

## L1 Influence in L2 Learners to Use The Definite Article 'The' by Arab and Spanish Speakers

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### Article History

Received : 21/06/2022

Accepted : 26/06/2022

Published : 28/06/2022

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### المخلص

هذا البحث يدرس مهارة استخدام أداة التعريف الإنجليزية (The) عند مجموعتين من متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية. المجموعة الأولى هم العرب والمجموعة الثانية هم الإسبان ويوضح مدى تأثير اللغة الأولى على اكتساب اللغة الثانية. وتكمن أهمية هذا الموضوع لما لأداة التعريف من أهمية في الجملة من حيث المعنى والدلالة والقواعد النحوية. وأداة التعريف هي موجودة في النظام اللغوي العربي والإسباني، ولكن نظامها وطريقة استخدامها يختلف ويتشابه مع اللغة الإنجليزية في بعض المواضع. في هذا البحث سوف نسلط الضوء على أوجه التشابه والاختلاف بين العرب والإسبان عند استخدامهم لأداة التعريف الإنجليزية وذلك من حيث دقة الاستخدام أو الأخطاء المشتركة. وهذا البحث قائم على تحليل دراسات سابقة.

### Abstract

In this paper we investigate the use of the English article system in two comparable learner corpora, Arab and Spanish speakers. Such investigation is significant as article use is at the interface of syntax, semantics and pragmatics. In addition, the differences between these particular learner groups are interesting in that the article system exist in Arabic and the Spanish article system is slightly different from the English one. We highlight and explain similarities as well as differences between the article use of these two groups. Given the assumptions that article underuse is a grammatical deficit and article overuse and misuse is a pragmatic deficit, we test the hypothesis that Arab learners have both a grammatical and pragmatic deficit, whereas Spanish learners may only have a pragmatic problem, especially in generic contexts. This paper analyzes the data of previous studies.

**Keywords** The definite Article. Arab. Spanish. Generic and non-generic

## Introduction

Most second-language (L2) learners who are learning English encounter many difficulties when they acquire a new language, that causes them to make errors when they produce the target language. These errors differ according to many factors, like teaching strategies, proficiency for teachers, level, and the influence of the first language (L1) for students. There are many studies that focus on the second language learners' errors in writing to find out the reasons it happens and how they can help the L2 learners to correct their errors to avoid them in future, and they also focus on areas that need reinforcement. One of these errors is using the definite article incorrectly or overusing it.

The purpose of this investigation is to explore whether and if Arabic and Spanish speakers who learn English commit the same errors when they produce an English definite article, and to find out if they transfer the definite article system from the first

language. This paper describes definite articles in each language (English, Arabic, and Spanish) by generic and non-generic. Then it discusses theories of language transfer, which is how the first language (L1) impacts in producing and using a second language (L2) ( Karim and Nassaji, 2013). Finally, it analyzes the data of previous studies.

## Literature Review

The first language of English learners could have an article system such as Spanish (Díez-Bedmar & Papp, 2008) and Arabic (Sarko, 2009), but some others have no article system as Russian (Chrabaszc & Jiang, 2014) and Chinese (Díez-Bedmar & Papp, 2008). Both groups sometimes produce an English definite article with errors. According to Sabbah (2015), Arabic learners of English frequently make number of types of errors when using the

definite article in English. The first is the omission of the definite article. For example, the mall is close instead of The mall is close. The second mistake is the wrong insertion of the definite article the in front of nouns, which are not usually preceded by the. Crompton (2011) found Arabic speakers overuse the English definite article instead of an English zero article.

On the other hand, Spanish learners of English have some difficulties with English articles too. According to Castro (2016), Spanish speakers are able to produce the articles, but they commit errors related to overgeneralization, in the case of the definite article, or to misuse the null condition, but (Morales, 2011) found that Spanish speakers use the definite article with more accuracy than the indefinite article. But, the other group who has no article system showed different production for example, (Chrabaszcz & Jiang, 2014) found Russian speakers preferred to omit definite articles in their production. Also, (Robertson, 2000) investigated the acquisition of English articles by speakers of Chinese. They showed a tendency to omit definite articles in the contexts.

#### Description the definite article in English, Spanish and Arabic

The definite article in English is refers to particular nouns (Richards & Schmidt, 2013). According to Harab (2014), the definite article in English is often prescribed for use when referring to one particular thing, when it is clear which thing or person we mean, and when we refer to a noun that both the speaker (writer) and the listener (reader) know exactly what is being referred to.

