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# The Acquisition of the Nongeneric Uses of the English Definite Article the by Arabic Speakers of English

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THE ACQUISITION OF NONGENERIC USES OF THE ENGLISH DEFINITE ARTICLE *the*
BY ARABIC SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH

by

Aied Mutlaq Alenizi

B.A., King Saud University, 2009

A Thesis
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master of Arts Degree.

Department of Linguistics
in the Graduate School
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
May, 2013

THESIS APPROVAL

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Approved by:

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Graduate School
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
February 27, 2013

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Aied Alenizi, for the Master of Arts degree in Applied Linguistics, presented on February 27, 2013, at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

TITLE:  THE ACQUISITION OF NONGENERIC USES OF THE ENGLISH DEFINITE ARTICLE *the* BY ARABIC SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH

MAJOR PROFESSOR:  Dr. Krassimira Charkova

This study aimed to investigate the acquisition of the four non-generic uses of the English definite article the by Arabic learners of English in Saudi Arabia. These non-generic uses included textual, situational, cultural and structural. This study had three goals: (1) to determine whether these uses are acquired in a certain sequence; (2) to explore which one of these uses is the most difficult and the easiest in learning; (3) to investigate whether one or two of the uses are overused.

The instrument consisted of 59 sentences adopted from Liu and Gleason (2002). There were 40 instances for required uses and 20 sentences for obligatory nonuse (5 instances for each use).  The subjects were instructed to insert *the* where they deemed it necessary. The participants were 45 male undergraduate English major students, whose ages ranged from 18 to 22 with a Mean age of 21.6, from a university in Saudi Arabia. They were divided into three groups (15 students each) based on their proficiency levels as follows; low intermediate, intermediate, and advanced. The results revealed developmental trends in the acquisition of the non-generic uses of the English definite article related to proficiency. Specifically, the advanced group showed significantly higher accuracy of use in all four functions.  Regarding the four functions, the order of acquisition, based on level of accuracy was as follows: situational, cultural, structural and textual.  The study results are discussed in view of their pedagogical implications for the teaching of the definite article to Saudi learners of English.

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# DEDICATION

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

To my beloved parents "My Lord, have mercy upon them as they brought me up [when I was] small" (Holy Quran, Isra 17:23-24). Also, to the rest of my family members: my brothers and sisters. And to those who have had concern, made sacrifices, gave encouragement and emotional support, which aided me in pursuing and completing my study. To them I dedicate this fruit of their love.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Learners' errors in the acquisition of a second language are of central interest to language research and pedagogy because they offer insights into the process of learning and the linguistic and extra-linguistic factors which may cause these errors. The English definite article is one of the difficult linguistic elements that learners of English are faced with due to its complexity of functions. The issue is further complicated by dissimilarities of expressing definiteness or lack of it between learners' L1s and English. Arabic learners of English are not an exception to this problem. Although Arabic has a definite article, its use is not exactly the same as in the English language. Specifically, Arabic is similar to English in that it is a {+ Article} language, but it differs from English in some uses or non-uses of the definite article. The purpose of this study was to identify whether there are developmental trends in the acquisition of the non-generic use of the English definite article in relation to level of proficiency. The following sections provide an overview of the theoretical framework of the study, including second language acquisition theories related to the research interest of the study.

## 1.1. Theoretical Framework

According to Corder (1967), second language learners' errors are a natural part of the learning process and should be systematically examined in order to gain insights into the way a language is learned. A number of second language theories have tried to understand and explain language learners' errors through linguistic comparison of learners' first and second languages. They have provided useful insights about the underlying reasons for learners' errors on all levels of grammar, namely phonology, morphology, and syntax. Since some of these theories are

directly related to the research interest of this study, it is important to outline their major postulations against which the results of the present study will be discussed and interpreted.

### 1.1.1 The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis and Language Transfer

One of the first attempts to explain language learners' errors was made by Lado (1957). In his book *Linguistics Across Cultures,* Lado proposed the idea of the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) which postulates that second language learners' difficulties in acquiring a second language ( L2) can be predicted through a systematic contrastive analysis of the phonology, morphology, and syntax of their mother tongue with the target language. According to Lado, those linguistic features that are similar between the L1 and L2 will be easier to acquire than those that are dissimilar. This is summarized in the following quote:

"Those structures that are similar will be easy to learn because they will be transferred and may function satisfactorily in the foreign language. Those structures that are different will be difficult because when transferred they will not function satisfactorily in the foreign language and will therefore have to be changed."(1957, p. 2)

As suggested by Lado's (1957) explanation above, the CAH implies the phenomenon of language transfer (Gass & Selinker, 1994) from learners' L1 to their L2. In fact, there are two types of transfer, positive and negative. Saville-Troike (2006, p. 19) explains that positive transfer, "occurs when an L1 structure or rule is used in an L2 utterance and that use is appropriate or 'correct' in the L2", whereas negative transfer "occurs when an L1 structure or rule is used in an L2 utterance and that use is inappropriate and therefore considered an 'error'.

In view of the CAH, Kharma and Hajjaj (1997) and Smith (2001) have come with some predictions about the acquisition of the English article system by Arabic learners of English.

Since, there are similarities and differences between the article systems of Arabic and English, both positive and negative transfer can be expected. According to Smith (2001), positive transfer can be predicted when the English definite article is used to refer back to a previously mentioned noun or for unique references since both English and Arabic use the definite article in these functions. On the other hand, Kharma and Hajjaj (1997) and Smith (2001) have predicted the following instances of negative transfer based on dissimilar uses of the definite article in English and Arabic:

1) Arabic learners of English may misuse some patterns of definiteness for the nouns in genitive constructions, as shown by the example *Car the teacher* instead of *the car of the teacher*.

2) Arabic learners of English may overuse the definite article in some English idioms where it is naturally <u>not</u> employed, as in *I went to the bed*, due to the fact that the Arabic counterpart of the same expression employs the definite article.

3) Arabic speakers of English may employ the definite article before proper nouns where it is grammatically <u>not</u> required, as in *He lived in <u>the</u> India*, because of the fact that proper nouns in Arabic are definite by default.

4) They also tend to employ the definite article in the second part of a compound noun phrase as in *The salt and the pepper* since ellipsis is not required in Arabic in this case.

5) They may use the definite article in generic plural noun phrases as in <u>*The horses are useful animals*</u> due to the fact that the Arabic counterpart of the same expression uses the definite article.

6) Arabic speaker may use the definite article before abstract nouns, as in *All men fear <u>the death</u>*, because Arabic requires the definite article with abstract nouns.

7) They may employ the definite article for mass nouns, as in *The milk is nutritious to the body*, due to the fact that mass nouns are definite in Arabic.

However, the CAH cannot entirely explain the errors found in the interlanguage of second language learners. The categorization of linguistic elements into easy and difficult is not always associated with areas of linguistic structure that are same and different (Gradman, 1971). Further insight into learners' errors is provided by the Markedness Differeantial Hypothesis (MDH).

### 1.1.3. The Markedness Differential Hypothesis

The MDH was first formulated by Eckman (1977) and is based on the linguistic concept of markedness which postulates that linguistic elements do not occur at equal frequencies. The ones that occur more frequently are unmarked, whereas the ones that occur less frequently are marked. For example, the most frequent function of the English definite article is to refer to a noun that has been mentioned before in the same context. According to the MDH, this function will be considered unmarked. However, there are other uses of the definite article which are not so frequent, such as the use of *the* with a noun that denotes a well-known referent in a particular cultural context (e.g. the White House) which will be classified as marked.

In view of marked and unmarked linguistic elements and second language acquisition, the MDH predicts two likely patterns of learner difficulties: 1) Areas of the L2 which are different from the L1 and are more marked will be more difficult to acquire; and 2) Areas of the L2 which are different from the L1, but are not more marked than in the L1 will be less difficult. Hence, not all differences between the L1 and the L2 will cause equal difficulties, the biggest challenges will be observed in relation to L2 linguistic elements that are different from the L1 and are associated with markedness.

In order to apply the principles of the MDH into the framework of this study, it is important to understand how definiteness is expressed in English and Arabic, which are the marked and unmarked areas in both languages and how these may affect Arabic learners' acquisition of the English definite article *the*. A brief overview is provided in the following sections.

## 1.2 Definiteness in English

According to Bickerton (1981), a referent is definite when it is known to the hearer, unique in the universe or in a given setting or generally known as a class that exists. In English, the general function of *the* is to indicate that both speaker and hearer presume a noun to be singled out or identified (Master, 1997). English also uses the personal pronouns *my*, *his, her, its etc*., in addition to the demonstratives *this* and *that,* in order to express definiteness. English grammarians and second language researchers (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Hawkins, 1978; Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, & Svartvik, 1985) usually categorize the use of the English definite article into two main categories of meaning, namely generic and nongeneric. In its generic use, *the* usually functions with a singular noun to mean either a species, a race, or people of a nation, as in *The German is very athletic*. However, some grammarians (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Christophersen, 1939) suggest that the generic use of *the* can also be employed with plural nouns, as in *The Germans are very athletic*.

Regarding the non-generic meaning of the definite article, different classifications have been provided by grammarians and researchers (e.g. Bickerton, 1981; Christophersen, 1939; Hawkins, 1978; Huebner, 1983; Liu & Gleason, 2002; Master, 1990; Quirk et. al., 1985; Robertson, 2000). For the purposes of the present study, the classifications developed by Hawkins (1978) and Liu and Gleason (2002) were utilized in developing the research instrument

of this study. The next section provides an outline of the non-generic functions of the definite article as viewed in the works of Hawkins and Liu and Gleason.

### 1.2.1   Location Theory by Hawkins

Hawkins (1978, pp. 106-147) developed a theory known as the Location Theory that classifies the non-generic uses of *the* into eight types as follows:

1) *Anaphoric use*: use of *the* when something is mentioned a second time and subsequently (*e.g., Bill was working at a lathe the other day. All of a sudden the machine stopped running*).

2) *Visible situation use:* use of *the* with a noun mentioned the first time to refer to something that both the speaker and the listener can see ( *e.g., Pass me the bucket*).

3) *Immediate situation use:* very similar to Type 2, the only difference being that the object referred to may not be visible *(e.g., Don't go in there, the dog will bite you.*

4) *Larger situation use relying on specific knowledge:* use of *the* first-mentioned noun because it is known in the community (e.g., people from the same village talking about *the church*, *the pub*, and so forth).

