

Partitive pronouns in contact: the influence of Dutch *ER* on the L2 acquisition of French *EN*

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Introduction

- Both French and Dutch have a so-called partitive pronoun: *en* in French and *er* in Dutch.
- This pronoun is used in combination with noun-less indefinite DPs in object position.

Introduction

- A: *Tu veux des noisettes?* FRENCH
B: *Oui, j'en veux.*
yes I EN want
'Would you like some nuts? Yes, I would like some.'
- A: *Hoeveel auto's heb je?* DUTCH
B: *Ik heb er drie.*
I have ER three
'How many cars do you have? I have three.'

Introduction

- Aims
 - Study the L2 acquisition of the French so-called partitive pronoun *en* by native speakers of Dutch, on the basis of data elicited in a Grammaticality Judgement Test
 - As Dutch has a pronoun (*er*) with similar but not identical uses as *en*, determine whether transfer from L1 Dutch to L2 French occurs.



Outline

- Similarities and differences in the use of *en* and *er*
- Previous research
- Research question and predictions
- Methodology
- Results
- Discussion
- Conclusion

Similarities between *en* and *er* (1)

- i. the use or omission of the pronoun with quantifiers in object position:

3. **J'ai lu trois* vs. *J'en ai lu trois*.

I have read three

I EN have read three

4. **Ik ken drie* vs. *Ik ken er drie*.

I know three

I know ER three

Similarities between *en* and *er* (2)

ii. the quantitative (a) and partitive (b) uses of the pronoun

5. Context: *Hier cinq étudiants sont venus me voir.*
yesterday five students are come me to.see
'Yesterday five students came to see me.'

a. *Aujourd'hui j'en ai aussi vu cinq.*
today I EN have also seen five
'Today I also saw five (students, i.e. different students).'

b. *Aujourd'hui j'en ai revu deux.*
today I EN have seen.again two
'Today I saw two of them again.'

Similarities between *en* and *er* (2)

ii. the quantitative (a) and partitive (b) uses of the pronoun

6. Context: *Gisteren heb ik vijf studenten gezien.*

yesterday have I five students seen

‘Yesterday I have seen five students.’

a. *Vandaag heb ik er ook vijf gezien.*

today have I ER also five seen

‘Today I also saw five (students, i.e. different students).’

b. *Vandaag heb ik er twee/twee ervan opnieuw gezien.*

today have I ER two /two of.them again seen

‘Today I saw two of them again.’

Similarities between *en* and *er* (3)

iii. the impossibility to use *er/en* with a **definite** noun-less DP containing an adjective:

*Il a attrapé **trois lapins**.* ‘He has caught three rabbits.’

7. *Il (***en**) a tué **le troisième** dans la forêt.*

he EN has killed the third.one in the wood

*Hij heeft **drie konijnen** gevangen.*

8. *Hij heeft (***er**) **de derde** in het bos gedood.*

he has ER the third.one in de wood killed

Similarities between *en* and *er* (4)

iv. *er/en* impossible with referential plural indefinite DPs. Definite pronoun required (Ihsane 2013):

Pointing at Paul and Marie:

9. Je vois **des enfants** sur la plage. Tu **les** vois aussi ?
I see of.the children on the beach you them see too
10. Ik zie **kinderen** op het strand. Zie je **ze** ook?

Differences between *en* and *er* (1)

- i. the use of *er/en* with an elliptical **indefinite** object DP containing an adjective:

Context: Marie has bought a blue balloon:

11. *Paul *(en) a acheté un rouge.*

Paul EN has bought a red.one

12. *Paul heeft (*er) een rode gekocht.*

Paul has ER a red.one bought

Differences between *en* and *er* (2)

ii. Non-referential plural indefinite DPs (Dutch bare plurals):

13. *Jean cherche des noisettes. Il en cherche.*

Jean is.looking.for of.the nuts he EN is.looking.for

14. *Jan zoekt noten. Hij zoekt ze/noten.*

Jan is.looking.for nuts he is looking.for them/nuts

Differences between *en* and *er* (3)

iii. Mass nouns (non-referential singular indefinite noun phrases):

Context: Louis : *Les chats ont bu du lait ce matin?*
the cats have drunk of.the milk this morning

