

# An Attempt To Studying Of Contrastive And Error Analyses In The Use Of Articles In English And French

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**ABSTRACT:** The present dissertation is an application of Contrastive Analysis and Error Analysis to the study of learners' errors in Article usage in English. The hypothesis was that only the combination of Contrastive Analysis and Error Analysis could account for learners' errors effectively. The qualitative analysis of the errors made in a test given to a group of students has revealed that when there are differences in article usage between English and French, most of the errors derive from native language interference, whereas when article usage is similar, the errors are for the most part due to overgeneralization, thus fully confirming the hypothesis

**Index Terms:** articles, analysis, error, contrastive

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. THE PURPOSE OF THE WORK

It is the purpose of this dissertation to explore the possibility of applying Contrastive Analysis together with Error Analysis to the study of errors made in English by French-speaking students. The topic that has been chosen to illustrate the approach is Article Usage.

### 1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Article usage is more complex than it appears to be. The study of the articles involves in the first place other elements of the Noun Phrase, in particular the head. Which article is to be used also depends on reference, whether generic, specific, etc. Thus, uppermost stand the complex relationships between class of nouns and type of reference. Other factors contribute to determine the correct use of articles, such as the function of the Noun phrase in the clause and the semantic content of the lexical items. Errors have to be analyzed in the light of all these conditioning factors.

### 1.3. HYPOTHESIS

The hypothesis formulated here is that Contrastive Analysis is capable of predicting areas of difficulties in foreign language learning but it does not account for all the interfering problems. A combination of Contrastive Analysis and Error Analysis is the most fruitful approach in the explanation of errors. This general hypothesis has been divided into two parts: (1) If Contrastive Analysis predicts all the learner's difficulties, the results obtained from learners' output should reflect:

(a) A high percentage of correct answers where there is similarity between the two languages.

(b) A low percentage of correct answers where there is difference between the two languages.

(2) Only through Error Analysis is it possible to explain errors not foreseen by Contrastive Analysis such as:

(a) Overgeneralization of the target language rules.

(b) Misapplication of the target language rules.

(c) Nonce-mistakes.

Notation used

CA - Contrastive Analysis

NL -Native language

IL - Interlanguage

EA - Error Analysis

TL - target language

\* - Ungrammatical sentence

Other notations are explained in the body of the paper  
: Zero article

## CHAPTER I: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### 1.1. CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS

#### INTRODUCTION

This section is a very important section because it talks about what happens when languages come in contact with each other. We can also learn a few things about the L2 environment, what happens in adult studies and some other areas of language learning. Corder (1973) notes that one of the ways of comparing languages is Interlingua comparison which is commonly called contrastive comparison. It is a process of comparing two languages. Dulay et al. (1982:96) note that the first language has always been seen as the learner's major problem in learning a new language but that in recent years, the emphasis on the L1 being the problem has shifted to its being an enrichment of the learner's communicative repertoire. There have also been a lot of discussions and controversies over the role of the first language in second language acquisition and recently research shows that the major impact the first language has on second language acquisition may have to do with accent and not only with grammar or syntax.

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### 1.1.1. The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis

Contrastive analysis is the study of two languages with the aim of pointing out their structural differences and similarities for academic use or societal benefit etc. It was formulated in Lado's (1957) *Linguistics across Cultures* in which he noted that structures that are similar to the learner's first language structures will be easy to learn while those that are different will be difficult to learn. The Contrastive analysis hypothesis, which was a major topic in AL for about two decades, has finally given way to more current and more positive views on first language and second language acquisition. Even though it has given way to some other theories, it is good to know what it entails as some of the recent theories still have it as part of their underlying language teaching methodologies (Dulay et al., 1982). Contrastive Analysis (CA) states that 'where structures in the L1 differed from those in L2, errors that reflected the structures of L1, would be produced'. Dulay et al. (1982), note that such errors were said to be due to the influence of the learners L1 linguistic habits on L2 production. For example, a Yoruba speaker would say 'omo pupa'- a fair complexioned person. An inadequate transfer of the structures, 'person fair' (light complexioned person) since the adjective comes after the noun.

