



A Comparison of English Article Use in English Major and English Minor:  
A Case Study of Naresuan University Students  
การเปรียบเทียบการใช้ English article ระหว่างนิสิตเอกภาษาอังกฤษและวิชาโท  
ภาษาอังกฤษ: กรณีศึกษาของมหาวิทยาลัยนเรศวร

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**Abstract:**

The present study examined to what extent English major and English minor students dealt with English article use and aimed to compare the accuracy of English article use between both groups. The English article use test including cloze test and translation test was distributed to 83 English major and minor students, and an interview was conducted to obtain additional explanation. The results showed that the most accurately used article in English major and minor students was “zero article” (major: Mean = 6.73, S.D. = 1.28, and minor: Mean = 5.60, S.D. = 1.68), “a/an” (major: mean = 13.20, S.D. = 1.91, and minor: Mean = 10.35, S.D. = 2.22), and “the” (major: Mean = 10.08, S.D. = 2.14, and minor: Mean = 7.26, S.D. = 3.02), respectively. Nonetheless, in the comparison, the accuracy of English article use in all types between both groups was significantly different. That is, English major students used the English article more accurately than the counterpart. An interesting finding was that zero article had fewer grammatical rules, so the participants performed better than other types. Although participants showed their knowledge at some level, their accuracies were inconsistent due to their experiences and familiarities.

**Keywords:** English articles, English minor, English major, Indefinite articles, Definite articles

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## Introduction

An article is one of the determiners which helps language users to distinguish given and new information (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). Articles in English language can be categorized into two main categories: definite article (e.g., *the*) and indefinite article (e.g., *a* and *an*). However, a noun sometimes does not need an article, or it is called zero article (e.g.,  $\emptyset$ ) (Leech & Svartvik, 2003). From previous studies, it is suggested that the article is one of the major problems that non-native English learners frequently have (e.g., Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Liu & Gleason, 2002) although their native tongues share a common ancestral language with English (Liu & Gleason, 2002) i.e., German, Spanish, Portuguese (Makarova & Polvakov, 2015). Meanwhile, learners from Asia, Southeast Asia, Arab countries, Slavic-speaking countries, and African-speaking countries usually make more mistakes on article use due to their L1 influences that have no equivalent article system to English (e.g., Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Liu & Gleason, 2002). Consequently, this problem is generally found in Thai learners of English (e.g., Kampookaew, 2020; Krasin, 2014; Nopjirapong, 2011; Suniphan, 2015, etc.).

Many related studies on article use by English learners focus on different directions. Some research investigates all types of articles: "*a/an*", "*the*", and "*zero articles*" (e.g., Hasbún, 2009; Liu & Gleason, 2002; Sun, 2016), but a number of studies focus only "zero article" or "the" (e.g., Kadhim, 2016). Additionally, their issues of study are diverse. For instance, Leśniewska (2016) focused on articles in the phrasal aspect while Sun (2016) studies in terms of L2 acquisition. Even though research related to English article use in Thailand is mostly based on writing error analysis that concerns comprehensive grammar analysis (e.g., Kampookaew, 2020; Patiyasevi, 2018; Sonthirak et. al, 2020; Watcharapunyawong & Usaha, 2013), little research focuses on article use in particular (e.g., Krasin, 2014; Nopjirapong, 2011). Literature shows that cloze test or gap-filling tasks (e.g., Ahmad & Khan, 2019; Gentner, 2016; Krasin, 2014; Liu & Gleason, 2002; Lu, 2001; Miller, 2005, Ogawa, 2008; Sun, 2016; etc.), essays (e.g., Liu & Gleason, 2002; Miller, 2005, Liu & Gleason, 2002; Lu, 2001; Miller, 2005, Nopjirapong, 2011; Stehle, 2009), error analysis (e.g., Adway, 2013; Ekiert, 2004; Hasbún, 2009; Kadhim, 2016; Liu & Gleason, 2002; Thomas, 1989; White, 2009; Zdorenko & Paradis, 2007;), and translation tests (e.g., Robertson, 2000) are mostly applied. Simultaneously, most studies used Hawkins (1978), Hawkins (2001), Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman (1999), Master (1988), Bickerton (1981) as a theoretical framework (e.g., Ogawa, 2008; Sun, 2016; Liu & Gleason, 2002; Miller, 2005; Ahmad & Khan, 2019; Gentner, 2016; Lu, C., 2001.). Likewise, participants in previous studies are a wide range of non-native English learners. To illustrate, English as a Second Language Learner ESL (e.g., Gleason, 2002; Robertson, 2000; Liu & Suniphan, 2021; Stehle, 2009; Young, 1996), English as a Foreign Language Learner EFL (e.g., Ahmad & Khan, 2019; Ekiert, 2004; Hasbún, 2009; Gentner, 2016; Nopjirapong, 2011; Zdorenko & Paradis, 2007), English language learners from Asia (e.g., Robertson, 2000), Middle East (e.g., Ahmad & Khan, 2021; Adway, 2013), and Thailand (e.g., Krasin, 2014; Nopjirapong, 2011). Moreover, several studies investigate learners from English major (e.g., Gentner, 2016; Kadhim, 2016; Lesniewka, 2016; Liu & Gleason, 2002; Nopjirapong, 2011; Sun, 2016), but none of the studies focuses on English minor students. This leads to research questioning to what extent English major and English minor students deal with English article use. The present study aims to compare the accuracy of English article use between English major and English minor students.



