The Pragmatics of Articles in Outer Circle Englishes: Some Theoretical and Pedagogical Considerations

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Abstract

Usage of definite and indefinite articles is known to vary across different varieties of English, especially in the outer circle. As a semantic/pragmatic category, definiteness is notoriously slippery to define – is it uniqueness, familiarity, inclusiveness or identifiability? Literature has shown that the lack of an agreed definition can complicate any principled attempt to explain the meanings that are encoded by (in)definiteness markers such as articles. This paper considers pragmatic meanings that might arise if definiteness is seen as a semantic composite of locatability, inclusiveness and exclusivity (Chesterman, 2005). Such meanings may be able to account for variation patterns found in outer circle varieties. Speakers of these varieties may therefore construct a semantic/pragmatic system of articles that differs slightly from that of inner circle varieties but can be assumed to express systematic meanings that are achieved through communicative cooperation and implicature *a la* Grice. Some pedagogical implications of these variations are discussed.

Keywords: (In)definiteness, English articles, outer circle varieties, Chesterman, cooperative principle, Gricean maxims, implicature

Introduction

Article usage is known to vary in world Englishes (WE) (Filppula & Klemola 2017; Kortmann 2006; Kortmann & Szmreczanyi, 2004). On the surface, these variations can be viewed as syntactic – dissimilar distributional patterns of *the* and *a/an* that hint at varying architecture of the noun phrase (NP). On another level, they can also indicate variation in meaning. For example, the same meaning may be expressed by different articles, as in genericity in *Did you go to* ***Ø university****?* vs. *Did you go to* ***the university****?* in Indian English. Conversely, the variation can refer to different meanings that are expressed by the same article, as in specificity for both speaker and hearer in *I hid it in* ***the garden****, Mum* in inner circle Englishes vs. specificity for speaker only in *Malaysia has* ***the hot weather*** in many outer circle Englishes.[1]

This paper is concerned with the latter type of variation. It aims to identify the kinds of meaning that can arise from these variable usages of articles. In order to do so, it will apply Chesterman's (2005) semantic/pragmatic theory of definiteness to a set of outer circle English data

extracted from the International Corpus of English (ICE). Following a brief description of articles and the notion of definiteness in the next section, the application of this theory will be elaborated within the framework of Gricean cooperative principle and implicature. The rest of the paper will proceed by describing the methodology and presenting the findings. Before concluding, it will also discuss some implications on the teaching of articles in English as a Second Language (ESL).

Articles and what it means to be definite

Articles are generally understood to signal definiteness in language. As a semantic/pragmatic category, definiteness is not easy to define and has a long tradition of debate to prove it. Compounding matters further, not all languages mark definiteness or even have articles. Investigating this phenomenon from a cross-linguistic perspective, Lyons (1999) concludes that definiteness is a grammaticalization of a kind of general meaning called identifiability. Thus, like other grammatical categories such as tense and number, it allows for variability in meaning across and within languages. This view may offer some insight into the variation in the data to be encountered below.

The general usage of articles in English – definite, indefinite and zero – is described in the appendix, which is a summary of the insights culled from four authoritative references on English Grammar: Quirk et al.'s (1985) "A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language", Biber et al.'s (1999) "Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English", Huddleston and Pullum's (2002) "Cambridge Grammar of the English Language" and Downing and Locke's (2006) "A University Course in English Grammar". Considering the wide range of uses shown in the table, how does one explain the meaning that unifies all of them?

In explicating the complexity of definiteness, these authors make use of two further semantic notions – reference and specificity. Reference is "the relationship which holds between an expression and what that expression stands for on particular occasions of its utterance" (Lyons, 1977, p. 174). It used to be thought that all words (or any linguistic expressions) have referents (or extensions) in the real world. A more commonly held view presently is that the referents of linguistic expressions are more abstract in nature, often glossed as 'mental entities' and captured in similarly abstract concepts of "universe of discourse" (Givón, 1984) or "mental spaces" (Fauconnier, 1998).

