

To the loving memory of my dear father,

Mustafa Püskül,

this thesis is dedicated.

EFL STUDENTS' USE OF ENGLISH ARTICLES
AT DIFFERENT PROFICIENCY LEVELS:
A COMPARISON OF CONTEXT AND TASK TYPE

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ABSTRACT

EFL STUDENTS' USE OF ENGLISH ARTICLES
AT DIFFERENT PROFICIENCY LEVELS:
A COMPARISON OF CONTEXT AND TASK TYPE

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This study was designed to investigate the use of English articles by beginner, intermediate, and advanced level Turkish EFL students at Pamukkale University. It examined whether the accuracy of article use by the students varied with respect to the types of noun phrase (NP) contexts, and analyzed the types of errors committed by the students in using English articles. It also investigated whether the accuracy of article use varied with respect to the proficiency levels and the tasks that were given to the students.

The data were collected through a multiple choice task and a written production task. The results of these tasks revealed that the accuracy of article use by

students varies with respect to the types of NP contexts in the multiple choice task. However, there is no significant difference among the types in terms of the accuracy of article use in the written production task. Moreover, each proficiency level tended to omit or substitute the articles when they make a mistake. However, the variety and frequency of these errors depended on the proficiency level of the students, type of the NP contexts, and the tasks that were given to the students. The study also revealed that the accuracy of article use varied with respect to the proficiency levels, and the tasks that were given to the students.

Key words: Article, definite article, indefinite article, noun phrase (NP), NP types, NP contexts, omission, and substitution.

ÖZET

İNGİLİZCE'DEKİ TANIMLIKLARIN İNGİLİZCE'Yİ YABANCI DİL OLARAK
ÖĞRENEN FARKLI SEVİYELERDEKİ ÖĞRENCİLER TARAFINDAN
KULLANILMASI: İÇİNDE BULUNDUKLARI BAĞLAM VE TEST ÇEŞİDİNE
GÖRE BİR KARŞILAŞTIRMA

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Yüksek Lisans, Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce Öğretimi Bölümü

Tez Yöneticisi: Dr. JoDee Walters

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Bu çalışma İngilizce'deki tanımlıkların Pamukkale Üniversitesi'nde İngilizce'yi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen başlangıç, orta ve ileri düzeydeki Türk öğrenciler tarafından kullanımını araştırmak için yapılmıştır. Çalışma öğrencilerin tanımlıkları kullanmadaki başarısının, tanımlıkların yer aldığı isim öbeği çeşidine göre değişkenlik gösterip göstermediğini incelemiştir, ve öğrencilerin İngilizce'deki tanımlıkları kullanırken yaptıkları hataların çeşitlerini analiz etmiştir. Çalışma aynı zamanda tanımlık kullanımındaki başarının öğrencilerin yeterlilik seviyelerine ve onlara uygulanan testlere göre farklılık gösterip göstermediğini incelemiştir.

Veri çoktan seçmeli bir test, ve bir sayfalık kompozisyon yazma testi yoluyla toplanmıştır. Bu testlerin sonuçları öğrencilerin tanımlıkları kullanmadaki başarısının çoktan seçmeli testte tanımlıkların yer aldığı isim öbeği çeşidine göre değişkenlik gösterdiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Fakat, kompozisyon yazma testinde tanımlıkların doğru kullanımı açısından isim öbeği çeşitleri arasında önemli bir farklılık bulunmamaktadır. Bunun yanı sıra her seviye grubu bir hata yaptığında ya kullanılması gereken yerde tanımlık kullanmama ya da bir tanımlığın yerine başka bir tanımlık kullanma eğilimi göstermişlerdir. Fakat, hataların çeşidi ve sıklığı öğrencilerin seviyelerine, isim öbeği çeşidine ve öğrencilere uygulanan testlere bağlıdır. Çalışma aynı zamanda tanımlık kullanımındaki başarının öğrencilerin yeterlilik seviyelerine ve onlara uygulanan testlere göre farklılık gösterdiğini ortaya koymuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tanımlık, belirli tanımlık, belirsiz tanımlık, ad öbeği, ad öbeği çeşitleri, ad öbeklerinin yer aldığı bağlamlar, kullanılması gereken yerde tanımlık kullanmama, ve kullanılması gereken tanımlığın yerine başka bir tanımlık kullanma.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The English article system is quite complex for EFL and ESL learners. No matter what proficiency level the learners are, they face difficulties in understanding the English article system, and using English articles properly. According to Master (2002), the causes for the general errors committed in the usage of English articles stem from their frequency, unstressed nature, and multiple functions. In my opinion, in addition to these factors, if a learner's native language lacks overt articles such as the definite article *the* and the indefinite article *a(n)* in English, or employs only a definite article or an indefinite article, it causes extra difficulties for learners in acquiring the English articles.

As for Turkish EFL learners, since Turkish and English do not have a one-to-one correspondence in terms of the article system, there is an added difficulty in acquiring proficiency for English articles. Most Turkish EFL learners don't seem to understand the logic behind English articles and thus commit many errors while using them. Moreover, I believe that most Turkish EFL teachers also have trouble with English articles, possibly because they face difficulties in identifying their students' errors in article usage, determining the causes of these errors, and teaching the English article system effectively.

The present study will analyze the use of English articles by Turkish EFL learners. The aim of the study is to examine whether the accuracy of article use by the Turkish EFL learners varies with respect to the NP (noun phrase) types described in the literature. The study also examines the types of errors committed in these NP

contexts, and investigates whether the accuracy of article use varies with respect to the proficiency level and the tasks given to the participants.

Background of the Study

Researchers have investigated the English articles from different perspectives. While some have been concerned with the pedagogical implications of articles (Master, 1988a, 1988b, 1990, 1997b, 2002; McEldowney, 1977; Whitman, 1974), others have investigated the acquisition of articles by ESL and EFL learners of English (Butler, 2002; Ekiert, 2004; Huebner, 1983; Liu & Gleason, 2002; Parish, 1987; Robertson, 2000; Tarone & Parish, 1988; Thomas, 1989; Yılmaz, 2006).

Bickerton's (1981) study, considered the most significant contribution to research on the English article system, points out that the articles of English are governed by the semantic function of the noun phrase (NP) in discourse. The classification of the semantic function of an NP is determined by two discourse features of referentiality. First, does the noun have a specific referent [+/- SR]? Second, is it assumed as known by the hearer [+/- HK]?

Huebner's (1983) classification of nouns is based on Bickerton's distinctions ([+/- SR], [+/- HK]). Using these two binary features, Huebner classified the semantic functions of the NPs into four types: Type 1 [-SR; +HK], Type 2 [+SR; +HK], Type 3 [+SR; -HK], and Type 4 [-SR; -HK]. His classification focuses not only on the presence or absence of articles in obligatory contexts, but also on the semantic types of NPs and the article usage for each type. In addition, with the help of this classification, the development of learners' grasp of the "article + NP function" relationship can be analyzed. Several researchers (Butler, 2002; Ekiert, 2004; Parish, 1987; Tarone & Parish, 1988; Thomas, 1989) who have investigated

the acquisition of English articles have used Huebner's classification. His classification will also be employed in this study with some additions. As in Butler (2002), Ekiert (2004), and Thomas (1989), idiomatic and conventional uses of *a/an*, *the*, and \emptyset will be classified as Type 5 in this study.

Master (1997b, 2002) is one of the researchers who is interested mainly in the pedagogical implications of the English articles, and has suggested various strategies for teaching the English articles effectively. Master (1990) claims that the English article system can be taught as a binary division between classification (*a* and \emptyset) and identification (*the*). The aim of his study is to provide a pedagogical tool for selecting the appropriate article. In another study Master (1997) describes the acquisition, frequency, and function of the English articles. In addition, he suggests pedagogical implications for beginner, intermediate and advanced levels of proficiency. Master (2002) also explains the reasons for the difficulty non-native speakers of English face in acquiring the English article system.

Among the research on the acquisition of English articles, there are two longitudinal studies conducted with learners from specific L1 backgrounds. Huebner (1979) reports on the development of the article system in a Hmong adult's interlanguage over a one-year-period. In another longitudinal study, Parish (1987) analyzed a Japanese ESL learner's article system over a period of four months using three different systems of analysis. Apart from these longitudinal studies, Ekiert (2004) studied the acquisition of the English article system by speakers of Polish in ESL and EFL settings; Butler (2002) analyzed the metalinguistic knowledge used by Japanese students in acquiring English articles; Liu and Gleason (2002) focused only on the acquisition of the article *the* by nonnative speakers of English; Geranpayeh

(2000) examined the acquisition of the English article system by Persian speakers; Robertson (2000) investigated the variability in the use of the English article system by Chinese learners of English; Takahashi (1997) studied the acquisition and use of the English article system by Japanese learners; Thomas (1989) investigated both first and second language learners' acquisition of the English articles; and Tarone and Parish (1988) examined the form and function of articles in the production of ESL learners.

My general impression as an EFL instructor is that, like many ESL and EFL learners, Turkish learners also face difficulties in understanding the rules and regularities behind the English articles, and using them correctly. Although there are many research studies on the acquisition of English articles by learners of specific L1 backgrounds, there are only a few studies which shed light on Turkish learners' acquisition of English articles.

Ürkmez (2003) investigated article use in compositions by Turkish EFL students. Her study was mainly based on a learner corpus. In other words, she examined the variability of article use in learners' writing. In addition, she investigated the variability of errors the students make in their use of articles. While analyzing the errors, she employed Huebner's (1983) semantic wheel. In a recent study Yılmaz (2006) investigated the acquisition of the English article system by Turkish learners. The aim of her study was to see whether or not Turkish learners would show any variability in the use of English articles due to their L1. In analyzing the use of English articles, she employed Bickerton's (1981) taxonomy.

Statement of the Problem

While some researchers have shown interest in the pedagogical implications of the English article system, and have investigated different techniques for teaching English articles effectively (Master, 1990; Mc Eldowney, 1977; Whitman, 1974), others have explored the process of L2 acquisition of English articles (Butler, 2002; Ekiert, 2004; Huebner, 1983; Parish, 1987; Tarone & Parish, 1988; Thomas, 1989). In addition, some (see, for example, Master, 2002) have investigated the reasons for the difficulty non-native speakers of English have in acquiring the English article system.

Like other non-native speakers of English, Turkish EFL learners also have difficulties in acquiring English articles. Throughout my teaching experience I have observed that students commit many article errors in their homework, exam papers, and also in their speech. Even advanced students cannot fully acquire the English article system. It is also a demanding task, especially for inexperienced instructors, to explain the English articles properly in class. However, few researchers have attempted to analyze the acquisition of English articles by Turkish EFL learners.

As far as I am aware, Ürkmez's (2003) study is the first in-depth research on the variety of English article use by Turkish EFL learners and the variety of errors Turkish EFL learners commit while using the English articles. However, the participants of her study were only advanced learners of English. In other words, Ürkmez did not investigate whether the errors show variation with respect to the proficiency level. Another limitation of her study was that she employed only a written production task. In a written production task, learners may not use all the categories of articles, and thus it is not possible to make a reliable generalization on

the usage of articles by learners. For example, Yılmaz (2006) who investigated L2 acquisition of the English article system by Turkish learners, employed three different tasks in her study: a picture description task, a written production task, and a fill-in-the-article task. However, her study also has some limitations, the most important of which is that she analyzed only three article contexts: referential definites, referential indefinites, and non-referential indefinites. She did not examine the generics, which is one of the main concepts for English articles.

This study aims to analyze the English articles used in five different contexts, 1) generics, 2) referential definites, 3) referential indefinites, 4) non-referential indefinites, and 5) idiomatic and other conventional uses of articles, by three groups of Turkish EFL learners at different proficiency levels: 10 beginner, 10 intermediate, and 10 advanced learners.

Research Questions

This study will address the following questions:

1. Does the accuracy of article use by Turkish EFL learners vary according to the five types of noun phrase contexts described in the literature?
2. What type of errors do Turkish EFL learners commit in these five article contexts?
 - 2a. Do they tend to omit the articles?
 - 2b. Do they tend to substitute the articles?
3. Does the accuracy of article use by Turkish EFL learners vary with respect to proficiency level?
4. Does the accuracy of article use by Turkish EFL learners vary according to the tasks?

Significance of the Study

This study was conducted to investigate the use of English articles by Turkish EFL learners, determine the types of the errors committed by Turkish EFL learners, and find out whether the accuracy of article use shows variation with respect to the proficiency level and tasks that were given to the participants. The results of this study will be beneficial to EFL instructors, text book writers, and curriculum planners who work with Turkish students. With the help of this study instructors will be better able to predict the types of errors their students are likely to commit, identify the types of errors, and employ various teaching strategies to make the instruction more effective. This study is also expected to be useful for instructors who are choosing or developing their teaching materials.

Conclusion

This chapter was an introduction and overview to the study. In the second chapter, the relevant literature that provides a general background for the present study is reviewed. In Chapter 3, the methodology of the study, including the setting and participants, instruments, procedures, and data analysis is explained. Chapter 4 presents the results of the study, and Chapter 5 summarizes and discusses the results, presents pedagogical implications, asserts the limitations of the study, and finally gives suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter focuses on selected literature related to the topic of the study. The first section reviews contrastive analysis, error analysis, and interlanguage. The second section explains the noun classes, and the English article system. The last section presents studies on teaching the English article system, and studies on the acquisition of English articles.

The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis

The contrastive analysis (CA) hypothesis was a favoured paradigm in the field of applied linguistics and second language teaching in the 1950s and 1960s. According to the CA hypothesis, if structures of L1 and L2 differed, the errors committed by language learners would reflect the structure of their L1. It was assumed that learners would tend to transfer to their L2 utterances the formal features of their L1, and this process has been identified as negative transfer. Here it is important to note that the differences between the structures of languages usually appear due to the differences between the origins of the languages. Languages that are in the same language family and in the same branch usually share the same structural features.

The second assumption was that if structures of L1 and L2 were similar, learners would spontaneously use the L1 structure in L2 performance. Since this process results in correct utterances, it is called “positive transfer” (Dulay, Burt & Krashen, 1982).

According to linguists, conducting a CA would reveal the L2 structures which cause difficulties for learners in acquisition. In addition, the data would guide

teachers and material developers in terms of lesson planning (Dulay et al., 1982).

Along the same lines, Richards (1971/1974) states that: “especially in the teaching of languages for which no considerable and systematic teaching experience is available, contrastive analysis can highlight and predict the difficulties of the pupils” (p. 172).

By the early 1970s, mainly because of its association with Structuralism and Behaviorism, some doubts were raised about the reliability of CA (James, 1998).

According to Dulay et al. (1982), the data which addresses the CA hypothesis have revealed a number of issues. First, the errors committed by child and adult L2

learners do not entirely reflect the learners’ L1. Second, L2 learners commit many grammatical errors even though the structures are similar in both the L1 and L2. In these cases, if positive transfer were operating, errors should not be committed.

Third, while judging the grammatical correctness of L2 sentences, learners often are not affected by their L1 but by the L2 sentence type. Finally, compared with

grammatical errors, phonological errors exhibit more L1 influence. According to these findings, the CA hypothesis accounts only for a small portion of L2

performance data, and thus is not sufficient in predicting learner performance.

Eventually, it was realized that errors could not be predicted or explained only by means of contrastive analysis because errors were not committed solely due to L1 interference.

Error Analysis

The error analysis (EA) movement emerged as a response to the failure of CA to account for learner errors, and has been more successful in exploring L2

acquisition. According to Dulay et al. (1982), the most significant contribution of

error analysis has been the discovery that most of the grammatical errors L2 learners

commit do not reflect L1 interference. On the contrary, the errors made by L2 learners are similar to the errors made by L1 learners in that learners are building an L2 rule system just as children build a rule system for L1. James (1998) points out that the most important difference between CA and EA is that while the learners' native language is taken into consideration in CA, EA is based on the claim that errors could be fully described in terms of the L2.

Researchers suggest that analyzing learners' errors serve many purposes. First of all, Corder (1967/1974) states that a learner's errors are significant for teachers in that they can see the learner's progress in the target language, and determine what remains for the learner to learn. In addition, Dulay et al. (1982) point out that teachers can gain insights about learners' difficulties in producing the target language appropriately. Second, Corder (1967/1974) and Dulay et al. (1982) suggest that errors provide data for the researcher to identify how languages are learned or acquired, and what strategies are being used by the learner. Finally, Corder (1967/1974) states that since learners learn the target language by committing errors, errors can be regarded as a device for the learner while acquiring the language.

Before doing an error analysis, errors and mistakes should be distinguished. While errors reflect gaps in a learner's knowledge, mistakes reflect occasional lapses in performance. The former occur as a result of learners' lack of knowledge; the latter occur when the learner is unable to perform what he or she knows (Ellis, 1997). Once all the errors are identified, they can be classified into groups. However, there are various definitions for error categories and error types in the literature, which prevents "meaningful cross-study comparisons or validation of results" (Dulay et al., 1982, p. 197).

Dulay et al. (1982) address this problem in their study by defining the categories and stating the purposes of the categories included in the taxonomies used by the researchers. They propose four types of taxonomies: linguistic category, surface strategy, comparative, and communicative effect taxonomies. Errors based on linguistic category taxonomies are classified in terms of which language component (phonology, morphology, semantics, syntax, and discourse) or a particular linguistic constituent (the noun phrase, the auxiliary, the verb phrase, the adverb, and so on) they affect.

The surface strategy taxonomy consists of four error categories: *omission*, *additions*, *misformation*, and *misordering*. Dulay et al. (1982) define omission errors as the absence of an item which must take place in a grammatical sentence. Addition errors, on the other hand, are characterized by the presence of an item that must not occur in a grammatical sentence. It falls into three subtypes: *double marking*, *regularization*, and *simple addition*. Double marking is defined as the use of two markers for the same feature in a linguistic construction (e.g. *she doesn't smokes*). Regularization errors, however, arise when “a marker that is typically added to a linguistic item is erroneously added to exceptional items of the given class that do not take a marker” (Dulay et al., 1982, p. 157). For example, *putted* is a regularization in that the past tense marker -ed has been added to the verb which does not take a marker. Simple addition, which is the third subtype of additions, is not characterized by any specific features. Dulay et al. (1982) state that “if an addition error is not a double marking nor a regularization, it is called a simple addition” (p. 158). The third category of surface strategy taxonomy suggested by Dulay et al. (1982) is misformation. It refers to the use of the wrong form of a structure or

morpheme, and falls into three subtypes: *regularizations*, *archi-forms*, and *alternating forms*. Dulay et al. (1982) point out that regularization errors appear when a regular marker is used in the place of an irregular one, as in *gooses* for *geese*.¹

The second subtype of misformation Dulay et al. (1982) suggest is *archi-forms*. They define it as “the selection of one member of a class of forms to represent others in the class” (p. 160). For instance, the learner might temporarily use just one member of the class of personal pronouns as in the following examples: *give me that/me hungry*. The third subtype of misformation is *alternating forms*, which Dulay et al. (1982) define as “fairly free alternation of various members of a class with each other” (p. 161). For example, *these pencil, this dogs*. The final category of surface strategy taxonomy proposed by Dulay et al. (1982) is *misordering*. It refers to the wrong placement of a morpheme or group of morphemes in a sentence (e.g. *where daddy is going?*).

James (1998) rejects some of the categories suggested by Dulay et al. (1982), renames some of them, and adds *blends* as a fifth category to the error taxonomy, which he prefers calling the *Target Modification Taxonomy*. In this way, he describes the following categories: *omission*, *overinclusion*, *misselection*, *misordering*, and *blends*. He defines *blends* as “typical of situations where there is not just one well-defined target, but two” (p. 111). The blend error occurs when learners combine two alternative grammatical forms as in **according to Erica’s opinion*.

Recall that Dulay et al. (1982) suggest two more error taxonomies (*the comparative taxonomy*, and *the communicative effect taxonomy*) for the classification

¹ James (1998) criticizes Dulay et al. (1982) for assigning regularization as one of the three subtypes of misformation. He states that Dulay et al. (1982) give examples (e.g. **gooses*) which have the same origin as the examples they have given to exemplify regularization as a subtype of additions.

of errors. The comparative taxonomy is based on “comparisons between the structure of L2 errors and certain other types of constructions” (p. 163). For instance, if the errors of a Korean EFL student were to be classified according to the comparative taxonomy, they might be compared to that of errors reported for children acquiring English as an L1. The communicative effect taxonomy, on the other hand, deals with errors in terms of their effects on the reader or listener. It differs from the surface strategy and comparative taxonomies in that it does not focus on characteristics of the errors themselves but focuses on identifying the errors which seem to cause miscommunication and those that do not (Dulay et al., 1982).

The employment of these error taxonomies to suggest the sources of the errors has been considered as a positive aspect of error analysis. However, explaining the error types only by means of assigning a single source to each error is not adequate. Dulay et al. (1982) state that “explanations of errors will have to be multidimensional and include factors beyond the observable characteristics of the errors” (p. 197).

Interlanguage

Applied linguists discovered through EA that the majority of errors produced by language learners had neither the characteristics of the L1 nor the L2. Thus, the error analysis movement paved the way for a theory of interlanguage (IL), a notion which was introduced by Larry Selinker in 1969. However, before that, in 1967, Corder had proposed the term *idiosyncratic dialect* for the learner language. He proposed that the language of a learner is a special kind of dialect and “it is regular, systematic, meaningful, i.e. it has a grammar, and is, in principle, describable in terms of a set of rules” (Corder, 1971/1974, p. 161). He stated that “Selinker (1969)

has proposed the name *interlanguage* for this class of idiosyncratic dialects, implying thereby that it is a dialect whose rules share characteristics of two social dialects or languages” (p. 161). Corder (1971/1974, p. 162) exemplifies interlanguage with the following diagram.

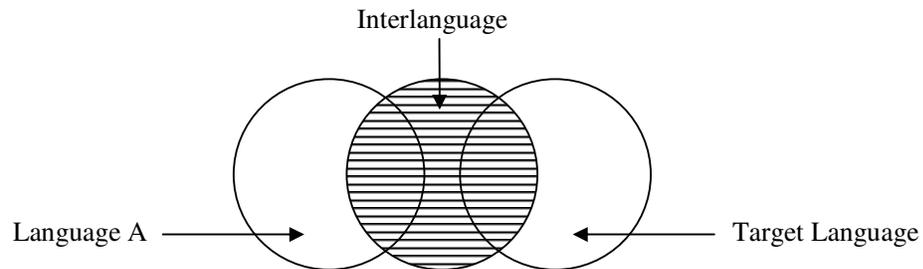


Figure 1 - Corder's Interlanguage Diagram

In the diagram, Language A represents the second language learner's L1.

