

# **The Study of the English Article System Errors Made by High School Students in the United Arab Emirates**

دراسة الأخطاء في استخدام أدوات المعرفة والنكرة في اللغة الانكليزية لدى طلبة  
الثانوية العامة بدولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة

by

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine the errors made by grade 12 students in the use of definite and indefinite articles in one of the secondary schools for boys located in Sharjah educational zone. English articles system can be confusing for Arab ESL/EFL students, because the Arabic language only has a definite article and no indefinite article. In contrast, the English language contains both. The study sought to identify the most often occurring errors and to offer teaching and learning strategies to solve these obstacles. Moreover, it is discovered that the most frequently occurring errors made by the study's sample are intralingual errors caused by ineffective and old approach in teaching the article system. As a result, several pedagogical applications were recommended to assist English teachers in teaching students how to acquire the English article system. It is hoped and advised that the findings of this study would be used to develop exercises to assist students in developing a more appropriate use of the definite and indefinite articles.

**Keywords:** English article system, error, sources of errors

## ملخص

تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى التعرف على نوعيّة الأخطاء التي يرتكبها طلاب الثانويّة العامة في استخدام أدوات المعرفة والنكرة في اللغة الانكليزيّة في إحدى المدارس الثانويّة للبنين في منطقة الشارقة التعليميّة .

أدوات المعرفة والنكرة يمكن أن تكون إحدى المشاكل المعقّدة للطلاب العرب الذين يدرسون اللغة الإنكليزيّة كلغة ثانية أو لغة أجنبيّة. يعود سبب هذه المشاكل إلى احتواء اللغة العربية فقط على أداة تعريف وتفتقر إلى أداة النكرة بينما تحتوي اللغة الإنكليزية على أداتي المعرفة والنكرة. حاولت الدراسة الحالية إلى حصر وإيجاد الأخطاء الأكثر تكرراً واقترحت بعض الطرق التعليميّة لتفادي هذه الأخطاء مستقبلاً. لقد توصلت الدراسة الحالية إلى أن معظم الأخطاء التي تم ارتكابها مفادها الأساليب التعليمية الغير صحيحة في تدريس أدوات المعرفة والنكرة في اللغة الانكليزيّة، لذلك تم اقتراح نشاطات تعليميّة والتي قد تساعد المدرّسين لتحسين اكتساب الطلاب لأدوات المعرفة والنكرة. يؤمل ان يتم استخدام هذه المقترحات والتدريبات لتحسين قدرة الطلاب على امتلاك الأدوات الصحيحة وكيفيّة استخدامها.

Dedication:

To the memory of my father,

To my beloved mother Allah keep her safe,

To my brothers and my sister,

To my wife and my children,

To my sincere supervisor, Dr. Emad A.S. Abu-Ayyash, To Doctor Solomon  
David,

To readers everywhere.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

Between the 1960s and the 1970s, a variety of research on Second Language Acquisition (SLA) was built on the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis. According to the (CAH), the learning process should emphasize on the area where the L1 and L2 have language differences. If such linguistic issues are not adequately addressed during the learning process, they will pose a challenge for L2 learners.

The English Articles (*a*, *an*, and *the*) are recognized as the commonly used words. The article *the* is most often used word in English (Master,2002, p.332). Nearly 85% of the English texts contain *the* and *a*. (Berry, 1993). According to these figures, it is clear that the English articles represent a sizable portion of the English language. English articles provide a variety of semantic and syntactic purposes. As a result, they are critical functional keywords. Function words differ from the content words because the content words are commonly forgotten by the learner in the learning process of the language. Furthermore, functional words are hardly stressed in speech.

The importance of articles in the discourse regarding cohesion demonstrates the important role they play to ensure successful communication. Mastering the English articles for no-native speakers cannot be ignored, therefore interaction might be harmed if the listener/ speaker and the speaker /writer do not have the same set of characteristics suggest by articles. (Gilmore 2007, p.97).

Master (2002) clarifies the phenomenon by arguing that the articles are typically unstressed, they become obscure in spoken conversation. As a result, the English articles system is the most challenging aspect of grammar for ESL/EFL students if not fully mastered. (Master,1990, pp.491-492).

The frequent use of English articles indicates the important role played in the discourse. The articles fulfill a number of functions, one of these functions is to provide cohesiveness in speech. This purpose is mostly used with the definite article "*the*". For example, in the following text:

**"I was overjoyed to see the firefighter who rescued my kitten!"** Here, we are addressing a specific firefighter. Even if we do not know the firefighter's name but he is a distinctive officer because he rescued the kitten.

According to Kim and Lakshmanan (2007, p.98), ESL/EFL students take longer to comprehend the article system than they do for any other grammatical form. Furthermore, Avery and Radisic (2007) suggest that L2 students will never acquire the actual use of the English articles. As a result, ESL/EFL students frequently make errors in their use of the English article system. Han, Chodorow, & Leacock (2006) showed that 13% of sentences in the TOEFL students' essays from China, Russia, and Japan contained article errors.

Thomas (1989, p.335) emphasizes the significant challenges that emerge as a result that some languages contain the article system, but it is significantly different from the English article system. He believes that the challenge is caused for the students whose native language lack equivalent to the English article system.

Anderson (1984) confirms this statement, adding that articles pose various challenges for ESL/ EFL students due to the system complexity. It is not a one-to-one link between structure and meaning. This may result in another sort of confusion from L1 when L 2 is being taught. (Ellis,2013, p.34).

Thus, Swan (1994) believes that learning and teaching English articles or any other aspect of English grammar would be more effective if the specific problems of learners

were identified. After evaluating the errors done by L2 English learners, many remedial strategies can be used, such as equipping the students with the opportunity to practice English articles in a real-world setting. (Master, 1994, p.23: Murano, 2002, p.628).

Master (1997) noticed that the zero articles which were not considered in the COBUILD corpus are placed first, followed by the definite article *the* and last by the indefinite article "a/ an"

Genre	Source	Zero	The	A(n)	Arts Des	Total Words
Research Journal	Technical articles (16)	49.7%	38.6%	11.8%	90.3%	63289
Science Magazine	Science News (4 issues)	57.0%	28.7%	14.3%	88.4% <sup>5</sup>	34987
News Magazine	Newsweek (1 issue)	46.6%	34.4%	19.1%	82.6%	31869
Novel	The Tenth Man	27.9%	45.9%	26.2%	77.7%	30956
Plays*	Macbeth and Julius Caesar	44.7%	38.7%	16.7%	58.8%	516197
All	(24) Samples	48.0%	36,3%	15.7%	82.6%	197644



Table (1) The Three Articles' Frequency of Occurrence in Five Genres (Master, 1993)

AL-Johani (2002) conducted a contrastive study on English and Arabic articles. This study aimed to provide a detailed description of the usage of the articles in both Standard English and Arabic, by using a contrastive structural analysis. This study emphasizes the similarities between the systems of the articles in the two languages. The basic result in this study says that many errors made by learners of the two languages are the result of the inadequate instruction which does not create enough awareness of the similarity and contrasts between the systems of the articles in English and Arabic.

Any English language teacher is well aware that his/her students make a variety of repeated errors. To begin there is a common misuse of the article system, which proves to be a significant stumbling obstacle for the Arab learners.

Liu (2013) presents a study of the article system in English. This study discusses mass and count nouns in English, and what makes a Noun Phrase definite, and what makes it indefinite. It also discusses the generic use of English articles. It claims that not every mass noun can be converted into a count noun and vice versa.

## **1.1. Statement of the Problem**

The goal of this research is to identify the errors made by high school students in the Sharjah, UAE. When they apply the definite and definite articles in English. As an English teacher and the head of the English department of the same school, I have noticed that both the students and the teachers have their concerns about the use of the definite and the indefinite articles in English. The six teachers participated in this survey along with the students express their worries about the use of the English articles. The six

teachers claim that students make numerous errors while the teachers feel helpless to provide a solution. The teacher refers these errors to the mother tongue which is Arabic.

Kharma (2015, p.333) emphasized the important role of articles in English. He investigated the type of errors committed by Arab students learning English in Kuwait and attempted to explain the causes of some of these errors. Kharma recommended that teachers of Arabic should pay more attention to the notions of definiteness and indefiniteness in the formal teaching of Arabic grammar. He suggested that this would help students to understand the English articles in a better way.

They emphasized that these errors are the result of the fact that the Arabic article system is distinct from the English article system. The teachers believe that they must employ specific tactics in order to overcome this obstacle.

As a result, articles are critical functional words. Unfortunately, Crompton (2011, p. 6) conducted one study to investigate these errors committed by UAE Arabic learners, thus the scarcity of research on the errors made by Arabic learners in the UAE motivated me to investigate this issue hoping to identify the effective remedies.

Additionally, to the abovementioned, using the English articles requires from the students to apply semantic, pragmatic, and grammatical functions, as there is no one-to-one form function mapping for each article, resulting in a large number of rules to master. According to Awaj and Mohamed (2017) Ali and Arabi (2017), Ahmed et al (2016), Saihi (2016), Ahmed (2016) research, article's errors are cohesive writing errors for native Arabic-speaking English learners.

## **1.2. Importance of the research**

The importance of this research arises from its attempt to deal with the types and sources of these errors in order to supply relevant information to both teachers and curriculum planners.

In general, significant study has been conducted on the errors made by Arabic EFL learners while writing or speaking in English when they use definite and indefinite articles such as Awaj& Mohamed (2017), Faeq& Farhan (2017), Khouribet (2017), Ahmed.et al (2016), Saihi (2016).

However, little research has been conducted on Arab learners in the United Arab Emirates. To the extent that the researcher is aware, this is one of the rare studies in the U.A.E. Crompton conducted the first study at the American University of Sharjah. Undoubtedly, this study is of particular interest to me. Additionally, it is believed that it will serve as a valuable resource for the Ministry of Education teachers in the United Arab Emirates. It may assist in more clearly identifying the errors and thereby identifying the difficulties. It will probably form the base for a follow-up study and the answers to these difficulties in the near future. If these issues are identified they can be resolved by identifying the necessary solutions that can be implemented in the other educational institutions in the United Arab Emirates.

On the other hand, recognizing the main reason behind these errors may assist English teachers in adjusting their priorities, updating, and reconsidering their teaching techniques. Teachers who are familiar with these errors and have the necessary sources can assist their students in acquiring English articles more easily than those unaware. Teachers will initially be familiarized with these errors and the factors that lead to their

occurrences. In the second stage (s)he will be ready to deliver sufficient opportunities for the students by generating instructional and evaluation procedures for interacting with the English articles that should be used correctly in the writing and speaking. Thus, this investigates the inappropriate use of the English definite and definite articles between the Arabic – speaking students in the UAE, more accurately among English- language high school students in Sharjah Educational Zone and provide as the foundation for further investigation and research.

Additionally, including teachers in sharing their own interoperations on these obstacles and their own perspective on how to tackle these errors would give legitimacy to the current study

### **1.3. The Research Questions:**

The main question:

What are the common of the English article system errors made by high school students in the U.A.E?

The following questions are addressed in this study:

1. When are the most frequent errors “language interference errors and intralingual errors ” occur?
2. What teaching and learning strategies needed to be applied to address these challenges?

## **Chapter two: Literature Review**

In this chapter, I will conduct a review of some relevant literature. The studies in this chapter have been organized chronologically and evaluate literature available in areas for example, language acquisition, second language acquisition, and error analysis. This part is not meant to be a thorough review; however, it is designed to provide the reader with the primary theories and analysis of the prior studies that are relevant to this topic.

### **2.1. Language acquisition theories:**

Numerous ideas and methodologies have been performed to analyze the acquisition of language (LA). Biaget (1973) Bloomfield (1914), Chomsky (1976), and Skinner (1957). It is impossible to examine all of these hypotheses in details in this study because it is primarily concerned with the language errors in a oner specific area of (LA). However, it is possible to mention the essential theories in order to show the most popular and well-known theories. Skinner's (1957) concept of the (LA) process, for example, is described by his behavioral approach which is based mostly on the concept of imitation. He believes that imitation is the children primary technique through which children acquire the language.

Usually, language learning errors provide information on other aspects that are not directly associated with language description, and which also be a result of the teaching techniques reflected in the learning processes. Moreover, I feel that language teachers should be familiar with at least some aspects of linguistic theories. As an example, Hutchinson and Waters (2009) suggest that the majority of the ESP study is focused on the language and composition analysis of ESP materials. Where factors affecting the learning process receive the least attention. They claim that the best way to comprehend,

study, and teach language is to understand the natural behavior of the human mind.

Hutchinson and Waters (2009, 39). Consider the following:

- \* Language acquisition is affected by the mind perception, organization, and collection data... as with language, we will highlight the significant developments in theories and how they apply to the ESP learner's and teacher's needs.
- \* Those quoted opinions emerge from a qualified specialist who based their observations on scientific evidence and study findings. As a result, the following chapters will discuss the Behaviourism and Mentalist theory on which serve as the foundation for numerous various linguistic schools, instructional methods, and approaches.