## Research Objective

To compare the accuracy of English article use between English major and English minor students.

## Research Question

How the accuracy of English article use between English major and English minor students is different from each other?

## Research Hypothesis

English major students have a higher performance than English minor students in English article use.

## Theoretical Framework

### Types of English Articles

English articles are determiners preceding a noun that can be categorized into two major types (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Hawkins 1978). The first type is *indefinite article*, e.g., *a(an)*. It is used in non-specific noun phrases (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999) to indicate that the mentioned noun is general, and the hearer has no shared experience or knowledge of the speaker (Hawkins, 1978). The use of indefinite articles depends on different situations; noun classification (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999) and noun environment (Hawkins, 1978; Huebner, 1983). In noun classification, Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) proposed that an indefinite article is used with:

1. Singular countable common noun, e.g., a book.
2. Disease name, e.g., a headache
3. Common nouns as non-specific referent in non-generic use, e.g., I don't have a car.

For noun environment, Huebner (1983) stated that indefinite article is used in:

1. Non-referential indefinite which noun is a specific referent and is known to the hearer, e.g., We need to write an essay.
2. Referential indefinite which noun is a specific referent but unknown to the hearer, e.g., My son brought a rabbit.

Next, the second type of article is a *definite article*. It is used to convey the non-generic meaning of a specific situation or particular thing of a large set (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). Moreover, the definite article provides new information to a hearer about how the new information relates to the old information depending on the previous mentioning and emphasizing (Hawkins, 1978). Meanwhile, Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman (1999) states that the definite article '*the*' could be used in generic meaning as well. For its uses, definite article is used with a different noun, and it conveys different meanings, generic and non-generic meanings, as following.

### Generic meaning

*The* is used with the following nouns in order to express that the mentioned noun is general and referred to all things of the same category. Moreover, the generic meaning of *the* is a rare case (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999)



1. Plural proper noun or collective noun, e.g., *The Americans*, *The Mississippi*
2. Countable noun, e.g., We listened to the news on *the radio*.

#### Non-generic meaning

Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman (1999) indicates that *the* expresses non-generic meaning. It means that *the* is referred to a particular noun in the same large category. Besides, it is used with the following nouns.

1. Unique noun, e.g., *The sun*, *the moon*
2. Uncountable noun, e.g., *The bacon*, *The sugar*

Besides, there is also *zero article* that could be both definite articles and indefinite articles (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Hawkins, 1978). *Zero article* is used with the following categories of a noun:

1. Singular proper noun which is mostly geographical name, e.g., *San Francisco*
2. Plural countable nouns, e.g., *glasses*

Moreover, Huebner (1983) suggests that it is also used in various noun environments which are:

1. Non-referential definite, e.g., I want to go to theme park.
2. Non-referential indefinite noun which is a specific referent and is known to the hearer.  
e.g., We need go home.
3. Referential indefinite which noun is a specific referent but unknown to the hearer, e.g., I love orange cat.

In conclusion, English articles are determiners which can be divided into three types: *indefinite article*, *definite article*, and *zero article*. These articles are used variedly in different contexts depending on noun classification and noun environment. Consequently, in order to communicate correctly and efficiently, the articles are a major part of English grammar that should not be neglected. However, a great deal of rules and exceptions of English article uses can cause confusion and neglect among non-native English speakers.

