

*Analysis of English Department Students' Errors in the Use  
of the English Article System*

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**ABSTRACT**

*Observing the students of English department gives the impression that the article system is never adequately mastered and that errors persist into the advanced level. The current study sets out to investigate the use of the English articles (the, a/an, zero ) by 100 fourth year students in Iraq.*

*The theoretical part of the study probes the conceptual elements comprising the meaning of definiteness ; it also includes a simple classification of nouns in English. This part is terminated in the different usage contexts of the definite, indefinite and zero article in English.*

*The study employed a gap filling test, as a means of data collection, that consists of forty - five discrete items. The study adopted an error analysis in processing the collected data.*

*The empirical part of the study indicates that fourth year students at the department of English face problems in using the English article system correctly. The results also show that the percentage of article errors are statistically significant ,in other words , the use of the definite article proved to be the*

*easiest, then the indefinite article, and at last the zero article. The results also report a noticeable transfer of students' native languages in their use of the English article system.*

### *Section One*

#### *Introduction*

*Any teacher of English as a foreign language is aware that his / her learners make a number of recurring, predictable, and seemingly intractable errors. First and foremost amongst these is the frequent misuse of the article system which appears to be a major stumbling block for learners( Swan & Smith, 1987:218).*

*The high frequency of the English articles suggests that they must play a certain role in discourse. One function that the articles contribute to discourse is to create cohesion for stretches of language. This function is mostly found with the definite article " the".*

*The function that articles have in discourse concerning cohesion reveals that their potential role is maintaining successful communication. If this is the case, the mastery of articles is an issue that English non-native speakers cannot ignore, suggesting the importance for English non-native speakers to master the use of English articles. Indeed, communication may be hindered if the listener/ hearer and the speaker / writer do not share the same sets of things referred to through the articles.*

*The English articles (the, a/an, zero) are the most commonly used words in English. In the COBUILD list of the ten most frequent words in English ( Sinclair ,1991)," the" ranks first in the corpus of 20 million words and "a" the fifth.*

<i>Item No.</i>	<i>The words</i>	<i>Frequency of Occurrence</i>	<i>Percentage of Occurrence</i>
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1.	<i>The</i>	(309 497	25.1%
2.	<i>Of</i>	155 044)	12.6 %
3.	<i>And</i>	(153 801	12.5%
4.	<i>To</i>	(137 056	11.1%
5.	<i>A</i>	1129928)	10.5%
6.	<i>In</i>	(100 138	8.1%
7.	<i>That</i>	67 042)	5.4%
8.	<i>I</i>	64 849)	5.3%
9.	<i>It</i>	61 379)	5.0%
10.	<i>Was</i>	54722)	4.4%

*Table (1)  
COBUILD List of the Ten Most Frequent Words in English  
(Sinclair, 1991)*

*Master (1997) discovered that the zero article( which was not counted in the COBUILD corpus) holds the first position, the definite article "the" second, and the indefinite article "a / an" the last.*

<i>Genre</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Zero</i>	<i>The</i>	<i>A(n)</i>	<i>Arts/Dets</i>	<i>Total words</i>
<i>Research Journal</i>	<i>Technical articles (16)</i>	49.7%	38.6%	11.8%	90.3%	63 289
<i>Science Magazine</i>	<i>Science</i>	57.0%	28.7%	14.3%	88.4%	34

	<i>News (4 issues)</i>					<b>987</b>
<i>News Magazine</i>	<i>Newsweek (1 issue)</i>	<b>46.6%</b>	<b>34.4%</b>	<b>19.1%</b>	<b>82.6%</b>	<b>31 896</b>
<i>Novel</i>	<i>The Tenth Man</i>	<b>27.9%</b>	<b>45.9%</b>	<b>26.2%</b>	<b>77.7%</b>	<b>30 956</b>
<i>Plays*</i>	<i>Macbeth and Julius Caesar</i>	<b>44.7%</b>	<b>38.7%</b>	<b>16.7%</b>	<b>58.8%</b>	<b>36 516</b>
<i>All</i>	<i>(24) Samples</i>	<b>48.0%</b>	<b>36.3%</b>	<b>15.7%</b>	<b>82.6%</b>	<b>197 644</b>

*Table ( 2 )  
Percentage of Occurrence of the Three Articles in Five  
Genres (Master, 1993)*

### *1.1 The Aims of the Study*

*Many researchers and methodologists, implicitly or explicitly, have seen the need to address the article errors that have been noted in foreign language students' performances (Pica,1983;Tarone,1985;Parrish,1987;Master,1987;Robertson, 2000 and Goto Butler,2002).*

*English articles occur very frequently in written and spoken communication as indicated by Sinclair (1999). It is noted that many foreign language learners have difficulty in acquiring the English article system and the incorrect use may affect the communication negatively (Huebner,1983; Thomas,1989).*

*The lack of the mastery of the English articles caught our attention during the process of teaching , therefore the purpose of the present study is to see whether fourth-year English department students have problems with English articles or not, especially that their major is English in addition to eight years of studying English generally in primary and secondary schools. The study also investigates whether or not there is a relation between Iraqi learners' use of articles and the type of the article( the, a/an, zero ) . The current paper also aims to examine the role of first language in the acquisition ( use) of English article system by Iraqi learners of English as a foreign language.*

## *1.2 Hypotheses*

*The present study hypothesizes the following:*

*1-Since the subjects of the study in hand are advanced learners of English , therefore it is hypothesized that the fourth year English department students will have no problems in using the English article system correctly.*

*2-There is no relation between students' correct use of articles and the type of the article whether definite ( the ), indefinite ( a/an ) or zero article.*

*3-If errors exist in Iraqi students' use of the English articles, the possibility of native language transfer can be a source of these errors.*

## *1.3 The History of Articles*

*As far as the historical development of articles is concerned, Eckersley & Eckersley (1960:52) report that the definite article "the" was originally a form of "that", a demonstrative adjective. The following indicate this fact clearly*

*I wasn't ready at the time ( i.e. at that particular time)  
I will never buy something of the kind*

*Regarding the indefinite article "a/an", it is believed that "a/an" was a numeral adjective in Old English. A stressed form of it became the modern English "one"; an unstressed form became "an".*

## **SECTION TWO**

### **The Meaning of Articles**

*A thorough understanding of the English article system is a must in order to categorize article errors into different types. Consequently, the purpose of the present section is to explore the meaning of English articles.*

*In describing articles, theorists have generally approved that English articles are prototypical realizations of marking definiteness ( Halliday, 1976; Chesterman, 1991; Lyons,1999).An entity in the real world referred to by a noun, which is also called referent , is described as definite when it is known, familiar, unique, or identified to the speaker & hearer. The referent is indefinite when it is novel, unfamiliar, or assumed not to be identified by the hearer. However, definiteness is a covert notion without the occurrence of an article. That is, a thing denoted by a noun phrase cannot be known as definite or indefinite without the occurrence of the definite article "the" or the indefinite article" a/ an" and zero article with a noun. It is therefore*

*crucial to understand the notion of definiteness .It is worth mentioning that definiteness is not the only characterizing feature in exploring the meaning of articles. Other factors like genericity and specificity are also involved in the matter.*

## *2.1 The Conceptual Elements of Definiteness*

*Many notions are employed in defining definiteness. These notions involve uniqueness and existentiality, familiarity and inclusiveness. Each of these axes will be handled separately below.*

### *2.1.1 Uniqueness and Existentiality*

*Many philosophers and logicians have attempted to clarify the meaning of definiteness The first attempt goes back to Russell. Russell(1905) declares that an entity denoted by a singular noun used with "the" must exist and must be unique. An entity referred to by a noun marked by "a / an" is not unique, though it may exist. Since existentiality can be found in both definite and indefinite descriptions, uniqueness is agreed to be a constitutive element of definiteness. Consider these examples*

