

An Analysis of Article Errors Made by EFL Libyan Students at the Department of English in the Faculty of Arts, Misurata

تحليل الأخطاء المتعلقة باستخدام أدوات النكرة والمعرفة التي يقع فيها الطلاب الليبيون الدارسون في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بكلية الآداب بجامعة مصراتة

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Abstract

The present study aimed to analyze, identify, and categorize the article errors made by Libyan EFL learners in their use of the English article system. It also sought to attribute these article errors to their possible sources and attempted to know these sources and help learners to get rid of these errors. The sample of this study consisted of 50 Libyan students who enrolled in the second semester of the academic year 2020 at the Department of English in the Faculty of Arts, Misurata. The study employed two data collection tools; an MCQ test and semi-structured interviews with two EFL teachers. In this study, the researchers used the Surface Structure Taxonomy (SST) of errors to explain the different types of article errors made by the participants which were addition, substitution, and omission. The findings of this study revealed that the errors of using 'the' were more common than errors of using 'a' and 'an'. The obtained results of the test and the interviews revealed that the percentage of interference errors committed by the participants was the highest. The study concluded that the students committed many errors as they transfer from their L1 into L2. The Inter-lingual transfer was not the only source of errors but L2 was another source as well. In other words, ignorance and incompleteness application of the article rules push the participants to commit intra-lingual errors.

Keywords: English article system, Surface Structure Taxonomy of Errors (SST), error analysis, mother tongue interference, inter-lingual and intra-lingual errors.

ملخص البحث:

من خلال هذه الورقة يهدف الباحثان إلى تحليل وتحديد وتصنيف الأخطاء التي يقع فيها الطلبة الليبيون متعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية عند استخدامهم لأدوات النكرة والمعرفة؛ يسعى الباحثان أيضا إلى معرفة مصادر ومسببات هذه الأخطاء، والتي من خلالها يتمكن الباحثان من مساعدة المتعلمين تفادي هذه الأخطاء والتخلص منها، والجدير بالذكر أن هذه الدراسة أقيمت بقسم اللغة الانجليزية بكلية الآداب جامعة مصراتة؛ حيث تضمنت 50 طالباً وطالبةً من الفئتين (إناثاً وذكوراً) ممن يدرسون مادة القواعد 2 بالفصل الدراسي الثاني لسنة 2020؛ وتم خلال هذه الدراسة استخدام طريقتين لجمع البيانات المطلوبة: وهما اختبار متعدد الخيارات، وعقد مقابلة مع اثنين من معلمي اللغة الانجليزية بهذا القسم؛ إضافة لما سلف ذكره فقد تم استخدام نظرية (SST) لتوضيح أنواع الاخطاء التي يقع فيها المتعلمون، وقد أظهرت النتائج ثلاث أنواع من الأخطاء: الحذف والاضافة والاستبدال. كما أوضحت النتائج أن أداة التعريف (the) هي الخطأ الأكثر تكراراً لدى المتعلمين؛ فقد كان عدد الأخطاء في هذه الأداة أكثر من عدد الأخطاء التي وقوعوا فيها عند استخدامهم لأدوات التنكير، وأوضحت النتائج أيضا أن السبب في وقوعهم في هذه الأخطاء يرجع إلى تأثير اللغة الأم (العربية) عليهم؛ ذلك لأن لغتهم الأم تحتوي علي أداة تعريف مشابهة وهي (أل) التعريف، وتبين من خلال نتائج البيانات والمقابلات التي أجريت أن تأثير اللغة الأم لم يكن هو السبب الوحيد لتكرار هذه الأخطاء، ولكن هناك بعض الأسباب المتعلقة بقواعد اللغة الانجليزية نفسها، والتي تعرقل متعلمي اللغة من استخدام أدوات المعرفة والتنكير بشكل صحيح أثناء تعلمهم اللغة المكتسبة. الكلمات المفتاحية :

أدوات النكرة والمعرفة الإنجليزية، نظام تصنيف الأخطاء، تحليل الأخطاء، تداخل اللغة الأم، الأخطاء المتعلقة بتأثير اللغة الأم واللغة المكتسبة.

