

COGNITIVE THEORY AND TASK-BASED COMPETENCE

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Cognitive Theory in ELT

Aptitude, competence and achievement
depend on knowledge types

Conscious

Spelling
Rules

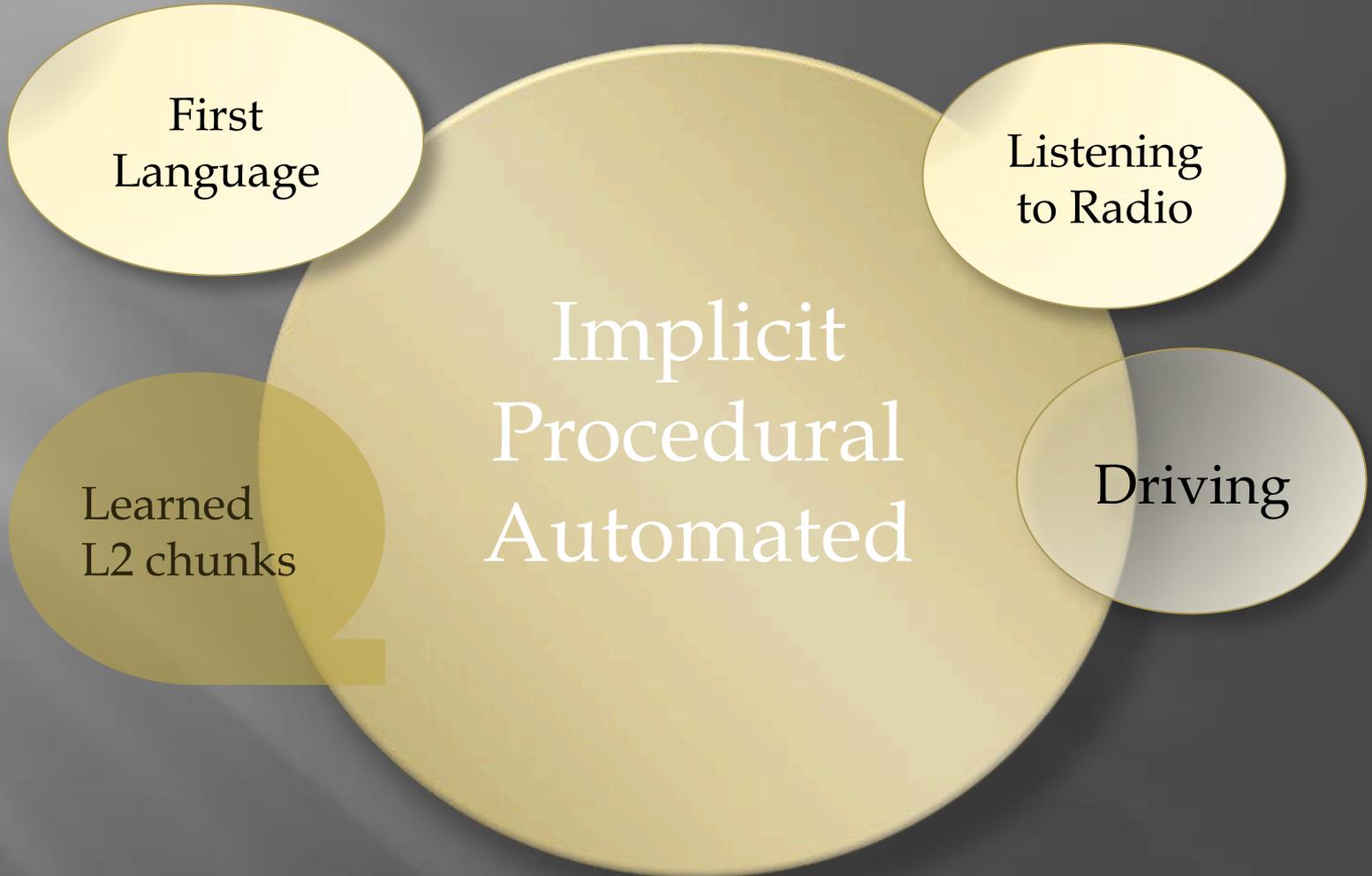
Labelling
parts of
speech

Explicit
Declarative
Analysed

Structure
Rules

Grammar
Rules

Subconscious



Pedagogical channels

Following Instructions

Giving presentations

Comprehension questions

Information gaps

Filling in blanks

Multiple choice questions

Grammaticality Judgement

Time Controlled Tests

Group discussions

Writing Journals