*The King of France is bald.*

*I met an old man and a young boy in a park yesterday.*

### *2.1.2 Familiarity*

*Since an analysis in which meaning is detached from pragmatic elements is felt to be inadequate, attempts have been made to define the meaning definiteness in terms of reference. Also because the impact of speaker / hearer and*

*context should be taken into account in explaining the meaning of definiteness ( Strawson,1971).*

*The idea of familiarity goes back to Apollonius Dyscolus (2nd century AD), who perceives the role of identity as well as the previous mention of the referent as factors that determine presence and absence of the definite article in Greek ( Lyons 1999: 254).*

*Christopherson ( 1939: 69-70 ) has embraced and modified this view as it becomes obvious from the following extract regarding to the use of "the":*

*"...for the use of a the-form, it is necessary that the thing meant should occupy so prominent a place in the listener's mind that by the mention of the form the right idea is called up. There must be a basis of understanding and the purpose of the article "the" is to refer to this basis, to indicate "the thing you know this function may be described as familiarization.*

*This view suggests that a noun phrase used with "the" implies that the referent is familiar to both the hearer and the speaker. If the hearer is not able to recognize the referent, a what- question may be expected from the hearer, as in*

*- "I was down at the bookseller's yesterday, but I couldn't get the book. It is out of print."*

*(surprised) "What book?"*

*The what question can be asked since the hearer is not familiar with the "book" introduced by the speaker. As*



*Christopherson (ibid. :28) asserts, if the speaker “wants to be understood it is important that he should not use words and phrases which the hearer is likely to misinterpret.” Hence, familiarity can differentiate between the definite and indefinite article with regards to definiteness.*

### *2.1.3 Identifiability*

*Identifiability is considered to be a constituent element of definiteness when reference is taken into account. This concept is also considered a redefinition of familiarity and uniqueness. Searle (1969: 85-86) proposes a principle of identification, which defines the necessary conditions for a successful definite reference as follows:*

*“The principle of identification requires that the hearer be able to identify the object from the speaker’s utterance of the expression. By “identify” here I mean that there should no longer be any doubt or ambiguity about what exactly is being talked about. At the lowest level, questions like “who?”, “what?”, or “which one?” are answered. Of course at another level these questions are still open: after something has been identified one may still ask “what?” in the sense of “tell me more about it”, but one cannot ask “what?” in the sense of “I don’t know what you are talking about”. Identifying, as I am using the term, just means answering that question. ... Identification ...rests squarely on the speaker’s ability to supply an expression of one of these kinds, which is satisfied uniquely by the object to which he intends to refer.”*

To Lyons( 1999), Identifiability refers to the hearer's ability to identify the referent of the noun phrase marked by "the". And familiarity is still a component of identifiability. One can identify a real world entity, which he knows to exist because he can see it or have heard of it ( familiar ).Consider the following in which the setting is in the sitting room

*Just give the shelf a quick wipe, will you, before I put the television on it.*

In the above sentence ,the hearer has knowledge of the shelf in the room. However, identifiability demands more than that. It suggests that the hearer should exert some effort to know what is being referred to. If, for instance, the speaker of the above sentence wants to hammer some nails in the wall to hang a picture while he/ she is on a stepladder, he/she may say( to a person who enters the room)

*Pass me the hammer, will you?*

In the above mentioned example, the hearer has no knowledge of the hammer at the time the speaker utters the request.The use of " the hammer" implies that the hearer can identify the hammer the speaker is talking about(Lyons, 1999).So, where familiarity is tenuous, identifiability can take its place.

#### 2.1.4 Inclusiveness

It is argued that the idea of inclusiveness can be part of the meaning of definiteness. Consider the following instances

*Bring us the wickets in after the game of cricket.  
We must ask you to move the sand from our gateway.*

*In the first sentence, the referent of the noun phrase "the wickets" is the totality of the wickets or the whole set of six wickets, not a set of four or three wickets. And the referent of "the sand" is the totality of the sand , not some part of it.*

*It is also believed that the notion of inclusiveness should complement and even incorporate the criterion of uniqueness. The idea of totality in plural noun or mass nouns when used with the definite article is similar in meaning to the universal quantifier "all" and the wickets in the above mentioned sentence refers to the unique maximal set of wickets. However, when the totality of the entities ( that requires the use of "the") is just one, then inclusiveness is equal to uniqueness( Hawkins, 1978).*

*So far we have explored one aspect of the meaning of English articles, i. e. the meaning of definiteness. The present study has advocated four defining elements of definiteness: uniqueness, familiarity, identifiability and inclusiveness. It also argues that these four meanings can be combined into two: identifiability and inclusiveness. Identifiability subsumes familiarity, and inclusiveness subsumes uniqueness.*

*Now it is time to consider another aspect of the meaning of English articles, that is the interrelation between definiteness and specificity on the one hand, and the relation between definiteness and genericity, on the other hand.*

*Articles can express generic meaning, in which all or most members of a set are referred to. Lyons(1999:179) defines generic noun phrases as those whose reference is made to an entire class as a whole. While Huddleston(2002) states that generic noun phrases can be perceived as those expressions denoting the situation type called unlimited states, which*

*potentially hold for all time. Unlike definiteness , genericity does not have one form. It has been agreed that all three forms of the articles ( the, a/an or zero), when used with noun phrases, may have a generic reading.*

*A cat has four legs  
The cat has four legs  
Cats have four legs*

*The article+noun in these sentences tell us that it is the cat species that is being commented upon. However, Celece-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman(1999:277)state that the generic meaning of articles is the one in which one or more individual members of a set are being referred to. They provide the following examples for this particular meaning.*

*The lion escaped from the zoo  
A lion escaped from the zoo  
Lions escaped from the zoo*

*In order to capture the non generic uses of articles, one must differentiate between specific and non specific noun phrases. In defining specificity, Brinton ( 2000:292) states that specificity is concerned with whether or not a description conveyed by a noun phrase refers to a specific entity in the real world. In other words, a specific noun phrase is one in which the identity of individual member(s) is obvious, for example*

*The lion escaped from the zoo*

*And a non specific noun phrase is one where the identity of a member of the set is not clear, for example*

*Have you seen an elephant in the wild?*

*In the next section, the study will move away from these theoretical explanations concerning the meaning of English articles, and look in more detail at how articles are used in practice.*

## **SECTION THREE**

### *Using Articles*

*So far many researchers have agreed that article usage is an area of grammar that shows "considerable prominence in any error analysis"(Oller and Redding, 1971:85) especially studies focusing on Asian learners of English as a foreign language , namely Japanese and Chinese, have reported a high frequency of article errors among common errors of English( Goto Butler, 2002).*

*Therefore, the present section investigates how articles should be actually used. But before doing so the researchers will briefly introduce the classification of English nouns since the conceptual distinctions involved are basic to the mastery of the English article system.*

### **3.1 Noun Classes**

*Modern grammars, as well as the traditional ones, categorize English nouns into two groups: common and proper nouns. Common nouns are subdivided into two subclasses: count nouns ( refer to individual, countable entities e.g., books, eggs) and non count nouns( refer to an undifferentiated mass or notion e.g., butter, music).In both of these subclasses, a further semantic classification is made which results in concrete count / non count ( broadly, tangible)*

*and abstract ( broadly, immaterial) count / non count nouns ( Quirk et al. , 1985: 247).*

*The count / noncount distinction can be problematic for ESL / EFL learners because such a distinction does not proceed from nature but is language specific, i.e. what is countable and what is uncountable is arbitrary and differs from one language to another. In addition, English itself has nouns with dual membership, i.e. nouns that can be viewed as both count and noncount(Quirk et al.,1985 :247 ; Celece-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman,1999:273).*

*Celece-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman(ibid.:274-275)handle this dual count / noncount function in terms of shifts. Both abstract non count nouns( life, beauty,etc.)and mass non count nouns ( cheese, coffee, etc.)undergo such shifts. They distinguish two shift processes: abstract non count noun to count noun shifts in which nouns like "life" are conceived in an individual way and thus they are countable without changing the meaning. Consider these examples*