A concept closely related to reference is specificity. In "talked to *a girl*", it can be argued that this girl may or may not be a particular girl that the speaker has in mind, with no assumption that the hearer can identify her. But if this girl is a particular girl in the mind of the speaker, then the referent intended here is specific. As summarized by Ionin et al., specificity is "speaker intent to refer" (2004, p. 5).[2]

Literature indicates that underlying the vast range of usages across the dimensions of reference and specificity are the concepts of uniqueness,

inclusiveness, familiarity and identifiability. Uniqueness as the meaning of definiteness was proposed by Russell (1905). The sentence "*The queen of England* is old but healthy", for example, demonstrates that there is only one person who is rightfully and therefore, uniquely, the queen of England. Despite this claim, uniqueness is not tenable in utterances such as "Take *the lift*" when uttered in a lobby with more than one lift. The familiarity theory was proposed by Christophersen (1939) who asserted that the notion of definiteness must be associated with some kind of previous knowledge, as in "There he is; I've been looking for *the man* all day". Nevertheless, a sentence such as "Beware of *the dog*", which is commonly encountered as a sign on a stranger's gate fundamentally challenges this theory. Meanwhile, Hawkins' (1978) notion of "inclusiveness" extends from uniqueness which works to cover plural and mass nouns. In "If you want to play badminton, go get *the rackets*", the italicised NP must be unique in reference to the whole set. However, in "There are scratches on *the tiles"*, "tiles" does not necessarily refer to every single one of them. As regards identifiability, it claims that the definite article enables the hearer to identify the referent intended by the speaker (Lyons 1999). For example, knowing that many people keep dogs to guard their houses may guide listeners to identify the dog in "Beware of *the dog*" above. Nevertheless, it does not work in "I'm going to talk to *the prime minister* about this after the election – whoever he is!" In this case, the intended referent cannot yet be identified in the strictest sense of the word.

The views of definiteness offered by these theories are thus not watertight. Although they have advanced what is currently known about articles to a great extent, the lack of a unifying theory or one that can adequately capture the variability shown by inner circle (or "traditional") varieties becomes a matter of concern when variation is inherent and extensive, as in the case of world Englishes (Kachru, 1985; Schneider, 2007). To illustrate what this might mean, consider the following invented sentences, adapted from usages in inner circle varieties themselves, and how they do not seem to match any of the usages described in the appendix.

1. His only novel – if *Ø novel* is what it is – was published many years ago.
2. It's *Ø Ohio University* vs. *The Ohio State University* today.
3. Can I have *a juice*, please?

What explanation can be given for these patterns of usage which clearly vary from what has been said about articles so far? In (1), the singular count noun "novel" is left undetermined, in (2) two similarly named universities come from the same American state but only one takes a surface article, and in (3) the mass noun "juice" takes an article that carries the meaning of "one".

Can similar patterns also be found in non-native varieties of English especially in the outer circle? Such patterns certainly abound. Consider the following:

4. I am going to *Ø post office*. (omission of *the*) (East African English, from Schmied, 2004, p. 932)
5. I don't have *Ø ticket.* (omission of *a*) (Singapore English, from Wee, 2004, p. 1061)
6. Apparently they can tape your phone conversation and use it as *a what evidence* in court ah (insertion of *a*) (Singapore English, from ICE-Sin:S1A-005#285)
7. The most universalized celebration is *the Christmas*. (insertion of *the*) (Jamaican English, from ICE-Jam#exam essay)
8. Ya it's those computer is all the data in *the computer readable format* so you go the machine CD-ROM. (substitution of *the* for *a*) (Singapore English, from ICE-Sin:S1A-001#188)

The paper's focus on the outer circle is also motivated by the relative stability of many of the varieties found in this region in spite of their close contact with indigenous languages and interaction with other socio-historical variables (Hickey, 2005). It is still, however, important to distinguish such language features from errors or similar non-lasting elements (Hamid & Baldauf Jr., 2013) to commit to the claim of stability.[3] Given this concern, a reasonable question to ask is: Is there any underlying similarity that can be found between sentences in (1) – (3) and those in (4) – (8)? And more importantly, what can these variation patterns tell us about definiteness in human language? This explains why a theory that approaches definiteness from a different perspective is needed.

