

*Research Article*

## Errors in the English Article System Among EFL Learners: Evidence from the Kurdistan Region - Iraq

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Article Info	Abstract
Article History Received Apr 28, 2024 Revised Jun 21, 2024 Accepted Jun 22, 2024	The identification of the sources and types of students' errors in the use of the English article system is beneficial in assisting them to overcome such problems. This study aims to investigate the types and sources of article errors made by Kurdish EFL learners. The data was collected from 61 third-year university students who were studying English at the time of the present study. The types of article errors were analysed based on surface structure taxonomy (SST). Contrastive and error analyses were adopted to analyse the sources of article errors. The study findings suggest that the students committed different types of errors in the use of the English article system, namely, substitution, omission, and addition. Omission errors were the most frequent type of article errors, while substitution errors were the least frequent ones. The sources of errors are divided into two categories: inter-lingual and intra-lingual. Analysis of the student's written samples indicates that most of the errors in the articles are attributed to the target language itself. The implications of the study suggest that teachers should pay more attention to the acquisition of the English article system. Limitations and future research considerations are discussed in the article.
<b>Keywords</b> Article Errors EFL Learners Kurdistan Region - Iraq	



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### 1. Introduction

The acquisition of the English article system can be considered the most difficult task for EFL learners. According to Master (2002), there are two factors contributing to the difficulties in the use of the English article system: First, articles are the most frequent types of function word in English, and second, function words like articles are unstressed, making it difficult for non-native speakers of the English language to differentiate between them. The acquisition of English articles is, therefore, challenging for learners who speak languages without articles. In non-English-speaking countries, students are required to study English as a second or foreign language before entering the university. In the context of the Kurdistan Region – Iraq (KRI), students study English through Kurdish language-based instruction at schools for twelve years before taking their undergraduate studies. They also study the English article system and how to use it appropriately in great detail.

Past research has underscored language transfer as a source of difficulty for learners of English, as the grammatical rules of their first language (L1) affect the use of articles in their second language (English). In another study dealing with Japanese learners of English, Mizuno (1999) discovered that Japanese EFL/ESL learners made errors in using the English article system due to the absence of articles in the Japanese language. He also indicated that the misuse and overuse of English articles by Japanese students are attributed to the interference of L1 (Japanese) with L2 (English). The study of second language acquisition (SLA) and the interference of L1 to L2 was a concern to many researchers and linguists. The term language transfer has been adopted to discuss the interference between L1 and L2. Gass (1984, as cited in Murphy, 2003) stated language transfer as the transmission of L1 rules (form and function) to L2. Some researchers have stated that language transfer is negative and delays second language acquisition. In contrast, others have considered language transfer important because it facilitates language acquisition. This has sparked controversial debates among researchers in the field of English language teaching and learning. The acquisition of the English article system by EFL/ESL learners and the factors that contributed to the errors in their use has also been of interest to linguists. Previous studies have provided detailed information about article errors made by Arab, Pashto, Iraqi, Taiwanese, and Chinese learners of English. However, there is no study to date investigating the acquisition of the English article system and common article errors among Kurdish EFL learners. The factors attributed to the article errors among Kurdish EFL learners were not examined as well. The examination of the sources of article errors is especially important for writing pedagogical implications. This investigation is important because it is also the first study to investigate the errors in the use of the English article system by Kurdish EFL learners. It is also significant for the lecturers of the English language because it provides a clear description of how to handle students' errors in the use of the English article system. This contribution also offers seminal pedagogical implications that lecturers can use in their writing syllabuses and preparing instructional materials and methodologies. The purpose of this study is, therefore, to analyse and classify article errors and identify their sources. To this end, the present study addresses the following research questions.

1. What are the common types of article errors made by Kurdish EFL learners?
2. What are the sources of these errors in the English article system?

