University of Gezira
Faculty of Education- Hasahisa
Department of Foreign Languages

Difficulties Encountered by the EFL Learners in Using Articles, Third Class Secondary Schools:

A Case Study of Greater Wad Medani Locality Secondary Schools,
Gezira State, Sudan

By

Isam Addin Mohammed Alhassan Ismaeel

June, 2013
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Isam Addin Mohammed Alhassan Ismaeel
B-Ed (Hons) in English Language, Gezira University (1999)

A Dissertation
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in English Language Teaching (ELT) Department of Foreign Languages Faculty of Education- El-Hasahiesa University of Gezira

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<td>Main Supervisor</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Ahmed Gasm Asseed Ahmed</td>
<td>Co- Supervisor</td>
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Date of Examination: 6.6.2013
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Abdul Galil Abdalla Salih</td>
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Date of Examination: 6.6.2013
Dedication

To my beloved family
To the soul of my dead brother – Elsadig, my lovely wife
Jasmine, my son Musab and my lovely daughters Mina and Munia
Acknowledgement

All praise is for Allah the Almighty Who has power over everything. My great thanks is for Dr. Yousif Abdel Galeel Nugud for advice and help. My thanks also extends to all doctors of the English Department – Faculty of Education – Hassahiesa- Gezira University for their great support. Moreover, my thanks to all the teachers and students who helped in carrying out this study.

Last but not the least, thanks to Allah for being Muslim.
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Master of Arts in English Language Teaching (June 2013)
English Department – El-Hassahiesa
Gezira University

Abstract

Understanding and using English articles correctly among students help in avoiding committing mistakes. This study aims at recognizing the difficulties that the students of secondary schools- third class face when using the definite and indefinite articles in English language. It also aims at finding the practical solutions for the problem. It is assumed that the problem is due to the mother tongue interference. The descriptive analytical method has been adopted. A test on definite and indefinite articles has been used as a tool of the study which has been administered to the sample size which consists of fifty learners (50). Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) has been used to analyze data. The results have shown that there are some difficulties when using the articles. This is due to insufficient exercises on articles in the course book, the use of inappropriate teaching methods and the effect of Arabic language. Thus, the study has recommended that students should be given more exercises on the articles. The study has also recommended that teachers should use a variety of methods of teaching articles.
المصعبات التي يواجهها دارمي اللغة الإنجليزية عند استعمال أدوات التعريف والتنكير بالمدارس الثانوية - الصف الثالث

دراسة حالة للمدارس الثانوية بمحلية واد مدني الكبري ، ولاية الجزيرة ، السودان

عصام الدين محمد الحسن اسماعيل

ماجستير الآداب في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية (يونيو 2013)

قسم اللغة الإنجليزية – الحصاصا

جامعة الجزيرة

ملخص البحث

فهـم و استعمال أدوات التعريف والتنكير في اللغة الإنجليزية بصورة صحيحة عند الطلاب يساعد في تجنب الوقوع في الأخطاء. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على المصعبات التي يواجهها طلاب المدارس الثانوية - الصف الثالث عند استعمال أدوات التعريف والتنكير في اللغة الإنجليزية وإيجاد الحلول العملية لها. افترض الباحث أن أثر اللغة الأم له دور كبير في سوء استعمال أدوات التعريف والتنكير. استخدم الباحثان منهج الدراسة لإجراء الباحثين

صمم الباحث اختبارًا في كيفية استعمال أدوات التعريف والتنكير لجمع البيانات من عينة الدراسة التي شملت خمسة دارسًا. وقد استخدم الباحث ببرنامج الحزم الإحصائية الاجتماعية لتحليل البيانات. وأوضحت النتائج أن هناك مصعبات عند استعمال أدوات التعريف والتنكير وذلك بسبب قلة التمارين في المناهج وضعف طرق التدريس وثر اللغة العربية عند استعمالها. وعليه فقد أوصت الدراسة بإعطاء الطلاب المزيد من التمارين التي تنطلق باستعمال أدوات التعريف والتنكير كما أوصت بضرورة تنويع طرق التدريس من قبل المعلمين.
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Chapter One
Introduction

1.1 Background

For all the students who study any language in the world, it is very necessary for them to be aware of its all components in general and its grammar in particular. As for English language, it is an international language and most students try to learn it to be able to communicate. The students of secondary schools in general and third class in specific must have great knowledge about the definite and indefinite of English language articles. It helps them a lot in building sentences correctly and in developing their language. Definite and indefinite articles help both the students and teachers in distinguishing and knowing the nouns.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The students in secondary schools in general and third class in particular are in need to understand and use the definite and indefinite English language articles correctly to avoid the common mistakes that they always make and difficulties they face while using articles. So the syllabus (spines series) should help in achieving this.