Oral narrative

Explaining ideas

Role playing

Reading out loud

Interface



*'Shift is possible from declarative to procedural through
sufficient exposure to the L2'*

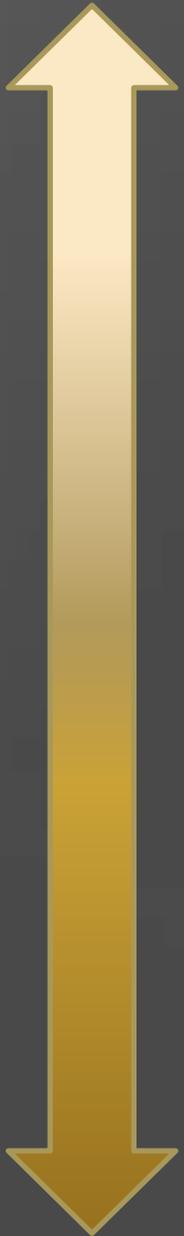
Birdsong and Molis (2001)

Measuring L2 knowledge

- ▣ **Focus** (form vs content)
- ▣ **Goal** (accuracy vs meaning)
- ▣ **Control** (short timed vs long timed)
- ▣ **Context** (contextualised vs sentential)
- ▣ **Purpose** (Aware vs unaware)

Three tests

- ▣ T1 : Free composition (Describe hometown)
- ▣ T2: Fill in blanks (6 short stories)
- ▣ T3: Grammaticality Judgment Test