1. Introduction

English articles are considered to be one of the most essential rules that the second language (L2) Learners have to master because the English articles work as functional categories which are required in linguistic expressions to signal meaning associated with the propositional level. The concept of (in)definiteness is universal but it differs from one language to another which can display a challenge for second language learners especially those whose first languages lack articles. The definite article 'the' denotes that the speaker/ writer postulates the hearer can recognize the

referent while the indefinite article implies that the speaker/writer assumes that the recipients cannot identify the referent. It also has an important function that is restrictive to singular countable structures (Awad, 2011).

The difficulties in mastering the English articles are worth to be focused on especially when errors may weaken the L2 learners' ability to improve their learning process (Awad, 2011). Referring to her study, Awad reported that the struggles that L2 learners have with articles are often attributed to the complicated system in which the English articles operate. Moreover, she said that the differences between the first and target languages can also cause problems even for advanced learners (Awad, 2011).

Ahmed et al.'s study (2011) found that secondary school students encountered difficulties in learning articles because their native language lacks the system of articles. Master (1997) supported this idea by stating that this is particularly true when the first language lacks a grammatical category that is present in the second language.

Several Second Language Acquisition (SLA) researchers of the article system confirmed that Arab learners have encountered struggles with acquiring and mastering the English articles. In Yemen, Al-Samawi (2004) observed that article errors represent approximately 40% of all overused expressions in students' English writing. Kharma (1981) found that misuse of articles was one of the most common frustrating errors in a study on Kuwaiti students majoring in English. Diab (1996) also confirmed that article errors constituted nearly a third of all grammar errors in Lebanese learners' writing. He stated, "It turned out that the transfer of Arabic linguistic structures influenced the English writings of Lebanese students on the grammatical, lexical, semantic and syntactic levels" (p.71). He demonstrated that Lebanese students made more errors in the areas where they felt English and Arabic were rather similar.

For decades, many linguistics have been attempting to determine what kinds of article errors and why these errors were made by the first language (L2) learners. According to several linguists like Ellis (1985) and Lado 's studies (1964), they mostly went with the assumption that the L1 plays an essential role in L2 learning. Referring to these linguists, the errors committed in L2 learning which are the results of the differences between L1 and L2 are called interference errors.

In his study which was done in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Al-Qadi (2017) presented that most of the article errors could be attributed to L1 interference. He also added that the Arabic Article System was negatively transferred into English where learners seemed to use their mother tongue to decide on the appropriateness of using the article to express his/ her speech. Also, he found that EFL learners made errors that were related to L2 interference.

Besides, Mahmoud (2000) reported that the mother tongue plays a prominent role in learning and using another language especially in foreign language learning situations where learners are infrequently exposed to the target language. According to his study, Arab learners in such situations rely heavily on their inter-lingual transfer strategy to solve the problems they encounter when learning English.

1.1 Research questions

This study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What are the types of English article errors made by the second semester EFL Libyan students at the Department of English in the Faculty of Arts, Misurata?
2. How does mother tongue interference affect the Libyan students' use of articles?
3. What are the sources of these English Article errors?

1.2 Significance of the study

The significance of the current study is seen as:

- It can analyze, investigate and identify article errors that Libyan learners make in their use of the English article system.
- It can provide Libyan teachers with adequate analysis of article errors made by Libyan students.
- It can assist EFL teachers to figure out and comprehend these sources of errors.
- The research findings can work as a beneficial source for developing materials for learning articles for Libyan learners.

1.3 Definition of the term

Error Analysis

Many SLA researchers and teachers came to realize that the errors L2 learners make in the process of constructing a new system of language needed to be analyzed and clarified (Brown, 1980). Brown identified error analysis as a type of linguistic analysis that concentrates on errors committed by L2 learners. He explicated that errors arise from different general sources: inter-lingual errors of interference from the native language and intra-lingual errors within the target language. As Richards (1997) stated that error analysis is the process of studying and analyzing the errors which are made by second language learners. It focuses on the types and the sources of errors.

Alhaisoni et al. (2017) defined error analysis as one of the best ways of clarifying and describing errors made by EFL learners. This kind of analysis can explain the sources of these errors and the causes of their occurrence. As a result, it can help EFL learners to avoid their article errors that commonly have while learning the English language.

Corder (1967) also demonstrated the importance of using articles and pointed out that error analysis is one of the most important aspects of language learning that has an essential role in studying the process that goes beyond the understanding of using articles. Moreover, Corder developed error analysis to study the sources and the classification of article errors. According to him, article errors were classified into five categories; linguistic level, sources, modality, norm versus system, and the form (Cited in Alhaisoni et al., 2017).