Chesterman's definiteness theory and Grice's cooperative principle

Chesterman's (2005) definiteness theory, originally published in 1991, is based on Hawkins' (1978) discussion of location theory (which is couched in pragmatic terms, roughly amounting to answering "In the relevant context, where can the entity signalled by *the* be located?"). The starting point of his investigation was not the opposition between *the* and *a*, as commonly was the case. He was interested instead in the difference between "article" and "no-article" on the surface. Following Hawkins (1978), he proposes that *the* signals locatability and inclusiveness (see previous section). But the presence of articles at all (definite or otherwise) also means that there is a signal of "extensivity". To oversimplify, extensivity refers to an entity's maximum potential quality (as opposed to quantity) and hence, generality. A further distinction needs to be made between zero and null articles. The zero article occurs before mass and plural nouns while the null article occurs before proper names and NPs such as "Come along, *Ø boy*", "He's in *Ø prison*", "*Ø Breakfast* is ready", etc. (Chesterman, 2005.). (See all examples of referential zero article in the appendix in this regard.) A distinguishing feature between the two is that the null article cannot occur with a restrictive relative clause

(cf. * "He's not *John* I used to know" and * "*Breakfast* you asked for is ready") unless a definite article is supplied pre-nominally.

The, a(n), zero and *null* are distributed across the three meanings of locatability, inclusiveness and extensivity according to their +/-ve values (Table 1).

Table 1
Distribution of articles across Chesterman's (2005, p. 68) composite meaning of definiteness

	Locatable	**Inclusive**	**Maximum extensivity**
zero Fill it up with *Ø milk*. *Ø Oil* won't mix with *Ø water.*	-	±	+
a There's *a woman* at the door. She wants *a man* in her life.	±	-	-
the *The king* stood by himself. I know *the girl*s there.	+	+	-
null Did you come here by *Ø bus*? *Ø Kanye* is married to *Ø* Kim.	+	+	+

What is potentially useful about this composite view of definiteness is that it requires meaning enrichment from the pragmatic context. As explained by Chesterman (2005):

> The features show how the interpretation of an NP varies according to the article it occurs with. With respect to extensivity, the features are absolute: either a surface article is present or it is not. *But the other two oppositions are ultimately pragmatic: [± locatable] and [± inclusive] indicate pragmatically determined default values: and [± inclusive] is defined with reference to a pragmatic* all*, not a logical one.* (p. 68, emphasis added)

The picture that has emerged in the literature regarding article usages in the outer circle is that they can create untypical meanings when they vary from those in the inner circle (e. g. Y. Kachru, 2003; Sharma, 2005). However, given that stability characterizes much of the communication held in English in the outer circle (see also "nativization" in Schneider, 2007), such

meanings may be genuinely intended and understood by interactants and should be accounted for on their own terms. To this end, the study seeks to utilize the Gricean cooperative principle. It aptly encapsulates the spirit of cooperation adopted by most speakers and hearers in WE situations even in the face of misunderstanding. It also allows investigation into the meanings that may be inferred by the hearers, i.e. implicatures, which in turn, can be tested.

Grice's cooperative principle captures the idea that people generally cooperate in order to communicate. Without this inclination to cooperate, communication can fail and become ineffective for the most part. In Grice's terms, the principle rests on four maxims: quality, quantity, relation and manner. These roughly correspond to telling the truth, saying what needs to be said in the right amount, staying on topic and being clear, respectively. Speakers do not always adhere to the maxims and thus may violate, flout or opt out leading to different kinds of implicatures (Birner, 2013, p. 43).

