L2 Acquisition of the English Article System by Turkish Learners

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis investigates the second language (L2) acquisition of the English article system by Turkish learners in order to examine first language (L1) transfer effects. More specifically, the aim is to see whether or not L1 Turkish learners would show any variability in the use of English articles due to their L1.

Two groups of learners at different proficiency levels (20 beginner and 20 advanced learners) were tested through three different tasks. The tasks consist of a picture description, a writing, and a fill-in-the-article task. Data were analyzed using the Mann-Whitney tests.

Results of the analyses indicated that Turkish learners of English were able to make semantic distinctions among different article environments. They supplied the required articles in obligatory contexts at a higher rate than the other articles. In general, it appeared that the absence of definite articles in Turkish did not pose much problem for L2 learners. Omission errors (i.e., omission of both definite and indefinite articles) appeared mostly in on-line speech and written production tasks, and learners also demonstrated some problems in *zero* article contexts; they tend to overuse *the* and *a/an* in these contexts. Results did not reveal clear evidence for persistent L1 influence in the use of L2 articles. The rate of variable use of L2 articles was lower in the advanced group. This suggests that variable article use in the L2 is not a permanent problem.

KISA ÖZET

İngilizce'yi İkinci Dil Olarak Öğrenen Türk Öğrencilerin İngilizce'deki Tanımlıkları Edinimi

Gülsen Yılmaz

Bu tez, İngilizce'yi ikinci dil olarak öğrenen Türk öğrencilerin İngilizce'deki tanımlıkları (*a/an, the,* the *zero* article) edinimini araştırmaktadır. Çalışmanın amacı, öğrencilerin, anadil Türkçe'nin etkisiyle bu formların kullanımında değişkenlik gösterip göstermediklerini incelemektir.

Çalışmada iki ayrı dil düzeyinde (20 başlangıç ve 20 ileri düzey öğrenci) olan iki grup öğrenci test edilmiştir. Kullanılan testler, resim betimleme, kısa kompozisyon yazma ve boşluk doldurma testlerinden oluşmaktadır. Veriler Mann-Whitney testi yordamıyla incelenmiştir.

Sonuçlar, Türk öğrencilerin, İngilizce'deki değişik tanımlıklar arasındaki anlamsal ayrımın farkında olduğuna işaret etmektedir. Öğrenciler, bu formların koyulması gereken yerlerde, doğru olan formu diğerlerine oranla daha çok tercih etmişlerdir. Genel olarak, Türkçe'de belirli tanımlık (*the*) olmaması onlar için pek sorun oluşturmamıştır. Öğrenciler, genellikle konuşma ve yazma testlerinde belirli ve belirsiz tanımlıkları (*a/an* ve *the)* gerekli yerlere koymamış ve ayrıca, sıfır tanımlıkta (the *zero* article) da biraz zorlanmışlardır. Sıfır tanımlık gereken yerlerde, *the* ve *a/an* kullanma eğilimi göstermişlerdir. Sonuçlar İngilizce'deki tanımlıkların kullanımında, net bir anadil etkisinin olmadığını açığa çıkarmıştır. İleri düzey öğrenciler bu formların kullanımında daha az değişkenlik göstermiştir. Bu da, ikinci dilde tanımlıkların kullanımındaki değişkenliğin kalıcı bir problem olmadığına işaret etmektedir.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABIL	ability
ABL	ablative
ACC	accusative
AOR	aorist
CAUS	causative
DAT	dative
DP	determiner phrase
FUT	future
GEN	genitive
LOC	locative
NEG	negative
NP	noun phrase
PL	plural
PASS	passive
POSS	possessive
PRES	present tense
PAST	past tense
S	singular
1	1st person
2	2nd person
3	3rd person
*	ungrammatical construction

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

One of the important and widely observed phenomena in second language (L2) acquisition is first language transfer. L2 learners tend to transfer certain forms and meanings of their first language (L1) into the L2. This has been reported by many studies that looked at L2 interlanguage development. Certain errors in the L2 are attributed to the properties of L1. Nevertheless, it has not been always easy to determine the extent to which L2 learners transfer their L1 properties into the L2.

The issue of L1 transfer has been debated since the beginning of the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis in the 1940s. It was believed that comparing the L1 and L2 would predict the potential problems in L2 acquisition, and that such an analysis would also be relevant to the learning and teaching of foreign languages. However, when it was observed that L2 learners with different L1s followed similar paths in L2 acquisition, it became clear that the comparison of surface properties was not sufficient to gain insights into the language transfer phenomenon (Smith & Kellerman, 1986).

The problem of language transfer is also studied within a generative framework, where L1 transfer is examined in relation to Universal Grammar (UG) involvement. Specifically, these studies investigated 1) whether or not syntactic categories/features that are not present in the L1 are ultimately acquirable in the L2; 2) whether or not L2 learners are stuck with L1 properties and would transfer these into the L2 even in the end-state L2.

The UG-based studies looked at both verbal and nominal domains. For example, there is much research on the L2 acquisition of gender, number and case by learners whose L1 lacks these categories (e.g., Franceschina, 2001; Gürel, 2000;

Hawkins, 1998; Parodi, Schwartz & Clahsen, 1997). They all reported L1-based difficulties in L2 acquisition.

Furthermore, studies that involved L2 learners from different L1 backgrounds revealed that L2 learners with different L1s behave differently in the acquisition of certain L2 properties. For example, White (1985) found that Spanish speaking learners of English treated English as if it were a null subject language like their L1 Spanish, while French speaking learners did not. Vainikka and Young-Scholten (1996) found that Korean and Turkish learners of L2 German initially assumed L1 word order. Hawkins and Chan (1997) reported that French speaking and Chinese speaking learners of English analyzed English restrictive relative clauses based on their L1. Chinese speaking learners failed in [± wh] feature in contrast to French learners since overt wh-movement is not allowed in Chinese unlike English.

Nevertheless, some research findings revealed that L1 transfer is not persistent. That is, successful acquisition of L2 properties is possible by learners whose L1s lack those properties (e.g., Schwartz and Sprouse, 1994, 1996; White, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c). They propose that the L2 learner is not limited to L1-based grammatical options, but constantly restructures his/her grammar in response to L2 input. In other words, L2 input triggers grammatical change towards the target language when L1 grammar is unable to accommodate L2 input. It is, therefore, assumed that L1 transfer effects can be eliminated in the end-state L2. For example, White (2003b) points out that a Turkish speaker is found to be very sensitive to [±definiteness] distinction in L2 English, although this feature is realized differently in the L1 Turkish. White's (2003b) findings also suggest that overt features, such as inflectional morphology in the L1, sensitize the L2 learner to overt morphology in the L2. Nevertheless, research on near-native speakers demonstrates that, in certain

grammatical domains, native-like mastery may not be possible (due to persistent L1 transfer) even if learners may become fully native-like in other aspects of the L2 grammar (e.g., Sorace, 1993).

The present study aims to examine the acquisition of the features [± definite] and [± specific] in L2 English by native Turkish speakers. L1 Turkish lacks an overt definite article, but L2 English overtly realizes this form. The difference between Turkish and English is believed to provide a good testing ground for both variability and L1 transfer issues.

The English article system consists of very simple forms *a/an*, *the*, and ∅ (the *zero* article). Yet, the mastery of English articles is a considerable source of difficulty for non-native speakers, especially for those whose L1 lacks an equivalent article system. This is mainly because the article system is based on a complex set of abstract distinctions, which are, to some extent, arbitrarily mapped on to surface forms. There is also a complex interplay between linguistic and discourse factors that learners need to consider in order to arrive at the correct form of article.

L2 studies on article use have compared different L1 groups in their mastery of the L2 article system. While there has not been a consensus as to the nature of the errors and the article choice of the learners, all of them reported the difficulty in the acquisition of the English article system even in advanced stages.

Many of the earlier studies that examined article acquisition followed Bickerton's (1981) semantic binary features (i.e., ±specific reference and ±hearer knowledge). They classified English noun phrase (NP) environments in a systematic way according to Bickerton's taxonomy. In the present study, my classification of NPs is also based on Bickerton's taxonomy.

The main objective of this thesis is to investigate the L2 acquisition of the English article system by Turkish learners. As will be discussed in Chapter 2, Turkish does not have an article system like English; definiteness and specificity are expressed through different means in Turkish. Given this, the present study might provide insights into the nature of interlanguage development when L1 and L2 differ with respect to a particular linguistic property. The main issue that is investigated in this thesis is the acquisition of English articles in two different developmental stages from the perspective of L1 transfer effects in L2 acquisition. More specifically, I attempt to answer the following research questions:

(a) Are Turkish learners of L2 English able to acquire semantic distinctions that determine different article use?

(b) Do they demonstrate L1 transfer effects by omitting definite articles in definite contexts?

(c) If there is a considerable amount of definite article omission, is this more widespread in subject or object NPs?

(d) Do they demonstrate relatively less indefinite article *a/an* omission (compared to *the* omission in definite contexts) in indefinite contexts?

(e) If there is a tendency to omit articles (definite or indefinite), does that lead to better performance in *zero* article contexts?

(f) Do they tend to substitute *the* for *a/an* or vice versa?

(g) Does proficiency have an effect in the correct use of articles?

The specific chapters are organized in this thesis as follows: Chapter 2 discusses relevant facts about English and Turkish. Sections 2 and 3 in this chapter present the article system of English and Turkish, respectively. Chapter 3 reviews the findings of previous research on L2 acquisition of the English article system. Chapter

4 presents the methodology and the results of the study. The findings will be discussed in the final chapter.

CHAPTER 2

THE ARTICLE SYTEMS OF ENGLISH AND TURKISH

2.1. Introduction

Languages differ from each other with respect to the nature of the article system in their grammar. There are four different types of languages, all attested among the languages of the world: (a) languages with the category of definite articles only (e.g., Icelandic); (b) languages with the category of indefinite articles only (e.g., Turkish); (c) languages with both definite and indefinite article categories (e.g., English); (d) languages with neither category (e.g., Estonian) (Juvonen, 2000:14).

English and Turkish demonstrate a contrast with respect to their articles, and this difference between the two languages may be an interesting research area from the perspective of L2 acquisition. In this chapter, I will first look into the article system in English and then move on to a discussion on Turkish. In Section 2, I will discuss the use of the articles in English by introducing various semantic notions such as definiteness and referentiality. In Section 3, I will present data from Turkish to illustrate how these notions are expressed in Turkish.

2.2. English

Languages, like English, that use word order to signal grammatical relations tend to develop articles since it is not possible to differentiate the old and the new information consistently. It is the definite and indefinite articles that help us identify the new and old information (Thompson & Martinet, 1978).

Languages like English with an overt definiteness marking have the feature [± definite]. An NP is *definite* if and only if its referent is known to both the speaker and the hearer, and is unique in the contextually relevant domain. Otherwise, the NP

is *indefinite* (Ionin & Wexler, 2002: 150). As for the featural representation, *the* encodes for [+definite], and *a/an* and ∅ stand for [-definite] (Lyons, 1999). This is illustrated below:

(1) Definite:

I read a book. *The book* was interesting.

(2) a. Indefinite:

I read *a book* yesterday. (Ionin &Wexler, 2002:150)

b. Indefinite:

I saw *∅rabbits* in the garden yesterday. (Hawkins 2001:232)

According to Ionin and Wexler (2002: 150), an indefinite NP is referential if and only if the speaker has its referent 'in mind' and intends to refer to it. Otherwise, the NP is quantificational. The following examples illustrate how referentiality comes into the picture in the interpretation of NPs:

(3) a. Referential indefinite:

I read *an interesting book, which my cousin gave me.*

b. Quantificational indefinite:

Mary read *a book* (but I don't know which one).

(Ionin &Wexler, 2002:150)

As can be seen in the examples in (3), in both referential and nonreferential contexts, the indefinite NP has to be used with the indefinite article *a/an*.

Fodor and Sag (1982) propose that English indefinites are ambiguous as to whether they modify a noun that is referential (specific) and/or quantificational (nonspecific) for the speaker. In other words, indefinites can be specific or nonspecific. A specific indefinite is used if the speaker refers to a unique individual, where the individual is in the restricted set captured by the NP. For example, in sentence (4a) below, the speaker intends to refer to a particular man. That is, the speaker has a particular individual in mind when s/he utters 'a man'. Therefore, the indefinite *a man* is specific. However, in (4b), there is no intent to refer, and *a man* is a quantificational expression similar to *every man*, *no man.* Therefore, it is nonspecific.

(4) a. Specific (referential) indefinite:

A man just proposed to me in the orangery (though I'm much too embarrassed to tell you who it was).

b. Nonspecific (quantificational) indefinite:

A man is in the women's bathroom (but I haven't dared to go in there to see who it is) (Fodor and Sag, 1982: 359)

I will not discuss the details of Fodor ad Sag's analysis of definites any further here. What is relevant for my analysis is that specific indefinites involve speaker knowledge. This point is also illustrated in the example from Tura (1973: 40):

(5) a. I am looking for *a saleslady*. Oh, I see *one* over there.

b. I am looking for *a saleslady*. Oh, I see *her* over there.

In the first sentence, the NP 'a saleslady' does not have a specific reference, and an indefinite noun substitute (one) has been used to refer to the NP later in the discourse. In the second sentence, the NP has a specific reference, and a definite personal pronoun (her) has been used to refer to the NP later in the discourse.

Definite NPs can also be potentially specific or nonspecific. The following examples illustrate this point (Ionin, Ko, & Wexler, 2003:5):

(6) a. Definite specific:

I'd like to talk to *the winner of today's race* – she is my best friend!

b. Definite nonspecific:

I'd like to talk to *the winner of today's race* – whoever that is; I'm writing a story about this race for the newspaper.

The speaker is referring to a particular individual in (6a) but not in (6b). Although definites can be specific and nonspecific, in this thesis, following Enç (1991), I will assume that all definite NPs are specific. That is, I will not consider definite nonspecific NPs in my analysis.

Besides definiteness and specificity, other relevant features that have been used in the classification of articles are [±specific reference; ±hearer knowledge] (e.g., Bickerton, 1981; Huebner, 1983, 1985; Master, 1997; Parrish, 1987; Thomas, 1989). These features are related to the notions such as definiteness and

referentiality. Nevertheless, the exact formulation of my classification of English articles in this thesis is based on Bickerton's original taxonomy that uses [± specific reference; ± hearer knowledge].

2.2.1. Bickerton's Taxonomy of English Articles

Any explanation on article use should go beyond the word and sentence level since we depend on the discourse context to determine what is meant in a speech. Articles are also classified according to their different interpretations. Bickerton (1981) suggests that these differences can be explained in terms of the features of referentiality [Specific Referent] and definiteness [Assumed Known to Hearer]. This classification divides environments for articles according to whether a noun which is followed by an article has a specific referent, or whether a noun is already known from the previous discourse or context and hence identifiable by the listener. These two features bring forth four cross-classified environments, where one or more articles are possible depending on the lexical properties of the noun (e.g., singular or plural, mass or count).

Bickerton's taxonomy has been used by a number of researchers as the basis for interpreting the L2 acquisition of English articles (e.g., Huebner, 1983, 1985; Master, 1987; Parrish, 1987; Thomas, 1989). The following section summarizes each context that comes out of this classification.

2.2.1.1. -Specific Referent [-SR], +Hearer Knowledge [+HK]

Nouns classified as [-SR, +HK] are also called *generic nouns*. A generic noun refers to a non-specific entity identified by the hearer from general knowledge. All

three articles *the/a/∅* can be used with generic interpretations, but in the case of *the*, the noun must be count and singular:

(7) a. *The rabbit* can cause problems for *the gardener*.

b. *A rabbit* can cause problems for *a gardener*.

c. *∅ Rabbits* can cause problems for *∅ gardeners*.

(Hawkins, 2001:235)

In contrast to the context given above, in some contexts, the three forms of generics cannot be used interchangeably. For example, in the following example in (8a) and (8b), both 'a mother/a father' and 'mothers/fathers' are used in a generic sense. These generic nouns refer to the role of mothers and fathers; however, in (8c), 'the mother' and 'the father' have a nongeneric interpretation and refer to a specific definite mother/father.

(8) a. *A mother* works at home, but *a father* works outside.

b. *Mothers* work at home, but *fathers* work outside.

c. *The mother* works at home, but *the father* works outside.

(Tura, 1973:56)

In addition, some generic environments favor a certain type of article. For example, in (9), *the*-generic and *zero*-generic are very close in meaning, while *a*-generic is ungrammatical:

(9) a. *The cat* is widespread.

b. ∅ *Cats* are widespread.

c. **A cat* is widespread. (Tura, 1973:53)

Identification of the semantic and syntactic characteristics of generic nouns is a complicated issue, so is the L2 acquisition of these properties. Thus, I believe that the acquisition of generics has to be examined in a separate L2 study. In this thesis, I do not investigate generic nouns, and nouns in generic contexts were not included in the analysis.

2.2.1.2. +Specific Referent [+SR], +Hearer Knowledge [+HK]

Nouns classified as [+SR, +HK] are also called *referential definites,* and are marked with *the* irrespective of the lexical properties of noun (mass/count and singular/plural). Here, the noun refers to a specific entity which the hearer can identify from the previous discourse. The use of the definite article has been categorized into different environments. These environments, presented below, are adapted from Huebner (1983), Hawkins (2001) and Lyons (1999). Once a noun is presented in the discourse, it normally becomes referential and definite:

(10) Speaker A: What would you do if you had $100,000?

Speaker B: I would buy a flat.