5) *Larger situation relying on general situation:* use of *the* with something that one can assume people anywhere in the world should know *(e.g., The White House referring to the U.S. government, the moon.*

6) *Associative anaphoric use:* basically the same as Type 1, the only difference being that the first-mention *the* is used with a noun that is related to a previously-mentioned noun, rather than being the same noun ( *e.g., We went to the wedding. The bride was very tall.)*

7) *Unfamiliar use in NPs with explanatory modifier:* use of *the* with a first-mention noun that has an explanatory or identifying modifier in the form of a clause, prepositional

phrase, or noun (e.g., *The movies that are shown here now are all rated R; There was a funny story on the front page of the Guardian this morning; I hate the name Algernon*.

8) *Unfamiliar use in NPs with nonexplanatory modifier:* similar to Type 7, the only difference being that the modifier does not provide explanatory information (e.g., *My wife and I share the same secrets,* where the modifier *same* does not inform us as to what the secrets are "only points to an identity between the two sets of secrets, my wife's and my own" [Hawkins, p. 148]). Here *same* is used as a unique adjective that always require *the*. Not only *same*, but also there are a small number of modifiers, such as *only* and *sole* which require the use of *the*, such as *only* and *sole*.

## 1.2.2   Liu and Gleason's classification

Liu and Gleason (2002) further elucidated the ideas of Hawkins. Instead of using the eight original categories, the authors collapsed them into four major uses: *cultural*, *situational*, *structural*, and *textual*. In cultural use, *the* is used with a noun that is a unique and well-known referent in a speech community, or when people in a local community rely on information locally available (Combination of 4 and 5 of Hawkins' classification above). In situational use, *the* is used when the referent of the first-mentioned noun can be sensed directly or indirectly by the interlocutors (combination of 2 and 3 above). In structural use, *the* is used with a first-mentioned noun that has a modifier such as a prepositional phrase, a relative clause, or certain adjectives (combination of 7and 8). In textual use, *the* is used with a noun that has been previously referred to, or is related to a previous noun (combination of 1 and 6). In fact, this study's instrument and interest are based on the above mentioned four non-generic uses of *the.*

## 1.3 Definiteness in Arabic

In Arabic, words, phrases, and sentences are indefinite by default (Schulz, 2004). In order to become definite, there are three ways (Holes, 2004), namely by means of the definite article *al*, by annexation, and by means of a possessive suffix.

In Arabic, 'al' (ال) is the equivalent of the English definite article *the*. It is attached to the beginning of a word and, unlike English, written as a part of it. Example 1 below, found in Alsulmi (2010), illustrates a comparison of the definite article in English and Arabic.

Example 1: the book      al- ketaab      الكتاب (p. 20)

To further illustrate the difference between the definite article in Arabic and English definite article, example (1) is represented in a tree diagram in Figures 1 and 2.
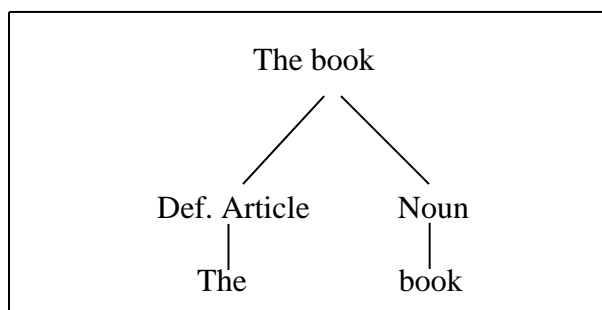


*Figure 1*: A tree diagram of
*the book*
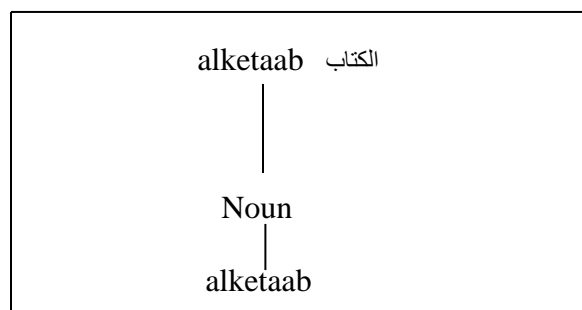
*Figure 2*: A tree diagram of
*alketaab*

Figure 1 shows that in English, the noun phrase *the book* contains two parts; a head and a determiner. Obviously, the definite article in English is a free morpheme which stands by itself. However, in Arabic (Figure 2), the definite article *al* is a bound morpheme, which does not exist by itself. In other words, the definite article *al* cannot be separated from the head noun.

In addition to the use of the definite article *al,* Arabic also employs other ways of conveying definiteness, such as annexation and by means of pronoun suffixes. Annexation

means adding a noun to another noun to make the initial noun function as definite (Beeston, 1970). The second noun that is added should be a proper noun. Example 2 below illustrates the phenomenon of annexation. The word 'madiinaat-u' in this example is definite by virtue of annexing the noun Damascus 'dimashq-a'.

<div align="center">

Example 2: مدينة دمشق   madiinaat-u dimashq-a        the city of Damascus (p.23)

Damascus city      city       Damascus

</div>

The other way of making a noun definite is by adding a possessive pronoun suffix. Example 3 shows that *house* is definite even though the prefix *al* has not been attached to it. The definiteness is conveyed by means of the possessive suffix *her* 'ها'.

<div align="center">

Example 3:  Her house          bait-u-ha                      بيتــــــها

</div>

## 1.3.1 Uses of the definite article *al*

As mentioned above, the major way of conveying definiteness in Arabic is through the use of the definite article *al*.  According to Aljarim and Alameen (1999, pp. 137-141), the Arabic definite article has six major uses as follows:

1. *Textual use*: use of *al* when something is mentioned a second time, as in example 4

    Example 4:  فعصى فرعون *ال*رسول. أرسلنا إلى فرعون رسولا ( p.137)

    In-na arsal-na illa Feraun rasuila.      Faasa      Feraunu      *al-* rasila.

    Verily sent-we to Pharaoh messenger. Disobeyed Pharaoh *the* messenger.

    "We sent to Pharaoh a messenger. But Pharaoh disobeyed *the* messenger."

     In this statement, *the messenger* in the second sentence refers to the messenger that was mentioned in the first.

2. *Situational use*: the use of *al* makes its noun to refer to something (visible or not) understood by both the speaker and the listener as in Example 5

Example 5: ‏أعطني القلم‏ (p.137)

    Aati-ni *al*-qalam

    Give-me *the* pen

    "give me *the* pen"

In example 5, the definite article *al* signifies that the noun 'qalam' is known both by the speaker and the listener.

3. *Cultural use: al* is attached to the names of things that are known by every member of a local community or general for everyone.

Example 6: ‏زرت الكعبة‏ ( p.137)

    Zur-tu alka'bah

    Visited-I- the-ka'bah

    "I visited the ka'bah"

Example 6 shows the definite article *al* attached to a noun that is culturally well-known in Islam.

4. *Structural use: al* is attached to nouns that are modified by explanatory modifiers such as relative clauses.

Example 7: ‏كان البيت (الذي اشتراه أحمد) غاليا‏ (p.138)

    Can-a *al*beit-tu (*allathi eshtara-hu Ahmad* ) Ghali-an

    Was *the* house (*that bought-was Ahmad)* expensive.

    "the house (that was bought by Ahmad) was expensive"

Example 7 shows that *al* is used due to the existence of the explanatory phrase in parentheses which turns the noun to definite.

5. *Entire class*: al is also used to cause its noun to refer to an entire class of things as in the example below.

Example 8: إن الإنسان لفي خسر

Inn    *al*-insana  lafi Khusr

Truly *the* man    in   loss.

"truly mankind is in loss"

Here, *al*-insana is not used to reference a particular human being, rather to the entire class of mankind.

6. *Individuals of a class: al* may be used to encompass all the individuals of a class. In order for *al*- to be in this capacity, it is necessary to be interchangeable with the word كل "kull" (every) as in example 9.

Example 9: الحمد لله

*al* hamd-u      lillah

*every* praise-be  to Allah

"praise be to Allah"

In Example 9, *al* is not referring to a particular praise, or a particular type of praise. Rather, it means every kind of praise. In other words, *al* is used to refer to each single type of class.

In view of the functions of the definite article in Arabic and English, it seems that for Arab learners of English to acquire the correct use of the English definite article *the*, they have to develop an awareness of the similarities and differences in how the definite article is employed or not employed in Arabic and English.  Table 1 summarizes the non-generic use of *al* and *the* in Arabic and English.

Table 1

*Comparison between non-generic use of the in Arabic and English.*

| Similarities | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Uses of** *the/al* | **Arabic** | **English** |
| **Textual** | انا أرسلنا إلى فرعون رسولا. فعصى فرعون *ال*رسول<br><br>In-na arsal-na illa Feraun rasuila. Faasa Feraunu *al-*rrasola<br><br>Verily sent-we to Pharaoh messenger. Disobeyed Pharaoh *the* messenger<br><br>"We sent a messenger to Pharaoh. But Pharaoh disobeyed *the* messenger." | I bought a car. *The* car is new. |
| **Situation** | اعطني القلم<br><br>Aati-ni  *al*-qalam<br><br>Give-me *the* pen<br><br>"Give me *the* pen" | Pass me *the* bucket, please (Hawkins,1978, pp.111). |
| **Cultural** | زرت الكعبة<br><br>zur-tu *al*-Ka'bah<br><br>visited-I  *the*-Ka'bah<br><br>"I visited *the* Ka'bah". | They had their wedding ceremony in *the church*. |
| **Structural** | كان البيت الذي اشتراه أحمد غاليا<br><br>Cana *al*beit-tu al-lathi eshtara-hu Ahmad    Ghali-an<br><br>Was *the* house that      bought-was Ahmad expensive.<br><br>"the house that was bought by Ahmad was expensive" | The woman who was from *the* south was nasty to him. (Hawkins, 1978, pp.131). |

"Table 1 (Continued)"

| Differences | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Entire Class** | إن الإنسان لفي خسر<br><br>Inn *al*-insana lafi Khusr.<br><br>truly *the* man in loss.<br><br>"Truly, mankind is in loss. | **Null article**<br><br>Verily, φ mankind is in loss. |
| **Individual** | الحمد لله<br><br>*al* hamdu      lillah<br><br>*every* praise-be   to Allah<br><br>"Praise be to Allah." | **Null article**<br><br>Φ praise be to Allah. |

       The comparison between the non-generic uses of the definite article in Arabic and English as shown in Table 1, reveals that both languages share the four categories of textual, situational, structural, and cultural use of the definite article.  However, there are also some dissimilarities. For example, regarding some aspects of cultural use English and Arabic do not use the definite article in the same way.  Specifically, regarding some diseases, like '*cancer*', the definite article *the* is omitted in English, whereas it exists in Arabic since names of diseases and names of the days of the week are definite in Arabic.