Three Groups

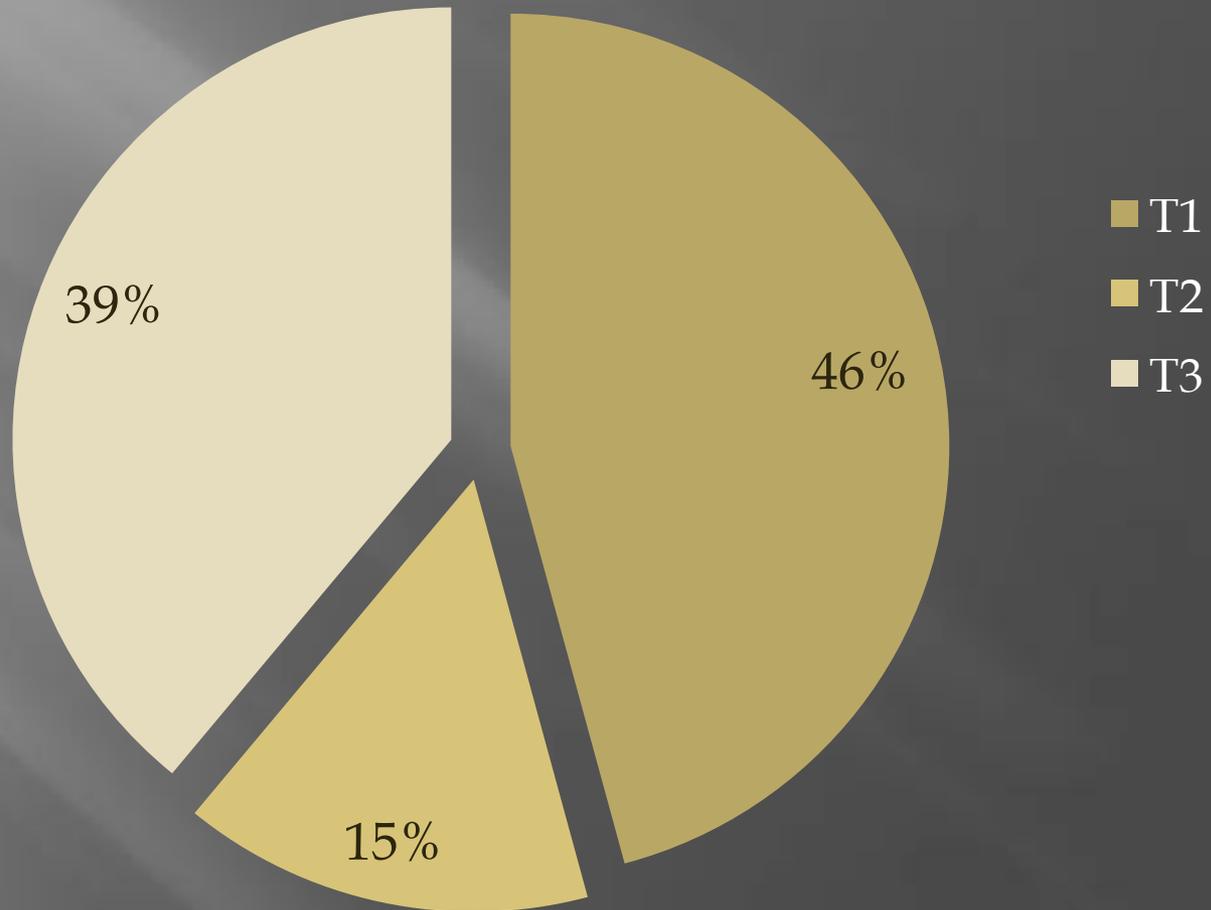
- ▣ G1 : Elementary and lower intermediate (n=20)
- ▣ G2 : Mid intermediate (n=20)
- ▣ G3 : Upper intermediate and advanced (n=20)

What was assessed?

