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| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Examining Article Misuse in Writing Among Students of Public Secondary Schools in Mbale City, Uganda

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| ABSTRACT

Misuse of English articles among second language learners is a source of difficulty in language and education, particularly in nations where English is an official language. Language proficiency is one of the elements that contribute to the improper usage of English articles in writing. The study examines the misuse of articles in the writing of students in public high schools in Mbale town, Uganda, in this context. Krashen's Input Hypothesis Theory, which attempts to explain the misuse of articles in writing, was used as the theoretical framework and a descriptive research design for data. The target students' population was 600 with a sample size of 235 while the teachers' population was 20 with a sample size of 19. The study used interviews and questionnaires as its two main research instruments. The study found that instructional, linguistic, and contextual variables have significant impact on how students use articles in their writing. The study concludes that students face a variety of challenges, including insufficient fundamental education, insufficient feedback, a lack of exposure to acceptable use models, interference from their native language, and insufficient writing practice, all of which contribute to the systemic and complex nature of the issue. When teaching Grammar, the study recommends that teachers to explicitly compare the structure and function of English articles to the absence or variance of these characteristics in native languages.

| KEYWORDS

Definite article, English Language, Grammar, Indefinite article, Second language, Writing

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

English is mainly taught as a second language in Africa, with varying degrees of institutional support, teacher training, and student experience. According to a study conducted in Nigeria, article misuse is one of the most common grammatical errors made by students in their essays and tests, which can impair academic assessment and comprehension (Okonkwo & Chinonye, 2021). These issues are made worse by overcrowded classrooms, a lack of educational materials, and a lack of language immersion opportunities. In English-language articles the referents of nouns are determined by their grammatical structure. Articles are of two categories: indefinite articles (a and an) and definite articles (the). Depending on the specificity and familiarity of the term mentioned in the statement, one of these articles should be used. However, later research has demonstrated that speakers of article-based languages, such as Arabic, use the definite and indefinite articles of English language in ways that are not target-like (Ivanov & Tryzna, 2020).

The importance of grammatical understanding among second language (L2) learners in their ability to use articles accurately is highlighted by studies such as Huang, Wu, Song & Wang (2018). In circumstances where students are not used to article systems, Tuan (2021) suggests concentrating on explicit instruction and regular practice when teaching English articles. Similarly, Huang, Wu, Song, and Wang (2018) emphasize the need for targeted teaching strategies that address the difficulties students

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encounter while learning how to utilize articles, particularly in second language contexts. Despite decades of educational changes and programs designed to enhance English language proficiency, issues with article use continue to exist in Uganda, where English is the official language and the main language of teaching from upper primary school on. The majority of Ugandan pupils attend public secondary schools, which have large class sizes, limited teaching time, and few linguistic resources (Tembe, 2025). Due to these circumstances, teachers find it challenging to concentrate on teaching a specific element of grammar, like articles.

2. Literature Review

Previous studies on the learning of the English article system by English as Second Language (ESL) speakers have found that interlanguage grammar follows different developmental pathways (Li & Yuan, 2024; Tryzna et al., 2025; Usman et al. 2025). Numerous factors contribute to the issue of the improper usage of English articles in writing, not just linguistic proficiency. Important cognitive and environmental factors to consider include the complexity of the rules governing articles, the students' restricted exposure to English, the standard of teaching, and the intrusion of their native tongue. The first language interference is one of the major reasons why articles are used incorrectly. Most of the students in Mbale City speak Luganda and other indigenous languages, which do not have articles. Because their native languages do not employ definite and indefinite articles, this linguistic diversity presents a cognitive barrier for English students (Krashen, 2004).