Nemser's (1971/1974) terminology for the learner language differs from Corder's (*idiosyncratic dialect*) and Selinker's (*interlanguage*); he uses the term *approximative system*. He defines it as “the deviant linguistic system actually employed by the learner attempting to utilize the target language” (p. 55). According to Nemser, approximative systems display different characteristics in accordance with the proficiency level. He points out that learning experience, communication function, and personal learning characteristics play a role in the variation of the approximative systems as well.

Selinker (1972/1974) points out that interlanguage is “a separate linguistic system based on the observable output which results from a learner's attempted production of a TL (target language) norm” (p. 35). He proposes that whenever learners attempt to produce a sentence in L2, they activate the *latent psychological structure*, which he defines as an already formulated arrangement in the brain. Selinker suggests that there are five processes in the latent psychological structure:

language transfer, transfer of training, strategies of second language learning, strategies of second language communication, and overgeneralization of TL linguistic material. In addition he states that these processes “are *central* to second language learning, and that each process forces fossilizable material upon surface IL utterances, controlling to a very large extent the surface structures of these utterances” (p. 37).

Studies on interlanguage have mainly focused on determining the degree of systematicity in interlanguage variability, and the nature of that systematicity. In order to uncover that systematicity, most researchers investigating first or second language acquisition have employed the order-of-acquisition approach which was modeled after Brown’s (1973, cited in Huebner 1979) longitudinal study on first language acquisition. In his study, Brown analyzed the language development of three children over a four-year period. He found that the children acquired fourteen English grammatical morphemes in a similar order. Other studies on L1 acquisition reveal that syntactic patterns such as interrogative and negative sentences of L1 are also acquired in a similar order by children (Schmitt, 2002).

Huebner (1979), however, points out that the order-of-acquisition approach fails to capture some features of interlanguage. He states that “it does not reveal the systematic use of morphemes before they acquire Standard English functions. Second, it does not show the interrelationships of the various “areas” of the interlanguage system” (p. 22). In order to analyze the systematicity of the learner’s interlanguage, Huebner proposes that looking at where a given morpheme appears in obligatory contexts is not sufficient, we must also look at where it occurs in contexts where it would not be allowed. Accordingly, he states that “we must define these

contexts in terms of possibly universal semantic features rather than in terms of target language categories” (p. 24).

On the other hand, one of the most interesting issues raised by the order-of-acquisition approach employed in the studies of L1 acquisition is whether L2 learners also acquire the grammatical structures in a definite order (Ellis, 1997). In order to investigate this issue, researchers have chosen a number of English morphemes such as the plural *-s*, progressive *-ing*, and the auxiliary *be*, and analyzed the speech of L2 learners who differed in their ages and L1s. They found that irrespective of the learners’ L1s, ages, and whether or not they had received instruction, most of the learners acquired the grammatical structures of L2 in a fairly set order. Ellis (1997) points out that in addition to following a similar order of acquisition for certain L2 structures, learners proceed through a number of interim stages before they master the L2 structures. He exemplifies this process with the acquisition of the irregular past tense form of ‘*eat*’ as shown in Table 1.

Stage	Description	Example
1	Learners fail to mark the verb for past time.	‘eat’
2	Learners begin to produce irregular past tense forms.	‘ate’
3	Learners overgeneralize the regular past tense form.	‘eated’
4	Sometimes learners produce hybrid forms.	‘ated’
5	Learners produce correct irregular past tense forms.	‘ate’

Table 1 - Stages in the Acquisition of the Past Tense of ‘Eat’ (Ellis, 1997, p. 23).

Ellis (1997) proposes that the accurate use of a structural form does not necessarily mean that the learner has acquired this form, as can be seen in Table 1. Learners who produced ‘eated’ and ‘ated’ are more advanced than learners who produced ‘ate’ at the second stage. Consequently, Ellis states that “acquisition follows a **U-shaped course of development**; that is, initially learners may display a

high level of accuracy only to apparently regress later before finally once again performing in accordance with target-like norms” (p. 23). This process reveals that learners are restructuring their interlanguage while acquiring the L2 structures. Along the same lines, Huebner (1979) states that “a learner’s hypotheses about the target language may be under continual revision” (p. 28).

Based on Huebner’s system of analysis, i.e. that of describing grammatical contexts using semantic features, the present study might reveal the acquisition order of the English articles by Turkish EFL learners, and the variation in the use of these articles depending on learners’ proficiency levels. In order to provide a better understanding of the study, the following section reviews the English article system.

Introduction to the English Article System

The English article system is considered as one the most difficult structural elements of English grammar for ESL and EFL learners in acquiring English. If the learners’ native language lacks overt articles, or employs only one or two of them, it causes extra difficulties for them in acquiring the English articles. For example, languages such as most Asian and Slavic and many African languages do not have articles. In addition, even the languages that have articles or article-like morphemes such as French, Spanish, Farsi, the Scandinavian languages, and the Semitic languages differ from English in the way they use these articles (Murcia & Freeman, 1999).

This section aims to provide the necessary information on the distribution and the function of the articles in English. As the distribution and the use of articles are determined by the noun classes, it would be useful to first examine the noun classes in English.

Classification of Nouns

The nouns in English are classified as common nouns, which can be further classified as count nouns or non-count nouns (also called 'mass'), and proper nouns (Murcia & Freeman, 1999).

Common Nouns

Common nouns fall into two classes: 1) count nouns, and 2) mass nouns. This lexical classification is a prerequisite knowledge for the correct use of articles. Count nouns are those which can take definite and indefinite articles and admit a plural form (e.g. *the bottle, a bottle, bottles*). Mass nouns, on the other hand, are those which can take zero article, definite article, and indefinite quantifier, but do not admit a plural form. (e.g. *Ø bread, the bread, some bread*) (Quirk et al., 1972). While common nouns can take the indefinite article and the plural inflection, non-count nouns, which are singular in number for purposes of subject-verb agreement, cannot take them (Murcia & Freeman, 1999).

Both the count and mass nouns have a semantic division into concrete and abstract nouns, although concrete nouns are mainly count and abstract mainly mass. (Quirk et al., 1972) e.g.,

count:	a) concrete: <i>bun, toy, ...</i>	b) abstract: <i>difficulty, worry, ...</i>
	a) concrete: <i>iron, butter, ...</i>	b) abstract: <i>music, homework, ...</i>

(p. 129)

Abstract nouns which refer to states, events, concepts, and feelings that have no physical existence, can be either a countable or non-countable noun.

life (the general notion):

Life can be beautiful. (the non-countable use)

a life (a human being as a specific instance of the general notion):

The quick thinking police officer saved a life. (the countable use)

(Murcia & Freeman, 1999, p. 274)

Proper Nouns

Proper nouns are names of specific people, places, countries, months, days, and so on. Proper nouns and common nouns are similar in terms of countability. However, unlike common nouns which pick out classes of entities, proper nouns pick out a unique entity. In other words, they are inherently definite and do not take the indefinite article. In addition, unless they take plural inflection, they do not require a definite article except for some borrowings and when the speaker is being emphatic and using stressed *the* (Murcia & Freeman, 1999).

Count (proper)

Mr. Wayne, *a John Wayne, the (two) Waynes (= John and Patrick)
America, *an America, the (two) Americas (= North and South, or
Anglo and Latin) (p. 273)

The English Article System

All nouns appear in noun phrases in actual usage, and the kind of reference the NPs have is indicated by the preceding determiner. Determiners based on their position in the noun phrase in relation to each other fall into three groups: 1) Predeterminers (e.g. *half, all, both*), 2) Postdeterminers (e.g. *seven, many, few*), and 3) Central determiners (e.g. *the, a, Ø*) (Greenbaum & Quirk, 1990).

Predeterminers occur before the articles, the demonstratives, and the possessives (*all the students, both these students, half our students*); however, they

do not precede the following quantifiers: *each, every, (n)either, some, any, no, enough*. Postdeterminers occur immediately after determiners (The *two* young women were successful), and consist of ordinals (*first, fourth, last, other*), and quantifiers (*seven, ninety, many, few*). The ordinals usually occur before the quantifiers where they fall together (the *first two* poems, my *last few* possessions). Central determiners, which can be preceded by predeterminers or followed by postdeterminers, consist of five groups: 1) articles (*the, a(n), Ø*), 2) the demonstratives (*this, that, these, those*), 3) the possessives (*my, our, your, ...*), 4) the *wh*-determiners (*which, whose, whichever, ...*), and 5) the negative determiner *no* (He has *no* concentration) (Greenbaum & Quirk, 1990).

The articles *the, a(n),* and \emptyset are the most common central determiners. They do not convey a lexical meaning. They indicate definiteness, genericness, and referentiality. The acquisition of these articles has been investigated by classifying noun phrase (NP) contexts for the appearance of articles. According to Bickerton (1981) the classification of the semantic function of an NP is determined by two discourse features of referentiality; whether the noun has a specific referent [+/- SR], and whether it is assumed as known by the hearer [+/- HK]. Huebner (1983, 1985) developed a system of analysis which accounts for article use in NP contexts. He analyzes NPs in terms of the four possible combinations of Bickerton's (1981) two binary features. The semantic wheel in Figure 2 illustrates the four types.

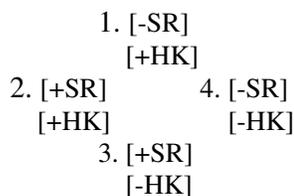


Figure 2 - Huebner's Semantic Wheel

His classification has been taken as a model for the analysis of English NP environments, and it is used as well in this study. Based on the studies of Butler (2002), Ekiert (2004), and Thomas (1989), idiomatic and conventional uses of articles are classified as a fifth type in this study. Figure 3 presents the NP types that are considered in this study.

Type 1	[-SR; +HK]	generics
Type 2	[+SR; +HK]	referential definites
Type 3	[+SR; -HK]	referential indefinites
Type 4	[-SR; -HK]	non-referentials
Type 5	idiomatic and conventional uses of <i>a/an</i> , <i>the</i> , and \emptyset	

Figure 3 - The NP Types that are Considered in this Study

Type 1. [-SR; +HK] - Specific Referent, + Hearer Knowledge

Nouns classified as [-SR; +HK] are called generics. A generic noun refers to all or most members of an entity which is identified by the hearer from general knowledge. All three articles *a/an*, *the*, \emptyset convey generic meaning. *A/an* is used with singular count nouns, and abstract nouns. The \emptyset article, on the other hand, is used with plural count nouns, mass nouns and abstract nouns. In non-generic contexts, *the* can normally be used with the singular/plural count nouns (I saw the rabbit/the rabbits), with mass (She presented the evidence), as well as abstract nouns (The understanding they reached was short-lived). However, in order to produce a generic

interpretation in the case of *the*, the noun must be a count noun and singular (Hawkins, 2001).

The rabbit can cause problems for the gardener.

A rabbit can cause problems for a gardener.

Ø Rabbits can cause problems for Ø gardeners.

(p. 235)

Type 2 [+SR; +HK] + Specific Referent, + Hearer Knowledge

Nouns classified as [+SR; +HK] are called referential definites, and are marked with *the*. They refer to a specific entity which the hearer can identify from the previous discourse or from the context. Referential definites fall into subcategories such as *previous mention*, *specified by entailment*, *specified by definition*, *unique in all contexts*, and *unique in a given context*.

If a noun is mentioned in discourse previously, it becomes referential and definite.

(Chris approached me carrying a dog)

The dog jumped down and started barking.

(Thomas, 1989, p. 337)

Second, if a noun is specified by entailment, then the definite article is obligatory in the context. In the following sentence *door* entails *bell*, and thus *bell* becomes a specific referent.

I approached his front door and rang the bell.

(Thomas, 1989, p. 337)

Third, a noun can become specific by definition, such as *the girl with a hat*, *the book which is on the table*, and so takes the definite article. Fourth, some nouns are unique in all contexts, and thus they also require the definite article. For instance,

the moon, *the* Pope, *the* sun. Moreover, some nouns are unique in a given context, and thus they are also preceded by the definite article:

Among employees: *the* boss

Among classmates: *the* midterm exam

(Thomas, 1989, p. 337)

Type 3 [+SR; -HK] + Specific Referent, - Hearer Knowledge

Nouns classified as [+SR; -HK] are called referential indefinites, and are marked with *a/an*, and \emptyset . These are the nouns that the speaker mentions for the first time. Their referent is identifiable to the speaker but not to the listener. In this context, singular count nouns take *a/an*; mass nouns and plural count nouns take the \emptyset article.

Speaker A: How will you get a ticket for the England-France match?

Speaker B: I have a contact/I have \emptyset contacts.

(Hawkins, 2001, p. 233)

Type 4 [-SR; -HK] - Specific Referent, - Hearer Knowledge

Nouns classified as [-SR; -HK] are called non-referentials, are marked with *a/an*, and \emptyset . *A/an* is associated with singular nouns; \emptyset is associated with plural count nouns and mass nouns. These nouns are nonspecific not only for the speaker but also for the listener.

Speaker A: What does she want to do when she's married?

Speaker B: Have a baby/Have \emptyset babies.

(Hawkins, 2001, p. 234)

Type 5 [idiomatic and conventional uses of a/an, the, and Ø]

Type 5 includes idiomatic and conventional uses of *a/an*, *the*, and \emptyset .

All of a sudden, he woke up from his coma.

In the 1950s, there were lots of protests against the Vietnam War.

He has been thrown out of work, and his family is now living Ø hand to mouth.

(Butler, 2002, p. 479)

Studies on teaching the English article system

The English article system is considered as one of the most complex facets of English grammar. Master (2002) points out that even the most advanced learners of English commit article errors although they have mastered all the other elements of English. On the other hand, instructors who teach English grammar to EFL learners face difficulties in how to present the English article system. Whitman (1974), like many researchers, claims that the English article system is one of the biggest problems to overcome in teaching English grammar to non-natives. Accordingly, some researchers (Master, 1988a, 1988b, 1990, 1997, 2002; Pica, 1983b; Whitman, 1974) provide pedagogical implications for teaching the articles as a system.

Whitman (1974) points out that “English article structure is a sequence of quantification and determination rather than a choice between specified and unspecified” (p. 253). Having analyzed the English article system, Whitman suggests six steps for teaching articles to foreigners. For the first step, he claims that it is beneficial to start with *quantification* since it will be easier for the learner. The lesson will be based on making distinctions between singular and plural count nouns. For instance, *there is a car, there are two cars*. The second step includes introducing *generic plural* by using the quantifier *all* as a contrast to it even though the meaning

remains the same. For example, *All women are beautiful = Women are beautiful*. As a third step, Whitman (1974) suggests teaching non-count nouns by making contrast to count nouns. For instance, *some pencils, some soup*. According to Whitman, in this step teachers should emphasize the fact that mass nouns are semantically plural but syntactically singular, and although they can be used with all non-numeral plural quantifiers (such as *some, a lot of, all, and etc.*), they neither take the plural making suffix nor occur with the plural forms of the verb. The fourth step is an introduction to determiners which cause problems to learners whose L1 lacks them. According to Whitman (1974) “there are two inter-dependent problems: how to communicate the idea of a known group, and how to communicate the meaning and function of *the*” (p. 259). Thus, he suggests introducing the learner to *which-* NP questions and “second mention” use of *the*.

Which pencils are new? The pencils on that table.

I watched a film. The film was called ‘Last Year in Vietnam’.

In the fifth step, learners are introduced to NPs which contain both a quantifier and a determiner. For example, *One of the pencils on that table is new*. As for the final step Whitman suggests teaching the generic use of articles, and states that “generic usage of *a/an* and *the* is probably best delayed considerably” (p. 261).

Pica (1983b), who believes that “article use may have more to do with communication and communicative competence than with grammar and linguistic competence” (p. 231), suggests including discourse-related rules in the teaching of the English article system. According to Pica, in order not to frustrate beginner level students, activities such as ordering food should be carried out first as articles are not obligatory in these immediate contexts. Second, Pica (1983b) points out that first

mention *a* and subsequent mention *the* are easy to teach; however they are not used so frequently compared to personal pronouns, or possessive pronouns in everyday speech. Pica also suggests encouraging students to use *the* with a qualifying description as assessing the hearer's knowledge is often a complex issue. For instance, instead of “go to the supermarket”, it is better to construct a sentence like “go to the nearest supermarket” if there is more than one supermarket in that environment. Moreover, Pica suggests carrying out dialogues that include examples of article use, and claims that discussing the effect of an article error will serve to increase awareness of native usage. Finally, she points out that in order to promote natural acquisition, students should take part in real life experiences.

Master (1990), who is another researcher who attempted to help teachers find ways to teach the English article system, claims that Pica's suggestions are valuable in terms of improving lower level students' proficiency especially in spoken communicative competence; however, they need to be supplemented with more detailed aspects of the English article system in order to serve for more advanced students and for written competence. Moreover, Master (1988a), states that:

One way to teach the intricacies of the article system is to break it down into simpler components and to proceed step by step, over a great period of time, and with maximum recycling, in order to give students a sense of confidence that they can at least apply the major rules. (p. 2)

To this end, Master (1988a) proposes a detailed schema for teaching the English article system. He suggests answering six questions about each noun in the discourse since they determine the article use. First of all, is the noun countable or uncountable? Second, is it definite or indefinite? Third, is it countable or uncountable? Next, is it specific or generic? Then, is it postmodified or not? Finally,

is it part of an idiomatic phrase or not? Although this set of questions cover the majority of the article contexts, in another study Master (1990) states that they are somewhat unwieldy for students to use.

In order to address this shortcoming, Master (1990) has developed a binary system which simplifies the pedagogical presentation of the articles. He suggests teaching the English article system as a binary division between *classification* and *identification*. In this framework, \emptyset is used to classify a noun and *the* to identify it. Master (1990) points out that *a* is not a separate category of articles, and it should be considered as a variant form of \emptyset . The most significant contribution of this dichotomy is that it provides one form/one function correspondence for *a*/ \emptyset and *the*, and thereby simplifies the article choice for students. However, the binary system fails to explain the use of \emptyset and *the* with proper nouns and idiomatic phrases.

In another study, Master (1997) provides pedagogical implications for beginner, intermediate, and advanced level learners. For the beginner level, he points out that it is not worthwhile to teach the rules of article usage. He suggests using photographs or real items to present the countability of new nouns. For the second step, he suggests introducing mass nouns such as *money*, *baggage*, and *furniture*, which require explanation. According to Master, it is better to teach these nouns by contrasting them with their countable representatives (e.g. *money* vs *a dollar*, *baggage* vs *a suitcase*). In addition, Master points out that the focus on the definite article should be avoided except the names of countries such as *The United Kingdom*. For the intermediate proficiency level, Master suggests employing more cognitive teaching methods, and proposes article exercises which assist the comprehension and learning of the articles. At the advanced level, Master (1997) claims that rules are not

functional or worthwhile to learn either. Instead, he suggests two pedagogical techniques:

- (1) In general, a lexical rather than a syntactic approach to article pedagogy appears to be appropriate.
- (2) Students should be encouraged to keep records of their errors so that they become in essence researchers on their own linguistic behavior. (Master, 1997, p. 227)

Master (2002), based on his pilot study, suggests another technique for teaching the article system. The study was conducted with three classes, and each of the classes was exposed to different treatments. The instruction for the first group was based on the information structure which describes the manner in which information is provided to the listener in discourse. The second group received traditional article instruction. The third group was not exposed to any instruction in the article system. The results of the study reveal that the group which received instruction based on the canonical information structure did better at choosing the appropriate article than both the traditional group and the control group. Thus, Master (2002) suggests encouraging students to use canonical information structure while deciding on the correct article. “The information structure marks given information with *the* and new information with *a* or \emptyset ” (Master, 2002, p. 337). If noun phrases occur to the left of the verb, they are marked with the definite article. If they occur to the right of the verb, they are marked with the indefinite article. Master states that this generalization should be explained to the students, and practiced with fill-in-the-blank exercises.

Directions: Fill in the blanks with a, \emptyset , or the.

- a. Hilda visited ___1___ small town in Italy.
- b. ___2___ children are studying ___3___ Arabic.

Answers: 1. a; 2. the; 3. \emptyset (Master, 2002, p. 341)

Effective pedagogical tools can be determined by investigating the acquisition of English articles by L2 learners. By that means, researchers can identify the areas which cause difficulties for L2 learners, and thereby they can suggest implications that are relevant and functional.

Studies on the acquisition of English articles

Many studies have been conducted to analyze the acquisition of English articles by L2 learners. Huebner's (1983) one-year longitudinal study is considered as the first in-depth analysis of the L2 acquisition of the English articles. He conducted the study with a 23-year-old Hmong who was learning English in a natural, untutored setting. The data for this study were collected from free conversation sessions held every three weeks. According to Huebner (1979), in order to discover the systematicity in learners' interlanguage, a morpheme must be analyzed both in terms of where it occurs in obligatory contexts, and where it appears in contexts where it would not be allowed in Standard English. Thus, while analyzing the data he employed his semantic wheel, which is based on Bickerton's (1981) binary features, as discussed earlier. Thereby, he was able to look at the presence or absence of articles in obligatory contexts, analyze different types of NPs and the articles used with each semantic type, and also observe the development of the learner's comprehension of the article system.

The results of Huebner's (1983) study reveal that in the first weeks the participant's article usage differentiated between *the* (which he pronounces as *da*) and \emptyset . Huebner points out that the participant marks the [+SR+HK] contexts with *the* mainly if the noun phrases are not in subject position. On the other hand, Huebner states that his participant has no indefinite article at Time 1. Another

significant point to notice is that at Time 2 there was a relatively high occurrence of *the* in all contexts. However, the participant started to omit *the* from [-SR-HK] contexts around week 21, and around week 27, from [+SR-HK] contexts. He began to use the indefinite article after 20 months in [+SR-HK] and [-SR-HK] contexts. According to Huebner, there was a systematicity in the acquisition of articles which was governed by the semantic function of noun phrases. His study shed light on how a learner's hypothesis about the use of the definite article changes over time. In addition, it was found that the definite article was acquired comparatively earlier than the indefinite article.

Parish (1987) employed Huebner's (1979, 1983) system of analysis and conducted a longitudinal study which lasted four months. She analyzed the L2 acquisition of the English articles by a 19-year-old Japanese woman. When the data collection started, which was based on oral production tasks, the participant had been living in the US for three weeks. Although she had received six years of English instruction in Japan, according to her scores in the proficiency test she was placed at the beginning level. Parrish found that the participant acquired *the* more quickly than *a*. Moreover, like Huebner's participant, she showed a tendency not to mark subject position NPs with *the* in [+SR] [+HK] contexts. Accordingly, Parrish states that "Mari could have hypothesized that subject position [+SR] [+HK] NPs are marked \emptyset and those in predicate position are marked *the*" (p. 368). Parrish points out that since the participant may have overgeneralized \emptyset in *the* and *a* contexts, it would be difficult to claim that the participant acquired the \emptyset article first. Furthermore, Parrish claims that like Huebner's participant, her participant's hypotheses about article use also changed over time. In addition, she displayed a gradual rise in the use of *the* and

a, using the former with an 84% rate of accuracy and the latter with a 50% rate of accuracy at the end of the study. Finally, Parish points out that the participant's use of the articles shows a systematicity which she claims is governed by "the semantic function of NPs, lexical categories and attempts to keep linguistically related forms consistent with one another" (p. 381).