Speaker A: How would you decorate *the* flat?

In this example, ‘the flat’ has been mentioned before in a previous sentence, and it is familiar from the discourse. The use of the definite article *the* is obligatory in this context.

Second, the definite article *the* is obligatory when a noun is unique or traditionally assumes a unique referent. For example, *the* Pope*, the* Sun*, the* North Pole occur with *the* since they are unique for everyone by shared knowledge.

Third, when a noun is unique by definition, such as *the house with a view, the girl who speaks Basque*, it obligatorily takes *the*. *Partitive* and *locative* NPs are also unique by definition and occur with *the*. That is, being part of the main NP renders them a unique reading, as in the examples below (Hawkins, 2001: 234):

(11) *The* bow of a ship came into view. (Partitive)

(12) Write your name on *the* back of an envelope. (Locative)

Fourth, some nouns are unique for a particular group of people. For example, *the* blackboard*, the* ceiling*, the* table in a classroom, or *the* car*, the* baby of a house, are unique for the people in these settings. The specific referents are assumed to be known to the hearer and therefore take the definite article *the*.

Finally, when the referent is physically present in the immediate environment, it occurs with *the*. In (13), ‘the guy’ is immediately visible and marked with the definite article *the*.

(13) Go ask *the* guy over there. (Parrish, 1987: 364)

2.2.1.3. +Specific Referent [+SR], -Hearer Knowledge [–HK]

Nouns classified as [+SR, -HK] are also called *referential indefinites*, and these include first-mention nouns. They are marked with *a/an* or ∅ depending on the mass/count and singular/plural character of the noun. Here, the noun refers to a specific entity, which the hearer cannot identify from the previous discourse or context. In the following example, 'a very good job offer' is specific and refers to a particular job offer the speaker received. Since it is the first time the speaker has mentioned it in the discourse, the indefinite article *a/an* is used:

(14) Speaker A: I received *a* very good job offer today.
Speaker B: Congratulations!

When the first mention noun is plural, ∅ is used:

(15) Speaker A: Are you busy tonight?
Speaker B: Yes, I am going to write ∅ letters.

2. 2.1.4. -Specific Referent [-SR], -Hearer Knowledge [–HK]

Nouns classified as [-SR, -HK] are also called *nonreferential indefinites,* and, similar to [+SR, -HK] contexts, the indefinite articles *a/an* and ∅ are used in these contexts. Here, the noun does not refer to a specific entity, which the hearer can identify from the previous discourse or context. In the example below, the Speaker B does not refer to a specific 'book' or 'books' in the mind, but it is a plan in his/her mind. Since it is the first time that this topic has been introduced into the discourse, it is unknown to the hearer.

(16) Speaker A: What are you going to do after you finish university?

Speaker B: I hope to write *a* book/∅ books.

The following table summarizes the use of English articles in [± SR] and [±HK] contexts:

Table 2.1

Bickerton's taxonomy of English articles

Features	**Environment**	**Articles**	**Example**
[-SR; +HK]	Generics	A/An,The,∅	*The rabbit* is a nuisance. *A rabbit* is a nuisance. ∅ *Rabbits* can be nuisance. ∅ *Theories* must always be supported by ∅ *evidence* .
[+SR; +HK]	Referential definites	The	She left *the baby* at home. Goldilocks ate *the porridge* . She presented *the evidence* .
[+SR; -HK]	Referential indefinites	A/An, ∅	I have a contact. I have ∅ contacts. They reached *an understanding* . She presented ∅ *evidence* .
[-SR; -HK]	Nonreferential indefinites	A/An, ∅	She wants to write *a book.* She wants to write ∅ *books* . It can be difficult to reach *an understanding.* They need ∅ *evidence* to support their theory.

(adapted from Hawkins, 2001:235)

In addition to this four-way categorization based on [± specific referent] and [±hearer knowledge] described above, there are also idiomatic uses of articles and other productive contexts for articles. However, in the present study, the acquisition of the idiomatic use of English articles was not examined. It is nevertheless important to note some of these examples:

(17) a. He is always on *Ø edge*.

b. *He is always on *the edge*.

c. He lives on *the edge* of the town. (Master, 1994:238)

In the idiomatic use in (17a), 'to be on edge' means to be always tense and nervous. The use of the definite article makes the sentence ungrammatical (17b). However, in the non-idiomatic use in (17c), 'the edge of the town' refers to the part of the town he lives in, which is far from the center of the town. Recall that this type of use of the definite article *the* falls into category [+SR, +HK].

There is also a set of proper nouns that require the definite article in English. For example, *the* Middle East*, the* Sahara*, the* Pacific Ocean*, the* gulf of Mexico*, the* Plaza Hotel are among the names of places that take the definite article *the* (Allsop, 1983: 41). As mentioned earlier, neither idiomatic use nor proper noun contexts is included in the present analysis.

So far, I have summarized contexts that require different article use in English. As can be seen in the above summary, mass/count and singular/plural distinctions are also important in the classification of English articles (Hawkins 2001). The following table illustrates the distribution of English articles according to these four lexical characteristics:

Table 2.2

Co-occurrence possibilities of the articles and types of nouns in English

Article	**Noun types**	**Examples**
The	+count, +singular	*The rabbit* was running.
	+count,-singular	*The rabbits* were running.
	-count, +mass	He made *the porridge* for us.
	-count, -mass	*The understanding* they reached was short-lived.
A/An	+count, +singular	I saw *a rabbit* in the garden.
	-count, -mass	They reached *an understanding* .
∅	+count, -singular	I saw ∅ *rabbits* in the garden.
	-count, +mass	He made ∅ *porridge* for us.
	-count, -mass	The situation calls for ∅ *understanding* .

(adapted from Hawkins 2001: 233)

As can be seen in Table 2.2, the articles in English have different but overlapping distributions. *The* is the definite article, and it is associated with singular/plural nouns (e.g., the rabbit/s), with mass (e.g., the porridge) as well as abstract nouns (e.g., the understanding). *A/an* is an indefinite article, and it can be used with singular count nouns (e.g., a rabbit) and abstract nouns (e.g., an understanding), but not usually with mass nouns (*a furniture).[1] The *zero* article can be used with plural count (e.g., rabbits), mass (e.g., porridge) and abstract nouns (e.g., understanding). It is not usually used with singular count nouns (e.g., *I saw rabbit). [2]

In the example in Table 2.2, 'I saw a rabbit in the garden', indefinite article *a* implies that there was only one rabbit, and it is introduced in the discourse for the first time, unknown to the hearer. In the example, 'I saw ∅ rabbits in the garden', the indefinite *zero* article implies that there is more than one rabbit, that they are mentioned for the first time in the discourse, and, that they are not known by the

[1] Indefinite article *a* can be used where the NP can be interpreted as a singular count noun: *They bought a cheese with a smokey flavor* (Hawkins, 2001: 232).

[2] ∅ can be used with a singular count noun if the noun can be interpreted as a mass noun: *She doesn't eat rabbit* (Hawkins, 2001: 232).

hearer. Therefore, we can say that *a/an* is considered a surface variant of ∅ used with singular count nouns. That is, *a*/*an* marks both singularity and indefiniteness, while ∅ marks plurality and indefiniteness. After mentioning the presence of rabbit(s) in the garden, the definite article *the* is used before the singular or the plural form when referring to the rabbit(s) for the second time in the discourse (Haegeman & Gueron, 1999).

2.3. Turkish

Turkish is a language with rich nominal and verbal inflection. Turkish is traditionally classified as an SOV language, but it is flexible with respect to word order. Nevertheless, pragmatic factors are important in determining the word order (Erguvanlı, 1984). Turkish has six cases: nominative, accusative, dative, locative, ablative and genitive. Case inflection plays a role in the interpretation of nominals as (in)definite/(non)specific.

Turkish lacks articles that correspond to the definite article *the* in English. The form *bir* can be used to mark indefiniteness as well as number. That is, the indefinite article (a/an) and the numeral (one) have the same surface form in Turkish (Kornfilt, 1997; Underhill, 1976). According to Lyons (1999), Turkish *bir* is a quasi-indefinite article since it is an unstressed variant of the numeral *bir*, and can signal indefiniteness only indirectly.

The function of *bir* as an indefinite article has been questioned (e.g., Aygen-Tosun, 1999; Lyons, 1999; Öztürk, 2004). It has been stated that it is common for languages to lack indefinite articles but have definite articles (Crisma, 1997; Longobardi, 2001a, cited in Öztürk, 2004). Turkish, lacking a definite article while having an indefinite article seems to be an exception to this generalization.

Nevertheless, following Lewis (1967) and Underhill (1976), I will assume that *bir* in Turkish corresponds to the indefinite article *a/an* in English.

2.3.1 Definitiness / Specificity in Turkish NPs

2.3.1.1. (In)definite Nouns

Turkish expresses the definite-indefinite distinction. An NP is definite when its referent is immediately identifiable by both the speaker and the hearer. A speaker uses an indefinite NP to refer to an entity which is not familiar to the hearer. The entity is being introduced into the discourse and only then can the hearer identify it. An NP that includes *bir* (a/an) or any of the other indefinite determiners (e.g., *birtakım* (some), *birçok* (a lot of / many), *biraz* (little), *hiçbir* (no, any)) is unambiguously indefinite (Aygen-Tosun, 1999; Dede, 1986; Göksel & Kerslake, 2005; Schroeder, 1999; Tura, 1973).

Definiteness in Turkish is encoded differently in subject and direct object NPs:

(18) Öğrenci saat-i bul-muş.
Student watch-ACC find-PAST-HEAR-3S
'The student found the watch.' (Tura, 1973: 135)

In (18), both non-case-marked subject and accusative-marked object are definite. Below is a summary of these facts of Turkish.

2.3.1.1.1. (In)definite Subject NPs

Subjects at the beginning of a sentence are definite unless overtly marked for indefiniteness with an indefinite article *bir*, or quantifiers such as *herhangi bir* (any) in Turkish (Erguvanlı, 1984).

(19) a. Çocuk yer-de yat-ıyor-du. (Definite)
Child ground-LOC lie-PROG-PAST- 3S
'The child was lying on the ground.'

b. Bir çocuk yer-de yat-ıyor-du. (Indefinite)
A child ground- LOC lie-PROG-PAST-3S
'A child was lying on the ground.' (Tura, 1973: 102-103)

As can be seen in the above example, the bare NP 'çocuk' in the subject position has a definite interpretation in (19a). The same NP marked with indefinite article 'bir' has an indefinite reading in (19b). In both cases, the NP has a neutral stress.

Consider now the following examples that illustrate how stress affects definiteness[3]:

(20) a. Çocuk <u>ağl-ıyor.</u>
Child cry-PROG-3S
'The child is crying.'

[3] Underscoring indicates stress in these examples.

b. Çocuk ağl-ıyor.

Child cry-PROG-3S

'There is (some) child-crying.'

c. Bir çocuk ağl-ıyor.

A child cry-PROG-3S

'There is a child crying.'

'What is crying is a child.'

d. Bir çocuk ağl-ıyor.

A child cry-PROG-3S

'A child is crying.'

'A certain child is crying.' (Tura, 1973:99-100)

In (20a), the NP is the topic because it does not carry the stress. The verb carries the neutral stress and is the comment. This sentence means that there is one specific child who has already been discussed prior to the utterance of this sentence. This NP is definite (Tura, 1973: 102).

In (20b), the incident of child-crying is the significant information and is the comment. The definiteness or indefiniteness of the subject is irrelevant. The utterance may be an answer to the question, 'What is this noise?' The NP is stressed, and it differentiates child-crying from woman-crying or dog-barking (Tura, 1973: 100).

In (20c), the indefinite article *bir* is used, and this sentence can be interpreted as 'a child is crying'. The NP is indefinite because it is new to both the speaker and

the hearer. However, the speaker intends to go on discussing the referent of the NP. The speaker may continue, for example, by saying:

Git anla bakalım kim.

'Go (and) find out (who).' (Tura, 1973: 101)

In the last example, in (20d), the NP is still marked with *bir*. However, this time, the stress is on the verb, and the verb functions as the comment of the sentence. The NP 'bir çocuk' is the topic of the sentence, and it has a partially definite or a partitive reading. The speaker may say this sentence by pointing to a child who is within the sight of both the speaker and the hearer (Tura, 1973: 102).

Now let us look at the following examples from Tura (1973:112) that illustrate how word order plays a role in determining (in)definiteness in Turkish. In (21a), the subject NP, 'mektup', is in the sentence-initial position and definite. In (21b), the bare subject NP is in the pre-verbal position. Therefore, it is interpreted as indefinite:

(21) a. *Mektup* dün Ankara'-dan gel-di. (Definite)
Letter yesterday Ankara-ABL come-PAST- 3S
'The letter came from Ankara yesterday.'

b. Dün Ankara'-dan *mektup* gel-di. (Indefinite)
Yesterday Ankara- ABL letter come-PAST
'There was a letter from Ankara yesterday.'

Indefinite subject NPs may have different interpretations when they are in the sentence-initial and pre-verbal position. Let us consider the following pair of sentences:

(22) a. Dün siz-i *bir öğretmen* ara-dı.
Yesterday you-ACC a teacher look for-PAST-3S
'A teacher wanted to see you yesterday.'
'The one who wanted to see you yesterday was a teacher.'
'There was a teacher who wanted to see you yesterday.'

b. *Bir öğretmen* dün siz-i ara-dı.
A teacher yesterday you-ACC look for-PAST-3S
'A teacher wanted to see you yesterday.'
'A certain teacher wanted to see you.'
'One of the teachers wanted to see you yesterday.'

(Tura, 1973: 113)

In (22a), the indefinite subject NP, 'bir öğretmen', is next to the verb and stressed. It distinguishes between a teacher or a doctor. The speaker may or may not know who that teacher is, and is only informing the hearer about the identity of the person who called the hearer, implying that s/he is going to give more information about this teacher. In (22b), the same subject NP is in the sentence-initial position and has neutral stress. Here, the speaker is partly or completely familiar with the NP in question and implies that the hearer may guess who this person is (Tura, 1973: 113).

Finally, the use of demonstrative pronouns gives the subject NPs a definite reading in both the sentence-initial and pre-verbal positions:

(23) a. Bu ihtiyar adam dün biz-e gel-di.
This old man yesterday we-DAT come-PAST-3S
'This old man came to visit us yesterday.'
(Underhill, 1976: 124)

b. Dün biz-e bu ihtiyar adam gel-di.
Yesterday we-ACC this old man come-PAST-3S
'This old man came to visit us yesterday.'
'It was this old man who came to visit us yesterday.'

2.3.1.1.2. (In)definite Object NPs

Case-marking plays a crucial role in encoding definiteness in direct object NPs in Turkish. For example, in sentence (24a) below, the accusative-marked NP is interpreted as definite, while the bare nominal in (24b) and the *bir*-marked bare nominal in (24c) are interpreted as indefinite.

(24) a. Murat kitab-ı oku-yor. (Definite)
Murat book-ACC read-PROG- 3S
'Murat is reading the book.'

b. Murat kitap oku-yor. (Indefinite)
Murat book read-PROG-3S

‘Murat is reading a book.’

‘Murat is book-reading.’

c. Murat bir kitap oku-yor. (Indefinite)

Murat a book read-PROG-3S

‘Murat is reading a book.’ (Erguvanlı, 1984:21-22)

In Turkish, while accusative case-marked direct objects can move freely within a sentence, direct objects without accusative case marking cannot. That is, if a direct object is not in the pre-verbal position, accusative case marking is necessary (Aygen-Tosun, 1999; Erguvanlı, 1984; Göksel & Kerslake, 2005; Ketrez, 2005; Tura, 1973). The following examples illustrate this point:

(25) a. Ben belki kitap oku-r-um.

I maybe book read-AOR-1S

‘I may read/do book reading.’

b. *Ben kitap belki okur-um.

I book maybe read-AOR-1S

c. Ben kitab-ı belki oku-r-um.

I book-ACC maybe read-AOR-1S

‘I may read the book.’ (Aygen-Tosun, 1999:1)

The following examples from Tura (1973:123) illustrate different forms in which Turkish object NPs may appear:

(26). a. Müdür araba iste-di.
President car ask for-PAST-1S
'The President asked for a car.'

b. Müdür bir araba iste-di.
President a car ask for-PAST-1S
'The President asked for a car.'

c. Müdür bir araba-yı iste-di.
President a car-ACC ask for-PAST-1S
'The President asked for a car.'

d. Müdür araba-yı iste-di.
President car-ACC ask for-PAST-1S
'The President asked for the car.'

In (26a), the NP does not identify a car at all but just refers to the class of cars. The referent or the quantity of the noun (one or two cars) does not have a significance for the speaker. The speaker simply asks for a car which is absolutely indefinite.

In (26b), the NP is marked with *bir,* and it refers to one (not two or three cars) indefinite car among the set of cars, and it is less indefinite than the NP in (26a). The

speaker may be signaling the introduction of an NP into the discourse which s/he will discuss further. The following sentences may be uttered by the speaker following this sentence in (26b):

Hemen geldi.
'It came right away.'

Hala gelecek.
'It will still come.'

Yokmuş.
'They said there weren't any.' (Tura, 1973:124-125)

In the sentence in (26c), the NP is accusative case-marked and has the indefinite article *bir*. It has an interpretation somewhere between definite (i.e., araba-yı in (26d)) and indefinite (bir araba in (26b)). The speaker signals some prior knowledge about the NP. It may have a partitive reading, and the speaker may refer to one car in a group of cars. It may also refer to a certain car in a group of cars. It is totally unknown to the hearer.

