies within a shared context. For example, there is more than one prime minister in existence in the world, and so the phrase 'the prime minister' is only unique within a certain context or conversation. In addition, Hawkins claims that unique reference is a product of a singular noun and not the definite article *the*, even going so far as to claim that uniqueness "is not part of the meaning of *the* itself" (1978:158). Instead, Hawkins argues that a totality of objects within a shared set is often the referent of definite NPs, and he is credited with introducing the term *inclusiveness* to supersede that of uniqueness. Hawkins (1978:161) defines inclusiveness as "this property of the definite article to refer to all the objects or all the mass in the pragmatically limited domain of quantification, whereupon the sentence as a whole makes some claim about these objects". In other words, uniqueness can only apply in very limited contexts and when the definite article is used with a singular, count noun; whereas, inclusiveness can be given as a definition for definite NPs which contain plural and mass nouns as well as singular ones.

The second property of definiteness outlined by Abbott (2006) is familiarity, commonly associated with the work of Christophersen (1939). According to Abbott, familiarity is often considered to be an opposing theory of definiteness to the notion of uniqueness. On familiarity, Hawkins (1978) points out that it is not strictly accurate to state that use of the definite article in English is restricted to contexts where the hearer is familiar with the referent of the NP. He states that definiteness goes beyond the expression of a relationship between two entities, in that both the speaker and hearer must have a shared knowledge of said relationship (1978:100). In other words, the speaker and listener need to be able to identify the referent, even if they are not familiar with it. For this reason, Abbott states that familiarity has mostly been surpassed by the notion of identifiability (2006:136). She argues that familiarity implies prior acquaintance whereas identifiability merely explains that the hearer should be able to identify a unique referent when taking into account all

background and contextual information, alongside any description provided by the speaker. A key point about identifiability and inclusiveness is that, according to Lyons (1999:14), neither property can fully account for all uses of the definite article on its own and so, despite being seen as opposing concepts, both are required.

The third property of definiteness listed by Abbott is strength and this applies to existential sentences, which in the narrowest sense denotes sentences with a *there is/are* construction (Lyons, 1999:236). Weak, or cardinal, NPs refer to indefinites whereas strong, or definite, NPs are quantificational. There is a problem related to strength, termed the 'definiteness effect', so called because of a tendency for *there be* constructions to be followed by an indefinite NP. In a similar vein to the ongoing debate about presuppositions which I touched on above, one of the problems is related to the existence of the referent. Strong NPs such as example 13b (from Abbott, 2006:139 citing Milsark, 1977) are considered infelicitous (as marked by #) because a strong NP carries a presupposition of existence whilst *there be* constructions also assert existence (Abbott, 2006). This means that the infelicity arises because both the existential construction and the use of the definite article express the same presupposition of existence.

13. a. There is a wolf at the door.
    b. #There is the wolf at the door.

Abbott points out that the infelicity in sentence 13b should not be labelled as a definiteness effect, and that the distinction between weak and strong NPs is in fact very different to the distinction between definites and indefinites. Lyons (1999:239) makes a similar claim and suggests that the tendency to not use definites in existential constructions like 13b may vary not just cross-linguistically, but also between varieties of English. Therefore, while Abbott claims that strength is an important property of definiteness, there is evidence against this position. The debate surrounding strength goes beyond the scope of the thesis and so will be left aside. Finally, Abbott's fourth property, specificity, is covered in more detail in Section 2.2 below.

Referentiality is another aspect of definiteness which is much debated within the literature. Lyons (1999:171) claims that 'referential' is somewhat synonymous with 'specific', and 'attributive' with 'non-specific', although referentiality is more

commonly used in relation to definite NPs, whereas specificity is often used to discuss indefinite NPs, a point I will return to in Section 2.2 of this chapter. Donnellan (1966) stated that there are two possible, and quite distinct, functions of definite NPs because, on many occasions, their use does not necessarily carry the presupposition or assumption that something exists which fits the description. He describes both attributive and referential uses of definites and provides the much cited example in 14 (from Donnellan, 1966:285).

14. Smith's murderer is insane.[3]

The attributive use of this sentence would apply when the murderer is probably not known, and the purpose of the sentence is to say something about the state of mind of whoever is the murderer. In this case, use of the definite is considered essential. The referential use, on the other hand, would refer to a particular person who is known to have murdered Smith, and to describe something about that person. Therefore, Donnellan states that the referential use is to identify the entity being spoken about to the addressee and any other description which serves this purpose would be equally as valid as the possessive definite used in example 14. Furthermore, Donnellan (1966:286) claims that the main difference between attributive and referential uses of definite NPs occurs when the presupposition is hypothesised to be false. He explains that, in the attributive reading, if there is no murderer then the quality of being insane cannot be attributed to anyone. However, in the second (referential) reading, the person accused of being the murderer can still be referred to as insane even if it later transpires that no murder took place. Therefore, it is the presupposition of existence that is the main difference between these two readings.

The sentence given in example 14 explains the potential ambiguity which Donnellan identifies between different interpretations of definite NPs. This leads to the question of whether definite NPs are indeed referential. A widely held view within the literature opposes Donnellan and claims that definites and indefinites are not semantically referring but are descriptive instead (Lyons, 1999:166). Despite summarising this viewpoint, Lyons agrees with Donnellan and states that both

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[3] This sentence does not contain a definite article, but the genitive form is recognised as a type of definite NP (Lyons, 1999: 22).

simple definites and indefinites have referential uses. Furthermore, Heim (2011) clarifies that the original distinction between referential and attributive uses, as made by Donnellan, has not always been recognised as a semantic distinction and, like Lyons, Heim points out that many disagree with Donnellan's claim of semantic ambiguity.

So far, the arguments laid out in this chapter have mostly related to definite NPs. Indefiniteness is commonly marked by the indefinite article although, as Lyons explains, it can also be signaled indirectly with a cardinality determiner (1999:95). Therefore, it may be the absence of a definite determiner that marks indefiniteness, rather than the presence of an indefinite determiner. Lyons points out that the English indefinite article may be considered a cardinality item as it is known to have originated from the numeral *one* and cannot occur with any numerals. In other languages, *one* is phonologically identical to what Lyons calls "the quasi-indefinite cardinal article" for example, German *ein*, French *un* and Turkish *bir* (Lyons, 1999:95). However, a cardinal analysis such as this does not adequately explain why *a* cannot co-occur with any definite determiners, including *the*. Heim (2011) explains that definites and indefinites are commonly believed to differ from each other in three main areas, assuming a Fregean approach to definites and an existential (Russellian) approach to indefinites.[4] These three areas are listed as semantic type, uniqueness, and presuppositionality, although Heim calls some of these assumptions into question. She goes on to argue that presuppositionality should not be so closely linked to definites, in the same way that existential quantification should be distinguished separately from indefinites.

To summarise Heim's arguments on definites as they are relevant to the approaches presented in this chapter, presupposition was introduced above with the argument from Russell (1905) that a referent must be presupposed to exist before it can be identified as unique. However, Heim (2011) argues for a departure from the standard semantics, her main issue with presupposition arising because early analysis only considered singular count nouns and differences emerge as soon as the theories are extended to plural and mass nouns. As for indefinites, there appears to

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[4] A Fregean approach to definites recognises presupposition as the main difference between definites and indefinites (Heim, 2011). That is, a definite NP carries a presupposition of existence that is not held in an equivalent indefinite NP. An quantificational approach to indefinites assumes that indefinites do not presuppose uniqueness nor entail it, and a sentence with an indefinite NP must be always true or false (Ionin, 2003).

be a 'non-uniqueness' condition which cannot be explained by the quantificational analysis. Ionin (2003:36) explains that the existence of a unique referent is incompatible with use of the English indefinite article, but this does not suggest that *a* can carry a presupposition of uniqueness. In addition, Heim (2011) argues against Donnellan's identification of a referential/attributive ambiguity, stating that "there remains no compelling argument" for such an ambiguity with definites (p. 1017). What Heim's arguments show is that disagreements and debates in the literature are ongoing, even with relation to the limited number of viewpoints summarised above, and we are still a long way from fully understanding all aspects of definiteness. Therefore, it is of little surprise that there are substantial differences between pedagogical grammar and the awareness that linguists hold about constructions such as the English article system, a point I will return to in Chapter 4.

   Definiteness determines article choice in English, meaning that there are separate articles for use in definite and indefinite contexts. In English, the definite article is used in contexts that are obligatorily definite, meaning that there is a presupposition of a unique referent that is accessible to both the speaker and the hearer, as outlined above. Likewise, the indefinite article can only be used when conditions for this presupposition have not been met. In English, the definite article is more than twice as common as the indefinite article, with the British National Corpus (2014) identifying 6,055,159 uses of the definite article *the*, but only 2,505,891 uses of the indefinite articles *a/an*. Many also propose that English has a zero article which replaces the indefinite article with plural and mass nouns, although Lyons finds little support for this claim. He says "the reality seems to be that a noun phrase is indefinite if it has no definite determiner, whether or not it has an indefinite determiner" (1999:34).[5] It is not the case that English articles only encode definiteness, and neither is the definite/indefinite distinction only applicable to contexts which use an article (Lyons, 1999). The definite and indefinite articles in English are described by Lyons as the 'default forms' (1999:36). What he means by this is that the definite article only occurs when no other definite determiner which

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[5] This is an opposing view to that expressed by Master, who was responsible for several studies on article pedagogy in the 1990s. Master claims that the zero article is "a fully fledged article that is equal in status to the visible articles" (1997:216) and even goes so far as to claim that the zero article is the first one to be acquired by L2 learners with an articleless L1. This is despite recognising that article omission and use of a zero article is indistinguishable. In relation to the zero article, Master concedes that "acquisition is largely by default" (1997:216).

may provide more semantic context is required. Likewise, the occurrence of *a* with singular forms marks the absence of any other cardinality determiner, and is needed because the noun is not inflected for number (Lyons, 1999:36).

Lyons (1999:4) attempts to simplify the use of the definite article in English by separating it into distinct types according to whether each use is situational, stems from general knowledge, is anaphoric, or bridges cross-reference and associative uses. Situational uses of *the* are when the physical location of the speaker and hearer allow them to be familiar with the referent of the noun phrase. This can mean location in close proximity to the referent, as exemplified in 15, or even location within a country which would allow both speaker and hearer to identify the prime minister of that country (see example 16; both examples from Lyons 1999:3).

15. Just give **the shelf** a quick wipe, will you, before I put this vase on it.

16. I hear **the prime minister** behaved outrageously last night.

Payne and Huddleston (2002:370) give more detail about how what they call the "identifiability requirement" for use of the definite article to be satisfied, with the identification of eight separate contexts. The situational uses identified by Lyons and exemplified in 15 and 16 would include both contexts with "sensory features" (Payne and Huddleston) such as something that can be seen, heard, or felt, and contexts where there is a shared (non-linguistic) knowledge. Lyons (1999:3) gives the sentence in (17) as an example of familiarity that stems from general knowledge.

17. **The moon** was very bright last night.

Anaphoric *the* is used when the referent is familiar due to a prior mention, and this is possibly one of the most widely known uses of the definite article. The previous mention may be by the same speaker, or even as part of a conversation with another person, as in example 18 (from Lyons, 1999:4).

18. A: An old man, two women and several children were already there when I arrived.
    B: Did you recognise **the old man**?

The earlier mention of the man in (18) uses the indefinite article, a form used to introduce new and unfamiliar referents to the discourse (Lyons, 1999:4). A less well known use of the definite article in English is when the clause following the definite NP is required to make the referent familiar to the hearer and thus trigger use of the definite article. Lyons calls such examples "anticipatory anaphoric (or "cataphoric") uses" (1999:5) and provides the sentence in 19 as an example (Lyons, 1999:3).

19. **The bloke Ann went out with last night** phoned a minute ago.

The fourth category of definite article usage, as defined by Lyons, can be considered as a combination of both general knowledge and anaphoric use, in that the previous mention of a referent leads to a certain assumption about that referent. Lyons provides the examples in 20 and 21, and explains that it is general knowledge that taxis have drivers, just as there is an assumption that arriving from New York would require travel by plane (1999:3).

20. I had to get a taxi from the station. On the way **the driver** told me there was a bus strike.

21. They've just got in from New York. **The plane** was five hours late.

This type of usage for the definite article is described by Lyons (1999) as bridging cross-reference and associative uses. It is also recognised by Payne and Huddleston (2002), who classify examples 20 and 21 as associated with anaphoric ('prior mention') usage of the definite article. Two further contexts are identified by Payne and Huddleston (2002:370), and they are when a modifier establishes identifiability (see example 22) and a less common usage whereby identifiability is established by the sentence itself. This can be seen in example 23 (2002:371) where the sentence itself informs readers that there is a dog and that they should beware of it. Example 22, on the other hand, is similar to (19), which Lyons described as a 'cataphoric' use.

22. They are interviewing **the man who mows her lawn**.

23. Beware of **the dog**.

All of the above examples are for use of the definite article whenever the referent of a noun phrase is classed as familiar or identifiable. The 'familiarity theory', a view of definiteness that was first expressed by Christophersen (1939) and then expanded on by Hawkins (1978), was touched on above. It was contrasted with uniqueness, although Lyons (1999) claimed that neither offers a full account for all the instances of definite article usage which he exemplifies. However, what the accounts have in common is that for a referent to be classed as familiar or unique it must be noticeable as such by both the speaker and the hearer. This idea of 'shared knowledge' between a speaker and hearer is an important element of how definiteness is operationalised in the research conducted by IKW (2004). Their definition informs the current study and is presented below (see example 32).

Ionin (2006:178) claims that, in English, use of the definite article is preferred over the indefinite article whenever the presuppositions for its use have been met. She cites Heim's (1991:28) 'Maximize Presupposition' principle to justify this statement. The principle is presented in (24).

24. The Maximize Presupposition principle: "Make your contribution presuppose as much as possible!"

The justification for preference of the definite article applies because it carries more presuppositions than the indefinite article: one example being the presupposition of existence that is held by definite NPs. As outlined previously, Heim (2011) claims that presuppositions are what distinguish a definite NP from an indefinite context. By applying the 'Maximize Presupposition' principle, Ionin (2006) argues that presuppositions, by their very nature of being known to both the speaker and the hearer, have a higher status than, say felicity conditions.[6] This claim will be addressed further when examining the definition of specificity outlined in Section 2.2.

Indefinite articles, therefore, differ from the use of definite NPs in that they do not expect the addressee to be able to identify anything. The English indefinite article *a/an* is used with singular count nouns, and Payne and Huddleston (2002)

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[6] A felicity condition focuses on the knowledge state of the speaker, whereas a presupposition is a statement presupposed to be true by both the speaker and the listener (Ionin, 2006). It is the focus on both speaker and hearer knowledge which, according to Ionin, makes a presupposition stronger than a felicity condition in the discourse.

associate this with its historical development from the numeral *one*. They separate indefinites into two types, according to whether they are quantitative or not. Quantitative *a* means that there is no more than one of the referent, although the distinction between 'one' and 'more than one' is not an important element of the sentence. This is seen in example 25 (from Payne and Huddleston, 2002:372).

25. She has just bought **a new car**.

Non-quantitative use of the indefinite article, on the other hand, does not express cardinality but rather simple membership of a set (see example 26 from Payne and Huddleston, 2002:372). Here the singular NP 'a doctor' is not quantitative and so could not be replaced by the numeral *one*.

26. Jill is **a doctor**.

To summarise, definiteness in English is expressed by the article system, with the definite article being the preferred choice of article anytime the presuppositions for its use have been met (Ionin, 2006). Payne and Huddleston (2002) say that direct contrast between definite and indefinite NPs mean that the definite article *the* can only be used when a unique referent can be identified, and when this is not the case then the indefinite article should be used instead. A number of contexts for use of the definite article can be identified, and an outline of these uses was provided above, summarising the descriptions given by Lyons (1999) and Payne and Huddleston (2002). However, to reiterate a point made by Trenkic (2008), there is no direct mapping between a definite form and overt definiteness marking in English, and this may be where the difficulties for L2 learners of English begin. As will be seen in the next chapter of this thesis, article acquisition is particularly problematic for the majority of learners whose L1s do not have an article system. Mandarin Chinese learners of English are one such group, and next I will outline how definiteness operates in Chinese, despite the lack of articles.

2.1.1. DEFINITENESS IN MANDARIN CHINESE

Mandarin Chinese does not have an article system. Therefore, this section will outline some of the basic properties of Mandarin, including word order and the

importance of meaning when determining sentence structure, in order to understand how definiteness and specificity may be represented in the absence of any overt morphological markers for these notions. At times, the details below will be contrasted with information about definiteness marking in English in order to develop a better understanding of the two languages and, consequently, the learning task in terms of L1 transfer and access to UG for L1 Chinese learners of English.

According to Li and Thompson (1981:15), a description of Mandarin Chinese must include 'topic' alongside the relations of 'subject' and 'direct object'. This is because a topic prominent sentence structure is a key feature of the typology of Mandarin. Li and Thompson explain that the topic always comes first in a sentence; it explains what the sentence is about; and it always refers to something that it is assumed the hearer has knowledge of. Robertson (2000) defines the topic in Mandarin as representing given information, or knowledge which is assumed to be shared between the speaker and hearer. The location of the topic in a sentence and its importance means that Chinese is often referred to as a topic-prominent language. In contrast to subjects, which typically occupy the first position in a sentence in SVO languages such as English, the topic in Mandarin does not need to have a direct semantic relationship with the verb. Li and Thompson (1991:15) give the sentence in (27) to demonstrate the importance of topic in Mandarin sentences. The topic of example 27 is the tree, whereas 'leaf' is the subject.

27. zhei ke shu yezi hen   da
    this   CL tree leaf very big
    'This tree, (its) leaves are very big'.

When describing basic sentence structure in Mandarin Chinese, Li and Thompson explain that the topic-comment relationship should be referred to instead of the subject-predicate relation that is important in languages such as English. Importantly, despite being described as a topic-prominent language, there is no obligatory morphological topic marker in Mandarin Chinese (Lyons, 1999).

Liu (1997) states that the distinction between definites and indefinites in Chinese is related to the position of the NP in the sentence but says, in line with what Li and Thompson explained about word order in Mandarin, that the distinction cannot be related to subject position and object position. She makes it clear that the distribution of definites and indefinites is a tendency rather than a restriction, and

that there are examples which do not adhere to the word order rules. Li and Thompson (1981:20) state "preverbal position is a signal for definiteness for topics, subjects, and objects, that is, for whether these topics, subjects, and objects are already known to both the speaker and hearer". This is a prime example of how semantic factors rather than grammatical ones determine how major constituents are ordered in relation to the verb, another key difference between Mandarin and English. Robertson (2000) agrees that word order, as well as the use of demonstratives, mark definiteness on the NP, if and when it is marked in Chinese. He goes on to say that this means indefinite NPs cannot occupy the pre-verbal topic position and, likewise, post-verbal subjects are almost consistently indefinite. The same restriction applies to object NPs, which can move from their post-verbal position if the speaker wishes to emphasise that the object NP is definite (Robertson, 2000:141). Lyons states that constraints on the interpretation of topics and subjects in Mandarin relate to what he terms "semantic/pragmatic definiteness" (1999:236). Therefore these constraints differ from the restrictions placed by languages such as English which, he argues, grammaticalise definiteness.

In other words, NPs which precede the verb in Chinese tend to be definite, whilst NPs which follow the verb have a tendency to be indefinite regardless of whether they are subjects or objects. This is demonstrated in examples 28 and 29, taken from Li and Thompson (1981:20). In these examples, perfective aspect (PFV) and currently relevant state (CRS) have been highlighted by Li and Thompson. The verbal suffix –*le* indicates that the event is being viewed in its entirety or as a whole, and so expresses perfectivity in Mandarin. When *le* is in sentence-final position, it appears to have a variety of semantic and pragmatic functions which Li and Thompson term CRS. They clarify that the use of this particle "claims that a *state of affairs has special current relevance with respect to some particular situation*" (1981:240; emphasis added by Li and Thompson).

28. ren   lai   le
     person come PFV/CRS
     'The person(s) has/have come'.

29. lai   le   ren   le
     come PFV person CRS
     'Some person(s) has/have come'.

Li and Thompson explain that the preverbal subject in example 28 is interpreted as definite, i.e. as known to both the speaker and the hearer. They interpret this sentence as 'The person(s) whom you and I are expecting has/have come' (1981:20). Example 29, on the other hand, has a post-verbal subject which, as detailed in the previous paragraph, leads to an indefinite interpretation whereby the subject is not assumed to be known to the hearer. Notice that for both examples, Li and Thompson (1981) describe the definite/indefinite distinction as an interpretation rather than a rule. The tendency for pre-verbal elements to be definite is explained further by Lyons (1999). Since topic occupies the first position in Mandarin sentences, similarities between topics and the notions of identifiability and uniqueness can account for this tendency. Topics generally represent given information. Lyons explains that "the identifiability which characterizes many definites is often a matter of occurrence in the preceding discourse, and the 'familiarity' of many situational or general knowledge definites is often sufficient to afford the mental salience needed for givenness" (1999:233).

However, definiteness in Mandarin must always be understood in relation to referentiality. As discussed in Section 2.1, Donnellan (1966) argued that definite NPs may be either referential or attributive and there is still a debate surrounding the claim that definites may be ambiguous between referential and non-referential interpretations. In Mandarin Chinese the situation is somewhat different. The question of definiteness does not arise for non-referential NPs because only referential NPs can be definite or indefinite (Li and Thompson, 1981). They explain that referential NPs refer to an entity which may be singular or plural, real or hypothetical, and physical or conceptual (1981:126). In Mandarin grammar, non-referential NPs never take a classifier phrase and so the presence of such a phrase would mark an NP as referential. Furthermore, if the classifier phrase includes a demonstrative then the NP is necessarily definite and if it includes a numeral but no demonstrative then it is necessarily indefinite (Li and Thompson, 1981). This is shown in examples 30 and 31, respectively (from Li and Thompson, 1981:130).

30. nei   zhang   zhi
    that   CL   paper
    'that sheet of paper'

31. yi   ke   shu
    one CL   tree
    'a tree'

Li and Thompson's claim that a classifier phrase with a numeral is necessarily indefinite is taken further by Chen (2004). He states that, whilst *yi* on its own is a numeral, when it occurs with a classifier it is a fully grammaticalised marker of indefiniteness (2004:1159). This could explain why Slabakova (2008:187) has said that "the presence of classifiers in Chinese (which are only used with indefinite NPs) may be aiding … learners in acquiring English articles".

Chen's claim about '*yi* + classifier' follows from several reports in the literature that there may be a diachronic change in progress in Mandarin Chinese in relation to definiteness marking. Li and Thompson (1981:131) first reported that the unstressed demonstrative *nei* and the unstressed numeral *yi* were beginning to function as similar to the English words *the* and *a*. These are seen in examples 30 and 31. In addition, according to Lyons (1999:98), Mandarin Chinese did not previously have a cardinal article, but the numeral *one* is being used increasingly in indefinite NPs, with Lyons reporting that its use is commonly restricted to specific indefinites. Lyons, however, does not make the link with classifiers that Chen (2004) does. The unstressed use of the demonstrative, along with the singular numeral, leads Lyons to describe these words as "optional incipient articles" (1999:132).

Further data comes from Huang (1999), who suggests that the distal demonstrative *nage*, reportedly used recurrently in spoken Chinese, is developing as a grammaticalised definite determiner. Huang also explains that the proximal demonstrative *zhege* shows no evidence of becoming an equivalent indefinite determiner, describing the numeral *yige* as "the stronger candidate for an indefinite article" (p.93). Huang examines a database of ten face-to-face conversations and radio interviews which, in total, contain 729 demonstrative tokens. Following the identification of eight discourse-pragmatic functions of demonstratives in Chinese, he goes on to argue for the emergence of the category of a definite article based on the distribution of three of these functions. Unavailable use establishes the referent using a relative clause or complement, and identifying use is where shared background or "invoked frameworks" (p.89) enable the speaker and hearer to identify an object. Finally, the referent-inducing function allows for the introduction

of a new but familiar object, which may be topically significant. Huang argues that the contexts for unavailable use, identifying use, and referent-inducing use are "where the speaker assumes the identity of a referent to be community shared knowledge", and in his data set these account for 27.5% of uses of distal demonstratives (1999:90). The claim that the numeral *yige* may be the indefinite equivalent, however, is not examined in this paper because it does not commonly occur in spoken discourse (Huang, 1999). Huang supports his argument on the status of the distal demonstrative with reference to lengthy extracts of spoken text, and concludes that the presence of *nage* has come to be expected in certain spoken interactions where the identity of the referent is shared; therefore, it "is clearly functioning in ways indistinguishable from the definite article" (1999:92).

These claims for a grammaticalisation of demonstratives and numerals in Mandarin Chinese were examined in more detail by Chen (2004). Using a corpus of 74 stories narrated by Chinese students in Singapore and Taiwan, plus 24 written Chinese fables, Chen assesses the use of demonstratives and numerals and comes to the conclusion that "there is no simple, fully grammaticalised marker of definiteness in Chinese, like the definite article in English" (2004:1177). As stated above, Chen argues that the Chinese numeral *yi* has reached the endpoint of grammaticalisation into an indefinite article, but he also reinforces the point I made earlier that marking an NP as either definite or indefinite in Chinese is not obligatory and, therefore, argues that definiteness as a grammatical category[7] is not fully developed in this language.

For demonstratives, Chen (2004) focuses attention on *zhe* 'this' and *na* 'that' which, in contemporary Chinese and the Beijing dialect, may take the respective forms *zhei* and *nei*, as seen in example 30. In terms of the anaphoric use of the two demonstratives, Chen points out that "*zhe* is preferred for a referent that has just been introduced into discourse. When the referent is referred to later in the discourse, particularly after several intervening referents, *na* is more often used than *zhe*" (2004:1152). Chen provides several examples of contexts where, in English, the

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[7] Chen (2004) distinguishes between a broad and narrow sense of definiteness. He states that "definiteness, in the broad sense of the term, is a language universal" (p. 1132). The narrow sense of definiteness relates to whether there is a linguistic form whose primary function is to indicate identifiability, and whether definiteness features are obligatory and uniquely specified for nominal expressions. It is in this narrow sense that Chen presents arguments against the grammaticalisation of definiteness in Chinese.

demonstrative would not generally be allowed, and the definite article would be used instead. The anaphoric (non-contrastive) use can be seen in example 32 (from Chen, 2004:1153), and this also contains the numeral *yi*. However, whilst agreeing that *zhe* and *na* are used as definite articles in some situations, Chen also states that "there is evidence which suggests that they are still far from reaching the endpoint" of grammaticalisation (2004:1154).

> 32. You yi   ge lierne… yang zhe   yi   zhi gou. *Zhe zhi gou* hen
>   have one CL hunter   keep DUR one CL dog this CL dog very
>   dongshi.
>   intelligent
>   'There was a hunter who had a dog. The dog was very intelligent.'

The anaphoric and recognitional uses of demonstratives, as exemplified in the work of Huang (1999) amongst others, are explicitly discounted by Chen. He states that these uses do not suggest a fully grammaticalised definite article and are instead representative of the beginning of the grammaticalisation process. This leads to his conclusion that the demonstrative and numeral, whilst functionally and morphologically similar to articles, have not yet been fully grammaticalised. Therefore, it appears that demonstratives and numerals in Chinese are taking on some of the functions of definiteness marking which, in English, would be expressed by either the definite or indefinite article. The reported process of grammaticalisation of the demonstrative and numeral in Mandarin Chinese may be affected by regional variations, and Chen (2004) also reports that certain uses are more common in colloquial spoken Chinese than in written Chinese. The process of grammaticalisation is, however, relevant to L2 acquisition research, as noted in the study by Robertson (2000) which reports on the overuse of the demonstrative *this* and the numeral *one* amongst Chinese learners of English (Chapter 3 will discuss Robertson's study in more detail). The changing status of determiners and numerals in Chinese could, therefore, have implications for the learners in the current study, an issue I will return to in Chapter 8.

   To summarise the information on definiteness presented here, Mandarin has no obligatory morphological marker for definiteness, although the fact that it is a topic-prominent language with topics always occupying the first position in a sentence means that there is a tendency for definite and indefinite NPs to occupy

different positions within a sentence. Topic almost invariably represents given information and therefore topic NPs will tend to be definite. English, on the other hand, has definite and indefinite articles which serve as overt morphological markers of definiteness. However, the articles are not the only way to mark definiteness in English, with Lyons (1999) revealing that the definite article only occurs when no other definite determiner which may provide more semantic context is required, and the indefinite article is used with singular forms to mark the absence of any other cardinality determiner. Finally, there is an ongoing debate surrounding the best definition of definiteness, with semantic and pragmatic accounts using terms such as identifiability and uniqueness. There are also grammatical accounts of definiteness, such as that offered by Lyons (1999), although they have not been outlined here.

As has become clear throughout this section of the thesis, it is difficult to establish a simple definition of definiteness that encompasses all the important elements of this property and there is much ongoing debate about exactly which properties are incorporated within definite and indefinite NPs. IKW state that the definiteness feature is related to discourse and provide the following informal linguistic definition (2004:5):

> 33. 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.

In common with Heim (2011), IKW reference "the standard Fregean analysis of definites and the standard quantificational analysis of indefinites" (2004:5) as the formal definitions on which the definition in (33) is built. In terms of the debates outlined above in relation to definites, IKW accept that referring expressions presuppose the existence of a referent. Additionally, according to the definition in (33), the knowledge of both the speaker and listener are relevant when determining definiteness, and uniqueness rather than familiarity is settled on as an important element of definite descriptions. The quantificational analysis of indefinites was touched on when discussing Heim (2011), and differs from cardinality as outlined by Lyons (1999). The current study was built upon the work of Ionin and several of her colleagues (2003; 2004; 2006; 2008; 2009) and therefore, despite the ongoing disagreements within the literature, the definition provided in example 33 will form

the basis for the instruction on definiteness as provided to one group of participants in this study. Information on possible ways to identify the uniquely presupposed individual will also be incorporated into the instruction given to learners, and detail about what marks a context as unique was given above. The development of this instruction is outlined in Chapter 5, whilst Chapter 3 will detail the various studies into the acquisition of the English article system conducted by Ionin and colleagues (2004; 2008; 2009). The rest of this thesis will operationalise definiteness in terms of the informal definition provided by IKW (2004) given in example 33.

2.2. SPECIFICITY

As detailed above, English has separate articles for use in definite and indefinite contexts. On the other hand, Mandarin Chinese is a topic-prominent language with no established, obligatory article system. Specificity is not overtly marked in either language and, arguably, both definite and indefinite contexts can be specific or non-specific. Lyons (1999:168) claims that similar terms which refer to the characteristics of specific and non-specific are referential or non-referential (quantificational); extensional or intensional; and *de re* or *de dicto* respectively, although he points out that none of these pairs are strictly equivalent. Like definiteness, there is still no complete understanding of specificity, with Ebert and Hinterwimmer professing that "we are still a good deal away from an understanding of specificity that encompasses and systematically relates all the dimensions along which specificity markers in and across languages vary" (2013:1). They note that discussion on specificity tends to focus on properties such as interaction with other operators in terms of scope relations, or identifiability by the speaker. There are also questions within the literature about whether definite contexts can be defined as both specific and non-specific, with many arguing that only indefinites have a specificity distinction. Significant works on specificity which present arguments in support of this position are presented below; for example, Enç (1991:9) claims that all definites are specific because "identity of referents entails inclusion" and offers evidence from Turkish to support her claim (see examples 35 and 36 below). For the current study I acknowledge that the terms specific and non-specific are used most regularly in relation to indefinites (Lyons, 1999) but I choose to adopt an operationalisation of specific and non-specific that applies to both definite and indefinite contexts in line

with IKW (2004). The majority of the discussion of specificity in this chapter will relate to examples from English as they are the most common within the literature cited here.

Ambiguity exists in relation to specificity in English, meaning it is possible for the same sentence to have both a specific and non-specific reading. Abbott (2006:144) gives the sentence in example 34 (taken from Fillmore, 1967), and explains that the specific reading would provide information about "certain friends of mine" (i.e. that they speak French) whereas the non-specific reading would merely assert that "I have friends who speak French".

34. Some friends of mine speak French.

Furthermore, Abbott (2006) claims similarities between this distinction and Milsark's argument of strong and weak NPs, presented earlier in this chapter, as well as Fodor and Sag's (1982) separation between referential and quantificational readings of indefinites which is introduced below.

Another commonly made link is between Donnellan's (1966) view of referential and attributive uses of definites, and specific and non-specific uses of indefinites. However, Enç (1991) asserts that specificity is completely distinct from definiteness, despite being closely related. She goes on to say…

> [d]efiniteness and specificity of NPs are clearly related phenomena. Both definites and specifics require that their discourse referents be linked to previously established discourse referents, and both indefinites and nonspecifics require that their discourse referents not be linked to previously established discourse referents. What distinguishes these notions is the nature of the linking. (Enç, 1991:9).

To elaborate, the nature of linking between the discourse referent in the NP and previously established discourse referents is described by Enç as an identity relationship for definiteness and an inclusion relationship for specificity. She goes on to cite Heim (1982) as explaining that definites must meet the 'Familiarity condition' and specific indefinites must meet the contrasting 'Novelty Condition'

(1991:8). For non-specific indefinites, in addition to being novel they must be 'unrelated' to referents that were previously established in the discourse.

Enç offers her analysis of specificity in terms of the relationship between discourse referents as an alternative to an analysis which incorporates scope (see below). She provides the following two examples from Turkish (1991:4–5).

35. Ali bir piyano-yu kiralamak istiyor.
    Ali one piano-Acc to-rent   wants.
    'Ali wants to rent a certain piano.'

36. Ali bir piyano kiralamale istiyor.
    Ali one piano to-rent   wants.
    'Ali wants to rent a (nonspecific) piano.'

Enç explains that in (35) the accusative morpheme acts as a marker of specificity; whereas, the lack of case morphology in example 36 means the sentence is obligatorily interpreted as non-specific. She makes a suggestion based on a closer examination of Turkish that "the difference in specificity correlates with a difference in the domains of discourse in which the sentences would be appropriate" (1991:7).

Not everyone agrees with Enç, and scope is often claimed to be closely related to specificity. However, Lyons (1999) points out that arguments relating to scope are based on pragmatic distinctions and that, despite the large amount of literature which discusses scope ambiguities, "there is no reason to posit an ambiguity relating to specificity in the articles themselves" (1999:172). In addition, Enç points out that using *specific* as a descriptive term related to scope relations means that "specificity is not recognised as an independent semantic phenomenon" (1991:2). She argues that specificity is independent of scope relations and that not all specifics have wide scope (1991:23). Despite denying that wide scope and specific readings are one and the same, Enç (1991) acknowledges that there are significant questions about specificity and scope relations which remain unanswered. There is considerable complexity in these different interpretations of specificity, and a great deal of clarification is needed in order to justify why certain examples may be interpreted as specific or non-specific. This gives some indication of the challenge involved in explaining the properties of specific and non-specific NPs to the L2 learners in the current study.

As highlighted earlier, the current study is based on the work of Ionin who expresses a different view of specificity to that proposed by Enç (2006:175). For Ionin's (2006) argument, the concepts of presupposition and felicity are important. As discussed in Section 2.1, she defines a presupposition as "a statement presupposed to be true by *both speaker and listener*" (2006:189; emphasis added by Ionin). She argues that, by taking the knowledge of both speaker and hearer into account, a presupposition takes preference over felicity conditions since a felicity condition focuses only on speaker knowledge and so is weaker in the discourse. Ionin highlights that this distinction between presuppositions and felicity conditions is crucial to her account of specificity, and goes on to point out that hearer knowledge must be assessed before a speaker can felicitously use a specific definite NP. This is because definites carry presuppositions of existence and uniqueness. See example 37 from Ionin (2006:190).

37. I saw the cat.

She explains that the speaker and hearer must "share knowledge that there is a unique cat in some *contextually given domain*" before this sentence can be uttered felicitously (Ionin, 2006:190).

Ionin's work builds upon the referential and quantificational distinction made by Fodor and Sag (1982). This distinction is based on referentiality and so has similarities to the referential/attributive ambiguity, outlined by Donnellan (1966) and explained in Section 2.1, but for indefinites rather than definites. To clarify, referentiality is most commonly associated with definites, in line with Donnellan's proposal, and the specific/non-specific distinction is considered the equivalent for indefinite contexts. Fodor and Sag (1982) extend the pattern found with definite referentials to indefinites, stating that a referential reading can be identified "by the fact that it does not exhibit relational interactions with other elements in a sentence" (Fodor and Sag, 1982:379). By the nature of being indefinite, the aspect of referring on behalf of the speaker is not intended to be shared by the hearer when a referential indefinite is used. Lyons (1999:165) provides the following two examples to demonstrate the difference. Example 38 is a referential indefinite and, according to Lyons, example 39 describes but does not refer.

38. I bought a car.

39. Pass me a book.

Lyons explains that *a car* in example 38 is familiar to the speaker but unfamiliar to the hearer and so indefinite. It is also specific because it is used to denote a particular entity, whereas *a book* in example 39 does not refer to any particular entity. Furthermore, Fodor and Sag (1982) argue that the semantic ambiguity between referential and quantificational indefinites is quite distinct from any scope ambiguities that may co-occur, and provide extensive observations which indicate that indefinites require an additional interpretation to being seen just as quantifiers.

The concept of 'speaker intent to refer' is generally accepted as a definition of specific reference. IKW (2004) cite Fodor and Sag (1982) as the source of this definition, but acknowledge that specificity can be defined in a multitude of other ways. Specificity was given an informal linguistic definition by IKW (2004:5), as seen in (40).

40. 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.

A clarification of the notion of 'speaker intent to refer' is provided by Trenkic (2008), who notes that intent to refer presupposes that the speaker has a particular referent in mind, but that does not require the speaker to be personally acquainted with the referent or to have detailed knowledge of the object or individual.

However, the addition to this definition of a 'noteworthy property' by Ionin (2003) has created some controversy. The main support for her addition of noteworthiness to the above definition comes from the use of the referential indefinite *this* in informal, spoken English. Ionin (2006) states that *this*-indefinites (which she labels referential *this)* are only felicitous in specific contexts, thus serving as a marker of specificity. However, even when the speaker intends to refer to a specific object or individual, Ionin argues that the felicity conditions for the use of *this*-indefinites are only met when something further is said about that individual. Examples 41a and b are taken from Ionin (2006:181) and # indicates that felicity conditions have not been met.

41. a. Becky wrote some thank-you notes using a/#this purple pen; then she
mailed the notes to her friends.
   b. Becky wrote some thank-you notes using a/this purple pen, which
suddenly exploded, spilling purple ink all over Becky's clothes and
furniture!

According to Ionin (2006), the use of referential *this* in 40a is not felicitous and the restriction occurs because nothing further is said about the pen. Contrast this sentence with example 41b where something noteworthy is stated about the pen, in this case the information that it exploded and spilled ink, and also note that referential *this* is perfectly acceptable in (41b). Therefore, Ionin summarises the following three properties of referential *this*, which she refers to as *this*$_{ref}$ (2006:181).

42. Properties of DP headed by *this*$_{ref}$:
   a. They are indefinite;
   b. They do not take narrow scope with respect to intensional/modal
      operators or negation;
   c. Their felicity is affected by *noteworthiness*.

Ionin's argument that 'noteworthy property' should form part of the definition of specificity has not been universally adopted. Trenkic (2008:4) argues that the terminology is too "vague" and does not differ much from the original definition that did not include an addition of noteworthiness. The fact that this definition of specificity was then operationalised as a form of 'explicitly stated knowledge' in the L2 test materials used by IKW (2004) and since adapted for use in numerous other studies including the current one, is another issue raised by Trenkic. She argues that 'explicitly stated knowledge' and 'intent to refer' (or specificity) are two unrelated factors (2008:8). The influence that this may have had on IKW's results will be addressed in Chapter 3.

To return to the distinction between definiteness and specificity, the definitions provided by IKW (2004) and given in examples 33 and 40 relate this difference to speaker and hearer knowledge. For definiteness there is a shared knowledge between the speaker and the hearer that is needed for a context to be marked as definite. For a specific reading of an NP to apply, on the other hand, only the knowledge of the speaker is relevant in terms of their intention to refer to a specific referent, or not.

Finally, there is the issue of whether specificity distinctions can apply to definites as well as indefinites. Lyons (1999:177) argues that they can, although notes that languages which express specificity with some form of morphological or lexical marking only do so for indefinites. To argue that specificity distinctions clearly apply to both definites and indefinites, Lyons provides examples of both definite and indefinite NPs affected by ambiguity in relation to so called 'opaque contexts'. These include negations, questions and modals, where a continuation of the sentence makes a specific or non-specific reading more likely. For instance, Lyons (1999:168) provides the following examples of indefinite specific and non-specific sentences (example 43a and b) and definite specific and non-specific sentences (example 44a and b).

43. a. Have you found **a watch**? – I'm sure I left it lying here.
    b. Have you found **a watch**? – or can't you decide what kind you want to buy?

44. a. I'm going to have lunch with **the president** tomorrow– I'm dreading it, he's such a boring man.
    b. I'm going to have lunch with **the president** tomorrow– that is, if the election takes place today and we have a president.

Lyons repeats Donnellan's (1966) distinction between referential and attributive definites, and states that this "may well be" the same as the specificity distinction but using different terminology (1999:171). Furthermore, he relates the distinction which occurs in opaque contexts to scope relations, whilst also noting a similar distinction in transparent contexts as referential versus non-referential. For ease of reference, Lyons chooses to refer to both distinctions under the umbrella term of specificity. He recognises that, despite the pragmatic and semantic evidence from English, there is no cross-linguistic evidence that specificity as a lexical or morphological category exists with definites. He goes on to say that this "also makes it very unlikely that there is a quantificational-referential ambiguity in the English definite article" (1999:178). Ionin (2003), however, claims that there is cross-linguistic evidence to support the argument that definites can be specific or non-specific and that only previous-mention definites are obligatorily specific. Samoan is her much-cited example of a language which marks specificity, and this will be discussed further in Chapter 3 in relation to the findings of IKW (2004). For non-

specific definites, Ionin (2003) recognises that they match the truth conditions for indefiniteness but argues that it is Maximize Presupposition which ensures that the definite article is used.

2.3. CONCLUSION

There is still an element of controversy within the literature surrounding definiteness and specificity, both in terms of what these features mean and also how they are represented in languages that do and do not have an article system. The disagreement over definiteness and referentiality emphasises this, and Lyons states that "there is dispute over whether definite noun phrases can be referring expressions, or whether it is rather speakers who sometimes refer using them" (1999:3). Furthermore, referentiality has been extended to describe a potential ambiguity which Fodor and Sag (1982) identified in the use of indefinites. They explain referential indefinites in terms of speaker intent without consideration of the hearer's knowledge, and therefore argue that they have a different pragmatic purpose to referential definites where both the speaker and hearer must be able to identify the referent of the NP. Referential indefinites are considered equivalent to specific indefinites, with IKW (2004) citing Fodor and Sag (1982) as the source of their definition.

The disagreement surrounding specificity, as is most relevant for the current thesis, does not surround the concept of 'speaker intent to refer', but is rather related to Ionin's (2003) decision to expand the definition to encompass the idea of 'noteworthy property'. Ionin bases her expansion on the use of referential *this* in informal spoken English. However, Trenkic (2008) disagrees with this decision, arguing that the addition of *noteworthiness* adds nothing to the original definition. Also of interest is the debate surrounding definite NPs, and whether they are always specific or can, like indefinites, have both specific and non-specific interpretations. Lyons (1999) recognises that languages which overtly mark specificity either lexically or morphologically only do so for indefinites. However, he also argues that there is semantic and pragmatic evidence from English that the specificity distinction can apply to definites as well as indefinites.

To attempt to contribute to these ongoing debates or add evidence that may advance one argument over another would go beyond the scope of the present thesis.

Therefore, the definition that I adopt in order to teach definiteness and specificity to Chinese learners of English is that provided by IKW (2004). Their paper has become a somewhat seminal work on the L2 acquisition of articles with its proposal that definiteness and specificity may interact, resulting in difficulties in certain contexts for learners of English whose L1s do not have an article system. The paper by IKW has arguably caused the resurgence of interest in article acquisition within the field in the last decade. A different operationalisation of these terms could lead to different results, and this issue will be revisited in Chapter 8 when the outcome of the study is being discussed. The definitions of definiteness and specificity can be found in this chapter in examples 33 and 40, respectively, and these will be built on when developing instruction materials, as outlined in Chapter 5.

3. PREVIOUS STUDIES OF L2 ARTICLE ACQUISITION

In the past decade, numerous studies have focused on article errors amongst L2 learners of English at different levels of proficiency, examining the distribution of such errors amongst different populations of learners and theorising on the reasons for their occurrence. Most of this work has focused on adult L2 learners, although some studies have also looked at children (Ionin, Zubizarreta and Philippov, 2009; Morales, 2011; Zdorenko and Paradis, 2008). The cumulative outcome of this research has been a number of hypotheses relating to how articles are acquired by adult and child learners, the most widely cited of which is possibly Ionin's ACP hypothesis (2003). This chapter provides an overview of the key findings on article acquisition which will influence how articles are taught to one group of participants in the current study. It begins with a look at early studies into L2 English article acquisition and then gives a detailed summary of how the features of definiteness and specificity, defined in Chapter 2, have been applied to explain patterns of article misuse. Alternative theories which disagree with Ionin's parameter setting explanation are covered next, followed by a brief overview of article acquisition studies on children. The final section of this chapter considers the implications of the finding that the definite article appears to be acquired before the indefinite article amongst many learners of L2 English.

Early research into article acquisition by Parrish (1987) and Young (1996) gave an outline of acquisition processes and highlighted some of the difficulties this form can present to learners of L2 English. Both of these studies consider the use of demonstratives and quantifiers when used instead of articles, since these forms are known to encode definiteness in some articleless languages such as Mandarin Chinese (see Chapter 2 for more details). The relevance of these papers to the current thesis comes from their explanation that articles encode the concepts of 'specific reference' and 'hearer knowledge'. According to Parrish, both 'hearer knowledge' and 'specific reference' are required for use of the definite article. 'Hearer knowledge', however does not form part of indefinite contexts, and indefinites may be either + or − 'specific reference' (1987:364). Therefore, Parrish appears to agree with the claim (stated in Chapter 2) that only indefinite articles mark the specificity distinction. Young (1996), on the other hand, separates these two concepts according to a position stated by Bickerton (1981). Young defines

specificity as a semantic universal, whereas 'hearer knowledge' (as assumed by the speaker) is related to discourse. By drawing attention to the importance of article semantics and why acquisition of the intricate system of different NP environments can be problematic for L2 learners, both Parrish and Young provide evidence of a complex developmental process which, it appears, is under-represented in the metalinguistic rules about articles currently presented in L2 English classrooms.

3.1. DEFINITENESS AND SPECIFICITY

The possibility that two-article languages select articles on the basis of either definiteness or specificity was suggested by Ionin (2003). She claims that these features cause L2 learners of English whose L1 does not have an article system to fluctuate between correct and incorrect usage of the definite and indefinite articles. Ionin hypothesised that more errors would be made in contexts which were either definite and non-specific or indefinite and specific, and proposed a parametric variation that exists between languages which set articles on the basis of specificity or definiteness. The resulting ACP was used to explain the experimental results from Ionin's (2003) three studies of Korean and Russian adult learners of L2 English. The final study was reported in IKW (2004) and supports the proposal that L2 learners of English with an articleless L1 fluctuate between the two settings of the ACP (the definiteness setting and the specificity setting) and that more errors occur within contexts that are [+definite, −specific] and [−definite, +specific]. As outlined in Chapter 2, IKW (2004:5) gave an informal definition of definiteness which refers to the knowledge of both the speaker and listener, and of specificity, which refers only to speaker knowledge. The definition of definiteness was given in example 33 and specificity in example 40, both are repeated here for ease of reference.

> 45. Definiteness and Specificity: Informal definitions
> If a Determiner Phrase (DP) of the form [D NP] is...
> **a.** [+definite], then the speaker and hearer presuppose the existence of a unique individual in the set denoted by the NP.
> **b.** [+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.

Results of a forced-choice elicitation task conducted on groups of L1 Russian and Korean L2 learners of English supports the proposal that learners struggle to

produce articles correctly in definite non-specific and indefinite specific contexts. The task had 76 dialogues in total covering each of four contexts, as seen in examples 46-49 (from IKW, 2004:22–23). Furthermore, IKW included previous mention definites and partitive indefinites, both of which are obligatorily specific, and these will not be discussed in relation to the current study.

46. [+definite, +specific]
    Kathy: My daughter Jeannie loves that new comic strip about super mouse.
    Elise: Well, she is in luck! *Tomorrow, I'm having lunch with (a, the, –) creator of this comic strip- he is an old friend of mine.* So I can get his autograph for Jeannie!

47. [+definite, −specific]
    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.

48. [−definite, +specific]
    Meeting on a street
    Roberta: Hi, William! It's nice to see you again. I didn't know that you were in Boston.
    William: I am here for a week. *I am visiting (a, the, –) friend from college- his name is Sam Brown, and he lives in Cambridge now.*

49. [−definite, −specific]
    Chris: I need to find your roommate Jonathan straight 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.

For the definite non-specific dialogues (see example 47), the error rates for the Russian and Korean learners were 33% and 14% respectively, whereas for the indefinite specific contexts (example 48) the error rates for the two groups of learners were slightly higher at 36% for the Russian learners and 22% amongst the Korean learners (IKW, 2004). This can be contrasted with definite specific and indefinite non-specific contexts (examples 46 and 49), with both contexts resulting in error rates of below 10% for the Russian learners and below 5% for the Korean leaners. According to the authors, these results show a systematic pattern of article

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misuse errors amongst these groups of learners based on [+/− definite] and [+/−
specific], and therefore support the hypothesis that learners' errors will fluctuate
between possible UG parameter settings until there is sufficient evidence available
from the input for them to select the correct setting (the FH). IKW (2004) looked at
performance across the four contexts, and divided the learners into four possible
patterns of article use which can be seen in example 50 (from IKW, 2004:38).

50. **a.** The definiteness pattern: Correct parameter-setting
    At least 75% *the* use in [+definite, +specific] contexts
    Less than 25% *the* overuse in [−definite, −specific] contexts
    One of the following:
      i. no specificity distinction with definites or indefinites OR
      ii. a small (<25%) specificity distinction with definites only OR
      iii. a small (<25%) specificity distinction with indefinites only

b. The fluctuation pattern
    At least 75% *the* use in [+definite, +specific] contexts
    Less than 25% *the* overuse in [−definite, −specific] contexts
    Evidence for a specificity distinction
      More overuse of *the* with [+specific] than with [−specific]
        indefinites
      Less use of *the* with [−specific] than with [+specific] indefinites
    Evidence for a definiteness distinction
      More use of *the* with [+specific] definites than with [+specific]
        indefinites
      The specificity distinction with indefinites does not exceed the
        specificity distinction with definites by more than 50% (and
        vice versa)

c. The specificity pattern: Parameter mis-setting
    At least 75% *the* use in all [+specific] contexts
    Less than 25% *the* use in all [−specific] contexts
    Equally high use of *the* with [+specific] definites and [+specific]
      indefinites

d. The partial fluctuation pattern
    At least 75% *the* use in [+definite, +specific] contexts
    Less than 25% *the* overuse in [−definite, −specific] contexts
    One of the following:
      i. the specificity distinction is made only with definites OR
      ii. the specificity distinction is made only with indefinites OR
      iii. the specificity distinction is much (>50%) larger with indefinites
        than with definites (or vice versa)

e. Miscellaneous pattern

Any patterns that do not fit into the above four categories

Statistical analysis showed significant effects of both definiteness and specificity on the two groups of learners. Individual results, however, did not stand up to scrutiny since nine individual learners showed partial fluctuation patterns and a further 13 learners showed miscellaneous patterns of article misuse which could not be accounted for by the FH. This finding has been the basis of much of the criticism of this paper and has led to alternative explanations of article acquisition such as that posited by Hawkins et al. (2006; see Section 3.2). However, IKW argue that only 4 of these learners show random behaviour, with the other learners all leaning towards patterns of fluctuation or the definiteness setting. The reason they were not classified as exhibiting one of these patterns is because they fall below a somewhat arbitrary cut off of 75% of article use which matches either the fluctuation pattern, the definiteness pattern, or the specificity pattern. IKW (2004) also state that there does not appear to be any recognisable L1 effect in the behaviour of these 22 learners.

A further criticism of IKW (2004) has been made by Trenkic (2008), who takes issue with the way in which specificity is operationalised in their study. Trenkic states that there is a difference between specificity and 'explicitly stated knowledge' (ESK) and that the two factors are unrelated (2008:8). However, as can be seen in examples 47 and 49, contexts that were classified as [−specific] by IKW are often operationalised as the speaker explicitly stating that they do not know, or were not told, who the referent of the conversation is. Trenkic goes on to make a distinction between "discourse specificity", as presented in the previous chapter of the current thesis as 'intent to refer', and "speaker specificity" which she claims is what IKW actually tested. Furthermore, by explicitly denying knowledge of the referent, as in examples 47 and 49 above, Trenkic claims that the speaker therefore makes the referent relevant and so the context becomes specific, in terms of the discourse (2008:15). According to Trenkic, this means that the ACP does not adequately explain the results of IKW's study. To test this claim, Trenkic added two additional contexts to IKW's task. There were [+definite, +specific, −ESK] and [−definite, +specific, −ESK] and Trenkic explained both contexts as "[t]he speak has a specific referent in mind, but she explicitly denies that she knows the identity of

the person being talked about" (2008:12). Examples 51 and 52 show the new contexts (from Trenkic, 2008:12–13).

51. [+definite, +specific, −ESK]
    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.

52. [−definite, +specific, −ESK]
    Office gossip
    Gina: …and what about the others?
    Mary: Well, Dave is single, Paul is happily married, and Peter is engaged to (a, the, −) merchant banker, but none of us knows who she is or what she's like.

Trenkic found a highly significant effect on article misuse caused by the combination of specificity and ESK for both the definite and indefinite articles, and concluded that specificity did not play a part in L2 article choice for the Mandarin Chinese learners in her study. However, the learners were found to pattern with the L1 Korean and L1 Russian learners in IKW (2004), suggesting that the problem is with IKW's operationalisation of specificity rather than due to a difference between Chinese learners and speakers of other articleless languages. Trenkic's finding that the Chinese learners pattern like speakers of other articleless languages is encouraging in terms of the current study, and I will return to this issue in Chapter 8. However, I find less support for her criticism of IKW's operationalisation of specificity, since their elicitation task has been widely used in other studies without issue.

To return to the research conducted by IKW (2004), a further point of interest in their results is that data from a written production task did not provide enough definite non-specific contexts to test the theory of overuse of the indefinite article in such contexts. Some omission of the definite article was observed in the written data. For indefinite contexts, IKW (2004:48) give the following examples of learner errors taken from the production data of their participants.

53. My husband met us in the airport and drove us to our new home. Then we went to our neighbours house for the small party.

54. On Thanksgiving week-end we went to NY for the first time. We took
<u>the room</u> in the New-Yorker Hotel and went outside to see the town.

Examples 53 and 54 show overuse of the definite article with indefinite contexts which IKW consider to be possibly specific, since the speaker appears to have a particular entity in mind. Overall, the results for the production task were less conclusive than for the elicitation task in which contexts could be more easily controlled.

Further work by Ionin, Zubizarreta and Bautista Maldonado (2008; henceforth IZBM) contrasts the results of an elicitation task conducted on speakers of L1 Russian and L1 Spanish, the latter being a two-article language which, like English, has both definite and indefinite articles. One criticism of this paper is the difference in age and proficiency level of the two groups of learners, as well as their country of residence (the Russian speakers were resident in the US but the Spanish speakers were tested in their native Mexico). No evidence is provided to demonstrate that these two groups of learners are statistically comparable and so this could introduce variables which weaken the comparison that is made between the groups, unless the results can be supported by data from alternative studies. According to IZBM (2008), the results of the Russian speakers were found to support the FH whereas the Spanish speakers' use of articles was claimed to be caused by L1 transfer since no effect of specificity was found. Consequently, the authors conclude that transfer overrides fluctuation. Furthermore, the Spanish speakers became significantly more accurate in their use of English articles as proficiency increased whereas the effect of proficiency on the Russian learners was less pronounced. This contrasts with the results of IKW (2004) who reported a developmental effect on the Russian learners, with the advanced group marginally more accurate, although the same effect was not observed in their Korean participants. The possible effect of proficiency on learner's use of articles is considered further by García Mayo (2009) in her discussion of the different accuracy rates for the definite and indefinite article (see Section 3.4).

A second finding from IZBM (2008) was that the Spanish participants, whose L1 has the same definiteness setting as English, showed high rates of article omission. This was linked to L1 transfer since the majority of omissions occurred before a single item which, when directly translated, would not require an article in

the L1. Further investigations into fluctuation and the associated Full Transfer in Spanish learners come from García Mayo (2009), and Morales (2011), neither of whom reported such high rates of omission. García Mayo looked at adult learners of English whilst Morales' study examined children. Both used the same elicited production methodology based on the work of IKW (2004). García Mayo provides these examples to demonstrate the semantic contrast between the Spanish definite article (*el, la, los, las*) (see example 55) and indefinite article (*un, una, unos, unas*) (example 56).

55. Isabel quiere   entregarle   el premio *al*   ganador
    Isabel want-3SG present clitic the prize   to the winner
    "Isabel wants to present the prize to the winner
 a. …pero él no quiere   que ella se   lo   entregue.
                                                            [+specific]
    but he not want-3SG that she clitic clitic give-3SG
    but he doesn't want her to give it to him"
 b. …pero tendrá   que esperar a que termine   la carrera.
                                                            [-specific]
    but have-3SG-FUT that wait   to that finish-3SGS the race
    but she will have to wait until the race finishes."

56. Carlos quiere   casarse con *una* médico
    Carlos want-3SG marry with a   physician
    "Carlos wants to marry a physician
 a. …aunque siempre está   discutiendo con ella en el hospital.
                                                            [+specific]
    although always is-3SG arguing   with her in the hospital.
    although he is always arguing with her in the hospital."
 b. …anuque todavía no conoce   a   ninguna.   [-specific]
    although still   no know-3SG OBJ none.
    although he hasn't met one yet."

(García Mayo, 2009:23)

By showing that transfer overrides fluctuation amongst L1 Spanish learners of English whose L1 encodes definiteness in the article system, both García Mayo and Morales demonstrate evidence to support the FH which claims that fluctuation will occur amongst speakers of articleless L1s. García Mayo concluded that the Spanish learners in her study were 'highly accurate' with both definite and indefinite English articles (2009:32) whereas the Spanish speaking children in Morales' study were

more accurate with the definite article. Despite displaying some errors with articles in [−definite, +specific] contexts, the effect was not significant and Morales (2011) concluded that semantic context has no effect on English article choice by Spanish speaking children. In another study, Hawkins et al. (2006) contrasted Japanese and Greek learners of English, again using a forced-choice elicitation task. Greek also encodes definiteness in its article system and Hawkins et al. found no evidence of fluctuation amongst the Greek participants, unlike the Japanese learners in the study. Therefore, it would appear that amongst L2 learners of English whose L1 uses articles to mark definiteness, transfer does indeed override fluctuation as claimed by IZBM (2008).