#### Previous Studies

Articles are considered to be one of the prominent problems that most EFL and ESL learners are encountering (e.g., Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Liu & Gleason, 2002). Due to this reason, a number of research studies on English article use by non-native English speakers have been carried out.

Numerous previous studies mostly focus on non-native speakers who are EFL and ESL learners whose native tongue has no equivalent article system (e.g., Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Liu & Gleason, 2002; Ogawa, 2008; Robertson, 2000; Master, 1988; Sun, 2016). The results show that they make more mistakes in English articles than the speakers whose native tongue has an article system. Additionally, the studies aim at different goals. Some works study the frequency of English article use (e.g., Ahmad & Khan, 2019; Sun, 2016; Thomas, 1989; Lu, C., 2001; Steleh, 2009), and the findings reveal that the most accurately used article is "*the*", "*a/an*", and "*zero articles*" respectively. However, the problems of English article use have been studied in some works. Those studies suggest that overuse, omission, and misuse of articles are resulted from the difficulty in distinguishing the countability, L1 influence, experience and background of the English language are also the main issues for EFL. Moreover, the English article use is compared in various dimensions, such as year (e.g., Ahmad & Khan, 2019; Gentner, 2016; Miller, 2005),



native language (e.g., Ogawa, 2008; Sun, 2016; Liu & Gleason, 2002; Waelateh et al., 2020; White, 2009; Master, 1988), English proficiency (e.g., Sun, 2016; Lesniewska, 2016; Ahmad & Khan, 2021; Lu, C., 2001; Liu & Gleason, 2002; White, 2009), and English language acquisition (e.g., Sun, 2016; Ahmad & Khan, 2019; Lu, C., 2001; Master, 1988; Thomas, 1989). For research instruments, cloze test (e.g., Ogawa, 2008; Lu, C., 2001; Miller, 2006; Sun, 2016; Ahmad & Khan, 2019; Gentner, 2016; Liu & Gleason, 2002), essay writing (e.g., Alhaisoni; Guadel & Al-Zuoud, 2017; Stehle, 2009; Waelateh et al., 2020), and error analysis approaches (e.g., Thomas, 1989; Alhaisoni; Guadel & Al-Zuoud, 2017; White, 2009) are frequently used.

Likewise, most Thai researchers have studied writing errors emphasizing on many types of grammar (e.g., Kampookaew, 2020; Kongrod, 2017; Patiyasevi, 2018; Watcharapunyawong & Usaha, 2013), and the article is a partial focus (e.g., Krasin, 2014; Nopjirapong, 2011). It is investigated that articles are one of the main problems in writing, and the most error occurs in *the*. Regardless, there is little research focusing only on article use, and these studies often make a comparison of different years (e.g., Krasin, 2014) native language (e.g., Suniphan, 2022), and only an English major (e.g., Nopjirapong, 2011; Watcharapunyawong & Usaha, 2013). In methodology, data is usually collected by using essay writing (e.g., Kampookaew, 2020; Nopjirapong, 2011; Watcharapunyawong & Usaha, 2013) and cloze test or sentence completion (e.g., Krasin, 2014; Suniphan, 2022)

In conclusion, many previous studies suggest that articles are the major obstacle in English language use, especially in EFL and ESL learners whose L1 has no article system, and the most and least accurately used article is *the* and *zero article* respectively. Moreover, cloze tests and essay writing are instruments frequently used in collecting data from a wide-range of groups of participants—age, nationality, native language, and background knowledge. What makes the current study different from the previous research is the participants and the instruments. That is, English minor students, as a group of participants, took part in the study with the English major students. In addition, the present study examines both qualitative data and quantitative data by using cloze test, translation test, and interview.

## Research Methodology

### Participants

The participants of the study were 40 English major students from the Faculty of Education and 43 English minor students from the Faculty of Humanities at Naresuan University. All participants were second-year to fourth-year students who learned English as a foreign language for at least 12 years in school, and they have wide ranges of English language proficiency. Besides, the English minor students were from Eastern language majors, i.e., Thai, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Burmese, and Western language majors, i.e., French.

### Instruments

The present study was divided into two parts to collect both quantitative and qualitative data, and two instruments were employed. The quantitative data were initially collected by using the English article use test including 28 gap-fills which were adapted from Gentner (2016) and 12 items of translation test adapted from Cambridge Dictionary, Line Dictionary, The Free Dictionary, Azar & Hagen (2002), and Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman (1999) (see Appendix A). The participants were provided 15 minutes to complete the tasks and not allowed to use dictionaries.



