

### **Mass/count noun distinction in L2 English**

Count and mass nouns are encoded differently in grammars of the world's languages. According to Chierchia (1998), the three most crucial differences in how those two types of nouns are marked in English grammar relate to the availability of plural morphology, distribution of number marking and the use of determiners.

In English grammar, the use of mass or count nouns affects the use of articles, plural marking and agreement. Given that L2 learners usually have challenges in the use of articles and plural marking and agreement in the initial stages of L2 acquisition, it may be fruitful to investigate how L2 learners of English treat mass and count nouns since conceptualizing a noun in a certain way leads learners to use those nouns with different morphosyntax.

Barner and Snedeker (2005) investigated the representation of mass/count nouns in L1 English of children and adults. This study replicated Barner & Snedeker (2005) in L2 English to shed light on the semantics of mass/count noun distinction in L2 English. Using a quantity judgment task adapted from Barner and Snedeker (2005), the researcher investigated to what extent Turkish L2 learners of English based their quantity judgments on cardinality or amount in evaluating substance mass nouns, object mass nouns (e.g. *furniture*), count nouns and mass/count flexible nouns. The study also investigated the issue of first language transfer in L2 English. Based on the points above, the research questions addressed in the study are:

- Do quantity judgments of Turkish L2 learners align with that of native English speakers?
- To what extent do L2 learners base their quantity judgments on cardinality or amount in evaluating substance mass nouns, object mass nouns, count nouns and flexible mass/count nouns?
- Does L2 proficiency lead to a more native-like interpretation of the types of nouns tested?

The results showed L2 learners treated substance mass nouns, count nouns, flexible mass/count nouns with count syntax similarly but they differed in object mass nouns, mass/count flexible items with mass syntax.

#### **50-word summary**

This study investigated whether interpretations of Turkish L2 learners aligned with those of native English speakers in mass/count nouns. The results showed L2 learners treated substance mass nouns, count nouns, flexible mass/count nouns with count syntax similarly but they differed in object mass nouns, mass/count flexible items with mass syntax.

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