

## ACQUISITION OF DEFINITENESS AND INDEFINITENESS BY BEHDINI KURDISH LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

SHIVAN SHLAYMOON TOMA\* and KHALIDA JUMAA HUSSEIN\*\*

\*Dept. of Translation, College of Languages, University of Duhok, Kurdistan Region-Iraq

\*\*Dept. of English Language, College of Basic Education University of Duhok, Kurdistan Region-Iraq

*(Received: November 18, 2019; Accepted for Publication: December 23, 2019)*

### ABSTRACT

The acquisition of English grammatical articles by non-native speakers of English language has been the main concern of a wide range of research, especially in languages whose grammatical article system functions differently from the English grammatical article system. Behdini is a variety whose grammatical article system is different from that English grammatical parameter. Thus, the acquisition of L2 English articles among L1 Behdini speakers is investigated in this study along proposals based on the Interpretability Hypothesis (Hawkins & Hattori, 2006; Tsimpli & Dimitrakopoulou, 2007; Hawkins & Casillas, 2008), and the Full Transfer Full Access (FT/FA) hypothesis (Schwartz and Sprouse, 1994, 1996).

The researcher developed a Judgement Elicitation Task (JET) based on the following research question:

Will Behdini learners' English language proficiency level play a role in participants' judgements? Will these learners be able to acquire English definite, indefinite, and zero articles systematically? In other words, is any development expected in Behdini learners' acquisition of English articles?

40 Behdini L2 English learners took part in the Judgement Elicitation Task. English learners took an English language proficiency test based on which they were roughly grouped into three sub-groups: elementary (11 participants), intermediate (22 participants), and advanced (7 participants). All participants took two tests: an acceptability judgment test including 46 items (34 pure test items + 12 filler gaps) and a proficiency test with 40 items.

The results of the study show that there is a transfer from L1 into the L2ers' English interlanguage due to the finding that most participants, disregarding their proficiency level, failed to reject the ungrammatical sentences in almost all the categories. The study finds support for the FT/FA proposal, where first language transfer, second language input and access to universal grammar features are argued to have impacts on Learners of English article acquisition among L1 Behdini learners. The result also shows that learners of English fluctuate in their choice of articles, which is interpreted by the predictions made by the Fluctuation Theory. Uninterpretable features also, proved to be difficult to acquire by Behdini learners, a point that can be interpreted the base form of the Interpretability Hypothesis.

**KEYWORDS:** Definiteness, Indefiniteness, second language acquisition, Behdini, Universal Grammar, first language Transfer.

### INTRODUCTION

Despite the numerous studies on English article acquisition, the acquisition differences and difficulties by English as a second language learner remain to be further explored. This research paper investigates the acquisition of English definite and indefinite articles by Behdini learners.

#### Problem of the study

English is one of the main modules taught to students formally beginning from the age of

seven in all the national type schools in Kurdistan. Despite early exposure and frequent use, English definite and indefinite articles remain problematic for Behdini learners when they communicate in English language.

#### Aim of the study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the acquisition difficulty of the definite and indefinite articles by Behdini learners and to see whether Behdini learners will attain a full competence of English definite and indefinite articles.

### **Definiteness and Indefiniteness in Behdini**

In Behdini, the concept of definiteness and indefiniteness is related to the features of the noun phrase. Mackenzie (1961) points out that a noun can be indefinite by the addition of the definite marker *-ek*. In addition, the noun can be definite when nothing is added to it. For example:

(1) Diwa-rek  
Wall-IND  
"A wall."

(2) Mamusta hat  
Teacher come  
"The teacher came."

We have, however, to bear in mind that of the two types of noun, proper and common, only the common can be made definite or indefinite since proper names like Jwan, Duhok, etc. are always definite by nature.

### **Definiteness and Indefiniteness in English**

Every time a noun is used, one has to decide whether to use or not an article, and if it is decided that an article is necessary, then it should be decided which one. Parrot (2000) points out that article belongs to the wider class of "determiner," words, or phrases that come at the beginning of a noun phrase and signal whether the information is new or familiar, or which tell us something about quantity. Quirk and Greenbaum (1973) stated that English uses three types of articles; namely definite article, the indefinite article, and zero articles to make the common noun definite and indefinite. However, proper nouns are always definite.

### **Literature Review and Theoretical Background**

#### **Universal Grammar**

Chomsky (1976) stated that universal grammar is an innate, biologically endowed language faculty, a system of principles, conditions, and rules that are elements or properties of all human languages (as cited in Toma, 2016, p. 36). In other words, UG permits the first language (L1) acquirer to arrive at a grammar on the basis of linguistic experience.

The (UG) model of language acquisition which was developed in the 1980s, and was then called the principles and parameters theory, claims that the child's mind possesses universal principles that always apply to language and

variable parameters that have different settings in different languages (Chomsky 1986). A sentence such as "*Is Sam is the cat that black?*" is not only impossible in English but is also forbidden in any human language because the elements in the sentence can only be moved around to form questions according to the structure of the sentence, not its linear order (Chomsky 1980); this principle of structure-dependency is built-in to the human mind so that a human language that breaks structure-dependency is literally inconceivable.

#### **Principles and Parameters**

UG includes principles and parameters. UG Principles are linguistics information that are common to all human languages. In addition to the Universal principle, UG contains parameters. Hawkins (2001) defines UG parameters as "variation between particular languages is accounted for by a small number of parameters of variation allowed within the overall design defined by the principles."