Bloomfield (1914) and Chomsky (1976) discover that LA process is basically brain in nature. They claim that the human brain is genetically programmed for language acquisition, and this has been referred to as the inherent theory. On the other hand, Biaget (1973) cognitive theories agree with this but go further by saying that language acquisition occurs only after a cognitive foundation is built through phases of cognition. Thus, Biaget links linguistic learning and abilities to the learners' cognition stage i.e., her/his age

## **2.2. Second Language Acquisition theories:**

This study is mostly involved with second language acquisition (SLA). Several theories have been developed in this area in an attempt to fully explain the SLA process. Skinner's (1957) Behaviorism is one of the earliest attempts to explain the SLA process. It claims that language acquisition is similar to a habit information. According to this approach, learning a language entail acquiring a linguistic habit. This hypothesis completely disregards the mental component of language learning, it has been questioned for the following as Johnson (2004) states:

"... minimized the importance of the mental activities and defined learning as the capacity to inductively uncover patterns of rule-governed behavior from instances offered by learners' setting." (p.18)

In the case of the literature on language learning, instructions, and hypothesis, were not in the hands of teachers before the arrival of the Twentieth Century. By 1950, Skinner in the United States and Pavlov in Russia had created behaviorist theory. This theory seems to be about learning in general and mostly psychological in nature. It sees language as a process of habit building. Stimuli and responses strengthen these habits. A child learns his mother tongue, according to behaviorists, through copying his mother and murmuring words surrounding him. To conclude, the behaviorist perspective praising, and punishing are essential aspects that influence whether reinforcement is maintained or eliminated. One of the most significant concerns raised against this theory is that the majority of studies were implemented on animals lacking a creative faculty of language (Hamza, 2014, 7).

Chomsky claims that kids were born with the innate ability to acquire language that are naturally defined. Returning to, (Goodluck, 2015), he views language as a key component of human genetics as a quality that defines humanity and adds that language learning is a natural form of development. Humans have a brain that has neural circuits that have to gather internal language information from birth as well as the innate capacity to process verbal communication in response to what they hear. In this situation, the baby's brain is capable of comprehending what (s)he hears through basics or rules that already contains, (Linden, 2008).

Chomsky stressed that people were biologically equipped to acquire language regardless of regulation, as children have the language acquisition device, (LAD) a part of our brain that facilitates language learning and later function as an instrument to apply language instructions. He believes that because most of the languages share some of the fundamental values, for example, most languages have nearly identical structure “verb”, “noun”, “subject”, “object” and “adjective”, he believes that the child’s job is to develop the means of communication that (s)he perceives as required to deliver these fundamental values. For example, the “LAD” previously encompassed the concept of “verb”, “tense” as well as the ability to pay attention and listen to word forms such as "watched" or "kicked". According to Chomsky's linguistic theory, children worldwide acquire the language in the same way, regardless of where were they born what culture, they have or what language they will learn to speak. Schumann (1978) places a greater focus on the role of culture in explaining S.L.A, as a result of acculturation. He suggests that language acquisition is influenced by both the psychological and social aspects that are incorporated during the process of learning. He asserts that when the gap between the learner of the second language and the native speaker of this language is small, learning will be more effective. While this approach cannot fully explain S.L.A. it does attempt to provide one of the insight through solutions for making S.L.A more efficient and successful. Leaving aside the environmental aspects associated with S.L.A Chomsky's (1976) language universal grammar theory is based mainly on his belief that language learning is a reflection of each person’s mental activity. While Chomsky’s theory does not directly address S.L.A, it has a significant influence on a number of theories, for example Krashen (1978) who was inspired by Chomsky's understanding of language and produce his model, named the “monitor model.” For the first time, he distinguished



between learning and acquisition in his approach. Then, he expands on this idea with his theory, which he refers to be as “input theory “and more recently “the comprehending theory.”

Krashen (2004) concludes that while learning is cognitive, the acquisition is subconscious and more directly connected to individuals’ mental processing. Krashen asserts that grammatical rules are learned in a predictable way. This idea has been accused of failing to stretch further than the grammatical part of language. This would not hinder it from explaining a variety of other features of S.L.A. Hatch (1978) and Long (1981) also criticized Chomsky's theories of language acquisition, arguing that they are insufficient to clarify the S.L.A. Long and Larsen-Freeman (1991) conducted a more in-depth examination of S.L.A. by extending far beyond languages’ structure to the discourse level. They explain various topics linked to S.L.A through the use of free and controlled recorded discussions.

Swain (1995) dismisses Krashen's and Chomsky's ideas and advocates for the development S.L.A. acquisition through learner production. She believes the more the learner practices the language, (s) he can monitor his or her development and identify what (s)he learns and what (s) he does not learn. Another perspective of language acquisition is the socio-cultural theory which is based on Vygotskian idea on language and claims that language acquisition is a cultural phenomenon that mediates social and psychological relationships. the concept of ‘scaffolding’ is one of the most significant theory inherited from Vygotsky (1978) or the zone of proximal development (ZPD) that is:

"The difference between the intellectual developmental stage attained by individual issue solving and the developmental level attained by conflict solving under adult supervision or in collaboration with more proficient mates" (p.86)

This theory highlights the need for others to help learners during the learning process, such as teachers and peers, in order to assist learners in carrying out specific learning activities. This would be unreasonable to deny or accept all these theories which contribute to the understanding of some of all parts of the S.L.A process. I think that combining all these methods would lead to a more comprehensive, better, and better understanding of the S.L.A.

### **2.3. The History of Contrastive Analysis:**

Robert Lado's *Linguistics Across Cultures* established the theoretical base for what become known as the contrastive analysis hypothesis (1957). Lado argues in his theory that "those aspects that are comparable to the learner's native language will be easy for him, while those that are dissimilar will be challenging. While Lado's concept was not unique, he was the one who present a thorough theoretical treatment and propose the systematic set of technical procedures for the contrastive study of languages. This included identifying the languages (using structuralist linguistics), comparing them, and anticipating obstacles during the learning process.

Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, researchers in the Second Language Acquisition (S.L.A) leaned entirely on the Contrastive Analysis theory (CA). It was first regarded to be the only approach for examining the differences between two unique languages. This theory was used to describe why learners have problems when attempting to study the target language. CA theory was first suggested and developed by Lado (1957), who suggested that during the learning of the second language, learners like

to compare the element in their mother language with the targeted language. He discovers that identical parts are easier than dissimilar parts. Although this theory was not unique novel or innovative. Lado (1975) established it as a structure for contrastive studies of languages with methodologies, analysis, and a comprehensive scientific approach. This approach contains a description, comparison of the language, and forecast of all the challenges that learner may have when learning the second language. According to Brown (1980), the central perspective of CA is that: “the primary impediment to second language learning is the interaction of the first language system with the second language system” (p.148).

CA implies that the errors produced by the learner of L2 are a result of negative interference from the mother tongue. This hinders the adequate learning procedure and creates challenges. Powell (1998) defines the ‘interference’ as the impact from the L1 that might affect the acquisition of the second language. Regardless of the fact that C. A’s theory is extremely beneficial for explaining errors, Hughes (1980).

## **2.4. The History Error Analysis:**

During the 1960s and 1970s, the introduction of error analysis (E.R) had a significant influence on the search study in the area of SLA. It was first introduced by Corder (1967) who emphasized the importance of analyzing the learners’ mistakes in order to improve and minimize errors. Corder (1973) outlines the phases of the E.R. procedure. The initial phase is detecting the errors and conducting an investigation into the target language. The second phase involves an examination of the teaching methods. The third phase involves proposing a solution and emphasizing the pedagogical consequences of the adjustment. Thus, as a theory and practice, error analysis deserves the researcher’s trust by paving the

road for positive improvement in language learning. As a result, the focus shifted away from just listing errors toward fixing them in three phases. Magnan (1983) proves this by asserting that:

"... researchers currently consider language learning as a progression of phases or interlanguages, with errors indicating that learners are experimenting with linguistic rules in order for us to proceed through interlanguage phase" (p.383).

Lu (2010): "arising from the failure of contrastive analysis to adequately account for student errors, reference began appearing in the literature to a new technique; EA. It has been proposed in several places as an alternative or supplement to CA. In fact, Error Analysis covers a wide range of viewpoints as to its goals and its value to the language teaching field. EA evolved from transformational linguistics and the concept of language as a rule-governed system."

Thus, EER is not just avoiding errors, but also about learning from them. Considering that, views regarding errors have adjusted in a favorable direction in the past 40 years. Thus, teaching English has shifted away from the focus on grammar toward the focus on the main four skills, which identified the process of learning English for several years. Simply, errors which happen English language learners place a higher emphasis on studying English grammar as a means of achieving.

As a result, numerous errors occurred. Throughout time, instructors and linguists are acutely aware of the importance of shifting their focus on grammar as their attitudes shifted positively to make errors. According to Lu (2010) the error analysis procedure consists of five steps: the first includes recognizing errors by separating laps from competence errors. Second examining errors using a grammatical model. Thirdly dividing the errors into categories and subcategories as substantive errors. The fourth stage

examines the causes and the reason for the errors. The fifth stage involves evaluating these errors identifying the most serious errors and then selecting the most efficient means for correcting them.

## **2.5. What is "an error"?**

Generally, the phrase “error” refers to a systematic and repeated breaking of a rule.

“Error is the learner’s inability to apply the necessary language rules, which will assist him in acquiring the second language and developing the systems of rules” Littlewood (2014, p. 44) asserts that all ESL learners make two types of errors. These are referred to as interlingual and intralingual errors. The interlingual errors happen when the ESL learners try to translate one language into the second. It will lead to errors due to the difference between the target language and the mother tongue. After that, it became known as the transfer strategy. Furthermore, errors occur when the ESL students interpret data using their own rules. As a consequence of these types of errors, second language learners’ resort to overgeneralization and omission-based simplification. Klassen, (1991), defines it as a type of pattern that the native speaker considers as inadequate and inappropriate applied in the linguistic context. As a result, the errors committed by the learner are distinct from mistakes. The errors are systemic in nature and embedded in the learners’ perception and training.

Edge (1989) differentiates errors from” mistakes, slips, attempts.” He emphasizes that errors are the primary factor affecting second and foreign language learning, as well as speech performance. Thus, committing errors requires attention and treatment, as learners would be unable to fix these errors on their own because they do not know they

are making them. Therefore, errors are a fundamental aspect of the learning procedure for learners, however mistakes are for short term. Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991) confirm this claim by stating that error “is a product indicative of his/ her present stage of L2 progress, or underlying competence” (p.59). According to Ellis (2008), the in-performance error reflects the learner’s inadequate knowledge and misunderstanding of the proper rule or structure. However, errors simply slip in performance that the learner may easily resolve.

## **2.6. The Importance of Studying Errors.**

Numerous studies on error analysis have been conducted in the second language acquisition field, including those by Brown (1980), Chacheter and Celce-Murcia (1977), Corder (1974), Dulay and Burt (1974), James (1998) and Richards (1971). Asserting the previous studies on E.R reveals that scientists and linguistics have been attracted by error since they cause great difficulties for the learner of the second language that cannot be neglected. Corder (1967) believes that errors are a serious problem that must be addressed quickly and continuously when discovered. It is well-known that the primary purpose of learning the language is to mastery it. Producing numerous errors in the language learning process may have a negative result, as a result, the learning process may be delayed in general. Brooks (1960) adopts a critical view of errors stating that “like sin, the error must be prevented and remove its impact, but its existence must be anticipated” (p.58). Moreover, in the latest study, examining error has been proven valuable and effective to the learning process. Errors became a device for teaching instruction and language acquisition improvement. Corder (1967) indicates the significance of errors by emphasizing the following: "They are crucial for three reasons. To begin, they benefit the teacher, they show how far the learner has advanced to the aim.

Second, they present proof to the investigator about how language is learned, what tactics the learner implements to comprehend the language. Thirdly, they are obvious to the student himself, because errors can be viewed as a tool used by the learner to acquire the language." (p. 161).

Additionally, Gass and Selinker (1984) claim that errors are extremely useful in determining learners' competency level in the language. As a result, diagnostic exomes can be implemented to determine the errors made by learners. Abi Samra (2003) confirms this approach, highlighting the importance of errors as a source of data for examining the learner processes followed by both learner and instructor when learning the language. Errors that the students make during language learning have been thoroughly and intensely investigated. Moreover, the errors produced by SL learners bring to light the difference between two distinct languages (the first language and the target language).

## **2.7. Errors taxonomies:**

Richards (1974) described the area of errors as dealing with the distinction in how people learned to speak a language and the way adult native speakers use language. To further understand of these errors, we need to distinguish between mistakes and errors. Eliss (2007) emphasized the differences between errors and mistakes. He said that errors showed inadequacies in the learner's knowledge; they arose as a result of the learner's inability to identify what is correct. Mistakes showed occasional failures in performance; they occurred when the learner was unable to accomplish what he or she knew in the particular instance.