With English as a second language, Transfer Hypothesis (Ellis, 2021) states that students are likely to import the rules and patterns of their first language into the process of learning a second language, leading to common mistakes such as leaving out articles. One common example of this kind of error is when pupils fail to employ the necessary article and instead use sentences like "She is teacher" instead of "She is a teacher." Thus, linguistic competency is only one of the many variables that contribute to the misuse of English texts in writing. By examining cognitive and environmental factors, such as the complexity of article rules, the quality of teaching, the absence of English exposure, and the influence of students' native language, one can understand why pupils at Mbale public secondary school misuse articles.

In their research, Lightbown and Spada (2022) found that insufficient feedback, a lack of exposure to acceptable usage models, interference from one's native language, and a lack of writing practice all contribute to the complexity and systemic nature of the difficulties that students encounter. Moreover, Ma, Li, Jiao, and Liu (2024) postulated that pupils' misusage of articles in their writing is due to a number of factors, including a lack of explicit direction, insufficient writing practice, little constructive criticism, restricted access to excellent reading materials, and local language conventions. The study suggests that educators should make a clear comparison between the structure and function of English articles and the absence or variation of these characteristics in native languages when teaching the various parts. In addition, Caldwell-Harris's research (2021) found that continuous exposure to authentic, context-rich language input promotes language learning. Without this exposure, students have trouble understanding how texts operate in different communicative environments.

Incorrect use of articles is also influenced by sociocultural factors. Students in places like Mbale City, where English is a second language and seldom spoken at home, are primarily exposed to the language in the classroom. This might lead to excessive use of formal, textbook-based language that doesn't properly represent how people use articles in their everyday conversations. Students may not get enough experience in the nuances of how articles are used in real life conversation and writing. Moreover, the capacity of a student to absorb complicated grammatical principles like article usage may be impacted by their varying levels of enthusiasm or confidence in language learning, which might be influenced by their cultural background (Ou, et al. 2021). Some studies show that students with little motivation may lose interest in learning the nuances of grammar, such as articles, which will affect that language proficiency (Shin & Kim, 2022).

The impact of textbooks and instructional resources should not be disregarded as well. In secondary schools, several textbooks may not offer sufficient practice that is specifically focused on articles, or they may fail to provide the context in which articles are used in the target language. Instructional materials, according to research, should provide students with lots of opportunities to learn and apply grammar rules in real-world situations (Carroll, 2023; Haruna et al. 2024). Without this, students often rely only on rote memorization of rules that may not correspond to actual language use in the real world, rather than understanding the practical applications of article usage. As a result, textbooks and other instructional materials should incorporate more examples and exercises that discuss how articles are used in both spoken and written communication.

When learning English articles, the development of grammatical competence is highly dependent on students' participation and motivational elements. Motivated students usually make fewer errors when learning a language, especially when using articles (Ma, Li, Jiao, and Liu, 2024). The level of student's motivation affects how engaged they are with course materials, practice assignments, and seeking feedback on their language use. Secondary school students in Mbale City may not always see the relevance of articles to their language acquisition, a lack of motivation may lead them to put less work into learning this aspect of English grammar. Therefore, the misuse of English articles in writing among secondary school students in Mbale City is caused

by several factors such as the influence of their native language, a limited scope of instruction, insufficient exposure to English, the complexity of article norms and insufficient feedback.

3. Theoretical Framework

Krashen's Input Hypothesis Theory (Krashen, 1989) served as the basis for the research. This theory states that students get better by interacting with challenging language (i+1 input, where i is the current level of a student and +1 is the next level of proficiency). This facilitates the learning of new grammatical structures in real-world situations. The usage of English articles varies from one language to another, and some languages do not have any at all (Carroll, 2019). As a result, second-language students often make mistakes or leave out articles, particularly in situations where English uses articles to convey definiteness or specificity (Shin & Kim, 2022).

Students who have not had enough real-world experience using articles correctly may struggle to consistently put the rules into practice. Because of this, Krashen's Input Hypothesis remains quite useful for determining how students in Mbale City's secondary schools might improve their use of articles. According to this theory, teachers can enhance their students' grammatical correctness and internalization of English article rules by using task-based language teaching methods and making sure that their students are exposed to consistent, varied input that is both challenging and still understandable. This comprehensive strategy, which emphasizes exposure, production, and adequate educational assistance, may be required to tackle the elements that lead to the misuse of articles in English writing.