In Sudan there were three levels for the students to study before they go to university. They were as follows: Primary, intermediate and secondary schools. Nowadays there are only two; basic and secondary school. As for the students of secondary schools in Sudan (the subject of our study) have three books to study. Book 4 for first class, Book 5 for second class and
Book 6 for third class. These books are supposed to develop the students' skills and knowledge about English Language.

As for third class students they study book six. Concerning definite and indefinite English Language articles, there should be a lot of lessons to practice in this book. Unfortunately, there is only one lesson to practice articles. This explains the main cause of the incorrect usage and misunderstanding of articles among the students which lead to committing mistakes.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The researcher in this study tries to achieve the following objectives which will be as:

1- To show the importance of using the English language articles correctly.
2- To find reasons why the students use the English language articles incorrectly.
3- To develop the students' skills in using articles in the right way.
4- To suggest some new techniques which can help the teachers in teaching the English language articles in secondary schools.

1.4 Questions of the Study

The study aims at finding answers to the following questions:

1- What is the importance of using the English articles correctly?
2- Are the problems which face the students due to the teaching methods?
3- Are these difficulties and problems due to the syllabus?
4- What are the suggested solutions for these problems?
1.5 Hypotheses of the Study

The study attempts to test the following hypotheses:
1- The syllabus, the teachers and the students play an important role in the difficulties which face the students in understanding and using English Language articles.
2- The current syllabus (Spine Six) doesn't contain sufficient practices on the English Language articles.
3- Nearly, all the students of secondary schools in general, neglect the definite and indefinite articles and study them only for final exams.
4- The teachers, who teach spine six, do not use techniques which can help in developing the understanding and using of articles among their students.

1.6 Significance of the Study

No one ignores the importance of the articles in the process of teaching and learning English Language. This study is carried out to explore the suitable methods and techniques to help the students in secondary schools in general and third class in specific to understand the articles correctly and avoid the mistakes they make. Also the students can find out a lot of hidden issues about the English language articles which will help them a lot in solving these problems.

1.7 Methodology of the Study

This study follows the descriptive analytical method. It uses one tool for data collection which will be a test for third class students in secondary schools – third class. The samples will be chosen randomly. Data will be
analyzed by Statistical Package for Social Science Program (SPSS). The results will be shown in percentages using figures and tables.

1.8 Delimitation of the Study

This study is supposed to be designed to be delimited only to secondary school students- third class (boys) Medani- Gezira state- formal education- Sudan.

1.9 Operational Definitions

The followings are definitions of some terms which are related to the study:

1.9.1 Error:

Carl James (1997:2) defines errors as: "An error is an unsuccessful bit of language. An error is an observable phenomenon in FL/SL learning". Hall in a discussion forum says: “An error is a wrong response because you have no knowledge about what the right answer is”.

1.9.2 Mistake:

A lot of people think that mistakes and errors are the same. But of course there is a big difference between them.

Hall in a discussion forum states that: “A mistake is a wrong response that if you thought about it you would realize is wrong. If the student given a second chance, he has the potential to correct it”.

1.9.3 Article:

Master (1997:215) defines an article by saying that: "An article is a word that combines with a noun to indicate the type of reference beginning made by the noun".
1.9.4 Usage

Marjorie and Webster (1994:334) defines usage as: "Firmly established and generally accepted practice or procedure. It is the way in which words and phrases are actually used in language community".

1.9.5 Use

Marjorie et al (1994) say the following about use: "Use is the act or practice of employing something. Also it is the act of using something for a purpose".
Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

It seems obviously that most of the students in Sudanese secondary schools find difficulty in the usage of the definite and indefinite English Language articles correctly. The study in this chapter tries to detect the causes of the problem and also suggests some solutions for them.

2.2 Definition of Articles

The researcher tries to give some definitions of English articles which will be as follows:

Celce (1978: 125) says:

"The English articles the, a/an and zero are quite difficult to acquire, articles are believed to be a source of difficulty for both learners and teachers of English especially for those whose native languages don't have articles or articles-like morphemes which are used in ways that differ from English articles".

This is what Celce says about the definition of the articles and a lot of definitions have been offered about this for instance, Master (1997:215) says:

"An article is a word that combines with a noun to indicate the type of reference beginning made by the noun. An article is a word that can't be used alone so it is not a descriptive word, it is a limiting one. Basically,
an article is an adjective-like adjectives articles modify nouns.