1.4 Literature Review

In reviewing the literature, the fact that the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of learners who acquire English as a second/ foreign language continue to influence their use of English for years and even decades have been extensively documented in the academic literature (Centeno et al., 2014). In Second Language Acquisition, a great deal of research has reported that the article errors could be attributed to L1 interference or L2 itself while others' studies proved that both sources have a strong effect on the process of learning the article system.

Kassamany (2006) supported the idea of the impact of L1 Arabic interference on the acquisition of English articles. Her study was conducted on EFL Lebanese learners of the preparatory year program at Beirut University in which she attributed the article errors to L1 negative transfer.

In their studies of syntactic errors made by Arabic-speaking EFL learners, Al-Mohanna (2014) and Tawalbeh (2013) also shed light on the effect of the inter-lingual nature. Another study dealing with Arabic learners of English was undertaken by Crompton (2011) cited in Alhaisoni (2017), who focused on errors in the use of English articles. The results revealed that L1 interference strongly influences the process of the second language acquisition of English articles.

Brown (1980) went with the idea of L1 interference as a major stumbling block. He reported, “The principal barrier to Second Language Acquisition is the interference of the first language system with language system” (p.148)

Other studies, such as Hamza (2011) and Alsulmi (2010)’s studies, in which Hamza studied 40 Iraqi EFL undergraduates at Babylon University in Iraq while Alsulmi conducted his study on 24 undergraduate male EFL learners at Qasim University in Saudi Arabia. According to both of them, they attributed Arabic EFL learners’ article errors to L2 itself under an umbrella term called the intra-lingual type of errors.

Alhaysony (2012) studied a written sample of 100 first-year female EFL learners at the Department of English in the University of Ha’li. The study revealed that L1 interference has a strongly effect on the process of second language acquisition of articles. The learners depended heavily on transfer to judge the appropriate usage of articles. This study also pointed out that Arabic interference is not the only source of errors made by Saudi EFL learners but L2 English was also a source of a variety of errors.

1.5 The article system in the English Language

Ecskesley and Eckersley (1980) classified articles as definite and indefinite articles. Awad (2011) presented that the English articles *the* and *a(n)* in English occur as free morphemes categorized under determiners. The

definite article *'the'* falls into the determiner position of the definite phrase, while the indefinite article is classified under the determiner position of the cardinality phrase. In addition to indefiniteness, it signals number. According to (Keene & Adams, 2002), there are three articles which are: *a*, *an*, and *the*. Catford and his colleagues (1974) identified one more article which is \emptyset (zero articles).

Some researchers consider the absence of *the* and *a(n)* as an article itself termed the zero (\emptyset) or null article (Master, 1997). Warriner and Graham (1977) defined articles as demonstrative adjectives that precede and modify nouns. On the other hand, Leech and Svartvik (1975) defined articles as a subclass of determiners. Hence, some researchers refer to articles as adjectives while others describe them as a kind of determiners.

According to Alhaysony (2012), the article system in English consists of three different articles: *a/an*, *the* and the *zero article*.

The first article is called an indefinite article and it is used before singular nouns (Thornbury, 2004). They are used to:

- introduce a new person or thing into a text:
An Englishman, a Scotsman, and an Australian were on a plane.
- to show that a person or thing is a member of a group:
Fatima's a Muslim
- to talk generally about a class of things:
An octopus has eight legs. (Thornbury, 2004, p. 2)

The second article is called definite article and it is used to:

- refer to something that mentioned before:
We saw a good film. It was the new film by Tim Burton.
- When there is only one of something:
How many astronauts have landed on the moon?
- For nationalities and other groups:
I really admire the Italians.
The old, the sick and the unemployed need our special care.
- For oceans, rivers, names of ships, superlatives, time (Vince, 2010, p.137)
- (*The*) article is used in front of:
Singular count nouns: the dog
Plural count nouns: the dogs
Non-count nouns: the fruit (Azar, 1992, p. 207)

The third article is zero articles. This article is used with plural count nouns when s/he is making a generalization. For example, ‘*Dogs make good pets*’. ‘*Bananas are yellow*’. It is also used with a non-count noun when s/he making a generalization. For instance, *Fruit is good for you. I like music* (Azar, 1992, p. 206).

