The determiner phrases in East Asian learner English

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This paper aims to assist trainee or novice ESL teachers who have some knowledge of linguistic theory but little or no knowledge about the grammar of discourse- or topic-oriented languages with no article and null pronouns, including Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. Proposing an activation model for DP in these Asian languages, the properties between English determiner phrases (DP), including articles, pronouns, demonstratives, and (alienable) possessives, are compared with those in the East Asian languages. The conscious awareness of explicit knowledge about the grammar of DP in two typologically distinct languages will provide additional benefits to the teachers' teaching in Asian contexts.
Keywords: Determiner phrase, explicit knowledge, East Asian language learners, English as second language

1   Introduction

What explicit linguistic knowledge learned by preservice ESL (English as a second language) teachers can be transferred to the ESL classroom? The goal of this paper is to assist teachers to reflect on the structure of a determiner phrase (DP) in the context of teaching ESL.[1] Specifically, it is written for trainee or novice ESL teachers who have some knowledge of linguistic theory but little or no knowledge about the grammar of discourse- or topic-oriented languages with null pronouns (Barbosa, 2011; Huang, 1984; Kim, 2000) or languages with a bare noun phrase (NP) without a determiner (Tomioka, 2003). Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, and Korean (henceforth CJK) are often listed as examples of such languages. The distributions of linguistic items in the structure of DPs in English and the CJK languages, including articles, pronouns, demonstratives, and (alienable) possessives, are explored as the requirement of the morphophonological realization of these determiner elements (Ds) varies in these two typologically distinct language groups[2]. An overt/pronounced D item with a strong D feature such as NUMBER is obligatory in English, whereas a covert/unpronounced D with a weak D feature such as NUMBER and/or INDEFINITE is ubiquitous in CJK. For example, D features NUMBER and PERSON in the English sentence *I love animals*

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[1] Here ESL is used as a cover term; it includes the context of both English as foreign language and English as additional language.

[2] Quantifiers, including *all*, *each*, *both*, *most*, *many* and *every* are also D elements, but are left for future study.

must be pronounced/overt with the strong D features. However, in the equivalent Korean sentence (*nay-ka*) *tongmwul-*(*tul*)*-ul cohahay* 'I like animals', these D features are weak as *nay-ka* 'I.NOM' and the plural suffix *tul* '-s' can be unpronounced/covert. To help L1 (first or native language)-CJK learners' *restructuring* or *noticing* (Schmidt, 1990; Skehan, 1996) in the acquisition of L2 (second or additional language) English, teachers may need to be aware of features of the target language (L2) that L1-CJK learners need to acquire; furthermore, teachers can anticipate potential difficulties that the learners may encounter if they are aware of L1 structure (Andrews & McNeil, 2005; Bigelow & Ranney, 2005). Grammatical gaps discussed in this paper are written within the framework of generative second language acquisition (White, 2003), focusing on potential difficulties encountered by L1-CJK learners learning L2 English.

Teacher Language Awareness (TLA) is defined as "the knowledge that teachers have of the underlying systems of the language that enables them to teach effectively" (Thornbury,1997, p. x, cited in Andrews, 2007, p. ix). Within the framework of TLA, Knowledge About Language (KAL) includes ESL teachers' explicit and declarative knowledge about language (Andrews, 2007, p.13). Although explicit knowledge in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is defined as "declarative knowledge of the phonological, lexical, grammatical, pragmatic, and sociocritical features of an L2" (Ellis, 2004, p. 244), declarative knowledge should not be limited to knowledge about the L2. Explicit knowledge about the grammatical difference between learners' L1 and their L2 may also help teachers and learners notice a gap in L2 acquisition (Schmidt, 1990; Swan & Smith, 2001) because L1 transfer in L2 acquisition is an observed phenomenon (Ionin & Zubizarreta, 2010). Andrews (2007) suggests that the abilities to analyze grammar from the learner's perspective and to anticipate the learners' grammatical difficulties are two of twelve aspects of grammatical knowledge and awareness that are required of trainers of English L2 teachers. Their grammatical knowledge and awareness would help L1-CJK learners notice notable forms in L2 English acquisition.

