EUROPEAN
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The Use of Articles by Bilingual Learners at Secondary Level

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Abstract

This research study analyses the errors in the use of articles by bilingual learners at secondary level. Results show that through proper teaching, the chances of errors can be minimized in the use of articles. This study was conducted through an experimental research. After administrating the pre – test, the students were taught through planned lessons and then post test was administered. The chances of pre – test interference were minimized through a separate post – test. The major findings show that students of the post – test group have better performance than the students of pre – test group. Score of pre – test is 60.56% while the score of post – test is 92.05%.

Key words: articles, bilingual learners, second language (L₂)

Introduction:

English is taught as a compulsory subject in Pakistani schools and colleges. Bilingual learners whose native language is not English make wrong use of the structures while in present age the more stress is given to functional syllabi but despite this fact we cannot ignore the structure of the language. One structure may have one or more meaning and it may be used differently according to the meaning, which it expresses.

When teaching English to Pakistani students, teachers use Pakistani texts which are supplied with English translations. The guiding assumption is that equivalence between the grammars of two languages facilities bilingual usage is it second language learning, lexical borrowing, or code – switching (Milroy & Muysken, 1995, p. 193). Even so, no exact match exists between categories in different languages. In Urdu there isn't any article.

A book was lost yesterday means something different from *the book was lost yesterday*. The usage of definite and indefinite articles is one of the hardest things for Pakistani learners to master, because it's often entirely arbitrary. The researcher feels a need to find out the problems in the use of articles so she conducts a research study on the students of Divisional Public School, Faisalabad.

Research on the language of bilingual learners shows a marked delay in their acquisition of grammatical morphemes, English articles are not inflected, but bilingual learners often omit **articles** in their spontaneous language productions. To distinguish between the definite and indefinite article learners must be able to associate the former with specificity and the later with

non-specificity, as well as to overcome egocentrism to determine specificity from the point of view of the listener. Milroy & Muysken (1995) devised comprehension and production tasks to test how well three and four year olds can differentiate between the two types of articles, and found that even three-year olds can discriminate between the two types of articles. Though bilingual learners show difficulty in producing articles.

We have to study English as a second language because, Urdu, our national language is still in the stage of infancy. Moreover, English affords an effective means of establishing relationship with the rest of the world. Besides our students have to study Arabic this is compulsory up to middle standard. Along with these languages some of the provinces have started their languages.

The biggest problem is when students don't write an article when the need to. Students of D.P.S. Faisalabad are often frustrated by trying to use English articles. Despite years of study and exposure to grammar, many students are not able to master the article system. The difficulty with articles lies in the incompatibility of the rules of grammar with the semantic meaning of the words.

Many second language (L_2) learners   have trouble while using articles. The primary reasons of their difficulty are not known. This study focuses on this problem. The Articles such as 'a', 'an' and 'the' are the most commonly used words in English, but the bilingual learners face difficulty while using them. This can be due to the fact that the English article system doesn't consist of one-to-one form and meaning relationships. This poses a great challenge to L_2 learners (Anderson 1984). This also fits true for those learners who have studied English for so many years (Krharma, 1981).

Basically, an article is an adjective. Like adjectives, articles modify nouns. 'A' and 'an' signal that the noun modified is indefinite, using 'a' or 'an' depends on the sounds that begin the next word. The definite article is used before singular and plural nouns when the noun is specific one. 'The' denotes that the noun is 'definite'.

Articles are used to differentiate between things or ideas. Nouns that need determiners are countable singular nouns. Nouns that don't need determiners are proper nouns, plural nouns, mass nouns (un-countable nouns).

This research was aimed at evaluating the comprehension of articles by Bilingual students at secondary level.

Design of research:
This study was conducted through experimental research. Researcher administered a pre-test (see Annex A) followed by a post-test (see Annex B) to the sample. After administering the pre-test the students were taught through planned lessons and then post-test was administered.

Hypothesis
The students of secondary level:
   a) Can differentiate between definite and indefinite articles.
   b) Use these articles appropriately, if teaching strategies are improved.

Mode of data collection and analysis:

Tool:
Pre-test and post -test were used for data collection.

Population/sample:
Girls of class x of Faisalabad district were used for administering the tool. There was a group of 20 students that were randomly selected. This group was given a pre-test for testing their comprehension about articles.

Data analysis:
Data was analyzed by the means 0f:
1. Classification
2. Tabulation
3. graphing

To find out the differences

Statistical Analysis:
Statistical analysis was carried out by using coefficient of variance and Standard Deviation.

Performance of students in Pre-Test VS Post-Test

Pre-test % Marks Obtained (X)	X^2	Post-test % Marks Obtained (Y)	Y^2
45	2025	83	6889
77.5	6006.25	84	7056
46.25	2139.063	91.5	8372.25
51.25	2626.563	86	7396
51.25	2626.563	94	8836
50	2500	94.5	8930.25
53.75	2889.063	92	8464
55	3025	96	9216
57.5	3306.25	93	8649
58.75	3451.563	96	9216
61.25	3751.563	97	9409
60	3600	96	9216
96.25	9264.063	98	9604
70	4900	97	9409
67.5	4556.25	93	8649
60	3600	94	8836
62.5	3906.25	88.5	7832.25
67.5	4556.25	88.5	7832.25
66.25	4389.063	88	7744
1211.25	76007.81	1841	169837
53.75	2889.063	91	8281

By applying the formula of Coefficient of Variance the performance of students in the post-test is greater than pre-test.