       Moreover, a difference between Arabic and English exists in some geographical names. In English, the definite article is omitted in *Lake Monroe* (A lake in the United States), but it is definite in Arabic by means of annexation -- *Buharat Monroe,* "the lake of Monroe".

       Therefore, following Lado (1957), such differences can be expected to cause acquisition problems for Arabic learners of English. Specifically, it is expected that the transfer will be negative (Saville-Troike, 2006), where Arabic learners of English will tend to use the definite article when it is not required in its cultural function in English.

Table 1 also shows an odd function of the definite article in Arabic compared to English related to the Class and Individual. Specifically, English employs a *zero* article (e.g.,الإنسان_ ''*al-insana*'' literally translated into English as *the mankind*, whereas it should be *mankind*) as stated in Table 1 above.  In this function, an overuse of the null article by Arabic learners of English can be predicted.

In sum, this study attempts to examine the acquisition of the non-generic uses of the English definite article *the*.  It has three objectives: (1) to identify the accuracy of using the four non-generic uses, (2) to find if one is overused over another, and (3) to determine the sequence in which the four uses are acquired in relation to  learners' English proficiency levels.
To achieve these objectives, this study seeks to answer the following question with three related sub-questions.

1. Are there developmental trends in the acquisition of the non-generic uses of the definite article *the* by Arabic learners of English in view of:

   a)  proficiency level

   b)  type of non-generic use (textual, structural, cultural, situational)

   c)  required vs. obligatory nonuse

So far, this chapter provided the theoretical background of the study against which the results will be interpreted. Another important part of this framework is given in the next chapter which summarizes empirical findings related to the acquisition of the definite article *the* by Arabic learners of English and by learners of English of L1s different from English.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of studies have been conducted to examine second language learners'
acquisition of the article system of the target language. In some cases, the target language is
similar to learners' native language in that both languages have article systems such as Spanish
learners of English (e.g. García Mayo, 2008). In other cases, learners' L1 and L2 are dissimilar
in two main ways: 1) The L1 does not have an article system, whereas the L2 does as is the case
with Chinese learners of English (e.g. Chan, 2005); and 2) The L1 has an article system, whereas
the L2 does not, as is the case of Arabic and English learners of Chinese, Korean or Japanese.

Since the purpose of this study was to examine the acquisition of the English definite
article by second language learners of Arabic, the literature review is delimited to studies which
were also interested in the acquisition of the English definite article *the*. The review of these
related studies is organized into two sections: 1) Studies which examined the acquisition of the
English definite article by learners of L1s other than Arabic, and 2) Studies which examined the
acquisition of the English definite article by Arabic learners of English.

**2.1 Studies which examined the acquisition of the English definite article by learners of L1s
other than Arabic.**

Master (1987) was one of the first researchers to note that articles seem to be acquired
differently depending on whether or not they occur in the L1.  It has also been observed that the
acquisition of the definite article *the* occurs before the indefinite article *a* (Huebner, 1983;
Master, 1997; Parrish, 1987; Thomas, 1989). Other researchers (e.g. Chaudron & Parker, 1990;
Huebner, 1985; Parrish, 1987; Thomas, 1989) have reported developmental trends with higher
proficiency learners, especially in regard to the indefinite article *a*. Furthermore, for learners

whose native languages lack articles, researchers Ekiert (2004), Master(1997), and Parrish(1987) have found that *zero* dominates in all environments for articles in the early stages of language learning.

Parrish (1987) conducted a longitudinal study to demonstrate how an analysis based on the presence or absence of morphemes in obligatory context alone fails to account for much of the systematic variability in one learner's acquisition of the English articles.  The subject was a 19-year-old Japanese woman who had studied English for six years in her country before arriving to the US. First, upon her arrival, the participant was placed in the beginning level of instructions based on her Michigan Test score. Second, data were collected during 20- to 30 minute sessions every ten days for a period of four months. She was asked to tell two stories, one about the U.S. and one about Japan, and to describe a place, such as her city, the campus, etc. The same topics were recycled in order to give her equal opportunities to produce various environments for articles. Her responses were recorded and transcribed.

The findings of Parrish's study (1987) that relate to the present study were that:  (1) The acquisition of the definite article *the* occurred before the indefinite article *a;* (2) The definite article *the* was overused for contexts requiring *a*. As the level of proficiency increased, there was an improvement in the accuracy of article use.  Also, a specific hierarchy of acquisition was noted, zero article, definite article, followed by the indefinite article.

Even though his research investigated the effectiveness of the systematic teaching of the article system to a group of nineteen advanced ESL students enrolled in a Master's degree-level Applied Linguistics-TESOL course, Master (1997) supported the third finding of Parrish's study (1987) and suggested that learners of English seem to acquire the *zero* article first despite the fact

that he claimed that one cannot tell the difference between the *zero* article and omission of the article.

In other words, his data showed that the accuracy of using *zero* reaches 100% for low- and high-proficiency participants after a decrease in the middle, whereas the overuse of *zero* decreases with proficiency development. This overuse lasts longer than the articles *the* and *a*, and this persistence was later explained by Liu and Gleason (2002) as follows: "This overuse of the zero article and the underuse of *the* at the advanced stage would suggest that the two articles are acquired rather late" (p.5). Additionally, he found that there was a significant increase in the overuse of *the* across intermediate group. In a previous study, Master (1995) observed that most of the errors were made by ESL students with the cultural use of the definite article, which would possibly imply that certain uses of *the* might be more difficult to acquire than others.

Later on, several studies were specifically delimited to the acquisition of the non-generic uses of the English definite article *the*. Liu and Gleason (2002) conducted a study classifying the eight uses of the definite article into four major categories: *cultural*, *situational*, *structural*, and *textual*. The study aimed to determine whether these uses present different levels of difficulty for ESL students and whether they are acquired at the same time. The methodological instrument consisted of 91 sentences. In 51 of the sentences, there were a total of 60 deleted obligatory uses of *the* (15 per category). The remaining 40 sentences were included as control items (10 per category). Liu and Gleason decided not to leave blanks for the missing obligatory uses nor for the unnecessary *the* distracters. They asked the participants to read the sentences and insert *the* wherever they deemed it necessary. The rationale for that decision was that if they had included blanks some participants might have filled every blank with *the,* making the data unreliable. The test was piloted with native speakers before being administered to the

participants in the study (41 low, 49 intermediate, and 39 advanced level ESL students with TOEFL scores below 500).

The study found that with proficiency level the participant's performance on the employment of *the* in obligatory contexts improved. Also, a hierarchy of difficulty in the acquisition of the four types was found, following the order: cultural use was the most difficult, followed by textual use, structural use, and situational use. The latter result directly contradicts Parrish's (1987) study which found that the primary use of the definite article is textual. Liu and Gleason explained this contradiction by the fact that in Parish's study most contexts in which the definite article was used were textual. This was due to the differences in data collection, whereas in Parish's study the data was elicited through narration, in Liu and Gleason's study (2002), the data was controlled for context of use by administering a written task with pre-determined contexts of use.

Chan (2005) conducted a similar study to that of Liu and Gleason (2002) to investigate the acquisition of the English articles by Chinese (Cantonese) speakers of English. The participants were 20; ten of them were chosen from secondary school and the other ten were undergraduate students from universities in Hong Kong. For the purpose of the study, he used a story-telling test and a grammatical-judgment test. The study had two objectives: 1) To examine the accuracy order of the English articles (*a* , *the* and *Zero article*) and 2) To find out whether the four non-generic uses of the English definite article *the* present different levels of difficulty among Chinese speakers of English.

Regarding the first aim of his study, the findings showed that each type of the tests revealed different order for the accuracy of using the articles. In other words, the story-telling results revealed that the definite article is employed more accurately than the indefinite article,

with the *zero* article in between. This contradicts the order in the findings of Parrish (1987) and Master (1997) in that the definite article is acquired first followed by *zero* article, and then by the indefinite article *a*. This contradiction might be because of the fact that the participants' L1 was different. However, the accuracy order in the grammatical judgment test was indefinite article, *zero* article and then definite article. Regarding the four non-generic uses of *the*, the results revealed a hierarchy of difficulty with the cultural use being the most difficult one followed in order by structural, situational and textual use.

Chan (2005) explains the reason for the textual use to be the easiest as due to the fact that it follows a rather simple rule. That is, the definite article is required for something that has already been mentioned before and is known to the interlocutors as appears again. For structural use being in the second place of difficulty, the author noted that students have been taught by first/second-mentioned rule without touching on the exceptions for these rules. That is, the definite article can be used before the first mentioned nouns in some cases, and second-mentioned nouns can be attained without previous mention (Master, 1988). These nouns can be proceeded by certain adjective called 'ranking' adjectives by Frank (1972) such as superlatives (e.g. *the best*), sequence adjectives (e.g. *the first*) and unique adjectives (e.g. *the only*). These nouns require the structural use of *the*. On the other hand, the cultural use was the most difficult for the participants because it is not framed by the situation but is determined by conventional practice.

García Mayo (2008) conducted a replication and an extension of Liu and Gleason's study (2002). The study aimed to: (1) identify whether the difficulty hierarchy pointed out by Liu and Gleason can be validated with a different sample of participants whose L1 (in this case Spanish) has articles, and in a different setting (English as a foreign language); and (2) examine

developmental trends related to proficiency level. The participants, 16 elementary, 31 low–

intermediate and 22 advanced Spanish EFL learners, read 85 sentences containing 60 deleted

obligatory uses of *the* and 40 distractor items. There was also a control group of 15 native

speakers. This study revealed four main trends: 1) The four non-generic uses presented different

levels of difficulty for the EFL learners; 2) The underuse of the obligatory *the* decreased

significantly from the elementary to the low–intermediate level, but the difference between the

low-intermediate and advanced levels was not so clear-cut; (3) The participants' overuse of *the*

was strongly influenced by their L1 and improved significantly with proficiency level. Overall,

the study found confirmatory evidence in support of Liu and Gleason's (2002) hierarchy of

difficulty in the acquisition of the non-generic uses of the definite article.