In the final sentence in (26d), the NP is marked with the accusative case marking, and it refers to a unique car for both the speaker and the hearer. This is the most definite NP (Tura, 1973: 127).

There are certain classes of NPs that are inherently definite. For example, proper names of people, places and institutions, most pronouns, pronominal

quantifiers, the interrogative *kim*(*ler*) 'who' are among these. Object NPs with definite determiners such as *bu, şu, o* are also definite:

(27) Osman'-ı / *Osman dün gör-dü-k. (Proper name)
Osman-ACC/*Osman yesterday see-PAST-1PL
'We saw Osman yesterday.'

(28) Murat sen-i / *sen seviyor. (Pronoun)
Murat you-ACC/*you love
'Murat loves you.'

(29) Ömer herkes-i/*herkes sinirlen-dir-di. (Pronominal quantifier)
Ömer everyone-ACC/*everyone get angry-CAUS-PAST-3S
'Ömer got on everyone's nerves.' (Göksel & Kerslake, 2005:371-372)

(30) Kim-ler-i/ *Kim-ler gör-üyor-sunuz? (Interrogative)
Who-P-ACC/ *Who-PL see-PROG-2PL
Who do you see (nowadays)?

(31) Bu pasta-yı/ *bu pasta beğen-me-di-m. (Demonstrative)
This cake-ACC/* this cake like-NEG-PAST-1SG
'I didn't like this cake.' (Kornfilt, 1997:313)

As illustrated earlier in Tura's (1973) examples, indefinite object NPs may occur without the accusative suffix in the pre-verbal position. They may occur with

the indefinite article ‘bir’. In these contexts, they do not refer to a particular entity but express new information:

(32) Çekmece-de bir defter bul-du-k.
Drawer-LOC a notebook find-PAST-1PL
‘We found a notebook in the drawer.’ (Göksel & Kerslake, 2005:373)

An NP that includes the plural suffix (33) or a cardinal numeral (34) is also considered indefinite unless a definite determiner is also present (35):

(33) Çekmece-de defter-ler bul-du-k.
Drawer- LOC notebook-PL find-PAST-1PL
‘We found notebooks in the drawer.’

(34) Çekmece-de dört (tane) defter bul-du-k.
Drawer-LOC four ENUM notebook find-PAST-1PL
‘We found four notebooks in the drawer.’
(Göksel & Kerslake, 2005:373)

(35) Çekmece-de bu dört (tane) defter-i bul-du-k. (Definite)
Drawer-LOC this four ENUM notebook-ACC find-PAST-1PL
‘We found these four notebooks in the drawer.’

In sum, NPs have a status of (in)definites depending on the relation between the speaker and the hearer with respect to the presence or absence of certain

presuppositions about the identity of an entity. Accusative case-marked object NPs without the indefinite article 'bir' are interpreted as definite (See example (26d)), whereas non-case-marked direct object NPs with, or without, any indefinite article may be interpreted as indefinite (See example (26a) and (26b)). Accusative case-marked direct object NPs with an indefinite article (See example (26c) may still be interpreted as indefinite.[4]

This last point is illustrated once more in the following examples:

(36) a. Kamyon kocaman köpeğ-i ezdi geçti.
dog-ACC
'The truck ran over the huge dog and went away.'

b. Kamyon kocaman bir köpeğ-i ezmiş geçmiş.
a dog-ACC
'The truck ran over a huge dog and went away.'

(Tura, 1973:126)

The accusative case-marked NP without the indefinite article *bir* implies that the speaker has some prior knowledge about the presence and uniqueness of the referent. However, this meaning is not available in the second sentence, where the accusative-marked NP appears with an indefinite article.

[4] Tura (1973:125) calls these 'quasi-indefinite'.

NPs marked with both *bir* and the accusative case are generally referential, and they are either totally or partially known by the speaker prior to the discourse, but totally unknown by the hearer (Tura, 1973: 127).

2.3.1.2. Specificity in Turkish

Specificity presupposes that an entity or a set of entities exist because of having been previously mentioned in the discourse. That is, when an NP is specific, both the speaker and the hearer are familiar with the entity in question (Aygen-Tosun, 1999; Enç, 1991; Fodor & Sag, 1982).

Turkish has been recognized as a language where overt case morphology has a direct impact on the [+specific] interpretations of the nouns (e.g., Aygen-Tosun, 1999; Dede, 1986; Enç, 1991; Erguvanlı, 1984; Göksel & Kerslake, 2005; Ketrez, 2005; Kornfilt, 1997; Tura, 1973). In Turkish, specificity is marked only on object NPs with the quantifier *bir* and the accusative marker. The following examples illustrate this point:

(37) a. Ben bir kitap oku-du-m.
I a book read-PAST-1S
'I read a book.'

b. Ben bir kitab-ı oku-du-m.
I a book-ACC read-PAST-1S
'I read one of the books.' (Aygen-Tosun, 1999:2)

In both of these sentences, the object NPs are indefinite. Nevertheless, in (39a), the NP is nonspecific but, in (39b), it is specific. In the following sentence in (39c), the NP is both definite and specific.

c. Ben kitab-ı oku-du-m.
I book-ACC read-PAST-1S
'I read the book.'

Following Enç (1991), I assume that all definite NPs are specific. As illustrated in previous examples in (37a) and (37b), indefinite NPs can be nonspecific or specific. The accusative case in object positions gives a specific interpretation to NPs, and its absence yields nonspecific interpretation in the case of indefinites which are marked with *bir*. This is illustrated once more in the examples below:

(38) a. Ali bir piyano-yu kiralamak ist-iyor. (Specific)
Ali one piano-ACC to rent want-PROG-3S
'Ali wants to rent a certain piano'

b. Ali bir piyano kiralamak ist-iyor. (Nonspecific)
Ali one piano to rent want-PROG-3S
'Ali wants to rent a piano.' (Enç, 1991:4-5)

In (40a), the indefinite NP marked with the accusative suffix 'bir piyano-yu' refers to a certain piano Ali has in mind. It implies that Ali's wish is directed toward a particular piano, and the NP has a specific reading. In (38b), however, the

indefinite NP ‘bir piyano’ does not refer to a specific piano. Ali has not seen and decided to rent a certain piano. Rather, he has a wish or intention to rent a piano. Therefore, it has a nonspecific interpretation. The sentence in (38a) above can be uttered in a context where it has been established that Ali has decided to take home two of the pianos in a showroom. If he decides that he can only afford to buy one and rent the second one, he can utter the sentence in (38a).

Besides such partitive reading, a presuppositional reading is also available in accusative-marked indefinite NPs. Consider the following example from İşsever (2003: 1040):

(39) Yalın üniversiteyi kazanırsa ne yapacak?
‘What will Yalın do if he is accepted to university?’

a. Bir fakir-i yemeğ-e götür-ecek-miş.
A poor-ACC meal-DAT take-FUT-HEAR-3S
‘He will take a poor person out for dinner.’

b. Bir çocuğ-u tepe-den tırnağ-a giydir-ecek-miş.
A child-ACC head-ABL nail-DAT clothe-FUT-HEAR-3S
‘He will clothe a child from head to foot.’

Nakipoğlu-Demiralp (2004:10) suggests that both presuppositional and partitive readings are possible in these sentences. If both the speaker and the hearer share the knowledge that there is a poor person and a child, then this gives us the presuppositional reading (Kelepir, 2001). In addition, the NPs here may refer to one

child or poor person from a set of children or poverty-stricken people. Nakipoğlu-Demiralp observes that when *bir* is not stressed in an NP, it is interpreted as a weak determiner, whereas, when it is stressed, it functions as a numeral. An unstressed indefinite NP induces a presuppositional reading. Under this interpretation, only one set of poor children who need help is presupposed. When *bir* is stressed, we get a numeral sense that induces a partitive, hence a specific reading.

Examples below, further illustrate the specific-nonspecific distinction in indefinite NPs in Turkish:

(40) a. Bir öğrenci-yi arı-yor-um. Bul-a-m-ıyor-um. (Specific)
A student-ACC look for-PROG-1S. Find-ABIL-NEG-PROG-1S
'I am looking for a student. I can't find him' (Specific)
(’I am looking for a student. *I can't find one’) (*Nonspecific)

b. Bir öğrenci arı-yor-um. Bul-a-m-ıyor-um.(Nonspecific)
A student look for-PROG-1S. Find-ABIL-NEG-PROG-1S
'I am looking for a student. I can't find him' (Specific)
'I am looking for a student. I can't find one' (Nonspecific)

(Dede, 1986:158)

In (40a), the speaker is talking about a particular student in his/her mind, and the nonspecific pronoun ‘one’ used in the discourse leads to ungrammaticality. However in (40b), the NP is not case-marked, and both specific and nonspecific interpretations are possible depending on the following utterances in the discourse (Dede, 1986).

Besides accusative case marking, other case markings can contribute to specificity. Examples below illustrate how ablative (41) and genitive case (42 and 43) mark definiteness and specificity (Öztürk, 2004: 37-38):

(41) Ali köpek-ten/*köpek kork-tu.
Ali dog-ABL/ *dog get/be afraid-PAST-3S
'Ali got afraid of the dog.'

(42) a. Kalem-in kutu-su
pencil-GEN box-1S
the box of the pencil

b. Kalem kutu-su
pencil box-1S
pencil box

(43) a. Ben- im/* Ben kalem-im
I-GEN/ * I pencil-1S

b. Ali-nin/ *Ali kalem-i
Ali-GEN/*Ali pencil-3S (Öztürk, 2004:37)

In (41), the ablative case-marked NP is definite and specific, and the absence of the ablative case marking leads to ungrammaticality. In the next example, in (42a), the genitive case leads to a definite and specific reading. Its absence forms a

nonspecific compound noun in (42b). In the last example (43), the genitive case is obligatory since the NPs are composed of definite and specific possessors such as pronouns (43a) and proper names (43b).

These examples suggest that, in Turkish, not only accusative case, but also other cases on the nouns interact with the referentiality of NPs. Nevertheless, in this thesis, I just focus on the accusative case marking as the corresponding form to the English definite article *the* in my discussion of English and Turkish facts within the context of definiteness and specificity.

To sum up, the status of (non)specific NPs depends on the perceptions of the speaker and the hearer with respect to the familiarity of the referent of the NP in question. An object NP marked with the accusative case is specific (see example (37c)). An accusative case-marked object NP that is not marked with a stressed *bir* has a presuppositional reading, whereas if it is marked with a stressed *bir*, it has a partitive and specific reading (see example (39)).

So far I have discussed how Turkish NPs can have (in)definite and (non)specific interpretations.

Recall that, in English, lexical properties of nouns (i.e., mass/count and singular/plural) play a role in classification of articles in [± definite] and [±specific] contexts. The article use varies in these contexts. While *the* can be used in both singular and plural [+count] as well as [-count] contexts, the indefinite article *a* can be used in singular [+count] nouns as well as [-count; -mass] nouns. The zero article may appear in [+count, -singular] and [-count, -mass] and [-count, +mass] contexts.

Now, let us look at how these features are exemplified in Turkish. [+count] nouns occur with the numeral *bir,* or in the bare form as illustrated below:

(44) a. Nil bir elbise, iki şapka al-dı.
Nil a dress two hat buy-PAST-3S
'Nil bought one dress and two hats.'

b. Nil Ø elbise al-dı.[5]
Nil dress buy-PAST-3S
'Nil bought a dress/dresses.'

Turkish [-count, +mass] nouns can occur with the numeral *bir* or in the bare form like [+count] nouns. In fact, they can be treated as [+count] nouns without any restrictions.[6]

While the use of the indefinite article *a/an* before mass nouns yields ungrammaticality in English, it is not uncommon to put *bir* before mass nouns in Turkish:

(45) a. Mobilya/bir mobilya
Ø furniture/*a furniture

b. Ödev/bir ödev
Ø homework/*a homework

5 The bare [+count] noun 'dress' in (44b) may have both singular and plural interpretation (Kornfilt, 1997; Tura, 1973; Underhill, 1976). When it has the accusative marker it is interpreted as singular:
Nil elbise-yi al-dı.
Nil dress-ACC buy-PAST-3S
'Nil bought the dress.'

6 [+mass] nouns such as *bilgi* (information) can also be pluralized like [+count] nouns (e.g., *bilgi-ler* (information-PL)). This is ungrammatical in English (*informations).

c. Öğüt/ bir öğüt

Ø advice/*an advice

d. Haber/bir haber

Ø news/*a news

e. Bilgi/bir bilgi

Ø information/*an information

The numeral *bir* is frequently used instead of the container or measurement in Turkish:

(46) Nil bir su iç-ti.

Nil a water drink-PAST-3S

'Nil drank a glass/bottle of water.'

Similarly, Turkish [-count, -mass] nouns can also occur with the numeral *bir* or in the bare form:

(47) Anlaşmazlık/ Bir anlaşmazlık çöz-ül-dü.

Disagreement/ A disagreement solve-PASS-PAST

'The disagreement/A disagreement was solved.'

Another distinction between English and Turkish is that some [+count] nouns in Turkish can easily be conceived as mass:

(48) a. Birkaç kitap al-dı-m.
A few book buy-PAST-1S
'I bought a few books.'

b. Biraz kitap al-dı-m.
A little book buy-PAST-1S
'*I bought a little book.' (Tura, 1973: 90)

c. Biraz su iç-ti-m.
A little water drink-PAST-1S
'I drank a little water.'

In all count, mass and abstract nouns, the accusative marker denotes a definite reading as illustrated below:

(49) a. Nil elbise-yi al-dı.
Nil dress-ACC buy-PAST-3S
'Nil bought the dress.'

b. Nil su-yu iç-ti.
Nil water-ACC drink-PAST-3S
'Nil drank the water.'

c. Anlaşmazlığ-ı çöz-dü-ler.
Disagreement-ACC solve-PAST-3PL

They solved the disagreement.

In general, there seems to be no clear syntactic distinction between mass, count and abstract nouns in Turkish.

To sum up, in this chapter, I have discussed the article systems of English and Turkish. First, I reviewed the relevant features (i.e., definiteness and specificity) that govern article choice in English. I also explained the use of articles in different NP environments classified according to the features of [±specific reference] and [±hearer knowledge]. Then, I discussed relevant Turkish facts corresponding to the classification of different article environments in English. Now, I can summarize the facts of English and Turkish as follows:

Table 2.3

Summary of Turkish and English facts

Context	**Type of NP**	**English**	**Form**	**Turkish**	**Form**
[+SR, +HK]	Subject	*The boy* was lying on the ground.	The	*Çocuk* yerde yatıyordu.	∅
	Object	Murat read *the book* .	The	Murat *kitab-ı* okudu.	NP-ACC
[+SR, -HK]	Subject	*A boy* was lying on the floor.	A/An	*Bir çocuk* yerde yatıyordu.	Bir+NP
		A dog ate the whole cake.	A/An	Bütün pastayı *köpek* yedi.	∅
	Object	Murat read *a book.*	A/An	Murat *bir kitab-ı* okudu.	Bir+NP-ACC
[-SR, -HK]	Subject	*A truck* would roll over in this road.	A/An	Bu yolda *kamyon* devrilir.	∅
		An expert could have helped.	A/An	*Bir uzman* yardim edebilirdi.	Bir+NP
		Accidents might have blocked the traffic.	∅	*Kazalar* trafiği kapamış olabilir.	∅
	Object	Murat wants to buy *a car.*	A/An	Murat *bir araba* almak istiyor.	Bir +NP
		Murat wants to buy *a car.*	A/An	Murat *araba* amak istiyor.	∅
		Murat wants to write *long novels.*	∅	Murat *uzun romanlar* yazmak istiyor.	∅

In the next chapter, I will discuss the findings of previous L2 acquisition research of the English article system.

CHAPTER 3

L2 ACQUISITION OF THE ARTICLE SYSTEM IN ENGLISH

3.1. Introduction

There has been an interest in the study of L2 acquisition of articles for the last two decades and most of the studies are conducted in L2 English (Bickerton, 1981; Butler, 2002; Chaudron & Parker, 1990; Huebner, 1983, 1985; Ionin & Wexler, 2002; Ionin et al., 2003; Leung, 2001; Master, 1987, 1994, 1997, 2002; Parrish, 1987; Robertson, 2000; Thomas, 1989; Yoon, 1993; Young, 1996; White, 2003b). It has been observed that learners have problems in acquisition of articles in the L2. These problems occur in the form of omission or substitution. These errors do seem to persist, particularly in L2 learners whose L1 does not have an article system.

Articles such as *a/an* and *the* are the most commonly used words in English, and yet the use of articles is in fact rather complex. Part of the complexity may be due to the fact that articles are much required and used very frequently in English sentences. They are reported to be among the most frequently occurring words in English (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). The excessive requirement of articles makes it difficult for L2 learners to monitor their article use and apply the rules about article use at a conscious level (Master, 1997). For instance, it is especially difficult for L2 learners to consciously monitor their performance in on-line language production. Another problem is that these forms are usually unstressed and difficult to hear. They are also given less importance in spoken communication as article misuse does not impede communication (Master, 1994). Yet, another problem for L2 learners is that the article system loads multiple functions onto a single item (Master, 1987; Young, 1996). In the following paragraph, the complexity of form-function relations is exemplified. *The* is used three times with three different

meanings such as uniqueness (*the critical- period hypothesis*), generic reference (*the brain*), and anaphoric reference (*the idea*).