According to UG, principles are general and common to all languages; e.g., that a sentence must always have a subject. Whereas parameters are specific, for example, the position of heads in phrases is determined by a parameter. Whether a language is head-initial or head-final is regarded as a parameter which is either on or off for particular languages (i.e. English is head-initial, whereas Turkish is head-final).

According to the generative approaches to SLA, UG principles and parameters apply not only to FLA but also to SLA. White (2003) stated that universal grammar constrains second language acquisition. She added that If the L2 learner acquires abstract properties that could have been induced neither in the second language input nor in the learner's L1 grammar, this is strongly indicative that principles of UG constrain interlanguage grammars.

#### **First language Transfer**

The L1 transfer is known as the phenomenon whereby the acquisition of a new language is influenced by the grammar, pronunciation, orthography, or other aspects of an individual's first language (or another previously learned language), which may either inhibit or facilitate learning. (via the Net 1)

Transfer means carrying over the forms and meanings of one language to the other, resulting in interference. Cook (2002) stated that transfer from the first to the second language includes both utilization and acquisition, i.e. it might influence both the procedures of talking for the time being and the procedures of learning over some undefined time frame. The impact of the first language on the second is evident from our regular experience; most native speakers of English can tell whether an L2 client originates from Japan, Germany, France, or Spain.

Transfer in the sense of the relationship between the two languages in the same mind, which is at the heart of second language acquisition. If people simply acquired an L2 in the same way as their L1, there would be no need for a separate discipline of SLA research. A major factor in the different courses of L1 and L2 acquisition must be the developing links between the two languages. In a sense, any investigation of L2 learning or use that does not involve this relationship is not SLA research (Cook, 2002).

### **Second Language Acquisition Theories**

#### **The Full Access Full Transfer Theory (Schwartz and Sprouse, 1994, 1996)**

The Full Access Full Transfer (FA/FT) Hypothesis proposes that the initial state in second language acquisition is learner's L1 grammar (full transfer). Furthermore, it is hypothesized that changes to the initial state can take place. In other words, the learner has the ability to restructure their native language grammar according to the L2 input provided (full access). Schwartz and Sprouse (1994), based on a longitudinal study of a native speaker of Turkish (Cevdet) acquiring L2 German word order, propose that L1 grammar constitutes the Interlanguage (IL) grammar in the first place. They claim that Cevdet initially transfers verb-final word order as in Turkish but is able to restructure German word order consisting of more than just the subject and a single finite verb

in a main clause. Their claim is that the restructuring to L2 grammatical properties is determined by operations constrained by UG.

#### **The Interpretability Hypothesis (Hawkins & Hattori, 2006; Tsimpli & Dimitrakopoulou, 2007; Hawkins & Casillas, 2008)**

The Interpretability Hypothesis argues that only the meaningful, or interpretable, features remain accessible to adults in a second language, even if L2 differs from the native language. Moreover, it is hypothesized that uninterpretable features, such as subject-object agreement, are inaccessible to L2 learners. And so, there is partial access to UG; that is, there is a critical period effect for uninterpretable features.

For instance, the case of resumptive pronouns is available in the Greek L1 but not in the English L2. In a study by Tsimpli and Dimitrakopoulou (2007), they predicted that the learner will have problems in abandoning the resumptive strategy in L2 wh-interrogatives and they found out that resumptive pronouns (RPs) in Greek have uninterpretable features, and these features cause learnability problems even at advanced stages of acquisition. Resumptive uses of agreement on the pronouns in the L1 are transferred to the L2 grammar as shown in 1.

(1) Pjoni ipesoti (toni) prosevalan xoris logho?

whom said:2 SG that him insulted:3 PL without reason

“Whom did you say that he resulted without a reason?”

#### **Previous Studies on L2 English Definiteness and Indefiniteness Acquisition**

Unlike the acquisition of English articles by L1 learners, the English article system is one of the most difficult aspects of English grammar for L2 learners and one of the last to be fully acquired (Master, 1987). Following are some outstanding studies on the article acquisition sequence, differences, and difficulties by learners of various L1 backgrounds.

Thomas (1989) investigated 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). Thomas observed that the most common error among L2 learners across all proficiency levels was overgeneralization of zero articles. This was observed particularly in learners whose L1s lack articles. Thomas

observed that appropriate use of all articles was better in more proficient learners. That is, knowledge of articles increased with proficiency. In addition, L1 influence was also apparent. Learners with an article system in their L1 appeared to be more successful than the learners without article system in their L1.

Sarko (2009) investigates the acquisition of English articles among L1 Syrian Arabic and L1 French speakers. According to Sarko, Syrian Arabic has a morpheme to mark definiteness but no phonologically overt exponent for indefiniteness. French, on the other hand, disallows bare NPs, and requires that all NPs either in singular, plural, or mass contexts must have overt articles. Sarko predicts that both L1 Syrian Arabic and L1 French speakers will not fluctuate in their article choice in English, since they both have articles to encode definiteness and indefiniteness. The results of the study showed that both the L1 Syrian Arabic and L1 French speakers did not fluctuate in their article choice between definiteness and specificity in English.