The tasks focused on the accuracy of all types of English article use—a, an, the, and zero article—in noun classification and noun environment derived from Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman (1999), Heubner (1983), and Hawkins (1978). The collected data from this instrument were analyzed and compared to examine the accuracy of English article use between both groups.

Moreover, structured interviews were also included to seek additional explanations of the acquired qualitative data. Six participants from each group were chosen to participate in this process. The interview questions were adapted from Hughes et al. (2019) and designed based on quantitative data to cover all possible reasons for the answers as the following samples (see Appendix B):

1. Do you have any strategy or approach when you use English article?
2. Do you think whether English articles are difficult for you, and why?
3. Do you know how to use each English article? if yes, please explain their uses.
4. How do you gain knowledge about English articles?
5. Please complete the blank with the appropriate article.

1. We normally use \_\_\_\_\_ when we talk about something which isn't specific or it's the first time we mention something. When we talk about something specific or talk about it again, we use \_\_\_\_\_.

2. We also use \_\_\_\_\_ when something is unique (there is only one), with superlatives or with the names of some places (e.g., oceans, deserts, mountain ranges).

3. \_\_\_\_\_ People know about the Great Wall of China.

4. Countries in \_\_\_\_\_ African plan to build a wall.

#### Data Collection

The data were collected by using the English article use test via Google Forms and test paper to provide convenience for the participants. Subsequently, the collected data were marked with the scoring criteria. Furthermore, six participants from each group were chosen from their test scores in quantitative data analysis to participate in the interview. All participants were informed that all the processes were conducted for academic purposes, and their personal information and answers were confidential.

#### Data Analysis

In data analysis, the scoring criteria were employed to mark the collected data from the English article use test. The researchers focused only on article uses, and other ungrammatical structures and misspelling words were not included. The individual scores from each participant group were categorized into three article types—indefinite article, definite article, and zero article. Later, these scores were analyzed to obtain mean score and standard deviation of each type of article. These statistical numbers were interpreted as the following criteria.

Table 1 Mean scores interpretation of *a/an*, *the*, and *zero article*

Mean Scores			Interpretation
A/an (17)	the (15)	Zero article (8)	
13.61 - 17.00	12.01 - 15.00	6.41 - 8.0	very high
10.21 - 13.60	9.01 - 12.00	4.81 - 6.40	high
6.81 - 10.20	6.01 - 9.00	3.21 - 4.80	moderate
3.41 - 6.80	3.01 - 6.00	1.61 - 3.20	low
0.00 - 3.40	0.00 - 3.00	0.00 - 1.60	very low

Accordingly, the received statistic number would illustrate the accuracy of English article use that each group made. Furthermore, the marked scores were also analyzed by using independent samples t-test with p-value at 0.05 in order to compare the competency of English article use between two groups. In addition, qualitative data from interviews were examined for further explanation of the possible reasons in quantitative data analysis.

### Findings

The present study explored to how the accuracy of English article use between English major and English minor students is different from each other. The researchers investigated the accuracy of English article use in 40 English major students and 43 minor students by using the English article use test with forty items in total including seventeen items of *a/an* test, fifteen items of *the* test, and eight items of *zero article* test. Consequently, the results received from the test were analyzed, and mean score and standard deviation were presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Mean Scores of the Accuracy of English Article Use in English Major and Minor Students

Article	English Major				English Minor			
	Mean	S.D.	%	INTPN.	Mean	S.D.	%	INTPN.
A/an	13.20	1.91	77.65	high	10.35	2.22	60.88	high
The	10.08	2.14	72.56	high	7.26	3.02	67.17	moderate
Zero article	6.73	1.28	84.06	very high	5.60	1.68	70.06	high