According to Celce (ibid) The articles in English Language are "the, a and an" (in some contexts)" some "." a and an" are modern forms of the old English "a" which in the English language dialects was the number "one". So all the articles are words that precede and modify the nouns. Zandvoort (1985:117) thinks that: "A noun may be preceded by a mono-syllable called a definite article "the". The usage in English is more restricted than in some other languages”.

Also Zandvoort (1985:124) adds that: "Another mono-syllable that may precede a noun is the indefinite articles "a/an". Their usage in English is less restricted than in some other languages". Another definition is given by (http: en- Wikipedia. Org) about using definite and indefinite articles with nouns:

“ In languages that employ articles, nearly every common noun (with some exceptions) is expressed with a certain definite or indefinite article. To show whether a noun is singular or plural every noun must be preceded by an article. This contrast to other adjectives and determiners shows that articles are of the most common words in many languages”.

As for Zandvoort (1958:117):"An article is a word (prefix or suffix)that is used with a noun to indicate the type of reference being made by the noun. Articles specify the grammatical definiteness of the nouns".
2.3 English Language Articles

In English language the articles are: definite article "the", indefinite articles "a /an" and sometimes "some" for plural forms of indefinite and zero article "∅". Each one of these articles has its own meaning and usage when it is linked or used with a noun.

Martha (1994:26) says: "The articles are little words that precede and modify nouns".

Examples:
• the teacher
• a college
• an egg
• some books
• 0 water

(Ahmed, 2010)

Leech and Svartvik (1975:205) mention that: “We write the definite article "the". The spelling of articles and the pronunciation of both definite and indefinite articles depends on the initial sound of the following word".

2.4 Definite Article "the"

Marjorie, et al (1994: 334) claim that: "A noun is definite (specific) when you and your listener both know which person, place or thing you mean. "The" can be with most nouns count or uncounted, singular or plural used".
Joseph (2008:94) reports that: “Definite articles evolve from demonstratives, and in turn can become genetic articles that maybe used in both definite and indefinite context”.

2.5 Uses of Definite Article "the"

There are some important cases (Ahmed, 2010) in which articles can be used. These cases are summarized as follows:

- "The" can be used for specific nouns that the listener knows about.
  e.g.: He has brought the bag. (Here the listener knows exactly which bag does the speaker mean).
- "The" can be used also to refer back to something that has already mentioned.
  e.g.: There is a car outside my house. Move the car away.
- To express that something is the only one.
  e.g.: The moon is very bright tonight.
- With countries which include words like kingdom, states, republic.
  e.g.: The Republic of Sudan / The United States
- Also with countries which have plural nouns.
  e.g.: The Netherlands / The Philippines

2.6 Pre modification

If the noun is preceded (Hornby, 1990:29) by one of the followings: (this, that, these, those, some, any, no, none, my, mine ..we don't use the definite article "the".
- Some red books
- my red books
2.7 Post modification

If the noun is followed by a dependent clause (Hornby, ibid) as who, which or a preposition phrase (of, in, to) it is made definite and in this case it takes the definite article "the".
- The man, who lives next door, is Chinese.
- The boy, whom I was taking to, was my best friend.

2.8 Nouns in English Language

Many definitions were given about nouns in English Language. Here the researcher tries to lay light about nouns in English; definition and usage as follows:

Hornby (1990:29) defines the nouns as: "A noun- in English Language- is a name of a person, an animal, a place or a thing".

There are five types of nouns in English Language as follows: Proper nouns, Common nouns, Collective nouns, Abstract nouns and Compound nouns.

Concerning talking about all these types of English Language nouns mentioned above, it is very necessary to mention that we don't use any of the English Language definite or indefinite articles with the proper nouns. Whereas we can use articles with the rest of types.
Table 2.8.1 Shows Changing Nouns from Singular to Plural:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
<th>Article</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book</td>
<td>Books</td>
<td>the book / a book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>the books / some books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>box / class (s, ss, sh, ch, o, x)</td>
<td>boxes / classes</td>
<td>the box / a box</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>the boxes / some boxes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>life / wife</td>
<td>lives / wives</td>
<td>the wife / a wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>the wives / some wives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boy / story</td>
<td>boys / stories</td>
<td>the boy / a boy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>the boys / some boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>the story / a story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>the stories / some stories</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Hornby:1990)

2.9 The Indefinite Articles "a, an"

The indefinite articles (http://www.usingenglish.com) in English language are "a / an and some". They signal that the noun which they modify is indefinite referring to any member of a group. e.g.:

- My daughter really wants a dog for Christmas. This refers to any dog.
- Somebody calls a police. Means who is available.
2.9.1 Uses of Indefinite Articles "a/ an"

Wikipedia (2009) mentions some uses of the indefinite articles as quoted below:

"The word "a or an" introducing an unspecified noun or the name of a general category". The use of indefinite articles "a or an" usually depends on the sound that begins the next word and they both used before a singular noun only. So the sound is more important than the spelling. English uses the indefinite articles "a/an" from the old English forms of the number one.

