

## The Difficulties of Learning English Articles Among Undergraduate Kurdish Learners of English in Kurdistan

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### Abstract

*The challenge of mastering the correct usage of English articles, specifically "the," "a," and "an," continues to persist among second language learners, particularly among students in the Middle East, such as Kurdish learners. These difficulties endure despite ongoing efforts by linguists and English instructors to help second language learners overcome article-related errors. This study aims to investigate the specific obstacles faced by Kurdish learners when acquiring English, with a particular emphasis on the proper utilization of articles "a," "an," and "the." Employing a qualitative research approach, the study utilized semi-structured interviews to gather insights from seven English language teachers in Kurdistan who work with Kurdish students.*

*The findings of this research indicate that Kurdish learners commonly struggle with article usage, primarily characterized by the frequent omission of the definite article "the" and the incorrect use of indefinite articles "a" or "an" in inappropriate contexts. Several factors contributing to these article-related errors were identified, including student negligence, interference from their native language, and to a limited extent, issues related to language internal consistency.*

*To address the challenges related to article usage among Kurdish English learners, educators should consider implementing pedagogical strategies. This could involve making English the primary medium of instruction, promoting immersive learning experiences, and adopting a variety of instructional methods, including teacher-led instruction and self-assessment by students for mastering grammar rules and principles. In summary, despite the increasing interest of Kurdish students in learning English, the acquisition of articles remains a significant obstacle. Instructors must develop effective strategies to improve article usage as the number of Kurdish learners in Kurdistan enrolling in English courses continues to grow.*

**Keywords:** *English articles, second language learners, Kurdish learners, article usage errors, pedagogical strategies, language interference, immersive learning, English instruction, language acquisition.*

### Introduction

#### Background of the Study

The effective use of English articles is recognized as a fundamental indicator of language proficiency (Abdullah, 2020; Laveen, 2019). However, native speakers often overlook the intricacies of article usage, resulting in a lack of awareness about its significance in

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English syntax (Abdullah, 2020). While article errors may not significantly impede daily communication, they carry substantial weight in academic writing, reflecting language mastery and precision in expression and thought (Ahmed et al., 2015). Despite the frequent use of definite and indefinite articles in English discourse, second language learners, particularly those from the Middle East, such as Arabic and Kurdish speakers, tend to struggle with the correct application of English articles due to differences in their writing systems and orthography (Keshavarz, 2017; Laveen, 2019). These differences have a notable impact, contributing to spelling and article usage errors among learners (Ahmed, 2017). Researchers have made efforts to develop instructional rules to facilitate article acquisition among Kurdish learners (Ahmed, 2017; Sofi-Karim, 2015). However, article acquisition remains a significant challenge for both teachers and students.

#### Problem Statement

Despite various efforts to enhance article acquisition among Kurdish learners, no single, universally effective instruction strategy exists. Hussain and Hann (2016) discussed the importance of training second language learners to understand the concept of noun countability. Differentiating between countable and uncountable nouns can aid ESL learners in article acquisition, as countable nouns take plural forms, while uncountable nouns do not. However, a key challenge for second language learners lies in recognizing that countability is a grammatical, not a practical category. Moreover, students may encounter difficulties when their native languages allow certain nouns to be pluralized, which is not the case in English, further hindering article acquisition, especially for Kurdish students. The use of the indefinite articles "a" or "an" also poses challenges, particularly for Kurdish students in identifying noun countability and proper usage (Toma & Hussein, 2020). Additionally, the use of zero articles, classified into null and zero articles, presents difficulties for Kurdish second language learners, as they are used differently before plurals, uncountable nouns, proper nouns, and singular countable nouns (Sulaiman & Mohammed, 2020). Given these challenges, the motivation for this study stems from the need to address article acquisition difficulties among second language learners, with a specific focus on Kurdish students in Kurdistan. The research aims to investigate these acquisition challenges and identify suitable pedagogical strategies for educators (Ameen, 2020).