An implicature is not truth-conditional in the sense that its falsity does not affect the truth of the main utterance. There are two kinds of implicature: conventional and conversational. The implicatures to be discussed in this paper are a sub-type of the latter – generalized. A generalized conversational implicature cannot be easily separated from the form. This means that the implicature "does not need to be computed anew with each relevant utterance" (Birner, 2013, p. 63). For example, the use of "some" in "I've eaten *some* mangoes" implies that *not all* mangoes have been eaten. This meaning of *not all* is understood by the hearer each time "some" is used – unless the context is reasonably changed, as in "I've eaten some mangoes; I mean, all the mangoes in the fridge". The added part of the sentence also shows that even when the implicature of *not all* is cancelled, it does not negate the truth of the utterance, that is, the speaker has eaten a number of mangoes!

The composite meaning of definiteness comprising values of locatability, inclusiveness and extensivity (see Table 1) can be reconfigured as a set of generalized conversational implicatures. When an article is chosen, that choice indicates that the other three articles and their meanings do not apply. The implicature is then based on the composite meaning of the article being chosen. Of course in the context of outer circle Englishes, the options of articles are usually binary (see (4) – (8)). By working out which maxim is observed by the speaker, the choice of one article over the other and thus, the resulting variation pattern, can be explained.

Because generalized conversational implicatures are context-dependent, they can be cancelled when the context changes sufficiently. Cancellation is one type of several "tests" proposed by Grice to determine that, among others, the meaning of the implicature is non-truth-conditional. Another test is calculability. Grice posits that a conversational implicature can be worked out, or "calculated" based on the utterance and its context (Birner, 2013, p. 68). Both these tests were used in this study.

Methodology

The data for this study were excerpted from the International Corpus of English (ICE) (see *www.ice-corpora.net/ice/index.html*). The outer circle varieties were represented by Indian English, Singapore English, Philippine English and Kenyan English. Each corpus contains 1 million words – 600,000 spoken and 400,000 written – and consists of 12 text types or registers. The analysis in this study was based on only three – private dialogue, academic writing and reportage. Definite and indefinite articles (*the* and *a/an*) were analyzed according to two definiteness-based annotation schemes that were based on the table in the appendix (Wahid, 2013). A total of 6,950 NPs containing *the* and 2,152 NPs containing *a/an* were analyzed.

As for the zero and null articles, the analysis was based on a case study of "house". This nominal was chosen because it is made of a common noun and allowed the analysis to focus on undetermined singular count nouns as in (1), (4) and (5). Tokens that function as a verb or an adjective or form part of titles of books, films, etc. (e.g. "The House of the Rising Sun" or "Little House on the Prairie") were excluded. A total of 1,652 NPs containing "house" were analyzed. The annotation scheme consists of two usage types, i.e. determined and undetermined. Undetermined tokens of "house" were subjected to a further qualitative analysis.

For *the* and *a/an*, tokens that did not match any of the usage types listed in the annotation schemes served as the data for this study. In the interest of space, only a number of representative cases are discussed in this paper. As the aim is to identify the types of meaning produced by these usages, this study is conceived as a qualitative analysis which includes (i) identifying the implicature for each usage, and (ii) submitting it to the tests of calculation and cancellation.

Results

This section examines several of the usage variation patterns found in the outer circle data.

Substitution of **the** *for* **a**

9. The skin is burning like whereas in Goa we have *the cool climate* (Indian English, from ICE-IND:S1A-001#20).

While the more commonly used *a* would give the meaning of {not locatable, not inclusive, not extensive}, *the* renders "cool climate" as {locatable, inclusive, not extensive} (see Table 2). The implicature is that Goa has one of known types of climates, possibly one out of a set of two – warm and cool.

Based on the Relation maxim, an implicature can be calculated along

the following lines: The speaker is saying something related to temperature, which can be influenced by the climate. Uttering *the cool climate* implies there is a finite number of climate types in this context i.e., the region of India being talked about, possibly a warm one and a cool one. But similar to all conversational implicatures, it can be cancelled as in when a third person (perhaps also residing in Goa) says, "Actually, Goa is just wet". Although the implicature is cancelled, the fact that Goa has a particular climate is still true.

10. [It was] rectangle all over the place all over the belt all along the belt and the one thing about it was this gold crest would fall off and I had to go and buy *the super glue* from the co-op to stick it back, you know [.] (Singapore English, from ICE-SIN:S1A-003#X354).