"An" is used before words that begin with vowel sounds (even if they spelled with initial "consonants" as in: an hour.
"a" is used before words that begin with consonant sounds (even if they spelled with vowels" as in: a European.

As for the word "some" it is used as a functional plural of "a or an" in this regard Marjorie et al (1994:335) say that:

"A noun is indefinite (not specific) when either you or your listener do not have a particular person, place or thing in mind ". The indefinite articles "a, an" are used in English to indicate membership in a group.

Examples:
• They can be used when mentioning something for the first time.
Example:
Yesterday I went to the market and I bought a camera and an umbrella.
- "a + singular noun" beginning with vowel letter sounded consonant.
  - a user / a university
- "an + singular noun" beginning with a vowel.
  - an elephant / an apple
- Acronyms start with consonant letters but have vowel sounds.
  - an MSDS (Material Safety Data Sheet)
- If the noun is modified by an adjective, the choice between "a and an"
  depends on the initial sounds of the adjective that immediately follows
  the article as in:
  - a broken egg
  - an unusual problem
* Use the indefinite article a /an with singular count noun that are not
  specific.
  - Salma has beautiful hair. (uncountable)
- Use a / an + jobs
  - Her uncle is a doctor.

(www.word-English.org)

There are some cases in which one, two or any of the definite articles can be used as Penny (1988:53) claims: "Sometimes there are cases where two or any of the three alternative articles (the a/an or nothing) are possible".
2.10 Other Types of Articles

Of course there are other types of articles in English Language beside the definite and indefinite articles which will be as follows:
1. Portative Article
2. Negative Article
3. Zero Article

2.10.1 Portative Article

The following is one of many definitions of portative articles. Joseph (2008: 94) describes portative article as:

"a portative article is a type of indefinite article which is used with a mass noun such as: water, juice, milk etc to indicate a non specific quantity of it. Portative means a word or form which denotes part of a collective group of quantity. Portative article is used in French and Italian. The nearest equivalent for it in English is "some".

2.10.2 Negative article

Also as for the negative article (Joseph, ibid) states the following: "It specifies none of its nouns can be regarded as neither definite nor indefinite. In English language it always fulfilled by "no" which can appear before singular or plural noun".(93)

2.10.3 Zero article

Zero article as a type of indefinite articles which takes much concern is also defined as:
"Zero article is the absence of an article. In languages having a definite article, the lack of an article indicates that the noun is indefinite. In English the zero article rather than the indefinite article is used with plural and mass nouns".

(Wikipedia 2009:53)

2.11 Articles in Arabic Language

The definite article in Arabic Language is the addition of the prefix "al" to the noun and it should be connected to the noun. In English language as mentioned earlier, the definite article is "the" which is the same as "al" but "the" is always written separated from the noun.

Gaafar and Jane (2003:11) say: "Arabic has two genders: masculine and feminine. Everything you will meet is either a he or a she, nothing is an it. e.g.:

- بنت bint (girl)
- مدرسة madrasa (school)

Almost all other nouns are masculine.

eg.:

- ولد walad (boy)
- درس dars (lesson)

There is no indefinite article "a/an in Arabic. ولد walad means both boy and a boy. There is a small modification occurs at the end of the word called nunation (adding the suffix “un”)

Example:

- A house = bait+ un = baitun بيت
- A language =luga+ tun = luga 

There are three cases in Arabic which will be as follows:

The book = الكتاب

- nominative = - al-kitabu
- genitive = - al-kitabi
- accusative = - al-kitaba

These cases can be adopted for both masculine and feminine definite.

As for the masculine and feminine indefinite will be as:

a book = كتاب / a queen = ملكة
- nominative = kitabun / mlikatun
- genitive = kitabin / mlikatin
- accusative = kitaban / mlikatan

The definite article "the " is al " آل " which is added to the beginning of nouns e.g.:

- كتاب ( a book ) -- الكتاب alkitab (The book )
- علم ( a flag ) -- العلم alalam (The flag) 

Gaafar and Jane (2003:12): "We sometimes pronounce "al" as "a" and this is according to a group of letters".

We can divide the letters in Arabic language into two types. The moon letters and the sun letters.