However, in another study by Wong and Quek (2007), where one hundred (50 Chinese

and 50 Malay) upper secondary students of thee levels of English proficiency (low, intermediate

and advanced) were involved, the hierarchy of difficulty in the acquisition of the four non-

generic uses of the English definite article was as follows: cultural being the most difficult

followed in order by textual and structural, and situational being the least difficult. These

findings match Chan's (2005) results in that cultural use was found to be the most difficult. On

the other hand, they contradict the results in Chan's study regarding the other three uses of *the*.

So far, this section outlined findings in the acquisition of the definite article in empirical

research with speakers of English whose first languages were Chinese, Malayan, Japanese, and

Spanish. The next section focuses on empirical research with Arabic learners of English.

**2.1 Studies which examined the acquisition of the English definite article by Arabic learners of English**

Among existing empirical research about the acquisition of the English articles, there are also a number of studies with Arabic learners of English. However, none of these studies has specifically focused on the four non-generic uses of the English definite article *the*. In fact, most of these studies (e.g. Crompton, 2011; Kharma & Hajjaj, 1997; Scott and Tucker,1974; Smith, 2001; Thompson-Panos & Thomas-Ruzic, 1983) have examined errors in the  use of the English articles by Arabic English learners in a more general way.  As a result, they have identified some of the most problematic areas and as pointed out by Scott and Tucker article errors were among the top four types of errors as the most common error was the deletion of the indefinite article *a*.

Kharma (1981) conducted a study to investigate the types of errors made by Arab students learning English in Kuwait in the employment of the definite and indefinite articles of English. He looked at college level students' errors in a cloze test. The results showed that the use of the English articles was problematic and a challenge for Arabic learners of English. The mean error rate was over 25% for all articles (*a, the* and *Ø*), highest for *a* and lowest for *the*. However, in production data, generated from a corpus of student essays, Kharma reported half of all errors being in the use of *the*.  He found that 61% of errors were instances of switching the articles: "*Ø-for-a*" (46%), "*the-for-a*" (15%). Overuse accounted for the remainder with the largest types of error being "*a-for-the*" (27%) and "*a-for-Ø*" (8%). The researcher observed that a great number of these errors were due to L1 interference. Yet, it was also pointed out that there might be other factors, such as wrong learning strategies and inadequate teaching methods, which may account for students' acquisition problems with the English articles.

Another study with Arabic English learners was conducted by Crompton (2011) in order to investigate the most common types of errors in the use of the English articles and whether these errors were caused by language transfer. The data consisted of 95 written essays submitted by Arabic students as regular class assignments at the American University of Sharja. The data was analyzed with the help of *Wordsmith Tools 4* (Scott 2006). The results revealed that the misuse of the definite article for generic reference was among the most common errors in the data. The data demonstrated that these errors were most likely caused by L1 transfer, rather than by an interlanguage developmental trend. Overall, the findings showed both positive and negative transfer from Arabic to English attributed to similarities and differences between the article systems of the two language.

2.3. **Summary of findings of related studies**

The review of studies which have examined the acquisition of the article system of English by non-native speakers suggest that there is a developmental trend, related to proficiency level as the more advanced the level of proficiency is the more accurate the use becomes (e.g. Chan, 2005; Parrish,1987 ). However, the results about the hierarchical difficulties posed by the different uses of the English definite article are mixed. For example, some studies (e.g. García Mayo, 2008; Chan, 2005; Liu & Gleason, 2002; Master,1995) showed that cultural use is the most difficult, whereas other studies (e.g. Ansarin, 2004;  Parrish, 1987) showed that situational and textual uses are acquired first.

The present study, based on Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (Lado,1957),  predicts that of the four non-generic functions of *the,* textual use will be acquired in the first stage because of the similarities between the definiteness systems between Arabic and English. On the other hand, the study predicts the most difficult use will be the cultural one because even though it exists in

Arabic, there are some inherent differences that might result in a negative transfer to English as it was described in Saville-Troike (2006).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study was designed to investigate the acquisition of the non-generic use of the English definite article by Arabic L1 learners of English as a second language in Saudi Arabia. The study employed a quantitative approach to investigating the problem, including descriptive and statistical analyses.

## 3.1. Research Questions

Specifically, this study was conducted to answer the following research question and related sub-questions:

1) Are there developmental trends in the acquisition of the non-generic uses of the definite article *the* by Arabic learners of English in view of:

   a) proficiency level.

   b) type of non-generic use (textual, structural, cultural, situational).

   c) required vs. obligatory nonuse.

## 3.2 Participants

This study was conducted at a university in Saudi Arabia. The participants of this study were 45 male undergraduate English major students. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 22 with a Mean age of 21.6. They were divided into three groups, 15 participants each, according to their proficiency levels. The groups were rated low-intermediate, intermediate and advanced. Low-intermediate level students were in their second semester at the time of the study; intermediate level students were chosen from second and third-year students, and advanced-level students were chosen from fourth-year students.

In Saudi Arabia, before college level, students are exposed to English for six years (three years in elementary school and three years in high school). When students finish high school, they should have equally received the same basic education of English. Therefore, the average exposure to English for the participants was as follows: seven years for the low-intermediate students, eight to nine years for the intermediate students and ten years for the advanced students. The town from which the participants were chosen is 300 km away from the closest big city. The chance to contact native speakers of English is very rare to guarantee that the participants to some extent have similar English background.

**3.3 Instrument**

The instrument used in this study was adapted from Liu and Gleason (2002), who report that they have ensured the instrument's validity and reliability by conducting a pilot study and Kuder-Richardson 20 reliability test. The test yielded a coefficient of reliability = .843, indicating that the instrument had good reliability according to the authors. Despite the good reliability coefficient reported by Liu and Gleason, in the process of adapting the instrument for the purposes of the present study, it was considered that its length was too long and might lead to fatigue and boredom that could affect the reliability of the results. For this reason, the instrument was shortened to 56 sentences from 91. In the 56 sentences included in this study, there were 40 instances for required uses and 20 sentences for obligatory nonuse (5 instances for each use). Regarding test format, the sentences were given without blanks for the missing required uses of *the* nor for control items (obligatory nonuse). Participants were asked to insert *the* whenever they deemed it necessary. The rationale for not leaving blanks was that some low-level students might fill in *the* in every blank. Doing so might lead to having unreliable data which certainly causes undesirable results.

**3.4 Variables**

The aim of this study was to investigate the acquisition of the four non-generic uses of the English definite article *the* by three groups of Arabic native speakers whose English is a second language.  The dependent variables were calculated as scores of the incorrect use of *the* in the four functions: textual structural, cultural and situational.  The independent variable was the proficiency level with three levels; low-intermediate level, intermediate level, and advanced level. These groups were classified according to their academic year. For validity purposes, the place where the study took place was 300 km away from the closest big city (where chances to meet native speakers of English are not available) to ensure that they do not have contact with native speakers of English.  This was to guarantee that the participants to some extent have the same English knowledge acquired from school.

**3.5 Data Coding**

Because reporting the participants' total of accuracy scores is essential for the purpose of the present study, a descriptive analysis was conducted using the SPSS statistics program to count the number of incorrect use of *the*, specifically, the number of errors where *the* was required but not inserted, and the number of errors where *the* was obligatory not used, but inserted.

Separate mean scores were calculated for errors in each of the four non-generic uses of the definite article, including errors in use and errors in non-use, i. e. where the use of *the* is not permitted by the grammar of English.  Examples 1 and 2 below, illustrate the two types of errors that were counted in the total means scores.

Example 1: Required *the*

Fred bought a car on Monday. On Wednesday, he crashed <u>car.</u>

In Example 1, if a subject provided *the* before car in the second sentence, this was counted as correct use. However, if *the* was not supplied, this was counted as error.

Example 2: Obligatory nonuse of *the*

At the zoo I saw several tigers.  I think that tigers are beautiful animals.

In Example 2, if a subject provided *the* before tigers in the second sentence, this was counted as error.  However, if *the* was not supplied, this was counted as correct use.

## 3.6 Data Analysis

The data analysis involved calculating descriptive statistics and 4 one-way ANOVAs to compare the three proficiency groups on their errors in the required obligatory nonuse of *the* in the four different type of non-generic use. Four Tukey's multiple comparison tests were also performed in order to identify significant differences between the three levels of proficiency.  In addition, twelve *t*-tests were performed to determine which function of *the* was overused.

The analysis also included calculating percentages of errors within the four types of uses and within proficiency levels. To control for Type I error, all ANOVA tests were performed at alpha =.0125 as alpha of .05 was divided by four for each of the four main domains of use. The next chapter offers a detailed presentation of this study's results.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

## 4.1 Introduction

This study investigated the acquisition of English non-generic uses of the definite article "*the*" namely, *textual, structural, cultural and situational* by three proficiency groups (advanced, intermediate, and low intermediate) of Saudi learners of English as a foreign language.  A comparison was made between the groups on the way they acquire the four non-generic uses of the definite article *the* in English.  The participants were 45 Saudi undergraduate male students who were learning English as a second language. The participants were given a written test which contained 40 required and 20 obligatory nonuse instances of "*the*" (15 instances for each use of *the*) without providing blanks in the text. They were instructed to insert the definite article *the* if they thought it was incorrectly omitted.  In scoring the data, 1 point was given for the incorrect insertion, 0 point for each correct use. The maximum score for each of the four required uses amounted to 10, and the maximum for each of the four obligatory nonuses amounted to 5.

This chapter presents the results of the data analysis.  The four uses of *the* were examined through statistical analysis, including 4 one-way ANAOVAs and 12 dependent *t*-tests.   Each of the four uses was examined by 1 one-way ANOVA and 3 dependent *t*-tests.  To control for Type I error, all ANOVA tests were performed at alpha =.0125 as alpha of .05 was divided by four for each of the four main domains of use. In the t-test analyses, the mean scores were calculated as percentages to avoid biases related to unequal number of tokens for required and obligatory nonuse. The presentation of the results is organized in four sections, each dedicated to one of the four uses, including textual, structural, cultural and situational.

## 4.2. Results for Textual Use of *the*

### 4.2.1. One-way ANOVA Results

This part of the analysis aimed to address the question: *Does proficiency level affect the accuracy in employment of the English definite article "the" in textual use?* In the written test given to the 45 participants, there are 15 instances for textual use of *the* in total. Table 2 summarizes the descriptive statistics for the incorrect insertion of the English definite article *the* with regard to textual use for each proficiency groups. The data was analyzed through a one-way ANOVA, where the dependent variable was the total mean score of errors in the use or non-use of *the,* and the independent variable was the proficiency level of the participants.