Classifying errors according to their critical importance is the key aspect of error analysis. Richards'(1971) research of errors provides the basis for the current categorization of errors produced by L2 language learners. For him, errors fall into three

main types: interference error caused by learners' mother tongue, the interlingual error caused by the wrong generalization of L2 rules and developmental errors conducted by learners' attempt to construct hypotheses based on an inadequate perspective of the second language that (s)he learns. However, Selinker (1972) believes Richards' categorization is too general. As a result, he expands the categorization by adding more subgroups in order to make it more thorough. The novel aspect of this categorization is the type of methods that learners employ those results in errors, specifically communication and learning strategies. However, according to James (1998) these methods happens when the student tries to employ an approximate form of the fundamental term in conversation and then converts it to indirect expression. Richards (1974) later simplifies this categorization by dividing them into two categories "the intralingual errors" produced by native language interference and the intralingual and developmental error" generated during the learning process. Additionally, Dulay and Burt (1974) expand Richard list of errors by adding two new categories' (1974) unique errors and ambiguous errors. Unique errors, for them, those that do not the first language structure and are not developed in the first language acquisition system. While ambiguous errors are the ones that do not fit neatly in the categories of the intralingual errors. Brown (1980) proposes another type of error that occurs as a result of the learning context. For him, this type of error can be created by instructors using ineffective teaching tactics in the school setting. Finally, Ellis (2008) asserts that learners might generate another type of error known as "induced error." He believes that these errors are mostly produced by ineffective teaching methods and more precisely, by incorrect teaching materials.

## **2.8 Nature of grammar errors:**



Lengo, believes that mistakes and errors appear in the writing skill. Mistakes occur because of poor attention, tiredness, or indifference. They can be self-corrected with little attention. (Lengo. N. 2005). On the other hand, students - in most cases - make errors due to faulty and incomplete performance by both the teacher and the learner when employing the linguistic items. Errors take place because the learner is ignorant of the right use of the grammatical rules, the language acquisition as a whole, as well as the differences that lie between the learner's mother tongue, and the target language. Therefore, errors cannot be classified as self-corrected. Within this context, the transfer theory has some sort of implication. If the entity of the mother language corresponds with the target language system, the transfer will be possible. If not, the transfer will enhance errors occurrence. (Abdulmoneim, 2017).

In case of the Arabic language and the English grammar, the resemblance points are not identical. Therefore, and for the purpose of this study, the researcher poked through the morphological errors, errors of tense, passive and active mood, prepositions, articles, committed by students in composition and grammar sections of their final exams in the English paper. Accordingly, the researcher envisaged pedagogical factors dedicated for authors, editors, syllabus tailors, in addition to textbooks writers in order to aide students avoid making such errors.

## **2.9.L 2 English article acquisition research on non- native English speakers.**

Marefat and Rahmany (2009) investigated how Persian EFL learners acquire RCs. This study enrolled 39 native Persian speakers between the age of 18 and 22 who were studying English translation. Students were divided into two groups according to their skills in the English language. They were required to complete a sentence comprehension

task. The study's findings corroborated the Noun Phrase Accessibility Hierarchy predication. Additionally, the results suggested that the proficiency level had no impact on the difficulty order of the RCs. Kim (2013) investigated if the NPAH is applicable to Korean EFL students and whether subject RCs are simpler to comprehend and produce than objects RCs. Additionally, the study examined the affecting RC formation in English and Korean, focusing on three distinct pairs of RCs for comparison: (1) subject and indirect object RCs, (2) direct object and object of preposition RCs, and (3) object of preposition RCs. The study found that subject RCs is easier than object RCs in both comprehension and production tasks which would be compatible with the NPAH. On the other hand, other research indicates that the NPAH impact does not apply to all groups of EFL learners. Gao (2014), for example, evaluated the barriers to Chinese English learners' comprehension of English relative clauses. The data collection method included two tests: a sentence combining test and a grammatical judgment test. The first test was designed to assess learners' capacity to work productively. While the second was designed to assess their intuitive understanding. The sentence combination test required participants to combine two sentences in such a way to create a relative clause. The grammatical judgment exam required learners to assess the grammar structure of the sentences and correct those they considered incorrect. Both studies revealed that RCs modifying objects are far easier to program than those modifying subjects. Therefore, this investigation did not support Korean and Comrie's NPAH.

As mentioned previously, the English article system pose a significant issue to all English language learners, whatever their proficiency level. The majority of research have examined the English article system from another angle. For instance, Venuti's (2011) study examines many characteristics of English articles. This part replication of Gleason's

(2002) study, which examined non-generic functions of the English articles, including cultural, situational, structural, and textual. Subjects includes students from private school and also students from Toronto Canada university. The study uses a sample of 17 low-intermediate, 20 high intermediate, and 34 advanced ESL learners. The data were then obtained using the same tool that was used in Gleason's (2002) research, a written test. Rather than a quantitative study that reinforces Gleason's finding, Venuti discovers that Gleason's testing tool is unconvincing. This leads him to highlight serious concerns about the selection of assessment instruments, which he believes should be comprehensive in their coverage of all potential errors that may occur when L2 students use the English article system. Unlike Venuti, Khoshgowar's (2010) work is concerned on contextual errors. His research focuses on the use of the English articles in controlled dialogues with 12 Afghan Dari speakers of intermediate or advanced English learners whose mother tongue does not contain the article system. The statistics for this study were gathered from a recorded conversation between them about various issues relevant to their current life situation and their future plans. The taped discussions were transcribed and examined for their informational content, related to application, and various noun quality. The study's findings indicate that the students are correct in developing the indefinite articles a/ an in referential and non-referential settings that contain previous knowledge. In regard to the zero article, the subjects demonstrate difficulties in demonstrating it, particularly in referential context. Barret and Chen (2010) use a variety of contexts. Their study examines the usage of the English article system in the composition of 30 Taiwanese university students to assess their usage of English articles in writing using corpus-based data. The information was evaluated in order to assess some characteristics of the article system implemented in the students' academic writings. The definite and indefinite

articles are considered to be excessively used, while the zero article is largely forgotten. It is claimed that several errors can happen as a result of inadequate knowledge of the relationship between countable and uncountable nouns and the definite article system. Moreover, it is advised that when teaching the writing, the semantic and pragmatic relationships between particular and the knowledge of the listener or the reader should be addressed in order to prevent article usage errors among L2 learners. Taaj Aldeni (2008) takes different strategy in his study. He works on the psychological aspects of second language acquisition. He performs research on the influence of prevention strategies and their effect on learners' use of the English articles and their evaluation in the system. The entire research is based on the avoidance hypothesis, which states that when learners encounter challenges employing different syntactic systems when learning L2, they employ avoiding tactics by ignoring a certain language rules and forms (Ellis, 2003). According to Taaj Aldeni, this method accounts for the large number of errors produced by Persian English learners while learning the English article system. He finds that the avoidance tactics are enforced on the EFL students. Additionally, he mentions two primary causes for these errors: (1). The challenging of the English article system, which is filled with irregularities that control its rules and (2) the significant difference between the L1 and L2 article systems. His research involved 103 male and female Iranian EFL students enrolled in a bachelor's degree program. He gathered information by implementing two tests: the Oxford replacement quiz to evaluate the participants' linguistics skills and the writing test to evaluate their usage of articles in writing. The first test results are standardized and divided as the following: elementary and pre-intermediate. The subjects' writings are assessed to determine the errors committed by learners when they use English articles. These errors are categorized into deletion of *the*,

inserting of *the*, misusing *the* for *a*, deleting *a* and inserting *a*. The data indicates that the most frequently occurring error is deleting *the* and the least frequently occurring one is misusing *the* for *a*. Humphrey (2007) examines errors from a different angle. His research focuses on the social effect of learners' culture on their language learning. His research sought to understand the process Japanese English learners produce the English article. His research involved high school and university students. The information was gathered during a test that consisted of two parts containing local context. The first part is a paragraph, while the second contains a brief dialogue, multi-sentential and clausal units. In both parts, students were required to complete the missing article. The study's results indicate that Japanese learners do not fully comprehend English article usage. He implies that Japanese students employ arbitrary guessing tactics. He attributed this choice to their reliance on local contextual clues rather than a comprehension of the English article system. Ekiert (2004) follows Humphrey (2007)'s lead by investigating the errors caused by Polish learners in a different learning situation. Twenty-five learners are separated into three groups: 10 Polish ESL learners, 5 Polish EFL learners, and 5 native speakers of English (the control group). Each student has a unique proficiency level. The responses were gathered by providing participants with sample sentences and then asking them to add the article when needed. Ekiert (2004) builds his study on Gleason's (2002) argument that when giving testers a fill article blank test will mislead the students with limited abilities to believe that they have to fill using *the* or *a*. The thing that will affect the test credibility. In contrast to the investigation that has been discussed so far.

Milton's (2001) research is entirely qualitative in nature. It does not express any desire to examine any social, psychological, or linguistic cause. He provides statistics for various sorts of errors based on corpus-based statistics to investigate errors done by Hong

Kong University students. His corpus-based statistics indicate that learners violate the English article system as one of the top ten errors. The least frequently occurring error is the use of the zero article in place of the indefinite article indefinite article for zero article, definite article for zero article, and definite article for the indefinite article. Additionally, the study of Sarani (2003) and White (2003) relies heavily on the quantitative approach to investigate various forms of errors. Nevertheless, the findings of both investigations are strikingly different, Sarani's study, for instance, examines the article usage on 40 Iranian undergraduate students using a fill-in test. The findings indicate that most or errors are created because of the complication of the English article system rather than by negative transfer from the first language. However, White's (2003) research is carried on Turkish speakers and he concludes that article deletion errors are more often as a result that in the Turkish language the use the term "bir" to refer to "one" to indicate particular and to avoid any lack of any article indicating indefiniteness.

## **2.10. L 2 Studies on the acquisition of English article by Arabic-speaking learners.**

Numerous studies have been conducted on the article system errors caused by the Arab students, for instance, Abushihab (2011), Alhaysony (2012), Alsulmi (2010), Bataineh (2001), Crompton (2011), El-Sayed (1982), Hamza (2011), Kharma (1981) Kassamany (2006) and Sarko (2008). Not long ago, Alhaysony (2012) has carried out a study case on 100 Saudi female students from the English department. Her research focuses on the type of errors students do when using English articles, her research is focused on the taxonomies of surface structure that are implemented to categorize errors. She gathers information by making her students write detailed essays on aspects of their lives. According to the findings of the (SST)study, the individuals committed numerous

deletion errors and fewer substitution errors. In regard of deletion error sort, the most common is the deletion of *a*, whereas the less common is the deletion of *an*. Moreover, her findings suggest that the mother tongue interference, especially Arabic, contributes significantly to the development of these errors, so do the instructional tactics used to teach the English errors. As a result, she emphasizes the importance of teachers' awareness of the distinctions between the native language and the second language when teaching the English articles.

Mohammed and Mustafa's (2012) investigation aimed to examine 100 fourth-year students in Iraq, using the English article system (*the*, *an*, *a* and *zero*). The conceptual section of the paper digs into the cognitive components that comprise the notion of definiteness, it also provides a straightforward categorization of English nouns. This section ends with an examination of the context of the definite, indefinite articles used zero articles used in English. The study collected information using a filling gap test composed of 45 distinct items. The study depended on error analysis in the process of gathering information. The observational section of this investigation suggests that fourth-year students in the English department have difficulties in using the English articles properly. Additionally, the findings indicate that the frequency of the article errors is statistically important, in different words, the definite articles were found to be the simplest to use, followed by the indefinite article and finally the zero article. Additionally, the findings indicate that students use the mother tongue to transfer the use of English articles.

Crompton's research (2011) appears to support this finding, although his study focuses on Arab learners from several Arab countries. He performed research on learners at the American University of Sharjah in the UAE. His information collection has included a

variety of nationalities. These papers are typical students' projects. The information was then evaluated to determine the type of errors produced by the students in terms of article usage. The most commonly encountered error is the improper use of the definite article "for generic reference." He finds out that the majority of errors are caused by interlingual interference instead of intralingual errors. A further study that supports this notion is that of Abushihab et al (2011). He has done research aimed to categorize the grammatical errors generated by Jordanian EFL students at Azzytona University in Jordan. This research involved 62 students from English literature department. The findings suggest that 75 errors in the use of the English articles are done out of total errors of 345. He discovers that the most frequently occurring error is the deletion of *the* and the less common occurring error is the insertion of *a*. Furthermore, the researcher concluded that these errors are caused because of the great differential between the Arabic and the English languages articles. Moreover, the strong influence of L1 interferences adds negatively to the occurrence of these errors. Sarko (2008) comes to the similar results, while he adds more EFL French speaking students in order to boost up his notion of Arabic language interaction. He examines the effect of *Al* in the Arabic definite article on the acquisition of the English article system. He also involves French-speaking students in his study in order to compare how the Arabic speaker and the English speaker acquire the article system. He does so because French, like English, has definite and indefinite articles, whereas Arabic has only one definite article which is *Al*. His research focuses on English language students with various skills. He believes that learners of French, whatever their competence level, make significant improvements in acquiring the article system than the Syrian learners who speak Arabic. He outlines his research's finding by declaring that:



“It appears that the lack of overt morphological form for the indefinite article with singular nouns in the L1 implies the acquisition of the corresponding morphological category in the L2 by L1 Syrian Arabic speakers and conversely, presence of indefinite articles in the L1 (French), supports the acquisition process” (p. 113)