4. Methodology

4. 1 Research Design

The researchers employed a descriptive research design to explore how secondary school students in Mbale City utilized English-language materials in their writing. It **gives** a **complete evaluation** of the **issue** at hand (Hirose & Creswell, 2023). The **validity and reliability of the research were enhanced by the** mixed methods approach, which **involved collecting** both qualitative and quantitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2023). The qualitative component explored teachers' insights into the challenges students face with article usage, while the quantitative component measured the frequency and types of errors in student writing.

4.2 Target Population

The target population for the research consisted of 600 pupils and 20 English language teachers from five public secondary schools in Mbale City, which were given the names Schools A, B, C, D, and E, as shown in Table 1. Senior Two and Three students were given priority because they are at a critical point in their language development, specifically in learning grammatical articles (a, an, and the), which are essential for effective academic writing, It was not possible to reach all the students because of the big class sizes that are common in public secondary schools. As a result, the study focused on students whose parents or guardians may be contacted during school events—in three schools, this was during visitation days, while in the other two, it was during PTA meetings. The researchers were able to inform parents or guardians of students under the age of 18 about the study and obtain their informed consent through these opportunities.

Table 1: Distribution of Target Population by School

School	Student Population	Teacher Population
School A	140	4
School B	120	4
School C	110	4
School D	115	4
School E	115	4
Total	**600**	**20**

Source: Senior Inspector of Schools, Mbale City (2025)

Table 1 shows that 600 students from five public secondary schools in Mbale City were designated as Schools A, B, C, D, and E.

4.3 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

4.3.1 Sample Size

Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination table was used to select 235 students as a sample from the 600 total students for statistical analysis and generalization in the setting of secondary schools in Mbale City. Additionally, 19 English language teachers were sampled from the five schools to participate in qualitative interviews, ensuring coverage across all institutions involved in the study.

Table 2: Sample Size and Sampling Techniques by School

School	Student Sample	Sampling-Technique (Students)	Teacher Sample	Sampling Technique (Teachers)
School A	55	Simple Random Sampling	4	Purposive Sampling
School B	47	Simple Random Sampling	4	Purposive Sampling
School C	43	Simple Random Sampling	4	Purposive Sampling
School D	45	Simple Random Sampling	4	Purposive Sampling
School E	45	Simple Random Sampling	3	Purposive Sampling
Total	**235**		**19**	

Source: Senior Inspector of Schools, Mbale City (2025)

Table 2 shows that 235 students were selected from the total population of 600 while 19 teachers of English language were chosen from five schools.

4.3.2 Sampling Techniques

Both probability and non-probability sampling techniques were used in the study to assure methodological rigor and representativeness.

4.3.2.1 Simple Random Sampling

The student respondents were chosen using simple random sampling. Using a computer-based randomization process, the required number of students were chosen from each of the five schools after lists of all senior two and three students from each school were obtained. By minimizing bias and ensuring that each student had an equal opportunity of being chosen, this probabilistic technique enhanced the external validity of the quantitative findings.

4. 3. 2. 2 Purposive Sampling

The teacher respondents were selected using purposive sampling. English language teachers were selected based on their qualifications, prior experience teaching grammar and writing, and active role in evaluating their students' writing. They were included to offer educated, experience-based insights into the teaching strategies and patterns of article usage at their institutions. The use of combination sampling is in line with the recommended practices for mixed-method research, which place a strong emphasis on statistical representation for broad application and expert knowledge for qualitative depth (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2023).

4. 4 Tools for data collection

The study used interviews and questionnaires as its two main data-gathering techniques.