Kwame (2018) investigated the Acquisition of L2 English articles among L1 Dagbani speakers. Dagbani lacks a morphological marker for indefiniteness. As a result, indefiniteness is expressed in the language by bare nouns. The results of the study showed that L2 English article acquisition among L1 Dagbani speakers is influenced by their L1

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Questions and Hypotheses

#### Research Questions

The research questions below will be guiding the analysis in this study:

What is the status of definiteness and indefiniteness in the interlanguage of Behdini learners of English? That is to say, how do L2 learners go from Behdini whose definite articles are not realized morphologically but whose indefinite articles are realized as bound morphemes attached to the end of nouns to English that features definite and indefinite articles as free morphemes?

#### Hypotheses

Two major SLA theories are going to be taken into account to design the predictions in this L2 study, as illustrated below:

(1) The Full Access Full Transfer Theory (Schwartz and Sprouse, 1994, 1996).

Based on this theory, Behdini learners' initial state of L2 acquisition is predicted to be the final state of their L1 acquisition (thus full transfer is predicted to occur). Behdini L2ers' failure to assign a representation to input data will force subsequent restructuring; drawing from options of UG (thus full access is predicted to be possible).

This means that Behdini learners at lower proficiency levels are predicted to be fully transferring their Behdini L1 structures into their English interlanguage. This transfer is represented by carrying over the absence of definite articles into English and misplacing indefinite articles from their L1 structure into their English interlanguage. However, Behdini learners at advanced levels of proficiency are predicted to utilize their access to UG and thus an enhancement is predicted to happen in their acquisition process.

(2) The Interpretability Hypothesis (Hawkins & Hattori, 2006; Tsimpli & Dimitrakopoulou, 2007; Hawkins & Casillas, 2008).

Due to this hypothesis, uninterpretable features that are not instantiated in Behdini L1 are predicted to be inaccessible in Behdini learners' L2 acquisition.

This means that Behdini learners of English will not be able to fully reset the parameters in English that allow definite articles, that use zero articles, and that use indefinite articles. This is because the features involved in their derivation are uninterpretable in Behdini. The prediction is that Behdini learners will accept definite, indefinite, and zero articles in positions where they are ungrammatical in English and that they will reject them where they are grammatical especially at lower proficiency levels.

#### Participants, Procedure, and Design

The JET has been conducted in two one-hour sessions at the University of Duhok, College of Basic Education, Department of English.

The first session was devoted to conducting the JET (see Appendix 1), in which the participants were not required to make any corrections. There was no time limit for completing the test. Participants had the freedom to spend the amount of time they wanted. Also, they could change their mind in judging individual sentences.

The second session was devoted to the proficiency test (see Appendix 2).

There were 40 native speakers of Behdini from Iraqi Kurdistan. 11 males and 29 females. Their age ranged between 18 and 23. All the subjects use Behdini daily, and all of them were students of the Department of English at the University of Duhok, with English being their second language.

All the 46 sentences in this JET (34 pure test items + 12 filler gaps) are English sentences, half of which are grammatical and the other half ungrammatical. They are all tested with and without definite and indefinite articles to determine which structures will be accepted and which ones will be rejected by the Behdini participants based on the similarities and differences between English and Behdini.

A number of variables are employed in this study. Below is a description of these along with their levels, and the coding system that is used for each variable and level is also explained.

#### **(A) Dependent variable**

##### **1- Rating1**

The dependent variable in this experiment is the acceptability measured on a four-point rating scale: (1) Very Good, (2) Good, (3) Bad, and (4) Very Bad.

##### **2- Rating**

The first two options in the variable stated above are clearly "grammatical" and the last two options are clearly "ungrammatical." Therefore, options 1 and 2 are combined together to denote "Good" for acceptance and options 3 and 4 together to denote "Bad" for rejection.

#### **(B) Predictor variables**

##### **1- Categories**

This is the main variable in the study, and it has these variables: Definite.articles, Indefinite.articles, Zero.articles, and Noun.phrases. The categories variable is considered the most important variable in this study because it is essential to investigate all the research questions mentioned above.

##### **2- Grammaticalness**

This variable has two levels: Grammatical vs. Ungrammatical. Each sentence that is tested is presented once as being a grammatical sentence (as in a) and once as an ungrammatical sentence (as in b).

(2) a. The city was destroyed.

b. \*City was destroyed.

##### **3- Participants**

This variable previews the 40 Behdini speakers who are learners of English participating in this experiment. The levels range from P1 to P40.

##### **4- Test.Items**

This variable previews the 34 sentences (which are the pure testing items after subtracting the 12 filler gap sentences). Here, the original order is given as they appear in the data distribution for investigation purposes by the researcher.

##### **5- Test.Number**

This variable lists the 34 sentences in a randomized order (this is the order which the participants see in the JET) so that participants cannot have the chance to systemize their answers in a certain way that will not allow them to use their intuitions.