2.11.1 Moon letters

When "al" is followed by one of the following letters, we pronounce it as "al" and it is called the moon letters. This letters are fourteen which will be as follows: (ا-أ / ب-ب / ج-ج / ح-ح / خ-خ / ش-ش / ح-ح / غ-غ / ف-ف / ق-ق / ك-ك / م-م / س-س / ز-ز / ي-ي )
Examples:
- The moon = algamar
- The house = albait

Jaafar and Jane (2003:15)

2.11.2 Sun letters

When we omit "I" from "al" when pronouncing it, it is called the sun letters. These letters are as follows (t- / th- / d- / dh- / r- / z- / sh- / s- / s- / n- / dh- / t- / ẓ- / ṣ- / ẓ-)

Examples:
- The sun = ashams
- The time = azzaman

Jaafar and Jane (2003:17)

We mostly double the letter followed the definite article "al" when we omit "I" sound with the sun letters.

When translating we write a hyphen (-) between the definite article "al" and the word.

The cat (al-hir)

The article "al" can be used with both masculine and feminine whether they are singular, dual or plural.

Abdulrahman (2007: 19) says: “In Arabic, a noun is indefinite by the mere absence of the definite. There is no indefinite article in Arabic as in English”

Also dealing and comparing between the two languages Arabic and English in the use of indefinite articles we find:
Althamani (2004:39) mentions: “The double vowel can be considered as the indefinite article of the Arabic language: similarly to English “a” it is a vowel. But on the contrary it comes at the end of a word”

Ellis (1994: 49) proposals what he calls a variable competence model of the second language acquisition. He points out that native speakers do not have just one single language system, but a number of overlapping systems.

“The article the is usually referred to as the definite article and a/an the indefinite articles. They both constitute part of the noun phrase and usually show that there are no other determiners present. They occupy the first position in the noun phrase”

2.12 Contrast between English and Arabic Language

The followings are some comparisons between English Language and Arabic Language as follows:

Jones (1960:2) says: “The students at spoken English or any other language are faced with difficulties”

Yaladen (1983: 85) agrees that: “When a student speaks his own language well, beside the linguistic accuracy, he concerns himself with the way he expresses himself as he moves from one context to another”.

2.13 Definition of Error Analysis and Contrastive Analysis

As for some definitions to Error Analysis and Contrastive Analysis we find: According to James (1997:1) "Error is the process of determining the incidence, nature, causes and consequences successful language”.

He also defines Contrastive Analysis as:
"The describing of comparable features of MT such as: tenses, cooking verbs, consonants clusters, also the language of apologizing, and then comparing the forms and resultant meanings across the two languages in order to spot the mismatches that would predictably give rise to interference and errors".

Ellis (1994:71) says that: "Error analysis involves a set of procedures for identifying, describing and explaining errors in learner's language".

2.14 Common Mistakes in Using English language Articles among Third Class Secondary Schools Students

There are, of course, some common mistakes that are made by the students of secondary school when they use articles. Ellis (1994:76) gives some reasons for these common mistakes:

"Most common mistakes in English as a second language are the incorrect or missing articles in an English sentence. As simple as they look, articles are actually sources of many mistakes of English language as a second language learning. This is because many learners of English as a second language are unaware that there are rules to follow when deciding which article is most appropriate to use in an English sentence".

Examples:
- I saw rainbow after the rain. (wrong)
- I saw a rainbow after the rain. (right)

(Ellis, ibid)
Kharma (1981:19) also gives some examples:
- I live in United States. (wrong)
- I live in the United States. (right)
- My boy friend has got new job. (wrong)
- My boyfriend has got a new job. (right)

One of the most common mistakes is using an article with a singular count noun. Master (1997:223) maintains that: "A singular count noun used with null article is considered to be more familiar than that used with "the". Examples:
- After dinner, he'll see a movie. (right)
- After the dinner, he'll see a movie. (wrong)
(Master, ibid)

Quirk, et al (1985:247) give some examples of the misuse of articles with uncount nouns:
- Would you like a cake? (wrong)
- Would you like cake? (right)

Abdul Gadir (2010) also gives some examples to illustrate some of these common mistakes:
- I met a survivor from the Asian Tsunami, yesterday. (right)
- I met survivor from the Asian Tsunami, yesterday. (wrong)
- The winner of this competition will get a free ticket to Vietnam.(right)
- Winner of this competition will get a free ticket to Vietnam. (wrong)
- I was down at the book seller's yesterday but I couldn't get the book. It was out of print.
- Surprised:
What Book? (right)
What the book? (wrong)

The followings are some more examples which offered by Donnellan (1996:43) which show the common mistakes when using articles:
- The murderer of Smith is insane. (right)
- The Smith murderer is insane. (wrong)
- The true lover kisses whenever the opportunity presents itself. (right)
- True lover kisses whenever the opportunity presents itself. (wrong)
- Oil floats on water. (right)
- An oil floats on water. (wrong)

2.15 Previous Studies

The researcher has checked some libraries of Gezira University – faculty of Education - Hantoo and Hasahisa. Unfortunately there are no many direct topics about Definite and Indefinite Articles.