4. 4. 1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was divided into two sections: Section A collects demographic data like age, gender, and school, and Section B asks about the factors that contribute to the misuse of English language publications in writing. The respondents rated their responses using a 5-point Likert scale: 1 represented strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 neutral, 4 agree, and 5 strongly agree.

4.4.2 Interview Guide

An open-ended question from the interview guide was used to gather qualitative information from the English teachers. This helped validate the answers to the questionnaire and provided greater knowledge of the problem from the perspective of the teachers.

4.5 Quality control

This includes the reliability and validity of the research tools listed below.

4.5.1 Validity of Research Instruments

Validity ensures that the research instruments measure what they are intended to measure. To ensure content validity, professionals in the area, such as research supervisors and English language teachers, examined the interview guides and questionnaires. The content validity index (CVI) was calculated using the following formula:

CVI = (Number of relevant items / Total number of items).

4.5.2 Reliability of the Research Instruments

The consistency and stability of the research tools over time is what is meant by reliability. A pilot study was carried out with a small sample of students from a different school who were not part of the main study to determine the validity of the questionnaire. The same group received the same survey two weeks later. The responses were thoroughly examined to ascertain if the findings were consistent. The questionnaire items' internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha. A reliability index of 0. 70 or higher was considered sufficient for the purpose of evaluating the reliability of the instrument.

4.6 Data Analysis

The study used quantitative and qualitative data analysis to ensure that the people or respondents being examined were adequately represented. These approaches may be combined to produce a comprehensive explanation in which statistical patterns are supported by qualitative data. Quantitative data was analyzed using the statistical software SPSS version 25 (Pallant 2020), which is well-known for its ability to manage big datasets and reduce errors. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize the responses from the Likert scale. The use of English articles by students was examined using means and standard deviations to uncover overall patterns and differences, whereas categorical variables were explained simply using frequencies and percentages.
Thematic analysis, which Braun and Clarke (2021) describe as a method for finding themes in teacher answers, was employed to improve the qualitative data. Because it allows for methodical classification and flexibility in interpretation, this approach is ideal for extracting insightful patterns from text data. Therefore, to enhance the validity of its findings and assure methodological rigor, this study employed a mixed-methods approach that combined qualitative and quantitative methods (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2023). The qualitative insights used to contextualize statistical patterns allowed for a comprehensive interpretation of the data.

4. 7 Data Gathering Procedure

Before data collection, the researcher obtained an introduction letter from the Directorate of Higher Degrees and Research to seek approval from the relevant education authorities. Once approval was granted, the researchers visited the selected schools and distributed the questionnaires to the students. The students were given a set time to complete the questionnaire. Afterward, interviews with the English teachers were scheduled at their convenience. Data collection took place over a period of two weeks to ensure sufficient time for both questionnaires and interviews.

4. 8 Ethical Considerations

This research gave ethical considerations top priority and I accordance with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki 1964, Before beginning data collection, the researchers acquired ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee of the Directorate of Higher Degrees and Research (2022-08-11260), Kampala International University, Uganda. In addition, this study followed established ethical standards for research, particularly research involving underage participants. Prior to beginning the data collection process, informed consent was obtained from all participants, including teachers, students, and their parents or guardians, to participate and publish their information. To ensure that everyone understood the consent form, it was orally translated into Luganda and Lumasaba in this case. A verbal agreement was accompanied by a thumbprint or signature as proof of agreement in locations where literacy was an issue. Data confidentiality and participant anonymity were prioritized. No

identifying details were included in the final report, and all records were securely stored, accessible only to the researcher and supervising academic staff.

5. Data Presentation, Interpretation and Analysis

Data analysis ensured triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data for comprehensive findings.