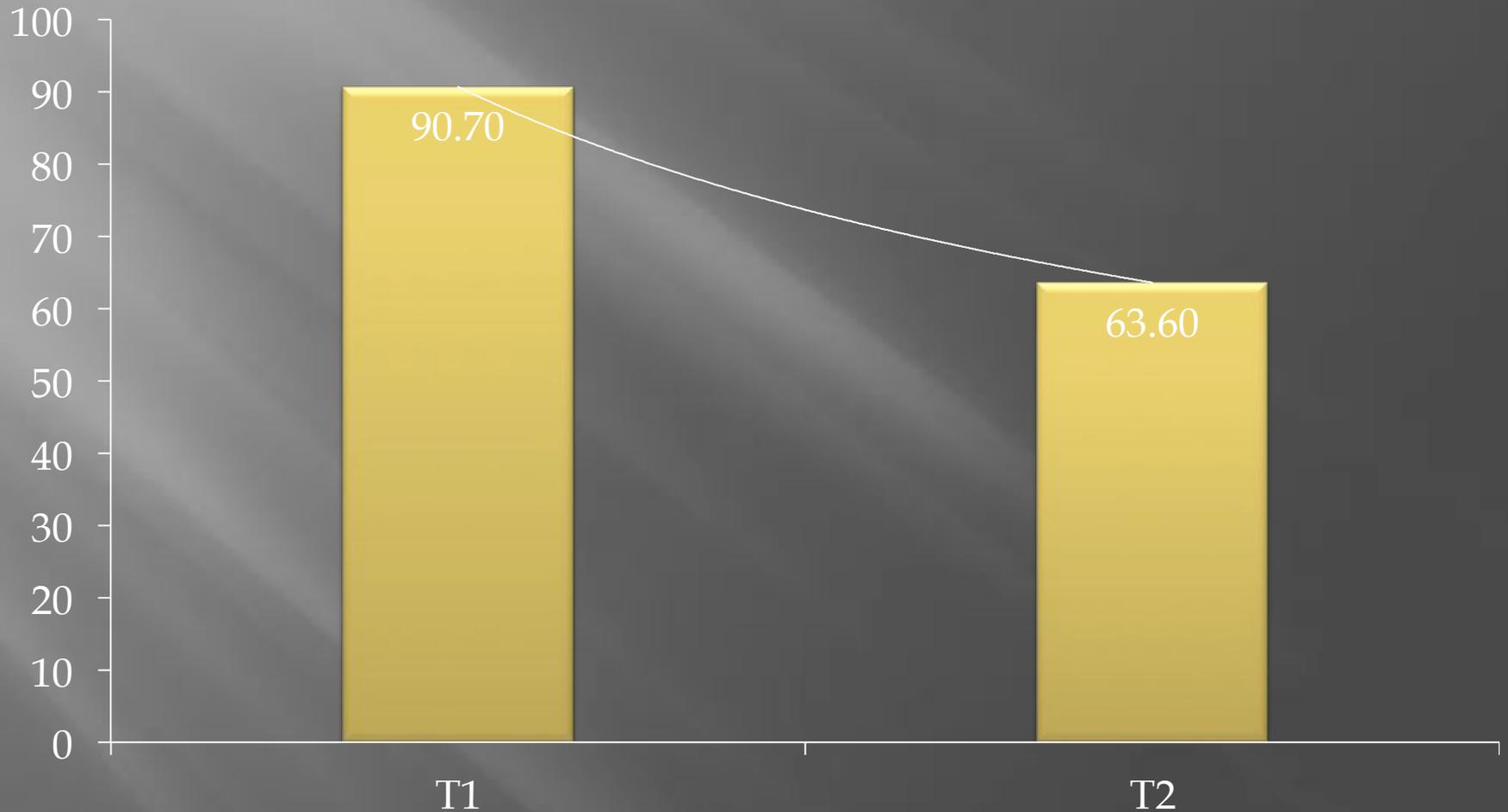
Article use

- Accuracy
- Errors:
 - ❖ Overuse
 - ❖ Omission
 - ❖ Replacement

