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Using and Translating the Definite Article 'The'/ 'Al' by Arab Learners of English as a Foreign Language

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Abstract: *The present article investigates the difficulties that encounter the Arab learners of English as a foreign language, when using or translating sentences and phrases, which containing the definite article 'the'/'al'. The subjects of the study are third year students of English department at the Faculty of Education – Radfan, university of Aden (one of the recognized universities in the Arab World). The results obtained show that most of the students of the third level, English department, at the Faculty of Education-Radfan make errors when they translate the Arabic definite article in sentences into English. The study also reveals that most of the students are not familiar with the different usages of the English definite article and most of them spontaneously translate the Arabic definite article "al" into the English definite article "the" even if it is expressed by a zero article in English. Further, it has shown that the vast majority of the students' errors are due to the effect of their mother tongue (interference) on English and their unfamiliarity with the different situations in which the definite article is used or not in English.*

Keywords: *Determiner, Definite article, Interference.*

Introduction

There are some particular problems in the process of translation: problems of ambiguity, problems that originate from structural and lexical differences between languages and multiword units like idioms and collocations. Another problem would lie in grammar because there are several constructions of grammar poorly understood, in the sense that it is not clear how they should be represented, or what rules should be used to describe them.

Translation, being a very complicated and challenging procedure, requires different knowledge areas. The most important of which are lexical, semantic, syntactic, cultural, and stylistic. Insufficient knowledge in any of these areas will definitely lead to mistranslation or at

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least to inaccurate translation. Beside, ignoring one of these areas may distort the meaning of original text (Newmark, 1981).

Statement of the Problem

It is obvious that students who are learning English encounter many difficulties in their study, as a result many errors are made when they translate from Arabic into English. One of these errors made in this regard is the wrong translation of the definite article. Students make definite article mistakes when they translate from Arabic (their own mother tongue) into English. They may attach definite article which are not required before some nouns.

Therefore, there is a serious need to conduct a study to investigate the definite article errors that encounter the EFL learners of English . This study aims at finding out the difficulties and causes which make the Arab learners of English commit errors when they translate sentences containing Arabic definite article into English. It also probes the extent to which article errors are made and tries to suggest some plausible solutions. The population of the study will be selected randomly from the students of English department at one of the education faculties affiliated to a recognized university.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims at:
1- Exploring the extent to which the students commit errors in translating and using the definite article in sentences from Arabic into English.
2- Identifying the causes that lead the students to make the definite article errors in their translation of these sentences.
3- Providing some suggestions and insights to avoid these kinds of errors in translation.

Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following questions:

1- To what extent do the students commit errors in translating the definite article from Arabic into English?

2- What are the main causes which lead the students to make the definite article errors in their translations of the Arabic sentences into English?

3- Are the students familiar with the different situations in which the definite article is used or no in English?

Research Hypotheses

The research hypothesizes the following:

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1- The students commit a lot of errors when they translate the Arabic definite article in sentences into English.

2- The students make definite article errors in translating the sentences because they think there are fully identical definite article usages between Arabic and English, and they are not familiar with the different situations of using the English definite article.

3- The students translate the Arabic definite articles into English depending on the Arabic definite article which leads to making errors (interference), in other words they translate the Arabic definite article "al" into the English definite article "the" even if there is a zero article (no article) in English.

Significance of the Study

This study adds to the few studies so far which are conducted in the area of grammatical interlingual errors of translation in the Arab world in general and among Yemeni University students, in particular. This study is expected to help students indentifythe different usages of the definite article in English and Arabic taking into consideration these differences when they translate from Arabic into English and vice versa. This study can also help teachers in solving some of the translation problems that encounter students and provide them with some procedures and techniques of translation.

Limitations of the Study

The study has three limitations:-

1- Limitation of time: The study was carried out and applied in the academic year 2012/2013.

2- Limitation of place: The study was applied and carried out at the Faculty of Education–Radfan, University of Aden, Yemen.

3- Subject Limitation:This study is intended for investigating the causes which lead the third level B.A students to commit mistakes when they translate the definite article in sentences from Arabic into English at the Faculty of Education – Radfan, University of Aden.

4) The indefinite articles (aand an) aer not included in this study.

Methodology

Both quantitative and qualitative methods are used in this study in order to get the desired objectives.

Data Collection Instrument and Participants

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A test will be conducted to collect the data of this study. The researchers presented a test containing 10 Arabic sentences. The Arabic definite article "al" is used twice in each sentence. 25 students of the Faculty of Education- Radfan, University of Aden Yemen (third level) will be selected to act as the subjects of the present study .

Literature Review

Articles in English

Articles are small words that are often used at the beginning of noun phrases. There are two: *the* (the definite article) and *a/an* (the 'indefinite article'). They belong to a group of words called 'determiners' (Swan, 2005: 51).

Articles as a Part of Determiners

According to Swan (2005: 135), determiners are words like *the*, *a*, *my*, *this*, *some*,*either*, *every*, *enough*, *several* which come at the beginning of noun phrases, but they are not adjectives.

Types of Determiners

Swan (ibid) classifies determiners into two groups, group A and group B.

Group A

This type helps to identify things- to say whether they are known or unknown to the hearer, which one(s) the speaker is talking about, whether the speaker is thinking of particular examples or speaking in general, etc., they are three kinds:

- Articles : a/an, the.
- Possessive: my, your, his, her, its, our, your, their, one's, whose.
- Demonstrative: this, these, that, those.

In this category, two determiners cannot be used together. For example it cannot be said: *the my friend".

Group B

Most of these are 'quantifiers': they say how much or many we are talking about. The most important are:

- Some, any, no.
- Each, every, either, neither.
- Much, many, more, most, (a) little, less, least, (a) few, fewer, fewest, enough, several.
- All, both, half.
- What, whatever, which, whichever.

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Some types of this category can be used with singular nouns (e.g. each), some with plurals (e.g. many), some with uncountable (e.g. much) and some with more than one kind of noun (e.g. which). Two determiners of this group can be used together if the combinations makes sense. For example, "we meet every few days".

Definite Article in English

"The" is the definite article in English. Itgoes with both countable and uncountable nouns. It marks the noun as referring to something or someone assumed to be known to the speaker and addressee (or the writer and reader) (Biber et al, 2002: 70).

The Importance of Using Definite Article in English

Since errors in the use of articles generally do not impede communication, many learners may feel that the effort involved in learning the system correctly is not proportionate to the benefits accrued (Master, 1997:216). For academic writing, however, a greater level of accuracy is required, and the correct article becomes an indication not only of mastery of the language but of exactness in thought and expression. As Master (ibid) indicates, “imperfect control of the use of articles may suggest imperfect knowledge”, leading to the perception that the writer of a university essay or academic paper does not have an adequate grasp of their subject.

According to Hewson (1972: 131), “the definite and the indefinite article are among the ten most frequent words of English discourse”. Nation &Waring (1997: 8-9) also concluded that "the" occurs so frequently that about 7 percent of the words on a page of written English and the same percentage of words in a conversation is repetitions of the word "the".This frequency means that this small word has a wide-ranging effect on speech styles and expression, and that proficiency in this system will provide non-native speakers with a perceptibly increased level of accuracy.

Regarding the importance of the definite article especially in translation, Ghazala (2008:71) states that it is not advisable to undermine such a translation problem of definite article. Indeed, sometimes it makes a big difference to drop it, or to keep it, as illustrated in the following two versions of the Security Council's Resolution, 242, after the Zionist war against the Arab countries in 1667:

A : Withdrawal (of Israeli forces) from Arab occupied territories (The English version)

B: Withdrawal (of Israeli forces) from the Arab occupied territories (The French version).

A long dispute has been going on between the Arabs and the Zionist about the two versions, as the first (without 'the') is adopted by the Israelis for it is interpreted as withdrawal from some Arab occupied territories, whereas and the second is adoptedby the Arabs as it means withdrawal from all Arab occupied territories.

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Pronunciation of the Definite Article "the"

With regard to its pronunciation, Swan (2005: 135) states that "the" is normally pronounced /ði:/ before a vowel and /ðə/ before a consonant.

e.g. The ice /ði: a**I**s/ The snow /ðəsnəʊ/

The choice between /ði:/ and /ðə/ depends on pronunciation, not spelling. For example /ði:/ is pronounced before a vowel sound, even it is written as a consonant, and /ðə/ is pronounced before a consonant sound, even if it is written as a vowel.

e.g. The hour /ði:aʊə(r)/ The university /ðəju:n**I**vɜ:s**I**t**I**/

Sometimes a stressed /ði:/ is pronounced before a hesitation, or when we want to stress the following word, even it is begins with a consonant.

e.g. He is the /ði:/ - just a moment – deputy assistant vice-president.