##### **6- Age**

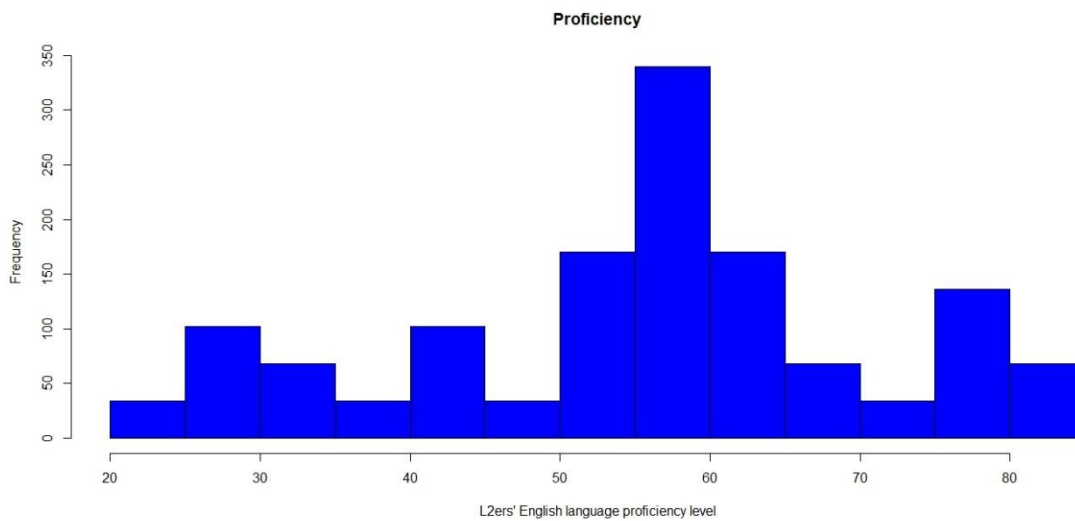
This variable shows participants' ages, which range between 18 and 23.

##### **7- Gender**

This variable shows participants' gender, with the two levels of "Male" and "Female."

##### **8- Proficiency**

This variable measures each participant's English language proficiency level out of 100%. The test is based on a proficiency test that is accredited from Oxford University. Participants' scores ranged between 23% and 83%. The L2 learners' proficiency levels are previewed in Figure 1.



**Fig. (1):** Behdini learners’ English language proficiency level

**ANALYSIS, RESULTS, AND DISCUSSION**

**Data analysis**

The data analysis is conducted through using mixed-effects modeling by using the lmer package (version is 3.3.1) in the R software, which is an open-source language and environment for statistical computing.

In this study the traditional ANOVAs are avoided, and rather the advanced regression design with mixed-effect modeling has been employed because it is regarded to be a more

powerful, more modern, and more flexible option and that allows for statistical control of a large variety of variables in mixed-effects models including both fixed and random effects (Baayen et al., 2006 and New et al., 2007).

Below, the findings of each category are shown separately in the form of tables to provide a better understanding of Behdini learners’ performance over each category that is related to the various factors and effects in this experimental study.

**Table (1):** Acceptance Rates of Definite Articles

Rating	Definite.articles	
	Grammatical	Ungrammatical
1 (Good)	10% <b>8</b>	48% <b>38</b>
2 (Bad)	90% <b>72</b>	52% <b>42</b>

As Table 1 illustrates, the L2 learners’ performance in the definite articles is not quite good. The percentage of learners who accepted grammatical sentences is only about 10%. While, the percentage of those who judged definite articles as ungrammatical is about 90% which is the majority of the L2 learners.

In addition, it can be seen from Table 1 that learners’ performance of definite articles in ungrammatical sentences is much better than in the grammatical sentences. The percentage of

the learners who accepted the ungrammatical sentences is nearly 48%, whereas those who accepted the grammatical sentences are approximately 52%.

This evidence that while the majority of the participants acquired the grammatical sentences with definite articles, more than half of them failed to reject the ungrammatical sentences. This proves that there is a transfer from L1 to the L2 learners English interlanguage.

**Table (2):** Acceptance Rates of Indefinite Articles

Rating	Indefinite articles			
	Grammatical		Ungrammatical	
1 (Good)	80%	<b>64</b>	64%	<b>51</b>
2 (Bad)	20%	<b>16</b>	36%	<b>29</b>

Table 2 shows the percentage of L2 learners' acceptance rates of indefinite articles. It can be seen that 80% of L2 learners accepted grammatical sentences, while only 20% of the learners rejected the grammatical sentences. Additionally, the percentage of the learners who accepted ungrammatical sentences is 64%, and only 36% rejected the ungrammatical sentences. These findings could simply suggest that L2 learner face less difficulty in acquiring English indefinite articles even though the definite article

in English is a free morpheme that precedes a noun, this is not the case in Behdini where it is a bound morpheme which follows a noun. However, when it comes to declining the ungrammatical sentences, almost two-thirds of the participants (64%) were unable to reject the ungrammatical sentences. This could be traced back to the assumption that the majority of Behdini learners follow their L1 grammatical structures in their acquisition process of English indefinite articles.

**Table (3):** Acceptance Rates of Zero Articles

Rating	Zero articles			
	Grammatical		Ungrammatical	
1 (Good)	79%	<b>63</b>	75%	<b>60</b>
2 (Bad)	21%	<b>17</b>	25%	<b>20</b>