15. Anne: *Oui, ils en ont bu.* vs. **Oui, ils l' ont bu*
yes they EN have drunk yes they it have drunk

Context: Piet: *Hebben de katten melk gedronken vanmorgen?*

16. Anna: *Ja, ze hebben het/melk gedronken.* **Ja, ze hebben er gedronken.*

Differences between *en* and *er* (4)

iv. Negative contexts:

Context : Anne: *Tu ne bois pas **de** vin?*

you NEG drink not of wine

17. Lucie: *Non, je n'**en** bois jamais.* vs. **Non, je ne **le** bois jamais.*

no I NEG EN drink never no I NEG it drink never

'Anne: Don't you drink wine? Lucie: No, I never do.'

18. Anna: *Drink je **geen** wijn?*

drink you no wijn

Jan: *Nee, ik drink **het** niet/ik drink **geen** wijn.* **Ik drink **er** niet.*

Previous research

- In Wust's dictogloss task (2009), no low- or intermediate- level L2 learner of French with English L1 used *en*.
- Hulk's (1991) Grammaticality Judgement Task shows that negative transfer from Dutch V2 rule onto French decreases dramatically in the first three years of secondary education, and is almost absent in first year of university.

Research Question

- **RQ:** Is there transfer from L1 Dutch in the L2 acquisition of *en*?
- **Predictions:**
 - There may be positive transfer.
 - There will not be much negative transfer for advanced L2 learners.
 - Negative transfer will be minimal for highly advanced L2 learners.

Methodology

- Participants:
 - Advanced learners. Submitted to the same exams testing their proficiency of French at University.
 - 28 native speakers of Dutch, studying French at University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands (age range: 20-30)
 - Five participants left out (bilingual Dutch-French or had lived in France for a long time; Japanese as L1)
 - Two groups according to their level of study: undergraduates (N13) and masters/masters+ (recently graduated) (N10)
 - Control groups of 8 native speakers of French and 23 native speakers of Dutch

Methodology

Test items: similar use of *en/er* in French and Dutch

- *en/er* with quantified noun phrase (French 6; Dutch 6)
- partitive vs. quantitative *en/er* (French 6; Dutch 9)
- **en/er* with definite det. + adjective (French 6; Dutch 6)
- **en/er* with referential plural indefinites (French 6; Dutch 9)

Methodology

Test items: different use of *en/er* in French and Dutch

- *en/*er* with indefinite det. + adjective (French 6; Dutch 6)
- *en/*er* with non-referential plural ind. NPs (French 6; Dutch 9)
- *en/*er* with indefinite mass nouns (French 6; Dutch 9)
- *en/*er* with negated indefinite NPs (French 12; Dutch 18)

Methodology

Items only testing the judgement on the use of *en* in French:

- **en* with indefinite subjects (French 6)
- **en* with a partitive NP (French 6)
- *clitic position* (French 18)

Methodology

- Example of test items:
 2. [Je visiterai quelques musées.] - J'en visiterai quelques-uns.
- Mark only one oval.
 - 0 Correct
 - 0 Incorrect

Methodology

- Example of test items:

39. [Je visiterai quelques musées.] - Je visiterai quelques-uns.

- Mark only one oval.

0 Correct

0 Incorrect

Results

- Fillers not included in the calculations
- Items testing only French not included
- "Correct" or "Incorrect" based on our own expectations and confirmed by the results of the control groups
- For Dutch: results Bachelor and Master taken together
- Three groups: Bachelor (N=13), Master (N=10), Natives (N=8) justified on the basis of the overall results in the French test

Results

Example: referential plural indefinite NPs (**en/*er*)

Pointing at Paul and Marie:

9. Je vois **des enfants** sur la plage. Tu **les** vois aussi?

I see of.the children on the beach you them see too

10. Ik zie **kinderen** op het strand. Zie je **ze** ook?

Results

Example: non-referential plural indefinite NPs (*en/*er*)

