INVESTIGATING KURDISH EFL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' AWARENESS AND PRODUCTION IN USING ENGLISH GENERIC REFERENCE IN WRITING

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Abstract

This article aims to discover: (1) if Kurdish EFL students are aware of English generic referential items (2) whether Kurdish EFL students are able to differentiate between English generic and specific references, (3) whether Kurdish EFL students comprehend the correct semantic interpretations of English generic reference (4) and to discover possible students' errors in using English generic reference in writing and attribute the errors to their sources. The study draws on the assumption that Kurdish EFL students' overuse of generic reference in writing could be a contributing factor in several error sources. Therefore, a quantitative test served eighty Kurdish EFLs as the means of data collection at four distinct colleges in the Kurdistan Region for the academic year 2021–2022. The statistical analysis of the data revealed that, about half of the Kurdish EFL test takers misapplied generic reference in their writings in the areas of syntax, semantics and discourse. The reasons could be negative interlingual and intralingual transfers, lack of students' grammatical proficiency and the learning context.

Key words: generic reference, specific reference, generic forms, generic meanings.

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction and the Statement of the Problem

Generic reference is a linguistic universal phenomenon that exists in all human languages. Regarding this, Behrens (2005, 287), for example, emphasizes the variations in generic noun phrases across languages. The following is an illustration of a French sentence that has been translated into eight different languages with the Kurdish language having been added by the researcher.

1. <u>A boa constrictor is a very dangerous creature, and an elephant is very cumbersome</u>.

- GERMAN: *Eine Riesenschlange ist sehr gefährlich, und ein Elefant braucht viel Platz.*
- FRENCH: *Un boa c'est trés dangereux, et un éléphant c'est trés encombrant.*
- HUNGARIAN: *Áz óriáiskígyó nagyon veszélyes, az elefánt roppant terjedelmes.*
- GREEK: *Ο βόας είναι τρομερά επικίνδυνος κι ο ελέφαντας αρκετά ενοχλητικός.*
- ARABIC: *Al-buwwaa'u khatirun giddan, w-al-fiilu haa'ilu l-hagmi.*
- TAGALOG: *Lubhang mapanganib ang sawa at napakalaki naman ang elepante.*
- FINNISH: *Boat ovat hyvin vaarallisia, ja elefantti vie paljon tilaa.*
- VIETNEMESE: *Một con trăn thật là nguy hiểm vá một con voi thì thật là lịch kịeh rầy rà.*
- KURDISH: Mary zebelah u gewre bûnewerêky metersy dare ûe fîl zor gewre u qûrse. (و زۆر گەورە و فیل وە مەترسیدارە درێژ بونەوەرێکی و زەبەلاح ماری (قورسه

In the above examples, the indefinite article has been used with singular nouns in French, English and German language to express genericity. Then, the definite singular has been used in Hungarian, Greek, and Arabic. But Tagalog, Finnish, Vietnamese and Kurdish did not use articles in making generalizations rather than bare singular nouns have been employed. As a result, significant differences were found in the degree of generic markedness. Thus, genericity in language is globally practiced and it requires different syntactic structures to construct a generalized statement.

It is obvious that, genericity is conveyed through the usage of bare singular nouns in the Kurdish language whereas in the English language, definite singular count nouns, indefinite singular count nouns, definite plural nouns, bare plural count nouns and bare mass nouns can be delivered generically (Dahl, 1975; Carlson, 1977; Quirk et al., 1985; Krifka et al., 1995). Hence, this distinction between the generic references made in the English and Kurdish languages might create an evident gap in the minds of Kurdish EFL students. Therefore, overgeneralizing the English grammar rules in making generic reference could possibly take place. Thus, the researcher found it critical to investigate potential issues that Kurdish EFL students might run into when using generalizations from the most significant to the least significant and associate them to their sources.

1.2 Aims of the Study
This study aims to:
1. Find out Kurdish EFL students' awareness of various types of English generic reference in writing,
2. Find whether Kurdish EFL students are able to differentiate between English generic and specific references in written works,

3. Determine whether Kurdish EFL students comprehend the correct semantic interpretations of English generic reference in writing.

4. Discover possible students' errors in using English generic reference in writing and attribute the errors to their sources.

1.3 Research Questions

1. Do Kurdish EFL learners recognize different English generic referential items?

2. Can Kurdish EFL students distinguish between English generic and specific references in writing?

3. Is it difficult for Kurdish EFL students to understand the meaning of English generic reference in written works?

4. What are some possible frequent errors that Kurdish EFL students could make while employing generic reference in writing?

1.4 Hypothesis of the Study

1. Kurdish EFL students might be presented with problems in recognizing different types of English generic reference,

2. Kurdish EFL students might struggle to differentiate between English generic and specific references in written works,

3. Kurdish EFL students might find it challenging to comprehend the meaning of English generic reference in written works,

4. Kurdish EFL students are predicted to make errors when employing English generic reference in writing.

1.5 Methodology of the Study

Regarding the design of the theoretical background of the study, the researcher followed an eclectic approach that employed different models for each type of generic reference. Concerning the data collection, the study is a quantitative method that used a quantitative

test to collect data from 80 Kurdish EFL students randomly at three distinct universities in the Kurdistan Region. The question designs and the data analysis were all completed by the researcher.

1.6 Limitations of the Study

The current study is limited to a generic reference with its realizations in writing, including generic articles (a, the, zero), generic NPs, generic adjectives, generic clauses, generic pronouns, generic quantifiers, generic non-finite verbs and generic anaphors. Moreover, a proportionate number of third-year students participated in the study. They were chosen from private and public universities in the Kurdistan Region. Only English department students will be used as a sample in the study for the academic year 2021-2022. Therefore, one should not generalize the conclusions to all EFL learners in the Region.

1.7 Value of the Study

1. This study helps readers to understand the concept of English generic reference, its types and classifications based on various perspectives,
2. The identification of errors made by Kurdish EFL students has a significant value for EFL instructors since it provides them with the types of errors and sources of their errors,
3. This study is significant for EFL syllabus designers and English pedagogical textbook writers to enhance EFL students'academic writing performance, particularly Kurdish EFL students.

1.8 Review of Previous Studies on Generic Reference

Generic reference has been the topic of many studies in different contexts. Hence, INVESTIGATING KURDISH EFL UNIVERSITY

STUDENTS' AWARENESS AND PRODUCTION IN USING ENGLISH GENERIC REFERENCE has not been settled yet in the Kurdistan Region. The outstanding contributors to the study of generic reference are (e.g. Wijaya, 2012; AL-Malki et al., 2014; Tomás, 2016). Wijaya's study is titled *Teaching English Generic Nouns: The Exploration of The Generic Idea in English and Indonesian and The Applications of Explicit Instruction in Classroom.* Since the Indonesian language lacks an article system, the study's objective is to examine how the generic notion is conveyed in the English and Indonesian languages. AL-Malki et al. (2014) on the other hand, published a paper entitled *Generic Reference in English, Arabic and Malay: A Cross Linguistic Typology and Comparison.* The study's objective is to investigate the acquisition and interpretation of generic references by speakers of English, Arabic and Malay languages. Tomás (2016) conducted the present thesis under the name of *Generic Reference: A Comparison between English and Catalan Languages.* The aim is to compare the similarities and differences between English and Catalan languages when dealing with generic reference through the use of articles.