#### Research Purpose

This study centers on Kurdish undergraduate students in Kurdistan who are learning English as a second or foreign language. Observations made while assessing their academic assignments revealed a lack of proficiency in English articles, which is a significant hurdle for many Kurdish students entering university. The confusion is partially attributed to the variations in articles across multiple dialects within the Kurdish language. Therefore, this study aims to explore the primary challenges faced by Kurdish undergraduate students when learning English, especially in the context of article usage, to enhance their academic writing skills.

#### Research Aim and Questions

The primary goal of this study is to investigate the difficulties encountered by Kurdish learners when using articles "a," "an," and "the." To achieve this aim, four research questions have been formulated:

RQ 1: What are the most common article usage errors made by Kurdish students when learning English? RQ 2: What factors contribute to article-related errors among Kurdish learners?

RQ 3: What insights can English teachers gain from analyzing the errors made by Kurdish learners?

RQ 4: What instructional approaches can be employed to eliminate errors related to article usage among Kurdish learners?

### Importance of the Study

In addition to identifying common article usage errors among Kurdish students learning English, this study aims to uncover contributing factors. The insights gained from this research will be valuable in developing more effective classroom instructional strategies, ultimately enhancing the teaching and learning experience for English language learners.

## Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to address the research questions. Semi-structured audio-recorded interviews were conducted with participants, and the transcribed data were analyzed using NVivo qualitative analysis software, following a thematic analysis approach.

## Literature Review

This literature review delves into past research to understand article usage errors among second language learners and examines factors contributing to these errors. It also explores pedagogical lessons and instructional approaches for reducing article usage problems among students. The chapter begins by presenting theoretical frameworks relevant to second language acquisition and identifying potential causes of article usage challenges.

**Theoretical Framework** Since the 1970s, English article acquisition has been a focus of research, particularly for second language learners (Nurpahmi, 2013; Ahmed et al., 2015; Sulaiman & Mohammed, 2020). English speakers acquire articles at an early stage and unconsciously, but for second language learners, especially those without equivalent article systems in their native language, challenges arise (Toma & Hussein, 2020). The study draws on theories such as Chomsky's innatism theory, which posits that language acquisition is natural and innate for humans. Additionally, Krashen's theory emphasizes comprehensible input for second language acquisition. For Kurdish learners of English, the study applies these theories to understand the challenges they face in article usage.

Moreover, the article *Errors Among EFL or ESL Students English as a Second Language (ESL) students often encounter challenges when acquiring English articles. This section defines English articles, compares article use in Kurdish and English, explores article acquisition by first language (L1) and second language (L2) students, identifies common errors among ESL or EFL students, and outlines difficulties associated with English acquisition. It is worth pointing to the definition of English Articles English articles consist of definite and indefinite articles, including "the" (definite) and "a" or "an" (indefinite). They serve various purposes, such as indicating specificity or generality. The Kurdish language, on the other hand, lacks articles but uses demonstratives with definite article-like functions. Differences in article usage systems contribute to challenges for Kurdish learners of English.*

**The Kurdish System** The Kurdish language uses definite articles "-a" and "-aka," and their allomorphs, as well as indefinite articles like "-ê," "-yê," and others. The position and usage of these articles in Kurdish differ from English, confusing for Kurdish students. The lack of articles in Kurdish is a significant source of difficulty when learning English articles. The study draws from prior research indicating that native language interference contributes to article errors among Kurdish learners.

That's, the comparison of English and Kurdish Article Usage The differences between English and Kurdish article systems pose challenges for Kurdish students. Past research

suggests that the adoption of various teaching methods has been instrumental in easing article acquisition for Kurdish learners. These methods include explicit grammar rules, the use of sentence patterns, oral practice, and modifications to teaching materials. Additionally, continuous language learning, teacher support, and in-service training have been recommended to improve the English language competence of Kurdish students.

