

Quirk, R. & Greenbaum, S., (1973): A University Grammar of English, Longman, London.

Roberts, N. B., (1976): "On the Generic Indefinite Article", Language, Vol. 52, No. 2. Pp. 427-448.

Wright, W., (1971): A Grammar of the Arabic Language, Cambridge University Press, England.

Zandvoort, R. W., (1966): A Handbook of English Grammar, Longmans, London.

- Joodi, A. M. H., (1978): A Contrastive Analysis of the Article System in Standard English & Modern Standard Arabic, An M. A. Unpublished Thesis, University of Baghdad.
- Kaluza, H., (1963): "Teaching The English Article To Speakers of Slavic", LL, Vol. XIII, No.2, pp.113-124.
- Kharm, N., (1981): "Analysis of the Errors Committed by Arab University Student in the Use of the English Definite / Indefinite Articles, " IRAL, Vol. XIX, No. pp. 333-343.
- Kharm, N. & Hajjaj, A., (1989): Errors in English Among Arabic Speakers: Analysis & Remedy, Longman Group, UK., Limited.
- Mackey, W. F., (1966): "Applied Linguistics, Its Meaning and Use", ELT., Vol. XX, No. 3. pp "
- Master, p., (1988): "Teaching the English Article system, Part I", English Teaching Form, Vol. XXVI No. 2, pp. 2-7.
- Oller, J. W. & Redding, E. z., (1971): "Article Usage and Other Language Skills ", LL, Vol. XXI, 1, pp. 85-95.
- Praninskas, J. (1975): Rapid Review of English Grammar, Prentice-Hall, INC., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey.

Select Bibliography

- Adams, A., (1962): "where is THE? : Some Cnnrastive Pattern Practices " LL, Vol. 12, No. 1, pp. 57-68.
- Agnihotri, R. K., Khanna, A.L. & Mukherjee, A., (1984): "The Use of Articles In Indian English: Errors and Pedagogical Implications ", IRAL, Vol. XXII, No. 2, pp. 115-129.
- Aziz, y. y., (1979): " English Articles: A Problem For The Iraqi Learner", Journal of Education & Science, Vol. I, pp. 19-28.
- Aziz, y. y., (1989): A Contrastive Grammar of English and Arabic, Ministry of Higher Education Press.
- Beeton, A. F. L.m., (1970): The Arabic Language Today, Hutchinson & Co., London.
- Eckersley, c. E. & Eckersley, J. M., (1966): A Comprehensive English Grammar For Foreign Students, Longmans, Green & Co. LTD., London.
- Ilyas, A. I., (1985): "Some Remark About The English Definite Article 'the'And The Arabic /al/, With Reference To Translation", Al-Mustansiriya Literary Review, Vol. 11, pp.

of the learner to distinguish between a specified and non-specified noun-head or due to the learner's failure to distinguish between the specifying function of 'the' and the identifying function of 'a(n)'.

Recommendations for Pedagogical Implications:

It is of utmost importance that learners of English at the university level are fully acquainted with the partial similarities and partial differences between the system of article usage in both English and Arabic (for details, see II. 1 & III). Learners need also be given complete information on the individualizing and the classifying functions of the indefinite article along with a careful classification of English nouns along the axis of countability and concreteness. This could be done by contrasting the use of the indefinite article with that of the zero article or nunation. Furthermore, learners should be familiarized with nouns whether they are premodified or postmodified, definite or indefinite. In addition, they should also be given thorough information about the system of reference usage in both languages (see II.2), i. e., much light is to be shed on types of reference: specific, generic and unique. This, followed by a lot of practice, will take care of this crucial area of English-language learning.

2. Omission of Articles (where needed):

Omission of article which is (44.36%), accounts for a higher frequency of errors than insertion of articles (37.33%). The definite article was found to be omitted in specified contexts as much as (93.22%) as against its omission before superlative and comparative modifiers (6.78%; Table-6). This shows that the use of the definite article in specified contexts offers maximum difficulty to the Arabic speaker. The most important reason seems to be partial differences and partial similarities between the uses of the definite articles in English and Arabic.