The more common article, indefinite *a*, would give "super glue" the meaning of {not locatable, not inclusive, not extensive} but the definite *the* here makes it {locatable, inclusive, not extensive}. Like "the cool climate" above, the implicature of this choice is that this particular glue is one of several kinds – normal (strength), super (strength), etc.

If the speaker is believed to adhere to the Manner maxim, an implicature can be calculated along the following lines: The speaker describes "glue" as super and it is not unlocatable; therefore, it must belong to the set of glue types in the relevant context. Glue can usually be distinguished according to its strength, so it must be the glue of the super strength type. Of course this can be cancelled if the speaker says, "Actually, all glue is super strong". However, the cancellation does not affect the truth about the speaker buying strong glue.

***Substitution of* the *for* Ø (null)**

11. They look to the parties to influence the course and content of public policy and through their selection of the present and future leaders they really make a big impact on *the society* (Philippine English, from ICE-PHI:S2A-043#90).

From the meaning of {locatable, inclusive, extensive} afforded by the expected null article in inner circle varieties, "society" is deemed as {locatable, inclusive, not extensive} due to the use of *the*. The implicature is that it is the one and only society out of several others that is relevant to the discussion.

The Relation maxim allows the implicature to be calculated in this manner: "Society" here is not in the abstract sense which is how it would otherwise be conceived. By individuating this particular society in the utterance, the existence of other societies is implied. It can be cancelled, for example, if the speaker corrects himself/herself by saying, "I shouldn't have said that. We are all in this together, all of us". However, this does not change the fact that there is an aggregate of people being discussed.

***Substitution of* a *for* Ø (zero)**

12. Sometimes I just [,] just fry a bit slightly and then [,] put you know [,] I just put into *a tomato sauce* and onion then ginger and garlic and big chillies or capsicum whatever <w> you've (Indian English, from ICE-IND:S1A-007#203).

More typically meant as {not locatable, not inclusive, extensive} by virtue of the more commonly used Ø (zero) in this kind of context, "tomato sauce" is regarded as {not locatable, not inclusive, not extensive} in this utterance because of indefinite *a*. One available implicature herein is it is a kind of tomato sauce. However, the implicature that it is an amount of tomato sauce is also possible.

On the basis of the Quantity maxim, the addition of the indefinite article which also means "one" must point to "tomato sauce" being expressed as any representation of individuated tomato sauce because choosing the zero article would turn it into being general or abstract, thereby exceeding the required scope of the description in this context, which is basically "one of something". This first possible implicature (kind of tomato sauce) may be cancelled if the speaker says, "Actually, all tomato sauce is the same" while the second one (amount of tomato sauce) can be cancelled by the same speaker through saying, "Wait a second, you can put as much tomato sauce as you want!" Nevertheless, both will not alter the fact that tomato sauce is the cooking ingredient used.

***Substitution of* a/an *for* the**

13. No self-control [.] We have […] But I told you I put on that mini by the way they even go to *an extent of tearing* it you know that means you can't control yourself because what you are seeing is not you want to see something more than that […] If your eyes […] Yeah Yeah (Kenyan English, from ICE-KEN: S1A003K).

The typical meaning of {locatable, inclusive, not extensive} otherwise provided by *the* here is replaced with that of {not locatable, not inclusive, not extensive} courtesy of *an*. One implicature is that there exist other extents of tearing in the relevant context.

The Quantity-based implicature arises because the non-locatability of *an* allows a perception of other extents. If the speaker is thinking of presenting the information in just the right amount to adhere to the Quantity maxim, the use of *an* instead of *the* should give rise to this meaning. But, of course, it can be cancelled if the speaker adds, "But, you know, that is all the tearing they did". However, the meaning of the individuals doing something as terrible as tearing remains.