Types of the Definite Article "the"

Based on its use, (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Hawkins, 1978; Quirk et al, 1985) usually categorize the English definite article "the" into two main categories of meaning, namely generic and nongeneric.

Definite Article with a Generic Meaning

In its generic use, "the"usually functions with a singular noun to mean either a species, a race, or people of a nation, as in "*the German is very athletic"*. However, some grammarians (Celce- Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Christophersen, 1939) suggest that the generic use of "the"can also be employed with plural nouns, as in *"the Germans are very athletic*".

Definite Article with a Non-generic Meaning

Regarding the non-generic meaning of the definite article, different classifications have been provided by grammarians and researchers. Exemplifications, Hawkins (1978: 106-147) developed a theory known as the Location Theory that classifies the non-generic uses of "the"into eight types as follows: Anaphoric use, visible situation use, immediate situation use, larger situation use relying on specific knowledge, larger situation relying on general situation,associative anaphoric use**,** unfamiliar use in noun phrases with explanatory modifierandunfamiliar use in noun phrases with non explanatory modifier.

Liu and Gleason (2002: 7) further elucidated the ideas of Hawkins. Instead of using the eight original categories, the authors collapsed them into four major uses as follows:

Cultural use, situation use, structural use and textual use.

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General Uses of Definite Article "the"

According to Thomson and Martinet (1986: 19-20) the definite article "the" is used in the following situations:

1) When the object or group of objects is unique or considered to be unique.

e.g. The earth. The moon. The sun.

2) Before a noun which has become definite as a result of being mentioned a second time.

e.g. I bought a car a month ago but the car is broken now.

3) Before a noun made definite by the addition of a phrase or clause.

e.g. The place where I met him.

4) Before a noun which by reason of locality can represent only one particular thing.

e.g. Ahmed is in the garden. (the garden of this house).

5) Before superlatives, and first, second, etc. used as adjectives or pronouns, and only.

e.g. The first day. The only way.

6) "The" can be used with a singular to represent a class of animals or things.

e.g. The whale is in danger of becoming extinct.

7) "The" is used with some adjectives (without a noun) to represent a class of people. The meaning is always plural.

e.g. The rich. The old. The dead.

8) "The" is used before certain proper names of seas, rivers, groups of islands, chains of mountains, plural names of countries, deserts, and regions.

e.g. The Atlantic. The Thames. The Alps.

And before certain other names.

e.g. The Hague. The Sudan.

9) "The" is also used before names consisting of noun + of + noun.

e.g. The Gulf of Mexico. The United States of America.

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It can also be used before names consisting of adjective + noun (provided the adjective is not east, west, etc).

e.g. The Arabian Gulf.

"The" can be used before the adjective east/west etc. + noun in certain names.

e.g. The North/South Pole.

But it is omitted in some cases such as, North America.

"The", however, is used before east/ west etc., when these are nouns.

e.g. The North of Spain. The Middle East.

10) "The" is used before other proper names consisting of adjective + noun or noun + of + noun.

e.g. The Tower of London.

"The" can also be used before names of choirs, orchestras, pop groups, newspapers and ships.

e.g. The Philadelphia Orchestra. The Times.

11) "The" with names of people has a very limited use. The + plural surname can be used to mean the family.

e.g. The Smiths = Mr and Mrs Smith (and children).

Omission of the Definite Article "the"

There are cases in which the definite article "the" is not used (it is also called a zero article). These cases are:

l) Before names of places except the places already mentioned, or before names of people.

e.g. Cairo. Aden.

2) Before abstract and material nouns except when they are used in a particular sense.

e.g. Water is essential for life.

3) After a noun in the possessive case, or a possessive adjective.

This is my book.

4) Before names of meals.

e.g. George was having breakfast when the phone rang. .

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5) Before names of games.

e.g. Ali plays golf.

6) Before parts of the body and articles of clothing, as these normally prefer a possessive adjectives.

e.g. Raise your right hand He took off his coat.

7) "The" is never used before indefinite plural nouns (generic nouns) especially when this does not refer to a particular group of people or things.

e.g. Elephants are huge animals.

8) Before some places and with some forms of transport such as at home in/to bed at/to work at/to school by bus/ plane / car / train, and on foot.

e.g. She goes to work by bus.

He is at home.

9) "The" is not used with these nouns: bed, church, court, hospital, prison, school, college, and university when these places are used for their primary purpose.

e.g. Mrs Kelly goes to church every Sunday.

10) "The" is not used with sea (go to sea /be at sea) when the meaning is go/be on a voyage.

e.g. Tom is a seaman. He spends most of his life at sea.

11) "The" cannot be used with "work" when it means place of work. It is not also used with "office" when it means to hold an official (usually political) position.

e.g. He is on his way to work.

"The" is omitted from the word "town" when speaking of the subject's or speaker's own town.

e.g. We were in town last Monday.

(ibid 21-2)

Definite Article in Arabic

"Al" (Arabic: أل) is the definite article in the Arabic language; a particle (*ḥarf*) whose function is to render the noun on which it is prefixed definite. For example, the word *kitāb* كتاب "book" can be made definite by prefixing it with "al"- resulting in الكتاب *al-kitāb* "the book".

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Unlike most other particles in Arabic, "al" is always prefixed to another word and it never stands alone. Consequently, most dictionaries will not list it as a separate word. By the same token, "al" is not a permanent component of the word to which it is prefixed. It is added and removed to toggle between the definiteness and indefiniteness of the word.As a particle, "al" does not inflect at all–not for gender, plurality, grammatical case, etc.

Definiteness in Arabic

There are many ways in which Arabic words can be made definite. These include the use of personal pronouns like "me", the use of proper nouns like "Saudi Arabia", demonstrative pronouns like "this man", relative pronouns like "the man who ...", vocation like "O man", possession like "my bag", and of course the definite article like "the man" (IbnHisham, 2001: 159-90).

Uses of the Definite Article "al"

The Arabic definite article "al" has six major uses as follows:

1.Textual Use

"Al" isused when something is mentioned a second time, as in the following example:

" :قال تعالى(16 ,15 : المزمل) ".كَمَآ أَرۡسَلۡنَآ إِلَىٰ فِرۡعَوۡنَ رَسُولٗا . فَعَصَىٰ فِرۡعَوۡنُ ٱلرَّسُولَ

kama ʾarsalna ʾillaferʿaūnarasūla. Faʿaṣaferʿaūnu al- rasūla.

God to Whom be ascribed all perfection and majesty says: "*As we did send to Pharaoh a messenger. But Pharaoh disobeyed the messenger*". Al-Hilali and Khan (1996:794)

In this statement, the messengerin the second sentence refers to the messenger that was mentioned in the first (Aljarim and Alameen , 1999: 137-141).

2. Situational Use

The use of "al"makes its noun refer to something (visible or not) understood by both the speaker and the listener.

e.g. أعطَني القَلَمَ

ʾAʿatini al-qalama. "Give me *the* pen"

In this example the definite article "al" signifies that the noun 'qalam' is known both by the speaker and the listener.

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3. Cultural Use

"Al"is attached to the names of things that are known by every member of

a local community or general for everyone.

e.g. زُرتُ الكَعبةَ

zurtual-kʿabata

“I visited *the*Ka’bah”

This example shows that the definite article "al" isattached to a noun that is culturally well-known in Islam (al- *Kʿabah*).

4.Structural Use

"Al"is attached to nouns that are modified by explanatory modifiers such as relative clauses.

e.g. كَانَ البيتُ (الذي اشتَراه أحمدٌ) غالياً

Kānaalbytu (allaḏiaštrahu ʾAḥmad) qāliyan

“The house (that was bought by Ahmad) was expensive”

This shows that "al" is used due to the existence of the explanatory phrase in

parentheses which turns the noun to definite (ibid:138) .

5- Entire Class

"Al" is also used to cause its noun to refer to an entire class of things as in

the example below.

إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ

ʾInn al-insanalafiḫusrin

“Truly mankind is in loss”

Here, al-insana is not used to reference a particular human being, rather to the entire class of mankind.