### 1.1.2. Some Major Issues on Contrastive Analysis (CA)

#### a. Interference and Transfer

Interference refers to two very distinct linguistic phenomena; psychological and sociolinguistic. Dulay et al. (1982) aver that the psychological use of the term interference refers to the influence of old habits when new ones are being learned while the sociolinguistic use, i.e. interference, refers to language interactions, such as linguistic borrowing and language switching that occur when two language communities are in contact. There was however confusion in the definitions of interference by Weinreich (1953) and Haugen (1953).

The CA hypothesis states that 'interference is due to unfamiliarity with L2, that is, the learner not having learned the patterns of the target language very well'.

#### b. Child Studies

Dulay and Burt (1974) worked on the natural speech of children and analysed over 500 grammatical errors made by 175 children learning English in US schools. The results showed that less than five percent (5%) of the errors observed reflected the children's first language- Spanish. Some other empirical studies have shown that children place limited reliance on the structure of the mother tongue when learning second language in a host environment (Dulay et al., 1982:102). Some other researchers who have worked on child studies are Ervin-Tripp 1974, Boyd (1975) Wode (1976) etc. All the researchers mentioned above commented on low incidence of inter-lingual errors. To them, most of the errors appeared to be developmental. They are the type of errors that could be made by children learning those languages as their first language.

#### c. Adult Studies

Dulay et al. (1982:103) assert that studies conducted on the speech and writings of adults, learning English as a second

language, revealed that the majority of non-phonological errors observed for adults do not reflect the first language; but that the proportion of errors found in similar situations for children is somewhat less than that of adults. They noted that, approximately eight percent (8%) to 23% of the adults' errors which may be classified as interlingual studies, were conducted on the speech of adults learning English in the US and the compositions of native English speaking adults enrolled in Spanish and German foreign language university classes in the US (White, 1977), Lococo, 1975, 1976). Many other researchers, along this line, have also commented on the relatively small numbers of Interlingua errors in their observations. Most of the studies conducted were done in both host and foreign language environments.

#### d. Sources of Interlingua Errors

Dulay et al. (1982:108), claim that interlingual errors of syntax and morphology occur in relatively small numbers in verbal performance of L2 learners and that a comprehensive account of L2 acquisition should be able to accommodate them. It is clear from the observation of Dulay et al. that their observations are not conclusive. They however made the following guesses that: There are indications that interlingual errors are occasioned by at least two environmental factors: 1) conditions that result in premature use of the L2 and 2) certain elicitation tasks.

### 1.1.3. Conditions that Result in the Premature Use of the L2

Premature use of L2 is a situation where a learner uses the structures of L2 or uses the language when he/she has not been adequately exposed to the language. There are many situations that can lead to the premature use of L2 and some of these situations can be unavoidable ones. Below are some of them.

#### a. Pressure to Perform

The need to communicate in the target language before one has been exposed enough to it may pressurise a speaker of an L2 to use some of the structures in the L1. Living in the country of the target language also makes demands on the learner to quickly get exposed to the target language because a lot of the major language communication for jobs and social activities will require sophisticated verbal interaction in the new language. There could also be pressures from peers or colleagues in the target language environment that can make the learner speed up his/her attempts at learning the target language. For example an 8 year old Nigerian child who finds himself/herself in a British school will definitely be under pressure to use the language because his/her peers may be making jest of his/her Nigerian accent even if his/her use of the target language's grammatical structures are correct.

#### b. Limited L2 Environments

Environmental factors that limit the scope and quality of second language learning include: 1) the absence of peers who speak the language natively and; 2) severely limited and often artificial conditions under which the language may be learned (Dulay et al., 1982:109). For example, finding a few hours weekly to memorise vocabulary or dialogues and doing audio-lingual drills. These activities do not help

much. Researchers have noted that they cannot be helped. There are all kinds of foreign language immersion programmes meant to rectify some of the shortcomings of the foreign language context, as noted by Dulay et al., which are meant to offer students real and extended communicative experiences in the second language by presenting the subject matter in a new language. For example, if an L2 speaker of English does not have enough exposure to the L2 and he/she wants to speak the language at all cost, may lead to premature use of the L2 because he/she would not have been exposed enough to the language.