***The case of "house": Ø for* the *or* a/an**

In cases where a surface article, either *the* or *a/an*, is omitted, is it substituted with the zero or null article? Are they similar to (1) above? Because Chesterman's definiteness theory postulates that the zero article is reserved for mass and plural count nouns (see table 1), the relevant article for the purposes of this case study is null. The implicatures that may arise from this substitution are exemplified below.

a/an → Ø

14. So it means that uh you find people saving up for *Ø house*, some of them even want a landed property before they get married and uh it may be a bit uh too much of a high expectation but there it goes, you know, uh people do think that way (Singapore English, from ICE-SIN:S1B-025#51).

When the expected *a/an* is otherwise omitted, the meaning {not locatable, not inclusive, not extensive} shifts to {locatable, inclusive, extensive}. An available implicature here is that the entity "house" is unbounded, akin to an abstract idea or concept.

Adhering to the Manner maxim, the speaker chooses to omit the indefinite article and makes available all the meanings associated with the null article instead. If this is to be interpreted as promoting clarity on the speaker's part, it must be to maximise the notion of "house" itself. The speaker thus implies saving up for the idea of house ownership. To cancel it, he or she could add, "But you know what? If it's an HDB flat they're buying, it's just a box!"[4] Regardless of the cancellation, the meaning of some individuals saving up for something meant for habitation remains.

the → Ø

15. C: But my house is in Tirumangalam.
    A: Tirumangalam. How far about […] ?
    C: Twenty-two kilometres from *Ø house.*
    A: Twenty kilometres.
    (Indian English, from ICE-IND:S1A-024#56 – 60)

The more typical *the* would give a meaning of {locatable, inclusive, not extensive}. However, when it is omitted, the null article is allowed to move in and the meaning changes to {locatable, inclusive, extensive}. As in (14) just now, the implicature is that "house" is an unbounded entity, an abstract idea or concept. The maxim of Manner guides the speaker to choose the null article over the definite one. The only difference in meaning is extensivity. If *the house* implies a bounded entity, the null article removes the restriction. It seems that the speaker intends to maximise the notion of "house". What was previously "my house" has become more than just the house that matters in the context of the conversation. It seems that in the broader area of Tirumangalam, the speaker is measuring distances between an abstract concept of house with perhaps those of school, town hall, cinema, market and so on. Each of them may then be conceived as an institution. To cancel, a third speaker could say something along the lines of "22 kilometers from Tirumangalam? Who'd want to live in a house that far?" Despite the cancellation, the meaning of the sentence about the distance between the town and the speaker's habitation is unchanged.

Untypical tokens of undetermined "house" NPs such as those shown here occur with the null article. This renders the NPs identifiable, inclusive and maximally extensive, turning them into abstract ideas or concepts. In a sense, there is a parallel between "house" conceived this way and a proper noun (e.g. Tom), which is not abstract but a one-member set (Chesterman, 2005). Compare the invented examples in (16) and (17).

16. The intruder must be placed exactly 22 kilometers from where *Ø house* is. (Uttered in a computer game simulating life on a new planet involving a single individual)
17. The intruder was caught exactly 22 kilometers from where *Ø Tom* is.

Implications for teaching of articles in ESL

The fluid range of meanings of definiteness that is available through article choices made by outer circle English users certainly has implications for the teaching and learning of ESL in such settings. However, translating this idea into action is not without challenges.

Any discussion on teaching nativized usage patterns such as those documented here will invoke notions of "norm" and "standard". Although they may now constitute a norm in a given speech community, their continuing use does not contribute to the standard, a perceived acceptability yardstick that is often based on inner circle varieties and upheld by language gate-keepers (Peters, 2020). This is, unfortunately, the usual scenario involving nativized features identified through decades of research in world Englishes – they very rarely become codified (Kubota, 2018). Keeping this in mind, teachers would do well by asking themselves if the students need to learn the nativized patterns. Some scholars are more comfortable leaving such

questions to students because it appears to be more democratic (e.g., Timmis, 2002). However, some others such as Tollefson (2007) and Kubota (2018) question this practice and encourage teachers to be more critical of what and how they teach because these issues are not beyond the confines of the classroom, as it is commonly believed, but in fact influence everything they do in it (Pennycook, 2007). Teachers will subsequently be confronted with such important issues as power, prestige, identity, access, equity and so on, all of which require a hard and honest look at what their students really need.