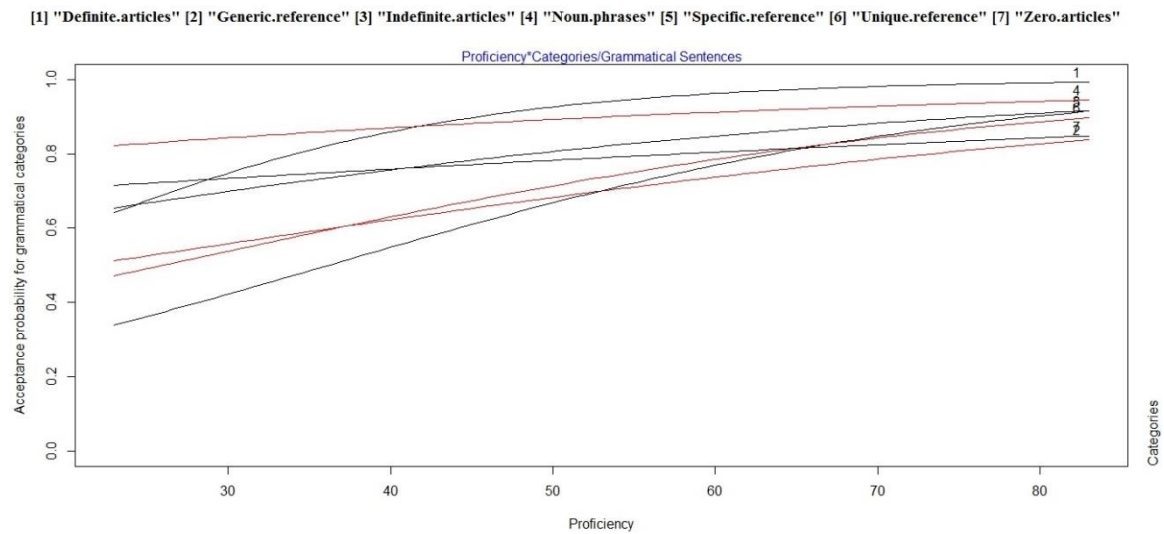
Table 3 demonstrates the average results of L2 learners' performance over zero articles in grammatical and ungrammatical sentences. The percentage of L2 learners who rated grammatical sentences as good is 79%. Compared to, those who rated them as bad denoting their ungrammaticality 21%.

Interestingly, the L2 learners who accepted the ungrammatical sentences are 75%, which is the vast majority of the participants. This is an indication that Behdini learners face serious difficulties and thus reject the ungrammatical sentences that involve zero articles due to a negative transfer from their L1 grammatical structures.

### **Effect of Learners' English Language Proficiency Level**

In this section, the effect of learners' language proficiency over the L2 learners' performance highlighted above will be presented.

Figures 2 and 3 demonstrate the effect of the three-way interaction of categories (including definite articles, indefinite articles, zero articles, generic reference, specific reference, unique reference, and noun phrases), grammaticalness (including grammatical and ungrammatical), and proficiency (participants' English language proficiency level).



**Fig. 2:** The effect of grammatical sentences for the interaction of categories,

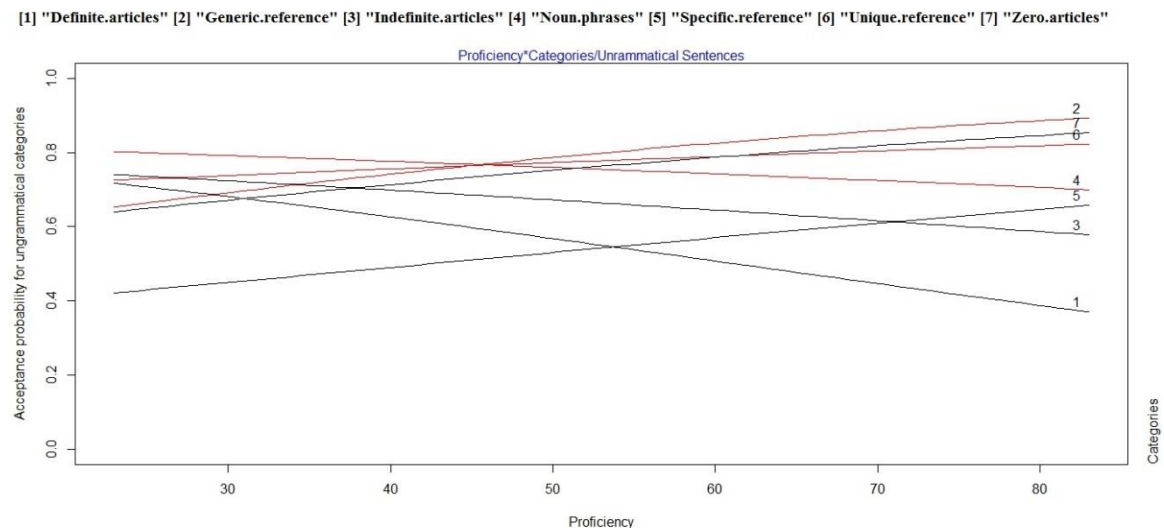
### GRAMMATICALNESS, AND PROFICIENCY

As shown in Figure 2, participants' proficiency level plays a very effective role in the judgments that they have made all over the levels of categories and grammaticalness. With the increase of Behdini learners' English language proficiency levels, their acceptability

rates are improved over all the seven grammatical levels of categories.

Figure 2 shows that with the increase of participants' proficiency level, acceptability rates of grammatical sentences highly increases. Unique reference categories have received the highest acceptability rates in this respect.

The figure also shows that zero articles are the least levels that are affected by the increase in the proficiency level.



**Fig. (3):** The effect of ungrammatical sentences for the interaction of categories, grammaticalness, and proficiency



Figure 3 plots the effect of participants' proficiency on their judgments over ungrammatical categories. The judgment paradigms shown in this figure generally indicate more complicatedness and complexity than in the grammatical sentences. The figure shows that with ungrammatical sentences proficiency only had a partial effect. This is because only the ungrammatical definite articles, indefinite articles, and noun phrases were improved in the rejection rates as the level of proficiency raised. However, the rest of the ungrammatical levels (which are: generic reference, specific reference, unique reference, and zero articles) are accepted as proficiency levels are enhanced.