6.Individuals of a Class

"Al" may be used to encompass all the individuals of a class. In order for "al" to be in this capacity, it is necessary to be interchangeable with the word"كل" “kull” (every).

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e.g. الحَمدُ للهِ

Al-ḥamdulillahi

"Praise be to Allah"

In this example "al" is not referring to a particular praise, or a particular type of praise.

Rather, it means every kind of praise. In other words, "al" is used to refer to each single type of class (Aljarim and Alameen 1999: 137-141).

"Al" with Sun and Moon Letters

According to Abu-Chacra (2007:39), the Arabic consonants are phonetically divided into two major classes called:

1- Sun letters ḥurūfunšamsyyatun, assimilating.

2- Moon letters ḥurūfunqamariyyatun, non-assimilating.

Sun Letters

The sun letters have received their name from the Arabic word for 'sun', šamsun, whose first letter, ش /š /, belongs to the class of assimilating letters.

There are fourteen sun letters. These letters are pronounced with the tongue touching the teeth or front part of the mouth. The sun letters are:

ش		ز	ر	ذ	د	ث	ت	ن	ل	ظ	ط	ض	ص
š	S	z	r	ḏ	d	ṯ	t	N	L	ẓ	ṭ	ḍ	ṣ

Abu-Chacra (ibid) confirms that when the definite article ...أل /al.../ is attached to a word which begins with a sun letter, the sound ...ل /l/ of the definite article is assimilated to the sound of the following sun letter. Although the ...ل /l/ is not pronounced, it is written as such (without a *sukūn*), but in the transliteration it is omitted. Owing to the assimilation, the first consonant of the word is doubled, which is indicated by a *šaddah* above it.

e.g. شَمْسٌ*šamsun*, a sun. الشَّمْسُ*aš- šamsu*, the sun.

رَجُلٌ*raǧulun*, a man. الرَّجُلُ*ar-raǧulu*, the man.

Moon Letters

Abu-Chacra (ibid: 40) states that the other fourteen letters are called moon letters, because the first letter, ق /q/, of the Arabic word for 'moon', قَمَرٌ*qamarun*, represents the class of non-assimilating letters. The moon letters are as follows:

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ي	و	هـ	م	ك	ق	ف	غ	ع	خ	ح	ج	ب	أ
y	W	H	m	K	q	f	ġ	ʿ	ḫ	ḥ	ǧ	b	ʾ

When the definite article "أل", "al" is attached to a word beginning with a moon letter, the *lām*ل / l of the article is not assimilated and retains its pronunciation.

e.g. قَمَرٌ*qamarun*, a moon. الْقَمَر*al-qamaru*, the moon.

كِتَابٌ*kitābun*, a book. الكِتَابُ *al-kitābu*, the book.

However Abu-Chacra (ibid) states that The letters ج / ǧ / and ي /y/ are counted as moon letters (non-assimilating), although they are pronounced with the tongue touching the front part of the mouth, e.g. الجَبَلُ*al- ǧabalu*, the mountain.

Spelling Rules of the Preposition لِ .. li.. with Definite Article "al"

When .. لِ li.. (means "for, to") precedes a word with the definite article "أل" "al", the *"alif* ,ا" is omitted in writing and pronunciation, and the two *lāms*are joined together (Abu-Chacra, 2007: 57).

e.g. العَامِلُ*al-ʿāmilu*, the worker. للعَامِلِ *lilʿāmili*, for the worker.

الطَّبِيبُ*aṭ-ṭbību*, the doctor. للطَبِيبِ*liṭ-ṭbību*, for the doctor.

Description of the Data

The data of this study are simple Arabic sentences. The third level B.A students are asked to translate them into English.

The data consist of ten Arabic sentences which are supposed to be translated into English. These sentences are intended to check the students ability in translation from Arabic into English.

The Test

According to Richards and Schmidt (2010: 591), a test is any procedure for measuring ability, knowledge or performance. For Seliger and Showhamy (1990:176), a test is a procedure used to collect data on subject's ability or knowledge of certain disciplines. In second language acquisition research, tests are generally used to collect data about the subject's ability and knowledge of the second language in areas such as vocabulary, grammar, reading, metalinguistic awareness, and general proficiency.

In this study, the test is used to collect data which is considered as the most suitable instrument for collecting the data required because the other research instruments are not as effective as the test in measuring the proficiency of the students in translation.

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Evaluating the Test

This test, as an instrument for this study, was evaluated well before distributing it to the subjects. The test was introduced to a group of specialized experts at the University of Aden to judge its validity and reliability so that their comments and suggestions could be taken into consideration.

Some experts gave few notices about some sentences which were immediately amended and modified in order to be in line with the experts' suggestions.

Piloting the Test

Before administering the instrument of the research to the informants, it must be tried out to check its effectiveness and whether it suits the students levels and proficiency in translation.

For this purpose the test was tried out on a small group of students (5 students) of the third level of English major at the Faculty of Education- Radfan, University of Aden. The results showed that all the students made mistakes when translating the definite article in sentences from Arabic into English. This trial confirms the hypotheses of this study and shows that the test is suitable to be applied to a large group of subjects.

Description of the Test as an Instrument of the Study

The test of this study consists of ten Arabic sentences. A 10-item test is sufficient for the purpose of the present study as researchers such as Bataineh (2005) and Sugimoto (1997) used 10-item tests effectively to conduct their studies. Each sentence of the test contains two Arabic definite articles "أل, al" which are attached to two Arabic nouns. The students are asked to translate the sentences into English as follows:

Sentence No. (1) ***نَذْهَبُ إِلَى المَدْرَسَةِ بالسَّيارَةِ*** contains two Arabic definite articles "أل, al" attached to the nouns " مَدْرَسَة" and "سيَّارة" taking into consideration that the definitearticle in the second noun is preceded by the Arabic preposition "بـ , by" "بالسّيارة". ***Sentence No. (2)*** ***المَاءُ ضَرُورِيٌ لِلحَياةِ*** also contains two definite articles "أل, al" attached to two nouns "مَاء" and "حيَاة". The second definite article is also preceded by an Arabic preposition "لـ, li" "للحَياة". **Sentence No. (3)** ***يَخْدِمُ الأَطِبَّاءُ والمُعَلِّمُونَ أوطَانَهم*** involves two Arabic definite articles with the nouns " أطِبّاء" and " معلِّمُون". ***Sentence No. (4)*** ***الْبَحْرَيْنُ أَصْغَرُ مِنَ الكُويتِ*** also contains two Arabic articles preceded the following two Arabic countries "البَحرَين " and "الكُويت". ***Sentence No. (5)*** ***تَدُورُ الأَرْضُ حَوْلَ الشَّمْسِ*** also involves using two Arabic definite articles "أل, al"before the Arabic nouns "أرْض" and "شَمس".

Sentence No. (6) ***الوَرَقُ مَصنُوعٌ مِنَ الخَشَبِ*** includes two definite articles with the nouns "وَرَق" and " خَشَب". ***Sentence No. (7)*** ***فِي بَرِيطَانيَا القَهوَةُ أغْلَى مِنَ الشَّاي*** contains two nouns preceded by two definite articles which are " القَهْوَة" and " الشَّاي". ***Sentence No. (8)*** ***يُحِبُّ النَّاسُ الزُّهُورَ*** involves the nouns " □نَا" and " زهُور" which are preceded by the definite article "أل, al". ***Sentence No. (9)***

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الحَيَاةُ صَعْبَةٌ جِدّاً بِدُونِ الكَهرَباءِ has two Arabic definite articles attached to the nouns " حَياة" and " كَهرَباء ". ***Sentence No. (10) الحَلِيبُ جَيِّدٌ لِلأطفَالِ*** also includes two definite articles; the first precedes the noun " حَلِيب" and the second one attached to the noun "أطفَال". The second definite article is preceded by an Arabic preposition "-ل"li" "لأطفَال.

Subjects

The population of the study is the third level students, department of English, at the Faculty of Education- Radfan, University of Aden. They are 25 students representing the whole students of the third level. They have been learning English as a foreign language for 9 years. They study translation for two semesters and have some experience of how to translate sentences from English into Arabic and vice versa. Thecommon language spoken at home and school is their own mother-tongue, which is 'Arabic'. Thesubjects are homogeneous in terms of their linguistic, educational, and socioeconomic background.

