

Why are articles hard?

Exploring second language representations and processing

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7th Fl., Nagoya University (文系総合館7階カンファレンスホール)

Utterances that non-native speakers produce often differ – be it phonologically, morphosyntactically, idiomatically or at the level of pragmatic appropriateness – from the input to which they have been exposed. One of the central questions of second language (L2) research is why it happens: what forces shape the patterns of L2 use and development, what underlying knowledge and processing mechanisms non-native speakers develop, and to what degree these converge on what native speakers know or do. This talk will address these questions by focusing on L2 morphosyntax, specifically difficulties that English articles pose to speakers of languages that do not have a corresponding property. How do we refer and how do we resolve reference in a second language? Why do some second language learners show persistent variability in L2 article production? And how do they process L2 articles in comprehension? I will report findings from a number of recent studies, utilising a range of methodologies, from picture descriptions to eye-tracking in the visual world paradigm. Populations involved in the experiments included L1 Chinese, L1 Thai and L1 French speakers of L2 English, as well as monolingual English speakers. The talk will highlight the most important findings, suggesting differences in which native and non-native speakers of English represent and process English articles.

Free admission/No pre-registration needed. Contact address: Shunji Inagaki <inagaki@lang.nagoya-u.ac.jp>