The aforementioned theses are completely different from the current paper in a way that they used a comparative analysis to compare their languages to the English language in making generic references. Moreover, they merely investigated one way, namely, articles. Whereas, the present study investigated eight different generic referential items to create English generic references, including noun phrases, pronouns, articles, quantifiers, nominalized adjectives, non-finite clauses, conditional clauses and generic anaphora. Thus, it leads to different goals, methodologies, data collection, analysis, and outcomes.
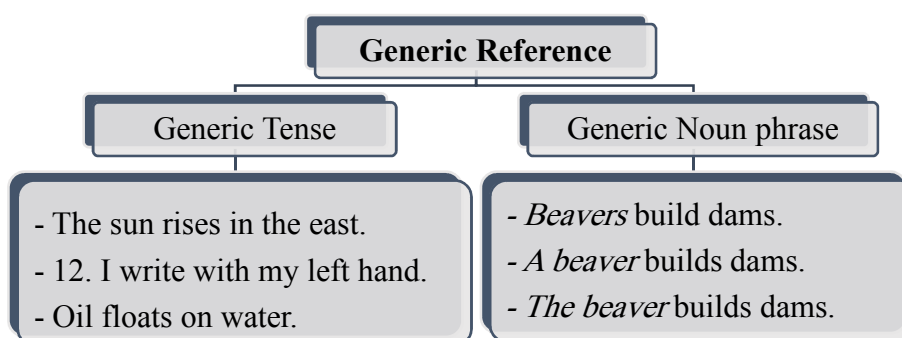
2   Theoretical Background

2.1 Generic Reference in the English Language

Generic reference is used to refer to all individuals within a group without mentioning any particular individuals. Quirk et al. (1985) used the term *generic reference* to refer to a collection of entities rather than a single person or thing. Correspondingly, a reference is generic when a noun phrase refers to a whole class rather than to an individual or more instances of the class (Biber et al., 2002). According to Downing and Locke (2006, 421), generic reference means "to refer to a whole class of entities, usually with regard to their typical characteristics or habitual activities." Also, Cowan (2008) defines generic reference as a noun that commonly refers to members of a species or class, such as *trees*, *dogs* and *teachers*.

2.1.1 Syntactic Structures and Semantic Interpretations of English Generic Reference

Dahl (1975) claimed that, a reference is generic in two closely related ways; they are generic tense and generic nouns. To illustrate, see the table below provided by the researcher.

Table 1. Dahl's Classification of a Generic Reference

Generic Reference	
Generic Tense	Generic Noun phrase
- The sun rises in the east. - 12. I write with my left hand. - Oil floats on water.	- *Beavers* build dams. - *A beaver* builds dams. - *The beaver* builds dams.

Regarding the generic tenses, the author referred to the actual cases that could be valid in all of the grammar tenses as long as it is habitual, such as the examples listed under the generic tense's column. On the other hand, the generic noun phrases are referred to the subjects that had been italicized and listed under the generic noun phrase's column.

According to Krifka et al. (1995), the term "genericity" has been used to describe two distinct phenomena, namely, *reference to kinds* and *characterizations* (see diagram 1). The first one focuses on the features of NP in the subject position. The second describes the regularity of events and circumstances that the subject NP involves. Carlson (1989, 167) gives some definitions of generic sentences. In one of his definitions, he affirms that, "a generic sentence expresses regularity over events or situations." Therefore, it is predicated on the entire sentence, not just on the NP. The claim was also approved by Michaelis (2006, 232). He called the former "gnomic sentence" and the latter "habitual sentence," then grouped both types under the generic sentences.

Diagram 1. The Generic Sentence by Krifka et al., 1995

Generic Sentence

Kind Referring NP   **Characterization**

In the first type, *kind referring NP*, the generic reference is conveyed by referring to the subject. Only *DS, BP* and mass NPs are selected as subjects because they can hold a collective reading of a kind NP while *IS*, an individual, cannot (Lyons, 1977, 196; Cohen, 1999, 43-4; Vogel & McGillion, 2002, 163). There are some specific examples of kind predicates, such as *die out or be extinct, be*

widespread, be common, and invent. In this case, the subject of such predicates denotes a kind with the aid of using *BP* or *DS* because they relate to an entire class of NP. Thus, the *IS* cannot be employed since an individual cannot be extinct or widespread but a class can, for instance:

1. The dinosaur is extinct.
2. Dinosaurs are extinct.
3. *A dinosaur is extinct.

In the second type, *characterizing sentences* are the regularity of events and actions in which the subject NP is involved, for example:

4. *A fish* likes water.

Semantically, any fish chosen at random from the group enjoys being in water. Thus, the indefinite article in a generic sense is applicable when the whole generic sentence expresses regularities and particular facts about one individual of a group that can be applied to the whole group.

2.1.2 The Generic Referential Items

Generic reference is highly important in writing since the ideas are introduced, or conveyed broadly to be tied and maintained thoroughly toward the specific point in the writing. There are various generic referential items to create generalized sentences in the English language, including nouns, pronouns, articles, nominalized adjectives, quantifiers, non-finite verbs, generic anaphors and conditional clauses (Quirk et al., 1982, 1985; Rooth, 1985; Eastwood, 1994; Krifka et al., 1995; Carlson and Pelletier, 1995; Greenbaum 1996; Biber et al, 2002; Dancygier and Sweetser, 2005; Downing and Locke, 2006; Radden and Dirven 2007; Cowan, 2008; Aarts, 2011; Murphy 2012). Each has different syntactic patterns and semantic interpretations. Therefore, it is important to identify and make appropriate use of them in writing.

Hence, the researcher adopted an eclectic approach to discuss each type of generic reference. To illustrate, see the table below provided by the researcher herself.

Table 2. The English Generic Referential Items
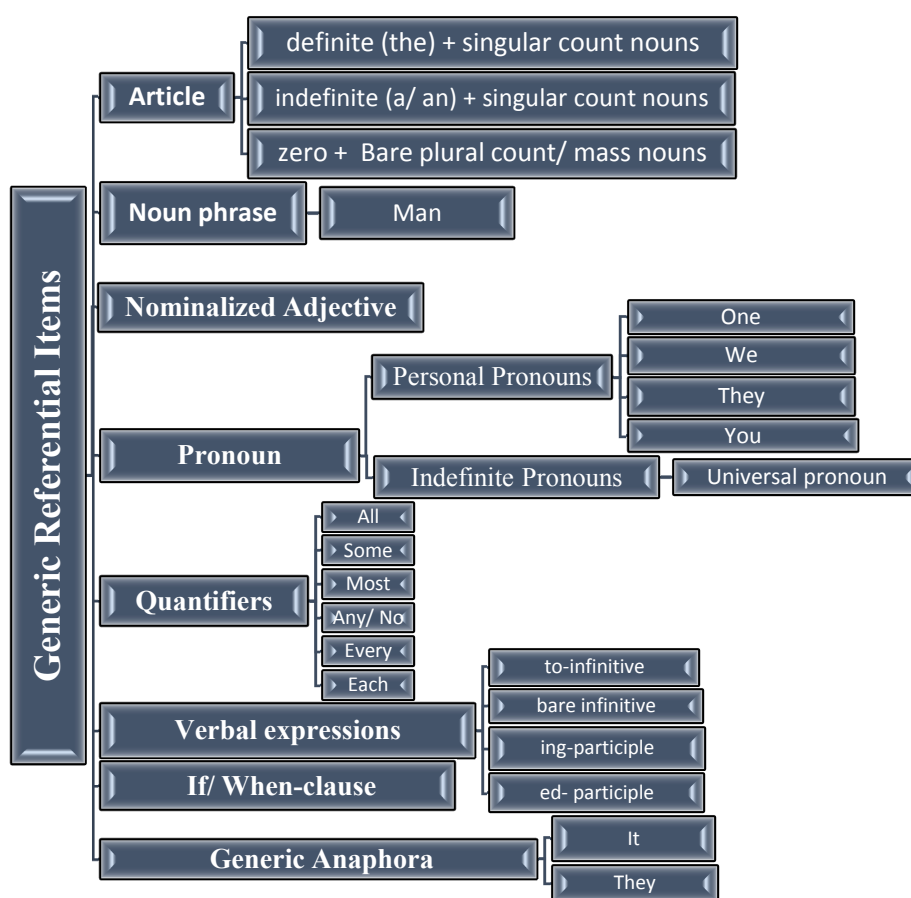
2.1.2.1 Articles as Generic Reference

Eastwood (1994) states that, utilizing English articles for making generic reference structures are most common and placed in the front. Biber et al. (2002) claim that, generic references are created in one of three ways: *indefinite articles, definite articles and zero articles*.