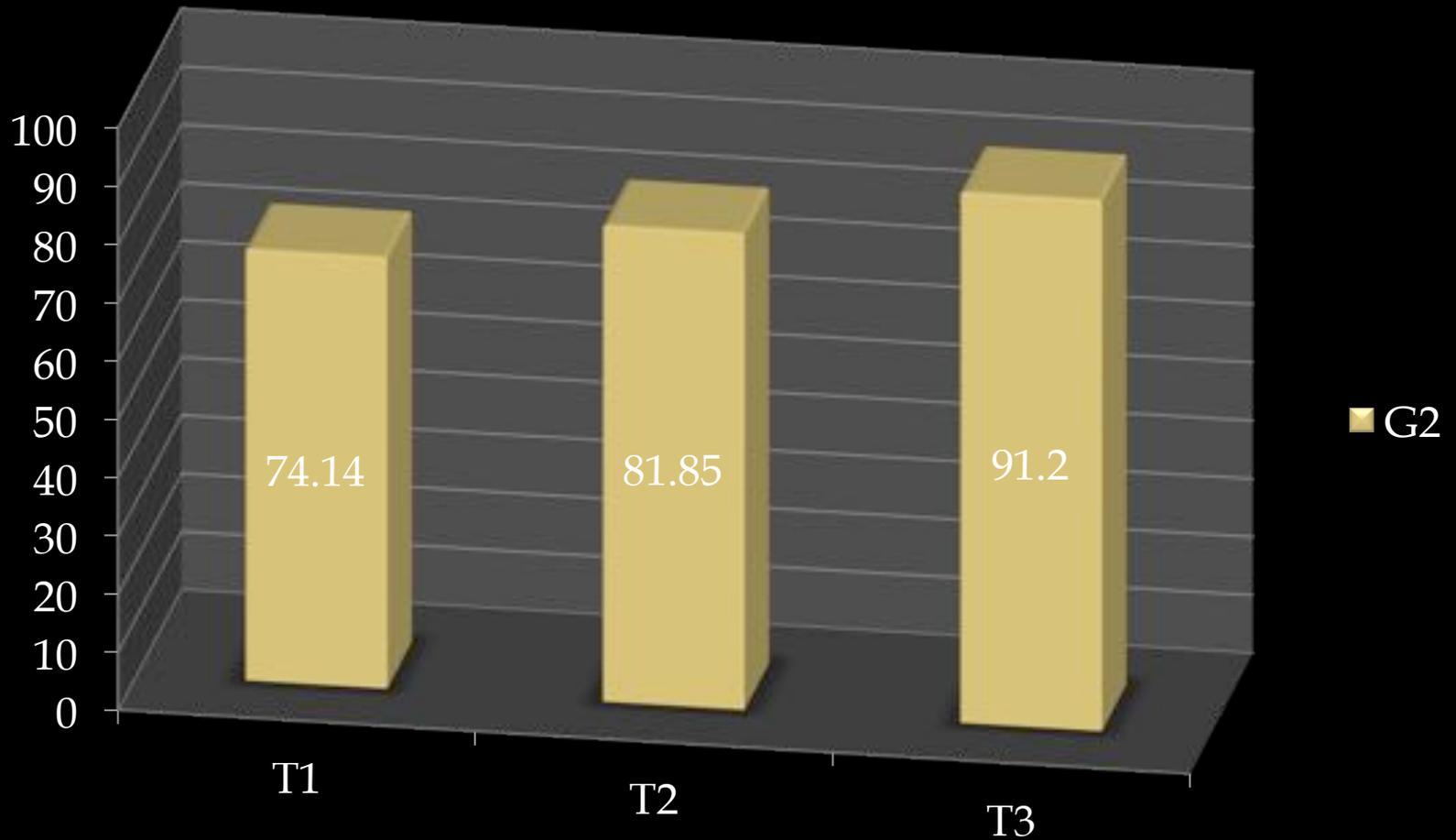
Correct marking of plural and uncountable indefinites by G1