Table 2 illustrates that English major students used *a/an* accurately for 77.65 percent. The mean score indicates that the average score is 13 correct answers out of the total of 17 items (Mean = 13.20, S.D. = 1.91), and it could be interpreted that the accuracy of *a/an* article was at a “high” level. The accuracy of using *the* in English major students was 72.56 percent, and the average score is 10 correct answers out of the total of 17 items (Mean = 10.075, S.D. = 2.14). Therefore, it could be interpreted that the accuracy of *the* article in English major students was at a “high” level. In addition, English major students also made the accuracy of using “*zero article*” for 84.06 percent, and the average score is 7 correct answers out of the total of 8 items (Mean = 6.72, S.D. = 1.28), it could be interpreted that the proficiency of English article of *zero article* was at “very high” level. Meanwhile, Table 1 also showed that the accuracy of using *a/an* in English minor students was 60.876 percent by having the average score is 10 correct answers out of the total of 17 items (Mean = 10.35, S.D. = 2.22), it could be interpreted that the accuracy of using *a/an* was at “high”



level, the accuracy of using *the* was 67.17 percent by having the average score is 7 correct answers out of the total of 15 items (Mean = 7.26, S.D. = 3.02), it could be interpreted that the accuracy of using *the* was at “moderate” level, and the accuracy of using *zero article* is 70.06 percent by having the average score is 5 correct answers out of the total of 8 items (Mean = 5.60, S.D. = 1.68), it could be interpreted that the accuracy of using *zero article* was at “high” level.

To sum up, the most accurately used article in English major students was *zero article*, *a/an*, and *the* respectively due to their “very high” and “high” level of accuracy. Likewise, the most accurately used articles in English minor students were also *zero article*, *a/an*, and *the* correspondingly, and their accuracies were at “high” level.

In addition, the current study also aimed to compare the accuracy of English article use between English major and English minor students. Thus, the accuracy of English article use in both groups was compared by using t-test with p-value at .05. The researchers made a hypothesis that English major students used the articles more accurately than English minor students. The result of the comparison was presented in Table 3.

Table 3 A Comparison of the accuracy of English Article Use between English Major and Minor Students

Article	English Major		English Minor		t	p-value
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
A/an	13.20	1.91	10.35	2.22	-5.78	0.00
The	10.08	2.14	7.26	3.02	-4.94	0.00
Zero article	6.73	1.28	5.61	1.68	-3.43	0.00

Table 3 illustrates that the p-value of the accuracies of using *a/an*, *the*, and *zero article* in both groups of participants were all less than .05. Thus, it can be interpreted that the accuracy of all types of English article use in both groups were significantly different, and English major students use English articles more accurately than English minor students.

From the findings, it can be summarized that the most accurately used article in English major and minor students was *zero article*, *a/an*, and *the* respectively, and their accuracies were at “high” level in overall. Nonetheless, in the comparison, the accuracy of English article use in all types was significantly different, and English major students were more accurate on English article use than English minor students. Moreover, the interview findings will be combined with the discussion to corroborate the tests in the next part.

### Summary and Discussions

The present study explores the performance of English major and English minor students when the two groups deal with English article use. The result reveals that, in English major students, the accuracy of using “*zero article*” of English major students is at “very high” level (Means = 6.73, S.D. = 1.28), the accuracy of using *a/an* is at “high” level (Means = 13.20, S.D. = 1.91), and the accuracy of using *the* is at “high” level (Means = 10.08, S.D. = 2.14). Likewise, in English minor students, the accuracy of using *zero article* of English major students is at “high” level (Means = 5.61, S.D. = 1.68), the accuracy of using *a/an* is at “high” level (Means = 10.35, S.D. = 2.22), and the accuracy of using *the* is at “moderate” level (Means = 7.26, S.D. = 3.02). Surprisingly, the present study provided that the most accurately





used articles of both groups are “zero article”, “a/an”, and “the” respectively ( $0 > a/an > the$ ). However, these results differed from Lu’s (2001) which stated that the most correctly used articles in their participants were “the”, “a/an”, and “zero article” correspondingly ( $the > a/an > 0$ ). By the same token, the findings of the current study did not support Thomas’ (1989), Suniphan’s (2021), and Amhad and Khan’s (2019) which proposed that “the” is the most accurately used article. Moreover, it was not consistent with Sun’s (2016) which claimed that “zero article” is the most difficult article. However, the result from the present may be explained by the fact that participants might have knowledge on “zero article” use at some levels. A possible explanation for this could be that English learners whose native language has no equivalent article system used more “zero article” than other types (e.g., Master, 1988; Parrish, 1987; Lu, 2001). Moreover, “zero article” has obvious and fewer-detailed rules than other types of articles. However, this cannot truly define the accuracy of using “zero article” due to the participants’ answers in the interview. The participants were asked to respond and explain about article use, and it was found that some of them were able to explain the grammatical rules of “zero article” that is used with plural nouns and proper nouns, e.g., people, geographical name, etc. To illustrate, Interviewee 1 explained that “zero article is used with country names.”, and Interviewee 5 stated that “zero article is used with proper nouns, people, and disease names.” In contrast, Interviewee 2 and 6 provided similar answers that “I don’t understand how to use it.” In addition, when the interviewees were asked to complete the sentences by using articles, their answers were varied, and they could not provide the reason for their answers consistently and precisely. For instance,

“ \_\_\_\_\_ People know about the Great Wall of China.”