Since the original proposal of the FH, questions have been raised about its validity in relation to parameter setting. There also remain questions about whether definites should have been included in the FH since the existence of a specific/non-specific contrast with definite articles is widely disputed in the literature, as outlined in Chapter 2. The current thesis follows IKW (2004) in teaching and testing specificity in relation to both definites and indefinites. Ionin's (2003) reason for claiming that specificity distinctions exist for both definites and indefinites was based on the structure of Samoan, whilst Lyons (1999) refers to pragmatic and semantic evidence from English to make the same point. However, cross-linguistic evidence from Samoan has since been presented which supports the argument that the non-specific article can only be used in indefinite contexts, and therefore any errors occurring in definite contexts may not be explicable with reference to specificity. Tryzna (2009) gives more detail about the evidence from Samoan which goes against the proposal for two parameters based on definiteness and specificity. She claims the language has one article for use in non-specific indefinite contexts (*se*) and a different article (*le*) for use in the three remaining contexts, as demonstrated in Table 1 (from Tryzna, 2009:71).

Based on translation data from a single Samoan speaker which was then validated by two further Samoan multilinguals, Tryzna proposes a reduced ACP. She then tests whether Polish and Mandarin Chinese adult L2 learners of English will display fluctuation with indefinite articles only. A forced-choice elicitation task, which also considered the effects of singular and plural DPs but did not include any definite non-specific contexts, resulted in four different patterns of article misuse across the groups of learners. The results are summarised in Table 2. Advanced L1

Chinese participants (CH adv.) showed either correct usage (65%) or evidence of fluctuation in indefinite contexts (35%) whereas advanced L1 Polish participants (PL adv.) were overall less accurate, as predicted due to their lower proficiency in comparison with the Chinese group. 47% showed the target setting and 21% demonstrated fluctuation in indefinite contexts, whilst a further 31% of participants showed miscellaneous patterns of article use. Finally, in the intermediate L1 Polish group (PL int.) just 11% demonstrated fluctuation with indefinite contexts, whilst the remainder all showed miscellaneous patterns of article use and none were considered to have accurate usage. There were, therefore, "noticeable differences in individual patterns of article use both in terms of the speakers' L1s as well as their L2 English proficiency" (Tryzna, 2009:81).

Table 1. Specificity and definiteness interaction in Samoan

Context type corresponding	An example of a test sentence (target DP in bold)	The Samoan DP
1. Non-specific indefinite	I'm looking for **a hat** to go with my new coat.	**se pulou**
2. Specific indefinite	I'm looking for **a hat**. I must have left it here yesterday.	**le pulou**
3. Specific definite	I want to talk to **the winner** of the race. She is a good friend of mine.	**le malo**
4. Non-specific definite	If you want to talk to **the winner**, wait until the end of the race.	**le malo**

Tryzna interprets these results as evidence for optionality amongst lower level learners which eventually becomes fluctuation (albeit a reduced version which only occurs in indefinite contexts) as English proficiency increases. Optionality is defined by Sorace (2000:93) as "the coexistence within an individual grammar of two or more variants of a given construction, which: make use of the same lexical resources; and express the same meaning", and Tryzna relates optionality to a developmental process since these patterns were only found amongst lower proficiency learners. It differs from fluctuation because the latter leads to a more systematic pattern of errors. Furthermore, she describes the ACP as "too restrictive"

(p. 85) and argues that it is not a parameter, a view also expressed by Hawkins et al. (2006). The investigation of Greek and Japanese learners by Hawkins et al. showed evidence of fluctuation in the group results of the Japanese learners, with high rates of article misuse in singular and plural indefinite specific contexts (50% and 58% respectively). Despite this finding, a more detailed analysis of individual results for the Japanese learners showed differing patterns of article use which go beyond the two problematic contexts identified by the original ACP, a similar finding to that of Tryzna (2009) and comparable with IKW's (2004) less well-cited finding that 9 learners showed patterns of article use not predicted by the constraints of the ACP. IKW's results were considered in some detail by Hawkins et al. (2006) who, questioning whether the construction-specific rules of the ACP even match the definition of a parameter, propose an alternative explanation for article errors in L2 English, as discussed in Section 3.2.

Table 2. Patterns of L2 English article use (adapted from Tryzna, 2009:82)

Pattern	Description	PL int. (N=19)	PL adv. (N=19)	CH adv. (N=17)
Definiteness (target setting)	high use of *the* with definites; little or no overuse of *the* with indefinites	0	9(47%)	11(65%)
Fluctuation (non-target, expected)	high use of *the* with definites optional use of *the* with specific indefinites, little or no overuse of *the* with non-specific indefinites	2(11%)	4(21%)	6(35%)
Specificity (Setting I)	high use of *the* with definites and specific indefinites; little or no overuse of *the* with non-specific indefinites	0	0	0
Miscellaneous I-IV	4 patterns of apparent optionality in article use which do not match the definition of fluctuation given above	16(84%)	6(31%)	0

In response to Tryzna's paper, Ionin, Zubizarreta and Philippov (2009; henceforth IZP) incorporate the new evidence from Samoan by proposing that adults may combine their domain-specific knowledge with explicit strategies, thereby explaining the results found in previous studies which included errors in definite non-specific contexts (see example 47 above). IZP (2009) conducted a further written elicitation task in order to determine whether child and adult Russian learners of English demonstrate a similar developmental pattern in their acquisition of article semantics, and found no significant difference in the overall accuracy rates of these two groups of learners. The results of the adult participants suggest a similar group pattern to that found in previous studies, with errors with the use of both specific indefinites and non-specific definites, although IZP do not clarify whether any individual learners showed miscellaneous patterns of article use. Therefore, despite the criticisms from Hawkins et al. (2006) and Trenkic (2008), plus Tryzna's argument that the ACP only applies to indefinite contexts (2009), multiple studies have found the same patterns of significantly more errors in [+definite, −specific] and [−definite, +specific] contexts amongst adult learners with an articleless L1. This supports my decision to develop instruction materials for young adult Chinese learners of English, which target these contexts in the hope of improving article accuracy.

IZP explain the adult group results by considering explicit knowledge of article use because, in light of the new data from Samoan, the non-specific definite context can no longer be explained with reference to natural language patterns. They argue for a combination of "domain-specific linguistic knowledge and explicit strategies" (2009:355) with the former available to both adult and child L2 learners whereas the latter is only employed by adults. The L2 children in this study only demonstrated specificity effects with indefinites and L1 English children of the same age showed no specificity effects (the child results will be discussed in more detail in Section 3.3). An example of an explicit strategy, as proposed by IZP, is the use of 'contextual clues' to determine whether the speaker has a particular referent in mind. They claim that "this strategy is based on learners' underlying sensitivity to specificity" (p. 355). Snape and Yusa (2013:178) interpret the strategy suggested by IZP as "use *a* when the speaker does not have a particular referent in mind". Although IZP describe these strategies as 'explicit' it does not necessarily mean they were learnt through instruction; however, they may be related to explicitly learnt

rules and metalinguistic knowledge. IZP suggest that exposure to the target language and overall language proficiency have a role to play in whether, and to what extent, explicit strategies are employed by adults to support their linguistic knowledge. By acknowledging that adult L2 learners may employ explicit strategies alongside their use of implicit knowledge, this paper lends support to the proposal that explicit strategies can be targeted and further developed by instruction within a language classroom. The present study builds on this possibility in an attempt to improve article accuracy amongst adult L2 learners of English by means of instruction on specificity.

One study which provides exactly this type of instruction to Japanese L2 learners of English is Snape and Yusa (2013). They taught specificity, genericity and article perception to seven upper-intermediate adult learners, with 70 minutes instruction provided on each of the three points spread across three weeks. Definiteness and specificity were taught in the first instruction session, perception in the second session, and genericity in the third session. Pre and post-tests consisted of an adaptation of IKW's (2004) forced choice elicitation task which measured participants' awareness of specificity, as well as an acceptability judgment task which targeted genericity and a transcription task to analyse perception. Example test items were not provided by Snape and Yusa, as all three tasks were taken from previously published work. The three tasks were administered before and after instruction (the order of the items was changed between the pre-test and post-test), with a delayed post-test consisting of the same tasks completed two weeks later. Additionally, there was a control group of a further seven participants who completed the pre and post-tests but received no instruction on the English article system.

In terms of the instruction on specificity, there was no significant difference between the post-test scores of the experimental and control groups, which suggests that the explicit instruction did not affect the learners' performance on the forced-choice elicitation task. Snape and Yusa posit several explanations for this result, including the short (70 minute) instruction period, the complexity of article semantics, and the fact that the instruction may have been too difficult (2013:177). However, since this was a pilot study the group sizes were very small so there was possibly a lack of statistical power to detect any difference. Snape and Yusa recommend that instruction on specificity should focus on definite non-specific

contexts since the Japanese learners showed no fluctuation results with the indefinite article. This is in line with the results from IZP (2009) discussed above, who suggest that leaners may use an explicit strategy for definite contexts which causes the specificity effect. A follow-up study is currently being undertaken in Japan with a much longer instruction period, although the full results are not yet known. Like the work of Snape and Yusa, the current study also investigates the effect of specificity instruction but there are differences. Most notably, the wish to maintain ecological validity was an important factor in the design of the current study. This was achieved by delivering the specificity instruction as part of a larger English language programme and by matching real classroom grammar lessons as closely as possible, both in terms of the amount of instruction and the teaching method. This will be discussed further in Chapter 5. In addition, although both Chinese and Japanese are articleless languages, L2 learners of English from these L1 groups may show different patterns of fluctuation, as reported by Snape, Leung, and Ting (2006; see the next section for details).

3.2. ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS FOR ARTICLE ERRORS

An alternative explanation of L2 article acquisition was given by Robertson (2000) who investigated the tendency of Chinese learners of English to omit articles in obligatory contexts. He predicts that the learners will systematically omit articles, and also proposes a default zero article in the learners' interlanguage grammar which can be used to account for cases of omission which are not systematic. Results from Robertson's paired referential communication task showed "an apparent optionality in the use of the definite and indefinite article in the spoken and written English of Chinese learners of English at all levels" (p. 140) as well as overuse of the numeral *one* and determiner *this*. Robertson claims that difficulties with the English article system which arise in interlanguage development are due to mapping problems between the semantic and pragmatic features of the L1 and L2. Overall, the omission rate in Robertson's study was relatively low, with less than a quarter of all obligatory articles omitted and, following a detailed examination of each context which arose in this spoken task, many of these instances were found to be systematic and could be explained by syntactic and pragmatic principles. The three principles given by Robertson (2000:135) are shown in examples 57–59.

57. A syntactic principle of 'determiner drop', whereby an NP with definite or indefinite reference need not be overtly marked for [+/−definiteness] if it is included in the scope of the determiner of a preceding NP. This principle can extend across speakers, e.g.
A: Inside the blue triangle, use, using *the red pen*.
B: *Red pen*. It's opposite?
A: Yeah, opposite …

<div align="right">(example from Robertson, 2000:162)</div>

58. A 'recoverability' principle, whereby an NP need not be marked for [+/−definiteness] if the information encoded in this feature is recoverable from the context. This was considered to be the pragmatic equivalent of the 'determiner drop' principle exemplified in (56).

59. A 'lexical transfer principle', whereby some learners are using demonstratives (particularly *this*) and the numeral *one* as markers of definiteness and indefiniteness respectively e.g.
A: *This square size* is eight cm, er …

<div align="right">(example from Robertson, 2000:167)</div>

Taken together, these principles suggest an environmental explanation for optionality amongst these Chinese learners since the L1 does not grammaticalise definiteness, and Robertson claims that when definiteness can be inferred from the context the article is more likely to be omitted. The remaining instances of optionality in the data were ascribed to "indeterminacy in the interlanguage grammar" (p. 169). To the best of my knowledge, this theory has not been applied to speakers of other L1s to test whether the way that definiteness is encoded in the L1 can lead to predictions for patterns of article omission or misuse in the L2, or whether these three principles can be applied to patterns of article omission amongst speakers of other articleless languages when participating in similar spoken tasks. However, Lardiere (2004; 2008) considered Robertson's observation of an overuse of determiners which could be caused by L1 transfer, but did not find such patterns in the spoken and written production of an end-state Chinese learner of English. Therefore, Robertson's explanation has not been supported in subsequent research and so it will not inform the design of the current study.

As previously mentioned, IZP (2009) stated that adult L2 learners' use of explicit strategies could account for article misuse errors in non-universal contexts but, rather than suggesting a separation of different types of knowledge, they

propose that these strategies are based on intuitions informed by Universal Grammar (UG). IZP also consider that different task types may influence the area of knowledge used to complete that task, an issue which was considered when selecting two different task types for use in the current study (see Chapter 5 for details of the tasks). The use of explicit strategies was also suggested by Trenkic (2007) who used both spoken and written tasks to analyse article use amongst adolescent Serbian learners of English. She observed that more articles are omitted in contexts which are adjectively modified and gives this example of a dialogue where speaker A omits an article in two Art+ Adj+ N contexts but supplies them correctly in two other contexts which are Art+ N (Trenkic, 2007:306; italics used in the original text to identify relevant contexts).

60. A: there are a lot of trees
    B: ok
    A: *dark forest* + and you go through *the forest* . . .
    B: yes
    A: and you go round it + and you come + to *wooden bridge*
    B: mhm
    A: and you go over *the bridge* . . .

 To account for this, Trenkic considers that if the L1 does not grammaticalise definiteness (e.g. Chinese; see Chapter 2 of the current thesis for details) then articles will be treated like adjectives by learners. Therefore, she claims that the production of articles is pragmatically motivated and that processing difficulties caused by the production of numerous elements in modified contexts are the reason why the high rates of article omission appear to pattern in this way.

Trenkic claims that her proposal for a lexically based model of article production holds implications for the L2 production of functional elements more generally. Whilst her proposal that a processing overload could lead to increased article omission is well supported, her theory that articles function as adjectives in the L2 lexicon of learners with an articleless L1 has led to criticism. I agree with IZP (2009), who state that her proposal, based on the adjectival nature of Serbian determiners, cannot necessarily be extended to other articleless languages such as Chinese. They go on to conclude that "there is little or no direct evidence that speakers of article-less L1s really do consider *the* and *a* to be adjectives" (p. 354).

Hawkins et al. (2006), whose results for Japanese and Greek learners were stated above, turn to yet another explanation for the patterns of article misuse and omission observed in L2 learners of English. They discount the ACP on the basis that a parameter setting theory for article acquisition is not sufficiently general and so is incompatible with minimalist views of syntax. They go on to question whether the fluctuation reported by IKW (2004) does represent a developmental stage of parameter setting because a feature in the lexical entry should be either present or absent. Furthermore, by providing a detailed scrutiny of previous research on the topic, Hawkins et al. (2006) suggest that the results from IKW (2004) only show fluctuation at group level but that individual results suggest stability. Whilst recognising that a developmental stage possibly does exist for speakers of article-less languages acquiring L2 English articles, Hawkins et al. adopt the Distributed Morphology framework (Halle and Marantz, 1993) to explain how the features [+/−definite] and [+/− specific] could be attached to functional categories by individual Japanese learners of L2 English. This approach claims that phonological realisations of features will only be inserted after all syntactic operations have applied. In terms of the predictions that this theory makes about L2 behaviour with articles, the patterns of misuse will be similar to those predicted under Ionin's FH. What differs is the explanation for these errors. Hawkins et al. state that native English speakers will produce bundles of features for their L1 article system as follows:

61. [D, +definite, +singular] (= 'the')
    [D, +definite, −singular] (= 'the')
    [D, −definite, +singular] (= 'a')
    [D, −definite, −singular] (= '0')

whereas the contexts of insertion for the phonological exponents are given as:
62. a   ↔   [D, −definite, +singular]
    the ↔   [D, +definite]
    0   ↔   [D]

<div align="right">(both examples from Hawkins et al., 2006:20)</div>

Hawkins et al.'s proposal of feature bundles based on the structure of the L1 is supported by a detailed examination of article use amongst three of the participants, all of which can be clearly explained by applying this framework and analysing which of these features have been identified as relevant by each speaker. However,

their framework has not been as widely tested as Ionin's FH and, since the error patterns at group level are similar under both theories, their explanation will not be considered further.

Snape, Leung, and Ting (2006) is one paper that applies the account from Hawkins et al. to their review of two small-scale studies which involve Japanese, Chinese and Spanish learners of English. Both studies used the forced-choice elicitation task from IKW (2004). Snape et al. explain that this feature-based account would make similar predictions for the Japanese and Chinese learners, since both groups would have full access to the UG features of [+/−definite] and [+/−specific] in the absence of an L1 system which, like English, grammaticalises definiteness. The Spanish learners were not predicted to fluctuate since Spanish has an article system, and this was confirmed in the results. However, the Chinese L2 learners were found to perform better than the Japanese L2 learners. Snape et al. accounted for this result by referring to Li and Thompson's (1981) claim about the changing status of Chinese, as detailed in Section 2.1.1 of the current thesis. They argue that Mandarin Chinese is grammaticalising the universal category of identifiability and developing definiteness as a grammatical category. According to Snape, Leung, and Ting, this means that the Chinese learners in the study they review were able to transfer the morpho-syntactic feature [+/−definiteness] and map it on to corresponding lexical items in English (i.e. the definite and indefinite articles). For this reason, they outperformed the Japanese learners despite both languages being described as articleless.

Article use amongst Mandarin Chinese learners of English was explored in more detail by Snape (2009), who tested three hypotheses using a forced choice elicitation task and an oral elicited picture description task. The FH (Ionin, 2003), the Representational Deficit Hypothesis (Tsimpli and Roussou, 1991) and the Prosodic Transfer Hypothesis (Goad and White, 2008) have all been used to account for the difficulties that L2 learners have with the English article system. The young adult learners in Snape's study were all classified as intermediate, following administration of the Oxford QPT. Results for the forced choice elicitation task were consistent with the FH, in that the learners were incorrectly selecting *the* and *a* as markers of specificity, although an analysis of individual results showed that only 50% of learners demonstrated patterns of fluctuation. Results for the elicited picture description task, on the other hand, did not show the same patterns of article

omission which were predicted based on the results of previous studies of article use amongst Chinese learners of English (for example Robertson, 2000). Furthermore, the learners were more accurate with suppliance of definites than with indefinites, a result that was not predicted under either the Representational Deficit Hypothesis or the Prosodic Transfer Hypothesis and could not be explained. Snape, therefore, found no support for the Representational Deficit Hypothesis because there was no evidence of a lack of acquisition of the uninterpretable number feature. He concluded that there was support for the weak interpretation of the Prosodic Transfer Hypothesis, and also stated that his results are consistent with the FH.

Both White (2003b) and Lardiere (2004) consider L1→L2 prosodic transfer to explain the patterns of article omission in data from two end-state L2 learners of English. The Prosodic Transfer Hypothesis (Goad and White, 2008) explains that learners with an articleless L1 will not have a corresponding L1 prosodic structure to transfer, and so will delete articles in L2 English. Lardiere (2004) also looks in more detail at how definiteness is represented in Chinese and its relationship to the feature [number], and proposes that learners have difficulty separating features from L1 forms and 're-mapping' them onto the correct L2 form. Examples 63 and 64 (from Lardiere, 2008: 123) show suppliance and omission of plural marking by a Chinese end-state learner of L2 English.

63. Plural marking supplied: *everyday for the next five days*
we spoke two languages in our household
for all the human beings in the world

64. Plural marking omitted: *I borrow a lot of book from her*
I hear it so many time
I have two cousin

Features and their assignment to functional categories in an L2 grammar can, according to Liceras, Zobl and Goodluck (2008), result in variation amongst learners for several reasons. In the L1, a feature may not necessarily project a functional category or have a morphemic realisation. Furthermore, if there is a combination of features which are permitted for a particular functional projection, and these differ between the L1 and the L2, this is a potential cause of variability. Given the different ways in which the features of definiteness and specificity can be encoded in the

world's languages, it seems reasonable to expect to be able to explain difficulties with the L2 English article system by applying this theory. Lardiere (2004) considers functional categories in her explanation for article errors based on data from Lardiere (1998) and White (2003b). She discounts a parameter setting explanation for the observed omissions on the basis that "the acquisition of the properties and distribution of definiteness in articles is apparently far more complex than the mere switching of a parameter setting" (p. 338) and claims more generally that parameter resetting does not sufficiently explain the variability in L2 learners' production of morphological inflection which has been observed in previous acquisition studies (Lardiere 2004; 2008; 2009). Additionally, she highlights the importance of L1 influence on L2 feature selection. A key point made by Lardiere (2009) is that the greater the difference between the representation of features in the L1 and L2, the more problems this could potentially create for the L2 acquirer. I agree with Lardiere that the representation of L1 features is an important consideration for learners and, by extension, teachers. This point certainly warrants consideration when deciding how best to explain the English article system to L2 learners, especially given the range of L1s amongst students who may be taught using the same methods and materials. Therefore, a problem would arise in a multilingual English classroom with, for example speakers of L1 Chinese, a language which selects the feature [+definite] (Lardiere, 2009:184) but does not have an article system, alongside speakers of L1 Spanish, a language whose article system encodes the same [+/−definite] feature as the English article system. The learnability problem faced by these two groups of learners when encountering the English article system will be quite diverse, and yet it is difficult to envisage a situation where different teaching materials could be produced for learners based on the assembly of features in their L1.

3.3. FLUCTUATION IN L2 CHILDREN

Spanish speaking children's use of English articles is cited by Morales (2011) as evidence of transfer and she claims that they correctly apply the definiteness distinction to their use of English articles; however, a contrasting result was found by Zdorenko and Paradis (2008). This longitudinal study of 17 children who speak L1s either with or without articles showed that both groups of children

displayed similar accuracy rates in their use of articles, and L1 background was not found to be significant. This means that both groups of children fluctuated between correct and incorrect usage, and therefore suggests the opposite pattern to those studies where transfer was shown to override fluctuation. One possible explanation for this disparity is that Zdorenko and Paradis employed a different methodology with collection of spoken data, but it could also be that the [+article] group was selected to include children with L1 Romanian and Arabic as well as Spanish; three languages with very different article systems. The mean age of the 17 children was 5;4 years at the start of the study, and Zdorenko and Paradis argue that fluctuation is a developmental stage for L2 child learners of English, regardless of whether there is an L1 determiner system which can be transferred. Additionally, the FH only explains substitution errors and so in order to consider the problem of article omission, Zdorenko and Paradis refer to the Full Transfer/Full Access (FT/FA) theory (Schwartz and Sprouse, 1994; 1996). The FH assumes Full Access to UG and so is not incompatible with FT/FA (Ionin, 2003). In support of the FT/FA account, and as predicted, only the articleless group were found to omit articles. However, since fluctuating patterns of article misuse were recorded amongst both groups, this does not support L1 transfer.

IZP (2009) explained the result of Zdorenko and Paradis (2008), who found no significant difference in article misuse amongst children whose L1 either did or did not have articles, with reference to the age of the children in the study. Citing work with L1 English children (Warden, 1976), IZP suggest egocentricity as one possible explanation for this finding, whereby children aged 3–9 ignore 'hearer knowledge' and therefore overuse the definite article in indefinite contexts. As mentioned, IZP studied both adult and child L2 learners of English with Russian L1, alongside child L1 learners of English. They suggest that the majority of child L2 learners depend on domain-specific learning and therefore make more misuse errors with the indefinite article in specific contexts. This is in contrast to the adult learners in the same study (see Section 3.1), who also made errors in definite non-specific contexts. Whilst work on children's L2 acquisition of the English article system is not currently as numerous as studies into L2 acquisition by adults, the insights from IZP (2009) are directly applicable to the present thesis. They suggest different patterns of article misuse amongst adult and child learners with the same L1 and relate this to adults' use of explicit strategies. If it is possible to further develop such

strategies with the aid of instruction, this could potentially lead to an improvement in article accuracy amongst adult L2 learners of English.

3.4. 'DIRECTIONALITY' IN ARTICLE ACQUISITION

One of the more notable features of Zdorenko and Paradis' (1998) work is the attention it pays to the different accuracy rates for definite and indefinite articles, since the children in both groups (L1 with articles; L1 without articles) were significantly more accurate in their use of definite articles. This result was seen at all levels of acquisition, and was predicted with reference to Lardiere's (2004) explanation of the semantic complexity of the English indefinite article which must consider the count/mass distinction. It also mirrors the findings from much earlier research into article acquisition by Parrish (1987), who analysed a Japanese learner of L2 English numerous times during a four month period using an oral narrative task. Parrish showed that, by the end of the study, this learner's use of the definite article was much more accurate than her use of the indefinite article, with calculated rates of accuracy at 84% and 50% respectively.

García Mayo (2009) also examined the different accuracy rates between definite and indefinite articles in L2 learners of English, a phenomenon she refers to as 'directionality'. Directionality is defined as "the observed tendency of L2 speakers to supply *the* more frequently than *a*" (García May, 2009:13). Her results, however, show this only occurred with low-intermediate adult Spanish learners, and not with advanced learners. García Mayo therefore suggests that directionality may be linked to proficiency and that the effects could disappear as the learner's interlanguage develops. This claim is supported by data from Trenkic's study of Serbian adolescent learners of English (2007). These learners were shown to have much higher rates of article omission and misuse with indefinite contexts in a written translation task, although the difference between the definite and indefinite article was less pronounced amongst higher level groups. Other research has also found this pattern of higher accuracy rates with the English definite article amongst Spanish speaking children (Morales, 2011), an end-state Turkish adult (White, 2003b), and intermediate and advanced Chinese adult learners (Lardiere, 2004; Robertson, 2000; Snape, 2009), the latter group being significantly more accurate in definite contexts in all three studies. Thus far, such results have tended to be

secondary to the main study and so have not been discussed in detail, although Lardiere (2004) does mention the semantic complexity of the English indefinite article and states that the features for *a* are more complex than for the definite article, an explanation which is often cited when discussing this phenomenon. For example, indefinite articles in English can only be used with singular count nouns and so must take the feature [number] and the count/mass distinction into account. If, following a more detailed examination of this phenomenon, the indefinite article is found to be more complex to acquire than the definite article then this could have implications for the instruction of these two forms. Instruction of the English article system will be explored in more detail in the next chapter of this thesis.

3.5. CONCLUSION

The acquisition of articles by L2 learners of English has been studied in great detail in recent years. Early studies focused on the semantic properties of 'specific reference' (an absence of which indicates a generic context) and 'hearer knowledge' (Parrish, 1987; Young, 1996), whereby hearer knowledge would indicate a definite context and lack of hearer knowledge an indefinite. This idea was further developed with the proposal of a semantic parameter with two settings of specificity and definiteness (Ionin, 2003). Subsequent research has supported the proposal of this parameter, either by demonstrating that learners from articleless L1s fluctuate between the two settings of this parameter (IKW, 2004; IZBM, 2008) or by showing that learners whose L1 also has the definiteness setting can transfer this to their use of English articles (Hawkins et al., 2006; García Mayo, 2009; IZBM, 2008; Morales, 2011). Whether this fluctuation also applied to child learners was disputed (Zdorenko and Paradis, 2008). However, cross-linguistic evidence from Samoan provided by Tryzna (2009) suggests that languages with the specificity setting only use a separate article for non-specific indefinites and not, as stated by Ionin (2003), for all non-specific contexts. This supports a body of literature on specificity which argues that the specific/non-specific contrast only applies to indefinites, as outlined in Chapter 2. Tryzna proposed a reduced ACP, and evidence from the errors of child Russian learners of English (IZP, 2009) supports this. In the same paper, adult Russian learners were reported to also misuse articles in non-universal (i.e. definite, non-specific) contexts, a result which echoed previous work and which IZP

(2009:357) describe as an 'overextension' of the specificity distinction. The explanation provided by IZP was the use of explicit learning strategies based on specificity when selecting an article for [+definite, −specific] contexts. Other explanations for errors in L2 article acquisition include environmental accounts (Robertson, 2000), changes to modified contexts (Trenkic, 2007; 2008), prosodic transfer (White, 2003b) and feature assembly (Hawkins et al., 2006; Lardiere, 2004; 2008).

Finally, there has also been substantial evidence of 'directionality' in the acquisition of English articles amongst both child and adult learners from a variety of L1s (García Mayo, 2009; Lardiere, 2004; Morales, 2011; Parrish, 1987; Robertson, 2000; Snape, 2009; Trenkic, 2007; White, 2003b; Zdorenko and Paradis, 2008). The reasons why the definite article should be used more accurately than the indefinite article, and therefore is potentially acquired earlier, have not been fully explained in the literature. However, the fact that this is observed in research into L2 article acquisition employing diverse methodologies and providing different theoretical explanations has implications for the way that articles could be taught to L2 learners of English.

All of the above studies focus on the acquisition of English articles. Many of the afore-mentioned investigations into the ACP have used the same methodology based on IKW's (2004) forced-choice elicitation task due to the belief that collection of spontaneous production data would not provide enough examples of all the target contexts. Nevertheless, any evidence for fluctuation or optionality found by applying other data collection methods would strengthen the current body of evidence on how articles are used by L2 learners of English. A study which used alternative data collection methods alongside an elicitation task controlling for context would be beneficial. Finally, as mentioned above, both IZP (2009) and Trenkic (2007) cite explicit learning strategies to explain the patterns of article acquisition uncovered in their respective studies. If, as suggested by these two papers, adults employ explicit strategies alongside UG controlled acquisition processes then the need for more research into how articles are taught and the impact of this instruction on learners' article accuracy becomes ever more pressing.

4. THE ROLE OF INSTRUCTION

The role of instruction in L2 acquisition is a widely researched area within English Language Teaching (ELT) literature. Since L2 acquisition is often contrasted with L1 acquisition, which occurs without instruction, there is some question over whether instruction is necessary for acquisition. There has been a wealth of publications on this topic as well as several detailed summaries and meta-analyses providing an overview of research in this area (Lightbown, 2000; Norris and Ortega, 2000; Spada and Tomita, 2010). These provide valuable insights into what is currently known about how instruction impacts on SLA and what types of instruction have proven to be most beneficial. Within the pedagogic literature it is accepted that instruction has both short and longer term benefits for L2 learners, although there is still some question about the type of knowledge developed by instruction. However, the role of instruction on acquisition processes is still being debated within generative SLA literature, with many referring to the influential argument presented by Schwartz (1993), which cast doubt on whether instruction can ever lead to improvements in underlying linguistic competence.

This chapter will give an overview of the key findings of empirical research into instructed SLA. It will begin with a discussion of instruction as viewed within the generative literature. Arguments in support of instruction will then be presented, including such issues as different types of grammar instruction and whether the language forms that are taught should follow natural acquisition orders. Empirical evidence for the benefits of explicit instruction will be summarised. The final part of this chapter sets the background for the present thesis with a review of research into instruction of the English article system and an examination of how articles are presented in published ELT materials. The aim of this chapter is to contextualise the topic of the present thesis by explaining what is known about instructed SLA and, more specifically, instruction of the English article system.

4.1. INSTRUCTION AND GENERATIVE SLA

Generative approaches to L2 acquisition have traditionally dismissed instruction as playing no role in acquisition since the processes of 'learning' and 'acquisition' have been viewed as being quite distinct. The work of Krashen (1982) has been influential due to his widely cited hypothesis that L2 acquisition is

subconscious and comparable with child first language acquisition, whereas learning is a conscious awareness of the rules of the L2. He also states that the learning/acquisition distinction does not exist in the L1. Krashen (1982) suggests that the only purpose of language instruction is as a source of L2 input which can support acquisition, and as a method of monitoring output. He proposes that optimal input must be comprehensible, and a little beyond the learner's current stage of acquisition. Therefore, as Pienemann (1985:45) explains, "instruction is no longer seen as a process of grammatically tutoring L2 development but as providing linguistic input for acquisition in the classroom".

The learning/acquisition distinction is used in the generative paradigm whereas explicit/implicit knowledge is terminology regularly adopted by applied linguists and used widely in pedagogic literature. Exactly how these terms may differ is difficult to determine since they are applied in two separate bodies of literature, and in many cases it can seem that they are one and the same. Acquisition, however, only applies to language since it is viewed as existing within a language specific faculty of the brain. Implicit learning, on the other hand, can refer to all types of learning, not just language. Whong, Gil and Marsden (2013b) point out that an understanding of the learning/acquisition distinction is important when considering whether instruction can assist with the development of properties which are not easily acquired. They state that further exploration of the interface between learnt and acquired knowledge, as well as research into different types of language input, could benefit language teachers and generative researchers alike.

Whong (2011) further highlights the importance of input as necessary to L2 acquisition and also points out that the effects of instruction are limited, especially due to the development of language in systematic stages. However, she claims that metalinguistic knowledge can compensate for weaknesses in L2 syntax and morphology since language processing can be based on both types of knowledge, therefore leading to native-like production. Of course, the correct type and amount of input is still necessary for learner development. If language teaching develops explicit metalinguistic knowledge, and this can lead to native-like performance but not acquired knowledge, then there is still an argument for teaching learners about the abstract structures of language and providing ample examples in the classroom input. This is supported by Schwartz (1993), who accepts that explicit knowledge

can be used by L2 learners to improve their behaviour in the L2. This is despite her arguing against instruction playing any role in language acquisition.

Schwartz (1993) maintains that competence is not the same as learnt (explicit) knowledge since competence is acquired, and any knowledge which results from negative data (error correction, or learning about what is grammatically not possible in the target language) is inherently different. She explains this difference as a 'translation' problem: although learnt (explicit) knowledge exists, it is not accessible by the domain specific area of the brain responsible for linguistic competence. This is known as the 'no interface' position. She states that this may not be true for the acquisition of morphology or the lexicon, where learnt knowledge could have a greater effect. Schwartz concedes that learnt knowledge can be used to supplement, or even in some areas override, linguistic competence for properties that are known to be difficult to acquire. On the other hand, she does not believe that instruction can affect syntactic knowledge.

Recent empirical research by Yusa et al. (2011), however, suggests otherwise. Their neuro-imaging research provides evidence to suggest that instruction and UG may work together to develop L2 syntax. Two groups of 20 Japanese adult learners of English were tested; one group received instruction and the other group did not. The instructed group were taught about negative inversion (NI) in simple sentences (see example 65) and, when tested on their awareness of NI in complex sentences (example 66), they were found to have a much lower rate of errors compared to tests conducted before the instruction period.

65. Those students are never late for class.
66. Those students who are very smart are never silent in class.

<div align="right">Both examples from Yusa et al. (2011:2720)</div>

There was also a significant change in activation in Broca's area of the brain for the instructed learners. The accuracy of the non-instructed group, on the other hand, showed no significant improvement and there was also no significant change in cortal activation between the two testing periods for this group. These results, which could not be attributed to L1 transfer since NI does not occur in Japanese, can be argued to show strong empirical support for the previously disputed idea that instruction can work together with UG to develop underlying competence.

In conclusion, whilst this paradigm has traditionally viewed learning and acquisition as two different processes, there is now growing acknowledgement within the generative literature that instruction may benefit L2 proficiency. Furthermore, recent research suggests that instruction can lead to changes in competence, as measured by neuro-imaging. On the other hand, there is a large body of empirical evidence that rarely applies generative linguistic theory but that supports the benefits of instruction for SLA, and this work is discussed in more detail next.

4.2. ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT OF INSTRUCTION

Topics which are regularly investigated in instructed SLA research include which type of instruction is of most use and which language features can most benefit from classroom input. These issues have been addressed in numerous studies and this section provides only a brief review of work on this topic.

Taking a more analytical approach than many published summaries of L2 instruction research, Norris and Ortega (2000) use directly comparable measures of effect size to synthesise empirical research in this area. They make the results of diverse studies directly statistically comparable and extend their study to cover 49 published experimental and quasi-experimental research papers during an 18-year period. Answering a total of six research questions, the results of this meta-analysis suggest that focused L2 instruction makes "a substantial difference" (p.480).

As explained by Norris and Ortega (2000), research into which type of instruction proves most beneficial to L2 learners has formed a large proportion of published work in this area. Perhaps surprisingly given the amount of literature dedicated to this topic, Norris and Ortega found no measurable difference in instructional effectiveness between two types of form-focused instruction (FFI). The first type of FFI is when form is taught integrated with meaning and this is known as Focus on Form (FonF). It is different to Focus on FormS (FonFS), which is when form is taught in isolation (both terms come from Long, 1991). The difference between these two teaching methods is articulated by Fotos (1998), who reports that FonF uses "an indirect, context-based presentation of grammar forms, rather than overt, teacher-led instruction" (p. 302). The Norris and Ortega (2000) meta-analysis found no empirical evidence from the 49 studies they compared that FonF leads to

greater gains than FonFS, based on the current operationalization of these terms. In fact, both instructional contexts were reported to have a large effect, and the analysis also concluded that explicit instruction (which involves a formal statement of the rules or negative feedback) is more effective than instruction that does not do this (implicit instruction). In the context of the current thesis, the results from Norris and Ortega (2000) justify the instructional treatments applied to participants in the present study (see Chapter 5 for further details).

Spada and Tomita (2010) completed a further meta-analysis of 30 studies published between 1990 and 2004, some of which were the same studies examined by Norris and Ortega. One variable in their research was linguistic complexity, yet this is the principle limitation of the study because of Spada and Tomita's definition of simple and complex forms. The definition is based on derivational rules and measured by the number of transformations that each form must undergo in order to arrive at a target form. For example, to form the regular past tense just one transformation occurs, the addition of the '*ed*' inflection, and so these forms are classified as simple. The problem with this measure of complexity becomes apparent with the case of articles in English. They are well known to be difficult to acquire due to their semantic complexity (as demonstrated in Chapter 3), and Spada and Tomita recognize this. "The rules regarding their use are considered too abstract for learners to infer from the input, and explicit instruction on article use is often not effective." (2010:267). However, the criterion applied by Spada and Tomita classifies articles as a simple form. Despite this limitation, the results of this paper support Norris and Ortega's conclusion that explicit instruction is more beneficial than implicit instruction. Therefore, this publication can be taken as further evidence that explicit instruction on language forms is beneficial for L2 learners. Taken together, these two meta-analyses provide very strong support for the benefits of instruction in L2 acquisition since they summarise most of the empirical investigations into instructed SLA published over a 24-year period.

FFI is further examined by Bruhn de Garavito (2013), who argues that the methodological decisions which surround grammar instruction within language classrooms often depend on which theoretical position about the role of input in acquisition is being applied. Her review of object pronoun instruction in L2 Spanish relates findings from generative research about the acquisition of object pronouns to how they are taught in current language textbooks, with a view to improving the

input that learners receive. Object pronouns are of interest since they are widely taught and yet learners often have difficulty comprehending the different types of pronoun. The different properties of English and Spanish pronouns, for example the use of clitics in Spanish and the fact that they may follow or precede the verb, are identified by Bruhn de Garavito as one of several potential areas of difficulty for L2 learners. The examples below (Bruhn de Garavito, 2013:20–21) show how replacing the object with a clitic pronoun results in a change in word order in Spanish (example 67) that does not occur in English (68).

67. a. Compré   **una blusa.**
         Bought-I a   blouse
         'I bought a blouse'
     b. **La** compré.
         it   bought-I
         'I bought it'
     c. *Compré   **la.**
          Bought-I it

68. a. I bought **a blouse.**
     b. I bought **it.**

She identifies further differences between English and Spanish object pronouns which may cause confusion for learners of L2 Spanish, and then considers the results of generative SLA research into the position of clitics, and how these findings can be applied to language teaching.

Bruhn de Garavito (2013) argues that better communication between applied linguists and theoretical linguists working within the generative framework should begin with the topic of learnability, by which she means not teaching something that learners are not developmentally ready to acquire. She relates both input and transfer to learnability, and discusses how each of these factors could impact on acquisition. For instance, she considers how the different properties of object pronouns in English and Spanish exemplified above could affect their learnability and proposes not spending class time teaching the difference between a direct and indirect object pronoun since this can be learnt instinctively. Furthermore, the insights from generative research suggest that the position of clitics with conjugated verbs should be taught first, whilst the position of clitics preceding a main verb or infinitive is

acquired later and so should not be the focus of instruction when teaching the grammar of L2 Spanish object pronouns to lower level L2 learners.

The issue of learnability relates closely to the work of Pienemann (1985; 1989; 1998) and his examination of the teachability of language as it relates to a learner's readiness to acquire. His Teachability Hypothesis (Pienemann, 1989) postulates that "instruction can only promote language acquisition if the interlanguage is close to the point when the structure to be taught is acquired in the natural setting" (p.60). He also states that instruction is an attempt to change the interlanguage and yet provides experimental evidence that "developmental maturity in the [interlanguage] system" cannot be changed (1998:253). If, as Pienemann suggests, we consider acquisition orders then articles are known to be difficult to acquire (Pica, 1983; also see Chapter 3). Therefore, part of the difficulty learners have with the English article system could be because it is taught at a stage when learners' interlanguage is not sufficiently advanced.

A similar proposal is made by Lightbown (2000), who provides an overview of how research insights have enabled language teachers to better understand the acquisition processes their learners undertake and to adapt their teaching methods and materials accordingly. The paper reviews ten previously published findings from SLA research which were generalizable to language teaching pedagogy; Lightbown's third generalisation can be seen in example 69 (2000:432).

69. There are predictable sequences in L2 acquisition such that certain structures have to be acquired before others can be integrated.

She revisits each generalisation in turn and discusses what new contributions more recent research findings can add to her previous suggestions. As can be seen in example 69, Lightbown recognises the importance of acquisition orders. Furthermore, she observes that instruction with an explicit focus on form is advantageous, and that context can aid comprehension of the L2 but on its own is not sufficient to trigger acquisition. Overall, Lightbown's generalisations add further support to the findings of Norris and Ortega on the benefits of instruction. She advises that applying general principles from SLA research, such as Pienemann's theory about learnability (1985; 1988; 1998), can be beneficial as one part of a language teacher's knowledge base.

The papers cited here form only a very small part of published literature on the topic of form-focused language instruction. However, they all state that instruction is beneficial to acquisition and many provide strong empirical support for this claim. Of particular interest are two detailed meta-analyses by Norris and Ortega (2000) and Spada and Tomita (2010) which, taken together, collate a large number of studies and both demonstrate that explicit grammar instruction can have a measurable impact on learners' knowledge of the L2.

4.3. TEACHING THE ENGLISH ARTICLE SYSTEM

Research into English article acquisition by learners of various L1 backgrounds and proficiency levels was discussed in some detail in Chapter 3. Therefore, this section will briefly review the small number of empirical studies that have examined article instruction and then review current L2 teaching materials for English articles, both in general English textbooks and in grammar practice books. As discussed above, teachability research (Pienemann, 1989) has concluded that instruction should follow natural acquisition orders. Since articles are difficult to acquire by learners whose L1 does not have an article system (IZBM, 2008), they are often considered to be difficult to teach. Whong (2011) states that the complexity of article semantics (as outlined in Chapter 2 of the current thesis) could cause difficulties for teachers. Having worked for more than a decade as an English teacher and having taught articles many times with seemingly little effect on my learners' accuracy, I agree with her. However, the outcome of L2 instruction research that has focused on articles suggests otherwise.

Master (1990) attempted to simplify instruction of the English article system by providing learners with a binary choice. Part of this proposal includes combining definiteness and specificity into a single feature which Master named 'identifiability'. It is comparable to definiteness, but only includes examples which are [+definite, +specific] or [−definite, −specific], thus avoiding instruction on the two contexts ([+definite, −specific] and [−definite, +specific]) which multiple SLA studies have shown to be problematic to L2 learners of English (IKW, 2004 for example). As Chapter 5 shows, there is already a lack of focus on specificity in published article instruction materials, and therefore Master's proposal does not suggest a radical departure from current pedagogy. However, he provides a

simplified method of instruction whereby the indefinite and zero articles[8] are presented together in contrast to the definite article. The aim is to provide a "coherent grammar" (p. 461) for article instruction which would make the form easier to understand. His argument for not teaching specificity is that there is little point "spending class time on a distinction that requires the same article" (p. 467). He also notes that specificity can be ambiguous, stating that at times it is difficult to identify whether a noun is specific or generic. This paper argues against the very distinction that is being taught to one group of participants in the current thesis. I also disagree with Master's insistence on a simplification of pedagogical grammars at the expense of linguistic accuracy, and think that this calls into question the benefit of applying his generalisations. However, despite his argument against instruction on specificity, Master is a vocal advocate of article instruction per se, especially as written accuracy is important to more advanced learners and this cannot be achieved without control of the English article system.

Master's later work (1994; 2002) studies the effects of article instruction and provides empirical support for the teachability of the English article system. Both studies apply a pre-test/post-test design, with his 1994 research examining the performance of learners on a forced choice elicitation task before and after systematic instruction on the English article system. Instruction lasted six hours over nine weeks. His 2002 paper, on the other hand, compared instruction on information structure with traditional article instruction. The instruction period in this study lasted three hours during a three-week period. In both studies, the treatment group performed significantly better than other groups on the post-test. In both these papers, Master emphasises the importance of article instruction for learners of L2 English at intermediate level and higher by explaining how article errors in their written production could lead to comprehension difficulties for readers. Furthermore, the results of both studies suggest that instruction of the English article system is beneficial to these groups of learners. Master has also presented a framework for the presentation of the English article system in L2 classrooms (1997). After reviewing research into the acquisition of the definite, indefinite, and zero articles, he makes recommendations for how articles are best taught to

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[8] As highlighted in Chapter 2, there is disagreement surrounding the existence of the zero article. Lyons finds little support for the idea of a zero article which marks indefiniteness with plural and mass nouns (1999:34), a 'rule' which is commonly presented to learners in pedagogical grammars.

beginner, intermediate, and advanced learners. This framework recommends targeting intermediate level learners and focusing on a single distinction at a time, in a similar way to the binary choice recommendation from his 1990 study. For beginner level learners, Master recommends introducing just the indefinite article, and only as part of a lexical phrase. Finally, the framework suggests that articles should not be taught to advanced level learners as they are able learn articles as lexical items within a given context. In my opinion, Master's framework does not suggest anything radically different to what textbooks already do, especially his suggestions for elementary and intermediate level learners. Furthermore, in my experience of teaching articles, this type of instruction does not work.

Muranoi (2000) also examined the effects of instruction on the English article system, and his research focused on one particular type of pedagogical treatment—interaction enhancement. This method of instruction uses teacher feedback, in the form of recasts of incorrect forms and requests for repetition, to focus learner attention on target forms. Additionally, Muranoi examined whether a debriefing session following the interaction enhancement should focus on meaning or form. Learners' use of articles was measured across four written and spoken tasks and results suggest that a form-based feedback session was more effective than a meaning-based feedback session. There were measurable improvements in task performance at the immediate post-test, and these results were sustained for 5 weeks, the time of the delayed post-test. The results of this study are generalizable to other teaching contexts since they add further support to the use of FFI as part of meaning-based language lessons. The findings about article instruction, however, are less clear since Muranoi's results only emphasise the pedagogical implications of his study.

Instruction on specificity, genericity and article perception was examined by Snape and Yusa (2013) in a pilot study, as outlined in the previous chapter. Seven upper-intermediate adult learners were given 70 minutes of instruction on each of the three points. Additionally, there was a control group of a further seven participants who completed the pre and post-tests but received no instruction on the English article system. In relation to definiteness, specificity and genericity, no difference was detected between the post-test results of the experimental and control groups. However, the learners' perception of articles, as measured by a transcription task, improved following instruction. Snape and Yusa conclude that instruction on

such a complex area of grammar may be too difficult for learners of this level, although they concede that the short period of instruction on each structure may not be sufficient and are currently undertaking a further study to test this claim.

In summary, the results from these studies suggest that L2 learners' accuracy with the English article system can be improved by instruction. When considering what to teach learners about this complex system, and indeed when article instruction may be beneficial in terms of the order of acquisition, Master's (1997) framework for article pedagogy based on L1 acquisition studies and his own research (Master, 1990; 1994) suggests targeting instruction at intermediate level learners and focusing on only a single distinction at a time. Master also supports using an input processing approach (Van Patten and Cadierno, 1993). This method of instruction provides materials which allow learners to practise processing input, as opposed to traditional grammar instruction where the focus is on the production of language. Muranoi (2000) favours a similar form of interaction enhancement to teach the English article system; whereas, Snape and Yusa (2013) apply a different approach based on generative theoretical linguistics with less concrete outcomes, although their teaching method comes closest to the approach being applied in the current thesis.

The current study uses explicit FFI for both the standard and linguistically-informed teaching interventions (see Chapter 5 for details) despite, in my experience, the current trend being to teach form integrated with meaning. As outlined in Section 4.2, there is empirical support for the benefits of explicit instruction, and no measurable differences have been found between studies where form was taught in isolation and those where form was taught integrated with meaning (Norris and Ortega, 2000). Snape and Yusa's (2013) pilot study did not find any measurable effects of instruction on specificity, and I recognise that this has implications for the current study. However, I argue that they used a shorter instruction period and different teaching materials to the current study and, in addition, the learners were L1 Japanese and a higher proficiency than the learners in the current study. Furthermore, Master (1997) and Muranoi (2000) suggest a departure from traditional grammar instruction when teaching the English article system. However, neither provides any example teaching materials and, in my opinion, an input processing approach which fully captures the complexity of article

semantics would be very difficult to develop, although I welcome any future studies that wish to try.

Therefore, the studies presented in this section of the chapter demonstrate that there is empirical support for providing instruction on articles to L2 learners of English, despite the different teaching methods used. Next, the topic of article instruction is expanded with a closer examination of how articles are taught in five popular L2 English coursebooks. This is followed by a presentation of the grammar practice materials used with one of the experimental groups in this study (the Standard Instruction Group). Before reviewing the teaching materials, it is helpful to consider inductive and deductive approaches to grammar instruction as defined by Ellis (2006). He assumes the importance of explicit instruction and therefore the inductive and deductive approaches are related to the presentation of grammar rules to learners. Traditionally, under the PPP approach (present-practice-produce), whose importance is highlighted by Hedge (2000), grammar presentation was done at the beginning of the lesson in a very explicit manner. Nowadays, there is a movement to a more inductive presentation of grammar rules whereby, as Ellis explains "learners are first exposed to exemplars of the grammatical structure and are asked to arrive at a metalinguistic generalisation on their own; there may or may not be a final explicit statement of the rule" (2006:97). For many language teachers, directing students to work in groups to decipher such metalinguistic information is a way to make grammar instruction more communicative and therefore, if the discussion is conducted in the L2, produce output. An inductive approach, therefore, assumes ample proficiency in the L2 for such a discussion to be held.

4.3.1. STANDARD TEACHING MATERIALS

A review of five general English coursebook series examines whether inductive and deductive approaches to grammar instruction are equally represented, and will demonstrate how articles are generally taught to L2 learners of English. These titles were chosen because they are some of the most widely-used general English coursebooks in the UK. The books are New English File (Oxenden and Latham-Koenig, 2006; 2010; Oxenden, Latham-Koenig and Seligson, 2004), Cutting Edge (Cunningham and Moor, 2003; 2005; 2007), Language Leader (Cotton, Falvey and Kent, 2008; Cotton et al., 2010; Lebeau and Rees, 2008), Global (Clandfield and

Jeffries, 2011; Clandfield and Pickering, 2010; 2011) and New Headway (Soars and Soars, 2000; 2003a; 2003b; 2006). For each series, the elementary, intermediate, and advanced level books were reviewed. This review does not consider the applications of such materials within individual classrooms, and it must be stated that many experienced teachers may choose to adapt or supplement the provided materials depending on the needs of their learners. However, for the current thesis it is important to consider the way articles are often presented to learners since the Standard Instruction Group is being monitored on their use of articles before and after being taught with standard materials. The materials used with this group of learners can be found in Appendix A, and they are reviewed at the end of this chapter.

Articles are known to be complex for L2 learners, as outlined in Chapter 3, with many reports of frequent errors amongst learners from different L1s even at high levels of proficiency (Trenkic, 2008; Snape and Yusa, 2013). Despite this, they are first introduced at an elementary level in all of the books reviewed, although with a simplification of the rules. From reviewing five series of books it is clear that, despite being introduced at the lowest level, most coursebooks continue to teach articles at every level. In theory at least, this approach should allow for the gradual acquisition of articles, with learners being presented with progressively more complex rules. The widely documented problems with article use amongst L2 learners, however, seem to suggest otherwise.

The Language Leader Elementary coursebook (Lebeau and Rees, 2008) uses a deductive approach to grammar instruction for articles, with the grammatical structure presented to learners and then practised. The elementary level book provides the following information for learners about the uses of the English article system:

> 70. The articles are *a/an* and *the*. We usually use them like this:
> a) no article with plural nouns, to talk about people or things in general.
> *Iranian films are popular.*
> b) *a/an* with a singular noun, and to talk about a person's job.
> *a rich part of the city*
> c) *the* with singular or plural nouns, to talk about a known or specific person or thing.
> *two 11-year-old boys in Chile ...* <u>The</u> *two boys*
> *the head teacher of the school*   (Lebeau and Rees, 2008:33)

This information is followed by two short exercises, which, as with many of the coursebooks, provide little opportunity for practice therefore making it difficult for learners to automatize these rules. An important point to note in example 70 is the vocabulary for rule (c). It explains that the definite article is used to talk about "a specific person or thing" (Lebeau and Rees, 2008:33) which is linguistically inaccurate and may lead learners to falsely overgeneralise that all specific contexts require the definite article and, vice versa, that all definite contexts are obligatorily specific. The information above is provided at elementary level and can be contrasted with the Advanced Language Leader book (Cotton et al., 2010) which instead uses an inductive approach by asking learners to identify an example of each usage in a text. Here, learners are introduced to a total of eleven instances of use for the definite, indefinite, and zero articles which are far more complex than the rules presented to elementary level learners. There is no reference to the definite article being used in specific contexts and instead the rules talk about the more linguistically accurate concept of uniqueness. Again, this information is only followed by minimal practice in the form of one gap-fill exercise. The rules presented to advanced level learners can be seen in example 71. As well as the small number of practice exercises available in the Language Leader coursebooks, each level of book provides a 'language reference and extra practice' section. This repeats the explicit rules for the grammar that are covered in each book and provides one or two extra practice activities. Furthermore, there is a workbook with more practice activities which learners can use at home or in class.

71. **Which of the rules a–k below explain the use of the articles underlined…?**
   Definite article:
   a. common knowledge– we know we can tell from the context what is being referred to
   b. repetition– this is not the first mention of the person or thing
   c. uniqueness– the only one of its kind in the world, or in this context
   d. with a superlative phrase
   e. with the names of countries or groups of islands which are plural
   f. with names of rivers, oceans and seas
   Zero article:
   g. with uncountable nouns when speaking about the noun in general
   h. with the names of most cities, streets, countries and continents

> i. with plural countable nouns
>
> j. with most numbers (except a half, a hundred, a thousand)
>
> **Indefinite article:**
>
> k. with a singular countable noun mentioned for the first time

(Cotton et al., 2010:19)

The New English File books also introduce articles in the elementary level book (Oxenden, Latham-Koenig and Seligson, 2004), but only the indefinite article at this level. It is covered in three separate chapters of the elementary coursebook. This is either alongside vocabulary items, for example 'jobs', or with demonstratives or quantifiers. Given that several studies of article acquisition have uncovered patterns of directionality, suggesting that the definite article is acquired before the indefinite article (see Section 3.4), it is interesting that four of the five coursebooks reviewed here use the opposite approach and introduce the indefinite article first. This decision appears to be motivated by vocabulary rather than grammar, with the indefinite article being taught alongside certain lexical items as a set phrase, or language 'chunk' (e.g. Jobs: 'a builder'). Instruction of this type was recommended by Master (1997:226) for beginner learners. Nevertheless, there is a contrast between the order in which articles are presented to learners and the results of acquisition research. As outlined in Section 3.4, results from empirical research strongly suggest that learners acquire the definite article first, and Lardiere (2004) proposes that the semantic complexity of the indefinite article could be problematic for L2 learners due to the mass/count distinction. Yet, all of the coursebooks reviewed here introduce the indefinite article to the lowest level learners, and four out of five of the titles do not introduce the definite article until a later stage.

Cutting Edge (Cunningham and Moor, 2005) and New Headway (Soars and Soars, 2006) take the same approach of only introducing the indefinite article to elementary level learners, as does Global (Clandfield and Pickering, 2010). In reality, all three of these books are really teaching vocabulary, since there is little or no mention of the uses of the indefinite article, as recommended by Master (1997). The explicit instruction of the indefinite article given in the Global Elementary coursebook, however, is expanded slightly in a 'grammar focus' section at the back of the book, as seen in example 72 (Clandfield and Pickering, 2010:136). This information is accompanied by two short exercises.

72. **Articles (a, an)**
    Singular nouns
    Use the definite article *a/an* with singular nouns.
    Use *a* with singular nouns starting with a consonant sound.
    a computer, **a** video
    Use *an* with singular nouns starting with a vowel sound.
    an apple, **an** umbrella

    Plural nouns
    For plural nouns, write a number or no article.
    two computers
    computers

By the intermediate level book, Global (Clandfield and Pickering, 2011) has introduced both the definite and indefinite articles to learners although not the zero article, and provides six different uses of the article (three for the definite article, three for the indefinite article). In contrast, the New Headway pre-intermediate book (Soars and Soars, 2000) uses a more inductive approach to instruction by asking learners to find examples of article use in a text then correct some sentences using the information from the inductive exercise. The explicit rules are given in a separate section of the book with a detailed explanation of the indefinite, definite and zero articles which runs to half a page. Therefore, the amount of information about article use in English far outnumbers opportunities for practice in this book and so learners have little chance to produce the target grammar despite, according to Swain's (1985) Output Hypothesis, the production of output being beneficial to acquisition. New Headway is not the only textbook series which takes this approach of loading learners with information about the article system and, in my opinion, not providing sufficient opportunities for them to practice using this information. In fact, this review demonstrates that it is a common problem.

Ellis (2002) has examined the methodology employed in several grammar books and the theoretical basis which appears to support the chosen methodology. He points out that many books have not adapted to recent trends, such as meaning-centered grammar instruction (FonF as discussed in Section 4.2) or students being able to discover how a grammar point works via an inductive approach. Of the five book series reviewed here, the only one that does not use a traditional explanation of

grammar followed by controlled practice is Language Leader (Cotton, Falvey, and Kent, 2008; Cotton et al., 2010; Lebeau and Rees, 2008). This series of books applies a variety of approaches to the presentation of grammar throughout the levels. However, there is also a shortfall in the amount of sustained practice for grammar points within the Language Leader series. The other four books, however, use more standard approaches. Even Global (Clandfield and Jeffries, 2011; Clandfield and Pickering, 2010; 2011), a relatively new series of books which claims to be different to other coursebooks and developed with consideration of advancements in technology and the 'post-methods' era,[9] still has a very traditional approach to grammar instruction by providing an explicit statement of the rules in its 'grammar focus' sections. Where Global differs from the other books is that the instruction is what Ellis (2006) describes as 'extensive' in that up to four grammar topics can be taught in one unit. My own personal communication with teachers who have used this book suggests that extensive instruction, when taught in a form-focused way rather than incidentally, is not beneficial to learners and that the different topics of grammar in each unit of the Global series overload learners with information.