13. *Jean cherche des noisettes. // en cherche.*

Jean is.looking.for of.the nuts he EN is.looking.for

14. *Jan zoekt noten. Hij zoekt ze/noten.*

Jan is.looking.for nuts. He is looking.for them/nuts

Results

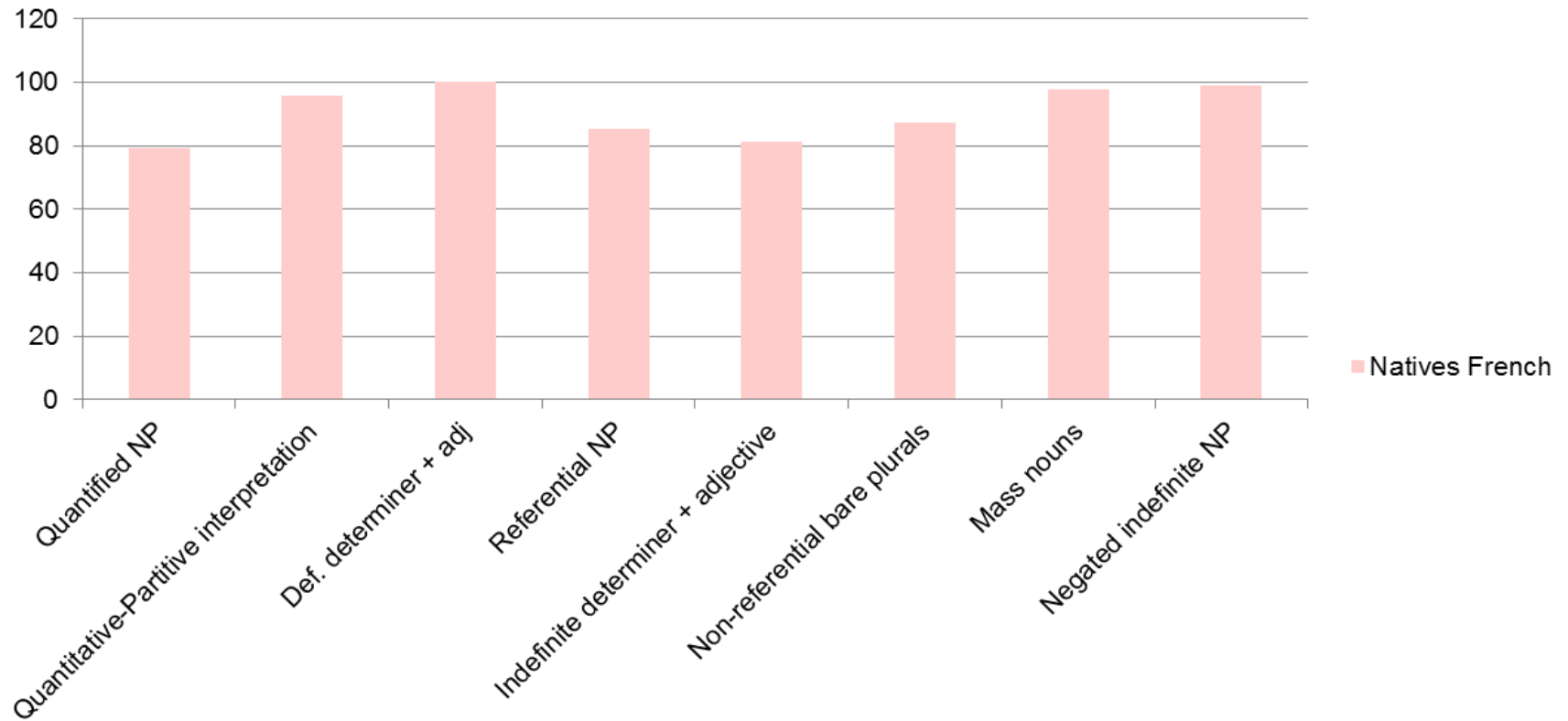
Example: (non-)referential plural indefinite NPs