Validity of the Data

Richards and Schmidt (2010: 622) define the validity as ''the degree to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure, or can be used successfully for the purposes for which it is intended." Similarly Seliger and Shohamy (1990: 188) state that "validity refers to the extent to which the data collection procedure measures what it intends to measure."

Bell (1999 : 104), in his turn, defines validity as "a complex concept which tells us whether an item measures or describes what it is supposed to measure or describe."

According to Bose (2002 : 127), the test has validity if it tests what it is supposed to test. The content validity is a basic requirement for any test to be considered as valid test. It refers to the fact that the content of the test is the one that the test intends to test. And the face validity is concerned with what teachers and students think of the test.

Regarding the instrument of this study, the test was assessed by some English experts at the University of Aden, Yemen who stated that this test measures what it is intended to measure.

Reliability of the Data

Richards and Schmidt (2010: 495) define reliability as ''a measure of the degree to which a test gives consistent results". A test is said to be reliable if it gives the sameresults when it is given on different occasions or when it is used by different people.

Similarly, Bell (1999) regards reliability as "the extent to which a test or procedure produces similar results under constant conditions on all occasions."

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The test of this study shows high level of reliability since the results of the subjects in the pilot study and the whole subjects were the same in both cases , furthermore, the mistakes made by informants were relatively the same.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Marking the Test

As it has been mentioned previously, a test is used for collecting the data of this study. The test consists of ten Arabic sentences, each sentence contains two Arabic definite articles which are supposed to be translated into English.

There are ten Arabic sentences in which two Arabic definite articles are used in each sentence, the first article is called part 1 (p1) and the second article is called part two (p2). The total mark of the test is (100) one hundred. In other words there are (10) marks for each sentence. Each sentence is divided into two parts so that each part contains one Arabic definite article and has (5) marks out of (100).

Analytical and Interpretational Processes

As it has been stated earlier, the test is used as an instrument to accomplish the aims of this study. This test includes ten Arabic sentences. Each sentence contains two definite articles p1 and p2. The undergraduate students are asked to translate them into English.

The respondents faced many difficulties and committed many errors in their translation of the Arabic definite articles. Most of them translated the Arabic definite article (أل) point-blank into the English definite article (the). Some others used (a/an), some used a zero article as an equivalent to the Arabic definite article.

The following discussion is a detailed analysis and interpretation of each individual sentence including its two parts. The analysis is reinforced by using tables ,Frequencies , reliable statistical procedure of percentage , mean, standard deviation , test value = 5, degree of freedom (df) and seg. (2- tailed).

Sentence No (1) " نَذْهَبُ إِلَى المَدْرَسَةِ بالسَّيَارةِ "

(naḏhabu'ilāalmadrasatibis-syārati)

This sentence contains two parts of the Arabic definite article. The first part (p1) is attached to the noun (أل + مدرسَة), the second part (p2) is attached to the noun (أل+ سيّارة).

Some of the respondents made errors when they followed the Arabic structure translating them into (the + school and the + car) like this sentence:

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- We go to the school by the car.

While some subjects translated the two parts correctly into school and car leaving out "the" since "the" cannot be used with places to which people go for the purpose they are intended for. Similarly in p2 "the" cannot precede means of transport, so the whole sentence is translated into:

- We go to school by car.

Students	Correct translation		Incorrect translation		Percentage of errors	
	P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2
25	20	15	5	10	20%	40%

Table 1. The percentages of errors when translating sentence No. 1

Table (1) shows that (20) of the subjects, i.e. (80%) in p1 got the correct translation whereas (5) of them, i.e. (20%) made errors. In p2, (15) of the students, i.e. (60%) translated correctly, whereas (10) of them, i.e. (40%) committed errors.

Sentence No (2) " المَاءُ ضَرُورِيٌ لِلحيَاةِ "

(almāuḍarūriunlilḥayāti)

In this sentence, the two parts of the Arabic definite article are: p1 (أل + مَاء) and p2 (أل + حيَاة)

Many of the respondents translated them into (the water, the life) like this:

- The water is essential for the life.

"The" must be excluded from this sentence and it does not precede these two nouns

(water and life) because they are material and abstract nouns which are used generically in this context. However only some subjects translated this sentence correctly into:

- Water is essential for life.

Students	Correct translation		Incorrect translation		Percentage of errors	
	P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2
25	6	17	19	8	76%	32%

Table 2. The percentages of errors when translating sentence No. 2

Table (2) above indicates that (6) of the subjects, i.e. (24%) in p1 obtained the correct translation, while (19) of them, i.e. (76%) made errors. In p2, (17) of the respondents, i.e. (68%) translated correctly, farther (8) of them, i.e. (32%) committed errors.

Sentence No. (3) " يَخدِمُ الْأَطِبَّاءُ والمُعَلّمُونَ أوطَانَهم"

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(yaḥdimualāṭibā'uwalmu'alimūna 'awṭānahum)

The Arabic nouns attached to the Arabic definite article "أل" in the two parts of the sentence are: (أطبّاء) and (معلّمون). Most of the subjects translated the two Arabic nouns into (the doctors) and (the teachers), they translated the whole sentence like this:

The doctors and the teacher serve their countries.

Or the doctors and teachers serve their countries.

Some of the subjects translated it correctly without using "the" in both cases, some used the English definite article in one part and dropped it in the other part.

The sentence is translated properly into:

Doctors and teachers serve their countries.

Students	Correct translation		Incorrect translation		Percentage of errors	
	P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2
25	4	17	21	8	84%	32%

Table 3. The percentages of errors when translating sentence No. 3

Table (3) above shows that (4) of the tested respondents, i.e. (16%) in p1 got the correct translation whereas (21) of them, i.e. (84%) made errors. In p2, (17) of the students, i.e. (68%) obtained the correct translation, whereas (8) of them, i.e. (32%) committed errors.

Sentence No. (4) " الْبَحْرَيْنُ أصغَرُ مِنَ الكُويتِ "

(albaḥrynu 'aṣġaru mina alkwayti)

The nouns attached to the definite article are: (البحرين) in p1 and (الكويت) in p2. Some of the respondents translated them incorrectly like the following sentence:

The Bahrain is smaller than the Kuwait. Some other students translated it like this formula: **Al –Bahrain is smaller than al-Kuwait.**

Some other students translated it correctly without using "the" since proper names of the countries generally do not take "the" before them. So its translation is:

Bahrain is smaller than Kuwait.

Students	Correct translation		Incorrect translation		Percentage of errors	
	P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2
25	14	17	11	8	44%	32%

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Table 4. The percentages of errors when translating sentence No. 4

Table (4) above reveals that (14) of the testees, i.e. (56%) in p1 got the correct translation whereas (11) of them, i.e. (44%) made errors. In p2, (17) of the subjects, i.e. (68%) translated correctly, but (8) of them, i.e. (32%) committed errors.

Sentence No. (5) "تَدُورُ الأَرْضُ حَولَ الشَّمسِ"

(tadūrualʿarḍuḥawlaaš-šamsi)

The nouns which are attached to the Arabic definite article are: (أل+ أرض) in p1 and (أل+ شمس) in p2.

The majority of the respondents translated it correctly by adding "the" with (earth and moon). The definite article is used here because the earth and the moon are unique in the universe and this matches the Arabic pattern which has the same usage.

A few students made errors using different forms in translating it. But most of them translated it into:

The earth goes round the sun.

Students	Correct translation		Incorrect translation		Percentage of errors	
	P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2
25	19	18	6	7	24%	28%

Table 5. The percentages of errors when translating sentence No. 5

Table (5) shows that (19) of the testees, i.e. (76%) in p1 acquired the correct translation, but (6) of them, i.e. (24%) made errors. (18) of the subjects, i.e. (72%) translated correctly in p2, while (7) of them, i.e. (28%) committed errors in the same part.

Sentence No. (6)"الوَرقُ مَصنُوعٌ مِنَ الخَشَبِ"

(alwaraqumaṣnūʿaun mina alḫašabi)

In this sentence, there are also two cases in which the Arabic definite article is used, they are: (أل+ ورق) and (أل+ خشب). On the whole, a large number of respondents translated them incorrectly into (the paper and the wood) because they are highly affected by their mother tongue (Arabic) since these two nouns are preceded by an Arabic definite article so they translated the whole sentence into:

The paper is made from the wood.

Some students used the definite article in one part and omitted it in another.

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"The" cannot precede the nouns (paper and wood) in this context on the grounds that they are material nouns used generically. The right translation of this sentence is:

Paper is made from wood.

