(Bare) plural DPs and L2 Acquisition: From generics to mass/count distinction and plurality

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This paper presents L2 studies of bare plural DPs as well as a set of related linguistic phenomena that present potentially fruitful avenues for exploration in Second Language Acquisition. So far, DPs have been at the centre of L2 studies in the nominal domain. However the focus in L2 studies has revolved around some well known properties such as article use, agreement features and the mass/count distinction. Shifting the focus away from these properties for a moment, in this talk, I will present some relatively less well established properties associated with bare plural DPs in L2 acquisition. We first start by looking at how BPs, in the generic use, can offer an insight into L2 learner's sensitivity to lexical semantic constraints. Second, we show how aggregate nouns (e.g., spaghetti vs. noodles) can be explored in the L2 study of the mass-count distinction. Then we take on the notion of plurality - do plural nouns denote necessarily a plurality of things (i.e, more than one)? In English, it seems not, and this has been a topic of intensive debate in semantics in recent years (Sauerland, et. al. 2005; Farkas and de Swart 2010; Kane et. al. 2015). Following a recent study on this question by Renans and colleagues (2018), I show how a similar issue can be exploited in SLA. This can offer a new way of testing L2 learners' knowledge of plural DPs. In turn, this will also have implications for SLA on the L1 transfer among obligatory vs optional plural marking languages.