#### Article Acquisition by First Language (L1) and Second Language (L2) Learners

While there is a growing body of research in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), limited attention has been paid to the acquisition of articles by English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. This literature review aims to explore the acquisition of articles in English by both L1 and L2 learners. We examine theories, research findings, and factors contributing to errors, as well as pedagogical and instructional approaches employed to facilitate the acquisition of articles among language learners.

In terms of the Theoretical Framework, Several theoretical perspectives inform our understanding of article acquisition among language learners. Zeydan (2017) suggests that investigating how L1 students acquire articles can shed light on the process of L2 article acquisition. Jackson and Kuriyama (2019) examine the principles and sequence in the article system used by L1 students, revealing an early overextension of zero articles and limited use of "a" or "an." Krish and May (2020) propose that the English article structure represents a sequence of determination and quantification rather than a choice between unspecified and specified articles. Zeydan (2017) indicates that L1 learners master the use of the article system at an early age.

Tai (2019) challenges the assumption of early acquisition of definite and non-definite article distinctions among L1 learners. Drawing on Bickerton's (1984) language bioprogram hypothesis, Tai argues that specific-nonspecific distinction (SNSD) in L1 learners occurs as they develop their verbal skills, suggesting that the acquisition of English articles in L1 learners is an innate process.

Now focusing on the Article Acquisition by L2 Learners, In contrast to L1 learners, L2 students often find the English article system challenging and tend to acquire it later in their language development (Zeydan, 2017). Research has examined the acquisition sequence and challenges faced by L2 learners.

Tsunemoto and McDonough (2020) investigated the L2 development sequence of article acquisition among Japanese EFL students, finding that the sequence closely follows the L1 natural order. Similarly, Krish and May (2020) explored the acquisition sequence among Chinese L2 students and found that the mastery of "a" and zero articles resembled that of L1 learners.

Liu and Lu (2020) studied the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) of definite English articles among Malay and Chinese speakers, and their findings indicated that the acquisition sequence followed natural order, regardless of the learners' L1 backgrounds. Ionin et al. (2020) investigated the ability of Russian and Korean ESLs to discriminate different types of English genericity. They found that, while L2 learners used zero articles for plural nouns and indefinite articles for singular generics, they struggled to acquire definite articles for singular generics. Kim (2019) examined English article use by Korean L1 adults and children learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and noted that both groups demonstrated sensitivity to specificity and definiteness when using articles. The overuse of "the" by L2 learners was often attributed to their L1 proficiency. Ionin et al. (2020) also highlighted that errors in using "a" or "an" by L2 learners were often due to L1 interference and L1 experience.

Turning to the Factors Contributing to Errors Several factors contribute to article acquisition errors among L2 learners, including interlingual and intralingual errors.

### Interlingual Errors

Interlingual errors result from native language interference, where ESL students apply linguistic elements from their native language to their English writing or speech (Abdullah, 2020). The influence of native language interference can occur in various linguistic components, such as semantics, lexis, syntax, grammar, morphology, and phonology (Ellis, 2008). These errors are more pronounced when there are significant differences between the native language and the target language, leading to challenges in comprehension. These interlingual errors can impact article acquisition among L2 learners, making it essential to address them during language instruction (Kim, 2019; Zeydan, 2017).

### Intralingual Errors

Intralingual errors arise from ineffective learning traits, including the learner's unawareness of grammar rules or the faulty application of those rules (Sari et al., 2020). These errors are not related to native language interference but are attributed to the learner's limited understanding of the target language's rules. Developmental errors occur when learners attempt to create hypotheses about English article usage based on their limited language experience. These errors can result from incomplete insights regarding the target language and often lead to article acquisition errors (AlKhresheh, 2016; Fareed et al., 2016).

### Pedagogical Approaches

To address article acquisition challenges among L2 learners, it is crucial to employ effective pedagogical approaches. Several key considerations have been identified in this regard.