In addition to these studies, Thomas (1989) performed a pseudolongitudinal study of the acquisition of English articles by learners of different L1 backgrounds. The participants, who are in different proficiency levels, fall into two groups; the ones whose L1s lack an article system, the so-called [-Art] group, (Japanese, Chinese, Korean and Finnish), and the ones whose L1s employ an article system, the so-called [+Art] group, (Spanish, Italian, French, Greek and German). While analyzing the data, which were collected by means of a picture description task, Thomas employed Huebner's (1983) noun classification system. She states that in general both groups used *the* correctly in *the* contexts; however, while [-Art] group used *the* in 81% of [+SR+HK] contexts, [+Art] group used *the* in 97% of [+SR+HK] contexts. On the other hand, the use of *a/an* was less accurate for each group, and its acquisition was delayed. Thomas also points out that no matter in what proficiency level they were, both groups of participants overgeneralized \emptyset in *a/an* and *the* contexts. Nevertheless, on average, the [-Art] group used \emptyset comparatively more frequently than the [+Art] group. In addition, both groups overgeneralized *the* in first mention contexts [+SR-HK] but not in [-SR-HK] contexts where nonreferential nouns appear because, as Thomas (1989) states, "they initially associate *the* with the feature [+SR]" (p. 351).

In the light of these studies, some provisional generalizations about the L2 acquisition of the English articles emerge. In general, Huebner (1983), Parish (1987) and Thomas (1989) point out that L2 learners acquire *the* earlier than *a/an*, and may overgeneralize *the*. For learners especially whose L1s lack an article system, Parish proposes that \emptyset is acquired first, followed by *the*, and finally *a*. Along the same lines, Master (1997) states that “the first article that seems to be acquired by [-Art] speakers is \emptyset ” (p. 216). In addition, the studies of these researchers reveal that the more proficient L2 learners become the more accurately they use the articles.

Recent studies on the acquisition of the English articles have focused on isolated features of the English article system. Some of them have explained the causes of difficulties L2 learners face in acquiring the articles. Others have investigated the acquisition of English articles by specific L1 backgrounds. For example, Butler’s (2002) study addresses the primary causes of the difficulties Japanese learners face in using the English articles properly. For this purpose, Butler examined the metalinguistic knowledge of the English article system that learners employ when they use the articles. The study was conducted with eighty Japanese students who were at different proficiency levels. For the data collection instruments, a fill-in-the-article test and an interview were conducted. In analyzing the students’ usage of articles, Butler also employed Huebner’s (1983) semantic wheel. However, in addition to Huebner’s four types, he classified the idiomatic expressions and conventional uses of the articles as a fifth type in his study, as in Thomas (1989). The results of the fill-in-the-article task reveal that students at higher proficiency levels used the articles more accurately compared to lower level students. According to the interview data, learners, depending on their proficiency levels, set up different

hypotheses to make sense of the English article system. Butler points out that lower level learners are impressed by the rules given by teachers and textbooks. On the other hand, learners who realized that rules did not work in all contexts set up ad hoc hypotheses to gain a better comprehension of the article system. In general, learners had difficulties in detecting the HK (hearer knowledge) contexts and noun countability accurately due to the structural, semantic, and pragmatic differences between English and Japanese.

Another recent study was conducted by Ekiert (2004) who aimed to investigate the order followed by adult L2 learners in acquiring the English article system and to examine whether EFL classroom learners follow different paths in the acquisition of English articles compared to ESL learners who acquire English in a natural environment. The study was carried out with ten adult Polish learners of ESL, ten adult Polish learners of EFL, and five native English speakers who served as a control group. In order to collect data, participants were asked to read forty-two sentences which included seventy-five deleted obligatory uses of articles, and insert *a(n)*, *the*, or *zero* article. While analyzing the use of English articles, Ekiert used Huebner's (1983) classification as well. In addition, like Thomas (1989), and Butler (2002), she classified idiomatic expressions and conventional uses of articles as Type 5. According to the results, generics and idioms presented the biggest challenge for the participants. Ekiert also points out that the \emptyset article was commonly overused by all levels of proficiency. While the low-ability level participants scored the highest rate of \emptyset overuse, the rate of overuse dropped with increasing levels of proficiency. In the case of *a*, the proportion of overuse is very small and is almost the same for each level of proficiency. However, the proportion of unnecessary use of the definite

article differs according to the proficiency level. The intermediate level learners showed the highest overuse of the definite article. Based on these findings Ekiert (2004) claims that the English articles, which are used in five semantic contexts, cause different levels of difficulty for L2 learners, and are not acquired at the same time. Moreover, the order followed by ESL and EFL learners in acquiring the English articles is the same; there is no clear evidence for the influence of the environmental conditions.

Liu and Gleason (2002) investigated only the acquisition of the definite article by ESL students. They point out that the nongeneric *the* falls into four categories: 1) *cultural use* (i.e. *The* Moon is full today), 2) *situation use* (i.e. Can you pass me *the* newspaper?), 3) *structural use* (i.e. Do you know *the* pilot who flies this airplane?), and 4) *textual use* (i.e. I saw a man in a car across the street. At first I wasn't sure, but then I realized that *the* man driving the car was a friend of mine). The aim of their study is to find out whether these uses cause different levels of difficulty for ESL students and whether they are acquired concurrently. The participants, who were 41 low-, 49 intermediate-, and 38 advanced-level ESL students, were given 91 sentences to read and insert *the* wherever they thought necessary. The results of this research reveal that the four non-generic uses of *the* present different levels of difficulty for ESL students and do not appear to be acquired at the same time. According to Liu and Gleason, ESL students acquire situation use first, cultural use last, and structural and textual uses in between. Moreover, in the process of the acquisition of *the*, ESL students' underuse of obligatory *the* decreases as their English proficiency improves. On the other hand, the unnecessary use of *the* increases significantly as the ESL students' English

proficiency increases from low to intermediate level but then decreases as their English improves from intermediate to advanced level. This is in line with the results of Ellis' (1997) study which revealed that acquisition followed a U-shaped course of development. Liu and Gleason also aimed to investigate whether or not participants would show any variability in the use of English articles due to their L1s. There were 18 different L1s represented; however, some languages had only a few participants. Thus, Liu and Gleason did not count every language as a variable since it would give unreliable results. Instead, they divided the participants into two mixed language groups: Indo-European and all others. Since English is an Indo-European language, Liu and Gleason wanted to investigate whether participants of other Indo-European languages would commit fewer errors than participants of other language groups. The results revealed that the Indo-European language speakers performed better; however, significant differences in the performances of the groups were found only in the cultural and situation uses of *the*. Thus, Liu and Gleason state that native language is not a significant factor in the acquisition of *the*.

Some researchers have taken interest in the acquisition of English articles by Turkish learners. For example, Ürkmez (2003) investigated the variability of article use in Turkish EFL learners' writing, and analyzed the variability of the errors committed by first year students of English Language Teaching Department at Uludağ University. The data on article usage were obtained from students' final exam papers, and analyzed according to Huebner's (1983) semantic wheel. The results of the study reveal that *the* was the most frequently used article among the participants. In the case of the variability of the errors, the participants were aware that definiteness associates with *the*, and indefiniteness associates with *a/an*.

Nevertheless, they were unaware that \emptyset also associates with indefiniteness. They did not face difficulties in distinguishing *the* from *a/an*. However, they could not decide whether to use *the* or \emptyset . The \emptyset article was the most overgeneralized, and *the* was the second most overgeneralized article. Since data were obtained only from a single task, the results of the study might not be reliable due to the fact that participants might have avoided using some of the articles. In addition, since the participants represented only one level of proficiency, generalizations could not be made about article use by all Turkish EFL students.

Yılmaz (2006) is another researcher who was interested in the acquisition of English articles by Turkish learners. The aim of her study was to examine whether or not Turkish learners would show any variability in the use of English articles, due to their L1. The participants of the study were 20 beginner and 20 advanced level learners. In order to collect data, a picture description, a written production, and a fill-in-the- article task were used. The data analysis was based on Bickerton's (1981) taxonomy. Yılmaz points out that in general, different article contexts are accurately distinguished by Turkish learners; however, definite contexts are perceived earlier than indefinite contexts. In some respect, this study shares the findings of the previous research. First, as in Huebner (1983), Parish (1987), and Thomas (1989) the study reports on the delayed acquisition of *a/an*. In the case of the omission errors, the rate of *a/an* omission is higher than *the* omission. On the other hand, the rate of *a/an* omission decreases in accordance with gaining proficiency in L2. Accordingly, Yılmaz states that "becoming more proficient helped learners eliminate potential L1 effects" (p. 84). Moreover, Yılmaz points out that contrary to the previous research, learners face difficulties in the \emptyset article contexts. In general, the results of the study

did not show evidence of persistent L1 influence in the use of English articles. The study has some limitations which prevent us from making generalizations about the acquisition of English articles by Turkish learners. First, Yılmaz did not investigate idiomatic, conventional, and generic uses of articles. Second, she employed only two proficiency levels, excluding the intermediate level from the analyses.

Since there are very few studies on the acquisition of the English article system by Turkish EFL learners, and since the previous studies have limitations in terms of fully explaining the acquisition process and the use of articles, more studies are needed. The study described in the following chapters is different from the studies on the acquisition of the English articles by Turkish learners in that it investigates the use of English articles by three different proficiency levels (beginner, intermediate, and advanced) in five different NP environments: 1) generics, 2) referential definites, 3) referential indefinites, 4) nonreferential nouns 5) idioms and conventional uses.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I reviewed the relevant literature on contrastive analysis, error analysis, interlanguage, and the English article system. Since the use of articles is closely related to noun phrases, I also briefly reviewed the literature on the nouns in English. Finally, the studies on teaching the English article system, and acquisition of the English article system by ESL and EFL learners are presented. The following chapter describes the methodology of this study, including the setting and participants, instruments, procedures, and data analysis.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this descriptive study was to investigate the use of English articles in five different semantic environments by beginner, intermediate, and advanced-level EFL students at Pamukkale University (PAU). The study intended to analyze the accuracy of article use in the five NP contexts by Turkish EFL learners, examine the types of errors committed in the five NP contexts, and investigate whether the accuracy of article use by the students varied with respect to the proficiency level and tasks that were given to the students. The findings of this study may contribute to the research on the acquisition and use of the English article system by Turkish EFL learners. In addition, this study will be beneficial to Turkish and foreign instructors teaching English to Turkish students, and material developers. With the help of the study, they will be able to see what types of article errors are committed by learners at beginner, intermediate, and advanced proficiency levels, and may adapt their presentations and materials according to the Turkish EFL learners' needs.

The study addressed the following research questions:

1. Does the accuracy of article use by Turkish EFL learners vary according to the five types of noun phrase contexts described in the literature?
2. What type of errors do Turkish EFL learners commit in these five article contexts?
 - 2a. Do they tend to omit the articles?
 - 2b. Do they tend to substitute the articles?
3. Does the accuracy of article use by Turkish EFL learners vary with respect to proficiency level?

4. Does the accuracy of article use by Turkish EFL learners vary according to the tasks?

This chapter introduces the methodology of the present study. The following subsections, which review setting, participants, instruments, procedure and data analysis, explain how this study was conducted.

Setting and Participants

The study was conducted at Pamukkale University (PAU), which was established in 1992 in Denizli, Turkey. PAU is not an English medium university; students at PAU, except those majoring in the Department of English Language Teaching, the Department of English Language and Literature, and the Faculty of Medicine, have general English courses only in their first years and, depending on the faculty, they receive three or four hours of instruction a week. The university conducts a proficiency test at the beginning of the first semester, and the students who score lower than 60 are classified as beginners, and are enrolled in English lessons. On the other hand, students who score above 60 are exempted from the lessons. The courses last for two semesters and they are mainly based on beginner level. The students who score lower than 60 are required to attend the classes regularly, and they are given two mid-terms and a final examination in each semester. If they fail these tests, they have to take the courses again, whether in the summer school (this not obligatory) or in the following year.

The participants of this study were 30 Turkish EFL learners studying at PAU. In order to be able to make generalizations about the article use of Turkish EFL learners, and investigate whether there is a variation in the article use due to the proficiency level or not, the study was conducted with students at beginner,

intermediate, and advanced proficiency levels. In order to determine the students who would take part in the study, a proficiency test was conducted at the Department of Pre-school Teaching, and at the Department of English Language and Literature at PAU. Attendance to the test was voluntary. However, in total, 97 students participated in the test. According to the test results, the proficiency levels of the students were determined. Although the study investigates the use of articles by ten students at each level, considering the possibility that some of the students might write illegibly in the tasks, 15 students were randomly chosen from each proficiency level. Consequently, the tasks were conducted with 45 students in total. However, after conducting the tasks, based on the legibility of their hand writing, ten students were chosen from each proficiency level. The students differed from each other in terms of their proficiency levels, ages, genders, the departments they are majoring in, classes, and age and place of their first exposure to English. This information was gathered through the use of a brief questionnaire (see Appendix A), administered prior to the proficiency test, and the tasks employed in the study).

Proficiency level	Number of students	Dept.	Average age and range	Average and the range of age of first exposure to English	Place of first exposure to English	Number of students
Beginner	10	Pre-school Teaching	19 17-22	13 (9-18)	Primary School	0
					Secondary School	0
					University	10
Intermediate	9	English Language and Literature	20 18-21	15 (12-17)	Primary School	5
					Secondary School	5
	1	Pre-school Teaching			University	0
Advanced	10	English Language and Literature	20 18-22	12 (10-14)	Primary School	8
					Secondary School	2
					University	0

Table 2 - Detailed information about participants

Instruments

The instruments of this study consist of a proficiency test, which was conducted to determine the proficiency levels of the students, and two tasks, which were conducted to analyze the use of English articles by the participants.

I wanted a measure of more general language proficiency, rather than a measure of how well the students could manipulate, produce or recognize discrete grammar structures. Therefore, I decided to employ the reading comprehension section of a retired TOEFL test, which consisted of 50 questions. Further, in order to better differentiate between intermediate and advanced students, I decided to employ the reading test under timed conditions, on the assumption that more advanced students would read faster, understand better, and answer more questions than the intermediate students.

In order to collect data for the study, two different tasks were used to create contexts where L2 learners would use English articles: a written production task, and a multiple choice task. In order to test the reliability of the tasks, they were piloted with native and non-native speakers of English. After the piloting, necessary revisions were completed, and the tasks were made ready for the main study which was conducted on 23rd February, 2007.

Written Production Task

In this task, the participants were given two topics, and they were asked to choose one of them and write a one-page essay. Before deciding on the two topics which would generate enough opportunities to use a variety of articles, five topics were piloted. Each topic was piloted with a native speaker of English, and a Turkish EFL instructor. In order to choose the two most generative topics, all NP environments that fall into the five types in each of the participants' essays were identified. The next step was to count the number of occurrences of these contexts in each of the essays. According to the results, the two topics that generated the greatest variety of article contexts were chosen. The selected topics are as follows: 1) What are the qualities of an ideal spouse? and 2) Should young people start working when they are still at school/university? The original task is shown in Appendix B.

Multiple Choice Task

The multiple choice task consisted of forty-four sentences. The sentences were adapted from Ekiert (2004), who adapted the sentences from Butler (2002), Liu and Gleason (2002), and Master (1994). In addition, I adopted a sentence from Murcia & Freeman (1999), and another from Hawkins (2001). There were a total of seventy-five obligatory uses of *a/an*, *the*, and \emptyset articles across five NP types, and

there were fifteen instances for each type. The orders of the items in the test were random. As for the test format, rather than leaving blanks for the missing obligatory uses of *a/an*, *the*, and \emptyset , I provided a choice of three articles, and students were instructed to pick the one article that they thought was most suitable.

This task was piloted with two native EFL instructors, and two Turkish EFL instructors on 18th of January, 2007. They were given 20 minutes to complete this task, and they were not allowed to use dictionaries. When I analyzed the participants' responses, I realized that some of the NP environments fell into more than one semantic type. Thus, in order to avoid ambiguity, I further narrowed the contexts. The full task can be found in Appendix C. In the following section, some test items from the multiple choice task are presented.

1. Did you hear that Fred bought (a/an - the - \emptyset) car? However, because of some financial problems he had to sell (a/an - the - \emptyset) car.

The articles that are obligatory in the above sentences represent different semantic contexts. Recall that nouns that the speaker mentions for the first time are classified as Type 3 [+SR; -HK] and are marked with *a/an*, and \emptyset . Since “car” is mentioned for the first time in the context and since it is a singular noun, it takes the indefinite article. On the other hand, recall that if a noun is mentioned in discourse previously, it becomes referential and definite. These nouns are classified as Type 2 [+SR; +HK] and are marked with *the*. The “car” in the second sentence therefore takes the definite article.

2. (A/An - The - \emptyset) Tiger is (a/an - the - \emptyset) fierce animal.

The word “tiger” in the sentence above refers to all or most members of the family of tigers which are identified by the hearer from general knowledge. Recall

that these nouns are called generics and classified as Type 1 [-SR; +HK]. Since the noun is a singular count noun it can take *a* or *the*. On the other hand, some nouns are nonspecific both for the speaker and for the listener, as in “**a** fierce animal”. These nouns are classified as Type 4 [-SR; -HK], as mentioned before, and are marked with *a/an*, and \emptyset . Since the noun “animal” is singular in this sentence, it takes the indefinite article.

3. He can be very dangerous. Always keep (**a/an** - **the** - \emptyset) eye on him.

Recall that *a/an*, *the* and \emptyset take place in idiomatic expressions as well, and also they have some conventional uses. The sentence above contains the idiomatic expression “keep an eye on someone” which means to keep someone under observation. Most of the idioms are unique and fixed in their grammatical structure. The expression “keep an eye on someone” cannot become “keep the eye on someone”.

Procedure

In order to conduct this study, verbal permission was obtained from the Dean of the Faculty of Education and Dean of the Faculty of Letters at Pamukkale University. Then, I informed the instructors of the classes for which I would be conducting a proficiency test, and I gave a brief description of my study and its purpose, and scheduled a time for the proficiency test. On the 16th of February 2007, I conducted the proficiency test. According to the proficiency test results, students were divided into their proficiency levels, and 15 students were chosen randomly from each proficiency level. Then, I told the students the date and time of the main study.

The data were collected by means of two tasks: a written production and a multiple choice task. The preparation of tasks was completed on 15th January. Then, they were checked by my thesis advisor. For the multiple choice test forty-four sentences were prepared; for the written production task five topics were decided on. The next step was to test the reliability of the multiple choice task, and choose the most appropriate two topics for the written production task by conducting a pilot study. The written production task was piloted with five native and five non-native speakers of English. The multiple choice task, on the other hand, was piloted with two native and two non-native experienced EFL instructors. The reason for the high number of participants for the written production task was that the topics for this task were chosen from five. Thus, each topic was piloted with a native and a non-native speaker. The pilot studies finished on 5th of February, 2007. With the help of these studies, I was able to see the weaknesses and the strengths of the tasks. After the pilot studies, the most appropriate two topics were chosen for the written production task, and necessary changes were made in the multiple choice task.

The main study was conducted on 23rd of February at the Faculty of Education. Although tasks included written instructions, the participants were given verbal instructions before each task. The multiple choice task was given last so that the learners did not realize that they were being tested on article use. The participants were given forty-five minutes for the written production task, and twenty minutes for the multiple choice task. Except for the beginners, the participants were not allowed to use a dictionary.

After collecting the data, first of all, the papers were divided into three groups, the beginner, intermediate, and advanced level students' papers. They were

analyzed, and the ten most legible papers were chosen from each proficiency level. Next, for the data analysis, each paper was assigned a number. Then, the essays written for the written production task were typed without correcting mistakes, or making any changes. Since students were asked to circle the answers in the multiple choice task, there was no need to type the papers of this task. After these procedures the data were ready to be analyzed. I started analyzing the data on 26th of February. At the end of March, I entered the results of the quantitative data using Statistics Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Data Analysis

This study investigated the use of English articles by Turkish EFL learners. It analyzed the accuracy of article use in the five NP contexts by Turkish EFL learners, and the errors committed in these article contexts. It also examined whether or not the accuracy of article use varied according to proficiency level, and the type of tasks students participated in.

Data were collected from two sources: a written production task, and a multiple choice task. The data collected from these tasks were analyzed by using Statistics Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). In order to analyze the data obtained from the tasks, first of all, all the NP environments in the tasks were identified. The number of NPs was evident in the multiple choice task; however it varied in the written production task since the data were obtained from the essays of the participants. Therefore all the NP contexts in each of the participants' essays were identified. Since the articles would be analyzed in terms of their use in the five NP contexts, the NPs falling into these five types in both of the tasks were identified. Noun phrases containing possessives, and proper nouns were eliminated as in

Huebner's (1979) study. Then, the correct and incorrect article usages in each of the contexts were identified, and checked by my thesis advisor.

In order to investigate whether the accuracy of article use by Turkish EFL learners varies according to the five types of noun phrase contexts, find out whether learners tended to omit or substitute *a/an*, *the*, and \emptyset in the five noun phrase contexts, and analyze whether the accuracy of article use varied with respect to proficiency level and tasks, first, all the NP contexts that fall into the five types in both of the tasks were identified (the number of NP contexts in the multiple choice task were determined prior to the study since it was important that the number of NP types was equal). For the written production task, the NP contexts in the students' essays were assigned a number (the number of NP contexts differed according to the students' essays). Then for each NP context in both of the tasks the required article(s) was/were determined. The next step was to enter the data into SPSS. For each task, while entering the data, first, the number of the NP context was entered. Second, the article required in that context and then the article used by the student was entered. In this way, it was possible to see the required article, and the article used by the student. It was also possible to see whether the students omitted the required article or substituted it with another article. Finally, the number of correct and incorrect article usages in each NP type in both of the tasks, and the number of omission and substitution errors in each NP type and in both of the tasks was counted. The results of the statistical tests were interpreted and presented in Chapter 4.