> "Chapter 4 of *Biological Foundations of Language* presented what has since been called *the critical-period hypothesis*. It suggested that *the brain* is able to learn *a primary language* during a certain early period, and not later on, and it proposed physiological explanations of why this might be so. Lenneberg's innovation lay in *those explanations*; the idea itself had been around for a while." (Rymer, 1993 cited in Young, 1996:136).

As can be seen in the above paragraph, the functions of *the* and *a/an* may overlap with each other and with other linguistic forms. The generic meaning of *the* in *the critical-period hypothesis* is very similar to the generic meaning of *a* in *a primary language*. The anaphoric meaning of *the* is expressed by the demonstrative *those* in *those explanations*.

A further difficulty for learners is the relationship between noun countability and article use (Butler, 2002; Master, 1994; Young, 1996). This is illustrated below:

> "Piaget saw the growth of *language* as tied to the growth of *thought*, as though it were *a branch* on the cognitive plant. Chomsky inclined to see *language learning* and *cognitive development* as *independent plants* in *a common garden.*" (Rymer, 1993 cited in Young, 1996:136).

In this paragraph, the singular indefinite NPs are used with the indefinite article *a*, such as *a branch* and *a common garden*. The noncount indefinite NPs take the *zero* article (*language, thought, language learning* and *cognitive development*) as well as plural indefinite NPs *(independent plants*).

To sum up, learners have to consider this complex interplay between multiple functions to arrive at the correct choice of article.

While much work has been devoted to article use in English, there is still no consensus as to what underlies article choice in L2 English. L2 research has so far tried to identify contexts for articles and then investigated learners' production of

articles in those environments. Many studies on the acquisition of English articles have used Bickerton's (1981) and Huebner's (1983) taxonomy in classifying the nouns. As discussed earlier, this taxonomy is basically based on referentiality and identifiability of nouns by the listener. The relevant features in this classification are [±specific reference] and [±hearer knowledge].

Below, I will summarize some of the earlier L2 studies on the acquisition of English articles and discuss their findings.

3.2. Earlier Studies

Huebner's (1983) analysis is the first in-depth study of the acquisition of English articles. He carried out a one-year longitudinal case study of a Hmong speaker acquiring L2 English in an untutored setting in the USA. Free speech data were collected to observe the acquisition of the definite article *the*. It was found that the participant acquired the definite article *the* relatively quickly.[7] In general, there was a high occurrence of *the* in obligatory contexts starting from the first weeks. Nevertheless, a lower rate of *the* has been reported in the nouns in subject positions compared to the predicate positions. Within the first six weeks, the participant used *the* before 90% of all nouns. The amount of overuse first decreased in [–SR, –HK] contexts around week 21, while it persisted in [+HK] contexts which involve referential definites and generics (i.e., [+SR, +HK] and [–SR, +HK]). Around month six, there was an overuse of *the* in all [+SR] contexts. At the end of the first year, the participant went back to using *the* exclusively in [+HK] contexts, repeating the tendency to equate *the* with [+HK] contexts. At this stage, *a/an* was not present.

[7] The participant pronounced *the* as *da* (a phonological approximation of *the*).

In the follow-up study 20 months later, Huebner (1985) found that the indefinite article *a/an* began to be used in both [+SR, -HK] and [-SR, -HK] contexts. With respect to the use of *the*, the participant continued to substitute *the* in [+SR, -HK] contexts that require *a*/*an.* There were few omission errors. Huebner suggested that there was systematicity in the acquisition of articles. The learner systematically changed hypotheses over time about the use of the definite article and started using the indefinite article much later.

In another case study, Parrish (1987) studied the acquisition of articles in a Japanese learner of English over a period of four months. The participant had been living in the USA for three weeks and was at the beginning level when data collection began. She had received six years of English instruction in Japan before her arrival in the USA. Oral production data were collected through story telling and picture description. Parrish found that the rate of article omission in the contexts that require *the* and *a/an* was high. Overall, the participant used *the* in 67.9 % in [+SR, +HK] contexts, while omitting articles in the remaining 32.1% cases. There was an overuse of *the* at a rate of 9.4% in [+SR, -HK] contexts, whereas no such overuse was observed for *the* in [–SR, -HK] and [–SR, +HK] contexts. In other words, there was a tendency to equate *the* with [+SR] contexts. *A/an* emerged in later stages and correctly appeared in [+SR, -HK] and [–SR, -HK] contexts, revealing a tendency to equate *a* with the [–HK] contexts. Overall, the indefinite article *a/an* was used less frequently and less accurately than *the*.

In addition to these case studies, some other studies examined the article acquisition in different groups of L2 learners at different proficiency levels with different L1s.

For example, Master's (1987) pseudolongitudinal study looked at the acquisition of articles in spontaneous speech at four different proficiency levels (i.e., level 1, level 2, level 3, level 4) in five different L1 groups (German, Spanish, Japanese, Chinese and Russian). Master reported that omission errors were prevalent in the early stages of L2 acquisition, at least for learners whose L1s lack articles (Japanese, Chinese and Russian). Omission errors decreased with proficiency. The first context in which overt articles were used consistently is [+SR, +HK], regardless of the learner's L1. The findings revealed that learners whose L1s lack articles demonstrated a slight tendency to overuse *the* in [-SR, +HK] contexts. However in [-SR, -HK] contexts, there was no evidence of *the* overuse, except for a single participant who produced *the* in front of all nouns. Therefore, Master suggested that the learners linked *the* with [+HK]. For all L1 groups, the acquisition of *a/an* seemed to occur independently of *the* and appear only after *the* is largely mastered. Unlike *the* and the *zero* article*, a/an* was overused much less frequently.

In another pseudolongitudinal study, Thomas (1989) examined the acquisition of English articles by learners in three proficiency levels. The study included L1s with an article system (Greek, Spanish, Italian, French and German) as well as languages without an article system (Japanese, Chinese, Korean and Finnish). A collaborative picture description task was used with each pair of participants. Thomas observed that the most common error among L2 learners across all proficiency levels was overgeneralization of the *zero* article. This was observed particularly in learners whose L1s lack articles. However, overall, the learners acquired the definite article *the* relatively early and correctly used it in the [+SR, +HK] contexts. Nevertheless, on average, learners whose L1s have an article system used *the* correctly at about a rate of 97%, while this rate dropped to 81% in learners

whose L1s lack an article system. The learners in general also overgeneralized the use of *the* in the first mention contexts [+SR, -HK], but not in [–SR, -HK] contexts. Thomas hypothesized that L2 learners initially associate *the* with the feature [+SR]. The accurate use of *a/an* in [–SR, -HK] contexts was delayed across all L1 groups. Overall, the findings suggest that appropriate use of all articles was better in more proficient learners. That is, knowledge of articles increased with proficiency. Nevertheless, L1 influence was also apparent. Learners with an article system in their L1 (French and German learners) appeared to be more successful than Japanese, Chinese, Korean and Finnish learners in their use of articles.

From these early studies, some tentative generalizations can be drawn regarding the acquisition of articles in L2 English. Overall, Huebner, Parrish, Master and Thomas all point out that *the* emerges earlier than the indefinite article *a/an,* and that *the* is overgeneralized. Nevertheless, there has not been an agreement on the contexts in which *the*-overuse is observed. Huebner and Master suggest that *the* is associated with the [+HK] contexts, whereas Parrish and Thomas suggest that it is associated with the [+SR] contexts. Thomas (1989) points out that findings of Huebner and Master need more examination. It seems that *the* overuse in [+HK] contexts stems from the high occurrence rate of *the* in the generic [-SR, +HK] and referential definite [+SR, +HK] contexts. Generics had occurred very infrequently in Huebner's and Master's data, and they did not have comparable standards in defining and analyzing generics. Therefore, their suggestion regarding the association of *the* with the [+HK] contexts is questionable. With respect to the omission of *the* and *a/an*, it is reported that omission was the most common error and considerably higher for learners whose L1s lack articles. Therefore, it is suggested that L2 learners with an article system in their L1 perform better than those who do not. In all four studies

mentioned so far, the appropriate use of articles increases as proficiency in the L2 advances.

3.3. Recent Studies

In recent years, there has been a revival of interest in the L2 acquisition of articles. Recent studies have examined this issue, mostly within a generative perspective. In these studies, the acquisition of articles has been interpreted in relation to the acquisition of functional categories and their morphological realizations. They discussed the variable use of articles from the perspective of L1 effects and UG access (e.g., Ionin et al. 2003; Leung, 2001; Snape, 2002; Robertson, 2000; Young, 1996; White, 2002, 2003b, 2003c). Generally, these studies showed that L2 learners from various L1 backgrounds are able to acquire the English articles, but demonstrate variability in the use of articles. Despite inconsistent suppliance and variable use observed even in the end state L2 grammar, the errors did not seem to be random. The learners' article use was within the constraints of UG, and they were found to have knowledge of related abstract syntactic properties.

For example, Robertson (2000) examined the use of English definite and indefinite articles in advanced L2 learners with L1 Taiwanese and L1 Mandarin, languages without an article system. The data came from elicited production task involving collaborative problem solving. The participants sat in pairs and described a geometrical diagram so that the other participant could reproduce it on a paper. The nature of the task elicited a large number of articles. Inaccurate responses mostly consisted of omission errors (22%) rather than substitution (misuse of a definite article for an indefinite article or vice versa). Interestingly, the rate of omission was

higher in echo contexts than it was in non-echo contexts.[8] Robertson notes that the frequent omissions in echo contexts stems from the nature of interaction rather than a variable use of articles. In the echo contexts, the information encoded in the article could be recovered from the immediate situations, and they did not need the articles pragmatically. Overall, the participants were more accurate in the definite contexts (83.2%) compared to indefinite contexts (around 77.9%). Robertson pointed out that these speakers neither lacked articles nor used them randomly. Therefore, Robertson concluded that the learners had the knowledge of articles, but it was difficult for them to map the articles onto the abstract Determiner Phrase (DP) features [± definite].

Leung (2001) investigated the acquisition of [±definite] feature in L1 Cantonese learners of English who are at the L2 end-state.[9] A picture description and a written production task were used. Leung found high accuracy rate in the suppliance of the articles in obligatory contexts. Nevertheless, learners were more accurate in the use of indefinite articles than definite articles (99.5% and 85%, respectively). They also tended to substitute *a/an* in some *the* contexts. Leung concluded that the end-state learners are able to acquire the article system to a great extent even if they are not exemplified in their L1.

Another end-state study was a longitudinal case study conducted by White (2003b). The participant was an L1 Turkish speaker of English and had been living in Canada for ten years at the time of testing. Spontaneous production data were collected from five interviews conducted over a period of twenty months. The data were also accompanied by a grammaticality judgment task. Findings revealed that

[8] Echo contexts are defined as the contexts where the NP is repeated by the hearer functioning as a comprehension check. They are not identical in the form to the first NP. E.g.,
Speaker A: Okay? Er, under, un, under the blue line, go(t) one box, rectangular.
Speaker B: Rectangular box.
Speaker A: Er, red color, rectangular (Robertson, 2000: 156).

[9] In this study, Leung looked at the [±definite] feature in the initial state of L3 French. I only report on the findings about the participants' L2 English.

the Turkish speaker had more problems with the suppliance of indefinite articles. The participant omitted the indefinite articles at a rate of 40% in obligatory contexts. White predicted that the participant might use *a/an* in specific indefinite contexts, just as Turkish *bir* is used, and the *zero* article in nonspecific indefinite contexts as in Turkish. However, White found no evidence to support these predictions. Another prediction was that the participant might associate the definite article *the* with [+specific] contexts since Turkish realizes specificity morphologically. However, there was no relation between specificity and the use of the definite article either. The participant supplied *the* at a rate of 72% in obligatory contexts. In fact, the participant was very sensitive to [±definite] distinction and never used definite articles in place of indefinites (or vice versa). The participant's performance on the grammaticality judgment task also confirmed that she had knowledge of the definite/indefinite distinction. In contrast to some earlier studies (e.g., Huebner, 1983; Thomas, 1989; Leung, 2001), White's study did not reveal any substitution errors. What is interesting is that the omission errors are observed not only in definite contexts, but also in indefinite contexts. Nevertheless, unlike the spontaneous production data, in the grammaticality judgment task, the participant's performance in the use of definite and indefinite articles was very accurate.

In a recent study, Ionin et al. (2003) set out to investigate the overuse of *the* reported in previous research (e.g., Huebner, 1983; Master, 1987; Parrish, 1987; Thomas, 1989). Recall that there has been no consensus in the literature as to why *the* is overused. The participants were intermediate and advanced L2 English learners with L1 Korean and L1 Russian. They were asked to fill in the blanks corresponding to a target article in short dialogues and to provide written answers to five English questions. Results revealed that *the* was used in specific indefinite contexts at a much

higher rate than in nonspecific indefinite contexts. The participants were also quite accurate in using *the* with definites and *a/some/Ø* with nonspecific indefinites. The findings suggest that higher overuse of *the* in specific indefinites is directly tied to the learners tendency to associate *the* with the feature specificity. The researchers explained that definiteness and specificity are the two settings governing the article choice within UG. The learners have access to both settings, but do not know which setting is correct. As a result, they fluctuate between the two settings in article spectrum. When they choose the specificity setting, they are in conflict in the specific indefinites and incorrectly use *the.* With respect to the effect of proficiency, it has been reported that the advanced learners in general were more accurate in the article use than the intermediate learners.

In sum, recent studies on article use did not reveal similar results with respect to the form of errors. For example, while Robertson (2000) reported a high omission rate for *the* and *a/an,* White (2003b) reported relatively more omission of the indefinite article *a/an*. Neither of them reported substitution errors. That is, their learners did not substitute definite articles for indefinites or vice versa (cf. Leung, 2001). Nevertheless, all of these studies revealed that learners, even if their L1 lacks an article system, are sensitive to [±definite] or [±specific] distinction, and their performance increases substantially in the L2 end state. A general conclusion of these studies is that persistent errors in article use in the end state L2 do not seem to reflect a deficit in syntactic categories related to determiners, but reflect some type of morphological mapping problem.

In the present study, I will examine the acquisition of the English article system by native Turkish speakers in order to identify contexts in which learners would potentially show more variability in the use of English articles. The findings

will also be analyzed with respect to any potential L1 transfer effect. Since it is important for us to see whether L2 acquisition of articles demonstrates any considerable development, I have included two groups of L2 learners with different proficiency levels. The following chapter presents the details of the study conducted to investigate the above mentioned issue.

CHAPTER 4
STUDY AND RESULTS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter describes the study which was carried out to examine the L2 acquisition of three English articles by Turkish learners. This study compares the choice of articles in different semantic contexts in two groups of learners: beginner and advanced. Before I discuss the details of the study, I would like to present my predictions.

4.2. Predictions

As mentioned earlier, this study looks at the development of the L2 article system in L1 Turkish learners. Given that Turkish does not have a distinct definite article, I predict that Turkish learners will demonstrate omission errors in contexts that require the definite article *the*. I also predict that there will be more omission errors in subject positions requiring the definite article *the* as the sentence-initial bare subject nouns in Turkish are inherently definite. In object positions, however, I expect more accurate use of *the*. This is because Turkish realizes a specificity distinction morphologically for object NPs. That is, accusative-marked direct objects are definite in Turkish. Therefore, I predict that L1 Turkish learners will demonstrate more sensitivity in marking specificity on direct objects NPs. With respect to the use of the indefinite article *a/an* in subject and object positions, I predict that there will be less omission errors in required contexts as there is an article *bir* in Turkish which partially marks indefiniteness. Therefore, compared to *the*, learners are predicted to be more accurate in suppliance of the indefinite article *a/an* in obligatory contexts. Recall that bare nominals (nouns with a *zero* article) can also be interpreted as indefinite in Turkish. Therefore, in indefinite contexts, a relatively higher use of *zero*

article may be found. That is, since Turkish (similar to English) may realize indefinite contexts through the use of a *zero* article or *a/an*, Turkish learners of English might fluctuate between *a/an* and *zero* articles in these contexts. If there is a tendency among Turkish learners to omit articles (definite or indefinite) altogether, this would automatically give better results for indefinite contexts that require the *zero* article. This would, of course, give the impression that Turkish learners are better in selecting *zero* articles compared to *a/an* in indefinite contexts. Nevertheless, I expect that the correct use of all articles will increase with proficiency. Therefore, I expect to find higher accuracy rate in the advanced learners.

4.3. Methodology

4.3.1. Participants

There were two groups of native Turkish speakers who volunteered to take part in the present study. The first group consisted of 20 adult learners who were attending the School of Foreign Languages at Boğaziçi University in Istanbul. Their level of proficiency was determined by the language school.[10] According to the results of the placement test they were classified as beginner learners. The mean age in this group was 19.1.

The second group consisted of 20 senior students of the Department of Foreign Language Education at Boğaziçi University.[11] The mean age in this group

[10] In this group, 15 participants attended preparatory classes in their high schools and had had English instruction in their high schools for 6.4 years on average before they enrolled in the university. However, no one of the 20 participants had been to an English speaking country. One participant was an advanced speaker of German.

[11] With respect to their proficiency level, they were believed to be advanced learners of English since they had already passed the Boğaziçi University English Proficiency Test and were senior students in the Department of Foreign Language Education. 14 of them also attended the preparatory school in the School of Foreign Languages at Boğaziçi University. Only one of them had been to England (for one year).

was 22. No one was fluent in any other third language. Individual information about the participants is given in Appendix A.