In Arabic, according to Abdullah, & Thabet (2014) the definite marker in Arabic language; which is a prefix affixed to the beginning of the noun, it is written as

Al. It is function make the noun a definite. Also, as with the in English, Al- is used with all types of noun; singular, plural, mass, and abstract noun. For example,

1. أعطني الكتاب  
etani al kitab

Give me DEF book.

'Give me the book'

In Spanish, the definite article in Spanish is 'el' (el) (plus its gender and number inflected forms *la* (la), *los* (looz), and *las* (laz) ). 'el' can precede all types of nouns, singular or a plural countable and uncountable (Esguevillas Castro, 2016). The Spanish definite article is used before a common noun of any sort or any word or expression acting as a noun, except in direct address. For example,

2. *El novio.*

*el novio*

DEF boyfriend

'The boyfriend'

#### The Factors determine to use a definite article

There are a variety of conditions that require the use or absence of the definite article, but that these can all be subsumed under two basic categories; generic and non-generic. I will start to discuss the non-generic conditions.

#### Non-generic

According to Liu and Gleason (2002), the definite article the uses with the noun in non-generic context, when the speaker makes the listener understand the referent by using cultural, situational, or textual information.

Garcia Mayo (2008) describes the non-generic meaning of the definite article has four major uses as follows: cultural use, situation use, structural use and textual use.

#### Cultural use

The use with a noun that is "a unique and well-known referent in the speech community" (Liu and Gleason,2002). The speakers used the common knowledge in the same community as in (3).

3. *The white house is in Washington*  
(Garcia Mayo, 2008: 535)

#### Situational use

The use when "the referent of a first-mention noun can be sensed directly or indirectly as unique by the interlocutors, or the referent is known by the members of the local community" Liu and Gleason,2002). The is defined the noun which known by a group of people on the same local.

4. *a man says to his wife at the breakfast table, Can you pass me the newspaper?*

#### Structural use

The is used with "a first-mention noun that has a modifier" (Liu and Gleason,2002). The used with the noun that change not stable(5)

5. *We don't like the boyfriend Elisa has now*  
(Garcia Mayo, 2008: 555)

#### Textual use

The is used with "a noun that has been previously referred to or mentioned" (Liu and Gleason,2002). Textual because it defines noun that already mentioned in the same text. (6)

6. *Fred bought a car on Monday. On Friday he crashed the car.*  
(Garcia Mayo, 2008: 535)

According to Liu and Gleason (2002), in English, the non-generic use of the is more recurrent and more extensive than the generic.

The three languages, English, Spanish and Arabic use the four nongeneric categories, for examples,

#### 1-Cultural use:

7. Eng: From here to the royal palace it will take you about 5 minutes.

**Spn:** De aquí al palacio real tiene usted unos cinco minutos.

di aquí al palacio ril tiene usted unoz smjko minutos

From here to DEF royal palace it will take you about 5 minutes.

In this example, Spanish to which is a and el which is the, al comes from the contraction of the preposition a and the masculine singular definite article el, then it became al

Arb: من هنا إلى القصر الملكي سيأخذ منك 5 دقائق

m i n huna 'iilaa al qasr al malakii sayakhudh mɪŋk 5 daqayi

From here to DEF royal DEF palace it will take you about 5 minutes.

'From here to the royal palace it will take you about 5 minutes.'

#### 2- situational:

8. Eng: Can you pass me the TV control

**Spn:** Me pasas el mando a distancia de la tele?

mi pasas el mando a distancia de la tele

Me pasas DEF mando a distancia de la tele?

(Garcia Mayo, 2008: 545)

9. أَعْطِنِي الْقَلَمَ -Arb:

aetani al qalam

Give me DEF pen.

'Give me the pen'.

### 3- Structural

10. Eng: We don't like the boyfriend Elisa has now.

**Spn:** No nos gusta el novio que tiene ahora Elisa.

no nos gusta el novio kju tiene ahora elisə.

No nos gusta DEF novio que tiene ahora Elisa.

لم يعجبنا الصديق الذي لدى اليسا الآن Arb:

lm yaejbna al sadiq aldhy ladaa 'iilisa ælən.