- The indefinite article (A/an) is used generically with singular countable nouns and designates any person or thing of the class.
- The zero article is used generically with plural and uncountable nouns and refers to the entire class.
- The definite article (the) is used generically only with singular countable nouns and refers to a class.

According to Downing and Locke (2006), generic reference can be expressed through articles in four different syntactic structures as in the following:

- <u>The + singular count noun</u>: They say *the elephant* never forgets.
- <u>A(n) + singular count noun</u>: They say *an elephant* never forgets.
- <u>Zero + plural count noun</u>: They say *elephants* never forget.
- <u>Zero + mass noun</u>: They say *exercise* keeps you healthy.

2.1.2.2 Man as Generic Reference

According to Krifka et al. (1995), "*man"* is an English NP that can be interpreted as a kind-referring NP when it is in the sense of the 'human race'. Also, Quirk et al. (1985) added that, the noun 'man' is used without being preceded by any article when it has the meaning of the 'human race' rather than 'a male human being', for example:

1   *Man* has lived on the earth for ages.
2   This book is an attempt to trace the history of *man/ mankind*.

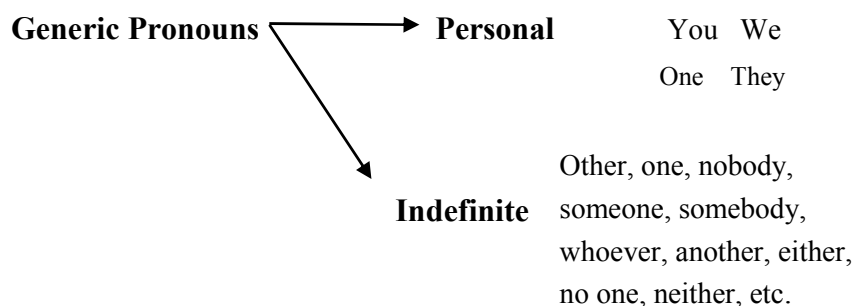### 2.1.2.3 Nominalized Adjective as Generic Reference

In this kind of generic reference, the phrase's head is an adjective rather than a noun, and it is preceded by the definite article "the," which is always used to refer to a class yet never to a single entity. They are constructed only from those adjectives that show characteristics and stable properties of human beings, like *the masses, the clergy, the saints, the rich, the poor, the blind, and the unemployed*

(Quirk et al. 1982; Greenbaum 1996; Radden and Dirven 2007). For example:

1. *The poor* often have a lower life expectancy than *the rich.*
2. *The old* must be respected.

2.1.2.4 Pronouns as Generic Reference

In the English language, there are different types of pronouns, such as: personal, reflexive, relative, demonstrative, and indefinite, but the ones that are used in a generic sense are: personal pronouns and indefinite pronouns (Quirk *et al.*, 1985; Eastwood, 1994; Greenbaum, 1996).

Generic Pronouns ⟶ **Personal**   You   We
                         One   They

Indefinite   Other, one, nobody, someone, somebody, whoever, another, either, no one, neither, etc.

1. ***You:*** *You can wear anything these days.*
2. ***One:*** *Ice-cream is full of calories. It makes one hotter, not cooler.*
3. ***We:*** *We use language to communicate.*
4. ***They:*** *They say the earth is getting warmer.*

2.1.2.5 Quantifiers as Generic Reference

Murphy (2012) recommended using the following quantifiers to construct specific and generic sentences.

Table 3. Quantifiers as Generic and Specific Reference

Specific Reference	Generic Reference
- All the students of this class have the same problem.	- All students have the same problem.
- I don't want any of this money.	- I don't want any money.
- Most of the children at this school like playing.	- Most children like playing.
- Some of these books are very old.	- Some books are very old.

2.1.2.6 Non-finite Verbs as Generic Reference

According to Krifka et al. (1995), verb-based arguments can be used in statements to support the notion of genericity. When applied generally, these expressions have the subject position as their syntactic position. They cover three different kinds of these expressions:

- Gerundives / V.ing + NP ~ Smoking cigarettes is a bad habit.
- Infinitives / to + base verb + NP ~ To solve the crossword is difficult.
- Nominalizations / V.ing + of + NP ~ Smoking of cigarettes is a bad habit.

2.1.2.7 Conditional Clauses as Generic Reference

Quirk et al. (1985) and Dancygier and Sweetser (2005) lay claim to conditionals- *when-clauses/ if-clauses* to express the regularity of actions that express genericness. Carlson and Pelletier (1995, as cited in Rooth, 1985) believed that a sentence with an indefinite description (I-genericity) in a subject position is equivalent to an initial *when-clause/ If-clause*, for instance:

1. *A green-eyed dog* is usually intelligent.
2. When a dog is green-eyed, it is usually intelligent.

2.1.2.8 The Generic Anaphora as Kind-referring NP

Generic anaphora plays no less important in making generalizations. Carlson and Pelletier (1995) assert that a generic anaphora should be analyzed as referring back to a kind within the text, for example:

1. John killed a spider because *they* are ugly.
2. A lion is a ferocious beast, *it* has huge claws.

2.3 Generic Reference in Writing

Lee (1996), advanced the hypothesis that generic sentences are topic sentences in which a kind-of referring noun phrase is constructed as the topic. Additionally, Bailey (2015) finds it convenient to claim that, generalisations in writing are often used to introduce a topic broadly. The items that are used for making generalizations are powerful statements because they are simple and easy to understand. Nevertheless, they must be used with the provision of care to avoid being erroneous or oversimplified. To crystalize, the following topic sentences are ample examples of generalizations in writing:

1. Cats are more intelligent than dogs.
2. Earthquakes are difficult to predict.
3. There is a link between poverty and disease.
4. Women work harder than men.
5. Travel by air is faster than train travel.

It is important to mention that one cannot generalize the idea spontaneously if it is not supported by evidence or research. Eventually, generalization is essential to the early part of any academic piece of writing because it contains the most general statement of the entire writing, allowing the supporting sentences in the following part to be developed in-depth based on the generalized statements of the topic sentence.

3   Methodology

3.1 The Study's tool and Sample Selection

The study adopted a quantitative approach. A quantitative test was employed to collect data from the selected samples. Allibang (2016) defined "sample" as a carefully chosen subset of individuals from a statistical population to accurately portray the traits of the entire population. Dawson (2002) affirms that, when people are alike in some relevant respects, they are going to be randomly selected. Richards et al. (1992), the larger the sample size, the more representative of the population and decreases sampling errors. Therefore, a random selection of 80 Kurdish EFL students at the third levels in the universities of the Kurdistan Region took place for the academic year 2022-2021 (see table 4).

