An Article Critique 1: Choi

For your short analysis, you should discuss the following points:

* What is the research question in the study?
* How was data collected and analyzed?
* How do the results speak to the study's hypothesis/question?
* What are weaknesses and strengths of the study in your opinion?

(Answer):

This study investigated the acquisition of the English count/mass distinction by L2 English learners of Korean and Mandarin Chinese by focusing on whether these learners transfer the semantics of plural marking from their L1 to their L2, and also that they are influenced by atomicity in the use of the count/mass morphosyntax in English. In order to address these hypotheses, the comparison experiment was conducted, where L1- Korean and L1-Mandarin Chinese L2-English learners as well as a control group of native English speakers completed timed Grammar tasks in both English and their L1 (for the increased reliability) including 48 items (24 target items & 24 fillers) on a computer screen. Considering the fact that the singular and the plural forms were the only predicted response options in the English GT task, a mixed ANOVA was used on the suppliance of the plural marker -s by revealing that atomicity affects both groups of learners equally. For the Korean GT task, a repeated-measures 3 ×2×2 ANOVA showed that there was a significant effect of countability, but not of the other two variables. There were also significant interactions between all three variables, indicating that the native Korean speakers accepted sentences plural nouns more with concrete nouns than abstract nouns in the count category, which is consistent with the previous literature, Kim (2005). Overall, the findings from two experiments show that both native Korean and native Mandarin speakers produced *-s* with count nouns accurately and occasionally over-use *-s* with atomic nouns in English, but not with non-atomic ones. For the Korean and Chinese experiments, the different behavior of plural marking was observed as the researchers assumed: *-tul* in Korean is optionally used with atomic nouns, while *-men* in Chinese is not used at all with [-human] nouns.

The researchers discussed this particular topic with a clear description of why this study is significant by stating that no prior study has examined L1-Korean L2-English learners in this domain as well as there have been relatively few studies on this topic in L2-acquisition. The introduction provided fairly comprehensive explanations of the grammatical distinctive features between Korean and Chinese in comparison with English in terms of count/mass distinctions. Table 1 on page 156 summarizes those among these three languages precisely, which helps the reader comprehend this paper. As for data visualization, Figure 1 includes error bars that show level of uncertainty although there may be some doubt that this figure actually shows standard errors, not standard deviations given the fact that standard error bars are usually much smaller than standard deviation bars. Furthermore, adjusting P-values in the Korean GT task addresses the issue of increasing the probability of errors in multiple statistical analyzes.

However, there are some issues that need to be addressed in the paper. First, four tokens in six categories of the 24 target sentences in the English grammar task are not enough and difficult to generalize the findings to the larger population. In addition to this, all the participants in this study were from a state university in the Midwest; this could possibly limit the generalizability of these findings to the larger learners’ population and the authors did not discuss how these factors of their study seemed to be limitations. While the researchers mentioned that L1-Korean and L1-Chinese English learners’ adequately accurate use in *-s* with count nouns might be explained by their relatively high L2 language proficiency (p170), they provided little information about how many of participants were intermediate and advanced in each group. Future research can be reproduced with a figure that contains that information. Although significant results with significant effect sizes in the results part of this study proved the authors’ predictions, conducting ANOVAS by turning percentages into numbers is statistically questionable. This study could have been done with a logistic regression, given the fact that there is a categorical predicted variable. Lastly, this research seems to focus on only two influential factors in the acquisition of mass/count noun, L1-transfer and semantic universals. However, the prompt effect from the data which are not regarded as L1-transfer and sematic universals may affect participants, given the fact that participants may notice some patterns that are absent from their L1 by being exposed to the data, and they may extract them, in which case they get biased. Nevertheless, it does appear that the authors pay little attention to this data-driven possibility and it seems questionable about how they can tell if it is L1-transfer or semantic universals.

What about the effect of being exposed to the input from the data? Since participants may notice some patterns that are absent from their L1 from the data and extract them, in which case they may start being biased. This is not L1-transfer and not semantic universals either. The researchers pay little attention to this data-driven possibility, still questionable, how can we tell if it’s L1-transfer/semantic universals,

Notes:

Post-hoc comparisons 163, adjusting p-value P167

Weaknesses: Universal semantics but only focusing on two particular languages. Might language proficiency level be affecting the results? I’d like to know how much population of the participants is intermediate and advanced in each group in a figure (p161). Turning % into numbers and doing ANOVA!!

An Article Critique 2: Fern´andez, E. M.