#### Teaching Grammar

Teaching grammar is of paramount importance in enhancing second language acquisition, including article acquisition. Grammar provides learners with the tools to construct correct sentences and communicate effectively (Hanauer et al., 2018). Educating English teachers on the significance of teaching grammar and providing them with relevant approaches is crucial for successful article acquisition (Padula et al., 2020). It is essential to emphasize the relevance of grammar in L2 instruction and ensure that learners master fundamental concepts, including coordination, subordination, verb forms, nouns, phrases, clauses, verbs, subjects, and adjectives, for effective article acquisition (Prihantoro, 2016). Article teaching should encompass both deductive and inductive approaches to address the diverse needs of L2 learners (Ionin et al., 2020).

#### Equipping Teachers with Grammar Teaching Approaches

English teachers should be equipped with effective grammar teaching approaches, including inductive and deductive methods (Rajab et al., 2016). The deductive approach involves the teacher explaining rules to students, while the inductive approach encourages students to discover and understand these rules themselves. A balanced approach to teaching grammar is essential for learners to develop a solid understanding of article use (Hanauer et al., 2018).

#### Determining Teaching Requirements

Teachers should identify the specific requirements for teaching grammar, focusing on the forms and meanings that cause difficulties for L2 learners (Omar, 2019). An incidental focus on language material that aligns with students' language proficiency levels is recommended, ensuring that learners comprehend the rules within their grasp before moving to more advanced levels (Hanauer et al., 2018). Teachers should also address the challenges posed by certain forms and meanings in the acquisition of articles and provide solutions to these problems (Padula et al., 2020).

### Instructional Approaches

In addition to pedagogical strategies, instructional approaches play a crucial role in enhancing article acquisition among L2 learners. First, Self-regulated strategies, such as self-monitoring, goal setting, and self-reinforcement, can facilitate article acquisition by allowing L2 learners to develop pre-skills and apply article rules independently (Hussain & Hann, 2016). This approach empowers learners to self-regulate their learning and monitor their progress (Jackson and Kuriyama, 2019). Self-regulated strategies encourage learners to practice article rules, leading to increased accuracy in article use (Abdulmajeed, 2017).

Next, the Sentence Instructional Practices Teaching sentence construction, incorporating visual aids, and encouraging self-monitoring during sentence formation can enhance L2 learners' understanding of article use (Keshavarz, 2017). These practices help students grasp the principles of sentence creation and article application, with particular emphasis on the use of illustrations to illustrate objects and items (Omar, 2019; Rahmalia et al., 2016).

Following that is Peer Tutoring Peer tutoring fosters collaboration and cooperation among L2 learners, allowing them to support one another in acquiring article use. It creates a mutually interactive environment in which students with similar L1 backgrounds can work together to improve their article acquisition skills (Rahmalia et al., 2016). Performance feedback is also an essential component of peer tutoring, as it facilitates constructive engagement and the identification and resolution of article-related errors (Padula et al., 2020).

In conclusion, this literature review has provided insights into article acquisition by both L1 and L2 learners. Theoretical frameworks and research findings have shed light on the processes, challenges, and innate aspects of article acquisition among language learners. Factors contributing to errors, including interlingual and intralingual influences, have been examined, emphasizing the need to address these issues during language instruction. Pedagogical and instructional approaches have been discussed to support effective article acquisition, encompassing the teaching of grammar, equipping teachers with appropriate approaches, and determining specific teaching requirements. Instructional strategies, such as self-regulated strategies, sentence instructional practices, and peer tutoring, have been highlighted as valuable tools in enhancing article acquisition among L2 learners.

## Results

The main themes arising from the collected data are discussed, offering insights into the causes of article usage errors and the contributing factors. Additionally, the results provide valuable pedagogical lessons that educators can draw from these issues and present instructional approaches to address these challenges.