As far as the omission of the indefinite article is concerned, 87 out of a total of 126 errors were detected (see III. B. 2). This 'error'-type is due to the reason that in Arabic there is no discrete free morpheme to function as the counterpart of 'a(n)'. The language takes recourse to certain inflection for this purpose. This generates an acute learning problem for Arabic learner of English and accounts for the very high frequency of error committed by them.

3. Selection of a Wrong Article:

The number of errors involving inappropriate selection of articles was found to be 18.31% of the total number of errors in the use of articles (see Table-1). This shows that selection of the appropriate article remains a tricky problem at this stage of learning. These types of errors are caused by the failure on the part

teacher, the course-designer and the text-book writer in the order indicated:

1. Insertion of Articles (where not needed):

The most serious violation of the rules in this area relates to the insertion of the definite article before generic (abstract and concrete) uncount nouns (75.53 %; Table-3). This 'error'-type can, because the absence of a one-to-one correspondence between the articles in English and Arabic can perhaps account for this high percentage of errors (see III. A. 1.z).

As for the incorrect insertion of the indefinite article, there were only 12 cases as compared to 94 related to the incorrect insertion of the definite article. This 'error'-type is due to absence of an equivalent morpheme as a counterpart to the English 'a(n)' in the learner's own language which makes his task very difficult. At school, he has been taught to use 'a(n)' before singular nouns, and when he is not sure whether a noun is count or uncount, he plays safe by inserting 'a(n)' before most singular nouns. Some times learners insert indefinite article before plural nouns (see III. A. 2. z). This 'error'-type is due to the fact that the Arab learner of English has obviously not yet internalized the correct use of the English indefinite article. The source of this 'error'-type, therefore, seems to be intralanguage.

the use of the indefinite article before noun heads which were specified either in context or by a qualifying word or phrase, e. g.,

1. John is a captain of the team (48.2) (62.2).
2. John is the captain of a team (50.2).
(‘team’ is contextually specified.)
3. The pupils chose Ali a monitor of our class (46.20)
4. I gave a dog outside some food (50.1).
5. many of a new grammar books ... (71.10).
(‘dog’ and ‘grammar books’ are contextually specified.)

III.c.2 Replacement of A(N) by THE:

In 28 cases, a(n) was replaced by ‘the’. (viz., 53.85% of the total for III.I.c). This ‘error’-type is also caused by the failure on the part of the learner to distinguish between a specified and a generic noun head. Some examples follow:

1. The umbrella is necessary in winter (46.11).
2. Layla called the man the fool (49.3).
3. The African leader went to Europe (58.9)

It should be noted that the noun heads ‘umbrella’, ‘fool’ and ‘African leader’ are not specified in the context.

Findings and Conclusions:

Looking back at the findings of this study, we can clearly see that the following areas merit the earnest attention of the class-

1. Layla called the man Fool (47.3).
2. I enjoyed Exciting match (of) football (47.17).
3. umbrella is necessary in winter. (48.32).
4. Tea is popular drink in Iraq (54.18).
5. number of grammar books are useful (78.10).
6. That day was Holiday (26.II).

III.c Selection of a Wrong Article:

The number of errors involving inappropriate selection of articles was found to be 18.31% of the total number of errors in the use of articles (see Table -1). This shows that selection of the appropriate article remains a tricky problem at this stage of learning. This should be hardly surprising in view of the fact that even accomplished writers and users of English both native and non-native are known to have tripped occasionally in their use of articles.

Errors in the selection of an appropriate article have been grouped under two headings:

III.c.1 Replacement of THE by A(N), and

III.c.2 Replacement of A(N) by THE

III.c.1 Replacement of THE by A(N):

Failure to distinguish between the specifying function of 'the' and the identifying function of 'a(N)' has led to 24 errors (viz., 46.15% of the total 52 for III.c (see Table-8). All these are cases of

III.b.2. Omission of the Indefinite Article:

Cases of omission of the indefinite article numbered 67 out of a total of 126 errors of omission of articles, (viz., 53.18%. see Table-5). All of these pertain to omission of the indefinite article before singular (concrete and abstract) nouns.

In English, the indefinite article has a two-fold function

- a. Individualizing function, when it points out an individual person or things without fixing its identity and often with the implication that any other specimen of the same class would have done just as well, e. g.,

There is a pencil on the table.

We met a man on the way.