Conclusion

In this chapter the setting and the participants of the study, instruments for data collection, data collection procedures and data analysis techniques were presented. The next chapter will present the results of the study.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

This study was designed to investigate the use of English articles by beginner, intermediate, and advanced-level EFL students at Pamukkale University (PAU). The articles were analyzed in terms of their use in five different noun phrase (NP) contexts described in the literature. The focal points of this study were to determine whether the accuracy of article use varies according to the type of the NP contexts, to identify the types of errors that students commit in these five article contexts, and to investigate whether or not the accuracy of article use varies according to the proficiency level and the type of the task students were expected to complete.

The participants in this study were 30 EFL students from Pamukkale University. They were selected by the results of the proficiency test conducted for this study. According to the test results, 10 students were chosen for each of the three proficiency levels: beginner, intermediate, and advanced. In order to collect the necessary data for this study two tasks were given in a single session: a multiple choice task and a written production task. First, for the written production task, the students were asked to write a one-page essay. Second, for the multiple choice task, the students were asked to choose the appropriate article in the given NP contexts. The data gathered from these tasks were analyzed by quantitative procedures.

This chapter presents the findings about the use of English articles in five different NP contexts given in the tasks. The results are presented in three main sections. First, the results of the multiple choice task are described. Then, the results of the written production task are presented. In both of these sections, first of all, the findings about the accuracy of article use in each of the five NP contexts are

presented. Second, the results are described in terms of the proficiency levels. Third, the findings about the omission and overuse of the articles in each of the five NP environments are presented. In the final section, the results of the two tasks are compared in terms of the accuracy of the article use.

Data Analysis Procedures

Following the collection of the data, the students' papers for each task were grouped together yielding three sets of data: beginners, intermediates, and advanced students. Then, each paper was assigned a number from 1 to 30. In order to analyze the data, first of all, all the NPs falling into the five NP types in the essays were identified. The NPs in the multiple choice task had been identified before the task was conducted. For example, in the sentence: "In (**a/an - the - Ø**) 1960s, there were lots of protests against (**a/an - the - Ø**) Vietnam War", which is the sixth sentence of the multiple choice task, there are two NP environments and participants were asked to choose the correct article in these NP contexts. For the written production task, since the number of NP contexts was not equal in the students' essays, each NP context was assigned a number. Then for each NP context in both of the tasks the required article(s) was/were determined. The next step was to enter the data into SPSS. For each task, while entering the data, first, the number of the NP context was entered. Second, the article required in that context and then the article used by the student was entered.

In order to investigate whether the accuracy of article use by Turkish EFL students varies according to the five types of NP contexts, an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was performed. Then, in order to investigate whether the accuracy of

article use in the five types of NP contexts varies with respect to the proficiency level, again an ANOVA was performed.

Moreover, in order to analyse whether the accuracy of article use varies according to the tasks given to the participants another ANOVA was performed. According to the results of all these tests, some differences have been seen; therefore, in order to see where these differences come from Scheffe tests were performed. The details of the results are given in the following section.

Results

Multiple Choice Task

Overall results of the multiple choice task are presented in Figure 4.

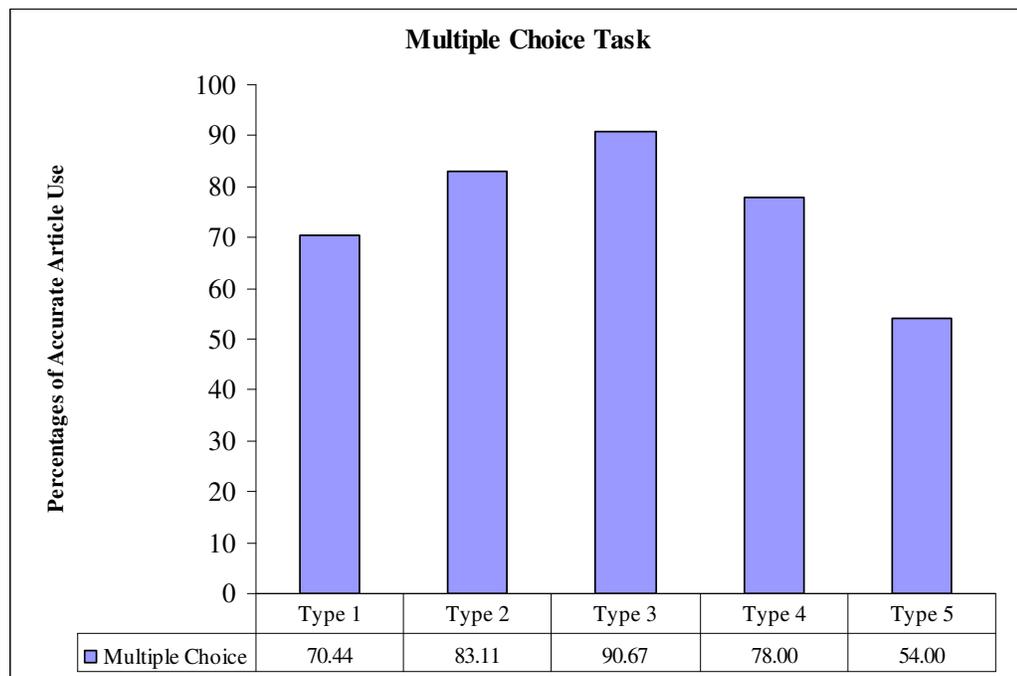


Figure 4 - General Results of the Multiple Choice Task

In the figure, the percentages of correct article use in each of the five NP contexts are presented. This figure shows that the accuracy of article use by the

students appears to vary in the multiple choice task according to the five types of noun phrase contexts. The means and standard deviations are presented in Table 3.

Types	Multiple Choice Task	
	Mean	Std. Deviation
Type 1	70.44	14.19
Type 2	83.11	13.87
Type 3	90.67	10.00
Type 4	78.00	11.50
Type 5	54.00	16.73

Table 3 - Means and Standard Deviations of the Multiple Choice Task

According to the results of the ANOVA, there is a significant difference among the types in terms of the percentage of correct article use in these contexts ($p < .000$). It was important to investigate where this difference came from. According to the Scheffe results, there is no significant difference between Type 2 and Type 4 in terms of the rate of accurate article use. However, all the other types differ from each other in terms of accurate article use. In Type 3 [+SR; -HK] contexts that require *a/an* and \emptyset , the students used the articles most accurately. However, in Type 5 [idiomatic and conventional uses of *a/an*, *the*, and \emptyset] contexts, they performed poorly. After Type 5 contexts, Type 1 [-SR; +HK] contexts were the most problematic for the students.

The means and standard deviations for the proficiency levels are presented in Table 4.

Proficiency Level	Multiple Choice Task	
	Mean	Std. Deviation
Beginner	47.50	5.56
Intermediate	60.10	3.60
Advanced	61.70	4.39
Total	56.43	7.83

Table 4 - Means and Standard Deviations for the Proficiency Levels

It seems that the advanced and intermediate students have performed better than the beginners. An ANOVA was performed to see if this difference was significant, and it revealed that the difference was significant ($p < .000$). Figure 5 presents the beginner, intermediate, and advanced students' performances in supplying the correct article in the five NP contexts in the multiple choice task.

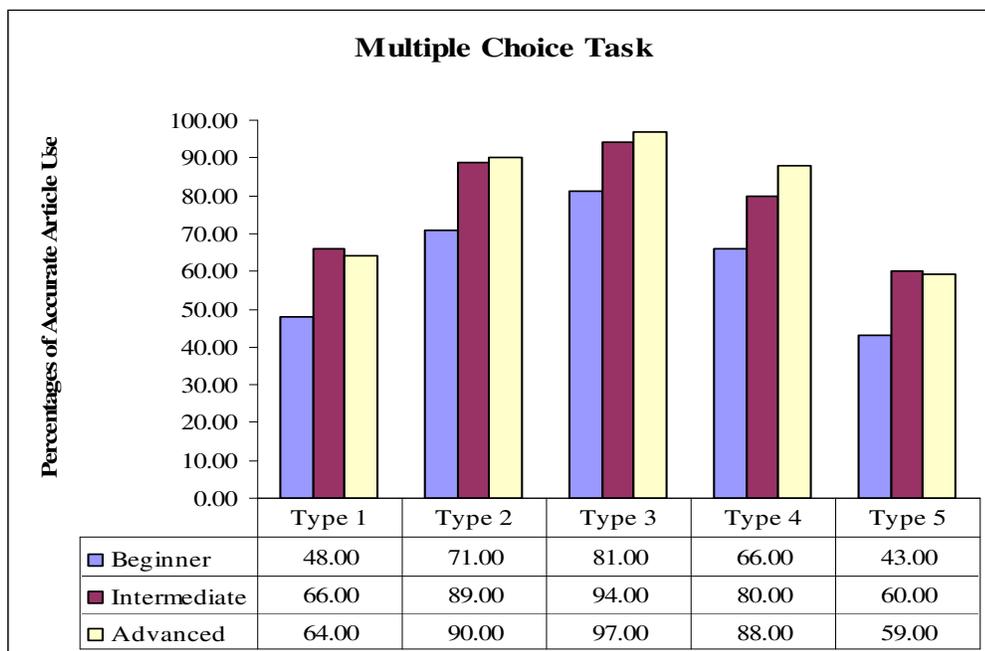


Figure 5 - Use of Articles by the Proficiency Levels in the Multiple Choice Task

According to the results of the ANOVA there is a significant difference among the proficiency levels in terms of supplying the correct article in the five NP contexts ($p < .000$).

In order to see where this difference comes from Scheffe tests were performed. According to the results of the Scheffe tests, beginner students differ from the intermediate and advanced learners in terms of supplying the correct article in all five NP contexts. They were the least successful in each of the article contexts. However, there is no significant difference between intermediate and advanced learners except in Type 4 [-SR; -HK] contexts.

In order to see the accurate use of each article in the five NP contexts, the performances of each proficiency level in these five NP contexts, and the types of errors they commit in these five NP contexts, each article context will be explained separately.

Type 1. [-SR; +HK] - Specific Referent, + Hearer Knowledge

In [-SR; +HK] contexts that require *a/an*, *the*, and \emptyset , the beginner students significantly differed from the intermediate and advanced students in supplying the correct article ($p < .008$). However, there is no significant difference between the intermediate and advanced students' performances.

Recall that the multiple choice task consisted of forty-four sentences. There was a total of seventy-five obligatory uses of *a/an*, *the*, and \emptyset articles across five semantic types, and there were fifteen instances for each type. For instance, in Type 1 contexts, the intermediate and advanced students were able to supply 13.5 and 13.1 correct answers out of 19² respectively; but, the beginner students were able to supply only 10.8 correct answers out of 19.

Context	Proficiency Level	Number of Correct Answers		
		Mean	Std. Deviation	%
Type 1 [-SR; +HK]	Beginner	10.8*/19	1.93	57
	Intermediate	13.5/19	1.95	71
	Advanced	13.1/19	1.85	69
	F-Value	5.791		
	P-Value	0.008		

Table 5 - General Results of Type 1 [-SR; +HK] Contexts

² There were two possible answers in four of the Type 1 contexts in the multiple choice task (7. **A / the** Cat likes mice, 16. Your claim flies in the face of all **the / \emptyset** evidence, 17. **A / the** Tiger is a fierce animal, 28. **A / the** Paper clip comes in handy). Therefore, the percentages were calculated based on 19 questions, not on 15 questions.

This table shows that in [-SR; +HK] contexts, beginner students were not as successful as the intermediate and advanced students. Now, let's look at each article used in [-SR; +HK] contexts separately.

Overall, in [-SR; +HK] contexts that require *a/an*, *the*, and \emptyset , the \emptyset article was used most accurately. The students were able to supply \emptyset correctly at a rate of 70%. However, *a/an* was the least accurately used article in this contexts. The students supplied *a/an* correctly only at a rate of 28%. The detailed results can be seen in Table 6.

Context	Proficiency Level	Article Required	Article Supplied by the Learners		
			A/An	The	\emptyset
Type 1 [-SR; +HK]	Beginner	A/An	12/30 ³ (40%)	10/30 (33%)	8/30 (27%)*
	Intermediate		9/30 (30%)	6/30 (20%)	15/30 (50%)
	Advanced		5/30 (17%)*	6/30 (20%)	19/30 (63%)
	Overall		26/90 (28%) P<0.04	22/90 (24%) P>0.475	42/90 (48%) P<0.04
	Beginner	The	15/60 (25%)	32/60 (53%)*	13/60 (22%)*
	Intermediate		9/60 (6%)	24/60 (40%)	27/60 (45%)
	Advanced		5/60 (4%)	25/60 (42%)	30/60 (50%)
	Overall		29/180 (16%) P>0.090	81/180 (45%) P<0.047	70/180 (39%) P<0.031
	Beginner	\emptyset	8/100 (8%)*	51/100 (51%)*	41/100 (41%)*
	Intermediate		0/100 (0%)	16/100 (16%)	84/100 (84%)
	Advanced		1/100 (1%)	14/100 (9%)	85/100 (85%)
	Overall		9/300 (3%) P<0.002	81/300 (27%) P<0.000	210/300 (70%) P<0.000

Table 6 - Detailed Results of Type 1 [-SR; +HK] Contexts

In [-SR; +HK] contexts that require *a/an* (*A paper clip comes in handy*), the advanced group's performance is significantly worse than that of the beginner and intermediate groups ($p < .04$). However, there is no significant difference between the

³ In this table, and in all of the following similar tables, denominators of these fractions (in this case, 30) show the occurrences of a specified article in a specified NP context in the tasks. Since there are fifteen instances of articles for each NP type in the multiple choice task, and since there are 10 students in each group, the denominators should add up to 150 for each proficiency level for each of the five NP type in the multiple choice task. However, since there are two possible answers in four of the Type 1 contexts in the multiple choice task the denominators add up to 190 for Type 1 contexts.

beginner and intermediate groups in terms of supplying *a/an* correctly. Here it is important to note that the indefinite article is taught first in most EFL classes in Turkey. Therefore, the beginner students' success in supplying *a/an* correctly is not very surprising. The surprising point is that the advanced students performed worse than the other groups. It is possible that a U-shaped developmental curve (Ellis, 1997), which was mentioned in Chapter 2, may be responsible for this result. For instance, initially the students display a high level of accuracy in supplying *a/an* correctly because it has very recently been taught, and then they regress. It may be that when they come to a native-like stage, once again they will perform in accordance with target-like norms and supply *a/an* correctly at high rates.

As for the substitution errors, there is no significant difference among the proficiency levels. Overall, they substituted *the* for *a/an* at a rate of 24%. However, in terms of the omission errors beginner students significantly differ from the intermediate and advanced groups ($p < .04$). While they omitted *a/an* at a rate of 27%, the intermediate and advanced groups omitted *a/an* at a rate of 50% and 63% respectively.

In [-SR; +HK] contexts that require *the* (We don't know who invented *the* wheel), the beginner students' performance is significantly better than that of the intermediate and advanced groups' ($p < .05$). However, there is no significant difference between the intermediate and advanced groups in supplying *the* correctly in [-SR; +HK] contexts. Although the beginner students seem to be a bit more successful than the intermediate and advanced groups in supplying *the* in this context, they were still successful only just over half of the time. In Turkish, there is no overt definite article; therefore, Turkish EFL students face difficulties in acquiring

the. Except for the use of *the* before some country names (the USA, the UK), beginner students are usually not taught how to use *the*. Although they are exposed to it in reading, and listening activities, they cannot acquire it and do not know when to use it. It is possible that they overgeneralize *the* until they fully acquire it, which is called “*the*-flooding” by Huebner (1983) and Master (1997). For instance, in [-SR; +HK] contexts that require \emptyset , the beginner students substituted *the* for \emptyset at a rate of 51%. However, *the* substitution for \emptyset decreases as the students’ proficiency increases.

As for the omission errors, the beginner students once again significantly differ from the intermediate and advanced students ($p < .031$). They omitted *the* at a rate of 22%, which was lower than the intermediate and advanced groups’ rates. In terms of the substitution errors, there is no significant difference among the proficiency levels. Overall, they substituted *a/an* for *the* at a rate of 16%. It can also be seen from Table 5 that intermediate and advanced students appear to use \emptyset article when they don’t use *the*, whereas beginner students use *a/an* and \emptyset at an equal rate.

In [-SR; +HK] contexts that require \emptyset (\emptyset Water is essential for \emptyset life), the beginner group’s performance is significantly worse than that of the intermediate and advanced group ($p < .000$). They were able to supply \emptyset only at a rate of 41%. As for the substitution errors, all levels have mainly substituted *the* for \emptyset . However, the beginner group significantly differs from the intermediate and advanced groups in supplying *the* for \emptyset ($p < .000$). The overall rate of *a/an* substitution for \emptyset is not as high as *the* substitution for \emptyset . It is only at a rate of 3%. However, once again the beginner group significantly differs from the intermediate and advanced groups in supplying *a/an* for \emptyset ($p < .002$).

It seems that intermediate and advanced students prefer to omit Type 1 articles when they make a mistake, and they are most successful with \emptyset articles, which is one of the most common article usages in generic contexts. They seem to be overgeneralizing \emptyset in *a/an* and *the* contexts. The beginner students, on the other hand, tend to use *a/an* or *the*, even if it is wrong. This could be because they have not fully acquired the articles and are not sure yet of when to use which article.

Type 2 [+SR; +HK] + Specific Referent, + Hearer Knowledge

In [+SR; +HK] contexts that require *the* (*The French are against the war in Iraq*), the beginner groups' performance is significantly different than that of the intermediate and advanced groups' performances ($p < .001$). However, there is no significant difference between the intermediate and advanced groups' performances, as in Type 1 [-SR; +HK] contexts. Table 7 presents the overall results in [+SR; +HK] contexts.

		Number of Correct Answers		
Context	Proficiency Level	Mean	Std. Deviation	%
Type 2 [+SR; -HK]	Beginner	10.6*/15	2.17	71
	Intermediate	13.3/15	1.64	89
	Advanced	13.5/15	0.84	90
	F-Value	9.703		
	P-Value	0.001		

Table 7 - General Results of Type 2 [+SR; -HK] Contexts

According to the results shown in Table 7, all levels are remarkably successful in [+SR; -HK] contexts. However, the intermediate and advanced groups performed significantly better than the beginner group. Table 8 presents the use of *the* in [+SR; +HK] contexts in more detail.

Context	Proficiency Level	Article Required	Article Supplied by the Learners		
			A/An	The	Ø
Type 2 [+SR; +HK]	Beginner	The	13/150 ⁴ (9%)*	106/150 (71%)*	31/150 (20%)*
	Intermediate		2/150 (1%)	133/150 (89%)	15/150 (10%)
	Advanced		2/150 (1%)	135/150 (90%)	13/150 (9%)
	Overall	17/450 (4%) P<0.009	374/450 (83%) P<0.001	59/450 (13%) P<0.017	

Table 8 - Detailed Results of Type 2 [+SR; -HK] Contexts

As can be seen from Table 8 all levels tended to omit *the* in [+SR; +HK] contexts when they did not use *the*. However, the beginner group significantly differs from the intermediate and advanced groups in omitting *the* in [+SR; +HK] contexts ($p<.001$). The rate of *a/an* substitution for *the* is not high, only at a rate of 4%. But again it is the beginner group which significantly differs from the other two groups. As for the intermediate and advanced groups, it can be said that, as in [-SR; +HK] contexts, when they err in [+SR; +HK] contexts, they err on the side of no article.

Type 3 [+SR; -HK] + Specific Referent, - Hearer Knowledge

In [+SR; -HK] contexts that require *a/an* and Ø, the articles were used most accurately compared with the other contexts.

Context	Proficiency Level	Number of Correct Answers		
		Mean	Std. Deviation	%
Type 3 [+SR; -HK]	Beginner	12.1*/15	1.45	81
	Intermediate	14.1/15	0.99	94
	Advanced	14.6/15	0.52	97
	F-Value	15.646		
	P-Value	0.000		

Table 9 - General Results of Type 3 [+SR; -HK] Contexts

The beginner group significantly differs from the other groups ($p<.000$) in supplying the correct article in [+SR; -HK] contexts. They were not as successful as

⁴ see footnote 3.

the intermediate and advanced students. Now, let's look at the use of *a/an* and \emptyset in [+SR; -HK] contexts separately.

Context	Proficiency Level	Article Required	Article Supplied by the Learners		
			A/An	The	\emptyset
Type 3 [+SR; -HK]	Beginner	A/An	113/130 (87%)*	11/130 (8%)*	6/130 (5%)
	Intermediate		123/130 (95%)	4/130 (3%)	3/130 (2%)
	Advanced		128/130 (98%)	0/130 (0%)	2/130 (2%)
	Overall		364/390 (93%) P<0.001	15/390 (4%) P<0.010	11/390 (3%) P>0.254
	Beginner	\emptyset	4/20 (20%)	8/20 (40%)*	8/20 (40%)*
	Intermediate		1/20 (5%)	1/20 (5%)	18/20 (90%)
	Advanced		0/20 (0%)	2/20 (10%)	18/20 (90%)
	Overall		5/60 (8%) P>0.129	11/60 (19%) P<0.017	44/60 (73%) P<0.002

Table 10 - Detailed Results of Type 3 [+SR; -HK] Contexts

Overall, in [+SR; -HK] contexts that require *a/an* and \emptyset , *a/an* was the most accurately used article by all levels (My computer has *a* new sound card). Nevertheless, the beginner group performed worse than the intermediate and advanced groups in supplying *a/an* correctly ($p<.001$). Since all levels are remarkably successful in [+SR; -HK] contexts that require *a/an*, the rate of omission and substitution errors is not high. Moreover, there is no significant difference among the proficiency levels in terms of omitting *a/an*. However, the beginner group significantly differs from the other groups in substituting *the* for *a/an* ($p<.010$).

In [+SR; -HK] contexts that require \emptyset (I keep sending \emptyset messages to him), the beginner students performed worse than the intermediate and advanced students ($p<.002$). In this context, the rate of *the* substitution is higher than that of *a/an* substitution. The beginner students significantly differed from the other groups in substituting *the* for \emptyset . Another important point is that advanced students did not substitute *a/an* for \emptyset , and intermediate students committed this error only one time. It

seems that the intermediate and advanced students are aware of the fact that if a noun is plural it never takes the indefinite article.

In Type 3 [+SR; -HK] contexts, it appears that all levels are most successful with *a/an*. The advanced group prefers to omit *a/an* when they make a mistake. The beginner and intermediate groups, on the other hand, either omit or substitute. In \emptyset contexts, the advanced group prefer to substitute *the* for \emptyset when they make a mistake. The performances of the advanced and intermediate groups are very similar, with the exception of one substitution of *a/an* by the intermediate group. The beginner group; however, is continuing in the trend of erring on the side of *a/an* or *the*, even when it is wrong, as was seen in Type 1 [-SR; +HK] contexts.