Kassamany's (2006) examines another research which confirms and verifies his idea regarding the effect of the mother tongue on the use of the English system by Arab EFL learners. Furthermore, her approach is unique by assessing the students using a written translation and election exercise. Her research focused on students enrolled in the University of Beirut's inclusion program. The findings indicate that Arab students do not significantly demonstrate preferences for modifying their use of the end a in” non-referential indefinite contexts”. Furthermore, the research emphasizes the notion which is the majority of errors committed by Arab students by applying English articles are a result of Arabic interference and the challenge of the English article system. Indeed, Kharma (1981) is a leader in promoting this approach. His investigation proves the notion of linguistic interference in the learning procedure of the English article system. He carried research on the use of English articles by Arab students in Kuwait. The research findings show that the majority of errors are caused by Arabic language interference. Therefore, he adds that additional errors may occur as a result of the methods employed to learn the second language. Such as overgeneralization and insufficient teaching methods. The opposing opinion, that errors are caused mainly by insufficient teaching methods. Is supported by numerous studies, for example as Hamza (2011) examined Iraqi students' use of the English article. His research involves 40 undergraduate students majoring in history and Arabic, he gathers the information through the use of multiple-choice and a closed test. Then he evaluated the data to determine the type of error using percentage

formulas and the Chi-square test. The study's results indicate that majority of errors are intralingual in nature, rather than transferable. The research recommended that students should be given additional chances to practice English article usage in the English-language context. Alsulmi's (2010) study had a similar finding, but completely on different samples. He performs a study at Al Qasim University in Saudi Arabia on 24 undergraduate students. The aim of this research is to determine whether the errors committed by L2 learners are caused by negative interference or by the learning methods used to study the English articles. He used a multiple-choice test of 70 short dialogues. Then, he asked the students to give explanations for their choice of why they made it. The answers indicate that errors are caused by ineffective teaching and learning methods more than those caused by the negative transfer from their Arabic language. To be more accurate, the findings confirm the Dulay and Burt (1980) argument that when students are repeatedly engaged to the target language's grammar, the effect of L1 decreased even more if learners demonstrate improvement in comprehending the rules of the L 2 grammar. Therefore, it is claimed that the errors learners commit are adoptive and overgeneralization errors in comparison to L1 interference. This perspective and findings are remarkably similar to those of Bataineh (2005), who conducted research on Jordanian students studying English at the University of Jordan. Her research examines the often-committed errors made by Jordanian EFL learners when they use indefinite articles. The finding indicates that the majority of errors are developmental in nature, such as overgeneralization and oversimplification. These errors have resulted in ineffective learning processes. For instance, the analysis identifies exactly one L1 interference error. The deletion of the definite article. Numerous studies on EFL have been conducted internationally. Additionally, Abushihab's (2014) research identified grammatical errors

in composition done by students at Gazi University English department in Turkey. The study subjects were told to write about challenges they encountered when learning English as a foreign language. The errors were divided into five categories: tenses errors, propositional errors, active and passive, and morphological errors. The findings indicated that learners committed 179 grammatical errors. 27 in the use of tenses, 50 in the use of prepositions, 52 in the use of articles, 17 in active and passive voice, and 33 in morphological errors. Snape (2015) performed research on English learners in Japan and Spain. He discovered that they are distinguished in their usage of the L2 article system in that Spanish learner of English substitute indefinite articles for the definite articles and the opposite, and Japanese learners have “mapping problem” rather than representational insufficiency, whereas Japanese learners have a “mapping problem” instead of representational insufficiency. While Rahimi and Taheri (2016) for instance, conducted a study on the grammatical errors committed by different level students in Iranian universities. Their study group was selected according to the results of the Oxford Proficiency Test, which aims to verify student levels. The obtained results revealed that students have major difficulties in using prepositions such as "of/ from". The researchers rendered such difficulties to inter-lingual and intra-lingual interferences.

Usha and Kader (2016) conducted research on syntactic and morphological errors as seen by secondary school teachers. The language acquisition and questionnaire were used to collect data from 280 students in Kerala. The findings showed that the order of the words, articles, auxiliaries, tenses, and prepositions were the least common and prominent errors among the study group. The teachers' perception reveals that learners' attitudes, methods of teaching, inter-lingual and intra-lingual were the main causes behind such errors. Another study was carried out by Hourani (2008) who researched the types

of grammatical errors made by UAE' secondary male students in their composition assignments. The researcher used two separate questionnaires and results revealed that the majority of grammar errors were in the subject-verb agreement (25%), prepositions (15%), articles (10%), tenses (22%), passive (6%), plurality (8%), and auxiliaries (3%).

Gedion, Tati, and Peter (2016) examined syntactic errors committed by Malaysian students in their compositions. The study sample consisted of 50 students whose mother tongue is Malay, which is a second language and English is taught as a foreign language.

In another study conducted on Pakistani EFL / ESL learners, Mehmood, Farukh and Ahmad (2017) observed that most learners' errors appeared because of intra-lingual factors in their EFL/ESL learning. In addition, Zafar (2016) while working on a functional English course observed that the majority of learners committed errors because of the first language interference, such an interference of the mother tongue in L2 learning, as she highlighted, could be lessened through applying remedial teaching measures, which she accomplished successfully by applying remedial measures on Pakistani language learners.

Faeq and Farhan's (2017) study attempts to explore the frequent syntactic errors in the English composition committed by students of secondary schools in Iraq. The study consisted of 97 students at the fourth grade at A-Siraj secondary school for boys in Baghdad (2015- 2016). The study uses Error Analysis to detect, explain, and categorize errors and to determine their causes. It also uses the Contrastive Analysis as an approach for explaining the structural systems of Arabic and English. The study investigated the exam essays written by the students and the results show that verb group errors were found to be the largest group in number. The next largest groups of errors occurred

consecutively in tense, prepositions, articles, word order and voice. The study concluded that interference from the mother tongue, faulty assumptions about the target language and inconsistency of English constitute the main sources of errors. Finally, some pedagogical recommendations are presented for English teachers and syllabus designers.

In another study conducted by Abdul-Fattah and El-Hassan (2018) investigating the syntactic errors committed by intermediate level students in ten Jordanian schools. The study sample consisted of 320 male and female students and the information was gathered through an objective test asking the students to select an answer from four alternative options. The obtained results demonstrated that the students committed several syntactic errors including word order (3.95%), comparative and superlative adjectives (3.5%), lexis (7.48%), prepositions and temporal specify (7.00%), concord (6.75%), verbal forms (14.3%), intensifier, determiner, and quantifier (7.8%), interrogative (9.66%), pronouns (10.4%), and also tense related forms with (20.4%). These types of errors appeared as a consequence of a number of factors as overgeneralization, the complexity of the target language, insufficient learning, the inability to concentrate, and a native language interference

Belaïd and Almrtdi (2019) examined the syntactical errors made by EFL students in their final test scripts. They are studying English as a foreign language in the English Department at Faculty of Languages and Translation, Azzaytuna University. The research included 9 EFL students who represent the entire number of the spring semester, 8-semester students in the academic year of 2018/2019. The study main objective is to determine the most frequent errors made by Libyan EFL students at the Faculty of Languages and translation in the following areas: errors in the function of noun phrases; errors in types of phrases; and errors in determiners. As a result, the present study is not

experimental rather than describes and analyzes learners' errors in their final test scripts for an intensive grammar course. The information gathered demonstrated that most of the senior EFL learners continue to make numerous errors in L2 grammar, which is obvious in their exam script. At the conclusion of the study, a list of suggestions will be made as an improvement plan for the most frequent errors in the present study.

Analyses of the errors made by Arabic English learners in general demonstrate that they are highly problematic. For instance research for example, Kharma (1981), El-Sayed (1982), Sarko (2008), Kassamany (2006), Crompton (2011), Abushihab et al (2011), and Alhaysony (2012) imply that linguistic interference is the primary source of the incorrect article usage in English. However, studies of Abu-Ghararah (1989), Hamza (2011), Alsulmi, (2010), and Bataineh (2001) demonstrate that the cause of errors in the English articles system is caused by learners' methods. Both these opposing views fail to take into consideration the existence of errors. One way to measure this difference in findings is to explore the variety of additional characteristics. to acquire any meaningful results that are not contradictory, all of these factors must be examined and adequately evaluated. Relying solely on a single factor or method of investigation would lead to conflicting results. To summarize, these investigations represent two distinct data concerning the cause of errors in the English article learning process, but they were conducted in distinct situations and using a distinct investigation approach. I consider this distinction in the findings is natural and good. It opens the door for a more comprehensive understanding of Arab learners' development of the English article system. Additionally, it increases the efficiency and validity of the upcoming study. Considering all the factors employed in this research when conduction future research will support in developing a highly comprehensive understanding of the area of language learning.

## **The rationale of the Study**

The only reason behind conducting such an analytical non-experimental study is the weak performance of the twelve grade students in the English Department in their advanced grammar examinations. The learners' poor command over the target language grammar was frequently observed through the researchers' teaching experience. Learners' incompetence in fully mastering the target language grammar will indeed create obstacles in their future uses of the target language, which will negatively reflect on their performance.

## **Chapter Three: Methodology**

The current research employs both qualitative and quantitative methods to a sample of Sharjah high school students from two different levels of competence. The methods used to ensure reliable results that are supposed to be triangulate. Denzin (1978) considered to be the one introduced the concept "triangulation" to describe how research methods can be combined in a complementary way.

The triangulation method involved data collection, analysis, and assessment to provide the most accurate answer to the study questions. (Morse, 1991). As a result, the current study employs this strategy, which has been considered useful and fruitful. Thus, the objective is to identify the sources of errors in the usage of the English article system by Arab learners of various nationalities, including the Emirati learners.

The following part mostly discuss the methods employed to accomplish this goal. To address the study topic, I collected qualitative and quantitative data through a test and interviews. The present study includes of 50 English students from private schools and six English teachers. I have students test the definite and indefinite articles for both the multiple-choice test and the closing test. Furthermore, 6 teachers were interviewed at a high school in Sharjah. They instructed me on how to conduct an improvement plan when confronted with errors in the use of definite and indefinite articles.

### **3.1. The sample group:**

The sample group consists of 12<sup>th</sup>-grade students in private high schools in Sharjah. The following table summarize the of 12<sup>th</sup>-grade students' population in Sharjah high School for Boys.



Table (2): the population of the study

<b>Schools</b>	<b>Grade 12 male students</b>
School 1	134
School 2	24
School 3	22
Total	180

The study enrolled are 50 students from a Sharjah high school. The students were selected arbitrarily based on availability and are from the arts and sciences departments between the ages of 17 and 18, 6 professional teachers with long teaching experience are selected.

Additionally, they have extensive understanding of the UAE setting and have all been employed as teachers in the UAE for an extended period of time. They are all high school English teachers with a minimum of five years' experience in the UAE. They all have extensive expertise as English language teachers and have conducted several methodological workshops.

The survey's sample size and composition are summarized in Table 2 below:

Table (3) the sample group:

<b>No</b>	<b>Sample group</b>	<b>Size</b>
1-	Teachers	6
2-	Students	50

According to table (2) the study involved six male teachers, who are Arabs of diverse nationalities: Egyptian, Palestinian, Syrian, and Jordanian. They had extensive expertise in the Arab world teaching English as a foreign language. The majority of the teachers have between 5 to 50 years of experience.

Table (4): Demographic information on the teachers who took part in the study.

	<b>Teaching Experience</b>				
<b>Gender</b>	0-5 years	6-10 years	10-20 years	10-15 years	More than 20 years
<b>Males (6)</b>	1	2	2	1	0

Table (5): Demographic information on the students who took part in the study.

<b>Nationalities</b>					
<b>Section</b>	<b>Emirati</b>	<b>Palestinian</b>	<b>Egyptian</b>	<b>Jordanian</b>	<b>Syrian</b>
Arts students (25)	15	4	3	1	2
Science students (25)	10	4	3	4	4
Total	25	8	6	5	6

According to Table (4), the study 50 students from both the grade 12 Arts and Science sections.

The students represent a variety of countries, including those from the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Egypt, Palestine, and Syria. I narrowed the study down to male students from a single school since it is impossible for male teachers to visit female schools because it is restricted only to female teachers. When choosing the students, I ensured that it was a convenience sample. Furthermore, all participants in this study were volunteers.

### **3.2. Tool of Data Collection**

The purpose of this research is to examine the errors done by students in private high school in Sharjah. Information was gathered from two tests: multiple-choice test, which has 30 questions, and a close test that must be filled with the proper articles.

The results were evaluated to define the frequency and the percentage of errors in each of the two tests. Additionally, the percentages are displayed qualitatively and graphically via tables and histograms. The findings of the two quizzes were then reinforced with the qualitative data, containing statements from the interviews with the six English teachers. The enrolling students accounted for almost 37% of the male students enrolled at Sharjah high school for boys. Additionally, I held meetings with the six English teachers at male high school. Teachers support me with a better image of the difficulties associated with teaching articles. And the strategy followed in their sessions. They volunteered to conduct the interviews and respond to my study's questions.

### **3.2.1. Data Collection:**

I gathered the information from students and teachers in March, throughout English teaching sessions, after requesting permission from the school director. Following each lesson, a single teacher was interviewed. Teachers were encouraging and helpful. Moreover, I took notes while teachers answering my inquiries. Thus, I have not recorded or taped the interview to maintain the privacy and secrecy. Students' quizzes took place in March with the assistance of the department teachers. The participants were aware of the study objectives and were assured that there would be no harm or violation to them or violation of their privacy. It was clearly stated to them that their answers will remain anonymous and secret.

### **3.3. Instrument Design**

This research was specifically conducted to determine the students' errors in the use of the English article system (definite and indefinite), as well as to assess teachers' opinions toward a number of points concerning articles teaching and learning methodologies. I created two tools to get the information from the participants, interview, and test.