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Kurdish and English Article System**

The Kurdish and English languages have different sentence structures. Kurdish sentence structure is (SOV), while English sentence structure is (SVO). English articles can be divided into two different categories: definite articles and indefinite articles. Indefinite articles like (a, an) and definite articles like “the”. In general, English has four different articles (a, an, the, and Ø-zero articles). In contrast, Kurdish articles can be divided into definite and indefinite articles. The definite article in Kurdish, “eke”, is used after a

noun to indicate that the identity of the noun is known to the reader. Unlike English, Kurdish has only one indefinite article, which is “êk”.

A number of differences and similarities Can be found in article system of the two languages.. First, in English, the definite article “the” is used before nouns, while in Kurdish, the definite article “eke” is used after nouns. Second, in English, phonological awareness related to the use of indefinite articles is necessary in understanding the correct choice of articles based on the phonological context. The English indefinite articles “a” and “an” come in different phonological contexts; for example, “a” precedes nouns starting with consonant sounds, while “an” precedes nouns starting with vowel sounds. In contrast, in Kurdish, phonological awareness related to the indefinite articles is not necessary. “êk” comes after the nouns without regard to the phonological context. In English, the definite article “the” is the most frequent type of article (Sinclair, 1991 as cited in Master, 1997). Kurdish overuses the definite article “eke” as well.

As it has been explained, the number of difficulties is greater than the number of similarities. As a result, Kurdish and English have different article systems. When two languages have differences in grammar and structure, errors are expected, and the acquisition of the target language will be difficult (Lado, 1957). Such grammatical and structural differences cause difficulties for Kurdish EFL students and encourage them to transfer the rules of their native language to articles in their target language. However, Master (1997) posed another critical hypothesis and stated that the acquisition of the English article system is usually marked by whether the learners’ native language contains the article system or not, rather by similarities or differences among the languages. As a result, the acquisition of target language articles will be easier for Kurdish EFL students, and it will also eliminate the frequency of inter-lingual errors related to article usage.

In this study, two hypotheses are being presented, namely Lado’s hypothesis and Master’s hypothesis. Based on Lado’s hypothesis inter-lingual errors are expected because Kurdish and English are different in the article system. Additionally, based on the second hypothesis inter-lingual errors are not expected because Kurdish has an article system that is both definite and indefinite, as in English.

The relevant literature contains numerous studies on EFL/ESL learners' errors in the use of the English Article System. Scott and Tucker (1974) ranked article errors as the most repeated type of errors among other grammatical mistakes by high school graduates. It has been suggested that learners with higher proficiency levels in English commit fewer errors in the use of articles and other grammatical structures. To put it differently, the acquisition of the English article system is related to learners' proficiency levels, a concept supported by Butler (2002), which identifies common article errors among Japanese learners of English. He stated that learners with higher proficiency levels were less likely to commit errors, while learners with lower proficiency levels were greatly influenced by the grammatical rules of their native language. Past research has classified the types of article errors made by L2 learners into three different

categories: omission, addition, and substitution. Alhaysony (2012) used the same classification for errors in the English article system. In addition, according to Sermsook et al. (2017), the article errors recorded the second highest frequency with a percentage of 13%. The study participants in the investigation of Khuwaileh and Shoumali (2000) made different grammatical errors; in which one of the major errors was cohesion and coherence. Articles like “the” are one way to make a text more cohesive and coherent (Halliday & Hassan, 2014). Many other studies concerned with grammatical errors studied the effectiveness of the grammatical corrections made by the teachers for the learners’ common errors. According to Tomasello and Heron (1988), teachers can use error analysis to identify the type and source of the errors made by L2 learners. Error analysis is different from error correction because it refers to all the errors made by the same group of people who share the same mother tongue (Sobahle, 1986).

Moreover, the source of article errors can be divided into two categories: inter-lingual, which involves the transmission of L1 rules to L2, and intra-lingual, where the target language itself might be the source of errors, known as intra-lingual sources of difficulty (Corder, 1967). Corder claimed that not all article errors are related to the interference of L1 and L2. James (1998) divided the source of errors into four main categories: “inter-lingual errors, intra-lingual errors, communication strategy-based errors, and induced errors.” In contrast, Hinnon (2014) proposed three sources of errors, including “negative transfer of L1 to L2, the differences between L1 and L2 grammar and sentence structures, and restricted knowledge of L2.” Many researchers, like Kaweera (2013), have concluded that inter-lingual errors are the negative language transfer of the learner’s L1 to L2, while intra-lingual errors are errors committed due to a lack of knowledge about the target language. The English article system is a complicated system of acquisition, and learners should pay more attention to the correct use of articles in both spoken and written forms of language.