But Enoor. In (2006) tried to give some enlightenment about the area of Definite and Indefinite Articles among university students. In an M. A thesis "The Usage of the Definite and Indefinite Articles by Sudanese University students" of English in University of Gezira. He showed in his study that the majority of students face lexical and grammatical difficulties when using the definite and indefinite articles. So his findings and recommendations will be as follows:
- There are no enough lessons and exercises concerning definite and indefinite articles on spine six.
- The students can't easily differentiate between al- tariff in Arabic and the definite article" the".
- The researcher also recommends and ask more intensive use of audio visual aids in teaching English articles.

Also as for Salih - he tried his best to give light about the area. "An Aim at Investigating the Impact of Errors" (2008) in BHD thesis.

As long as students lack knowledge about some/any branch in English grammar, they commit grammatical mistakes. The researcher tried to analyze the problems that encounter the students in studying English. He tried not only to cover all errors in spelling, syntax and lexis but also suggested some ways to overcome them.

He finds and recommends that:
- There is no much concern on essential elements in English language learning and/or teaching.

- The researcher suggests teaching grammar by using certain situation areas.

Also an investigation study made by Samara (2003) in an M.A thesis "An Analysis of Errors in Arabic Speakers' English Writing" at the American University of Beirut.

The most important findings are:
- Most of errors are caused by an over application of foreign language.
- There are no many effective rules to teach the students that can help them in developing their language.

The researcher recommends the following:
- We need to encourage the students to practice speaking English at home, with their friends or anyone in order to reduce the number of mistake they commit due to negative language (L1) transfer.
Chapter Three
Methodology of the Study

3.1 Introduction

No doubt students of secondary schools face difficulties when dealing with the definite and indefinite articles. So the researcher here in this study tries to deal with this problem and to suggest some ways to overcome it. In this chapter the method which used, the samples and tools by which the data was collected and the techniques used to analyze the data will be shown.

3.2 Population of the Study

The students of secondary schools- in Medani- Gezira State- Sudan were the subject of the study. All of them study the spine series. As for grade one they study Spine 4, grade two Spine 5 and grade three spine 6. These series are supposed to develop the students' knowledge about English Language. The study focuses on grade three male students.

3.3 Sample of the Study

The test is administered to the students of secondary schools grade three (boys) in the meant area. The students of Medani Secondary Schools were involved. (50) Fifty random samples were chosen out of the total number.

3.4 Tools and Data Collection

In this study the researcher used one tool for data selection and it was a test for third class students at secondary schools (boys). The test followed a direct, simple and clear language about definite and indefinite articles. Question (A):
Filling the spaces by choosing "a, an or the" in ten separated questions. Question (B): Using "a, an or the" through a given paragraph. The questions were various to cover a lot of cases about definite and indefinite articles. The researcher

The questions revealed the weakness and difficulty that face the students when dealing with the English articles.

3.5 Validity of the Test

A number of lecturers in the Department of English language- Faculty of Education - Gezira University- Hantooq have revised the test. All of them agreed that it is a suitable one. The face validity was checked so the test is valid.

3.6 Reliability of the Test

In this test the researcher using an (SPSS) program, followed and used the split half method in measuring its reliability. The questions were divided into two halves for scoring purposes of the test. For this purpose the even numbered questions were scored separately to obtain corresponding scores. He uses correlation. That was stated as follows:

\[
r = \frac{N\sum XY - (\sum X)(\sum Y)}{(N\sum X^2) - (\sum X)^2 - (N\sum Y)^2 - (\sum Y)^2}
\]

\[
r = \frac{8 \times 2007 - 120 \times 110}{(8 \times 2148) - (120)^2(8 \times 1892 - (110)}
\]
2856
2784 \times 3036 \quad = \quad 8452224

r =
2856 \quad = \quad 0.98

r = 1

R = \text{reliability}

N = \text{number of all questions}

X, Y = \text{paralled lists of candidates scores}

\sum = \text{sum}

R = 0.98 \quad = \quad 1
Chapter Four
Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher focuses on showing the results that the students have obtained in the test. The results are analyzed and discussed below. The test has been administered to students of secondary schools – third class (boys).