#### c. The Elicitation Task

Dulay et al.(1982)claim that elicitation task refers to the manner in which spoken or written performance is elicited from the second language learner. The learner could be asked to translate a sentence or paragraph in his or her native language, or describe a scene or picture, or attempt a fill-in the blanks test. Dulay et al. notes that the proportion of interlingual errors changes with the elicitation task, especially translation, and they note that translation tasks tend to increase the L2 learner's reliance on first language structures. It also has the tendency of masking the processes that the learner uses for natural communication. A learner may engage in premature use of the L2 if he/she is given language tasks he/she has not learnt well.

#### d. Borrowing

Cultural and linguistic contacts in societal bilingualism give rise to two major phenomena and these are borrowing and code-switching. Borrowing, to Dulay et al. (1982), is the incorporation of linguistic material from one language to another. Borrowing is a normal consequence of languages in contact in multilingual societies ( Weinrich 1953, Hangen(1953). Individual lexical items can be borrowed. English borrowed thousands of French words and other Latin based words were also borrowed. They are incorporated into the grammatical structure of the borrowing language. They are regarded as new words in the language. Dulayet al. refer to the words 'maize' and 'tomato' which were borrowed from the American languages. When borrowed words get learned by speakers within the community, it is referred to as integrated borrowings. An L2 learner may borrow prematurely and miss some concepts or spellings of words in the target language. For example, an L2 learner has been heard to say 'come and listen to me. I want to tell you a useless thing'. The learner obviously wanted to say 'a useful thing'.

#### e. Code Switching

This is an active process of incorporating material from both bilingual languages into communicative acts. It involves a speaker shifting from one language to the other. Indiscriminate mixing gives the impression that the speaker lacks control of the structure of both languages. However, Dulayet al.(1982:115) have a contrary opinion, claiming that code switching is most engaged in by those bilingual speakers who are the most proficient in both languages they speak. They note some specific sociolinguistic functions such as symbolising ethnic identification. In the absence of the right words to use, L2 learners sometimes code switch from their L2 to L1 to express themselves when

it seems they are taking too much time. For example, a speaker can say: 'I'll stop by kin ba le find out ibite base de. Soo understand? I'll stop by to find out how far you have gone with the work. Do you understand? The items in italics are from the Yoruba language. This is definitely a Yoruba speaker of English code switching from English to Yoruba in between sentences.

## 1.2. ERROR ANALYSIS

### 1.2.0. Introduction

In this unit, you will be introduced to linguistic description of errors, miscue analysis and its application to learners' use of language, practical uses of errors etc. There is a way that learners' errors can be used to assist learners instead of perceiving them in a negative light. Errors can be very useful in taking decisions for language teaching and learning. We shall, however, start with the data for analysis and the description of errors.

### 1.2.1 The Data for Analysis

It has been highlighted early on that the purpose of error analysis is to describe the nature of the learner's interlanguage and to compare it with the target language and this explains why error analysis is a branch of comparative linguistic study. This was buttressed by Brown (1994) cited in Darus and Subramanian (2009) that error analysis emphasizes "the significance of errors in learners' interlanguage. It is the systematic knowledge of an L2 as independent of both the learners' L2 and L1. Corder notes that the pressure on the learner to use the target language would have made data collection easy in that, the learner would have been asked to express himself in his mother tongue and his utterances can then be translated into the target language.

### 1.2.2 Preliminaries to the Description of Errors

Error analysis is performed on learners' spontaneous language e.g. essays, compositions, speech, stories, etc. Scholars have noted that the key to error analysis is the systematic nature of language and, consequently, of errors are of two types: those that can be predicted and those that cannot be predicted. A learner is in different stages of learning and errors can occur at these stages of learning which can be analysed. In a learner's pre-systematic stage, the learner cannot correct his/her errors or explain what is wrong. At the systematic stage, the correction of the learner may be an attempt to find out, or be able to explain what is happening. At this stage, he/she must have been familiar with the internal structure of the language. Corder notes that at the pre-systematic stage, he/she can correct his/her errors and explain why he/she committed the error.

### 1.2.3. The Linguistic Description of Errors

In error analysis, we compare similar sentences in the learner's dialect and the target language. It is like expressing the same thing in two languages. One of the objectives of error analysis is the linguistic part of the descriptive process. Below is an example of a sentence with the omission of an article from Corder (1973: 277). I was told: there is bus stop/ I was told: there is a bus stop. In the sentence, there is an error in terms of the omission but the explanation is not full. A full description will explain the

error in terms of the linguistic process or rules which are being followed by the speaker. Another is:

I have a great difficulty in...