In spite of the fact that many studies were undertaken, offering understanding of the possible errors in the use of the English article system, students still have difficulties with the use of English articles. In essence, the analysis of the sources of the article errors and factors that contributed to those errors by students is continuously required to be carried out. The current study clearly states the factors that contributed to the article errors in the students’ composition, and it also offers educational implications for fixing them.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

#### **3.1. Contrastive Analysis**

Ellis (1997) says errors help ESL learners learn the target language fully. Many researchers have considered errors to be an integral part of second language acquisition; they believe that language acquisition will not occur without errors. In this study, contrastive analysis is adopted to identify the errors related to the negative transfer of the first language to the second one. The contrastive analysis was proposed by Robert Lado in 1957 in his influential book “Linguistics Across the Cultures.” He stated that contrastive

analysis can be used to identify the errors and difficulties related to the negative transfer of first and second languages by comparing the two languages and cultures to one another. When similarities in the structures of the two languages can be found, errors are not expected. When they are different, the errors are expected. His idea of the contrastive analysis was that it deals with the surface comparison of the language.

### 3.2. Error Analysis

Contrastive analysis cannot be used to identify some types of errors that ESL learners might face. For errors that cannot be identified by contrastive analysis, error analysis (EA) is adopted. British applied linguist Pit Corder considered errors to be an important part of language acquisition, without which acquisition would not happen. EA is used to analyse and identify the errors related to the second language itself, which are classified as intra-lingual errors. EA is a theory that can be adapted to analyse learners' errors to evaluate their progress in the target language (Corder, 1967). Both contrastive analysis and EA can be used to identify the different types of errors that L2 learners might encounter in the acquisition of the second language. They are also beneficial in providing corrective feedback on students' errors. Zhu and Wang (2019, as cited in Ha et al., 2021) noted that learners want their errors to be corrected by teachers because it helps them to know about their errors.

### 3.3 Dulay's Theory

Surface structure taxonomy (SST) was proposed by Dulay et al. (1982), who categorized grammatical errors into three main categories: omission, addition, and substitution. Corder (1981) stated that SST can be used to classify and analyse errors in surface structures. The present study adopted SST to classify the type and source of article errors. Based on Dulay's theory, students' errors in the use of the English article system can be divided into three major types:

1. Omission errors refer to the situation in which the articles are being omitted in structures that must appear and be used in well-formed structures. They have been subcategorized into omission of "the", omission of "a", and omission of "an".
2. Addition errors refer to the situation in which articles are added that must not appear or be used in well-formed structures. They have been divided into three other subcategories: addition of "the", addition of "a", and addition of "an".
3. Substitution errors refer to the situation in which students substitute the correct articles for incorrect ones. The researcher divided them into four major sub-types: substitution of "the" for "an" and "a", substitution of "an" and "a" for "the", substitution of "a" for "an", and substitution of "an" for "a".

## 4. Methods and Materials

### 4.1. Research Design

A quantitative research design was adopted to examine the types and sources of article errors in the participants' written samples. It allowed the researchers to include more participants and provide more accurate and quantified results for the addressed problems.

## **4.2. Participants**

In this study, 61 undergraduate students studying the English language at one public university in KRI served as participants of the study. All the study participants were third-year university students and almost all of them had the same academic backgrounds and proficiency level in the English language. The participants' selection was based on random sampling. They were all native speakers of the Kurdish language, and their ages ranged from 19 to 21. They were all familiar with the composition of academic essays; and have been taught how to compose well-organized essays in their first semester of studying. Additionally, they studied the English article system and how to use it correctly in secondary and upper-secondary schools.