- b. Classifying function, when it assigns a person or a thing to a special class or kind, e. g.,

We have an old radio at home. It is a wonderful thing.

In Arabic there is no discrete free morpheme to function as the counterpart of a(n). The language takes recourse to certain inflections for this purpose. This generates an acute learning problem for Arab.

Learners of English accounts for the very high frequency of errors committed by them. Some examples follow:

III.b.1.z In Specified Contexts:

So far the largest number of errors of omission of articles belongs to this group 55 (93.22% of the total for III.b.1; see Table-6). This shows that the use of the definite article in specified contexts poses maximum difficulty to the Arab learner. The most important reason appear to be the partial differences and partial similarities between the uses of the definite articles in English and Arabic. It was noticed that in many cases the learners refrained from using the definite article before a noun when the noun was specified by a qualifier like an adjectival or a prepositional phrase, e. g.,

1. Give me some of unboiled milk (47.6).
2. Some of new grammar books are useful (53.10).
3. When I went to Town garden(32.II).
4. The place of Mosul is in north of Iraq (9.III).

The learner did not use the definite article in such cases, perhaps, because he thought it was redundant to do so when the noun head was thus specified.

Anything unique is specific in its own right and should take 'the' as Quirk et al. (1980.p.75) put it "Definite reference requires the definite article."

Some learners appear unaware of this semantic phenomenon ----

5. And sun was shining (39.II).
6. John is captain of the team (70.2).

36% of errors for III. were noticed (see Table-1). These errors were grouped under two headings:

III.b.1 Omission of the Definite Article, and

III.b.2 Omission of the Indefinite Article.

III.b.1 Omission of the Definite Article:

Errors involving omission of the definite article numbered 59 out of a total of 126 for III.b (viz., 46.82%; see Table-5). These errors were further subdivided as follows:

III.b.1.y Before Superlative and Comparative Modifiers, and

III.b.1.z In Specified Contexts.

III.b.1.y Before Superlative and Comparative Modifiers:

The definite article is used with the superlative except in the predicate after the verb 'be' when a superlative form is used without a noun in a sentence like 'She is most beautiful'. The sentence can only mean, She is extremely beautiful and not that 'She is more beautiful than any one else'. In fact, there is no comparison implied here. It is to be noted that this 'error'-type is due to the lack of the rules concerning such usage of the superlative modifiers. Only 4 errors belonging to this group were found of which the following is a representative sample.

◀ Tea is ... most popular drink in Iraq (49.18).

III.a.2.z Before Plural Nouns:

The number of errors listed under this group is 7 out of 12 for III.a.2. It comes to 58.33%, see Table-4). The English indefinite article has the force of a weak numeral 'one'. Hence, it cannot collocate with a plural noun. The indefinite article is only used before singular nouns, including such words as 'alms', 'barracks', 'bellows', 'gallows', 'gas-work', 'head-quarters', etc, which though plural in form may be singular in meaning (see Zandvoort, 1966, p. 124).

1. I saw a children playing different games (27.II).
2. I saw the garden which are full of a beautiful flowers (40.II)
3. living with a happy days (19.III)
4. We see a wonderful places (23.III).

Since there are no indefinite articles as such in his own language, the Arabic learner of English has obviously not yet internalized the correct use of the English indefinite article. He does not know that the indefinite articles 'a(n)' and the plural suffix 's' are mutually exclusive. The source of this error, therefore, seems to be intralingual

III.b Omission of Articles (where needed):

Statistically, the largest number of errors in the use of articles falls under this heading. A total of 126 errors of this type (viz.,44.

Arabic, the indefinite article as I have already mentioned is either an inflectional bound morpheme (-n) / ?al-tanwi: n / or zero suffix (Ø). This lack of a one-to-one correspondence between the articles in English and Arabic can perhaps account for the above percentage of errors.

These errors were further classified as follows:

III.a.2.y Before Uncount (Concrete & Abstract) Nouns, and

III.a.2.z Before Plural Nouns.

III.a.2.y Before Uncount (concrete and Abstract) Nouns:

Five cases of this 'error'- type were listed (viz, 41.67% of

III.a.2, see Table-4). A few samples are reproduced below:

1. They make a tea (4. III).
2. A spring in Mosul is very beautiful (21.III).
3. People make a travelling around Mosul (1.III).