The researcher used a diagnostic type of test because it is primarily used to diagnose students' main difficulties in a particular aspect of language. As claimed by (Brown, 2015, p.500), "such tests offer a checklist of features for the teacher to use in pinpointing difficulties." As a result, the researcher did not instruct the students—just tested them. It is important to mention that, the researcher did not encounter any issues regarding ethical considerations.

Table 4. The Sample Selection

The Selected Universities	Class	N. of Students
Sulaimani University- College of Basic Education	Public	20
Sulaimani University- College of Languages	Public	20
Salahadin University- College of Basic Education- Erbil.	Public	20
Cihan University- College of Languages- Sulaimani.	Private	20

The test consisted of 22 items categorized into four questions; two of them were recognition questions, and they are close ended. While the other two are production questions, and they are open-ended. Heaton (1988) stated that a good type of test is the combination of "recognition-type items" and "production-type items". In the light of this, the test questions had been designed (see appendix 2).

3.1 Validity of the Test

Allen and Davies (1977) suggested that, valid test is a test that actually measures what it is supposed to measure. Cohen (2001), added two main distinct categories of a valid test, namely, face validity and content validity. To prove the face validity of the study's test items, the jury members' feedback was incorporated into the final version of the test (see appendix 1 & 3).

3.2 Reliability of the Test

Another major characteristic of a good test is reliability that refers to the consistency of a test measurement, i.e., the test should provide the same, or similar results on two different occasions for the same student (Richards et al., 1992; Bachman and Palmer, 1996; Brown, 2000; Mackey and Gass, 2005). Kiszely (2006) contributed that, reliability has two dimensions: firstly, the consistency of the students' test results. Secondly, it is about the examiners' work. Sattler (2001) and Asaad (2004) mentioned several factors that affect test reliability, such as:

5. The Length of the Test: basically, the longer the test is, the larger a sample of the behaviour will be examined and is less influenced by random factors, including predicting or guessing.

6.   Moderate Item Difficulty: instead of having entirely difficult or easy items, the test developer should spread the scores over a quarter range, i.e., if most of the students obtain the majority of the test items correct/ incorrect, the reliability is low.

7.   Objectivity: when evaluating the test, socio-political beliefs must be set aside, i.e., objectively scored tests rather than subjectively scored tests show a higher reliability of a test.

8.   Heterogeneity of the Students' Group: when the test-takers represent a range of different genders, intellectual levels, abilities and skills, reliability is obtained.

3.3 Pilot Test Administration

Mousavi (1999, p.284) uses various forms for pilot testing, such as "pre-test", "trial", and "try-out." Douglas (2000) further reported that the finest way to understand how well a test is designed is by giving the draft of a test to a known population. The pilot test was therefore administered to 24 pupils set into two groups on two different occasions in the English Department's third stage of the College of Basic Education at the University of Sulaimani. First, it was employed with a group of 12 stuedents on April 5, 2022. Second, on April 14, 2022 the students took the same test (see table 5)

Table 5. The Pilot Test Scores

Group A

Group B

Students No.	Score of Q1. (10%)	Score of Q2. (14%)	Score of Q3. (10%)	Score of Q4. (7%)	Score of Q5. (9%)	Total Score (50%)	Status
11	8	8	8	7	4	35	passed
9	8	8	8	3	6	33	passed
7	6	6	8	7	6	33	passed
6	4	10	9	6	4	33	passed
3	6	6	9	6	6	33	passed
4	8	8	7	7	2	32	passed
8	8	8	4	4	8	32	passed
5	4	8	10	5	4	31	passed
10	8	6	8	6	3	31	passed
6	8	8	9	4	1	30	passed
9	8	8	8	5	1	30	passed
3	6	12	6	4	2	30	passed
1	8	8	4	6	3	29	passed
5	6	10	8	4	1	29	passed
7	8	4	8	4	5	29	passed
4	2	8	6	8	0	24	failed
10	8	8	4	4	0	24	failed
1	0	8	4	5	6	23	failed
2	6	6	4	6	1	23	failed
12	2	6	6	5	3	22	failed
8	4	6	8	2	2	22	failed
12	4	4	6	5	2	21	failed
2	6	0	8	5	2	21	failed
11	8	0	6	4	2	20	failed

As it is indicated from the above table, 15 students passed and 9 of them failed in the test. It is

important to mention that, the last question of the test (Q5), which is an essay writing question has been ticked and graded by the researcher and two other experts in the field of ELT based on a well-fixed set of criteria designed by the researcher herself (see appendix 4) for the purpose of reliability. The final grade assigned for question five was computed as:

The researcher = T1
The 2nd marker = T2
The 3rd marker = T3
T1+ T2+ T3 = X
X/3 = x (final grade)

Table 6. The Essay Writing Score of Q/5.

No. students	T1 (9)	T2 (9)	T3 (9)	Total 27/3= 9	Status
8	7	8	8	8	Pass
1	6	5	6	6	Pass
3	5	6	7	6	Pass
9	6	6	5	6	Pass
19	6	5	7	6	Pass
7	6	5	5	5	Pass
5	4	3	5	4	Fail
6	4	3	4	4	Fail
11	5	4	4	4	Fail
10	3	3	3	3	Fail
13	4	2	3	3	Fail
24	3	2	4	3	Fail

2	2	3	1	2	Fail
12	2	2	1	2	Fail
15	1	2	2	2	Fail
16	3	2	2	2	Fail
20	1	2	2	2	Fail
23	1	2	2	2	Fail
14	1	1	1	1	Fail
17	1	1	2	1	Fail
18	1	1	1	1	Fail
21	1	1	1	1	Fail
4	0	0	0	0	Fail
22	0	0	0	0	Fail

3.3.1 Reliability of the Pilot Test

After grading the items, the statistical procedures took place to determine the reliability of the test. The researcher used a test-retest method with the aid of 'Levene's Test' which is a type of SPSS independent sample T-test that is employed to determine whether the variances of two samples, or groups are approximately equal or homogeneous (Leven's test, 2018). Loewen and Plonsky (2015, 99) defined Levene's Tests as "a test used to assess the assumption of homogeneity of variance." For example:

o   Levene's Test significance will be interpreted at:

o $P < 0.05$ (is less than the hypothesis number)

o   Leven's test non-significance will be determined at:

o $P > 0.05$ (is greater than the hypothesis number- null hypothesis)

Table 7. The Mean and the P. Value of the Pilot Test Sample

Mean of Group A	Mean of Group B	P. Value
29.50	28.50	0.87

The P. value of the students' responses from the both groups in the pilot test is higher than 0.05. As a result, identical variances are presumed, and the test is reliable.

3.4 Administration of the Final Test

The final test was created in light of the results of the pilot test. There were 22 items in it (see appendix 3). The test was scheduled for April 18, April 19, and April 25, 2022. The test papers were then scored by the researcher, who also calculated the percentage of errors for each item.

3.4.1 The Reliability of the Final Test

To measure the reliability of the final test of the present study, a statistical package called Cronbach's alpha was applied which is a convenient test used to estimate the reliability or internal consistency of a composite score (Nguyen, 2010). The obtained test score by eighty Kurdish EFL students in twenty-two items is 0.762 which is undoubtedly reliable (see table 8).

Table 8. The Reliability of the Final Test

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	**Number of Items**	**Valid Cases**
0.762	22	80

3.5 Scoring Scheme of the Study's Test

The aim of this test is to investigate the difficulties that Kurdish EFL students might face in using generic references in writings. The whole test score is out of 100 points. It has four questions, including 22 items. The first question is a multiple-choice type of test that is used to assess the students' ability to recognize the types of generic referential items, so each item is scored either correct or incorrect. Each correct item is given one point and incorrect item is given zero.