Unlike the English language, there are only two articles in the Arabic Language. The first one is the definite article 'al', which is a prefix, and the indefinite article 'zero'. The definite article in the Arabic Language is used with nouns whether singular or plural. Furthermore, ‘al’ is used with abstract proper nouns and some proper nouns. It is also used with two words which can be joined by the word /and/ such as (*A’ malu fii Al-laili wa al-nahari*) = **I work in the day and the night* (Kharama and Hajjaj, 1989 cited in Alhaysony, 2012, p.58). Accordingly, the researchers found that Arabic learners overuse the definite article when they use it in English and make different inter-lingual errors (Alhaysony, 2012).

The English article system presents many different problems for non-native speakers of English, particularly for those whose native languages do not have articles or do have articles or article like morphemes which are used in ways that differ from English articles (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). In the field of second language acquisition (SLA), second language learners usually take longer to acquire articles than other forms of English grammar (Bataineh, 2005). Antony (1987) stated that many EFL participants realized that the article system (*a, an, the, & zero article*) is a very challenging aspect of English syntax to acquire and learn.

According to Świątek, (2013), the English article system, which includes the indefinite article ‘*a / an*’, the definite article ‘*the*’, and the ‘*zero articles*’, is one of the most challenging structural elements for L2 learners to acquire. The difficulties inherent in the foreign language learning processes constitute the complexity of the target system.

1.6 Related Studies

There has been extensive research on the L2 acquisition of articles, such as Master (1988), Tarone & Parrish (1988), and Thomas (1989), who studied the acquisition of the English article system. In terms of the

terminology specific to article acquisition research, the early studies concentrated mostly on the presence or absence of articles in obligatory contexts. (Cited in Świątek, 2013).

In the field of second language acquisition (SLA), it has been documented that the mastery of the English article system by English language learners (ELLs) is a challenging task. SLA researchers became interested in the topic of L2 acquisition of the English article system in the 1980s and many of them collected data to examine and investigate a pattern of English article uses by L2 English learners from their first language backgrounds (Ahmed, et al, 2011).

One of the studies that Robertson (2000) conducted was with 18 postgraduate Chinese participants with an advanced level of proficiency in the UK. The participants took part in a collaborative problem-solving task. The study concluded that the majority of the participants encountered difficulties associated with moving from the grammar of Chinese to the grammar of English. The study showed that a lot of article errors were attributed to L1 transfer. The participants tended to omit articles in obligatory texts.

In his attempt to investigate the source of errors in the 10th grade Jordanian students in the academic year 2011-2012, Tawalbeh (2013) carried out a quantitative analysis of the frequency of English article errors by 200 Jordanians. The participants were selected from several public schools in the region of Karak-Jordan. A fill-in-blank test and a translation test were used to be analyzed. The study revealed that the participants committed more transfer errors in their use of the definite article than other types of errors.

Referring to mother tongue interference, Alhaisoni et al. (2017) had a study that consisted of 150 Saudi EFL students who enrolled in the preparatory English program at the University of Ha'il in Saudi Arabia. The purpose of his study was to identify the types and the sources of article errors in a larger context of written discourse based on the Surface Structure Taxonomies of errors (SST). The participants were given an hour to write one of the different topics. The results demonstrated that L1 interference strongly influences the process of second language acquisition of the articles.

According to Frith's study (1977) which consisted of 22 Arab-speaking EFL students at the American University of Beirut, it reported that most of

the article errors occurred due to negative transfer. He concluded that negative language interference was a persistent problem in the use of the article system.

Al-Qadi's study (2017) aimed to investigate the article errors made by 50 Saudi Arabic male learners of English in the Preparatory Year English Program of King Saud University in Saudi Arabia. The participants were subject to an MCQ test and interviewed by 5 teachers. The analyzed data of the test and the interview revealed that addition */the/* was the most frequent error type which was attributed to the highly frequent use of the definite article */al/* in Arabic. The study showed that the Arabic article system was negatively transferred into English where learners seemed to resort to their mother tongue to decide the appropriate article that can be used in their test and their interviews. However, the target language was also the source of many errors in many cases. Incomplete application and ignorance of the rules brought learners to commit intra-lingual errors as well. This finding of this study was very close to findings reached by Alhasony (2012).

Alhasony (2012) proved the same ideas that Al-Qadi had. His study sample consisted of 100 Saudi females who studied at the Department of English at the University of Ha'li. He found out that 57% of the errors the participants made were inter-lingual while 43% of errors were intra-lingual.