4.3.2. MATERIALS USED WITH STANDARD INSTRUCTION GROUP

The materials used to teach the Standard Instruction Group in this study were not taken from any of these five series of coursebooks; rather they were selected from three popular grammar practice books. This is because participants were enrolled on an Academic English course which focused on skills development, and the coursebooks reviewed above are aimed at general English courses which focus on language development. Grammar practice books, of the type used in this study, can be accessed by students for self-study as they often contain answer keys. They are also commonly used by teachers as additional materials to supplement the grammar lessons found in coursebooks such as New English File (Oxenden and Latham-Koenig, 2006; 2010; Oxenden, Latham-Koenig and Seligson, 2004) and Cutting Edge (Cunningham and Moor, 2003; 2005; 2007). These materials were chosen for the purposes of 'ecological validity', because they were already used

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[9] The post-methods era arose due to concern that any one method (for example, Communicative Language Teaching) may not suit every classroom and group of learners. It is recognition of the diversity of learners and learning environments (Hinkel, 2006). Post-methods language instruction shifts the decision-making back on to classroom teachers and learners and away from a method which may be overly prescriptive and inapplicable to that particular context.

within the particular teaching context where this study took place. I accept that they were designed for self-study rather than classroom use, that they are outdated, and that there may be more effective methods for teaching the English article system. The selection of these materials for use in the current study emphasizes the demands placed on busy teachers and their need to rely on materials which they may recognize as less than ideal. Using different teaching materials, or indeed a method that does not involve explicit teacher-led instruction, may have resulted in a different set of results. The widespread use of such materials for teaching learners about the English article system is an issue that warrants further investigation, and there have only been a handful of studies relating to article instruction since Master's work almost two decades ago.

The first lesson delivered to learners was taken from Collins Cobuild (1991) and consisted of three units, each delivering one page of information about articles and one page of practice exercises. The first unit looked at determiners in general and their use with different types of nouns, then there was one unit each for the definite and indefinite articles (see Appendix A). Five different uses of the definite article are given in Unit 12 of this book, as well as some more detailed examples relating to vocabulary items, for example musical instruments. The one exercise that accompanies this information requires learners to identify the entity being referred to via different uses of the definite article in a short story. Information about the indefinite article is then contrasted with use of the definite article, as seen in example 73. There are two exercises to practise usage of the indefinite article with singular count nouns and one exercise which requires learners to choose between the definite and indefinite articles.

> 73. You use 'a' or 'an' when you are talking about a person or thing for the first time.
> Note that the second time you refer to the same person or thing, you use 'the'.
> *She picked up* <u>*a book*</u> *… … * <u>*The book*</u> *was lying on the table.*
> <div align="right">(Collins Cobuild 1991:28)</div>

The second lesson delivered to learners took exercises from two different books. The first (Dean, 1993) gives a further page of information about the indefinite, definite and zero articles and also lists some common phrases that select a

particular article. Part of the explanation of the definite article given by Dean (1993) attempts to differentiate between specific and generic uses of the definite article, as seen in example 74, and there is a practice exercise which encourages learners to select between these two uses (see Appendix A.3, exercise 3). Dean uses the phrase "the most common meaning of *the*" (1993:53) when introducing specific reference, thereby subtly indicating that there may be less common meanings which are non-specific. However, he contradicts this information in the preceding sentence by stating that the definite article is only used in specific contexts. His decision to introduce 'specific' as the opposite of 'generic' is noteworthy, and will be referred to in Section 5.5.1 when considering the accuracy of teachers' knowledge of articles. The other exercises which follow the presentation of the rules give more general practice of articles and so there could be a tendency to overload students with information.

74. *The* is used with singular countable nouns (*the book*), with plural countable nouns (*the books*), and with uncountable nouns (*snow, spaghetti*), in their specific sense (not in their general sense).
The snow was over a metre deep last winter.
The most common meaning of *the* is 'the one you know something about' ('a specific and definite one'). In context, we often know about something because it has already been mentioned.
Alan took a book of the shelf. He opened the book and started to read.

(Dean 1993:53)

The final exercise used with the Standard Instruction Group was adapted from Hewings (2005), and provides further examples of article use with one error correction exercise that focuses on uniqueness. Given the importance of definiteness and specificity in this study, the fact that Hewings talks about "only one of a particular thing" (2005:115) when referring to the definite article further demonstrates how standard teaching materials could lead L2 learners to confuse definiteness and specificity. Materials for both of these grammar lessons can be found in Appendix A, and a timetable showing when these lessons were delivered to participants is in Table 3 in Chapter 5.

This summary has shown the different approaches to grammar instruction that are applied to the English article system in five popular series of coursebooks. It

was found that articles were taught at every level with a gradual development of the complexity of rules presented to learners. Whilst there is a slight shift towards inductive methods of grammar instruction it appears that, in most cases, the presentation of grammar rules is still done in a very traditional way. Although none of these materials were presented to the group of participants who received standard instruction on the English article system as part of the present study, it is still valuable to observe the methods employed since the development of new grammar teaching materials forms an integral part of this thesis. The materials used with the Standard Instruction Group in the current study were also reviewed here, and since these were taken from grammar practice books they apply a very deductive approach with a clear statement of the rules. The tendency in these books is to present learners with a large quantity of examples and, often, a list of 'set forms' which may select a particular article (see examples 80 and 81 in Section 5.5.2). All of the standard teaching materials only give instruction on definiteness, and the use of the term 'specific' was highlighted in some materials where it is incorrectly used as a synonym for 'definite'. Given the distinction between definiteness and specificity examined in Chapters 2 and 3, I argue that instruction of this type may enhance the fluctuation patterns observed in many L2 learners and, therefore, hinder rather than help with the acquisition of the English article system. The development of teaching materials related to instruction on definiteness and specificity will be outlined in Chapter 5.

4.4. CONCLUSION

This chapter provides an overview of the role of instruction from both a generative SLA and a language pedagogy viewpoint. It also reviews the small number of studies which have examined instruction on the English article system, and ends with a consideration of current article instruction materials. Despite approaching the role of instruction from a variety of theoretical standpoints, the general consensus within pedagogic research is that instruction is beneficial to language learners and that some element of focus on accuracy, or form, is effective in facilitating development of the interlanguage of classroom learners. Inputs from generative SLA have been less direct since, as Whong (2011) states, "research by generative SLA researchers…. on the effect of explicit instruction remains

extremely limited" (p.58). However, papers such as those by Lightbown (2000), which synthesise the outcomes of SLA research into insights applicable to language teachers, have long served to bridge this divide. A more recent movement to directly apply generative SLA findings to language pedagogy in order to measure any gains is exemplified by the work of Bruhn de Garavito (2013) and Snape and Yusa (2013), and it is within this research area that the current thesis sits. The very existence of this growing body of work implies that the importance of generative SLA research to language pedagogy should not be under-estimated.

5. METHODOLOGY

The results of several studies examining whether learner accuracy with the English article system can be improved following instruction were discussed in Chapter 4. The conclusion was that English article usage is more accurate following instruction, and previous research (Master, 1990; 1994; 1997) recommends targeting intermediate level learners but also focusing on one distinction at a time. These results are important since errors with L2 English articles are a well-documented feature of interlanguage, and the complexity of articles can make them difficult to teach (Snape and Yusa, 2013). The overarching aim of this thesis is to create new, linguistically-informed teaching materials to explain properties of the English article system to L2 learners and then test their efficacy when compared to standard article instruction. These materials are heavily influenced by theoretical SLA research conducted within the generative framework, as outlined in Chapter 3.

This chapter begins with a presentation of the research design for the study, including the timing of all teaching and data collection for each of the three groups. The next section gives a profile of the participants and explains how their proficiency was measured, followed by details of each of the three tasks completed. There follows information related to the three different teaching interventions delivered to participants. Next there is a discussion of the chronological development of new, linguistically-informed, teaching materials which were used with one group of participants in the current study (the Specificity Instruction Group). Finally, the research questions and hypotheses that were presented in the introduction to the thesis are repeated and refined. The results of the study can be found in Chapters 6 and 7 with a discussion of the results in Chapter 8.

5.1. RESEARCH DESIGN

This study uses a pre-test/post-test methodology, with the same tasks being completed by the participants before and after instruction. The pre-test was conducted at the beginning of the course of instruction, after which the three groups of participants received 10 weeks of intensive English instruction including weekly grammar lessons, with a focus on academic reading and writing. The input for the three groups was broadly similar, with the exception of the content of the grammar lessons. The groups consisted of pre-formed English classes, and students had been

allocated to each class according to their IELTS[10] reading score. All the classes were within the same full IELTS band with a mean score of 5.0 or 5.5 and so participants should have broadly similar proficiency levels.

During the lessons, the Standard Instruction group received FFI on definiteness in the English article system using standard teaching materials; whereas, the Specificity Instruction group received instruction on definiteness and specificity using newly created teaching materials, the development of which will be outlined later in this chapter. Finally, the No Instruction group received instruction on an alternative grammar point, as explained in Section 5.2, and this was decided by their teachers based on their perception of the students' needs. The No Instruction group did not receive any instruction on the English article system during the 10 week course. All of the instruction took place over several weeks and the time frame of this and the data collection can be seen in Table 3.

As can be seen in Table 3, pre-test data for all groups was collected in week 2. For the Specificity Instruction group, post-test data was collected in week 7. This is one week earlier than for the No Instruction and Standard Instruction groups due to a British Council inspection taking place at the time of data collection. A further difference with the Specificity Instruction group was that teaching took place in weeks 3, 4, and 6 with no homework, whereas homework was given to the Standard Instruction group. The reason for the different approaches is that the newly developed teaching materials delivered to the Specificity Instruction Group involved a lot of group discussions, and the timing of the activities was checked during the piloting phase so that each lesson lasted almost exactly 90 minutes. The Standard Instruction group, on the other hand, were taught using the materials presented in Section 4.3.2. After the teacher had presented the materials, students worked alone or in pairs to complete the various exercises. Any work not finished during the lesson was assigned for homework, with a follow up review given during the grammar lessons in weeks 4 and 7, as shown in Table 3. The timing of the

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[10] IELTS is the International English Language Testing System. It is a standardised language test which provides proof of English language skills and is often required by educational organisations as part of their recruitment and admission procedures (Cambridge English, 2015). IELTS results are reported in a 9-band scale consisting of whole and half bands. Listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills are assessed separately and the results from the four parts produce the overall score. According to Cambridge English (2015) learners of an IELTS band 5 are classified as 'moderate users' and learners in this band have "partial command of the language, coping with overall meaning in most situations, though … likely to make many mistakes".

instruction delivered to participants was decided by the design of both the newly developed materials and the standard materials, so that the amount of instruction delivered to the two groups was as closely matched as possible. The process of consulting with teachers and then piloting the materials heavily influenced the design of the instruction on specificity, as outlined in Section 5.5.

Table 3. Data collection procedure for all groups

	No Instruction group	Standard Instruction group	Specificity Instruction group
1st week	Proficiency test (Oxford Quick Placement Test)		
2nd week	2 pre-tests completed First sample of written work submitted		
3rd week	Instruction on alternative grammar points (90 minutes each week)	Instruction on definiteness in English articles (90 minutes) plus homework review/ follow up (90 minutes)	Instruction on definiteness (90 minutes)
4th week			Instruction on specificity (90 minutes)
6th week	Further instruction (as above)	Further instruction (as above)	Error correction exercise with some focus on definiteness and specificity in the answers
7th week			2 post-tests completed
8th week	2 post-tests completed Second sample of written work submitted		Second sample of written work submitted

Follow-up testing was conducted on some participants from each group several months after the instruction period to see whether any short term improvements in article accuracy were retained over a longer period of time. A smaller number of participants took part in this delayed post-test as many were unable to commit to further testing in their own time due to the workload on their degree courses. Delayed post-test data was collected from a total of 6 participants: 3 in the Specificity Instruction group; 2 in the Standard Instruction group; and one participant in the No Instruction group. This test was administered 6-8 months after the post-test, and during this time participants were completing English medium higher education but were not enrolled on any compulsory English courses. The results for the delayed post-test will be discussed in Section 7.3.

The three tasks which made up the pre-test and post-test consisted of an elicitation task, an acceptability judgement task, and a sample of written work. All three tasks were completed by the participants at each time point, and any participant who did not complete all six tasks was excluded from the analysis. The delayed post-test consisted of just the elicitation task and acceptability judgment task. More details of these tasks are given in Section 5.3.

5.2. PARTICIPANTS

The participants in this study were young adult Chinese learners of English. They were university students on a 10 week pre-sessional English course at Sheffield Hallam University at the time of data collection. This course is an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course with a focus was on developing academic skills, and more details of the course content can be found in Section 5.4. The three groups of participants were made up of pre-formed language classes, and it has been recognised that the logistical challenges of classroom research can make random group assignment difficult (Plonsky, 2013). However, assignment to an intervention was random. Learners from several different classes were randomly assigned to one of the three interventions so that a roughly similar number of learners would receive each intervention. The participants were recruited during their English lessons, and all teaching took place during class time. Testing was carried out in the students' own classrooms during lunch breaks. There were also a small number of students with different L1s in each group, for example Thai, Arabic, Turkish, or Vietnamese, some of whom completed the tasks but were not included in the analysis in order for the L1 to be kept constant across all the participants.

All participants completed the Oxford Quick Placement Test (QPT) (UCLES 2001) before data collection began. The QPT scores can be mapped onto levels of the Common European Framework (CEFR) and participants were classified as either elementary or lower intermediate (CEFR level A2 or B1). The Oxford QPT is a multiple choice format which assesses reading, vocabulary and grammar. There are two versions of the paper and pen test, and Version One was applied to all the participants in this study. Due to the low level of the participants in this study they completed just Part One which consists of 40 items; Part Two is used only for higher level participants. It is a well-known and widely used test of English language

proficiency, and as such the proficiency level of participants in this study can be directly compared with that of participants in other published studies. QPT scores, along with profiles of the three groups of participants, can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4. Characteristics of L2 Learners

	No Instruction group	Standard Instruction group	Specificity Instruction group
Number	17 (6 male, 11 female)	18 (9 male, 9 female)	15 (7 male, 8 female)
Age Range	21–29 (M= 23.5)	20–25 (M= 22.6)	21–33 (M=24.2)
Oxford QPT Score Range	21–30 M= 25.65, sd=2.64	16–27 M= 22.06, sd=3.40	17–27 M=21.77, sd=3.40 (n =13)
Length of time in UK	2 weeks– 2 years M= 4.71 months, sd= 8.36	1 week– 2 years M= 3.79 months, sd= 7.63	1 week– 3 years M=5.62 months, sd=9.85

As explained in the previous section, participants were divided into three groups. The first group (n=17, No Instruction group) received no instruction on the English article system, but instead were taught about alternative grammar points such as sentence structure and prepositions. The second group (n=18, Standard Instruction group) received instruction on definiteness using teaching materials taken from standard English grammar books as explained in Section 4.3.2 of the previous chapter (see Appendix A for a copy of all the teaching materials used with this group). The third group (n=15, Specificity Instruction group) received instruction on both definiteness and specificity, using the newly created teaching materials which are described later in this chapter (see Section 5.6) and presented in Appendix B. The details of the participants in each group can be found in Table 4.

As can be seen from the table, there was a difference in the average proficiency score for each group of learners with the mean score for the No Instruction group classified as CEFR level B1 and the mean scores for the Standard Instruction and Specificity Instruction groups classified as CEFR level A2. In addition, two participants in the Specificity Instruction group had their proficiency test scores discounted meaning that only 13 participants from this group had their

proficiency measured, as can be seen in the proficiency scores presented in Table 4. These two participants were late arriving for the proficiency test and so did not have time to fully complete the task during their lunch break. However, they were still included in the final analysis as they were present at all subsequent testing and teaching sessions. A one-way ANOVA was conducted on the remaining 48 participants, and this showed that the difference between proficiency levels of the groups is significant ($F_{2,47} = 7.64$, $p = .001$). Post-hoc comparisons using Tukey's contrasts found a statistical difference between the No Instruction and Standard Instruction groups (mean difference $= 3.59$, $p = .004$, 95% CI 1.01, 6.18) and between the No Instruction and Specificity Instruction groups (mean difference $= 3.88$, $p = .005$, 95% CI 1.06, 6.69). There was no significant difference between the groups regarding the length of time spent in the UK or other English speaking country ($F_{2,49} = .185$, $p = .831$).

5.3. DATA COLLECTION

As outlined in Table 3 above, there were two time points for data collection, as well as follow-up testing on a subset of participants 6–8 months after the initial intervention period. Informed consent was taken from all participants. They were provided with an information sheet in English explaining the details of the study which they were able to keep. Participants had time to discuss the details of the study with each other using their L1, and were able to ask questions in the L2. Next, they were required to sign a consent form, which included questions about any previous instruction in English or time spent in English speaking countries. By signing this form, participants agreed to complete both the pre-test and post-test and were asked whether they could be contacted at a later date for further testing. The majority of participants agreed to this. Copies of the information sheet and consent form can be found in Appendix F. For the delayed post-test there was a further information sheet and participants were also asked to sign the consent form again. In the rest of this section, the three data collection instruments are explained. Details of the elicitation task are given first, followed by information about the judgment task. Finally, details of the written production data are given.

5.3.1. ELICITATION TASK

The elicitation task was untimed and was administered using pen and paper. Participants could take as long as they liked to complete the task, and all finished it in less than 40 minutes. There were instructions written on the front and participants were also given simple oral instructions in English and were allowed to ask questions before the task began. Participants were asked to complete the items in the order given and not to go back to or change any earlier answers. There were no practice items for this task because it follows a gap-fill format that is very familiar to most students of English. During piloting, the practice items were found to be unnecessary and so were removed from the final version of this task.

This task was originally devised by Ionin (2003) then used by IKW (2004) for their study of article use amongst Russian learners of L2 English. It has since been used in its original or adapted format by numerous researchers (García Mayo, 2009; Hawkins et al., 2006; IZBM, 2008; IZP, 2009; Morales, 2011; Snape and Yusa, 2013; Tryzna, 2009; see Chapter 3 for details of all of these studies) and therefore can possibly be considered a standard measure for article usage amongst L2 learners of English. In this study, a later version of the test was used, as administered by IZP (2009). This did not use the 'forced-choice' method where participants have to select either the definite, indefinite, or zero article in given contexts. Instead, this task was a simple gap-fill format, and tasks of this type are very common in L2 English classrooms. Participants were presented with a dialogue which contained a blank space and instructed to fill in the gap with any suitable word, including an 'X' if no word was necessary. The space was always in object position and all of the target DPs were singular. The only difference to the original task used by IZP (2009) is that some vocabulary items were changed from American English to British English since data collection for the current study took place in the UK. This change was made after the test was piloted with 10 native speakers of English and 2 highly proficient non-native speakers. The pilot study participants made comments about the American English and felt that it affected their ease of understanding which prompted the change. After the vocabulary had been changed, piloting was repeated with 8 Chinese learners of English who were a slightly higher proficiency level than the participants in the main study, as measured by the IELTS exam (IELTS 6.0). Following the second stage of piloting, no problems were

identified with individual items on the task. A copy of the final version of this task can be found in Appendix C with examples of each relevant context shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Test item types for elicitation task

Type	Example
+definite, +specific	*At a bookshop* Chris: Well, I've bought everything that I wanted. Are you ready to go? Mike: Almost. Can you please wait a few minutes? I want to talk to _____ owner of this bookshop – she is a very nice lady, and I always say hi to her.
+definite, −specific	Mother: What are you reading in the newspaper? Daughter: I'm reading a poem about baby lions – I really like it. I would like to write a letter to _____ author of that poem – unfortunately, I have no idea who it is… The poem isn't signed!
−definite, +specific	*In an airport, in a crowd of people* Man: Excuse me, do you work here? Security guard: Yes. Can I help you? Man: Yes, please. I am trying to find _____ red-haired girl; I think that she flew in on Flight 239.
−definite, −specific	*In a school* Child: It's my birthday next week! Teacher: That's great. Are you going to have a party? Child: Yes! A big party! I am hoping to get _____ new dog! I love animals!
filler	*At the supermarket* Salesperson: Hello! What can I help you with today? Customer: I am looking for tomatoes. I want to make spaghetti sauce _____ dinner.

The task consists of 60 items, all short dialogues, and there were four contexts which are relevant to this study with six items per category. The four contexts are [+definite, +specific], [+definite, −specific], [−definite, +specific] and [−definite, −specific] making a total of 24 test items. There were two additional contexts included in the task which are not relevant to the current study, but the task was used in its entirety in order to maintain consistency with IZP. A further difference to the original task used by IKW (2004) is that this version included 24 filler items. IZP (2009) used these filler items as a cut-off in the final analysis of data, with participants being required to score 16 out of 24 items correct in order to be included in the analysis. However, this cut-off level was not applied to the participants in the present study as it was felt to be a somewhat arbitrary figure. Furthermore, the participants in the current study are a relatively low proficiency level and therefore applying the same cut-off level may have excluded an unnecessarily large number of participants. The participants' proficiency level, however, did not appear to affect their ability to complete the task, as is evident from the results presented in Chapter 6.

5.3.2. ACCEPTABILITY JUDGMENT TASK

In order to obtain a more complete picture of learners' knowledge of the English article system, a timed acceptability judgement task (AJT) was created. Ellis (2005) suggests that timed tasks such as this measure implicit knowledge whilst an untimed task such as IZP's elicitation task would measure explicit knowledge. Although it is almost impossible to identify exactly which type of knowledge is being accessed by individuals when analysing their responses to a task, Ellis' argument is that the timed nature of the judgment task means that participants would have less time to access their stored, learnt knowledge when completing this task. Ellis (2005) and Gutiérrez (2013) also report that the grammatical and ungrammatical items in judgment tasks appear to measure different constructs, and this claim will be tested, as outlined below in relation to Research Question 9.

Judgment tasks of this type are not commonly used in pedagogy and so participants received detailed instructions on how to complete the task in the L2, and worked through several examples together, as a class, before the task began. Each task item consists of two sentences. The first sentence sets the context, and

participants were instructed to decide whether the second sentence (which was numbered to match the answer sheet) contained any errors or was appropriate in the given context. As a timed task, the sentences were presented by automated PowerPoint and the participants recorded their judgments on paper. The sentences for the judgment task were not printed on the answer sheet so that participants could not view the sentences for longer than the permitted time, or return to any items. The full task and answer sheet can be found in Appendix D. Judgments were made on a scale with −2 and −1 for unacceptable sentences of English and +1 or +2 for acceptable sentences. They were coded as either correct (acceptance of a grammatical sentence/ rejection of an ungrammatical sentence) or incorrect (rejection of a grammatical sentence/ acceptance of an ungrammatical sentence). There was also a 'can't decide' option for participants to select if they were unable to reach a decision in the time available. The 'can't decide' option was coded as incorrect, and was responsible for 1.88% of responses in the pre-test, and 0.37% of responses in the post-test. This figure does not include one participant in the Standard Instruction group, who selected the 'can't decide' option for 58% of responses in the pre-test. The judgment task data from this participant was excluded from further analysis. Finally, the answer sheet included a space on each answer row for participants to write the unacceptable word or words if they judged the sentence to be ungrammatical. The option of writing a correction may not be expected in all AJTs, but it was included here to check whether participants made their judgment based on the actual error, or for some other reason such as unfamiliarity with a vocabulary item. In reality, participants did not write the unacceptable word or words for many of the items judged negatively, and one possible reason is the fast pace with which this task progressed.

The AJT was developed especially for this study and it involved three rounds of piloting which will be outlined here. The first version was piloted with 9 native speakers of English. At this stage, the task consisted of 30 items, with 5 items for each of the four contexts ([+definite, +specific], [+definite, −specific], [−definite, +specific] and [−definite, −specific]) and 10 filler items. For each test context some of the items were made ungrammatical by changing the article. The filler contexts contained either prepositions or pronouns, and again items were made ungrammatical by supplying the wrong preposition or through agreement errors. An example of each item type from the final task can be found in Table 6. After the pilot

group had completed their judgments, each item was coded as having either a target or a non-target response and any items with two or more non-target responses were looked at in more detail. This applied to 5 items, meaning 17% of items had to be reviewed.

Table 6. Test items for judgement task

Type	Grammaticality	Example
+definite, +specific	grammatical	My favourite books are about Harry Potter. I think the author is called J.K. Rowling.
	ungrammatical	Our train leaves at 11am tomorrow. I will meet you outside a station at 10.30am.
+definite, −specific	grammatical	I read a very good book about vampires recently. I don't remember the name of the author.
	ungrammatical	Hannah is trying to choose a magazine to buy. She doesn't know which issue is a latest one.
−definite, +specific	grammatical	Two ladies are sitting in a restaurant. They are waiting for a friend but she is late.
	ungrammatical	Peter is shouting loudly into his mobile phone. He is having the argument with his mother.
−definite, −specific	grammatical	Two children are talking about when they grow up. Bill wants to be very rich and drive a fast car.
	ungrammatical	Martin is shocked by the cold weather in Sheffield. He needs to buy the winter coat before it snows.
filler	grammatical	The student can't find the new classroom for her English lesson. Someone told her it is next to the computer room.
	ungrammatical	The exam starts at 11am tomorrow. Students must arrive at time or the door will be locked.

Two further issues with the task were identified at this stage: an uneven number of grammatical and ungrammatical items (5 is an odd number, meaning there were 3

acceptable items and 2 unacceptable items for each context); and the overall length of the task appeared to be too short. Therefore, additional items were included to bring the total to eight items for each context, with four grammatical and four ungrammatical items, and a further 8 filler items were also added. At this stage, some previous-mention definites were included in the [+definite, +specific] context since previous mention definites are always specific (Lyons, 1999). Due to their prominence in much of the pedagogical information provided to L2 learners of English, I felt it was important to include them in the testing materials. These items were retained in the final version of the task as they did not appear to cause problems during the various stages of piloting.

For this second round of piloting, two versions of the task were produced with ungrammatical items in Version A made grammatical in Version B, and vice versa. The order in which the items were presented to participants was not randomised and both versions of the task presented the items in the same order. The second version of the task was then piloted with a further 9 native speakers: 4 people completed Version A and 5 completed Version B. This second round of piloting identified just 3 problematic items which were then modified further. Finally, for the third round, the piloting was repeated with 8 Chinese learners of English who were a slightly higher proficiency level than the participants in the main study. They were IELTS band 6.0 and the participants in the main study are all IELTS band 5.0 or 5.5. The purpose of this final stage of piloting was to determine the correct amount of time to display the sentences. According to Gutiérrez (2013), previously published research which has used timed judgment tasks have displayed individual sentences on screen for up to 6.24 seconds. He does not suggest this time as a blanket recommendation for all judgment tasks, however, since the length of the material to be judged will also affect how long it needs to be displayed. The participants in the current study had to read two sentences per item, as exemplified in Table 6, and they also had a low overall proficiency and relatively slow reading speed. Therefore, 6 seconds were given for participants to read the first sentence which sets the context. The second sentence then appeared, and both the sentences together remained on the screen for 16 seconds. Piloting demonstrated that this allowed just enough time for participants to respond. At this stage of task development, an auditory cue was also added to signal the transitions between sentences.

The final task consisted of 50 items in total. The same four contexts for article use were used as in the elicitation task ([+definite, +specific], [+definite, −specific], [−definite, +specific] and [−definite, −specific]), with four grammatical and four ungrammatical items for each context. This made a total of 32 test items; furthermore, the task contained 18 filler items which targeted prepositions and pronouns. Participants completed different versions of the task in the pre-test and post-test, and Table 6 shows examples of test items from Version A, and all of the sentences for each version of the task are available in Appendix D.

As a final check of the judgement task, the pre-test scores of all participants were analysed to determine whether individual participants favoured a particular response (either grammatical or ungrammatical). Favouring a particular response had to be defined numerically, and so a ratio of 3:2 in either direction was chosen. This is somewhat arbitrary and a different ratio could lead to a different result. There were equal numbers of grammatical and ungrammatical items on the task; therefore, if participants selected either grammatical or ungrammatical responses for more than 66% of items then they were deemed to have favoured that response. Since the numbers of grammatical and ungrammatical items were balanced, a mean close to 50% is expected if there is no preference. For each participant, the numbers of grammatical and ungrammatical responses on the pre-test were counted, with no separation between the three groups. Of the 50 participants, seven were found to favour an ungrammatical response, and eight were found to favour a grammatical response. This means a total of thirty five participants did not favour a particular response. The mean percentage of grammatical and ungrammatical responses was then calculated across all 50 participants, based on their balance of responses of each type. This calculation did not consider whether the responses were correct or not, as it was merely assessing a preference. Any items for which learners did not provide a response were left out of the analysis. A paired-samples t-test found no statistical difference between the two response types (Mean grammatical responses = 47.02, sd = 13.59, n = 50; Mean ungrammatical responses = 48.56, sd = 13.48, n = 50). The 95% CI for the difference in means is −8.24, 5.16 (t = −.46, p = .646, df = 49). The data suggests that, on the whole, participants did not show a preference and this task was considered to be a suitable measure of the participants' knowledge of articles.

5.3.3. WRITTEN PRODUCTION

A sample of writing was collected from participants at two points during the course (see Table 3) whose timing corresponded with administration of the elicitation task and AJT. Written production data was also analysed by Ionin (2003) and used to support the findings of the elicitation task, with a summary of the results provided in IKW (2004). To collect this data, Ionin asked a set of 6 controlled questions, with learners instructed to write between 3–5 sentences for each question. A much less-controlled data collection method was chosen for the current study due to the limitations of collecting data in a classroom-based study. As part of their attendance on an EAP course, the participants in this task were required to produce written work for both formative and summative assessment. Participants gave their permission for electronic copies of these essays to be accessed for this project, and a selection of this work was analysed for article use (see Chapter 6 for the results). The length of these essays was standardised across all groups, although there were some differences in the topics, as outlined in Table 7. The first essay was approximately 350 words in length, and the second essay was approximately 400 words long. The written data serves as a further measure of the participants' knowledge of articles because, despite the essays being written at home with time for corrections and revisions, the time pressures of the intensive pre-sessional course make it highly likely that the production was fairly spontaneous.

Analysis of article use in the written work involved coding by native speakers of English who selected an appropriate article for each noun phrase. This was then measured against individual participants' use of articles in their written work. This coding technique was based on the analysis conducted by Ionin (2003). Four different coders worked on each essay, and for a context to be considered unambiguous then 3 of the 4 coders had to agree on which article should be used. Analysis of article use in the written production was not separated into the same four contexts used in the elicitation and judgment tasks, partly due to problems with determining specific and non-specific contexts in production data (see Ionin 2003 for more details). This decision will be discussed further in Section 6.4. Instead, each text was given an overall accuracy score, calculated as a percentage by dividing the number of correct uses of the definite and indefinite articles against the total number of uses of these two articles. Correct use of the zero article was not included

in this calculation due to the debate surrounding the existence of this article which was touched on in Chapter 2, although it was measured in each text. Furthermore, a measure was made of the different types of error: article omission, article substitution, or using an article where none is required. These error types are discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

Table 7. Writing topic for each group at pre-test and post-test.

Group	Pre-test writing topics	Post-test writing topics
No Instruction	The benefits and drawbacks of electronic media	Problem/solution essay: Studying abroad
Standard Instruction	The benefits and drawbacks of electronic media **Or** The most useful techniques for studying English	Problem/solution essay: Studying abroad **Or** students' own topics relating to their intended subject of study
Specificity Instruction	Students' own topics relating to their intended subject of study	Students' own topics relating to their intended subject of study

5.3.4. EVALUATION OF DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Two different types of task were used for data collection; an untimed elicitation task taken from IZP (2009) and a timed AJT developed for this study. Both tasks measured four contexts which are considered relevant to the current study ([+definite, +specific], [+definite, −specific], [−definite, +specific], [−definite, −specific]) and both tasks also contained filler items. Furthermore, there was a measure of written production data, although the limitations of the particular classroom context where this study took place mean that it was not possible to control the topic of this written work. The reason for selecting three different measures was to gather as much information as possible about the participants' knowledge and use of articles. In addition, it appears that the elicitation task and judgment task measure different types of knowledge, since the former was untimed

and the latter timed. The untimed elicitation task follows a gap-fill format which is very common in language classrooms (as explained above). In class, such tasks are often used to practice a learner's explicit knowledge of a rule which has recently been taught. Timed judgment tasks, on the other hand, have been proposed as a measure of implicit knowledge (Ellis, 2005; Ellis and Loewen, 2007). Ellis and Loewen (2007:125) rationalise this argument by stating that during a timed judgment task "learners would only be able to judge the sentences on the basis of their implicit knowledge because the speed of the response required precluded access to their explicit knowledge".

The speed of each response in the timed judgment task used by Ellis (2005) and Ellis and Loewen (2007) was decided based on an average speed of native speaker responses, plus 20%. As such, each item was displayed for a different amount of time. As explained previously, in the current study the initial sentence (to set the context) was displayed for 6 seconds and then the target sentence appeared, with both sentences displayed on the screen for a further 16 seconds. This timing was decided during piloting. However, based on the data from Ellis (2005), Isemonger hypothesises that changing the time limit on a judgment task may affect whether it is more likely to load on explicit or implicit factors (2007:110). Isemonger questions whether the time limit allowed by Ellis (2005) was quick enough to really ensure that participants were unable to access their explicit knowledge, and the same claim could be made about the time limit imposed in the current study. Furthermore, the judgment task in the current study asked learners to write a reason whenever items were judged to be ungrammatical (see Appendix D.5 for a copy of the answer sheet), and Gutiérrez (2013) claims that asking learners to locate and correct errors requires access to explicit knowledge. However, the learners in the current study were not asked to provide corrections and in reality many of them did not locate the error either. One final point about the type of knowledge measured by timed judgment tasks is that grammatical items may measure implicit knowledge whereas ungrammatical items appear to measure explicit knowledge (Ellis, 2005; Gutiérrez, 2013). Therefore, although the aim is for these two tasks to measure different aspects of the participants' knowledge of articles, in order to make claims about exactly which type of knowledge is measured by each task a detailed factor analysis of the constructs of explicit and implicit

knowledge in relation to the tasks would be required, and such an analysis goes beyond the scope of the current thesis.

For the reasons outlined in the previous paragraph it is difficult to tell whether the two tasks and the written data measure different types of knowledge. What is clear is that an untimed gap-fill exercise, a timed AJT, and essay writing are all different. Therefore I'm looking at the same phenomenon of articles from several different angles, even if I can't confidently claim that the tasks measure explicit or implicit knowledge. Despite their differences, all three methods of data collection are text-based. Practical concerns meant it was not possible to collect oral production data. Firstly, all data collection took place in the participants' classrooms during breaks between English lessons. Oral data collection would have involved meeting each participant individually which puts the burden on the participant to show up. In addition, it would have been impossible to collect data from all of the participants in the same week because of the large amount of time the learners spent attending the English course or involved in self-study, meaning there were very few hours when data collection could be undertaken. Another data collection method that was considered when designing this study, but ultimately rejected, was a measure of reaction times when responding to the judgment task. Again, the restrictions that came from the particular context chosen for this classroom-based study meant that the specialist software needed to record reaction times was not available in any rooms that were large enough to accommodate multiple participants. Therefore, although it may have been ideal to include alternative data collection techniques, this did not seem possible within the constraints of the current study. The three test types provided the broadest possible measure of each participant's knowledge and use of the English article system within the practical constraints placed by the classroom-based nature of this study and the timeframe available.

5.4. TEACHING CURRICULUM

As can be seen in Table 3, data collection took place over 8 weeks of the 10 week pre-sessional course. No data collection occurred in the final fortnight since this time was devoted to revising for and sitting the final assessments. The pre-sessional course consists of 18 classroom hours a week. This includes a 90 minute grammar lesson, a 30 minute individual tutorial to discuss progress and independent

study, and a one hour lecture during which listening and note-taking skills are developed. The other 15 hours of lessons are all skills-based with a focus on academic English, for example reading academic texts or essay writing. The 90 minute weekly grammar lesson was utilised for the teaching part of this research, with two separate instruction periods. This is the only part of the course which differed according to whether participants were in the No Instruction, Standard Instruction or Specificity Instruction groups. To reiterate, the teaching intervention for the Specificity Instruction group consisted of 90 minute sessions during weeks 3, 4, and 6 of the course, and for the Standard Instruction group there were 90 minute sessions in weeks 3 and 6 with follow-up and review of homework in weeks 4 and 7. For both groups this meant a total of 4.5 hours of instruction on articles was provided. This may appear a relatively small amount of teaching, given that the students were receiving 18 hours a week of classroom instruction. However, there was a practical consideration due to the intervention being incorporated into a pre-existing language course. The motivation for this was the issue of the ecological validity of the current study and the desire to replicate actual classroom practice. In reality, students are rarely taught about one grammar point consistently over several weeks at the expense of all other grammar items. Therefore, while such a study may be interesting from an acquisition research viewpoint, I argue that it could become so removed from the reality of classroom practice that the results would become irrelevant to language learners and teachers. However, a follow-up study providing more than 4.5 hours of grammar instruction could make an interesting comparison with the results of the current research, a point I will return to in Chapter 8.

The teaching approach for the grammar instruction delivered to all three groups of participants was FFI where the grammatical form in question (articles) was not embedded within a meaning-based lesson (i.e. it followed an FonFS approach). As outlined in Chapter 4, previous research has shown that explicit FFI is beneficial to learners, regardless of whether that form is taught in isolation or embedded within a meaningful context (Norris and Ortega, 2000). Additionally, one of the aims of the current thesis was to produce materials which could be used in actual classrooms and to test their efficacy by replicating classroom practice as closely as possible. I am an experienced English language teacher and have taught for several years on the same pre-sessional course where this study was conducted; therefore, I have detailed knowledge of the type of grammar instruction delivered by

teachers on this programme. The reality of the grammar instruction delivered on this course is one of decontextualized 90 minute lessons which each focus on a different area, decided in advance by individual teachers based on the needs of their students.

The Standard Instruction group was made up of two classes, and both classes received the same two lessons on article use. Each lesson was consolidated the following week with a review of the homework on articles (any exercises not completed during class time) and a chance for learners to ask further questions. The first lesson gave general information on the use of determiners before nouns, and then more detailed information on when to use the definite and indefinite articles. The second lesson reviewed definiteness and also provided participants with common instances when either the definite or indefinite article is used in English. The materials for both lessons were summarised in Section 4.3.2 of the previous chapter and can be found in full in Appendix A. During the grammar lessons, participants were encouraged to work collaboratively to complete all the tasks and were allowed to ask questions about any areas which caused difficulties. One class was taught by the author of this thesis, and the second class was taught by an experienced teacher who had been briefed on the aims of the research project but at this point had no understanding of the concept of specificity. This ensured that specificity could not be accidently taught to this group of participants.

The No Instruction group received instruction about alternative grammar points, and the decision about what to teach during this lesson was decided through discussion with the class teachers. The participants in this group were also split across two classes and were taught by experienced teachers who had been briefed on the aims of the research project. Both teachers agreed that the area of instruction should be prepositions during one lesson and sentence structure in the second lesson, since these were deemed to be the areas of grammar which presented the greatest difficulty for these groups of learners.

In the Specificity Instruction group, participants were split between 3 classes; therefore materials were delivered by the author of this thesis and two other teachers. Both teachers agreed not to adapt the materials and to answer student questions with reference to the concepts of 'shared knowledge' and 'speaker intent to refer'. The design of the materials and piloting will be discussed in more detail next, alongside information about the instruction delivered to the Specificity Instruction group.

During the piloting process it became evident that the materials could be easily used by teachers with no background in generative linguistics.

5.5. LINGUISTICALLY-INFORMED TEACHING MATERIALS

The development of the new teaching materials will be considered chronologically. First, the consultation with practising language teachers and the initial stages of development will be explained. The process of piloting will then be considered, and finally the changes made to the materials following piloting will be outlined. The final version of the teaching materials can be found in Appendix B.

5.5.1. INITIAL STAGE AND CONSULTATION WITH TEACHERS

In order to develop linguistically-informed teaching materials which were accessible to teachers with no background in generative linguistics, it was necessary to involve teachers in the process. Therefore, during the initial stage of development I worked with five experienced and qualified teachers of L2 English who teach academic English at a UK university. Four of the teachers are native English speakers, and the fifth speaks Slovenian and Serb-Croat as first languages but has been resident in the UK for over 25 years. The teachers had an average of 18 years of teaching experience. They were shown early drafts of the materials and invited to comment. They explained when concepts were difficult to understand and also gave their opinion of how the materials would work with learners of different levels. The input of these teachers was influential in the ultimate design of the materials.

Initially, there was an issue of the linguistic accuracy of the teachers' knowledge of grammar since some of them questioned the decision to not teach genericity. This was due to a misunderstanding of the term 'specific' which they use when referring to non-generic uses of articles. An example from Dean (1993), presented in Chapter 4 and repeated here for ease of reference, shows where such a misunderstanding may have arisen, since teachers regularly work with materials which present such a contrast (see example 75). As the materials developed with examples and pictures, however, the teachers gained a clearer understanding of what is meant by specific and non-specific reference.

75. *The* is used with singular countable nouns (*the book*), with plural countable nouns (*the books*), and with uncountable nouns (*snow, spaghetti*), in their specific sense (not in their general sense).
The snow was over a metre deep last winter.
The most common meaning of *the* is 'the one you know something about' ('a specific and definite one'). In context, we often know about something because it has already been mentioned.
Alan took a book of the shelf. He opened the book and started to read.
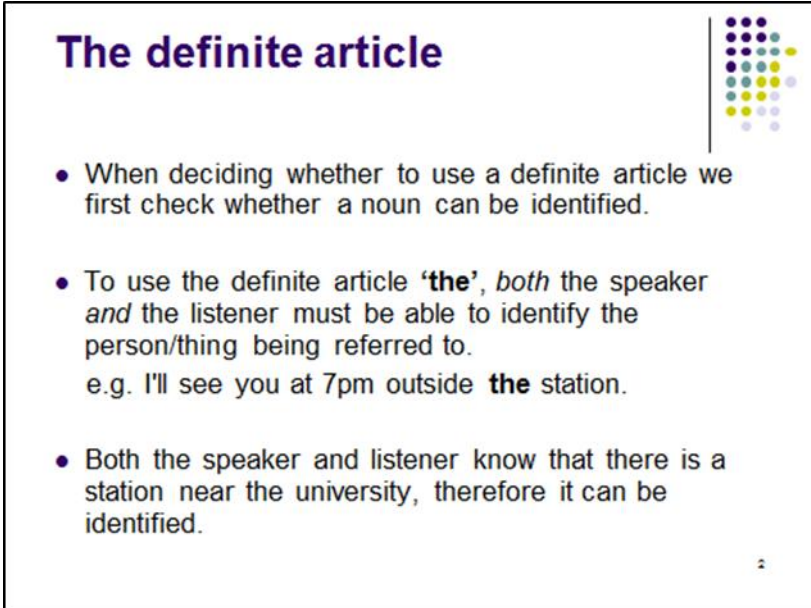
(Dean 1993: 53)

The first decision was how to present the materials to learners, and a traditional presentation/practice lesson format was decided on so that input could be controlled when different teachers used the materials. This deductive approach fits with the goal of using explicit instruction, which has been shown to be more effective than implicit instruction (Norris and Ortega, 2000). The presentation materials were put onto PowerPoint to make them easily accessible to different groups of teachers. Figure 1 shows how the definite article was first explained to learners. During consultation with the teachers, there was a criticism about the amount of information on the slides (see Figure 1), since the teachers in question teach presentation skills to learners and stress the importance of not overloading slides with information.

Figure 1. Example of how definiteness as 'shared knowledge' was explained to learners in a PowerPoint presentation.

The teachers felt, therefore, that the teaching materials contradicted this message. Ultimately, all of the information presented to learners had to be included in the PowerPoint slides so that teachers did not have to provide their own definitions or examples, and the criticism was further defended because of the need to control input across different groups of learners and for use by different teachers.

The definitions of specificity and definiteness given in the literature (as previously presented in Chapter 2 and repeated in (76) for convenience) were far too complex to be presented to learners.

76. Definiteness and Specificity: Informal definitions
    If a Determiner Phrase (DP) of the form [D NP] is...
    1. [+definite], then the speaker and hearer presuppose the existence of a unique individual in the set denoted by the NP.
    2. [+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.
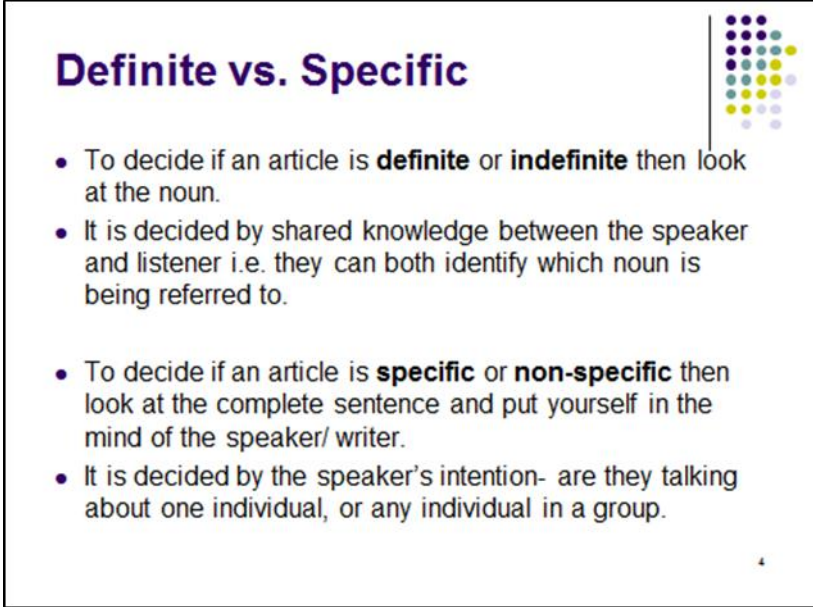
(IKW, 2004:5)

These definitions were also incomprehensible to the teachers involved in the consultation and so, once the decision had been made about how to present the information to learners, the next stage was to change the above informal definition into a pedagogical definition. In order to contrast specificity and definiteness, definiteness must be taught as 'shared knowledge' and so a decision was made to review definiteness using this terminology, as demonstrated in Figure 1. It is considered a review since it is assumed that all of the learners in the Specificity Instruction Group will have received previous instruction on the role of definiteness in the English article system. This is because the participants are all intermediate level learners and, as explained in Chapter 4, articles are routinely taught in L2 classrooms from elementary level. Specificity was taught as 'speaker intent to refer' but without mentioning 'noteworthy property' (Ionin, 2003) in order to simplify the concept. Therefore, the pedagogical definitions that I arrived at, and which were presented to learners, can be seen in example 77. These were then presented to learners in the PowerPoint presentation, alongside examples, and Figure 2 demonstrates how these two concepts were contrasted when being summarised.

77. Definiteness and Specificity: pedagogical definitions
   If a noun phrase is...
   1. [definite], then *both* the speaker *and* the listener can identify the noun, and answer the question **'Which one?'**
   2. [specific], then the speaker is referring to one particular individual.

Figure 2. Example of how the pedagogical definitions of definiteness and specificity were summarised following their presentation to learners.

In order to completely review definiteness and effectively introduce the relatively abstract notion of specificity for the first time, the decision was made to create materials for three lessons. The initial version of the materials, therefore, had the first lesson reviewing the definite/indefinite contrast but using the terminology given in example 77. The definiteness lesson was influenced by Master's concept of 'binary choice' when teaching articles (1990), which was outlined in Chapter 4. Despite disagreeing with his arguments against linguistic accuracy in grammar instruction, his argument for not overloading learners with complex rules, examples, and exceptions resonated with me. Therefore, decisions about whether to use the definite or indefinite article were presented as a simple choice. As can be seen in example 78, information was presented in a stepped format as a series of questions for learners to ask. This material can be seen in context in Appendix B. It was then simplified further to remind learners of the questions whilst they completed a practice exercise (see Figure 3). The second lesson introduced specificity with the use of pictures and examples to explain the concept to learners, and the final, shorter

lesson contrasted definiteness and specificity to show how one influences article choice but the other does not.

78. Three things to ask
   i. Can the noun be identified by both the speaker and the listener?
      YES. Definite article 'Pass me the book.'

   ii. If not, is it a mass noun?
      YES. No article 'I like to eat_ chocolate'.

   iii. If not, is it singular?
      YES. Indefinite article 'I need to buy a pen'.
      NO. No article 'I like _ dogs'.
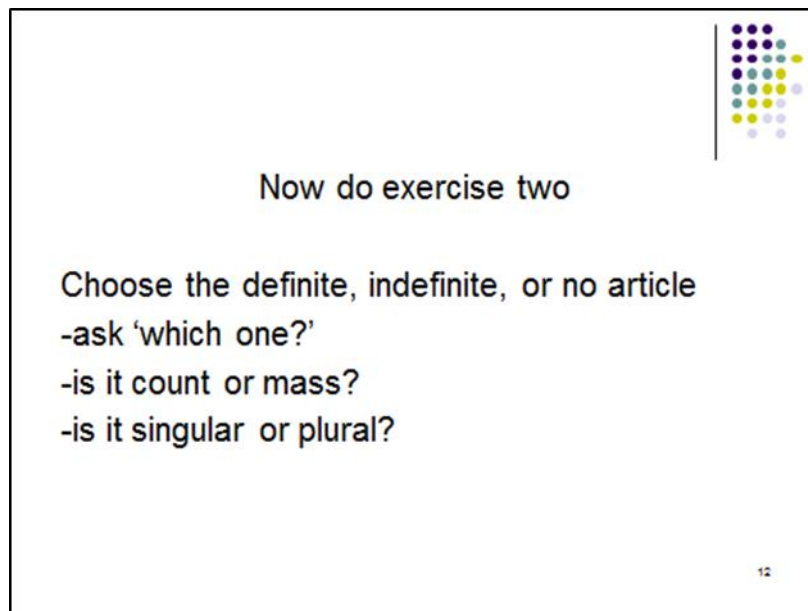
Figure 3. PowerPoint slide which reminded learners of three questions to ask when choosing between the definite and indefinite articles.

After creating new materials for the presentation part of the lessons, a decision was made to adapt current article instruction materials and sentences from a coursebook for the practice materials. Although specificity is not taught in current published materials, it was possible to adapt the exercises to ask learners to identify specific and non-specific NPs (see example 79). In addition, several of the exercises were designed communicatively so that learners had to discuss the difference in meaning between pairs of sentences, or give their reasons for identifying particular concepts as either specific or non-specific. The aim was to include inductive as well

as deductive activities in the practice materials (Ellis, 2006), although it was only possible to include an inductive activity in the definiteness lesson, since learners had no prior knowledge of specificity and without seeing numerous examples they may not have been able to establish the rules for themselves. Finally, once the presentation and practice materials were ready in their first draft, they were piloted with learners of different proficiency levels.

79. Exercise 4

4.1 Correct the use of articles in the following sentences. Some sentences do not contain an error.

1) Sri Lanka has the wonderful climate.
2) The organization's aim is to educate the public about the dangers of smoking.
3) We need an environment free from pollution.
4) She has worked in a fashion industry since she left school.
5) The wind is blowing dust all the way from Africa.
6) We can look forward to a warm southerly wind this weekend.
7) The USA is a country with the high level of immigration.
8) How can we combine economic growth and respect for an environment?
9) Car exhaust emissions are having a major effect on a world's climate.
10) That's Terry- he's the third person on the right.
11) She has become the important figure in Norwegian politics.
12) It's a most important issue and we need to discuss it in detail.

Sentences 1–12 from Hewings, M. (2012). *Advanced Grammar in Use,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press pp. 115.

4.2 Now decide whether the articles in each sentence are specific or non-specific. Write 'S' or 'NS' above each noun phrase.

5.5.2. PILOTING

Initially, the specificity lesson was given to in-sessional students at Sheffield Hallam University who were attending a one hour grammar workshop that was not assessed. This demonstrated that it is possible to teach the abstract notion of specificity to L2 learners of English. Following this, all of the exercises were piloted with pre-sessional students during summer 2013. The students involved in this stage of piloting were mostly L1 Chinese speakers and had the same approximate proficiency level, and were attending the same course, as the participants in the main

study. Once all of the practice exercises had been tested with students, the complete three lessons were given to foundation students (a lower proficiency than the participants in this study) and in-sessional students (a higher proficiency). The foundation students were, again, mostly L1 Chinese, whereas the in-sessional students were two multilingual classes with speakers of European, African, and Asian languages. The materials were deemed an appropriate level for all students, and some changes were made based on my own observations and feedback from teachers.

Following feedback from teachers, as well as my own observations about the areas that caused most difficulty for learners, more pictures were included in the PowerPoint slides to make the concepts of 'shared knowledge' and 'speaker intent to refer' easier for L2 learners and teachers to comprehend without the need for lengthy explanations. Figures 4 and 5 demonstrate two of the pictures I drew to help clarify these concepts, and they can be seen in context in the full set of teaching materials in Appendix B. A further, small change occurred in the second lesson where the order of exercises 3.1 and 3.2 were switched (see Appendix B) to move from an inductive type exercise towards a more deductive exercise.
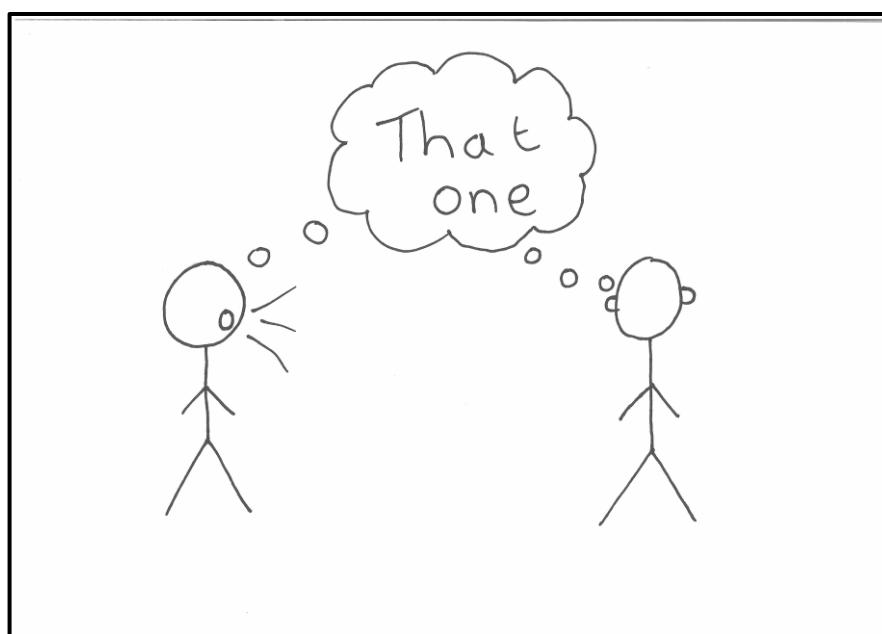
Figure 4. Picture drawn to demonstrate the concept of 'shared knowledge'.
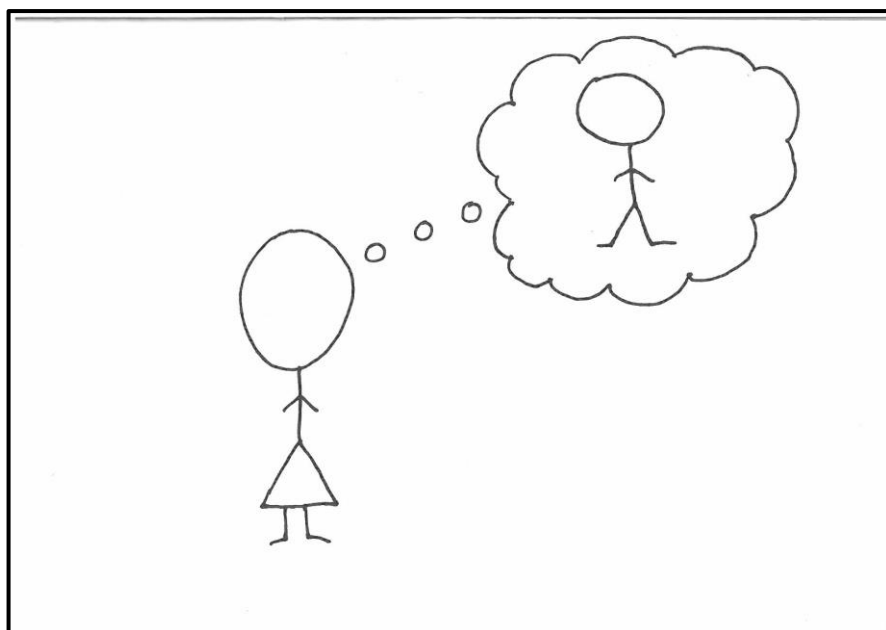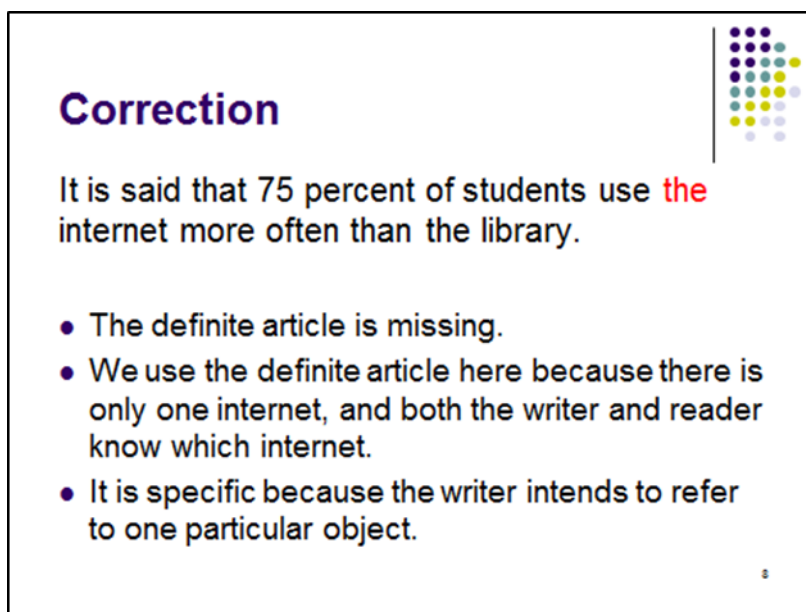
Figure 5. Picture drawn to show that the speaker intends to refer to a particular individual.

Initially the materials were designed for use in one 90 minute grammar lesson but, as explained above, they were split into three lessons when they became more complex and lengthy. Lesson one taught definiteness, lesson two specificity, and lesson three reviewed and practised definiteness and specificity together. Feedback from teachers during piloting was that there was too much emphasis on articles at the expense of other grammatical forms, and they felt that this could potentially place their students at a disadvantage. Therefore, the final version of the materials settled on two lessons plus a review lesson using students' own errors. The first lesson continued to focus just on definiteness using the terminology presented above, and the second lesson introduced specificity before contrasting it with definiteness and reviewing how the two concepts differ. The third, error correction, lesson looked at common errors in learners' writing, and the answers given via the PowerPoint slides included overt references to specificity (see Figure 6). The decision to include various types of errors in the final review lesson also helped to disguise which grammatical form was being tested in my tasks. As well as the materials, all teachers were provided with a lesson plan and teachers notes (including answer key) so that they would present the materials to learners in the same order. The full set of materials can be found in Appendix B.