The second question is of nine items used to assess the students' ability to differentiate between generic and specific references based on syntactic structures and meanings. Each correct item is given two points and incorrect one is given zero.

The third question is a combination of both recognition and production types of test. It consists of five sentences that need to be translated from English into Kurdish. This is important to assess students' ability to understand and utilize English generic referential items in writing. For each correct item, students obtain five points.

The last question is the most useful because it requires students to write an essay with general references. It has been graded out of 50 points, which have been divided into three sections: ten points are given for the frequency with which generic references are used correctly, and another ten are given for employing different kinds of generic references. 30 points are then awarded for accurately using generic references in relation to possible syntactic, semantic, and discourse errors. For further illustration, the researcher has provided the table below:

3.6 Measures of Central Tendency

According to Brown (1988), the measurements of central tendency are the mode, median, and mean that come under descriptive statistics.

Hatch and Farhady (2002, 54) described central tendency as "the central point in the distribution of scores in the data. Seliger and Shohamy (1989) claimed that, these measurements provide statistical data regarding the average and the typical behaviour of subjects with respect to a certain phenomenon.

Mean is a measure of central tendency calculated by summing all scores of student's test responses and dividing it by the number of students (Loewen & Plonsky, 2015, 110; Scorepak, 2005). Mackey and Gass (2005, 254) explain mode in simple words as "the most frequent score obtained by a particular group of learners". According to Burton and Miller (1998), median is a score between two halves; top half and bottom half.

4. Results and Discussion

According to Boeije (2010), raw data collected cannot be considered as research findings, therefore they need to be analyzed. SPSS has been employed to analyze the data retrieved from the students' tests. The current section deals with the discussion of the results, which are derived from the data analysis. To further illustrate, tables and figures have been used along with the analysis and presentation of the data. The total true scores of the 22 items are 3033 and the error scores are 2647. It means that the degree of mastery is 55.62%, and the errors constitute 44.38% of the sample selected for the study. This result verifies the hypothesis of the study.

4.1 Subjects' Performance at Recognition Level/ Q1 and Q2
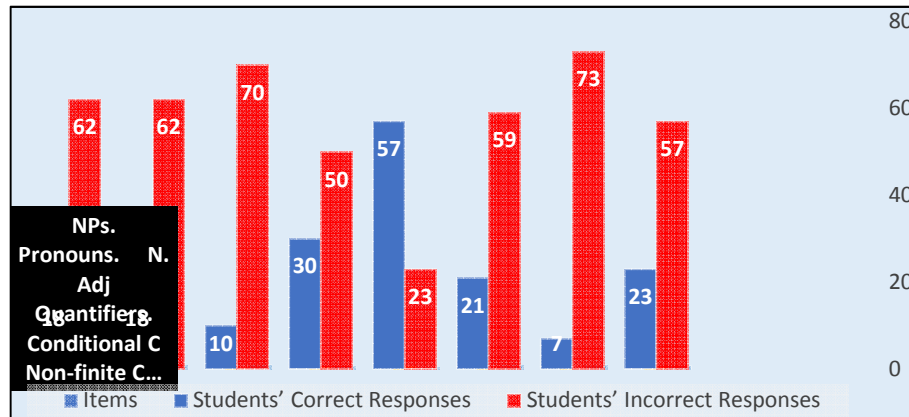### 4.1.1 Subjects' Performance/ Q1

The first set of questions, as mentioned earlier, is prepared at the recognition level. To verify the first hypothesis, which states "Kurdish EFL students might be presented with problems in recognizing

different types of English generic references," the performance of the subjects has been investigated through descriptive statistics. The mean score of this question is (2.56) and the average percentage of correct responses is 29%. While, 71% of the 80 Kurdish EFL students gave wrong answers when asked to identify different forms of generic references. Students may not have researched this grammatical and linguistic phenomenon in the English language, or they may have had incorrect assumptions and understanding of generic references. Additionally, some students reported that, they haven't studied this topic, therefore they were uninformed. It is also possible that they didn't take the questions seriously and chose a response hastily or arbitrarily (see table 9).

Table 9. Frequency of Correct and Incorrect Responses at Recognition Level/ Q1

Items	Students' Correct Responses	Students' Incorrect Responses	Percentage of Correct Responses	Percentage of Incorrect Responses
G. Anaphora	7	73	8.8%	**91.3%**
N. Adjective	10	70	12.5%	**87.5%**
G. Noun	18	62	22.5%	**77.5%**
G. Pronoun	18	62	22.5%	**77.5%**
Non-finite C.	21	59	26.3%	**73.8%**
G. Quantifiers	30	50	37.5%	**62.5%**
Conditional C.	57	23	71.3%	**28.7%**
Average	23	57	**29%**	**71%**

Figure 1. Frequency of Correct and Incorrect Responses/ Q1

4.1.2 Subjects' Performance/ Q2

The second set of recognition types of questions has been set to verify the second hypothesis which states "Kurdish EFL students might struggle to distinguish between English generic and specific references in written works." The test takers were asked to choose either G (generic), or S (specific) for each sentence. The average percent of the correct responses is (58.19%). The findings showed that, out of 80 Kurdish EFL students, 41.8% of them found it challenging to distinguish between generic and specific references (see table 10). The reason could be, it is difficult to rapidly identify generic or specific since a reference is either generic or specific based on its syntactic forms, semantic interpretations, and positions within the sentences. Hence, students may not be aware of these details or may not have paid close attention to their meanings in order to understand.

Another problem might be their wrong assumptions or understanding about genericness. Students assume that the grammatical form of generic reference is always plural and the

opposite is true to the specific reference form. Hence this is not always the case because there are times when both singular and plural forms convey general meanings. The other reason might be intralingual transfer. As claimed by Richards (1974), intralingual errors are caused by the difficulty of the language itself. English generalizations have proved quite difficult to analyze semantically because the term is complex itself. In other words, English generic references may apparently express generic and non-generic readings depending on the context and how the author interprets them (Dayal V.,2005). Thus, the second hypothesis was verified as well.

1. *The potato contains vitamin C* (generic)
2. *The potato rolled out of the bag* (specific)
3. *Lions are dangerous* (generic)
4. *Lions were dangerous* (non-generic)

Table 10. Frequency of Correct and Incorrect Responses at Recognition Level/ Q2

Item Number	Students' Correct Responses	Students' Incorrect Responses	Percentage of Correct Responses	Percentage of Incorrect Responses
1	5	75	6.25%	93.75%
2	14	66	17.5%	82.5%
3	67	13	83.75%	16.25%
4	60	20	75%	25%
5	53	27	66.25%	33.75%
6	57	23	71.25%	28.75%
7	46	34	57.5%	42.5%
8	62	18	77.5%	22.5%
9	55	25	68.75%	31.25
Average	**46.55**	**33.44**	**58.19%**	**41.8%**
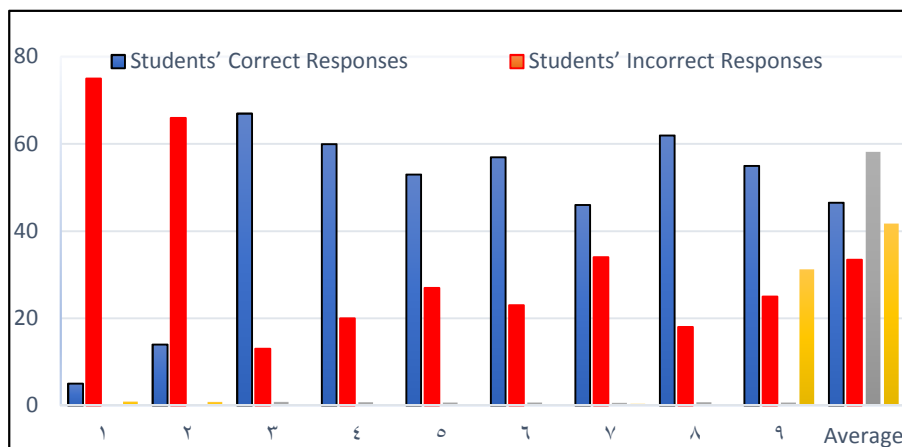
Figure 2. Frequency of Correct and Incorrect Responses/ Q2