Table 1: Percentages of accuracy

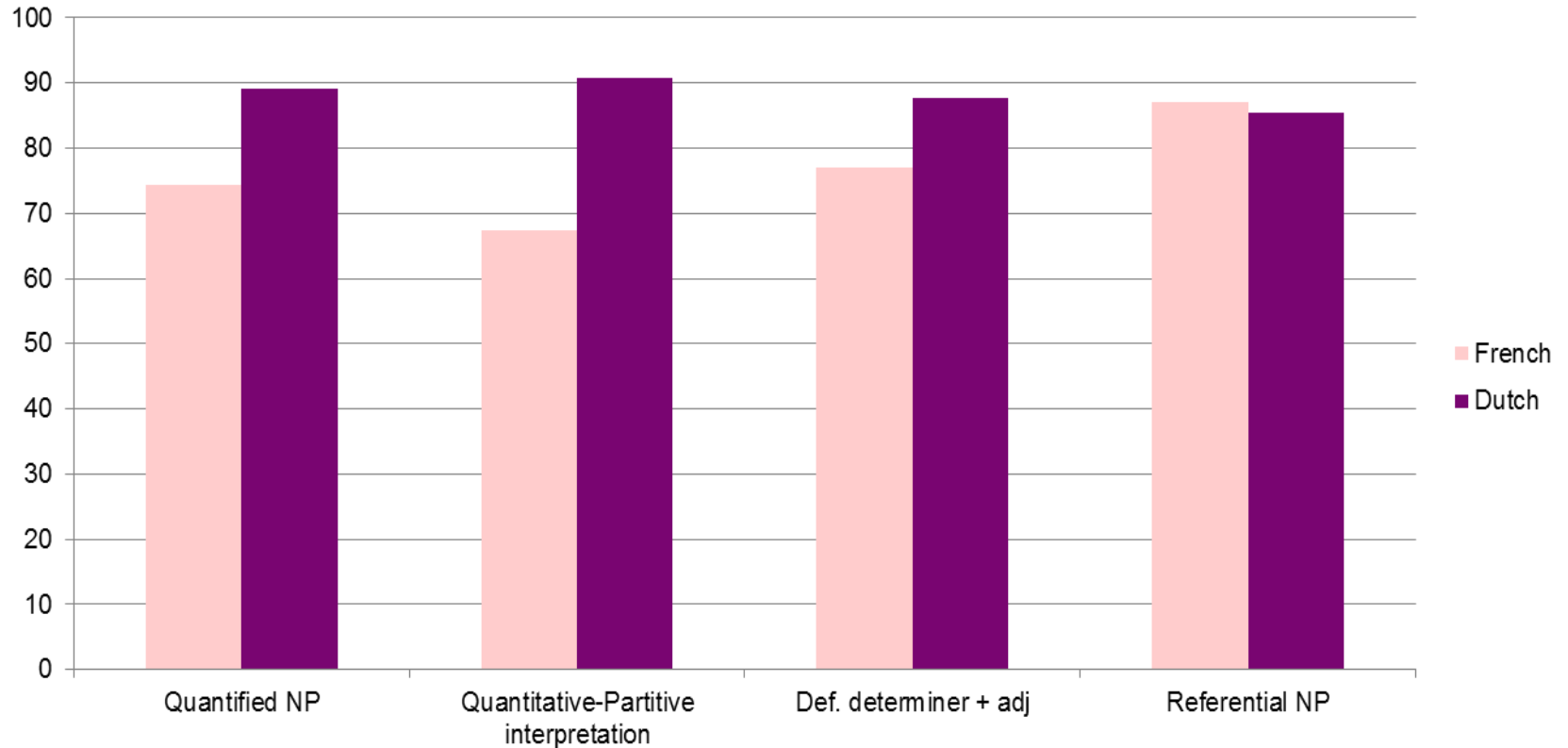
%		French		Dutch	
		G	U	G	U
Referential plural indef. NPs	BA	92.3	79.5	85.5	85.5
	MA	96.7	80.0		
	Natives	100.0	70.8		
Non-referential plural indef. NPs	BA	15.4	15.4	76.1	89.9
	MA	50.0	43.3		
	Natives	100.0	75.0		