Students	Correct translation		Incorrect translation		Percentage of errors	
	P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2
25	3	13	22	12	88%	48%

Table 6. The percentages of errors when translating sentence No. 6

Table (6) reveals that only (3) of the subjects, i.e. (12%) in p1 obtained the correct translation, while (22) of them, i.e. (88%) made errors. In p2, (13) of the subjects, i.e. (52%) translated correctly, but (12) of them, i.e. (48%) committed errors.

Sentence No. (7)"فِيبَرِيطَانْيَا القَهوَةُ أغلَى مِنَ الشَّاي"

(fībarīṭānyāalqahwatu'ġl'a mina aš-šāy)

In this sentence, two nouns are used with the definite article which are: (أل+ قهوة) in p1 and (أل الشاي +) in p2. When the tested subjects translated them into Arabic, many of them translated the Arabic definite article "أل" into the English definite article "the" in both parts. It was incorrect translation because the nouns (tea and coffee) are nouns of materials with a generic meaning in this context, so they do not take "the". The subjects translated the sentence incorrectly into:

In Britain, the coffee is more expensive than the tea.

In some other translations of this sentence, a few students used the definite article in one part and left it out in another, or used indefinite article in either part. Some others translated it accurately into English like the following sentence:

In Britain, coffee is more expensive than tea.

Students	Correct translation		Incorrect translation		Percentage of errors	
	P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2
25	6	18	19	7	76%	28%

Table 7. The percentage of errors when translating sentence No.7

Table (7) above indicates that just (6) of the subjects, i.e. (24%) in p1 obtained the correct translation, whereas (19) of them, i.e. (76%) made errors. In p2, (18) of the respondents, i.e. (72%) translated it accurately, but (7) of them, i.e. (28%) made errors.

Sentence No. (8)"يُحِبُّ النَّاسُ الزُّهُورَ "

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(yuḥibu an-nāsuaz-zuhūra)

The two parts of the Arabic definite article are attached to the nouns (الناس) and (الزهور) which are used to refer generically to all members of people and flowers not to specific ones so a zero article (no article) is used in English. But the vast majority of the subjects added the English definite article "the" when they translated them into English.

The formula of their wrong translation is:

The people like the flowers.

Only a very few tested subjects translated it correctly when they left the definite article out from the two general nouns like the following sentence:

People like flowers.

Students	Correct translation		Incorrect translation		Percentage of errors	
	P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2
25	5	1	20	24	80%	96%

Table 8. The percentages of errors when translating for sentence No. 8

Table (8) above reveals that just (5) of the subjects i.e. (20%) in p1 translated the first part of the definite article correctly, while (20) of them i.e. (80%) made errors in the same part. Only (1) of the respondents i.e. (4%) obtained the correct answer in p2, the rest, (24) of them i.e. (96%) committed errors.

Sentence No. (9) "الحَيَاةُ صَعبَةٌ جِدّاًبِدُونِالكَهْرَباءِ"

(alḥayātuṣa'batunğiddanbidūnialkhrabāi)

The Arabic definite article here is attached to two nouns (ألـ + حياة) and (ألـ + كهرباء) which are abstract nouns with a generic meaning in this context. They do not take the English definite article "the". However the Arabic nouns take in such a situation.

Because the effect of the mother tongue, most of the students used the English definite article "the" in English structure which made them commit errors like this:

The life is very difficult without the electricity.

Some students got right translations when they translated the sentence into:

Life is very difficult without electricity.

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Students	Correct translation		Incorrect translation		Percentage of errors	
	P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2
25	2	13	23	12	92%	48%

Table 9. The percentages of errors when translating sentence No. 9

Table (9) above indicates that only (2) of the respondents, i.e. (8%) in p1 acquired the proper translation, but (23) of them, i.e. (92%) made errors. In p2 in the same sentence (13) of the subjects, i.e. (52%) translated correctly, whereas (12) of them, i.e. (48%) committed errors.

Sentence No. (10) "الحَلِيبُ جَيِّدٌلِلْأَطْفالِ"

(alḥalībuǧayyadunlilaṭfāli)

The two parts of the sentence which contain the definite article are: (أل+ حليب) in p1 and (أل+ أطفال) in p2.

These two Arabic nouns refer to an entire class of things so they take the Arabic definite article "أل". On the contrary, the English definite article does not come with nouns which refer to entire class of things. Since most of the students do not realize this fact, and being effected by their mother tongue (Arabic), they translated the two nouns into English with their articles so errors were made in their translations.

Most of the students' wrong translation of the sentence was as follows:

The milk is good for the children.

Some students translated it correctly in one part and made errors in the other part.
The accurate translation of this sentence can be shown in the following sentence:

Milk is good for children.

Students	Correct translation		Incorrect translation		Percentage of errors	
	P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2
25	2	18	23	7	92%	28%

Table 10. The percentage of errors when translating sentence No. 10

Table (10) above shows that (2) of the students, i.e. (8%) in p1 got the correct translation, whereas (23) of them, i.e. (92%) made errors. In p2, (18) of the students, i.e. (72%) translated correctly, whereas (12) of them, i.e. (28%) committed errors.

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Students	Test Sentences																				Total
	S1		S2		S3		S4		S5		S6		S7		S8		S9		S10		
	P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2	
1	5	5	5	0	5	5	5	0	0	0	5	5	0	5	0	0	5	0	0	0	50
2	5	5	0	5	0	0	0	0	5	5	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	5	35
3	5	0	0	5	5	0	5	5	5	5	0	5	0	5	0	0	0	5	0	5	55
4	5	0	0	5	0	5	0	0	5	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	5	35
5	5	0	0	5	0	5	5	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	30
6	5	5	0	0	0	0	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	0	0	0	5	5	65
7	5	5	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	5	5	5	0	0	0	0	0	5	40
8	0	5	0	5	0	5	0	0	5	5	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	5	0	0	35
9	5	5	0	5	0	5	5	5	5	0	0	5	0	5	0	0	0	5	0	5	55
10	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	5	5	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	5	0	5	30
11	5	5	5	0	0	5	5	5	5	5	0	5	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	5	55
12	5	0	5	0	0	0	5	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	25
13	5	5	5	5	0	5	5	5	5	5	0	5	5	5	0	0	0	5	0	5	70
14	0	0	0	5	0	0	5	5	5	5	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	5	40
15	5	5	0	5	5	5	0	5	5	5	0	0	0	5	5	0	0	5	0	5	60
16	5	5	0	5	0	5	0	5	5	5	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	40
17	5	5	0	0	0	0	5	5	5	5	0	5	0	5	0	0	0	5	0	5	50
18	0	0	0	0	0	5	5	5	5	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	25
19	5	5	0	5	0	5	5	5	5	0	0	5	5	5	5	0	0	0	0	5	60
20	5	5	0	5	0	5	0	5	5	5	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	40
21	0	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	0	0	5	5	5	0	5	5	5	0	0	70
22	5	0	0	5	0	5	5	5	5	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	5	45
23	5	5	0	5	0	5	0	0	0	5	0	5	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	5	40
24	5	0	0	5	0	5	0	5	5	5	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	5	0	5	45
25	5	0	0	0	0	5	0	5	0	5	0	5	5	5	0	0	0	0	5	5	45

Table 11. The full marking system obtained by the students in each part of sentences in the test