Related to intra-lingual errors, Hamza (2011) conducted a study on 40 Iraqi EFL first-year students at the College of Education/ Safi El-Dein El-Hilli, of Babylon University during the academic year (2009-2010). The study aimed at identifying the kinds of errors that learners made in the use of definite and indefinite articles. The results revealed that Arab EFL learners' article errors are intra-lingual L2 rather than inter-lingual L1.

Alsulmi (2010) carried out his study at Al-Qasim University in Saudi Arabia on 24 undergraduate male EFL learners. The findings attributed learner's errors to intra-lingual errors rather than inter-lingual ones. Also, Duly and Burt (1974) cited in Al-Qadi (2017) conducted 179 Spanish-speaking children, aged between 5-8 years, in three school districts. From their study, they concluded that 87 % of errors were intra-lingual errors.

2. Research Methods

2.1 Research Design

This research study is an experimental study that aimed to investigate the English article errors among Libyan learners of English in EFL grammar classes. In an attempt to investigate and categorize the article errors and to attribute them to their possible sources, the researchers decided to use two research tools; an MCQ test and a semi-structured interview were employed for data collection.

2.2 Setting and Participants

The study sample consisted of 50 English- major students. They were Libyan undergraduate students who were studying at the Department of English in the Faculty of Arts, Misurata - Libya during the academic year 2020. Their native language is Arabic. Their English language proficiency level was intermediate. The participants were familiar with the English article rules before they did the test. They were taught English articles system in the preparatory, high schools, and different courses at the university. The sample of this study also involved two EFL teachers who were interviewed for the sake of this study.

2.3 Research Instruments

To investigate the article errors and the sources of these errors Libyan learners of English made while learning the English language, An MCQ test and semi-structured interviews were implemented. The researchers applied both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods.

2.3.1. The MCQ Test

The MCQ test consisted of 20 multiple choice questions on the use of English articles, /a/, /an/, /the/ and *zero article*. The participants were given 45 minutes to do this test. The researchers analyzed the MCQ answers and they focused on the article errors which the participants committed in L2 learning.

2.3.2 The Semi-Structured Interview

The researchers also conducted semi-structured interviews with two EFL teachers to investigate the techniques and methods which were used in

teaching English article system and to perceive the sources of article errors depending on the two teachers' experiences.

3. Results

3.1 Analysis of the MCQ Test

The participants were assigned to do an MCQ test which consisted of 20 questions. The test was analyzed by using the Surface Structure Taxonomy of Errors (SST) to categorize the article errors into three different groups, namely mission, addition, and substitution. The number of errors of each type was counted for frequency and calculated into percentages. Moreover, the participants' errors were classified according to their possible sources into two types: inter-lingual (errors attributing to L1 interference) and intra-lingual errors (errors having no L1 interference).

3.2 Analysis of Semi-Structured Qualitative Interviews

For the sake of the present study, the researchers examined and investigated the types and the sources of the English article errors made by EFL Libyan learners. Semi-structured qualitative interviews were with two EFL teachers at the Department of English in Misurata University who have thought English for many years. They were asked some questions related to their experience of teaching the article system, the error types, and sources of these errors that EFL learners submit in using the article system. Both teachers believe that teaching and learning the English article system is one of the most common challenging tasks for them and their students. They said that mastering the English article system is not easy for the EFL Libyan students because of the mother tongue interference which can negatively affect the process of learning and mastering the article system. The teachers added that the EFL Libyan learners meet many difficulties while learning English because of their mother tongue, Arabic. The teachers indicated that EFL Libyan learners could make these errors due to over-generalization in the target language, resulting from ignorance of rule restriction and incomplete application of rules and interference resulting from first language negative transfer. According to their experience of teaching grammar, the teachers thought that the EFL Libyan students often insert unnecessary articles in their speaking and writing. For example, they added the definite article where it is not needed, such as *It was the cloudy in the middle of the Summer. I went to the Boston and I have lived in the New Your since 2019*. In addition to this, the learners omitted and substituted necessary articles where these articles should be used. They omitted the definite article and the

indefinite article ‘a’ more frequently, for example, *she is ^ clever student*. The students also omitted the indefinite article where it is required, for example, *we can meet at ^ station*.