#### **3.3.1. Interviews:**

Interviews are typically implemented to gather data and to facilitate the informal conversation between the study participants and the researchers. (Fasick, 2001). To guarantee that the interviews were carried correctly, I used a set of guidelines. To begin, I asked a direct and straightforward question. Also, teachers had the opportunity to express themselves freely and frankly. Additionally, I selected a time that was convenient for all teachers to attend the interview without placing extra pressure on them. I attempted

to be as nice and friendly as possible and informed them that all answers will be used for the research purpose.

Additionally, teachers were told that they may cancel or refuse the interview anytime. The interviews took place during the school's recess at the science lab. Every interview took approximately 10 to 15 minutes.

The interview sections are composed of three parts (see Appendix 1). The first section collects personal data about the teachers' names, nationalities, teaching levels, and academic experience. This type of findings may assist in determining the authenticity of their answers. In the second section are four questions, for the teachers to provide a detailed response. Teachers were questioned in the first section whether teaching the English article system is a difficult topic for them, while the second question is related to the educational methods they rely on while instructing students on English articles. The third question focuses on the most serious errors learners commit when it comes to the English article system. Last the fourth question concerns teaching and learning methods that assist learners in minimizing their usage of the English article system. Teachers were given the freedom to add any further remarks.

### **3.3.2. Tests:**

A two-question test is developed for students: the first question is a multiple-choice question, and the second question is a close test in which the participants are asked to add the missing articles. The examination consists of 30 multiple-choice questions (see Appendix 2). The first question requires the students to select the correct response from four provided options.: the definite *the* indefinite article *a*, the indefinite article *an*, and *no article* required. The second question is a close test of a paragraph from the domestic

context. Learners are instructed to insert the definite article *the*, indefinite articles *a, an* or just leave the space empty when no article is required.

#### **3.3.2.1. The Test Validity and Reliability:**

Al Agha (1996) believes that a reliable test should assess precisely what is intended to assess. Regarding reliability, it is another critical part that evaluates that the test's quality and reliability.

Gay (1987) describes test validity as the degree to which a test assessment is consistent regardless of what it measures. To confirm test validity and reliability, the entire test was emailed to educators and English language and methodologies specialists. Certain improvements were made in response to the educators' input and recommendation. This was done to ensure that the tests covered all possible errors committed by the study subjects.

To achieve this purpose, the test was presented to a number of arbitrators, and their opinions confirmed that the test is valid and that each of its element's measures what it was prepared to measure.

#### **3.3.2.2. The Tests' Statistical Analysis**

The Chi-Square assessment and percentage equations were used to examine and discuss the errors done by learners in two competency levels: science and art. According to the grade 12 science findings, students scored higher than students in the art section. This was rational for determining that students in the scientific department have a greater competency level than students in the art department.

## Chapter Four: Findings

### 4.1. The observation of error's types made by students:

The study shows the percentage of students who gave incorrect responses on the two assessment tests. The errors identified throughout the study are classified as the following:

**1. Interference errors:** the errors caused by Arabic influence when students choose incorrectly from various options, *a.an, no article*.

**2. Intralingual or developmental errors:** are those that occur as a result of ineffective teaching methods created during the process of acquiring the English article system. the following categories and subcategories are used to classify these errors:

**A. Substitution errors:** These errors were classified as follows:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Substitution <i>a</i> with <i>an</i> .         | 2. Substitution <i>an</i> with <i>a</i> .          |
| 3. Substitution <i>the</i> with <i>a</i> .        | 4. Substitution <i>the</i> with <i>an</i> .        |
| 5. Substitution <i>no article</i> with <i>a</i> . | 6. Substitution <i>no article</i> with <i>an</i> . |

**B. Omission errors that include:**

1. Deleting *the* when it is not required.
2. Deleting *a* when it is not required.
3. Deleting *an* when it is not required.

Table (2) summarize the total number of errors identified in two educational departments as a consequence of the test conducted. Each department selected 25 students

from various sections. The test is divided into two parts multiple-choice part questions and a close-test part. It is composed of 30 items. Therefore, the total number of responses would be 700 if they were all correctly answered.

Histogram (1) The errors frequencies in the two streams are as follows:

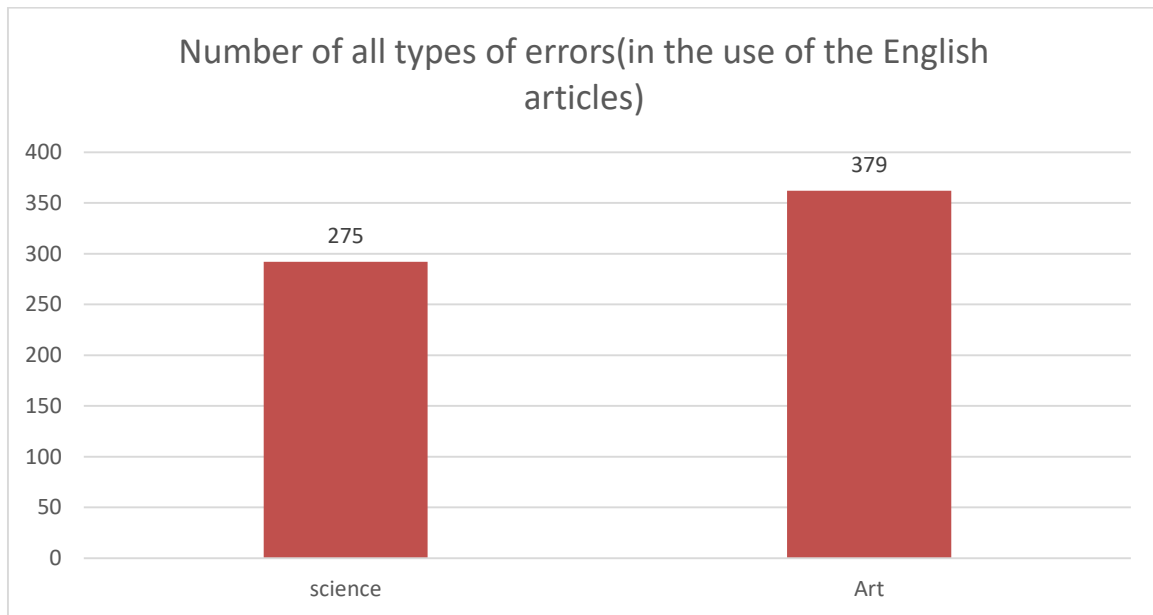


Table (6): Errors rate percentages in the two streams:

Stream	Rates of errors (in the use of the English articles)	Percentage
Art	379	% 57.9
Science	275	% 42

Table (6) reveals that students in the scientific stream have a lower percentage of errors than those in the art stream sections, based on the findings. This suggests that, despite the low number of students in the scientific part who committed errors in the use



of the English article, regardless, they do so. The English article system is one of the most challenging systems in English, according to English teachers, and this is shown in the continuing and summative assessments. They go on to say that this is much clearer in writing tests. They go on to state that, additionally the difficulties of the English article system, the issue getting worse with students in the Art sections who use ineffective learning practices. Two of the interviewed teachers believe that the effect of Arabic as a mother tongue is more obvious since the Arabic language lacks indefinite articles. They believe that this is one of the reasons learners in both departments commit numerous errors. Moreover, three teachers emphasize the absence of adequate practice on the English article system in grade 12 educational curriculum. They believe that this topic requires additional consideration when developing the curriculum.

Using the educational section as a factor, each group's statistical findings for each group would indicate that each group has unique statistical findings. The predicted number of correct answers was 350, while the expected number of incorrect responses was 350. The results of the Chi-Square test are as follows:

Table (7): The following are the results of Chi-square test used by students in the Art stream:

<b>Stream</b>	<b>Number of correct answers</b>	<b>Number of errors</b>	<b>Chi-square</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Art	321	379	0.77	%57.9

Just like shown in Table (7 ), the Chi-square test was used on this sample, and the computed value was (0.77), which matched to the table value of (3.5) with (1) as a

level of flexibility, indicated that the neutral hypothesis was accepted. Thus, between what is observed and what is expected, there are no statistically significant differences. This means that the Art section students' replies boost the hypothesis that both first language interference and learning strategies influence the acquisition of the English article system. Furthermore, the percentage of errors they committed is nearly comparable to the projected ratio of 50 percent. Some characteristics, such as students' slow growth in English in prior years and the loss of passion amongst Art students, may be the key causes those damaging consequences the entire learning process, according to English teachers that teach these parts.

Table ( 8): The following are the results of Chi-square test used by students in the Science stream:

<b>Stream</b>	<b>Number of correct answers</b>	<b>Number of errors</b>	<b>Chi-square</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Science	425	275	17.	% 42.

The null hypothesis was rejected when the computed value (17) was compared to the table value (3.6) with (1) as a degree of freedom. As a result, the discrepancy between what is observed and what is expected has statistical significance. This means that, despite the fact that language interference and learning techniques play a significant part in the acquisition of the English article system, scientific students made less errors than expected (usually 50 percent). The use of proper learning strategies is thought to help lessen the effect of interference with the mother tongue. English teachers report that the

science department student have generally interacted well throughout the learning process, which may contribute to the overall success of the learning process to a certain level.

#### **4.2. The classification of the type of errors made by students:**

The insertion of when it is not required is one of the most common interference errors caused by the first language interference. Although Arabic has a definite article equivalent to the, it lacks indefinite articles. Substitution and omission of **the, an, a** however, are intralingual errors caused by an inefficient learning process and a shortage of knowledge or grasp of the English article rules.

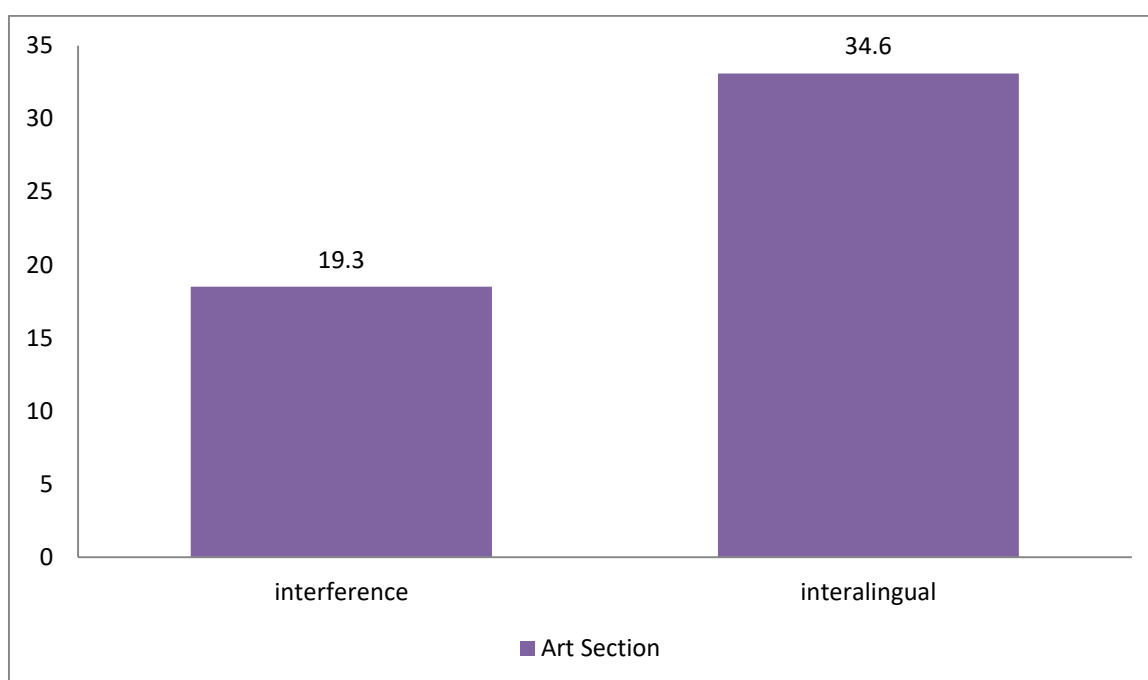
Table (9 ): Types of errors made by Art students and Science students.

<b>Art Section</b>	<b>Number of errors</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Science section</b>	<b>Number of errors</b>	<b>Parentage</b>
interference errors	136	% 19.3	interference errors	88	% 12.5
intralingual errors	243	% 34.6	intralingual errors	187	% 23.5
Total	379		Total	275	

The sorts of errors committed by students in the Art section are primarily first language Intralingual errors, as shown in table (9). This reinforces the notion that the detrimental impact of ineffective learning strategies for acquiring the English article system outweighs the impact of linguistic interference. Students in the Science part also

had a lower percentage of interference errors than students in the other section. In both types of errors, furthermore, the percentages of errors made by students in the scientific section are smaller than those made by students in the art section. The explanation for the decrease in science department errors was related to the use of suitable learning methodologies.