If teachers indeed make the decision to teach the usage patterns discussed here to students, they can demonstrate the permutations of locatability, inclusiveness, and extensivity and the four articles (see Table 1) with regard to both native and nativized usages. Instruction of this kind can involve comparing and contrasting the two types, highlighting the tendencies that are dominant in each of the circles. Raising students' awareness of what "works" in a given context has been promoted as a practical aim by many of those who are amenable to the plurality of English (Dewey & Leung, 2010; Jenkins, 2006; Lopriore & Vettorel, 2015). Nevertheless, Chesterman's (2005) account of definiteness need not be the only theoretical input for the students; at lower proficiency levels, discussions also referencing the other definiteness theories (see above) may be more accessible and helpful (see, e.g., lesson ideas in Yule, 1998, pp. 23-52) and may provide a pathway for appreciating Chesterman's (2005) explications should they be perceived as too advanced. It is also important to emphasize the pragmatic nature of the created meanings. It goes without saying that it is really the teachers who can determine how technical the lessons should be. For example, students of lower proficiency levels may not appreciate the intricacies of Gricean maxims but a more straightforward explanation of "what is implied by this article instead of that" may be more effective.

Conclusion

While on the surface, untypical usages of articles in the Outer Circle may suggest a kind of deviation from how definiteness is marked in the inner circle, an analysis such as the one in this paper shows that the former group of speakers may be able to construct a semantic/pragmatic system of articles that somewhat differs from that of their Inner Circle counterparts. It is necessary to point out that the claims made in the discussion above are possible due the robustness of the usage patterns in the ICE data. The qualitative analysis described in the present study points to the fact that these language users are cooperative beings *a la* Grice and intend to express particular meanings largely by adhering to the maxims. The burden of interpretation then falls on hearers who can exploit the composite definiteness meaning contextually to infer the various implicatures based on the substitutions that have taken place.

Teachers can exploit the knowledge gained from understanding the composite meaning of locatability, inclusiveness, and extensivity to teach how

articles are used in the inner circle and how they may appear to deviate from the so-called established usage patterns when the articles are used in the outer circle. It should also be pointed out that both inter-circle and intra-circle comparisons are possible.

In conclusion, the study of variation can benefit from a pragmatic perspective in its attempt to gain insight into what may at first seem to be disorganized patterns of language use. This study is hinged on the assumption that the English used by the outer circle speakers, in fulfilling its function as a communication tool, is reasonably organized for meaning. This assumption allowed an application of the Gricean framework to account for what should be regular human language behaviour of the grammatical kind.

Notes

[1]The concentric circles – inner, outer and expanding – are terms due to Kachru (1986) which roughly correspond to countries where English is traditionally spoken (e.g., the United States), countries where English is spoken as a second language (e.g., Singapore) and countries where English is a foreign language (e.g., Japan), respectively. This model has been criticized numerous times in the past for being outdated (e.g., Bruthiaux, 2003) but for the purposes of this paper, use of the "outer circle" category, as the opposite of "inner circle", is justifiable.

[2]While English does not have special markers for specificity, the demonstrative *this* in informal English is capable of expressing this meaning, e.g. "Adam talked to *this girl*, but he wasn't interested in her at all". This article, used in the form of a demonstrative, is not considered for discussion in this paper.

[3]A similar concern about (4) – (8) being interlanguage errors was raised by a reviewer. One way to prove the persistence, as well as pervasiveness, of these usage patterns in these varieties is to provide quantitative data, which this study does not due to its qualitative design. Elsewhere, though, there are a number of such studies and two more recent ones in which such evidence can be found are Filppula and Klemola (2017) and Siemund (2013).

[4]HDB stands for Housing and Development Board, a governmental body responsible for public housing in Singapore.