The teachers offered a glance at some sources behind the problems faced by the Libyan EFL students. They pointed out that the differences in the language systems of the mother language and target language and the negative transfer from Arabic into English by the Libyan EFL students seem to be the main source of the most common problems faced by them. The teachers clarified that EFL learners are not able to accept the fact that English is a completely different language with its systems and rules which can be considered as a primary source of the most errors in the students’ use of error article system. The EFL Libyan students tend to learn English with Arabic in the background which affects their use of English language rules. The teachers suggested that the EFL students need to learn English as an independent language with its distinct language system and rules. They stated that EFL teachers should assist learners to understand this fact at the very early stage of their learning. Concerning, the materials that teachers can utilize to teach English article system can be helpful to teach English article system. The two teachers also mentioned some materials such as newspapers, advertisements, greeting cards, invitation cards, postcards, magazines, journals, pictures, audio cassettes, images, TV programs, TV ads, and movies. They suggested using learner autonomy which can foster in EFL classes in Libya and that Libyan students can develop some autonomous learning strategies. They concluded that learner-produced learning materials can be a successful and effective tool to promote learner autonomy in EFL classes

4. Results and Discussion

Overall, the researchers discussed and presented the findings of this study in the line with its objectives. They followed some steps to identify, classify and collect errors.

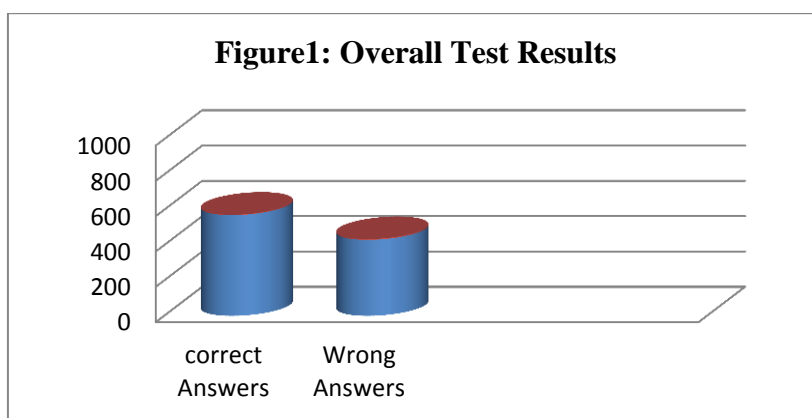
To identify errors, the researchers followed the steps identified by Ellis (1997). The researchers used the Surface Structure Taxonomy of errors (SST), namely; omission, addition, and substitution. The errors were classified according to their possible sources into inter-lingual and intra-lingual errors.

The results demonstrated that the frequency of errors made by Libyan EFL learners was 430 which constituted approximately 43% out of the total

number of the responses which were 1000. This result went with the study presented by Smith (2001). Table (1) presented the overall test result of this study.

Table 1: Overall Test Results

Correct Answers	Wrong Answers
570	430



4.1 Types of Article Errors

To illustrate the answers to the research questions, the researchers displayed three types of errors related to the article system within the Surface Structure Taxonomy of errors (SST) as demonstrated in the table (1) and figure (1) above. The total number of errors made by Libyan EFL students is 430.

Table 2: Frequency of errors according to SST

Error types	The	the %	an	an %	a	a%	total
Omission	33	42.8%	17	22.2%	27	35%	77
Addition	165	69%	39	16.4%	35	14.6%	239
Substitution	21	18.4%	36	27.6%	57	50.4%	114
Error total	219		92		119		430

According to the SST, table (2) clearly showed that addition is the most challenging error type for the EFL Libyan students with a percentage of 55.5%. The addition of the definite article */the/* occupied the first position according to error frequency with the percentage of 69% among this error type and 38% among all article errors. This result strengthened the fact which said Arabic-speaking students overuse the Arabic definite article */al/* in their L1 which negatively influences their use of the article system in learning L2. This is called inter-lingual interference which was defined by Lado (1964) as a negative influence of the mother language (L1) on the performance of the target language learner. Corder (1967) cited in (Alhaisoni et al., 2017) proved the same point by saying that L2 learners commit inter-lingual errors because they use their L1 as a tool to learn L2. They transfer some structures from their L1 to produce their L2. Oldin (1989) also asserted the same fact by saying that transfer is the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously acquired.

The indefinite articles */an/* and */a/* came in second and third place with 39 and 35 errors consequently. This reflects that Arabic-speaking learners less frequently add indefinite articles in their use of the article error system. These findings concurred with the results of Snap (2005) cited in Al-Qadi, (2017). Bataineh (2005) presented the same results that showed in the present study when revealed that both definite and indefinite articles were omitted in many positions in the given test. This result can be attributed to the idea which said that omission of indefinite articles cannot be effective by L1 interference because Arabic has no indefinite articles. Therefore, Arab learners were restored to omit these articles in the production of English.