Histogram (2(: The percentages of errors in the two streams:



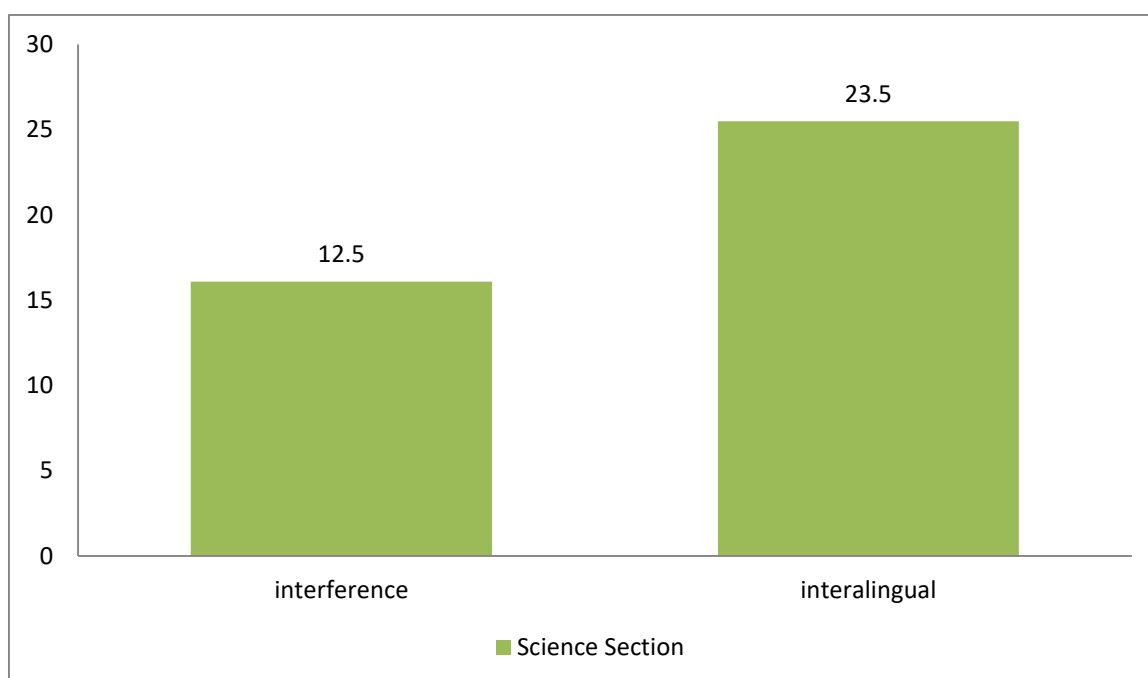


Table (10): Types of errors made by Art students

Type of errors	Number of errors	Percentage
language interference (using <i>the</i> when it is not required)	136	% 19.3
<b>2. intralingual errors</b>		
A. Substitution errors	211	% 30
B. deleting errors	33	% 4.5

This is approved that substitution errors are occur more often than the omission errors. Based on these observations, students select their answers depending on their previous understanding that any noun phrase must be followed by article despite of the

contextual circumstances that indicates whether or not should be used. This could be caused by inadequate understanding of the English articles and their inability to comprehend the context. English teachers acknowledge that one of the primary obstacles to acquire the English article system is its complexity. They believe that this would result in poor choices by students.

Table (11 ): Substitution errors made by Art students

Type of error	Frequencies of error	Percentage
A. Substitution <i>an</i> with <i>a</i>	22	%3.1
B. Substitution <i>a</i> with <i>an</i>	29	%4
C. Substitution <i>the</i> with <i>a</i>	66	% 9.4
D. Substitution <i>the</i> with <i>an</i>	33	%4.7
E. Substitution <i>no article</i> with <i>a</i>	38	% 5.3
F. substitution <i>no article</i> with <i>an</i>	13	% 1.7

It is clear that substitution *a* for *an* is the least frequent errors, whereas substituting *a* for *the* is the most frequent errors. This proves that students struggle with determining the indefiniteness in the English Language, although Arabic language has completely different indefiniteness marking system than English. In Arabic, indefiniteness is not indicated by an article. Rather than that, it is presented using *tanween* (nunation) with the noun phrase. This creates remarkable confusion between Arab EFL students. As shown

in the interviewed teachers, the situation is exaggerated by the inability of acquiring the rules of the head noun pre-modifiers.

Table ( 12): Omission errors made by Art students.

Type of omission error	Frequency of errors	Percentage
1.Deleting <i>the</i> when it is needed	17	% 2.3
2.Deleting <i>a</i> when it is needed	13	% 1.8
3.Deleting <i>an</i> when it is needed.	2	%0.2

It is clear that deleting *the* when it is required is the most frequent error, while deleting *an* is the least frequent occurring. This demonstrates that the misuse of *the* as a determiner or pre-determiner of the noun phrase is among the most frequent error made by EFL students. The suitable choice is determined by one's knowledge of English articles, which include inserting *the* when the head of the noun is preceded by a relative pronoun, *the* when the noun is addressed to in the context, and so forth.

Histogram (3): Percentages of omitting errors made by Art students.

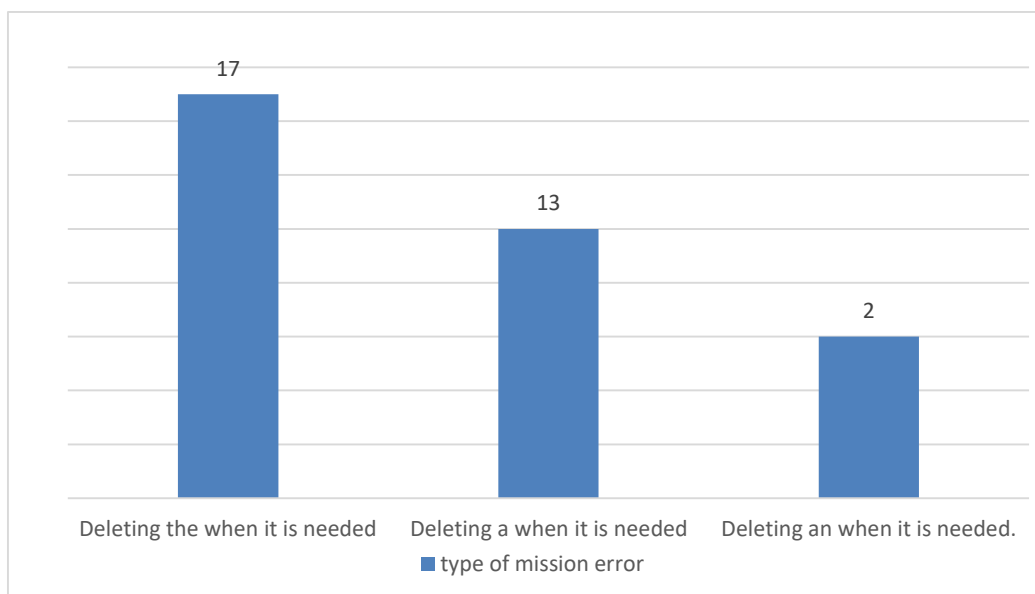


Table (13 ): Types of errors made by Science students

Type of errors	Number of errors	percentage
<b>1.language interference (using when it is not needed)</b>	88	% 12.5
<b>2.Intralingual errors</b>	178	% 26.6
a. Substitution errors		
b. Omission	21	% 2.9

Substituting errors are unquestionably more common than omission errors. These findings suggest that students in the scientific department share a similar tendency to answer questions instead of leaving them unsolved. This supports the notion that the



English article system is challenging and influencing the students' answers. The conclusion is that the Arab EFL students, whatever their English proficiency level make errors as a result of the difficulties in the English article system and the interference of their mother tongue. Therefore, the suitable learning methods and tools are applied, this challenging could be minimized. However, adopting an appropriate learning strategy will not completely prevent the possibility of making errors.

Table (14): Science students' substitution errors.

<b>Type of error</b>	<b>Frequencies of error</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Substitution <i>an</i> with <i>a</i>	<b>14</b>	<b>%1.9</b>
<b>b.</b> Substitution <i>a</i> with <i>an</i>	<b>35</b>	<b>% 4.9</b>
<b>c.</b> Substitution <i>the</i> with <i>a</i>	<b>44</b>	<b>%6.2</b>
<b>d.</b> Substitution <i>the</i> with <i>an</i>	<b>35</b>	<b>%4.9</b>
<b>e.</b> Substitution <i>no article</i> with <i>a</i>	<b>33</b>	<b>%4.6</b>
<b>f. substitution no article</b> with <i>an</i>	<b>21</b>	<b>%2.9</b>

According to the statistics in table (14), the most repeated substitution error by science department's students is the substitution of *the* for *an*. This is the most repeated error committed by the Art department's students. This confirms the notion that students face difficulties. This back up the notion that students struggle with the concept of definiteness and indefiniteness, which is not the same in Arabic. Thus, overgeneralization or insufficient knowledge of the L2 rules are significant obstacles to master the English language.

Histogram (4 ): percentages of Science students who make substitution error.

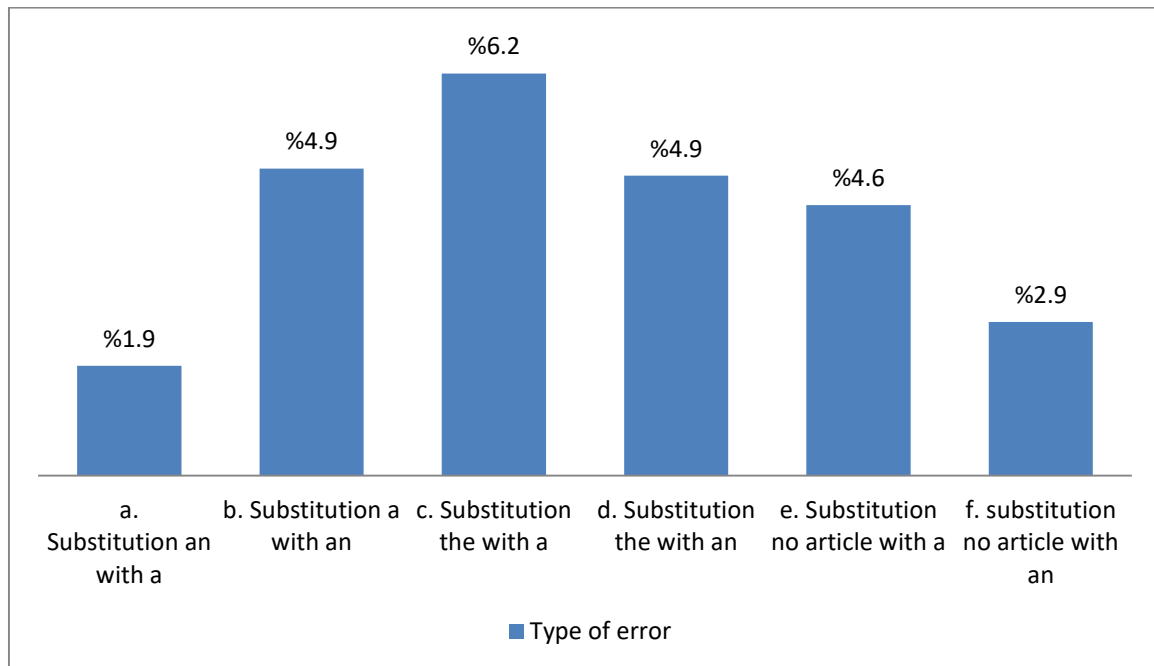


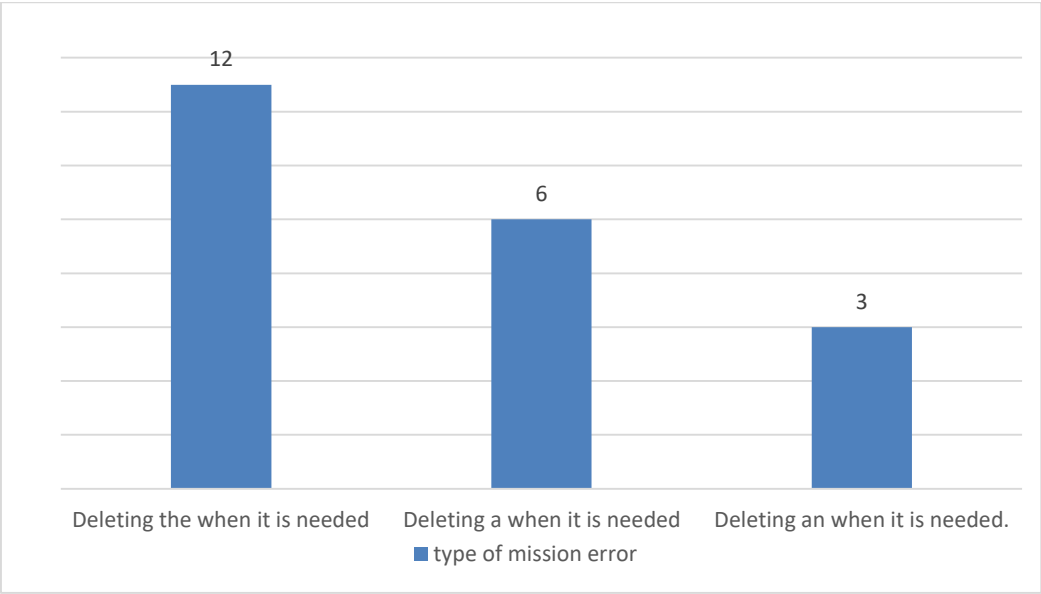
Table (15) Science students omission errors.

<b>3.Omission</b>		
<b>g.</b> Deleting <i>the</i> when it is needed	12	% 1.6
<b>h.</b> Deleting <i>a</i> when it is needed	6	%0.8
<b>i.</b> Deleting <i>an</i> when it is needed.	3	%0.4

The statistics (15) clearly demonstrates omitting *the* when it is required was the most often error made by Science department students. This also shows that the misuse of *the* as a determiner or pre-modifier of the noun phrase is one of the most frequent error made by EFL learners. The inability to use the English article norms in learning context

reflects the students' inadequate knowledge and practice. According to the English teachers, the insufficient practice of the rules in the real-world is one of the difficulties that hinder the complete mastery of usage of the English article system by the Arab learners, especially the high achievers.