Type 4 [-SR; -HK] - Specific Referent, - Hearer Knowledge

In [-SR; -HK] contexts that require *a/an* and \emptyset , there is a significant difference among the proficiency levels in supplying the articles accurately ($p < .000$). It is important to note that this is the only context where each proficiency level significantly differs from the others.

		Number of Correct Answers		
Context	Proficiency Level	Mean	Std. Deviation	%
Type 4 [-SR; -HK]	Beginner	9.9*/15	1.10	66
	Intermediate	12.0*/15	0.94	80
	Advanced	13.2*/15	1.14	88
	F-Value	24.698		
	P-Value	0.000		

Table 11 - General Results of Type 4 [-SR; -HK] Contexts

As can be seen from Table 11, in [-SR; -HK] contexts the advanced group performed better than the beginner and intermediate groups. The beginner group, on

the other hand, was not as successful as the intermediate and advanced groups. Now, let's see which article, *a/an* or \emptyset , was used most accurately by the students.

Context	Proficiency Level	Article Required	Article Supplied by the Learners		
			A/An	The	\emptyset
Type 4 [-SR; -HK]	Beginner	A/An	73/100 (73%)*	10/100 (10%)	17/100 (17%)*
	Intermediate		89/100 (89%)	5/100 (5%)	6/100 (6%)
	Advanced		92/100 (92%)	6/100 (6%)	2/100 (2%)
	Overall		254/300 (85%)* P<0.001	21/300 (7%) P>0.449	25/300(8%) P<0.002
	Beginner	\emptyset	8/50 (16%)	16/50 (32%)	26/50 (52%)
	Intermediate		5/50 (10%)	14/50 (28%)	31/50 (62%)
	Advanced		0/50 (0%)*	10/50 (20%)	40/50 (80%)*
	Overall		13/150 (9%) P<0.003	40/150 (26%) P>0.241	97/150 (65%)* P<0.002

Table 12 - Detailed Results of Type 4 [-SR; -HK] Contexts

Overall, in [-SR; -HK] contexts that require *a/an* and \emptyset , *a/an* was the most accurately used article by all proficiency levels, which was the same pattern seen in Type 3 [+SR; -HK] contexts that require *a/an* and \emptyset , although the difference is more marked in Type 3 contexts.

In [-SR; -HK] contexts that require *a/an* (I'm going to buy *a* new bicycle), the beginner group performed worse than the intermediate and advanced groups ($p<.001$). However, there is no significant difference between the intermediate and advanced groups in terms of supplying *a/an* correctly. While there was no significant difference among the proficiency levels in substituting *the* for *a/an*, the beginner group significantly differed from the intermediate and advanced groups in omitting *a/an* ($p<.002$). They omitted *a/an* at a higher rate than the intermediate and advanced groups.

In [-SR; -HK] contexts that require \emptyset (There are \emptyset nine planets travelling around the sun), each of the group's performance is worse than their performances in supplying *a/an* in [-SR; -HK] contexts. The advanced group significantly differed

from the other groups ($p < .002$). They were able to supply \emptyset correctly at a higher rate than that of the beginner and intermediate students. With respect to the substitution errors, it can be observed that the rate of *the* substitution for \emptyset is at a higher percentage than that of *a/an* substitution for \emptyset . All the levels seem to prefer *the* to *a/an* in \emptyset contexts. As for the *a/an* substitution for \emptyset , the advanced group significantly differed from the intermediate and advanced groups ($p < .003$), in that this group did not substitute *a/an* for \emptyset , just as they did not commit this error in Type 3 [+SR; -HK] contexts.

Type 5 - idiomatic and conventional uses of a/an, the, and \emptyset .

This is the most difficult context among the five contexts, causing the most trouble for students in supplying the correct article in the multiple choice task.

		Number of Correct Answers		
Context	Proficiency Level	Mean	Std. Deviation	%
Type 5 idiomatic and conventional uses of <i>a/an, the, and</i> \emptyset	Beginner	6.4*/15	2.22	43
	Intermediate	9.0/15	2.10	60
	Advanced	8.9/15	2.47	59
	F-Value	4.206		
	P-Value	0.026		

Table 13 - General Results of Type 5 Contexts

As can be seen from Table 13, the beginner students performed significantly worse than the intermediate and advanced groups in Type 5 contexts ($p < .026$). However, there is no significant difference between the performances of the intermediate and advanced groups. Now, let's look at each article in Type 5 contexts separately.

Context	Proficiency Level	Article Required	Article Supplied by the Learners			
			A/An	The	Ø	
Type 5 idiomatic and conventional uses of <i>a/an</i> , <i>the</i> , and \emptyset	Beginner	A/An	13/40 (33%)*	14/40 (35%)*	13/40 (32%)*	
	Intermediate		33/40 (82%)	3/40 (8%)	4/40 (10%)	
	Advanced		33/40 (82%)	5/40 (13%)	2/40 (5%)	
	Overall			79/120 (66%) P<0.000	22/120 (18%) P<0.029	19/120 (16%) P<0.019
	Beginner	The	5/50 (10%)	32/50 (64%)	13/50 (26%)	
	Intermediate		5/50 (10%)	30/50 (60%)	15/50 (30%)	
	Advanced		7/50 (14%)	31/50 (62%)	12/50 (24%)	
	Overall			17/150 (11%) P>0.677	93/150 (62%) P>0.939	40/150 (27%) P>0.813
	Beginner	Ø	13/60 (22%)	28/60 (47%)	19/60 (31%)	
	Intermediate		6/60 (10%)	27/60 (45%)	27/60 (45%)	
	Advanced		10/60 (16%)	25/60 (42%)	25/60 (42%)	
	Overall			29/180 (17%) P>0.246	80/180 (44%) P>0.898	71/180 (39%) P>0.57

Table 14 - Detailed Results of Type 5 Contexts

In Type 5 contexts that require *a/an* (All of *a* sudden, he woke up from his coma), the beginner students performed significantly worse than the intermediate and advanced students ($p<.000$). They were able to supply *a/an* only at a rate of 33%. The intermediate and advanced groups, on the other hand, were able to supply *a/an* at a rate of 82%. With respect to the omission errors, the beginner group significantly differed from the intermediate and advanced groups ($p<.019$). They omitted *a/an* in obligatory contexts at a higher rate than that of the intermediate and advanced students. As for the substitution errors, once again the beginner group significantly differed from the other groups ($p<.029$). They substituted *the* for *a/an* at a rate of 35%; whereas the intermediate and advanced students substituted *the* for *a/an* at a rate of 8% and 13% respectively.

In Type 5 contexts that require *the* and \emptyset , there are no significant differences among the proficiency levels in terms of supplying the correct article. However, the students appeared to be more successful in supplying *the* in obligatory contexts than

supplying \emptyset . With respect to the omission errors, students tend to omit *the* in obligatory contexts at a high rate, but there is no significant difference among the proficiency levels. Furthermore, in the contexts that require \emptyset , the rate of *the* substitution for \emptyset is higher than the rate of *a/an* substitution for \emptyset . It seems that all levels mainly prefer to substitute *the* for \emptyset when they make a mistake.

Overall, in Type 5 contexts, the students were not as successful as they were in other contexts. Moreover, there were no significant differences among the proficiency levels in terms of supplying the correct article, except the *a/an* contexts.

Written Production Task

The overall results of the written production task are presented in Figure 6.

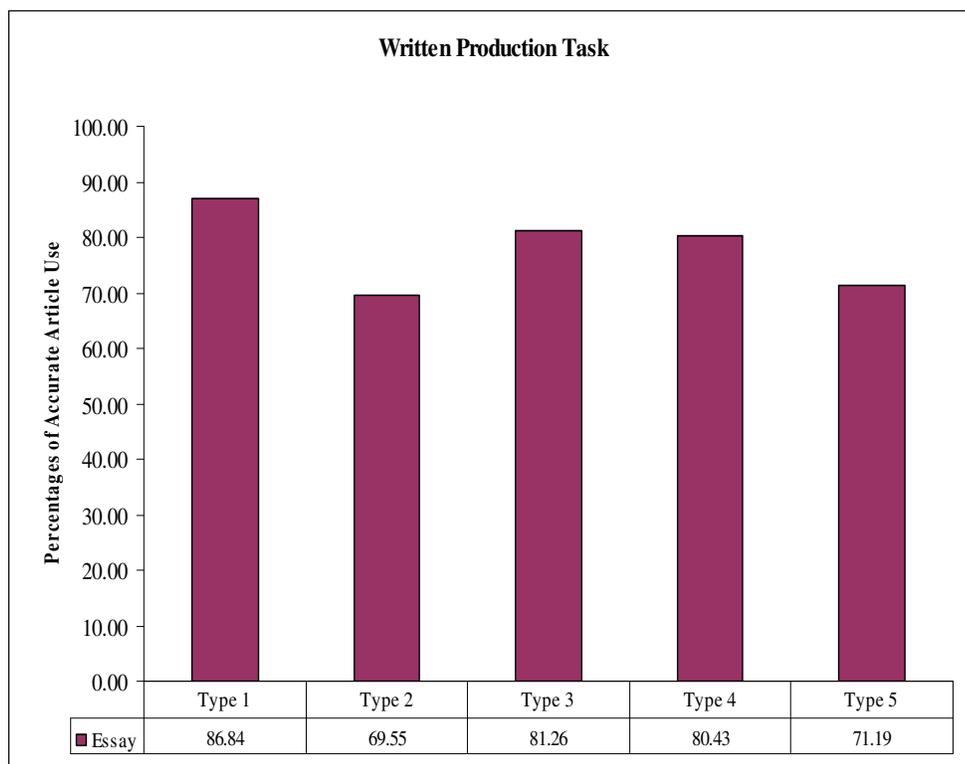


Figure 6 - General Results of the Written Production Task

The means and standard deviations of accurate article use in the five article contexts are presented in Table 15.

Types	Written Production Task	
	Mean	Std. Deviation
Type 1	86.84	14.01
Type 2	69.55	35.23
Type 3	81.26	24.59
Type 4	80.43	16.13
Type 5	71.19	39.63

Table 15 - Means and Standard Deviations, Articles in 5 NP Contexts, Written Task

According to the results of the ANOVA there is no significant difference among the five types of article contexts in terms of the accuracy of article use by the students in the written production task. However, students showed the highest performance in Type 1 [-SR; +HK] contexts, and the lowest performance in Type 2 [+SR; +HK] contexts.

The means and standard deviations for the proficiency levels are presented in Table 16.

Proficiency Level	Multiple Choice Task	
	Mean	Std. Deviation
Beginner	68.73	33.89
Intermediate	80.20	25.93
Advanced	86.41	20.41
Total	78.45	28.10

Table 16 - Means and Standard Deviations by Proficiency Level – Written Task

It seems that the advanced and intermediate groups have performed better than the beginner group. An ANOVA was performed to see if this difference was significant. According to the results of the ANOVA, there is a significant difference among the proficiency levels ($p < .005$). Figure 7 presents the use of English articles in the five NP contexts by beginner, intermediate, and advanced students in the written production task.

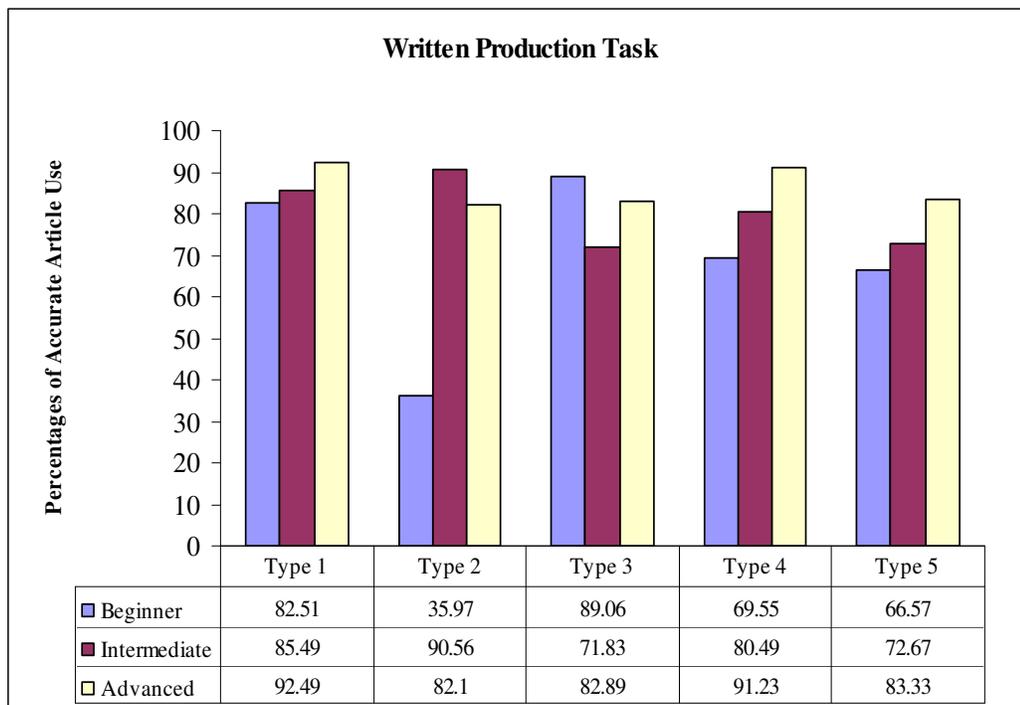


Figure 7 - Article Use by Proficiency Level in the Written Production Task

In order to see where this difference came from, Scheffe tests were performed. According to the results of the Scheffe test, the difference among the proficiency levels appears only in Type 2 [+SR; +HK], and Type 4 [-SR; -HK] contexts in the written production task. In Type 2 [+SR; +HK] contexts beginner students performed worse than the intermediate and advanced students. But there is no significant difference between the intermediate and advanced groups' performances. In Type 4 contexts, each proficiency level differs from each other in terms of supplying the correct article in obligatory contexts. In the other three article contexts, there is no significant difference among the proficiency levels.

In the following section, the five NP contexts, in terms of the students' performances in the written production task, will be examined separately. In this way, the accurate use of each article in the five NP contexts, the performances of each proficiency level in these five NP contexts, and the types of errors they commit

in these five NP contexts will be presented. Here, it is important to note that in the written production task, the total number of NP contexts in each student's essay differs. While some of the students have used each of the five NP types in their essays, some of them have not used some of the NP types even once. For instance, the intermediate students did not use any Type 5 contexts that require *a/an* in the written production task. As a result, no statistical tests could be performed in this context. However, in order to investigate whether the accuracy of article use varied with respect to the five NP contexts, and in order to make comparisons among the proficiency levels, a common measure (scale) was needed. Therefore, in the written production task the hundred scale was used in reporting the results. Since the results were changed into the hundred scale, the means and the percentages are the same.

Type 1. [-SR; +HK] - Specific Referent, + Hearer Knowledge

In [-SR; +HK] contexts that require *a/an*, *the*, and \emptyset , students used the articles more accurately than in any other article context. Each proficiency level was remarkably successful in supplying the required articles in [-SR; +HK] contexts. In addition, there is no significant difference among the proficiency levels. Table 17 presents each proficiency level's overall performance in [-SR; +HK] contexts in the written production task.

		Number of Correct Answers		
Context	Proficiency Level	Mean	Std. Deviation	%
Type 1 [-SR; +HK]	Beginner	82.51	19.74	82.51
	Intermediate	85.49	12.78	85.49
	Advanced	92.49	4.65	92.49
	F-Value	1.3725		
	P-Value	0.271		

Table 17 - General Results of Type 1 [-SR; +HK] Contexts – Written Task

Now, let's examine each article in [-SR; +HK] contexts separately. Table 18 presents the use of *a/an*, *the*, and \emptyset by beginner, intermediate, and advanced students. With the help of this table, the rate of omission and substitution errors can be also seen.

Context	Proficiency Level	Article Required	Article Supplied by the Learners		
			A/An	The	\emptyset
Type 1 [-SR; +HK]	Beginner	A/An	1/2.4⁺ (42%)*	0.1/2.4 (4%)	1.3/2.4 (54%)*
	Intermediate		3/3.3 (91%)	0/3.3 (0%)	0.3/3.3 (9%)
	Advanced		4.9/5.7 (86%)	0.1/5.7 (2%)	0.7/5.7 (12%)
	Overall		8.9/11.4 (78%) P<0.028	0.2/11.4 (2%) P>0.659	2.3/11.4 (20%) P<0.030
	Beginner	The	0/0.2 (0%)	0.1/0.2 (50%)	0.1/0.2 (50%)
	Intermediate		0/0.5 (0%)	0.4/0.5 (80%)	0.1/0.5 (13%)
	Advanced		0/2.3 (0%)	2.1/2.3 (91%)	0.2/2.3 (9%)
	Overall		0/3 (0%) N/A ⁺⁺	2.6/3 (86%) P>0.501	0.4/3 (14%) P>0.501
	Beginner	\emptyset	0.1/9.1 (1%)	0.3/9.1 (3%)	8.7/9.1 (96%)
	Intermediate		0.1/10.6 (1%)	1.7/10.6 (16%)	8.8/10.6 (83%)
	Advanced		0.2/18 (1%)	1.3/18 (7%)	16.5/18 (92%)
	Overall		0.4/37.7 (1%) P>0.980	3.3/37.7 (9%) P>0.252	34/37.7 (90%) P>0.239

⁺ these numbers represent the average number of correct article usages per student, over the average number of contexts per student.
⁺⁺ N/A means no test was conducted in that context because of the inadequate number of contexts.

Table 18 - Detailed Results of Type 1 [-SR; +HK] Contexts – Written Task

In [-SR; +HK] contexts that require *a/an* (A tiger is a fierce animal), the beginner students' performance is significantly worse than that of the intermediate and advanced groups ($p<.028$). However, there is no significant difference between the intermediate and advanced groups. Moreover, the rate of substitution errors is not significant in this context. Students who were not able to supply the correct article, tended to omit it. As for the omission errors, the beginner group significantly differed from the other groups ($p<.030$). They omitted *a/an* at a higher rate than that of the intermediate and advanced students.

In [-SR; +HK] contexts that require *the* (*The telephone is a very useful invention*), there is no significant difference among the proficiency levels. However, beginner students appeared to be less successful than the intermediate and advanced groups in supplying the correct article. The lack of significance is probably due to the fact that in most of the essays, there were not enough [-SR; +HK] contexts that require *the*. As for the substitution errors it is interesting that students did not substitute *a/an* for *the*. However, they omitted *the* at a rate of 14%.

In [-SR; +HK] contexts that require \emptyset (\emptyset Rabbits can cause problems for \emptyset gardeners), all levels were remarkably successful in supplying \emptyset correctly. The students who were not able to supply \emptyset correctly, mainly tended to substitute *the* for \emptyset . The rate of *a/an* substitution is very low in \emptyset contexts, only at a rate of 1%.

Overall, in [-SR; +HK] contexts, the students are successful in supplying the required articles. Except for the [-SR; +HK] contexts that require *a/an*, there is no significant difference among the proficiency levels. It seems that all levels prefer to omit the articles when they make a mistake, and in \emptyset contexts, they mainly tend to substitute *the* for \emptyset .

Type 2 [+SR; +HK] + Specific Referent, + Hearer Knowledge

In [+SR; +HK] contexts that require *the* (*Sally Ride was the first American woman in space*), the beginner students performed significantly worse than the intermediate and advanced students ($p < .000$). However, there is no significant difference between the intermediate and advanced groups' performances, which can also be seen from Table 19.

		Number of Correct Answers		
Context	Proficiency Level	Mean	Std. Deviation	%
Type 2 [+SR; -HK]	Beginner	34.00*	36.18	34.00
	Intermediate	89.00	7.48	89.00
	Advanced	83.00	26.77	83.00
	F-Value	13.049		
	P-Value	0.0000*		

Table 19 - General Results of Type 2 [+SR; -HK] Contexts – Written Task

Now, let's look at the rate of omission and substitution errors in [+SR; +HK] contexts.

			Article Supplied by the Learners		
Context	Proficiency Level	Article Required	A/An	The	Ø
Type 2 [+SR; +HK]	Beginner	The	0.3/4.2 (7%)	2.1/4.2 (50%)*	1.8/4.2 (43%)*
	Intermediate		0.2/12.1 (2%)	10.8/12.1 (89%)	1.1/12.1 (9%)
	Advanced		0.3/11.5 (3%)	10/11.5 (87%)	1.2/11.5 (10%)
	Overall		0.8/27.8 (3%) P>0.319	22.9/27.8 (82%) P<0.000	4.1/27.8 (15%) P<0.001

Table 20 - Detailed Results of Type 2 [+SR; -HK] Contexts – Written Task

As can be seen from Table 20 the students who were not able to supply *the* correctly, mainly tended to omit it. Moreover, the beginner group significantly differed from the other groups in omitting *the* in [+SR; +HK] contexts ($p<.001$). They omitted *the* at a higher rate than the intermediate and advanced students. As for the substitution errors, there is no significant difference among the proficiency levels. However, the beginner students appeared to substitute *a/an* for *the* at a slightly higher rate than that of the intermediate and advanced students. This is due to the fact that, when the intermediate and advanced students erred, they omitted rather than substituted, a pattern that the beginner students are also tending towards.

Type 3 [+SR; -HK] + Specific Referent, - Hearer Knowledge

In [+SR; -HK] contexts that require *a/an*, and \emptyset , each proficiency level much of the time supplied the correct article. Table 21 presents the overall results in [+SR; -HK] contexts.

Context	Proficiency Level	Number of Correct Answers		
		Mean	Std. Deviation	%
Type 3 [+SR; -HK]	Beginner	89.06	15.76	89.06
	Intermediate	71.83	35.33	71.83
	Advanced	82.89	16.79	82.89
	F-Value	1.2847		
	P-Value	0.2931		

Table 21 - General Results of Type 3 [+SR; -HK] Contexts – Written Task

According to the results of the ANOVA, there is no significant difference among the proficiency levels in terms of supplying the articles in [+SR; -HK] contexts correctly. Now, let's look at each article in [+SR; -HK] contexts separately.