We don't like DEF boyfriend Elisa has now

'We don't like the boyfriend Elisa has now'

(Garcia Mayo, 2008: 555)

### 4- Textual

11. Eng: A. Bryce arrived in Santander yesterday. The well-known writer will participate in a university course in the following days.

**Spn:** A. Bryce llegó ayer a Santander. El conocido escritor participará en un curso de la Universidad en los próximos días.

A. Bryce llegó ayer e sɛntændər. el conocido escritor participará en un curso de la universidad en los próximos días.

A. Bryce llegó ayer a Santander. DEF conocido escritor participará en un curso de la Universidad en DEF próximos días

وصل أ. برايس إلى سانتاندر أمس. سيشترك الكاتب المعروف في دورة الجامعة في الأيام التالية Arb:

wasal 'a baruays 'iilaa santandir 'ams sayusharik alkatib almaeruf faj dawrat aljamieat faj al'ayam altaaliat.

A. Bryce arrived in Santander yesterday. DEF well-known writer will participate in a DEF university course in DEF following days.

'A. Bryce arrived in Santander yesterday. The well-known writer will participate in a university course in the following days'.

(Garcia Mayo, 2008: 555)

Generic reference in English, Arabic, and Spanish  
Genericity in English

According to Master (1997), Generics refer to general kinds of nouns and can to identify it by English articles. The general rules regarding definite article and generics. The first rule is when the noun referring to a kind of thing by using the plural form, so it will use the zero article. (12)

12. Computers are important devices in technology  
(González, 2016: 10)

The Second rule is If the noun is non-count, it uses the zero article too (13)

13. Water is scarce in many countries.  
(González Tomás, 2016: 11)

According to Ionin, et al. (2011), English generics include two categories: Noun phrase (NP)-level and sentence-level (characterizing sentences). NP-level generics with singular nouns can use the definite article with it as in the example (14), but cannot use an indefinite article as in the example (15). It can also use the zero article with plural nouns as in the example (16). The definite (the dinosaur) and bare plural subjects (dinosaurs) can come as a kind-referring, but the indefinite (a dinosaur) cannot because, with kind predicates like extinct, the NP subject must indicate a kind: An individual or a group of individuals cannot be extinct, but a kind can be. However, sentence-level generics can use an indefinite article with singular noun as in the example (17) and use zero article with plural nouns and mass generic as in the example (18) and (19). Examples (17) and (18) do not illustrate something about a specific potato, but about potatoes in general based on the characteristics of individual potatoes; example (19) has a generic description for (gold) is expensive. As a singular noun sometimes it is unacceptable to use the definite article with it as (20). This example, cannot get a generic interpretation with the definite article, but sometimes it can use the definite article according to (Alzamil, 2019) as in example (21) is generic, because it makes general notice about 'lion'

NP-level generic:

14. The dinosaur is extinct
15. #A dinosaur is extinct.
16. Dinosaurs are extinct.

Sentence-level generic:

17. A potato contains vitamin C and amino acids
18. Potatoes contain vitamin C and amino acids.
19. Gold is expensive.
20. The lion has a tail.
21. # The potato contains vitamin C and amino acids

### Genericity in Spanish

According to Esguevillas (2016), it has four different definite articles use, according to the gender and number (el, la, las, Los). English and Spanish used the definite article in a different way of each other that is when if the noun has a generic reference.

English uses the zero article with plural count (22) and with mass noun as (23). But in Spanish is required to use the definite article in generic contexts, when the nouns plural (24) and mass form (25)

22. Teachers are strict

23. Milk is white

24. Los profesores son estrictos

DEF teachers are strict

'Teachers are strict'

25. La leche es blanca

DEF Milk is white

'Milk is white'

(Esguevillas, 2016 : 2)

Spanish and English, if the noun singular non-count can use the zero article because the speaker is not appointed specific water, in English (26) and Spanish (27).

26. Give me water

27. Dame agua

Give me 0 water

'Give me water'

(Esguevillas, 2016 : 10)

According to Snape et al. (2013) Spanish indicates to the generic with articles. Kind-formation in Spanish shows the definite article is required to refer to kinds of NP-level and the sentence-level. In NP-level generics, Spanish resembles English about using the article for generics at the NP-level with singular NP is just the definite article is used to referring to kind of dinosaurs as in (28). In (29) and (30) are unacceptable use the definite article with.