I have great difficulty in....

The difference in the sentences above can be classified into two: one, omission of a required element and addition of an unnecessary or incorrect element. Other differences in other utterances could be selection of an incorrect element and mis-ordering of elements depending on the kind of errors found.

#### 1.2.4 Miscue Analysis

The term 'miscue analysis' was coined by Goodman (1969); this approach is based on three cueing systems he believed underlay the reading process: Grapho/phonetic (the relationship of letters to sound system), syntactic (the syntax/grammar system) and semantic (the meaning system). Miscue analysis refers to a process of diagnosing a child's reading. It is based on the premise of analysing the errors a reader makes during oral reading. It is a tool for closely looking at the types of reading strategies a reader uses. When a reader reads orally, the teacher learns a great deal about whether the reader is making sense of what is being read. This also gives the listener clues about how familiar or unfamiliar the reader finds the subject matter. Using the miscue analysis method, a teacher/parent will be much more capable of assisting those children/learners who experience difficulty.

#### 1.2.5. The Theoretical Uses of Error Analysis

For the applied linguist, the provision of a scientific approach to the practical problem provides a feedback to the theory. The psychologist will predict that the problem of errors could be the nature of the mother tongue of the learner as a second language. The applied linguist makes a comparative study of both languages and identifies certain features of the second language which are different from the first. Corder specifically notes that the study of errors is part of an experiment to confirm or disprove the psycholinguistic theory of transfer. Corder (1973: 267) notes that the following important point in his write-up on the study of errors: The study of errors is part of the methodology of the study of language learning.

#### 1.2.6 Mistakes of Performance

The learner can also make mistakes by breaking speaking rules, i.e. using inappropriate language. Corder notes that this can be referential or stylistic. To him, reference is that relation that holds between linguistic forms and objects or events (or classes of these) in the world outside. For example, when a learner makes inappropriate choice- e.g., using 'hills' for 'mountains', this is referential. Stylistic mistakes are also made by native speakers. These have to do with familiarity with the language. Learning the appropriate use of features of the mother tongue has to be in relation to social, technical and emotional differences in situations. The use of some stylistic features of language at times shows one's membership of some group, family, profession, caste class, etc. For details and more explanations on errors, see Corder(1973).

#### 1.2.7. The Correction of Errors

Corder's position on language learning is that it is a process of discovering the underlying rules, categories and system of choice in the language through some sort of processing by the learner. The technique of correction of errors requires that the teacher understands the source of the errors so that he/she can provide appropriate data and other information which will help resolve the learner's problems. Corder concludes this section by saying – 'skill in correction of errors lies in the direction of exploiting the incorrect forms produced by the learner in a controlled fashion (Corder1973:267).

## CHAPTER II: ARTICLE USAGE

### 2.0. Introduction

Both English and French possess definite and indefinite articles which belong to the class of determiners. A comparison between articles in the two language shows how they differ morphologically and syntactically. The morphological differences are;

#### 2.1. Definite article

The definite article in English - THE - is invariable as to number and gender while the definite article in French inflects for number and genders le, la, les.

#### 2.2. Indefinite article

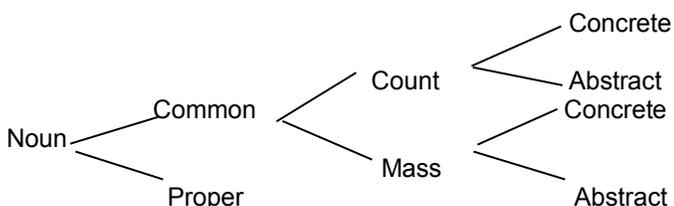
The English indefinite article A(N) is singular only, the non-singular form being either unstressed SOME or ZERO ARTICLE, whereas in French the indefinite article inflects for number and gender: UN, UNE... Syntactically, the articles perform the same function in the two languages, which is that of conferring a status of either definiteness or indefiniteness to the noun they precede. The use or non-use of an article depends on the type of noun that is the head of a noun phrase; which article – definite indefinite or zero - can be used is, in turn, determined by reference. Therefore articles cannot be studied in isolation and the class NOUN is also treated to the extent that it is relevant to the purpose of the study. Countability, or rather, the dichotomy COUNT vs MASS is discussed at greater length as it seems to play a decisive part in the learners' use of articles in English. The differences and similarities between English and French in the realization of the same function are highlighted in the following sections where article usage in the two languages is dealt with separately. As stated in the introduction our main concern is a comparison between co-occurrence restrictions on the articles in English and French.