'tea', 'spring' and 'travelling' in the above sentences are uncount nouns which cannot take the indefinite article.

Absence of an equivalent article as a counterpart to the English 'a(n)' in his own language makes the task of the learner difficult. At school, he has been taught to use 'a(n)' before singular nouns, and when he is not sure whether a noun is count or uncount, he plays safe by inserting 'a(n)' before most singular nouns.

*III.a.1.z Before Generic Abstract and Concrete Uncountable**Nouns:*

A very large number of cases of insertion of the definite article before generic uncountable nouns, 71-75.53% of the total 94 for III.a.1, e were noticed. A few examples follow:

1. The sound travels slower than the light (47.5).
2. I like the sunny weather (30.II).
3. They think the money means everything (16.III).

'sound', 'light', 'weather' and 'money' are ordinarily (as in the above sentences) abstract uncountable nouns and are not preceded by the definite article in English. In Arabic, however, it is possible to say / ?al-sout /, / ?al-nur /, / ?al-taq / or / ?al-nuqu:d / (e.g., "Money is dear to everyone") meaning / ?al-nuqu: du azi: zatun inda kulli ?al-naasi /. This 'error'-type can, therefore, be considered an instance of mother tongue interference.

III.a.2 Incorrect Insertion of the Indefinite Article:

There were only 12 cases related to the incorrect insertion of the indefinite article (i. e., 11.3 % of the total for III.a as compared to 94 related to the insertion of the definite article (see Table-4). The reason is not far to see; in Arabic, the definite article / ?al / is a very high pressure morpheme which tends to 'gate crash' into the learner English repeatedly. On the other hand, the English indefinite article 'a(n)' which is a free morpheme is unlike its Arabic counterpart. In

In the case of Arabic proper nouns, however, the situation is not so clear as in English. In Arabic, it seems, that /ʔal/ is often added before the proper nouns of native origin, but it is omitted before proper nouns which may be of foreign origin. Thus, while it is possible to say Al-Mosul, Al-Basrah, Al-Sulaimaniyah, Al-Iraq; one does not add /ʔal/ to such proper nouns as London, Baghdad, Kirkuk, France, etc. In cases when /ʔal/ is prefixed to the use of the foreign borrowings, it is done more for the sake of rhythm and conformity to the native pattern than with the purpose of specification. This phenomenon causes a serious learning problem for the learner who most of the time he tends to follow the Arabic pattern in his choice of the definite article. Here are some examples:

1. In the Iraq, tea is the most popular drink (47.17).
2. The African leader went to the Europe (47.9).
3. In the winter,... umbrella is necessary (47.9).
4. The spring in any place ... (9.III).
5. Mosul is called the city of the two springs ... (5.III).

The definite article was found to be used before proper nouns in cases only (viz., 7.45 % of the total for III.a.1). This small figure should not, however, detracts from the magnitude of this particular learning difficulty. One can, perhaps, ascribe this low frequency count to the fact that proper nouns were rather sparingly used by the learners in their answers to the diagnostic test

III.a.1.x Before Generic Count Nouns:

Sixteen errors (17.02 % of the total for III.a.1; see Table-3.) of insertion of the definite article before generic count nouns were noticed. A few examples follow:

1. I had caught three of the big African elephants (58.8).
2. A number of the seats are available (73.19).
3. The children were going to the school (37.11).

From the above mentioned examples, it seems that 'elephants', 'seats' and 'school' are not specified in the context. Perhaps 'the school' in sentence '3' is a case of translation from / ?al-madrasati /. As already noticed, there is lack of a one-to-one correspondence between the use of the definite article in English and Arabic. / ?al / in Arabic does not always specify; for instance in / ?al-hind /, / ?al / does not specify 'India'; in / ?al-maal / as in / ?akrahu ?al-maala / (I hate money), it is the same case.

III.a.1.y Before Proper Nouns (Unique Reference):

The use of the definite article in the English noun-phrase is fairly clear in the case of proper nouns. 'The' is not ordinarily used "before a singular proper name, ... before the name of most countries, states, cities, towns, ... names of streets, name of a language when it is not followed by the word 'language', ... and before the names of games (see Praninskas, 1975, p. 77).