4.3.2. Tasks

In second language acquisition research, elicited speech production through picture description and written production tasks are commonly used data collection techniques. In this study, three different tasks were used to elicit contexts where L2 learners would use English articles: a fill-in-the-article, a written production and an elicited oral production task. In order to be able to elicit comparable contexts for article use across participants, spontaneous speech was not used in this study. Instead, each participant was asked to describe the same set of pictures to elicit similar context types.

The tasks were piloted with two beginner and two advanced learners of English.[12] The tests were also piloted with two native English speakers. Testing took place in two sessions in a classroom environment. Participants were first asked to fill out a language background questionnaire (See Appendix B). The elicited oral production task was carried out individually in a separate meeting with each participant. Subsequent to this first task, the written production and the fill-in-the article tasks were given in small groups or singly. The fill-in-the-article task was always given last so that the learners did not realize that they were being tested on article use. The first two tests were not timed[13], but the participants were given 15 minutes to complete the third test.[14] (See Appendices C, D, E for the Tasks 1, 2 and 3, respectively.) [15] The participants were given instruction before each task (the tests

[12] These learners were not included in the study.
[13] The written and the picture description tasks lasted for about half an hour each.
[14] When I piloted this task, it took the participants 12-15 minutes to complete it. Once they were finished, they were not supposed to go back and change their answers. Therefore, a time limit was given.
[15] Appendix E has sample pictures the participants were asked to describe.

also included written instructions). The participants were not allowed to use dictionaries during the testing session.

Let us now look at each individual task.

4.3.2.1. Fill-in-the-article Task

The test consisted of eighty items which were contextualized in 50 short dialogues that contained slots to be filled in with an article. The dialogues were constructed with the help of an experienced native English language teacher. The items were not given in isolation but in contexts, since the interpretation of nouns or NPs (hence the required article) may change depending on the contexts. Some slots might have been filled in with more than one article. In order to avoid such ambiguous cases, dialogues were contextualized so that the participants would understand the situations clearly.

Following Bickerton's (1983) taxonomy, three different contexts were created in these dialogues. These are [+Specific Reference, +Hearer Knowledge], [+Specific Reference, -Hearer Knowledge] and [-Specific Reference, -Hearer Knowledge]. As mentioned earlier, [-Specific Reference, +Hearer Knowledge] (i.e., generics) were not included in this study. Participants were instructed to read through each dialogue carefully and fill in the blanks with an article (*a/an, the, or* the *zero* article) they preferred. Article use in subject and object positions was analyzed separately. A total of 80 blanks were distributed evenly in five contexts (See Appendix F, for distribution of each article across five contexts). The orders of the items in the test were truly random. The full test can be found in Appendix C. In the following section, some test items are presented.

1. [+Specific Referent, +Hearer Knowledge] (+SR, +HK)

Recall that, in this context, irrespective of the lexical properties of the noun (mass/count, singular/plural), only the definite article *the* is allowed. The following examples illustrate the use of *the* in subject and object positions, respectively.

(50) On the phone:

Wife: Hi, honey. I just had a little accident. Nothing serious and no one was hurt. ____ C/car is alright.

Husband: What happened?

Wife: Well, I hit a garbage truck.

(51) At home:

Mother: Did anyone feed _____ cat today?

Daughter: I did. Why?

Mother: He looks hungry.

2. [+Specific Referent, -Hearer Knowledge] (+SR, -HK)

Recall that, in this context, singular count nouns take the indefinite article *a/an*. The following examples illustrate the use of *a/an* in subject and object positions, respectively.

(52) Alex: How will you do your Physics project?

Stefan: ____ F/friend is going to help me. She is an assistant at the Physics Department.

(53) Anthony: What does your wife do?

Dave: She runs ____ multinational company.

Recall that, in this context, mass nouns and plural count nouns take the *zero* article. The following examples illustrate the use of the *zero* article in subject and object positions, respectively.

(54) Laura: How was the restaurant?

Sara: We were disappointed. ____ C/chicken was on the menu, but apparently they had run out of it out before we arrived.

(55) Lucy: I heard that the rector's proposal was turned down. Do you know why it was rejected?

Joan: Yeah, he proposed ____ very radical changes to some of the departments.

3. [-Specific Referent, -Hearer Knowledge] (-SR, -HK)

In this context, singular nouns take the indefinite article *a/an*. The following examples illustrate the use of *a/an* in subject and object positions, respectively.

(56) Mr. Wilson: I'm having problems with my business partner.

Mr. Roberts: What's the problem?

Mr. Wilson: He doesn't want to sign the contract.

Mr. Roberts: Well, ____ lawyer might help.

(57) Sales Assistant: May I help you?

Mrs. Brown: Yes, please! I'm looking for ____ coat.

Sales Assistant: Do you have something specific in mind?

Recall that, in this context, plural count nouns and mass nouns take the *zero* article. The following examples illustrate the use of the *zero* article in subject and object positions, respectively.

(58) Victim: I have just been burgled! ____ C/criminals are taking over the city, and you are doing nothing to catch them!

Officer: Right, but don't forget that we are in Istanbul.

(59) Customer: I would like to buy a study desk. Can you help me?

Sales Assistant: Certainly, madam. Do you prefer ____ modern furniture?

4.3.2.2. Written Production Task

In this task, participants were asked to answer in writing three questions on different topics.[16] They were asked to write a one-paragraph essay for each topic. This task was designed to supplement the other two tasks. The hypothetical nature of the questions in this task was able to elicit mostly nouns with no specific reference (i.e. –SR, -HK). There was no time limit, and the participants completed this task in about 30-40 minutes. For each essay, contexts (i.e., [+SR, +HK], [+SR, -HK], [-SR,

[16] The topics given were:
1) What do you plan to do after you graduate from university?
2) Tomorrow is your last day on earth. How would you like to spend it?
3) Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of keeping secrets from your girl/boyfriend. Is honesty always the best policy?

-HK]) were identified separately and participants' suppliance of articles in each context was counted and quantified. An experienced native English language teacher checked all the essays and verified the researcher's judgments in assessing learners' use of the articles.

4.3.2.3. Elicited Oral Production Task (Picture Description)

In addition to metalinguistic judgment (Task 1) and written production task (Task 2), an elicited oral production task was also given to participants. I was interested in examining whether correct article suppliance would change as an artifact of the task. Participants were presented ten set of pictures which were printed in black and white. The pictures represented various scenes depicting motions of people and various objects. For example, in one picture, burglars break into a house when the family is at dinner, and then they get caught by the police. Another picture shows what a rabbit does daily in a week.[17] Participants were instructed to give as many details as possible in their descriptions. Each participant talked about the pictures for about 25 minutes in total. Data were recorded and transcribed.

In transcriptions, there were certain procedural standards that were followed. For example, following Bickerton (1981), Huebner (1983) and Parrish (1987), equative NPs such as 'This is a restaurant' have been classified as [–SR, -HK]. Substitution errors such as *a* suppliance in *an* contexts were ignored. That is, I was not particularly interested in whether or not the participants were following the rule requiring the use of *a* before consonants and *an* before vowels. I discarded the instances where identification of an article was uncertain, or where it was unclear

[17] The researcher told the participants that she was not familiar with the pictures in question. They sat at a table in a way that the pictures were out of the researcher's sight at the moment of the learner's description of pictures.

whether a given sound represented an article or a hesitation morpheme.[18] I ignored grammar errors regarding tense, gender agreement, and prepositions as long as the content was clear.

Moreover, some NP environments have been excluded from the analysis. The first is the 'existential use' of an NP, such as 'There is a couple' and 'They have got a grandpa'.[19] Following Huebner (1983), Robertson (2000) and Leung (2001), commonly used expressions such as 'in the morning, at home, the same woman, in hospital, at school, in the middle of, and ranking adjectives such as 'the first table, the most beautiful girl' were also excluded.

In coding the data collected in this task, three different contexts for article use (i.e., [+SR, +HK]; [+SR, -HK]; [-SR, -HK]) were identified, and learners' use of articles was counted in each context. NPs in subject and object positions were counted separately. In addition, direct objects and prepositional objects[20] were differentiated, and only NPs occurring in direct object positions were included in the analysis.

As in the written production task, an experienced native English language teacher checked all the transcriptions and verified the researcher's judgments in assessing learners' use of the articles in this production task.

[18] This term is used in Robertson (2000) to indicate an unclear article produced by the learner which is difficult to classify as an indefinite article or a filler sound.

[19] Including such examples could have distorted the analysis since learners seemed to be very good at using these structures. They seem to have learnt certain expressions as prefabricated patterns. For example, Robertson (2000) noted that the highest accuracy rate (95.1%) in his data was in the existential utterances.

[20] Below sentences taken from a student transcript illustrates the two types of objects:
Direct object: We see *an ambulance*.
Object of preposition: The guys seem to carry the boy *into the ambulance.*

4.4. Results

4.4.1. Fill-in-the-article Task

Overall, results of the first task are given in Table 4.1 below.[21] The rate of the correct suppliance for each category is highlighted. Wherever there is a statistically significant difference between the two groups, the p-values are given in the relevant box in the table.

Table 4.1
Fill-in-the-article task results

		Article Supplied by the Learners		
Context	**Article Required**	**A/An**	**The**	**Ø**
+SR, +HK				
Beginner learners n=20	The	63/319 (19.75%)	**234/319 (73.35%)**	22/319 (6.90%)
Advanced learners n=20		7/320 (2.19%)	**309/320 (96.56%)**	4/320 (1.25%)
			p < 0.01	
+SR, -HK				
Beginner learners	A/An	**251/320 (78.44%)**	43/320 (13.44%)	26/320 (8.13%)
Advanced learners		**287/320 (89.69 %)**	18/320 (5.63%)	15/320 (4.69%)
		p < 0.05		
+SR, -HK				
Beginner learners	Ø	44/318 (13.84%)	76/318 (23.90%)	**198/318 (62.26%)**
Advanced learners		15/320 (4.69%)	78/320 (24.38%)	**227/320 (70.94%)**
				p < 0.05
-SR, -HK				
Beginner learners	A/An	**221/319 (69.28%)**	51/319 (15.99%)	47/319 (14.73%)
Advanced learners		**251/319 (78.68%)**	23/319 (7.21%)	45/319 (14.11%)
		p < 0.05		
-SR, -HK				
Beginner learners	Ø	89/318 (13.21%)	61/318 (19.18%)	**215/318 (67.61%)**
Advanced learners		14/320 (4.38%)	22/320 (6.88%)	**284/320 (88.75%)**
				p < 0.01

Results of the Mann-Whitney tests showed that the advanced learners performed significantly better than the beginner learners in each of the five contexts. Let us now look at each of these contexts separately.

[21] Each environment had originally '320' contexts; however, two beginner participants and one advanced participant did not fill in some of the slots in the task yielding 319 or 318 total slots in some of the contexts above.

In [+SR, +HK] contexts that require *the*, the advanced groups' performance is significantly better than that of the beginner group ($z = -4.08$, $p < .01$). They are able to supply *the* correctly at a rate of 96.56%, while beginner learners fall behind with only a 73.35% correct suppliance rate. Contrary to my prediction, neither group has a high omission rate in this category. It seems that both the beginner and the advanced groups tend to supply some overt article (i.e. *the* or *a/an*) in [+SR, +HK] contexts. The omission errors of the beginner and advanced groups are only 6.90% and 1.25%, respectively. It is also observed that beginner learners substitute *a/an* for *the* at a very high rate (19.75%). They might have felt obliged to put an article because of the nature of the task. This might also be due to the fact that learners somehow know that the indefinite article *a/an* can also be used in [+SR] contexts. Therefore, besides *the*, they also use *a/an* in this context. The examples (60) and (61) illustrate how the learners failed to supply the definite article *the* or incorrectly put the indefinite article *a* in [+SR, +HK] contexts requiring *the*, respectively:

(60) On the phone:

Wife: Hi, honey. I just had a little accident. Nothing serious and no one was hurt. **Ø** C/car is alright.

Husband: What happened?

(61) At home:

Mother: Did anyone feed **a** cat today?

Daughter: I did. Why?

Mother: He looks hungry.

In [+SR, -HK] contexts that require *a/an*, both groups correctly supplied the indefinite article *a/an* at a higher percentage than the other articles. That is, in this context, the rate of omission and substitution errors was low as I predicted. Nevertheless, the beginner group and the advanced group differed significantly from each other with respect to the suppliance rate of *a/an* in the obligatory context ($z = -2.54$, $p < .05$). With respect to the omission errors (i.e., suppliance of the *zero* article in *a/an* context), we see that the rate of omission for both groups is low (8.13% and 4.69%). Furthermore, with respect to the substitution errors, we observe that the beginner group substitutes *the* for *a/an* at a rate of 13.44%, whereas the substitution rate for the advanced learner is only 5.63%. The beginner learners' tendency to substitute *a/an* for *the* was also seen in [+SR, +HK] contexts. This suggests that beginner learners seem to associate both articles with [+SR] contexts, but they have not yet mastered distinct functions of *the* and *a/an* in [+HK] and [-HK] contexts. Also, as I already mentioned, it might be the case that, due to the nature of the task, the beginner learners simply tend to fill the blanks with an overt article. The examples (62) and (63) illustrate how the learners omitted *a* or incorrectly supplied *the* in [+SR, -HK] contexts requiring *a/an*, respectively:

(62) Anthony: What does your wife do?
Dave: She runs **Ø** multinational company.

(63) Police: What did you do last Tuesday night?
Suspect: I visited **the** friend.

In [+SR, -HK] contexts[22] that require the *zero* article, the advanced group performed significantly better than the beginner group ($z = -2.06$, $p < .05$). However, here, both groups displayed their lowest accuracy rate, with only 62.26% and 70.94% correct suppliance of the *zero* article. This is interesting as it appears that correct article choice is difficult for both groups in [+SR, -HK] contexts that require *zero* articles. The beginner and advanced learners supplied *the* at a rate of 23.90% and 24.38%, and *a/an* at a rate of 13.84% and 4.69%, respectively. Errors in suppliance of the *zero* article are again somewhat contradictory to what I predicted earlier, because the prediction was that L1 Turkish learners of English would tend to omit articles across all contexts. This might have resulted (even if accidentally) in high *zero* article suppliance in *zero* article contexts, too. However, this is not what we see here. The reason might be that the instruction they have received has probably made them oversensitive to using overt articles. The examples (64) and (65) illustrate how the learners incorrectly supplied *the* or *a* in [+SR, -HK] contexts requiring the *zero* article:

(64) Julia: What did they serve at the party last night?

Harry: They first served **the** wine. Later on, we also had **the** bacon.

(65) Laura: How was the restaurant?

[22] I prepared this test with an experienced native English language teacher; but upon further checking, I found out that two items (item no. 46 and 78) turned out to have two answers. I originally prepared these items in the obligatory context of [+SR, -HK] which require the *zero* articles. In my further check, an Australian, an English and a Canadian native speaker said that article *the* would be equally correct in these test items. Interestingly, the learners predominantly chose to say *the* if they had not supplied the *zero* article in these items. In addition, some other items that were prepared in the obligatory context of [+SR, -HK] which require the *zero* articles (item no. 1, 32, 33, and 76) seemed to be open to more than one options: the *zero* article and the definite article *the*. Therefore, a further analysis should be done to have a better understanding of the learners' tendency in these situations.

Sara: We were disappointed. **A** C/chicken was on the menu, but apparently they had run out of it out before we arrived.

In [-SR, -HK] contexts requiring *a/an*, both groups correctly supplied the indefinite article *a/an* at a higher percentage than the other articles, and the advanced group performed significantly better than the beginner group ($z= -2.52$, $p< .05$). The rate of omission (i.e., supplying the *zero* article in *a/an* contexts) is high in both the beginner and the advanced groups (14.73% and 14.11%, respectively) in this indefinite context, contrary to my prediction. With respect to the substitution errors, the participants tend to supply *the* instead of *a/an.* This substitution is 15.99% for the beginners and 7.21% for the advanced group. This shows that both groups allow *the* in [-SR] contexts. That is, the definite article *the* is not completely dissociated from [-SR] contexts.

The [-SR, -HK] contexts that require the *zero* article were again difficult for both groups contrary to my prediction. I predicted that a general tendency to omit articles in all contexts might have resulted in better accuracy in *zero* article contexts. However, as can be seen in Table 4.1, the beginner learners tend to use *the* and *a/an* in the *zero* article contexts at a rate of 19.18% and 13.21%, respectively. The rate of *the*-overuse is lower in the advanced group (6.88%). This suggests that the tendency of *the*-overuse in [-SR] environments decreases with proficiency. Nevertheless, both groups correctly supplied the *zero* article at a higher percentage than the other articles (67.61% and 88.75%). The advanced group's performance was significantly better than the beginner group ($z = -3.09$, $p< .01$).

In addition to the above analysis, I further looked into the [+SR, -HK] and [-SR, -HK] contexts that require *zero* article. Recall that both groups of learners tended

to overuse *the* at very high rates in these contexts. There was also overuse of *a/an* in the beginner group in these contexts. I thought that substituting *the* or *a/an* for *the* zero article might be somehow related to the learners (in)ability to distinguish between [+mass] and [-mass] (e.g., furniture and chair) in English.