#### NP-level generics

28. El dinosaurio está extinto.

DEF dinosaur is extinct

'The dinosaur is extinct'.

29. #Un dinosaurio está extinto.

# INDF dinosauris extinct

'A dinosauris extinct'.

30. \*Dinosaurio está extinto

Dinosaur is extinct

'Dinosaur is extinct'

(Snape et al., 2013: 6)

#### Sentence-level generics.

In Spanish can the definite article and the indefinite article used to give potato a generic interpretation with singular NPs as in (31) and (32). The plurals and mass nouns have specific and generic readings, they show can be used the definite article with it as in the examples (33), (34)

31. La patata contiene vitamina C y aminoácidos.

potato contains vitamin C and amino acids DEF

'The potato contains vitamin C and amino acids'.

32. Una patata contiene vitamina C y aminoácidos.

INDF potato contains vitamin C and amino acids

'A potato contains vitamin C and amino acids'.

33. Las patatas contienen vitamina C y aminoácidos.  
(plurals nouns)

DEF potatoes contain vitamin C and amino acids

'The potatoes contain vitamin C and amino acids'.

34 a. El Oro es caro.( mass nouns)

DEF gold is expensive

'The gold is expensive'

(Snape et al., 2013: 6-7)

#### Genericity in Arabic

According to Alzamil (2016), the definite article in Arabic (Al) is used it with singular (35), plural (36), and mass nouns as (37). The Arabic nouns in generics context are always definite. But English uses the zero article with plural and mass nouns in generic reference as examples (12) and (13).

35- القطة لها أربعة أرجل-

Al qtah aendha arba arjul

DEF cat has four legs

'The cat has four legs'

36 -القطط لها أربعة أرجل-

Al qtaht aendha arba arjul

DEF Cats have four legs

Cats have four legs'

37-الذهب معدن نفيس-

Al thahb maden nafes

metal precious DEF Gold

metal' precious 'Gold

(Alzamil, 2016: 26 )

According to Al Zamil (2019), Arabic generic use by 'al' in NP-level and sentence-level. The examples below producing by Arabic participants they translated the English sentence to Arabic. In NP-level generics, the Arabic speakers used the definite article with singular and plural nouns as in examples (38) and (39), and unacceptable use indefinite article with NP-level generics as in examples (40) and (41) because the Arabic system does not have an indefinite article. Sentence-level generics likes NP-level generics can be used the definite article with singular (42), plural (43), but cannot be used indefinite article(44).

#### NP-level generics:

38-الديناصور منقرض.

Al Daenasor mokqrad

DEF dinosaur extinct

The dinosaur is extinct.

الديناصورات منقرضة 39

Al Daenasor at mokqrad

DEF dinosaurs extinct.

'Dinosaurs are extinct'

ديناصور منقرض 40

Daenasor mokqrad

\* 0 dinosaur extinct.

'A dinosaur is extinct.'

ديناصورات منقرضة 41

\* 0 dinosaurs extinct

'Dinosaurs are extinct'

Sentence-level generics

الأسد له ذيل 42

Al asad lho thyl

DEF lion has tail

'The lion has a tail

الأسود لها ذيل 43

DEF-lions have tails

The lions have tails.

أسد له ذيل 44

Asad lho thyl

\* 0 lion has tail

A lion has tail

(Al Zamil, 2019: 96)

### Countability and Noun type

In English, nouns can be countable or uncountable. Countable refers to singular or plural thing. Uncountable refers to something does not have a plural form.

### English article with countability

The definite article in English the can use with countable and uncountable nouns

### Articles for singular and plural noun

Master (1997) described the function of the is distinguish the noun or mention it by the speaker to be noticed it by the hearer. It comes with countable and uncountable nouns. Nouns are following the could be either singular or plural, such as (45) and(46)

The movie that I saw last night was great. (singular 45.) 46. The movies that I saw last night was great. ( plural

### Count and non-count (mass)

Wisniewski (2010), mentioned countable nouns refer to countable things such as boys, chairs, and computers. While the definite article the used with both count and mass nouns, the indefinite article a/an only precedes count nouns as in such as (47) and (48)

47. A cat ate the fish.

Not

48. A snow-covered the cat.

According to Alenizi, (2017) 'Uncountable nouns refer to undifferentiated mass or notion'. Noun countability judgments by Arabic speakers of English., such as water and insight. Countable and uncountable nouns are also divided into abstract and concrete nouns. Abstract nouns refer to unobservable notions, such as love, sound, or moment.