Table 2

*Descriptive statistics for proficiency level and errors of employing 'the' in textual use*

| Proficiency | N | Mean | SD | % Errors | 95% CI Lower | Upper | Minimum | Maximum |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| LowIntermediate | 15 | 8.13 | 2.99 | 54.2% | 6.47 | 9.79 | 3 | 12 |
| Intermediate | 15 | 5.26 | 3.21 | 35% | 3.48 | 7.04 | 0 | 11 |
| Advanced | 15 | 3.20 | 2.51 | 21.3% | 1.80 | 4.59 | 0 | 8 |

Note: % error was calculated by dividing the group Mean by the total possible score of 15.

Preceding ANOVA, Levene's test showed that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was observed, $F (2, 42) =. 661$, $p = .522$. Thus, the ANOVA results could be interpreted without concern for their validity. Specifically, the one- way ANOVA revealed that the independent variable *proficiency level* had a significant effect on subjects' ability to accurately employ the definite article *the* in the textual use, $F (2, 42) = 10.76$, *p<.001.* Since the descriptive statistics (See Table 2) showed a decrease in Mean scores of errors from the low

intermediate group to the advanced group, the ANOVA results can be interpreted to mean that the acquisition of the textual use of the definite article *the* reaches higher levels of accurately as the proficiency level progresses.

However, since there were 3 proficiency levels a multiple comparison *post hoc test* was necessary in order to find out which proficiency level was significantly different from others. For this purpose, the analysis continued with Tukey's multiple comparison test which showed that the group of the lowest proficiency level (low intermediate) was significantly different from the other two groups (comparison with the intermediate group, $p = .027$; comparison with the advanced group, $p < ,001$. However, the intermediate and advanced groups were not significantly different from each other ($p=.141$) as both had close Mean scores and error rates of 35% and 21.2%, respectively. Moreover, both groups showed a significantly higher ability to correctly employ the definite article in the textual use than the low intermediate level group (See Figure1).

Overall, the Tukey's results showed that there is a developmental trend in the acquisition of the textual use of the definite article *the*, as the significant improvement occurs at the intermediate level. Although the advanced group had a lower mean than the intermediate, the difference between the two did not reach significance.
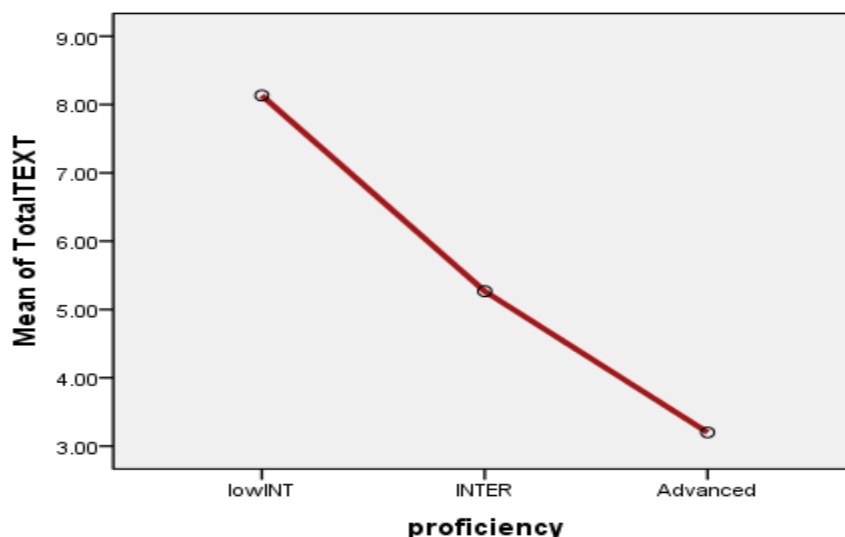
*Figure 1*: Mean plot for errors in textual use per proficiency level

### 4.1.2. Dependent *t*-test Results for Textual Use

Since the textual data included 10 instances of required and 5 instances of obligatory nonuse of *the*, the overall ANOVA results were not sufficient to understand whether the participants had acquired both types at an equal level. For this reason, the relationship between required and obligatory nonuse was further examined through 3 dependent t-test analyses, one for each proficiency group. The *t*-test results for the low intermediate group revealed that the Means of errors for both required and obligatory nonuse were not significantly different, $t$ (14)= 1.152, $p=.269$, $d = .29$ (See Table3). The low value of the effect size $d= .29$ further indicated that the participants in the low intermediate level did not distinguish between textual required and obligatory nonuse of *the* and had an almost equal percentage of errors in both uses.

Table 3

*t-test results for textual required and obligatory nonuse of 'the' for the low intermediate group.*

| Textual use | N | Mean | SD | % errors | 95% CI | | t | Sig. | Effect size d |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Lower | Upper | (14) | | |
| required | 15 | .58 | .292 | 58% | .424 | .748 | 1.15 | .269 | .29 |
| obligatory nonuse | 15 | .45 | .287 | 45% | .294 | .613 | | | |

With regard to the intermediate group, the results showed a similar pattern (See Table 4). Particularly, there was no significant difference in required and obligatory nonuse of textual use, $t(14) = -.995$, $p = .337$, $d = -.25$. In fact, the error rate in both contexts was quite similar, 32% in required use and 41% in obligatory nonuse. The low value of the effect size $d= -.25$ further supports the lack of significant difference.

Table 4

*t-test results for textual required and obligatory nonuse of 'the' for intermediate group.*

| Textual use | N | Mean | SD | % errors | 95% CI | | *t (14)* | Sig. | Effect size *d* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Lower | Upper | | | |
| required | 15 | .32 | .278 | 32% | .166 | .474 | -.995 | .337 | -. 25 |
| obligatory nonuse | 15 | .41 | .266 | 41% | .265 | .561 | | | |

However, for the advanced group the difference between required and obligatory nonuse of textual use of the definite article was significant, $t (14) = 2.17$, $p = .048$, $d = .56$ (See table 5). Specifically, the errors in obligatory nonuse were significantly fewer than in required use (18% vs. 36%).

Table 5

*t-test results for textual required and obligatory nonuse of 'the' for advanced group.*

| Textual use | N | Mean | SD | % errors | 95% CI | | *t* | Sig. | Effect size *d* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Lower | Upper | *(14)* | | |
| required | 15 | .36 | .274 | 36% | .205 | .512 | 2.17 | .048 | .56 |
| obligatory nonuse | 15 | .18 | .186 | 18% | .078 | .283 | | | |

## 4.2 Results for Structural Use of *the*

### 4.2.1 One-way ANOVA Results

The purpose of this part of analysis was to address the question: *Does proficiency level affect the accuracy in employment of the English definite article "the" in structural use?* Table 6 summarizes the descriptive statistics for the incorrect insertion of the English definite article

"*the*" with regard to structural use for each proficiency groups. Similar to the textual use, the data were analyzed through a one-way ANOVA in order to compare the three proficiency levels.

Table 6

*Descriptive statistics for proficiency level and errors of employing 'the' in structural use.*

| Proficiency | N | Mean | SD | % Errors | 95% CI Lower | Upper | Minimum | Maximum |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| LowIntermediate | 15 | 6.46 | 3.24 | 43.06% | 4.66 | 8.26 | 2 | 12 |
| Intermediate | 15 | 5.40 | 2.79 | 36% | 3.85 | 6.94 | 1 | 10 |
| Advanced | 15 | 3.06 | 3.15 | 20.4% | 1.65 | 4.47 | 0 | 7 |

Note: % error was calculated by dividing the group Mean by the total possible score of 15.

First, Levene's test was performed and the results showed that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was observed, $F(2,42) =. 642$, $p = .531$. The one-way ANOVA followed, showing that the independent variable *proficiency level* had a significant effect on subjects' ability to accurately employ the definite article *the* in the structural use, $F (2, 42) = 5.47$, $p=.008$. As seen in Table 6, the descriptive analysis showed a decrease in Mean scores of errors from the low intermediate to the advanced group. These results suggest that the acquisition of the structural use of the definite article reaches higher levels of accurately as the proficiency level progresses.

Additionally, Tukey's multiple comparison test was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference between proficiency levels. Tukey's results revealed that there was no significant difference between the low intermediate and intermediate groups with $p= .572$. However, the difference between the low intermediate group and the advanced one was significant with $p= .007$. In other words, the advanced group demonstrated a higher level of accuracy in the structural use of *the* than the low intermediate group. The difference between the

advanced and the intermediate groups was also insignificant ($p =.08$) as the advanced group

showed a significantly lower level of errors.

In sum, Tukey's results showed that there was a developmental progress in the

acquisition of *the* in structural use as the error rate decreased from low intermediate to advanced,

but the significant improvement occurred at the advanced level (See Figure2).
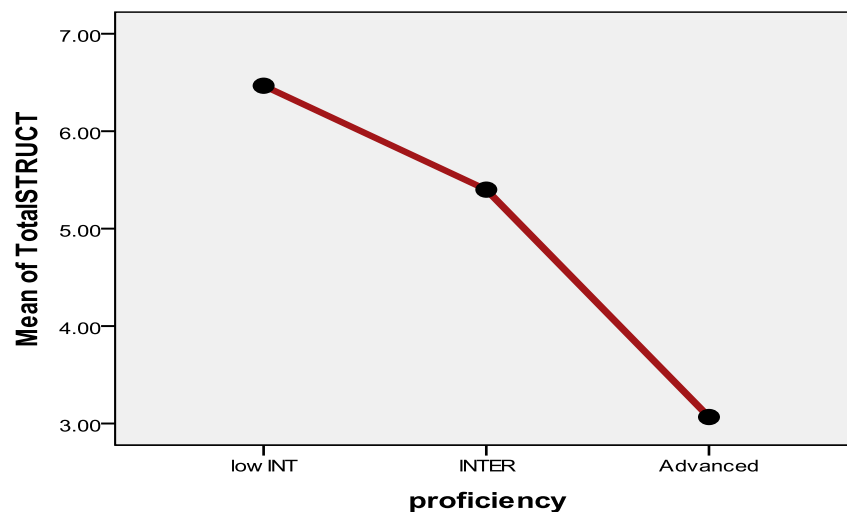


*Figure 2*: Mean plot for errors in structural use per proficiency level.

### 4.2.2 Dependent *t*-test Results for Structural Use

The analysis continued through t-test comparison between required and obligatory

nonuse of *the* in structural contexts.  For low intermediate group, the difference between required

and obligatory nonuse of structural use of the definite article *the* was not significant, $t (14)=.483$,

$p=.636$, $d = .12$.  The error rate of both required and obligatory nonuse was quite similar, 45%

and 40%, respectively (See Table 7).