## **4.3. Data Collection Procedures**

The data collection instrument was students' written tests. By utilizing this method, we aimed to demonstrate the types of article errors and factors that caused difficulties for Kurdish EFL students in the use of English articles. Ethically, we informed the writing instructor about the study procedures and purposes, and verbal consent was obtained from the instructor to use the students' written tests for the purpose of this study. In our study, ethical considerations come first; therefore, we ensured that all the participants' personal details, including their names and test marks, were kept confidential. To effectively maintain the integrity of our study, we prioritized the participants' well-being and mental state by minimizing harm in an honest and clear manner.

Study participants were engaged in a 20-minute written test administered by their instructor in their regular writing class. They were asked to compose an academic essay based on all the writing instructions they were taught in their first semester of study. In addition, four different topics were given to them to write a short essay about: the impact of technology on our lives, culture, university life, and online education. They have been given absolute freedom to choose one of the four given topics and write on them based on their knowledge and interests. All four given topics were decided by the instructor, and they all reflected the participants' proficiency levels and interests, and they all had a narrative nature that allowed the students to write about freely. The students' written essays were calculated as a test; therefore, they were not allowed to use dictionaries or access the internet at the time of the written test. Additionally, all the students' written tests were passed in two stages: first, they were collected and marked by the instructor, respectively. More importantly, the instructor did not identify the students' errors related to the use of English articles. Second, they were handed over to the researchers to conduct their investigation on them.

## **4.4. Data Analysis**

Scholars have introduced different steps in analysing students' errors. The procedure of EA was adopted in analysing and interpreting the errors in the student's written samples. Ellis and Barkhuizen

(2005) introduced procedures for EA to analyse the common grammatical errors in both spoken and written forms of language. It comprises five main steps:



**Figure 1.** Procedures of EA

1. Note. This figure shows the procedures of EA (Ellis & Barkhuizen 2005).
2. Collection of data: This is the first step in EA in which the researcher collects sufficient data to classify and analyse the errors. In this study, the gathered data is in the form of written samples.
3. Identification of errors: In this step, the researcher was involved in the identification of the errors. According to Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005), before identifying errors, the researcher should understand the differences between errors and mistakes. After the data collection procedure, the researcher identified the common errors in the use of the English article system made by Kurdish learners of English. The errors were found in clauses and sentences, and some of them contained more than one error.
4. Description of errors: The identified errors are classified into their types. SST which was proposed by Dulay et al. (1982) was used to classify the errors into three major categories: omission, addition, and substitution.
5. Explanation of errors: It is the most critical step in EA in which the source of classified errors is analysed. The major factors that contributed to the occurrence of errors in the use of English articles were analysed. It has been explained what the common sources of the errors are and why the students have made such errors. Contrastive analysis and EA are used to identify the source of errors. Based on both approaches, the source of article errors has been divided into inter-lingual and intra-lingual. Contrastive analysis is employed to identify interlingual errors, and EA is employed to identify errors related to intralingual factors.
6. Evaluation of errors: In the last step of EA, researchers have evaluated and drawn a numerical conclusion for the errors. The number and frequency of each classified type of error are presented through the use of mathematical or numerical tables. It also identifies strategies to correct the most common types of article errors.

## 5. Results and Discussion

### 5.1. Types of Article Errors

As mentioned earlier, SST is used to identify and classify the types of article errors. Based on SST, the errors found can be divided into omission, addition, and substitution. Omission means replacing both

definite and indefinite articles with zero articles with zero articles. In contrast, addition means replacing zero articles with both definite and indefinite articles. In substitution, the articles will be used instead of one another. The total one hundred and fifty errors were made by the Kurdish EFL learners in their written samples. Table 1 shows the overall frequency of article errors and their main types based on SST.