SLA studies have reported that learners from L1-CJKbackgrounds have difficulties with acquiring English articles: Chinese (Leroux & Kendall, 2018; Lopez, 2019; Snape, 2006; Snape, García Mayo, & Gürel, 2009; Tryzna, 2009); Japanese (Butler, 2002; Snape, 2006; Snape et al., 2009); and Korean (Ionin, Baek, Kim, Ko, & Wexler, 2012; Ionin, Ko, & Wexler, 2004). Some studies have provided pedagogical suggestions. For example, Master (1997, 2002, 2003, 2007) identifies the problems acquiring English articles as well as suggests that instructors use an information structure, including Topic and Focus. Akakura (2012) details effective results from explicit instruction on articles. However, it seems that there are few studies that sketch the difference between the distribution of D elements in English and CJK in a manner which may be useful for novice ESL teachers with little or no prior knowledge of CJK grammars. This paper aims

to fill the gap by providing a synopsis of contrastive analysis of the DP systems in these languages.[3]

This paper is structured as follows: Section 2 briefly reviews key research findings in DP acquisition, particularly focusing on features of D; it has been assumed that a deficit of these features in CJK may cause the problem of acquisition. In Section 3, I demonstrate the internal structure of DP in generative grammar and the different distributions of D elements in L1 and L2. I suggest that novice L2 teachers need to consciously be aware of in L1-CJK learners' grammar. Tree representations of the structure of DPs with various D elements presented in this section may help teachers visualize the differences. Section 4 concludes with a statement of my beliefs about the sequence of teaching the grammar of English DP, grounded in my understanding of DP systems and in experience of acquiring them.

2   The structure of DP, the features on D, and morphophonological D elements

A Determiner Phrase (DP) is a phrasal projection, and its head is a D (determiner) which selects an NP (Noun Phrase) as its complement in Generative Grammar (Abney, 1987; Adger, 2003; Carnie, 2013). The structural, functional, and lexical categorial labels of items in English sentences with distinct D items can be represented as in (1) and (2). None of the D elements in these two sentences are morphophonologically optional.

(1)   *She loves her son*.

labels	She	loves	her	son
structure	DP	T_{PRES} VP	DP	NP
function	subject	finite	object	
category	PRONOUN	VERB	POSSESSIVE	NOUN

(2)   *The boy loved this dog*.

labels	The	boy	loved	this	dog
structure	DP	NP	T_{PST} VP	DP	NP
function	subject		finite	object	
category	ARTICLE	NOUN	VERB	DEMONSTRATIVE	NOUN

DPs can be the subject of a clause, the object of a finite or non-finite verb, or the object of a preposition in English. Articles, pronouns, demonstratives, quantifiers, and (alienable) possessives can appear at D (the head of a DP); a pronoun, a demonstrative, a quantifier can stand alone at D, while an article and a possessive both must take a noun phrase (NP) as their complement. For example, the D

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[3] This paper complements the summary of CJK grammars discussed in *Learner English* (Swan & Smith, 2001) although I cover only DPs.

element *her* in (1) must select a NP [DP her [NP son]] as its complement and the D element *the* in (2) must select a NP [DP the [NP boy]] as its complement.

What sort of explicit knowledge about English DPs do L2 English teachers need to be aware of or obtain to understand and help the L2 learners' learning experience? What challenge do L2 English learners face when they learn English DPs? What characteristics of DPs do discourse- or topic-oriented languages (Barbosa, 2011; Huang, 1984; Kim, 2000) have in common? Some differences in D elements in these languages, including articles, have been briefly noted in *The Grammar Book* (Larsen-Freeman & Celce-Murcia, 2016) and summarized in *Learner English* (Smith & Swan, 2001). For instance, "most Asian languages have no articles" (Larsen-Freeman & Celce-Murcia, 2016, p. 281). Thompson notes that "many Japanese learners achieve really creditable proficiency in all aspects of written English except for articles and the number-countability problem" (2001, p. 304). Chang notes that there are no articles in Chinese (2001, p. 321); Lee states that Korean nouns are not preceded by articles (2001, p. 338). As English articles are one of the D elements that appear in the head of a DP, recently, a few studies have discussed them in the context of determiner phrases in SLA studies. However, most studies discuss English articles are in the context of noun phrases.[4]