Histogram (5): Percentages of science students who make omission errors.



## Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter presents the study's findings, which may provide insight into the following questions:

1. When are the most common errors that as a result "language interference errors and intralingual errors"?
2. What instructional and learning methods should be used to tackle these problems?

Before delving into the study's findings, which may have provided an answer to the first question, it's worth briefly discussing the two opposing article systems of English and Arabic, that will bring to an examination of the positive and negative effects of Arabic on learning the English definite and indefinite articles.

### 5.1. A. English VS Arabic Article system.

In general, SLA research on the acquisition of the English article system divides languages between those that have the article system and those that do not [+article], while Arabic language include the definite articles. It lacks the indefinite article as a sign of indefiniteness (Schulz, 2004). In English there are two sorts of articles: the definite the definite article **the** and indefinite articles **a**, **an**. The definite article system function as a determiner preceding the noun and serve as adjective. When **the** precedes the noun, the speaker or the writer emphasize that the reader or listener is aware of the noun's identity. Using **a** or **an** suggests that the noun's identity is unclear or generic. Research on the acquisition of English articles such as Enc (1990), Ionin (2004) and Lyons (1999) dig into precise details about the relationship between the noun phrase and the definite and indefinite articles in terms of the specificity and definiteness.

When L1 and L2 students learn English articles, the first thing they notice is that articles are associated with specificity and definiteness. The use of *the* to refer to both specific and general things. This is the system they use to express the noun phrase's status. Thus, the majority of errors occur during the article system acquisition process include the extensive use or deletion of the definite article *the* in various context when learners misinterpret specificity and definiteness. Thus, Specificity is lexical prosperity that is associated with the speaker's or writer's understanding without consideration of the listener's or reader's understanding of this term. Ko et al (2008) emphasize that "Specificity is a semantic propriety that refers to the speakers' knowledge state of the regarding singularly salient discourse referent". (p.118). When the noun phrase is particular, we state that "there is a specific item that the speaker is considering as motivating the description choice" (Lyons, 1999, p.166). Ionin backs this up by explaining: "If a determiner phrase of the form [ D NP] is +specific, then the speaker means to refer to a unique individual within the set designated by the NP and believes this individual to possess some notable quality" (2004, p.326).

Even though the concept of specificity is simple and straightforward, the link between specificity and definiteness continues to be a source of discussion, certain linguistics like Enc (1990), believe that all "definite" should be definite and it is difficult that the noun phrases to be unspecific if they are definite. Ionon (2003) on the other hand, uses another approach to this problem. He considers that overt morphology, rather than semantic features are more crucial in identifying whether a noun phrase is definite or not via encoded definiteness.

The following example demonstrates the distinction with both specificity and definiteness:

*John is looking for a **taxi diver** but he can't find him* (indefinite but specific)

*John is looking for a **taxi driver**, but he can't find one* (indefinite and non-specific)

The noun phrase **taxi driver** is marked as indefinite, but it is specific in the first example and non-specific in the second.

*I listened to the music which I admire.* (Definite but non-specific)

*I listened to the music which you send me.* (Definite and specific)

In regard of definiteness, Ko et al (2008) identifies definiteness as “a semantic property that refers to both the speaker and the hearer’s information status regarding a distinct discourse referent” (p.118). Lyons (1999) highlights the importance of definiteness, believing that it is critical in assisting the listener in organizing his knowledge during any talk. As a result, it connects and interacts all the discourse's components, such as concepts and distinctions, to produce a communication structure.

To summarize, definiteness is more closely associated with the usage of *a* or *the* , whereas specificity is a feature that is more indicated by the actual dialogue that occurs between the speaker and the listener rather than the existence or the absence of the definiteness marker *the*. Basically, the English article system is divided into two categories: definite *the* and indefinite *a* or *an*, which operates as determiners preceding the noun and as adjective, if *the* precedes the noun the speaker or the writer emphasize that the reader or the listener aware of the noun’s identity. While, using *a* or *an* suggests that the noun’s identity is unclear, or it is even general. In some situations, the use of definite or indefinite articles is unnecessary. The definite article *the* normally used for both singular and plural countable or uncountable nouns, while *an* or *a* are indefinite

articles. The indefinite article *a* that precedes the singular countable nouns which begins with consonant or vowel sounds that sounds like consonant, while *an* precedes a singular countable noun that begins with vowels or mute(h). The countable nouns relate to countable objects. The countable nouns relate to objects that can be counted. These items can be either singular or plural, though uncountable nouns are always singular. These elements can be either singular or plural, however uncountable nouns are singular in nature.

However, unlike English language, Arabic language only include the definite article *al*, that is like the definite article the in English. Therefore, the Arabic article system place a greater emphasize on the distinction between the definiteness and indefiniteness than the English article system does on definiteness and specifcness. According to Smith (2001), two definite articles in Arabic and English are comparable in that they point to indeterminate and previously stated nouns, as well as unique nouns. Therefore, he argues that the negative transfer poses issues because Arabic, unlike English, does not contain an indefinite article. This omission is accounted for through the use of nunation (typically, called tanween.). But Fassi-Fehri (1993) considers this to be the primary cause of the negative interference that leads to error making. According to the findings of this study, the presence of the definite article in Arabic is a source of negative transfer since it encourages Arab learners of English as a second language to use it in situations when it is not required.

Until then, the lack of a definite article is another language transfer issue that leads to errors when Arab learners employ the English article system in various situations. Additionally, the omission of *al* before the noun phrase which is zero article signifies

indefiniteness in English or *nakerah* in Arabic. There are stages of definiteness and indefiniteness in all languages, but they are labelled differently.

To put it another way, each language has different ways of expressing definiteness and indefiniteness. At the syntactic level, the Arabic grammarian agrees that the initial state of all nouns is indefiniteness (the English equivalent is the zero article) and inserting **al** which is the definiteness marker before the noun phrase is another state that comes later. This demonstrates that indefiniteness is the norm as a syntactic state. When we say (ketab**un**), we write ketab**in**, we are referring to the definite state of ketab**an** (book) in Arabic.

The suffixes *un,in,an* are referred to as tanween in Standard Arabic. These variations denote the word's various grammatical placements in phrases. These grammatical principles for the word *ketab* are illustrated in the following instances in various grammatical positions:

*I bought a painting about nature:*

اشتريت لوحةً عن الطبيعة

**“*Ishatret lohatan an al tabeaa*”**

The noun *ketab* is a direct Object in this sentence. *lohatan* is formed by adding **an** to the end of the noun *ketab*.

I took a walk-in long road.

مشيت في طريقٍ طويل

**“*masheet fee tareeqin taweel*”**



The noun *atreeqin* is propositional complement in this sentence preceded by *in* (which is in Arabic “*fee* “: a preposition which is similar to the preposition *in*). As a result, *in* is used to identify the prepositional case. It changes into *tareeqin*.

A book you read is better than a friend.

كِتَابُ تَقْرُؤِهِ أَفْضَلُ مِنْ صَدِيقِي

“ *ketabun taqra’uho afdal men sadeeq*”

The noun *ketab* is a predicate in this sentence, coming at the beginning of the sentence. As a result, the prefix *un* is used to indicate that it is a predicate. It is transformed into *ketabun*.

By inserting *al* it becomes *al ketab* (the book), which is the definite form of the term *ketab*. The article *al* expresses definiteness in Arabic (the equivalence is *the* in English).

I found the book you told me about

وجدت الكتاب الذي أخبرتني عنه

“ *Wagadt al ketab alathi akhbartani anho*”

The noun *ketab* is the definite case in this sentence, which is referred to *ma’refa* (definiteness) which is the opposite of *nakerah* (indefiniteness). As a result, the suffix *al* is added to the end of the word *ketab* to form *al ketab*.

Clearly said, the disparities between these two systems could be the primary cause of challenging encountered when learning and teaching the English article system, as well as the source of negative transfer, which is the primary cause of article system problems. This is, I believe, a typical attitude in all research conducted to investigate the reasons of errors in the usage of the English article system among EFL Arab learners. To summarize,

past research has found a wide range of findings in terms of the most common errors produced by Arab EFL learners when using article systems.

As a result, considering the variations and similarities between the two article systems in Arabic and English could be a critical problem that English instructors should be aware of when teaching English definite and indefinite articles to Arab students.

Taking into consideration the previous research, the most frequent error made by Arabic speaking learners while employing the definite article system is the omitting of a/an. (Al Kaimi et al (1979), Beck,(1979),El Sayed (1983),Kharmah (1981) and Willcott (1974). Because Arabic language does not have an indefinite article, this error could be caused by the negative transfer of L1. However, in terms of the most common inaccuracy, the current analysis comes to a different result. It demonstrates the most obvious error is the substitution of *the* with *a*. In other words, the students frequently substitute *a* for *the* .

This might be explained by some learners' inclination of hypercorrection which indicates the challenging of coping with these types of structures for students. More precisely, the most obvious problem in applying *a* the indefinite article are when it is used with uncountable and proper nouns. The repetition of the indefinite article may be a result of ineffective learning methods. According to the literature, the most common error is the use of *the* instead of the zero article. The redundant nature of the definite articles may be a result of ineffective learning methods. In terms of the interlingual errors the literature, the most frequent error is the use of *the* instead of zero article, Abu Gharah (1989), Al Kasimi et al. (1979), and Kharmah are only a few examples (1981). The repetition of the definite article is a prominent error in the usage of the English article between learners in

both Science and Art sections, according to the findings of this study; however, it is not the most common. More precisely, this error occurs when **the** is used with all kinds of nouns, including proper, countable, and uncountable nouns. This may be a result of the first language negative transfer, i.e., Arabic. Although, the findings indicate that the intralingual errors are more common than the interlingual errors. Even though the latter also visible. Additionally, the results indicate that the negative transfer is not the primary reason for errors in the usage of English definite and indefinite articles within the population's sample, Nevertheless, the rate of the interlingual errors are considerable and comparable to the of intralingual errors rate. (See tables 10 and 1).

### **5.1.B. Pedagogical perspective: suggestions for teaching the definite and indefinite articles**

This chapter demonstrates the teaching and learning tactics that must be used to overcome the issues of EFL Arab and Emirati students making errors when using the English article system. This would address the second research question, which is also one of the study's aims.

This research aims to offer some recommendations for avoiding errors caused by learners when utilizing definite and indefinite articles in writing and speaking. Another issue with Arab learners learning the English article system is that it is not based on meaning. For instance, if the Arab learner of English hears or reads the statement; *\*please, hand pen*. He or she will quickly comprehend the significance. For him or her, the use of **the** or **an** is levant because the sentence's meaning has been expressed and thoroughly understood. As a result, the Arab EFL learner may commit unintended language

interference errors. This is among the difficulties associated with learning the English articles. To address the issue, teachers should employ several pedagogical methods that facilitates the students' effective learning. The objective is that learners would not be obstructed to a particular sort of learning methods, consequently limiting the sufficient learning, and increasing errors. Additionally, when teachers are aware of the right technique to teach the definite and indefinite articles, they play a critical role in decreasing any challenges.

### **5.1. B.1. Teaching the articles contextually:**

Contextual teaching is an effective approach for teaching the English article. This might enhance the learning and turn it to become more successful than just giving the rules. For instance, Rinvolucris (1997) "Defining birds and brothers " activity is one of well-known activities in which students are required to construct sentences identifying the characteristics of brothers or birds. Each sentence must begin with the phrase "*the bird*" and students should work their way through it. This task was chosen to demonstrate how articles can be used contextually. Therefore, it is not suggested to concentrate on the form when teaching the English article.

However, it is conceivable to introduce students to various structural forms of the English article in part. Dekyser (Dekyser, 1998). To summarize, learners should be actively involved in applying the articles to various social and cultural situations. As a result, Students would gain a greater understanding of the situational and cultural roles of article usage.

### **5.1. B.2. Authentic sources:**

One way for learning English is to teach it through authentic materials, which are writings written by native English speakers for native English speakers, such as periodicals, newspapers, and other publications. They are not the same as artificial teaching materials, which are resources created expressly for English language learners, such as exercises from the course book or extra materials.

Many educators and teaching specialists emphasize the relevance of authentic sources like Little, Devitt, and Singleton (1989). They claim that real literature will not only assist learners get more familiar with the target language's culture but will also make studying more fun. As a result, motivation will aid in the facilitation and productivity of learning process.

Students would be instructed to discover the phrases in the original texts that contain the articles as a first step to make this strategy more relevant. The learners would next be asked to create comparable statements in their own words. The third phase would be to have students exchange sentences and creates a dialogue, which they would be then presented verbally in couples as the final output.

Other activities could be included, having students listen to a discussion among two native speakers, no matter what the topic of the conversation is, and completing written exercises by filling in the blanks with the appropriate article if necessary. As a result, students who are exposed to authentic English material will do better. In addition, the odds of acquiring and comprehending English articles would be better.

This would provide students with real-world opportunities to exercise utilizing the definite and indefinite articles more effectively. The greater they exercise, the more they

will comprehend how to use the articles correctly. However, stating the rules directly will not assist, as students will constantly compare and contrast the new information with what they already know in their native language.