Table 7

*t-test results for structural required and obligatory nonuse of 'the' for the low intermediate*

*group.*

| Structural use | N | Mean | SD | % errors | 95% CI | | *t (14)* | Sig. | Effect size *d* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Lower | Upper | | | |
| required | 15 | .45 | .282 | 45% | .290 | .603 | .483 | .636 | .12 |
| obligatory nonuse | 15 | .40 | .272 | 40% | .249 | .550 | | | |

On the contrary, the difference between required and obligatory nonuse of structural use of the intermediate group was significant, *t*(14)= 2.92, *p*=.011, *d*=.75 (See Table8). The error rate in the obligatory nonuse structural (17%) was significantly lower than in required use (45%).

Table 8

*t-test results for structural required and obligatory nonuse of 'the' for the intermediate group.*

| Structural use | N | Mean | SD | % errors | 95% CI | | *t (14)* | Sig. | Effect size *d* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Lower | Upper | | | |
| required | 15 | .45 | .285 | 45% | .295 | .611 | 2.92 | .011 | .75 |
| obligatory nonuse | 15 | .17 | .183 | 17% | .072 | .275 | | | |

On the other hand, for the advanced group the difference between required and obligatory nonuse of structural use of *the* was not significant, *t*(14)= -1.127, *p*=.279, *d*= -.29 (See Table 9). Moreover, the error rate in both cases was roughly the same, 18% vs. 25%. The low value of the effect size *d*=-.29 further supports the lack of significant difference.

Table 9

*t-test results for structural required and obligatory nonuse of 'the' for the advanced group.*

| Structural use | N | Mean | SD | % errors | 95% CI | | t (14) | Sig. | Effect size d |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Lower | Upper | | | |
| required | 15 | .18 | .185 | 18% | .077 | .283 | -1.127 | .279 | -.29 |
| obligatory nonuse | 15 | .25 | .244 | 25% | .117 | .388 | | | |

## 4.3 Results for Cultural Use of *the*

### 4.3.1 One-way ANOVA Results for Cultural Use

This part of the analysis aimed to address the question: *Does proficiency level affect the accuracy in the employment of the English definite article "the" in cultural use?* Table 10 summarizes the descriptive statistics for the incorrect insertion of the English definite article "*the*" regarding cultural use for each proficiency group.

Table 10

*Descriptive statistics for proficiency level and errors of employing 'the' in cultural use.*

| Proficiency | N | Mean | SD | % errors | 95% CI | | Minimum | Maximum |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Lower | Upper | | |
| LowIntermediate | 15 | 5.80 | 2.45 | 38.66% | 4.44 | 7.15 | 1 | 10 |
| Intermediate | 15 | 5.80 | 2.11 | 38.66% | 4.63 | 6.96 | 2 | 9 |
| Advanced | 15 | 2.93 | 1.98 | 19.53% | 1.83 | 4.03 | 0 | 6 |

Note: % error was calculated by dividing the group Mean by the total possible score of 15.

The assumption of homogeneity of variances was confirmed through performing Levene's test, $F(2,42) =. 358$, $p = .701$. The results of one-way ANOVA showed that proficiency level influenced subjects' ability to accurately employ *the* in cultural use, $F(2, 42) = 8.55$, $p<.001$. The descriptive analysis (See Table 10) showed that low intermediate and intermediate groups did not have any difference as both had Mean scores of 5.80. However, there was a sharp decrease in errors (Mean = 2.93) for the advanced group.

By performing Tukey's multiple comparison test, it was found that there was no significant difference between the low intermediate and intermediate groups since both groups had Mean score of 5.80. On the other hand, Tukey's results showed that the advanced group was significantly different from the other groups ($p = .002$) as the subjects in this group demonstrated a significantly more accurate use of *the* in cultural contexts.

Overall, the subjects in the low intermediate and intermediate groups did not make any progress in the acquisition of *the* in the cultural use. However, a significant development in the acquisition occurred in the advanced group (See Figure 3).
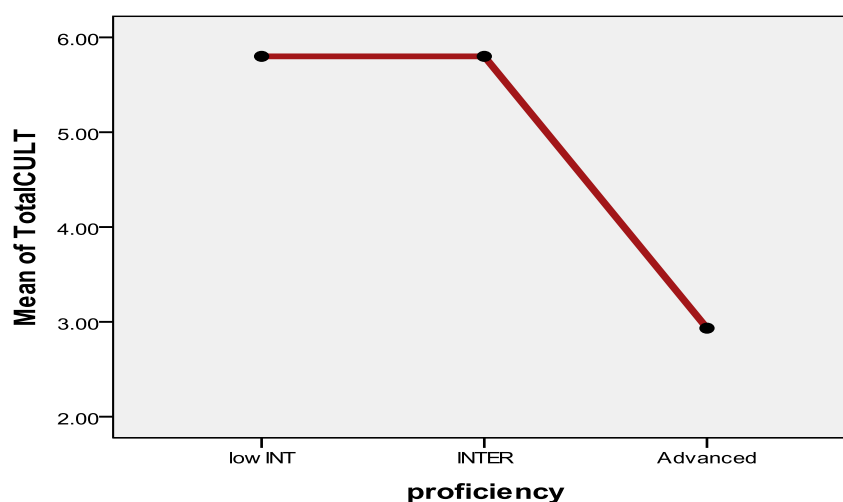


*Figure 3:* Mean plot for errors in cultural use per proficiency level.

**4.3.2 *t*-test Results for Cultural Use**

The t-test results (See Table11) for cutural use of the definite article *the* showed that the difference between required and obligatory nonuse in the low intermediate group was not significant, $t(14)= 1.85$, $p =.085$, $d=.49$ although the error rate for both contexts was different (45% vs. 25%).

Table 11

*t-test results for structural required and obligatory nonuse of 'the' for the low intermediate*
   *group.*

| Cultural use | N | Mean | SD | % errors | 95% CI | | $t$ (14) | Sig. | Effect size $d$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Lower | Upper | | | |
| required | 15 | .45 | .244 | 45% | .317 | .588 | 1.85 | .085 | .49 |
| obligatory nonuse | 15 | .25 | .277 | 25% | .099 | .407 | | | |

However, for the intermediate group the difference between required and obligatory nonuse of cultural use of *the* was significant, $t(14)= 3.66$, $p =.003$ (See Table12). The significant difference was supported by the high value of the effect size $d= -.96$ (47% vs. 21%).

Table 12

*t-test results for cultural required and obligatory nonuse of 'the' for the intermediate group.*

| Cultural use | N | Mean | SD | % errors | 95% CI | | $t$ (14) | Sig. | Effect size $d$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Lower | Upper | | | |
| required | 15 | .47 | .205 | 47% | .359 | .587 | 3.66 | .003 | -.96 |
| obligatory nonuse | 15 | .21 | .159 | 21% | .124 | .301 | | | |

The same pattern cannot be extended to the advanced group since the difference between required and obligatory nonuse was found not significant, $t(14)= -.972$, $p=.348$, $d = -.26$. (See Table13).  The low value of the effect size $d= -.26$ and the close error rates (18% vs. 26%) further support the lack of the significant difference.

Table 13

*t-test results for cultural required and obligatory nonuse of 'the' for the advanced group.*

| Cultural use | N | Mean | SD | % errors | 95% CI | | *t (14)* | Sig. | Effect size *d* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Lower | Upper | | | |
| required | 15 | .18 | .168 | 18% | .093 | .280 | -.972 | .348 | -.26 |
| obligatory nonuse | 15 | .26 | .235 | 26% | .136 | .396 | | | |

## 4.4 Results for Situational Use of *the*

### 4.4.1 One-way ANOVA Results Situational Use

The question addressed in this part of the analysis was formulated as: *Does proficiency level affect the accuracy in employment of the English definite article "the" in situational use?* Table 14 shows the descriptive statistics for the incorrect insertion of the English definite article "*the*" regarding situational use for each proficiency groups.

Table 14

*Descriptive statistics for proficiency level and errors of employing 'the' in situational use.*

| Proficiency | N | Mean | SD | % Errors | 95% CI Lower | 95% CI Upper | Minimum | Maximum |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| LowIntermediate | 15 | 4.66 | 2.79 | 31.06% | 3.11 | 6.21 | .0 | 8 |
| Intermediate | 15 | 5.66 | 2.60 | 37.73% | 4.22 | 7.11 | 3 | 12 |
| Advanced | 15 | 2.53 | 1.30 | 16.86% | 3.49 | 5.08 | 1 | 6 |

Note: % error was calculated by dividing the group Mean by the total possible score of 15.

Levene's test, performed prior to ANOVA, showed that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was observed, $F(2,42) =. 5.580$, $p = .007$.  Overall, the ANOVA results revealed that the acquisition of *the* in situational use was affected by proficiency level as $F(2,42) = 7.06$ and $p =.002$ (See Figure 4). Tukey's analysis best illustrated the difference between the groups of proficiency. The advanced group had the lowest error rate and it was significantly different from the other two groups (comparison with the low intermediate group with, $p=.042$; comparison with the intermediate group with, $p=.002$). An interesting pattern was observed in the low intermediate and intermediate groups, where the error rate was higher in the intermediate group (37.73%) than in the low intermediate group (31.06%). However, this difference was not significant so it could have been due to chance.

Overall, the Tukey's results suggested that a developmental trend in the acquision of *the* in situational use may be observed at higher levels of proficiency as the advanced group showed an error rate of 16.86%. (See Figure 4).
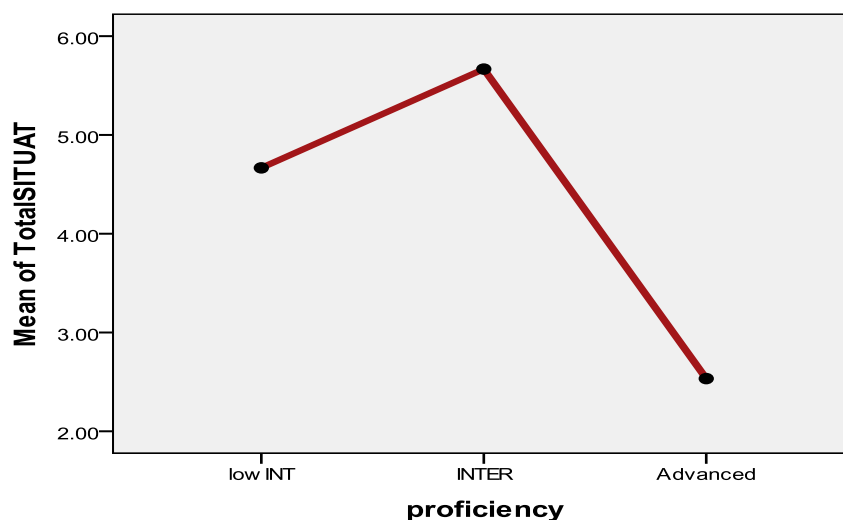
*Figure 4:* Mean plot for errors in situational use per proficiency level.