Results

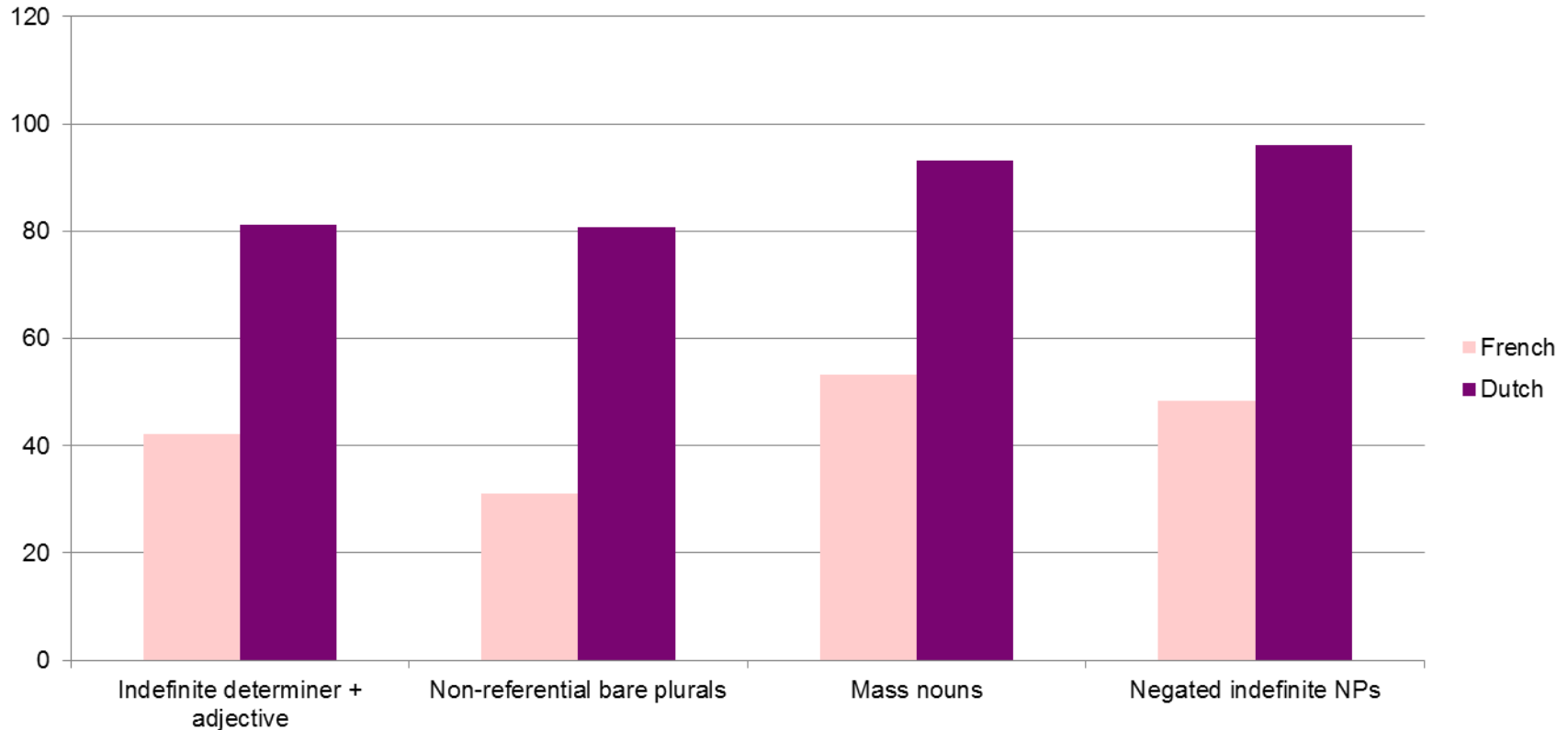
Natives French



Results: L2 learners similar use *en/er*