*Life can be difficult. ( life the general notion, noncount )*

*The quick-thinking police officer saved a life. ( a human being as a specific instance of the general notion, count)*

*A number of other similar mass to count shifts involve more concrete noncount mass nouns. If we conceive of such nouns as " a kind of " then they are countable, e.g.,*

*James likes wine. ( generic, noncount)*

*There are several French wines available.( kinds of wines, count )*

*Similarly, such nouns can be countable when conceived of as " a unit of serving of"*

*Coffee is expensive nowadays. ( substance, noncount)*

*We will have two coffees. ( servings, count)*

*As for proper nouns, they are inherently definite and they can be either singular , e.g. Jack, or plural like the Simpsons. Proper nouns , like common nouns, undergo shifts of two types. The first shift involves personal names and trade names that can function as common nouns, e.g.*

*Nine Ahmeds were in the wedding ceremony*

*Give me the Kodak*

*The opposite can be found in shifts involving regions that have become countries or local geographical names( or place names ) that have changed to become proper nouns, consider these examples respectively*

*The sudan*

*Sudan*

*The green park*

*Green Park*

### *3.2 Usage Contexts*

*Now that we have discussed noun classes, we will proceed with the contexts in which articles occur. As mentioned earlier, the decision of which article to be used is in principle dependent on the notion of definiteness, therefore in discussing the use of articles, most approaches focus on the use of the definite article "the", whose usage is considered a reference point for other articles.*

#### *3.2.1 The Uses of the Definite Article*

*Following Halliday ( 1976 ), the uses of the definite article "the" described in Quirk et al. (1985) can be categorized into two main types: endophoric uses in which the choice of "the"*

*is dependent on the surface structure features of a text, i.e. textual reference and exophoric uses where the choice of "the" is motivated by the extralinguistic situation, i.e. nontextual reference.*

*The endophoric uses of "the" can be of two types. The first type is the anaphoric in which the interpretation of the linguistic unit is derived from some previously expressed unit. Anaphoric uses of "the" deal with the backward reference of a definite phrase to a piece of information given earlier in the text or discourse. There are two subtypes of anaphoric uses: direct and indirect.*

*Direct anaphoric use means that a definite noun phrase refers directly to the same head noun that has occurred in the text, e.g.*

*I bought a TV. and an Mp3 player, but the Mp3 player did not work after it was connected to the TV.*

*Whereas the indirect anaphoric use lies in the association or inference from what has already been mentioned on the basis of the hearer's knowledge, e.g.*

*I took a taxi to the airport and the driver told me that the planes were running late*

*The second type of the endophoric uses of "the" that are mentioned in Quirk et al.(1985:268 ) is the cataphoric use of "the" in which the hearer is enabled to locate the referent of the head noun with what follows the head noun, i.e. it deals with forward reference. Although cataphoric use is generally related to postmodification , Quirk et al.(ibid)note that there's no difference between postmodification and premodification , i.e.*

*The wines of France are among the best in the world  
The president of Mexico*



*The Mexican president*

*The exophoric uses of "the" are valid when the extralinguistic situation accompanying the linguistic unit is the source of identifying the referent of the head noun. Under this title, many cases are included. First there's the situational use in which we make use of (1) the immediate situation, e.g. when in a garden, we may say*

*The roses are beautiful*

*Or (2) we resort to a larger situation like a country, the world, hence we may say*

*The Prime Minister  
We must take care of the environment*

*Similarly, knowledge based on anatomy, i.e. body parts reference use, e.g.*

*Everyone gave us a pat on the back*

*Also, if there's only one person or thing that can be meant logically, then in this case words like only, most, first, last make clear that only one can be meant. Consider*

*He is the most popular student in my class*

*In addition, Quirk et al.( 1985:269) extends the use of "the" to what he terms "sporadic" use because reference is made to an institution which may be seen recurrently at various places and times, e.g.*

*My sister goes to the theatre every month*

*At last, there is the generic reference use in which one exemplar stands for the whole class; as a result "the" is generally used with count singular nouns. One should remember that when the definite article is used in generic*

*sense, we talk about the class as a whole without any exception, so this construction is used only for very general statements that are true for all members.*

*The cat is a feline*

### *3.2.2 The Uses of the Indefinite Article*

*When the conditions for the use of "the" do not exist, i.e. the speaker does not expect the hearer to be able to identify the person(s) or the thing(s) referred to uniquely, he/she will mark the noun as nondefinite by putting "a/an" before a singular count noun or no article(zero) before a plural count noun or a non count noun (Quirk et al. ,1985:269 ).*

*The first context for the use of the indefinite article "a/an" is when the noun refers to a specific, actual member(s) of a class, but the hearer is not expected to know exactly which one(s)( non definite use), e.g.*

*At the restaurant, I ordered a dish of hot and spicy food*

*The second context for the use of the indefinite article, as proposed by ( ibid. :273), is the nonreferring use in which the noun names a class or category to which a person or thing belongs. Consider this example*

*Mozart was a great musician*

*There's also the numerical use of the indefinite article in which "a/an" functions as the unstressed form of one, e.g.*

*The Simpsons have two daughters and a son*

*At last, we have the generic use of the indefinite article which expresses that any arbitrary representative member of*

*the class can stand for a class as a whole. See the example below*

*A zebra has stripes*

### *3.2.3 The Uses of the Zero Article*

*Again the uses of the zero article as explained in Quirk et al. (1985:274) can be classified into three main divisions. First there is the non definite use where the zero article is used with plural count nouns and non count nouns.*

*I've bought melons, not grapes  
Could you please serve tea for breakfast?*

*Then there is the generic meaning expressed by the use of the zero article which identifies the class considered as an undifferentiated whole. In such contexts, the zero article is used with plural count nouns and non count nouns.*

*Cars must be fitted with safety belts  
I would like to eat rice for breakfast*

*At last, there is the definite meaning use of the zero article. There are special circumstances for such a use. These special circumstances can be listed as follows:*

*1-Noun phrases in copular relations, e.g. He is captain of the team*

*2- Sporadic reference*

*(A)Some institutions of human life and society*

*The judge sent the criminal to prison*

*(B)Means of transport and communication*

*I used to travel by bus*

*(C)Times of day and night*

*She woke up at night to find her mother dead*

*(D)Seasons, e.g. Winter 1903 was not like this last winter*

(E) *Meals, e.g. Will you stay for breakfast , please?*

(F) *Illnesses, e.g. She's got (the) flu*

*Also, with parallal structures, where two nouns are placed together, the zero article is used for both nouns, e.g.*

*They came arm in arm*

*In addition, there are certain fixed structures in which nouns with a zero article occur before or after a preposition, e.g.*

*He showed great bravery in face of danger*

## **SECTION FOUR**

### ***The Empirical Study***

#### ***4.1 The Subjects***

*The subjects in this study are 100 fourth-year students in the Department of English, College of Education, Kirkuk University, who are trained to become English teachers in secondary schools. The subjects form a variety of different L1 backgrounds. Accordingly, they can be classified into three groups: the first group comprises thirty subjects whose native language is Arabic, while the second group consists of thirty two members whose mother tongue is Kurdish and the last group comprises thirty six Turkmen students whose native language is Turkish. The remaining two subjects are native speakers of Assyrian ( Christian). The responses of the native speakers of Assyrian are neglected because they are few in number. Consequently, their responses are not sufficient to make statements concerning the analysis of their test results .*

*Fourth-year students are selected( among other stages) because they are assumed to be at a high level and had already taken courses in practical English grammar for four years.*

## *4.2 Data Collection*

*A gap filling test was administered to the students. The test, having 45 items of gap-filling with 61 spaces : 15 blanks were to be filled with the definite article "the" , 21 blanks with the indefinite article "a / an", 25 blanks with zero article "Ø" ( see the Appendix). The test is constructed with the intention of testing the students' proficiency in using the English articles( the, a/an, zero article).*