Concrete nouns are nouns that can be observed and measured such as sugar, and telephone. A noun's countability is dependent on its potential to combine with various types of determiners. According to Huddleston (1984), non-count (mass) and count interpretations of a phrase are dependent upon several factors, including the choice of the determiner, whether the noun is singular or plural, and on the noun itself. A countable noun can occur with the in the singular and plural, for example, the door, the doors, and with no article in the plural, doors are brown. And a noncount noun can occur with the and no article in the singular such as, the honey is sweet, and honey is sweet, which are both possible. Some nouns are both countable and uncountable depending on how they are used.

### Common noun and proper nouns

According to Katz et al (1974), the term proper noun refers to specific individuals of people, places, or things, such as Marie, Paris, and Google. They always start with a capital letter, and they could contain two or three words like Marie Bill, Pacific Ocean. On the other hand, the term common noun refers to classes of objects, or generic such as women, websites, or cats. Shapiro et al (1989), mentioned the proper nouns do not usually take an article, as in the example (49). But a singular common nouns always require an article before it ( a- an/ the), as in examples (50) and (51)

49. He plays baseball in Prospect Park

50. I ordered a new computer online.

. 51. He plays baseball in the park

A plural common noun does not require an article. A plural common noun can have the article the to distinguish the noun from its generic counterpart as in (52) generic and (53) non-generic.

52. Babies cry every night

53. The babies cry every night

### Spanish articles with countability

(Vargas, 1952) mentioned Spanish nouns divide to masculine or feminine. The Article system in Spanish has different categories including definite or indefinite, and feminine or masculine, and singular or plural. In Spanish both the indefinite article (un, una,



unos, unas) and the definite article (el, la, Los, las) have to agree with the gender and number of the noun. They have a function similar to that of the English definite article in that they refer to specific things or people in a group or class. But Spanish articles differ from English articles when the writer/ speaker wants to refer to a specific thing or person. In this case, he/she needs to match the article with the number (singular or plural) and with the gender (masculine or feminine) of the noun. See

Table 1.

Examples of Spanish definite articles		
Examples	The gender	The count
La revista pequeña 'The small magazine'	feminine	singular
El libro pequeño 'The small book'	masculine	singular
Las revistas pequeñas 'Small magazines'	feminine	plural
Los libros pequeños 'Small books'	masculine	plural

Spanish uses the definite article with mass nouns for generics or abstract sense, that is not present in English, for examples (54) and (55)

54. El oro es caro

DEF gold is expensive

'Gold is expensive'

55. El amor y la fe son muy importantes

DEF love and DEF faith are very important

'Love and faith are very important'.

**Proper and common nouns**

Proper nouns in Spanish do not use the definite article and generally omit it (56) and (57), but can use the definite article with proper nouns if the noun is modified by an adjective (58)

56. Quiero estudiar Canadá.

'I want to study Canada'.

57. Es un informe sobre México

'It's a report about Mexico'

58. Quiero estudiar el Canadá colonial

I want to study colonial DEF Canada

'I want to study colonial Canada'

Spanish use the definite article before common nouns to use it as a definite noun (59).

59. El niño esti enfermo

DEF boy is sick

'The boy is sick'

Arabic article with countability

According to Hawas (1986), the definite ( Al )-(ال) that can be seen with all, such as in count/mass, singular/plural, and proper/common nouns. (Al ) in Arabic can use it with count nouns ( singular or plural ). The definite article with singular noun in Arabic is similar to English by function and position (60),

60. The teacher helps the student to learn.

المعلم يساعد الطالب ليتعلم

Al mualem yasad a taleb le yatalem.