In a few SLA studies, some semantic related features have been employed to explain the behaviour of English articles. For instance, adopting from Huebner (1985), Butler (2002) identifies four types of NPs in English: i) generic nouns [-SR (Specific Reference), +HK (Hearer's Knowledge)] (e.g., *cat* or *whale* in '*A cat likes mice*' or '*The whale is a mammal*'; ii) referential definite nouns [+SR, +HK] (e.g., *pen* in '*Pass me the pen*'; iii) referential indefinite nouns [+SR, -HK] (e.g., *man* in '*I saw a strange man standing at the gate*'); and iv) non-referential nouns [-SR, -HK] (e.g., *lawyer* in '*He used to be a lawyer*'.

(3) | | - SR | + SR |
|---|---|---|
| + HK | generic nouns | referential definite nouns |
| - HK | non-referential nouns | referential indefinite nouns |

Butler (2002) argues that these two features associated with English NPs are absent in Japanese NPs. If these four [±SR, ±HK] features are legitimate, then they must be associated with D in current generative grammar, as we now know that the properties of specificity and hearer's knowledge about referents are associated with D but not NP. In other words, these features are not inherently associated with the meaning of each noun. Ionin, Ko, & Wexler (2004) identify two kinds of English D features: D with [±DEFINITE] or D with [±SPECIFIC]. They argue that these features are related to the knowledge or mind state of the speaker

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[4] *The Grammar Book* (2016, 3rd ed.) does not use DP, but still uses NP as a maximal projection; the head N with D as a specifier of NP [NP D N]. However, D as the head of DP [DP D [NP]] has been employed since Abney (1987) in Generative Grammar (cf. Adger, 2003; Carnie, 2013) which assumes Universal Grammar.

([+DEFINITE]) or interlocutors ([+SPECIFIC]) in English. In the case of [D[+DEFINITE] NP], both speaker and hearer presuppose the existence of a unique individual in the set denoted by the NP, while in [D[+SPECIFIC] NP], the speaker wants to indicate a unique individual in the set expressed by the NP and thinks this individual also has a special property. They argue that neither definiteness nor specificity is obligatorily encoded in Korean and the co-existence of *the* as [+DEFINITE] article and *the* as [+SPECIFIC] article in English grammar create a challenge in L2 acquisition. Adopting D features from Ionin et al. (2004), Lopez (2019) conducts an experiment and measures the outcome of explicit instruction on articles with [+SPECIFIC]. Results of her experiment do not support the benefit of using explicit instruction materials in the classroom. Lopez conjectures that the result may have been affected by low proficiency of L1 Chinese learners of L2 English and short intervention between the instruction and the experiment.

Some scholars do not see definiteness and specificness as discrete properties. Chesterman (1991) investigates the interaction between morphophonological D elements and morphosyntactic features. The study identifies five different kinds of D elements in English: zero ($\emptyset_1$), *some*, *a/an*, *the*, *null* ($\emptyset_2$). The zero ($\emptyset_1$) article is the most indefinite, while the null article ($\emptyset_2$) is the most definite article. Master (2003) lists *chicken* in the sentence *The boy ate chicken* as a noun occurring with the zero ($\emptyset_1$) article, while *home* in the sentence *I left it at home* as a noun occurring with the null ($\emptyset_2$) article in English. Although the percentage of zero/null Ds occurring (48.0%) exceeds *the* (36.3%) and *a/an* (15.7%) in five genres of English (Master, 1997), the roles of the zero and null Ds in English DPs have not received much attention in SLA research. For example, Akakura (2012) does not include either the null or zero English articles in her study measuring the effectiveness of explicit instruction to L1-Japanese learners acquiring L2 English articles. Nevertheless, this study suggests that explicit instruction can improve both implicit and explicit L2 knowledge.

Many studies discussed above assume that CJK languages lack an article system or have no encoding system of definiteness or specificity. Then, a reasonable question to ask is to what extent are the most indefinite zero ($\emptyset_1$) article and the most definite null article ($\emptyset_2$) in English similar with the bare NP in CJK languages? Although this study does not answer this specific question, Section 3 compares properties of D elements in the four languages. By suggesting an activation model as a pedagogical tool, which can help L1-CJK learners to activate a mental space for the structure of D with strong D features, this study emphasizes that it is important for trainee or novice ESL teachers to understand the structural differences in two typologically different language groups.