Figure 6. Example answer to the error correction exercise which includes an overt reference to specificity.

Finally, several teachers commented during piloting that the materials did not teach set forms (such as use of the definite article with superlatives) but this feedback was not acted on. Standard materials already do this, and in my experience of teaching articles it overloads learners with a lot of information and they are often unable to apply the generalisations that they are taught. Examples of two set forms can be seen in (80) and (81). In some cases I have seen, learners have the list of set forms in front of them and are still unable to use the correct article. Furthermore, the use of these set forms are, at best, generalisations, and the use of such generalisations has been questioned. They may lead learners to incorrectly overgeneralise and, when the pedagogical generalisations are different to learners' grammar, this may compete with other knowledge learners have and lead to inaccurate performance (Rothman, 2008). Another argument against the teaching of set forms is that matching exercises of this type allow learners to develop their problem solving and logic but not, in my opinion, L2 knowledge.

80. We use **the** + adjective (without a noun) to talk about groups of people, especially:

    the young   the old   the elderly   the rich   the poor…
    The young = young people; **the rich** = rich people etc.
    Do you think **the rich** should pay more taxes to help **the poor**?

(Murphy, 1994:150)

81. We say: **the north** (of France)   *but* **northern** France (*without* 'the')
              the south-east (of Spain) *but* **south-eastern** Spain
      Compare:
                    Sweden is in **northern** Europe; Spain is in **the south.**
                                                              (Murphy, 1994: 152)

This section of the chapter has explained the process of developing new, linguistically-informed, teaching materials which teach the abstract semantic notion of specificity to L2 learners of English. The materials were designed in such a way that they could be used by teachers with no background in generative linguistics. The development of these materials was explained chronologically from the initial stage, through piloting and the changes that were made to the materials after piloting them. The main point is that teachers had no real concept of what specificity is and yet were able to teach the notion to their students with the use of examples and pictures. The results of this instruction will be discussed further in Chapters 6 and 7 which compare the three groups of L2 learners of English who each received different instruction on articles. As far as classroom use was concerned, the materials were used with no objection from teachers or learners and specificity was taught to learners across a range of proficiency levels during both the piloting and intervention phases of the current study.

5.6. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

So far, this chapter has presented information about the research design, the participants, data collection instruments and the intervention phase of this study which included the development of new, linguistically-informed teaching materials for use with one group of participants. This chapter will now conclude with a presentation of the research questions and hypotheses. The three main research questions where given in the introduction (see Chapter 1). For ease of reference, Research Questions 1–3 are repeated below, and these are refined with the addition of six more research questions. The nine research questions are listed in examples 82–90. The first two ask about the effects of instruction, and Research Questions 3 and 4 are related to any measured improvements in accuracy following instruction. Research Question 5 looks for evidence of directionality, as proposed by García

Mayo (2009, see Chapter 3.4) and the next two questions are related to the role of specificity. The final two questions are methodological.

82. **Research Question 1.** Will explicit instruction on definiteness and specificity have an effect on article accuracy amongst L2 learners of English?

83. **Research Question 2.** Will linguistically-informed instruction lead to greater gains than standard instruction?

84. **Research Question 3.** Will improvements in article accuracy be short term, or more durable?

85. **Research Question 4.** Will proficiency have an impact on any improvements in article accuracy?

86. **Research Question 5.** Is there any evidence that the definite article is acquired before the indefinite article?

87. **Research Question 6.** Will participants perform worse on [+definite, −specific] and [−definite, +specific] contexts, as measured before any intervention?

88. **Research Question 7.** Will instruction on specificity improve accuracy in [+definite, −specific] and [−definite, +specific] contexts?

89. **Research Question 8.** Will the two tasks produce different results, thereby suggesting that they measure different abilities?

90. **Research Question 9.** Judgment task: Will learners perform differently when judging grammatical and ungrammatical sentences? If so, does this suggest they use different types of knowledge for these two items?

Each question will now be discussed individually with a prediction of the expected result stated. These predictions will be restated in Chapter 8 when the results will be summarised as they apply to each question in turn.

Research Question 1. Will explicit instruction on definiteness and specificity have an effect on article accuracy amongst L2 learners of English?

It is predicted that instruction will have an effect on article accuracy. Evidence in support of explicit instruction is plentiful (see Norris and Ortega, 2000), and Master (1994; 2002) conducted several studies on article acquisition and found empirical support for the benefits of teaching the English article system. If this prediction is supported, it will mean there will be a significant difference between the three groups of participants. The No Instruction group are not predicted to make a significant improvement between the pre-test and post-test whereas the other two groups are predicted to improve significantly.

Research Question 2. Will linguistically-informed instruction lead to greater gains than standard instruction?

Multiple acquisition studies suggest that specificity has a role to play in article errors in L2 English (see Chapter 3) and so the linguistically-informed instruction on specificity as well as definiteness is expected to be more beneficial than instruction on definiteness alone. If this prediction is supported, the Specificity Instruction group will make the largest improvement between the pre-test and post-test, and the difference between this group and the other two groups will be statistically significant.

Research Question 3. Will improvements in article accuracy be short term, or more durable?

Whilst there is plentiful evidence that explicit grammar instruction is beneficial for language learners, there is less support for the long-term effects of instruction. Whong, Gil, and Marsden (2014) recommend conducting delayed post-tests up to a year after instruction has ended, although they recognise the practical difficulties of this. Spada and Tomita's (2010) meta-analysis found that very few of the studies they reviewed had delayed post-tests, and of the few that did the delay

was relatively short. One widely-cited study which measures the effects of explicit instruction over a longer period of time is White (1991). One group of adolescent French learners of English were explicitly taught about adverb placement in English, whilst a control group received instruction on question formation which included positive input but no explicit instruction about adverbs. At the time of the immediate post-test, the group who received instruction on adverbs performed significantly better than the control group, and this statistical difference was also evident at the time of a second post-test 5 weeks later. White concluded that the instruction had been effective, although recognised that it may have only led to gains in conscious knowledge. However, she also followed up a subset of participants one year later and found that the effects of instruction had not been retained, with no significant difference between the pre-test scores of the instructed group and their scores on the follow-up tests conducted a year later. The results from White's study (1991) draw attention to the fact that instruction, whilst beneficial in the short term, may not lead to changes in the learners' underlying competence. Therefore, to use the terminology from the literature on instructed SLA, it appears that explicit instruction may improve the learners' explicit knowledge of a language but not their implicit knowledge. Whong, Gil, and Marsden (2014:555) point out that "implicit knowledge is assumed to be more lasting".

Therefore, the prediction is for short term improvements in article accuracy following the instruction period which may not be visible at the time of the delayed post-test. This is because the improvements will most likely be with the participants' explicit knowledge of the English article system and not their implicit knowledge. There is also predicted to be some differences between the results for the two tasks, as explained below in relation to Research Question 8.

Research Question 4. Will proficiency have an impact on any improvements in article accuracy?

Many of the studies discussed in Chapter 3, for example Tryzna (2009), found that more advanced participants were more accurate than lower proficiency learners in their use of English articles. Therefore, it is predicted that the most advanced participants will also improve more than the less advanced participants. This is because they appear to be at the correct developmental stage to acquire the English article system. If this prediction is supported, it will mean a strong

correlation between a participant's proficiency level, as measured by the Oxford QPT, and their improvement on both tasks between the pre-test and post-test.

Research Question 5. Is there any evidence that the definite article is acquired before the indefinite article?

There is evidence from previous studies that the indefinite article is acquired later than the definite article, possibly due to its semantic complexity (García Mayo, 2009; Lardiere, 2004; Morales, 2011; Parrish, 1987; Robertson, 2000; Snape, 2009; Trenkic, 2007; White, 2003; Zdorenko and Paradis, 2008). Therefore, the same pattern is expected to be found in the production data of the participants in the current study, with this pattern – or directionality (García Mayo, 2009) – being more evident amongst lower level groups (as shown by Trenkic, 2007).

Research Question 6. Will participants perform worse on [+definite, −specific] and [−definite, +specific] contexts, as measured before any intervention?

The work of Ionin (2003; IKW, 2004; IZBM, 2008; IZP, 2009) suggests that these two contexts are more problematic than contexts where there is no 'mismatch' between definiteness and specificity ([+definite, +specific] [−definite, −specific]). Therefore, if this claim is supported, pre-test data will show evidence of a worse performance with these two contexts at both group and individual level. It is also predicted, based on the work of Tryzna (2009), that the participants will have the lowest overall scores on [−definite, +specific] contexts at the pre-test.

Research Question 7. Will instruction on specificity improve accuracy in [+definite, −specific] and [−definite, +specific] contexts?

As outlined in the previous section of this chapter, the teaching materials delivered to the Specificity Instruction group were designed to explain the concepts of 'speaker intent to refer' for a specific context and 'shared knowledge' for a definite context. Therefore, it is predicted that the Specificity Instruction group will improve more in [+definite, −specific] and [−definite, +specific] contexts than the other two groups of participants.

Research Question 8. Will the two tasks produce different results, thereby suggesting that they measure different abilities?

As outlined in Section 5.3.4., there is some evidence that timed judgment tasks may measure a different construct to untimed tasks, such as the elicitation task, which allow learners time to access their explicit knowledge (Ellis, 2005; Ellis and Loewen, 2007; Gutiérrez, 2013). Therefore, it is predicted that the results for the two tasks will differ. Furthermore, if the judgment task does indeed measure implicit knowledge, then any improvements in article accuracy as measured by this task are predicted to last for a longer time than improvements measured by the elicitation task. This is because explicit knowledge is assumed to be less durable than implicit knowledge (Whong, Gil and Marsden, 2014) and, as such, is less likely to be retained after the period of instruction has finished.

Research Question 9. Judgment task: Will learners perform differently when judging grammatical and ungrammatical sentences? If so, does this suggest they use different types of knowledge for these two items?

Evidence from Ellis (2005) and Gutiérrez (2013) suggests that learners use implicit knowledge to judge grammatical sentences on a timed judgment task, and explicit knowledge to judge ungrammatical sentences on the same type of task. Furthermore, Gutiérrez (2013) found a significant difference between the scores of his participants on the two sentence types. It is therefore predicted that this data set will show different rates of accuracy for grammatical and ungrammatical items on the judgment task.

5.7. CONCLUSION

This chapter has given details of the participants in this study, including their age, gender, proficiency level and the amount of time resident in the UK or other English speaking country. Further information was provided about the proficiency test, as well as the three tasks used in the pre-test and post-test. Information was then given about the teaching timetable, the instruction received by each group of participants, and how these periods of instruction fitted into the overall period of data collection, as outlined in Table 3. The development of linguistically-informed teaching materials was outlined, and there was also a presentation of the research

questions and hypotheses. Analysis of the results can be found in Chapters 6 and 7, with a discussion of what these results mean in Chapter 8.

6. GROUP RESULTS

As outlined in previous chapters, three groups of participants were involved in the current study. They were all young adult L1 Chinese learners of English studying in a UK university. The groups were formed of pre-existing classes of learners enrolled on a 10 week pre-sessional course in EAP. The instruction for all three groups was broadly similar with the exception of the content of a 90 minute weekly grammar lesson. The content of this lesson was altered to form the intervention part of this study, the details of which can be found in Table 3 in the previous chapter. During the grammar lessons, the Standard Instruction group received FFI on definiteness in the English article system using standard teaching materials. The Specificity Instruction group received instruction on definiteness and specificity using newly created teaching materials, as outlined in Chapter 5, and the No Instruction group received instruction on sentence structure and prepositions. The No Instruction group did not receive any instruction on the English article system during the 10 week course, and the alternative grammar point for this group was decided by their teachers based on their needs. All of the instruction took place over several weeks.

This study uses a pre-test/post-test methodology, with the same tasks being completed by the participants before and after instruction. The pre-test was conducted at the beginning of the course of instruction, and the post-test data was collected in the week following the final part of the intervention. The three tasks which made up the pre-test and post-test were an elicitation task, an AJT, and a sample of written work. As explained in the previous chapter, all three tasks were completed by the participants at each time point, and any participant who did not complete all six tasks was excluded from the analysis. Follow-up testing was conducted on some participants from each group several months after the instruction period to see whether any short term improvements in article accuracy were retained over a longer period of time. A smaller number of participants took part in this delayed post-test as many were unable to commit to further testing in their own time due to the workload on their degree courses. Delayed post-test data was collected from a total of 6 participants: 3 in the Specificity Instruction group; 2 in the Standard Instruction group; and one participant in the No Instruction group. This test was administered 6-8 months after the post-test, and during this time participants were

completing English medium higher education but were not enrolled on any compulsory English courses. The delayed post-test consisted of just the elicitation task and judgment task and the results for this will be presented in Chapter 7.

This chapter begins with a presentation of the descriptive statistics for all three groups of participants for both the elicitation task and the judgment task. These results will then be examined in more detail using inferential statistics, the results of which are outlined in Section 6.2. Both sets of results will be summarised before a presentation of the written production data in Section 6.4. This begins by looking at the overall accuracy of each learner group, and then there is a discussion of the different error types found in the production data before a comparison of error rates with the definite and indefinite articles.

6.1. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

All 50 participants in the three groups completed both an elicitation task and a judgment task twice during an eight week period (see Table 3, Chapter 5). The means and standard deviations for each task are presented below, beginning with data for the No Instruction group, followed by the Standard Instruction and Specificity Instruction groups, respectively.

6.1.1. ELICITATION TASK

A control group of ten native speakers of English completed this task at one time point, and they scored an average of 98.33% (s.d. = 2.55, range of scores = 94.44% −100%). The native speaker data was collected in order to provide a baseline for the scores on the elicitation task, and also to check for differences between scores on this task and the judgment task. However, the three learner groups in this analysis are not being directly compared to this group of English native speakers and so there will be no further discussion of this data.

The 17 participants in the No Instruction group received no instruction on the English article system. Table 8 shows the mean percentage of correct article choice for each of the four contexts measured by the elicitation task, and the same results are presented graphically in Figure 7. As can be seen from the table, there was an improvement in the mean percentage of correct choice of article in all four contexts between the pre-test and post-test. Furthermore, three of the contexts had mean

accuracy scores of over 90% at the time of the post-test. The [−definite, +specific] context had the lowest mean accuracy rate at both the pre-test and post-test. This was one of two problematic contexts identified by IKW (2004) as outlined in Chapter 3. The other problematic context identified by IKW was the [+definite, −specific] context, but this was the most accurate context for the No Instruction group at the time of the post-test.

Table 8. Mean percentage of correct choice of article on the Elicitation Task. No Instruction group (sd = standard deviation, *n* = 17).

Type	Pre-test	Post-test
+definite, +specific	75.49 sd= 17.79	91.17 sd= 10.41
+definite, −specific	84.31 sd= 17.15	93.14 sd= 13.25
−definite, +specific	71.17 sd= 29.56	85.29 sd = 15.46
−definite, −specific	85.29 sd= 11.61	90.19 sd= 10.31
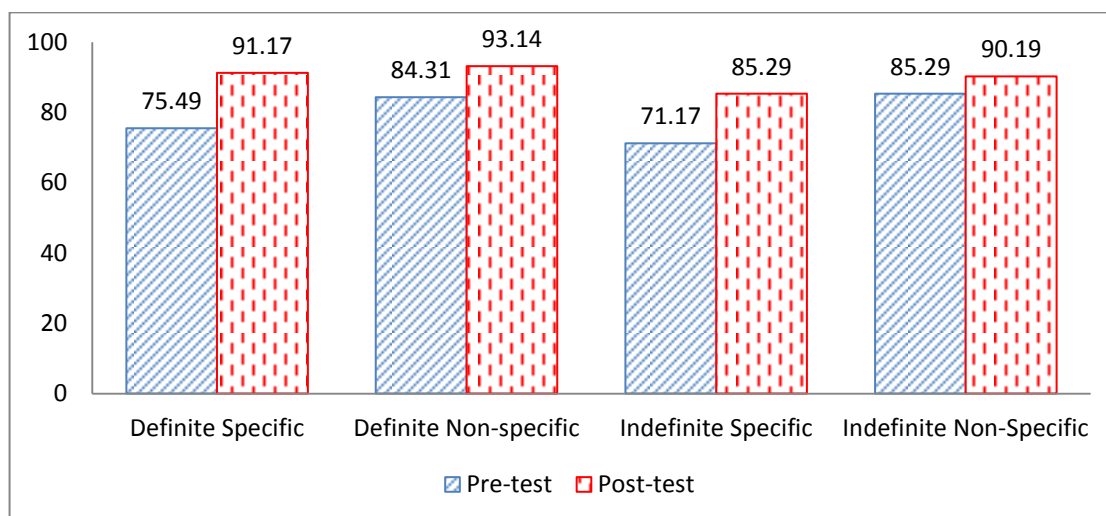
Figure 7. Mean percentage of correct choice of article on the Elicitation Task. No Instruction group (*n* = 17).

By comparison, the Standard Instruction group consisted of 18 participants. They received instruction on definiteness in the English article system using standard teaching materials which did not mention specificity. The mean percentage of accuracy for the definite and indefinite articles are presented in Table 9, and

graphically in Figure 8. At the time of the pre-test, the Standard Instruction group were, on average, most accurate with the [+definite, −specific] context.

Table 9. Mean percentage of correct choice of article on the Elicitation Task. Standard Instruction group (sd = standard deviation, *n* = 18).

Type	Pre-test	Post-test
+definite, +specific	64.81 sd= 20.52	81.48 sd= 19.71
+definite, −specific	83.33 sd= 22.87	83.33 sd= 18.96
−definite, +specific	73.15 sd= 28.66	67.59 sd = 26.49
−definite, −specific	76.85 sd= 23.67	90.74 sd= 11.75
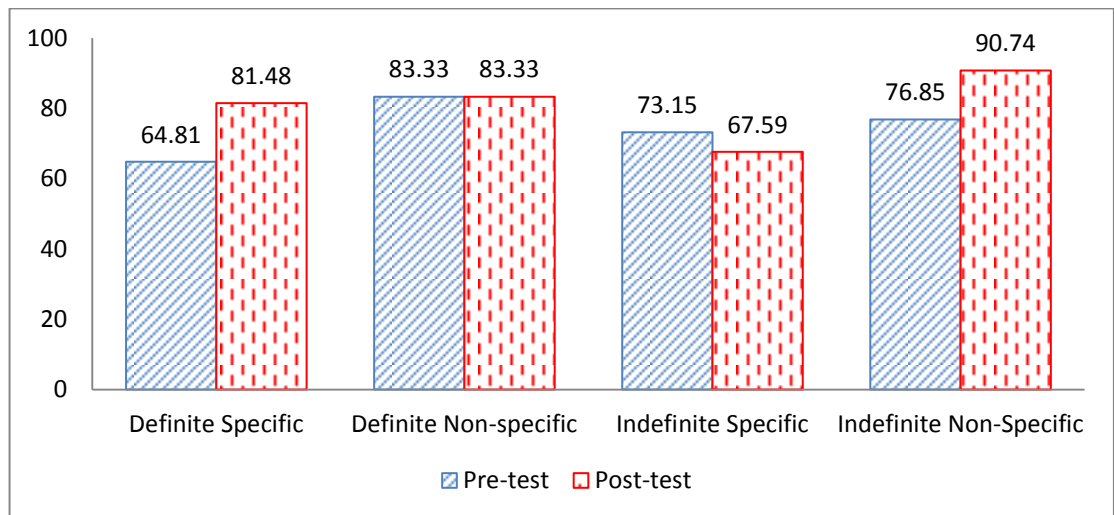
Figure 8. Mean percentage of correct choice of article on the Elicitation Task. Standard Instruction group (*n* = 18).

As explained in the previous paragraph, such a result does not match the predictions which were made based on the findings of IKW (2004). The post-test results for the Standard Instruction group look considerably different to those presented above for the No Instruction group. Whilst the Standard Instruction group's mean accuracy improved in [+definite, +specific] and [−definite, −specific] contexts following instruction on articles using standard grammar practice materials, there was no change with the [+definite, −specific] context. This was also the most accurate context at the time of the pre-test. The final context was [−definite, +specific], and this was identified as potentially the most problematic in previous research, as

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outlined in Chapter 3. Following instruction, the mean accuracy of the 18 participants reduced from 73% to 68% in this context. Despite only being a 5% reduction, this is noteworthy when compared to the results of the No Instruction group who improved in every context.

The final set of data for the elicitation task comes from the Specificity Instruction group. This group contained 15 participants and their intervention consisted of linguistically-informed instruction on both definiteness and specificity using newly created teaching materials. The development of these materials was outlined in Section 5.5 in the previous chapter. Table 10 shows the mean and standard deviation across all four contexts at pre-test and post-test, with this data presented graphically in Figure 9.

Table 10. Mean percentage of correct choice of article on the Elicitation Task. Specificity Instruction group (sd = standard deviation, n = 15).

Type	Pre-test	Post-test
+definite, +specific	59.99 sd= 29.41	80.00 sd= 22.00
+definite, −specific	61.11 sd= 27.94	73.33 sd= 30.73
−definite, +specific	66.66 sd= 25.97	70.00 sd = 30.34
−definite, −specific	70.00 sd= 20.12	73.33 sd= 19.72
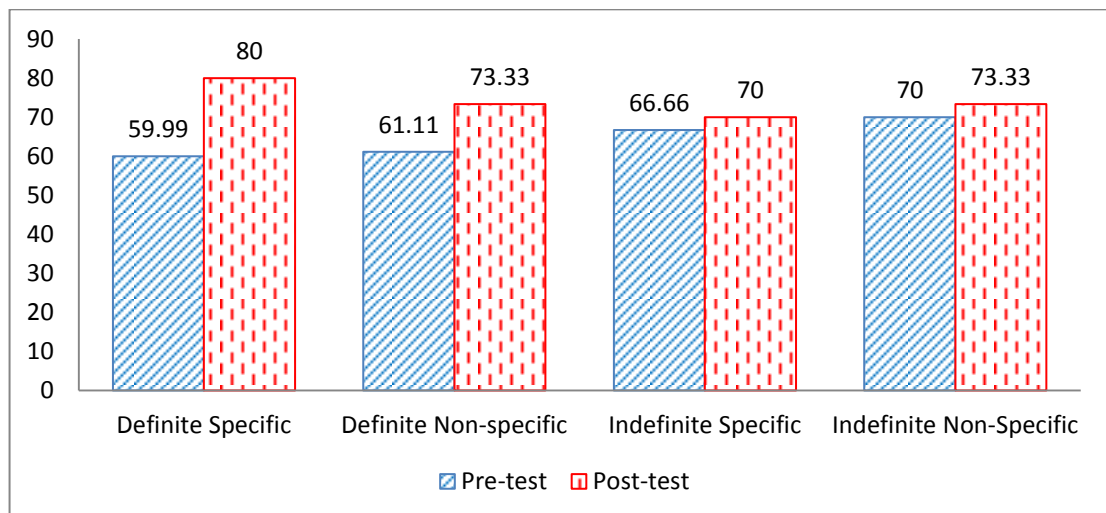
Figure 9. Mean percentage of correct choice of article on the Elicitation Task. Specificity Instruction group (n = 15).

The mean results for this group of participants on the elicitation task are similar to those presented in Table 8 and Figure 7 for the No Instruction group. Both groups of participants improved in every context between the pre-test and the post-test. This similarity occurs despite one group receiving instruction on specificity and definiteness and the other group receiving no instruction on the English article system. The results for the Specificity Instruction group show that the mean percentage of correct choice of articles improved more with definite contexts when compared to indefinite contexts. A further point of interest for the results presented in Table 10 is that some of the highest standard deviations are seen in these results, when compared to the results in Tables 8 and 9. This suggests that there was a lot of variance between the results of individual leaners in the Specificity Instruction group on this task.

To summarise, the No Instruction and Specificity Instruction groups improved in every context on the elicitation task, according to the mean results for each group. The Standard Instruction group, on the other hand, only improved in two of the four contexts. The mean accuracy for this group was unchanged for the [+definite, −specific] context, and there was a small reduction in accuracy with the [−definite, +specific] context, as measured by the elicitation task. There will now be a presentation of the descriptive statistics for the native English speakers and three learner groups for the judgment task.

6.1.2. JUDGMENT TASK

The means and standard deviations for the judgment task will now be presented for all three learner groups in turn. A control group of ten native English speakers also completed the AJT at one time point, and they scored an average of 92.81% (s.d. = 5.05, range of scores = 84.38% − 100%). As explained for the elicitation task, the three learner groups in this analysis are not being compared to this native speaker group and so there will be no detailed discussion of the native speaker data, but this data was collected in order to provide a baseline measure for this task. The mean native speaker result for the judgment task was lower than the result for the elicitation task presented in Section 6.1.1, meaning that a similar pattern can be expected in the learner data for this task. There was also a larger range of scores, which is unsurprising since participants were asked to judge the

acceptability of sentences within a given context, and very few of the sentences could be classified as ungrammatical.

The 17 participants in the No Instruction group received no instruction on the English article system. Table 11 shows the mean percentage of correct article choice for each of the four contexts measured by the judgment task, and the same results are presented graphically in Figure 10. Similar to the elicitation task, the mean percentage of correct choice of article improved in all four contexts between the pre-test and post-test for this group. However, the improvement in the [+definite, −specific] context was less than 1%. At the pre-test, participants were, on average, more accurate with the definite article than with the indefinite article. The highest score at the post-test level was in the [+definite, +specific] context with nearly 78%, whereas the mean scores in the other three contexts were all below 70%.

Table 11. Mean percentage of correct choice of article on the Judgment Task. No Instruction group (sd = standard deviation, *n* = 17).

Type	Pre-test	Post-test
+definite, +specific	69.85 sd= 15.97	77.94 sd= 17.42
+definite, −specific	63.24 sd= 20.00	63.97 sd= 18.69
−definite, +specific	56.62 sd= 17.74	63.24 sd = 20.00
−definite, −specific	54.41 sd= 17.65	68.38 sd= 19.82
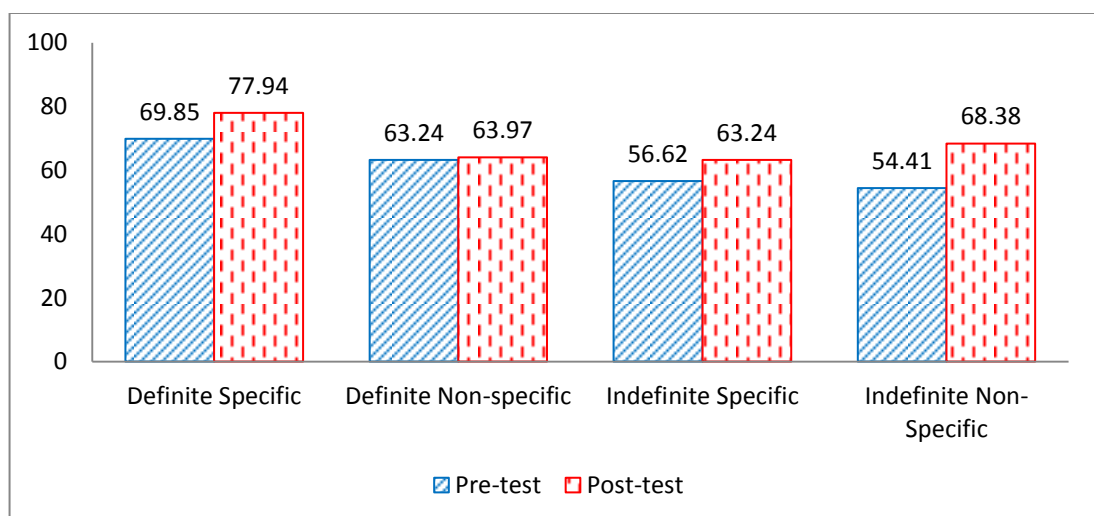
Figure 10. Mean percentage of correct choice of article on the Judgment Task. No Instruction group (*n* = 17).

The 18 participants in the Standard Instruction group received instruction on definiteness in the English article system using standard teaching materials which did not mention specificity. As explained in Chapter 5, one participant in this group selected the 'can't decide' response for 58% of items in the pre-test. Therefore, this participant was excluded from further analysis for this task, and the results presented below are for the remaining 17 participants. Table 12 shows the mean percentage of correct article choice for each of the four contexts measured by the judgment task, and the same results are presented graphically in Figure 11.

Table 12. Mean percentage of correct choice of article on the Judgment Task. Standard Instruction group (sd = standard deviation, $n = 17$)

Type	Pre-test	Post-test
+definite, +specific	41.91 sd= 14.62	55.88 sd= 21.25
+definite, −specific	44.85 sd= 20.76	71.32 sd= 18.63
−definite, +specific	33.09 sd= 12.45	58.09 sd = 25.36
−definite, −specific	47.06 sd= 20.51	65.44 sd= 22.76
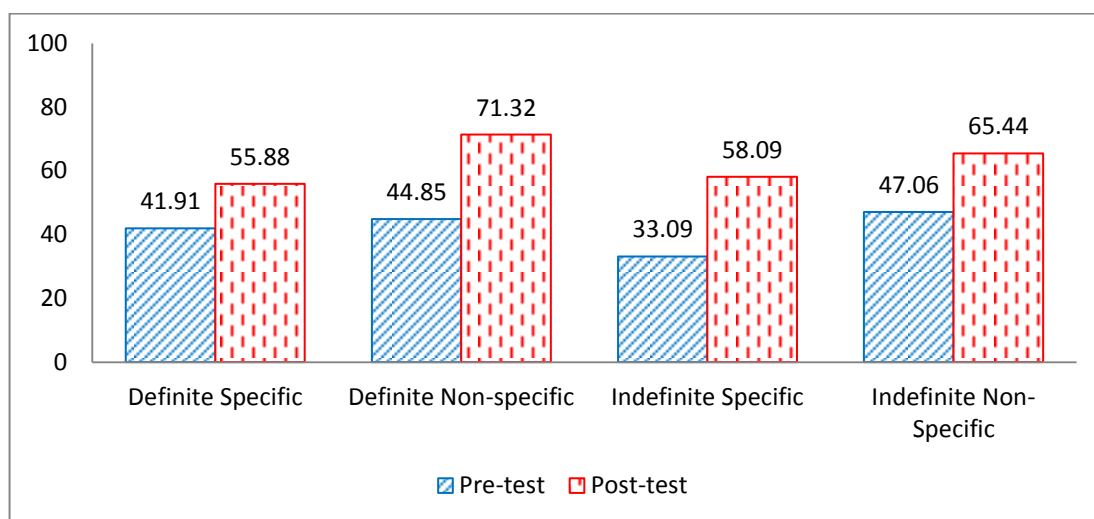
Figure 11. Mean percentage of correct choice of article on the Judgment Task. Standard Instruction group ($n = 17$).

The mean results for the Standard Instruction group were below 50% in all four contexts at pre-test. This is considerably lower than the results for the other two learner groups. The context which showed the largest improvement following the

intervention was the [+definite, −specific] context, with a mean post-test score greater than 70%. There was also an improvement in the mean percentage of correct choice of articles in the other three contexts, a result which mirrors that presented above for the No Instruction group. The mean results in Table 12 and Figure 11 also suggest that this group performed better with non-specific contexts at both the pre-test and post-test, as measured by the judgment task.

Finally, the 15 participants in the Specificity Instruction group received instruction on both definiteness and specificity in the English article system using newly created teaching materials (see Section 5.5 in the previous chapter for details). Table 13 shows the mean percentage of correct article choice for each of the four contexts measured by the judgment task, and the same results are presented graphically in Figure 12.

Table 13. Mean percentage of correct choice of article on the Judgment Task. Specificity Instruction group (sd = standard deviation, n = 15)

Type	Pre-test	Post-test
+definite, +specific	65.00 sd= 15.81	48.33 sd= 19.40
+definite, −specific	60.00 sd= 21.23	55.00 sd= 10.35
−definite, +specific	55.00 sd= 19.36	55.83 sd = 14.07
−definite, −specific	63.33 sd= 19.75	50.00 sd= 17.03
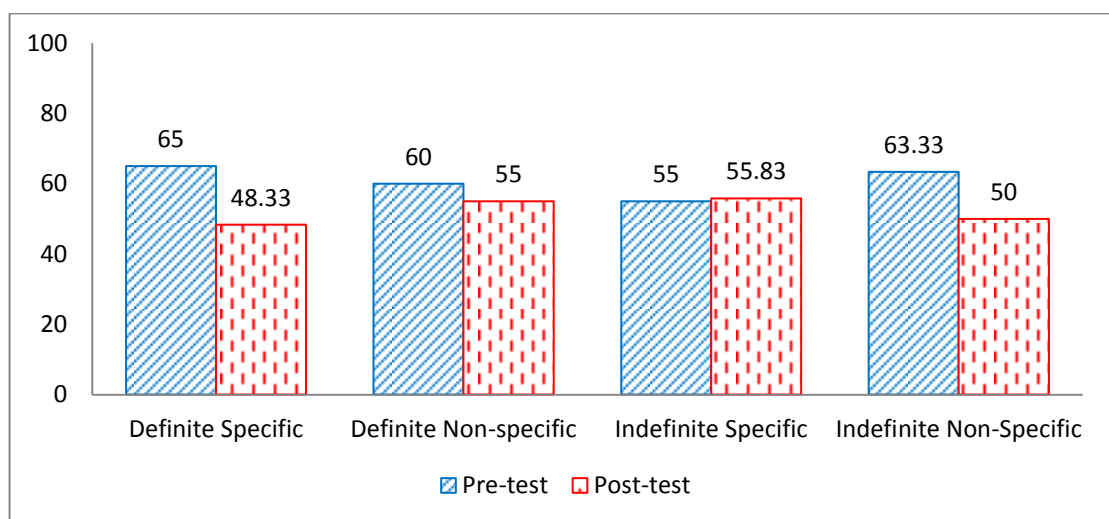
Figure 12. Mean percentage of correct choice of article on the Judgment Task. Specificity Instruction group (n = 15).

An examination of Figure 12 shows that this group made a small decrease in accuracy in three out of the four contexts. Inferential statistics, to be presented below, will measure whether this reduction in accuracy is significant. Even so, this is a noteworthy result which will be discussed further, in relation to the instruction this group received, in Chapter 8.

To summarise the mean results for each group on the judgment task, again two of the three groups improved in every context between the time of the pre-test and the post-test. The No Instruction group achieved this improvement for both tasks, and the Standard Instruction group also improved in every context when measured by the judgment task. Therefore the descriptive statistics for the Standard Instruction group looked different for the two tasks. Likewise, the Specificity Instruction group, who improved in every context when measured by the elicitation task, actually showed a small decrease in accuracy in three out of the four contexts when their mean percentage of correct choice of article was measured by the judgment task. Therefore, the two groups who received instruction on the English article system during the intervention stage of the current study showed different results across the two tasks. The Standard Instruction group improved more when measured by the judgment task, and the Specificity Instruction group improved more when measured by the elicitation task. There will now be a more detailed analysis of the results of these two tasks, followed by a presentation of the results for the written production data.

6.2. INFERENTIAL STATISTICS

A repeated measures (RM) ANOVA was conducted to identify any significant effects or interactions between the variables. There is one dependent variable: correct percentage, and a separate score was given for each of four contexts ([+definite, +specific] [+definite, −specific] [−definite, +specific] [−definite, −specific]). This led to four independent variables, as follows: time, with two levels (pre-test and post-test); definiteness, with two levels (definite and indefinite); specificity, with two levels (specific and non-specific); and group, with three levels (No Instruction, Standard Instruction, and Specificity Instruction). The data did not meet the assumptions of sphericity, normal distribution of data, or homogeneity of variance. Sphericity, which measures whether an individual participant's data points

have an equal variance (Larson-Hall, 2010) was checked via SPSS using Mauchly's test. Normal distribution of data and homogeneity of variance were tested with a visual examination of boxplots, one for each group of participants, from which it appears that these assumptions were not met. This violation of assumptions does not change the results reported in this chapter but, according to Larson-Hall (2010:75), it means that there may be additional differences between the three groups which cannot be found with parametric statistical tests.

The complexity of the data set means that a non-parametric analysis would have involved running multiple tests to answer each individual question, with the added risk of increasing the familywise error due to running multiple comparisons (Larson-Hall, 2010). As outlined in the previous paragraph, there are five variables within the data and there is no non-parametric alternative to the RM ANOVA. Whilst there are alternative analyses available for complex data which may have led to a more robust analysis of the results, for example an analysis using R, this was not possible within the time constraints of the current study.

It was predicted that the groups would perform differently due to the different grammar instruction they received, and the RM ANOVA showed there was an overall statistical main effect for group on both tasks (Elicitation Task: $F_{2,47}$ =5.67, p =.006, partial eta-squared =.19, power =.84; Judgment Task: $F_{2,47}$ =7.67, p =.001, partial eta-squared =.25, power =.93); however, this effect was also present at the pre-test, as explained in the next paragraph, and so cannot be attributed to the differences in instruction. Both tasks also found a significant four-way interaction between definiteness, specificity, time, and group (Elicitation Task: $F_{2,47}$ =5.21, p =.009, partial eta-squared =.18, power =.81; Judgment Task: $F_{2,47}$ =3.77, p =.030, partial eta-squared =.14, power =.66) as well as a number of smaller significant interactions. A Games-Howell post-hoc test for Group showed a significant difference between the No Instruction and Specificity Instruction groups on both tasks (Elicitation Task: mean difference =15.21, p =.013, 95% CI 3.03, 27.38; Judgement Task: mean difference =8.14, p =.037, 95% CI .43, 15.86) and between the No Instruction and Standard Instruction groups on the judgment task (mean difference =13.23, p =.004, 95% CI 3.97, 22.49), with the No Instruction group performing significantly better in all three cases. This result is not surprising due to the higher proficiency level of this group, as outlined in Chapter 5.

To clarify, despite all participants falling within the 5.0/5.5 IELTS band when they were admitted to study on the pre-sessional course, there was a significant difference between the proficiency levels of the three groups, as measured by the Oxford QPT placement test. Therefore, a three-way (2x2x3) factorial ANOVA was conducted on the pre-test scores of all participants examining the effect of definiteness, specificity and group. This showed a significant effect of group on both tasks (Elicitation Task: $F_{2,188} = 6.41$, $p = .002$, partial eta-squared $= .06$, power $= .90$; Judgement Task: $F_{2,188} = 28.99$, $p = .001$, partial eta-squared $= .24$, power $= 1$), meaning that the three groups differed significantly before there was any intervention, as measured by both tasks. Additionally, on the elicitation task there was a significant effect of specificity ($F_{1,188} = 6.66$, $p = .011$, partial eta-squared $= .03$, power $= .73$) and the judgment task showed a significant effect of definiteness ($F_{1,188} = 5.62$, $p = .019$, partial eta-squared $= .03$, power $= .66$), although the small effect sizes suggest that these were not important differences. There were no significant interactions on the pre-test scores for either of the tasks.

Due to the complexity of interactions when an analysis is conducted with four independent variables, this analysis was subsequently repeated as three separate RM ANOVAs, one for each group, in order to examine the interactions more closely. Additionally, the significant difference between the No Instruction group and the other two groups at pre-test, as outlined above, means that it is difficult to attribute any significant results to the effects of instruction. Therefore, the results are reported according to group. Next, the results for the elicitation task will be presented, followed by the results for the judgment task. Finally, this chapter will present an analysis of written production data which includes an explanation of the difficulties with measuring specificity in such a data set. The results of individual learners will be discussed in Chapter 7 alongside an analysis of the delayed post-test data. Chapter 8 will then summarise the results by relating them to the research questions and hypotheses, before discussing the full implications of this study.

6.2.1. ELICITATION TASK

As explained in the previous section, the pre-test scores of the three learner groups differed significantly for the elicitation task. A Tukey HSD post-hoc test showed a significant difference between the No Instruction and Specificity

Instruction groups (mean difference =14.63, p =.002, 95% CI 4.80, 24.45) and between the Standard Instruction and Specificity Instruction groups (mean difference =10.9, p =.039, 95% CI .40, 19.79), with the Specificity Instruction group scoring significantly lower in both cases. Because of this significant difference, a separate RM ANOVA was conducted for each of the three groups, with correct percentage for each of the four contexts as the dependent variable ([+definite, +specific] [+definite, −specific] [−definite, +specific] [−definite, −specific]). The three independent variables were: time, with two levels (pre-test and post-test); definiteness, with two levels (definite and indefinite); and specificity, with two levels (specific and non-specific). The results of the No Instruction group will be reported first, followed by results for the Standard Instruction and Specificity Instruction groups, respectively.

The 17 participants in the No Instruction group received no instruction on the English article system. As reported in Section 6.1.1, there was an improvement in the mean percentage of correct choice of article in all four contexts between the pre-test and post-test. In both the pre-test and post-test scores, participants were least accurate with the indefinite specific article (pre-test: M =71.17, sd =29.56; post-test: M =85.29, sd =15.46; n =17). According to Tryzna (2009), it is this context where languages which select articles on the basis of specificity differ from those which select articles on the basis of definiteness. This is relevant to the Chinese learners in the current study since Chinese has no obligatory article system, as outlined in Chapter 2, and Ionin (2003) proposes that learners of English with no L1 article system will fluctuate between sometimes selecting articles on the basis of definiteness and other times on the basis of specificity. Her proposal predicts more errors in contexts where definiteness and specificity interact, such as the [−definite, +specific] context.

The RM ANOVA showed a significant effect of time ($F_{1,16}$ = 16.90, p =.001, partial eta-squared =.51, power =.97) meaning that the difference between the pre-test and post-test results is significant for the No Instruction group. Furthermore, there was a significant effect of specificity ($F_{1,16}$ = 35.94, p =.001, partial eta-squared =.69, power =.10). There was no significant effect of definiteness, suggesting that participants performed similarly on definite and indefinite contexts, and no significant interactions.

The 18 participants in the Standard Instruction group received instruction on definiteness in the English article system using standard teaching materials which did not mention specificity. As reported in Section 6.1.1, participants in the Standard Instruction group were least accurate in [+definite, +specific] contexts at the pre-test stage, as measured by the elicitation task. At the post-test stage, however, they were least accurate with [−definite, +specific] contexts, and the mean percentage of correct choice of article actually reduced in this context between the pre-test and the post-test. There was no change in accuracy between the mean pre-test and post-test scores in the [+definite, −specific] context, and participants improved in [+definite, +specific] and [−definite, −specific] contexts. The two contexts where learners in this group did not improve were identified as potentially problematic in previous research (IKW 2004, and others), as discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

The RM ANOVA showed no significant effect of time at $p < .05$ ($F_{1,17} = 4.40$, $p = .051$, partial eta-squared $= .21$, power $= .51$). However, the power was low (.51) meaning that increasing the number of participants would most likely have resulted in a significant effect. In addition, there was a large effect size. Therefore, the difference between the pre-test and post-test results for the Standard Instruction group on the elicitation task will be considered as important, despite this not being statistically supported. There was a significant effect of specificity ($F_{1,17} = 19.12$, $p = .001$, partial eta-squared $= .53$, power $= .98$), and a significant 3-way interaction between time, definiteness, and specificity ($F_{1,17} = 14.89$, $p = .001$, partial eta-squared $= .47$, power $= .95$).

Means plots for time 1 (pre-test, see Figure 13) and time 2 (post-test, see Figure 14) demonstrate the 3-way interaction and the differences between these interactions at the time of the pre-test and post-test. The numbers 1 and 2 for specificity indicate specific and non-specific contexts, respectively; whilst the numbers 1 and 2 for definiteness indicate definite and indefinite contexts. It is clear from the means plots that the post-test scores (Figure 14) were not higher than the pre-test scores (Figure 13) in every context, as reflected in the descriptive statistics presented above. In terms of interactions, the pre-test scores show the largest difference between specific and non-specific contexts with definites, as demonstrated by the dotted blue line in Figure 13. At the time of the post-test, however, there was relatively little difference between specific and non-specific definites (see Figure 14) but the indefinite contexts, represented by the dashed green

line, show a much higher accuracy with indefinite non-specifics compared to indefinite specifics. Again, these trends can be identified with an examination of the descriptive statistics presented above, although the means plots make the interaction between definiteness and specificity clearer.

Estimated Marginal Means of MEASURE_1
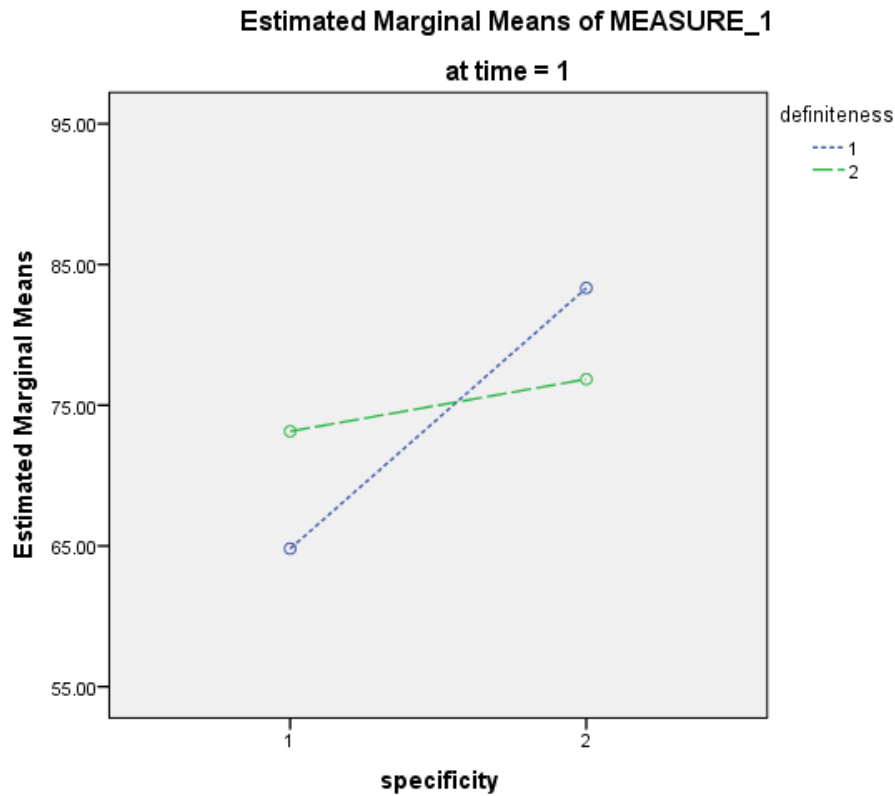
Figure 13. Interaction between definiteness and specificity at pre-test. Elicitation Task. Standard Instruction group (*n* = 18).

Finally, the 15 participants in the Specificity Instruction group received instruction on both definiteness and specificity in the English article system using newly created teaching materials (see Chapter 5.5 for more details). As was seen in Section 6.1.1, there was an improvement in the mean percentage of correct choice of article in all four contexts between the pre-test and post-test. At the pre-test, participants were most accurate in [−definite, −specific] contexts and least accurate in [+definite, +specific] contexts. At the post-test stage, participants in this group were most accurate with [+definite, +specific] contexts, and this context also showed the largest improvement.
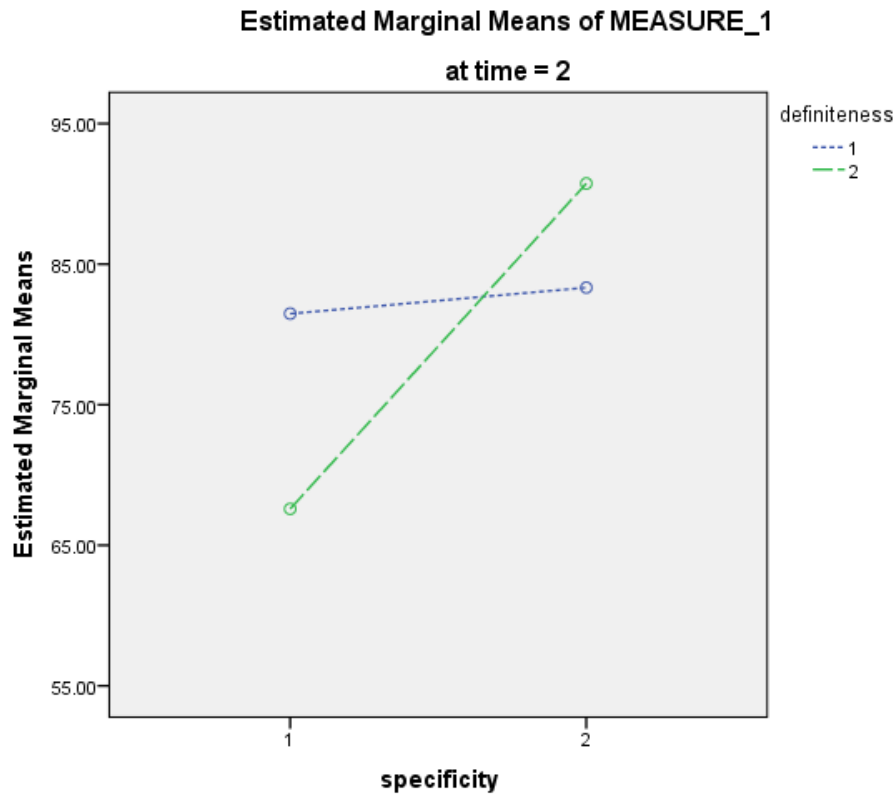
Figure 14. Interaction between definiteness and specificity at post-test. Elicitation Task. Standard Instruction group ($n = 18$).

A RM ANOVA was conducted and this showed a significant effect of time only ($F_{1,14} = 11.07$, $p = .005$, partial eta-squared $= .44$, power $= .87$) meaning that the difference between the pre-test and post-test results is significant. There was no significant effect of definiteness or specificity, although the power for these measures was below .10 meaning this test almost certainly did not have enough power to detect a true effect. Reducing the number of comparisons would increase the amount of power available for this test (Larson-Hall, 2010:274). However, both measures also showed a small effect size, meaning that an increase in power by testing a larger number of participants would not necessarily lead to a statistical result. Furthermore, results for the RM ANOVA showed that there were no significant interactions. The two-way interactions between time and specificity, and definiteness and specificity, as well as the three-way interaction between time, definiteness and specificity also had a power level below .10 and small effect sizes. Both the No Instruction and Standard Instruction groups showed a significant effect of specificity. It is possible that there was no statistical effect of specificity for this group, unlike the other two groups, due to the instruction they received. However, if

there had been a significant effect of specificity at the time of the post-test which was not present in the pre-test data, then there would have been a significant interaction between time and specificity. As this is not the case, it appears that there were no specificity effects present before the intervention began and, therefore, this lack of effect cannot be attributed to the instruction delivered to the Specificity Instruction group.

6.2.2. JUDGMENT TASK

As with the elicitation task results reported previously, a significant effect of group was found when a three-way factorial ANOVA was conducted on the pre-test scores of all three learner groups for the AJT. A Tukey HSD post-hoc test showed a significant difference between the No Instruction and Standard Instruction groups (mean difference $=20.58$, $p =.001$, 95% CI 13.28, 27.87) and between the Specificity Instruction and Standard Instruction groups (mean difference $=20.38$, $p =.001$, 95% CI 12.84, 27.92). As the AJT was created for the current study, a further analysis with items as cases was conducted on the pre-test scores for the target items. This was run as a three-way (2x2x3) factorial ANOVA and also found a significant effect of group. ($F2_{2,84} =10.25$, $p =.001$, partial eta-squared $=.20$, power $=.98$). A Tukey HSD post-hoc test showed that, like the analysis with participants as cases, there was a significant difference between the No Instruction and Standard Instruction groups (mean difference $=18.75$, $p =.001$, 95% CI 7.46, 30.04) and between the Specificity Instruction and Standard Instruction groups (mean difference $=18.35$, $p =.001$, 95% CI 7.06, 29.63). Therefore, when reading the results presented below, it should be noted that the Standard Instruction group were significantly lower than the other two groups on the pre-test, as measured by the judgment task. This difference was not evident in the elicitation task results, and so possible reasons for the Standard Instruction group's weak performance on the judgment task will be presented in Chapter 8. Furthermore, the difference between the results for these two tasks may suggest that they measure a different construct, as hypothesised in Chapter 5 when predicting the results for Research Question 8.

A RM ANOVA was conducted for each of the three groups individually, with correct percentage for each of the four contexts ([+definite, +specific] [+definite, −specific] [−definite, +specific] [−definite, −specific]) as the dependent

variable. The three independent variables were: time, with two levels (pre-test and post-test); definiteness, with two levels (definite and indefinite); and specificity, with two levels (specific and non-specific). As explained in Section 6.1.2, the mean percentage of correct choice of article improved in all four contexts between the pre-test and post-test for the No Instruction group. However, the improvement in the [+definite, −specific] context was less than 1%. The RM ANOVA conducted on the data for the No Instruction group (n =17) showed a significant effect of time only ($F_{1,16}$ = 10.92, p =.004, partial eta-squared =.41, power =.87) meaning that the difference between the pre-test and post-test results is significant. Despite this, the improvement in accuracy between the pre-test and post-test scores was relatively small at less than 8% overall (a pairwise comparison showed the mean difference =7.34, p =.004, 95% CI 2.64, 12.07). There was no significant effect of definiteness or specificity, and there were no significant interactions.

The 18 participants in the Standard Instruction group received instruction on definiteness in the English article system using standard teaching materials which did not mention specificity. As explained in Chapter 5, one participant in this group selected the 'can't decide' response for 58% of items in the pre-test. Therefore, this participant was excluded from further analysis for this task, and the results presented below are for the remaining 17 participants. As outlined at the start of this section, the Standard Instruction group were significantly worse than the other two groups on the judgment task, as measured before any intervention. The descriptive statistics for this group demonstrate this difference clearly (see Section 6.1.2), and the group results were below 50% in all four contexts at pre-test. The context which showed the largest improvement following the teaching intervention was the [+definite, −specific] context, with a mean post-test score greater than 70%. The mean results also suggest that this group performed better with non-specific contexts at both the pre-test and post-test, as measured by the judgment task. A RM ANOVA was conducted on the data set (n =17), and this showed a significant effect of time ($F_{1,16}$ = 30.92, p =.000, partial eta-squared =.66, power =1) meaning that the difference between the pre-test and post-test results is significant. This result is superficially similar to that found for the No Instruction group, as described above. However, for the No Instruction group, the improvements in some contexts were relatively small; whereas, the results for the Standard Instruction group show much larger improvements between the two time points as well as a larger effect size. There was

also a significant effect of specificity on the Standard Instruction group data ($F_{1,16} =$ 15.91, $p =.001$, partial eta-squared =.50, power =.96). There was no significant effect of definiteness, and there were no significant interactions.

The 15 participants in the Specificity Instruction group received instruction on both definiteness and specificity in the English article system using newly created teaching materials (see Section 5.5 in the previous chapter for more details). The descriptive statistics for the performance of the Specificity Instruction group on the judgment task can be found in Section 6.1.2 of the current chapter. A RM ANOVA was conducted on the data set (n =15), and this showed no significant effects or interactions. This is the only group, on either of the tasks, who did not improve significantly between the pre-test and post-test ($F_{1,14} = 3.97$, $p =.066$, partial eta-squared =.22, power =.46). The descriptive statistics presented in Section 6.1.2 above show that the Specificity Instruction group actually showed a non-significant decrease in accuracy in three out of the four contexts. However, the low power for the inferential statistics means that a larger sample size may provide a significant result. In addition, the effect size, as measured by partial eta-squared, is above .14 and, therefore, considered high (Larson-Hall, 2010). This means that the reduction in accuracy seen in the results of the Specificity Instruction group is important. This result will be discussed further, in relation to the instruction this group received, in Chapter 8. Furthermore, this same group's performance on the elicitation task showed a significant improvement across time which suggests that the judgment task may measure a different construct, as discussed previously.

6.3. SUMMARY OF GROUP RESULTS FOR THE TWO TASKS

The three groups differed significantly from each other at the pre-test stage, as measured by an elicitation task and a judgment task. There was also a significant difference between the mean proficiency levels of the groups, as measured by the Oxford QPT which was carried out one week before the pre-tests (see Chapter 5 for details). RM ANOVAs on the elicitation task data showed that the No Instruction and Specificity Instruction groups' accuracy with articles improved significantly between the pre-test and post-test, when measured by this task. The results for the Standard Instruction group were not significant, but showed a larger effect size which demonstrated an overall improvement. Descriptive statistics echoed this

result, showing that the No Instruction and Specificity Instruction groups improved in every context; whereas, the Standard Instruction group showed a small decrease in accuracy with the [−definite, +specific] context and no change in accuracy in the mean score for the [+definite, −specific] context. This will be addressed in Chapter 7 with an examination of the results of individual learners. One further noteworthy result for the elicitation task was that the RM ANOVAs showed a significant effect of specificity for the No Instruction and Standard Instruction groups, but not for the Specificity Instruction group. However, there was no interaction between time and specificity in the elicitation task results for the Specificity Instruction group, suggesting that this difference between the groups existed before any intervention and so it cannot be attributed to the instruction on specificity.

For the judgment task, the Standard Instruction group was significantly less accurate than the other two groups at the pre-test, with scores below 50% in every context. However, both the Standard Instruction and No Instruction groups improved in every context between the pre-test and post-test, and RM ANOVAs showed a significant effect of time for both groups. The Specificity Instruction group, on the other hand, showed no significant change and presented a non-significant decrease in accuracy in three of the four contexts. In [−definite, +specific] contexts the Specificity Instruction group's scores on the judgment task were similar at pre-test and post-test.

The next section of this chapter will present an analysis of the written production data submitted at the same time point as the pre-test and post-test tasks. First, details of the data are provided, followed by an overview of the accuracy of each group at both the pre-test and post-test time points. There follows a more detailed description of the different types of errors found in the written production data. The final part of this chapter will compare accuracy with the definite and indefinite articles in the written data across all groups to see whether there is any evidence that the definite article is acquired earlier. None of this analysis considers specificity or makes reference to the four contexts which have been important in the rest of the analysis. This is due to the difficulty in determining specificity in production data, as outlined below.

6.4. WRITTEN PRODUCTION DATA

All 50 participants in this study submitted two pieces of written work, one to coincide with the collection of pre-test data, and the other at the same time as the post-test data was collected. These essays formed part of the formative assessment on the 10-week pre-sessional course that participants were undertaking at the time of this study. There was some variation in the topics of this written work which was unavoidable due to the aims of the course; Table 7 in the previous chapter provides an overview of the writing topics for each group. As explained above, the analysis of the written data is secondary to the main analysis presented in Sections 6.1 and 6.2 because this data will not be considered in terms of specificity.