**Table 1.** The overall frequency of article errors (SST)

Error type	Total	%
Omission	105	70%
Addition	33	20%
Substitution	12	8%
Error total	150	

However, the current paper expected omission errors due to the fact that both students' mother tongue (Kurdish) and target language (English) have different article systems. The given table shows the omission of the articles as the most repeated type of error, with a frequency of 70% among the other types of article errors. Both definite and indefinite articles were deleted in many contexts in which they must not be omitted. This finding is in line with the result of Alhaysony (2012), who stated omission as the most frequent type of article error among Arabic-speaking learners of English. Moreover, addition errors have been concluded to be the second most frequent type of error, with a percentage of 20%. Substitution is the least-found type of article error, with 12 counts standing for 8%. This finding rejects the finding of Al-Qadi (2017), who stated substitution errors as the second most repeated type of error among Saudi Arab EFL learners. Substitution means substituting the correct article for the wrong one as depicted in Table 2.

**Table 2.** The types and frequency of the errors

Error type	The	A	An	Total	The%	A%	An%
Omission	69	31	5	105	65.7%	29.5%	4.7%
Addition	7	24	2	33	21.2%	72.7%	6.06%
Error total	76	55	7	138	55%	39.8%	5%

However, English has one indefinite article, a/an, but we divided it into two categories: "a" and "an". Table 2 presents the type and frequency of omissions and additions to the articles and divides the English article system into three categories: The, a, and an. From Table 2, it is clear that the omission of the definite article "the" is the most frequent among the other types of omission, with 69 counts representing 65.7%. The study concurs with the findings of Brown (1994) and Al-Qadi (2017), who recorded the omission of "the" as the most frequent one. The equivalence article for "the" in Kurdish is "eke". "eke" is the most repeated type of article in Kurdish as "the" in English, therefore, the omission of "the" was not expected.



The omission of the indefinite article “a” is the second most repeated error by Kurdish EFL learners, with a percentage of 29.5%. The omission of the indefinite article “an” is the least frequent one, with only five counts standing for 4.7%.

The addition of the indefinite article “a” is the most frequent type of addition error. Students added the indefinite article “a” to structures where it must not be used in well-formed structures. This finding was neither expected nor related to the negative transfer of students’ mother tongue rules to the target language. It also disagrees with the findings of Al-Qadi (2017), who stated the addition of “the” as the most frequent one. The addition of “the” comes in second, hitting seven counts with 21.2%. The addition of “an” was the least repeated type of addition error, with only two counts. We expected this finding due to the fact that neither Kurdish nor English overuse indefinite articles.

**Table 3.** Frequency of the substitution errors

Error type	Count	%
“a” for “an”	3	25%
“an” for “a”	0	0
“the” for “a” and “an”	5	41.6%
“a” and “an” for “the”	4	33.3%
Error Total	12	

The substitution errors have been divided into four major categories. The substitution of definite “the” for indefinite “a” and “an” has recorded the highest counts, with a percentage of 41.6%. In contrast, the substitution of indefinite articles “a” and “an” for the definite article “the” is the second most common substitution error, accounting for 33.3%. The substitution of indefinite articles “a” for “an” occupies the third place, with three counts only representing 25%. Learners have substituted “a” for “an” due to a lack of phonological awareness in the use of indefinite articles. No cases for the substitution of “an” for “a” were found; that is the least frequent type of substitution error. This result conflicts with the result of Hamza (2013), who stated the substitution of “a” for “an” or “an” for “a” as the most common type of substitution error. It also disagrees with Sermsook et al. (2017), who stated zero cases for substitution errors and grouped all the participants’ article errors into omission and addition.

## 5.2. Sources of Article Errors

The sources of article errors have been divided into two different categories: inter-lingual and intra-lingual. Inter-lingual errors are caused by the negative transfer of L1 to L2, while intra-lingual errors are caused by the incomplete application and students’ lack of knowledge of the L2 rules and grammar (See Table 4).