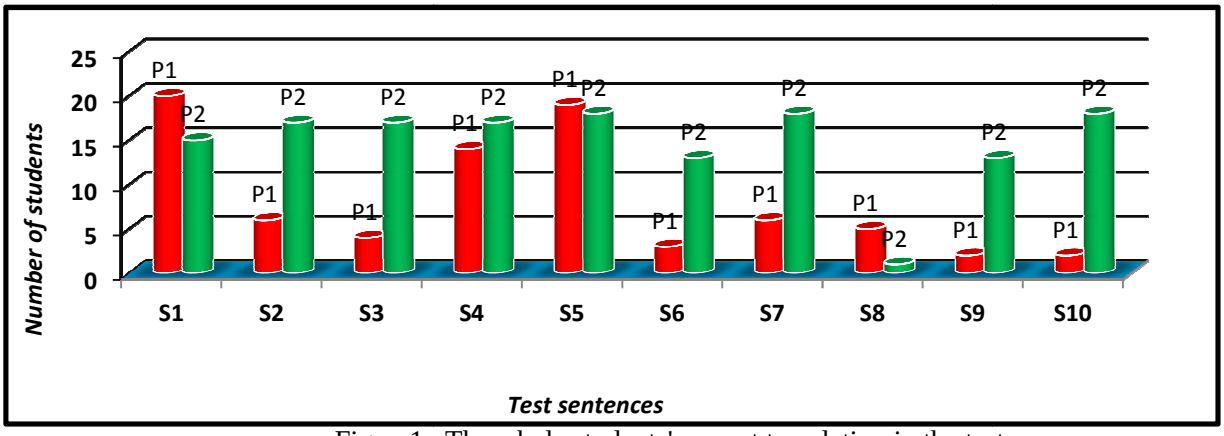

Figure1. The whole students' correct translation in the test

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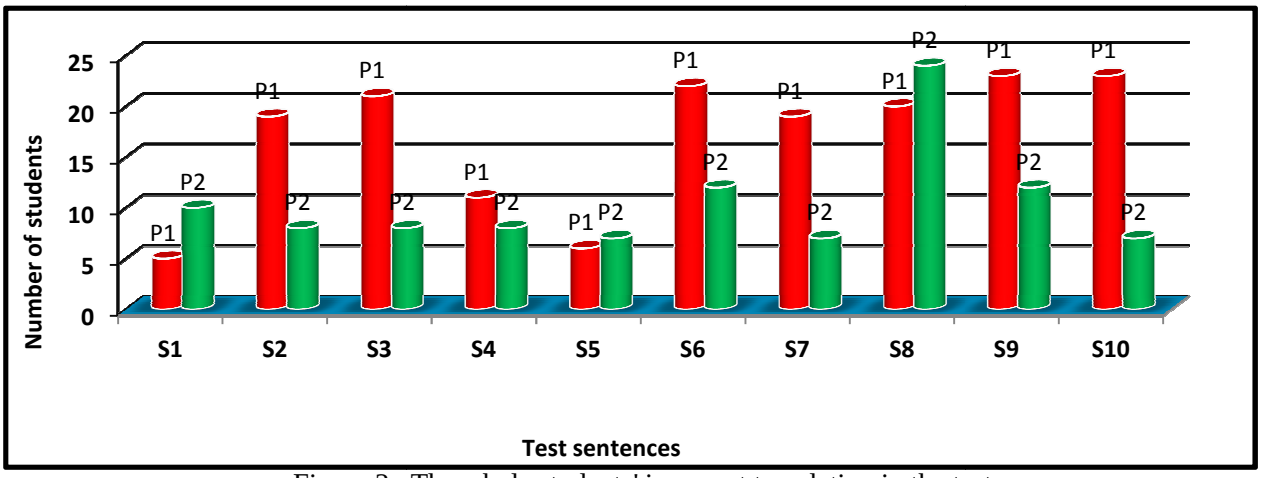

Figure 2. The whole students' incorrect translation in the test

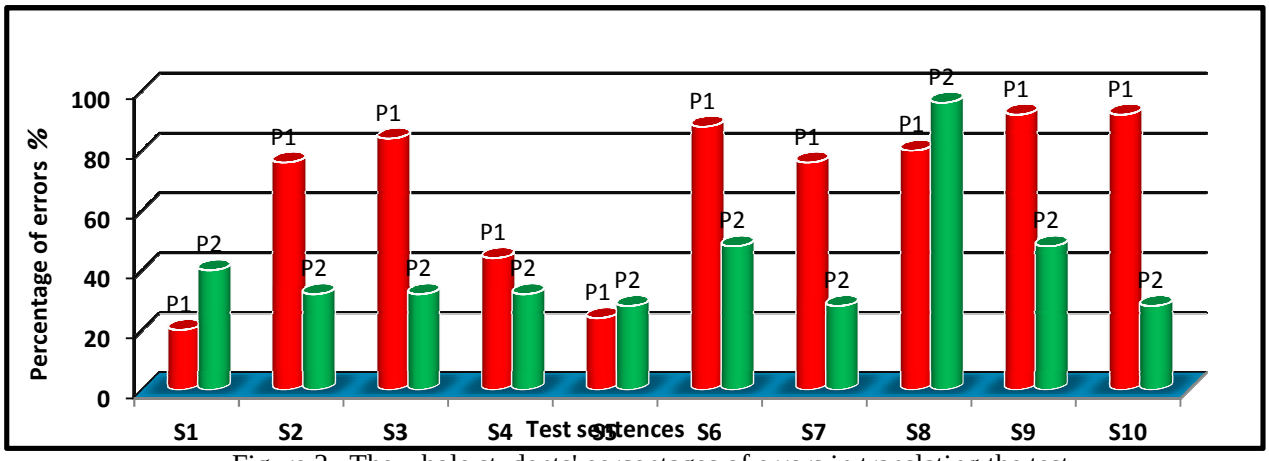

Figure 3. The whole students' percentages of errors in translating the test

It is worthy to explain the results of the test in a form of statistical process including score, mean, standard deviation, test value =5, degree of freedom (df) and statistical significance (2-tailed) such measurements can be shown in the following table (12).

Sentence	Score	Mean	Std. Deviation	Test Value = 5	df	Sig. (2-Tailed)
Sentence 1	10	7	3.54	t = 2.828	24	statistically significant at the 0.01 level
Sentence 2	10	4.6	2.47	t = - 0.811	24	not statistically significant
Sentence 3	10	4.2	3.12	t = - 1.281	24	not statistically

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						significant
Sentence 4	10	6.2	4.15	t = 1.445	24	not statistically significant
Sentence 5	10	7.4	3.57	t = 3.361	24	statistically significant at the 0.01 level
Sentence 6	10	3.2	3.5	t = - 2.571	24	statistically significant at the 0.05 level
Sentence 7	10	4.8	3.67	t = - 0.272	24	not statistically significant
Sentence 8	10	1.2	2.18	t = -8.718	24	statistically significant at the 0.01 level
Sentence 9	10	3	2.89	t = - 3.464	24	statistically significant at the 0.01 level
Sentence 10	10	4	2.89	t = -1.732	24	not statistically significant
Total	100	45.6	13.09	Test Value = 50 t = -1.68	24	not statistically significant

Table (12) describes the statistical procedures of the instrument of the data collection

The table above shows the following:

1) a- The mean of the students' scores in the first sentence is (7), with a percentage of (70%), this indicates that the students' translation is above the hypothesized mean.

b- There are statistically significant differences at (α = 0.01) level between the mean scores of the students, and the hypothesized mean. (the hypothesized mean is (50%) with (5) scores). This indicates that the students' translation of this sentence is good.

2) a- The mean of the students' scores in the second sentences is (4.6), with a percentage of (46%) which is below the mean.

b- There are no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the students, and the hypothesized mean.

3) a- The mean of the students' scores in the third sentences is (4.2), with a percentage of (42%) which is below the mean as well.

b- There are no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the students, and the hypothesized mean.

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4) a- The mean of the students' scores in the fourth sentences is (6.2), with a percentage of (62%) which is above the mean.

b- There are no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the students, and the hypothesized mean.

5) a- The mean of the students' scores in sentences 5 is (7.4), with a percentage of (74%) which is above the mean.

b- There are statistically significant differences at ($\alpha = 0.01$) level between the mean scores of the students, and the hypothesized mean. This indicates that few errors are made in this sentence.

6)a- The mean of the students' scores in sentences number 6 is (3.2), with a percentage of (32%) which is below the mean. That means a lot of errors are made in this sentence.

b- There are statistically significant differences at ($\alpha = 0.05$) level between the mean scores of the students, and the hypothesized mean. This is an indication of the numerous errors made in this sentence.

7)a- The mean of the students' scores in sentences number 7 is (4.8), with a percentage of (48%) which is below the mean.

b- There are no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the students, and the hypothesized mean.

8) a- The mean of the students' scores in sentences number 8 is (1.2), with a percentage of (12%) which is highly below the mean.

b- There are statistically significant differences at ($\alpha = 0.01$) level between the mean scores of the students, and the hypothesized mean. This shows that so many errors are made in this sentence.

9) a- The mean of the students' scores in sentences number 9 is (3), with a percentage of (30%) which is below the mean.

b- There are statistically significant differences at ($\alpha = 0.01$) level between the mean scores of the students, and the hypothesized mean. This indicates that a lot of errors are committed in this sentence as well.