4.2 Subjects' Performance at Production Level/ Q3 and Q4/
4.2.1 Subjects' Performance/ Q3

There are five items that make up the third question. They attempt to verify the hypothesis which states "Kurdish EFL students might find it challenging to comprehend the meaning of English generic references in written works." The test-takers were asked to translate five sentences from English into Kurdish- the students' mother tongue. The focus was on the generic words included inside the sentences to test students' comprehension and ability to accurately identify generic references in English.

In the light of the statistical results, 32% of Kurdish EFL students failed to understand the true meaning of the English generic references (see table 11). They overgeneralized in the grammar rules of the English language. The reason might be a negative interlingual transfer. To illustrate, Al-Baldawi and Saidat (2011) claimed that, overgeneralization may appear in different aspects of linguistics, such as semantic errors, syntactic errors, morphological and discourse errors, especially when two languages have different grammar

systems. Obviously, the English grammar system differs from that of Kurdish, i.e., the English language utilizes zero article with plural count nouns, whereas zero article is used with singular count nouns to achieve genericity in the Kurdish language (Hasan and Ghafoor, 2007). In fact, it is ungrammatical to use bare singular count nouns in the English language unless it is preceded by an in(definite) or zero articles (Biber et al., 2002), for instance:

o **English**	• **Kurdish**
1. *Cow eats grass.	*Mangakan gya dexon. ✖
2. Cows eat grass.	Manga gya dexwat. ✔

Overall, the researcher intends to state that, this is a universal issue with EFL students due to the fact that English language has several ways to express genericity. As it was claimed by other researchers in the previous studies, some languages are articleless (e.g. Indonesian and Malay) while others might have only one way. Kurdish language is similar to Tagalog, Finnish and Vietnamese languages in which they do not use articles in making generalizations in subject positions. However Kurdish language could take articles in making generalizations when it comes in the object position, for instance:
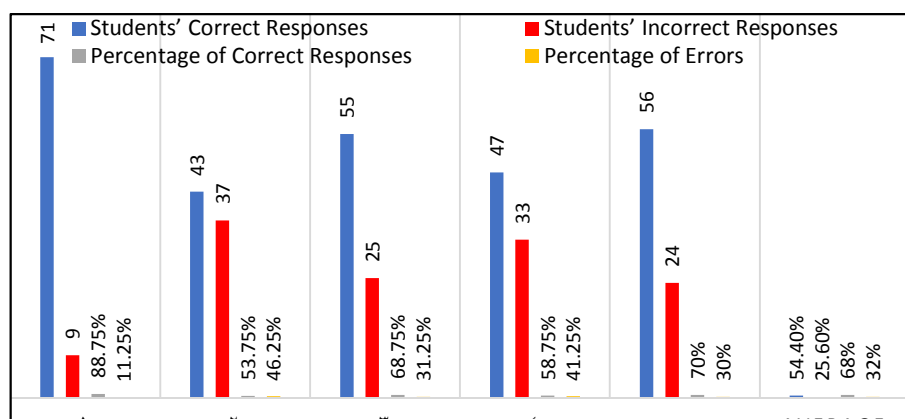
1.   Xwardny sêwêk hamû rojêk le dktor demanparêzêt.

Another reason might be the context of learning, as claimed by Brown (2000), the learning environment includes the classroom, the instructors, and any instructional aids that are used throughout the session. The researcher also reports that the students' lack of practice could be a significant factor in the learning environment's unfavorable effects. Therefore, interlingual transfer and the context of learning could be the reasons for Kurdish EFL students' errors, thus the third hypothesis was verified as well. The table below illustrates the correct

responses, the incorrect responses, the percentage of correct responses, and the percentage of errors of the subjects' performance on each item of this question.

Table 11. Frequency of Correct and Incorrect Responses/ Q3

Item Number	Students' Correct Responses	Students' Incorrect Responses	Percentage of Correct Responses	Percentage of Errors
1	71	9	88.75%	11.25%
2	55	25	68.75%	31.25%
3	47	33	58.75%	41.25%
4	56	24	70%	30%
5	43	37	53.75%	46.25%
Average	**54.4**	**25.6**	**68%**	**32%**

Figure 3. Frequency of Correct and Incorrect Responses/ Q3

4.2.2 Subjects' Performance/ Q4

Regarding the fourth question in the second set of production questions, it covers only one item that seeks to confirm the claim which states: " Kurdish EFL students are predicted to make errors

when they employ English generic references in their writing performance." The examiners were asked to write an essay including generic reference in it. The statistical results of this question demonstrated that while 81% of Kurdish EFL students were able to employ generic references in their writings, only 57% of them could use generic references accurately and 37% of them could use various types of generic references in their writings. To put it another way, (61%) of them had difficulty to use generic references in their writings. (19%) of them did not use generic references at all in their writings. (20%) of them did make accurate and inaccurate use of generic references (see table 12, 14 and 15).

The sources of their difficulties, or errors could be attributed to syntactic errors- misuse of articles (25%), dropping the generic marker-s (33%), and omission of articles (18.75). Semantic confusion-literal translation (32%), discourse errors- misuse of generic anaphora (18.75%) and article redundancy (45%), (see table 13). The pupils' lack of proficiency in the language, their lack of practice, their disinterest in the language, and the learning environment may all be contributing factors to their errors. See the table below for the overall statistical data subject's performance at the production level on three bases; accuracy, variety and frequency.

Table 12. The Usage of Generic References in Writing/ Q4

N	Accuracy	Variety	Frequency
Mean	0.57	0.37	0.81
Percent	57%	37%	81%

Figure 4. The Usage of Generic References in Writing/ Q4
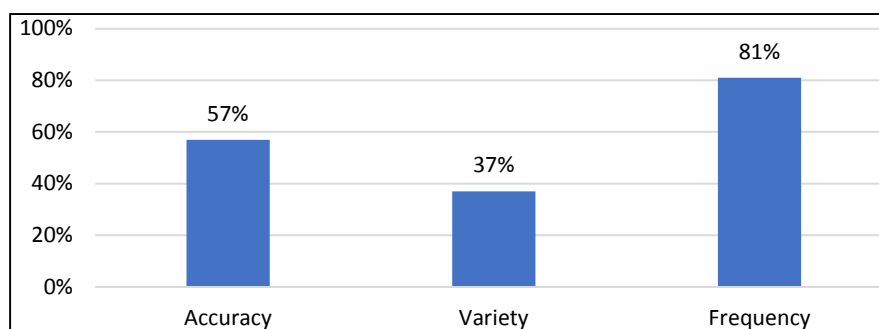
Table 13. Accurate Use of Generic Reference/ Q4

	Errors	**Frequency of making errors**	**Percent**	**Frequency of not making errors**	**Percent**
4	**Redundancy**	36	45%	43	53%
5	**Dropping generic marker-s**	27	33.8%	53	66%
3	**Misuse of Articles**	20	25%	60	75%
2	**Omission of Articles**	15	18.75%	65	81%
1	**Generic Anaphora**	14	18 %	66	82%
6	**Average**	**22.4**	**22%**	**57.4**	**57%**