For your short analysis, you should discuss the following points:

* What is the research question in the study?
* How was data collected and analyzed?
* How do the results speak to the study's hypothesis/question?
* What are weaknesses and strengths of the study in your opinion?

(Answers:)

The purpose of this study was to distinguish early attachment vs late attachment decisions, on the assumption that earlier closure is prompted exclusively by the syntactic components, whereas late closure may occur due to the consideration of extra-syntactic information. Data was collected through the use of an online task including 24 disambiguated sentences with 48 fillers and an off-line task, where participants were presented ambiguous materials on paper and were asked to answer questions directly about the ambiguous attachments. For an online reading task, mean reading times were analyzed, while means of participants’ responses that indicate N1 or N2 choices were analyzed in the off-line task. Overall, the findings suggest that speakers of English or Spanish show preference for low attachments in the online self-paced reading task as evidenced by their faster reading. Additionally, cross-linguistic differences in the off-line questionnaire experiment were seen, in the way Spanish speakers tended to attach higher than English, which is consistent with the previous studies.

The paper has been written with its clear purpose and significance, and the author identified one of the possible experimental issues earlier in the Introduction section and other several sections by saying that reading times in bilingual speakers tend to be slower, given what they know about the previous studies. Then, the author suggested a couple of potential solutions and said aural production or picture-matched tasks could possibly address bilingual performance deficit that has been reported in previous literatures, which eye-tracking can also be a better option, given the fact that we can see if they focus on a particular type of structure/sentence/word in this sort of experiment. However, there does not seem to be a strong correlation between this bilingual performance deficit and how directly this issue may affect the primary results of the study because if we can assume that bilingual speakers demonstrate slower reading times, they should behave in the same way in the whole experiments.

Using two different types of experiment was ideal and reliable, given the hypothesis of this study. However, data visualization and statistical analysis parts need more work, in my opinion. Taking Table 1 that shows the distribution of participants as an example, the top of the table seems quite straightforward but what is confusing is the first rows of bilinguals having all the different information for bilingual speakers, and this may cause the reader to take a while to realize that the numbers in the first row actually break down into the following three parts, Simultaneous, L2-Spanish and L2-English. It would be improved if there are separated tables for monolinguals and bilinguals or the table can only focus monolinguals versus bilinguals and all those details can be moved to Appendix. Additionally, the spread of the participants seems to be problematic since there is actually nobody tested in the bilingual dominant in Spanish in the off-line task as well as the online task, and the sample size does not appear to be balanced. Therefore, it is a little questionable about how much we can say about this particular sample size.

Besides, having negative numbers in a figure can be confusing and can be replaced with log numbers, given the fact that the actual scores (reading speeds) cannot be seen in the figures since mean percentages provided in the figures were subtracted from low attachment – high attachment. Furthermore, all the figures presented in this paper do not include error bars and we cannot tell how certain we are about these barplots. In addition to this, the author is saying that Figure 4 shows no difference, although it clearly shows a huge difference across the bars in mean difference between relative clause reading times, which indicates that there is a mismatch between what this figure is actually showing and what she is speaking statistically. Lastly, it would be interesting to know how much variation there is across dialects, although this is probably not an issue, considering that this study focuses on relative attachment preference (N1 or N2).

Notes:

Why is so much focus on English? Can be compared with Italian or Portoguees that are theoretically considered low attachment? This one is a classic example

An Article Critique 3: Guzzo, N. B.

For your short analysis, you should discuss the following points:

* What is the research question in the study?
* How was data collected and analyzed?
* How do the results speak to the study's hypothesis/question?
* What are weaknesses and strengths of the study in your opinion?

The goal of this study is to examine whether it is possible to override listeners’ default LA interpretation in the sentences of ambiguous depictive predicates in Brazilian Portuguese through the use of particular acoustic cues. Additionally, if it is possible, are they able to consistently signal HA in their speech? In an attempt to answer these questions, the authors conducted two different types of experiments, a judgement task, where participants listened to sentences containing ambiguous depictive predicates and were asked to choose whether the attribute referred to the subject or the object of the sentence, and production task, in which they were instructed to read paragraphs containing a depictive predicate within a context. There were 23 native speakers of Brazilian Portuguese tested in both of the experiments. Whereas for the judgement task, participants’ responses were modeled with multilevel logistic regressions with by-speaker and by-item random intercepts in R, for the production task, the data was analyzed in Praat to see if the certain acoustic aspects affect participants’ preference for specific interpretations in ambiguous depictive predicates in BP. Overall, the findings show that HA is prompted by pause before attribute in the judgement task, while speakers can signal HA by putting a pause before the attribute in the production task, although some of the speakers did not rely on any acoustic clues on their interpretation decisions.