In this study, the substitution of errors represented the second high proportion at 26.5% of the total errors. These results agree with the results of Al-Qadi (2017) who underscored that the substitution errors came at the second rank of errors made in his case study. Substitution errors refer to the use of the wrong article instead of the right one. The sample of this study demonstrated five types of substitutions. Two of them were made as a result of L1 interference which is called (inter-lingual). The tests' responses indicated that the participants used the definite article instead of indefinite articles and instead of the *zero articles*. This error is due to L1 interference because of their inadequate knowledge of the article system of English. On the other hand, the findings recorded the effect of intra-lingual interference in

using the English article system in other positions. These errors were classified into three categories which are substitution of /a/ for /the/, and substitution of /an/ for /the/. This part of the result goes with the studies of Alhaysony (2012) and Richards (1971) who indicated that L2 interference is intra-lingual, or often called developmental errors, which are due to the second language or the language being learned. The researchers claimed that many second language learners made errors that did not have their sources in the native language. These kinds of errors can be explained in terms of ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules overgeneralization, and false concept of the hypothesis of some grammatical rules.

Table 3: Frequency of Substitution Errors

Substitution of errors	Number	Percentage
Substitution / the/ for /an/	10	8.7%
Substitution /the/ for /a/	11	9.6%
Substitution /the/ for zero article	3	2.6%
Substitution /a/ for /the/	50	43.8%
Substitution /an/ for / the/	40	35%
Total	114	

As presented above in table (3), substitution /a/ accounted for the highest errors at 40.8% (50 errors) of all substitution errors which were 114. While substitution came at the second rank, the substitution of /the/ represented the least frequent substitution error type among learners which were 40, 24 errors respectively. Snap (2005) cited in Al-Qadi, (2017) also asserted that Spanish-speaker learning English substituted the definite article with an indefinite article and vice versa. The current findings went against with AbiSamra (2003) who declared that substitution of /the/ is to be the most common substitution errors in his study.

In regarding omission errors, omission means dropping an article from a context and using a zero article instead. In this study, these errors came at the last place with a frequency of 77 representing approximately 18% of such error type. In the meantime, the researchers manifested that the students omitted the definite article more frequently than the indefinite articles with 33 errors out of 77 errors. These findings can be attributed to

inter-lingual interference. These findings go in line with the studies done by Oldin (1989), Alhaisoni et al. (2017) and Ellis, (1997) who affirmed that first language acts as a major factor in SLA.

The researchers of the current study found the same result that Brown (1980) had in which he reported that inter-lingual errors were the most significant. The results revealed that the EFL learners who were trying to learn a second language were not fully familiar with the rules of the target language. This study showed that the only language EFL learners were fully familiar with is their own language so that they naturally tried to transfer their grammatical rules into the target language and then they made errors. Brown's study (1980) confirmed the same result.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, the present study investigated the types of the article errors which made by EFL Libyan learners who study at the Department of English in the Faculty of Arts in Misurata. The study findings focused on clarifying the types and the sources of article error types. The result showed that the majority of students made a variety of errors because of the inter-lingual and intra-lingual interferences. Considering the article errors, the study revealed that addition errors of articles were the most frequent error type among EFL Libyan learners. While substitution errors are the second most frequent errors, omission errors were the least frequent ones. Some of the current results were affirmed by some previous studies whereas others went against them. According to the current study, it is noticeable that the addition of the definite article is attributable to the highly frequent use of /al/ article in the Arabic language. Regarding this point, it is logical to conclude that EFL Libyan learners resorted to adding /the/ in their English context because of the L1 transfer. The analyzed data and the interviewed teachers' responses revealed that L1 interference was not the only source of article errors but L2 was also an important source. The study concluded that L1 interference can significantly affect the process of second Language Acquisition of the article system. Hence, teachers have to focus on explaining the differences between L1 and L2 while teaching the use of English articles. This is because while learners are attempting to learn a second language, they resort to negatively transfer their grammatical rules of their L1 into the target language as they are only familiar with their own language. In many cases, L2 was considered to be one of the sources of article errors. Incomplete

application and ignorance of the article rules made EFL Libyan learners commit intra-lingual errors as well.