### General Discussion of the Results

The performance of Behdini L2 learners of both definite and indefinite contexts was an issue this study attempted to investigate. The discussion of the status of definite and indefinite structures in Behdini learners' interlanguage will be guided by the research questions, which states:

**What is the status of definiteness and indefiniteness in the interlanguage of Behdini learners of English? That is to say, how do L2 learners go from Behdini whose definite articles are not realized morphologically but whose indefinite articles are realized as bound morphemes attached to the end of nouns to English that features definite and indefinite articles as free morphemes?**

Based on the results, it is clear that the interlanguage developed by Behdini learners of English swings between two dimensions, which are a successful acquisition of the grammatical sentences and failure to reject the ungrammatical sentences. In addition to that, the results of the current study also provide a support for the Interpretability Hypothesis (Hawkins & Hattori, 2006; Tsimpli & Dimitrakopoulou, 2007; Hawkins & Casillas, 2008), which indicates that uninterpretable features that are not instantiated in Behdini L1 are predicted to be inaccessible in Behdini learners' L2 acquisition. This provides an interpretation why most of the participants have failed to reject the ungrammatical sentences in almost all the categories (see Figure 3).

As for the effect of learners' language proficiency level, the findings of the JET in this research indicate that Behdini learners' English language proficiency level has a significant

effect on the judgments made by the informants over the grammatical test items. However, proficiency has a partial effect on the ungrammatical test items.

Behdini learners of high proficiency levels performed better than those at low proficiency levels when they accepted grammatical sentences for the seven levels of categories: definite articles, indefinite articles, zero articles, generic reference, specific reference, unique reference, and noun phrases (see Figure 2). With the increase of the proficiency level, acceptance rates have also increased. This can be interpreted by the Full Access Full Transfer Theory (Schwartz and Sprouse, 1994, 1996), in which Behdini learners' initial state of L2 acquisition was the final state of their L1 acquisition because at lower proficiency levels Behdini L2ers made a full transfer of their L1 structures. At higher levels of proficiency, however, Behdini L2 learners drew from options of UG, and full access was possible and an enhancement happened in their judgment rates. In other words, Behdini learners at lower proficiency levels were fully transferring their Behdini L1 structures into their English interlanguage. Whereas, at advanced levels of proficiency, the participants utilized their access to UG and thus an enhancement was detected in their acquisition process.

However, the results outlined in Figure 3 indicate that with ungrammatical sentences, proficiency only has a partial effect. This is because only the ungrammatical definite articles, indefinite articles, and noun phrases witnessed improvement in the rejection rates with the increase of the proficiency level. As for the rest of the ungrammatical levels (i.e., those of generic reference, specific reference, unique reference, and zero articles), proficiency does not seem to affect the judgment rates and these levels were accepted instead of being rejected as proficiency levels are enhanced. However, these can be interpreted by the predictions made by the Interpretability Hypothesis.

According to the results mentioned above, it can be argued that Behdini learners' initial state of L2 acquisition was the final state of their L1 acquisition. That is, in the initial state of L2 acquisition L2ers fully transferred their L1 structures. However, changes to the initial state took place. In other words, the learners had the ability to restructure their native language

grammar according to the L2 input; this goes in line with the prediction of Full Access Full Transfer Theory (Schwartz and Sprouse, 1994, 1996).

### CONCLUSIONS

The present study has come up with the following conclusions:

1. Definiteness and indefiniteness are featured differently between English and Behdini. The main difference is that in English the indefinite article is a free morpheme that precedes a noun, while in Behdini it is a bound morpheme which follows a noun and it is suffixed to the noun. As for definiteness, in English it is morphologically realized as "the" which precedes the noun, whereas in Behdini definiteness is not realized morphologically speaking and it does not take an explicit form, and thus a bare noun is considered a definite noun in Behdini.
2. The findings of the JET conducted in this study indicate that Behdini learners of English were successful in the acquisition of the English grammatical sentences despite the differences between source and target grammars mentioned above, but they failed to reject the ungrammatical sentences. That is to say, they faced difficulties to fully acquire English articles and to reach ultimate attainment, which refers to the outcome or endpoint of acquisition.
3. As referred to above, it can be noticed that most of the participants have failed to reject the English ungrammatical sentences in almost all the categories. This is because articles in English are considered to be uninterruptable features for Behdini L2ers (The Interpretability Hypothesis, Hawkins & Hattori, 2006; Tsimpli & Dimitrakopoulou, 2007; Hawkins & Casillas, 2008).
4. It was also shown that Behdini learners accepted definite, indefinite, and specificity articles in environments where they were not grammatical and rejected them in other environments where they were grammatical. However, in other instances Behdini learners' judgments were quite right. This means that they were fluctuating in their article choice between definiteness and specificity in their process of acquisition of English articles (The Fluctuation Hypothesis, Ionin, 2003; Ionin, Ko, and Wexler, 2003, 2004).

5. The results of this investigation show that Behdini learners' English language proficiency level has a significant effect on the judgments made by the informants over the grammatical test items. On the other hand, proficiency showed only partial and insignificant effect over the ungrammatical test items.

6. The present study supports the claims of the Full Access Full Transfer Theory (Schwartz and Sprouse, 1994, 1996). In other words, Behdini learners at lower proficiency levels were fully transferring their Behdini L1 structures into their English interlanguage. However, at advanced levels of proficiency, they managed to restructure to L2 grammatical properties which are determined by operations constrained by UG.