### 4.4.2 t-test Results for Situational Use

With regard to results for required and obligatory nonuse of situational use of the definite article *the,* the difference was insignificant in the low intermediate group, $t(14)= -442$, $p=.665$, $d =.11$. (See Table15). The low value of the effect size $d=.11$ supported the insignificance in the difference.

Table 15

*t-test results for situational required and obligatory nonuse of 'the' for the low intermediate group.*

| Situational use | N | Mean | SD | % errors | 95% CI | | $t\ (14)$ | Sig. | Effect size $d$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Lower | Upper | | | |
| required | 15 | .29 | .28 | 29% | .14 | .45 | -.442 | .665 | .11 |
| obligatory nonuse | 15 | .35 | .29 | 35% | .18 | .51 | | | |

Regarding the intermediate group, the differnce between the two contexts in situational use was highly significant with a very high value of the effect size, $t(14)= -4,956$, $p <. 0001$, $d=$

1.28 (See Table 16). Specifically, the intemedate level participants had significanty more errors in obligatory nonuse than in required.

Table 16

*t-test results for situational required and obligatory nonuse of 'the' for the intermediate group.*

| Situational use | N | Mean | SD | % errors | 95% CI | | $t(14)$ | Sig. | Effect size $d$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Lower | Upper | | | |
| required | 15 | .22 | .27 | 22% | .073 | .38 | -4.956 | .000 | 1.28 |
| obligatory nonuse | 15 | .68 | .15 | 68% | .60 | .77 | | | |

A similar trend was observed in the advanced group, where the difference between required and obligatory nonuse of situational use of *the* reached high significance with a very high value of the effect size, $t(14)= -7.79$, $p <.0001$, $d = 2$. It should be noted that in this group the error rate in required use was hardly 2.7%, whereas in obligatory nonuse it reached 45%.

Table 17

*t-test results for situational required and obligatory nonuse of 'the' for the advanced group.*

| Situational use | N | Mean | SD | % errors | 95% CI | | $t(14)$ | Sig. | Effect size $d$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Lower | Upper | | | |
| required | 15 | .027 | .045 | 2.7% | .001 | .052 | -7.79 | .000 | 2 |
| obligatory nonuse | 15 | .45 | .22 | 45% | .33 | .575 | | | |

## 4.5. Chapter summary

This chapter presented the results of the data analysis, following the research questions. The three proficiency groups (low intemediate, intermediate and advanced) were compared in

four uses of the definite article (textual, structural, cultural, and situational) as well as in the employment of *the* in required and obligatory nonuse contexts within each of the four domains of use. Several developmenatl patterns emerged as a result of the analysis. First, proficiency was found to be a significant factor in the use or non-use of *the*. However, the influence of proficiency was not exactly the same for all four contexts. Second, the acquisition of the required and obligatory nonuse within each of the four domains showed different acquisitional patterns. Lastly, the patterns within each domain differed. These rather complex patterns in the data will be discussed in the next chapter. These developmental trends will be suumarized and discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, LIMITATION AND CONCLUSION

### 5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to provide an in-depth account of the acquisition of the non-generic uses of the English definite article, including textual, structural, cultural and situational by Arabic speakers of English. Specifically, it examined the extent to which the four non-generic uses of the English definite article *the* are accurately employed, the overuse of one or more of these uses over the others, and the role that proficiency level plays in the acquisition of the English definite article. This chapter provides an interpretation of the findings of this research in view of the theoretical and empirical literature. It offers a discussion of the results, outlines some of the limitations and pinpoints some areas for future research. Finally, it concludes with the main implications of the study for the areas of teaching and research.

### 5.2 Discussion

By looking back at the results, there were several trends that will be addressed in this section. Since the study examined four non-generic uses of the definite article in required and non-required contexts and in relation to proficiency level, for the sake of clarity the main trends of the statistical analyses are summarized in Tables 18 and 19. This summary is organized from the highest to the lowest error rate and offers a more holistic way perspective of the tendencies observed in the data,

Table 18

*Error rate between proficiency levels in the four non-generic uses of the English definite article.*

|                  | Textual Use | Structural Use | Cultural Use | Situational Use |
|------------------|-------------|----------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Low-Intermediate | **54.2%***  | 43.06%         | 38.66%       | 31.06%          |
| Intermediate     | 35%         | 36%            | 38.66%       | 37.73%          |
| Advanced         | 21.3%       | 20.4%*         | 19.53%*      | 16.86%*         |
| Grand Mean Error | **36.83%**  | **33.15%**     | **32.28**    | **28.55%**      |

Note: An asterisk marks an error rate that is significantly different from the rest in the column.

As is shown in Table 18, the error rate decreases significantly from the low intermediate level up to the advanced one in all four contexts of use as the advanced level was found to have significantly lower rate than the other two groups in three of the four uses, including structural, cultural, and situational. It was also significantly different from the low-intermediate group in textual use, but not from the intermediate group. This trend shows that proficiency is a factor in the acquisition of the definite article by Saudi learners of English and there is a developmental increase in accuracy as the level of proficiency improves. Usually, the drop in error rate happens at the intermediate level, but it reaches significance at the advanced level. The only exception was observed in regard to textual use, where the intermediate level was not significantly different from the advanced. However, it should be noted that this group still had higher error rate than the advanced. These findings support the results of a number of studies which have also found developmental improvements related to proficiency (e.g. Chaudron & Parker, 1990; Huebner, 1985; Parrish, 1987; Thomas, 1989).

Regarding the hierarchical order of difficulties posed by the four non-generic uses, Table 18 shows that the highest error rate in the low-intermediate group (54%) and overall (36.83%)

was found in the textual use, followed by the structural use (43.06% low-intermediate; 33.15% overall), followed by the cultural use (38.66% low-intermediate; 32.28% overall), and finally the lowest number of errors were observed in situational use (31.06% low-intermediate; 28.55% overall).

Overall, the results showed that the acquisition of the non-generic uses of the English definite article presents different levels of difficulty; textual use being the most difficult use followed closely in order by structural and cultural, and situational use being the least difficult across the three proficiency levels. The finding that the situational is the easiest and acquired in the earlier stages of proficiency concurs with the conclusions of Liu and Gleason (2002), García Mayo (2008) and Wong and Quek (2007). However, the fact that textual use was found to be the most difficult in this study contradicts the findings of Chan (2005) according to which the textual was found to be the least in difficult.

Moreover, cultural use in this study ranked third in level of acquisition, whereas other studies (e.g. Chan, 2005; Liu & Gleason, 2002; Master, 1995) reported that the cultural use was the most difficult and acquired at a later stage. This finding also contradicts the predictions that this study made at its onset that the cultural use may be the most difficult to acquire due to inherent difficulties between English and Arabic. However, the results showed a lower rate of errors if compared with the textual and structural uses. One reason that may help explain this trend is that students' familiarity with English speaking cultures might have increased with the massive adoption of technology in Saudi Arabian society which makes it easy for English learners to access information in English and about English speaking cultures.

Regarding the structural use being in the second place of difficulty, it concurs the order of difficulty in Chan's (2005) results and contradicts all other studies in the literature review (e.g.

García Mayo, 2008; Liu & Gleason, 2002; Wong & Quek, 2007). Although this study cannot identify a specific reason why the structural use of *the* caused difficulties for Arabic learners of English, it might be, at least partially, due to the complexity of rules of the structural use or due to careless errors. Nevertheless, further investigations will have to be carried out to posit a factor to account for this performance.

Unexpectedly, the textual use of *the* was shown to be the most difficult part for the participants as the results revealed that the participants had the highest rate of errors across the three proficiency levels. This finding differs from the studies in the literature review. Theoretically, textual use is easier to understand than the other uses of *the*. The rule is simple in that when a noun is mentioned a second time, it takes *the*. However several factors might attribute to this difficulty. One is that most of textual use items in the instrument were of the associative anaphoric type. That is to say, nouns in these items were not the same as the previously mentioned ones, but they indirectly related to them. In other words, the reason that caused the participants to misuse the textual use of *the* might be the lack of a direct association with the previously mentioned noun (Liu & Gleason, 2002). For example, in the following test item (Item 3), *I read a book about New York. <u>Author</u>, however, was from Arizona,* the connection between the author and the book is not that straightforward. Another reason is that the distance between the first mentioning of a noun and the second mentioning was sometimes long and thus could have taxed participants' memories. For Example, *I saw a man in a car across the street. At first I wasn't sure, but then I realized <u>man</u> driving <u>car</u> was a friend of mine* (Item 23, test instrument). Therefore, the participants could have failed to associate the connection between the first mentioning and the second mentioning of the noun.

Another point of interest to this study was the difference of error rate between required and obligatory nonuse of the definite article. Table 19 provides a summary of the observed trends in view of required and obligatory nonuse.

Table 19

*Mean errors of obligatory nonuse of the definite article 'the'.*

|  | Textual | | Structural | | Cultural | | Situational | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | Req | Obnon | Req | Obnon | Req | Obnon | Req | Obnon |
| Low intermediate | 45% | 58% | 40% | 45% | 25% | 45% | 29% | 35% |
| Intermediate | 41% | 32% | *17% | **45%** | *21% | **47%** | *22% | **68%** |
| Advanced | *18% | **36%** | 25% | 18% | 25% | 18% | *2.7% | **45%** |

Note: Req = required; Obnon= obligatory nonuse; An asterisk marks a significant difference between required and obligatory nonuse error rates in boldface.

The summary of results for required and obligatory nonuse in Table 19 shows several trends. First, the acquisition of the required use of the definite article was consistent with level of proficiency as the error rate decreased from the lowest level of proficiency to the highest. In fact at the advanced level, the error rate was very low, ranging between 18% (textual), 25% (structural and cultural) and 2.7% (situational). This finding supports the results of Liu and Gleason (2002) who have also found an increased accuracy of use in contexts where *the* is required related to proficiency level.