**Table 4.** Source of article errors

<b>Inter-lingual</b>	<b>Counts</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Intra-lingual</b>	<b>Counts</b>	<b>%</b>
Addition "the"	7	47%	Omission "the"	69	51%
Substitution "the" for "a" and "an"	5	33%	Addition "a" and "an"	24, 2	17%, 1.5%
Substitution "a" for "an"	3	20%	Omission "a" and "an"	31, 5	23%, 3.7%
			Substitution "a" and "an" for "the"	4	3%
Error total	15			135	

As it is shown in Table 4 above, the frequency of the errors related to the target language (intra-lingual) is greater than the frequency of the inter-lingual errors. Intra-lingual errors recorded the highest frequency with 135 counts. Only 15 cases of article errors can be concluded to be inter-lingual (errors attributed to the interference of L1 and L2). This finding disagrees with the findings of Mizuno (1999), Alhaysony (2012), and Sermsook et al. (2017), who considered inter-lingual errors as the most frequent source of article errors. It also rejects Lado's null hypothesis, which states that when languages are different in structure and grammar, a greater number of inter-lingual errors are expected than intra-lingual ones. In addition, all the omission errors are attributed to L2 (intra-lingual). This finding supports the finding of Kim (2001), who stated as that intra-lingual errors are the most frequent source of errors among Korean EFL learners. The study subjects omitted both definite and indefinite articles due to their ignorance and wrong application of the target language rules. The omission errors are not associated with L1. This finding is in conflict with the findings of Sermsook et al. (2017), who claimed the source of omission errors was inter-lingual and Thai EFL learners who omitted articles in English discourses because they did not have any articles in their mother tongue. Hamza (2013) also suggested that Iraqi EFL students omitted articles due to L1 interference with L2. Students tended to use the article rules of L1 to use articles in L2. Omission errors are attributed to the target language rather than the student's native language because Kurdish has both definite and indefinite articles, as in English. This finding supports Master's null hypothesis that inter-lingual errors are not expected where the two languages have an article system.

The addition errors like the addition of "a" and "an" are attributed to the target language, and they ranked third, recording 24 and 2 counts, respectively, representing 17% and 1.5%. This finding suggests that the Kurdish-speaking learners of English added the indefinite articles "a" and "an" in many contexts in which they must not appear due to the student's lack of knowledge of the use of indefinite articles in the target language. The below examples present the addition of "a" in sentences in which they should not be added.

- Example 1: we have a different people
- Correction 1: We have different people
- Example 2: Someone has a work
- Correction 2: Someone has work

However, a few cases of addition errors, like the addition “the”, are attributed to the negative transfer between the student’s native language and target language (inter-lingual). Students have added the definite article “the” in places where it should not appear due to the fact that they overuse the definite article “eke” in their first language. They overused the definite article excessively in their English discourse as well. This rejects the finding of Sermsook et al. (2017), who considered the addition of “the” as intra-lingual, and the students have added “the” due to the wrong application of English rules. The example below indicates the addition of “the” in a sentence in which it must not be added.

- Example 3: The explore different cultures.
- Correction 3: Explore different cultures.

Substitution errors can be related to intra-lingual and inter-lingual sources of errors. The students substituted “the” for “a” and “an” due to L1 interference with L2. Students have substituted indefinite articles for definite articles due to the negative transfer of L1 rules to L2. This finding agrees with the finding of Hamza (2013), who marked the source of substitution of definite articles for indefinite articles as inter-lingual. Students tend to transfer the grammatical and syntactical rules of their first language to their second language due to a lack of knowledge of L2 grammar and rules. The substitution of “a” for “an” is caused by the negative language transfer between L1 and L2, too. Based on a contrastive analysis of errors, the study participants substituted “a” for “an” because the Kurdish language has only one indefinite article, “êk”, while English has two indefinite articles. Students tended to transfer the rules of their L1 to L2 and substitute “a” for “an” in almost all the sentences, neglecting the fact that English has two indefinite articles. In contrast, some cases of substitution errors, like the substitution of “a” and “an” for “the”, are attributed to the wrong application of the target language rules. This finding was not expected because neither Kurdish nor English overuse indefinite articles. This kind of substitution is the least frequent type of intra-lingual source of errors, with only 4 hits accounting for 3%, as showcased in the example below, indicating the substitution of “a” for “an”.

- Example 4: you can send a email to your boss.
- Correction 4: You can send an email to your boss.