8. The partial effect of L2ers' proficiency level over the ungrammatical sentences can be interpreted by the predictions made by the Interpretability Hypothesis (Hawkins & Hattori, 2006; Tsimpli & Dimitrakopoulou, 2007; Hawkins & Casillas, 2008).

### REFERENCE

1. Chomsky, N. (1980). On cognitive structures and their development. In M. Piattelli-Palmarini, (ed.), *Language and Learning: The Debate between Jean Piaget and Noam Chomsky* (pp. 35-52). London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
2. Chomsky, N. (1986). *Knowledge of language: Its nature, origin, and use*. New York: Praeger.
3. Clahsen, H., & Muysken, P. (1986). The availability of universal grammar to adult and child learners-a study of the acquisition of German word order. *Second language research*, 2(2), 93-119.
4. Cook (2002) in Aronoff, Mark And Janie Rees-Miller (Eds). *The Handbook of Linguistics*
5. Hawkins, R. (2001). *Second language syntax: a generative introduction*. Malden (MA): Blackwell Publishing.
6. Hawkins, R., & Hattori, H. (2006). Interpretation of English multiple wh-questions by Japanese speakers: A missing uninterpretable feature account. *Second Language Research*, 22, 269-301.
7. Hawkins, R. & Casillas, G. (2008). Explaining frequency of verb morphology in early L2 speech. *Lingua*, 118, 595-612.
8. Mackenzie, D. N. (1961). *Kurdish Dialect Studies*. London: Oxford University Press.

9. Master, P. (1987). A cross-linguistic interlanguage analysis of the acquisition of the English article system (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of California at Los Angeles
10. Parrot, M. (2000). Grammar of English Language Teachers, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
11. Quirk, R. and Greenbaum, S. (1973). *A University grammar of English*. Essex: Longman.
12. Sarko, G. (2009). L2 English article production by Arabic and French speakers. In M. d. G. Mayo, and R. Hawkins (eds.), *Second Language Acquisition of Articles: Empirical findings and theoretical implication* (pp. 37-66). Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
13. Schwartz, Bonnie D. and Rex A. Sprouse (1994) "Word Order and Nominative Case in Nonnative Language Acquisition: A Longitudinal Study of (L1 Turkish) German Interlanguage," in Teun Hoekstra and Bonnie D. Schwartz (eds.), *Language Acquisition Studies in Generative Grammar*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam, pp. 317–368.
14. Schwartz, B. D., & Sprouse, R. A. (1996). L2 cognitive states and the full transfer/full access model. *Second language research*, 12(1), 40–72.
15. Toma, S. (2016). From intrusive to resumptive: The acquisition of wh-dependencies by Behdini learners of English. Germany: LAMBERT Academic Publishing.
16. Tsimpli, I. M., & Dimitrakopoulou, M. (2007). The interpretability hypothesis: Evidence from wh-interrogatives in second language acquisition. *Second Language Research*, 23, 215–242.
17. White, L. (2003). *Second language acquisition and Universal Grammar*. Cambridge: University Press.
18. [https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/language\\_transfer](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/language_transfer).

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: The Judgment Elicitation Task

Age:

Gender: (Male - Female)

Mother tongue:

Usage of English: (daily – sometimes a week – sometimes a month - never)

Read the following sentences carefully and decide how grammatical or ungrammatical each sentence is on a scale of 1- 4, where:

1 = very grammatical

2 = grammatical

3 = ungrammatical

4 = very ungrammatical

Sentences	(1) very grammatical	(2) grammatical	(3) ungrammatical	(4) very ungrammatical
1. Khalid wrote an essay and a poem, and then he read the poem.				
2. Where are we having the dinner tonight?				
3. He bought her beautiful red dress.				
4. The city was destroyed.				
5. A doctor is not better than his patient.				
6. That boy sitting over there is my nephew.				
7. Brad came to dinner with us.				
8. I want to become great writer.				
9. The book on the table is useful.				
10. I want to buy a car.				
11. House on the corner is for sale.				
12. Oh! Ink has not come out of the carpet.				

---

13. The Americans are very jealous because they have not got a royal family of their own.

---

14. I love learning!

---

15. I put the book on the table.

---

16. I lent John a book, but he returned it, the pages were torn.

---

17. I lent John a book, but he returned it, pages were torn.

---

18. Horses are intelligent animals.

---

19. The boy sitting over there is my nephew.

---

20. That book on the table is useful.

---

21. We all agreed that it was a magnificent evening.

---

22. He travelled from a country to a country.

---

23. Khalid wrote an essay and a poem, and then he read poem.

---

24. I want to buy car.

---

25. Where are we having dinner tonight?

---

26. A house on the corner is for sale.

---

27. I saw girl and boy standing under a tree.

---

28. Would you like to travel with me?

---

29. He travelled from country to country.

---

30. He bought her a beautiful red dress.

---

31. Oh! The ink has not come out of the carpet.

---

32. The horses are intelligent animals.

---

33. City was destroyed.

---

34. I want to become a great writer.

---

35. There is so much to understand.

---

36. Americans are very jealous because they have not got a royal family of their own.

---

37. I saw a girl and a boy standing under a tree.

---

38. I put the book on table.

---

39. The doctor is not better than his patient.

---

40. Khalid wrote an essay and a poem, and then he read the poem.

---

41. Where are we having the dinner tonight?

---

42. In the end, we all felt like we ate too much.

---

43. He bought her beautiful red dress.

---

44. The city was destroyed.

---

45. A doctor is not better than his patient.

---

46. That boy sitting over there is my nephew.

---

Thank you for participating.