There are two reasons why the written data will not be analysed according to specificity. Firstly, specificity distinctions exist in the mind of speaker and do not depend on shared knowledge between a speaker and a listener (or, in the case of written data, a writer and a reader). For this reason it can be difficult to establish whether a particular context was intended as specific or non-specific in production data, a point recognised by Ionin (2003). Ionin overcame this limitation by focusing on certain cues, for example those related to scope; previous-mention definites; or the use of *there* or *have* constructions (Ionin, 2003:203). Despite the thorough analysis conducted by Ionin, ambiguity remained for some contexts. Furthermore, she was unable to find enough non-specific definite contexts in the production data, and her analysis focused predominantly on the use of indefinites, in particular the overuse of *the* with specific indefinites. As outlined in Chapter 5, the topic of the written data was not controlled in the current study whereas Ionin (2003) used targeted questions and was still unable to find examples of every context in her data. In addition, a preliminary analysis of the essays submitted for the pre-test found that the majority of errors in the written data were caused by omission or overuse of articles. Most of the essays (75% of the pre-test written production data) had either no substitution errors or just one error of this type. Therefore, analysing only the substitution errors in the small number of essays which contained them would not have given a complete picture of article use in the written work of these participants.

A total of 100 pieces of written data were collected from participants across the two time points, and a subset of this data was selected for analysis. This data is supplementary to the elicitation and judgment task data presented in Sections 6.1–

6.3, due to the decision not to measure specificity. A further reason for not analysing all 100 compositions was the time constraints of coding the essays, and a limit in the number of volunteers who were native speakers of English and available to do the coding. The subset of data came from 22 participants, meaning that 44% of all written production data was analysed. The twenty-two participants were selected based on their performance on the placement test (Oxford QPT). The mean proficiency across all groups on the Oxford QPT was 23, and so participants with a score of 21–25 on this test had their written work selected for analysis, since they appear to be representative of the data set as whole. This consisted of 8 participants from the Standard Instruction group, and 7 participants each from the No Instruction and Specificity Instruction groups.

As explained in the previous chapter, each essay was coded by four native speakers of English using a technique based on the analysis conducted by Ionin (2003). In each text, all articles were removed and a blank space was placed in front of every noun, regardless of whether or not it would require an article in English. The coders then wrote in the article that they would typically use. There were four copies of each essay so that four different coders worked on each one, and all judgments were made by individuals with no discussion between coders at any point. Once each essay had been coded by four native speakers, a count was made of the errors in the written data. For each essay, the number of correct uses of the definite, indefinite and zero articles were counted, as well as the three different types of error (omission, substitution, and overuse) for both the definite and indefinite article. Contexts were classified as ambiguous if the coders did not agree on which article should be used. In other words, any noun phrase where three of the four coders did not write the same article (definite, indefinite, or zero) was classified as ambiguous. Ambiguous contexts made up an average of 13% of article use in the pre-test data (sd = 6.53, range = 0%–25%) and 19% of article use in the post-test data (sd = 5.49, range = 12%–30%). All of the essays had a word count of 300-400 words, and contained an average of 52 noun phrases at the pre-test (sd = 10.33, range = 31–72) and 58 noun phrases at post-test (sd = 13.49, range = 33–88).

6.4.1. ACCURACY BY GROUP

The overall accuracy of each individual will be presented here, with data for the No Instruction group presented first, followed by the results for the Standard Instruction and Specificity Instruction groups, respectively. The accuracy percentage was calculated by dividing the number of correct uses of articles (both definite and indefinite) against the total number of uses of the two articles. An alternative measure of overall accuracy could produce different results to those presented below. Use of the zero article was not included in this calculation because correct use of the zero article could be accidental; in other words, not using an article when it is not required may not be intentional and therefore cannot be taken to mean that learners have correctly acquired the use of zero article.

Of the 22 participants across the three groups, eight participants demonstrated an improvement in accuracy in their use of the definite and indefinite articles between the pre-test and post-test, whereas thirteen participants showed a reduction in accuracy. The final participant showed no change in accuracy. A qualitative examination of the data suggests that the essays submitted at the post-test time point were structurally more complex than those submitted for the pre-test, which is to be expected because of a strong focus on developing students' writing during the pre-sessional course. For example, (91) and (92) show sentences from essays submitted at the time of the pre-test and the post-test, respectively. The students appeared to use longer, better structured sentences in the post-test essays and demonstrated a clearer organisation of ideas within each paragraph. This explanation will be considered further in Chapter 8.

91. In China the develop of tourism is walking in a high way.
    Example sentence from essay submitted at the pre-test time point.

92. In addition, according to Tesone (2006) many managers and consumers to exchange information through the Internet.
    Example sentence from essay submitted at the post-test time point.

The results for each group will now be presented. Of the 17 participants in the No Instruction group, seven had a proficiency score of between 21 and 25 and so their written production data was analysed. The accuracy percentage of each of these seven individuals at pre-test and post-test is presented in Figure 15. The first thing to

note it that there is a great deal of variation between individuals, with accuracy percentages ranging from 3% to 80%. Additionally, all but one of the participants in this group showed a reduction in their accurate use of articles between the pre-test and the post-test. This is in contrast to the results for the elicitation task and judgment task, where participants in the No Instruction group showed a significant improvement on both tasks between the pre-test and post-test.
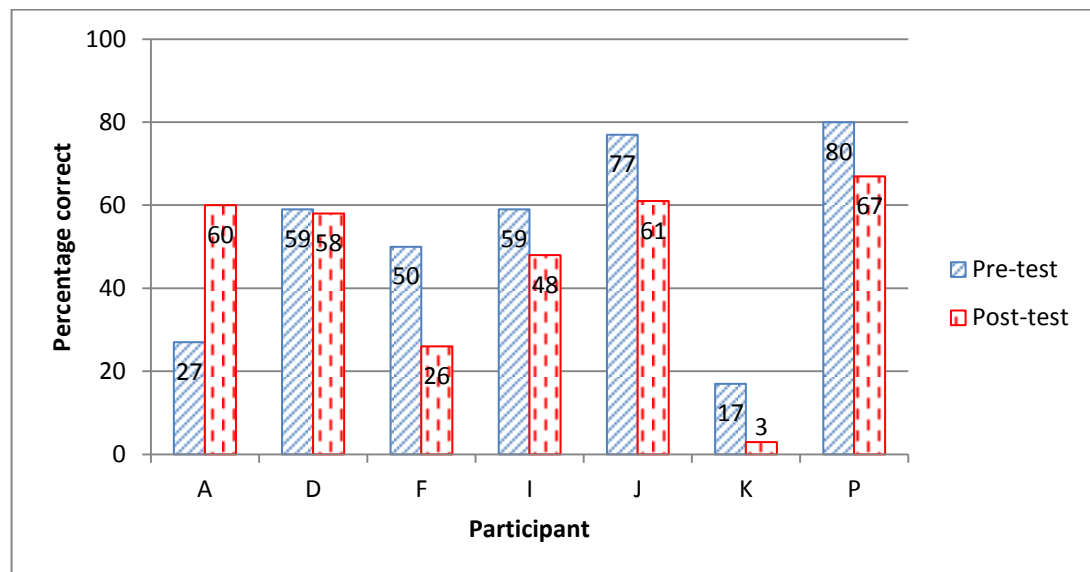
Figure 15. Mean percentage of accuracy in written production data at pre-test and post-test for individuals with an average proficiency. No Instruction group (*n* = 7).

The Standard Instruction group contains 18 participants, and eight of these had a proficiency score of between 21 and 25, as measured by the Oxford QPT. The accuracy percentage of each of these eight individuals at pre-test and post-test is presented in Figure 16. The results for this group differ somewhat to those presented in Figure 15 for the No Instruction group. In the Standard Instruction group data, four participants showed an improvement in correct article usage between the pre-test and post-test, whilst a fifth participant showed no change in accuracy. Just three participants in this group demonstrated the reduction in accuracy with article usage between the pre-test and the post-test that was seen in the majority of participants in the No Instruction group. The results for the elicitation task and judgment task for the Standard Instruction group showed a significant improvement on both tasks between the pre-test and post-test, a finding reflected in the improvement in accuracy seen in the written production data of half of the individuals from this reduced data set.
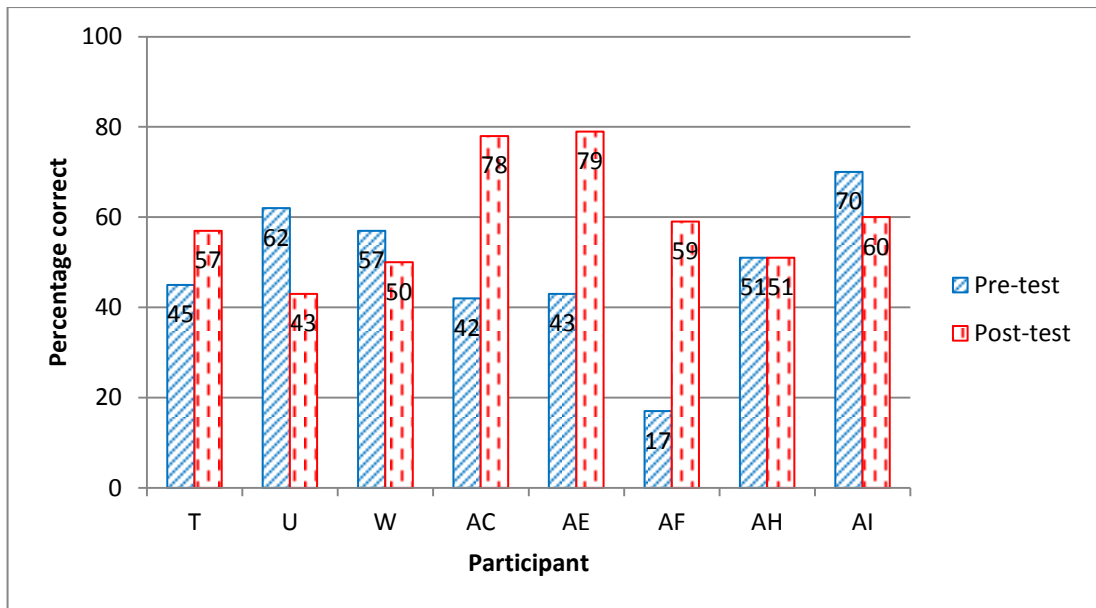
Figure 16. Mean percentage of accuracy in written production data at pre-test and post-test for individuals with an average proficiency. Standard Instruction group (*n* = 8).

Of the 15 participants in the Specificity Instruction group, seven had a proficiency score of between 21 and 25 and so were selected for this analysis. The accuracy percentage of each of these seven individuals at pre-test and post-test is presented in Figure 17.
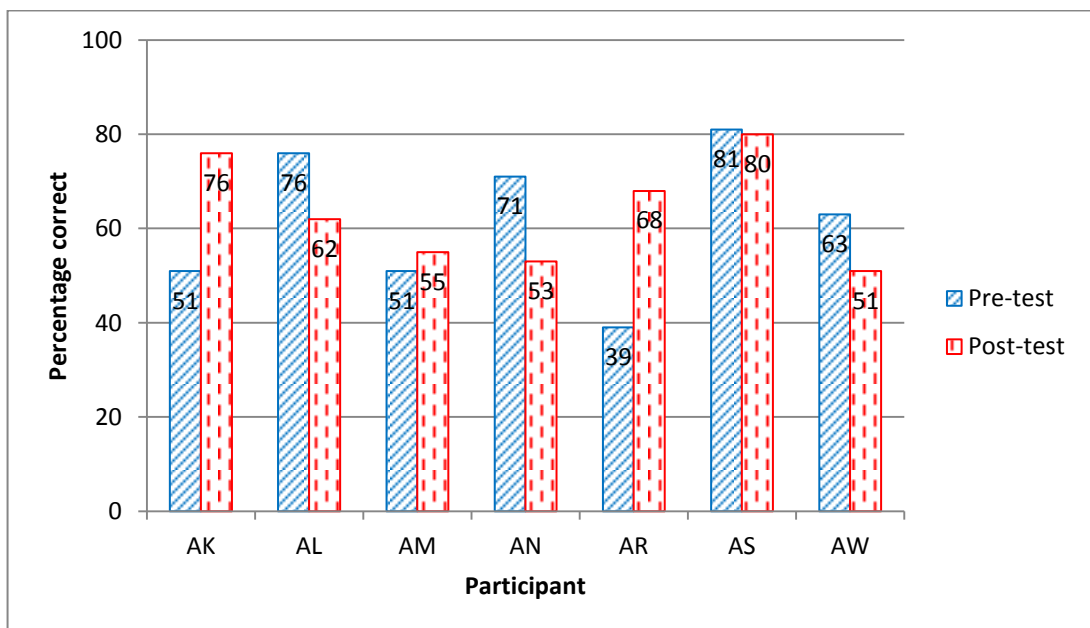
Figure 17. Mean percentage of accuracy in written production data at pre-test and post-test for individuals with an average proficiency. Specificity Instruction group (*n* = 7).

Like the Standard Instruction group, three participants from the Specificity Instruction group showed a reduction in accuracy with article usage between the pre-test and the post-test, whilst the other four participants improved. These results are less clear than for the No Instruction group who showed a reduction in accuracy overall. The group results for the elicitation task and judgment task for the Specificity Instruction group were also somewhat ambiguous since this group showed a significant improvement on the elicitation task between the pre-test and post-test but no significant change in accuracy on the judgment task. The written production data reflects this ambiguity, and so a further analysis of individual results for this group will be undertaken in Chapter 7, focusing on the judgment task data.

6.4.2. ERROR TYPES

The data presented above in relation to the overall accuracy of article use amongst the 22 participants whose essays were coded and analysed gives a varied picture, with some participants improving over time, whilst others demonstrated a reduction in the correct use of articles in their written work. Therefore, this section will look in more detail at the types of errors made by these participants. The first type of error is article substitution, when a definite article is used in an indefinite context, or vice versa. The second type of error is article omission, when no article is used in a context where most native speakers would consider it to be obligatory. The final type of error is article overuse, when an article is used in a context that would not typically require one. For each essay, the quantity of each error type was calculated for both the definite and indefinite articles and these raw numbers are presented in Table 14.

The numbers in Table 14 show that the participants in the Standard Instruction group made more errors than participants in either the No Instruction or the Specificity Instruction groups. This reflects the results for the judgment task presented earlier, where the participants in the Standard Instruction group scored significantly lower than participants in either of the other groups at the time of the pre-test. In terms of raw numbers, the No Instruction and Specificity Instruction groups made more errors in the post-test data; whereas, for the Standard Instruction group the number of errors decreased between the two time points. Overall, the pattern of errors was broadly similar across the three groups, with most participants

making more errors with the definite article, and omission errors being the most common of the three types. This chapter will now describe the different types of error in turn for all 22 participants whose written data was analysed.

Table 14. Total number of article errors in written data according to type at pre-test and post-test for all learner groups.

	Substitution		Omission		Overuse	
	Definite article used in indefinite context	Indefinite article used in definite context	Definite article omitted	Indefinite article omitted	Overuse of definite article	Overuse of indefinite article
No Instruction Pre-test	6	0	34	9	19	1
No Instruction Post-test	7	1	43	19	20	0
Standard Instruction Pre-test	7	1	66	19	23	7
Standard Instruction Post-test	12	4	45	17	38	2
Specificity Instruction Pre-test	11	3	19	7	40	4
Specificity Instruction Post-test	22	1	22	12	38	0

For article substitution errors on the pre-test, only three participants substituted an indefinite article in a definite context. There were four errors in total, meaning the three participants made one or two of this type of error each. It was

much more common to find errors where the definite article was used in an indefinite context, although only one participant made more than five substitution errors and nine participants made none at all. On the post-test, five participants made a total of six errors by substituting an indefinite article in a definite context; whereas, fifteen participants made the mistake of overusing a definite article in a context which the native speaker coders considered to be obligatorily indefinite, with between one and twelve errors per text. There were just two participants who made no substitution errors at the post-test. This shows that the amount of substitution errors increased between the pre-test and the post-test and that, across both time points, participants were more likely to overuse the definite article in an indefinite context rather than the other way round.

Article omission errors, on the other hand, tended to occur with both the definite and indefinite articles and there was no obvious increase in the occurrence of this error type over time. Every participant made omission errors on both pieces of writing, which supports the claim made by Robertson (2000:135) that Chinese learners have "a marked tendency to omit the article where native speakers of English would use one". At the pre-test, four participants omitted only the definite article and one participant omitted only the indefinite article, with the other seventeen participants omitting both articles; whereas at the post-test, all but one of the participants made omission errors in both definite and indefinite contexts. Whilst some participants had a similar number of definite and indefinite errors, other participants showed a much higher number of omissions in definite contexts, and no participant was found to have considerably more omission errors with indefinite contexts at either time point. This follows the trend identified with substitution errors, where the definite article is misused more frequently than the indefinite article. It is also evident when looking at the total number of errors for each group, which are presented in Table 14.

The third type of error is overuse of an article in a context where none is required. At the pre-test, the pattern of errors was similar to those for article substitution in that learners were much more likely to overuse the definite article. Three participants made no overuse errors, and five participants overused both articles. None of the participants overused just the indefinite article in the pre-test data. Therefore, the remaining fourteen participants overused just the definite article at the pre-test, with between one and nine errors per text. At the time of the post-test,

six participants made no overuse errors, suggesting a small decrease in the number of participants who made this type of error. A further two participants made errors with both definite and indefinite articles, although neither participant was found to have considerably more overuse errors with the indefinite article. Fourteen participants overused just the definite article at the post-test, and the number of errors per text seemed to increase between the pre-test and post-test, with three participants overusing the definite article more than 10 times in the texts submitted at the time of the post-test. This mirrors the trend identified with substitution errors, in that the number of errors increased between the pre-test and the post-test. It should also be pointed out that it was not the same fourteen participants who made errors with just the definite article at both time points. Furthermore, of the participants who made no overuse errors, there is just one participant who achieved this at both time points.

To summarise the different error types, in all three cases the definite article was more likely to be misused than the indefinite article. This is not surprising since, as detailed in Chapter 2, corpus data suggests that the definite article is used more than twice as frequently as the indefinite article in English. Omission errors did not change much between the pre-test and the post-test, with every participant making at least one omission error at both time points. The number of participants who made substitution errors increased between the pre-test and post-test, as did the total number of errors made (see Table 14). The number of overuse errors that were made also increased between the pre-test and post-test, although fewer participants made these errors by the time of the post-test. The next section will look in more detail at the different usage of the definite and indefinite articles by this subset of participants.

6.4.3. EVIDENCE OF DIRECTIONALITY

As outlined above in relation to all three error types, the definite article is misused more frequently than the indefinite article. However, it is also more than twice as frequent as the indefinite article in English (see Chapter 2 for details). This section of the thesis will investigate the possible reasons for this, and also make reference to the claim that the definite article is acquired before the indefinite article due to the semantic complexity of the latter form, as detailed in Chapter 3.

The studies reviewed in Chapter 3 all showed higher rates of errors with the indefinite article, but the opposite result was found in the written production data of the low-intermediate learners in the current study. As outlined in the previous section, participants across all three learner groups made more errors with the definite article; however, it is possible that they are using the definite article proportionately more than the indefinite article, and therefore have more opportunities to make errors. To assess this possibility, the percentages of correct use of the definite and indefinite articles were calculated and presented as a proportion of correct article usage. To make this calculation, the number of correct uses of the definite and indefinite articles in each text were counted. Correct use was defined according to the article selected by at least three out of four native speaker coders, as described in the introduction to this section. The percentage of correct definite and indefinite articles was then calculated for each text, out of the total number of correct uses. Therefore, the two figures add up to 100% and represent a proportion. If both articles were used equally then there would be a 50% proportion of correct use for each article. However, the number of uses of the definite and indefinite articles identified in the British National Corpus (2014) and detailed in Chapter 2, suggest that the definite article should be used around 70% of the time, with the indefinite article making up just 30% of uses. The results for the No Instruction, Standard Instruction, and Specificity Instruction groups can be seen in Figures 18, 19 and 20, respectively. These figures show that the definite article, represented by the grey striped bars, is used correctly more often than the indefinite article in the majority of the 44 texts analysed.

For the No Instruction group, Figure 18 highlights one participant (K) who did not use the indefinite article correctly at either pre-test or post-test. This was not seen in the data for either of the other groups. For the remaining six participants in the No Instruction group, four increased their proportion of correct uses of the indefinite article between the pre-test and post-test, often using it far more frequently than would be predicted given the respected frequencies of these two articles in the English language. As the definite article is proposed to be acquired first (see Chapter 3) this increase in proportional use of the indefinite article could be an indication that learners in the No Instruction group are beginning to acquire the correct use of the indefinite article, perhaps leading to overuse. The participants in this group had the highest overall proficiency of the three learner groups and so if this pattern of

possible acquisition and, hence, overuse is not repeated with the other two learner groups then it could be linked to proficiency. The remaining two participants (D and F) used a lower proportion of indefinite articles correctly at the post-test time point, when compared to their use of this article at the time of the pre-test, although D's use of the indefinite article was still above what would be predicted, proportionally.
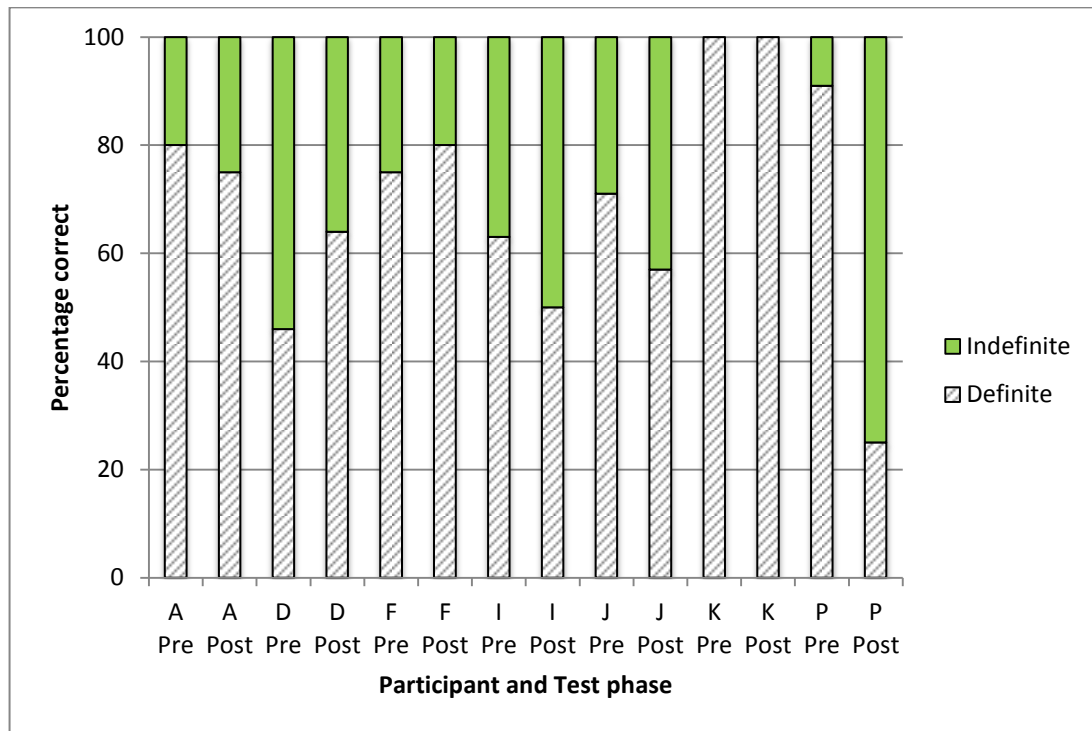
Figure 18. Percentage of correct uses of the definite and indefinite articles in the written production of learners with an average proficiency at pre-test and post-test. No Instruction group ($n = 7$).

The Standard Instruction group data for the proportion of definite and indefinite articles used correctly at each time point can be found in Figure 19. There is an exact split between the eight participants in this group, with four using a higher proportion of correct indefinite articles at the pre-test when compared to the post-test. This means their proportion of indefinite articles used correctly decreased over time. The other four participants showed the opposite pattern, with an increase in the proportion of indefinite articles that were used correctly. Overall, the definite article was still used proportionately more than the indefinite article by participants in the Standard Instruction group.
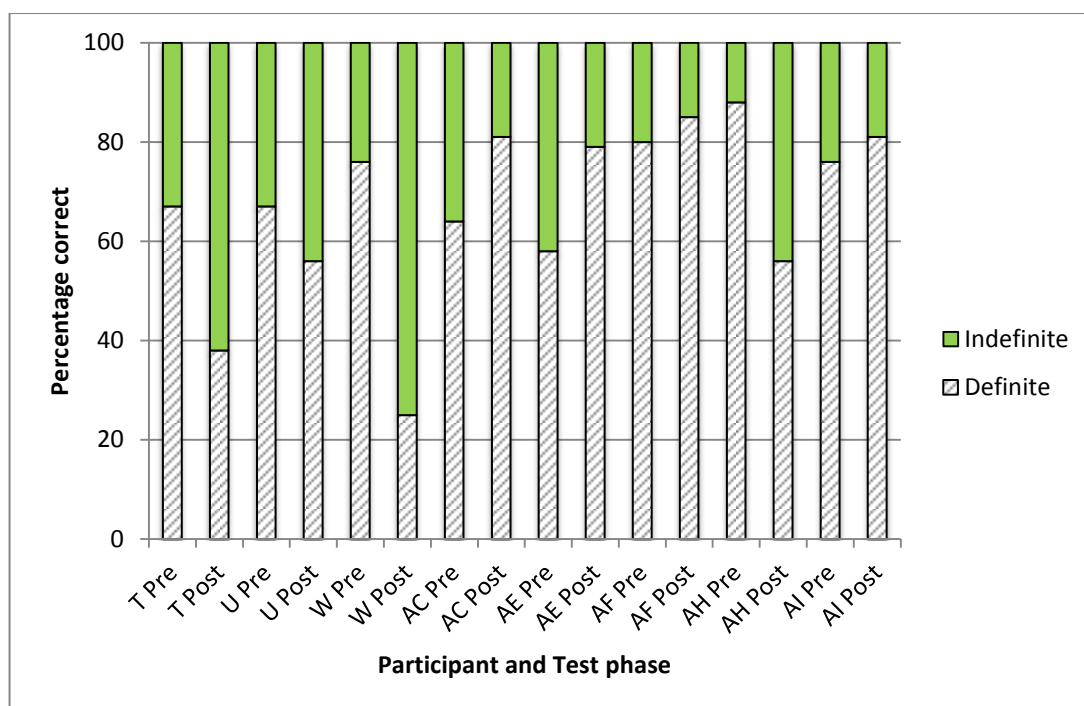
Figure 19. Percentage of correct uses of the definite and indefinite articles in the written production of learners with an average proficiency at pre-test and post-test. Standard Instruction group (*n* = 8).

The seven participants in the Specificity Instruction group had the lowest proportion of indefinite articles that were used correctly, when compared to the other two groups. However, three participants still managed to increase their proportion of indefinite articles used correctly between the pre-test and the post-test, as seen in Figure 20. The other four participants showed a small reduction over time in the proportion of indefinite articles used correctly. Out of 44 texts that were analysed across the three groups, just five had a higher proportion of correct uses of the indefinite article when compared to the number of correct uses of the definite article. Therefore, it is clear that the definite article represents both the highest number of correct uses as well as the highest number of errors, as described in the previous section of this thesis. Of the 22 participants, exactly half increased their proportion of correctly-used indefinite articles between the pre-test and the post-test, which could suggest some development in the acquisition of the indefinite article across time.
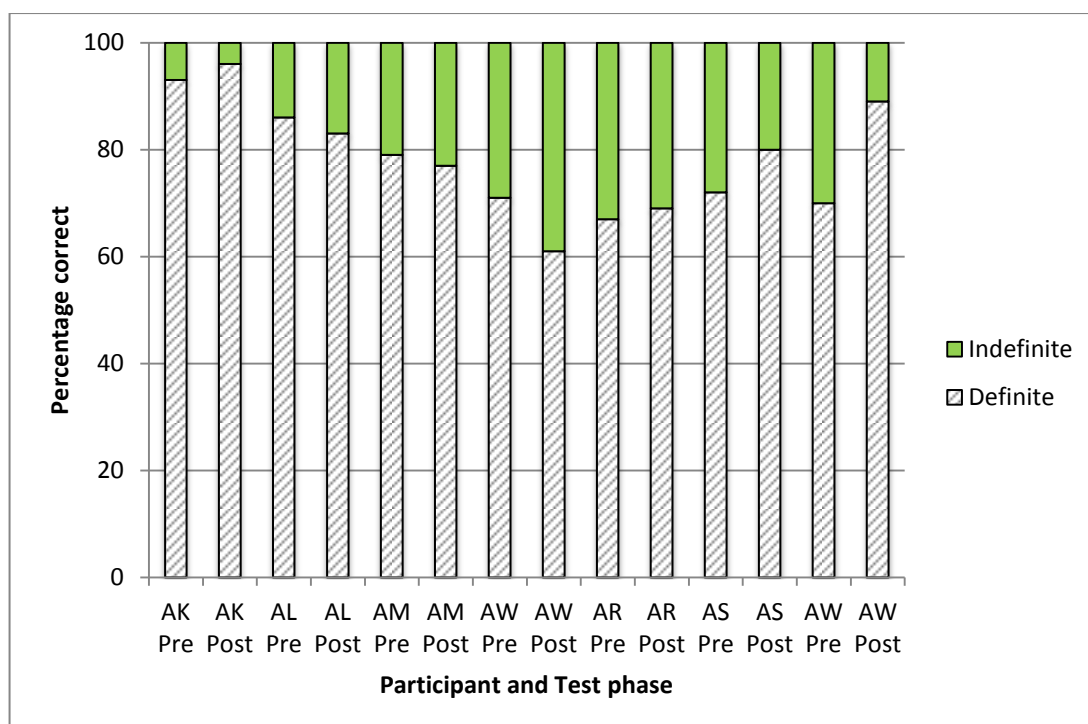
Figure 20. Percentage of correct uses of the definite and indefinite articles in the written production of learners with an average proficiency at pre-test and post-test. Specificity Instruction group (*n* = 7).

To summarise, the definite article is used more than the indefinite article, and as such represents both the largest number of errors and the largest number of correct uses. This is in common with use of the definite article across the English language, as outlined previously. It is possible that the higher number of errors with the definite article in this data, when compared to previous article acquisition studies, is because this article is used more than the indefinite article by these learners. However, it could also be a reflection of the relatively low proficiency of the learners in the current study. Therefore, the data presented in this section does not provide evidence against directionality. If, as previous research suggests, the definite article is acquired first then that would explain why it is used much more frequently than the indefinite article amongst these relatively low level learners. Finally, it should be mentioned that one limitation of this data, which will be addressed in more detail in Chapter 8, is that the writing topics differed between the pre-test and the post-test. Therefore, the different uses of the definite and indefinite articles at the two time points could be a reflection of the writing topics, rather than evidence that some participants are increasing their correct usage of the indefinite article over time. This data does not provide strong evidence to support the proposal

that the definite article is acquired before the indefinite article; however, neither does it go contrary to this theory, despite a higher number of errors being made with the definite article. It is clear that the higher overall use of the definite article makes it proportionately more likely to be used incorrectly when compared to the indefinite article.

6.5. CONCLUSION

This chapter has given the group results for the elicitation task, judgment task, and written production data with the No Instruction group, Standard Instruction group, and Specificity Instruction group data presented for each task. The No Instruction group improved significantly on both tasks, although there was a decrease in the accuracy of article use in the written production data of a subset of participants from this group. The Standard Instruction group also improved significantly on the judgment task, although they performed significantly worse than the other two groups on the judgment task at pre-test. The post-test data for the elicitation task showed a small, non-significant decrease in accuracy in two contexts for the Standard Instruction group and, despite an overall improvement on the elicitation task between the two time points, it was not statistical. This result will be explored further with an examination of the individual data in the next chapter of this thesis. The written production data for this group somewhat mirrored the trend shown by the task results, with half of participants in a subset of data also showing an increase in accuracy between the pre-test and the post-test. The results for the Specificity Instruction group are the least clear of all of the groups. Despite a significant improvement in accuracy as measured by the elicitation task, the group data for the judgment task showed a decrease in accuracy that was not significant. Therefore, the individual data for this task will be presented in Chapter 7. Written production data for a subset of participants from the Specificity Instruction group also showed variable results. Furthermore, an analysis of the proportion of definite and indefinite articles that were used correctly by each group showed that the Specificity Instruction group had the lowest proportion of usage of the indefinite article, possibly indicating that they have not yet acquired the use of this article. Whether these variable results are an indication of interlanguage development due to the linguistically-informed instruction delivered to this group will be explored further in Chapter 8. The next chapter of this thesis will present the results of

individual participants for those tasks and time points which require a closer examination. Chapter 8 will then revisit the Research Questions and predictions made in Chapter 5 and the results of the study will be summarised in answer to each question. Finally, there will be a more detailed discussion of the implications of these results.

7. INDIVIDUAL RESULTS

The previous chapter presented an analysis of the performance of three groups of learners on an elicitation task and a judgment task, plus an examination of a subset of written production data provided by the learners. The results for the two tasks were analysed according to the mean result for each of four contexts: [+definite, +specific], [+definite, −specific], [−definite, +specific] and [−definite, −specific]. However, group results may not always accurately represent the performance of individual learners. As outlined in Chapter 3, there are a number of studies which have tested the FH proposed by Ionin (2003). This hypothesis claims that learners' errors will not be random but will reflect possible UG parameter settings. When testing this hypothesis, Hawkins et al. (2006) found that the group results for Japanese learners of English suggest fluctuation whereas individual results do not. A further claim presented in Chapter 3 was that the [−definite, +specific] context is particularly problematic for L2 learners of English with an articleless L1. However, the group results for this context presented in Chapter 6 did not differ radically from the other three contexts, as measured by the elicitation task. Results for the judgment task show the lowest mean scores in this context for all three learner groups at the time of the pre-test, although this difference was not evident in the post-test results. Therefore, the current chapter will begin with a closer examination of the individual results for this context.

This examination is necessary to determine whether the error rates identified by research such as IKW (2004) and Hawkins et al. (2006) are also representative of the participants in the current study. This would suggest fluctuation on the basis of definiteness and specificity. The data presented here is from the pre-test and, as such, demonstrates the performance of these participants before any intervention. The mean accuracy of all 50 participants in this context was 72.33% (sd = 26.38) as measured by the elicitation task and 47.25% (sd = 19.89) as measured by the judgment task. As the standard deviations suggest, there is a great deal of variation between individual learners within this context. The judgment task used in the current research was newly developed for this study and so no comparable research has yet been conducted using this same instrument. The elicitation task, however, was taken from IZP (2009) and several previous studies of article acquisition have used an earlier version of this same instrument where learners were forced to choose

between the definite, indefinite, or zero articles. Therefore, the results from two of these previous studies will be contrasted with the results for individual learners on the elicitation task in the current study.

IKW (2004:30) found error rates with [−definite, +specific] contexts of 36% amongst L1 Russian speakers and 22% amongst L1 Korean speakers using the forced-choice elicitation task. The L1 Russian and Korean learners in IKW's study were classified as intermediate/advanced, although the mean proficiency of the Korean leaners was significantly higher than the mean proficiency of the Russian leaners. Therefore, the relatively low error rate of 22% amongst the Korean learners was attributed to them being of a higher proficiency than the Russian learners. Hawkins et al. (2006) found higher error rates amongst their Japanese learners on a similar forced-choice task. The error rates were 50% with singular specific indefinites and 58% with plural specific indefinites, despite these learners also being classified as upper intermediate or advanced according to their scores on the Oxford QPT. The Japanese learners tested by Hawkins et al. (2006) had a mean proficiency of 46.3 on the QPT, compared to a mean proficiency of 23.3 for the 50 participants in the current study. The learners in the current study are classified as elementary/lower intermediate and are therefore a considerably lower proficiency than the learners in previously published research. The mean error rate for the 50 L1 Chinese learners in the current study was 27.68% on the elicitation task, in the [−definite, +specific] context. This places their accuracy between the Korean and Russian leaners tested by IKW (2004), despite being a lower proficiency. Figure 21 presents the individual error rates at the time of the pre-test for all 50 learners on the elicitation task.

As outlined above, the lowest mean error rate for this context in the previous research was 22%, which relates to the Korean learners tested by IKW (2004). As can be seen from Figure 21, 27 individual participants in the current study had an error rate lower than 22%. However, another 13 learners had error rates of 50% or more, a level comparable to the Japanese learners in Hawkins et al.'s study (2006). Therefore, despite considerable individual variation, just over half of the participants in the current study were more accurate than the lowest mean score in previously published research with [−definite, +specific] contexts. This is despite being of a much lower overall proficiency. This finding mirrors the group results presented in the previous chapter of the current thesis, which did not show any radical difference

between performance on this context and the other three contexts as measured by either task at the time of the pre-test. The fact that these results differ from so many other studies, however, deserves further discussion and so this topic will be revisited in Chapter 8. Furthermore, the relatively high accuracy identified with this allegedly problematic context raises the question of whether learners in the current study demonstrate patterns of fluctuation. IKW (2004) divide learners according to five patterns of accuracy, as outlined in Chapter 3 and repeated in (93) for ease of reference.
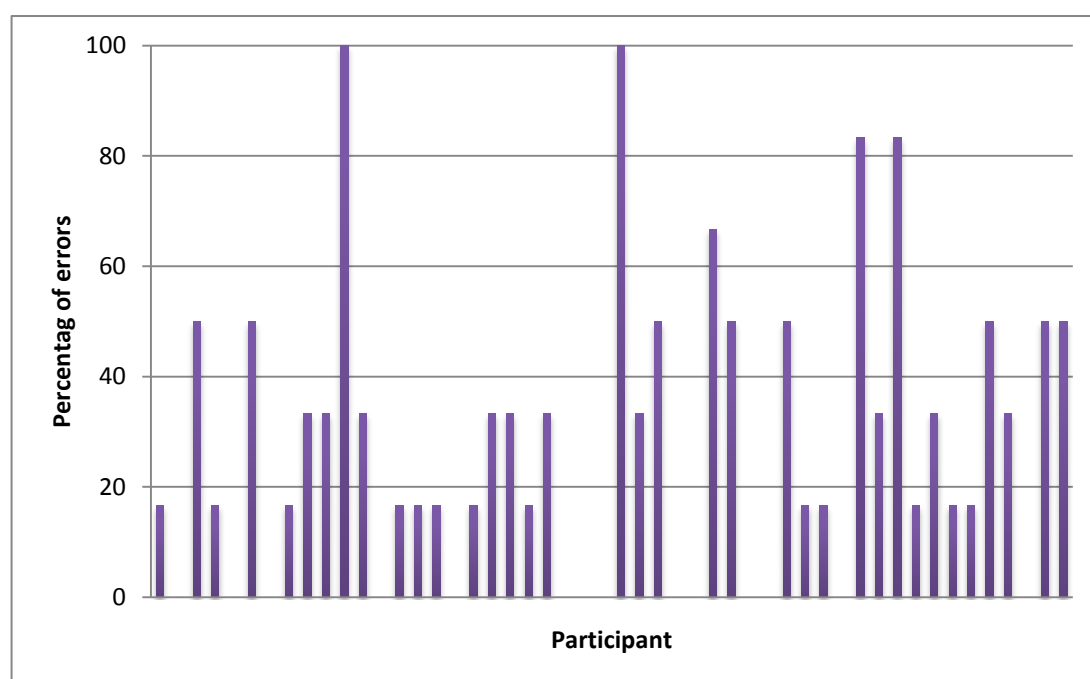
Figure 21. Pre-test error rates for the elicitation task in [–definite, +specific] contexts. All participants (*n* = 50).

93. **a.** The definiteness pattern: Correct parameter-setting
At least 75% *the* use in [+definite, +specific] contexts
Less than 25% *the* overuse in [−definite, −specific] contexts
One of the following:
    iv. no specificity distinction with definites or indefinites OR
    v. a small (<25%) specificity distinction with definites only OR
    vi. a small (<25%) specificity distinction with indefinites only
b. The fluctuation pattern
At least 75% *the* use in [+definite, +specific] contexts
Less than 25% *the* overuse in [−definite, −specific] contexts
Evidence for a specificity distinction

More overuse of *the* with [+specific] than with [−specific] indefinites

Less use of *the* with [−specific] than with [+specific] indefinites

Evidence for a definiteness distinction

More use of *the* with [+specific] definites than with [+specific] indefinites

The specificity distinction with indefinites does not exceed the specificity distinction with definites by more than 50% (and vice versa)

c. The specificity pattern: Parameter mis-setting

At least 75% *the* use in all [+specific] contexts

Less than 25% *the* use in all [−specific] contexts

Equally high use of *the* with [+specific] definites and [+specific] indefinites

d. The partial fluctuation pattern

At least 75% *the* use in [+definite, +specific] contexts

Less than 25% *the* overuse in [−definite, −specific] contexts

One of the following:

iv. the specificity distinction is made only with definites OR

v. the specificity distinction is made only with indefinites OR

vi. the specificity distinction is much (>50%) larger with indefinites than with definites (or vice versa)

e. Miscellaneous pattern

Any patterns that do not fit into the above four categories

The results of the individual participants were grouped according to the five definiteness and specificity patterns shown in (93). On the elicitation task, just one participant showed evidence of partial fluctuation, fluctuating with indefinites only. 18 participants appear to have acquired the definiteness setting, and the remaining 31 participants demonstrated miscellaneous patterns of article use. On the judgment task, again most of the participants showed miscellaneous patterns of article misuse with 44 participants falling into this category. 3 participants, all from the Specificity Instruction group, showed the fluctuation pattern in their pre-test results, as defined by IKW (2004). A further participant showed partial fluctuation with indefinites, whilst just 2 participants appear to have acquired the definiteness setting according to the judgment task results. As reported in Chapter 3, Tryzna (2009) stated that lower level learners will show optional use of articles, which develop into patterns of fluctuation as proficiency increases. This could explain why the patterns of fluctuation reported in previous research do not appear to apply to the individual participants in the current study. In addition, there is some difference between the two tasks. The small number of learners who showed patterns of full or partial

fluctuation when measured by the judgment task all showed miscellaneous patterns of article misuse on the elicitation task, adding support to the possibility that these two tasks measure different constructs.

The rest of this chapter will look in more detail at the results of individual learners within their groups, or at individual items. It begins with an examination of two sets of data which returned unexpected results following the group analysis. In Section 7.1, the performance of learners in the Standard Instruction group on the elicitation task will be presented to see whether the non-significant decrease in accuracy in the [−definite, +specific] context is indicative of the performance of most of the learners in this group. In Section 7.2, individual results for the Specificity Instruction group's performance on the judgment task will be presented. This is also due to a decrease in accuracy in three of the four contexts which was evident in the group results but may not represent individual learner's performance on this task. Section 7.3 will again look at the judgment task, but considering the results by item rather than by participant. This section will present the descriptive statistics for each of the target items to identify any differences between items that were placed in subject position in the task and those that were in object position. Finally, in Section 7.4 the six participants who completed a delayed post-test will be analysed in more detail with an examination of their performance at the three time points on both the elicitation task and judgment task.

7.1. STANDARD INSTRUCTION GROUP/ ELICITATION TASK

This section will provide descriptive statistics for the pre-test and post-test data of individual participants in the Standard Instruction group, as measured by the untimed, written elicitation task (see Chapter 5 for details of the task). These results will be presented for the [−definite, +specific] context. Statistical analysis of the data for all 18 participants, as measured by a RM ANOVA, showed an increase in accuracy between the pre-test and post-test which was not significant but had a large effect size. There was also a significant effect of specificity, and a significant 3-way interaction between time, definiteness and specificity. However, the descriptive statistics for the 18 learners presented in Section 6.1.1 suggest that learners in the Standard Instruction group increased in accuracy in [+definite, +specific] and [−definite, −specific] contexts, but decreased in accuracy in the [−definite, +specific]

context. There was no change in accuracy in the group mean for the [+definite, −specific] context. Therefore, the context presented here is anomalous with the overall results for this group on this task. Furthermore, this context is of interest since it was identified as the most problematic in previous research, as discussed above. Figure 22 shows the individual results of the Standard Instruction group in the [−definite, +specific] context, as measured by the elicitation task. One learner (Z) scored 0% for this context at both the pre-test and post-test and so has not been included in this chart. However, this participant's scores were included in the overall analysis as there were no anomalies in the other three contexts.
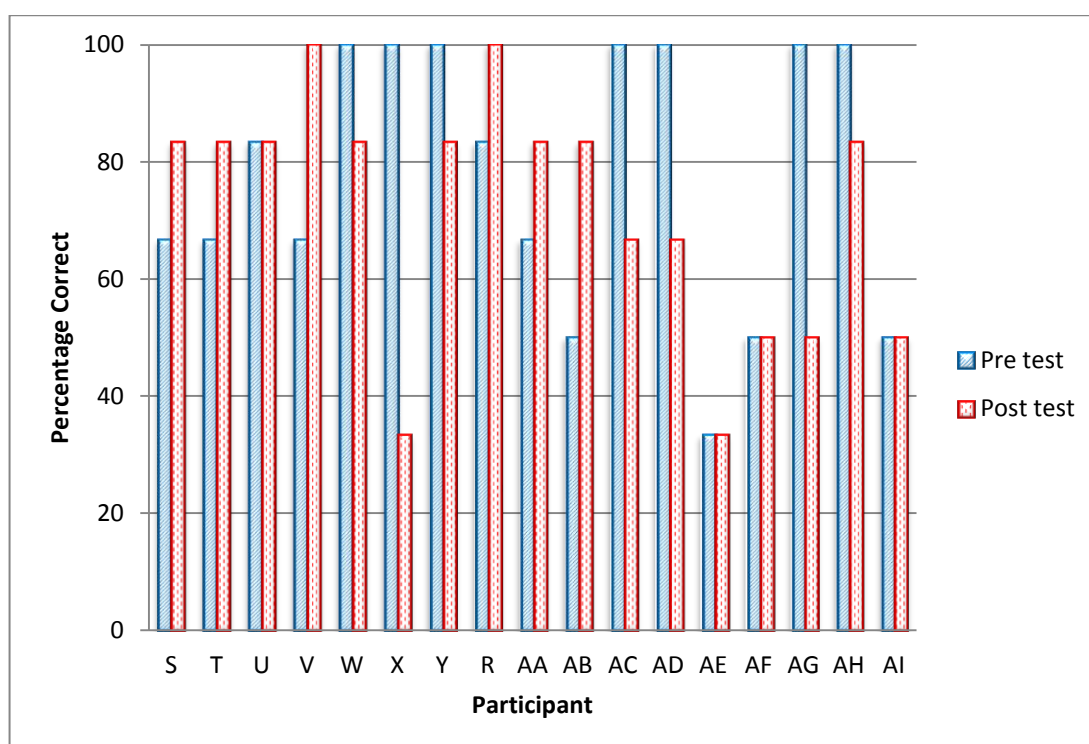
Figure 22. Individual performance on the elicitation task in [−definite, +specific] contexts. Standard Instruction group ($n = 17$).

The mean result for learners in the Standard Instruction group in the [−definite, +specific] context, as measured by the elicitation task, was 73.15% at pre-test and 67.59% at post-test. The standard deviation for both results was over 20, meaning it is necessary to look in more detail at the results of individual learners. Seven of the eighteen participants showed the same decrease in accuracy that was suggested by the group mean, whilst a further six participants improved between the pre-test and post-test. Four learners showed no change in accuracy in this context

following instruction, not including the participant who scored zero at both the pre-test and the post-test. Therefore, more than half of the participants in this group (11 out of 18) either improved in accuracy in this context or their score remained constant. To summarise, this context was identified as particularly problematic by previous research (see Chapter 3), so it is of interest to know how individual learners performed. Furthermore, the scores for the Standard Instruction group on the elicitation task decreased in this context between the pre-test and the post-test, the only decrease recorded across the three groups on this task. An examination of the individual results shows that the majority of participants in this group did not show a decrease in accuracy in the [−definite, +specific] context, despite the mean score demonstrating this trend. Therefore, this result does not accurately represent the scores of most of the learners and so will not be considered further.

7.2. SPECIFICITY INSTRUCTION GROUP/ JUDGMENT TASK

This section of the chapter will provide descriptive statistics for the pre-test and post-test data of individual participants in the Specificity Instruction group, as measured by the timed judgment task (see Chapter 6 for details of the task). These results will be presented for each of the four contexts: [+definite, +specific], [+definite, −specific], [−definite, +specific] and [–definite, −specific]. The group results for these four contexts suggest that learners showed a small decrease in accuracy in every context between the pre-test and the post-test, except for [−definite, +specific] contexts where the group performance remained relatively stable across time. Figures 23–26 show the individual results for each of the four contexts, respectively.

The mean result for this group for [+definite, +specific] contexts was 65.00% at pre-test and 48.33% at post-test, with both means showing a standard deviation greater than 15. Figure 23 presents the individual results for this context, and eight of the fifteen participants decreased in accuracy between the pre-test and the post-test. One participant in particular, AS, showed a large reduction in accuracy in the context, reducing from 87.5% accuracy at pre-test to 12.5% at post-test. However, they were not removed from the analysis because the scores of AS remained constant or improved in two further contexts between the pre-test and the post-test, with the fourth context showing a smaller reduction in accuracy for this participant.

Furthermore, three participants showed no change between the pre-test and post-test, whilst a further four participants improved. What is apparent from Figure 23 is that those participants who reduced in accuracy across time did so by a greater amount than the participants whose accuracy improved. Therefore, these individual results demonstrate that the net decrease over time in the group mean is reflected only in the results of 8 of the 15 participants.
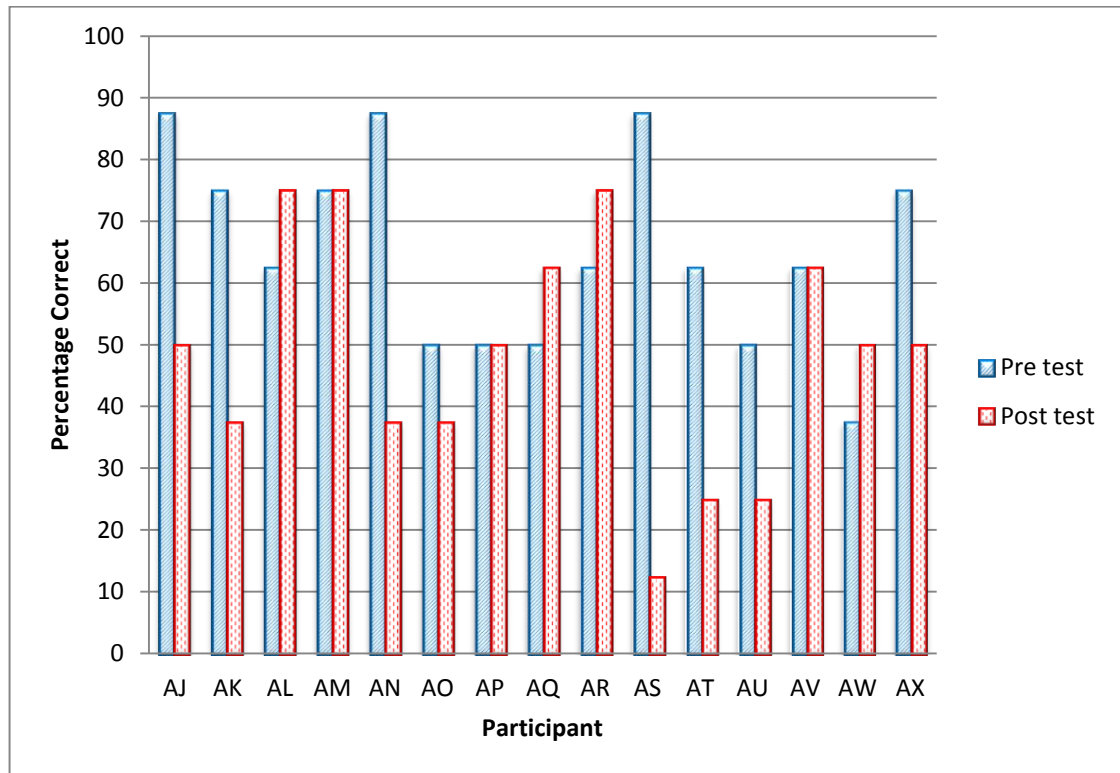
Figure 23. Individual performance on the judgment task in [+definite, +specific] contexts. Specificity Instruction group (*n* = 15).

Figure 24 shows that a further three participants demonstrated no change in accuracy between the pre-test and post-test in [+definite, −specific] contexts, as measured by the judgment task. Four participants increased in accuracy and eight participants showed a decrease in accuracy in this context between the two time points. These results are similar to those presented above for [+definite, +specific] contexts, although it is different individuals who increased and decreased in accuracy across the two contexts. Again, just over half of participants in this group had results which match those provided by the group mean. The mean result for this group for [+definite, −specific] contexts was 60.00% at pre-test and 55.00% at post-test, with a standard deviation of greater than 20 for the pre-test results.
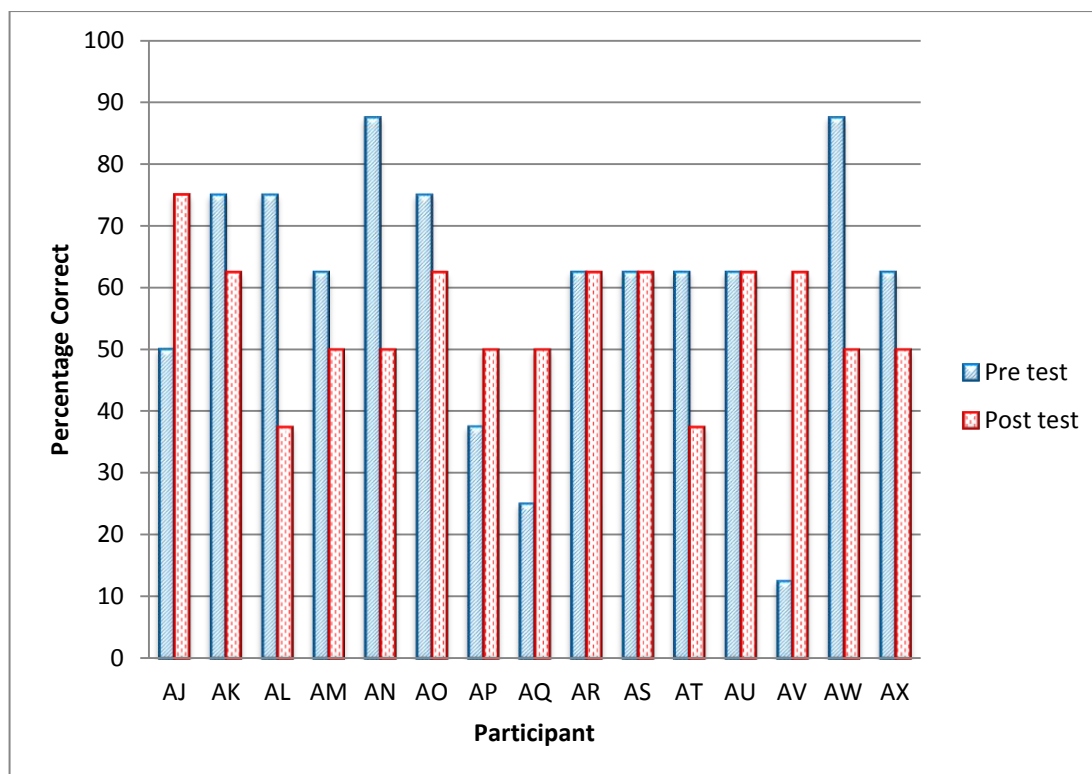
Figure 24. Individual performance on the judgment task in [+definite, −specific] contexts. Specificity Instruction group (*n* = 15).

The individual results for the [−definite, +specific] context are found in Figure 25. These differ markedly from the results presented above for both of the definite contexts. The group mean for this context showed a very small increase in accuracy of less than 1%, and the standard deviations for the pre-test and post-test means were 19.36 and 14.07, respectively. Similarly to the previous two contexts, three participants showed no change in accuracy between the pre-test and post-test. However, to reiterate, it is generally different participants whose accuracy remains constant across time for each of the three contexts. One participant, on the other hand, (AU) has shown this pattern across two contexts. Eight participants improved in accuracy in this context and four showed a decrease in accuracy between the pre-test and post-test whilst there was no change in the scores of the remaining three participants. These results are of interest because this group of participants received explicit instruction on specificity, designed to overcome potential problems with [−definite, +specific] contexts. The fact that, following this instruction, individual learners in the Specificity Instruction group improved more on this context than the other three contexts as measured by the judgment task, despite having a lower mean score at pre-test, is of interest. Therefore, these individual results will be discussed

further in Chapter 8. However, the individual pre-test results of all 50 participants on the elicitation task show that the accuracy level in [−definite, +specific] contexts are not comparable with the results presented in previously published research (see the introduction to the current chapter for more details).
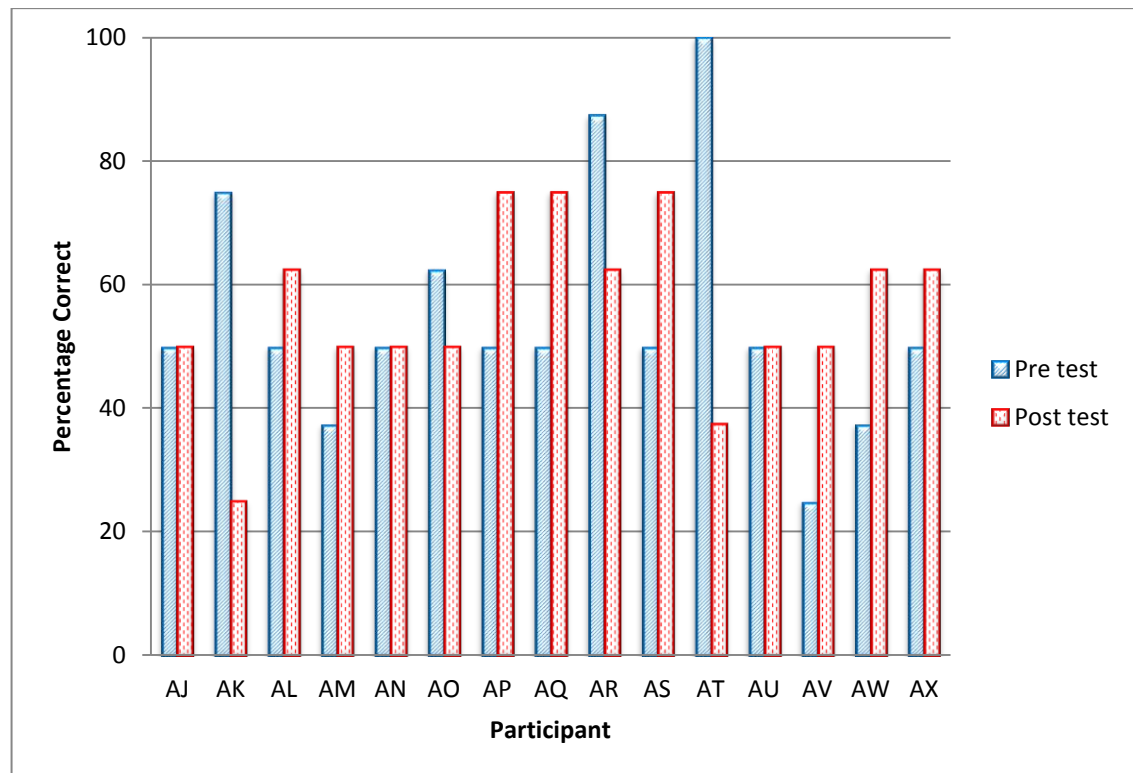
Figure 25. Individual performance on the judgment task in [−definite, +specific] contexts. Specificity Instruction group (*n* = 15).