3   The distribution of D elements in English and in topic-oriented languages

3.1   Default versus optional activation of DP

Japanese and Korean languages are both head-final languages with an SOV word order. These two languages are typologically less close to Chinese, which has a relatively rigid SVO word order with no case markers. However, these three languages share a property in common; they are all categorized as topic- or discourse-oriented languages in the literature (Barbosa, 2011, Huang, 1984; Kim, 2000). This property allows radical pro-drops (Neeleman & Szendrői, 2007), which means a pronoun occurring as the subject of a finite clauses or as the object of a verb can be unpronounced or dropped if it can still be understood as being a topic of the clause by interlocutors in the discourse context. An unpronounced or dropped subject or object in finite main clauses is ubiquitous in the CJK languages. This contrasts with English, which is a language that only allows an unpronounced subject in controlled clauses (that is, the subject of non-finite clauses such as the covert subject of *to go* in *I want to go*).

We can see the contrasting property of D elements between English and the CJK languages in a sentence frame like that in (4).

(4)   *Did you take it?*
  a. *Did Ø took it? /*Did you take Ø?   (English)
  b   (ni) chi (yao) le-ma?*you eat medicine ASP Q*   (Chinese)
  c. (omae) (kusuri) nonda-kai?   (Japanese)
        you   medicine eat.PST-Q
  d. (ne) (yak) mekess-ni?   (Korean)
        you medicine eat.PST-Q

For example, given a discourse context—a dad had asked his child to take medicine and later he confirmed if they took it—the pronouns 'you' and 'it' are obligatory in English, as shown in (4a), where the contrasting grammaticality is illustrated. These pronouns can be dropped in the Chinese (4b), Japanese (4c), and Korean (4d) which are equivalent clauses to the intended English (4a). The clauses with optionally pronounced arguments in the CJK languages are grammatical and the meaning of the unpronounced pronouns are correctly understood by interlocutors when the covert or dropped Ds are the topics (i.e., old information) of the clause (Huang 1984, Tomioka, 2003). Therefore, D in English is governed by the interface between phonology and semantics/syntax, while a null D in the CJK languages is seemingly governed by the interaction between the phonology and the information structure (Vermeulen, 2013) in addition to the internal structure of DP (Tomioka, 2003).

Assuming Universal Grammar and based on the structure of DPs in Generative Grammar, and the distribution of optionally pronounced pronouns and nouns in these languages, I propose an activation model for the structure of DPs in

the CJK languages, as in (5b). The Japanese pronoun *omae* 'you' and the Korean *ne* 'you' in the sentences in (4) must have the same structure with the Chinese *ni* 'you' in (5b).

(5) a. obligatory D (English)   b. adjunct D (CJK)
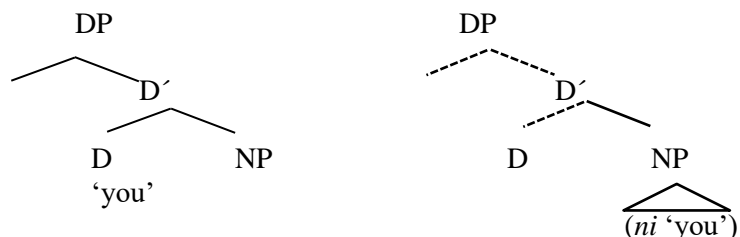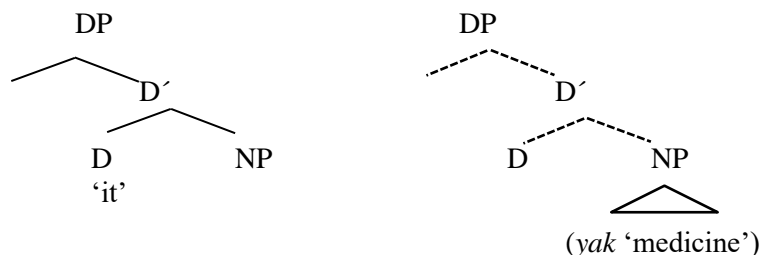

Following Tomioka (2003), I assume that the Chinese pronoun *ni* 'you', the Japanese pronoun *omae* 'you', and the Korean pronoun *ne* 'you' are N items. They can be unpronounced where a discourse topic is associated with D in the structure even when there is no element on verbs that agrees with the features on the subject.