5. 2 Quantitative Data

Using a series of structured survey items rated on a five-point Likert scale (5 = Strongly Agree (SA), 4 = Agree (A), 3 = Neutral (N), 2 = Disagree (D), 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD)), quantitative data was gathered and used to analyze the research. Descriptive statistical methods were used to analyze the responses, and the findings are presented appropriately with detailed interpretation of each statement based on the survey results, organized to maintain coherence and logical progression.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Factors Contributing to Misuse of Articles in Writing

Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Total	Mean	SD
1. I was not taught the correct use of articles clearly in school.	65 (34.6%)	73 (38.8%)	27 (14.4%)	15 (8.0%)	8 (4.3%)	**188**	3.98	0.92
2. My first language influences how I use articles in English.	84 (44.7%)	60 (31.9%)	26 (13.8%)	11 (5.8%)	7 (3.7%)	**188**	4.13	0.94
3. I mainly learn English from my peers rather than teachers.	45 (23.9%)	72 (38.3%)	33 (17.6%)	20 (10.6%)	18 (9.6%)	**188**	3.68	1.05
4. Lack of enough reading materials makes it hard for me to learn correct article usage.	70 (37.2%)	65 (34.6%)	28 (14.9%)	16 (8.5%)	9 (4.8%)	**188**	3.97	0.98
5. Teachers do not emphasize article usage in writing assignments.	58 (30.9%)	74 (39.4%)	29 (15.4%)	17 (9.0%)	10 (5.3%)	**188**	3.89	0.98
6. I do not get enough feedback from teachers on article mistakes.	71 (37.8%)	66 (35.1%)	25 (13.3%)	15 (8.0%)	11 (5.8%)	**188**	3.98	1.00
7. I find English article rules difficult because they do not exist in my mother tongue.	82 (43.6%)	58 (30.9%)	28 (14.9%)	12 (6.4%)	8 (4.3%)	**188**	4.09	0.93
8. I do not practice enough writing in English to improve my article use.	66 (35.1%)	72 (38.3%)	28 (14.9%)	16 (8.5%)	6 (3.2%)	**188**	3.97	0.94

Source: Primary Data (2025)

Quantitative data was gathered using a series of organized survey questions rated on a five-point Likert scale (5 = Strongly Agree (SA), 4 = Agree (A), 3 = Neutral (N), 2 = Disagree (D), 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD)) to assess participants' responses to the many elements that contribute to the misuse of articles in writing. The results are presented in Table 4. The data highlights the absence of explicit instruction on how to use articles in school, which is one of the most pressing issues. A significant number of respondents, 65 (34. 6%), strongly agreed, and 73 (38. 8%) agreed, that they were not given a clear education in the proper use of articles. The widespread understanding that instruction on article usage was either inadequate or ambiguous is reflected in the average score of 3. 98, with a standard deviation (SD) of 0. 92. In situations such as writing skills where English articles are used, this indicates a gap in basic grammar education. Schools must incorporate direct grammar education into their curriculum and make sure that classroom instruction includes all norms and exceptions to address this problem.

In addition to academic difficulties, the use of articles by learners was heavily impacted by their first language. Most participants said that their native language affects how they use articles in English, with 84 (44. 7%) agreeing and 60 (31. 9%) strongly agreeing. With a standard deviation of 0. 94, the best average score was 4. 13. A commonly accepted tenet of second language learning is supported by the data: When learning English, students frequently import grammatical structures from their native tongue, and these structures may or may not correspond to how English is spoken. Using contrastive analysis in instruction, where teachers purposely highlight differences between students' native languages and English grammatical standards, can help to minimize this linguistic interference.

Learning English mainly from classmates was identified as a possible factor in misusing articles, in addition to linguistic and educational influences. The responses to this statement were more varied, with 45 (23. 9%) strongly agreeing and 72 (38. 3%) agreeing. With an average score of 3. 68, there is only moderate agreement, which implies that although peer learning does take place, it may not be a trustworthy method for learning the nuances of grammar, like articles. Although peer-based learning