It is obvious that EFL Libyan students have some problems with the acquisition of articles and their types, as well as with the use of the English articles in English, which is indicated by transferring from their L1 in article use. The findings showed that English article system is so complex that teachers should focus more on the area of acquisition. Libyan learners often lack enough practice in speaking and writing.

This study suggested that direct corrective feedback can help in fostering the acquisition of the article system. Moreover, indirect corrective feedback on article errors can assist students. In the direct corrective feedback, EFL teacher can provide learners with the correct form by writing it near the incorrect one. Furthermore, explicit instruction on the article errors identified in the students' composition can foster the students to overcome these difficulties. In explicit instruction, the EFL teachers can explain the rules to the learners or direct them to find the rules by looking at linguistic examples exemplified in different sentences. All these suggestions can foster the EFL teachers when they teach the article system.

5.1 Recommendations

The study recommends the following:

- The rules of the English article system should be emphasized in English courses for EFL Libyan learners.
- Teachers of English grammar courses have to follow the techniques that help learners to recognize the uses of articles and to provide opportunities to practice and think in English when using English grammatical forms.
- Teaching the article system in contexts ranging from smaller words and sentences to long paragraphs can give a good opportunity for learners to develop their understanding of the article system use.

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Appendix A

Choose the correct answer:

1. Which words complete the sentence?

There are two new students in my class, boy andgirl.

- a). the / the b). a/ a c). You don't need a word in the spaces.

2. Which sentence is correct?

- a). The actors in this film are very talented.
b). Actors in this film are very talented
c). Actor in this film is very talented.

3. Which words go in the spaces?

They saw film yesterday. film was about an explorer.

- a). the / A b). a / A c). a / The

4. Complete the sentence.

My sister doesn't like..... . She thinks they are noisy.

- a). cat b). a cat c). cats

5. Complete the sentence.

Don't look at You will hurt your eyes!

- a). sun b). the sun c). a sun

6. Complete the sentence.

Can you play ...musical instrument? I play ...violin and ...guitar.

- a). the b). the c). the
b). the b).a c) the
c). a b). the c). the

7. Which sentence is NOT correct?

- a). Pollution is serious issue.
b). Environment is a serious issue.
c). Climate change is a serious issue.

8. Which sentence is NOT correct?

- a). People are increasingly worried about economy.
b). People are increasingly worried about crime.
c). People are increasingly worried about health.

9. Complete the sentence.

That's last station for twenty miles.

- a). the b). a c) you do not need a word here.

10. Which sentence is NOT correct?

- a). Let's go to restaurant for a drink.
b). Let's go to a restaurant for a drink.
c). Let's go to the restaurant for a drink.

11. Which sentence is NOT correct?

- a). The life has changed a lot in the last twenty years.

- b). A space ship has landed on the moon.
- c).The weather has been changeable recently.

12. Which sentence is NOT correct?

- a). I went into the store and asked to speak to the manager.
- b). Have you got a car? No I've never has the car in my life.
- c). There is no need to buy any milk. The milkman brings it every morning.

13. Which sentence is NOT correct?

- a). Fortunately, there are a few attractive places in this town.
- b). They've checked every one of cables.
- c). Sara is a very intelligent girl.

14. Which sentence is NOT correct?

- a). We live next to the health center on Tripoli Street.
- b). Some patients have to stay in the hospital for months.
- C). Ali wants to work as a teacher.

15. Choose the correct answer?

Could you take books you borrowed back to the library, please?

- a). a b). the c). No article

16. Choose the correct answer?

I don't know anywhere in world quite as beautiful as here.

- a). a b). the c). No article

17. Choose the correct answer?

Sara was really angry because She missed bus.

- a).a b). no article c). the

18. Choose the correct answer?

My friends were stopped by police last night.

- a). a b). the c) no article

19. Choose the correct answer?

Can I borrow pen you bought yesterday, please?

- a). the b). a c). an

20. Choose the correct answer?

There is a major problem with crime nowadays.

- a). the b). a c). No article

Appendix (B)

(Interview Questions)

1. Do you think that teaching and learning English Article System is a challenging task for EFL Libyan learners?
2. According to your experience, what are the types of English article errors made by EFL Libyan learners at the Department of English in the Faculty of Arts in Misurata?
3. What are the sources of the English Article errors?
4. What are the most noticeable errors EFL Libyan students commit in the use of the English Article System?
5. What kind of materials do you use in teaching the English Article System?