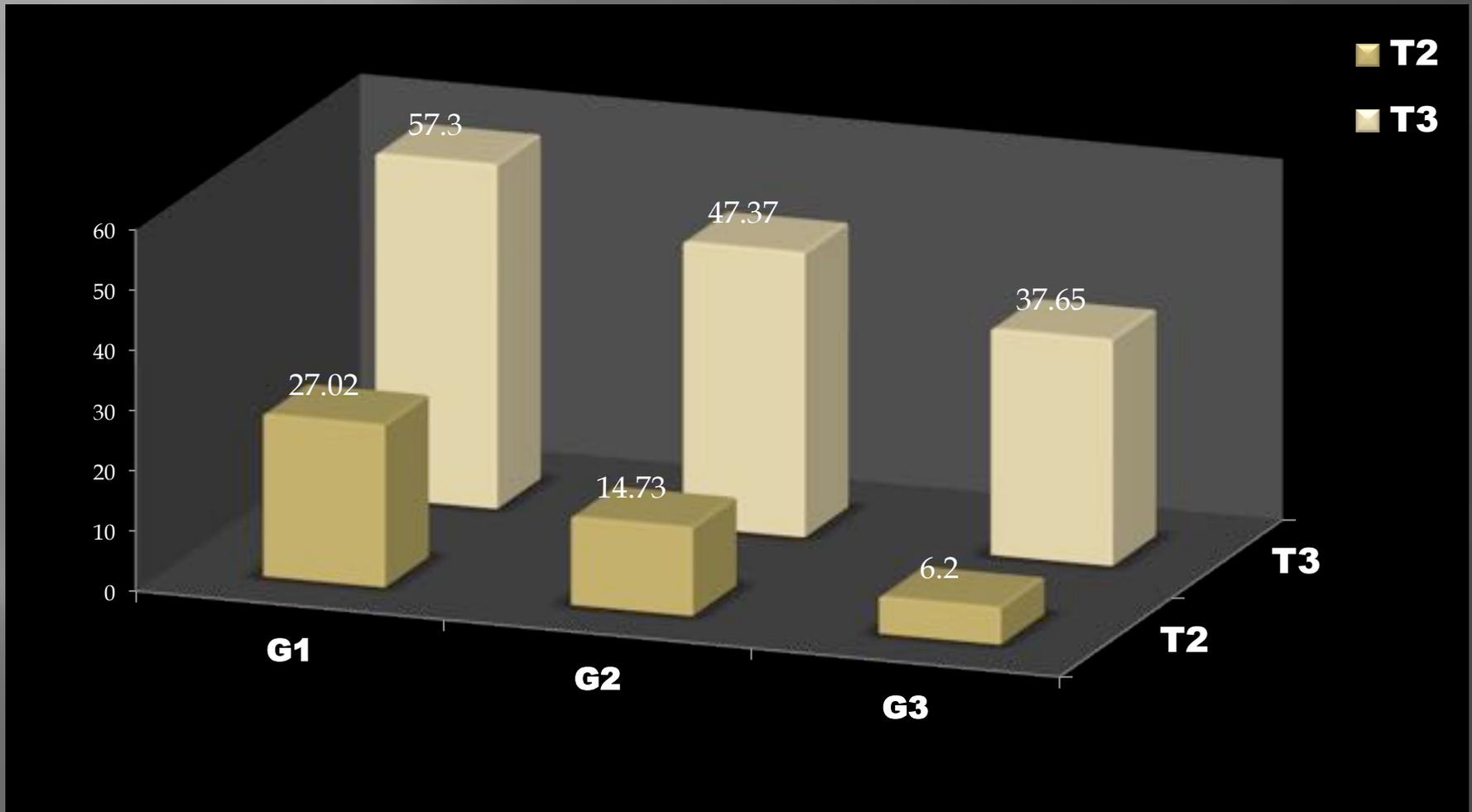
Correct marking of plural and uncountable indefinites by G3