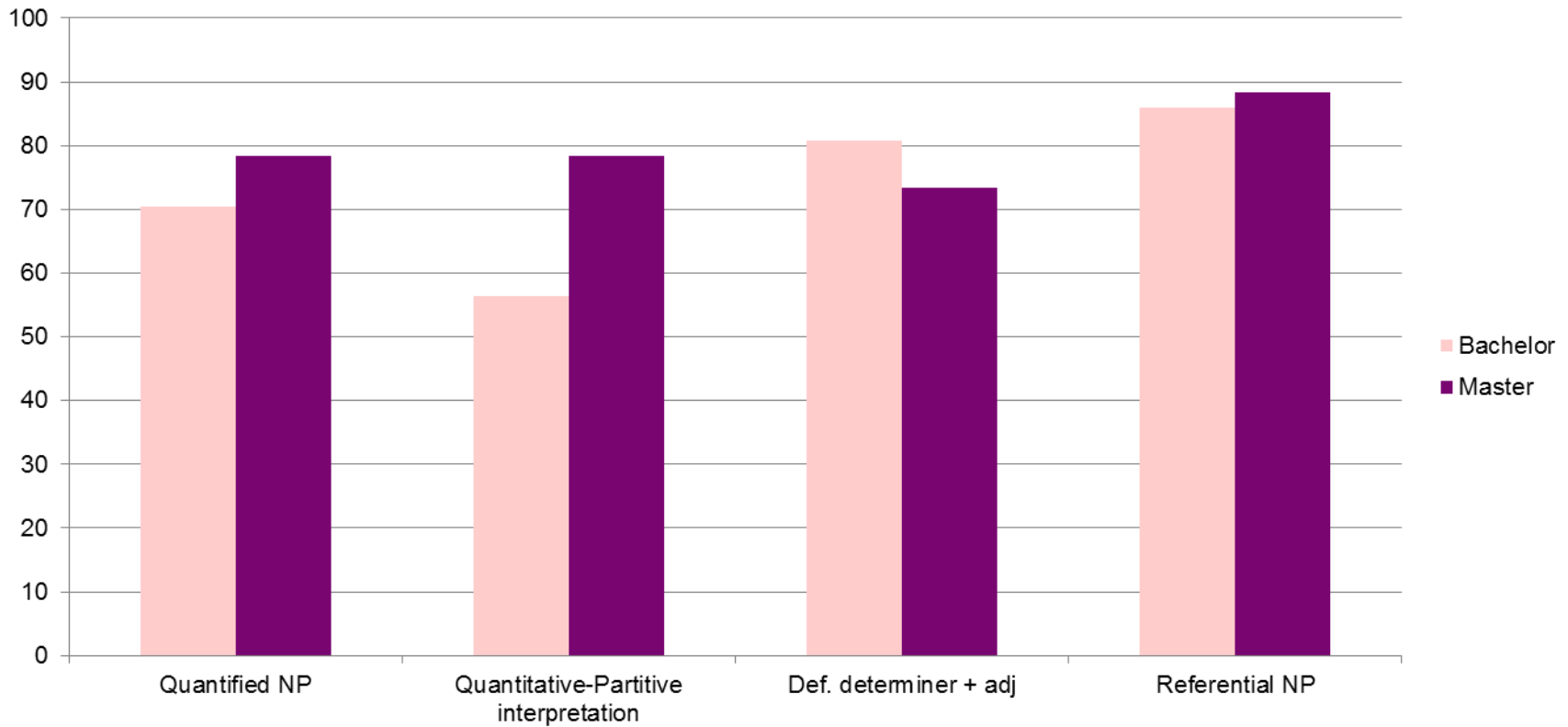
Results: L2 learners different use *en/er*