Errors in the use of articles were classified into three broad categories:

III.a Insertion of Articles (where not needed)

III.b Omission of Articles (where needed), and

III.c Selection of wrong Articles.

III.a Insertion of Articles:

A total of 106 errors out of 284 of wrong insertion of articles were noticed. This amounts to 37.33 % of the total errors (see Table-1) The absence of a one-to-one correspondence between the articles in English and Arabic can perhaps account for this high percentage of errors. These errors were further classified under the following heads:

III.a.1 Incorrect Insertion of the Definite Article, and

III.a.2 Incorrect Insertion of the Indefinite Article.

III.a.1 Incorrect Insertion of the Definite Article:

As many as 94 errors out of a total of 106 for III.a (viz., 88.68%, see Table-2) pertained to an unwanted use of the definite article in the learners' answers. There were subdivided as

III.a.1.x Before Generic Countable Nouns,

III.a.1.y Before Proper Nouns (unique reference), and

III.a.1.z Before Generic Abstract and Concrete Uncountable Nouns.

In Arabic, one can see that it is possible to use /ʔal/ with both the adjective and the 'Noun Head' in a noun phrase, whereas in English, the definite article precedes only the whole noun phrase:

EnglishArabicThe old city

/ʔal-madi: natu ʔal-qadi: matu/

The beautiful

/ʔal-marʔtu ʔal-d3ami:latu/

Again, the Arabic /ʔal/ is almost invariably employed to indicate the genus (class), i.e., any individual (animate or inanimate), as for example:

'Dinar and dirham bring man to perdition.'

Is translated into Arabic as /ʔal-di: naru waldirhamu ʔahlakannaasa / or 'Man is better than woman.'

Which is translated into Arabic as /ʔal-rad3ulu xeirun min ʔal-marʔati \ (see Wright, 1971: p. 269).

Also, while the English contrast between the article and zero marking is a contrast in the relevance of individualization, the Arabic contrast between the article and zero marking is one of the unambiguity versus ambiguity (see Beeston, 1970, p. 37). Consider the following table.

Marker	English	Arabic
zero article	man (generic)	/rad3ul / (genus)'class'
indefinite article	a man (any person)	/rad3ulu-n / specific indefinite
definite article	the man (specific person)	/ʔal-rad3ul (u) /specific definite

III. Errors in the Use of Articles:

On the basis of the present study, it is to be noted that 284 errors were committed by the students in the use of English articles. This amounts to 61.47% of the total errors 462 in the use of the noun phrase, which will be excluded from this study.

There exist partial similarities and partial differences in the use of articles in English and in Arabic, and this is what renders this particular area of language-use very vulnerable to errors. Though both the English 'the' and Arabic 'al' have had their origin in the demonstrative forms (see Eckersley & Eckersley, 1966: p. 52, and Wright, 1971, p. 269), yet, it would be naive to suggest that the English definite article 'the' has its counterpart in Arabic /al/ or that the English indefinite article 'a(n)' has no counterpart in Arabic. Against the English 'the', "the Arabic marker is a morpheme with positionally determined varieties lengthening of the initial consonant where this is a lingual (? Assana 'al-sana' 'the year'), a prefixed 'l' if the initial consonant is anything else /al-qarja / 'the village') (see Beeston, 1970, p. 37).

Arabic handles the problem of 'definiteness' by ensuring the absence of ambiguity, whether it is achieved by the inherent nature of the substantive itself or by the use of the article in any of its functional values.

Table I: System of Article Usage and Reference in English and Arabic

Reference	Article	English			Arabic		
		Count		Mass	Count		Mass
		Singular	plural		Singular	plural	
1. Generic	Definite	✓			✓	✓	✓
	Indefinite	✓					
	Zero		✓	✓			
	Definite	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2. Specific	Indefinite	✓			✓	✓	✓
	Some (Zero)		✓	✓			
	Zero	✓			✓		
3. Unique							

/ ?iStara saalimun qalaman wa daftaran Øumma baaSa ?al-daftara /.

Unique reference in English refers to a single individual and is expressed by zero article used with proper nouns such as: John, London, France, ... etc. Unique reference in Arabic, also points to a single individual and is expressed by zero article used with proper nouns, e. g., Salim, Basrah, ... etc. It could be noted that unique reference poses very little difficulty for the Arabic-speaking learner since the use of unique reference with most proper nouns is similar in both English and Arabic. The system of article usage and reference can be illustrated by using the following table.

singular count nouns, and the zero article before plural nouns and mass nouns.