The final of the four contexts is [−definite,−specific] and, in common with the two definite contexts, group results indicate a reduction in accuracy between the pre-test and post-test from 63.33% to 50%, with both figures showing a high standard deviation, suggesting that the mean may not accurately represent the results of individual learners. Figure 26 shows individual performance on the judgment task in [−definite, −specific] contexts. This context has the highest number of participants who decreased in accuracy between the pre-test and the post-test, with ten individuals showing this result. Two participants showed no change in accuracy between the pre-test and the post-test, and the accuracy of the judgments of three participants improved between the two-test phases.
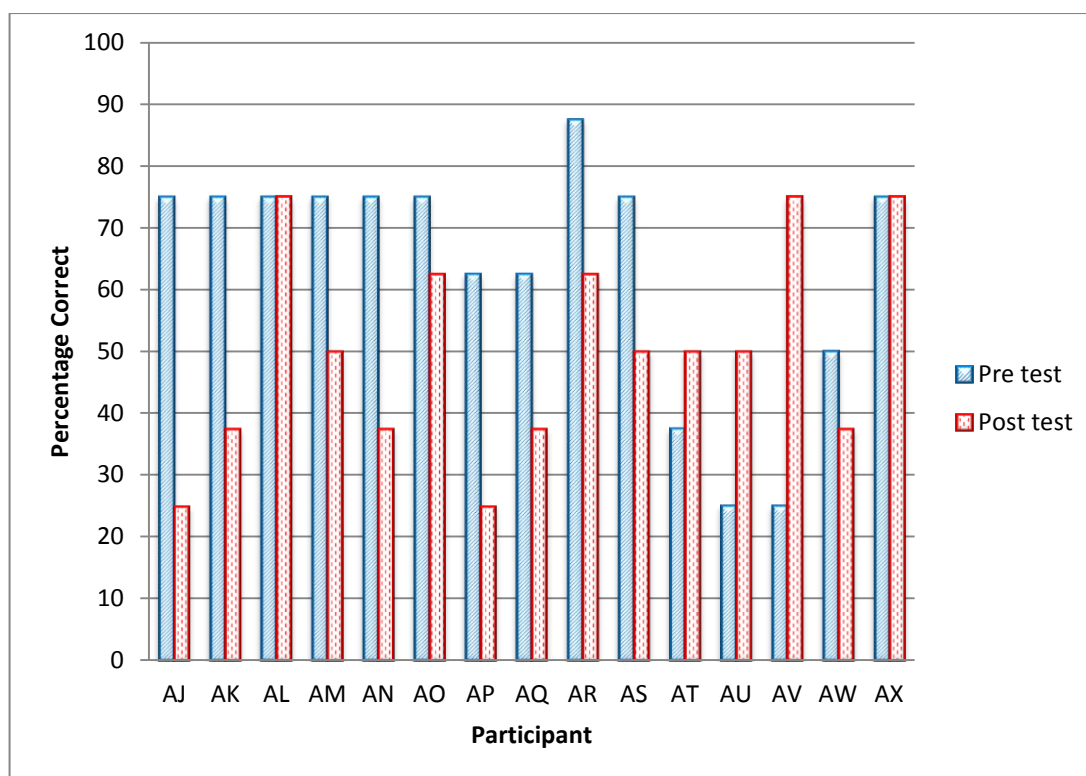
Figure 26. Individual performance on the judgment task in [−definite, −specific] contexts. Specificity Instruction group (*n* = 15).

To summarise, Table 15 lists the 15 participants in the Specificity Instruction group and states whether each individual increased or decreased in accuracy across the four contexts. As can be seen in Table 15, across all four contexts just two participants (AK and AO) consistently reduced in accuracy between the two time points. Furthermore, participant AN reduced in accuracy in three of the contexts, whilst participant AV increased in accuracy in three contexts, with both participants' scores remaining constant in the fourth context. The scores of the remaining participants did not show any discernible patterns. The individual results presented in this section for learners in the Specificity Instruction group suggest that, although the group means given in the previous chapter show a decrease for three of the contexts, at individual level 5–7 participants did not decrease in accuracy in these contexts between the two time points. The [–definite, +specific] context does not follow the same pattern, a fact which may be related to the instruction delivered to these participants.

Table 15. Individual variation between pre-test and post-test scores on the judgment task. Specificity Instruction group (*n* = 15).

Participant	+definite, +specific	+definite, −specific	−definite, +specific	−definite, −specific
AJ	decrease	increase	no change	decrease
AK	decrease	decrease	decrease	decrease
AL	increase	decrease	increase	no change
AM	no change	decrease	increase	decrease
AN	decrease	decrease	no change	decrease
AO	decrease	decrease	decrease	decrease
AP	no change	increase	increase	decrease
AQ	increase	increase	increase	decrease
AR	increase	no change	decrease	decrease
AS	decrease	no change	increase	decrease
AT	decrease	decrease	decrease	increase
AU	decrease	no change	no change	increase
AV	no change	increase	increase	increase
AW	increase	decrease	increase	decrease
AX	decrease	decrease	increase	no change

The AJT results for this group are presented with this level of detail because they are the only group on this task who did not show a significant improvement in accuracy between the pre-test and post-test. A small, non-significant decrease in accuracy was identified in three of the four contexts and the individual results presented above show that 8–10 of the 15 participants demonstrated this same pattern in each context. The one context where a decrease was not identified in either the group, or in the majority of individual results, was the [–definite, +specific] context. The possible reasons for the overall non-significant decrease will be explored further in Chapter 8 with reference to the interlanguage development of this group of learners. The different result for the [−definite, +specific] context will also be explored.

7.3. INDIVIDUAL ITEM ANALYSIS/JUDGMENT TASK

As explained in Section 6.2.2, a further analysis was conducted on the pre-test data for the judgment task with items as cases. This additional analysis was carried out because the judgment task was created for the current study and so has not been repeatedly tested. The elicitation task, on the other hand, was originally created by Ionin (2003) and has been used in its original or adapted form in numerous published studies. The inferential statistics for the item analysis on the judgment task at the time of the pre-test were presented in Section 6.2.2, and they did not differ from the analysis with participants as cases. This section of the thesis will present the descriptive statistics for the item analysis. Table 16 shows the mean scores for all 32 test items on the judgment task, 8 in each of the four contexts ([+definite, +specific] [+definite, −specific] [−definite, +specific] [−definite, −specific]). There is one column for each group, and the final column shows the mean score across all groups. The mean for each item varies between 38.78% and 79.59%. However, 24 of the 32 items had mean scores between 40% and 60% which is around chance level. It is also clear from Table 16 that the mean scores of the Standard Instruction group were the most variable, which reflects the analysis by participant, as outlined in Chapter 6.

A further point of interest in Table 16 is that, when creating this task, the majority of target NPs were placed in object position. However, due to an oversight that was not noticed until after data collection had been completed, three of the target NPs occupied subject position. These were items 6, 15, and 27 which all require a definite article. The mean scores for these three items are 57.14, 55.10, and 55.10, respectively, which are in the same range as the majority on items on this task. Therefore, the subject-object asymmetry does not appear to have affected these results, although a correction of this anomaly is recommended for anyone using this task in future research. The results of the item analysis will be considered further in Chapter 8, when discussing the results for the Standard Instruction group on the judgment task.

Table 16. Mean score per item on judgment task at pre-test. All groups.

Context	Item	No Instruction (*n* =17)	Standard Instruction (*n* =17)	Specificity Instruction (*n* =15)	Mean across all groups (*n* =49)
[+definite, +specific]	i1	88.24	64.71	33.33	63.27
	i6	70.59	17.65	86.67	57.14
	i9	82.35	88.24	66.67	79.59
	i24	70.59	23.53	73.33	55.10
	i25	58.82	23.53	41.18	42.86
	i27	58.82	23.53	86.67	55.10
	i43	58.82	52.94	71.18	53.06
	i49	64.71	41.18	66.67	57.14
[+definite, −specific]	i7	52.94	35.29	53.33	46.94
	i13	88.24	41.18	73.33	67.35
	i15	64.71	41.18	60.00	55.10
	i21	64.71	64.71	86.67	71.43
	i30	58.82	76.47	71.18	61.22
	i33	58.82	58.82	60.00	59.18
	i37	70.59	5.88	73.33	48.98
	i46	47.06	47.06	20.00	38.78
[−definite, +specific]	i10	35.29	41.18	53.33	42.86
	i14	52.94	41.18	26.67	40.82
	i19	35.29	23.53	73.33	42.86
	i26	47.06	41.18	35.29	42.86
	i28	58.82	41.18	60.00	53.06
	i31	64.71	29.41	35.29	44.90
	i38	88.24	23.53	66.67	59.18
	i44	70.59	23.53	80.00	57.14
[−definite, −specific]	i3	70.59	52.94	20.00	48.98
	i8	58.82	29.41	80.00	55.10
	i12	41.18	47.06	66.67	51.02
	i18	64.71	94.12	66.67	75.51
	i22	41.18	35.29	60.00	44.90
	i35	41.18	70.59	33.33	48.98
	i40	41.18	17.65	66.67	40.82
	i48	76.47	29.41	86.67	63.27

7.4. DELAYED POST-TEST

This next section of the thesis presents the results for the six participants who completed the delayed post-test. The original intention was to collect delayed post-test data from all 50 participants. However, as explained in Section 5.1, despite originally agreeing to all three phases of this study, when participants were contacted to complete the delayed post-test many were unable to spare the time. At

the time of data collection for the delayed post-test, the participants were no longer enrolled on an intensive English course so could only be contacted via email. Many simply did not reply or missed arranged meetings; whilst others replied saying they were too busy with their degree courses. The problems with data collection at the time of the delayed post-test are one of the principal limitations of this study, and will be addressed in Chapter 8. This data was collected between 6 and 8 months after the post-test, and during this time all 6 participants were resident in the UK and studying on English-medium university courses. The group will be given for each participant, although it is not possible to attribute any individual differences identified in this section of the thesis to the intervention method, due to the very small number of participants who completed the delayed post-test. The individual results of these six learners will be given for the elicitation task first, followed by the results for the judgment task. Additionally, these results will be summarised in Chapter 8 since they address Research Question 3, which asks whether any improvements in article accuracy will be short term or more durable.

7.4.1. ELICITATION TASK

The individual results on the elicitation task of the six learners who completed all three test phases are given in Table 17. For each context there were six items, and the number of times *the* is overused with indefinite contexts and *a/an* is overused with definite contexts are listed in the table. To summarise the results according to context, for the [+definite, +specific] there was minimal overuse of *a* at any of the three time points. The only score that stands out in this context is participant S who overused *a* with half of all [+definite, +specific] items at the time of the pre-test. There is considerably more overuse of *a* with the [+definite, −specific] context by one participant, AO, and this occurs at all three time points. The other participants overuse *a* minimally in this context. Therefore, only one of the six participants displays the higher overuse of *a* with non-specific definite contexts which was predicted based on the results of previously published research (see Chapter 3).

The other problematic context identified in the research reviewed in Chapter 3 is [−definite, +specific]. As shown at the start of the current chapter, the results of all 50 participants differ somewhat from previously published research. Participants

in the current study, as a whole, show a lower percentage of errors in this context than would be predicted, despite their relatively low proficiency level.

Table 17. Number of incorrect uses of *the*/*a* by individual participants on the elicitation task. All three test phases.

Participant	Group	Test Phases	+definite, +specific Overuse of *a*	+definite, −specific Overuse of *a*	−definite, +specific Overuse of *the*	−definite, −specific Overuse of *the*
C	No Instr.	Pre	0	0	3	2
		Post	0	0	2	1
		Delayed post	0	1	2	0
S	Standard	Pre	3	0	2	1
		Post	0	0	1	1
		Delayed post	0	0	2	1
Z	Standard	Pre	0	0	4	3
		Post	0	0	6	1
		Delayed post	1	0	4	2
AK	Specificity	Pre	0	0	1	3
		Post	0	0	3	1
		Delayed post	1	2	0	1
AO	Specificity	Pre	1	3	4	1
		Post	0	3	6	0
		Delayed post	0	4	5	0
AS	Specificity	Pre	1	0	1	1
		Post	0	0	2	1
		Delayed post	1	0	0	1

However, the results of the six participants who completed the delayed post-test are consistent with the previous research. It is clear from the data in Table 17 that there was more overuse of *the* with **[**−definite, +specific**]** items than there was overuse of either *the* or *a* in any of the other three contexts. This trend is seen for all 6 participants and there is little change across the three time points. The final of the four contexts is **[**−definite, −specific**]**, and there is more overuse of the incorrect

article with this context than with either [+definite, +specific] or **[+definite,** −specific] contexts. Therefore, it appears that the indefinite article causes more problems for these six participants than the definite article does. However, overuse of *the* with **[−definite, −specific]** items is not as prolific as it is with **[−definite,** +specific] items. To summarise the overuse of *a* and *the* on the elicitation task across all three time points, there appears to be more overuse of *the* with indefinite contexts than overuse of *a* with definite contexts. In addition, the results for the **[−definite,** +specific] context are markedly different from the other three contexts, in line with previous research findings (see Chapter 3 for details). This context showed the highest overuse of an incorrect article amongst these participants at each of the three time points.

In terms of accuracy with all items containing articles in the elicitation task, every participant improved their score between the pre-test and post-test, as can be seen in Table 18. Three participants (S, Z, and AS) then showed a drop in accuracy between the post-test and delayed post-test, although their percentage of correct responses was still higher than at the time of the pre-test. A further two participants sustained their improvement over the 6–8 months, showing the highest accuracy score at the time of the delayed post-test. The final participant (C, who received no instruction on the English article system) showed their lowest overall score at the time of the delayed post-test. Therefore, the overall results across both definite and indefinite contexts suggest that the majority of improvements in article accuracy, as measured by the elicitation task, were no longer visible at the time of the delayed post-test.

Table 18. Overall accuracy of individual participants (*n* = 6) on the elicitation task.

Participant	Group	Pre-test Score	Post-test score	Delayed post-test score
C	No Instr.	75.0	88.9	72.2
S	Standard	77.8	94.4	86.1
Z	Standard	41.7	69.4	66.7
AK	Specificity	55.6	77.8	80.6
AO	Specificity	50.0	63.9	69.4
AS	Specificity	75.0	83.3	80.6

7.4.2. JUDGMENT TASK

Next, the results for the judgment task will be presented to see whether they support the finding of the elicitation task analysis; that short-term improvements in article accuracy as a result of instruction do not lead to longer-term improvements following the end of intensive English instruction. Furthermore, the elicitation task results suggest that these six participants had higher overuse of an incorrect article in the [−definite, +specific] context. This finding supports the results of previously published research which suggests this to be the most problematic context for L2 learners of English whose L1 has no article system. The judgment task asks participants to identify whether items are grammatical or ungrammatical. As such, there is no article overuse visible in the results of this task. Therefore, the results in Table 19 show the number of items in each context that were correctly judged as either grammatical or ungrammatical. There are 8 items for each context, of which four were grammatical and four ungrammatical. No distinction is made in Table 19 between the results for grammatical and ungrammatical items. However, this will be addressed in Chapter 8 in relation to Research Question 9. The results in Table 19 are summarised below. Finally, the average accuracy across all four contexts for each learner at each time point will be introduced and discussed.

The individual participants' accuracy on the judgment task does not appear to differ across the four contexts. This is despite the suggestion in previously published studies that the [−definite, +specific] context is most problematic, a finding mirrored in the results of these 6 learners on the elicitation task. There is also little difference in accuracy between definite and indefinite contexts, or across the three time points. The results in Table 19 closely match the group results presented in the previous chapter, which show that participants in the No Instruction and Standard Instruction groups showed an overall improvement in accuracy between the pre-test and post-test. However, as with the elicitation task results presented above, this overall improvement was not always sustained until the time of the delayed post-test. As for the Specificity Instruction group, it has already been noted that their performance on the judgment task differed from the other two groups at both the group and individual level. These 6 learners reflect that trend. Two learners, AK and AO, reduced in accuracy in every context between the pre-test and the post-test, although there was some evidence of a return to their pre-test levels of accuracy

by the time of the delayed post-test. The final participant, AS, improved in accuracy in just the **[−definite, +specific]** context between the pre-test and post-test. However, by the time of the delayed post-test this improvement was no longer visible and so, as for the other delayed post-test results, there is no evidence of a long term improvement in article accuracy.

Table 19. Individual raw scores on the Judgment task.

Participant	Group	Test	+definite, +specific	+definite, −specific	−definite, +specific	−definite, −specific
C	No	Pre	5	4	4	2
		Post	6	5	4	2
		Delayed post	6	4	4	2
S	Standard	Pre	2	1	1	2
		Post	3	3	4	4
		Delayed post	4	6	2	6
Z	Standard	Pre	2	4	3	1
		Post	4	5	3	7
		Delayed post	3	6	5	3
AK	Specificity	Pre	6	6	6	6
		Post	3	5	2	3
		Delayed post	3	5	6	5
AO	Specificity	Pre	4	6	5	6
		Post	3	5	4	5
		Delayed post	4	3	5	6
AS	Specificity	Pre	7	5	4	6
		Post	1	5	6	4
		Delayed post	2	4	4	3

Overall, results for the judgment task across all four contexts are presented in Table 20. These scores show a short-term improvement between the pre-test and post-test for the three participants in the Standard Instruction and No Instruction groups, although only one of these participants, S who had a very low pre-test score, continued to improve between the post-test and the delayed post-test. The

participants from the Specificity Instruction group all showed a decrease in overall accuracy at the time of the post-test, as measured by the judgment task. However, only one of them continued to decrease in accuracy at the delayed post-test, whilst the other two showed some signs of recovery, but not enough to return to their pre-test levels of accuracy.

Table 20. Overall accuracy of individual participants (*n* = 6) on the judgment task.

Participant	Group	Pre-test Score	Post-test score	Delayed post-test score
C	No Instr.	46.9	53.1	50.0
S	Standard	18.8	43.8	56.3
Z	Standard	31.3	59.4	53.1
AK	Specificity	75	40.6	59.4
AO	Specificity	65.6	53.1	56.3
AS	Specificity	68.8	50.0	40.6

What is noteworthy from the scores presented in Table 20 is that there is no major difference between the scores of the six participants at either the post-test or delayed post-test. The scores for the pre-test, however, show that the three participants from the Specificity Instruction group have a considerably higher accuracy score than the other participants. As discussed in Chapter 6, the pre-test scores of the three groups were not statistically comparable for the judgment task, with participants in the Standard Instruction group performing significantly worse than participants in both the No Instruction and Specificity Instruction groups. It may be this variable performance by learners across the three groups at the time of the pre-test which has led to differences in the levels of improvement for this task. Therefore, the null result for the Specificity Instruction group may not result from the intervention. A more detailed consideration of the effects of the teaching interventions will be made in Chapter 8.

To summarise, the results for the judgment task appear to differ at both the group and individual level. There is little difference between accuracy with definite and indefinite contexts, and there is no notable impact from either of the allegedly problematic contexts. Learners from the Specificity Instruction group, representing half of the results presented here, reduced in accuracy in almost every context between the pre-test and the post-test, with some signs of recovery noted by the time of the delayed post-test. The overall results across both definite and indefinite contexts, however, suggest that the majority of improvements in article accuracy, as

measured by the judgment task, were not completely sustainable up to the time of the delayed post-test. This is a similar result to that presented for the elicitation task in the previous section.

7.5. CONCLUSION

This chapter took a closer look at the results of individual learners to determine whether the group results presented in the previous chapter of the current thesis are indicative of the results of individual learners. Furthermore, there was a focus on two results which warranted further attention: the performance of the Standard Instruction group on the elicitation task; and the performance of the Specificity Instruction group on the judgment task. In addition, the mean results for each individual item on the judgment task were presented. Finally, the individual results for the six learners who completed the delayed post-test were outlined, since a shortage of data at the time of the delayed post-test means that there are not enough results to perform inferential statistical analysis or to analyse the data according to group. The delayed post-test results for both tasks do not suggest any long-term improvements in article accuracy.

This chapter has shown that, in some areas, the individual results are similar to the group results, for example the Specificity Instruction group's performance on the judgment task. However, as the results for the Standard Instruction group on the elicitation task show, what appears to be a reduction in accuracy when examining the group mean at pre-test and post-test is actually indicative of less than half of the participants in that group. In this case at least, the statistical analysis which showed an overall significant improvement was more telling than the descriptive statistics.

A comparison was also made between the results of individual learners for [−definite, +specific] contexts on the elicitation task, and results presented in previous research which had used an earlier version of the same task. This found that less than half of the participants in the current study had results which were comparable with those in previously published research. The majority of learners in the current study scored much higher in this context, despite being a lower proficiency and also having an L1 without articles. Furthermore, there was no evidence of patterns of fluctuation amongst these learners and so the results of the current study do not support Ionin's FH (2003). Reasons for this disparity, including

possible issues of L1 interference, will be discussed in Chapter 8. However, there was some evidence of increased overuse of *the* in the [−definite, +specific] context by the 6 learners who completed the delayed post-test, as measured by the elicitation task. Additionally, the descriptive statistics for the Specificity Instruction group show a stronger performance on the [−definite, +specific] context at both the individual and group level, as measured by the judgment task. This is despite a statistically null result for this group on this task, whereas the other two groups improved significantly and all three learner groups showed an improvement when measured by the elicitation task.

8. DISCUSSION

This chapter of the thesis will begin by demonstrating whether the findings presented in the previous two chapters provide evidence for or against the hypotheses outlined in Chapter 5. It will then evaluate what these results say about article acquisition by the Chinese learners in the current study, and relate this discussion to a selection of the previous studies reviewed in Chapter 3. Next, the possible implications of these results for grammar instruction within language classrooms will be addressed, followed by a discussion of the methodological considerations of this study. The chapter will conclude by addressing the limitations of this study and presenting possible directions for future research.

The three main research questions, as stated in the introduction to this thesis, are as follows:

94. **Research Question 1.** Will explicit instruction on definiteness and specificity have an effect on article accuracy amongst L2 learners of English?

95. **Research Question 2.** Will linguistically-informed instruction lead to greater gains than standard instruction?

96. **Research Question 3.** Will improvements in article accuracy be short term, or more durable?

These main lines of enquiry were further developed in Chapter 5. Six additional questions were asked in order to fully evaluate the impact of the teaching intervention, as well as to answer some methodological questions related to the tasks and which constructs they measured. To reiterate, the six additional research questions are:

97. **Research Question 4.** Will proficiency have an impact on any improvements in article accuracy?

98. **Research Question 5.** Is there any evidence that the definite article is acquired before the indefinite article?

99. **Research Question 6.** Will participants perform worse on [+definite, −specific] and [−definite, +specific] contexts, as measured before any intervention?

100. **Research Question 7.** Will instruction on specificity improve accuracy in [+definite, −specific] and [−definite, +specific] contexts?

101. **Research Question 8.** Will the two tasks produce different results, thereby suggesting that they measure different abilities?

102. **Research Question 9.** Judgment task: Will learners perform differently when judging grammatical and ungrammatical sentences? If so, does this suggest they use different types of knowledge for these two items?

The nine hypotheses reported in Chapter 5 will now be addressed in order.

Research Question 1. Will explicit instruction on definiteness and specificity have an effect on article accuracy amongst L2 learners of English?

The hypothesis was that instruction would have an effect on article accuracy. The results for the two tasks were reported in full in Chapter 6. However, it was not possible to make the pre-test scores comparable on either task, with the three learner groups differing significantly before the intervention. Therefore, to effectively answer this question a further examination was made of the data. The mean improvement of all participants was calculated for both the elicitation task and the AJT. For each participant, their mean score on the pre-test was subtracted from the mean score on the post-test, excluding distractors, and this figure (the individual mean improvement) was used to calculate the mean improvement for each group. The results for the elicitation task will be presented first, followed by results for the judgment task.

As outlined in Chapter 6, the pre-test scores of the Specificity Instruction group were significantly less accurate than the other two groups, as measured by the elicitation task. However, the mean improvement of the participants in all three groups was roughly similar. The mean improvement for the No Instruction group

was 7.84 (SD= 7.81, n= 17), for the Standard Instruction group it was 5.09 (SD= 11.48, n= 18), and for the Specificity Instruction group it was 7.59 (SD= 11.85, n= 15). A one-way between groups ANOVA was run to check for any difference in mean improvement across the three groups of participants, and this showed no significant difference between the three groups, as measured by the elicitation task ($F_{2,49}$ = .64, p =.697). These results suggest that all three groups improved by a similar amount regardless of the teaching intervention. The prediction that instruction will have an effect on article accuracy is, therefore, not supported by the results for the elicitation task.

As outlined in Chapter 6, the pre-test scores of the Standard Instruction group were significantly less accurate than the other two groups, as measured by the judgment task. Furthermore, one participant in the Standard Instruction group was excluded from the analysis on the judgment task, because they selected the 'don't know' response in a large number of items in the pre-test. Therefore, the mean improvement was calculated for the remaining 49 participants. The mean improvement of the participants in the No Instruction group was 7.35 (SD= 9.17, n= 17), and for the Standard Instruction group it was much higher, at 20.96 (SD= 15.77, n= 17). The Specificity Instruction group, on the other hand, reduced in accuracy with a mean improvement of −8.54 (SD = 16.6, n = 15). A one-way between groups ANOVA was run to measure the difference in mean improvement across the three groups of participants. This showed a significant difference between all three groups, and a Tukey HSD post-hoc test found the Standard Instruction group improved in accuracy significantly more than the other two groups between the pre-test and the post-test, as measured by the judgment task (mean difference with No Instruction group = 13.60, p = .019, 95% CI 1.94, 25.26; mean difference with Specificity Instruction group = 29.50, p = .001, 95% CI 14.45, 41.54). The significant difference between the Standard Instruction and the No Instruction groups suggests that the prediction that instruction on definiteness would have an effect on article accuracy is tentatively supported. However, the No Instruction group made a larger improvement in accuracy on the judgment task than the Specificity Instruction group, with the Tukey HSD post-hoc test showing this difference to be significant (mean difference = 15.89, p = .007, 95% CI 3.75, 28.04). Therefore, instruction on specificity does not appear to have had an effect on article accuracy, as measured by the judgment task.

To summarise, the results for the elicitation task do not support the prediction that instruction on definiteness and specificity will have an effect on article accuracy. The results for the judgment task, on the other hand, suggest that instruction on definiteness may have had a positive short-term effect on article accuracy; whereas, instruction on specificity appears to have had no significant effect.

Research Question 2. Will linguistically-informed instruction lead to greater gains than standard instruction?

Linguistically-informed instruction relates to instruction on specificity since, as explained in Chapter 3, acquisition studies suggest that speakers of articleless L1s are more likely to make errors in contexts which are either [+definite, −specific] or [−definite, +specific], with the latter of the two contexts proving most problematic. One group of participants in this study, the Specificity Instruction group, was taught using grammar instruction materials designed to help learners overcome their difficulties with these contexts. The hypothesis was that the linguistically-informed instruction on specificity and definiteness was expected to be more beneficial than instruction on definiteness alone. To address this hypothesis, the results for the Specificity Instruction group will be reviewed. On the elicitation task, this group improved in all four contexts and there was a significant effect of time, meaning that a statistical difference was found between the pre-test and post-test scores ($F_{1,14} =$ 11.07, $p =$.005, partial eta-squared =.44, power =.87). Note that the power of this result is relatively high, which is a positive indication that the result reflects the true situation (Larson-Hall, 2010). On the judgment task, however, the mean scores for this group demonstrated no significant change, although a decrease in accuracy was visible in the scores for three of the four contexts, with the scores for the [−definite, +specific] context remaining relatively stable. A closer examination of the results for this group shows that the power was extremely low when measuring the effects of definiteness and specificity, with the same result for both variables ($F_{1,14} =$ .19, p =.673, partial eta-squared =.01, power =.07). This suggests that there may be differences which cannot be detected by this analysis, and supports the observation from the descriptive statistics that there are differences between the contexts. When comparing results for the Specificity Instruction group with the other two groups who did not receive instruction on specificity, there is no evidence to support the

prediction that linguistically-informed instruction will lead to greater gains than standard instruction. The Specificity Instruction group did not score significantly better than the other two groups at post-test as measured by either task, nor did they make the largest improvement between the pre-test and post-test.

Research Question 3. Will improvements in article accuracy be short term, or more durable?

The hypothesis presented in Chapter 5 states that any improvements in article accuracy which follow the instruction period may not be visible at the time of the delayed post-test. This prediction was made because previous research suggests that instruction may impact the participants' explicit knowledge of the English article system but not their implicit knowledge, and implicit knowledge is believed to be longer lasting (Whong, Gil, and Marsden, 2014). The delayed post-test results presented in Chapter 7 appear to support this hypothesis.

One of the principal limitations of this thesis arose due to difficulties collecting data for the delayed post-test, as explained previously in Chapters 5 and 7. The original proposal for this study included three different time points for data collection: a pre-test the week before instruction, a post-test in the week following instruction, and a delayed post-test at least six months after the instruction had ended. 50 participants completed the pre-test and post-test but, despite initially agreeing to complete the delayed post-test, only 6 participants were willing to do so six months after their English course had ended. Therefore, the results summarised here are for the six individual participants who completed all three tasks.

As outlined in detail in Chapter 7, elicitation task results show that the majority of the improvements in article accuracy that were visible at the time of the post-test were not sustained until the delayed post-test, although more data would be needed in order to confirm this result with statistical evidence. Results for the judgment task are also presented in Chapter 7, and they support the finding of the elicitation task. The improvements in article accuracy visible in the post-test scores of the 3 learners from the No Instruction and Standard Instruction groups were mostly not sustainable over a longer period of time. Additionally, half of the participants who completed the delayed post-test were from the Specificity Instruction group, and their mean accuracy on the judgment task decreased between the pre-test and the post-test. Some signs of recovery were visible in the delayed

post-test results of two of the three participants, although neither had returned to their pre-test level of accuracy.

Therefore, despite differences at both the group and individual level, the delayed post-test results for neither task show any definitive evidence of a long-term improvement in article accuracy. This supports the prediction that any improvements in article accuracy following instruction will only last for a short period of time, and that this could reflect the type of knowledge developed by explicit instruction. This will be debated further in Section 8.3 when a consideration is made of the possible constructs measured by each task.

Research Question 4. Will proficiency have an impact on any improvements in article accuracy?

The participants in the current study were all classified as either elementary or lower intermediate (CEFR A2–B1) following administration of the Oxford QPT (UCLES, 2001). Previous research suggests that advanced learners are more accurate with English articles than intermediate-level learners (IKW, 2004; Trenkic, 2007; Tryzna, 2009). Therefore, it was predicted that there would be a positive correlation between a participant's proficiency and the amount of improvement between the pre-test and post-test, with more advanced learners improving more. For each participant and for each task, their mean score on the pre-test was subtracted from the mean score on the post-test, excluding distractors, and this figure (the mean improvement) was correlated with their score on the Oxford QPT. A Pearson's r correlation between proficiency and mean improvement was not statistical for either of the tasks, with both showing a negligible effect size and a confidence interval spanning zero (Elicitation Task: 95% CI: −.37, .19; $r = -.10$, $R^2 = .01$; Judgement Task: 95% CI: −.32, .24; $r = -.05$, $R^2 = .002$). This suggests that proficiency score, as measured by the QPT, had no relation to participants' level of improvement on either the elicitation task or the judgment task, and so the hypothesis is unsupported.

Research Question 5. Is there any evidence that the definite article is acquired before the indefinite article?

As outlined in Chapter 5, numerous studies have shown that the definite article appears to be acquired first. Therefore, a hypothesis was proposed which states that the learners would be less accurate with the indefinite article, and that this

pattern would be most pronounced amongst the lower level learners in this study. Results from the elicitation task do not show any major differences in accuracy between the definite and indefinite articles for any of the groups' pre-test scores. Furthermore, the RM ANOVA results for the three groups found no significant effects of definiteness. An examination of the descriptive statistics shown in Section 6.1 suggest that the No Instruction group's post-test scores were slightly higher in definite contexts, as were the post-test scores for the Specificity Instruction group. This effect was not seen in the post-test scores of the Standard Instruction group. For the six learners who completed the delayed post-test, there were more errors with the two indefinite contexts when compared to the definite contexts, as measured by the elicitation task. This could be interpreted as evidence in support of the hypothesis, although the trend would need to be visible in more than 6 learners in order to fully support that claim.

Results of the RM ANOVAs for the judgment task also show no significant effect of definiteness for any of the groups. At the pre-test, the No Instruction group was slightly more accurate in definite contexts, although this pattern was not repeated in the post-test scores of this group or in the pre-test and post-test scores of the Standard Instruction and Specificity Instruction groups. Therefore, neither of the tasks show sufficient evidence that the learners are more accurate with their use of the definite article than they are with the indefinite article at either the pre-test or post-test.

Results for the written production data, however, offer weak support for the proposal that the definite article is acquired before the indefinite article. Across the pre-test and the post-test, the definite article is used more than the indefinite article and, despite representing the highest number of errors it also represents a higher proportion of correct uses. As outlined in Chapter 6, this is in agreement with corpus data suggesting that the definite article is more than twice as common as the indefinite article in English, although more controlled written data is needed. It was suggested in Chapter 5 that the topic of the written work should be held constant and the texts should be written under controlled conditions before the evidence from the written data could be claimed to weakly support directionality. However, as stated in Chapter 6, there is no strong evidence against the proposal that the definite article may be acquired earlier than the indefinite article by L2 learners of English and therefore the results relating to directionality are inconclusive.

Research Question 6. Will participants perform worse on [+definite, −specific] and [−definite, +specific] contexts, as measured before any intervention?

Due to the large number of studies (see Chapter 3) which offer empirical support for Ionin's FH (2003), the hypothesis was that the learners in the current study would perform worse in these two contexts than they would in [+definite, +specific] and [−definite, −specific] contexts. A visual examination of the descriptive statistics for the elicitation task show that only the No Instruction group demonstrates the predicted pattern of lowest overall accuracy in [−definite, +specific] contexts but, as a group, they are more accurate in [+definite, −specific] than in [+definite, +specific] contexts at the time of the pre-test. For the judgment task it is the other two groups, the Standard Instruction and Specificity Instruction groups, who both show this pattern of lowest overall accuracy in [−definite, +specific] contexts at the time of the pre-test. The Specificity Instruction group also performed worse in [+definite, −specific] contexts than they did in [+definite, +specific] contexts; whereas, the Standard Instruction group was more accurate in [+definite, −specific] than in [+definite, +specific] contexts. Therefore, the descriptive statistics for each group suggest that it is only [−definite, +specific] contexts which are potentially problematic. This result supports the proposal made by Tryzna (2009) for a reduced ACP that only applies to [−definite, +specific] contexts (see Chapter 3 for details). In addition, there are disagreements within the theoretical literature (outlined in Chapter 2) about whether the specificity distinction only applies to indefinites or can be extended to definite contexts as well.

Individual results for the [−definite, +specific] context were examined in more detail in Chapter 7, and results from the elicitation task were compared with the error rates of learners in previously published research (IKW, 2004; Hawkins et al., 2006). Despite being a lower proficiency level than the participants in these two studies, the majority of participants in the current study did not appear to have problems with [−definite, +specific] contexts. Over half of the learners in the current study (27 out of 50) demonstrated less overuse of *the* in this context than any of the mean scores in these two papers, as measured by the elicitation task at the time of the pre-test. Therefore, the hypothesis that participants would perform worse on these two contexts is unsupported, and possible reasons for the difference between the learners in the current study and the results of IKW (2004) and Hawkins et al. (2006) will be presented in Section 8.1.

Research Question 7. Will instruction on specificity improve accuracy in [+definite, −specific] and [−definite, +specific] contexts?

The results for Research Question 6 suggest that the [−definite, +specific] context is most likely to be problematic for learners whose first language does not have articles, and Tryzna (2009) presents evidence from Samoan to explain this difficulty (see Section 3.1). However, as previously stated, the hypothesis that participants would perform worse in this context is unsupported. Nevertheless, the instruction delivered to the Specificity Instruction group was designed to overcome potential problems in this context, and the hypothesis was that this group would improve more in [+definite, −specific] and [−definite, +specific] contexts than the other two learner groups.

On the judgment task, there was no significant change for learners in the Specificity Instruction group, and this result stands out because significant improvements were recorded for the other two groups on the judgment task and every learner group made a significant or important improvement when measured by the elicitation task. Furthermore, descriptive statistics showed a very small improvement (less than 1%) for the Specificity Instruction group in the [−definite, +specific] context, whereas this group became less accurate in the other three contexts. This change is not statistical, nor is it large enough to infer anything about the group results for this task, and so the individual data for the Specificity Instruction group on the judgment task were presented in Chapter 7. This showed that a larger number of participants improved in [−definite, +specific] contexts than in any of the other three contexts.

The elicitation task results do not support the prediction that the Specificity Instruction group would improve more in [+definite, −specific] and [−definite, +specific] contexts than the other two groups of participants. Learners in this group improved their accuracy in both [+definite, −specific] and [−definite, +specific] contexts; although they also improved in the other two contexts, and the No Instruction group showed the same improvement. Therefore, this change is not applicable to only the [+definite, −specific] and [−definite, +specific] contexts, nor can it be attributed to the instruction on specificity.

However, the small, non-significant negative effect that the instruction on specificity had on the judgment task results at both the individual and group level

did not extend to [−definite, +specific] contexts. This will be discussed further in Section 8.3.

Research Question 8. Will the two tasks produce different results, thereby suggesting that they measure different abilities?

The hypothesis presented in Chapter 5 was that the results for the two tasks will differ. Furthermore it was claimed that, if the timed judgment task measures implicit knowledge (as suggested by Ellis, 2005 and Gutiérrez, 2013), then any improvements in article accuracy as measured by this task would last for a longer time than improvements measured by the elicitation task. The elicitation task is untimed and so more likely to measure explicit knowledge (Ellis, 2005). The second part of this hypothesis is unsupported since, as outlined above in relation to Research Question 3, there were no long term improvements measured by either task. However, the prediction that the results for the two tasks would differ is supported by the data.

All three groups showed an improvement in accuracy on the elicitation task and a significant effect of time was evident for both the No Instruction and Specificity Instruction groups when an RM ANOVA was run on the results. The No Instruction group showed similar results on both the elicitation task and the judgment task, with an improvement in accuracy in all four contexts and a significant effect of time for each task. There were, however, further significant effects observed for the elicitation task that were not found in the judgment task data for this group. The Standard Instruction group also showed a significant effect of time for the judgment task and a non-significant but important improvement on the elicitation task (as judged by the large effect size). The Standard Instruction group improved in accuracy in all four contexts when measured by the judgment task but only improved in accuracy with [+definite, +specific] and [−definite, −specific] contexts when measured by the elicitation task. The Specificity Instruction group showed even larger differences in their results for each task, with a significant improvement in accuracy when measured by the elicitation task contrasted with no significant change in accuracy on the judgment task. Exactly which construct appears to be measured by each task will be discussed further in Section 8.3.

Research Question 9. Judgment task: Will learners perform differently when judging grammatical and ungrammatical sentences? If so, does this suggest they use different types of knowledge for these two items?

This question looks at learners' performance when judging grammatical and ungrammatical items, irrespective of the intervention they received. The hypothesis stated in Chapter 5 was that this data set would show different rates of accuracy for grammatical and ungrammatical items on the judgment task. The reason is that evidence from Ellis (2005) and Gutiérrez (2013) suggests that learners may use implicit knowledge to judge grammatical sentences on a timed judgment task, but explicit knowledge to judge ungrammatical sentences on the same type of task. Furthermore, the results from Gutiérrez's (2013) study showed a significant difference in performance on the two sentence types.

The pre-test scores of all 50 participants were analysed so that any differences between the sentence types could not have resulted from the instruction delivered to participants. For each participant, the number of correct items was counted for first grammatical and then for ungrammatical items, and a mean was calculated for each one. A paired-samples t-test was run to identify any difference between the mean scores for the two sentence types. A visual examination of boxplots for the two grammaticality types suggests the data meets the assumptions of normality and equal variances. There are two outliers in the grammatical data set, one high and one low, and no outliers in the ungrammatical data set. Results for the t-test (Grammatical mean = 53.92, sd = 18.17, n = 50; Ungrammatical mean = 55.36, sd = 18.27, n = 50) show the 95% CI for the difference in means is −8.34, 5.46 (t = −.42, p =.677, df =49). This reveals that there is no statistical difference between the mean scores for grammatical and ungrammatical sentences, and the hypothesis that this data set would show different responses for the two sentence types is not supported. Therefore, the data from the current study does not support the claims made by Ellis (2005) and Gutiérrez (2013) that participants may access different types of knowledge when judging the two sentence types, although it is possible that the participants could access different types of knowledge yet also perform comparably.

This section has summarised the group and individual results presented in the previous two chapters of this thesis in order to address the predictions made in

Chapter 5. The hypotheses for Research Questions 3 and 8 were supported, whilst the evidence presented in relation to Research Questions 2, 4, 6, 7 and 9 does not support the hypotheses. For Research Question 1, the two tasks gave different results with the elicitation task data not supporting the prediction of an effect of instruction. The judgment task results, on the other hand, suggest that standard instruction on definiteness had an effect on article accuracy whilst the linguistically-informed instruction on specificity had no significant effect. Finally, the results for Research Question 5 are inconclusive. This chapter will next address the implications of these findings for both article acquisition studies and language teaching. It will then explore the methodological considerations and outline what issues and questions remain outstanding and, therefore, may require further research.

8.1. ARTICLE ACQUISITION

The studies reviewed in Chapter 3 show that the English article system is a source of recurring difficulty for L2 learners, in particular those who have an articleless L1. Many studies have investigated article acquisition by L2 learners of English, and suggested reasons for these errors include syntactic misrepresentation (Trenkic, 2008), lexical transfer or pragmatic principles based on the surrounding context (Robinson, 2000), the Distributed Morphology framework (Hawkins et al., 2006), or problems that arise when setting a semantic parameter (Ionin and colleagues 2004; 2008; 2009). The current study is principally interested in article instruction. It looked at article accuracy amongst 50 Chinese learners of English studying in the UK who were classified as elementary or lower intermediate after completing the Oxford QPT placement test. To be more precise, it tested whether a linguistically-informed teaching intervention which introduced learners to the concept of specificity alongside instruction on definiteness could help the participants to overcome their difficulties with the English article system. As such, the aim of this study was not to contribute to the debate on why articles appear to cause such problems for learners. However, the results of the current study are of interest in relation to this debate because they differ from so much of the previously published research.

In common with much of the research reviewed in Chapter 3, this study used a version of the elicitation task originally devised by Ionin (2003). The results of this

task appear uncharacteristically high in comparison with previously published studies, especially considering the learners relatively low scores on the proficiency measure. A further notable difference between the results of the current study and previously published research is that there was no clear pattern of reduced performance in [+definite, −specific] and [−definite, +specific] contexts amongst these learners. Over half of the learners in this study (27 out of 50) made fewer errors in the [−definite, +specific] context than the participants in either IKW's (2004) study of intermediate and advanced Russian and Korean learners, or Hawkins et al.'s (2006) study of upper-intermediate and advanced Japanese learners. Furthermore, a closer examination of the results of individual learners found that just three participants showed patterns of fluctuation in their pre-test results on the judgment task; in addition, a small number of learners showed patterns of partial fluctuation on either one of the tasks (see Chapter 7 for details). Therefore as stated above, there is little support for the FH (Ionin, 2003) from the results of this study and, as suggested by Tryzna (2009), lower proficiency learners display optionality in relation to their use of English articles.

This unexpected result does not appear to have arisen due to any flaws in the data collection procedure. As outlined in Chapter 5, the participants completed the elicitation task and judgment task in their classrooms during breaks between lessons. The tasks were completed under test conditions and participants were instructed to not talk or access their smartphones. The rooms were quiet and all non-Chinese students left the classroom, with the exception of a small number of students who requested to be included in the study (although their data was not analysed). The participants were watched closely when completing the tasks and there were no signs of collusion. Finally, although it is not possible to tell whether the learners just randomly guessed answers, their unexpectedly high scores on the elicitation task suggest that they completed the tasks seriously.

Possible issues of L1 interference could explain the disparity between the results for the current study and those from previously published research. The learners in the current study are L1 Chinese, a language with no article system. Russian, Korean, and Japanese are also articleless languages. However, as highlighted in Chapter 2, Li and Thompson (1981) claimed some years ago that there was a diachronic change in progress in Chinese relating to the unstressed demonstrative *nei* and the unstressed numeral *yi*. Huang (1999) goes further,

claiming that spoken Chinese is developing a grammaticalised definite article in the form of the distal determiner *nage*. Chen (2004) points out that the demonstrative and numeral may be functionally and morphologically similar to articles, although he also states that Mandarin Chinese is officially classified as an articleless language and there is no obligatory article system that has been fully grammaticalised. As explained in Section 2.1.1, it is possible that regional differences may occur in the use of demonstratives and numerals in Chinese, and several Chinese language sources cited by Chen (2004) discuss this phenomenon in relation to the Beijing dialect. However, the learners in the current study were not asked about the status of *nei* and *yi* in their use of Chinese, a point I will return to in Section 8.4.

The current study is not the first paper to note different results between Chinese and Japanese learners. Snape, Leung and Ting (2006) summarise several unpublished studies and note that Chinese L2 learners performed better than Japanese L2 learners and did not show patterns of fluctuation. They conclude that not all articleless languages will lead to fluctuation when acquiring the English article system and offer the argument that "Mandarin Chinese is (well) ahead of Japanese in the process of grammaticalisation of the universal cognitive category of identifiability and in the development of definiteness as a grammatical category" (2006:138). On the other hand, Snape (2009) found results consistent with the FH when testing 38 L1 Chinese L2 English learners using a forced-choice elicitation task based on that used by IKW (2004). He accounted for the difference between these two sets of results by stating that the interlanguage grammars of the Chinese learners reported in Snape, Leung and Ting (2006) may have been more developed. In addition, Trenkic (2008) found that the Chinese learners in her study showed the same fluctuation patterns as the Russian and Korean learners in IKW (2004), although she disagrees with the explanation of error patterns based on specificity. However, the learners in the current study are a lower proficiency level than the participants in any of these studies and so it is highly unlikely that their relatively high level of accuracy on the elicitation task was a result of advanced interlanguage development.

However, it is worth exploring how possible L1 interference could affect the results of the current study. In Section 7.3, the results of an analysis with items as cases were presented for the 24 target items on the judgment task. Three items on this task presented the target NP in subject position, whereas all other 21 items had

the target NP in object position. As discussed in Chapter 2, word order can affect the interpretation of sentences in Chinese, with NPs which occur at the start of sentences tending to be definite due to the topic prominence of Mandarin. The three items on the AJT with the target NP placed in subject position all required the definite article. Therefore, this asymmetry may have resulted in the Chinese learners of English being more accurate with these three items. As already stated in Chapter 7, this is not the case and these 3 items all had mean scores of between 50% and 60%. Furthermore, if Chinese is developing "optional incipient articles" (Lyons, 1999:132) and the learners in the current study speak dialects of Chinese that use demonstratives and numerals in this way, a further effect of L1 interference would be an increased ability to acquire definiteness compared to speakers of other articleless languages. An effect of increased accuracy was found on the elicitation task. However, this increased accuracy does not mean that the learners in the current study have acquired the definiteness setting of the ACP. As previously stated in Chapter 7, on the elicitation task 18 of the 50 participants appear to have acquired the definiteness setting under Ionin's definition (2003), whilst just 2 participants appear to have acquired the definiteness setting according to the judgment task results.

Therefore, alternative explanations must be explored for both the high elicitation task results and the lack of fluctuation amongst these participants. This study used a version of the elicitation task taken from IZP (2009) rather than the version used by IKW (2004), as recommended by Tania Ionin (personal communication by email, April 2012). As detailed in Chapter 5, it did not use the 'forced-choice' method where participants had to select either the definite, indefinite, or zero article in given contexts. Instead, this task was a simple gap-fill format. It is possible, therefore, that this different version of the task led to the anomaly between the unexpectedly high scores from participants in the current study and the results from IKW (2004) and Hawkins et al. (2006), who both applied the forced-choice version of the task. However, in my opinion using the forced-choice version would have resulted in even higher scores amongst the participants in the current study. An alternative explanation comes from Trenkic (2008), who has criticised the operationalisation of specificity in the task used by IKW (2004). Trenkic believes that specificity is conflated with ESK in this task and so learners could be influenced by whether familiarity with the person being talked about is

claimed or denied. When she added further contexts to test this claim (as exemplified in Chapter 3), Trenkic found no evidence of specificity affecting L2 article choice amongst L1 Mandarin Chinese learners of English, although her results were comparable with the Russian and Korean learners in IKW's (2004) research. As already stated in Chapter 5, I believe the widespread use of different versions of the elicitation task in published research are testament to its reliability, but that the use of additional measures which may explore different constructs is beneficial.

For me, the most likely explanation for the high scores on the elicitation task is a task effect due to these learners' previous test training in order to pass exams such as IELTS. The similarity between the gap-fill format of this task and exercises which are used frequently in English lessons was noted in Chapter 5, with article choice gap-fill exercises occurring in many teaching materials. Additionally, accuracy on the judgment task was lower, which reinforces the argument that the high scores were related to the task, rather than being an indication that the learners in the current study have acquired the English article system. The increase in the number of errors in the written data between the time of the pre-test and post-test also suggests that articles are a continuing source of difficulty for these learners. In terms of the lack of fluctuation on both tasks, this could result from L1 influence and the grammaticalisation of determiners and numerals in some varieties of Mandarin. Learners whose L1 has an article system do not display patterns of fluctuation (Hawkins et al., 2006; IZBM, 2008; Morales 2011) and therefore the lack of fluctuation amongst the Chinese learners in the current study may be an indication of L1 transfer. It is recommended that any future studies with Chinese learners examine the use of determiners and numerals in the participants L1. Another possibility is that the proficiency level of the learners in the current study was too low for patterns of fluctuation to be evident. It was noted in Chapters 3 and 7 that Tryzna (2009) suggests that fluctuation patterns develop with increasing proficiency, and that less proficient learners will show optionality of articles but not fluctuation. This would mean that the ACP is an oversimplification of article acquisition since any patterns of fluctuation caused by a parameter would also be evident amongst low proficiency learners, and is a finding which warrants further investigation.

8.2. IMPLICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE TEACHING

This section will outline the implications of the results of this study for form-focused grammar instruction within language classrooms. First, it will assess whether the rich input provided to learners on an intensive language course, such as the one attended by participants in the current study, could be sufficient to trigger acquisition without the need for an explicit focus on grammatical forms. Next, it will compare the performance of the learners in the two instruction groups to evaluate whether there is sufficient support for providing linguistically-informed instruction to language learners, based on the results of this study.

8.2.1. GRAMMAR INSTRUCTION AND INPUT

As explained in Chapter 6, the No Instruction group are the only group who improved significantly on both tasks. On the elicitation task they made a similar level of improvement to the other two groups, with no significant difference between the mean improvements of the three groups. The accuracy of the No Instruction group on the judgment task improved significantly more than the Specificity Instruction group, although by a lesser amount than the improvement in scores recorded amongst participants in the Standard Instruction group. This improvement in both tasks provides evidence against the previously stated hypothesis that the No Instruction group would not make a significant improvement between the pre-test and the post-test. Therefore, it is worth considering what these results may say about the need for explicit grammar instruction on an intensive English course such as the one undertaken by the participants in the current study.

The improvement measured in the No Instruction group most likely occurred because they were developmentally ready to acquire determiners, irrespective of the instruction provided. It has been widely reported that instruction, whilst perhaps speeding up acquisition, cannot force learners to acquire forms which they are not developmentally ready to acquire (Pienemann, 1989). Articles in L1 acquisition tend to be acquired at the same time as the possessive (Brown, 1973), whereas a summary of L2 acquisition morpheme studies suggests that free morphemes, such as articles, appear earlier than bound morphemes in SLA (Zobl and Liceras, 1994). However, as Trenkic points out, when discussing the English article system, the "absence of one-to-one correspondence between definite contexts and overt definiteness marking

may present a particular difficulty in second language learning" (Trenkic, 2008:5). For Chinese learners, if there is indeed a lack of L1 article system to transfer then this would delay their acquisition of the English article system, as suggested by Ionin (2003). As a result, the improvement in article accuracy amongst the learners in the No Instruction group could result from their higher proficiency level at the start of the study, relative to the learners in the other two groups. This argument is not extended to the learners in the Standard Instruction group although, as previously reported, learners in the Standard Instruction group improved by a significantly larger amount on the judgement task when compared to the learners in the No Instruction group. However, the post-test scores of the two groups of learners are not comparable (see Section 6.1), with the post-test scores of the Standard Instruction group being of a similar level to the pre-test scores of the No Instruction group on both tasks. This relative lack of accuracy amongst the learners in the Standard Instruction group suggests that they still have difficulties with the English article system. The learners in the No Instruction group, on the other hand, appear much more accurate and made a large improvement in accuracy between the two time points despite receiving no explicit instruction on the form in question. Therefore, the improvement in article accuracy seen within the No Instruction group is most likely incidental, and not related to the lack of intervention for this group of learners. Such an explanation would be visible as a long term improvement in article accuracy but, since only one participant from this group took the delayed post-test, this cannot be corroborated.

In terms of the need to provide explicit grammar instruction to learners who are undertaking intensive language instruction or the benefits that may result from such instruction, the results of the current study support what is widely reported within the pedagogic literature. Input is known to be hugely important (Slabakova, Teal, and Liskin-Gasparro, 2014), one explanation being that input can provide cues which then trigger L2 development (White, 2003a). The rich input that learners were exposed to during the 10 weeks of the pre-sessional course appears to have been sufficient to lead to a measurable improvement in article accuracy amongst a group of learners that received no explicit instruction on the form in question. This raises an interesting question about the quantity and quality of input provided by such a course, and whether these learners would have made a similar improvement were

they studying on a content-based course for this period of time rather than attending an English language course.

This recognition of the role of classroom-based input in language classrooms is not to say that there is no need to provide explicit grammar instruction or to focus on form. The learners in the other two groups were a lower proficiency and perhaps not developmentally ready to acquire the English article system. However, both groups also showed a measurable improvement on the elicitation task, although at the time of the post-test their accuracy did not match the scores of approximately 90% recorded for the No Instruction group (see Section 6.1 for details). If, as already suggested, the elicitation task is a measure of explicit metalinguistic knowledge then it appears that these two groups of learners showed a similar level of improvement in accuracy as a result of the grammar instruction, despite being a significantly lower proficiency level than the learners in the No Instruction group. As highlighted in Chapter 4, FFI may be of most benefit to learners who need to compensate for weaknesses in acquired knowledge. Indeed, Whong (2011) suggests that explicit instruction should focus on function words and morphemes, which are expected to cause problems for L2 learners. She recommends not explicitly teaching learners about meaning or the core properties of syntax, as these areas appear to develop implicitly when there is sufficient exposure to the target language.

Finally, there is an alternative explanation for the improvement seen in the No Instruction group that should be presented, although it will not be addressed in detail. A discussion with the teachers who assisted with the instruction suggests that this group of learners were highly motivated and participated fully in all their English lessons. Therefore, their measurable improvement despite the lack of instruction could be a result of factors such as motivation and willingness to communicate, both of which are suggested to influence second language acquisition and use (Dörnyei, 2003). However, this is a speculative view based on feedback from the teachers who worked with these participants and it cannot be quantified relative to the results of the other groups of learners. Therefore, a discussion of the possible impact of affective factors on this group of learners would go beyond the scope of this thesis.

8.2.2. STANDARD AND LINGUISTICALLY-INFORMED METHODS OF ARTICLE INSTRUCTION

As outlined in Section 8.1, the hypothesis that linguistically-informed instruction on definiteness and specificity would prove more beneficial than instruction on definiteness alone was unsupported. The Specificity Instruction group did not score significantly better than the other two groups at post-test as measured by either task, nor did they make the largest improvement between the pre-test and post-test. However, there are some interesting trends in the results for this group which warrant further discussion in relation to the instruction on specificity.

Firstly, the No Instruction and Standard Instruction groups' mean scores on the judgment task showed a significant improvement between the pre-test and post-test whereas the Specificity Instruction group made no significant change. There was also a small, non-significant reduction in accuracy in three of the four contexts which was visible in both the group and individual results. This negative result could relate to information presented in the linguistically-informed instruction that contradicted the learners' prior knowledge of articles. The participants in the current study all began to learn English at school in China when they were approximately 10 years old. Therefore, they had received at least 10 years of classroom instruction in English before coming to the UK. As outlined in Section 4.3, articles are taught recurrently in the majority of English courses, with a focus on teaching generalisations which relate to definite and indefinite contexts. For this reason, there were most likely disparities between instruction on definiteness that the learners had received prior to the intervention and the new instruction on specificity. This may have caused the learners to overthink their responses to the judgment task and so make more errors.

Furthermore, despite the lack of significant result, the Specificity Instruction group's score in the [−definite, +specific] context remained relatively stable, and individual results show that over half of the learners improved in this context. Results for this allegedly problematic context were discussed in some detail in Chapter 7. As highlighted in Section 8.1, there are contradictory reports as to whether Chinese learners behave differently to speakers of other articleless languages in response to the effects of specificity. Nonetheless, the judgement task results for all three learner groups showed a lower accuracy level in this context at the time of the pre-test compared to the other three contexts (see Section 6.1),

although the post-test scores did not show the same pattern. The [−definite, +specific] context was a focus of the instruction delivered to the Specificity Instruction group and so the fact that the post-test results on the judgment task were different for this context compared to the other three contexts for only this group may be attributable to the instruction. Indeed, the instruction probably made the learners aware that the [–definite, −specific] context is not the only context when the indefinite article should be used. Additionally, the non-significant decrease in accuracy demonstrated by the Specificity Instruction group was only found in results for the timed judgment task. The same participants improved significantly when measured by the untimed, written elicitation task. As explained earlier in the current chapter, these results support the hypothesis that the two tasks would measure different constructs, and exactly what is measured by each task will be considered further in Section 8.3.

Finally, the results of the Specificity Instruction group may relate to how specificity was operationalised in both the teaching materials and the two tasks. A decision was made to follow IKW (2004) who apply the specificity distinction to both definite and indefinite contexts. The research of IKW has proved hugely influential in the last decade although, as outlined in Chapter 2, many in the literature only apply the specificity distinction to indefinites. No doubt a different operationalisation of these terms would have changed the outcome of the current study since it influenced the design of both the data collection instruments and the instruction delivered to the learners in the Specificity Instruction group. It is also necessary to re-examine the teaching materials in order to evaluate why the instruction on specificity was not effective. As outlined in Chapter 5, the materials underwent several rounds of piloting and were developed in consultation with experienced English teachers. Despite this, weaknesses remain which may have caused the lack of effect for the linguistically-informed instruction.