Table 14. Various Use of Generic Reference/ Q4

	Generic References	Variety of Using G.R.	Frequency of not Using G.R.	Mean of Using G.R.	Percent of Using G.R.
2	Articles	65	15	0.81	81%
1	NP	58	22	0.72	72%
5	Quantifier	32	48	0.40	40%
8	Generic Anaphora	30	50	0.37	37%
4	Pronoun	23	57	0.28	28%
7	Non-finite Clause	17	63	0.21	21%
6	Conditional clause	13	67	0.16	16%
3	Nominalized Adj.	5	75	0.06	6%
9	**Average**	**30.37**	**49.6**	**0.37**	**37%**

Table 15. Frequent Use of Generic Reference/ Q4

Generic Reference	Frequency	Mean	Percent
Accurate Use of Generic References	65	0.81	81%
Inaccurate Use of Generic References	49	0.61	61%
Frequency of Both	16	0.2	20%
Frequency of not Using Generic References	15	0.19	19%

4.3 Findings

1. Out of 80 Kurdish EFL students, 71% failed to recognize different types of generic reference. This may be the result of students' ignorance of English generic referential types. It is also possible that they gave a rash or arbitrary response.

2. 41.8% of Kurdish EFL students failed to distinguish between general and specific references. It may have been due to intralingual transfer since the term is ambiguous in the first place.

3. 32% students had trouble in understanding the meaning of generic references, it could have been the result of interlingual transfer and students' poor proficiency with the English language.

4. The statistical results demonstrated that 61% of Kurdish EFL students had difficulty to use generic references in their writings, 19% of them did not use generic references at all in their writings and 20% of them made both accurate and inaccurate use of generic references. The reasons, or sources of such difficulties could be attributed to syntactic errors: dropping the generic marker/s (33%), misuse of articles (25%) and omission of articles (18.75), semantic confusion and literal translation of 32%, discourse errors, article redundancy (45%) and misuse of generic anaphora (18.75%). This could have been the result of negative interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer, students' lack of input, grammatical knowledge of the English language, lack of practice or enthusiasm in learning, lack of instructional materials and insufficient time dedicated for teaching and learning may all be contributing factors of their errors.

５. Conclusions

The findings of the study have led to the following conclusions:

1. Nearly half of Kurdish EFL students did not adequately recognize types of generic reference,

2. Nearly half of Kurdish EFL students struggle to distinguish between generic and specific references,

3. Around half of Kurdish EFL students had trouble comprehending the meaning of English general references,

4. The majority of Kurdish EFL students were able to use generic references in writing. Nevertheless, only half of them used it accurately, even some of them did not use it at all. The possible frequent errors that Kurdish EFL students could make while employing generic reference in writing could be attributed to (1) syntactic errors: dropping the generic marker/s, misuse of articles and omission of articles, (2) semantic confusion and literal translation, (3) discourse errors including article redundancy and misuse of generic anaphora.

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Appendix 1

No.	Jury Members	University
1.	Dr Fatimah Rashid Hasan Al Bajalani (Professor)	Salahaddin University - Erbil
2.	Dr Hussein Gargary (Professor)	Nawroz University - Duhok
3.	Dr. Lazgin Khidhir Barany (Assist. Professor)	Nawroz University - Duhok
4.	Dr Zana Mahmoud Hasan (Assist. Professor)	University of Sulaimani - Sulaimani
5.	Dr Jamal Omar Ali (Assist. Professor)	University of Raparin - Raparin
6.	Dr. Karmand Hamad (Lecturer)	Soran University - Soran
7.	Ms. Kozhin Omar Ismael (Assist. Lecturer)	University of Sulaimani - Sulaimani

Appendix 2
The Test before Given to the Jury
Q1/ A. Choose the most appropriate answer.

1. My friend picked --- magazine and began to read. (a/an/the/ $\varnothing$)

2. John didn't keep --- spider because they are ugly. (a/an/the/$\varnothing$)

3. It is not --- easy task for her. (a/an/the/$\varnothing$)

4. He found --- dodo although it was believed to be extinct. (a/an/the/$\varnothing$)

5. To earn --- money is difficult. (a/an/the/$\varnothing$)

6. Chewing --- tobacco is a bad habit. (a/an/the/$\varnothing$)

7. What is the World Bank doing to help --- poor? (a/an/the/ $\varnothing$)

8. ---- Tigers are dangerous. (a/an/the/$\varnothing$)

B. Choose the types of the referring expressions from the given table for the following examples:

Noun phrase   Pronoun   Article   Nominalized Adjective   Adjective phrase   Verbal expressions   Quantifiers   clause

1. Music can be soothing
2. The tiger is striped.
3. A tiger is striped.
4. Tigers are striped.
5. The young don't read newspapers.
6. Young people don't read newspapers.
7. You can find anything these days from the internet.
8. We use language to communicate.
9. They say the earth is getting warmer.
10. Man set foot on the moon in 1969.

11. <u>All birds</u> have wings.
12. <u>Any tiger</u> is dangerous.
13. <u>Most children</u> like playing.
14. <u>Some books</u> are better than others
15. <u>If/when you heat water to 100 degrees</u>, it boils.
16. <u>To smoke cigarette</u> is a bad habit.

Q2. Differentiate between the generic and specific references in the following examples: For those which are generic, write down (G), and for those which are specific, write down (S):

Note: Generic reference refers to a general class while Specific reference refers to a particular member(s) of a general class.

1. Look at <u>that horse</u>.
2. Yesterday I met <u>a man.</u>
3. <u>Dogs</u> are making good pets.
4. Bring in <u>the dogs</u>.
5. <u>The tigers</u> are dangerous.
6. <u>Tigers</u> are dangerous.
7. <u>The tiger</u> is a dangerous animal.
8. <u>Hydrogen</u> is lighter than oxygen.
9. I like <u>the wines of France</u>.
10. Give me <u>a sandwich</u>.
11. <u>The Greeks</u> are musical.
12. <u>The Greeks that I know</u> are musical.
13. <u>We</u> have to be faithful in life.
14. <u>You</u> must trust yourself in hard times.

Q3/ Write the meaning of the following sentences in Kurdish:
a. Generic reference on subject level:

1. The potato was first cultivated in South America.
2. The dinosaur is extinct. _____

3. Potatoes were introduced into Ireland by the end of the 17th century. _____

4. A female kangaroo carries its young in its pouch. _____

5. The female kangaroo carries its young in its pouch. _____

6. Man has lived on the earth for ages. _____

7. All fish like water. _____

8. A fish likes water. _____

9. Igloos were traditionally used by the people of Greenland. _____

10. Chewing tobacco is a bad habit. _____

11. To chew tobacco is a bad habit. _____

12. Chewing of tobacco is a bad habit. _____

b. Generic reference on sentential level

1. A potato contains vitamin C. _____

2. The potato contains vitamin C. _____

3. Potatoes are served either mashed or fried. _____

4. Cows eat grass. _____

5. Roses are red. _____

6. The French love eating in restaurants. _____

7. The rich help the poor. _____

8. Oil is becoming scarce. _____

9. If someone owns a dog, he must pay tax on it. _____

10.   There arise typhoons in this part of the pacific. _____

11.   Any tiger is dangerous_____

12.   A lion is a ferocious beast, it has huge claws. _____

Q4/ Write a short essay (in no more than 300 words) and try to use as many generic references as possible:

- What characteristics must a good English teacher have? Write down as many of these characteristics as you can which you find the most important to you and provide examples for each characteristic.