DEF teacher helps DEF student to learn

The plural count nouns with definite article used to refer to a kind rather than single members of the class, but in English uses zero articles in this situation (61)

61. Eng: Monkeys like bananas

القرود تحب الموز

Al qurud tuhib al mo z

DEF monkeys like DEF bananas

**Mass Nouns**

Arabic uses a definite article with mass nouns or unidentified amount, but English use the zero article with mass nouns as in (62) and (63)

62. Eng - Gold is a useful metal

الذهب معدن مفيد

Al thahab magdan mufi d

Arb-DEF gold is a useful metal

63-Eng -He likes milk

هو يحب الحليب

Huwa yuhib al laban

Arb- He likes DEF milk

Moreover, in Arabic, abstract concepts are expressed with a definite article, such as al-sa'ada 'happiness' and al-'adl 'justice' a opposed to the English abstract which does not take the definite article as in (64)

64-Eng-Honesty is the best policy

Arb-The honesty is the best policy

الصدق هو أفضل صفة

Al sadiq huwa afdal syasah

DEF honesty is the best policy

Concrete and abstract mass nouns and plural count nouns always occur with the definite article when the generic reference in Arabic.

### Proper and common nouns

Arabic usually use the definite article with all nouns except personal names which usually occur without the article, but in some of the Arabic Gulf countries, family or tribe names are referred to by the addition of the definite article to the name of the grandfather like as in (65)

65-Saad the Sabah

سعد الصباح

Saad al sabah

Common nouns in Arabic as in English refer to a non-specific person, place, or thing, as in ( 66)

66-The student sat on the chair

الطالب يجلس على الكرسي

Al taleb yajls ala al korsay

DEF student sat on the chair

## L1 transfer

Karim and Nassaji (2013) describe transfer as the effect of first language information on a second language by the difference and similarities between both languages. Elwerfalli (2016) explained the transfer through contrastive analysis, hypothesis (CAH). This hypothesis present of interference and effect between L1 and L2. Also, CAH claims that difficulty which emerges when learning L2 is because of L1 interference. (Karim and Nassaji, 2013) mentioned there are two types of transfer: negative transfer and positive transfer. Positive transfer uses the L1 knowledge to help to acquisition and produce L2. It is part of the L2 rule and, hence, expedites the learning process. The second type is a negative transfer, which refers to overlapping L1 information in L2 acquisition and produces undesirable forms in L2. This happens when the L1 knowledge which is used in L2 production is not part of the L2 rule. This transfer prevents learning and target language forms. On the other hand, Grami and Alzughaihi (2012) argued that the transfer hypothesis has two parts; full and partial transfer. Full transfer assumes that L2 learners make the characteristics to the starting point of L2 acquisition. These properties are "all lexical projections, functional structures, parameter settings, and feature values transfer" (White, 2000). Partial transfer supposes L2 learners take some of the characteristics to the starting point of L2 acquisition, the characteristics like lexical projections, parameter settings, and feature values transfer (Grami and Alzughaihi, 2012). L2 learners use transfer strategies from the L1 to the L2 as a tool to help them to improve their L2 knowledge and skills. Schwartz and Sprouse (1996) proposed the Full Transfer/ Full Access (FT/FA) hypothesis means the final stage of L1 acquisition is the first stage of L2 acquisition (Full Transfer). Also, when the parameter values of the target language are incompatible with the mental grammar that has been transferred from the L1, the L2 learner has to restructure the principles of the target grammar through access to Universal Grammar (UG). This is the second part of the hypothesis and it is called full access (Full Access). Moreover, Ionin et al. (2008) tested the Fluctuation Hypothesis (FH) and found it affected article acquisition. They found L2 learners have

full access to UG principles and parameters, L2 learners whose L1 has articles not fluctuate, and the L2 learners whose L1 lacks articles fluctuate.

Based on the literature review of the studies discussed above, this paper addresses the following research questions which in turn allows the formulation of the hypothesis shown below.

## Research Questions

1. Do Arab and Spanish speakers produce an English definite article in the same way?
2. Do Arab and Spanish speakers transfer definite article from their first language?

## Hypothesis

Arab and Spanish speakers have article errors in using because they think there are completely identical article usages between L1 and L2. That it leads to a negative transfer when the L1 knowledge is used in L2 production is not part of L2 rules.

I think L2 learners whose L1 contains the definite article will transfer article semantics from their L1 to L2, So they will not fluctuate, because the fluctuation is a developmental process could be appear in child L2 acquisition or adult L2 learners whose lack article in their L1

## Analyze the "data"

There are some of the literature has shown English article acquisition by second language theories, such as transfer, full access/ full transfer, and Fluctuation hypothesis. The Spanish and Arabic speakers showed different ways to acquire and produce the definite article. Arabic and Spanish speakers have restructured their English from their L1-transferred grammars. But they not fluctuated because the fluctuation is a developmental process could be appear L2 learners whose lack article in their L1.