Examples: 1. The car is faster than the bus.

2. A car is faster than a bus.

3. Cars are faster than buses.

4. Gold is more expensive than silver.

Arabic, on the other hand, maps generic reference by using the definite article with all types of common nouns, e. g., /ʔal-baab / 'the door', /ʔal-ʔabwaab / 'doors', /ʔal-nift / 'oil', ... etc.

As for specific reference, English uses the definite article with all the three types of nouns, singular, plural and mass, e. g.,

1. He sold the pencil.

2. He sold the pencils.

3. He sold the sugar.

It uses the indefinite article before singular count nouns, e. g., He sold a pencil.

Zero article is used before the plural and mass nouns, e. g.,

1. He sold pencils.

2. He sold sugar.

In Arabic, definite and indefinite specific reference is expressed by definite and indefinite articles respectively (see also Aziz, 1979: p. 105; Aziz, 1989: pp.105-106, e. g.,)

As far as the second view is concerned, Arabic has three articles namely: definite / *ʔal* / 'the' and zero (\emptyset) article (see Aziz, 1979, 1989, and Kharma & Hajjaj, 1989).

From the above mentioned points, it seems that the difference between English and Arabic is that English employs a tripartite system to express definiteness/ indefiniteness, namely: a(n), the, and zero, whereas Arabic employs a binary system, namely: / *ʔal* / 'the' and the indefinite article which has two forms: nunation (-n) and (\emptyset). Part of the confusion in using the English articles arises from this main difference between the two systems: Arab learners tend to equate 'a(n)' (a free morpheme in English) and often zero with Arabic which apparently seems to be zero (bound morpheme in Arabic), and vice versa. In addition, the use of articles in English is more restricted than in Arabic. In English, it is closely connected with the classification of nouns into count / mass, and singular / plural (see also Aziz, 1979, p. 24; Master, 1988, p. 2). In Arabic, such classification does not affect the use of articles. Thus, this restriction of using articles in English may pose a difficulty for the Arabic-speaking learner.

II.2 System of Reference Usage in English and Arabic:

English expresses generic reference by inserting the definite article before singular count noun, the indefinite article before

As for Arabic, it seems that there are two contradictory views. According to the first view and general consensus, Arabic has two articles:

1. The definite article / ʔal /⁽²⁾: It is used with all types of nouns such as count nouns, both singular and plural, and mass nouns, e. g., / ʔal-kitaab/, /ʔal-kutub/ and /ʔal-maaʔ/, ... etc.
2. The indefinite article and its forms: With respect to the forms of the 'indefinite' article morpheme in Arabic, it might be stated that the indefinite article is one of two things: the suffix(-n) which is called / ʔal-tanwi:n/ 'nutation'⁽³⁾ and the zero suffix (Ø), which appears only in the deep structure (see Joodi, 1978, pp. 171, 188). Nutation is always realized as (-n) as in / kitaabu-n/ 'a book', / kutubu-n / 'Ø book', / ħali: bu-n / 'Ø milk', / muħammadu-n/ ' V Muhammad '. From the previous examples, it seems that Arabic (-n) corresponds to English 'a(n)' used with singular count nouns, and (Ø) used with plural count, non-count and proper nouns. On the other hand, Arabic (Ø) corresponds to English 'a(n)' used with singular count nouns, and (Ø) used with plural count nouns and proper nouns: / ʃaħraaʔu- Ø / 'a desert', /maʃaabi: ħu- Ø / 'Ø lamps' / jaʔquubu- Ø / 'Jacob' (see also Joodi, 1978, p. 182).

(2) It is to be noted that I. P. A symbols are used for the transcription of Arabic words.

(3) Nutation is traditionally defined as a quiescent (i. e. vowelless) superfluous (-n) that is attached to the end of a word-form, usually a noun (cited in, Joodi, 1978: p. 171 .)

Thus, while the first part of the diagnostic test yields strictly 'restricted' data, the second yields partly-controlled data, and the third gives absolutely 'free data', a piece of composition which does not restrict the students even in their choice of a topic. Consequently, it is hoped that the test combines all the advantages of yielding 'restricted', partly 'free' and fully 'free' data.