Materials for two lessons were developed, the first lesson was used to review definiteness and the second lesson taught specificity. There was also a third lesson which focused on error correction. For the lessons on definiteness and specificity, each had a PowerPoint presentation to explicitly teach the target form, plus two practice exercises. In Section 4.3.1, I am critical of the method for teaching articles in several series of general English coursebooks because of a lack of practice exercises. However, the same accusation can be made about my own teaching

materials as two exercises is not enough practice, particularly for a concept as complex as specificity. On reflection, there is also a lack of sufficient examples in the PowerPoint presentation on specificity, which contained just one example using the definite article and two examples with the indefinite article. The error correction exercise also contained just two references to specificity, a definite specific and an indefinite non-specific, neither of which are the problematic contexts identified by IKW (2004). Therefore, other than reminding leaners of the terminology related to specificity, this third lesson was most likely not sufficient. An additional criticism relates to the operationalisation of definiteness and specificity in the materials themselves. Firstly, the definite article was introduced with five examples of why the noun is identifiable (see example 103). Payne and Huddleston (2002), on the other hand, give eight such contexts. Just five were chosen in order to make the materials concise and to avoid overloading leaners with unnecessary information, but perhaps introducing all eight contexts would have improved the materials.

103. Reasons the noun is identifiable.
- because of a previous mention
  e.g. I have a cat. **The** cat is fat.
- there is only one of the person/object in the context
  e.g. I will see you in **the** library.
- general knowledge
  e.g. I caught a bus to university and **the** driver was very angry.
- something can be seen, heard, or felt
  e.g. Turn down **the** music.
- because of information provided by a modifier
  e.g. **The** person who arrived last.

For the specificity instruction materials I developed a pedagogical definition of specificity by simplifying IKW's informal definition (2004), as stated in example 45 in Chapter 3. This removed the notion of noteworthiness, for reasons explained in Chapter 5, and adopted the concept of uniqueness. However, the instruction materials refer to there being an identifiable person or object rather than a unique person or object. A further weakness could be that the subject-object asymmetry found in the judgment task was also present in the examples in the PowerPoint slides although, as discussed in Chapter 7, there is no evidence that this asymmetry impacted on the task results. Finally, the information provided to learners states that

they may make errors because they confuse definiteness and specificity, but no example of such errors is given. There are also weaknesses in the practice materials. Exercise 3.1 only has two out of a total of ten questions which relate to the problematic contexts, and exercise 4.2 focuses mainly on specific contexts. These imbalances should be rectified in future versions of the teaching materials.

The instruction on specificity was not effective and, based on the results of the current study, I would not recommend teaching specificity to low-intermediate level learners of English if the aim is to improve their accuracy with articles. However, it may be unrealistic to expect immediate improvements following instruction, as acquisition does not happen spontaneously. This is where a full set of delayed post-test results would have been beneficial. Despite the weaknesses in the teaching materials which are highlighted above, in my opinion the anomalous result amongst the Specificity Instruction group demonstrates the abstract nature of article semantics. It reflects the fact that students may not be able to learn enough about the concept in this teaching period. In particular, the limited time for this instruction to make realistic changes to these learners' interlanguage development becomes apparent when it is compared to instruction on definiteness. These learners are likely to have received a decade or more of instruction on generalisations about the English article system before arriving in the UK. This could be why, despite a significant improvement in accuracy in the elicitation task data following instruction on specificity, there was no significant change on the judgment task. Use of articles is a notoriously problematic area and the intervention took place across a relatively short space of time. Perhaps, rather than targeting learners, it would be more beneficial to make English teachers aware of specificity distinctions so that they can continuously reinforce the concept with their learners.

The instruction on definiteness was also not effective and, although the learners in the Standard Instruction group improved on both tasks, these improvements were also seen in the group who received no instruction on articles. Again, the instruction period was short but, as stated above, we can assume that these learners had repeatedly been exposed to instruction on articles in English lessons at school. In addition, learners in all three groups had problems with articles in their written English, and the errors in this area did not improve during the timeframe of the current study. This begs the question of whether articles are teachable. Previous research by Master (1990; 1994; 2002) suggests that they are,

although he recommends targeting intermediate level learners rather than the low-intermediate learners who participated in the current study. However, many teachers of English, for example the teachers consulted during this study, report that instruction on articles does not work. This view is supported by Whong (2011:110), who points out that linguists are still debating the exact properties of articles in English and that "[t]his makes it difficult for teachers to be able to teach these properties fully". Based on the results of the current study, I believe that articles may be better left untaught to L2 learners of English.

8.3. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The timed judgement task and the untimed elicitation task had different results in several areas, suggesting that they measure different constructs. This supports the hypothesis that the results for the two tasks will differ, although no evidence has yet been presented to suggest which construct appears to be measured by each task. As detailed in Chapter 5, two different tasks were used in order to obtain a more complete picture of learners' knowledge of the English article system. Ellis (2005) and Ellis and Loewen (2007) have argued that timed judgement tasks appear to measure implicit knowledge as opposed to learnt, metalinguistic knowledge, and they also suggest that the grammatical and ungrammatical items may measure different constructs. Gutiérrez (2013) looked at the latter claim in more detail, and found evidence to support the proposal that grammatical sentences measure implicit knowledge whilst ungrammatical sentences measure explicit knowledge. The participants in Gutiérrez's study also showed significant differences in their performance on these two sentence types. The learners in the current study, however, performed comparably with both the grammatical and ungrammatical items on the judgment task, as stated above when reporting the results relating to Research Question 9. Therefore, these results do not appear to support the claim that the grammatical and ungrammatical items measure different constructs, although it may be possible to perform comparably and also employ the two different types of knowledge.

As highlighted in Chapter 5, it is almost impossible to identify exactly which type of knowledge is being accessed by individuals just by analysing their responses to a task. Both Ellis (2005) and Gutiérrez (2013) recognise that tests can be designed

in such a way that they are more likely to measure either explicit or implicit knowledge, but this is not guaranteed. The timed nature of the judgment task in the current study meant that participants had less time to access their stored, metalinguistic knowledge when completing this task and so they may have used their implicit knowledge of the English article system to provide responses to this task. However, as pointed out in Chapter 5, it is possible that the 16 seconds that each pair of sentences was displayed was long enough for the participants to access their explicit knowledge, and so this task may not measure implicit knowledge. The elicitation task, on the other hand, was untimed and of a similar format to exercises used as part of FFI, so it is easier to assume that learners would use their explicit knowledge to complete this task. It is possible to infer that both types of knowledge were used by the learners in the current study when completing these tasks, given that both sets of scores differed and lower scores were recorded on the judgment task for all learner groups at both time points.[11] If the participants used their acquired knowledge to complete the judgment task and their learnt knowledge for the elicitation task, this difference can be explained because the English article system is known to be difficult to acquire but learners are repeatedly taught about it. However, to reiterate a point that has already been made, behavioural studies can only make inferences about what is happening in the mind of the learners. The one result that stands out as different is the performance of the Specificity Instruction group on the judgment task and, as explained in the previous section, this difference may be attributable to the instruction delivered to this group. Therefore, a follow up study would be beneficial, especially one that applied reaction time measures or techniques such as eye tracking to investigate the time course of participants' processing of sentences across the four contexts before and after receiving instruction on specificity. Results from such a study may make it easier to infer which type of knowledge the participants were accessing when providing a response.

Another point of interest in relation to the methodology is that all three learner groups improved by a similar amount on the elicitation task between the pre-test and post-test. It should be noted that this improvement could be the result of a task effect since there was only one version of the task and the same test items were presented to learners for the pre-test and post-test. It is not ideal to repeat the same

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[11] As detailed in Chapter 6, a group of English native speakers also scored higher on the elicitation task than the judgment task, with mean scores of 98.3% and 92.8% for the two tasks, respectively.

task within a relatively short space of time, and for the judgment task two versions were produced so that items which were grammatical in the first version became ungrammatical in the second version and vice versa. Learners were presented with different versions of the judgment task at pre-test and post-test. There was only one version of the elicitation task because it was taken from the IZP (2009) study which did not use a repeated measures design. However, since the learners were undertaking intensive instruction at the same time I believe that the possibility of them remembering items from the elicitation task between the two test periods is reduced. I do not, therefore, attribute the improvement in elicitation task scores to a task effect.

A further methodological decision which appears to have impacted on the results is related to the collection of written data. Due to restrictions placed by the language course provider, it was necessary to analyse essays submitted for assessment and there was no possibility of collecting additional written data which could be more closely controlled for context. Additionally, the essays selected for analysis were written at home where students were able to edit their work, and there was no time limit placed on their composition. This leads to two potential issues, one being that they were not controlled for plagiarism (although this was checked for using specialist software) and the second problem being the explicit correction of errors. Another issue with the written production data is the different topics at the time of the pre-test and post-test. As highlighted in Chapter 6, the different uses of the definite and indefinite articles at the two time points could be a reflection of the writing topics. Therefore, a more controlled collection of written data would have been ideal from a methodological viewpoint. Whether the results of such additional data would have proved more beneficial, however, is questionable since Ionin (2003) collected data by asking learners to answer five questions which were carefully designed to elicit article use in particular contexts. Despite this control, a summary of the production data in IKW (2004) states that they were still unable to find enough instances of [+definite, −specific] contexts to be able to fully test the FH. The written data in the current study provides an interesting picture of article use which supplements the results of the two tasks. However, due to these limitations it should not on its own be taken as evidence either for or against the hypotheses which were reviewed earlier.

Another question to address is why the number of article errors in the written data increased between the pre-test and post-test for learners in all three groups. One limitation is that this increase was seen in the raw data and, without a statistical analysis of these error rates, the difference may not be real. What was noted is that the structural complexity of the participants' writing appeared to increase over time, as exemplified in Chapter 6. A reduction in grammatical accuracy may be a consequence of this increasing complexity since learners' attention could have been focused on other elements of their written production. An alternative explanation may be that the demands of the intensive English course meant that the learners became less focused on their formative writing submissions as the course progressed, and that they spent less time on corrections.

To summarise, the elicitation task and judgment task appear to measure different constructs. However, I do not wish to debate which type of knowledge the learners were using when completing these tasks, as I believe more robust and time-sensitive measures are needed before any such claim is made. In particular, the judgment task results for the Specificity Instruction group mean that a more detailed examination of the effects of this intervention could be an interesting avenue for further study. Weaknesses were recognised in the written production data due to a lack of control over the topic and the writing process which resulted from the constraints of the particular classroom context of this study. The written data, therefore, can support the evidence from the two tasks but is not robust enough to enable conclusions to be drawn based on this data alone. Whether a more controlled collection of written data was necessary, however, is questionable due to the difficulties encountered by IKW (2004). Next, the final part of this chapter will address any additional limitations of the current study, and expand on those areas which warrant further investigation.

8.4. LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

To reiterate, one major limitation of this study is the problem collecting delayed post-test data which was explained above in relation to Research Question 6. This has already been discussed in some detail. Another principle limitation was the failure to collect data from participants about the status of determiners and numerals in their L1. As outlined in Chapter 2, there is some debate about whether

certain morphemes are developing as markers of definiteness in Chinese and, without an understanding of the current status of these morphemes in the participants' L1, it is impossible to rule out L1 interference. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies collect this sort of data, especially any work that examines article use amongst Chinese learners. The subject-object asymmetry in items on the AJT is a third limitation and, although this does not appear to have impacted on the results, it should be rectified before this task is used again.

An additional limitation relates to my role during the instruction and data collection periods. As well as being the researcher on this study, I am a trained language teacher and so delivered part of the instruction to the Specificity Instruction and Standard Instruction groups. This is a potential limitation because it is possible that I could have delivered the instruction in such a way as to favour the predicted outcomes. However, at the time of data collection I was not aware which of the three interventions would prove most beneficial. Additionally, the interventions for the Standard Instruction and Specificity Instruction groups were delivered at different times. This means there was no overlap which could potentially have led to confusion within the classroom over which intervention was being delivered. Finally, the null result for the newly developed linguistically-informed teaching materials should demonstrate that there was no influence over the results by either me or any of the other teachers involved in delivering the instruction, as the ideal outcome would have been a positive effect for this intervention.

The small participant numbers mean that statistical power was low for some analyses. Increasing the number of participants would have been ideal, and possibly led to obtaining three groups of learners that were of a comparable proficiency. However, due to the classroom-based nature of this study, data collection had to be arranged to coincide with the time frame of the intensive language courses. Therefore, it was not possible to increase the number of participants due to the time constraints of the PhD.

Finally, the scores of the Standard Instruction group on the judgment task have not yet been explained. As highlighted in Chapter 6, the participants in this group scored significantly lower than the other two groups on the pre-test, as measured by the judgment task. Each of the three learner groups showed a large effect size on the inferential statistics for this task, although the effect size for the

Standard Instruction group was the biggest. The Standard Instruction also made the largest improvement on this task, with a mean improvement of 20.96. For the elicitation task results, the Specificity Instruction group were significantly less accurate at the time of the pre-test, although all three learner groups improved by a similar amount on that task, and there was less noticeable difference in the descriptive statistics on the elicitation task. To return to the judgment task scores, the learners in the Standard Instruction group were of a comparable proficiency level to the learners in the Specificity Instruction group, were taught by the same teachers, and did not differ in any notable way. They were also given the same instructions when completing the task as the other two groups of learners, and there appears to be no clear explanation for their much lower mean scores or their larger improvement.

Despite these limitations, as a study of the effects of instruction on short-term language development the results of this research are suggestive. For a follow-up study, I first propose a closer examination of the role of input. Results for the No Instruction group suggest that the rich input available to learners during an intensive language course may lead to measurable improvements in grammatical accuracy even without the learners receiving instruction on the target form. This claim, however, needs to be empirically measured. As explained in Section 8.2, the results raise an interesting question about the quantity and quality of input provided by such a course. It appears that the learners in the No Instruction group were developmentally ready to acquire determiners, but it is not clear whether these learners would have made a similar improvement if they were enrolled on an English-medium university course for the same 10 week period, rather than undertaking language instruction. Therefore, I propose repeating the tasks with two groups of students of a similar proficiency who are resident in an English speaking country. One group would be undertaking an intensive English course, whilst the other group would be receiving English-medium education without any additional language instruction. Both groups of learners would, therefore, be receiving the same rich input. If the language instruction is the critical variable then the learners exposed to intensive language instruction would improve significantly more than the learners on the English-medium course, even if they were not explicitly taught about certain grammatical forms.

In terms of the development of linguistically-informed teaching materials which formed a central part of the current study, it is difficult to measure the success

of this part of the project. The teachers who assisted with delivering the instruction on specificity had no objection to using the newly created materials, possibly as a result of the consultation period with practising English teachers. In addition, the new materials were widely distributed throughout the language centre where this study was undertaken, with many teachers requesting copies to use with learners not involved in this study. However, no measure was made of the teachers' opinions about specificity instruction which could contribute to the results of the current study. A questionnaire of teachers' opinions after they had used the linguistically-informed materials would have been a useful addition to this study, and is recommended for any future research of this type.

Another outstanding question is whether the instruction provided to learners in the current study was sufficient for acquisition purposes. As outlined in Section 5.4, instruction on articles was limited to 4.5 hours in order to mimic real classroom instruction as closely as possible. In terms of the number of hours, concentrating on just one grammar point, for example articles, for an extended period of time does not match how grammar instruction is delivered in language classrooms. For this reason, an extended instruction period was not suitable in the current study since the intention was to maintain ecological validity and obtain results that were applicable to real language classrooms. Plonsky (2013) points out that an increase in the amount of classroom-based studies could make SLA research more relevant to language practitioners. He also highlights the shortage of experimental studies that are carried out in real language classrooms, and these are two areas that the current study set out to address. A follow-up study could, however, include a more detailed examination of instruction on specificity with a much longer period of explicit instruction. One difficulty with such a study is how to quantify exactly how much instruction may be necessary. Although the results of such a study would become removed from the reality of classroom practice and therefore be ungeneralisable for the language teaching community, nonetheless, the results would prove interesting from the viewpoint of SLA research. The outcome could contribute to the ongoing debate about the differences between explicit and implicit knowledge and whether explicit FFI can develop implicit knowledge. As demonstrated in Chapter 4, FFI is known to be beneficial to learners regardless of whether such instruction is delivered within a meaningful context or not (Norris and Ortega, 2000). However, whether it just benefits a learner's explicit metalinguistic knowledge of the form in question or

actually leads to developmental changes in their linguistic competence is extremely difficult to infer from behavioural measures alone. Additionally, there is no standard definition of either specificity or definiteness which are agreed across the linguistic literature, as explained in Chapter 2, and so an operationalisation of these terms which may not be universally accepted would still be necessary for the design of further teaching materials.

Finally, and as noted above, at the time of the post-test the Specificity Instruction group performed differently to the other two groups of learners on the judgment task. What was not expected is that the difference takes the form of a non-significant change in the accuracy of this group of learners following the linguistically-informed instruction. There was also a noticeable difference between the results for the [−definite, + specific] context and the results for the other three contexts amongst learners in the Specificity Instruction group, as measured by this task. The results suggest that the learners in the main experimental group differed from the other two groups of learners, and yet the problem with the delayed post-test data collection means it is impossible to quantify the long term effects of the instruction. Therefore, a follow-up study which takes a more longitudinal approach to instruction on specificity is needed, as is a comparison with a group of native English speakers to see how their judgments of article accuracy may change after learning about specificity. Further improvements can be made to the linguistically-informed teaching materials, as suggested in Section 8.2. Additionally, I suggest repeating the Specificity Instruction for learners of different levels to see which proficiency level, if any, is most likely to benefit from linguistically-informed instruction on this notoriously difficult aspect of English grammar. Again, this study should be across a longer timeframe in order to collect a full set of delayed post-test data and more accurately measure the longer term effects of such instruction.

9. CONCLUSION

The participants in this study were young adult L1 Chinese learners of English. They were separated into three learner groups consisting of pre-formed English classes. Each group received a different teaching intervention, with the groups allocated a treatment at random. All participants undertook 10 weeks of intensive language instruction on a pre-sessional EAP course, with the instruction held constant across the groups. The only variable was the content of the participants' grammar lessons, which differed according to the intervention. The No Instruction group was not taught about the English article system, the Standard Instruction group received instruction on definiteness only using published teaching materials, and the Specificity Instruction group was taught about definiteness and specificity using newly designed teaching materials, as outlined in Section 5.5. Data collection was a pre-test and post-test, each consisting of an untimed written elicitation task (from IZP, 2009), a timed AJT, and a sample of writing. There was also a delayed post-test on a smaller number of participants which consisted of the elicitation task and judgment task.

This thesis began by outlining the properties of definiteness and specificity, alongside an explanation of how these terms are operationalised in the current study. Chapter 2 highlighted that there is still considerable disagreement within the literature over these terms. For the properties of definite NPs, much of this debate surrounds the issues of identifiability and uniqueness. The disagreement about whether definite NPs can be both referential and attributive was also presented. In English, not all definite NPs require a definite article, just as indefinite contexts will only require an indefinite article with singular forms when no other cardinality marker is present. Mandarin Chinese, on the other hand, has no grammatical marker for definite NPs, although it appears that a slow process of grammaticalisation of determiners and numerals may be occurring. Word order in Chinese is relevant because topics occur at the start of a sentence, and there are similarities between the given nature of topics and the property of definiteness. For this reason, there is a tendency for definite and indefinite NPs to occur in different positions in Chinese sentences.

In terms of the properties of specificity presented in Chapter 2, there is also a great deal of disagreement within the literature. For the purposes of the current

study, Ionin's focus on referentiality is key (2003; 2006). Her analysis of referential *this* in colloquial English led to a proposal that noteworthiness is an important element of specificity. The informal definitions of definiteness and specificity provided by IKW (2004) were outlined in Chapter 2, and these form the basis of the instruction on specificity provided to one group of learners in the current study. It was also pointed out that there is not universal support for Ionin's addition of 'noteworthy property' to this definition. Finally, the disagreements present in the literature only serve to emphasise the difficulties of adopting a pedagogical definition of these two concepts in order to teach the English article system to L2 learners.

A review of the literature relating to the L2 acquisition of articles was presented in Chapter 3. The chapter began by outlining Ionin's FH (2003), which predicts that article errors will be systematic with an overuse of *the* in [−definite, +specific] contexts and an overuse *a* in [+definite, −specific] contexts. There were details of the numerous studies which have reported specificity effects amongst learners with an articleless L1. The lack of specificity effects amongst learners from languages which select articles on the basis of definiteness was also stated. The chapter then progressed to present several studies which did not adopt Ionin's analysis, and there was a brief presentation of some of the alternative explanations for the widely recognised problems that L2 learners of English have when acquiring and using articles. There was a recognition that fluctuation effects have only been recorded in [−definite, +specific] contexts when children are acquiring English as an L2, and that adults may employ explicit strategies causing them to also make errors in [+definite, −specific] contexts. A final point of interest in Chapter 3 was the suggestion that the definite article may be acquired before the indefinite article by L2 learners of English.

Chapter 4 presented the background to the pedagogical issues that are of relevance to the current study. It briefly presented the history of instruction as viewed within the generative SLA literature, before providing an overview of evidence from instructed SLA research which strongly suggests that FFI can be of benefit to learners. Several studies which measure article instruction were summarised, and the results suggest that instruction on the English article system can improve accuracy amongst intermediate level learners. Next, there was a review of current teaching materials which identified inaccurate generalisations in the

explanations presented to learners and a focus on presenting long lists of rules and exceptions which appear overly complicated and difficult to apply. Another observation was that articles tend to be taught at every level of proficiency within coursebook series, with a gradual increase in the complexity of information as learners progress through the levels. Next, Chapter 5 gave the methodological background to the current study. There was also a detailed explanation of the development of the linguistically-informed teaching materials including the consultation with teachers and the various rounds of piloting. Chapter 5 concluded with a presentation of the hypotheses for each research question, and the results for the study were evaluated in light of these hypotheses. Group results were given in Chapter 6 and individual results, plus the delayed post-test results from a small subset of participants, came in Chapter 7.

To summarise, the mean results for the No Instruction group showed a significant improvement on both tasks. The Standard Instruction group showed an improvement on the elicitation task which had a large effect size, and a statistically significant improvement on the AJT. The Specificity Instruction group also improved significantly, as measured by the elicitation task. However, there was no significant change in accuracy in the judgment task scores of the Specificity Instruction group. When individual results were analysed for this task, the majority of learners in the Specificity Instruction group showed a small reduction in accuracy across three of the contexts. Only the [–definite, +specific] context showed no decrease in accuracy for either the group mean, or in the majority of individual results. An analysis of the written data suggests that some participants from all groups reduced in accuracy between the pre-test and the post-test. Omission errors were far more common than substitution errors or overuse of articles, and the majority of errors in the written data related to use of the definite article. Meanwhile, results from the delayed post-test suggest that the measurable improvements in article accuracy recorded at the time of the post-test were not sustainable long term.

Finally, after a closer examination of the results of individual learners at the time of the pre-test, it is clear that the majority of participants did not show the patterns of fluctuation that were reported in previously published studies of article acquisition (see Chapter 3 for details). At the time of the pre-test, 31 of the 50 participants demonstrated miscellaneous patterns of article use as measured by the elicitation task, and 44 participants showed miscellaneous use of articles when their

results for the judgment task were reviewed. Therefore, the results of the individual learners in this study do not support Ionin's FH (2003) (which predicts overuse of *the* with indefinite specifics and overuse of *a* with definite non-specifics). One possible reason for this was argued to be the changing status of numerals and determiners in Mandarin Chinese (Li and Thompson, 1981; Huang, 1999; Chen, 2004), which may have led to L1 effects that made fluctuation effects less visible. An alternative explanation is that fluctuation effects may not be visible in learners of such a low proficiency (Tryzna, 2009) and that the FH is an oversimplification that does not fully capture the complexity of the process involved in acquiring English articles as an L2. However, as stated above, learners in the Specificity Instruction group were more accurate in the [−definite, +specific] context compared to the other three contexts following instruction, as measured by the judgment task. Additionally, the results of the 6 learners who completed the delayed post-test showed some evidence of overuse of *the* in the [−definite, +specific] context when measured by the elicitation task.

This study has demonstrated that it is possible to develop linguistically-informed teaching materials drawing on insights provided by generative SLA research to provide form-focused grammar instruction to L2 learners of English. As part of the current study, such materials were created and used to teach the English article system to L2 learners whose first language does not use articles. A measure of the effectiveness of this instruction, when contrasted with the two comparison groups, suggests that there may be differences in behaviour between the three groups according to the results of the timed judgment task. The untimed written elicitation task, on the other hand, measured similar improvements between the pre-test and the post-test for all three learner groups. The improvement in the scores of the No Instruction group on both tasks was attributed to their higher proficiency, and it was suggested that this group of learners may have been developmentally ready to acquire determiners, irrespective of the intervention. Therefore, in terms of the linguistically-informed instruction on definiteness and specificity, there is no evidence from this study that it was more beneficial than standard instruction on definiteness, and in turn the two groups who received FFI on articles did not improve more than the learners who received no instruction on this form. As outlined in Chapter 8, this suggests that articles may be un-teachable. Previous research (Master, 1990; 1994; 2002) does not support this claim. However, many

teachers of English report that instruction on articles does not work. A measure of the opinions of teachers who have used both standard teaching materials and linguistically-informed materials would be an interesting supplement to the results for studies of this type.

However, the anomalous result amongst the Specificity Instruction group could also demonstrate the abstract nature of article semantics and reflect the fact that students may not be able to learn enough about the concept in just 3 hours.[12] Use of articles is a notoriously problematic area and the intervention took place across a relatively short space of time. However, the difference between the main experimental group and the other two learner groups on the timed task is promising, as was the visible improvement in the [−definite, +specific] context following the instruction on specificity. This result deserves further investigation in order to fully understand and explain the impact of this instruction. In addition, similar studies which develop and use linguistically-informed materials for other grammatical forms and for languages other than English would provide an interesting comparison. The results for the current study may represent difficulties with teaching articles, rather than a problem with delivering linguistically-informed instruction per se, and this can only be determined after more studies of this type are conducted.

Finally, as highlighted in the introduction to this thesis, due to a disconnect between acquisition research and pedagogy, many English teachers are unaware that specificity may be responsible for some of the problems L2 learners have with articles. The effect of specificity has been demonstrated by the growing body of work which tests Ionin's FH (2003) and is widely cited within the SLA literature. In addition, most teachers do not even have knowledge of the concept, and it is highly unlikely that they are aware of disagreements in the linguistic literature relating to definiteness and referentiality. However, the development of teaching materials that teachers with no linguistic background were able to use demonstrates that greater inter-disciplinary collaboration is possible. The linguistically-informed materials were created with a minimum amount of specialist terminology and using pictures

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[12] Recall that the 4.5 hour instruction period included a 90 minute lesson which reviewed definiteness in a linguistically-informed manner. This was followed a 90 minute lesson on specificity and a further 90 minute lesson which contrasted the two properties as part of an error correction exercise. Full details of the instruction can be found in Chapter 5, with the materials for all 3 lessons in Appendix B.

and examples to explain the concepts. Definiteness and specificity were operationalised according to the informal definitions provided by IKW (2004), and these were simplified further into the pedagogical definitions outlined in Section 5.5. Whilst no measure was made of the teachers' opinions of the new materials, I am able to informally report that they said they enjoyed using the materials and that I was approached by several teachers not involved in the current study who asked whether they could also use the materials with their learners. In my experience, the teaching community is open to the insights provided by theoretical research, and the challenge for researchers is how their results can be made more accessible.

Appendix A. STANDARD TEACHING MATERIALS

A.1. LIST OF MATERIALS

Lesson One

From Collins Cobuild Student's Grammar (1991) – Units 11, 12, 14.

Teacher talks through grammar explanations for each unit.

Exercises started in class, any unfinished exercises completed at home.

Lesson Two

From Dean (1993) – Unit 12 and Hewings (2005) – adapted from p. 115–117 and p.120–121.

Teacher talks through grammar explanations from Dean (1993).

Exercises started in class, any unfinished exercises completed at home.

A.2. MATERIALS FROM LESSON ONE

Unit 11 Determiners

Main points

- Determiners are used at the beginning of noun groups.
- You use specific determiners when people know exactly which things or people you are talking about.
- You use general determiners to talk about people or things without saying exactly who or what they are.

a	both	few	more	other
all	each	fewer	most	several
an	either	less	much	some
another	enough	little	neither	
any	every	many	no	

1 When you use a determiner, you put it at the beginning of a noun group, in front of numbers or adjectives.

I met *the two Swedish girls* in London.
Our main bedroom is through that door.
Have you got *another red card*?
Several young boys were waiting outside.

2 When the people or things that you are talking about have already been mentioned, or the people you are talking to know exactly which ones you mean, you use a specific determiner.

The man began to run towards *the* boy.
Young people don't like *these* operas.
Her face was very red.

The specific determiners are:

the definite article: the
demonstratives: this that these those
possessives: my your his her its our their

Note that 'your' is used both for the singular and plural possessive.
See Unit 8 for 'this', 'that', 'these', and 'those' as pronouns.

3 When you are mentioning people or things for the first time, or talking about them generally without saying exactly which ones you mean, you use a general determiner.

There was *a* man in the lift.
We went to *an* art exhibition.
You can stop at *any* time you like.
There were *several* reasons for this.

The general determiners are:

4 Each general determiner is used with particular types of noun. You use some general determiners with:

- singular count nouns

a	another	each	every	no
an	any		either	neither

I got *a postcard* from Susan.
Any big tin container will do.
He opened *another shop* last month.

- plural count nouns

all	enough	many	no	some
any	few	more	other	
both	fewer	most	several	

There were *few doctors* available.
He spoke *many different languages.*
Several projects had to be postponed.

- uncount nouns

all	enough	little	most	no
any	less	more	much	some

There was *little applause.*
We need *more information*
He did not speak *much English.*

WARNING: The following general determiners can never be used with uncount nouns.

a	both	every	neither
an	each	few	several
another	either	many	

5 Most of the determiners are also pronouns, except 'the', 'a', 'an', 'every', 'no' and the possessives.

I saw *several* in the woods last night.
Have you got *any* that I could borrow?
There is *enough* for all of us.

You use 'one' as a pronoun instead of 'a' or 'an', 'none' instead of 'no', and 'each' instead of 'every'.

Have you got *one*?
There are *none* left.
Each has a separate box and number.

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Unit 11 Practice

A Underline the determiners in the following sentences. The numbers in brackets tell you how many determiners there are.

1 <u>My</u> friend Alec works in <u>a</u> hotel on <u>the</u> corner of <u>this</u> street. (4)
2 There weren't many people at the match. But it was very exciting and our team scored twice in each half. (4)
3 Would you like another piece of this cake, or would you prefer a chocolate biscuit? (3)
4 Most young people like this sort of music. (2)
5 Every child at the party was given a present to take home. (3)
6 Thank you for your letter and the lovely flowers. (2)
7 We live in a small village in the country. It's a quiet, comfortable place with several useful shops. (4)
8 I hope to spend another month in your country sometime this summer. (3)
9 There was little information at the airport. Few people seemed to have any idea what time the flight was likely to leave. (5)
10 Can you give me another call at the office? I don't have much time to spare right now. (3)

B Now do these. Remember that a determiner comes at the front of a noun phrase.

1 <u>These</u> oranges cost ten pence each. (1)
2 Each orange costs ten pence. (1)
3 A: Is this your coat? (1)
   B: No, I'm fairly sure it belongs to that man over there in the corner. I left my coat in the cloakroom. (4)
4 Most students read both books, but they didn't find either very useful. (2)
5 There were several people at the meeting earlier, but most of them left early so there aren't many left now. (2)
6 This is what I always have for my breakfast. (1)
7 If I haven't any books, I can't do my homework. (2)
8 There's another bottle of milk in the fridge. Help yourself to a glass if you'd like some. (3)
9 Have you finished that glass of milk? There's plenty more in the fridge if you'd like another. (2)
10 Most people enjoyed the show, but I was definitely the one who enjoyed it most. (3)

Unit 12 Main uses of 'the'

Main points

- You can use 'the' in front of any noun.
- You use 'the' when the person you are talking to knows which person or thing you mean.
- You use 'the' when you are referring back to someone or something.
- You use 'the' when you are specifying which person or thing you are talking about.
- You use 'the' when you are referring to something that is unique.
- You use 'the' when you want to use one thing as an example to say something about all things of the same type.

1 'The' is called the definite article, and is the commonest determiner. You use 'the' when the person you are talking to knows which person or thing you mean. You can use 'the' in front of any noun, whether it is a singular count noun, an uncount noun, or a plural count noun.

She dropped the can.
I remembered the fun I had with them.
The girls were not at home.

2 You use 'the' with a noun when you are referring back to someone or something that has already been mentioned.

I called for a waiter... ...The waiter with a moustache came.
I have bought a house in Wales... ...The house is in an agricultural area.

3 You use 'the' with a noun and a qualifier, such as a prepositional phrase or a relative clause, when you are specifying which person or thing you are talking about.

I've no idea about the geography of Scotland.
The book that I recommended now costs over three pounds.

4 You use 'the' with a noun when you are referring to something of which there is only one in the world.

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They all sat in the sun.
We have landed men on the moon.
The sky was a brilliant blue.

You also use 'the' when you are referring to something of which there is only one in a particular place.

Mrs Robertson heard that the church had been bombed.
He decided to put some words on the blackboard.

5 You can use 'the' with a singular count noun when you want to make a general statement about all things of that type. For example, if you say 'The whale is the largest mammal in the world', you mean all whales, not one particular whale.

The computer allows us to deal with a lot of data very quickly.
My father's favourite flower is the rose.

6 You can use 'the' with a singular count noun when you are referring to a system or service. For example, you can use 'the phone' to refer to a telephone system and 'the bus' to refer to a bus service.

I don't like using the phone.
How long does it take on the train?

7 You can use 'the' with the name of a musical instrument when you are talking about someone's ability to play the instrument.

'You play the guitar, I see,' said Simon.
Geoff plays the piano very well.

Unit 12 Practice

A Read this passage.

Three learned Christian monks were travelling through Turkey hoping to meet (1) **the wisest man** in (2) **the** whole **country**. (3) **The monks** explained that they wanted to meet him because they each had a question to ask him. (4) **The sultan** sent for Nasreddin Hodja who came to (5) **the palace** at once. (6) **The** first **monk** stepped up and asked his question.

'Where is (7) **the centre** of (8) **the earth?**' 'At this moment the centre of the earth is exactly below (9) **the** front right **foot** of my donkey.'

'How can you possibly know that?' asked (10) **the monk**.

'If you measure the earth carefully you will find that I am correct,' replied Hodja.

(11) **The** second **monk** stepped up and asked his question.

'How many stars are there in (12) **the sky?**'

'As many as there are hairs on my donkey,' replied Hodja. 'As you will see if you count them.'

(13) **The** third **monk** came forward. 'How many hairs are there in my beard?' he asked.

'That is easy,' said Hodja. 'As many as there are hairs in (14) **the** donkey's **tail**. If you do not believe me step forward and we can pull out (15) **the hairs** from your beard and (16) **the hairs** from (17) **the** donkey's **tail** one by one and count them.'

The third monk was not very keen on this idea so he had to admit he was beaten, so everyone could see that Hodja was (18) **the** wisest **man** of all.

Look at the 18 phrases with **the** above. How do you know in each case which person or thing the writer is talking about?

Now answer these questions:

1 Which man? *The wisest man.* ....
2 Which country? ....
3 Which monks? ....
4 Which sultan? ....
5 Which palace? ....
6 Which monk? ....
7 Which centre? ....
9 Which foot? ....
10 Which monk? ....
11 Which monk? ....
13 Which monk? ....
14 Which donkey? ....
15 Which hairs? ....
16 Which hairs? ....
17 Which tail? ....

What about (8), (12), and (18)? How do you know which one the writer means in each case?

8 ....
12 ....
18 ....

▶ **Bank**

Unit 14 'A' and 'an'

Main points

- You only use 'a' or 'an' with singular count nouns.
- You use 'a' or 'an' to talk about a person or thing for the first time.

1 You only use 'a' or 'an' with singular count nouns. 'A' and 'an' are called the indefinite article.

I got a postcard from Susan.
He was eating an apple.

Remember that you use 'a' in front of a word that begins with a consonant sound even if the first letter is a vowel, for example 'a piece, a university, a European language'. You use 'an' in front of a word that begins with a vowel sound even if the first letter is a consonant, for example 'an exercise, an idea, an honest man'.

2 You use 'a' or 'an' when you are talking about a person or thing for the first time.

She picked up a book.
After weeks of looking, we eventually bought a house.
A colleague and I got some money to do research on rats.

Note that the second time you refer to the same person or thing, you use 'the'.

She picked up a book... ... The book was lying on the table.
After weeks of looking, we eventually bought a house... ... The house was in a small village.

3 After the verb 'be' or another link verb, you can use 'a' or 'an' with an adjective and a noun to give more information about someone or something.

His brother was a sensitive child.
He seemed a worried man.
It was a really beautiful house.

You can also use 'a' or 'an' with a noun followed by a qualifier, such as a prepositional phrase or a relative clause, when you want to give more information about someone or something.

The information was contained in an article on biology.
I chose a picture that reminded me of my own country.

4 You use 'a' or 'an' after the verb 'be' or another link verb when you are saying what someone is or what job they have

He became a school teacher.
She is a model and an artist.

5 You use 'a' or 'an' to mean 'one' with some numbers. You can use 'a' or 'an' with nouns that refer to whole numbers, fractions, money, weights, or measures.

a hundred	a quarter	a pound	a kilo
a thousand	a half	a dollar	a litre

6 You do not use 'a' or 'an' with uncount nouns or plural count nouns. You do not need to use a determiner at all with plural count nouns, but you can use the determiners 'any', 'a few', 'many', 'several', or 'some'.

I love dogs.
Do you have any dogs?
Many adults don't listen to children.
I have some children like that in my class.

Note that if you do not use a determiner with a plural count noun, you are often making a general statement about people or things of that type. For example, if you say 'I love dogs', you mean all dogs. However, if you say 'There are eggs in the kitchen', you mean there are some eggs. If you do use a determiner, you mean a number of people or things but not all of them, without saying exactly how many.

I have some friends coming for dinner.
He has bought some plants for the house.
I have some important things to tell them.

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Unit 14 Practice

A Rewrite the sentences using singular nouns with **a** or **an** instead of the plural nouns in bold.

1 **Dogs** make good **pets.** / *A dog makes a good pet.* ....
2 **Lawyers** usually earn more than **policemen.** / ....
3 I love reading good **books.** / ....
4 You don't often see good **programmes** on TV nowadays. / ....
5 **Sons** are always a lot more trouble than **daughters.** / ....
6 I often have **eggs** for breakfast. / ....
7 Nowadays you can buy computer-controlled **washing machines.** / ....
8 I hate to hear **babies** crying or **dogs** barking. / ....

B Where you find a noun phrase with a singular count noun but no determiner, put in **a** or **an**.

1 In English *a* noun phrase with *a* singular count noun can hardly ever stand on its own.
2 We have just bought new house with large garden.
3 My brother is teacher and I have cousin who works with young children as well.
4 Would you like biscuit or piece of cake?
5 I spoke to official and he gave me very good advice.

C Look at the following pairs of sentences. For each pair fill one blank with **a** or **an,** and the other with **the**.

1 I wrote ...*a*........... long letter to Jenny this morning.
   Did I show you ....*the*....... letter I got from Peter this morning?
2 My uncle used to be .... dentist before he retired.
   Arthur Brown is .... dentist who lives next door to my parents.
3 Is there .... bookshop on the High Street?
   I bought this at .... bookshop in the High Street.
4 Has anyone seen .... newspaper I left in the sitting room?
   I usually buy .... newspaper on my way to work.
5 London is easily .... biggest city in Britain.
   Manchester is .... big city in the north of England.
6 It's not easy to learn .... foreign language which is very different from your own language.
   Japanese is certainly .... most difficult language I have tried to learn.
7 Agatha Christie was .... well known writer of detective stories.
   Agatha Christie was .... writer who invented Hercule Poirot.
8 The police are looking for .... young man aged about 23.
   .... young man the police are looking for is about 23.
9 Last night I saw .... interesting TV programme about Eastern Europe.
   I really enjoyed .... programme about Eastern Europe last night.
10 I learned to drive .... car when I was eighteen.
   Dad, can I borrow ....car tonight?

▶ **Bank**

A.3. MATERIALS FROM LESSON TWO

B Grammar guide

1	The indefinite article (*a/an*)	▪ *A/an* is used with singular countable nouns only (*a book, an orange*).
		▪ Before vowels (*a, e, i, o* and *u*) *a* changes to *an* but the change depends on the pronunciation and not just on the spelling. So we say *an hour* (*an* because the *h* is not sounded) but *a uniform* and *a European* (*a* is used before *u* and *eu* when they sound like the *y* in *you*).
		▪ The usual meaning of *a/an* is 'only one and it does not matter which one'. *I'd like a cup of coffee, please.* (= one cup of coffee and any cup of coffee)
		▪ When a singular uncountable noun is mentioned for the first time, use *a/an*. *Alan took a book off the shelf.*
		▪ We can use *some/a lot of/any* with plural countable nouns. *I've got some nails, but I haven't got any screws.*
2	The definite article (*the*)	▪ *The* is used with singular countable nouns (*the book*), with plural countable nouns (*the books*), and with uncountable nouns (*snow, spaghetti*), in their specific sense (not in their general sense). *The snow was over a metre deep last winter.* Other determiners are also possible before uncountable nouns in their specific sense. *Is there any snow on the motorway, or is it clear?*
		▪ The most common meaning of *the* is 'the one you know about' ('a specific and definite one'). In context, we often know about something because it has already been mentioned. *Alan took a book off the shelf. He opened the book and started to read.*
3	Zero article	▪ There is no article before: plural countable nouns in their general sense: *Cats can see in the dark.* uncountable nouns in their general sense: *Snow at night is beautiful.*
		▪ There is no article before proper names (*John*) and titles (*Mr*).
4	Phrases with indefinite, definite, or zero article	▪ The indefinite article is used: in exclamations: *What a mess!* in descriptions of frequency, speed and cost: *once a day, 30 km an hour*
		▪ The definite article is used: when there is only one (or only one which is important to the speaker): *the butcher's, the zoo, the police* for nationalities and *the* + adjective: *the British, the blind, the disabled* for regions, mountain ranges, oceans and seas: *the Middle East, the Alps* for hotels, restaurants, pubs, theatres and cinemas: *The Albion, the Odeon*
		▪ There is no article (zero article): for some institutions used for their main purpose (schools, hospitals, churches etc.): *Richard goes to school in the village.* (BUT *The school is opposite our house.*) before the names of meals: *Let's have lunch.* (BUT *The lunch was cold.*) for continents, countries and cities: *Asia, Italy* (BUT *the UK*), *Athens* for mountains and lakes: *Mount Snowdon, Lake Eyre* for streets (except *the High Street* and *the Oxford road*, which means 'the road which leads to Oxford'): *West Street, New Road*

(Dean 1993 Articles :53)

D Accuracy practice

1 Which is correct, (a) or (b)?

1 Julie goes to (a) **church** (b) **the church** every Sunday.
2 Go straight ahead to (a) **church** (b) **the church**, then turn left.
3 I'm a bit upset. Lee's in (a) **hospital.** (b) **the hospital.** He's quite ill.
4 My sister works at (a) **hospital.** (b) **the hospital.** She's a cleaner.
5 In Britain, children go to (a) **school** (b) **the school** from nine o'clock until four o'clock every day.

2 Which is correct, (a) or (b)?

1 My wife is away on business in (a) **Far East.** (b) **the Far East.**
2 It's the biggest theme park in (a) **UK.** (b) **the UK.**
3 The highest mountain in (a) **the Himalayas** (b) **Himalayas** is (a) **Mount Everest.** (b) **the Mount Everest.**
4 ‧ They live on a small island in (a) **Pacific.** (b) **the Pacific.**
5 She's travelling in (a) **the Europe** (b) **Europe** and (a) **Middle East.** (b) **the Middle East.**

3 Which is correct, (a) or (b)?

1 (a) **Spaghetti** (b) **The spaghetti** you ate yesterday was for today's dinner.
2 I like (a) **spaghetti.** (b) **the spaghetti.**
3 We often go to the park to look at (a) **flowers.** (b) **the flowers.**
4 (a) **Computer games** (b) **The computer games** are one of the things in the modern world that old Mr Tomkins doesn't like.
5 There's been an accident. Call (a) **police** (b) **the police.**

4 Put in *a/an, some, any* or *a lot of* only where necessary.

1 Peter and Alison haven't got ____ children.
2 ____ children would be ____ problem for them at the moment as they have ____ work to do and they don't have ____ money.
3 Unfortunately they don't have ____ interesting hobbies either. I think one of them should have ____ hobby.
4 Their lives consist entirely of ____ work. ____ people live like that.
5 They aren't even interested in ____ travel. Sad, isn't it?

5 Write this letter again, putting in articles where necessary.

A letter from Doris Winter to the manager of her local bank:

I went to bank yesterday in order to arrange for cashpoint card and credit card but I was told that I had to make written application. My name is Doris Winter and I am German national, staying in United Kingdom for one year to improve my English. I was also asked to provide details of my bank account in Germany. Account is at bank in Hamburg. Enclosed cheque has my account number. I understand that credit card they provided cannot be used here. You may contact manager (Mr Fuchs) who will provide reference for me if you require one.

Articles - some specific uses

(adapted from "Advanced Grammar in Use", Hewings, pp115-7, pp120-1, FB 23/10/03)

The and a/an: "the only one"

We use the when we know that there is only one of a particular thing. For example:
- the sun   the world   the North Pole   the jet age   the international market
  the travel industry   the arms trade

The same applies to the following things when we refer to them in a general way:
- the weather   the climate   the human race   the atmosphere   the sea   the public
  the environment   the sky   the ground   the wind   the future   the past

However, if we want to describe a particular instance of these we use a/an. Compare:
- She could hear the wind whistling through the trees outside. *and*
- There's a cold wind blowing from the north.
- What are your plans for the future? *and*
- She dreamt of a future where she could spend more time painting.

Practice

If necessary, correct these sentences.

1 Sri Lanka has the wonderful climate.
2 The organisation's aim is to educate the public about the dangers of smoking.
3 We need an environment free from pollution.
4 She has worked in a fashion industry since she left school.
5 The wind is blowing dust all the way from Africa.
6 We can look forward to a warm southerly wind this weekend.
7 The USA is a country with the high level of immigration.
8 How can we combine economic growth and respect for an environment?
9 Car exhaust emissions are having a major effect on a world's climate.
10 That's Terry – he's the third person on the right.
11 She has become the important figure in Norwegian politics.
12 It's a most important issue and we need to discuss it in detail.

Appendix B. LINGUISTICALLY-INFORMED TEACHING MATERIALS

B.1. ARTICLES LESSON PLAN

Lesson One

1. Exercise one: Inductive activity to introduce articles
   Match usage of articles in a text to the correct rule. Don't review answers yet.

2. PowerPoint One
   The definite and indefinite articles (including the count/mass and singular/plural distinctions)

3. Review answers to exercise one

4. Exercise two: Controlled practice
   Gap fill exercise. Select the definite, indefinite or zero article in sentences

Lesson Two

5. PowerPoint Two
   Specificity. What it is, why it might lead to errors

6. Exercise three: Controlled practice
   Identify whether sentences are specific or non-specific

7. Exercise four: Further practice
   Error correction exercise, followed by identification of specific and non-specific articles

8. PowerPoint Three
   Review of identifiability and specificity

Lesson Three

9. Error correction exercise
   Work in pairs to identify and correct the mistakes

10. Error correction PowerPoint
    Answers to exercise, with explanations for each error

B.2. EXERCISE ONE

Exercise 1

The words and phrases in bold print in the email below are examples of how articles are used in English. Read the text and match each word or phrase to one of the rules underneath. The first one has been completed for you. There may be more than one correct answer.

Dear Professor,

I went to (1) ***the library*** *in order to obtain* (2) ***the book you recommended in your lecture yesterday*** *but I was told that I had to fill in* (3) ***a reservation form****. There are only two copies of* (4) ***the book*** *available and other students have borrowed them both. I need to be able to access this book soon so that I can write* (5) ***the assessed essay****. Although* (6) ***electronic copies*** *of the book are available, my computer has broken so I cannot access them from home. I understand that students can borrow* (7) ***books*** *from other university libraries if they have permission from their professor. I would be grateful if you could provide me with* (8) ***a letter*** *so that I may access another university library and complete* (9) ***the essay*** *on time.*
Yours,
Mary Wintour

i) **The** is used when something can be identified by the reader because of a previous mention.

       Example: …..4………

ii) **The** is used when there is just one person, thing or group within the context and therefore it can be identified.

       Example: …………….

iii) **The** is used when a relative clause (or other modifier) means the reader can identify the noun.

       Example: …………….

iv) **A/an** is used with singular countable nouns when something is mentioned for the first time.

Example: …………….

v) **A/an** is used with an adjective (or other modifier) if that adjective provides extra information about a singular countable noun but does not help the reader to identify it.

Example: …………….

vi) **No article** is used with plural and uncountable nouns when something is mentioned for the first time.

Example: …………….

B.3. EXERCISE ONE ANSWERS

ANSWERS

Exercise 1

The words and phrases in bold print in the email below are examples of how articles are used in English. Read the text and match each word or phrase to one of the rules underneath. The first one has been completed for you. There may be more than one correct answer.

Dear Professor,

*I went to (1) **the library** in order to obtain (2) **the book you recommended in your lecture yesterday** but I was told that I had to fill in (3) **a reservation form**. There are only two copies of (4) **the book** available and other students have borrowed them both. I need to be able to access this book soon so that I can write (5) **the assessed essay**. Although (6) **electronic copies** of the book are available, my computer has broken so I cannot access them from home. I understand that students can borrow (7) **books** from other university libraries if they have permission from their professor. I would be grateful if you could provide me with (8) **a letter** so that I may access another university library and complete (9) **the essay** on time.*

Yours,

Mary Wintour

i) **The** is used when something can be identified by the reader because of a previous mention.

  Example: …..4, 9………

ii) **The** is used when there is just one person, thing or group within the context and therefore it can be identified.

  Example: ……1, 5……….

iii) **The** is used when a relative clause (or other modifier) means the reader can identify the noun.

  Example: …2………….

iv) **A/an** is used with singular countable nouns when something is mentioned for the first time.

  Example: ……8……….

v) **A/an** is used with an adjective (or other modifier) if that adjective provides extra information about a singular countable noun but does not help the reader to identify it.

  Example: …3………….

vi) **No article** is used with plural and uncountable nouns when something is mentioned for the first time.

  Example: ……7……….

B.4. POWERPOINT ONE

English Articles 1

APEAP course
Elaine Lopez

1

The definite article

- When deciding whether to use a definite article we first check whether a noun can be identified.

- To use the definite article **'the'**, *both* the speaker *and* the listener must be able to identify the person/thing being referred to.
  e.g. I'll see you at 7pm outside **the** station.

- Both the speaker and listener know that there is a station near the university, therefore it can be identified.

2

Which person/object?

To use the definite article, *both* the speaker *and* listener can identify the noun, and answer the question **'Which one?'**

speaker   listener

3

Which person/object?

To use the definite article, *both* the speaker *and* listener can identify the noun, and answer the question **'Which one?'**

Reasons they can identify the noun:

- because of a previous mention
  e.g. I have a cat. **The** cat is fat.

- there is only one of that person/ object in the context
  e.g. I will see you in **the** library.

4

Which person/object?

More reasons the noun is identifiable:

- general knowledge
  e.g. I caught a bus to university and **the** driver was very angry. (It is general knowledge that buses have drivers)

- something can be seen, heard, or felt
  e.g. Turn down **the** music.

- because of information provided by a modifier
  e.g. **The** person who arrived last.

5

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The indefinite article

If a noun cannot be identified by *both* the speaker *and* the listener the indefinite article **'a/an'** is used.
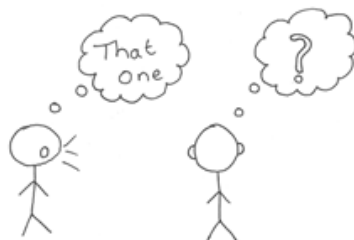
speaker   listener

6

The indefinite article

- Use of the indefinite article *a/an* depends on:

  1. Whether a noun is count/ non-count.
  We only use the indefinite article with countable nouns.
  e.g.I have **a cat**.

  2. Whether a noun is singular or plural.
  We only use the indefinite article with singular nouns.
  e.g. Do you like **cats**?

7

Review: Countable nouns

- If a noun can be made plural it is countable.
  e.g. a car/ cars, an hour/ hours

- Nouns that cannot be plural are non-count, or mass.
  e.g. coffee, milk, money

- Some nouns can be both count or mass, depending on the context.
  e.g. 'Let's go for a coffee' (i.e. a cup of coffee)

8

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Three things to ask

- Can the noun be identified by both the speaker and the listener?
  YES. Definite article 'Pass me **the** book.'

- If not, is it a mass noun?
  YES No article 'I like to eat_ chocolate'.

- If not, is it singular?
  YES Indefinite article 'I need to buy **a** pen'.
  NO No article 'I like _ dogs'.

9

Review: definite article

- The definite article is used with nouns that can be identified by both the speaker and the listener.
  e.g. Turn down **the** music.
  Both the speaker and the listener can hear the music.

- It doesn't matter whether the noun is count or mass, singular or plural.
  e.g. Where did you put **the coffee**? (mass noun)
  e.g. **The cats** have been fighting all day. (plural noun)

10

Review: indefinite article

- The indefinite article is used with singular, count nouns which cannot be identified by both the speaker and the listener.
  e.g. I have **a** cat.

- Mass nouns which cannot be identified use no article.
  e.g. I like coffee.

- Plural nouns which cannot be identified use no article.
  e.g. My mum likes cats.

11

Now do exercise two

Choose the definite, indefinite, or no article
-ask 'which one?'
-is it count or mass?
-is it singular or plural?

12

B.5. EXERCISE TWO

Exercise 2

Complete the following sentences. Use **a/an**, **the**, or **Ø**.

1)   I need ………… English grammar book- do you have one I can borrow?

2)   Can I use ………. bathroom?

3)   Mick is ………. only boy in class.

4)   Would you like ……… drink?

5)   Excuse me, where's ………. nearest café?

6)   Alice wants to find ………. boyfriend.

7)   I know ………. good restaurant- shall I reserve ………. table for tonight?

8)   I have ………. long hair and ………. small nose.

9)   Let's meet at 7pm at ………. bus stop opposite ………. cinema.

10)   ………. recent piece of research has demonstrated …..…… significant effect of assessment on students' perception of their course.

11)   It has been found that ………positive attitude can help recovery from injury.

12)   Tropical cyclones are known to be hazardous. ……….hazards relating to these storms can be grouped under three headings.

13)   ………. tourism is an important part of the economy in ………. number of developing countries.

14)   ……… top five countries with ………. highest occurrences of this disease are all located in Africa.

Sentences 1-9: adapted from Swan, M. and Walter, C. (2001). *The Good Grammar Book*, Oxford: Oxford University Press pp.148-151.

Sentences 10-14: adapted from Hewings, M. (2012). *Cambridge Academic English Upper Intermediate Student's Book,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press pp. 26-52.

B.6. EXERCISE TWO ANSWERS

ANSWERS

Exercise 2.

Complete the following sentences. Use **a/an, the**, or **Ø**.

1)   I need ……**an**…… English grammar book- do you have one I can borrow?

2)   Can I use …**the**……. bathroom?

3)   Mick is …**the**……. only boy in class.

4)   Would you like …**a**…… drink?

5)   Excuse me, where's ……**the**…. nearest café?

6)   Alice wants to find ……**a**…. boyfriend.

7)   I know …**a**……. good restaurant- shall I reserve …**a**……. table for tonight?

8)   I have ……**Ø**…. long hair and ……**a**…. small nose.

9)   Let's meet at 7pm at …**the**……. bus stop opposite …**the**……. cinema.

10)   …**A**…. recent piece of research has demonstrated …**a**…… significant effect of assessment on students' perception of their course.

11)   It has been found that …**a**….positive attitude can help recovery from injury.

12)   Tropical cyclones are known to be hazardous. ..**The**….hazards relating to these storms can be grouped under three headings.

13)   ……**Ø**…. tourism is an important part of the economy in …**a**……. number of developing countries.

14)   …**The**…… top five countries with …**the**……. highest occurrences of this disease are all located in Africa.

Sentences 1-9: adapted from Swan, M. and Walter, C. (2001). *The Good Grammar Book*, Oxford: Oxford University Press pp.148-151. Sentences 10-14: adapted from Hewings, M. (2012). *Cambridge Academic English Upper Intermediate Student's Book,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press pp. 26-52.

B.7. POWERPOINT TWO

English Articles 2

APEAP course
Elaine Lopez

1

Problems with article use

- With English articles, sometimes extra information is contained in the context.

- Look at these examples:

  1. I want to speak to **the winner** of the race because she is my best friend.

  2. As soon as the race finishes, I want to congratulate **the winner**.

What is the difference between *the winner* in these two sentences?

2

I want to speak to **the winner** of the race because she is my best friend.

The speaker has a specific person in mind.
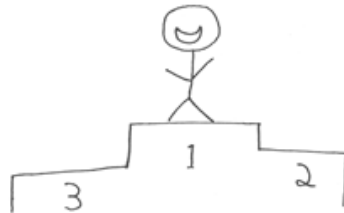
3

As soon as the race finishes, I want to congratulate **the winner**.

The people are still running so the speaker has no specific person in mind.

However, races generally have one identifiable winner and so the definite article is still used.

4

Specific and non-specific

- Now look at these sentences:

1. Jim wants **a new bicycle** for his birthday.
2. I have **a bicycle** which I was given on my birthday.

- Both of these examples use the indefinite article.

- One noun phrase is specific and the other is non-specific.

Activity: Which of the above noun phrases is specific and which is non-specific?

5

Specific and non-specific

1. Jim wants **a new bicycle** for his birthday.
Jim wants any bicycle which is new. This noun phrase is non-specific.

2. I have **a bicycle** which I was given on my birthday.
I am talking about just one particular bicycle. This noun phrase is specific.

6

Specific and non-specific

- *the* can be specific/non-specific
- *a/an* can be specific/non-specific

- Some learners make errors because they think the=specific and a=non-specific.

- This is not true!!

7

Specific and non-specific

- Specific and non-specific noun phrases are different depending on who/ what the speaker intends to refer to.
- If the speaker refers to one particular individual then it is specific.

  e.g. I am meeting **a rich man** after work today.

8

- If they refer to any individual within a group then it is non-specific.

  e.g. I want to marry **a rich man** when I'm older.

- It does not matter whether the listener can also identify the person/ object.

9

Summary

- Definite/indefinite is decided by identifiability. It is shared knowledge between the speaker and listener.

- Specific/non-specific depends on what the speaker is thinking about.

Remember: specific is not the same as definite.

Now do exercise three

10

B.8. EXERCISE THREE

Exercise 3

Articles: Specific and non-specific reference

3.1 Look at the underlined nouns in the following sentences. Decide which are specific and which are non-specific. The first two have been done as examples.

