

Why do Japanese learners misuse *the* when uniqueness or maximality is not presupposed? – a possibility of L1 transfer

1. Background and aim

This study aims to reexamine, in view of Japanese data, Ko, Ionin & Wexler's (2010) remark that the acquisition of English articles by article-less L1 learners is influenced not only by specificity, as argued by many previous works, but also by presuppositionality (presupposition of existence). According to their experimental studies, L1 Korean learners misuse *the* in (1a) significantly more often than in (1b): in (1a), presupposition of existence of players is evoked by 'the Boston Celtics team', but uniqueness presupposition required for an appropriate use of *the* is not satisfied. Furthermore, the expression 'any player would do' clarifies that the speaker does not have a particular player in his / her mind; in (1b), the referent of 'long novel' is interpreted under the scope of intensional verb 'plan' and is not existentially presupposed. To account for the above misuse of *the*, the authors suggest that L1 Korean learners "have access to semantic universals provided by UG" (p. 214) and, fluctuating possible parameter settings, mis-set *the* as a marker of presuppositionality, rather than definiteness (presuppositionality+uniqueness or maximality). Kaneko (1996) observes that a similar overuse of *the* is also observed among L1 Japanese learners. If Ko, Ionin & Wexler's (2010) analysis equally holds for Japanese, the misuse of *the* by L1 Japanese learners might be due to their confusion between two semantic universals, presuppositionality (without uniqueness or maximality) and definiteness (with it). This study on the other hand suggests a possibility that such confusion at least partially comes from L1 transfer, by showing that one type of demonstratives in Japanese, which shares some properties with English definite article *the*, does not convey uniqueness or maximality.

2. Data and suggestions

Japanese has three types of demonstrative determiners whose singular forms are *kono*, *ano* and *sono* (roughly corresponding to *i*, *ce*, *ku* in Korean). According to Hoji et al. (2003), *kono* and *ano* allows only specific and referential reading and are deictically specified respectively as [proximal] and as [distal], while *sono*, although deictically used to refer to something closer to the hearer (like in some uses of English *that*), permits non-specific and bound variable reading, as in (2), and associative reading, as in (3) (like English *the*). In consequence, while L1 Japanese learners correctly translate *kono* and *ano* by *this* and *that*, they tend to mix up *that* and *the* to translate *sono*, and, as observed by Mizuno (2000: 78), some of them misuse *the* in place of *that* in contexts like (4a) which corresponds to (4b) in Japanese where *sono* is deictically used. It thus seems reasonable to assume that some of misuses of *the* by L1 Japanese learners are due to their erroneous identification between *the* and *sono*.

Now, although being a demonstrative, *sono* doesn't convey uniqueness or maximality: i) $\langle \textit{sono} + \textit{bare noun} \rangle$ allows partitive reading, as in (5), where *sono* refers back to *sensee* 'our Professor' and *sono tyosyo* '(lit) that work' is interpreted as 'one or some of his works' (plurality of inanimate nouns is not marked), in view of the fact that B's reply *dono tyosyo?* '(lit) which work?' indicates that a unique work is not existentially presupposed; ii) in Japanese, plurality of human nouns may be clarified by suffixes *-tati* or *ra*. $\langle \textit{sono} + \textit{noun} + \textit{-tati} \rangle$ doesn't necessarily presuppose maximality. Thus, in (6), $\langle \textit{sono} \textit{gakusee-tati} \rangle$ refers to 'Professor Hata's students' and it is pragmatically evident that it is not ALL but only SOME of his students that give a talk with Prof. Hata; iii) like French definite articles, *sono* has its plural form, *sore-ra-no*, including a plural marker *ra*. The plural markers *tati* and *ra* convey plurality consisting not only of homogeneous members (ex. *gakusee-tati* means 'students'), but also of heterogeneous members (ex. *gakusee-tati* means 'students and others'). Now, $\langle \textit{sore-ra-no} + \textit{noun} \rangle$ is used only to denote plural entities of different types, as in (7b), while $\langle \textit{sono} + \textit{noun} \rangle$ is chosen to denote plural entities of the same type, as in (7a). Moreover, $\langle \textit{sore-ra-no} + \textit{noun} \rangle$ doesn't presuppose maximality: *sore-ra-no pen* '(lit) those pen' in (7c) may denote only two members (i.e. two different types of pens, a red pen and a blue pen) rather than all the four relevant pens. The absence of maximality of *sore-ra-no* seems to be correlated with non-homogeneity induced by *ra*. In any way, it seems necessary to examine if difficulty felt by L1 Japanese learners to detect uniqueness is due to their misidentification between $\langle \textit{the} + N \rangle$ and $\langle \textit{sono} + N \rangle$ (lacking uniqueness) and if they have similar difficulty to detect maximality induced, for example, by French plural definite *les*, because of their misidentification between $\langle \textit{les} + Ns \rangle$ and $\langle \textit{sore-ra-no} + N \rangle$ (lacking maximality).