Context	Proficiency Level	Article Required	Article Supplied by the Learners		
			A/An	The	\emptyset
Type 3 [+SR; -HK]	Beginner	A/An	2/3 (67%)	0/3 (0%)	1/3 (33%)
	Intermediate		1.2/1.6 (74%)	0.2/1.6 (13%)	0.2/1.6 (13%)
	Advanced		3.3/4 (83%)	0.3/4 (8%)	0.4/4 (9%)
	Overall		6.5/8.6 (76%) P>0.669	0.5/8.6 (6%) P>0.476	1.6/8.6 (19%) P>0.572
	Beginner	\emptyset	0/2.7 (0%)	0/2.7 (0%)	2.7/2.7 (100%)
	Intermediate		0.1/1.1 (9%)	0.2/1.1 (18%)	0.8/1.1 (73%)
	Advanced		0.1/1 (10%)	0.1/1 (10%)	0.8/1 (80%)
	Overall		0.2/4.8 (4%) P>0.324	0.3/4.8 (6%) P>0.168	4.3/4.8 (90%) P>0.099

Table 22 - Detailed Results of Type 3 [+SR; -HK] Contexts – Written Task

Overall, in [-SR; -HK] contexts that require *a/an* and \emptyset , the \emptyset article appears to be the most accurately used article. The students were able to supply it at a rate of 90%. With respect to the omission errors, the rate is relatively high in [+SR; -HK]

contexts that require *a/an* (Jane bought *a* ring and *a* necklace for her mother's birthday). As for the substitution errors, the rate of substituting *the* for *a/an* is not significant. It seems that when the beginner students erred, they tended to omit rather than substitute, but the intermediate and advanced students either omitted or substituted.

In [+SR; -HK] contexts that require \emptyset , the intermediate and advanced students substituted both *a/an*, and *the* for \emptyset . The beginner students, on the other hand, were remarkably successful in this context; they did not commit any errors. However, it should be pointed out that the number of occurrences of this context is very low in all groups.

It seems that the beginner group prefers to omit *a/an* when they make a mistake; however, the intermediate and advanced group either omit or substitute, at nearly equal rates. In \emptyset contexts, except for the beginner group, the groups either substitute *a/an* or *the* for \emptyset . However, there is no significant difference among the proficiency levels in terms of supplying *a/an* or \emptyset in [+SR; -HK] contexts.

Type 4 [-SR; -HK] - Specific Referent, - Hearer Knowledge

In [-SR; -HK] contexts that require *a/an* and \emptyset , the accuracy of article use significantly differs with respect to the proficiency levels ($p < .0064$).

		Number of Correct Answers		
Context	Proficiency Level	Mean	Std. Deviation	%
Type 4 [-SR; -HK]	Beginner	69.55*	16.69	69.55
	Intermediate	80.49*	14.50	80.49
	Advanced	91.23*	9.34	91.23
	F-Value	6.13		
	P-Value	0.0064*		

Table 23 - General Results of Type 4 [-SR; -HK] Contexts – Written Task

As can be seen from Table 23, each proficiency level differs from each other in terms of supplying the correct article in [-SR; -HK] contexts. The beginner group performed worse than the intermediate and advanced groups. The advanced group, on the other hand, performed better than the other groups in supplying the correct article in [-SR; -HK] contexts.

Now let's look at each article in [-SR; -HK] contexts separately according to the results of the Scheffe Test.

Context	Proficiency Level	Article Required	Article Supplied by the Learners		
			A/An	The	Ø
Type 4 [-SR; -HK]	Beginner	A/An	2.1/4.7 (45%)*	0/4.7 (0%)	2.6/4.7 (55%)*
	Intermediate		3.4/4.9 (69%)*	0.2/4.9 (4%)	1.3/4.9 (27%)
	Advanced		5.9/6.4 (92%)*	0/6.4 (0%)	0.5/6.4 (8%)
	Overall		11.4/16 (71%) P<0.001	0.2/16 (1%) P>0.381	4.4/16 (28%) P<0.001
	Beginner	Ø	0.1/3.9 (3%)	0.2/3.9 (5%)	3.6/3.9 (92%)
	Intermediate		0.2/6.1 (3%)	0.5/6.1 (8%)	5.4/6.1 (89%)
	Advanced		0.3/3.7 (8%)	0.1/3.7 (3%)	3.3/3.7 (89%)
	Overall		0.6/13.7 (4%) P>0.280	0.8/13.7 (6%) P>0.462	12.3/13.7 (90%) P>0.763

Table 24 - Detailed Results of Type 4 [-SR; -HK] Contexts – Written Task

The results show that the significant difference ($p<.001$) among the proficiency levels is only in [-SR; -HK] contexts that require *a/an* (Language is a great invention of humankind). The advanced group's performance in this context is significantly better than that of the beginner and intermediate groups'. They were able to supply *a/an* correctly at a rate of 92%; while the intermediate group was able to supply it at a rate of 69%; and the beginner group was able to supply it at a rate of 45%. As for the omission errors, the beginner group significantly differed from the other groups ($p<.001$). They omitted *a/an* at a higher rate than that of the intermediate and advanced students. With respect to the substitution errors, except

for the intermediate group, and that was only at a rate of 4%, the groups did not substitute *the* for *a/an*.

In [-SR; -HK] contexts that require \emptyset (Love and hate are \emptyset two extremes), there is no significant difference among the proficiency levels in terms of supplying \emptyset correctly. Each group most of the time supplied \emptyset accurately in [-SR; -HK] contexts. It is important to note that in [-SR; -HK] contexts the beginner group was more successful in supplying \emptyset than supplying *a/an*. While they were able to supply *a/an* only at a rate of 45%, they supplied \emptyset at a rate of 92%. As for the substitution and omission errors, since each group's performance is high in supplying \emptyset correctly, the rate of omission and substitution errors is low. However, it is also important to note that the pattern of substitution is different for the advanced group compared to beginner and intermediate groups. While the advanced students mainly tended to substitute *a/an* for \emptyset , the beginner and intermediate students tended to substitute *the* for \emptyset .

It is interesting that there is a significant difference among the proficiency levels only in [-SR; -HK] contexts that require *a/an*. In \emptyset contexts, there is no significant difference among the proficiency levels; however, it appears that the beginner and advanced groups have performed better in this context. It is also important to note that all groups prefer to omit *a/an* when they make a mistake. However, in \emptyset contexts, while the beginner and intermediate groups mainly tended to substitute *the* for \emptyset , the advanced group mainly tended to substitute *a/an* for \emptyset .

Type 5 - idiomatic and conventional uses of a/an, the, and \emptyset .

In order to investigate whether the use of articles in Type 5 contexts varies with respect to the proficiency levels, an ANOVA was performed. According to the

results of ANOVA, there is no significant difference among the proficiency levels in terms of supplying the articles in Type 5 contexts accurately. The overall results are presented in Table 25.

Context	Proficiency Level	Number of Correct Answers		
		Mean	Std. Deviation	%
Type 5 idiomatic and conventional uses of <i>a/an, the,</i> and \emptyset	Beginner	66.57	46.46	66.57
	Intermediate	72.67	41.15	72.67
	Advanced	83.33	32.39	83.33
	F-Value	0.4406		
	P-Value	0.6482		

Table 25 - General Results of Type 5 Contexts – Written Task

Now, let's look at the use of each article in Type 5 contexts separately.

Context	Proficiency Level	Article Required	Article Supplied by the Learners			
			A/An	The	\emptyset	
Type 5 idiomatic and conventional uses of <i>a/an, the,</i> and \emptyset	Beginner	A/An	0.1/0.1 (100%)	0/0.1 (0%)	0/0.1 (0%)	
	Intermediate		0/0 (0%)	0/0 (0%)	0/0 (0%)	
	Advanced		0.2/0.2(100%)	0/0.2 (0%)	0/0.2 (0%)	
	Overall			0.3/0.3(100%)	0/0.3 (0%)	0/0.3 (0%)
				N/A	N/A	N/A
	Beginner	The	0/0.7 (0%)	0.4/0.7 (57%)	0.3/0.7 (43%)	
	Intermediate		0/0.8 (0%)	0.8/0.8 (100%)	0/0.8 (0%)	
	Advanced		0/0.7 (0%)	0.7/0.7 (100%)	0/0.7 (0%)	
	Overall			0/2.2 (0%)	1.9/2.2 (86%)	0.3/2.2(14%)
				N/A	P>0.082	P>0.082
	Beginner	\emptyset	0/2.3 (0%)	0/2.3 (0%)	2.3/2.3 (100%)	
	Intermediate		0.1/2.8 (4%)	0.3/2.8 (11%)	2.4/2.8 (85%)	
	Advanced		0.1/2.8 (4%)	0.1/2.8 (4%)	2.6/2.8 (92%)	
Overall			0.2/7.9 (2%)	0.4/7.9 (5%)	7.3/7.9 (92%)	
			P>0.545	P>0.481	P>0.438	

Table 26 - General Results of Type 5 Contexts – Written Task

As can be seen from Table 26 there were not enough Type 5 contexts that require *a/an* in the students' essays; therefore, no statistical test could be performed.

In Type 5 contexts that require *the*, there is no significant difference among the proficiency levels, as in *a/an* and \emptyset contexts. Overall, the students were able to

supply *the* at a rate of 86%. The intermediate and advanced students did not commit any errors in this context. The beginner students, on the other hand, tended to omit *the* at a rate of 42%. However, it should be noted that due to the small number of contexts, the results may not be reliable.

As for Type 5 contexts that require \emptyset , the students were able to supply \emptyset at a rate of 92%. There is no significant difference among the proficiency levels in terms of supplying \emptyset . However, the beginner students appeared to be the most successful in this context, and they did not commit any errors. The intermediate and advanced students, on the other hand, both tended to substitute *a/an*, and *the* for \emptyset .

The Comparison of Multiple Choice Task and Written Production Task

In order to investigate whether the frequency and variety of the errors change with respect to the tasks, an ANOVA test was performed. According to the results, there is a statistically significant difference between the tasks in terms of the accuracy of article use in the five NP types ($p < .005$). In order to see where the difference lies, a Scheffe test was performed. The results of the Scheffe test reveal that the frequency and variety of the errors change according to the tasks only in Type 1 [-SR; +HK], Type 2 [+SR; +HK], and Type 5 contexts. The overall results are presented in Figure 8. In the figure, you can see the comparison of the students' performances in the multiple choice task and their performances in the written production task.

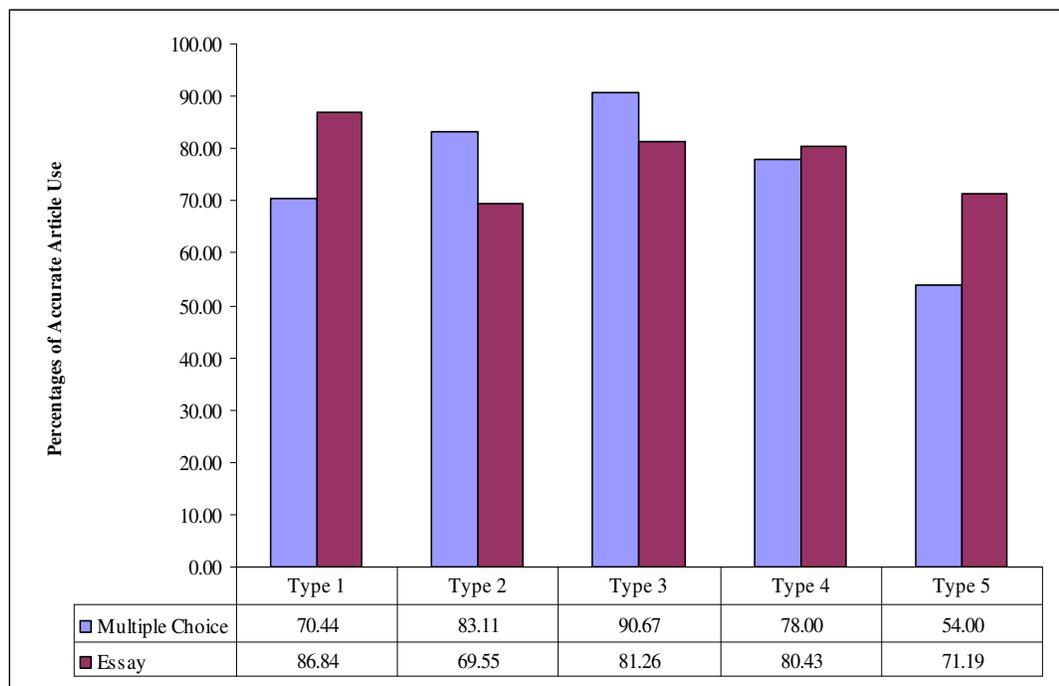


Figure 8 - Accuracy of Article Use According to the Tasks

As can be seen from Figure 8, the accuracy of article use in Type 1 [-SR; +HK] contexts varies with respect to the tasks. In the written production task the students performed better than they did in the multiple choice task. As for the accuracy of article use in Type 2 [+SR; +HK] contexts, the students' performances also differ according to the tasks. However, unlike the [-SR; +HK] contexts, this time the students performed better in the multiple choice task in supplying the articles in [+SR; +HK] contexts. Another difference between the students' performances in the use of articles appears in Type 5 contexts. In supplying the articles in Type 5 contexts, the students performed better in the written production task.

According to the results of the Scheffe test, there is no significant difference between the students' performances in supplying the articles in Type 3 [+SR; -HK], and Type 4 [-SR; -HK] contexts. Now, let's compare each proficiency level's performance in the multiple choice task with their performances in the written

production task. Recall that the number of NP contexts in the written task was not equal; therefore, the results were calculated by hundred scale. Thus, in order to compare the two tasks, the means for the multiple choice task have also changed to hundred scale.

TYPES	Proficiency Levels	Percentages of Accurate Article Use		t-values	p-values
		Multiple Choice Task	Written Production Task		
Type 1	Beginner	56.67	82.51	3.64	0.005*
	Intermediate	78.00	85.50	1.34	0.213
	Advanced	76.67	92.50	5.03	0.001*
Type 2	Beginner	70.67	35.97	-2.83	0.020*
	Intermediate	88.67	90.56	0.361	0.727
	Advanced	90.00	82.10	-0.954	0.365
Type 3	Beginner	80.67	89.01	1.312	0.222
	Intermediate	94.00	71.83	-2.02	0.075
	Advanced	97.33	82.89	-3.14	0.012*
Type 4	Beginner	66.00	69.55	0.663	0.524
	Intermediate	80.00	80.49	0.084	0.935
	Advanced	88.00	91.25	0.707	0.498
Type 5	Beginner	42.68	66.57	1.784	0.108
	Intermediate	60.00	72.67	0.926	0.379
	Advanced	59.33	83.33	2.767	0.022*

Table 27 - The Performances of Each Proficiency Level in the Tasks

The Beginner Group

According to the results of the Scheffe test, there is a significant difference between the beginner students' performances in Type 1 [-SR; +HK] contexts with respect to the tasks ($p < .005$). Their performance in supplying the required article in [-SR; +HK] contexts is remarkably better in the written production task. However, in Type 2 [+SR; +HK] contexts they performed significantly better in the multiple choice task ($p < .020$). As for Type 3 [+SR; -HK] contexts there is no significant difference in the beginner group's performances according to the tasks. This is the context in which the beginner students were most successful in each of the tasks. There is also no significant difference between the beginner students' performances in Type 4 [-SR; -HK], and Type 5 contexts with respect to the tasks.

The Intermediate Group

There is no significant difference between the intermediate group's performances in the five article contexts according to the tasks.

The Advanced Group

There is a significant difference between the advanced group's performances in supplying the correct article in Type 1 [-SR; +HK] contexts according to the tasks ($p < .001$). Like the beginner group, the advanced group performed better in the written production task in Type 1 [-SR; +HK] contexts.

As for Type 2 [+SR; +HK] contexts, the advanced students were able to supply *the* at high percentages in both of the tasks. There is no significant difference between their performances in [+SR; +HK] contexts according to the tasks.

However, when we compare the advanced group's performances in Type 3 [+SR; -HK] contexts in the multiple choice task with their performances in the written production task, it is observed that there is a significant difference between their performances with respect to the tasks ($p < .012$). They performed better in supplying the correct article in the multiple choice task.

There is no significant difference between the advanced students' performances in Type 4 [-SR; -HK] contexts according to the tasks. They were able to supply the articles in [-SR; -HK] contexts at high rates in both of the tasks. However, there is a significant difference between the advanced students' performances in Type 5 contexts with respect to the tasks ($p < .022$). They performed significantly better in the written production task, as they did in Type 1 [-SR; +HK] contexts.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the data gained from the multiple choice test and the written production task were analyzed and presented in three sections. In the first section, the results of the multiple choice task were presented. In the second section, the written production task's results were presented. In each of these sections, first of all, the overall rate of each proficiency level's correct article suppliance in the five NP contexts was presented. Second, the article(s) that is/are required in the five NP contexts were analyzed in detail. Each group's rate of correct article suppliance for each article(s) in the five NP types was presented. In addition, the rate of each group's omission and substitution errors were presented. In the last section, a comparison of the results of the multiple choice task and written production task was presented. The next chapter will present an overview of the study, the discussion of findings, pedagogical implications, limitations of the study, implications for further research, and conclusion.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Overview of the Study

This study was intended to examine the use of English articles in five different NP contexts by beginner, intermediate, and advanced level EFL students at Pamukkale University (PAU). It investigated whether the accuracy of article use by Turkish EFL learners varied with respect to the five types of NP contexts. It also examined the types of errors Turkish EFL learners committed in these five article contexts, and investigated whether the frequency and variety of the errors showed variation with respect to the proficiency level, and to the tasks that were given to the students.

In order to determine the participants of this study, a proficiency test was conducted at the Department of Pre-school Teaching and at the Department of English Language and Literature at PAU. Based on the test results, 10 students were chosen for each proficiency group: beginner, intermediate, and advanced. In order to collect data, the participants were given two tasks: a written production task, and a multiple choice task. Then, the students' article use in each NP context in both of the tasks was analyzed. Their correct and incorrect article use in each of the contexts in both the tasks was counted and the data were entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

The following section presents the results of the study in response to each of the four research questions posed in Chapter 1 by examining the results of the multiple choice task and the written production task. Moreover, the results of the study will be compared with the relevant literature. After discussing the similarities and differences of this study with the previous studies, the pedagogical implications

will be presented. Finally, the limitations of the study will be asserted, and suggestions will be given for further research.

Findings and Results

This section will answer the research questions of this study and interpret the findings in the light of the relevant literature. There are five sub-sections, four representing the four research questions, and one sub-section that addresses the order of acquisition of articles by Turkish EFL students.

Does Accuracy of Article Use Vary According to NP Context?

The findings of this study suggest that the five NP contexts present different levels of difficulty for the students. According to the results of the ANOVA, in the multiple choice task, there is a significant difference among the types in terms of the percentage of correct article use in the five NP contexts ($p < .000$). While there is no difference between Type 2 [+SR; +HK] and Type 4 [-SR; -HK] contexts, all the other types differ from each other in terms of accurate article use. Students used the articles in Type 3 [+SR; -HK] contexts most accurately, and the articles in Type 5 and Type 1[-SR; +HK] contexts least accurately.

When the results of the written production task were analyzed in terms of whether the accuracy of the article use varies with respect to the five NP types, it seems that there is no significant difference among the five types of article contexts. This is probably due to the fact that the students did not generate enough contexts that fall into the five NP contexts. Therefore, generalizations cannot reliably be made about the accuracy of article use in the written production task. However, it appears that students were somewhat more accurate in Type 1 contexts, and somewhat less accurate in Type 2 contexts.

For the multiple choice task, however, some generalizations can be made. For instance, each proficiency level faced difficulties in supplying the articles in Type 1 (generic), and Type 5 (idiomatic and conventional uses of *a/an*, *the*, and \emptyset) contexts in the multiple choice task. This is in line with Ekiert (2004), who investigated the acquisition of the English article system by speakers of Polish in ESL and EFL settings. In Ekiert's study, Type 1[-SR; +HK], and Type 5 contexts presented the biggest challenge for the participants. Moreover, Whitman (1974), who suggests six steps for teaching articles to foreigners, states that the generic usages of articles are probably best delayed. This may be the reason for the students' poor performances in Type 1[-SR; +HK] contexts in this study. In Turkish three types of noun phrases are employed to indicate genericness: unmarked phrases, plural phrases, and *bir* phrases (Tura, 1973). For instance,

(a) Kuş uçar, elbette.

(unmarked) singular count noun + third person verb

(b) Kuşlar uçar, elbette.

Plural count noun + third person verb

(c) Bir kuş uçar, elbette.

Bir + singular count noun + third person verb

(p. 151)

Since Turkish EFL teachers do not focus on the syntactic difference between English and Turkish (which is seen in example (a)), and do not teach the generic use of articles, or they delay it to the final stage, even the advanced students face difficulties in supplying the articles in generic contexts.

Moreover, EFL and ESL teachers primarily focus on the communicative needs of the students; they do not prefer to teach the idiomatic and conventional uses of articles, which may be due to the fact that they themselves are not very familiar with them. In addition, the course books do not include enough idiomatic expressions of English. It seems that these are the main reasons why the students in this and Ekiert's (2004) study faced difficulties in using the idiomatic and conventional uses of articles.

It is also important to note that the same pattern of accuracy emerges for each proficiency level in the multiple choice task. The order of accuracy (from greatest to least) is as follows: Type 3 [+SR; -HK], Types 2 [+SR; +HK] and 4 [-SR; -HK] (recall that there is no significant difference between these two), Type 1[-SR; +HK], and Type 5 [idiomatic and conventional uses of *a/an*, *the*, and \emptyset]. When compared with the relevant literature, it seems that these results are not in line with some of the previous research. According to Huebner (1983), Master (1997), Parrish (1987), and Thomas (1989), *the* is acquired earlier than *a/an* by L2 learners. They also point out that *the* may be over-generalized, which is called "*the*-flooding" by Huebner and Master. However, according to the results of this study, the students appear to be more successful in Type 3 [+SR; -HK] contexts that require *a/an*.

In the written production task, however, the pattern of accuracy is not the same. While the advanced group entirely differs from the other groups, the beginner and intermediate groups show a similar, but not the same pattern of accuracy. The order of accuracy for all groups (from greatest to least) can be seen in the following table:

	Greatest accuracy				Least accuracy
advanced	Type 1	Type 4	Type 5	Type 3	Type 2
intermediate	Type 2	Type 1	Type 4	Type 5	Type 3
beginner	Type 3	Type 1	Type 4	Type 5	Type 2

Table 28 - Patterns of Accuracy, Written Task

While the beginner group was most successful in Type 3 [+SR; -HK] contexts, the intermediate group was least successful. Recall that the nouns classified as [+SR; -HK], are the nouns that the speaker mentions for the first time, and are marked with *a/an*, and \emptyset . Here it is important to note that in Turkish EFL classes, the articles that fall into Type 3 contexts are taught first. In other words, the beginner students are taught that singular count nouns take *a/an*, and mass nouns and plural count nouns take the \emptyset article. Therefore, the beginner students were remarkably successful in supplying the articles in Type 3 [+SR; -HK] contexts in this study. However, the intermediate students were not as successful as the beginner students. It may be that a U-shaped developmental curve (Ellis, 1997) is responsible for this result. Initially the beginner students display a high level of accuracy in supplying the articles in Type 3 [+SR; -HK] contexts. Then the intermediate students regress. This may be because they are learning more about articles, and this new knowledge may be interfering with what they already know, or perhaps they are trying to fit new rules into an existing rule system. However, when we look at the advanced group's performance, it seems that they are beginning to correctly supply the articles in Type 3 [+SR; -HK] contexts at higher rates. Another important point is that while the intermediate group was most successful in Type 2 [+SR; +HK] contexts, the beginner and advanced groups were least successful. It is possible that intermediate students have just learned this particular use of *the* (like the beginners with *a/an*), so they are successful in using it. Moreover, since the beginner students are not taught

how to use the definite article except for the use of *the* before some country names (the USA, the UK), they are not successful in using it. The advanced students, on the other hand, are learning more about articles, and they are trying to integrate their new knowledge with what they already know. This may be the reason for their poor performance in supplying *the* in Type 2 [+SR; +HK] contexts.