*The gap filling items are discrete sentences which were selected from exercises in current grammar books with some modifications. The basis for the selection of the items was dependent on the most familiar constructs related to the use of the English articles as described in section three.*

*The data collection was carried out during a regular teaching term, the first term of the academic year(2009-2010 ).*

*The subjects were asked to choose the appropriate article ( i.e. the, a/an, zero article). Also, they were asked not to consult dictionaries or text books during the exercise ( test ), nor to collaborate with anyone else, in order to ensure as much as possible that the data is a true reflection of the subjects' individual unaided ability. The time allowed for the test was 60 minutes.*

## *4.3 An Error Analysis*

*An error analysis is conducted to ascertain the types of article errors that Iraqi fourth year / college of Education students make ,and it is followed by interviews with the subjects to investigate the causes of errors and why they are made.*

*The error analysis is performed into three general stages.The first stage is concerned with an overview of the types of errors that are made by the 100 subjects.*

*Second stage involves a more in depth analysis of a subgroup of articles( definite , indefinite, and zero article) to uncover what choices students actually make for each group and identify the causes of the errors ( which article causes the most errors).*

*Since we also want to know if the pattern of errors is the same for all subjects; therefore, the third stage involves an analysis of a subgroup of subjects according to their mother tongue( native language whether Arabic, Kurdish or Turkman) then to see which group makes more errors and in which article in particular.*

*We have also collected additional information from the subjects by conducting informal interviews . A random sample of the subjects has been chosen from each group. They reported, during small group interviews , the causes of errors they actually made (faced ) in using English articles.*

#### ***4.4 Results and Discussion.***

*Generally, the paper is concerned with testing the assumption that for fourth year students at the department of English, there is a positive correlation between proficiency*

*level and the ability to recognize and use articles correctly. When this was applied to the subjects in the current study, the results show that article errors occur frequently ( 55.979 % , as illustrated in table 3and 4).*

Item No.	Target Article	Total Response	Forms Produced by the subjects			
			A	An	The	Ø
1.	An	99	2	52	37	8
2.	Ø	98	16	0	60	22
3.	Ø	98	55	1	34	8
4.	A	98	85	2	5	6
5.	The	100/99	2/0	59/29	31/65	8/5
6.	Ø	100	18	0	69	13
7.	The	100	6	0	89	5
8.	A/ The	100/98	85/12	5/2	4/81	6/3
9.	Ø	99	10	0	28	61
10.	Ø/A	99/100	6/67	0/8	41/15	52/10
11.	Ø	99	4	3	4	88
12.	A/ Ø	100	54	1	45	0
13.	Ø/Ø	100/100	18/17	0/0	73/72	9/11
14.	The	100	29	0	49	22
15.	A	100	69	8	8	15
16.	Ø	99	23	3	30	43
17.	The	99	16	0	65	18
18.	A/A	100/100	60/42	1/1	35/54	4/3
19.	Ø	99	64	1	12	22
20.	An	100	7	80	3	10
21.	The/ The	100/97	34/14	0/7	55/34	11/42
22.	Ø/Ø	98/99	19/10	0/0	64/73	15/16
23.	A	99	38	1	22	38
24.	The	100	12	1	5	82

25.	Ø	99	25	0	67	7
26.	A/Ø	100/99	61/38	1/0	33/47	5/14
27.	The	100	38	0	56	6
28.	A/A	100/97	51/62	0/6	42/24	7/5
29.	Ø	100	2	27	46	25
30.	Ø	100	27	0	55	18
31.	The	100	5	8	77	10
32.	Ø	100	3	0	88	9
33.	The	99	48	4	35	12
34.	Ø/A	99/100	41/49	0/1	48/45	10/5
35.	A/Ø Ø/Ø	100/100 /99/99	38/30 /22/31	2/1/20/1	53/55 /69/58	8/14 /6/9
36.	Ø/A	100/100	38/66	1/0	46/34	15/0
37.	The	100	8	0	74	18
38.	Ø	100	22	0	38	40
39.	An	100	0	86	10	4
40.	Ø	99	26	0	65	8
41.	A/A	100/99	34/48	0/22	63/18	3/11
42.	The	100	49	2	32	17
43.	Ø	100	20	0	58	22
44.	The	100	1	5	91	3
45.	The/A	99/100	23/54	2/2	59/9	15/35

*Table ( 3 )  
Frequency of English Articles Used by 100 subjects*

Item No.	Target Article	Total Response	Forms Produced by the subjects			
			A	An	The	Ø
1.	An	99	2.02%	52.53%	37.37%	8.08%
2.	Ø	98	16.33%	0.00%	61.22%	22.45%
3.	Ø	98	56.12%	1.02%	34.69%	8.16%
4.	A	98	86.73%	2.05%	5.10 %	6.12%



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5.	<i>The</i>	100/99	2%/0.00 %	59%/29.38%	31 %/ 65.66 %	8 %/5.05 %
6.	$\emptyset$	100	18 %	0.00 %	69 %	13 %
7.	<i>The</i>	100	6 %	0.00 %	89 %	5 %
8.	<i>A/ The</i>	100/98	85 %/ 12.24%	5%/2.04 %	4 %/82.65 %	6%/3.06 %
9.	$\emptyset$	99	10.10 %	0.00 %	28.28 %	61.62 %
10.	$\emptyset$ /A	99/100	6.06 %/67 %	0.00 %/8 %	41.41 %/ 15 %	52.52%/10 %
11.	$\emptyset$	99	4.04 %	3.03 %	4.04 %	88.89 %
12.	<i>A/ <math>\emptyset</math></i>	100	54 %	1 %	45 %	0.00 %
13.	$\emptyset$ / $\emptyset$	100/100	18 %/17 %	0.00%/0.00 %	73 %/72 %	9 %/11 %
14.	<i>The</i>	100	29 %	0.00 %	49 %	22 %
15.	<i>A</i>	100	69 %	8 %	8 %	15 %
16.	$\emptyset$	99	23.23 %	3.03 %	30.30 %	43.43 %
17.	<i>The</i>	99	16.16 %	0.00 %	65.66 %	18.18 %
18.	<i>A/A</i>	100/100	60%/42%	1%/1%	35%/54%	4%/3%
19.	$\emptyset$	99	64.65 %	1.01 %	12.12 %	22.22 %
20.	<i>An</i>	100	7 %	80 %	3 %	10 %
21.	<i>The/ The</i>	100/97	34%/14.43 %	0.00 % /7.22%	55%/ 35.05%	11%/ 43.29%
22.	$\emptyset$ / $\emptyset$	98/99	19.39% /10.10%	0.00 %/ 0.00 %	65.30%/ 73.47%	15.31%/ 16.16%
23.	<i>A</i>	99	38.38 %	1.01 %	22.22 %	38.38 %
24.	<i>The</i>	100	12 %	1 %	5 %	82 %
25.	$\emptyset$	99	25.25 %	0.00 %	67.68 %	7.07 %
26.	<i>A/<math>\emptyset</math></i>	100/99	61%/38.38%	1 %/0.00 %	33%/ 47.47%	5% /14.14%
27.	<i>The</i>	100	38 %	0.00 %	56 %	6 %
28.	<i>A/A</i>	100/97	51%/63.91%	0.00 %/	42%	