- (1)a. Jason will go to the airport to meet the Boston Celtics team. The team will be leaving Boston on the 7 a.m. flight. Jason wants to get the autograph of {a / the} player. Any player would do– this would make him happy! (adapted from Ko, Ionin & Wexler 2010: 237) [-specific, -definite, +presuppositional]
- b. Clark has a very long commute to work. He gets so bored in the train. He plans to buy {a / the} long novel. Then he will have something to do. (ibid.) [-specific, -definite, -presuppositional]
- (2) Dono zidoosya-gaisya-ga sono zidoosya-gaisya-no ko-gaisya-o
which automobile-company-Nom that automobile company-Gen child-company-Acc
 suisensita no? (Hoji et al. 2003: 100-101) [bound variable use]
 recommended Comp ‘Which automobile company recommended **that** company’s subsidiary?’
- (3) Boku-ga aidokusi-teiru zassi-ga atte [...] kondo **sono** hyoosi-ni [...] [associative use]
 I-Nom adore-Prog magazine-Nom exist, this time the cover-Loc
 ‘I adore a magazine, and this time, on **the** cover...’ (Iori 2007: 159)
- (4)a. How are you, Harris? – Let me use **the** [=misuse of *that*] bicycle of yours. (Mizuno 2000: 78)
- b. Anata-no **sono** zityensya-o watasi-ni tukawa-setekudasai [deictic use]
 you-Gen **that** bicycle-Acc me-Dat use-let ‘Let me use **that** bicycle of yours.’
- (5) A: Konoaida, gakkai-no kaizyoo-de sensee-ga sono tyosyo-ni meotoosi-teorare-ta yo
 Last day meeting-Gen place-Loc professor-Nom **that** work-Dat read-Prog-Pst you know
 B: E, do-no tyosyo? (Iori 2007: 146) [associative-like use]
 Oh, which-Gen work
 ‘A: Last day, at the meeting, (of a linguistic society), our Professor was reading one (or some) of **his** works, you know. – B: Oh, which work(s)?’
- (6) Hata ... kyoozyu to sono gakusee-tati-wa [...] KG broadband station-nituite happyoosimasu.
 Hata professor and **that** student-TATI-Top KG broadband station-about give.a.talk.
 ‘Professor Hata and some of **his** students give a talk about KG broadband station.’
 (<http://www.jearn.jp/2003conference/news/kwansei.html>) [associative-like use]
- (7)a. Taro-wa pen-o ni-hon katta. Sikasi, {**sono** pen / ?***sore-ra-no** pen}-wa amari yoku kake-nakat-ta.
 Taro-Top pen-Acc two-CL bought but **that** pen / **those** pen-Top very well write-Neg-Pst
 ‘Taro bought two pens. But (lit)**that** pen does not write very well.’ (Kobayakawa 2004: 42)[anaphoric]
- b. Taro-wa aka pen to ao pen-o katta. Sikasi, **sore-ra-no** pen-wa amari yoku kake-nakat-ta.
 Taro-Top red pen and blue pen-Acc bought but **those** pen-Top very well write-Neg-Pst
 ‘Taro bought a red pen and a blue pen. But (lit) **those** pen don’t write very well.’ (ibid.) [anaphoric]
- c. Taro-wa aka pen ni-hon to ao pen ni-hon-o katta. Sikasi, **sore-ra-no** pen-wa amari yoku
 Taro-Top red pen two-CL and blue pen two-CL-Acc bought but **those** pen-Top very well
 kake-nakat-ta. [anaphoric]
 write-Neg-Pst ‘Taro bought two red pens and two blue pens. But (lit) **those** pen don’t write very well.’

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