From this interview question, the correct answer was zero article because the term ‘people’ is a plural noun with non-specific referent. Most interviewees were able to respond correctly. However, their explanations were varied. Interviewee 2 stated that “I think it is “zero article”, but I don’t know which people are being referred to. I don’t want to specify it myself.”, and Interviewee 3 claimed that “I choose “zero article” because ‘People’ is a plural noun.” However, interviewees 4 and 5 gave a similar explanation in contrast to two previously mentioned interviewees that “I answer “zero article”. It should not have any article preceding people.” And “I think it is “zero article” because I have never seen any article preceding People before.” Otherwise, only interviewee 1 responded in a different way, “I think it is “the” because the term ‘people’ is a plural noun.” Similarly, another sample interview question also showed interesting information about the participants’ reasons in English article use.

“We use \_\_\_\_\_ when we talk about people or things in general, and with the names of the most places (e.g., continents, mountains, cities, lakes).”

The correct answer for this blank should be “zero article”. Surprisingly, the interviewees showed various answers as following:

Interviewee 1: “I think “the” because it talks about people.”

Interviewee 3: “I think it is “zero article”, but I don’t know what to use.”

Interviewee 4: “I would say “a” or “an”.”



Interviewee 7: *"It is "a", but I'm not sure."*

Interviewee 8: *"This blank should be "zero article"."*

Interviewee 9: *"The"*

According to two sample interview questions above, the accuracy of using zero articles is inconsistent with the English article use test. Besides, the mean scores of zero articles that were higher than other articles might be the results from the research instrument. Due to the grammatical rules, it was difficult to include more items and more various questions in the *zero article* part. Therefore, it was apparent to the participants to select the answers. Consequently, these findings indicated that the participants had fairly knowledge about *zero articles*, yet the accuracy is inconsistent.

Furthermore, *"a/an"* and *"the"* were less accurately used which supported Kadhim's (2016), Young's (1996), and Nopjirapong's (2011). A possible explanation of these findings might be due to the nonexistence of articles in the participants' native language. Moreover, the number of grammatical rules and exception of *"a/an"* and *"the"* use could lead to confusion when compared to *"zero articles"*. In addition, the interview on article use demonstrated that most of the participants were confused and unconfident in selecting the articles due to the noun countability, specificity, and context. As Interviewee 1 claimed that *"Article is difficult for me because I don't know whether it is countable or not."* Similarly, Interviewee 10 stated that *"For me, noun countability causes difficulty."* Accordingly, most of the participants also said that they chose the articles based on their familiarity and experience as many of them stated that *"It sounds familiar and less awkward."* Moreover, it is interesting to note that the participants had some patterns in choosing articles to use. The interviewee revealed that *"I think of the grammar first. If I know how to use it, I will answer immediately. However, if not, I will guess the answer."* Thus, it could be interpreted that the participants have knowledge about *"a/an"* and *"the"* use at some level, yet their accuracies were uncertain because they were unable to give the explanation for their answers precisely as shown above.

Simultaneously, the present study aimed to compare the accuracy of English article use between English major and English minor students. Accordingly, the researchers compared the accuracy of English article use between both groups. Contrary to the expectations, this study illustrated that their accuracy of all English article types were significantly different. In addition, the findings accepted the hypothesis that English major students use all types of articles more accurately than English minor students. Accordingly, this rather contradictory result may be interpreted that English major students were more accurate in all types of English articles than English minor students. A possible explanation for this might be that although both groups have similar background knowledge in English since they had studied English at least 12 years in school, their enrolled curriculum in university were slightly different in English language intensity. English major students spent more English lesson hours than English minor students whose major language courses were other languages. This might cause English major students to be more accurate in English article use than English minor students in all types.

The current study adds substantially to our understanding of English article use in English minor students and the accuracy of English article use between English major and minor students. In addition, it has gone some way towards enhancing our understanding of the effect of being English major and minor students on the accuracy of



English article use. The present study also illustrates the approach the participants used in choosing the article which is checking their knowledge, checking their experience, and equipping their familiarity respectively. Moreover, this study has a remarkable research instrument which is able to collect data from all dimensions comprehensively and precisely. In contrast, there is a point that should be enhanced which is the thorough investigation in each type of English article.