environments can encourage communication, they frequently fail to offer organized grammar teaching. As a result, teachers should make sure that formal grammar instruction complements peer-learning to reinforce appropriate article use.
The lack of access to reading materials is another factor influencing learners' proficiency. The lack of adequate reading resources hinders their comprehension of appropriate article use, according to 65 respondents (34. 6%) who agreed and 70 (37. 2%) who agreed strongly. This worry is supported by an average score of 3. 97. Extensive reading helps pupils comprehend how articles are used in context. Students are denied essential exposure to appropriate grammatical use without a wide range of reading materials that are easily accessible. Schools should increase the size of their libraries and include more reading tasks that demonstrate proper article usage across genres as a remedy.
It was also discovered that the teachers' failure to emphasize the use of articles in writing assignments was another factor. Most respondents, or 30. 39. 4% (74) of respondents agreed with this statement, but 9% (58) had strong opinions about it. With a standard deviation of 0. The average score of 3. 89 out of 100 suggests that grammar instruction is given insufficient weight in written assignments. If instructors do not pay attention to articles, students lose out on the opportunity to learn and utilize grammar concepts, even though writing assignments give them real-world grammar experience. Teachers should concentrate on highlighting errors particularly related to articles, and grammar analysis should be utilized more in written tasks to address this issue.
The topic of insufficient teacher feedback on essay errors is a direct continuation of the one that preceded it. According to the data, 66 respondents (35. 1%) agreed that they do not receive enough feedback on their article usage, while 71 respondents (37. 8%) concurred wholeheartedly. As shown below, the average score of 3. 98 indicates a serious problem. Because it helps students recognize and learn from their errors, feedback is a crucial component of language learning. Students need timely and concentrated feedback to progress in their learning, particularly on recurring issues such the improper usage of articles. As a result, teachers should concentrate on giving pupils thorough and useful feedback to help them improve their grammar.
Additionally, several respondents suggested that the complexity of the rules governing articles was caused by the paucity of articles in the students' native language. Because of structural differences between English articles that are not obvious in their native languages, 82 respondents (43. 6%) said it is hard to understand article rules, while 58 respondents (30. 9%) agreed. The average score of 4. 09 demonstrates the relevance of this topic. English relies heavily on articles for its meaning and clarity, unlike some languages that do not use them. Focused grammar instruction that teaches students the use of articles in English and the underlying causes for these rules' variations from their native tongue is necessary to resolve this contradiction.
The study concluded that the primary reason students are unable to utilize articles effectively is because of their inexperience writing in English. 38. Only 3% (72) of survey respondents said they do not write enough to enhance their grammar, while 35% (66) said the same. The average score of 3. 97 indicates that regular writing enhances one's grasp of grammar. Through writing, students should demonstrate their comprehension of the content. Regular feedback from instructors and practical learning activities would benefit from this approach.
Therefore, the quantitative findings reveal several significant reasons why students misuse articles in their writing. These include unclear instructions, linguistic interference from the mother tongue, a lack of writing practice, limited peer and resource access, and inadequate teacher direction and feedback.

5.3. Qualitative Data

The qualitative insights provide a significant enhancement to the quantitative data. Since the transcription and analysis only included answers that were directly related to the objective of the study, the qualitative data remained concentrated and pertinent. The following discussions explain the underlying causes of this misuse of English articles for a more comprehensive picture of the issues and contextual factors that influence how students use language when writing English language essays in public high schools in Mbale City.

Respondent code-named A02 claimed that,

> "The main reason for improper article usage is that students aren't given enough explicit instruction on how articles function in English. Also, some students' first language doesn't have articles, so, they find it difficult to grasp the concept."

The core issues of pedagogical approach and linguistic background are covered in this response. Without direct instruction, students lack the conceptual framework needed to comprehend the context in which articles are used. Additionally, the respondent makes a compelling connection between this issue and first language interference: since many African languages lack articles, students have a harder time concentrating on definiteness or specificity. Consequently, since they are learning, these children require more thorough learning a completely new concept as opposed to just a new guideline.

Respondent B03 explained that,

> "Many students struggle with articles because they haven't developed a solid understanding of grammar rules in English overall. They lack practice in writing, which is essential for internalizing the correct use of articles."