Table (4.2) shows all questions (spaces) and their answers for the fifty students

The researcher in this table just tries to give an explanation for the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Number of Questions</th>
<th>All Spaces</th>
<th>Correct</th>
<th>Incorrect</th>
<th>Not Attempted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Indefinite</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An</td>
<td>Indefinite</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The</td>
<td>Definite</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

types articles and the number of questions on one paper test. Besides, the total number of all questions and their answers within the fifty paper test.
As for the indefinite article (a) for example, on one paper there are (10) ten questions – (500) questions in the entire fifty paper test. (237) correct answers, (194) incorrect and (69) left empty.

Table (4.3) shows the results and answers in percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article</th>
<th>Correct</th>
<th>Incorrect</th>
<th>Not Attempted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In percentage, the study tries here to show the results of the test which has been done by the (meant) students of secondary level – grade three (boys). These results were taken and chosen randomly from the total number of the students who had sat for this test.

**4.4 The Analysis of the Results**

As stated, there are (500) five hundreds spaces on the test. The researcher considered space (1) one is question one, space (2) two is question two, space (3) three is question three and so on. In question two for example, there are two spaces. Each space represents a question. That is to say I deal with the space number not with the question number. In the test there is a variation in questions and that for the sake of judging the students' performance very well and having good results. For instance, question (1) one consists of only one space where as question (2) two consists of two.
Table (4.4.1) shows the performance in percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No of Questions</th>
<th>Correct</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Incorrect</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Not Attempted</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q11</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q15</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q20</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q21</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q22</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q23</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q24</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q25</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As for the number of the students who had sat for this test was (80) eighty male students. All of them study at secondary schools – grade three. (50) Fifty student’s results have been chosen randomly.

The results have been given and shown in the table above as follows:

**Question (1)** (space one) (the): All the students attempted it. The correct answers were (16) sixteen which is 32% and the incorrect answers were (34) thirty-four and that is 68%.

**Question (2)** (space two) (a): We notice some similarities in the correct and the incorrect answers. That was (24) twenty-four in both and 48%.

**Question (3)** (space three) (the): Here the correct answers were higher than the incorrect, (29) twenty-nine correct which means 58%, the incorrect were (19) nineteen that is 38% where as only (2) two questions left empty.

**Question (4)** (a): (32) Thirty-two correct answers 64%, (15) fifteen answers were incorrect 30% and (3) three spaces left without answers.

**Question (5)** (a): (28) Twenty-eight students answered correctly that is 56%, (19) nineteen students answered wrongly and (13) thirteen questions not attempted.

**Question (6)** (an): This represents the highest mark in the test. (38) Thirty-eight correct answers 76%, (11) eleven incorrect that is 22% and only (1) one question was not attempted.

**Question (7)** (the): There were (26) twenty-six students answered correctly, (20) twenty incorrect whereas (4) not attempted.

**Question (8)** (the): (31) Thirty-one correct answers - 62%, (18) incorrect and only (1) one question not attempted.
**Question (9)** (a): Here the students attempted all questions. They answered correctly in (30) thirty questions and (20) twenty times committed mistakes.

**Question (10)** (the) Also all spaces have been answered. Some were correct and others incorrect. 30 to 20.

**Question (11)** (a): Here (2) two questions weren't attempted, (22) twenty-two correct and (26) incorrect – 52%.

**Question (12)** (the): The students again covered all questions. In the (14) fourteen questions the students did well and in (36) thirty-six questions they answered correctly.

**Question (13)** (an): All questions have been covered. (11) Eleven correct and (39) thirty-nine incorrect.

**Question (14)** (a): Only (3) three questions were left without answers. (31) Thirty-one correct and (16) incorrect.

**Question (15)** (the): The students (28) twenty-eight times attempted and answered correctly, (20) twenty times answered wrongly and (2) two spaces left without answers.