For Spanish, Diez-Bedmar & Papp (2008) compared Spanish and Chinese learners when they used the English article system in generic reference. The Spanish language has an article system is that different from the English article system whereas the Chinese language does not have an article system. The study showed that the indefinite article in English was less difficult to acquire than the definite article for both Spanish and Chinese speakers. However, they found that generic contexts are more difficult for Chinese learners than for Spanish learners. Chinese learners used the zero article more than Spanish learners in inappropriate contexts. Chinese speakers overgeneralized the use of the definite article more in unsuitable contexts, while Spanish learners overused the zero article to the detriment of the use of the definite article. Spanish learners transfer from their L1 because they have article system but Chinese learners cannot transfer because their language lack an article.

Another study by Mariñas (2011) notes that Spanish students prefer to use the English article at all times, even in situations it does not apply. Also, they overuse the definite article because of their L1 effect in their production. The transfer is the result of learners using their knowledge of the first language while

challenging to acquire the L2 input. This study showed Spanish student's transfer from L1 to L2, it might be come through similarity and difference between languages.

Snape et al. (2013) studied English article selection for generic reference by Spanish, Turkish, and Japanese learners. For singular nouns, the Spanish learners used the definite article with a singular generics in the correct way and some incorrect zero article, but Turkish learners tended to select the zero article incorrectly more often than they selected the correctly. Spanish selected the definite article with bare plurals and mass generics. For the Spanish learners, it could be L1 transfer effects from Spanish aid the acquisition of the definite article, but for the Turkish and the Japanese learners, it cannot be L1 transfer.

For nongeneric, Liu & Gleason (2002) studied the hypothesis that uses of the are not equally difficult for L2 learners. They found cultural use to be more difficult than textual use, structural use, and situational use for Asian learners. Also, García Mayo (2008) also validated the hierarchy difficulty that the cultural use of the definite article in English is difficult for L2 learners. Also, all cases of definite article overuse in the cultural, structural, and general reference categories found were due to transfer from Spanish. The cultural use is more difficult for Spanish speakers because the L1 transfer and previous knowledge about culture.

Sarko, (2009) studied English article acquisition by Arabic and French learners; both groups have an article system. He found both groups used English articles unlike speakers of L1, who do not have articles, and differently from each other. The results showed the Arabic and French learners were very accurate in definite contexts. Sarko thought the Arabic learners in the particular show to know article distribution by comparison with the French learners. It is argued that these findings are consistent with Full Transfer of the characteristics of the L1 at first, followed by restructuring across the target use of English articles, coordinated with Full Access to Universal Grammar.

Alzamil (2016) compared Arabic learners whose L1 has an article system to Mandarin learners whose L1 does not have an article system. The results of this study partially supported FT/FA. Arabic learners used the more accurately in singular and plural contexts than the Mandarin learners. Arabic learners did not profit as expected from the fact that generics in Arabic are constantly definite, as they showed a rise number of omission errors; the Mandarin learners had the same errors. Some evidence of fluctuation was found as the Mandarin learners preferred to link their use of the to specificity rather than definiteness in plural contexts.

For non-generic contexts, (Alenizi, 2013) investigated the acquisition of English non-generic uses of the definite article in four situations: textual, structural, cultural, and situational by three proficiency groups (low intermediate, intermediate and advanced ) of Saudi learners. The results of this study showed that the acquisition of the non-generic uses of the English definite article has different levels of difficulty; textual use being the most difficult use, then structural and cultural, and situational use is the less difficult at the three proficiency levels. These results agree

with which García Mayo (2008). Furthermore, in view of the Language Transfer Theory (Gass & Selinker, 1994) claimed there was a positive transfer in the situational use because L2 learners able to transfer their L1 knowledge and they showed more accuracy in comparison with the other three uses.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is to find out if the Arabic and Spanish learners produce a definite article in the same way and have the transfer effect in their writing. This study has shown that both languages Arabic and Spanish learners have different ways to produce a definite article. Spanish learners are a lot more accurate when using the definite article, except a few errors present because of the transfer effecting. However, Arabic learners have many errors in definite article most of them because they overuse it, also, Arabic learners have influenced by first language that to make the negative transfer.

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