Moreover, in the case of Chinese L1 speakers, there can be a negative L1 transfer in L2 learning for D items. Beginning Chinese L1 learners may frequently use a reverse gender feature for English third person pronouns, as third person pronouns with different gender features in the spoken Chinese are identical in their morphophonological forms. Teachers should not necessarily correct every learner's error in the early stages of learning, because too-frequent correction could discourage the learners who try to develop a default DP in L2 (Lyster, Saito, & Sato, 2012). Once the learners consistently fill a pronoun in the argument positions, then they should be encouraged to focus on learning the different gender and case features on D elements in L2 pronouns.

The similar operation is assumed for a referential pronoun in an object position, as in (4b) - (4d). Instead of using a referential inanimate pronoun *it*, either a null pronoun or a repetition of the noun substitutes for the complement of the Chinese verb *chi* 'eat', the Japanese verb *non-* 'drink', and the Korean verb *mek-* 'eat'. The structure of Chinese noun *yao* 'medicine' and Japanese noun *kusuri* 'medicine' in DP must have the same structure with the Korean noun *yak* 'medicine' in (6b).

(6) a. obligatory default D (English)   b. optional activation D (CJK)

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        DP                              DP
       /                               ⁄ ⁀
          D´                              D´
         /                              ⁄ ⁀
      D      NP                     D       NP
     'it'                                  /‾‾\
                                   (yak 'medicine')
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The English inanimate pronoun *it* in (6a) is associate with a strong feature so it can replace referring expressions, while an inanimate pronoun in CJK is absent. Common nouns, proper nouns, kinship terms, a noun with a demonstrative occur in the place of referential pronouns in CJK languages. This repetition of nouns is allowed. For instance, *yao* 'medicine' in Chinese, *kusuri* 'medicine' in Japanese, and *yak* 'medicine' in Korean can be used in the place where an English pronoun *it* would occur in a clause. Thus, there is no direct L1 transfer in terms of D items. It is informative for ESL teachers to know that the distribution of pronouns and nouns in the CJK languages differs from English. By understanding the distinct distribution of D elements in L1 and L2, teachers or teaching material designers can help learners acquire solid and default lines of DPs in the target language by developing pedagogical materials and/or in-class activities.

The evidence of the distributional difference of D items between L1 and L2 can be found in the existence of expletives as well.

(7)   *It is really cold today.*
    a.   *∅ is very cold today.   (English)
    b.   jintian ∅ feichang leng.   (Chinese)
         today   be very   cold
    c.   kyou-wa ∅ hontoni samui.   (Japanese)
         today-TOP really   be cold
    d.   onul-un ∅ cengmal chwupta.   (Korean)
         today-TOP   really   be cold.DEC

English has the dummy pronoun or expletive *it* in the head of DP in the subject position and it is obligatory, as in (7a), while the CJK languages do not have expletive pronouns in their inventory of D items. Moreover, CJK languages allow a null subject. Thus, novice teachers need to be aware of a deficit in D items in the learners' L1 and the salient traits of D in English first. After the source of errors is identified, they can help students to develop the solid D with strong phonological and semantic features in English by asking students to identify where/what the subject is in the sentence.