### Article Usage Errors Among Kurdish Students

To address Research Question 1, we explored the article usage errors that Kurdish students often make when learning English. The findings from the interview responses uncovered two primary themes concerning article errors among Kurdish students, namely, the frequent omission of the definite article "the" and the unnecessary use of both definite and indefinite articles. These themes will be elaborated on in the following subsections.

#### Frequent Omission of Definite Article "the" among Kurdish Learners

Kurdish students have a notable tendency to omit the definite article "the" more frequently than other English articles. This observation was consistent across various teachers. For instance, Teacher 1 reported that Kurdish learners, especially those at lower language proficiency levels, tend to omit articles when speaking and writing. Teacher 2

shared similar observations, emphasizing the commonality of errors in using the definite article "the." The prevalence of this omission is more pronounced among beginners, although intermediate and advanced students also exhibit this error. Other teachers concurred, underscoring the widespread omission of the article "the" among Kurdish learners.

#### Kurdish Learners Use Articles When Unnecessary

The results also revealed that Kurdish learners tend to incorporate articles when they are not grammatically required in sentence construction. For instance, some learners incorrectly use articles with place nouns that do not necessitate the usage of "the," "a," or "an." Examples include expressions like "I go to the home" instead of the correct "I go home." Kurdish learners often overuse the definite article "the," especially when it precedes proper nouns. The incorrect use of the article "the" was noted in various contexts, leading to sentences that lacked indefinite articles as well. In summary, Kurdish learners tend to employ articles unnecessarily, contributing to errors in article usage.

#### Factors Causing Kurdish Learners to Make Article-Related Errors

Turning to Research Question 2, the study investigated the factors influencing Kurdish students and leading to errors in article usage. The interview sessions revealed three primary themes: academic negligence among students, interlingual interference, and intralingual interference, which are detailed in the following subsections.

##### Academic Negligence among Kurdish Students:

Academic indifference and laxity among Kurdish learners were identified as contributing factors to article usage errors. Teachers expressed concerns that students often perceive English as a subject pursued for short-term academic gain rather than a language for practical use. This lack of dedication to self-study outside the classroom results in less meticulous attention to proper article use. Many errors are attributed to students failing to commit sufficient time to self-study, hindering the reinforcement of their knowledge and impeding the mastery of article usage.

##### Interlingual Interference Plays a Significant Role in Article Errors

Interlingual interference, stemming from the differences between the Kurdish language and English, significantly contributes to the improper acquisition of articles among Kurdish learners. The availability of both definite and indefinite articles in Kurdish dialects such as Bahdini and Sorani complicates the accurate use of English articles. The influence of native language grammar plays a major role in the challenges faced by Kurdish learners when using articles in English. The literal translation of Kurdish sentences into English exacerbates the issue, as students rely on Kurdish dictionaries, which do not consistently provide correct meanings.

##### Intralingual Interference Plays a Limited Role in Student Article Errors

In contrast to interlingual interference, intralingual interference has a relatively smaller impact on the article usage errors of Kurdish students. Although Kurdish learners may have an understanding of English grammar rules, they often struggle with practical application. Students frequently comprehend the rules but encounter difficulties in their effective use. Intralingual interference contributes to fewer errors among Kurdish students, particularly when compared to interlingual interference.

#### Pedagogy Lessons Learned from Kurdish Learners

To address Research Question 3, the study identified the pedagogical lessons that English teachers can derive from analyzing the errors made by Kurdish learners. Three main themes emerged, highlighting the significance of using English in instruction, creating an immersive learning environment, and incorporating diverse instructional strategies.

### Use English in Delivering Language

The findings suggest that when teaching Kurdish students, instructors should prioritize using the English language. While English communication is crucial, some use of the student's native language may be necessary if English explanations are not effective. Encouraging students to develop a genuine interest in English is essential to foster comprehension and proficiency. Additionally, students should be encouraged to think in English and avoid translating sentences from their native language.