As for the questions from (16) sixteen to (25) twenty-five, these concern the (10) ten spaces which were given in the whole paragraph.
Figure (4.4.2) shows the correct answers in percentage:

- **Corret**
  - a: 47%
  - an: 50%
  - the: 42%

Figure (4.4.3) shows the incorrect answers in percentage:

- **Incorret**
  - a: 39%
  - an: 42%
  - the: 32%
Figure (4.4.4) shows the not attempted questions in percentage

The three figures above (4.3.2), (4.3.3) and (4.3.4) show the correct, incorrect and not attempted questions for the indefinite articles "a/an" and the definite article "the". They give the results in percentage. Putting in mind that the not attempted questions are incorrect answers. So when we add these incorrect answers with the not attempted ones, the results will be as follows:

- a: 53%
- an: 51%
- the: 67%

We can notice that the difference between correct and incorrect answers is statistically significant. The incorrect answers are higher than the correct ones.
Figure (4.4.5) shows the correct and incorrect items in percentage.
4.5 Discussion of the Results in Relation to Hypotheses of the Study

There are four hypotheses that have been mentioned while analyzing the test which will be as follows:

4.5.1 Hypotheses One

"The students replace the definite article the with the indefinite article an"

As it was noticed after correcting and analyzing the results of the test, it appeared clearly that most of the students couldn't differentiate between
articles. Some of them used the indefinite article "an" incorrectly instead of the definite article "the". They based their answered on the vowel letters which the words begin in.

4.5.2 Hypotheses Two

"The students deal with the letter not the sound"

The researcher stated earlier that using articles depends on the initial sound of the word following the article. It doesn't depend on the letter in which the word begins. But the students commit a lot f mistakes in choosing the articles incorrectly by replacing them.

4.5.3 Hypotheses Three

"When the noun is modified by an adjective, the students deal with the noun not the adjective"

The study has explained in the first stages the uses of articles. One of these uses was about nouns which modified by adjectives. In this case the initial sound of the adjective is respected not the initial sound of the noun. The students in this test dealt with the nouns not the adjectives that justify the mistakes they fell on.

4.5.4 Hypotheses Four

"The students use the indefinite articles with uncounted nouns"

Also the indefinite articles can't be used with uncounted nouns. It is incorrect to say a/an water, a/an tea. After correcting the test, the study revealed the mistakes that the students had made.
Chapter Five
Conclusion, Finding and Recommendation

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher tries to conclude the study by showing the findings and recommendations. Also the study will try to give some suggestions for further studies. The main purpose of this study is to raise the knowledge of definite and indefinite articles among secondary schools students- grade three.

5.2 Findings of the Study

After analyzing the data the study revealed the following findings:

1. The students face difficulty to differentiate between definite and indefinite articles.
2. Common mistakes are made when choosing the articles because the students think of the letter not the sound.
3. The usage of the indefinite articles "a/an in front of cities is common.
4. One of the causes of these mistakes is the few exercises in spine 6.
5. The syllabus (the Spine Series) plays an important role in these difficulties which face the students when dealing with English Language articles.
6. Most of the students use the definite article "the" in front of countries.
7. The students don't care for English articles and the study them only for final exams.
8. Understanding and using English articles correctly make coherent writing and speaking among learners.
5.3 Recommendations

Here the researcher tries to suggest some recommendations such as:
1. The study recommends more lessons and intensive practice about definite and indefinite articles in spine 6.
2. The students should be aware of the importance of definite and indefinite articles in building the sentences correctly.
3. New techniques about definite and indefinite articles must be used by teachers.
4. The students of secondary schools should study the English Language sounds to help them in differentiating between articles.
5. Other types of articles (Portative, Negative and Zero) should be included in the Spine Series for general knowledge.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Studies

A lot of suggestions could be given concerning the term definite and indefinite articles such as:
1. Comparison between male and female in mistakes committed when using definite and indefinite articles.
2. The role of sounds of the letters when choosing definite and indefinite articles.
3. Articles are used with nouns, what about those which are modified by adjectives?
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Appendix

University of Gezira
Diagnostic Test for Students

Time: 30 m            Third Class            Year: 2013

The responses which will be shown in this test were put only to serve the purpose of the meant study.

Question (A): Fill in the spaces below by choosing "a, an or the".

(1) I like …… music of Beethoven.
(2) I saw …… film last night. ….. Film was very boring.
(3) We have …… dog and …… cat.
(4) There is …… apple in the box near …… fridge.
(5) …… cheese is not good today.
(6) I bought …… new umbrella yesterday. …… umbrella that I bought was green.
(7) Put some sugar to make …… orange juice.
(8) Ramadan is …… eighth month in the Islamic calendar.
(9) Could you please send me …… SMS message?
    (10) Is there …… garage behind …… kitchen?
Question (B): Use (a, an or the) in the following spaces. Notice that you sometimes need not to use any of them.

Last night, my wife and I decided to go out on …… tour. We headed to …… Kassala. We took everything we need. I prepared …… knife, …… spoon, …… plate and …… oven. My wife cooked …… food and made …… orange juice to drink. We enjoyed …… time there. We listened to …… music of Beethoven because I like it too much. We intend to go there again next month.