I believe it is hard to understand the article system unless first observing it in action. Pica (1983) claims that the acquisition of the English article system can only be accomplished by exposure to English language and everyday life situations and statements, not through classroom dialogue or language. Furthermore, utilizing this form of instructions would lessen the impact of the mother tongue interruption, which is one of the most common sources of errors. Being familiar with it in such a way that native speakers of English use it would improve their comprehending and prevent or even decrease the chances of the EFL learners making comparison between the two systems of articles in the first and the foreign languages.

Furthermore, the articles' spoken and written dialogue would reinforce the practice by providing more exposure to the target language. This technique, in comparison to other teaching tactics, is thought to increase the control over the usage of articles and therefore the learning process.

### **5.1. B.3. Employing pictures and real-world settings:**

Instructors of English should be conscious that they are teaching something that goes beyond the learners' imagination, experiences, and everyday interactions while teaching English as a foreign language. As a result, employing pictures would assist learners in receiving an instant visual presentation of linguistic items such as articles. Using real-world cases to illustrate this will vastly increase learning.

Because articles are abstract things, teaching them in context with pictures has a greater effect than teaching them in isolation from the real world. Giving students photos with "after" and "before" actions is one of the ways for using visuals to teach article usage. The goal is to educate students about the referenting aspect of English articles in a context.

As a result, students understand the distinction between utilizing articles that provide "new information" and publications that include "old knowledge." Students, for example, are shown two distinct photographs and instructed to show the differences in groups. They are shown an image of a messy classroom first, followed by a picture of a neat classroom (the same classroom after cleaning it).

The instructor should create the second image with the understanding that some elements or objects from the first image would dissolve in the second.

The teacher then begins his/her talk about *a* and *the* clearly *by* saying that *a* should be used when we speak about something/someone (new to us). When we discuss something, or somebody already discussed we use *the*.

One example of the model response would be:

Image 1: *I saw a cat next to the stairs.*

Image 2: *the cat which I saw next to the stair is gone.*

Numerous grammatical difficulties may occur, while the instructor should concentrate entirely on the use of the article. Before beginning the activity, it is recommended that students should be informed of the teacher's desire and purpose. Another way to use image into your English instructions would be creating picture story, that address all the issues of the article system and have necessary orders. Students add their own

interoperation to the image. Moreover, the teacher can provide images and assign students to the task of arranging the chronological or matching the image and then rearrange them accordingly. The next are some sentences that the teacher might write, and they are merely samples of what the teacher might create in advance

*A story of a kid who break his leg.*

*A kid was riding his bike.*

*The kid noticed a car entering the road.*

*The car was swift.*

#### **5.1. B.4. Writing practice:**

The goal of teaching English is to develop students' ability to communicate effectively in English, both in writing and in speaking. Without a doubt, writing is a crucial language acquisition abilities which need further training. As a result, writing activities should address any challenges encountered when using the article system. Following the observation and analysis of these mistakes, a variety of activities addressing the problems should be completed. One of the interviewed teachers in this research, for example, emphasizes that writing does not receive the attention it deserves, Students, he believes, should be exposed to greater everyday practice. Some writing activities, such as blank filling, where students are required to provide the proper articles based on the context, might be beneficial.

Additionally, by asking learners to match two columns A and B, using the matching skills low achievers that concentrates on indefinite article *a* and *an*. Column A has indefinite articles ( *a,an* ) and column B include abstract words such as *university, hour,*



*honor* etc. the purpose of this task is to practice the usage of indefinite articles in the sentence rather than in context, as it is used for the low level students who have no ability to understand text or context.

Furthermore, focusing on single article every session and supplementing it with extra writing practice activities would solidify knowledge of the article being discussed. To ensure that all these aspects are relevant and efficient, curriculum developers should involve a variety of writing tasks that will assist students in overcoming all of the problems that come with learning the English article system. Therefore, it is possible that the challenge may be better remedied more effectively if all the pedagogical findings discussed above are incorporated into remedial teaching classes for students on article usage in English.

## **5.2. Limitation of the study.**

The following are some of the study's limitations:

Only grade 12 male students from one of the high private schools were studied as part of the study sample. Due to cultural issues, involving female students in Sharjah Educational Zone was extremely challenging. Going any further is not feasible due to unavailability of local resources and research in this field in the UAE. As a result, I did not go into great detail in my examination of the English article system's syntactic and semantic characteristics, as well as their influence on students' mistakes.

## **5.3. Conclusion and Recommendations.**

It's fascinating to discover that my hypothesis was incorrect. It has been discovered that language interference mistakes are not the primary source of Arab speaking learners' faults in utilizing the definite and indefinite articles of English. Negative interference is

thought to have a role in interlingual mistakes, according to the study. Both sorts of mistakes have a cause-and-effect relationship. Simply put, ineffective learning/teaching techniques exacerbate the situation. The effect of negative language transfer might be mitigated if learners are given appropriate teaching techniques.

As a result, instructors must be thoroughly informed on how the English article system is delivered. This may not be properly implemented if instructors are unaware of the most typical mistakes committed by students. It is determined that understanding the frequent faults and the obstacles that produce these errors is necessary for resolving the issue of article system errors. The aim of this study was to identify, evaluate, and categorize mistakes committed by Arab EFL students in high private schools when using the definite and indefinite articles. Students from various Arab ethnicities learning English as a foreign language in one of the UAE's private schools were picked at random.

It is stated that teaching English articles to Arabic speakers who are not native English speakers necessitates a thorough examination of the two article systems in the two languages. Once Arab students study English, they place a strong focus on learning the rules. These principles governing the usage of English articles in writing and speaking might be difficult for Arabic speakers to grasp. It necessitates precision in determining the article options by analyzing the noun characteristics (e.g. countable or uncountable, plural or singular) as well as paying much attention to the actual purpose to effectively express the message.

The procedure of selecting the correct article thus necessitates knowledge of both the syntactic aspects of the noun that follows the article and the semantic component of the entire message in order for it to be delivered correctly. This is mostly a cognitive

process that adds to the difficulty of selecting an article. One more challenging is that the article system in mother tongue and the English language is challenging, although the mother tongue of the students has article system which is completely different from the English article system. Therefore, language interference had a strong impact on L2 acquisition. While examining the errors by L2 students, this phenomenon should be considered. The current research examines all the elements that contributes to these errors done by Arab students in the usage of English articles. The examination of errors causes was considered vital element of the research of learners' errors.

Because they are continuously influenced by L1's unique semantic characteristics while still striving to follow L2's syntactic norms, L2 English learners are occasionally unsure about which English article to use. The results revealed that the majority of student errors were intralingual and developmental in nature. These types of errors were more common in the use of the English article system, with larger percentages than language interference errors. The interference errors where thought was greater than the developmental errors, but the findings demonstrate the contrary.

This information, therefore, concluded that the English article system should be treated as a unique problem, and that both kinds of problems must not be treated individually. Thus, the influence of mother tongue interference on the use of various articles hinders the acquisition process of the articles and exaggerating the issue. The challenge of the English article system, the ineffective learning methods in teaching this system and the influence of the first language are aspects that abstract effective learning despite the percentage of the negative effect of each aspect. It's a chain of relatively unrelated consequence, but the end result is the same: the misuse of the English article system. The basis for this finding is that research on the errors made by Arab EFL learners

in the usage of the English article system have produced inconsistent results in terms of percentages of various sorts of errors and resources of English article system faults. This can be true in the current investigation.

This discrepancy between numerous studies on Arab EFL students suggests that future study on the definite and indefinite article systems and their usage should use a variety of methods. The main emphasize should be on the most effective and appropriate teaching and learning strategies for resolving this challenge, instead of analyzing and identifying the errors. Additionally, identifying the certain error are more common than others would not contribute a lot to the processes of errors reduction.

If this study is repeated, the focus will be on the most effective approaches for teaching the English article system, as errors have now been proven to exist, but in various degrees and types, which, in the researcher's opinion, have no bearing on the remediation process.

Based on the findings of this research and prior studies, it is suggested that English articles be instructed in real-world setting with authentic assessment and more access to real-world English. It is insufficient for students to learn the definite and indefinite article rules in isolation from contexts. It would be inefficient and unhelpful to continue to tell students that the English article system only applies to nouns or noun phrases.

This method of teaching the English article system ignores the distinction between the Arabic and English article systems, which are both very different in many ways. Because of this difference, the students use some ineffective strategies, allowing language interference to take hold. Furthermore, they are more focused on memorizing the rule than with implementing it in practice, which exacerbates the issue. As a result, students

make mistakes, and teachers, despite repeating the rules from time to time, are unable to deal with these fatal errors.

Additionally, researchers should concentrate their efforts on developing methods for teaching definite and indefinite articles to Arabic learners rather than just monitoring and identifying errors when addressing this issue. The most common errors have now been, clarified, and identified. There's no need to foresee or identify them. As a result, the analysis process should now focus on figuring out how to implement the pedagogical implications that indicated in the most prior research as final conclusions and suggestions into practice.

The next stage is to gather and assess all of the potential implications, classify them, and turn them into action plans. Future empirical research on the definite and indefinite article system, as well as the way to instruct it to primary school students from stage one to stage three, should be conducted in the United Arab Emirates. Without no doubt, effective training and teaching will lead to effective learning. It is time for researchers, syllabus designers, educators, and teachers to collaborate to draw attention to this critical topic, as well as other issues related to shifting research away from simply identifying errors and toward ways to apply the most effective methods to decrease error making.

The current research may serve as a starting point for raising awareness about the need for paradigm change in how English articles are studied, as well as how they are tackled and treated. in empirical research. In order to acquire more precise and thorough findings, similar studies should be conducted on a diverse sample of students of all competency levels and grades who study English as a second and foreign language in the United Arab Emirates. Furthermore, it would be extremely advantageous if a study was conducted to compare between articles written in English and articles written in Arabic.

In terms of the article system, this research will compare and contrast between the two languages. As a result, it may open the door for improved ways for teaching and learning about the article system. Research of the techniques for teaching English articles in the United Arab Emirates is also recommended to determine the most effective methods of teaching the article system to Arab learners. Furthermore, a study like this one would be more fruitful if it was conducted on a cross-section of various educational institutions at all levels.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1:

#### Teacher Interviews

## Part 1: Personal information

Name(optional):

Nationality:

Teaching grade:

Years of teaching experience:

## Part 2: Questions

- 1- Do you think teaching the English article system is a challenging task for you? Why, why not?
- 2- What are the teaching strategies you use in teaching the English articles?
- 3- What are the most obvious errors that students make when it comes to using the English article system?
- 4- What tactics and methods of teaching and learning do you believe are more effective at reducing students' misuse of the English article system?
- 5- Do you have any comments, suggestions, or recommendations to add?

(Please you can write them yourself if you wish.)

## Appendix 2:

Test 1

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Section: \_\_\_\_\_ Art/science \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

A)-Chose the correct answer:

1-Is there ----- library in your city?

- a)- a                      b)- an                      c)- the                      d)- no article

2- I have been listening for her for ----- hour.

- a)- the                      b)- a                      c)- an                      d)- no article

3- We go to ----- mall by taxi.

- a)- no article              b)- a                      c)- the                      d)- an

4- Where is ----- dog? I think it is in the garden.

- a)- a                      b)- the                      c)- an                      d)- no article

5-He is -----bank officer.

- a)- a                      b)- an                      c)- the                      d)- no article

6- Dubai is ----- amazing city.

- a)- no article              b)- a                      c)- the                      d)- an

7- Arabis is ----- important language.

- a)- no article              b)- a                      c)- the                      d)- an

8- I need -----information about malls in Dhabi.

- a)- a                      b)- an                      c)- the                      d)- no article

9- ----- Sun is a star.

- a)- A                      b)- An                      c)- The                      d)- No article

10-What is on----- agenda today?

- a)- no article      b)- a                      c)- the                      d)- an

11- Where is -----pen? It is in the drawer.

- a)- the                      b)- a                      c)- an                      d)- no article

12- -----Red Sea is between Saudi Arabia and Africa.

- a)- A                      b)- An                      c)- The                      d)- No article

13- Ali is studying ICT at-----Oxford University.

- a)- the                      b)- a                      c)- an                      d)- no article

14-What did you chose for-----party?

- a)- the                      b)- a                      c)- an                      d)- no article

15- ----- homeless dogs need more attention from the community.

- a)- The                      b)- A                      c)- An                      d)- No article

Test 2

Read the following passage. Fill up the blank spaces with the appropriate article. Leave the space blank if no article is required. The first one has been completed for you.

Ramy lives in villa with his dad, mum, and sister Farah. \_\_\_\_\_ villa contains five bedrooms, \_\_\_\_\_ kitchen, \_\_\_\_\_ bathroom and \_\_\_\_\_ sitting room. Ramy's father works in \_\_\_\_\_ office and his mother stay at \_\_\_\_\_ home looks after \_\_\_\_\_ villa. She is always busy in \_\_\_\_\_ kitchen cooking meals. Ramy and Farah support their mother with \_\_\_\_\_ housework. Ramy likes using \_\_\_\_\_ sweeper and Moza likes to sweep \_\_\_\_\_ floor. Their father gives them money when they help their mother. They usually spend \_\_\_\_\_ money on \_\_\_\_\_ trips with friends!