The misuse use of articles is just one symptom of a wider problem of insufficient grammatical proficiency and a lack of experience with well-organized writing tasks. The respondent asserts that having inconsistent exposure to grammar principles without constant reinforcement through writing leads to poor writing skills. This can be corrected by gradually improving students' precision in using articles through exercises that include peer editing, journal writing, and grammar-related activities that are integrated into genuine writing tasks.

Respondent C06 suggested that,

> "The biggest factor is the lack of exposure to English outside the classroom. If students don't engage with English in their daily lives, they struggle with applying grammatical rules like article usage in real-world contexts."

This understanding emphasizes the link between language learning and immersion in the environment. The media, frequent conversations, reading, and other real-world experiences help students learn a language much better than in the classroom. The respondent emphasizes that, in the absence of real-world experience, classroom teaching alone is insufficient.

Respondent D04 asserted that,

> "First language interference is a major factor. In many local languages, articles don't exist, so students tend to skip them in English sentences. It's a difficult habit to break."

This respondent emphasizes the lack of articles in indigenous languages. Conceptual adaptation, rather than simply translation, is the cognitive problem here. Students are learning a whole new grammatical category, not simply translating structures. As a result, the practice of leaving out articles is firmly established and necessitates a comparative analysis as well as ongoing correction and explanation.

Respondent E05 expressed that,

> "Students are often unsure when to use articles because they don't have enough contextual learning. They mostly rely on memorization, which leads to mistakes in understanding article rules."

The threat of learning outside of context is discussed by this respondent. Grammar taught in isolation, apart from actual usage, frequently leads to subpar retention and application. The context of an article's rules is highly dependent on the nature of the noun being discussed, including whether it is common or, countable or uncountable, well-known or unfamiliar. Students are not trained to make such decisions through rote learning.

Respondent F06 emphasized that,

> "Many students do not receive feedback on article usage in their writing. Without feedback, they don't realize where they are going wrong, and this leads to repeated mistakes."

This respondent highlights the relevance of feedback in learning. The absence of detailed feedback leads to fossilization, where incorrect habits become ingrained. Teachers must adopt strategies that include both written corrections and oral explanations, encouraging students to reflect on their errors. Feedback sessions and peer-review workshops can also create a culture of grammatical awareness and shared responsibility for improvement.

6. Discussion of Findings

Findings from the study reveal that extensive teacher involvement ensured an abundance of qualitative data regarding instructional challenges and student errors. The L1 interference issue had the greatest average (4. 13). Most students (76. 6%) agreed that their native languages influence how they utilize English articles. In multilingual Uganda, where many native languages lack a distinct or indefinite article system (Katamba, 2022), this lends evidence to Odlin's (2012) theory about negative language transfer. Students often see articles written in their first language as unnecessary or superfluous since there are none. Contrastive analysis (Swan, 2024) has shown that pupils make fewer transfer errors when they compare the grammatical components of English and their native language.

Another significant, albeit minor, effect of peer-based learning was found to be its influence on the misuse of articles. A mean score of 3. 68 suggests that relying on peers rather than professional instruction may result in mistakes, especially when peers share similar misconceptions, even if peer interaction promotes language exposure. This finding corroborates the significance of guided learning via more knowledgeable others, as highlighted by Vygotsky's (1987) social development theory. As a result, teachers need to oversee peer learning settings and ensure that they are backed by clear, well-structured grammar instruction.

Another major factor is the lack of reading materials, as evidenced by an average score of 3. 97. Respondents said that a lack of exposure to well-written English prevents them from understanding how articles are used. This aligns with the findings of Grabe & Stoller (2022) who observed that students are forced to rely on mechanical concepts that they find hard to use in real-world writing because of the absence of such information. Students may gain a more intuitive understanding of how to use articles by assigning them a lot of reading and expanding the size of school libraries.