10)a- The mean of the students' scores in sentences number 10 is (4), with a percentage of (40%) which is below the mean.

b- There are no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the students, and the hypothesized mean.

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11)a- The mean of the students' scores in all the test sentences is (45.6) with a percentage of (45.6%). This percentage is below the mean.

b- There are no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the students, and the hypothesized mean.

It can be concluded from the above description that a lot of errors are made in this test as a whole.

The above description can be concluded as follows:

1- Students' translations in general are inaccurate, the students' scores range between very weak and good grades.

2- Students' translation of sentences (1 & 5) is quite good with a percentage of (70%) for sentence number 1, and (74%) for sentence number 5. And there are statistically significant differences at ($\alpha = 0.01$) level which indicates that students' translations in the two sentences are quite good.

3- Students' translation of sentences number 4 is above the mean with a percentage of (62%).

4- Students' scores in sentences (2, 3, 7, 10) are below the mean with percentages of (46%), (42%), (48%) and (40%) respectively.

5- Students' scores in sentences (6, 8, 9) are very weak and weak with percentages of

(32%), (12%), and (30%) respectively. There are statistically significant differences in theses sentences which indicate that the students made a lot of errors in these sentences.

6- To sum up, most of the students made errors in their translations of the study test, since the mean of the correct translation is (45.6) with a percentage of (45.6%) which is below the hypothesized mean.

General Discussion

According to the analysis of the test sentences, it shows that most of the third year students of the English department at the Faculty of Education-Radfan have committed a lot of errors when they translated sentences containing Arabic definite article into English. It is right to say that not all subjects have made the same errors or with the same degree, but each student has faced a specific level of difficulty in translating the definite article into English.

As previously mentioned, the test consists of ten Arabic sentences with two Arabic definite article cases in each sentence (the definite article is used twice in each sentence, p1 and p2). The respondents are supposed to translate them into English. The students encountered a lot of

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difficulties in choosing the proper equivalent of the Arabic definite article when translating into English.

Regarding the different equivalents to which the Arabic definite article can be translated into English, they can be categorized into three cases.

First case: In this condition, the Arabic definite article "أل" is translated into the English definite article "the". In other words the proper equivalent of "أل" which matches it in translation is "the". To make this case clear, these examples can be given.

1- **"تَدورُ الأرضُ حَولَ الشَّمسِ"** (sentence No. 5 in the test)

(tadūrual'arḍuḥawlaaš-šamsi)

The earth goes round the sun.

Here (أل + أرض و أل + شمس) are translated into (the + earth, the + sun).

2- **"ذَهَبنَا إلى السِّينَمَا أمس"**

(ḏahabnā'ilā as-saynamai'amsi)

We went to the cinema yesterday.

In this example, (أل + سينما) is translated into (the + cinema).

Second case: In this case, there is no equivalent is available for the Arabic definite article in English, i.e. a zero article matches the Arabic definite article.

The following examples can illustrate this case:

1- **" المَاءُ ضَروريٌ للحيَاةِ "** (sentence No 2 in the test)

(almāuḍarūriunlilhaiāti)

*x***Water is essential for** *x* **life.** (*x* = zero article)

Although the Arabic definite article is used in (الماء) and (الحياة), when they are translated into English, the English definite article is omitted from the English nouns (water and life).

2- أنَا مُهتَمٌ جِدّاً بالأدَبِ

('anāmuhtamunǧiddanbil'adabi)

I am very interested in*x* **art.**

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Whereas the Arabic definite article is available in the Arabic noun (الأدب), it does not exist in the English translated noun (art).

Third case: In this situation, the Arabic definite article can be translated into the English equivalent (a or an).

The following Koranic verse can be given as a clear example.

قال تعالى " قَالَ إِنِّي لَيَحْزُنُنِي أَنْ تَذْهَبُوا بِهِ وَأَخَافُ أَنْ يَأْكُلَهُ الذِّئْبُ وَأَنْتُمْ عَنْهُ غَافِلُونَ." (يوسف : 13)

(qāla 'inniliaḥzununi 'an taḏhabūbihiw'aḥafu 'an y'akuluhuaḏ-ḏ'abuw'antum 'anhuġafilūn).

God to Whom be ascribed all perfection and majesty says: **"Truly, it saddens me that you should take him away. I fear lest a wolf should devour him, while you are careless of him."** (Pickthall, 1971: 311).

It is obvious that "أل" is used before the noun (ذئب) in this holy verse, when it is translated into English, the proper equivalent of "أل" is "a".

The third level undergraduates committed a lot of errors, as the test sentences revealed, when they translated the Arabic definite article in sentences into English.

One of the prominent errors made by the students is their excessive usage of the English definite article "the" as a fixed equivalent to the Arabic definite article "أل" (word for word translation), in addition, some students carelessly translated the Arabic definite article into "a", or kept writing "al" in their English translated versions.

In general, the main causes of making such errors can be attributed to the following:

1- Students' Previous Knowledge

Most of the students, if not all, learned in their early stages of study that "the" is translated into "أل" and vice versa as a fixed rule without being taken any exceptions. This false notion made them keep committing such errors without realizing them until it becomes a habit or routine.

Norrish (1987) states that "learning a language (a mother tongue or a foreign language) is a matter of habit formation."

2- Different Article Usages

A large number of the students are not familiar with the different usages of the English definite article. Most of them think that there is completely an identical usage between the Arabic and English definite article, but as a fact of matter there are many differences, that is why a lot of errors were made in translation. The problem is not with this difference of articles

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between the two languages, but in the use of the definite article "the" in English (Ghazala, 2008:70).

3- Mother Tongue Interference

Mother tongue interference is one of the major causes leading to committing errors by learners. Edge (1997: 7) is in line with this thought: "When people do not know how to say something in a foreign language, one possibility is to use words and structures from their own language and try to make them fit into the foreign language." In other words, word for word translation. Unintentionally, based on interference, most of students of the third level always translated "ال" into "the".

4- Importance of Articles

A lot of students think that articles in general and the definite article in particular are not as important as other English words, and believe that such mistakes do not impede the translation process, consequently, most of them do not pay much attention to them. In fact, using the correct definite article is very important especially for academic writing, however, a greater level of accuracy is required, and the correct article becomes an indication not only of mastery of the language but of exactness in thought and expression. As Master (1997: 216) indicates, “imperfect control of the use of articles may suggest imperfect knowledge.”Ghazala (2008:71) states that "thus, it is not advisable to undermine such a translation problem of definite article. Indeed, sometimes it makes a big difference to drop it, or to keep it."

Findings of the Study

As it has been previously mentioned, the population of the study is 25 students who were asked to translate 10 Arabic sentences into English. Each sentence contains two Arabic definite articles.

Depending on the results of the tabulated numerical and descriptive analysis of the students' responses in the test, the following findings can be concluded, then compared with the hypotheses given in the beginning of the work.

1- Most of the students made errors when they translated sentences which contain Arabic definite articles into English. It means that more than half of the students' translations were incorrect. Considering the total number of definite articles to be translated into English, there are 500 Arabic definite articles. The students' correct translations of the definite articles are 228 out of 500 with a percentage of (45.6 %).The total number of the students' incorrect translations is 272 with a percentage of (54.4 %). The highest percentage of errors committed by the subjects is (75%) whereas the lowest percentage is (30%). With regard to the mistakes made in each sentence, the biggest number of errors (maximum value) occurs in sentence number 8 with a

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percentage of (88%), while the smallest number of errors (minimum value) occurs in sentence number 5 with a percentage of (26 %).

The following table and figure show a descriptive analysis of errors and percentages of correct and incorrect translations of the definite article in the test.