### Ensure Immersive Learning Environment

Teachers highlighted the importance of immersive language learning. Kurdish learners need to engage with English outside the classroom to gain proficiency in article usage. Encouraging students to use English in their everyday lives and providing opportunities for practical application is crucial for effective language acquisition. Focusing on long-term language acquisition rather than short-term academic success is recommended.

### Incorporate More Instruction Strategies

Existing instructional strategies are often inadequate for facilitating comprehensive article acquisition. Teachers identified the need for more diverse instructional strategies to address the specific learning needs of Kurdish students. Adapting teaching methods to students' levels, time, location, and other contextual factors is crucial. An eclectic approach, tailored to the prevailing learning conditions, is recommended for teaching English to Kurdish learners.

### Instructional Approaches

Research Question 4 inquired about instructional approaches that could be employed to reduce article usage errors among Kurdish learners. The findings indicate that teacher-led instruction is essential when introducing new concepts. After grasping these concepts, students should engage in self-monitoring to reinforce their understanding.

### Use Teacher-led Instruction

Teachers emphasized the significance of teacher-led instruction in language learning. While a communicative approach and gap-fill exercises were seen as effective strategies, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to teaching English. Instructors should diagnose errors and collaborate with grammar or composition specialists when needed. Tailoring the teaching method to students' levels, contexts, and learning conditions is essential.

### Student Self-Monitoring and Learning

The study highlighted the importance of students' personal effort and self-monitoring in the language learning process. Students need to go beyond understanding concepts and actively apply what they have learned. Homework assignments, error reflection, and personal initiative are valuable practices that can help students improve their article usage.

## **Discussion**

This study was undertaken to delve into the challenges faced by Kurdish learners in their pursuit of English proficiency, focusing specifically on their struggles with the articles "a," "an," and "the." In this chapter, we engage in a comprehensive discussion of the findings derived from interviews conducted with English college teachers in Kurdistan, who are actively involved in instructing Kurdish students. These findings will be explored in the context of our research questions, related prior literature, and the theoretical framework. Additionally, we acknowledge the potential limitations of this study and offer recommendations for future research.



## English Article Usage Errors Among Kurdish Learners

Research Question 1 aimed to identify English article usage errors that Kurdish students encounter during their English language acquisition journey. Our interviews yielded valuable insights. A frequent error observed was the omission of the definite article "the," which was particularly noticeable among students at lower language proficiency levels and intermediate stages. These findings align with the observations made by Zeydan (2017), who noted that new Kurdish learners often grapple with appropriate article usage due to challenges in distinguishing between count and noncount nouns. Taib (2015) also reported high levels of definite article omission among Kurdish English learners, especially in spoken English. However, it's noteworthy that Kurdish students tend to commit fewer errors when using the indefinite articles "a" or "an."

Interestingly, the errors in article usage were not confined to novice learners. Even in advanced classrooms, similar errors were observed, though less frequently, often becoming apparent upon a meticulous assessment of students' assignments or essays. Our interviews with college teachers also unveiled the tendency of Kurdish learners to use articles unnecessarily, which was consistent with Muhammadi's (2014) findings, who investigated sound segment and syllabic pattern errors among Kurdish students. These learners were found to inappropriately use indefinite articles, inserting them into sentence construction where they were not required. A common scenario involved the misuse of articles with place nouns and before proper nouns. These findings are in harmony with earlier research, emphasizing that article use errors among Kurdish learners, like their counterparts in EFL contexts, often stem from difficulties in grasping the intricacies of English nouns and when and where to employ articles (Naser & Hasan, 2017; Zeydan, 2017). In summary, common article usage errors among Kurdish learners encompass the frequent omission of the definite article "the" and the unwarranted use of the indefinite articles "a" or "an."

### Causes of Article Usage Errors

Research Question 2 focused on identifying the factors that contribute to article usage errors among Kurdish learners of English. The insights gathered from teachers pointed to three key factors: academic negligence, interlingual interference, and intralingual interference. Among these, academic negligence emerged as a significant factor.