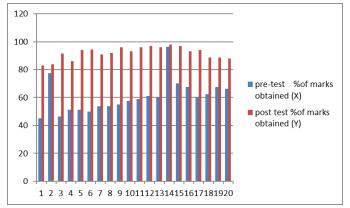C .V .of X=19.01 %

C .V. of Y=4.62 %

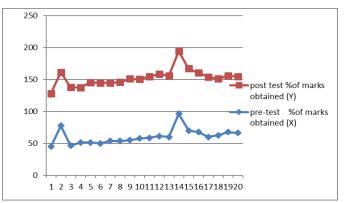**Result:** This shows that the performance of students of Post-Test is greater than the Pre-Test.

Figurative Representation of Performance

Pre-Test vs. Post-Test Performance

Pre-Test%of Marks Obtained (X)	Post-Test%0f Marks obtained (Y)
45	83
77.5	84
46.25	91.5
51.25	86
51.25	94
50	94.5
53.75	91
53.75	92
55	96
57.5	93
58.75	96
61.25	97
60	96
96.25	98

Comparison of Individual Results (Pre-Test vs. Post-Test)

Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

The major findings show that students of post-test has greater performance than the students of pre-test.

Findings:
Analysis of data revealed the following findings:
- There is a significant difference between the performance of the students in post-test and in the pre-test.
- First language infers in the use of Articles in second language.
- Performance of students is poor before teachers' guidance.
- Students usually made mistakes in use of 'a' 'an', and 'the' in pre-test.
- Mistakes in the use of Articles are minimized by teaching through lesson plans.
- Pre-test (pre-teaching) results show that students cannot differentiate between the appropriate use of definite and indefinite articles.
- Finding of post-test shows that students can differentiate between the appropriate use of definite and indefinite articles.
- Results of post-test shows that students can use articles appropriately if they are explained the difference between the first language and second language.

Conclusions:
In the light of the analysis of data findings of the study following conclusions were drawn:
- Score of pre-test was 60.56 % and score of post-test was 92.05%.
- Teaching through lessons plans has good effect on students' performance.
- Performance of students in differentiating between definite and indefinite articles are greater in post-test than in pre-test.
- Students can use articles appropriately after learning through group practices.
- To become master in the use of articles in second language needs a lot of practice. One way of practicing is paying attention to article usage in the things we read. The more we pay attention to the places where articles appear in the sentences, the more we will start to get sense for how to use them in our own writing.
- Using articles correctly is a particular challenge for writers whose first language is not English.

Recommendations:

- Students should be taught articles through appropriate teaching strategies.
- Secondary school syllabus should be designed in such a way as it should emphasize the use of articles.
- While teaching articles the students should be explained the difference between the first language and second language.
- In our schools rote memory should be discarded and students should learn to work in pairs and groups.
- Teachers should assign creative works instead of cramming.
- An English teacher should make use of a lot of exercises while teaching articles.

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Annexure A

Pre – Test on Articles

Q. 1: Choose a, an:

1. Waiter: Good morning. Would you like to see ___ menu?
2. Customer: No thank you. I know what I want. I'd like ___ omelet.
3. Waiter: Do you want ___ plain omelet?
4. Customer: No, I'll have ___ ham omelet.
5. Waiter: That comes with ___ toast. You have a choice of white or whole wheat.
6. Customer: Could I have ___ English muffin instead.
7. Waiter: Of course. Would you like ___ glass of orange juice with that?
8. Customer: No thank you. Just bring me ___ water.
9. Waiter: Would you like ___ cup of coffee as well?
10. Customer: I don't suppose you have ___ decaffeinated coffee.

Q. 2: Tick the right indefinite article.

The Indefinite Article	
1. Adam is ….. excellent student.	a an
2. He always walks with ….. dog.	a an
3. This is ….. great pencil.	a an
4. Father eats ….. apple each day.	a an
5. Come back in ….. hour.	a an
6. Ms. Potts is ….. good worker.	a an
7. Make me ….. offer I can't refuse.	a an
8. Bring me ….. umbrella.	a an
9. Charlotte is ….. mother.	a an
10. The children have ….. gift.	a an

Annexure B

Post – Test on Articles

Q. 1: Choose a, an:

1. Waiter: Yes we do. We serve ___ excellent cup of decaffeinated coffee.
2. Customer: Good. Do you have ___ skim milk?
3. Waiter: Yes, we do. Would you like ___ ketchup with your omelette?
4. Customer: No thank you. Just one little question. I'm ___ tourist. Is there a tourist office in town?
5. Waiter: Yes, there's ___ office just down the street.
6. Customer: Good. You see, I'm looking for ___ hotel. Can you recommend one?
7. Waiter: Well, there's the Seaview Hotel, but it's ___ expensive one.
8. Customer: I'll call them anyway. I suppose this is just ___ summer work for you.
9. Waiter: That's right. I'm studying Geology at ___ university in California.
10. Customer: Good luck. I notice that it's not too busy right now.
Waiter: It's the end of the breakfast service. Lunch starts in half ___ hour.

Q. 2: Try this passage below where you must put "a, an or the" into the spaces.

I went into (1) …… restaurant in Oxford Street, sat down and lit (2) …… cigarette. I called (3) …… waitress over, who was sitting dreaming. I ordered (4) glass of beer. I was thirsty. (5) ……

beer tasted good. But I threw (6) …… cigarette away. I wanted to give up smoking – a crazy habit!

Bored, I took out my mobile phone. Who could I call? (7) …… friend? Yes, but which one? (8) …… piece of paper had fallen out of my pocket as I'd taken out (9) …… phone. I remembered I'd written down (10) …… telephone number on it. Who was it? I knew! It was (11) …… number of that intelligent and interesting new girl in (12) …… office. I'd call her. May be she'd like to talk.