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Appendix. The usage of *the*, *a/an* and zero article

<table>
<tr><th>referential</th><th>non-referential</th><th>generic</th></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>the</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">* refers to something that can be identified uniquely in the contextual or general knowledge shared by speaker and hearer, specified as follows:
○ immediate situation . e.g. The kids are quiet (said a in classroom)
○ larger situation (general knowledge)
e.g. the Prime Minister
○ anaphoric reference – direct
e.g. I brought a book and a pencil but broke the pencil later
○ anaphoric reference – indirect
e.g. I brought a book but the pages were missing
○ cataphoric reference
e.g. The band on stage is BTS
○ sporadic reference
e.g. I take the train to work everyday
○ logical use
e.g. The last person to leave will lock the door
○ reference to body parts
e.g. He hit me on the head</td><td>* occurs in idioms, e.g. “grab the bull by its horns”</td><td>* refers to a class as represented by its typical specimen, e.g. “The monkey is a curious animal”</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2"></td><td>* is used with nouns denoting nationality, e.g. the Finns</td></tr>
<tr><td>* occurs with the fused-head construction of adjective and noun, e.g. the rich and the poor</td></tr>
<tr><td>* presupposes uniqueness (a count noun typically has only one unique entity to identify) although cf. “He married the daughter of the butler” (even though the
butler may have more than one daughter)</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
</table>

* presupposes existence of the entity of the referent to be identified; in a negative context *the* still entails existence, e.g. "He thinks it's good to marry *the daughter* of the butler (although the butler doesn't have a daughter)		
* unique identifiability is achieved via totality for plural and non-count nouns; this totality is not as strong as a universal quantifier, e.g. *all*		
* refers to something presented as if familiar although without previous introduction, e.g. "Jalal sat on *the bus*, staring at *the empty house* and the life he was about to leave behind"		
	a/an	
* refers to something that is not uniquely identifiable in the shared knowledge of speaker and hearer; introduces a new specific entity into discourse e.g. "*A rock* dropped from the sky today"	* creates non-specific reference, e.g. "He's looking for *a wife*"	* refers to any representative member of the class; cannot be used attributively to describe a whole class, e.g. "*A camel* can go without water for months" but "**A camel* is becoming extinct"
	* carries a descriptive role or classifies, usually non-quantitatively, e.g. "May is *a lousy singer*"	
* carries the quantitative meaning of "one", e.g. "I have *a dog* and *a cat*"	* is used with a proper noun to individualise each referent if there exist several bearing the same name; non-specific use, e.g. "She'll be born on *a Friday* next year"	
* is used with a proper noun to individualise each referent if there exist	* is used with non-count nouns in certain set expressions, e.g.	

several bearing the same name; specific use, e.g. "Is there *a Mary Jackson* here?"	"The rain fell with *a vengeance*"	
* is used with entities like continents, countries or cities to create an indefinite referent with an abstract or imagined quality, e.g. "*A stronger Asia* will emerge from this crisis". And also with humans, e.g. "They left, leaving *a puzzled Christine* at the door"		
* occurs with a proper name to be used as a metonym, e.g. "There was *a Carolina Herrera* among her dresses in the wardrobe"		
	zero	
* indicates neutralisation of article distinctions; sporadic use of *the* is so institutionalised that the article is dropped, as in: ○ meals e.g. What's for *dinner*? ○ institutions e.g. She goes to *church* sometimes ○ means of transport and communication e.g. I'm coming by *bus*. ○ times of the day e.g. At *night* they roam the earth ○ days, months and seasons e.g. Come and see me on *Monday* ○ accompanies a unique role or task e.g. Claire Jones is	* used as a plural counterpart of the indefinite article; the number and amount of the referent is indefinite, e.g. "There are *persimmons* in that box"	* refers to the whole class, e.g. "*Rainy days* make you sad"
	* classifies plural nouns, e.g. "We are singers'	

Professor of Nuclear Science at Cambridge University. ○ parallel structures e.g. He went from *door to door*, showing them his wares ○ block language e.g. *Singer* arrested for sex with *minor* ○ vocatives e.g. You look great, *darling*		