

The use of definite article by Japanese learners of English

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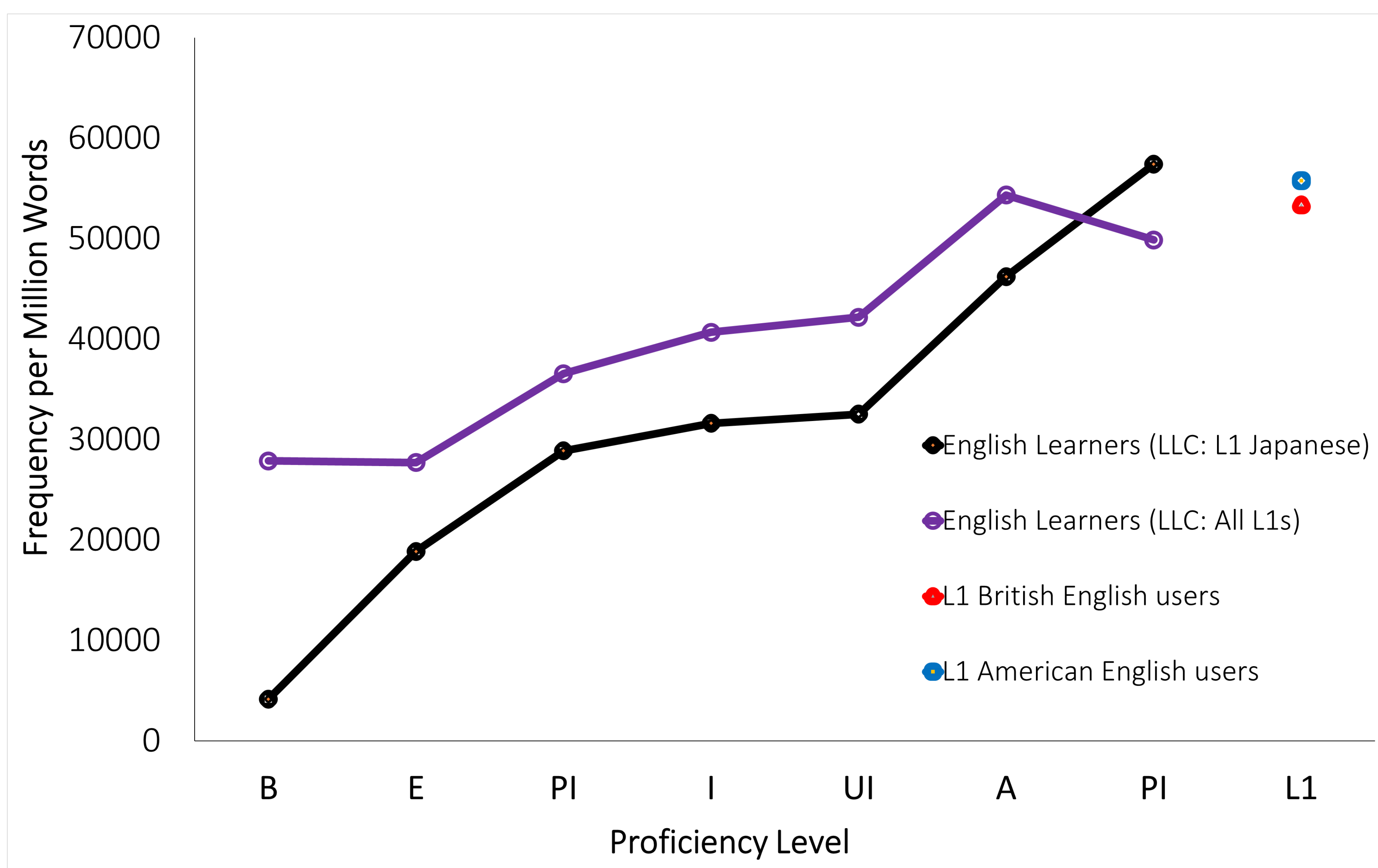
Why definite article *the*?

- Most frequent word in English (Brezina & Gablasova, 2015).
- BUT...
- “Most of ESL students have trouble with articles” (Miller, 2005)
 - Learners with article-less L1s acquire articles in the late stage of L2 development (Murakami & Alexopoulou, 2016).
 - L1 Japanese users with higher proficiency in English performed more target-like use of the, but still different from L1 users (Butler, 2002).
 - Japanese use particles (は or が) to express (in)definiteness (Snape et al., 2013).
- + α
- Function words are not heavily influenced by the topic of the essays than content words.

Research Questions

Are there any differences in the use of definite article *the*

1. across L1 Japanese users, English learners with different L1s, or L1 English users?
2. across L1 Japanese users with different proficiency levels?



Selection of corpora

1) Longman Learners' Corpus (LLC)

10 million words corpus consisting of essays and exam scripts written during 1990 to 2002 by learners of twenty different L1s with eight levels of proficiency.

Text type: Essay, free essay, project essay

L1: 1) Japanese, 2) all L1s

Proficiency: Beginners, elementary, pre-intermediate, intermediate, upper-intermediate, advanced, proficiency

2) British English 2006 (BE06)

3) American English 2006 (AmE06)

1 million words corpus consisting of written texts published around 2006.

Text type: Academic prose in various disciplines

What can we do in classrooms?

- Emphasise the difference between English and Japanese.
- Give feedback focusing only on the use of articles.
- Introduce data driven activities using learner and L1 corpora.

More importantly though...

- British and American English are **not** the English norms.
- It is up to the learner to choose to aim for “native-like” use.
- Learners have the choices to use whatever kind of English.

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