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				6.18%	/24.74%	7%/ 5.15%
29.	Ø	100	2%	27 %	47 %	25%
30.	Ø	100	27%	0.00 %	55 %	18 %
31.	The	100	5 %	8%	77 %	10 %
32.	Ø	100	3 %	0.00 %	88 %	9 %
33.	The	99	48.48 %	4.04 %	35.35 %	12.12 %
34.	Ø/A	99/100	41.41%/ 49%	0.00 %/ 1%	48.48 % /45%	10.10%/ 5 %
35.	A/Ø Ø/Ø	100/100 /99/99	38%/ 30% /22.22%/ 31.31%	2 %/ 1%/ 2.02 %/ 1.01%	53%/ 55%/ 69 %/ 58%	8%/ 14%/ 6%/ 9%
36.	Ø/A	100/100	38%/ 66%	1%/ 0.00%	46%/ 34%	15% /0.00%
37.	The	100	8%	0.00%	74%	18%
38.	Ø	100	22%	0.00%	38%	40%
39.	An	100	0.00%	86%	10%	4%
40.	Ø	99	26.26%	0.00%	65.65 %	8.08 %
41.	A/A	100/99	43%/48.48 %	0.00%/ 22.22%	63 %/ 18.18%	3%/ 11.11%
42.	The	100	49 %	2 %	32 %	17 %
43.	Ø	100	20 %	0.00%	58 %	22 %
44.	The	100	1 %	5 %	91 %	3 %
45.	The/A	99/100	23.23%/ 54%	2.02%/ 2%	59.59%/ 9%	15.15%/ 35%
<p><i>Total Percentage of Erroneous Responses =3414.75</i>  <i>Average =3414.75 ÷ 61</i>  <i>=55.979 %</i></p>						

*Table (4)*  
*Percentage of English Articles Used by 100 Subjects*

*The results did not support our hypothesis , as we expected, fourth year students will have few problems in using the English article system correctly. Therefore , it is evident that correct English article use is a problem for students, even for university students who are about to become teachers of English, and it appears never to be fully mastered.*

*The great number of article errors is somewhat surprising because students have been exposed to textbooks extensively dealing with the correct use of the articles in their process of learning / acquiring the English language. McEldowney( 1977) notes a great similarity of article errors in the English of Europeans, Asians, south Americans and Arabs with vastly different language backgrounds and states that the same types of errors persist in the English of school children, college students, university students, English teachers, scientists and others. These errors centralize around three main areas:*

- 1- Omission of a/the/-s*
- 2- Wrong insertion of a/the/-s*
- 3- Confusion of a/the/-s*

*The possible reasons for this disappointment may be elaborated as follows. Teachers seem to overlook article errors completely, which may have various reasons. One possibility may be that teachers tolerate article errors either because they are used to seeing them frequently or they may find them difficult themselves( Swan & Simth, 1987). Another possibility is that because the current emphasis is on communication and meaning rather than form and accuracy,*

*teachers may feel that article errors are not problematic enough to pay attention to because they often do not cause communication to break down. And this goes with what Burt ( 1975) believes, that article errors are only local errors and they differ from global errors in that they do not hinder communication. However, the correct and incorrect use of articles does not usually affect understanding.*

*In addition, during the interviews students reported that, among the reasons underlying their errors, they found certain concepts difficult to understand and they confirmed their need to translate some of the items to their native languages so as to respond to the items.*

*On the one hand, the results of the present study reveal sort of contradiction with Oller & Redding ( 1971: 93), who used a multiple choice format to test the mastery of English article system, they found that article errors decrease as proficiency increases, even for students whose L1 does not have formal equivalents of the English articles. They remark that " the learning of article usage goes hand in hand with the development of proficiency ". Mizuno (1985:9-10) states that the beginners made frequent errors, most of which disappear as they progress.*

*On the other hand, our findings support ( Tarone, 1985, Yamada and Mastuura, 1982; Kubota, 1994) who state that article accuracy is not related to proficiency level.*

*The second hypothesis states that there is no relation between students' correct use of article and the type of the article whether definite ( the ), indefinite (a/an), or zero article (Ø). The results in Tables ( 5, 6, 7 ),which contradict the hypothesis in question,indicate that the frequency and*

percentage of errors are significantly different for each article.

The zero article errors accounted for the highest percentage of errors ( 79.9416% ). As for the use of the indefinite article, the students reported more errors (41.1038%) than the use of the definite article which recorded( 41.8687% ). To sum up in accordance with the findings, the number of errors is in the following order: zero > a/an > the.

However, the results correspond with pervious researches regarding article errors (Hakuta, 1976; Parrish, 1987; Swan & Smith, 1987; Kubota, 1994) which conclude that the definite article was acquired earlier than the indefinite and zero article. Their study also shows that the use of the definite article proved to be the least problematic, followed by the indefinite and the zero.

The highest percentage of errors ( more than 50% ) accounted for was in the use of the zero article in eighteen items ( twenty two spaces )as shown in table(5).

Item No.	Correct Response	Total Response	Erroneous Response	Percentage of Erroneous Response
2	Ø	98	76	77.55%
3	Ø	98	90	91.84%
6	Ø	100	87	87%
9	Ø	99	38	38.38%
10a	Ø	100	33	33%
11	Ø	100	11	11%
13	Ø/Ø	100/100	91/89	91% /89%
16	Ø	99	56	56%
19	Ø	99	77	77.78%

22	∅/∅	98/99	83/83	84.69 %/83.84%
25	∅	99	92	92.93%
26b	∅	99	85	85.86
29	∅	100	75	75%
30	∅	100	82	82%
32	∅	100	91	91%
34a	∅	99	89	98.90%
35b,c,d	∅/∅/∅	100/99/99	86/93/90	86%/93.94%/90.91 %
36a	∅	100	85	85%
38	∅	100	60	60%
40	∅	99	91	91.92%
43	∅	100	78	78%
				Sum=1923.54 Average=76.9416%

*Table (5)  
Percentage of Erroneous Response in the Use of the  
Zero " ∅ " Article*

*Item 2 (75.55% ), zero article used with plural countable nouns (place) to identify the class considered as undifferentiated whole; item 3( 91.84%) when used with non count nouns which are always singular –philosophy; item 6 (87%) non count which are always singular-life; item 13 (91% , 89%) used in fixed phrases; item 16 ( 56%) when used with unspecified quantity ; item 19 (77.78%) the use of the zero article after "such" in exclamations; item 22 (84.69% , 83.84% ) when used for pairs joined by "and" i.e. parallel structures; item 25 (92.93%) with means of transport; item 26 the second space (85.86%) when used with pairs of nouns( natural pairs ); item 29 ( 75%) unique items like holidays; item 30 (82%) for the times of the day and night; item 32 (91%) used with*

*human life and society ( specific reference-school); item 34 the first space(89.90%) when used with non count noun like soup; item 35 the second, third, fourth space (86% , 93.94% , 90.91%) used with non count nouns like flour, wheat; item 36 the first space ( 85%) non count noun( sugar); item 38 ( 60 %) when used with unique items(languages); item 40 (91.92%)when used to refer to some institutions like prison; item 43 (78%) the use of the zero article for academic subjects and related topics ( unique reference).*

*The positions where the highest percentage of errors ( more than 50% ) for the indefinite article are committed in these five items( item 18b, item 23, item 34b, item 35a, item 41) as table (6) illustrates.*

<i>Item No.</i>	<i>Correct Response</i>	<i>Total Response</i>	<i>Erroneous Response</i>	<i>Percentage of Erroneous Response</i>
<i>1</i>	<i>An</i>	<i>99</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>47.47%</i>
<i>4</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>98</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>24.12%</i>
<i>5a</i>	<i>An</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>41</i>	<i>41%</i>
<i>8b</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>15%</i>
<i>10a</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>33%</i>
<i>12</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>46</i>	<i>46%</i>
<i>15</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>31%</i>
<i>18</i>	<i>A/A</i>	<i>100/100</i>	<i>40/58</i>	<i>40 %/58%</i>
<i>20</i>	<i>An</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>20%</i>
<i>23</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>61</i>	<i>61%</i>
<i>26a</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>39%</i>
<i>28</i>	<i>A/A</i>	<i>100/97</i>	<i>49/35</i>	<i>49%/36.08%</i>
<i>34b</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>51%</i>
<i>35a</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>63</i>	<i>61%</i>
<i>36b</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>34%</i>
<i>39</i>	<i>An</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>13%</i>
<i>41</i>	<i>A/A</i>	<i>100/99</i>	<i>66/51</i>	<i>66 %/51.51%</i>
<i>45b</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>46</i>	<i>46%</i>