The omission of “a” is attributed to L2, and it recorded the second highest frequency of intra-lingual sources of errors with a 23% percentage. According to the error analysis, which is used to analyze the source of errors related to the target language itself (intra-lingual), the students omitted “a” due to a lack of L2 knowledge and the incorrect application of L2 grammatical rules. The findings suggested that Kurdish EFL learners had more difficulties with the use of indefinite articles than with definite articles. This kind of difficulty can be related to the fact that Kurdish has only one indefinite article, while English has two. Additionally, such a difference in the number of indefinite articles between Kurdish and English caused the misapplication of indefinite articles in the target language. The two examples below show the omission of “a” from sentences in which they should not be omitted.

- Example 5: Technology is very important thing in our life.
- Correction 5: Technology is a very important thing in our life.
- Example 6: we can learn new skill.
- Correction 6: We can learn a new skill.

As it is explained above, the use of indefinite articles was the most problematic error for the Kurdish EFL students, and they tended to omit, add, and substitute them in many well-written structures. This problem in the use of indefinite articles can be explained in two ways: first, Kurdish has only one indefinite article, “êk”, that can be used after nouns, while English has two indefinite articles “a” that can be used before nouns that start with consonant sounds and “an” before nouns that start with vowel sounds. Such a difference in the number and the usage of indefinite articles in Kurdish and English caused difficulties among Kurdish EFL students. Second, it explained that students made errors in the use of indefinite articles due to a lack of knowledge of the target language rules and grammar. It also explained that students have not been taught appropriately how to use indefinite articles in the target language.

As the English language was the main source of article errors for Kurdish EFL learners, the findings suggest that English has a very difficult article system, and the teachers should give more credit to the teaching of the English article system. Teachers can help students overcome their difficulties in using the English article system by adopting new mythological strategies to teach them. Most of the students have made errors in the target language article system due to a lack of knowledge about the target language's grammar and structure.

## 6. Conclusion and Implications

We consider this study the first investigation to examine the types and sources of article errors in students' writing in the context of the Kurdistan region - Iraq. The motivation behind the current contribution was to identify the common sources that contributed to the errors in the English article system. The results of the present study are important because they specifically inform educational policymakers about the English article system and how to overcome students' problems and difficulties in the acquisition of the English article system correctly. It also helps instructors prepare their instructional materials and other teaching materials in the English article system. As most of the students' article errors are attributed to the target language, the lecturers are recommended to give more credit to the acquisition of target language articles and their correct use.

This study offers some seminal pedagogical implications. First, we noticed that the target language caused most of the difficulties for study participants in using English articles. This may signal that students have not been taught how to use target language articles appropriately, therefore, adopting a new and more appropriate teaching methodology is necessary. Employing teaching methodologies that engage the learners in the real-life application of articles may lead to faster acquisition of the English article system. Our findings also yield those teaching methodologies that utilize the use of short sentences, dialogue, and cloze tests to explain and teach articles before engaging the students in writing exercises. Second, this study suggests a canonical information structure. The effectiveness of this teaching methodology in teaching English articles was tested and investigated by Master (2002). He also stated that canonical information structure is the most helpful teaching strategy to teach EFL/ESL learners to acquire the English article system. This framework can be used to explain how articles are organized and used, more specifically regarding definiteness, specificity, and countability. It can also be used to draw phonological and semantic distinctions among articles, which may lead to faster acquisition of target language articles.

## 7. Limitations and Future Work.

Our study suffers from two important limitations. First, only third-year university students who were studying English were recruited as our study participants. We could not take students from other stages, so the students' proficiency levels related to article errors were not investigated. Second, it would be better to interview instructors and consider taking their thoughts to enrich our understanding of the addressed problem; however, due to time constraints, we could not conduct interviews with instructors. Based on the

above-mentioned limitations, the present study suggests that more English-majoring students from different stages need to be taken into consideration in order to assess their proficiency levels and provide more accurate results. To draw more accurate pedagogical implications, future researchers are suggested to conduct in-depth interviews with instructors related to the students' article errors, more specifically with regards to their teaching methodologies and instructional materials being used to teach the target language article system.

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