In conclusion, according to the results of ANOVA, it can be said that the accuracy of article use by the students varies with respect to the types of NP contexts in the multiple choice task, except for Type 2 [+SR; +HK] and 4 [-SR; -HK] contexts; however, there is no significant difference among the types in terms of the accuracy of article use in the written production task. Here it is important to note that the inadequate number of NP contexts in the written production task may be responsible for this result.

What Types of Errors Are Committed in the Five NP Contexts?

Both omission and substitution errors occurred in the five article contexts. However, the variety and frequency of these errors depended on the proficiency level of the students, and the type of the contexts. For instance, in Type 1 [-SR; +HK] contexts, the intermediate and advanced students tended to omit *a/an*, and *the* at high rates in the multiple choice task, whereas the beginner students either omitted or substituted, at nearly equal rates. Moreover, all levels preferred to substitute *the* for \emptyset in Type 1 [-SR; +HK] contexts. It is interesting that the situation is the same in Type 4 [-SR; -HK], and Type 5 contexts. This indicates that the students overgeneralize *the* in \emptyset contexts. In Type 3 [+SR; -HK] contexts, however, only the beginner students tended to substitute *the* for \emptyset . They used *the* as often as the \emptyset

article in \emptyset article contexts. This is also evidence of *the* overgeneralization in \emptyset article contexts.

In the written production task, however, there is no variation among the proficiency levels in terms of types of errors in Type 1 contexts. All levels tended to omit *a/an*, and *the*, and all levels tended to substitute *the* for \emptyset .

All levels tended to omit *the* in Type 2 [+SR; +HK] contexts in both of the tasks. In Type 3 [+SR; -HK] contexts, however, while the advanced students tended to omit *a/an*, the beginner and intermediate students both omitted *a/an* and substituted *the* for *a/an* in the multiple choice task. In the written production task, the situation is just the opposite. In this task the beginner students tended to omit *a/an*; the intermediate and advanced students, on the other hand, both omitted and substituted. In Type 3 [+SR; -HK] contexts that require \emptyset , while the beginner and advanced students tended to substitute *the* for \emptyset , the intermediate students substituted both *a/an*, and *the* for \emptyset at an equal rate in the multiple choice task. In the written production task, the beginner students were remarkably successful in \emptyset contexts. They did not commit any substitution errors. The intermediate and advanced students; however, either substituted *a/an* or *the* for \emptyset . The possible reason for the fact that the beginner students were successful in zero article contexts, as explained above, is that \emptyset , along with *a/an*, are the first articles presented to beginner students.

The intermediate and advanced students were remarkably successful in Type 4 [-SR; -HK] contexts that require *a/an* in the multiple choice task. They both omitted and substituted; but the rates are not high. The beginner students, on the other hand, mainly tended to omit *a/an*. In the written production task, however, all

levels tended to omit *a/an*. In Type 4 [-SR; -HK] contexts that require \emptyset , the advanced students tended to substitute *the* for \emptyset , but the beginner and intermediate students either substituted *a/an* or *the*. However, it is important to note that the rate of their *the* substitution is slightly higher. In the written production task, while the beginner and intermediate students tended to substitute *the* for \emptyset , the advanced students tended to substitute *a/an* for \emptyset .

In Type 5 contexts that require *a/an*, all levels either substituted or omitted in the multiple choice task. Since they did not use enough idiomatic and conventional uses of *a/an* in their essays, no generalizations can be made about the errors committed in *a/an* contexts in the written production task. In contexts that require *the*, all levels mainly committed omission errors. Moreover, in \emptyset contexts, each proficiency level mainly tended to substitute *the* for \emptyset in the multiple choice task, as in Type 1 [-SR; +HK] and Type 4 [-SR; -HK] contexts. In the written production task, the intermediate and advanced students did not commit any errors in *the* contexts. The beginner students, however, preferred to omit *the* when they made a mistake. In \emptyset contexts, the situation is just the opposite. While the beginner students did not commit any errors, the intermediate and advanced students substituted both *a/an* and *the* for \emptyset .

It is also important to note that the unnecessary use of *the* in the multiple choice task decreases significantly as the students' English proficiency increases. While the beginner students overuse *the* at high rates, starting from the intermediate level the unnecessary use of *the* decreases, which is not in line with the results of Liu and Gleason (2002), who investigated only the acquisition of the definite article by ESL students. In Liu and Gleason's study, the unnecessary use of *the* increases

significantly as the students' English proficiency increases from low to intermediate level but then decreases as their English improves from intermediate to advanced level. In other words, the unnecessary use of *the* peaks at intermediate level, and the intermediate level has the highest level of unnecessary use of *the*. However, in this study the unnecessary use of *the* peaks at beginner level, and the unnecessary use of *the* decreases starting from the intermediate level. Since Turkish EFL students are not taught how to use *the* at beginner level, the beginner students usually use *the* unnecessarily. However, when they are taught at the intermediate level, the unnecessary use of *the* decreases.

In conclusion, all proficiency levels committed substitution and omission errors while supplying the articles in the five article contexts. However, the tendency to omit and substitute varies according to the proficiency levels, the five article contexts, and the tasks.

Does Accuracy of Article Use Vary with Respect to Proficiency Level?

According to the results of the ANOVA there is a significant difference among the proficiency levels in terms of supplying the correct article in the five NP contexts in the multiple choice task ($p < .000$), and in the written production task ($p < .005$). In the multiple choice task, the beginner students differ from the intermediate and advanced learners; they were the least successful in each of the article contexts. However, there is no significant difference between intermediate and advanced learners except in Type 4 [-SR; -HK] contexts.

In the written production task, the difference among the proficiency levels appears only in Type 2 [+SR; +HK] and Type 4 [-SR; -HK] contexts. The beginner students performed worse than the intermediate and advanced students in Type 2

[+SR; +HK] contexts. But there is no significant difference between the intermediate and advanced groups' performances. In Type 4 contexts each proficiency level differs from each other in terms of supplying the correct article in obligatory contexts. But again the beginner students were the least successful in supplying the required article in obligatory contexts.

The fact that the intermediate and advanced students performed better than the beginner students was an expected result. However, although it was expected that the advanced students would perform better than the intermediate group in each article context, it is interesting that they performed significantly better only in Type 4 [-SR; -HK] contexts in both of the tasks. It seems that either the advanced students have not progressed beyond an intermediate level in terms of article use, or that the intermediate students cannot expect to make further progress in the near future. It is also possible that, after a certain point, progress in acquisition of the articles is much slower than in the beginning stages. In order to see the progress in the acquisition of English articles, further research can be conducted with students at a higher level of proficiency than the advanced students in this study.

Since there is no research on the use of English articles by beginner, intermediate and advanced Turkish EFL learners, the results of this study cannot be compared. However, it is important to note that according to the results of Yılmaz's (2006) study, which employed only two proficiency levels, excluding the intermediate level, the Turkish EFL learners' accuracy in the use of articles increased as they became more proficient in the L2. When compared with the results of other studies, which have not been conducted with Turkish EFL learners but with learners of different L1 backgrounds, similar findings can be seen. For instance, in Ekiert's

(2004) study, which investigated the acquisition of the English article system by speakers of Polish in ESL and EFL settings, the ordering of semantic article types for low-ability level learners (from greatest to least) is the following: Type 4, Type 1, Type 5, Type 3, and Type 2. For high-ability learners the ordering is the following: Type 4, Type 3, Type 2, Type 1, and Type 5. This confirms the findings of the present study that the accuracy of article use varies with respect to the proficiency levels. Given that the patterns exhibited by Ekiert's learners are different from those of the learners in the present study, it also suggests that the acquisition of articles may be influenced by the native language.

Does Accuracy of Article Use Vary According to Task?

According to the results of the Scheffe tests, except in Type 4 [-SR; -HK] contexts, the students' performances in supplying the required article vary with respect to the tasks. For instance, the beginner group ($p < .005$), and the advanced group ($p < .001$) performed significantly better in the written production task in supplying the articles in Type 1 [-SR; +HK] contexts. In Type 2 [+SR; +HK] contexts the beginner group performed significantly worse in the written production task ($p < .020$). The advanced group, on the other hand, performed significantly worse in the written production task in supplying the articles in Type 3 [+SR; -HK] contexts ($p < .012$); however, in Type 5 contexts, they again performed significantly better in the written production task ($p < .022$).

When we compare the pattern of accuracy and errors in the tasks, it seems that there are both similarities and differences from one task to the other. For instance, all proficiency levels show the same patterns of accuracy and errors for Type 1 [-SR; +HK] and Type 2 [+SR; +HK] contexts. In Type 1 [-SR; +HK]

contexts, in the multiple choice task, intermediate and advanced students tend to omit when they err, and this is true for them in the written production task as well. The beginner students; however, both omit and substitute in the multiple choice task, but in the written production task, they do the same as the intermediate and advanced students. Also, in \emptyset contexts, all levels tend to substitute *the*, in both tasks. There are similarities across tasks for Type 2 [+SR; +HK] contexts as well. All levels tend to omit *the* in Type 2 [+SR; +HK] contexts in both tasks. However, in the other contexts, the performances of the proficiency levels differ according to task.

With respect to the patterns of accuracy and errors in Type 3 [+SR; -HK] contexts, there are differences across tasks. First of all, while all levels are most successful with *a/an* in the multiple choice task, they are most successful with \emptyset in the written production task. Moreover, in the multiple choice task, the advanced group prefers to omit *a/an* when they make a mistake. However, in the written production task, they either omit or substitute, at nearly equal rates. The beginner and intermediate groups, on the other hand, both omit or substitute in the multiple choice task. But, they prefer to omit *a/an* when they make a mistake in the written production task. In \emptyset contexts, the advanced group prefer to substitute *the* for \emptyset when they make a mistake. However, the beginner and intermediate groups either substitute *a/an* or *the* for \emptyset . In the written production task, the beginner group did not commit any errors in \emptyset contexts. The intermediate and advanced groups; however, either substitute *a/an* or *the* for \emptyset . It is interesting that the advanced learners, who were so good at never substituting *a/an* for \emptyset in the multiple choice task, tended to substitute *a/an* in \emptyset contexts in the written production task.

The accuracy of article use in Type 4 [-SR; -HK] contexts does not vary with respect to the tasks. However, it is important to note that while all the groups prefer to omit *a/an* when they make a mistake in the written production task, they either omit or substitute in the multiple choice task. It is also interesting that all levels seem to prefer *the* to *a/an* in \emptyset contexts in the multiple choice task. In the written production task, the beginner and intermediate students again tend to substitute *the* for \emptyset ; however, the advanced group mainly tend to substitute *a/an* for \emptyset .

For Type 5 contexts that require *a/an*, a comparison cannot be made across tasks since the students did not use enough idiomatic expressions that require *a/an* in their essays. For the contexts that require *the*, all levels mainly tended to omit in the multiple choice task. In the written production task, however, only the beginner students tend to omit *the*. Furthermore, in \emptyset contexts, all levels mainly tended to substitute *the* for \emptyset in the multiple choice task. In the written production task; however, the intermediate and advanced students either substituted *a/an* or *the* for \emptyset . The beginner students did not commit any errors in \emptyset contexts. It is also important to note that overall the students were more successful in supplying the required article in Type 5 contexts in the written production task. It is possible that the reason they performed better in the written production task for Type 5 articles is because in the written production task, they could choose the idiomatic expressions they were familiar with, and were more likely to be accurate with them, but they might not have been familiar with the idioms presented in the multiple choice task.

In conclusion, it seems that except for Type 1 [-SR; +HK] and Type 2 [+SR; +HK] contexts, the accuracy of article use varies with respect to the tasks. This in line with Tarone and Parish's (1988) study, who investigated the task related

variation in interlanguage. According to the results of their study, different tasks elicited different types of noun phrases, which in turn demanded different uses of the article. Moreover, there were some tendencies of learner accuracy with articles occurring with one type of noun phrase to change across the tasks used. Accordingly, Tarone and Parish state that “this change in accuracy is due to the communicative demands and discourse characteristics of the tasks” (p. 21).

The reason for the students’ different performances on the two tasks in this study might be due to the receptive / productive understanding of English articles. It is possible that the multiple-choice task represents receptive knowledge of the meaning and use of the various article choices; the written production task, on the other hand, represents productive knowledge of the English article system. Therefore, the knowledge of articles might be represented by a continuum, ranging from receptive knowledge to productive knowledge, similar to the continuum that is frequently suggested for vocabulary knowledge.

Order of Acquisition of Articles by Turkish EFL Learners

The relevant literature on the English article system has been mainly concerned with the acquisition pattern of the articles. Thus, I want to briefly analyze the results in terms of the acquisition of the articles, and compare some important results with the previous studies.

First, it is important to note that *a/an* was the most accurately used article by all levels in the multiple choice task. (Did you hear that Fred bought *a* car?). It appears that *a/an* is the first article to be acquired by the students, because even the beginner students, who were not successful in supplying \emptyset in Type 3 [+SR; -HK] contexts, were able to supply *a/an* at high rates. It is interesting that the situation is

the same in Type 4 [-SR; -HK] contexts that require *a/an* and \emptyset . *A/an* was again the most accurately used article by all proficiency levels in the multiple choice task. (I'm going to buy *a* new bicycle). Since there is an indefinite article in Turkish, Turkish EFL students logically appear not to face difficulties in acquiring *a/an*. They can understand the logic behind using *a/an* before singular nouns that the speaker mentions for the first time, and before the singular nouns that are nonspecific not only for the speaker but also for the listener. Moreover, *a/an* is always taught earlier than *the* in EFL classes in Turkey.

It is also important to note that although the beginner students were remarkably successful in supplying *a/an* in Type 3 [+SR; -HK] and Type 4 [-SR; -HK] contexts, they performed poorly in supplying *a/an* in Type 5 (idiomatic and conventional uses of *a/an*, *the*, and \emptyset) contexts. This was again an expected result since the idiomatic and conventional uses of *a/an*, *the*, and \emptyset are not taught to EFL students who are at the early stages of L2 acquisition. As for Type 1 [-SR; +HK] contexts, which was the second most problematic context for the students, the beginner students were able to supply *a/an* at a rate of 40%, and appeared to have performed better than the intermediate and advanced students. This also confirms the assumption that *a/an* is acquired in the early stages of the L2 acquisition. However, according to some researchers (Huebner 1983; Master 1997; Parrish 1987; Thomas 1989), *the* is acquired earlier than *a/an* by L2 learners. However, according to the results of this study, *the* appears to be acquired at later stages. For instance, in the multiple choice task, the beginner students performed significantly worse than the intermediate and advanced students in [+SR; +HK] contexts that require *the* ($p < .001$). The situation is the same in the written production task. The beginner

students performed significantly worse than the intermediate and advanced students in [+SR; +HK] contexts ($p < .000$). This indicates that the beginner students have not acquired *the* at this stage. These differences between the results of this study and the previous ones, supports the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis which argues that there is a relationship between the grammatical structures of the languages, and how people understand the world and behave in it. Along the same lines, Lee (1997) states that:

. . . although all observers may be confronted by the same physical evidence in the form of experiential data and although they may be capable of “externally similar acts of observation” . . . a person’s ‘picture of the universe’ or ‘view of the world’ differs as a function of the particular language or languages that person knows. (p. 87)

Semantically similar notions are expressed by different syntactic structures in different languages. For instance, definiteness is expressed by the definite article *the* in English, but Turkish does not mark definiteness overtly as such. The closest approximation to the definite article *the* in English is *o* (that) in Turkish (Tura, 1973). In addition,

the accusative marker *-i*, whose primary function is to mark the direct object which is immediately preceding the verb, may also be treated as the closest approximation of *the* in noun phrases used as objects in English:

- (a) The student who works here lost it.
‘Burada çalışan o öğrenci kaybetmiş.’
- (b) I am looking for the student.
‘Öğrenciyi i arıyorum.’

(Tura 1973, p. 96)

Since different cultures’ concepts of definiteness or indefiniteness change, students may face difficulties in acquiring the articles of a specific language. As for Turkish EFL learners, the fact that they have difficulties in acquiring *the* in English can also be seen in the results of this study. However, since Turkish has an indefinite

article, and since *a/an* is taught earlier than *the* in Turkish EFL classes, *a/an* appears to be acquired earlier by Turkish EFL learners. The practice of teaching *a/an* earlier than *the* in Turkish EFL classrooms may arise from awareness of this syntactic similarity between Turkish and English, or it may simply be a result of observation that Turkish students seem to learn it more easily.

Pedagogical Implications

The English article system is one of the most complex grammatical structures for L2 learners. According to the results of this study, even the advanced students, who are majoring at the English Language and Literature Department, have not fully acquired the English article system. The students faced difficulties in supplying the required article(s) in obligatory contexts, especially in Type 1 [-SR; +HK] and Type 5 contexts in the multiple choice task. It is possible that the reason they performed worse in these contexts is because the generic, and the idiomatic and conventional uses of articles are not taught, or are delayed in the EFL classes. As opposed to Whitman's (1974) view, who suggests teaching the generic use of articles as a final step, as it is done in many EFL classes in Turkey, I suggest focusing on these article usages starting from the intermediate proficiency level. However, according to Whitman (1974), since the generic, and the idiomatic and conventional uses of articles cause extra difficulties for the students in supplying the accurate article, it is better to wait until the students have acquired the articles in non-generic contexts.

It is also important to note that in EFL classes, the use of indefinite articles is taught explicitly, and it is easy for EFL teachers to teach the indefinite article compared with the definite article. As for the definite article, since Turkish does not

have a definite article, Turkish EFL teachers face difficulties in teaching *the*. Thus, the teachers should employ some strategies in order to increase their students' success in acquiring the definite article. For instance, it seems that teaching the definite article explicitly starting from the intermediate level can help Turkish EFL students acquire *the* more easily and earlier. In order to develop the students' comprehension some worksheets can be used in the class and can be given as homework. A sample worksheet for teaching how to use the definite article *the* in Type 2 contexts is presented in Appendix H.

Master (1988a) suggests a detailed schema for teaching the English article system, as mentioned in detail in Chapter 2. According to Master, the articles should be taught explicitly. He suggests answering six questions about each noun in the discourse since the answers to the questions determine the article use. The first question should be, is the noun generic or specific? Second, is it definite or indefinite? Third, is it countable or uncountable? Next, is it postmodified or not? Then, is it common or proper? And the final question should be, is it part of an idiomatic phrase or not? Although I believe that these questions raise the students' awareness, they may not be appropriate for beginner students. This schema can only be used with intermediate and above levels.

In another study, Master (1997) appears to realize this shortcoming, and provides pedagogical implications for each proficiency level separately. As mentioned in Chapter 2, for the beginner level, he suggests that it is not worthwhile to teach the rules explicitly. Instead, he suggests using photographs or real items to present the countable and uncountable nouns. Moreover, he suggests contrasting mass nouns such as *money*, *baggage*, and *furniture*, with their countable

representatives (e.g. *money vs a dollar, baggage vs a suitcase*). Furthermore, Master points out that the teachers should delay teaching the definite article except the names of countries such as *The United States*. For the intermediate proficiency level, however, Master suggests teaching the articles by using more cognitive methods, which should be accompanied by exercises which assist the comprehension and learning of the articles. For the advanced level, Master proposes that rules are not functional, and suggests a lexical rather than a syntactic approach. He also points out that advanced students should be encouraged to keep records of their errors so that they can realize their mistakes on their own.

Recall that the accuracy of article use varied with respect to the tasks, except for Type 1 [-SR; +HK] and Type 2 [+SR; +HK] contexts. This indicates that the students performed differently according to the task. Thus, teachers should use written production tasks to see which articles have been acquired by the students to the extent that they use them appropriately in writing. On the other hand, the fill-in-the-article, and multiple choice tasks would be more appropriate to assist the comprehension and learning of the articles.

It is also important to note that teachers should not only look at the presence or absence of articles in obligatory contexts, but they should also analyze the semantic type of the NPs which determine the article use. In this way they can see in which contexts their students commit the most errors. For instance, they can see whether the students face difficulties in generic contexts, in referential definites, in referential indefinites, non-referentials contexts, or in the idiomatic and conventional uses of articles. When teachers understand in which contexts their students face difficulties, they can adjust their instruction accordingly.

Limitations

There are several limitations inherent in the study, which may have influenced the results. First of all, because of the time limitations, the data were collected from only 30 students; 10 students from each proficiency level. Therefore, it is difficult to make generalizations about the use of English articles by beginner, intermediate, and advanced students. Another limitation is that in the written production task not enough obligatory contexts were provided for each NP type to permit me to make confident conclusions. Also, in some contexts it was not possible to perform statistical tests. Accordingly, it was very difficult to interpret the results of the written production task. Moreover, in this study the data were collected only through writing tasks, either multiple choice or written production; however, speaking tasks could also be conducted to see the use of English articles by beginner, intermediate, and advanced students in spoken language.

Suggestions for Further Research

In future research, data should be collected from more than 30 students since it is difficult to make generalizations with a small number of participants. Moreover, it was found that the written production task elicited different frequencies of article contexts. For instance, in the essays the students did not use enough idiomatic and conventional uses of articles, and consequently statistical tests could not be performed for the use of *a/an* in Type 5 contexts. Thus, in order to avoid this, the essay topics should be selected in a way that would elicit more contexts for each type. Moreover, the research on the use of English articles has been mainly concerned with the written language. Future research should also compare the

written and spoken language in terms of the use of English articles by beginner, intermediate, and advanced level Turkish EFL learners.

In addition, longitudinal case studies on the acquisition of English articles by Turkish EFL learners can be carried out. With the help of these studies, it would be possible to see the learners' progress in the acquisition of the English articles, and it would be possible to make generalizations about the order of acquisition of the English articles by Turkish EFL learners.