3.2 Salient versus irrelevant D elements: articles, demonstratives, and possessives

The overt D in English and covert D items in CJK languages discussed in Section 3.1 can be the result of the syntax-phonology interface and a matter of a phonological requirement on D in the two typologically different language groups. The distribution of D elements discussed in this section is related to how a semantic feature is associated with a covert and overt D in these four languages. The distinct distributional characteristics of articles, demonstratives, and possessive pronouns between English and the CJK languages are discussed. As shown in (8), the indefinite article *an* is obligatory in English, while there is no corresponding obligatory D element in CJK.
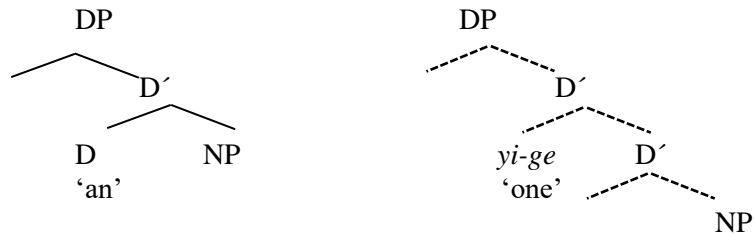
(8)   *I ate **an** apple in the morning*
- a. *I ate apple.   (English)
- b. (wo) zaoshang chi le (yi-ge) pingguo   (Chinese)
       I   morning   eat ASP one CLASS apple
- c. (boku-wa) asa   ringo-o   (ikko) tabeta   (Japanese)
       I-TOP morning   apple-ACC   one CLASS eat.PST
- d. (na-nun) achim-ey   sakwa-lul (han-kay) mekessta   (Korean)
       I-TOP morning-LOC apple-ACC one-CLASS eat.PST.DEC

Chang (2001, p. 321) notes that Chinese-speaking learners may omit necessary articles or insert unnecessary ones because there are no articles in Chinese.[5] There is no D item expressing APPLE as one member from the class of apples in CJK languages. If the clause implies that the speaker ate one apple but not two, a classifier with a number would surface in CJK: *Yi-ge pingguo* 'one-classifier apple' in Chinese, *ringo ikko* 'apple one-classifier' in Japanese, and *sakwa han-kay* 'apple one-classifier' in Korean. Note that the Japanese and Korean classifiers follow the noun they modify, while a Chinese classifier precedes the noun it modifies, as in (9b).[6] It could be that Chinese learners perform slightly better than Japanese learners in learning articles (Snape et al., 2009) because Chinese classifiers precede NPs. As noted by Chang (2001), Lee (2001), and Thompson (2001), an indefinite article which specifies a member of a larger class (Larsen-Freeman & Celce-Murcia, 2016) is lacking in CJK.

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[5] Examples of errors listed are: *Let's make fire; * He was in a pain; * He smashed the vase in the rage.

[6] A non-restricted relative clause modifies a noun optionally, while a restricted relative clause modifies a noun specifically. *I bought a book which was on sale* versus *I bought the book what/that was on sale*.
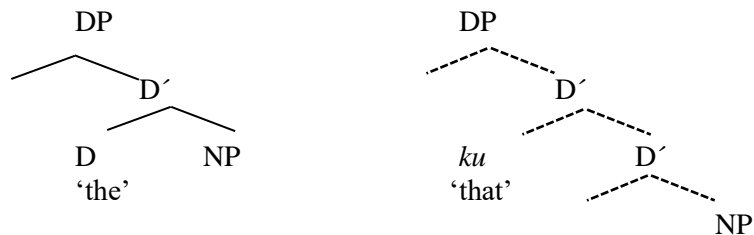
(9)   a.   obligatory D (English)   b.   optional D (CJK)

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          DP                                 DP
         /  \                               /  \
            D´                                 D´
           /  \                               /  \
          D    NP                          yi-ge    D´
         'an'                              'one'    /  \
                                                       NP
```

The requirement of definite article in English and CJK languages are also very different. According to Chesterman (1991), definiteness in English is scalar, rather than discrete, in terms of familiarity (locatability), quantity (inclusiveness), and generality (extensivity). The usage of definite article *the* in English is complex (see Larsen-Freeman & Celce-Murcia, 2016), while it is simply absent in CJK, as shown in (10).

(10)   *I put it/that on the table.*
     a.   *I put it/that on Ø table.   (English)
     b.   wo ba ta   fang zai (**na**-ge) zuozishang   (Chinese)
          I   ACC that put LOC that-CLASS table
     c.   (so-re-wo) (**so**-no) teburu-no ue-ni oita   (Japanese)
          that thing-ACC that table-POSS top-LOC put.PST
     d.   (ku-kes-ul) (**ku**-) thakca wi-ey nohassta   (Korean)
          that thing-ACC that table top-LOC put.PST.DEC

(11) a.   obligatory D (English)   b.   optional D (CJK)