Remember:

Specific: the speaker has a particular person/object in mind.

Non-specific: the speaker is referring to any person/object within a group.

1) I went to see a film last night. _____*specific*_____

2) She is looking for the biggest hat that she can find. __*Non-specific*___

3) I read the book that you recommended. _____

4) I think I will buy a sandwich for lunch but I can't decide whether I want tuna or chicken. _____

5) Yesterday I met the vice-chancellor of the university. _____

6) The class this morning was very confusing. _____

7) Tomorrow when I catch the bus to work I will say hello to the driver. _____

8) I would love to buy a house near the ocean. _____

9) When I graduate I want to get a good job. _____

10) I can't come to class tomorrow because I'm meeting a friend for coffee. _____

3.2 In pairs, discuss the difference in meaning between the noun phrases in these pairs of sentences. Are they specific or non-specific?

1) Mary's friend is <u>a footballer</u>, and he is very famous.

   John wants to be <u>a footballer</u> because he loves playing sport.

2) Where did you leave <u>the cake</u> which you bought for dessert?

   When you go shopping, please buy <u>the cake</u> with the most chocolate.

3) I want to go to <u>the cinema</u> tonight, but I can't decide between the Odeon and Cineworld.

   I saw you at <u>the cinema</u> yesterday, but you didn't see me.

4) I have <u>a date</u> tomorrow night with my new boyfriend.

   Let's arrange <u>a date</u> to meet. When are you free?

5) That shop has closed; maybe <u>a new café</u> will open there instead.

   There's <u>a new café</u> opened in town and I want to go there.

B.9. EXERCISE THREE ANSWERS

ANSWERS

Exercise 3

Articles: Specific and non-specific reference

3.1 Look at the underlined nouns in the following sentences. Decide which are specific and which are non-specific. The first two have been done as examples.

Remember:

Specific: the speaker has a particular person/ object in mind.

Non-specific: the speaker is referring to any person/object within a group.

1) I went to see a film last night. _____*specific*_____

2) She is looking for the biggest hat that she can find. __*Non-specific*___

3) I read the book that you recommended. _____**specific**_____

4) I think I will buy a sandwich for lunch but I can't decide whether I want tuna or chicken. _____**non-specific**_____

5) Yesterday I met the vice-chancellor of the university. _____**specific**_____

6) The class this morning was very confusing. _____**specific**_____

7) Tomorrow when I catch the bus to work I will say hello to the driver. _____**non-specific**_____

8) I would love to buy a house near the ocean. _____**non-specific**_____

9) When I graduate I want to get a good job. _____**non-specific**_____

10) I can't come to class tomorrow because I'm meeting a friend for coffee. ____**specific**_____

3.2 In pairs, discuss the difference in meaning between the noun phrases in these pairs of sentences. Are they specific or non-specific?

1)   Mary's friend is a footballer, and he is very famous. **Sp**

       John wants to be a footballer because he loves playing sport. **N-sp**

2)   Where did you leave <u>the cake</u> which you bought for dessert? **Sp**

When you go shopping, please buy <u>the cake</u> with the most chocolate. **N-sp**

3)   I want to go to <u>the cinema</u> tonight, but I can't decide between the Odeon and Cineworld. **N-sp**

I saw you at <u>the cinema</u> yesterday, but you didn't see me. **Sp**

4)   I have <u>a date</u> tomorrow night with my new boyfriend. **Sp**

Let's arrange <u>a date</u> to meet. When are you free? **N-sp**

5)   That shop has closed; maybe <u>a new café</u> will open there instead. **N-sp**

There's <u>a new café</u> opened in town and I want to go there. **Sp**

B.10. EXERCISE FOUR

Exercise 4

Correct the use of articles in the following sentences. Some sentences do not contain an error.

13)   Sri Lanka has the wonderful climate.

14)   The organization's aim is to educate the public about the dangers of smoking.

15)   We need an environment free from pollution.

16)   She has worked in a fashion industry since she left school.

17)   The wind is blowing dust all the way from Africa.

18)   We can look forward to a warm southerly wind this weekend.

19)   The USA is a country with the high level of immigration.

20)   How can we combine economic growth and respect for an environment?

21)   Car exhaust emissions are having a major effect on a world's climate.

22)   That's Terry- he's the third person on the right.

23)   She has become the important figure in Norwegian politics.

24)   It's a most important issue and we need to discuss it in detail.

Sentences from Hewings, M. (2012). *Advanced Grammar in Use,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press pp. 115.

4.2 Now decide whether the articles in each sentence are specific or non-specific. Write 'S' or 'NS' above each noun phrase.

B.11. EXERCISE FOUR ANSWERS

ANSWERS

Exercise 4

Correct the use of articles in the following sentences. Some sentences do not contain an error.

1) Sri Lanka has ~~the~~ - a wonderful climate.

2) The organization's aim is to educate the public about the dangers of smoking. **Correct**

3) We need an environment free from pollution. **Correct**

4) She has worked in ~~a~~ the fashion industry since she left school.

5) The wind is blowing dust all the way from Africa. **Correct**

6) We can look forward to a warm southerly wind this weekend. **Correct**

7) The USA is a country with ~~the~~ a high level of immigration.

8) How can we combine economic growth and respect for ~~an~~ the environment?

9) Car exhaust emissions are having a major effect on ~~a~~ the world's climate.

10) That's Terry- he's the third person on the right. **Correct**

11) She has become ~~the~~ an important figure in Norwegian politics.

12) It's ~~a~~ the most important issue and we need to discuss it in detail.

Sentences from Hewings, M. (2012). *Advanced Grammar in Use,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press pp. 115.

4.2 Now decide whether the articles in each sentence are specific or non-specific. Write 'S' or 'NS' above each noun phrase.

1) Sri Lanka has a wonderful climate. **S**

2)   The organisation's aim is to educate the public about the dangers of smoking. **S,S,S**

3)   We need an environment free from pollution. **S**

4)   She has worked in the fashion industry since she left school. **S**

5)   The wind is blowing dust all the way from Africa. **S**

6)   We can look forward to a warm southerly wind this weekend. **S**

7)   The USA is a country with a high level of immigration. **S, NS, S**

8)   How can we combine economic growth and respect for the environment? **S**

9)   Car exhaust emissions are having a major effect on the world's climate. **NS, S**

10) That's Terry- he's the third person on the right. **S**

11) She has become an important figure in Norwegian politics. **S**

12) It's the most important issue and we need to discuss it in detail. **S**

B.12. POWERPOINT THREE

English Articles 3

APEAP course
Elaine Lopez

Identifiability

- Whether to use the definite or indefinite article depends on shared knowledge between a speaker and listener.

e.g. "*I will meet you at **the** station.*" (both speaker and listener know which station the speaker is referring to)

e.g. "*There is **a** station near my new house.*" (the speaker assumes that the listener does not know about this station)

Specificity

- The difference between a specific and non-specific noun phrase depends on who/what the **speaker** intends to refer to.

e.g. "*I will meet you at* **the** *station*." (the speaker is referring to just one particular station)

e.g. "*Which is* **the** *station nearest to your house?*" (this could be any of a number of stations)

3

Definite vs. Specific

- To decide if an article is **definite** or **indefinite** then look at the noun.
- It is decided by shared knowledge between the speaker and listener i.e. they can both identify which noun is being referred to.

- To decide if an article is **specific** or **non-specific** then look at the complete sentence and put yourself in the mind of the speaker/ writer.
- It is decided by the speaker's intention- are they talking about one individual, or any individual in a group.

4

Now review a piece of academic writing you have done recently.

Check and correct the use of articles in this text.

5

B.13. ERROR CORRECTION EXERCISE

Error Correction: Mid-term Reading into Writing exam

The following sentences are taken from student answers to the Reading into Writing exam. There is at least one error in each of the sentences.

The errors might be with grammar (e.g. prepositions, articles, verb forms) or vocabulary (wrong word used). Also check the academic style and use of references in each sentence.

Find and correct the errors.

1. There are many drawbacks and changes which is done by the internet on the high education process.

2. It is said that 75 percent of students use internet more often than the library.

3. Most of college student are like to spend their time on the internet so that they do not get enough time to physical activity.

4. Jones and Johnson (2005) mentioned 73% of tutors satisfy to communicate with their students by email and found that it was easier way to contact with students.

5. In general speak, some studies have determined college student's internet use show negative corporation with fitness. Moreno and Jelenchik (2013).

B.14. ERROR CORRECTION POWERPOINT

Error Correction

APEAP course
Elaine Lopez

1

- Here are some problems from the Reading into Writing exam.
- Please correct the mistakes in each sentence.
- The number of mistakes is given for each sentence.

2

2 grammar mistakes
1 vocabulary error

1. There are many drawbacks and changes which is done by the internet on the high education process.

3

Corrections

There are many drawbacks and cha**lle**nges which **are** done by the internet on the hig**her** education process.

- error 1 = plural verb *to be*
- error 2 = comparative adjective needed
- Vocabulary error = challenges, not changes

4

There is also a problem with academic style here

There are many drawbacks and challenges which are done by the internet on the higher education process.

- This phrase is not precise enough, and the word *do* is a wrong collocation.

- replace with 'have occurred because of the effect of'

5

Correct sentence

There are many drawbacks and challenges which have occurred because of the effect of the internet on the higher education process.

1 grammar mistake

2. It is said that 75 percent of students use internet more often than the library.

Correction

It is said that 75 percent of students use the internet more often than the library.

- The definite article is missing.
- We use the definite article here because there is only one internet, and both the writer and reader know which internet.
- It is specific because the writer intends to refer to one particular object.

There is also a problem with academic style here

It is said that 75 percent of students use the internet more often than the library.

- No citation is provided for this statement.
- The idea is taken from Jones (2002).
- It is necessary to provide either an 'author prominent' citation or an 'information prominent' citation.

9

Citations

- Information prominent citation:

It is said that 75 percent of students use the internet more often than the library (Jones, 2002).

- Author prominent citation:

Jones (2002) reports that 75 percent of students use the internet more often than the library.

10

5 grammar mistakes

3. Most of college student are like to spend their time on the internet so that they do not get enough time to physical activity.

11

Corrections

Most college students like to spend their time on the internet so that they do not get enough time to do physical activity.

- error 1 = unnecessary preposition (of)
- error 2 = plural noun needed
- error 3 = unnecessary verb *to be* (are)
- error 4 = unnecessary relative pronoun (that)
- error 5 = verb missing from final clause

12

3 mistakes

4. Jones and Johnson (2005) mentioned 73% of tutors satisfy to communicate with their students by email and found that it was easier way to contact with students.

13

Corrections

Jones and Johnson (2005) mentioned 73% of tutors are satisfied to communicate with their students by email and found that it was an easier way to contact with students.

- error 1 = wrong verb form (passive needed)
- error 2 = indefinite article needed. This article is non-specific as the writer is discussing one of many possible ways to contact students.
- error 3 = unnecessary preposition (with)

14

4 grammar mistakes

5. In general speak, some studies have determined college student's internet use show negative corporation with fitness. Moreno and Jelenchik (2013).

Corrections

Generally speaking, some studies have determined college students' internet use shows a negative corporation with fitness. Moreno and Jelenchik (2013).

- error 1 = wrong linking expression used
- error 2 = wrong use of apostrophe. *Students* is plural not singular, so the apostrophe follows the 's'
- error 3 = 3rd person verb form needed
- error 4 = indefinite article needed

There is also a vocabulary error and a referencing error.

- Generally speaking, some studies have determined college students' internet use shows a negative correlation with fitness (Moreno and Jelenchik, 2013).

- vocabulary = wrong word used: correlation **not** corporation
- referencing = authors' surnames should be inside brackets for an 'information prominent' citation.

Appendix C. ELICITATION TASK (IZP, 2009)

INSTRUCTIONS

You will see 60 short English conversations.
One of the last sentences in each conversation has a blank (_____).

Fill in the blank with a word of your choice. Examples of possible words are
a, the, she, he, not, to, her, my, from, etc.
If no word is needed put a cross (X) in the blank.
If there is more than one possible answer, choose the answer that sounds best
in the context.

Complete the items in the order given.
Do not go back to or change your earlier answers.
Do not spend too long on any item.

1. *At the bus stop*
Mike: Hello, this is the first time I've seen you here. When did you start taking the
    city bus?
Chris: I started taking the bus when I started school _____ last week.

2. Jason: How is your cousin doing?
    Rachel: She is doing great. In fact, she is going _____ a trip to Brazil in the
        summer.

3. Mother: What are you reading in the newspaper?
    Daughter: I'm reading a poem about baby lions – I really like it. I would like to
            write a letter to _____ author of that poem – unfortunately, I have
            no idea who it is… The poem isn't signed!

4. *In a school*
Child: It's my birthday next week!
Teacher: That's great. Are you going to have a party?
Child: Yes! A big party! I am hoping to get _____ new dog! I love animals!

5. *At the supermarket*
Salesperson: Hello! What can I help you with today?
Customer: I am looking for tomatoes. I want to make spaghetti sauce _____
            dinner.

6. Barbara: Did Betty get anything at the bookshop yesterday?
    Rick: Yes – she bought a novel and a magazine. She read _____ magazine
            first.

7. *At the bus station*
Mildred: Where is the bus? It was supposed to come five minutes ago!
Station Attendant: I'm sorry. The schedule has changed. The bus will _____
                come today.

8. *In an airport, in a crowd of people*
Man: Excuse me, do you work here?
Security guard: Yes. Can I help you?
Man: Yes, please. I am trying to find _____ red-haired girl; I think
                that she flew in on Flight 239.

9. Brother: Did you get anything for our mother's birthday?
    Sister: Well, it's a long story. I went to a jewellery store, but I didn't have a lot
            of money. There were so many beautiful things in that jewellery store:
            some bracelets, earrings, necklaces – and so many of them! And I liked
            everything! But I only had money for one thing! So finally, I bought
            _____ bracelet.

10. *At a local shop*
Salesclerk: Welcome to our shop. May I help you?
Customer: Where is the dairy section? I would like to buy my daughter some
            cheese. _____ is hungry.

11. Mother: Did you eat breakfast this morning, dear?
    Daughter: Yes, mum. I ate cereal and milk before I went _____ to school.

12. Carrie: Did your funny uncle Reuben visit you for Christmas?
    Older sister: No, he and his wife went to visit her family instead. They went to
                  _____ capital of North Dakota – I can't remember what its
                  name is. It's probably a very cold place!

13. Maria: Mum, have you seen my blue scarf? I would like to wear it to school
              today.
    Mother: No, I haven't dear. Ask your sister. Maybe she knows where it
             _____.

14. Marcus: Can you and your friend Rick come over this weekend?
    Jim: I'll come over, but Rick isn't here. He went to _____ house
               belonging to his uncle George… I have no idea where that is. But Rick
               was very excited about going!

15. *Grandfather comes for a visit*
Grandfather: Where is my little granddaughter Beth? Is she home?
Father: No… She is not going to be back till late. She is having dinner with
                   _____ girl from class – her name is Angie, and Beth really likes
                   her.

16. Jules: Sarah, have you seen my car keys? I think I've lost them again.
    Sarah: Again? That's too bad, Jules. No, I have _____ seen them. Check
            your room, instead.

17. *At the cafeteria*
Miriam: Thank you for bringing me lunch today. This sandwich is really delicious!
Hannah: Yes, it is. My mother made it. She bought the ingredients _____ a
         wholefoods store.

18. *Mother comes home*
Mother: How did Peter spend the day at his grandmother's?
Father: He had a good time. He did his homework for tomorrow. Then he went
           outside and played with _____ little girl – I don't know who it was.
           Then he came back inside; and then I came and took him home.

19. *At a bookshop*
Chris: Well, I've bought everything that I wanted. Are you ready to go?
Mike: Almost. Can you please wait a few minutes? I want to talk to _____
       owner of this bookshop – she is a very nice lady, and I always say hi to her.

20. Jeremy: My head is hurting. I need to take a rest.
    Harold: You're right. You _____ working too hard. You deserve a break.

21. Gabrielle: My son Ralph didn't have anything to read last weekend. So, he went to the library.
    Charles: Did he find something to read?
    Gabrielle: Oh yes – there were so many wonderful things to read in the library: books, magazines, newspapers! I told Ralph to get just one thing. So finally, Ralph chose _____ magazine.

22. Leon: I think I need to relax for a little bit. My life has been so busy!
    Patrick: Really?
    Leon: Yeah, I've been so busy that I forgot ____ own birthday!

23. Louise: Where's your mother?
    Julie: She is meeting _____ principal of my brother's school. He is a very nice man. He is talking to my mother about my brother's grades.

24. Maryanne: What did you do yesterday?
    Richard: I visited my friend Kelly. Kelly and I went to a pet shop – we like to play with animals! We saw two cats and one dog at the shop. I took _____ dog for a walk around the block!

25. Jessie: I babysat yesterday for the first time ever.
    Lesley: How was it?
    Jessie: Fine. I baby-sat a little boy named Niles. I played a monopoly game with him. Then I did my homework, and Niles read _____ short story – I don't know what it was about. And then I put him to bed.

26. Cynthia: Jill, does Amy like roast beef?
    Jill: No, I don't think so.
    Cynthia: Really? How come?
    Jill: She does _____ like to eat meat.

27. Mother: What did you and Kenny do yesterday, when I wasn't here?
    Father: Well, we went shopping. Kenny needed something to write with. We went to a shop that had lots of pencils, pens, and markers. I told Kenny he could buy just one thing. So he bought _____ pen.

28. *Father comes home*
Father: Thank you for taking care of Karen. How did you spend the day?
Babysitter: Well, we went to a park. Karen played in the sandbox for a while. And then she met _____ beautiful friendly dog – he was very well-behaved, and Karen played with him for almost an hour.

29. Tamara: Hi, Genie. How is your brother George doing?
    Genie: Great! Last weekend, he went to visit his friend Ben. He stayed at _____ big campsite next to Ben's parents' house – it's the same campsite we visited last year!

30. Vicky: Where were you yesterday? I tried to call you, but you weren't home.
    Rachel: I went to a bookshop yesterday.
    Vicky: Oh, what did you get?
    Rachel: I got lots of things – several magazines, two red pens, and an interesting new book. After I came home, I read _____ book.

31. *First day of school*
Girl: Hi there! My name is Kathy. What's your name?
Boy: Hello, I'm Eric. It's a pleasure to meet _____ you.

32. *At a nursery school*
Teacher: Hello, everyone! Good Morning! Today, we'll be reading a story.
Student: Great! I love to read! Are _____ reading a story about pirates?

33. Sarah: Yesterday, I took my granddaughter Becky for a walk in the park.
    Claudia: How did she like it?
    Sarah: She had a good time. She saw one little girl and two little boys in the park. Becky is a little shy. But finally, she talked to _____ little girl.

34. *During break*
Mickey: I went to the zoo with my parents and sisters.
Lesley: How exciting!
Mickey: Yes! I _____ fun!

35. *At a toy shop*
Sales clerk: May I help you?
Client: Yes! I am very angry. I bought a toy for my child at this shop, but it's broken! I want to talk to _____ owner of this shop – I don't care who that is! I am going to complain!

36. *At the library*
Lisa: How many books did you borrow from the library?
Patrick: I borrowed nine. I'll have to return them all next _____ Thursday.

37. *Phone conversation*
Grandma: Hi, Billie! This is your grandma.
Billy: Hi, grandma, How are you?
Grandma: I'm fine, but I miss you and your brother Jim. I haven't seen you for almost a year! Is Jim home?
Billy: No, he's still at school. He is tutoring _____ little boy – I don't remember who it is. Jim will be home by seven.

38. Marian: Guess what! I just started working on the school newspaper. I take photographs!
    Jim: So what photographs have you taken so far?
    Marian: Well, I went to a park. At first I took photographs of flowers and trees. But I wanted to practice on people, too! There were lots of people in the park. I had just one picture left in my camera. So I photographed _____ woman.

39. *Phone conversation*
Aunt: Hi, Jessie. This is your aunt Trudy from York. I know it's your birthday next
       week. So tell me, what would you like for your birthday?
Jessie: Um… I'd like some money, please.
Aunt: Money?! But you are only eight years old! What do you need money for?
Jessie: For my stamp collection. I'd like to buy _____ beautiful stamp – I just
       saw it at the stamp store. It's really rare, and I really want to have it!

40. Anita: Oliver, please hand me the cookbook from the kitchen cabinet. I am
         planning on cooking dinner tonight.
   Oliver: I'm sorry dear. I'm afraid the book isn't here. I think Chris still _____
         it.

41. Dominique: I heard that your sister went on holiday. Where did she go?
    Raquel: Latin America. She spent two weeks in _____ capital of Mexico:
           Mexico City. It's a beautiful city, and she really enjoyed her trip.

42. *After school*
Father: Do you have any homework?
Child: Yes, I need to write a book report.
Father: So what will you read?
Child: Hmm… I don't know yet. But I like to read about things that move – cars,
       trains… I know! I would like to read _____ book about aeroplanes! I'll
       go to the library tomorrow!

43. *At the end of a running race*
Laura: Are you ready to leave?
Betsy: No, not yet. First, I need to talk to _____ winner of this race – he is my
      good friend, and I want to congratulate him!

44. Father: How did little Billy spend the evening yesterday, when I wasn't here?
    Mother: He did all his homework! And he read _____ very interesting story:
        it's about a small fishing village in Portugal, and the lives of the people
        who live there. He told me all about it.

45. Lee: Where have you been? I've been looking for all over for you.
    Jenny: I went to the record shop, and I bought some CDs.
    Lee: Really? My friend and I _____planning to go there later today.
    Jenny: What a coincidence!

46. *After a girls' tennis match at school*
Child: Excuse me! Can you please let me in?
Coach: What do you need?
Child: I am a reporter for my school newspaper! I need to talk to _____ winner
      of this game – I don't know who she is, so can you please help me?

47. *Phone conversation*
Mother: What did you have for dinner last night?
Son: Well, I had just two things in my refrigerator – a pot of soup and a cheese
         sandwich. I didn't want to cook anything else. So I ate _____ cheese
         sandwich.

48. *At an ice cream parlour*
Younger Sister: What ice cream flavour would you like?
Older Sister: Chocolate ice cream would be nice.
Younger Sister: I don't like chocolate very much. I prefer ____ vanilla.

49. Ruby: It's already 4pm. Why isn't your little brother home from school?
    Angela: He just called and told me that he got in trouble! He is talking to
            _____ principal of his school! I don't know who that is. I hope my
            brother comes home soon.

50. Eric: I really liked that book you gave me for my birthday. It was very
             interesting!
    Laura: Thanks! I like it too. I would like to meet _____ author of that book
           someday – I saw an interview with her on TV, and I really liked her!

51. Sophie: How did you spend your weekend at your cottage?
    Elise: Well, the weather was terrible. I couldn't go outside! And inside, I had
             absolutely nothing to do! So, finally, I went to a video store. It was big –
             there were lots of DVDs, and games! I had money for just one thing. So
             I rented _____ DVD.

52. Rose: Will you come shopping with me this weekend?
    Jen: Sure. Where do you want to go?
    Rose: Oh, anywhere. I am looking for _____ warm hat. It's getting rather
          cold outside!

53. Kevin: Your sister's name is Katherine, right?
    Larry: No, you've got it all wrong.
    Kevin: I'm sorry. Is her name Cameron?
    Larry: Wrong again! That is _____ her name! It's Candice!

54. Son: I can't believe how hot it is this evening!
    Father: Here, have some water. It should help you cool down.
    Son: Thank you. I will turn on the fan to keep the room from _____getting
             too warm.

55. *Phone conversation*
Angela: Hello! May I speak to Alicia, please?
Feliz: Oh, I'm sorry. She's not in right now. She went _____the shopping
         centre.

56. *In a "Lost and Found"*
Clerk: Can I help you? Are you looking for something you lost?
Customer: Yes… I realize you have a lot of things here, but maybe you have what I
            need. You see, I am looking for _____ green scarf. My little
            granddaughter lost it here yesterday, and she is very upset!

57. *In the classroom*
Noah: Would you like to play football with me at the park after school?
Oliver: Yes, I would love to! Can William play, too? _____ is very good at this
        game.

58. Robin: How is your little sister Clara doing? Does she still like animals?
    Julie: Oh yes! In fact, yesterday, she went to an animal shelter. She saw a very
             cute kitten and a little puppy there. She played with them all day long.
             And she gave some milk to _____ kitten.

59. *At a police station*
Susie: Can you please tell me where the library is? I am new here in the city,
                and I am lost.
Police officer: Of course I can help! The library _____on the corner of Maple
                Street and Beech Avenue.

60. Rudolph: My niece Janet likes animals a lot. Last week, she decided to get a pet,
             so she went to a pet shop.
    Lisa: Did she find any pets that she liked?
    Rudolph: Yes – she saw so many beautiful animals there – puppies, kittens,
             birds! Janet's parents told her to get just one animal. So Janet bought
             _____ kitten.

Appendix D. ACCEPTABILITY JUDGMENT TASK

D.1. SENTENCES FOR AJT (VERSION A)

+definite/+specific grammatical

1. A boy and a girl are standing outside the school talking.

I can't hear their conversation but the boy is wearing jeans.

2. My favourite restaurant is called Casa Italiana

This is because the chef is my best friend.

3. My favourite books are about Harry Potter.

I think the author is called J.K. Rowling.

4. I went to a very popular high school.

The headteacher's name was Mr. Johnson.

+definite/+specific ungrammatical

5. Our train leaves at 11am tomorrow.

I will meet you outside a station at 10.30am.

6. A new student is asking for directions on campus.

She wants to find a main library so she can start studying.

7. A cat is chasing a squirrel up a tree.

A squirrel is too fast and cannot be caught.

8. Food and drink are available from a trolley on this train.

You can buy them when a trolley passes your seat.

+definite/ −specific grammatical

9. I read a very good book about vampires recently.

I don't remember the name of the author.

10. I want to ask the grammar teacher if I can join their class.

First, I need to find out the name of the teacher.

11. I am watching some people run a 100m race.

When it ends, the winner will receive a gold medal.

12. Today the teacher has some special prizes for her students.

She will give them to the first children who arrive in class.

+definite/ −specific ungrammatical

13. Today I am visiting several gyms to decide which one to join.

When I am a member I will visit a gym every day.

14. Laura hasn't met any people at her new university yet.

She is looking for a head of department to ask about module choices.

15. Hannah is trying to choose a magazine to buy.

She doesn't know which issue is a latest one.

16. Alan is going to send a letter to his girlfriend.

He must find a nearest post office before it closes.

−definite/ +specific grammatical

17. Two ladies are sitting in a restaurant.

They are waiting for a friend but she is late.

18. Lots of children get lost in the zoo.

Today, staff have found a boy wearing a red t-shirt.

19. A group of girls are talking about Mariana's wedding.

Mariana will marry a man named David but they haven't met him yet.

20. I'm going to cook some Mexican food for you.

I'll make a dish called 'flautas', it is filled with chicken.

−definite/ +specific ungrammatical

21. Mary must leave work early today.

She has the appointment with the dentist at 3pm.

22. Tonight we're going to our favourite bar.

The bar has <u>the new cocktail</u> which I want to try.

23. A woman on the bus is dressed very strangely.

She is wearing <u>the red skirt</u> with one yellow shoe and one green boot.

24. Peter is shouting loudly into his mobile phone.

He is having <u>the argument</u> with his mother.

−definite/ −specific grammatical

25. Tom wants to go on holiday to Spain.

First he must find <u>a hotel</u> that is cheap enough.

26. Carol is thinking about her birthday next week.

She wants <u>a new handbag</u> but doesn't know if anybody will buy her one.

27. A student is shopping in Tesco.

She wants to buy <u>a pineapple</u> and some grapes.

28. Two children are talking about when they grow up.

Bill wants to be very rich and drive <u>a fast car</u>.

−definite/ −specific ungrammatical

29. Terry is buying things for his English course which starts tomorrow.

He needs <u>the pen</u> and some paper as well as two books.

30. There are 10 computers available in the library and Emma is looking for one.

She is trying to find <u>the computer</u> that is available.

31. Martin is shocked by the cold weather in Sheffield.

He needs to buy <u>the winter coat</u> before it snows.

32. Some students are in Endcliffe park.

They want to find <u>the good location</u> for their picnic.

Filler sentences (grammatical)

33. All the students are reminded that the deadline for their essays is tomorrow.
Essays must be handed <u>in </u>before 3pm and submitted online too.

34. The essay has taken a long time to write.
I was sitting <u>at </u>my desk all weekend writing it.

35. The student can't find the new classroom for her English lesson.
Someone told her it is next <u>to </u>the computer room.

36. There is a class trip to London on Monday.
The students are all looking forward <u>to </u>it.

37. Two ladies at a bus stop are talking about the weather.
Today <u>it </u>is very cold and they are not happy about having to wait.

38. Jack's brother lives in Korea and works as an English teacher.
<u>He </u>comes home every Christmas to visit his family.

39. Tom is buying a Christmas present for his mum.
<u>She </u>wants some new perfume but it is very expensive.

40. Nicolas doesn't like his name and wants to change it.
<u>He </u>would prefer a short name like Mark or John.

41. John really likes the actress Angelina Jolie.
He thinks <u>she </u>is very beautiful and wants to marry her.

Filler sentences (ungrammatical)

42. Cherry is going to visit the IT support desk when her class finishes.
She needs help <u>about </u>her laptop because it has a virus.

43. Jenny is walking towards the front of the bus.
She wants to get <u>over </u>the bus at the next stop.

44. Emily is only 5 years old and likes to sleep with the lights on.

She is afraid <u>with</u> the dark and cries if the light is off.

45. The exam starts at 11am tomorrow.

Students must arrive <u>at </u>time or the door will be locked.

46. There is an extra English class to help the students with IELTS revision.

<u>He </u>starts at 6pm in the Owen building, room 1021.

47. Nina and Sheila don't like walking around Sheffield.

The city has too many hills and <u>he</u> get really tired.

48. Becky is telling some new friends about her husband.

<u>It</u> works for a very large company which makes jeans.

49. All the students agree that Elaine is the best teacher in the world.

Her lessons are interesting and <u>he </u>teaches them lots of new things.

50. Lisa is very nervous about her presentation tomorrow.

It is 20 minutes long and <u>he </u>hates public speaking.

D.2. SENTENCES FOR AJT (VERSION B)

+definite/+specific ungrammatical

1. A boy and a girl are standing outside the school talking.

I can't hear their conversation but <u>a boy </u>is wearing jeans.

2. My favourite restaurant is called Casa Italiana

This is because <u>a chef </u>is my best friend.

3. My favourite books are about Harry Potter.

I think <u>an author </u>is called J.K. Rowling.

4. I went to a very popular high school.

<u>A headteacher's </u>name was Mr. Johnson.

+definite/+specific grammatical

5. Our train leaves at 11am tomorrow.

I will meet you outside the station at 10.30am.

6. A new student is asking for directions on campus.

She wants to find the main library so she can start studying.

7. A cat is chasing a squirrel up a tree.

The squirrel is too fast and cannot be caught.

8. Food and drink are available from a trolley on this train.

You can buy them when the trolley passes your seat.

+definite/ −specific ungrammatical

9. I read a very good book about vampires recently.

I don't remember the name of an author.

10. I want to ask the grammar teacher if I can join a class.

First, I need to find out the name of a teacher.

11. I am watching some people run a 100m race.

When it ends, a winner will receive a gold medal.

12. Today the teacher has some special prizes for her students.

She will give them to a first children who arrive in class.

+definite/ −specific grammatical

13. Today I am visiting several gyms to decide which one to join.

When I am a member I will visit the gym every day.

14. Laura hasn't met any people at her new university yet.

She is looking for the head of department to ask about module choices.

15. Hannah is trying to choose a magazine to buy.

She doesn't know which issue is the latest one.

16. Alan is going to send a letter to his girlfriend.

He must find <u>the nearest post office</u> before it closes.

−definite/ +specific ungrammatical

17. Two ladies are sitting in a restaurant.

They are waiting for <u>the friend</u> but she is late.

18. Lots of children get lost in the zoo.

Today, staff have found <u>the boy</u> wearing a red t-shirt.

19. A group of girls are talking about Mariana's wedding.

Mariana will marry <u>the man</u> named David but they haven't met him yet.

20. I'm going to cook some Mexican food for you.

I'll make <u>the dish</u> called 'flautas', it is filled with chicken.

−definite/ +specific grammatical

21. Mary must leave work early today.

She has <u>an appointment</u> with the dentist at 3pm.

22. Tonight we're going to our favourite bar.

The bar has <u>a new cocktail</u> which I want to try.

23. A woman on the bus is dressed very strangely.

She is wearing <u>a red skirt</u> with one yellow shoe and one green boot.

24. Peter is shouting loudly into his mobile phone.

He is having <u>an argument</u> with his mother.

−definite/ −specific ungrammatical

25. Tom wants to go on holiday to Spain.

First he must find <u>the hotel</u> that is cheap enough.

26. Carol is thinking about her birthday next week.

She wants <u>the new handbag</u> but doesn't know if anybody will buy her one.

27. A student is shopping in Tesco.

She wants to buy <u>the pineapple</u> and some grapes.

28. Two children are talking about when they grow up.

Bill wants to be very rich and drive <u>the fast car</u>.

−definite/ −specific grammatical

29. Terry is buying things for his English course which starts tomorrow.

He needs <u>a pen</u> and some paper as well as two books.

30. There are 10 computers available in the library and Emma is looking for one.

She is trying to find <u>a computer</u> that is available.

31. Martin is shocked by the cold weather in Sheffield.

He needs to buy <u>a winter coat</u> before it snows.

32. Some students are in Endcliffe park.

They want to find <u>a good location</u> for their picnic.

Filler sentences (ungrammatical)

33. All the students are reminded that the deadline for their essays is tomorrow.

Essays must be handed <u>under</u> before 3pm and submitted online too.

34. The essay has taken a long time to write.

I was sitting <u>to</u> my desk all weekend writing it.

35. The student can't find the new classroom for her English lesson.

Someone told her it is next <u>of</u> the computer room.

36. There is a class trip to London on Monday.

The students are all looking forward <u>at</u> it.

37. Two ladies at a bus stop are talking about the weather.

Today <u>he</u> is very cold and they are not happy about having to wait.

38. Jack's brother lives in Korea and works as an English teacher.

<u>It </u>comes home every Christmas to visit his family.

39. Tom is buying a Christmas present for his mum.

<u>They </u>wants some new perfume but it is very expensive.

40. Nicolas doesn't like his name and wants to change it.

<u>She </u>would prefer a short name like Mark or John.

41. John really likes the actress Angelina Jolie.

He thinks <u>it </u>is very beautiful and wants to marry her.

Filler sentences (grammatical)

42. Cherry is going to visit the IT support desk when her class finishes.

She needs help <u>with </u>her laptop because it has a virus.

43. Jenny is walking towards the front of the bus.

She wants to get <u>off </u>the bus at the next stop.

44. Emily is only 5 years old and likes to sleep with the lights on.

She is afraid <u>of</u> the dark and cries if the light is off.

45. The exam starts at 11am tomorrow.

Students must arrive <u>on </u>time or the door will be locked.

46. There is an extra English class to help the students with IELTS revision.

<u>It </u>starts at 6pm in the Owen building, room 1021.

47. Nina and Sheila don't like walking around Sheffield.

They city has too many hills and <u>they</u> get really tired.

48. Becky is telling some new friends about her husband.

<u>He</u> works for a very large company which makes jeans.

49. All the students agree that Elaine is the best teacher in the world.

Her lessons are interesting and <u>she </u>teaches them lots of new things.

50. Lisa is very nervous about her presentation tomorrow.

It is 20 minutes long and <u>she </u>hates public speaking.

D.3. AJT EXAMPLE POWERPOINT SLIDES (VERSION A)

Acceptability Judgement Task

Elaine Lopez
University of York

EXAMPLE

The students are working very hard for their exams.

EXAMPLE

The students are working very hard for their exams.

Ex. 1 They is all worried they might not pass.

TASK

My favourite books are about Harry Potter.

My favourite books are about Harry Potter.

1. **I think the author is called J.K. Rowling.**

D.4. TEST SENTENCES IN ORDER PRESENTED TO PARTICIPANTS (VERSION A)

1. My favourite books are about Harry Potter.

I think the author is called J.K. Rowling.

2. There is an extra English class to help the students with IELTS revision.

He starts at 6pm in the Owen building, room 1021.

3. Martin is shocked by the cold weather in Sheffield.

He needs to buy the winter coat before it snows.

4. John really likes the actress Angelina Jolie.

He thinks she is very beautiful and wants to marry her.

5. Cherry is going to visit the IT support desk when her class finishes.

She needs help about her laptop because it has a virus.

6. A cat is chasing a squirrel up a tree.

A squirrel is too fast and cannot be caught.

7. Today the teacher has some special prizes for her students.

She will give them to the first children who arrive in class.

8. There are 10 computers available in the library and Emma is looking for one.

She is trying to find the computer that is available.

9. Our train leaves at 11am tomorrow.

I will meet you outside a station at 10.30am.

10. I'm going to cook some Mexican food for you.

I'll make a dish called 'flautas', it is filled with chicken.

11. Two ladies at a bus stop are talking about the weather.

Today it is very cold and they are not happy about having to wait.

12. Tom wants to go on holiday to Spain.

First he must find a hotel that is cheap enough.

13. Hannah is trying to choose a magazine to buy.

She doesn't know which issue is a latest one.

14. A woman on the bus is dressed very strangely.

She is wearing the red skirt with one yellow shoe and one green boot.

15. I am watching some people run a 100m race.

When it ends, the winner will receive a gold medal.

16. Jack's brother lives in Korea and works as an English teacher.

<u>He </u>comes home every Christmas to visit his family.

17. All the students agree that Elaine is the best teacher in the world.

Her lessons are interesting and <u>he </u>teaches them lots of new things.

18. A student is shopping in Tesco.

She wants to buy <u>a pineapple </u>and some grapes.

19. Lots of children get lost in the zoo.

Today, staff have found <u>a boy</u> wearing a red t-shirt.

20. Emily is only 5 years old and likes to sleep with the lights on.

She is afraid <u>with</u> the dark and cries if the light is off.

21. Alan is going to send a letter to his girlfriend.

He must find <u>a nearest post office </u>before it closes.

22. Two children are talking about when they grow up.

Bill wants to be very rich and drive <u>a fast car</u>.

23. All the students are reminded that the deadline for their essays is tomorrow.

Essays must be handed <u>in </u>before 3pm and submitted online too.

24. Food and drink are available from a trolley on this train.

You can buy them when <u>a trolley</u> passes your seat.

25. My favourite restaurant is called Casa Italiana

This is because <u>the chef </u>is my best friend.

26. Two ladies are sitting in a restaurant.

They are waiting for <u>a friend</u> but she is late.

27. I went to a very popular high school.

<u>The headteacher's</u> name was Mr. Johnson.

28. Peter is shouting loudly into his mobile phone.

He is having <u>the argument</u> with his mother.

29. Becky is telling some new friends about her husband.

<u>It</u> works for a very large company which makes jeans.

30. I read a very good book about vampires recently.

I don't remember the name of <u>the author</u>.

31. A group of girls are talking about Mariana's wedding.

Mariana will marry <u>a man</u> named David but they haven't met him yet.

32. Jenny is walking towards the front of the bus.

She wants to get <u>over</u> the bus at the next stop.

33. I want to ask the grammar teacher if I can join their class.

First, I need to find out the name of <u>the teacher</u>.

34. There is a class trip to London on Monday.

The students are all looking forward <u>to</u> it.

35. Terry is buying things for his English course which starts tomorrow.

He needs <u>the pen</u> and some paper as well as two books.

36. Tom is buying a Christmas present for his mum.

<u>She </u>wants some new perfume but it is very expensive.

37. Laura hasn't met any people at her new university yet.

She is looking for <u>a head of department </u>to ask about module choices.

38. Mary must leave work early today.

She has <u>the appointment </u>with the dentist at 3pm.

39. The essay has taken a long time to write.

I was sitting <u>at </u>my desk all weekend writing it.

40. Carol is thinking about her birthday next week.

She wants <u>a new handbag </u>but doesn't know if anybody will buy her one.

41. Lisa is very nervous about her presentation tomorrow.

It is 20 minutes long and <u>he </u>hates public speaking.

42. The student can't find the new classroom for her English lesson.

Someone told her it is next <u>to </u>the computer room.

43. A new student is asking for directions on campus.

She wants to find <u>a main library </u>so she can start studying.

44. Tonight we're going to our favourite bar.

The bar has <u>the new cocktail </u>which I want to try.

45. Nina and Sheila don't like walking around Sheffield.

The city has too many hills and <u>he </u>get really tired.

46. Today I am visiting several gyms to decide which one to join.

When I am a member I will visit <u>a gym </u>every day.

47. The exam starts at 11am tomorrow.

Students must arrive <u>at </u>time or the door will be locked.

48. Some students are in Endcliffe park.

They want to find <u>the good location </u>for their picnic.

49. A boy and a girl are standing outside the school talking.

I can't hear their conversation but <u>the boy </u>is wearing jeans.

50. Nicolas doesn't like his name and wants to change it.

<u>He </u>would prefer a short name like Mark or John.

D.5. AJT ANSWER SHEET

Instructions
You will see an introductory sentence.
Underneath this sentence, a second sentence will be appear in bold.
Judge if the second sentence has an error with the grammar.

Examples
If you find an error choose -1 or -2 and copy down the error.

(Does this sentence have any errors?)

	Yes. A big error.	Yes. A small error.	No. I think it's ok..	No, no errors.		Can't decide	What is the error?
Ex.1	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	

If it has no grammar errors choose +1 or +2

(Does this sentence have any errors?)

	Yes. A big error.	Yes. A small error.	No. I think it's ok.	No, no errors.		Can't decide	What is the error?
Ex.2	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	

▪▪

Task
Does this sentence have any errors?

	Yes. A big error.	Yes. A small error.	No. I think it's ok.	No, no errors.		Can't decide	What is the error?
1	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
2	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
3	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
4	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
5	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
6	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	

Does this sentence have any errors?

	Yes. A big error.	Yes. A small error.	No. I think it's ok.	No, no errors.		Can't decide	What is the error?
7	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
8	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
9	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
10	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
11	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
12	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
13	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
14	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
15	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
16	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
17	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
18	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
19	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
20	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
21	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
22	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
23	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
24	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
25	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
26	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
27	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
28	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	

Does this sentence have any errors?

	Yes. A big error.	Yes. A small error.	No. I think it's ok.	No, no errors.		Can't decide	What is the error?
29	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
30	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
31	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
32	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
33	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
34	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
35	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
36	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
37	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
38	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
39	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
40	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
41	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
42	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
43	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
44	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
45	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
46	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
47	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
48	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
49	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	
50	–2	–1	+1	+2		X	

Appendix E. SAMPLES OF WRITTEN WORK

E.1. NO INSTRUCTION GROUP PRE-TEST WRITING SAMPLE

Multicultural society is merging of different electronic media. Gradually it become a hallmark of our world, for example, internet. We obtain almost all of our information by it and it might be bring multiple to our society which I would like to discuss in depth as follow.

People communicate by internet is increasing rapidly. Such as short message, chat rooms, blogs and online games. There are several reasons for this phenomenon. Firstly, Kiesler and others says "On the internet, people could express themselves freely without feeling fear, and in the online conversation anybody can change himself to become more desirable by the counter person. Adolescents are able to reconstruct their identity on the net more easily which is not possible in the real world." (2000, p395) .In the real world for some specifically reasons people can not expression themselves completely. Therefore online communicate is their preferred choice. Secondly. it is obvious internet largely facilitates people's routine life.

Recently, internet is an indispensably part in our day to day life and it absolutely bring a huge influence to our daily life. At the first place. "You can be an unknown user the application of many and different internet identities have cause addiction to the internet in the recent year. social communication by internet indicates it is very weak compare to face to face interaction and in the long run, it makes the over users to becomes more lonely" (Shojaiee and others, 2008,p395). In fact, we can not ignore another significant effective that internet bring to us. Overreliance internet will made people lose their face to face communicate skills and growing their mind with indifferent, in addition, teenagers will indulge in internet. Whereas, nodoubt internet have much positive effects even it possible to replace the outdate equipment. Ligang Wang says "argued that the Internet "may be" a functional alternative to television because they found that students most frequently used the World Wide Web for entertainment. They reasoned that if the Internet could offer more entertainment. It could displace television viewing."(2012,p4) Combing with the internet technology, almost our need are literally clicks away.

In conclude. internet will provide a wealth of information and save time and energy facilitates our life, that is the reason internet have the significant status on our life. Above those kind of effects this issue give inspiration to people of how to make the most internet and let it better serve our world.

E.2. NO INSTRUCTION GROUP POST-TEST WRITING SAMPLE

Getting a high education and living in other nations would be excited but it would bring varieties of challenges for international students to adapt the new things and local customs. Numerous changes for studying abroad in a new civilization effect a lot, such as language communication barriers, strange customs and behaviours, different foods and different weathers (Oberg 2006). This article will elaborate the challenges for receiving abroad education and exploring a brand new life in other civilized countries.

Application for Language in communication ability change a lot for overseas students and integrated variable culture (Pincas, 2001). Everybody has their own personal exclusive language studying techniques (Ember, 2001), thus the barriers for language communication become the largest challenge in the learning process. For instances, the understanding mistake, a diversity of accents, confused academic vocabularies, group discussion skills, and perplexed body languages limited the exchange from each other.

These issues above are mainly causes which affect studying and researching. In order to dispose of these barriers, students have been suggested and encouraged by tutors to attend the outdoor activities with local people, research in the library, and do more academic exchanges (Li, 2001). Also solve the problems by adjusting to writing and speaking in English all the time.

Whist strange customs, different foods, different weathers, and unfamiliar landscapes appeared into overseas students' daily lives when they stepped into the new cultural environment. Due to this reason, falling into homesick and suffering culture shock puzzled them. The sense of isolate, sad, and even desperate in everyday as if they filled with all kinds of problems (Oberg, 2006). Even if the

simple things such as shopping, making phone calls can frustrate students and lead them to missing their families and friends.

People who are feeling homesick and find it is difficult to adapt to a new environment. The best choice is paying more attention to learn the language and immerse themselves in the new civilization. For instance, organizing seminars for exchanging about the learning experiences with local students.

Although studying abroad and exploring a new life in other civilized countries may bring a large number of challenges, international students will surmount the difficulties to the best of their abilities in positive ways.

E.3. STANDARD INSTRUCTION GROUP PRE-TEST WRITING SAMPLE

Electronic media are not constrained by time and distance. Electronic media can have cognitive, emotional, and behavioral effects on the audience, influencing and changing people's lives (Medell. 2011. P13). Nowadays, there is an increasing development in electronic media such as internet, there are a couple of effects of internet, and the details are as follows.

However, the mobile-phone appeared in people and the distance is closer from one to another. People can cell anyone who has a phone. They can communicate does not face to face. For example, if you are visiting in another country and are time for Christmas Day, so you just call a phone to your country to greet your friends and families. That is fun. On the other hand, you have a phone that means working never ends. It is so boring for busy every day.

Although, using computer has many positive points for children. A child is about 4 years old; the parents would be worried about that how the child could become well in the future. Computer is a good way to guide. From computer child can see much more information about the society. There are also many funny things to train child what can do and what can do not. It is the main point. Otherwise, there are usual some insalubrious message in the corner of the web. There is some information about violence, obscene, etc. Just to avoid it, under the parents help.

All in all, electronic media makes our life more and more efficiently. It helps us save time and communication each other much easier. The step of society is accelerated. Under the circumstances of the media such a highly developed, we can live more and more comfortable.

E.4. STANDARD INSTRUCTION GROUP POST -TEST WRITING SAMPLE

In the hotel management, communication is an important function. Some people think the essence of management is communication. Many studies think that: The communication that takes place in an organization is an important influence in the success of that organization. (CLAMPITT, Phillip. G 1991) Communication is a process of exchange. Effective communication is to start, coordination of activities, feedback and corrective purposes of the process in the middle and the exchange of ideas and opinions with each other. Effective communication in an accurate, clear, concise, characterized activity. Effectively communicate with accurate and clear concise vitality= for characteristics. Effectively communicate about two opinions in the hotel management. First, effective communication in the role of external management of the hotel. Second, effective communication in the role of internal management. The hotel must pay attention to internal to external communication in order to manage more successful.

In the one hand, Hotel external communication is the communication refers to the hotel to customers and the public. "The customer is God" (ARRINGTON, Lance 1991). That is commonly used in hotels to a famous classic. Customers are the source of the hotel profits, is the basis on which the hotel. Therefore, to the supreme status of the customer in the hotel, this is no doubt. Is the hotel of potential consumers and the public, persons monitoring the vote. Communicate effectively with the public is also essential. There will have two factors explain it.

Overall, communication is a transaction. That is involved to negotiate meaning from the process (CLARK. Mona 1993). Not only effective communication is to attract customer loyalty and establish a good image. But also enhance the identity of the staff and advantageous to the coordination of interpersonal relationship enhance staff cohesion Along with the human improve of living standards, the hotel industry will be more and more common development, in the

next 50 years, every year the human cost in the hotel on the amount of will reach 50 million pounds. Not only will be consumers in a comfortable environment for the primary, becoming more intimate service. Staff will not only choose a high salary job. More companies are selected for their attitude to continuously improve the system and promote the work of the staff benefits. Attention to communication detail can more succeed hotel development. Close service will develop better.

E.5. SPECIFICITY INSTRUCTION GROUP PRE-TEST WRITING SAMPLE

Today, touring is the very popularly consumption in the world. But when visit a new place, visitors may face the serious problem, where can I sleep? So, to solve this problem, the smart businessman invented the hotel. The hotel industry has very long history and this essay introduce the developmental history of the hotel industry.

First of all, we need to define the hotel. Because with the society develops, hotel's function has become diversification. According to the Oxford Dictionaries, "the definition of the hotel is an establishment providing accommodation, meals, and other services for travellers and tourists, in the night" (Oxford Dictionaries, 2013).

The second point is that the history of the hotel has many years. It can divide into three stages. The first stage is ancient times. Before the nineteen centuries, due to the missionary, diplomatist and messenger need to finish their job that have to go to other countries or place. So, they are the main consumers of hotel. In addition, the businessman constructs the hotel near the road, so that the hotel can be found easily. Because the foot and carriages are the main transportation. "In the past, hotels were just normal houses offered for guests to stay in." (PRLOG, 2009) By contrast, in modern times, during the technology and society trad develop, the main consumer of the hotel is the commercial travellers who is rich. And the hotel usually located in the centre of city. Furthemore, the main ideas of hotel operation are cheaper, standing on consumer, safe, huge size.

The finally stage is current. After the second world war, the peace and development is the theme of the world. So, many people begin to travel. The hotel industry has the development peak. And not only is the commercial travellers main consumer, but everybody can be the consumers. In addition, the hotel has been

divided many classify, such as the business hotel, luxury hotel and so on. However, the main ideas of hotel operation are no change. Furthermore, through a hundred year development, the world has many famous hotel management companies. Such as InterContinental Hotels Group, Wyndham Hotel Group, Marriott International and Best Western International and so on. Especial the InterContinental Hotels goup, "according to the 2006 Hotel and Motel Management Magazine, Intercontinental Hotel Group has maintained its position as a top hotel management company hovering at the top of the list. (Carver, n.d.)

In general, going through the many years develop, the hotel industry is more and more ripe. Moreover, in my opinion, the hotel industry has great potential. In the near future it may become a pillar of the country economy.

E.6. SPECIFICITY INSTRUCTION GROUP POST -TEST WRITING SAMPLE

The modern hotel group was about born on 1950s in Europe and America, and about 60 years so far to date. Currently, all over the world, there have over hundred hotel companies, for example Wyndham Hotel Group, Best Western International. Furthermore, the most number of rooms of the hotel are controlled by this group of hotel. With the development of globalization, these types of company become more and more strong. In addition, the hospitality organisation will become the general way which the hotel must have experience. So if the hotel wants to develop better than other, it has to become a group. Because the hotel company has many advantages. This essay will introduce some advantages of hotel group from some different angles.

Hotel institution can share the resources of consumers in the group. This is the most important advantage. As for the hotel company, they have the same name, symbol. Especially they have the same management pattern, standard of service and order system which is higher efficiency and only belong to them. According to bob brotherton (2003), the hotel group is good for hotel to publicize and the views of consumers may be lead. In addition, the loyalty of the consumers will be increased.

Secondly, Knowles (1998) reports that the central motivation for group of hotel is profits. In the inside of the hotel organisation, the hotel company can easy to

operate their fund, when they face the emergency. And when they have new hotel to opening or some hotels which is include the group gets the troubles of management or fund, the hotel company can put more money to this hotel rather than other. It can help them to get profits. In addition it is good for the hotel group to find the balance of fund and controls the forward of development. And if the single hotel in the institution, it can easy to find the fund which from society. Because, the hotel group has better credit than the other hotel.

In conclusion. the advantage of fund, labor and consumers are the important advantages for the hotel group. Because of this advantage, the group of hotel become more and more popular until it become the trend of development at today. And in my opinion, the hotel company must occupy the large market may be 50 percentages may be over 50 percentages of the hotel market in the future.

Appendix F. ETHICS DOCUMENTS

F.1. INFORMATION SHEET

THE UNIVERSITY *of York*

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INFORMATION SHEET

Please keep THIS INFORMATION SHEET AND a signed copy of the consent form for your records

You are invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether to participate it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. If there is anything you do not understand, or if you want more information, please ask the researcher.

Title of study: The effects of grammar instruction on second language accuracy

Researcher: Elaine Lopez

<u>What is the research about?</u> I want to find out whether recent research about how languages are learnt can help us to improve the way that grammar is taught to people learning a second language.

<u>Why is the research being carried out?</u> This study will form part of my PhD thesis at the University of York.

<u>Who is carrying out the research?</u> Elaine Lopez

<u>Why have you been chosen to participate?</u> You have been chosen because Sheffield Hallam University TESOL Centre has agreed to help with this project, and you are a student on the pre-sessional course.

<u>What does the study involve?</u> All the research will take place during the 10 week pre-sessional course. You will be asked to stay behind after class to do some extra grammar exercises. You will do these exercises 2 times- once at the start of the course and once at the end. Some of these exercises will be written and some will be done on computer. Your writing will also be studied for accuracy.

Does this mean my English lessons will be different to other groups? No. All your reading, writing, listening and speaking lessons will be the same. There will be no changes to how you are taught or the activities that you will do, even if you decide not to be part of the study. This study is not related in any way to your final exams or coursework on the pre-sessional course.

When will this happen? All the research will be done during your English lessons on the 10 week pre-sessional course.

Do I have to take part?
You do not have to take part in the study and choosing not to take part will not change how you are taught or assessed on this course. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and will be asked to sign two copies of the consent form (one copy is for you to keep). If you decide to take part you will still be free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. If you withdraw from the study, I will destroy your data and will not use it in any way.

What are the possible risks of taking part? There are no risks to you from taking part in this study.

Are there any benefits to participating? There are no immediate benefits for you, but you will be participating in an exciting new piece of linguistic research that may help linguists and language teachers improve the way that grammar is taught.

What kind of information do I have to give? You will be asked simple questions about yourself including which languages you speak and how long you have been learning English. You will not have to give any personal details like your name or phone number but you will be asked for your student number. This is so that your answers from different exercises can be put together.

What will happen to the data I provide? The data you provide will be stored safely.

What about privacy ? Your name and any information that could identify you will not be written up or included when the work is submitted for publication. If you give your email address it will be stored safely and not given to anybody.

Will I know the results? If you give your email address on the consent form then I will send you a summary of the results of this study when it is finished. This may take several years so do not write your university email address here. I might also contact you at the end of the academic year to complete a second study. You do not have to give your email address if you don't want to.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Departmental Ethics Committee of the Department of Language and Linguistic Science at the University of York.

F.2. CONSENT FORM

The Effects of Grammar Instruction on Second Language Accuracy

Lead researcher: Elaine Lopez

Consent form

This form is for you to say if you agree to take part in the study or not. Please read and answer every question. If there is anything you do not understand, or if you want more information, please ask the researcher.

Have you read and understood the information sheet about the study?	Yes ❐	No ❐
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions about the study and have these been answered?	Yes ❐	No ❐
Do you understand that the information you provide will be kept safely by the researcher, and your name or identifying information about you will not be mentioned in any journals or books?	Yes ❐	No ❐
Do you understand that you may choose to stop being part of the study at any time without giving a reason, and that in such a case all your data will be destroyed?	Yes ❐	No ❐
Do you understand that the information you provide may be kept after the current project has finished, to be used in future research on language?	Yes ❐	No ❐
Do you agree to take part in the study?	Yes ❐	No ❐
Are you over 18?	Yes ❐	No ❐
Do you agree to the researcher keeping your contact details after the end of the current project, in order that she may contact you in the future about maybe taking part in other studies? *(You may take part in the study without agreeing to this)*	Yes ❐	No ❐

Your name (in BLOCK letters): _____

Student number: _____

Your signature: _____

Date: _____

Personal Details

Student number:		Age:
Gender (please circle)	MALE FEMALE	Code (to be completed by researcher):
What country are you from?		What is (are) your native language(s)? 1. 2.
Which languages do you speak?		
Language 1. 2. 3. 4.		Proficiency (e.g. beginner, advanced, fluent) 1. 2. 3. 4.

Previous Test Results

Which tests of English have you taken (e.g. IELTS/SHELT)?			
Most recent IELTS/ TOEFL/Pearson/ SHELT test result		Date of test (month and year)	

Language History

1. Please tick any of the following that apply to you:

☐   I had English lessons at school.

☐   I had English lessons before or after school (as an extra-curricular activity).

☐   I have attended English courses in an English-speaking country (not including you current university course).

☐ I lived in an English-speaking country as a child (from age …. until age ….)

☐ I usually speak English at home (in the UK) because my wife/husband/house-mate does not speak my first language.

2. How many years or months (in total) have you lived in England or any other English-speaking   country? _____ (include your time in Sheffield)

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AJT– Acceptability Judgment Task

ACP– Article Choice Parameter (Ionin, 2003)

CEFR– Common European Framework

CRS– currently relevant state (Li and Thompson, 1981)

DP– determiner phrase

EAP– English for Academic Purposes

ELT– English Language Teaching

ESK– explicitly stated knowledge

FFI– form-focused instruction

FH– the Fluctuation Hypothesis (Ionin, 2003)

FonF– Focus on Form i.e. when form and meaning are integrated in instruction

FonFS– Focus on FormS i.e. when form is taught in isolation

FT/FA– Full Transfer/Full Access (Schwartz and Sprouse, 1994; 1996)

IELTS– International English Language Testing System

IKW– Ionin, Ko, and Wexler

IZBM– Ionin, Zubizarreta, and Buatista Maldonado

IZP– Ionin, Zubizarreta, and Philippov

L1– first language

L2– second language

NI– negative inversion

NP– noun phrase

PFV– perfective aspect

PPP– the 'present, practice, produce' approach to language instruction

RM– repeated measures

QPT– Oxford Quick Placement Test (UCLES, 2001)

SLA– second language acquisition

UG– Universal Grammar

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