Kurdish learners of English often exhibit a lack of motivation for sustained engagement with the language beyond passing exams. This is consistent with the observations made by Naser and Hasan (2017) who noted that EFL students are generally less committed to learning English than ESL students. Unlike ESL students who are compelled to continue using English due to their overseas study environments, EFL students often reside in regions where their native language prevails in everyday communication (Muhammed & Ameen, 2014). As a result, Kurdish learners tend to be motivated to learn English primarily for academic purposes, with less enthusiasm for mastering the correct use of definite and indefinite articles.

Interlingual interference was another significant factor contributing to article usage errors among Kurdish learners. This phenomenon is rooted in the differences between the Bahdini and Sorani Kurdish dialects, each affecting the use of English articles in distinct ways. While the Sorani dialect encompasses definite and indefinite articles, the Bahdini dialect only includes an indefinite article and no definite articles. This linguistic discrepancy plays a pivotal role in the challenges faced by Kurdish learners when applying English articles. Furthermore, the literal translation of Kurdish sentences into English compounds the issue, as students often rely on Kurdish dictionaries, which do not consistently offer accurate meanings.

In contrast, intralingual interference was found to have a relatively minor impact on article errors among Kurdish students. Despite their awareness of English grammar rules,

practical application proved to be a hurdle. Kurdish learners often struggle to put their knowledge into practice, resulting in fewer errors compared to interlingual interference.

#### Pedagogy Strategies and Instructional Approaches to Improve Article Acquisition

Research Question 3 aimed to explore the pedagogical lessons that educators can extract from the errors made by Kurdish learners. Furthermore, Research Question 4 investigated instructional approaches to address these article usage errors.

One key pedagogical lesson is the importance of teachers using the English language extensively in their instruction. Although native language explanations might be necessary in certain situations, fostering a genuine interest in English among students is paramount for enhancing comprehension and proficiency. Encouraging students to think in English and discouraging reliance on translations from their native language can significantly contribute to effective learning.

In addition, creating an immersive learning environment emerged as a critical strategy. This entails encouraging students to use English in their daily lives and providing ample opportunities for practical application. Prioritizing long-term language acquisition over short-term academic success was emphasized, reflecting the need for consistent, real-world exposure to the language.

To reduce article usage errors, instructors should employ diverse instructional strategies tailored to students' needs, proficiency levels, and specific contextual factors. An adaptable approach that considers various learning conditions is recommended for teaching English to Kurdish learners.

Instructional Approaches include the utilization of teacher-led instruction for introducing new concepts. After grasping these concepts, students should engage in self-monitoring to reinforce their understanding. However, it's essential to recognize that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to teaching English, and teachers should diagnose errors and seek support from grammar or composition specialists when needed.

Student self-monitoring and active learning were highlighted as crucial components of the language learning process. Beyond comprehending concepts, students need to apply what they have learned, engaging in homework assignments, error reflection, and personal initiatives to improve their article usage.

#### Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Our study is not without limitations. The use of a small sample size may restrict the generalizability of our findings beyond the specific context studied. Future research could benefit from a larger and more diverse sample to enhance methodological rigor and data saturation. Furthermore, we recommend extending the scope of research to include students as interviewees, allowing them to share their experiences in English acquisition and use. Triangulating data through focus group discussions and classroom observations would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by Kurdish learners in their article usage.

### **Conclusion**

This study explored the challenges faced by Kurdish learners in mastering English articles, focusing on those for whom English is a second language. Our research unveiled a frequent omission of "the" and the unwarranted use of "a" or "an" among these learners. We identified several factors contributing to these challenges, such as academic negligence, and interlingual and intralingual interference. Pedagogical strategies, including creating immersive learning environments and teacher-led instruction, were recommended to address these issues. While we recognize the limitations of our study,

our findings offer valuable insights for both educators and students to improve English language proficiency and overcome article usage errors.

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