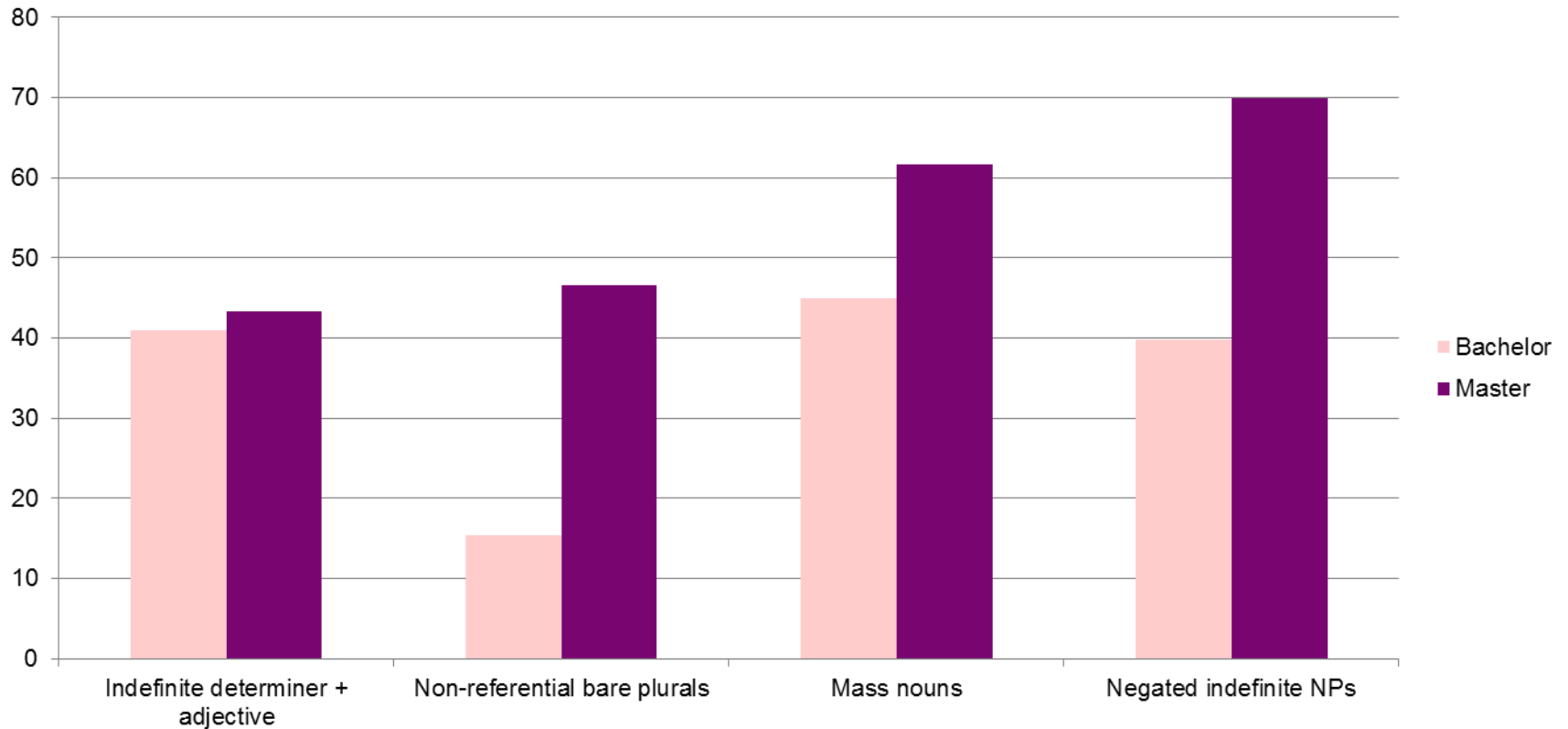
Results

- Different uses: all four yield significant differences
- Similar uses: differences are not significant for referential NPs and def + adj DPs, but “part/quant” uses and “en/er + quantifier” uses yield significant differences

Results: BA vs MA similar use *en/er*



Results: BA vs MA different use *en/er*



Discussion

- **RQ:** Is there transfer from L1 Dutch in the L2 acquisition of *en*?
- **Predictions:**
 - There may be positive transfer.
 - There will not be much negative transfer.
 - Negative transfer will be minimal for highly advanced L2 learners.

Discussion

■ *Predictions:*

- There may be positive transfer.
- Borne out
- Relatively small difference between results for French and Dutch in “similar use” contexts
- Positive transfer or mastering L2?

Discussion

■ *Predictions:*

- There will not be much negative transfer
- Not borne out
- Relatively big difference between results for French and Dutch in “different use” contexts
- No mastering L2 → positive transfer in “similar use” contexts

Discussion

■ *Predictions:*

- Negative transfer will be minimal for highly advanced L2 learners
- Not borne out
- MA students do not perform at ceiling in “different use” contexts

Discussion


- Generally, *en* is difficult to acquire for L2 learners (but emerges early in L1 acquisition, Valois et al. 2009; Sleeman & Hulk 2013)
- Dutch also has a quantitative pronoun (*er*)
- Positive influence from L1
- Important negative influence from L1
- Negative influence even at MA level, although less than at BA level

Conclusions

- Even highly advanced learners keep leaning on their L1 in the judgement of *en*.

Suggestions for future research:

- Is the acquisition of *en* easier for L2 learners who are not hindered by a semi-equivalent quantitative pronoun in their L1, e.g. German?
- Do French *en* and Dutch *er* influence each other when the languages are geographically in contact?



THANK YOU !

Main references

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