This paper is clearly organized and reader-friendly in the way it’s written with a clear direction provided in each section. One paragraph of summary is included in every section and it also gives the reader a clear guideline about what is going to be written in next section. Literature review is well-written since it is divided into two difference subsections. The first section mainly focuses on general knowledge about depictive predicates in Brazilian Portuguese, whereas the main findings are reviewed from the last section. The way the literature review is organized will help the reader who is even not familiar with this particular topic to comprehend the main focus of this study in my opinion, and there is a strong relationship between these two different subsections. Additionally, syntactic visualization of depictive predicates in the context of Brazilian Portuguese (3) & (4) on page 3 makes it fairly comprehensive and accessible to the reader.

There is rich information provided about participants and clear objectives of two types of experiments in this study. The information about participants’ hearing condition and the possible effects of their linguistic environment have been mentioned in the paper, and it is important given the fact that the researchers are trying to focus on phonological aspects. Thus, it is clear on what kinds of participants were in this particular study, although it could have been even better with one table or figure either in the participant section or Appendix that provides details of participants’ mean ages, their standard deviation, sex, their second language and other linguistic information.

The literature review seems to focus on only a few particular authors, such as Magalhaes and Maia in my opinion, and it might be improved by adding other researchers who have done similar studies for the sake of the increased reliability. As for data visualization, the figures that show participants’ specific attachment interpretations might be improved with one short paragraph of what these means more explicitly for the reader who is not in this specific field.

Lastly, it would be interesting if future research could explore the effects of acoustic clues in depictive predicates in Brazilian Portuguese compared with a different language that shares similar linguistic features or BP by examining depictive predicate clauses.

Weaknesses:

1. Only focusing on Magalhaes & Maia’s study? Needed to review other similar studies?

Notes:

1. What about depictive predicate clauses?

An Article Critique 4: Kang, Y. and Han, S.

For your short analysis, you should discuss the following points:

* What is the research question in the study?
* How was data collected and analyzed?
* How do the results speak to the study's hypothesis/question?
* What are weaknesses and strengths of the study in your opinion?

The main focus of this study is to investigate the sound change in Seoul Korean in the relationship between the lenis and the aspirated obstruents. There were two native Korean speakers examined in the 1935 recordings compared to the speech of the child speaker from 1935 re-recorded 70 years later to see if there is any change of a speaker’s speech over his lifespan. The acoustic analysis was conducted using Praat. Since the quality of recoding was not ideally clear for the analysis, the manual segmentation was conducted for the noise removal. Phonologically speaking, the researchers specifically examined the VOT and F0 values of the stops separately and then examine how the weighting of the two cues change from speaker to speaker. The results confirmed a tonogenetic sound change has been in progress. Additionally, a more conservative pattern of stop contrast was found than the data from 2005 as well as the data from younger speakers of Present Day Korean, and the mixed pattern from the oldest speaker in this study was seen, indicating that some speakers are undergoing general community-level sound change, while others seem to remain stable but may experience further sound changes through their life spans.

The significance of this research is clearly seen, as this is the first longitudinal study of tonogenetic sound change in Korean. A number of previous studies are shown earlier in the paper to provide general information about Korean phonological structures. Figures represent the sound variation and expected age-conditioned variation during the particular period of time under certain conditions, and these are quite helpful for the reader to understand the progress of the sound changes through the participant’s lifespan. Another point about those figures is error bars included to represent how much variation there is in the datasets. Although conducting multiple statistical comparison tests leads to the increased reliability, there is no mention of correcting P-values in order to handle the issue of increasing P-values.

As the authors mention in the last section in this paper, it goes without saying that the sample size of this study is small and there are only two speakers with the same genders. Gender-cross phonological differences might have been identified if they had examined native Korean female speakers. Besides, more detailed information about participants could be need, such as their linguistic background, the length of living in Korea or the region of their stay throughout their lifespan. If participants have moved somewhere in Korean during their life, there is a certain degree of possibility that they may be phonologically affected by their regional accents or dialects. Similarly, it would be important to know whether participants have any experience traveling abroad in this particular study, given its focus on phonological aspects. Future research could be reproduced with one table that includes these more explicit information about participants either in the participant’s section or Appendix.

(we cannot tell what particular aspects may cause this results. Need more explicit information.

Weakness:

1. Why only male speakers? (p 65)
2. More details about participants would be needed, such as linguistic background or environment? What if they have gone to another country and stayed there for a certain period of time? They might be affected? Not sure if the authors corrected P-value?