### Recommendations

From the current study, the researchers had studied on the participants that had similar backgrounds—enrolling English courses in university, and the scope of this study was considerably board which it examined all types of articles in both noun classification and noun environment. The researchers also shallowly studied on the accuracy without investigating each article thoroughly and causes of English article problems. Therefore, the researchers have several suggestions for further studies as follows.

1. Conduct the study with the participants that are significantly different, e.g., students from different faculties or majors and students with different English Proficiency.
2. Specify on one topic—noun classification or environment—to reduce confusion and receive more accurate data.
3. Study elaborately about problems of articles use and causes of those problems more and
4. Study and analyze the uses of each article in detail.

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Appendix A

แบบทดสอบการใช้ Article ในภาษาอังกฤษของผู้เรียนชาวไทยในสาขาวิชาเอกและวิชาโทภาษาอังกฤษ

แบบทดสอบนี้ใช้เพื่อเก็บข้อมูลที่ใช้ในการวิจัยเรื่องการเปรียบเทียบความแม่นยำในการใช้ Article ในภาษาอังกฤษของผู้เรียนชาวไทยในสาขาวิชาเอกและวิชาโทภาษาอังกฤษ มหาวิทยาลัยนเรศวร มีจุดประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาความแม่นยำในการใช้ article ในภาษาอังกฤษของผู้เรียนชาวไทยในสาขาวิชาเอกและวิชาโทภาษาอังกฤษ และเปรียบเทียบความแม่นยำในการใช้ระหว่างทั้งสองกลุ่ม

ตอนที่ 1 ข้อมูลและสถานภาพของผู้ทำแบบทดสอบ

รหัสนิสิต: \_\_\_\_\_ ชั้นปี: \_\_\_\_\_ เป็นนิสิต: \_\_\_\_\_ สาขาวิชาเอกภาษาอังกฤษ \_\_\_\_\_ สาขาวิชาโทภาษาอังกฤษ \_\_\_\_\_  
 หากถ้าเป็นนิสิตสาขาวิชาโทภาษาอังกฤษ โปรดระบุสาขาวิชาเอก: \_\_\_\_\_  
 ช่องทางการติดต่อ (เลือกเพียง 1 คำตอบ)      โทรศัพท์      อีเมลล์      Line      Facebook  
 โปรดระบุ: \_\_\_\_\_

ตอนที่ 2 แบบทดสอบแบบเติมคำ (Cloze test)

คำชี้แจง: แบบทดสอบนี้ประกอบด้วยช่องว่างทั้งหมด 28 ช่อง ให้เลือกเติม a, an, the, 0 (no articles) ลงในช่องว่างให้ถูกต้อง  
 ตัวอย่าง:              This is \_\_\_\_ example                      This *is* an example.

Hello Mom and Dad,

I'm having such a wonderful time here in (1) \_\_\_ Thailand. Early this morning I saw (2) \_\_\_a\_\_\_ cat on the floor of my hotel room. (3) \_\_\_The\_\_\_ cat was cute and white and made (4) \_\_\_a\_\_\_ funny noise. After eating breakfast, I went to (5) \_\_\_the\_\_\_ market to buy (6) \_\_\_a\_\_\_ towel and (7) \_\_\_an\_\_\_ MP3 player, but I had to bring (8) \_\_\_the\_\_\_ MP3 player back to the shop because it didn't work properly. I remember when dad bought (9) \_\_\_a\_\_\_ radio on our last vacation in the south of India, but when he turned it on one of (10) \_\_\_the\_\_\_ speakers was broken. Everyone says (11) \_\_\_the\_\_\_ weather here is so hot and humid, but I'm really enjoying my time away from (12) \_\_\_the\_\_\_ cold. My friend Sara, who you met last Christmas, is having (13) \_\_\_a\_\_\_ great time here too. She has been playing (14) \_\_\_-\_\_\_ basketball almost every morning at Naresuan University. She sometimes goes to (15) \_\_\_the\_\_\_ university twice (16) \_\_\_a\_\_\_ day. Last night we were invited to have dinner with the staff from the university. When (17) \_\_\_a\_\_\_ woman appeared, we were surprised to learn that she was the President. We wanted to try some of the most popular Thai dishes, so we ate (18) \_\_\_-\_\_\_ Pad Kra Prao and (19) \_\_\_-\_\_\_ Tom Yum Goong. Everyone gave us a pat on (20) \_\_\_the\_\_\_ back for finishing such (21) \_\_\_a\_\_\_ hot and spicy dish. Well, we're going to (22) \_\_\_the\_\_\_ movies in (23) \_\_\_an\_\_\_ hour to see (24) \_\_\_a\_\_\_ horror movie. I can't remember (25) \_\_\_the\_\_\_ name of (26) \_\_\_the\_\_\_ movie but it's about (27) \_\_\_a\_\_\_ man with (28) \_\_\_an\_\_\_ umbrella who hurts vampires across the villages of medieval Europe.