Out of the thirty-two [+SR, -HK] and [-SR, -HK] contexts requiring the *zero* article, half of the contexts had [-count, +mass] nouns (e.g., furniture). As can be seen in Table 4.2 below, the beginner learners incorrectly supplied *a/an* 16.93% of the time. This rate was only 7.81% in the advanced learners. This suggests that, compared to the advanced group, the beginner learners had more difficulty and perceived [-count] nouns as [+count] or they perceived [-count, +mass] nouns as [-count, -mass] nouns. For example, they incorrectly used *a* with 'modern furniture' and *an* with 'evidence'. In addition to *a/an* suppliance in these contexts, the beginner and the advanced groups are also found to incorrectly supply *the* at a rate of 19.75% and 13.44%, respectively. It seems that that their ability to detect [-count, +mass] nouns correctly might have helped them to eliminate the option of indefinite article *a/an* automatically. Being left with only two options, they seem to have fluctuated between *the* and the *zero* article in these contexts. For example, they never used *a/an* with 'friends' or 'detectives'.

Table 4.2. Zero article contexts in the fill-in-the-article task

	[+mass, -count]			**[+count, -singular]**		
	A/An	The	Ø	A/An	The	Ø
Beginner Learners n=20	54/319 (16.93%)	63/319 (19.75%)	202/319 (63.22%)	32/317 (10.10%)	74/317 (23.34%)	211/317 (66.56%)
Advanced Learners n=20	25/320 (7.81%)	43/320 (13.44%)	252/320 (78.75%)	4/320 (1.25%)	57/320 (17.81%)	259/320 (80.94%)

The second half of the [+SR, -HK] and [-SR, -HK] contexts requiring the *zero* article had nouns which are [+count, -singular] (i.e., friends). In these contexts, the

advanced learners' tendency to use *a/an* decreased to 1.25% as can be seen in Table 4.2 above. This may be due to that, they probably learnt not to use *a/an* with plural nouns. The beginner learners seem to have overlooked this fact and supplied *a/an* at a high rate (10.10%). Nevertheless, both groups might have used the nouns' plural form as a clue not to use *a/an* and therefore again fluctuated between *the* and the *zero* article in these contexts.

In sum, overall, both groups of learners are able to provide the required articles systematically in obligatory contexts at a higher rate than the other articles. As I predicted, the advanced group performed better in all of the five environments. With respect to omission errors, contrary to my prediction, there is almost no omission of *the* in definite contexts. However, in indefinite contexts that require *a/an*, learners have some omission errors and fluctuate between *a/an* and the *zero* article as I predicted. Finally, contrary to my prediction, *zero* article contexts seemed to be difficult for both groups, and they tended to supply *the* and *a/an* in these contexts. Nevertheless, the lower rate of *the*-overuse by the advanced group in the [-SR] compared to [+SR] *zero* article contexts suggests that the advanced learners have become aware that *the* is not plausible in [-SR] contexts. A higher rate of *a/an*-overuse in the beginner group may potentially be due to the difficulty to distinguish between [+mass] and [-mass] nouns. With respect to the substitution errors, beginner learners supplied *a/an* instead of *the* in definite contexts, and *the* instead of *a/an* in the indefinite contexts. This suggests that beginner learners have not yet mastered distinct functions of *the* and *a/an,* unlike the advanced learners.

4.4.2. Written Production Task

The table below presents the results of the second task. The rate of correct suppliance for each category is highlighted. The p-value showing the significance difference between the two groups is given in the relevant box in the table.

Table 4.3

Written production task results

		Article Supplied by the Learners		
Context	**Article Required**	**A/An**	**The**	**Ø**
+SR, +HK				
Beginner learners n=20	The	0/13 (0%)	**9/13 (69.23%)**	4/13 (30.77%)
Advanced learners n=20		0/93 (0%)	**87/93 (93.55%)**	6/93 (6.45%)
+SR, -HK				
Beginner learners	A/An	**2/2 (100%)**	0/2 (0%)	0/2 (0%)
Advanced learners		**7/7 (100%)**	0/7 (0%)	0/7 (0%)
+SR, -HK				
Beginner learners	Ø	0/3 (0%)	0/3 (0%)	**3/3 (100%)**
Advanced learners		1/6 (16.67%)	0/6 (0%)	**5/6 (83.33%)**
-SR, -HK				
Beginner learners	A/An	**50/73 (68.49 %)**	2/73 (2.74%)	21/73 (28.77%)
Advanced learners		**80/83 (96.39%)**	0/83 (0%)	3/83 (3.61%)
		$p < 0.01$		
-SR, -HK				
Beginner learners	Ø	0/29 (0%)	1/29 (3.45%)	**28/29 (96.55%)**
Advanced learners		1/29 (3.45%)	2/29 (6.90%)	**26/29 (89.66%)**

This task was able to elicit relatively few utterances from the participants. Therefore, it triggered few article contexts.[23] However, I believe that this task is still able to give us some insight into article choice of learners in a relatively less monitored production task. This task complements the other tasks in eliciting nonspecific NPs. Let us now look at the contexts separately.

In [+SR, +HK] contexts that require *the*, the advanced learners supplied *the* at a rate of 93.55%, while the beginner learners could only supply *the* at a rate of

[23] Mean number of the sentences uttered by the beginner and advanced learners are 19.7 and 33.6, respectively. However, when I piloted this task, more utterances were elicited from both beginner and advanced learners. Thus, this task was believed to be a good measure for article use, and, thus, was included in the study.

69.23%. The results of the Mann-Whitney tests did not show a statistical difference between the two groups.[24] Nevertheless, it seems that, in the written production, the beginner learners have difficulty using *the* in definite contexts. The rate of omission is high (30.77%). This is in line with my prediction. No *a/an* substitution is observed in this category. The following sentence from a participant's writing illustrates a failure in supplying *the* in a [+SR, +HK] context requiring *the*:

(66) …. If I love him very much and trust him, I want to share with him all **Ø** things about me…

In [+SR, -HK] contexts that require *a/an,* there happened to be very few utterances and both groups used *a/an* at a rate of 100%.

In [+SR, -HK] contexts that require the *zero* article, there were again very few utterances, and both groups were able to supply the *zero* article at a high rate. There is only one instance where the definite article *the* was used in the advanced group.

In [–SR, -HK] contexts that require *a/an,* the advanced learners performed significantly better than the beginner learners ($z = -3.52$, $p < 0.01$). The beginner learners exhibited a high omission rate (28.77%), while advanced learners supplied *a/an* at a rate of 96.39%. Only 2.74% *the*-substitution rate was observed in the beginner group. The following sentences from a participant's writing illustrate how the participant incorrectly supplied *the* and failed to supply *a* in [-SR, -HK] contexts requiring *a,* respectively:

[24] The difference did not turn out to be statistically significant due to the high standard deviation in this comparison (*sd* = 28.93). That is, the beginners' trend toward greater use of *a/an* and the *zero* articles was moderated by individuals who had supplied 'the' at a high rate.

(67) … I want to develop my abilities about my job. These are so important for working life. **The** good job means **Ø** good and happy life.

In [-SR, -HK] contexts that require the *zero* article, both groups supplied the *zero* article at a very high rate. That is, they have performed well in *zero* article contexts as I predicted. The rate of incorrect *a/an* suppliance in this category was very low here.

In sum, this task triggered relatively less utterances. However, this task was less monitored than Task 1. Therefore, its results are suggestive. The difference between the results of the two tasks is that, in the written production task, the beginner learners demonstrated more omission in definite contexts.

4.4.3. Elicited Oral Production Task (picture description)

The table summarizes the results of the elicited oral production task. The rate of correct suppliance for each category is highlighted. Wherever there is a significance difference between the two groups, the p-values are given in the relevant box in the table.

Table 4.4

Picture description task results

		Article Supplied by the Learners		
Context	**Article Required**	**A/An**	**The**	**Ø**
+SR, +HK				
Beginner learners n=20	The	32/530 (6.04%)	**277/530 (52.26%)**	221/530 (41.70%)
Advanced learners n=20		22/1273 (1.73%)	**1158/1273 (90.97%)**	93/1273 (7.31%)
			$p < 0.01$	
+SR, -HK				
Beginner learners	A/An	**185/284 (65.14%)**	19/284 (6.69%)	80/284 (28.17%)
Advanced learners		**233/284 (82.04%)**	29/284 (10.21%)	22/284 (7.75%)
		$p < 0.05$		
+SR, -HK				
Beginner learners	Ø	8/94 (8.51%)	6/94 (6.38%)	**80/94 (85.11%)**
Advanced learners		13/141 (9.22%)	22/141 (15.60%)	**106/141 (75.18%)**
-SR, -HK				
Beginner learners	A/An	**49/75 (65.33%)**	1/75 (1.33%)	25/75 (33.33%)
Advanced learners		**157/188 (83.51%)**	10/188 (5.32%)	21/188 (11.17%)
		$p < 0.05$		
-SR, -HK				
Beginner learners	Ø	1/20 (5%)	1/20 (5%)	**18/20 (90%)**
Advanced learners		2/78 (2.56%)	11/78 (14.10%)	**65/78 (83.33%)**

Results of the Mann-Whitney tests showed that advanced learners performed significantly better than the beginner learners in various contexts. Let us now look at each of these contexts separately.

In [+SR, +HK] contexts requiring *the*, the beginner and the advanced learners differed significantly in their suppliance of the definite article ($z= -4.82$, $p < 0.01$). In these contexts, the beginner group tends to omit the article *the* at a very high rate (41.70%). This is in line with my prediction. Recall that this prediction was also borne out in the written production, but not in the fill-in-the-article task. This suggests that omission is more common in written and speech production that are less monitored. Nevertheless, the advanced group does not demonstrate such a tendency in this task.

In [+SR, -HK] contexts requiring *a/an*, the beginner learners use *a/an* correctly at a rate of 65.14%. Nevertheless, they seem to differ significantly from the advanced learners in their suppliance of *a/an* in obligatory contexts ($z = -2.0$, $p < 0.05$). With respect to omission errors, the beginner learners tend to omit the indefinite article at a very high rate (28.17%). Recall that beginner learners tended to omit *a/an* in the fill-in-the-article and written production tasks, too, but the rate of omission is higher in on-line speech production. The omission rate is much lower in the advanced group here (7.75%). The advanced learners and the beginner learners supplied *the* instead of *a/an* at a rate of 10.21% and 6.69%, respectively in [+SR, -HK] *a/an* contexts. Recall that the advanced learners' *the*-overuse in the fill-in-the-article task in specific indefinite contexts was only 5.63%. In this picture description task, the advanced learners might have assumed that the researcher is already familiar with the content of the pictures. This legitimizes their use of the definite article with nouns that are not previously mentioned in the discourse. This appears to be a task-related confounding factor in the interpretation of *the* with the first-mention nouns in this task.

In the [-SR, -HK] contexts requiring *a/an*, the beginner learners' rate of omission is again very high (33.33%), compared to the other two tasks. The omission rate is much lower in the advanced learners (11.17%). Nevertheless, the beginner learners provided the correct article in this context at a high rate of 65.33%. However, they still differ significantly from the advanced learners in their suppliance of *a/an* in obligatory contexts ($z = -2.21$, $p < 0.05$). In [-specific] environments, the rate of *the* substitution for *a/an* decreased to 1.33% and 5.32% in the beginner and advanced learners, respectively. This suggests that neither group associates the definite article *the* with [-specific] contexts.

In [+SR, -HK] and [-SR, -HK] contexts requiring the *zero* article, the beginner learners seem to outperform the advanced learners, yet the difference does not yield to a significant result. This may stem from the fact that, since the beginner learners already have a tendency to omit articles, they also tend to be more successful in *zero* article contexts without actually being very aware of the correct choice. Advanced learners seem to overuse *the* in the *zero* article contexts regardless of the feature of [±specificity]. Recall that their tendency to overuse *the* in *zero* article contexts decreased in [-specific] contexts in the judgment task. However, here we see that use of the definite article *the* is extended to [-specific] contexts. This suggests that *zero* article contexts are more problematic for the advanced learners.

In sum, it seems that *a/an* and *the* omissions are observed more in on-line language production where the participants cannot monitor their speech to make corrections. Article omission has also been observed in written production to some extent. Overall, the omission rate of both *a/an* and *the* is higher in the beginner group. It seems that as a result of their tendency to omit articles, the beginner learners performed better than the advanced learners in *zero* article contexts. Nevertheless, the difference was not significant. In general, the advanced learners are good at dissociating between the indefinite and definite contexts. They prefer to use *the* in [+SR, +HK] contexts and *a*/an in [+SR, -HK] contexts. However, this dissociation strategy does not work in *zero* article contexts where they tend to overuse *the* in [-specific] contexts. This can be due to their increased awareness of definite article use obtained through formal instruction.

4.4.4. Comparison of the article use in subject and object positions

In the first analysis, the subject-object distinction has not been made. I carried out a further analysis to examine whether or not performances would differ in NPs depending on their positions in a sentence. To my knowledge, this has not been previously examined in the article acquisition literature, and this might be an important issue for L1 Turkish learners of English. Recall that, in Turkish, the [+specific] feature is marked in direct objects through the accusative case morpheme, while subject NPs occur with no case marking. Any potential difference between subject and object NPs might imply L1 Turkish influence. This issue was investigated in the fill-in-the article and picture description tasks.

4.4.4.1. Fill-in-the-article task

In the table below article suppliance for subject and object nouns is given separately. Following Wilcoxon signed ranks test, the p-values are given wherever there is statistical difference.

Table 4.5

Article use in subject and object NPs in the fill-in-the-article task

		Beginner Learners			**Advanced Learners**		
Context	**NP**	**A/An**	**The**	**Ø**	**A/An**	**The**	**Ø**
+SR, +HK (The)	Subject	21/160 (13.12%)	129/160 (80.62%)	10/160 (6.25%)	3/160 (1.87%)	157/160 (98.12%)	0
	Object	42/159 (26.33%)	105/159 (66.16%) $p < 0.01$	12/159 (7.5%)	4/160 (2.5%)	152/160 (95%)	4/160 (2.5%)
+SR, -HK (A/An)	Subject	118/160 (73.75%)	31/160 (19.37%)	11/160 (6.87%)	143/160 (89.37%)	12/160 (7.5%)	5/160 (3.12%)
	Object	133/160 (83.12%) $p < 0.05$	12/160 (7.5%)	15/160 (9.37%)	144/160 (90%)	6/160 (3.75%)	10/160 (6.25%)
+SR, -HK (Ø)	Subject	12/158 (7.5%)	64/158 (40.53%)	82/158 (51.96%)	3/160 (1.87%)	59/160 (36.87%)	98/160 (61.25%)
	Object	32/160 (20%)	12/160 (7.5%)	116/160 (72.5%) $p < 0.01$	12/160 (7.5%)	19/160 (11.87%)	129/160 (80.62%) $p < 0.01$

Recall that the prediction was that learners would tend to omit the definite articles more in subject positions, while they would be more accurate in the use of definite articles in direct object positions. In L1 Turkish, nouns in subject positions are by default definite and not marked by any definite article. Turkish nouns in object positions take accusative case marking when they are definite/specific. Let us now look at each of these contexts in the beginner and advanced groups.

Recall that I expected the learners to be more sensitive to [+specific] object contexts and use *the* as a result of L1 influence. In [+SR, +HK] contexts requiring *the*, the beginner learners have few omission errors in subject NPs, contrary to my prediction (6.25%). Again, contrary to my prediction, they are significantly more accurate in supplying *the* in subject positions than the object positions ($z= -2.93$; $p < 0.01$). The beginner learners tended to supply indefinite article *a/an* in definite object positions (26.33%) as well as subject positions (13.12%). The advanced group demonstrated very few omission and substitution errors and performed equally well in both subject and object positions.

Recall that, in indefinite specific contexts, Turkish subject NPs are marked with the indefinite article *bir*. Turkish object NPs can be marked with *bir* and the accusative case. I predict that these L1 properties might somehow get reflected in L2 article use. In [+SR, -HK] contexts requiring *a/an*, beginner learners' correct *a/an* suppliance is significantly higher in the object position than in the subject position ($z= -2.03$; $p < 0.05$). The advanced learners seem to be equally accurate in both positions (90% and 89.37%, respectively). With respect to the overuse of *the*, the beginners tend to supply *the* instead of *a/an* more in the subject position (19.37%) than in the object position (7.5%). No substantial *the*-substitution was observed in the advanced group. That is, in [+specific] contexts, both groups tend to mark indefinite

nouns in subject positions mostly with the indefinite article *a/an*. *The*-substitution in this context was observed only in the beginner group. The correct suppliance of the indefinite article in both subject and object positions might be due to L1 Turkish influence. But this might also reflect learners' mastery of the L2 property. Furthermore, since we do not see much *the*-substitution in the object position, we cannot clearly say that the presence of accusative case in direct object NPs in [+SR, -HK] contexts in Turkish results in *the*-overuse in English.

In [+SR, -HK] contexts requiring the *zero* article, beginner learners' suppliance rate of the *zero* article is significantly higher in the object position than in the subject position ($z= -3.20$; $p < 0.01$). This is also observed in the advanced learners, too ($z= -3.99$; $p < 0.01$). This suggests that, again, there is no L1 Turkish influence, as Turkish does not allow bare subject or object NPs in this context. With respect to overuse of *the*, both groups tend to overuse *the* more in the subject position (40.53% and 36.87%). Again, we cannot talk about any potential Turkish influence, as *the*-overuse is not observed in the object position but in the subject position.