	Sum=863.18 Average=41.104%
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*Table( 6 )*

*Percentage of Erroneous Respons in the Use of the Indefinite Article "A / An"*

*The items are: item 18 the second space,58% when used with pairs of nouns( not natural pairs ) , rain coat and camera; item 23, 61% when used to classify people; item 34 the second space, 51%) when used to mean 'any' , any spoon not a specified one; item 35 the first space (61%) bread when used in general statements; item 41 the first and second space ( 66% ) the use of the indefinite article to refer to the class as a whole and when it means one.*

*As for the definite article "the", the results show that the students have scored higher than the average ( 50%) in five items(item 14,item 21,item 24,item 33.item42). See Table ( 7 )*

<i>Item No.</i>	<i>Correct Response</i>	<i>Total Response</i>	<i>Erroneous Response</i>	<i>Percentage of Erroneous Response</i>
5b	The	99	34	34.34%
7	The	100	11	11%
8b	The	98	17	17.35%
14	The	100	51	51%
17	The	99	34	34.34%
21	The/ The	100/97	45/63	45% /64.95%
24	The	100	95	95%
27	The	100	44	44%
31	The	100	23	23%
33	The	99	64	64.65%
37	The	100	26	26%
42	The	100	68	68%
44	The	100	9	9%



45a	The	99	40	40.40%
				Sum=628.03 Average=41.869%

*Table (7)*

*Percentage of Erroneous Response in the Use of the Definite Article " The "*

*The items that students made errors in are: item 14 (51 %) when used to refer to unique items; item 21, the second space ( 64.95%) when used with specific reference; item 24 ( 95%) when a post modification is a clause; item 33 ( 64.65%) when used with fixed expressions ; item 42 ( 68% ) the use of "the" with musical instruments.*

*It is worth mentioning that the percentage of errors in the rest of the items are less than 50%; therefore they are not significant and as we thought there is no need to comment on them.*

*To test the hypothesis that deals with the effect of the native language on the students' correct use of the English article , the present study has shown results similar to other studies in different parts of the world ( e.g. Kuno, 1973; McEldowney,1977; Kharma, 1981; Agnihotri, 1984; Tarone, 1985; Mizuno, 1985; Master et al, 1989) in that there is some influence of the native language on the foreign language system and some overall systematicity to the errors. However, the results correspond with the subjects in the current study.*

*As far as the use of the definite article is concerned , Arab students report more errors ( 45.48%) than Kurd students ( 39.93% ) and those more than Turkmen students ( 39.80%). Table ( 8 ) shows this clearly.*

Item	Target	
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No.	Article	Arab Students	Kurd Students	Turkmen Students
5b	The	40%	28.12%	37.14%
7	The	10%	12.49%	8.33%
8b	The	20%	12.49%	20.58%
14	The	66.67%	13.24%	55.55%
17	The	20%	68.74%	17.13%
21	The/The	50%/65.51%	43.75%/73.33%	44.45%/58.32%
24	The	96.67%	96.86%	91.66%
27	The	53.34%	37.5%	41.67%
31	The	20%	31.24%	16.66%
33	The	60%	67.73%	63.89%
37	The	36.67%	25%	19.44%
42	The	80%	50%	75%
44	The	13.34%	3.12%	11.11%
45a	The	50	35.48%	36.11%
		Sum=682.2 Average=45.48%	Sum=599.09 Average=39.39%	Sum=597.04 Average=39.80%

*Table ( 8 )*

*Percentage of Erroneous Response in the Use of the Definite Article "the " According to Subjects' Native Language*

*To find out the difference between the subjects and the correct use of indefinite article, the results indicate that the large amount of errors was the share of the Kurd students. The percentage of their errors was ( 46.30% ) which was more than Arab students' percentage of errors ( 44.01% ) while the percentage of errors for the Turkmen students was the least ( 36.24% ). Table ( 9 ) pictures this.*

Item No.	Target Article			
		Arab Students	Kurd Students	Turkmen Students
1	An	36.66%	48.30%	55.55%
4	A	20%	12.89%	8.57%
5a	An	40%	37.49%	44.44%
8a	A	16.66%	18.74%	11.11%

10b	A	30%	34.37%	33.21%
12	A	43.33%	46.87%	47.22%
15	A	36.66%	34.37%	24.99%
18	A/A	53.34%/53.34%	43.74%/53.12%	22.22%/63.89%
20	An	90%	18.74%	24.99%
23	A	80%	61.28%	47.22%
26a	A	40%	46.87%	27.77%
28	A/A	63.33%/27.59%	46.87%/50%	38.89%/33.32%
34b	A	53.33%	43.74%	55.56%
35a	A	60%	65.62%	63.88%
36b	A	26.67%	46.87%	27.78%
39	An	13.33%	21.87%	8.33%
41	A/A	60% /36.67%	81.25%/96.78%	58.33%/27.78%
45b	A	43.33%	62.49%	36.11%
		Sum=924.24 Average=44.01 %	Sum=972.27 Average=46.30 %	Sum=761.16 Average=36.24 %

*Table ( 9 )  
Percentage of Erroneous Response in the Use of the  
Indefinite Article "a/an " According to Subjects' Native  
Language*

*It is also interesting to know that Turkmen students come in the first place in reporting the highest percentage of errors in the use of the zero article ( 84.95%), then comes the Kurd students( 72.44%) which was in turn more than the Arab students' percentage of errors ( 70.79% ).*

Item No.	Target Article			
		Arab Students	Kurd Students	Turkmen Students
2	∅	48.28%	93.54%	86.11%
3	∅	96.67%	83.86%	94.29%
6	∅	86.67%	71.54%	100%
9	∅	26.66%	21.54%	65.72%
10a	∅	48.27%	37.49%	55.55%

11	∅	10%	12.9%	11.1%
13	∅	90%/83.33%	87.49%/90.62%	94.44%/91.66%
16	∅	36.67%	58.06	72.21%
19	∅	80%	47.2%	80.56%
22	∅	80 %/73.33%	90%/90.32%	86.11%/88.88%
25	∅	93.1%	90.62%	94.44%
26b	∅	86.67%	83.86%	86.1%
29	∅	73.33%	68.74%	83.34%
30	∅	80%	71.87%	91.67%
32	∅	93.33%	87.49%	97.22%
34a	∅	83.33%	90.32%	97.22%
35b,c,d	∅	63.34%/80% /76.66%	93.74%/100% /93.75%	97.22%/100% /100%
36a	∅	76.67%	90.61%	88.89%
38	∅	50%	56.25%	72.22%
40	∅	38.34%	90.32%	100%
43	∅	70%	75%	88.89%
		Sum=1769.65 Average=70.79%	Sum=1811.05 Average=72.44%	Sum=2123.84 Average=84.95%

*Table (10)*

*Percentage of Erroneous Response in the Use of the Zero Article " ∅ " According to Subjects' Native Language*

*Assuming the possibility of L1 transfer, which can be a main source of the errors made ,we will look at the students' native language article system in more depth . It is worth mentioning that the subjects in this study are foreign language learners whose L1 either does have ( Arabic) or does not have( Kurdish and Turkish ) articles.*

*Although Kurdish and Turkish do not have an article system, definiteness and indefiniteness are conveyed to some*

extent by different linguistic means such as demonstratives and suffixation.

The demonstratives in Kurdish are ئە م (this), ئە و (that), ئە مان (these), ئە وان (those). ( ئە م ) is used with both masculine and feminine singular near referents. ( ئە و ) is used with both masculine and feminine singular distant referents. ( ئە مان ) is used with both masculine and feminine plural near referents. ( ئە وان ) is used with both masculine and feminine plural distant referents. All these demonstratives are used as premodifiers to the head noun ( Mockreyani, 1989:99-100).