Total of Errors	272
Average	54.4
Maximum Value of Errors	75
Minimum Value of Errors	30

Table 12. Descriptive analysis of errors in the test

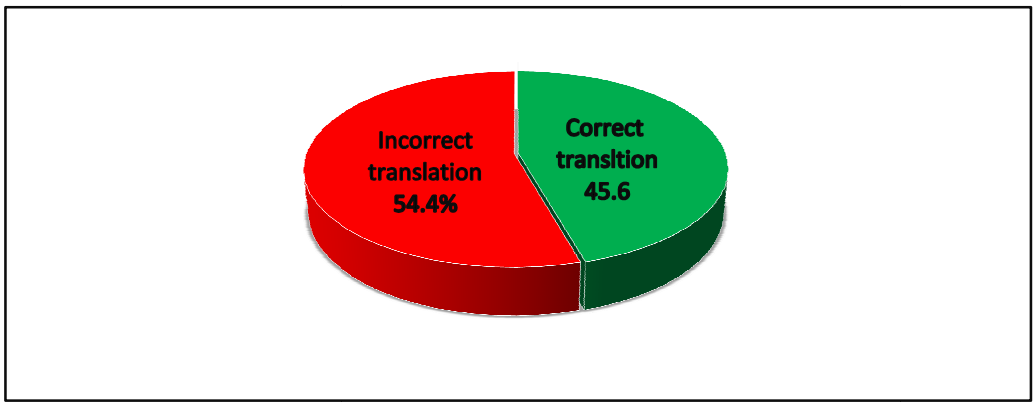

Figure 4. The percentages of correct and incorrect translations of definite article

The above account confirms the first hypothesis of this study which states that: "The students commit a lot of errors when they translate the Arabic definite article in sentences into English."

2- The results of this study reveal that interlingual errors committed by the subjects with respect to translating the Arabic definite article into English are due to the influence of their L1. More importantly, the errors are ascribed to the interference from the students' L1 (Arabic) with L2 (English). Most of the students depended on their mother tongue when they translated the sentences into English.

Researchers such as Mohammed (2000) and Abisamra (2003) point out that Arab EFL learners commit serious interlingual errors because they depend heavily on their L1.

Due to the students' word for word translation, in most cases, they translated the Arabic definite article "al" spontaneously into the English definite article "the" even with the English nouns which do not take "the" but a zero article. The students used their firstlanguage (L1) as a crutch to understand English, this confirms the third hypothesis which states that: "The students

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translate the Arabic definite article into English depending on the Arabic definite article which leads to making errors (interference), in other words they translate the Arabic definite article "al" into the English definite article "the" even if there is a zero article (no article) in English."

3- The students made errors because they think that there are identical usages between the Arabic and English definite articles, and therefore they translated the Arabic definite article "al" into the English definite article "the". In fact, there are not fully identical definite article usages between Arabic and English, in other words the Arabic definite article "al" cannot always be translated into "the" and vice versa but most of the students translate "al" into "the" in most cases expecting that they are totally equivalent in any context. There are some similarities and differences (see appendix1 and appendix 2), but most of the students are not familiar with these different usages, so a lot of errors were committed, this confirms and proves the second hypothesis which states that: "The students make definite article errors in translation because they think there are fully identical definite article usages between Arabic and English, and they are not familiar with the different situations of using the English definite article."

Juxtaposing the results of the study with Research Questions

As explained earlier, English and Arabic are different to a certain extent with regard to definite article. For example, the Arabic definite article can be used with abstract or material nouns which have generic meanings but English cannot. Thus, because of the differences between the two languages, the EFL students' L1 seems to have an impact on their L2. Further elaboration and explanations are found in the discussion of the three research questions below.

Discussion of Research Question 1

To what extent do the students commit errors in translating the definite article from Arabic into English?

As stated in the previous section, the 25 subjects of the current study committed a total of 276 interlingual errors with respect to translating the definite article in sentences from Arabic into English. This is more than half (54.4 %) of the total 500 article translations that were obtained in the data collection.

Secondly, The highest percentage of errors committed by the subjects was (75%) whereas the lowest percentage was (30%). With respect to the percentage of errors committed in each individual sentence, the highest percentage of errors was scored in sentence number 8 with a percentage of (88%), while the smallest number of errors existed in sentence number 5 with a percentage of (26 %).

Obviously, the largest number of errors were committed in sentence number 8 (88%). This indicates that the majority of the subjects mistranslated "al" into English. This was mainly

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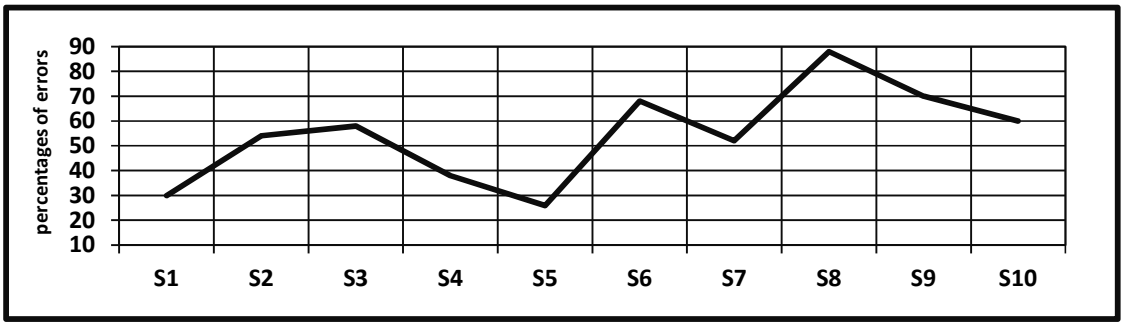
attributed to the influence of learners' mother tongue. The smallest errors were committed in sentence number 5 (26%) because the use of the Arabic definite article in this sentence totally corresponds with the use of the English definite article (positive transfer).

The percentages of errors made in each sentence can be shown in the following figure.



Discussion of Research Question 2

What are the main causes which lead the students to make definite article errors in their translations of the Arabic sentences into English?

The results of this study show that errors committed by the subjects with respect to translating the Arabic definite article into English were due to the influence of their L1. More importantly, the errors could be ascribed to the interference from the learners' L1.

Given the previously mentioned findings on the definite article category that the study focuses on, it is important to discuss the occurrence of errors committed by the subjects. In this study, it can be concluded that interlingual errors with respect to translating the Arabic definite article into English were caused as a result of word-for-word translation (literal translation) from Arabic. In this case, the learners combined the Arabic sentence words with English structures. Naimi (1989) points out that "the majority of all types of errors committed by Jordanian EFL learners could be attributed to negative transfer from Arabic."

This type of errors reflects the learners' inability to think in English. Spontaneously, they used their first language (L1) as a crutch to understand English. Some cases of the Arabic definite article are different from those of English.

Another reason for committing errors in translating the Arabic definite article into English is that most of the students were not acquainted with the different usages of the English definite article. They believe that there are identical usages between the Arabic definite article "al" and the English definite article "the", in other words, they think that "the" and "al" are fully equivalent, therefore they spontaneously translated "al" into "the" and vice versa. It is true to say that there are similarities between the Arabic and English definite articles but there are differences too.Mohammed (2000:129) states that "as far as the distance between the native and

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the target language is concerned, learners are often misled by the partial similarities between the two languages."

To mention but a few, unlike English, Arabic requires the definite article with abstract nouns. The definite article is used for specific things in English, but it is used in Arabic when referring to the whole group. In general the English definite article is not used with the names of countries, but in Arabic a large number of countries take the Arabic definite article "al".

Another subsidiary cause of making such errors is students' ignorance of the importance of using the definite article correctly.

To sum up, the main causes of making errors when translating the Arabic definite article in sentences into English are the effect of the learners' mother tongue on English (interferences) since most of the them used word-for-word translation and they combined the Arabic sentence words with English structures as well as the students' unfamiliarity with the different situations in which the definite article is used or not in English.

Discussion of Research Question 3

Are the students familiar with the different situations in which the definite article is used or not in English?

As it was mentioned in discussing the second question of this study, most of the students were not familiar with the different situations in which the definite article is used or not in English, that is why most of them committed errors when they translated the Arabic definite article into English.

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Appendix

The Test of the Study

Translate the following sentences into English.

1) نَذْهَبُ إِلَى المَدْرَسَةِ بالسَّيارَةِ.

2) المَاءُ ضَرُورِيٌ لِلحَياةِ.

3) يَخْدِمُ الْأَطِبَّاءُ والمُعَلِّمُونَ أوطَانَهم.

4) الْبَحْرَيْنُ أَصْغَرُ مِنَ الكُويتِ.

5) تَدُورُ الأَرْضُ حَوْلَ الشَّمْسِ.

6) الوَرَقُ مَصنُوعٌ مِنَ الخَشَبِ.

7) فِي بِريطَانيَا القَهوَةُ أغْلَى مِنَ الشَّاي.

8) يُحِبُّ النَّاسُ الزُّهُورَ.

9) الحَيَاةُ صَعْبَةٌ جِدّاً بِدُونِ الكَهرَباءِ.

10) الحَلِيبُ جيّدٌ لِلأطفَالِ.