```
          DP                                 DP
         /  \                               /  \
            D´                                 D´
           /  \                               /  \
          D    NP                            ku      D´
         'the'                              'that'   /  \
                                                        NP
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Like Chesterman (1991) observes for the article-less language Finnish, definiteness in CJK may be inferred by a variety of means. One usage of definiteness can be expressed by a demonstrative in CJK. For instance, a demonstrative with a classifier *na-ge* 'that' in Chinese (10b), a demonstrative with a genitive *so-no* 'that of' in Japanese (10c), or a demonstrative *ku-* 'that' in Korean (10d) can optionally fill the D position. However, none of CJK demonstratives seem to totally overlap with the usages of either the English definite article or a demonstrative. Thus, the inventory and distribution of D elements vary.

Another lexical category that appears in the head of D is possessive pronouns. The distribution of alienable possessive pronouns in English is also

more prominent than in CJK. As shown in (12a), the alienable possessive pronoun in English is obligatory, while the equivalent constructions—a pronoun plus genitive—*wo-de* 'I-GEN' in Chinese, *boku-no* 'I-GEN' in Japanese, *na-uy* 'I-GEN' in Korean are not obligatory; the meaning of the possessive is implied in a covert D. Thompson (2001, p. 305) notes that possessive pronouns in Japanese can be unexpressed unless emphasized or contrasted.

(12)　　　*I wiped it with my hands.*

  a.　*I wiped it with hands.　　　　　　　　　(English)

  b.　yong (*wo-de*) shou　ca-le-ca.　　　　　　(Chinese)
   　use　I-POSS hand　wipe-ASP-wipe

  c.　(sore-wo) (*boku-no*) te-de huita.　　　　　(Japanese)
   　that-ACC　I-POSS　hand-with wipe.PST

  d.　(ku-kes-ul) (*na-uy*)　son-ulo　takkassta.　(Korean)
   　that-ACC　I-POSS　hand-with wipe.PST.DEC

The distribution of CJK possessives in (12) show that the phonological realization of the semantic feature POSSESSIVE can be covert on the surface in these languages. This weak feature in the interface between the syntax and morphophonology may interfere in L1-CJK learners' L2 English acquisition.

(13)　a.　obligatory D (English)　　　b.　optional D (CJK)
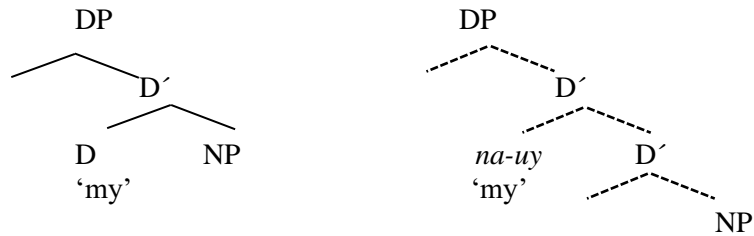
Moreover, the plural *-s* must be marked in English if the speaker was using both hands, while no plural marker is needed in such a case in the CJK languages: the bare noun, including the Chinese noun *shou* 'hand', Japanese noun *te* 'hand', and Korean noun *son* 'hand' in (12), can refer to one hand or both hands. The plurality is also associated with D (which is in complementary distribution with a singular indefinite article), the distribution of plural markers in CJK confirms again that the distribution of D elements varies in these languages.

