

Definite Article Errors and Effect of L1 Transfer

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Abstract : The present study investigates the type of errors English as a second language (ESL) learners produce using the definite article 'the'. The participants were provided a questionnaire on the learner's ability test. The questionnaire consists of three cloze tests and two free composition tests. Each participant's response was received in the form of written data. A total of 78 participants from three government schools participated in the study. The participants are high-school students from Rural Assam. Assam is a north-eastern state of India. Their age ranged between 14-15. The medium of instruction and the communication among the students take place in the local language, i.e., Assamese. Pit Corder's steps for conducting error analysis have been followed for the analysis procedure. Four types of errors were found (1) deletion of the definite article, (2) use of the definite article as modifiers as adjectives, (3) incorrect use of the definite article with singular proper nouns, (4) substitution of the definite article by the indefinite article 'a'. Classifiers in Assamese that express definiteness is used with nouns, adjectives, and numerals. It is found that native language (L1) transfer plays a pivotal role in the learners' errors. The analysis reveals the learners' inability to acquire the semantic connotation of definiteness in English due to native language (L1) interference.

Keywords : definite article error, l1 transfer, error analysis, ESL

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