A total of 80 freshmen of the Department of Translation at the College of Arts, Mosul University took the test.⁽¹⁾

II. 1 System of Article Usage in English and Arabic:

English has three types of articles. They are as follows:

1. The definite article: It is used with all types of nouns such as count nouns both singular and plural, and mass nouns, Consider the following examples: the pencil, the pencils, the water, ... etc.
2. The indefinite articles 'a(n)': It is used only with count nouns in the singular, e. g., a pencil, an apple, ... etc.
3. The zero article (\emptyset): It is used with plural count nouns and mass nouns, e. g., pencils, some pencils, milk, some milk, ... etc.

(1) The Code: The first numeral stands for the serial number of the script; the numeral following it gives the number of the sentence in the first part of the diagnostic test.

Thus, 16. 20 indicates "Script No. 16, Sentence No. 20". When , however, reference is to the second or the third part of the test, the corresponding part is shown by the Roman numerals II or III, e. g., 62. II indicates "Script No. 62, part No. II. " 37. III indicates "Script No. 37, Part No. III."

- V. Tracing each 'error' - back to its possible source, e. g. , interlanguage, intralanguage, ... etc.
- VI. Presenting some suggestions and recommendations for pedagogical implications.

I. The Diagnostic Test:

This paper is based on the results of a diagnostic test in preference to the experienced teacher's 'hunches' about his students' common errors which are undeniably true in most cases without, however, having the merit of a scientific basis. Mackey (1966: p. 97) supports this view by stating that "we are likely to get better results by collecting and classifying the mistakes the learners make then by trying to predict those we should expect them to make".

The diagnostic test designed specifically for the purpose of this investigation consists of three parts. The first part had a set of 20 Arabic sentences which were to be translated by the learners into English. This exercise in translation is expected to show the interference of the forms and patterns of Arabic in the target language, English. The second part of the test has a 'guided' short essay, and hints are provided for the learners in the form of relevant vocabulary and thought content. In the third part of the test, the learners were asked to produce a short composition on any topic of their own choice.

In fact, nouns in English may be countable or uncountable, definite or indefinite, premodified or postmodified, and they may have specific, generic or unique reference (see Roberts, 1976; Kharma, 1981; Quirk & Greenbaum, 1973, and Aziz, 1989). It has also been proved that another source of difficulty for Arab learners in using English articles comes from Arabic interference (see Aziz, 1979: p. 19, and Kharma & Hajjaj, 1989: p. 151). Thus, it becomes evident that learners of English fail to master this system with its difficult and complex rules of uses; therefore, they tend to make a remarkable number of errors in using articles.

This paper aims at investigating the types of errors in the use of articles made by Iraqi university students majoring in English at Mosul University. It also attempts to explain the causes of some of these errors and then to present some suggestions and recommendations for pedagogical implications.

In this research, the following steps are followed:

- I. Designing and administering a diagnostic test.
- II. Presenting the basic uses of articles in both English and Arabic.
- III. Identifying and classifying 'errors' in the use of articles followed by their tabulation in order to arrive at their frequency counts.
- IV. Describing each 'error'-type thus identified and classified.

*A Linguistic Study of Errors in the Use of
Articles Committed by Arabic-Speaking
Students at the English B. A. First-Year Level
(University of Mosul)*

Misbah M. D. Al-Sulaimaan^()*

Introduction

In Iraq, where English is taught as a foreign language, students often have a great deal of trouble in using English articles for various reasons. One main reason is related to the fact that English has a relatively difficult and complex system of articles (see Adams, 1962; Kaluza, 1963; Oller & Redding, 1971; Joodi, 1978; Aziz, 1979; Kharma, 1981; Agnihotri et al, 1984; Ilyas, 1985, and Kharma & Hajjaj, 1989). Master (1988, p. 2) claims that "mastery of articles in English is no easy matter for most EFL students. Even those languages that have an article system differ from English in the application of the rules and this difficulty lies in the fact that the article implies a certain view of the noun to which it applies" (for the same view see also Kharma and Hajjaj, 1989: p. 151).

(*) Department of Translation / College of Arts / University of Mosul.