Conclusion

This study investigated the use of English articles by beginner, intermediate, and advanced level Turkish EFL learners. Data analysis revealed that the accuracy of article use by Turkish EFL learners varies according to the five types of noun phrase contexts in the multiple choice task. This indicates that the five article contexts presented different levels of difficulty for each level. This is in line with Ekiert's (2004) study, who has also investigated the use of English articles in the five article contexts, but by speakers of Polish. Moreover, when analyzing the errors committed in the five article contexts, it appeared that the students committed both omission and substitution errors. However, the variety and frequency of the errors varied with respect to the five article contexts, the level of the students, and the tasks.

It was also found that some NP contexts caused extra difficulties for the students in supplying the correct article, which may be due to the fact that English and Turkish are very distinct languages, arising from different language families. The same meanings are expressed by different syntactic devices. In terms of the articles, the semantic notions of *definiteness* and *indefiniteness* are present in both languages.

However, while English uses *the* to mark definiteness and *a/an*, or \emptyset to mark indefiniteness, in Turkish the same notions are expressed by word order, stress, and *bir* (one).

Since Turkish does not have two words which correspond exactly to *the* and *a* to express the same phenomena and since English never employs word order and stress to distinguish definiteness from indefiniteness, the articles in English and their Turkish counterparts constitute an extremely crucial area in teaching and learning of the two languages. (Tura 1973, p. 2)

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APPENDIX A - PARTICIPANT INFORMATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Participant Information Questionnaire**I agree to participate in this study:****Date:****I. PERSONAL INFORMATION****Surname:** **Name:****Faculty:** **Department:****Class:****Telephone Number:** **E-mail address:****Date and Place of Birth:****Did you attend a preparatory class in your high school:****Did you attend a preparatory class in PAU:****II. LINGUISTIC INFORMATION****Native Language:****Language of Education:****Primary School:****Secondary School:****High School:****Age of first exposure to English?**.....**Place of first exposure to English?**.....**Do you speak any other languages besides English?**

APPENDIX B - WRITTEN PRODUCTION TASK

Written Production Task

Name:

Date:

Surname:

Choose one of the two topics below, and write a one-page essay. Please use a legible handwriting. You have 50 minutes for this task. Thank you for your cooperation.

1. What are the qualities of an ideal spouse?
2. Should young people start working when they are still at school/university?

APPENDIX C - MULTIPLE CHOICE TASK

Name:

Date:

Read the sentences and choose the correct article (*a/an - the - Ø*) for the given contexts. The symbol \emptyset refers to the zero article, when no article is used. If you believe there is more than one possibility, circle the most appropriate answer. You have 20 minutes to complete this task, and you are not allowed to use dictionaries.

1. Did you hear that Fred bought (**a/an - the - Ø**) car? However, because of some financial problems he had to sell (**a/an - the - Ø**) car.
2. What is (**a/an - the - Ø**) sex of your baby? It's (**a/an - the - Ø**) boy!
3. (**A/An - The - Ø**) Language is (**a/an - the - Ø**) great invention of (**a/an - the - Ø**) humankind.
4. There are (**a/an - the - Ø**) nine planets traveling around (**a/an - the - Ø**) sun.
5. Could you please pass me (**a/an - the - Ø**) salt? Sorry, I can't reach it.
6. In (**a/an - the - Ø**) 1960s, there were lots of protests against (**a/an - the - Ø**) Vietnam War.
7. (**A/an - The - Ø**) Cat likes (**a/an - the - Ø**) mice.
8. I'm going to buy (**a/an - the - Ø**) new bicycle.
9. He has been thrown out of (**a/an - the - Ø**) work, and his family is now living (**a/an - the - Ø**) hand to (**a/an - the - Ø**) mouth.

10. We rented (**a/an - the - Ø**) boat last summer in Antalya. Unfortunately, (**a/an - the - Ø**) boat hit another boat and sank.
11. I saw (**a/an - the - Ø**) strange man standing at (**a/an - the - Ø**) gate.
12. I keep sending (**a/an - the - Ø**) messages to him.
13. All of (**a/an - the - Ø**) sudden, he woke up from his coma.
14. I like to read (**a/an - the - Ø**) books about (**a/an - the - Ø**) philosophy.
15. (**A/an - The - Ø**) Love and (**a/an - the - Ø**) hate are (**a/an - the - Ø**) two extremes.
16. Your claim flies in (**a/an - the - Ø**) face of all (**a/an - the - Ø**) evidence.
17. (**A/an - The - Ø**) Tiger is (**a/an - the - Ø**) fierce animal.
18. My computer has (**a/an - the - Ø**) new sound card.
19. I don't have (**a/an - the - Ø**) car, but I'm planning to buy one soon.
20. (**A/An - The - Ø**) French are against (**a/an - the - Ø**) war in Iraq.
21. Last month we went to (**a/an - the - Ø**) wedding. (**A/An - The - Ø**) Bride was beautiful.
22. I look after (**a/an - the - Ø**) little girl and (**a/an - the - Ø**) little boy on Saturdays.
23. (**A/An - The - Ø**) Horse I bet on is still in (**a/an - the - Ø**) front.
24. I think she is at (**a/an - the - Ø**) end of her rope.
25. Jane bought (**a/an - the - Ø**) ring and (**a/an - the - Ø**) necklace for her mother's birthday. Her mother loved (**a/an - the - Ø**) ring but hated (**a/an - the - Ø**) necklace.
26. Steve's wedding is in (**a/an - the - Ø**) two weeks and he is getting (**a/an - the - Ø**) cold feet.
27. There is (**a/an - the - Ø**) orange in that bowl.
28. (**A/an - The - Ø**) Paper clip comes in handy.

29. Sally Ride was (a/an - the - Ø) first American woman in (a/an - the - Ø) space.
30. Writing (a/an - the - Ø) letters is (a/an - the - Ø) pain in (a/an - the - Ø) neck for me.
31. I would like (a/an - the - Ø) cup of coffee, please.
32. (A/An - The - Ø) Shade on this lamp is really ugly.
33. This room has (a/an - the - Ø) length of 12 meters.
34. (A/An - The - Ø) Water is essential for (a/an - the - Ø) life.
35. I ordered (a/an - the - Ø) bottle of wine for us.
36. (A/An - The - Ø) Telephone is (a/an - the - Ø) very useful invention.
37. We don't know who invented (a/an - the - Ø) wheel.
38. He used to be (a/an - the - Ø) lawyer.
39. I'm in (a/an - the - Ø) mood to eat (a/an - the - Ø) hamburger.
40. He is as poor as (a/an - the - Ø) mouse.
41. Do you have (a/an - the - Ø) pen? I lost mine yesterday.
42. He can be very dangerous. Always keep (a/an - the - Ø) eye on him.
43. (A/An - The - Ø) Rabbits can cause problems for (a/an - the - Ø) gardeners.
44. I saw (a/an - the - Ø) funny looking dog today. I have never seen one like that before.

APPENDIX D - MULTIPLE CHOICE TASK – KEY

1. Did you hear that Fred bought **a** car. However, because of some financial
1.[Type 3]

problems he had to sell **the** car.
2.[Type 2]

2. What is **the** sex of your baby? It's **a** boy!
3.[Type 2] 4.[Type 4]

3. **Ø** Language is **a** great invention of **Ø** humankind.
5.[Type 1] 6.[Type 4] 7.[Type 1]

4. There are **Ø** nine planets traveling around **the** sun.
8.[Type 4] 9.[Type 2]

5. Could you please pass me **the** salt? Sorry, I can't reach it.
10.[Type 2]

6. In **the** 1960s, there were lots of protests against **the** Vietnam War.
11.[Type 5] 12.[Type 2]

7. **A / the** Cat likes **Ø** mice.
13.[Type 1] 14.[Type 4]

8. I'm going to buy **a** new bicycle.
15.[Type 4]

9. He has been thrown out of **Ø** work, and his family is now living **Ø** hand to
16. [Type 5] 17.[Type5]

Ø mouth.
18.[Type 5]

10. We rented **a** boat last summer in Antalya. Unfortunately, **the** boat hit
19.[Type 3] 20.[Type 2]

another boat and sank.

11. I saw **a** strange man standing at **the** gate.
21.[Type 3] 22.[Type 2]

12. I keep sending **Ø** messages to him.
23.[Type 3]

13. All of **a** sudden, he woke up from his coma.
24.[Type 5]

14. I like to read **Ø** books about **Ø** philosophy.
25.[Type 3] 26.[Type 1]
15. **Ø** Love and **Ø** hate are **Ø** two extremes.
27.[Type 1], 28.[Type 1], 29.[Type 4]
16. Your claim flies in **the** face of all **the / Ø** evidence.
30.[Type 5] 31.[Type 1]
17. **A / the** Tiger is **a** fierce animal.
32.[Type 1] 33.[Type 4]
18. My computer has **a** new sound card.
34.[Type 3]
19. I don't have **a** car, but I'm planning to buy one.
35.[Type 4]
20. **The** French are against **the** war in Iraq.
36.[Type 2] 37.[Type 2]
21. Last month we went to **a** wedding. **The** Bride was beautiful.
38.[Type 3], 39.[Type 2]
22. I look after **a** little girl and **a** little boy on Saturdays.
40.[Type 3] 41.[Type 3]
23. **The** Horse I bet on is still in **Ø** front.
42.[Type 2] 43.[Type 5]
24. I think she is at **the** end of her rope.
44.[Type 5]
25. Jane bought **a** ring and **a** necklace for her mother's birthday. Her mother
45.[Type 3], 46.[Type 3]
loved **the** ring but hated **the** necklace.
47.[Type 2] 48.[Type 2]
26. Steve's wedding is in **Ø** two weeks and he is getting **Ø** cold feet.
49.[Type 4] 50.[Type 5]
27. There is **an** orange in that bowl.
51.[Type 3]
28. **A / the** Paper clip comes in handy.
52.[Type 1]

29. Sally Ride was **the** first American woman in **Ø** space.
53.[Type 2] 54.[Type 5]
30. Writing **Ø** letters is **a** pain in **the** neck for me.
55.[Type 4], 56.[Type 5], 57.[Type 5]
31. I would like **a** cup of coffee, please.
58.[Type 4]
32. **The** Shade on this lamp is really ugly.
59.[Type 2]
33. This room has **a** length of 12 meters.
60.[Type 4]
34. **Ø** Water is essential for **Ø** life.
61.[Type 1] 62.[Type 1]
35. I ordered **a** bottle of wine for us.
63.[Type 3]
36. **The** Telephone is **a** very useful invention.
64.[Type 1] 65.[Type 4]
37. We don't know who invented **the** wheel.
66.[Type 1]
38. He used to be **a** lawyer.
67.[Type 4]
39. I'm in **the** mood to eat **a** hamburger.
68.[Type 5] 69.[Type 3]
40. He is as poor as **a** mouse.
70.[Type 5]
41. Do you have **a** pen? I lost mine yesterday.
71.[Type 4]
42. He can be very dangerous. Always keep **an** eye on him.
72.[Type 5]
43. **Ø** Rabbits can cause problems for **Ø** gardeners.
73.[Type 1] 74.[Type 1]
44. I saw **a** funny looking dog today. I have never seen one that before.
75.[Type 3]

APPENDIX E – AN EXAMPLE OF THE BEGINNER STUDENTS' ESSAYS

My Ideal Husband

All of the girls want ideal husbands in their life. Certainly I have some thinks

(1) Type 4: Ø

with those girls. In fact I have got ideal darling. His name is Yusuf. Yusuf is twenty

(2) Type 3: an

three years old. He has got dark small hair and brown eyes. He is 1.70 cm. Yusuf

(3) Type 3: Ø (4) Type 3: Ø

lives in Mersin. He is a student. He studies at physical Education Teaching in Mersin

(5) Type 3: a

(6) Type 1: Ø

University. We are together for twenty months. I love him too much. Yusuf is ideal

(7) Type 3: Ø

husband candidate for me. He is very successful and very polite. He speaks

(8) Type 3: an

relatively quite with me. I like his this behavior. He has sports activities continuous.

(9) Type 3: Ø

He plays football, volleyball, handball, basketball and tennis. Especially, he plays

(10) Type 1: Ø

tennis everyday. I think Yusuf may be ideal husband. Ideal husband have to be

(11) Type 1: Ø

(12) Type 3: an (13) Type 1: an

career. He can taking very much risk. Firstly, he can liking my family. At the same

(14) Type 4: a

(15) Type 5: the

time my family can liking him too. He must giving importance special days.

(16) Type 1: Ø

For example, Valentine's Days, my birthdays and our marriage day. Secondly, he

(17) Type 1: Ø

must can be good father for our children. My ideal husband have to listen of me and

(18) Type 4: a

my children. While I am washing the dishes, he can help me to collect on the table.

(19) Type 2: the

(20) Type 2: the

He have to take me to out for meal once a month. My ideal husband must be

(21) Type 4: a, (22) Type 5: a

understanding because all women like understanding men. He have to be

(23) Type 1: Ø

self confident. If he isn't self confident, he doesn't find early work. I want to sit in a

(24) Type 4: Ø

doublex house in a town. My ideal husband candidate must be esteemed, faithful,

(25) Type 4: a (26) Type 4: a

intelligent, handsome, well-cared and loquacious. He give importance me. Finally, I

hope my big darling, my important love is perfect. I want to marry him at the small

time. Because we want to realize our images. We have a lot thinks about our lifes. I

don't want to sorry in my life. I hope I find true person for me. Because I love him

(27) Type 2: the

too much.

APPENDIX F –AN EXAMPLE OF THE INTERMEDIATE STUDENTS’ ESSAYS

My Ideal Spouse

With the beginning of our life, we find ourselves in a disorder. We start trying

(1) Type 2: the

(2) Type 3: Ø

to succeed something. I think there are two things that we must do. In order to have

(3) Type 3: Ø

a bright future, we must both have a good job and true person. First of all, I wanna

(4) Type 4: a

(5) Type 4: a (6) Type 4: a

explain what is a true person or an ideal spouse. I think there is no

(7) Type 1: a (8) Type 1: an

definition of an ideal spouse. We can't describe it with words. But shortly I wanna

(9) Type 1: an

(10) Type 4: Ø

give a short definition. Ideal spouse or true person is someone with whom you can

(11) Type 3: a (12) Type 1: an (13) Type 1: a

share your life. If you have a true spouse, you are one of the most lucky person in the

(14) Type 4: a

(15) Type 2: the, (16) Type 2: the

world I think. Because you will share your rest of life with him or her. So let's say

the qualities of an ideal spouse.

(17) Type 2: the, (18) Type 1: an

Firstly, an ideal spouse must be devoted. If you are devoted to each other, it is

(19) Type 1: an

definite that you won't have any problem in your life. In my opinion, the other

qualities of an ideal spouse cannot be counted. I wanna give an example from me.

(20) Type 2: the, (21) Type 1: an

(22) Type 3: an

Of course my wife must have some qualities. She must be jealous. Because if you are

jealous, you will really love your spouse. She must be a good cooker, respectful,

(23) Type 4: a

educated, easy-going, witty, self-confident. I forgot to say one of the most important

(24) Type 2: the

qualities she must be very beautiful so that I can fall in love with her. I can say that

I'm a bit angry man, so my wife must be patient. She must be romantic as well. In

our life we might have some problems so she must be helpful to me. Not only she,

but also me must have the same qualities that I describe before. Because it's our own

(25) Type 2: the

life, so we must be mature enough. And the last things that I say are we must have

(26) Type 2: the

both a good health and a high salary. In my opinion if we (my wife and me) have

(27) Type 4: Ø (28) Type 4: a

both these qualities I believe that we will have good marriage and bright future. And

(29) Type 4: a (30) Type 4: a

these will definitely bring happiness to our life. When you compare you and your girl

(31) Type 4: \emptyset

friend, you must be careful whether you find true spouse or not. So let's think one

(32) Type 4: a

more time in order to have a true spouse.

(33) Type 4: a

APPENDIX G – AN EXAMPLE OF THE ADVANCED STUDENTS' ESSAYS

Having a Job Still at University

(1) Type 1: Ø (2) Type 5: Ø

When we begins to study at university, if the university, which we study at, is far

(3) Type 5: Ø (4) Type 2: the

way from our hometown we take on much more responsibilities than we had.

Because we go to Primary and High School near our family without thinking

(5) Type 5: Ø

anything. Instead of us, our parents think every detail. For being far away from them,

there are main reasons to think of working when we are still at university.

(6) Type 3: Ø

(7) Type 1: Ø

(8) Type 5: Ø

One of the reasons is about money. At university we spend much more money. Even,

(9) Type 2: the, (10) Type 1: Ø, (11) Type 5: Ø

sometimes we live without money a couple of days. For this reason, we search for

(12) Type 1: Ø, (13) Type 5: a

a part-time job. We can work as a cashier, waiter or waitress or something else.

(14) Type 4: a

(15) Type 4: a

Before appointing to these kind of jobs, we should think for a second. These kind

(16) Type 3: Ø

(17) Type 4: a

jobs can make us tired. Moreover they may not let us study our school works

properly. If they take our time from studying, we shouldn't work at these such kind

(18) Type 1: \emptyset

of jobs.

(19) Type 3: \emptyset

The second reason is to spend our time efficiently. We do such kind of jobs

(20) Type 2: the

(21) Type 3: \emptyset

for our pleasure. For instance, we can organize concerts, do web designs. We work at

(22) Type 4: \emptyset , (23) Type 4: \emptyset

these jobs when we are free of schoolworks and they don't stop us studying. These

(24) Type 4: \emptyset

are not a regular job. For instance, whenever we want, we can design web sites to

(25) Type 3: a

(26) Type 4: \emptyset

earn money. When we are free of money, we can attend an organization

(27) Type 1: \emptyset

(28) Type 1: \emptyset

(29) Type 4: an

and earn some money. In addition to earning some money, we also get a great

(30) Type 3: a

pleasure by doing these. The third one is for our students. We can have a job about

(31) Type 2: the

(32) Type 4: a

what we study at university. What we learn in classes can be practiced. Moreover,

(33) Type 5: \emptyset

(34) Type 1: \emptyset

they haven't a chance to stop us studying. Since we do our own job. These jobs also

(35) Type 3: a

(36) Type 1: \emptyset

help us at school. We can learn the things more easily. To sum up, for some

(37) Type 5: \emptyset

(38) Type 4: \emptyset

APPENDIX H – A SAMPLE WORKSHEET FOR TEACHING HOW TO USE

THE IN TYPE 2 [+SR; +HK] CONTEXTSI. THE USE OF *THE* IN TYPE 2 [+SR; +HK] CONTEXTS

Nouns classified as [+SR; +HK] are called referential definites, and are marked with *the*. These nouns use *the* because both the speaker AND the hearer know which noun is being talked about. If you ask the question “which X?”, both the speaker and the hearer can answer the question. Referential definites fall into subcategories such as *previous mention*, *specified by entailment*, *specified by definition*, *unique in all contexts*, and *unique in a given context*. These subcategories are briefly explained with accompanying examples⁵ in the following section.

1. *Previous mention* - If the noun was already mentioned, so that both speaker and hearer now know what it is, then it becomes referential, and we use the definite article.

*I saw a woman in the train. **The** woman was smiling cheerfully.*

In this sentence, *the woman* points back to *a woman* in the sentence before. After the speaker introduces her into the conversation, both the speaker and the listener know which woman the speaker is talking about.

*Chris approached me carrying a dog. **The** dog jumped down and started barking.*

In this sentence, *the dog* points back to *a dog* in the sentence before, so everyone knows “which dog?”.

2. *Specified by entailment* - “Specified by entailment” means that we can understand what is being talked about because it “belongs to” something else that was specified in the sentence.

*I approached his front door and rang **the** bell.*

In this sentence, we can say *the bell*, because a door has been introduced into the conversation, and both the speaker and the listener can understand that *the bell* means the bell on the door that was already mentioned.

⁵ The example sentences and the sentences in the exercise are adopted from Hişmanoğlu 2006, and Thomas 1989.

*Erica walked to her car, got in, and started **the** engine.*

In this sentence, we can say *the engine* because both the speaker and the listener understand that the engine we are talking about is the engine in Erica's car.

3. Specified by definition - "Specified by definition" means that there is something in the sentence that defines, or specifies, exactly which noun is meant by the speaker.

*He sold **the** motorbike his father had bought him as a birthday present.*

In this sentence, we know which motorbike, because the sentence tells us which motorbike – the one his father had bought him as a birthday present.

***The** man sitting over there is my neighbor.*

Which man? The one who is sitting over there.

4. Unique in all contexts - "Unique in all contexts" means that we all know, from our experience of the world, what the speaker is talking about.

***The** moon is the satellite of **the** earth.*

Everyone knows about the moon and the earth, so we can be definite about it. There is only one moon for the earth, and there is only one earth.

The Bible / The Koran

There is only one Bible, and only one Koran (speaking generally).

*Tom is **the** tallest student in the class.*

Whenever we use a superlative this makes the noun unique in all contexts, so we use *the*.

5. Unique in a given context - "Unique in a given context" means that whatever the speaker is talking about is known to both the hearer and the speaker in that context – they both already know (although somebody outside of that situation might need more information).

Among classmates: *The results of **the** midterm exam haven't been announced yet.*

When you are talking to your classmates, you ALL know what you mean by mid-term, so you can use the definite article.

Among employees: *We were always terrified when **the** boss came in with his stopwatch.*

Fellow employees know which boss the speaker is talking about, so the speaker doesn't have to give more information – he can just use the definite article.

Practice using the Definite Article

All the blanks in the following sentences require the definite article. Please explain the reasons for each usage of *the*, and also assign a category for each usage.

Use the following categories:

A = Previous mention	D = Unique in all contexts
B = Entailment	E = Unique in a given context
C = Definition	

1. **That ... sun rises in ... east and sets in ... west is known by everybody.**
2. **The Associated Press (AP) is one of ... most widely known and trustable news agencies in ... world.**
3. **We watched an Italian film. film was called 'Life is Beautiful'.**
4. **Afghanistan is a mountainous landlocked country in south-west Asia. ... country is one of the ... poorest in ... world with 10 % of ... land suitable for agriculture.**
5. **Hearing that his boss was in hospital, he went to ... hospital to visit him.**
6. **Founded in 1214, the University of Oxford is one of ... most widely known universities of ... world.**

- 7. Rugby is a type of football in which ... ball can be handled, played with two teams of either 13 players or 15 players.**
- 8. Although the Turkish Foreign Ministry remained silent over reports on the existence of nuclear weapons in Turkey, scholars did not hesitate to reveal ... facts on ... nuclear weapons deployed in Turkey.**
- 9. ... heart is a four-chambered, muscular pump whose function is to pump blood continuously through ... body systems.**
- 10. Sakıp Sabancı goes to ... university sometimes to give lectures on ... Turkish economy.**