To sum up, neither group tended to omit the definite article *the* in nouns in subject positions. Contrary to my prediction, the rate of *the* suppliance was higher in the subject NPs than in the object NPs in both groups. This suggests that neither group tended to associate bare nominals with the [+specific] feature. Furthermore, we see correct suppliance of *a/an* in both subject and object NPs. Since Turkish allows *a/an* in [+SR,-HK] contexts for both subject and object NPs, this might be a positive transfer effect from L1 Turkish, but there is no clear support for this. We do not see *the*- overuse in the object NPs in [+SR, -HK] contexts. This would reflect a tendency to associate *the* with L1 accusative case. However, no such tendency was observed in

either group. In sum, in this task, we do not see any L1 influence with respect to article-marking of subject and object NPs.

4.4.4.2. Picture description task

The subject-object distinction was also examined in the picture description task. I was interested in seeing if there would be any differences in the use of articles in subject and object NPs in on-line production. In the table below, article suppliance for subject and object nouns is given separately. Following Wilcoxon signed ranks test, the p-values are given wherever there is a statistical difference. Let us now look at each of these contexts in the beginner and advanced groups.

Table 4.6

Article use in subject and object positions in the picture description task

		Beginner Learners			**Advanced Learners**		
Context	**NP**	**A/An**	**The**	**Ø**	**A/An**	**The**	**Ø**
+SR, +HK (The)	Subject	24/378 (6.34%)	179/378 (47.35%)	175/378 (46.29%)	20/809 (2.47%)	717/809 (88.63%)	72/809 (8.90%)
	Object	8/152 (5.26%)	98/152 (64.47%)	46/152 (30.26%)	2/464 (0.43%)	441/464 (95.04%) $p< 0.05$	21/464 (4.53%)
+SR, -HK (A/An)	Subject	6/69 (8.69%)	3/69 (4.34%)	60/69 (86.95%)	8/114 (7.02%)	18/114 (15.79%)	88/114 (77.19%)
	Object	123/191 (64.39%)	8/191 (4.18%)	60/191 (31.41%)	195/223 (87.44%) $p< 0.05$	14/223 (6.28%)	14/223 (6.28%)
+SR, -HK (Ø)	Subject	2/25 (8%)	3/25 (12%)	20/25 (80%)	5/27 (18.52%)	4/27 (14.81%)	18/27 (66.67%)
	Object	62/93 (66.66%)	11/93 (11.82%)	20/93 (21.50%) $p< 0.05$	38/61 (62.30%)	15/61 (24.59%)	8/61 (13.11%)

In [+SR, +HK] contexts that require *the*, the beginner learners seem to perform better in object positions in on-line production. However, the difference did not turn out to be significant.[25] This difference in the advanced learners is

[25] The difference in the rate of *the* suppliance in subject and object positions did not yield to a significant p-value due to the high standard deviation value in this comparison (*sd* = 27.09).

statistically significant (z=-2.29, p< 0.05). The advanced learners tend to omit *the* in subject positions more. This might suggest there is L1 Turkish influence, as bare nominals are interpreted as definite and specific in Turkish.

In [+SR, -HK] contexts that require *a/an*, both groups seem to have difficulty in using *a/an* in indefinite nouns in subject positions. They omit *a/an* at a very high rate in the subject position (86.95% and 77.19%). It seems that learners somehow avoid using *a/an* in indefinite specific subject NPs. This is surprising as both L1 and L2 allow the use of indefinite articles in these contexts. The advanced learners' correct suppliance of *a/an* in object positions is significantly higher than *a/an*-use in subject positions (z= -1.97, p< 0.05). The difference in the case of the beginner learners did not turn out to be significant though.[26] Correct use of *a/an* in direct object NPs is expected in both L1-transfer and no L1-transfer scenarios. With respect to *the* overuse in [+specific] contexts, the advanced learners have a high rate of overuse (15.79%) in the subject position. The beginner learners do not exhibit such an overuse. This suggests that, similar to the previous task, I do not see any tendency to associate *the*-marked direct object NPs with the accusative case-marked direct object NPs in Turkish.

In the [+SR, -HK] contexts that require the *zero* article, beginner learners supplied the *zero* article in the subject positions at a significantly higher rate (z=-1.97, p < 0.05). Such tendency is also observed in advanced learners. This suggests that bare subject NPs are associated with the [+specific] feature more than bare object NPs. This might imply L1 Turkish effect. However, recall that in the previous task, we could not find a similar tendency. This might suggest that L1 influence is revealed more in on-line tasks. With respect to *the* overuse, in the advanced group, it

[26] The difference in the rate of *a/an* suppliance in subject and object positions did not yield to a significant p-value due to the high standard deviation value in this comparison (*sd* = 25.29).

is higher in the object positions (24.59%) than in the subject positions (14.81%). This might be due to their association of *the*- marked direct objects with accusative case-marked direct object NPs in Turkish.

To sum up, unlike in the fill-in-the article task, both groups tended to omit the definite article *the* in definite specific subject NPs as I predicted. In addition to this potential L1 Turkish influence, their higher tendency to supply the *zero* article in subject NPs shows that they associate bare subject NPs with the feature [+specificity]. This may be due to the fact that bare subjects in Turkish are considered specific. The advanced group's tendency to mark object NPs with the definite article *the* in [+SR,-HK] contexts that require the *zero* article reflects another L1 tendency. On the other hand, we do not observe any tendency to overuse *the* in [+SR, -HK] object NPs that require *a/an*. Finally, there was a high *a/an* omission in specific indefinite subject NPs in spite of the fact that *a/an* is present in both L1 and L2.

To conclude, the results of the on-line production task suggest that L1 might have an affect in the article choice in the L2; however, this conclusion does not hold in the judgment task. Therefore, there is no clear evidence for L1 transfer.

4.4.5. Summary of Results

Below is an overall summary of the results obtained from the three tasks:

1. All the learners are able to supply the required article in obligatory contexts at a higher rate than the other articles in all three tasks. The findings suggest that they do not use the articles randomly. They have an understanding of the article system in English and attempt to use them correctly.

2. The prediction that correct use of articles will increase with proficiency is largely confirmed.

3. My prediction regarding the omission of the definite article *the* was not borne out in the judgment (fill-in-the-article) task, as neither group had a high rate of *the*-omission. In this task, they might have displayed their best performance since they knew that they were being tested on the use of articles. However, on the written and on-line speech production tasks, the rate of *the*-omission increased. In particular, the beginner learners omitted definite articles very frequently in both of these tasks. Recall that, prior to these tasks, they had not been informed that they were going to be tested on articles. These tasks reflect their on-line production performance, which is relatively less monitored compared to the judgment (fill-in-the-article) task.

4. With respect to the omission of indefinite article *a/an*, the omission was observed in all tasks, but the rate of omission was higher in the spoken production. As predicted, both groups tended to fluctuate between *a/an* and the *zero* article in indefinite contexts. The *zero* suppliance in these contexts happened to be much higher in the beginner group than the advanced group.

5. As regards the *zero* article contexts, the contexts in the fill-in-the-article task turned out to be problematic for both groups. Even if the learners supplied the *zero* article at a higher rate in general, they still demonstrated a tendency to overuse *the*. Moreover, they also overused *a/an* to some extent in these contexts. In on-line production, however, *zero* article contexts were problematic only for the advanced learners. They preferred to overuse *the* in these contexts. The beginner learners, on the other hand, correctly supplied the *zero* article in on-line production as well as in written production task. This seems to be a natural consequence of their general article omission tendency in on-line speech.

6. When we examine the contexts where *the* is overused in the judgment task, we see that both the beginner and the advanced groups preferred *the* in [+specific] *zero* article contexts, and this tendency was lower in [-specific] the *zero* article contexts. It seems that learners sometimes equated *the* more than the *zero* article with the [+specific] feature. With respect to *a/an* contexts, both beginner and advanced learners supplied *the* instead of *a/an* at a lower rate in [+specific] and [-specific] contexts. This type of substitution was observed less in the advanced group. This suggests that learners are aware that *a/an* can be associated with both [+specific] and [-specific] interpretations.

With respect to *the*-overuse in the on-line speech production in *a/an* contexts, the advanced learners again seemed to equate *the* with [+specific] feature and demonstrated more *the*-overuse in [+specific] than [-specific] contexts. In *zero* article contexts, however, they still overused *the* in the [-specific] environments as the *zero* article contexts happened to be problematic for them. The beginner group did not display much *the*- or *a/an*- overuse in the on-line speech.

7. Finally, a closer look into the *zero* article contexts in the fill-in-the-article task revealed that learners' article choice might have been influenced by lexical properties of the nouns. The beginner group's higher tendency to supply *a/an* seemed to have stemmed partly from their inability to distinguish between [+mass] and [-mass]. With respect to *the*-preference by both groups, they might have used the nouns' plural form as a clue not to use *a/an* and therefore chose to say *the*.

8. With respect to the L1 Turkish influence in the learners' article choice in subject and object NPs, some L1 transfer effects were observed in the on-line production task. That is, both groups tended to omit the definite article *the* in subject NPs, and the advanced group tended to mark [+specific] object NPs that require the *zero* article

with the definite article *the*. No such L1 effect was observed in the judgment task. The results reveal no clear indication of L1 transfer.

4.5. Conclusion

Turkish learners of L2 English, whose L1 lacks an article system, are able to make semantic distinctions among L2 articles. No random article use or unsystematic errors were observed in either group. All were able to provide the required article in obligatory contexts at a higher rate than the other articles. They did not demonstrate much definite article omission tendency except for in the on-line production task. They tended to omit the definite article in the subject positions in on-line speech production, possibly as a result of L1 effect, but they did not do so in the judgment task. They were somehow indecisive between supplying the indefinite article *a/an* or the *zero* article in indefinite contexts particularly in on-line speech. The *zero* article contexts seemed to be problematic for both groups. They demonstrated *the*-overuse in [+specific] *a/an* and *zero* article contexts. This suggests that they equate the definite article *the* with the feature [+specificity]. They did not exhibit permanent L1 effects in the use of articles. There was no clear evidence of L1 influence and transfer effects. In general, the accurate use of articles is high in the more proficient group.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1. Discussion of the Results

This study yielded several findings related to the acquisition of English articles by Turkish learners. Results of the present study support the findings of previous research that examined the acquisition of the English article system in learners whose L1 lacks an article system.

In this study, we saw that Turkish learners are able to dissociate different article environments, and they seem to be able to distinguish definite contexts earlier than indefinite contexts.

Findings about the omission of the definite article *the* are also in line with the previous research (e.g., Huebner, 1983, 1985; Master, 1987; Parrish, 1987; Thomas, 1989). The rate of *the*-omission seems to be lower than *a/an* omission in this study, and *the*-omission is common at the beginner level (i.e., in the written and on-line speech production). The advanced learners did not display *the*- omission, contrary to the findings of Robertson (2000) and White (2003b).

In this study, there was some evidence for delayed acquisition of the indefinite article *a*/an in line with previous research (e.g., Huebner, 1983; Master, 1987; Parrish, 187; Thomas, 1989). While *a/an* omission was observed in all of the tasks, it was much lower at the advanced level compared to the beginner level. In other words, there was proficiency-based accuracy in the use of *a/an.* This also suggests that becoming more proficient helped the learners eliminate potential L1 effects. That is, no fluctuation between *a/an* and the *zero* article in the indefinite article- *a/an* contexts is observed in the advanced learners.

In line with earlier findings, L2 learners in this study tend to overgeneralize *the* into *a/an* and *zero* article contexts (e.g., Huebner, 1983; Ionin et al., 2003; Leung, 2001; Master, 1987; Parrish, 1987; Thomas, 1989). In *a/an* contexts, this tendency was more prevalent in [+specific] rather than [-specific] contexts. That is, both groups overused *the* in the [+SR, -HK] *a/an* contexts, and the rate of overuse decreased in the [-SR, -HK] *a/an* contexts. These findings reveal a tendency to equate *the* with [+specific] environments as reported in previous research (e.g., Ionin et al., 2003; Parrish, 1987; Thomas, 1989). Nevertheless, in *zero* article contexts, *the* overuse extended to [-specific] contexts, in contrast to what has been reported in previous studies.

Zero article contexts in general, seemed to be problematic for L2 learners in this study, contrary to what has been observed in previous studies. Recall that overgeneralization of the *zero* article was reported to be the most common error, which happened to give the learners high accuracy scores in *zero* article contexts (e.g., Huebner, 1983; Master, 1987; Parrish, 1987; Thomas, 1989; Robertson, 2000; White, 2003b). The learners' difficulty with *zero* article contexts was more prevalent in the judgment task, where both groups of learners demonstrated a high rate of *the*-overuse and also some *a/an*-overuse. One might think that instruction that focuses on the form (in our case *article* instruction) has made them oversensitive and triggered overgeneralization of *a/an* and *the* as suggested by Pica (1983).

In the spoken production, however, the beginners correctly supplied the *zero* article in obligatory contexts, whereas the advanced learners still had trouble. It is important to note that this does not necessarily display the beginners' mastery.[27] However, persistent overuse of *the* by the advanced learners in the *zero* article

[27] It is important to note that acquisition of *zero* articles may actually refers to a default strategy of using bare forms by learners and not consciously applying the rules to use the correct article.

contexts (in both fill-in-the-article and spoken task) reveals a real problem on their part. Recall that this group consisted of senior students from the English Language Teaching Department who are assumed to devote much time and effort than students in any other departments to master English. Therefore, we can say that these errors must be of persistent nature. In earlier research, *the*-overuse was observed in the intermediate level, and it was reported to have decreased in the advanced learners (e.g., Huebner, 1983; Liu & Gleason, 2002; Master, 1987; Thomas, 1989). Therefore, the case of Turkish advanced learners needs further investigation with respect to overuse of *the* in *zero* article contexts.

One issue that might possibly complicate *zero* environments is countability of English nouns. Recall that, in indefinite contexts, [+count, +singular] nouns take *a/an* and [-count, +mass] nouns take *zero* article.[28] Detecting noun countability correctly in a given context has been reported to be difficult for non-native learners of English and causes them to substitute *a/an* for the *zero* article (e.g., Butler, 2002; Master, 1987; Yoon, 1993; Young, 1996). That is, in [+SR, +HK] contexts, once learners feel that the context is specific definite, they readily use *the* without further thinking. However, in [+SR, -HK] and [-SR, -HK] contexts, learners should do additional analysis, as they have to make a decision between *a/an* and the *zero* article depending on the noun countability. As my additional analysis revealed, beginner learners tended to mark the mass nouns in indefinite contexts with *a/an* (i.e., *a modern furniture, an evidence*) at a higher rate than the advanced learners. Recall that the difficulty in the acquisition of the indefinite article *a/an* compared to definite article reported by early studies might also be related to noun countability to some extent. It

[28] A further difficulty is that, sometimes, the very same noun may have a count (My sister was *a beauty* in her youth) or a noncount (My sister had great ∅ *beauty* in her youth) interpretation depending on the context where it is used (Yoon, 1993:284).

appears that [±count] features and its interaction with article choice have to be examined in some more depth.

Besides noun countability, the singular or plural nature of the noun might have also played a role in *zero* article contexts. That is, it is possible that the learners used *the* with the plural nouns (as they know that plural nouns do not occur with *a/an*). That can partially explain more *the*-overuse compared to *a/an*-overuse in these contexts.

Finally, when we look at the overall performance of the learners in this study, they seem to be more accurate in the judgment task and relatively less accurate in the spoken production task, confirming White's (2003b) results. Better performance in judgment might actually be reflecting their underlying competence about article use, yet they are not able to display this knowledge in the spoken performance. In other words, they are actually aware of the distinction between articles but cannot realize this morphologically in their speech. However, it is clear that they are able to dissociate between different article environments systematically.

To sum up, as reported in recent L2 research, the learners in this study are able to distinguish between [±definite] and [±specific] features that govern the article use in L2 English despite the absence of an article system in L1 Turkish. The learners' accuracy in the use of articles increased as they became more proficient in the L2 (e.g., Ionin et al., 2003; Leung, 2001; Robertson, 2000; White, 2003b).

5.2. Limitations of the Study

The study has some limitations in the design and implementation, which may have influenced the results.

Article acquisition by L2 learners from many different L1 backgrounds has been investigated extensively. However, to my knowledge, L2 acquisition of the English article system by Turkish learners has not been much investigated. The results of the study suggest that Turkish learners have some difficulty in learning how to use L2 English articles, and that some of the difficulties are of persistent nature. Therefore, further research needs to be done with perhaps more advanced (i.e., near-native) speakers of L2 English in order to see the L2 grammar in the end-state.

Furthermore, because of the time limitations, I was only able to collect data from 20 beginner and 20 advanced learners of English. The small number of participants makes it difficult to generalize the results.

In addition, classification of the beginner group may not be perfectly accurate. Although they were classified as such by the university, they have had a long exposure to English in their high schools. They may be somewhere close to the pre-intermediate level. Nevertheless, there was an obvious difference between this group and the advanced group in the length of L2 exposure they had received prior to this study, and this was reflected in their accuracy scores in L2 article use.

Another limitation is that the written production data could have been designed in such a way to elicit more data from the participants. I had particularly aimed to examine the article use in three different modalities (judgment, writing and speaking). However, the written production task triggered few contexts, and this made it difficult for me to interpret article use in the written task.

A further limitation is that I did not originally design the study in a way that distinguishes nouns as mass/count and plural/singular. Lexical properties of the

nouns in the tasks might have served as a potential confounding variable. The follow-up analysis showed that noun countability needs a separate investigation.

Yet another limitation is that I only looked at three article contexts, excluding one main category (i.e., generics) as well idiomatic, existential and expressional use of articles. Therefore, the results of the study cannot be generalized for article use in all the contexts in English.

In sum, the study should be evaluated with these limitations in mind before drawing general conclusions about the acquisition of the English article system by Turkish learners.