## Appendix 2: The Proficiency Test

### Grammar I

**Instructions: Select the best answer.**

1. Juan \_\_\_\_\_ in the library this morning.  
(A) is study (B) studying (C) is studying (D) are studying
2. Alicia, \_\_\_\_\_ the windows please. It's too hot in here.  
(A) opens (B) open (C) opened (D) will opened
3. The movie was \_\_\_\_\_ the book.  
(A) as (B) as good (C) good as (D) as good as
4. Eli's hobbies include jogging, swimming, and \_\_\_\_\_.  
(A) to climb mountains (B) climb mountains (C) climbing mountains (D) to climb
5. Mr. Hawkins requests that someone \_\_\_\_\_ the data by fax immediately.  
(A) sent (B) sends (C) send (D) to send
6. Who is \_\_\_\_\_, Marina or Sachiko?  
(A) tallest (B) tall (C) taller (D) the tallest
7. The concert will begin \_\_\_\_\_ fifteen minutes.  
(A) in (B) on (C) with (D) about
8. I have only a \_\_\_\_\_ Christmas cards left to write.  
(A) few (B) fewer (C) less (D) little
9. Each of the Olympic athletes \_\_\_\_\_ for months, even years.  
(A) have been training (B) were training (C) has been training (D) been training
10. Maria \_\_\_\_\_ never late for work.  
(A) am (B) are (C) were (D) is
11. The company will upgrade \_\_\_\_\_ computer information systems next month.  
(A) there (B) their (C) it's (D) its
12. Cheryl likes apples, \_\_\_\_\_ she does not like oranges.  
(A) so (B) for (C) but (D) or
13. You were \_\_\_\_\_ the New York office before 2 p.m.  
(A) suppose call (B) supposed to call (C) supposed calling (D) supposed call
14. When I graduate from college next June, I \_\_\_\_\_ a student here for five years.  
(A) will have been (B) have been (C) has been (D) will have
15. Ms. Guth \_\_\_\_\_ rather not invest that money in the stock market.  
(A) has to (B) could (C) would (D) must

### Grammar II

**Instructions: Select the underlined word or phrase that is incorrect.**

1. The majority to the news is about violence or scandal.  
(A) The (B) to (C) news (D) violence
2. Takeshi swimmed one hundred laps in the pool yesterday.  
(A) swimmed (B) hundred (C) in (D) yesterday
3. When our vacation, we plan to spend three days scuba diving.  
(A) When (B) plan (C) days (D) diving
4. Mr. Feinauer does not take critical of his work very well.  
(A) does (B) critical (C) his (D) well
5. Yvette and Rinaldo send e-mail messages to other often.  
(A) and (B) send (C) other (D) often
6. Mr. Olsen is telephoning a American Red Cross for help.  
(A) is (B) a (C) Red (D) for

7. I had a enjoyable time at the party last night.  
(A) a (B)time (C) at (D) last
8. The doctor him visited the patient's parents.  
(A) The (B)him (C) visited (D) patient's
9. Petra intends to starting her own software business in a few years.  
(A) intends (B)starting (C) software (D) few
10. Each day after school, Jerome run five miles.  
(A) Each (B)after (C) run (D) miles
11. He goes never to the company softball games.  
(A) never (B)the (C) softball (D) games
12. Do you know the student who books were stolen?  
(A) Do (B)know (C) who (D) were
13. Jean-Pierre will spend his vacation either in Singapore nor the Bahamas.  
(A) will (B)his (C) nor (D) Bahamas
14. I told the salesman that I was not interesting in buying the latest model.  
(A) told (B)that (C) interesting (D) buying
15. Frederick used work for a multinational corporation when he lived in Malaysia.  
(A) used work (B)multinational (C) when (D) lived in

### Vocabulary

**Instructions: Select the best answer.**

1. The rate of \_\_\_\_\_ has been fluctuating wildly this week.  
A. money  
B. bills  
C. coins  
D. exchange
2. The bus \_\_\_\_\_ arrives late during bad weather.  
A. every week  
B. later  
C. yesterday  
D. always
3. Do you \_\_\_\_\_ where the nearest grocery store is?  
A. know  
B. no  
C. now  
D. not
4. Jerry Seinfeld, the popular American comedian, has his audiences \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. putting too many irons in the fire  
B. keeping their noses out of someone's business  
C. rolling in the aisles  
D. going to bat for someone
5. The chairperson will \_\_\_\_\_ members to the subcommittee.  
A. appoint  
B. disappoint  
C. appointment  
D. disappointed
6. The critics had to admit that the ballet \_\_\_\_\_ was superb.  
A. procrastinate

- B. performance
- C. pathology
- D. psychosomatic

7. Peter says he can't \_\_\_\_\_ our invitation to dinner tonight.

- A. angel
- B. across
- C. accept
- D. almost

8. We were \_\_\_\_\_ friends in that strange but magical country.

- A. upon
- B. among
- C. toward
- D. in addition to

9. The hurricane caused \_\_\_\_\_ damage to the city.

- A. extend
- B. extended
- C. extensive
- D. extension

10. Many cultures have special ceremonies to celebrate a person's \_\_\_\_\_ of passage into adulthood.

- A. right
- B. rite
- C. writ
- D. write