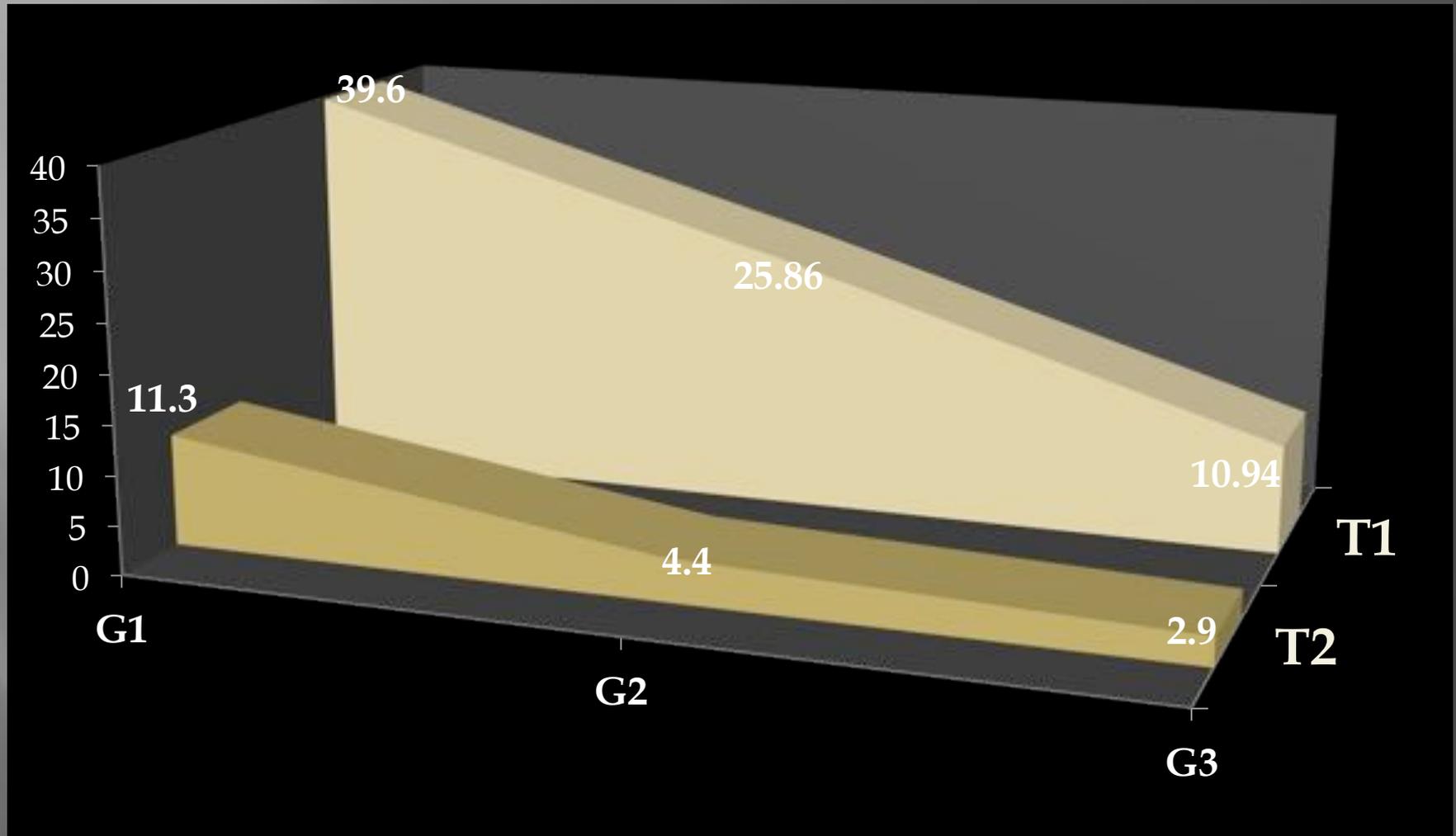
Percentages of correct a/n by G2



Overuse of the indefinite article across tasks two and three



Omission of the indefinite article



Implications

- ▣ Accuracy and form-focused tests assess conscious knowledge, rather than learners' actual L2 competence.
- ▣ Implicit, subconscious knowledge *can* lead to better academic achievement.
- ▣ Promoting a teaching culture that accommodates multi-cognitive channels.

References

- ▣ Birdsong, D. and M. Molis (2001) On the Evidence for Maturational Constraints in Second-Language Acquisition. *Journal of Memory and Language*, 44(2), 235-249.
- ▣ Ellis, R. (2009). Implicit and explicit learning, knowledge and instruction. *Implicit and explicit knowledge in second language learning, testing and teaching*, 3-25.
- ▣ Skehan, P. (1998). *A Cognitive Approach to Language Learning*. OUP.
- ▣ VanPatten, B. (1994). Evaluating the role of consciousness in second language acquisition: Terms, linguistic features & research methodology. *Consciousness in second language learning*, 27-36.
- ▣ Ortega, L. (2007). Meaningful L2 practice in foreign language classrooms: A cognitive-interactionist SLA perspective. *Practice in a Second Language: Perspectives from Applied Linguistics and Cognitive Psychology*, 180.
- ▣ Zhang, R. (2014). Measuring university-level L2 learners' implicit and explicit linguistic knowledge. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 1-30.

Thank you