Appendix 3
The Final Version of the Test

Q1/ Choose the types of the referring expressions from the given table for the following examples:

Noun phrase   Pronoun   Nominalized Adjective   Quantifiers   Conditional Clause   Non-finite clause   Generic anaphora

1. The young don't read newspapers.
2. We use language to communicate.
3. Man set foot on the moon in 1969.
4. All birds have wings.
5. If/when you heat water to 100 degrees, it boils.
6. Chewing tobacco is a bad habit.
7. John didn't keep a spider because they are ugly

Q2. Differentiate between the generic and specific references in the following examples: For those which are generic, write down (G), and for those which are specific, write down (S):

Note: Generic reference refers to a general class while Specific reference refers to a particular member(s) of a general class.

8. The tigers are dangerous.
9. The tiger is dangerous.
10. The tiger was dangerous.

11. Bring in the tiger.
12. A tiger is a dangerous animal.
13. The Greeks are musical.
14. I like the wines of France.
15. Smoking causes lung cancer.
16. Music can be soothing.

Q3/ Write the meaning of the following sentences in <u>Kurdish</u>:

17. Potatoes were introduced in Ireland by the end of the 17th century. --------------------

18. A female kangaroo carries its baby in its pouch.--------------------

19. Man has lived on the earth for ages. ---------------------------------

20. The rich help the poor.--

21. Cows eat grass.--

Q4/ Write a short essay (no more than 300 words) on this following topic using as many generic references as possible:

What characteristics must a good English teacher have? Write down as many of these characteristics as you can? provide examples for each.

Appendix 4
The Test Criteria of Q5
Identifying the Errors in Writing

9 points

Requirements	Used	Not used	Mean	Percent
Frequency of using generic references				
Accuracy of using generic references				
Variety of using generic references				

Accuracy of Using Generic Reference

Overgeneralizations	Mean	Percent
Omission		
Redundancy		
Misuse/ wrong use of articles		
Dropping the generic marker –s on generic nouns		
Discourse structure-generic anaphora		

Generic Referential Item Variety

Generic Reference Types	Mean	Percent
Noun Phrase		
Pronouns		
Nominalized Adjective		
Quantifiers		
Articles		
Verbal Expressions		
Generic Conditional Clause		
Generic Anaphors		

پوخته

لێکۆلینهوهیهک له ئاگایی و هۆشیاری وه بهکارهێنانی ئاماژه گشتییهکان لهلایهن ئهو خوێندکاره کوردزمانانهی زمانی ئینگلیزی وهک زمانی بێگانه دهخوێنن

ئهم توێژینهوهیه تهرخان کراوه بۆلێکۆلینهوه له ئاگایی و هۆشیاری وه بهکارهێنانی ئاماژه گشتییهکان لهلایهن ئهو خوێندکاره کوردزمانانهی زمانی ئینگلیزیی وهک زمانی بێگانه، ئامانج لهم توژینهوهیه: ا) ههولدهدات بزانێت ئایا خوێندکاره کوردهکانی زمانی ئینگلیزی ئاشنان بهم دیاردهیهی زمانی ئینگلیزی و جۆرهکانی، (ب) ئایا خوێندکاره کوردهکانی زمانی ئینگلیزی دهتوانن ئاماژهی گشتی و ئاماژهی تایبهت له نووسیندا جیا بکهنهوه، (ت) ئایا خوێندکارهکان دهتوانن تێبگهن له واتای ئاماژهی گشتی زمانی ئینگلیزی له نووسیندا به شێوازێکی دروست، (ث) له کۆتاییدا دهیهوێت دهرلهکان بدۆزێتهوه له نا دروست بهکارهێنانی ئاماژهی گشتی له نووسیندا و بیانگهرێنێتهوه بۆ سهرچاوهکانیان که دهشێت زیاتر له سهرچاوهیهک هۆکار بێت.

توێژینهوهکه گریمانهی ئهوه دهکات که، (ا) خوێندکاره کوردهکانی زمانی ئینگلیزی رهنگ ئاشنا نهبن بهم دیاردهیهی زمانی ئینگلیزی و به شێوازێکی نادروست بهکاریبهێنن له نووسیندا. توێژینهوهکه پشت دهبهستێت به لێکۆلینهوهی چهندێتی (تاقیکردنهوه) ، تاقیکردنهوهیهکی پێنج پرسیاری که له بیست و سێ برگه پێکهاتووه و ئهوهش ئهنجام درا لهسهر ههشتا خوێندکاری کوردی زمانی ئینگلیزی له کۆلێجهکانی زمانی ئینگلیزی و پهروهردهی بنهرهت له سێ زانکۆی جیاواز لهسهر ئاستی ههرێمی کوردستان بۆ سالی ٢٠٢١- ٢٠٢٢. دهرئهنجامهکان ئهوه دهردهخهن به نزیکهیی نیوهی خوێندکاره کوردهکانی زمانی ئینگلیزی وهک زمانی بێگانه ئاشنا نین بهم دیاردهیهی زمانی ئینگلیزی و شکستیان هێنا له تێگهیشتن و بهکارهێنانی ئاماژهی گشتی له نووسیندا به شێوهیهکی دروست. دهشێت هۆکارهکان بگهرێنهوه بۆ ئهمانه: کاریگهری نهرێنی زمانی دایک لهسهر زمانی مهبهست، کهمتهرخهمی خوێندکارهکانی زمانی ئینگلیزی بۆ فێربوون و گهران بۆ بابهتهکانی زمانی ئینگلیزی، پشتگوێخستنی ئهم بابهته زمانهوانییه له فێرکاری نووسینی ئینگلیزیدا له ناوهندهکانی خوێندن.

وشه سهرهکییهکان: ئاماژهی گشتی، ئاماژهی تایبهت، شێوازی گشتی، واتای گشتی.

الملخص

التحقيق في وعي واستخدام طلاب الجامعة الكورد الدارسين للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية للمرجع العام للغة الإنجليزية في الكتابة

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى اكتشاف: (١) ما إذا كان طلاب الجامعة على دراية بالعناصر المرجعية العامة للغة الإنجليزية (٢) ما إذا كان طلاب الجامعة قادرين على التمييز بين المراجع العامة والمحددة في اللغة الإنجليزية، (٣) ما إذا كان طلاب الجامعة يفهمون التفسيرات الدلالية الصحيحة من المرجع العام باللغة الإنجليزية (٤) واكتشاف الأخطاء المحتملة للطلاب في استخدام المرجع العام باللغة الإنجليزية في الكتابة وعزو الأخطاء إلى مصادرها. تعتمد الدراسة على افتراض أن الإفراط في استخدام الطلاب الجامعة للمراجع العامة في الكتابة يمكن أن يكون عاملاً مساهماً في العديد من مصادر الخطأ. لذلك، استخدم الاختبار الكمي مع ثمانين طالبا كوسيلة لجمع البيانات في أربع كليات متميزة في إقليم كوردستان للعام الدراسي ٢٠٢١-٢٠٢٢. وكشف التحليل الإحصائي للبيانات أن حوالي نصف العينة أساءوا استخدام المرجع العام في كتاباتهم في مجالات النحو والدلالات والخطاب. يمكن أن تكون الأسباب هي التحويلات السلبية بين اللغات، ونقص الكفاءة النحوية للطلاب وسياق التعلم.

الكلمات الدالة: مرجع عام، مرجع محدد، أشكال عامة، معاني عامة.