Another noteworthy observation is the underutilization of articles in writing assignments, which received an average score of 3. 89. When teachers do not place a particular emphasis on article use, students miss out on crucial opportunities to learn and improve article regulations. This correlates with research which indicates that there are measurable improvements in grammar when form-focused instruction is combined with writing practice (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). Teachers should include the objectives of article usage in writing rubrics and offer targeted guidance on how to use articles in a variety of genres and contexts.

Another issue is insufficient feedback, as seen by a high mean score of 3. 98. Most students stated that they did not get enough feedback or justification for their improper use of articles. Feedback is essential for the growth of interlanguage since it provides pupils with the information necessary to change their inner grammatical systems (Ranta & Lyster, 2017). Without it, students are more likely to make errors. Timely, thorough, and interactive feedback is necessary for students to engage with and reflect on their mistakes (Ferris, 2023). This is supported by the study by Kao, Reynolds, Zhang, and Wong (2025), which showed that giving unfocused feedback improved the accuracy of English article usage. Further study reveals that many students have difficulty with article regulations because they are so distinct from the structures of their native languages. The need for instructional strategies that clearly compare English grammar to the patterns of the learners' native language is highlighted by this conclusion, which has a mean of 4. 09.

Poor writing practice was discovered to be another significant cause of erroneous article usage (mean = 3. 97). Writing is a helpful skill that helps in the internalization of grammatical norms, especially for articles that are governed by guidelines but context-dependent (Park et al. 2016). Without regular writing practice and support, students are unlikely to improve their grammar. Grammar accuracy can improve significantly over time with well-organized writing assignments and modeling and revision exercises. These statistical results are supported by a plethora of qualitative data that provides helpful explanatory insights. In accordance with quantitative trends, many respondents pointed out that the incorrect use of articles is a result of insufficient explicit instruction, restricted writing practice, and inadequate feedback.

For instance, respondent A02 noted that, especially for students whose first language does not have comparable grammatical categories, articles are often not taught in a way that emphasizes their purpose. To teach unfamiliar grammatical concepts, Garcia & Amado (2025) came to the same conclusion, highlighting the necessity for instructional approaches that integrate verbal, visual, and contextual reinforcement. In support of this position, respondent B03 asserted that children are not adequately instructed on writing, which is necessary for understanding the laws governing publishing. As opposed to through theoretical principles, the best method for learning grammar is via practical application in actual communication scenarios (Larsen-Freeman, 2022). In addition, respondent C06 emphasized that outside the classroom, there is little exposure to English, suggesting that article use is still infrequent without immersion. The Input Hypothesis of Krashen (1989) is an input-based theory of acquisition that emphasizes the value of consistent exposure to language that is understandable for grammatical development.

In contrast, other responders, such as D04 and E05, valued conceptual understanding over rote learning and first language interference, respectively. They pointed out the continued abuse of articles as the cause and emphasized the need for grammar instruction in context. The respondent's last point was that the lack of corrective feedback, as seen by the acquisition of a second language, causes recurring mistakes and fossilization.

7. Conclusion

The study concludes that the misuse of articles by second language learners is influenced by a number of variables. These include the impact of regional linguistic patterns, restricted access to high-quality reading resources, little corrective feedback, insufficient direct teaching, and a dearth of writing practice. The definite article was challenging for many students to use in front of noun phrases that were organized like noun + of + noun. Additionally, students struggled to use indefinite articles correctly before singular countable nouns that stood for a class and in cases with figures.

8. Recommendations

When discussing the causes of article abuse, schools should focus on providing a full and comparative grammar education that considers the impact of students' native languages. The lack or variation of such features in local languages should be explicitly compared by teachers to the structure and function of articles in English. Students should also get more exposure to real English resources via extensive reading courses and well-stocked libraries. In addition, teachers should ensure that writing assignments are consistent and supported by continuous, constructive feedback that highlights the essay's flaws and provides students with actionable strategies for improvement.

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