MacKenzie(1961:50-51) states that the suffix ( ە کە ) is used in Kurdish to indicate definiteness. The form of the suffix ( ە کە ) is variable depending on the preceding phonological environment. If the noun ends with a consonant sound, ( ە کە ) keeps the same form, like

گول ( the flower ) ----- گوله کە ( flower )

If the noun ends with one of the vowels in Kurdish ( و , ی , ا , ە ) then ( ە کە ) is changed into ( کە ),

چیا ( mountain ) ----- چیاکە ( the mountain )

If the noun ends with the vowel sound , the same previous rule is valid but the sound ( ) in the stem is changed into ( ە ) e.g.

یاساری (bird) ----- یاساریکە ( the bird )

If the stem noun ends with the vowel sound ( وو ), again the suffix ( ە کە ) is used.

به روو ( oak ) ----- به رووه کە ( the oak )

On the other hand, indefiniteness is marked with the suffix ( يك ) which is derived from the word ( به ك , meaning 'one')(MacKenzie, 1961:52-53) . Like the definite suffix, the indefinite marker( suffix) is variable in form. If the stem noun ends with a consonant sound, ( يك ) is used, e.g.

گول (flower) ----- گوليك ( a flower )

But if the stem noun ends with a vowel sound the ( بيك ) or( به ك ) are used, e.g.

چيا (mountain) ----- چيا بيك ، چيا به ك ( a mountain )

In addition, any noun without the suffix ( يك ) is also indefinite but indicates a generic sense. While the same noun with the indefinite marker refers to a specific indefinite referent. Consider the following

پياو ( any man, men in general ) ----- پياويك ( a man, specific one )

As for Turkmen students, Yildirimalp(1980:43 ) states that there are no articles in Turkish. When the noun is placed in the objective case, it receives a definite conception. When the object of the verb is indefinite , it is in the nominative case by itself, or preceded by ( bir ) ( a or an in English).Consider the examples below

-Kitap nerede ?

" Where is the book?"  
(definite book)

-Burada (bir) kitap var mi ?

"Is there a book here ?"  
(indefinite book)

-Kitaba bakıyorum.

" I am looking at the book."  
( definite book)

-Kitabi görüyorum.

"I see the book."  
( definite book)

*There are six demonstratives in Turkish. Bu ( this) is used for both masculine and feminine singular near referents. Su ( that) is used with both masculine and feminine singular distant referents. Bunlar ( these) for both masculine and feminine plural near referents, whereas sunlar (those) is used for both masculine and feminine plural distant referents. O ( that ) is used for masculine and feminine singular distant referents, Onlar (those) is used for both masculine and feminine plural distant referents(Yildirimalp,1980:25) .*

*Hayder & Hidayat(1987: 37- 39) state that premodifying an indefinite common noun ( Ad Tamlaması) is another means of expressing definiteness in Turkish. These constructions, where two nouns are juxtaposed, are of three types. In the first type ( Bolirtili Ad Tamlaması) both of the juxtaposed nouns receive suffixation,e.g.*

Governed Noun	Governing Noun
Evin	işi
Unun	pakati
Sütün	köpüğü
Bahçenin	duvarı
Kapının	anahtarı
Odanın	havası
Pencerenin	boyası

*In this type, if the governing noun ends with a consonant, it receives one of the following suffixes( I, i, u, ü ) according to the rules of the vowel harmony system, e.g.*

*iş / işi, taş / taşI, köpük / köpüğü*

*But if the governing noun ends with a vowel, it takes one of these suffixes( sI, si, su, sü ) according to the rules of the vowel harmony system, e.g.*

*KapI / kapIsI, çivi / çivisi, kötü / kötü sI*

*As for the governed noun,if it ends with a consonant, it receives one of the following suffixes ( In, in, un, ün ) according to the rules of the vowel harmony system, e.g.*

*Ev / evin, duvar / duvarIn, süt / süt ün, un / unun*

*But if it ends with a vowel, then it takes one of these suffixes(nIn, nin, nun,nün) according to the rules of the vowel harmony system, e.g.*

*Bahçe / bahçenin, kapI / kapInIn, kötü / kötü nün*

*The second type of these constructs( Tamlama ) is termed ( Belirtisiz Ad TamlamasI). In this type, only the governing noun receives suffixation. If the governing noun ends with a consonant,, then the options are( I, i, u,ü ) according to the rules of vowel harmony system , e.g.*

<i>Governed Noun</i>	<i>Governing Noun</i>
<i>Boya</i>	<i>kalemi</i>
<i>Halk</i>	<i>ozanI</i>



When the governing noun ends with a vowel, the suffixes are ( *sI, si, su, sü* ) according to the rules of vowel harmony system , e.g.

Governed Noun	Governing Noun
<i>Gaz</i>	<i>lampasI</i>
<i>Masa</i>	<i>örtü sü</i>

The last type of these constructs is termed ( *Eksiz Ad TamlamasI* ) in which both of the governing and governed nouns do not take suffixes, e.g.

Governed Noun	Governing Noun
<i>Tas</i>	<i>köprü</i>
<i>Gümüş</i>	<i>tepsi</i>
<i>Demir</i>	<i>kapI</i>
<i>Sıcak</i>	<i>su</i>
<i>Egri</i>	<i>direk</i>

As for Arabic, Aziz(1989:101) declares that there are two articles: the definite article ( *ال* ) prefixed to the noun head and the zero article which expresses indefinite meaning ( often plus nunation *التنوين* ). See the following examples

( *I bought a book* ) *اشتریت کتابا*

( *I bought some books* ) *اشتریت کتبا*

( *I drank some milk* ) *شربت حلیبا*

The definite article, which indicates definite meaning, is a premodifier used with all types of common nouns whether count ( *singular or plural* ) or mass. This is also true of the zero article except that proper nouns in Arabic normally take the zero article . Consider the following

كتاب ( a book ) ----- الكتاب ( the book )  
كتب ( books ) ----- الكتب ( the books )  
ماء ( water ) ----- الماء ( water )

However, there are other devices that help to convey definiteness in Arabic like using demonstratives that premodify the head noun. هذا (this) is used with singular masculine near reference, هذه (this) is used with singular feminine near reference, ( هذان ) and ( هاتان ) are used with dual masculine/ feminine near reference respectively, ( ذلك ) and ( تلك ) ( that ) are used with singular masculine /feminine distant reference respectively, whereas ( هؤلاء ) (these) is used with both masculine and feminine plural near reference. At last ( اولئك ) (those) is used with both masculine and feminine plural distant reference (Aziz ,1989:145).

Furthermore, definiteness in Arabic is conveyed by means of postmodification. In order to turn an indefinite common noun into a definite one, the former is postmodified ( juxtaposed ) with another definite common noun, e.g. كتاب الرجل. This pattern of juxtaposing two nouns is termed Alidhafa ( الاضافة ) in Arabic.