(14) a. obligatory D (English)   b. optional D (CJK)
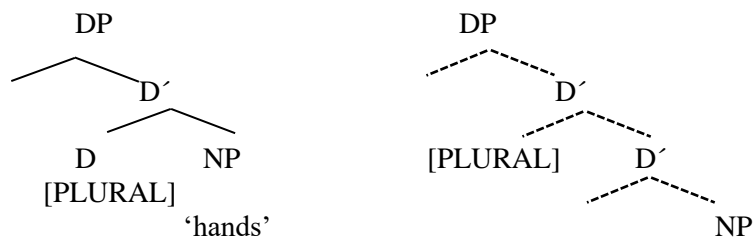
The distribution of D items including pronouns, expletives, articles, demonstratives, and possessives in English shows that the head of DP is prominent in English. One way of acquiring the obligatory marking of a D in English DPs is memorizing constituents with the obligatory D when L1-CJKlearners learn new English nouns by rote. Instead of memorizing the meaning of bare nouns, beginning learners would learn new English nouns in the form of DP constituents with any sort of D element: [that book], [a book], [the book], [his book], [these books], [Ø books] and so on. In this way, L2 learners may easily activate a default DP when they start to create new clauses in L2 with nouns. In order to acquire the D element associated with a common noun, it is desirable to learn DP constituents with an overt article first. For instance, beginning L2 learners should learn the sentences such as *thank you for **the** meal* or *People should never go without **a** meal* before *Thanks for Ø lunch* or *People should never go without Ø lunch!* so that the learners do not form the incorrect notion that the insertion of an English D is optional. Once learners have acquired the activated DP structure in L2 using overt pronouns and nouns with a D item, even with errors, they can move onto the next stage of learning the different distributions of each overt D element in L2. In this stage, the learners should practice using all different kinds of English D elements, including pronouns, possessives, demonstratives, and articles, when they produce simple finite clauses with one or two DPs. The difference between *a* and *an* based on phonological constraint can be introduced, but the different distributions of definite *the* versus indefinite articles based on the morphosyntactic constraint, and the difference between countable and uncountable nouns based on semantics should be presented and taught later. After they have acquired the default-ness of D, the distribution of D based on semantics and pragmatics, including idiomatic expressions, can be introduced. This idea is in line with Long (1991), which emphasizes form-function mapping.

So far, I have incorporated up-to-date syntax theory of DPs and knowledge about the contrastive characteristics of D elements in CJK in an SLA context. I have considered what explicit knowledge of English DPs must be attained by both learners and teachers in an English L2 classroom consisting of beginning learners with topic-oriented language backgrounds. The conscious awareness of explicit knowledge about the grammar of DP in L1 and L2 can provide additional benefits to the teachers' teaching in Asian contexts; explicit knowledge would help with designing an effective ESL curriculum and with diagnosing learners' errors. This

study calls for adding teaching materials that use linguistically informed explicit knowledge of DPs to develop instructional materials for trainee teachers.

4   Conclusions

Based on the internal structure of DPs in Generative Grammar and the distinct characteristics of D elements between English and topic-oriented languages like Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, I propose what explicit knowledge of DPs should be considered when teachers teach ESL in Asian contexts. I propose that instructional materials and instruction should cover the structural difference first, and then move onto individual morphosyntactic elements with different distributions, including the zero and null D elements (cf. Scott, 2019; Sun, 2016). I propose the following order of instruction:

(15)   Default insertion of overt D (activating a default DP) → Identifying
        different distribution of overt D with subcategorization→ Identifying
        the distribution of covert D

A determiner is a head that selects a noun phrase in Generative Grammar. If pedagogical materials and instruction are based on the belief that N is a head and D is in the specifier of NP position, then they should be revised. The consequence of this assumption is that teaching material designers and teachers do not see that there are subcategories or sub-features of Ds that select a NP in English; accordingly, they may overemphasize the different properties of nouns. The properties of NPs do not inform what kind of Ds precede NPs. The countability and uncountability of nouns can be changed in discourse contexts or as lexical derivation (cf. Tsang, 2017). Associating a context with a D feature may help the learners' acquisition of D items in English. ESL teachers should selectively focus on teaching different properties of D elements (cf. Sheen, 2007). Learning a new language and learning to restructure a new parameter can take time if L1 and L2 have significantly different parameters. By translating teachers' implicit knowledge into explicit knowledge about the properties of D elements, both teachers and learners may feel less frustrated when explicit teaching does not show immediate results. I hypothesize that L2 learners' best learning experience will happen when the teaching materials and syllabus are designed by applying teachers' explicit knowledge of both L1 and L2, even though the ways of learning and teaching can be implicit. Future research needs to address whether any previous research has been conducted related to pedagogical applications of D items in CJK learners' classroom and to attest whether the information presented here is pedagogically useful to ESL teachers in the classroom. For example, weather teaching new vocabulary along with an explicit D can help instructors teach the appropriate usage of L2 English DP to L1 CJK speaking beginner learners.

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