5.3. Implications

The results of the study suggest that Turkish learners are able to acquire English articles despite the absence of an article system in Turkish. In addition, the fact that they display variable performance across different tasks (i.e., better accuracy in written production and judgment compared to on-line speech) does not reflect a potential underlying grammar deficit.

Nevertheless, perfect mastery of the English article system does not seem to be easy for the learners. Both beginner and advanced groups have had long years of English exposure. That is, they have received abundant input through instruction at school. As a result of this, one might expect near-native accuracy in the use of these structures. However, even the advanced learners have still demonstrated some difficulty in using the articles in spite of plenty of input. This reveals that some aspects of language resist L2 acquisition.

One reason might be that rules in the traditional grammar books have proved to be insufficient for learners to master the complexity in the article system. Besides,

learners have limited time in classrooms and little opportunity to use English in real life situations in or out of school. Moreover, a person can effectively communicate in spoken English without much accuracy in article use. Accurate use of articles gains importance only when the learners begin to write, and this may have caused both learners and teachers to overlook this subject in second language instruction.

With respect to the importance of instruction, there is a great body of evidence assembled in favor of grammatical instruction and focus on form in general (Ellis, 1993; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991). However, effectiveness of instruction on article use has been relatively less explored (i.e., Master, 1994, 1997; McEldowney, 1977; Pica, 1983; Whitman, 1974). It has been suggested that instruction really helps learners. For example, Master (1994, 1997) showed that systematic teaching of the article system helped students grasp it more effectively and reported a significant decrease in errors in articles after the instruction. Overall, it is suggested that awareness of forms may be vital to make sure that learners master them. Formal instruction that would bring such forms to awareness may also speed up the learning process and prevent persistent errors (Ellis, 1993).

Nevertheless, classroom instruction should involve focus on form in the broader context of communication since the mastery of articles is reported to entail a command of the discourse (Pica, 1983). Therefore, teachers should emphasize both grammatical accuracy and coherence in discourse. The articles should be presented not in isolated drills, but in longer stretches of discourse. Regular errors such as omission of *a/an,* errors in the use of *a/an* with mass nouns and overuse/omission of *the* may be collected by the teacher. Then, learners can be provided with explanations about the causes of their mistakes and given a lot of situational and meaningful drills.

Finally, teachers should be patient when students still make errors after many hours of instruction as these efforts may not guarantee near-native performance.

APPENDIX A

Participant Information

Participant Number	Level	Age	Gender	Age of First Exposure to English	Place of First Exposure to English	Attendance to Preparatory Class	
						High School	University
1	B	19	F	12	Secondary School	Yes	
2	B	20	M	12	Secondary School	Yes	
3	B	19	M	12	Secondary School	Yes	
4	B	19	M	11	Secondary School	Yes	
5	B	19	F	12	Secondary School	No	
6	B	21	M	13	Secondary School	Yes	
7	B	19	F	12	Secondary School	Yes	
8	B	20	F	12	Secondary School	Yes	
9	B	19	F	10	Primary School	No	
10	B	18	M	15	High School	Yes	
11	B	18	F	12	Secondary School	No	
12	B	18	F	12	Secondary School	No	
13	B	18	F	12	Secondary School	Yes	
14	B	20	M	13	Secondary School	Yes	
15	B	20	M	11	Secondary School	Yes	
16	B	20	M	12	Secondary School	Yes	
17	B	19	M	19	University	No	
18	B	20	M	12	Secondary School	Yes	
19	B	18	M	11	Secondary School	Yes	
20	B	18	M	11	Secondary School	Yes	
21	A	22	F	12	Secondary School	Yes	Yes
22	A	22	F	12	Secondary School	Yes	Yes
23	A	22	F	11	Secondary School	Yes	Yes
24	A	22	F	11	Secondary School	Yes	Yes
25	A	22	F	11	Secondary School	Yes	Yes
26	A	21	F	11	Secondary School	Yes	No
27	A	23	F	12	Secondary School	Yes	Yes
28	A	22	F	12	Secondary School	Yes	No
29	A	22	F	13	Secondary School	Yes	No
30	A	22	M	13	Secondary School	Yes	Yes
31	A	22	F	12	Secondary School	Yes	No
32	A	22	M	12	Secondary School	Yes	Yes
33	A	22	M	15	Secondary School	Yes	Yes
34	A	22	F	11	Secondary School	Yes	Yes
35	A	21	F	10	Secondary School	Yes	No
36	A	22	M	10	Secondary School	Yes	Yes
37	A	22	F	13	Secondary School	Yes	No
38	A	23	F	13	Secondary School	Yes	Yes
39	A	22	F	11	Secondary School	Yes	Yes
40	A	22	M	14	Secondary School	Yes	Yes

APPENDIX B

Participant Information Questionnaire

I agree to participate in this study:

Name: **Date:**

I. PERSONAL INFORMATION (Will Remain Confidential)

Telephone Number: …… E-mail address: ……

Sex: Female: … Male: …

Date and Place of Birth: …….

High school: ……..……..…

Did you attend a preparatory class in your high school: ……..

Did you attend a preparatory class in B.U: ……

II. LINGUISTIC INFORMATION

Mother Tongue: ……

Language of Education:

Primary School: ……

Secondary School: ……

High School: ……

Age & place of first exposure to English: ……..……

How often do you use English? ……...……..

Where do you generally use English?

Home: ……....… School: ……..…..…… Social: …….……

Have you lived in an English-speaking country before? …… If so, how long did you stay there? …….

Country (1) ……Age of arrival: …Length of stay: …….....

Country (2) ……Age of arrival: … Length of stay: ……..

III. ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

Have you ever taken any standardized English Proficiency Test (e.g., TOEFL, IELTS)? ……..

How would you rate your linguistic ability in English in the following areas?

	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced	Near-Native
Reading				
Writing				
Speaking				
Listening				
Overall Competence				

IV. OTHER LANGUAGE(S): (besides English)

	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced	Near-Native
Reading				
Writing				
Speaking				
Listening				
Overall Competence				

APPENDIX C

Fill-in-the-article Task

Name: **Date:**

Level:

Read the dialogues and fill in the blanks with *a/an, the,* or the *zero* article *(Ø*). Write the most appropriate answer.

1. Liz: What happened to your garden? It's in ruins!

   Rita: **Ø**$_1$ D/dogs smashed all the flowers.

   ***

2. Sarah: Have you finished reading my paper?

   Emily: Not yet. I've just finished **the**$_2$ introduction. I'm planning to read **the**$_3$ conclusion tomorrow.

   ***

3. Kathy: **A**$_4$ N/new horror movie is being shown at the cinema. Have you seen it?

   Sue: No. Actually, I was planning to go tonight. Would you like to come with me?

   Kathy: Yes, I'd love to.

   ***

4. Jeff: Look! **A**$_5$ W/woman is waving at you? Do you know her?

   Brian: I don't think so.

   ***

5. Alice: My husband is a real TV addict. He never reads **a**$_6$ newspaper or **a**$_7$ book anymore. And forget about exercise. After work, he hurries home and then he just spends hours in front of the TV set.

   Tina: I know what you mean. My husband even cancels meetings when **a**$_8$ special show is on TV.

   ***

6. Husband: I've bought **a**$_9$ ring and **a**$_{10}$ necklace for you. I hope you'll like them.

   Wife: Oh dear! I thought you'd forgotten my birthday.

   ***

7. Customer: I would like to buy **a**$_{11}$ study desk. Can you help me?

   Sales Assistant: Certainly, madam. Do you prefer **Ø**$_{12}$ modern furniture?

   Customer: No, I prefer **Ø**$_{13}$ antique furniture.

   ***

8. Claire: I've just made **an**$_{14}$ apple pie. Would you like some?

   Barbara: Yes, please.

   ***

9. Tony: **Ø**$_{15}$ A/air conditioning was invented in 1911.

   Tim: Do you know who invented it?

   ***

10. Helen: I'm going to the bakery. Would you like some bread?

    Nancy: No, thanks. I prefer to make my own bread, because **Ø**$_{16}$ flour is very cheap nowadays.

    ***

11. Adam: Did the police start an investigation to find the murderer?

Lucie: Yes, **Ø** $_{17}$ detectives from the police department came here to look for fingerprints.

***

12. Mrs. Robertson: I wish we could arrange **Ø**$_{18}$ educational trips every year.

Mrs. Gray: We would then visit **Ø**$_{19}$ museums or **Ø**$_{20}$ art galleries with our students.

***

13. <u>At home:</u>

Mother: Did anyone feed **the**$_{21}$ cat today?

Daughter: I did. Why?

Mother: He looks hungry.

***

14. Julia: What did they serve at the party last night?

Harry: They first served **Ø**$_{22}$ wine. Later on, we also ate **Ø**$_{23}$ bacon.

***

15. <u>On the phone:</u>

Wife: Hi, honey. I just had **a**$_{24}$ little accident. Nothing serious and no one was hurt. **The**$_{25}$ C/car is alright.

Husband: What happened?

Wife: Well, I hit **a**$_{26}$ garbage truck.

***

16. Alex: How will you do your Physics project?

Stefan: **A**$_{27}$ F/friend is going to help me. She is an assistant at the Physics Department.

***

17. Sales Assistant: May I help you?

Mrs. Brown: Yes, please! I'm looking for **a**$_{28}$ coat.

Sales Assistant: Do you have something specific in mind?

Mrs. Brown: I think, **a**$_{29}$ wool coat will do.

***

18. Anthony: What does your wife do?

Dave: She runs **a**$_{30}$ multinational company.

Anthony: Does she travel a lot?

Dave: Oh, yes. **The**$_{31}$ C/company has clients all over the world.

***

19. General Manager: What will your department buy this year?

Sales Manager: We'll definitely buy **Ø**$_{32}$ computers. We may also buy **Ø**$_{33}$ fax machines.

***

20. Lucy: I heard that the rector's proposal was turned down. Do you know why it was rejected?

Joan: Yeah, he proposed **Ø**$_{34}$ very radical changes to some of the departments.

***

21. Terry: You wouldn't believe this! **A**$_{35}$ F/famous pop singer is coming to Istanbul this week. Guess who?

Charles: Jennifer Lopez?

Terry: Yeah, but how did you know?

Charles: **An**$_{36}$ A/announcement has already been made by the music club!

***

22. Steven: How did you solve the crime?

Carl: We found **Ø**$_{37}$ evidence in the crime scene.

***

23. Laura: How was the restaurant?

Sara: We were disappointed. **Ø**$_{38}$ C/chicken was on the menu, but apparently they had run out of it out before we arrived.

***

24. <u>Mr. Brown has just arrived in the Sales Department:</u>

Secretary: Good morning, Mr. Brown. **A**$_{39}$ C/client has called to arrange **a**$_{40}$ meeting with you. She said it was urgent.

Mr. Brown: Did she leave **a**$_{41}$ number?

Secretary: No, but she left **a**$_{42}$ message.

***

25. Paul: We've been waiting for you for almost two hours! Where have you been?

Mike: Terribly sorry for being late! **An**$_{43}$ A/accident caused a traffic jam on my way to the office.

***

26. <u>A woman with her dog entering a store:</u>

Security assistant: Excuse me madam, but **Ø**$_{44}$ dogs are not allowed inside the building.

Woman: Oh, I'm sorry.

***

27. Tom: How was the picnic yesterday?

Bill: It was great, but it started to rain in the afternoon and we all got wet.

Tom: Oh dear! But, **Ø**$_{45}$ rain was not forecast yesterday, was it?

***

28. Amy: All the hotels in Çanakkale were fully booked last weekend. I wonder why.

Brenda: Because, it was the time of the year when **Ø**$_{46}$ Australians came over to visit **the**$_{47}$ war cemetery.

***

29. Ann: How could you afford such an expensive car?

Beth: I won **Ø**$_{48}$ money in a contest on a TV show.

***

30. Susan: I heard that you're expecting a baby, congratulations!

Jane: Thanks a lot.

Susan: But, weren't you planning a trip to Africa?

Jane: Yes, actually we were.

Susan: Will you take **the**$_{49}$ child when you go to Africa?

Jane: No, I guess, we'll postpone **the**$_{50}$ trip.

***

31. Cindy: Do you think **Ø**$_{51}$ separate vacations are good for married couples?

Helen: Yes, I think they're necessary from time to time.

***

32. Jack: The path to Hisar campus is very dark and dangerous at nights.

Julie: **A**$_{52}$ T/torch would really help. Buy one.

***

33. Mr. Wilson: I'm having problems with my business partner.

Mr. Roberts: What's the problem?

Mr. Wilson: He doesn't want to sign the contract

Mr. Roberts: Well, **a**$_{53}$ lawyer might help.

***

34. Mother: Wake up; you'll be late for school.

Son: Leave me alone. I don't want to get out of bed.

Mother: I said, "Get up!" Go to the bathroom. **A**$_{54}$ C/cold shower will help you to wake up.

Son: OK, mom.

***

35. <u>At an accident scene:</u>

Reporter: What was the cause of the accident, officer?

Police Officer: Well, it looks like there were many causes. First of all, **the**$_{55}$ driver was driving much too fast. And while he was driving he was talking to a client on his car phone. When he saw the pedestrian he immediately stepped on the brakes, but it was too late. **The**$_{56}$ V/victim wasn't paying attention, either.

Reporter: You mean he didn't see **the**$_{57}$ car?

Police Officer: Yeah, because he was talking to his friend and they didn't wait for the traffic light to change. They crossed against a red light.

Reporter: And what happened when **the**$_{58}$ car hit him?

***

36. Jimmy: What would you take with you if you were going to spend three days on an island?

Peter: My friends, because **a**$_{59}$ lonely vacation depresses me a lot.

***

37. Doctor: You said your child had a stomachache, right?

Mother: Yes, since this morning.

Doctor: What did he have for breakfast?

Mother He had only **Ø**$_{60}$ bread and **Ø**$_{61}$butter.

***

38. Teacher A: Did you hear about the bus accident in Kilyos?

Teacher B: Yes, **a**$_{62}$ student in my class told me about it.

***

39. Victim: I have just been burgled! **Ø**$_{63}$ C/criminals are taking over the city, and you are doing nothing to catch them!

Officer: Right, but don't forget that we are in Istanbul. You know **Ø**$_{64}$ big cities are dangerous at night.

***

40. Frank: How is she going to carry out her research project?

Clara: The administration offered **Ø**$_{65}$ financial help but she turned it down.

***

41. Father: How was **the**$_{66}$ conference on parent-child relationships?

Mother: It was great! **The**$_{67}$ S/speaker at the meeting was a real expert in this area.

Father: What was it about specifically?

Mother: Well, **the**$_{68}$ introduction part was about how to detect your child's strengths and weaknesses, and then rest of the conference focused on developing creativity in the child.

***

42. <u>A radio report on drinking:</u>

Speaker: Drinking may help people relax, but it causes damage if a person drinks too much. In fact, **Ø**$_{69}$ alcohol increases the risk of liver cancer.

***

43. Karen: What would you do if you won **a**$_{70}$ lottery?

Joanna: I'd buy **a**$_{71}$ house.

***

44. <u>At a large dinner party:</u>

John: I wonder who brought **the**$_{72}$ carrot cake. It's delicious!

Mary: I don't know. Maybe Kathy will know.

***

45. Mr. Jones: In 1999, **Ø**$_{73}$ coal accounted for nearly 30% of Turkey's electric supply.

Mr. Alison: That's interesting!

***

46. Jeremy: If you want to be healthy, you should change your eating habits.

David: How?

Jeremy: Avoid all types of fast food, for instance. **Ø**$_{74}$ F/fruit and **Ø**$_{75}$ vegetables are good for your health.

***

47. Frank: Who came to visit you last winter?

Roger: **Ø**$_{76}$ F/friends from college who love to ski.

***

48. Police: What did you do last Tuesday night?

Suspect: I visited **a**$_{77}$ friend.

***

49. General Manager: How is your department doing nowadays? I heard that some of the old employees got retired.

    Human Resources Manager: Right. Now we're trying to sort out **Ø**$_{78}$ new job applications.

    ***

50. Alan: I don't know what to buy for her birthday?

    Brad: I'm sure **a**$_{79}$ novel or **a**$_{80}$ story book will make her very happy. You know she's a bookworm.

    ***

Thank you very much for your contribution!

APPENDIX D

Written Production Task

Name: **Date:**

Level:

Write about *one paragraph* to answer each question. Write clearly and neatly. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

1. What do you plan to do after you graduate from university?
2. Tomorrow is your last day on earth. How would you like to spend it?
3. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of keeping secrets from your girl/boyfriend. Is honesty always the best policy?

APPENDIX E

Sample Picture from Picture Description Task

APPENDIX F

Distribution of Items in the Fill-in-the-article Task

Context	Article Required	Position of NP	Items in this context	No. of items
+SR, +HK	the	Subject	25,31,55,56,58,66,67,68	8
		Object	2,3,21,47,49,50,57,72	8
+SR, -HK	a/an	Subject	4,5,27,35,36,39,43,62	8
		Object	9,10,14,24,26,30,42,77	8
	zero	Subject	1,15,17,38,45,46,73,76	8
		Object	22,23,34,37,48,60,61,78	8
-SR, -HK	a/an	Subject	8,29,52,53,54,59,79,80	8
		Object	6,7,11,28,40,41,70,71	8
	zero	Subject	16,44,51,63,64,69,74,75	8
		Object	12,13,18,19,20,32,33,65	8

Total number of items : **80**

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