### ตอนที่ 3 แบบทดสอบการแปล (Translation Test)

คำชี้แจง: แบบทดสอบนี้ประกอบด้วยคำถามเกี่ยวกับการใช้ Article จำนวนทั้งหมด 12 ข้อ ให้ผู้ทำแบบทดสอบแปลประโยคภาษาไทยในแต่ละข้อ เป็น**ประโยคที่สมบูรณ์** (Complete Sentence) ในภาษาอังกฤษ โดยใช้ article

ตัวอย่างเช่น:                   นี่คือตัวอย่าง                   →           This is *an* example.

1. พวกเขาได้รับเงิน 6 ดอลลาร์ต่อชั่วโมง  
We earn 6 dollars *an* hour.
2. ฉันเกิดในประเทศไทย  
I was born in Thailand.
3. ฉันคิดว่าคุณควรโทรหาตำรวจ  
I think you should call *the* police.
4. ฉันไม่ชอบปลา  
I don't like fish.
5. หล่อนมีแฟน  
She has *a* boyfriend.
6. เฟรดวางหนังสือไว้บนโต๊ะ เขากลับบ้านเพื่อไปเอาหนังสือ  
Fred left *a* book on his desk. He returned home to get *the* book.
7. พ่อของหล่อนเสียชีวิตด้วยโควิด  
Her father died of Covid.
8. ฉันได้ซื้อรถมาแล้ว  
I have bought *the* car.
9. พวกเราอาศัยอยู่ในบ้านเก่า  
We live in *an* old house.
- 10.กล้วยสีเหลือง (กล้วยมีหลายอัน)  
Bananas are yellow.
11. ฉันจะไม่ลืมครั้งแรกที่ฉันได้เจอคุณเลย  
I will never forget *the* first time I met you.
12. ฉันจะไปรับคุณที่สนามบิน  
I will pick you up at *the* airport.



## Appendix B คำถามสัมภาษณ์

1. ตอนทำมีหลักการยังไง ใช้เซ็นส์ หรือว่า ใช้หลักแกรมมาร์
2. a ใช้ตอนไหน, the ใช้กับอะไร, zero ใช้กับอะไร
3. อันที่รู้พวกนี้เนี่ย คิดว่ามาจากการเรียน หรือ มาจากการฝึกของเราเอง
4. ลองให้คะแนนการใช้ article คิดว่าอยู่ในระดับไหน (เต็ม 10 ให้เท่าไร)
5. คิดว่า article สำคัญต่อการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษไหม?
6. คิดว่า article เป็นปัญหาไหม แล้วปัญหาที่เจอตอนใช้ + สาเหตุที่ทำให้รู้สึกว่ายาก คืออะไร?
7. จงเลือกใช้ article ให้เหมาะสม
  1. In 1978 the Chinese started planting a wall of trees.
  2. It's the largest hot desert in the world.
  3. - Gobi Desert is getting larger.
  4. Countries in - African plan to build a wall.
  5. - People know about the Great Wall of China.
  6. After eating breakfast, I went to the market to buy a towel and an MP3 player.
  7. I remember when dad bought a radio on our last vacation in the south of India.
8. จงเลือกตอบ article ให้สัมพันธ์กับคำอธิบาย
  1. We normally use a when we talk about something which isn't specific or it's the first time we mention something. When we talk about something specific or talk about it again, we use the.
  2. We also use the when something is unique (there is only one), with superlatives or with the names of some places (e.g. oceans, deserts, mountain ranges).
  3. We use zero article when we talk about people or things in general, and with the names of the most places (e.g. continents, countains, cities, lakes).