The percentage of errors in the use of both definite and indefinite article for Arab, Kurd and Turkmen students is not statistically valid( less than 50%) ;but at the same time the percentage of error in the use of the zero article for the above mentioned groups are 70.79% , 72.44% and 84.95% respectively, i.e. Arab, Kurd and Turkmen students are facing a problem with this article. While it is not always clear that

*an error is the result of a transfer from the native language, Lado (1975:1-2) states that " ... those elements that are similar to [ the learner's ] native language will be simple for him and those elements that are different will be difficult " ;therefore, one possible reason for the difficulty that these subjects are facing could be that these students do not have a zero article in their native languages ( although Arab students do have a zero article in their mother tongue but it functions differently, zero article is used to indicate indefiniteness in Arabic) and consequently they are unable to use it correctly.*

#### *4.5 Conclusions*

*The goal of this study was to investigate whether or not there is any relation between correct article use and the proficiency level with reference to three types of articles ( definite, indefinite and zero ). The results indicate that the acquisition of the English article system is indeed a problem for students and they do not acquire the system automatically as they become more proficient. Apparently, even university students who will become future teachers of English do not acquire the system through input or study.*

*As for the errors made regarding the types of articles, the results indicate that students encounter the greatest difficulty in the use of the zero article followed by indefinite article then definite article.*

*Regarding the correlation between article errors and the subjects' native language , the results show that a significant correlation was found, from these correlation analyses, yet it is worth noting that careful interpretations should be taken into account given the fact that the sample is not large enough.*

*However, not all students make the same type of errors as there was no strong correlation between the type of errors among the subjects, suggesting that students' interlanguage differs probably because they have created different hypotheses about the uses of the different articles.*

#### *4.6 Pedagogical Suggestions*

*Since English article use is extremely complex for Iraqi students, the following are some suggestions which may aid in providing a solution for the students.*

*The question of how to present the articles in the classroom has been touched upon by many scholars. The traditional party holds the view that the explicit presentation of rules and conventions leads to improved acquisition of the English articles ( cf. Norris & Ortega, 2000). As Beaumont (1994) remarks, it is not an easy task to set up a working basis for teaching articles, but there has been an agreement that formal instruction is needed to achieve a positive effect in helping non native students acquire the English article system ( Lindstormberg, 1986; Berry, 1991; Master, 1997).*

*Mizuno (1985:24) asserts that the articles should be presented in a sequence according to their relative degree of difficulty, with the easiest being presented first. Thus on the basis of his experimental studies, the definite article would be tackled first, then the indefinite, and finally the zero.*

*Moreover, with the great emphasis on communicative language teaching in recent decades, many researchers believe that articles should be taught as part of a functional system rather than in isolation. This functional approach recommends that articles should be taught experientially and in context in such a way that their functions can be*

*understood and acquired naturally, rather than the current method of treating article usage as a set of abstract rules to be memorized ( Eastwood, 1999) .*

*Teachers should also emphasize and enhance the importance of correct use of articles in maintaining smooth communication. Yamada & Matsuura(1982: 61) conclude with the comment that "unless learners are taught to pay more attention to the article system, ...the chances are that the students will not improve their use of articles noticeably." Werner(1996) believes that teachers, especially non native language teachers of English as a foreign language, should look for help in pedagogical grammar books such as Quirk et al.(1985) and reference books such as Swan(1994), and textbooks, such as Murphy(1994 ), to help improve their students' performance.*

*Teachers should also provide extra effort for the more advanced learners who will be professionals in their field and who may have to write for international public, as they may feel more confident when errors in English are kept to the minimum.*

*Besides, foreign language learners need to develop the knowledge of which linguistic forms in their native language go with which features in the foreign language. We do believe that one problem in the current books is that they do not address the article system in a manner that makes clear the meaning of the forms to the foreign language learners whose native language does not have a similar system.*

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## **APPENDIX**

### **THE GAP FILLING TEST**

-----

*Dear students: the items below are particularly concerned with foreign students' use of articles in English. Your careful answering of them is instrumental to our research and will be highly appreciated. Thanks for your cooperation.*

***Q/ Fill in the blanks with a, an, the, Ø (zero article).***

- 1-..... architect is a person who designs buildings.
- 2-..... museums are closed on Mondays. .
- 3-..... determinism denies the existence of free will.
- 4-Mary's sister married Edward. He's ..... taxi driver.
- 5-I looked up and saw ..... airplane. .... airplane flew low over the trees.
- 6-..... life is short.
- 7-In ..... past, people had fewer expectations.
- 8-Singleton is ..... quiet village. .... village has a population of a few hundred people.
- 9-These tools are made by ..... Jackson & Son.
- 10-The American elect president for ..... 2008 is ..... democrat.
- 11-Here comes ..... Mr. Charli.

- 12-..... clever politician never promises too much.
- 13-We searched the room from ..... top to ..... bottom.
- 14-The story of ..... Titanic is a very touching one.
- 15-I've got ..... headache.
- 16-I have ..... presents for the children.
- 17-She has resigned from ..... government.
- 18-When you go on holiday, take ..... raincoat and  
..... camera.
- 19-Young people enjoy such ..... freedom.
- 20-My boss is such ..... idiot.
- 21-Barak Obama, candidate of ..... Democratic party, won  
.....2008 presidency election in America.
- 22-This business has been run by ..... father and.....son.
- 23-'Hard Times' is a great novel. It is ..... Dicken's novel.
- 24-..... Jack you are looking for no longer lives here.
- 25-We traveled all over Europe by ..... bus.
- 26-It is cold outside. Take ..... hat and ..... coat.
- 27-..... freedom of the individual is worth fighting for.
- 28-..... knife is not good. You need ..... screwdriver to do  
the job properly.
- 29-..... Eid is a time for family reunions.
- 30-We got up at ..... sunrise to clime to the summit.
- 31-The economical sanction imposed on Iraq were decided by  
..... United Nations.
- 32-The children went to ..... school early this morning.
- 33-"Make ..... beds" said Jane to her little sister.
- 34-We eat ..... soup with ..... spoon.
- 35-..... bread is made from .....flour,..... flour is made  
from..... wheat.
- 36-..... sugar is nice in ..... cup of tea.
- 37-Handreds of college students, as reported by .....Times,  
were demonstrating in the streets of London.
- 38-..... Turkish is a difficult language to learn.
- 39-Apples or grapes? Thanks, I'd like ..... apple.

40-He was sent to ..... prison for four years.

41-..... cat has ..... tail.

42-Tom plays ..... piano.

43-Peter Roach is specialized in ..... phonetics &phonology.

44-In ..... evening, we went out.

45-How much is ..... Basmati rice? It's 500 ID .....kilo.

أخطاء استعمال ادوات التعريف والتذكير في الانكليزية من قبل  
طلاب قسم اللغة الانكليزية في العراق  
دراسة وتحليل

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كلية التربية – جامعة كركوك

ان ملاحظة السلوك اللغوي لطلاب قسم اللغة الانكليزية عند استعمالهم ادوات التعريف والتذكير في الانكليزية يترك انطبعا بأن الطلاب لايمكنهم استعمال هذه الادوات بشكل متقن، بل حتى ان طلاب المراحل المتقدمة يقعون في الأخطاء المتعلقة بهذه الأدوات نفسها.

والدراسة الحالية موضوعة لبحث استعمال اداة التعريف (the) والتذكير (a/an) وال (zero) article في الانكليزية من لدن مئة طالب في قسم اللغة الانكليزية/ المرحلة الرابعة في العراق.

يتناول الجزء النظري من الدراسة العناصر الادراكية المكونة لمعنى التعريف والتذكير، وقد قدم البحث تصنيفا للاسماء في اللغة الانكليزية، كما يبحث الجزء النظري للدراسة سياقات الاستعمال المختلفة للادوات السابقة الذكر.

كما ان الدراسة وظفت اختبار ملء الفراغ المكون من خمس واربعين فقرة لجمع البيانات اللازمة، وقد تبنت الدراسة الحالية تحليل الأخطاء في معالجة البيانات المستقاة من الأختبار آلتف الذكر.

وقد توصلت الدراسة في جزئها العملي الى النتائج التالية:  
ان طلاب المرحلة الرابعة (المتقدمة) في قسم اللغة الانكليزية يواجهون صعوبات في اتقان استعمال ادوات التعريف والتنكير في الانكليزية. كما وظهرت الدراسة ان هناك تباينا في نسب الاستعمال الخاطيء لهذه الادوات. اذ ان استعمال اداة التعريف (the) كان الاسهل بالنسبة للطلاب، يليه استعمال اداة التنكير (a/an) ومن ثم ال zero article.  
هذا وان نتائج الدراسة تشير الى وجود تأثير ملحوظ للغة الأم ( العربية، الكردية، التركمانية) عند استعمال طلاب البحث الادوات السابقة الذكر.