On the other hand, the obligatory nonuse showed a less systematic pattern in relation to proficiency levels. For textual and structural uses, there was a decrease in error rate as the level of proficiency increased, but for cultural and situational use, the intermediate group showed a higher error rate than the low intermediate group. Interestingly, for situational use, even the

advanced level had a higher error rate than the low intermediate group. This trend is in line with

Parrish's study (1987) in that the ESL Japanese learner demonstrated a gradual decrease in errors

regarding the required use of the definite article, but there was an increase in the overuse of the

*zero* article at the intermediate stage. This phenomenon supports Archibald's model (1996, p506)

in that the error rate maybe lower at the beginning level, then increase at the intermediate level

before decreasing again at the advanced level. In the present study, this pattern was observed

only in relation to the situational use.

The last pattern was observed in the pair wise comparisons of required and obligatory

nonuse for each level of proficiency. For four of these comparisons there was a significant

difference between errors in required and obligatory nonuse (See table 19). Specifically, these

significant differences were observed at the advanced group in the textual context, the

intermediate group in structural and cultural contexts, and the intermediate and advanced groups

in the situational context. In all these cases, the errors due to overuse occurred at a significantly

higher rate than errors in required use.  For the rest of the comparisons, the difference between

required and obligatory nonuse was not significant, yet it should be noted that for the most part

the higher percentages were observed in the obligatory nonuse. Based on these results, it can be

concluded that the overuse of the definite article in contexts where it is obligatory nonuse

produced higher error rate than in contexts where it was required. This trend can be explained by

a negative transfer from Arabic where, as explained in chapter 1, the definite article seems to

occur in contexts that do not require definite article in English.

### 5.3 Limitations

This study has provided further empirical evidence that the four non-generic uses of the

English definite article *the* present different levels of difficulty for Arabic learners of English and

that these uses are acquired in different levels of proficiency. However, these results should not be generalized over all learners of English whose L1 is Arabic because this study has several limitations.

First, the sampling was small and delimited to a specific Arabic group of male participants in Saudi Arabia, who should not be equated with Arabic learners of English in the Arab world. In order to extend these results to a bigger population of Arabic learners of English, further studies should consider including bigger samples of participants from different Arabic countries.

Second, the categorization of students into proficiency levels was done based on the number of semesters in the program. However, such identification of proficiency levels may be problematic because students' real proficiency could have been different than the one they were assigned. Further studies should use language proficiency tests (e.g. TOEFL) to clearly separate students' levels.

Third, the instrument in this study used a written test and for this reason is delimited to formal contexts of use of the definite article. The results should not be extended to oral contexts of use in spontaneous speech.

### 5.4 Pedagogical Implications

Despite some obvious limitations, the results of this study offer valuable insights into the acquisition of the English definite article, specifically regarding its non-generic uses. First, this study showed that the acquisition of the non-generic uses of the English definite article follows a specific order, starting from situational ⟶ cultural ⟶ structural ⟶ textual. Teachers can take this sequence into consideration in classroom teaching practice and instructional material

writing. It does not mean that they should not teach textual and structural use to beginning students, but it makes more sense not to focus on the difficult uses at least in the early stages. Another implication of this sequence is that teachers would be more patient with students' errors regarding the more difficult uses since they need more time to master.

Second, teachers in classroom should employ a variety of learning strategies to make instruction more effective as suggested by Liu and Gleason (2002). For example, the five senses can be used to explain the situational use. Teachers can use auditory, visual and kinesthetic learning methods in their classrooms. For cultural use both cognitive learning and memorization can be employed due to the fact that cultural use rules are often governed by conventions. And finally, textual and structural uses may require cognitive and analytical learning methods besides practicing.

Third, this study revealed that more errors were observed due to overuse of the definite article in contexts where it is not required than in contexts where *the* is required. Therefore, teachers should pay special attention to students' errors due to overuse and provide systematic corrective feedback and adequate practice to help students overcome such errors.

Finally, the fact that even the advanced group of participants did not show errorless use of the non-generic functions of the definite article *the* suggests that Arabic English language teachers themselves may, too, have some problems with the accurate employment of the definite article. There are two implications of this proposition. The first one is that similar studies should be done with Arabic English language teachers in order to find out whether, indeed, they experience such problems and if so to identify exactly the nature of these problems. The second one applies to the need for English language teacher training programs to offer opportunities for pre-service teachers to continue to work on and improve their own language proficiency.

**5.5 Conclusion**

Previously, in chapter one a number of theories were introduced to account for the acquisition of the non-generic uses of the English definite article *the* by Arabic speakers of English. This study found confirmatory evidences in support of the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (Lado, 1957), Language Transfer Theory (Gass & Selinker, 1994), and The Markedness Differential Hypothesis (Eckman, 1977).

The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (Lado, 1957) claims that linguistic features that are similar between the L1 and L2 will be easier to acquire than those that are dissimilar. The comparison drawn in chapter 1 between Arabic (L1) and English (L2) showed that the two languages are similar in the situational use of *the*. The results of this study supported CAH in that the situational use yielded the most accurate use of the definite article among the four non-generic uses of *the*. Furthermore, in view of the Language Transfer Theory (Gass & Selinker, 1994) in the case of the situational use of *the,* it can be claimed that there was a positive transfer in that the participants were able to transfer their L1 use and thus reveal much higher level of accuracy in comparison with the other three uses.

The Markedness Differential Hypothesis (Eckman, 1977) also found support in this study. This theory is considered to be complementary to CAH (Lado, 1957). According to MDH, the degree of difficulty in the acquisition of a certain linguistic feature is related to whether this feature is marked or unmarked. For example, within the textual use, both the anaphoric and the associative anaphoric functions of *the* (Hawkins' categorization, 1978) seem to be unmarked in English because they have the same frequency of occurrence.

However, the associative anaphoric function seems more marked than the anaphoric one in Arabic due to that fact that it is less frequently used. A post hoc item analysis of the

instrument and corresponding types of errors showed that the errors in the associative use (more marked) outnumbered the errors in anaphoric use (more marked). Although this pattern was not examined fully and not included in the results of this study, it provides some insights into a possible presence of markedness in the associative use of *the* for Arabic learners of English. However, to substantiate such a claim, it is necessary to examine the issue in a much more focused and profound way both quantitatively and qualitatively.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

**Demographic Information**

Dear participant,

Thank you for your time in completing this task.  I would like to remind you that this is

<u>not </u>a test or any other form of evaluation. I need this information for my research which

examines issues related to the acquisition of the English definite article *the* by Arabic speakers of

English. That is why, it is important to get responses that reflect **your real** knowledge of English.

Please try to answer <u>all question</u>s.

**Please check the appropriate answer or fill in the relevant information.**

1.What is your English level?
   a) **Low intermediate (1ˢᵗ  year)**
   b) **Intermediate (2ⁿᵈ and 3ʳᵈ year)**
   c) **Advanced (4ᵗʰ year)**

2. What is your GENDER?
   a) **Male**
   b) **Female**

3– What is your **AGE**?  _____

4 – Have you ever been to an English native-speaking country for language learning
purposes?

a) **Yes**
b) **No**

5. If yes, how long have you been there?

a) **Less than three months**
b) **More than three months.**

6.  Do you take English lessons outside of school?
a) **Yes**
b) **No**

APPENDIX B

## Research instrument

Insert the whenever you deem it necessary:

1. Fred bought a car on Monday. On Wednesday, he crashed car.

2. Jim made a salad to go with dinner. Lettuce and tomatoes are always delicious in salad.

3. I read a book about New York. Author, however, was from Arizona.

4. I watched several old movies last weekend. I enjoy watching old movies.

5. I have read a few science fiction books this semester. Science fiction books are really interesting.

6. This bird is last one of its kind.

7. Sally Ride was first woman in space.

8. Who is leader of your club?

9. People from around the world are meeting here today.

10. Things of beauty always bring great joy.

11. We went hiking in Lake District last autumn.

12. I'm sick. I've come down with flu.

13.  Every year church has a big festival in April.

14. I start back to work on Monday.

15. Bill caught Malaria (a disease) while traveling in Africa.

16. While driving in their car to work, the husband asks his wife, "Could you open window please?"

17.  A woman, with her hands full, says to a man standing in front of the office, "Open door for me, would you?"

18.  A man says to his wife at the breakfast table, "Can you pass me newspaper?"

19. The game show host says to the contestant, "What's behind door number one?"

20. The daughter says to the mother " I'll come visit you in June."

21. I saw a new married couple across the street. Husband is taller that wife.

22. We rented a boat last summer at a lake. Unfortunately, boat hit another boat and sank.

23. I saw a man in a car across the street. At first I wasn't sure, but then I realized man driving car was a friend of mine.

24. At the zoo I saw several tigers. I think that tigers are beautiful animals.

25. When I grow up, I want to be a doctor. Medicine is a widely respected profession.

26. Professor who teaches the physics class explains things very well.

27. Shade on this lamp is really ugly.

28. She is only American woman to have run for vice-president.

29. I like to watch movies that are white and black.

30. Children growing up with both parents are healthier than those growing up with only one parent.

31. A plane crashed in Florida Everglades.

32. Pacific Ocean is the largest in world.

33. President Obama lives in White House.

34. Lake Michigan is a large lake in North America.

35. John's wife died of cancer in 1996.

36. While driving in their car to work, the father says to his son, "Please turn off radio."

37. Tom and his friend are playing basketball. Tom says loudly to his friends, "Pass me ball."

38. The manager asks her secretary, "Could you please check schedule for me.

39. The teacher says to his pupils, "Read Chapter Twenty in your book."

40. The man says to his friend "I'm off on vacation on tomorrow."

41. We went to a basketball game on Saturday.  Players at game were all very tall.

42. We went to a wedding. Bride was beautiful and groom was handsome.

43. My mother has a white dog and a black dog.  White is dog is taller than black dog.

44. We got a new television for our house. I enjoy watching some programs, but in

general I think that we shouldn't watch television so much.

45. Blue car across the road is very suspicious.

46. I know man who runs this university.

47. Do you know pilot who flew this airplane?

48. I've heard of parents who don't give their children enough to eat.

49. England is part of United Kingdom.

50. Sun is shining.  It is a beautiful day.

51. Moon is full tonight.

52. Jill had Polio (a disabling disease) when she was a little girl.

53. The mother asks the father, "Is baby sleeping?"

54. At dinner, the guest says to the host, "Could you please pass salt?"

55. In a bright sunny room, the woman asks the man "Could you close curtains, it's too bright in here."

56. A woman says to her friend "Why don't you come over for dinner tonight?"

57. Water in this glass is dirty.

58. Mississippi river runs through Louisiana.

59. At dinner, the mother reminds her children, "Keep your elbows off table."

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