#### 2.3. Article usage in English

The treatment of article usage here presented is not exhaustive; it is subsidiary to the analysis of the test applied to a group of students. We shall first consider the classification of NOUNS, then look at articles in terms of reference so as to set up the co-occurrence restrictions on articles, and finally we shall present a table of article usage. In this section we draw on A Grammar of Contemporary English (1974) by QUIRK et al. The examples taken from it appear between inverted commas

**2.3.1. Classification of Nouns**

As is known, in traditional grammars nouns are divided into concrete and abstract, the former subdivided into common and proper nouns. They are defined in terms of meaning. Moreover, no mention is made of countability. 3ESPERSEN (1933, 206-8) is the first grammarian to take countability into account. He makes a detailed analysis of the relationship between countability and number, stating that both concrete and abstract nouns are either countable or uncountable. Very well-known grammarians, e.g., the ECKERSLEYS (1960), follows the traditional classification, treating countability very superficially or not at all. Nouns have been classified according to a number of different criteria. But it is not our intention to discuss them. We have looked for a classification of nouns whose working criteria proved suitable for the purpose of the paper. This was found in A Grammar of Contemporary English (CGE) where the classification of nouns is presented in the following figure



The criterion of countability applies to common nouns only and yields two classes of nouns: count nouns - those that conform to the category of number and mass nouns which have no number contrast and are seen as having no "natural bound" (130), LYONS says that the notion of countability "is inherent in the lexical structures of all human languages" (283) although its characteristics vary from language to language. In spite of the fact that there is a tendency for concrete nouns to be count and for abstract nouns to be mass, countability is not determined by logic; nouns such as advice, furniture, information and music are mass nouns in English while in French they are count. We need only mention here two co-occurrence restrictions on articles:

- (a) singular count nouns either concrete or abstract cannot take ZERO ARTICLE,
  - (1) \*Child should be obedient
  - (2) \*This is difficulty
- (b) Mass nouns, whether concrete or abstract, never take the INDEFINITE ARTICLE.
  - (3) \*This is a good butter.
  - (4) \*I have a homework to do..

The other restrictions are dealt with in the following section.

**2.3.2. References and Article usage**

The GCE presents the following types of reference: generic, specific, situational, unique and linguistic. The first three apply to common nouns, unique reference applies to proper nouns, while linguistic reference can apply to any kind of noun. Generic reference shows what is normal or common for members of a class, species, etc. Specific reference particularizes, that is, it points to specimens of a class,

species, etc. Situational reference also specifies- the existence of ONE, but in this case the uniqueness is part of the knowledge of the speakers, as for instance in (5) Who is going to answer the telephone? Unique reference is restricted to proper nouns, as they unambiguously specify the existence of ONE, e.g. Dickens, England, Sunday, etc. Linguistic reference is either anaphoric; (6) "John ordered a book and the book has just arrived" or cataphoric (7) "The wines { of France that France produces\*\*

From this point onwards, restrictions on articles are marked with an asterisk where they are relevant to the comparison with French Generic reference Singular count nouns can take definite or indefinite article while mass and plural counts take zero article.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| (8) The cat eats fish<br>(9) A cat eats fish<br>(10) Cats eat fish but The cats eat fish*. | (12) Cigars are less harmful than cigarettes.<br>but *The cigars are less harmful than the cigarettes,<br>(13) Happiness is part of life. but ,<br>(11) Milk is good for children. but *The milk is good for children<br>(14) I have had several talks with my advisor.<br>(15) He dislikes idle talk. |
|--|--|

When modified by an of-phrase mass nouns and plural counts take the definite article without losing their generic reference. The article limits the reference only to a certain extent, but does not take from the nouns its generic characteristic.

|                                   |                                   |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| (16) He likes the music of Brazil | (17) He likes the wines of France |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|

If however the modifier is an adjectival, zero article is used..

|  |  |
|--|--|
| (18) Brazilian women but * The Brazilian women | (19) American Literature but * The American Literature |
|--|--|

**2.3.2.1. Specific reference**

Both count and mass nouns take the definite article,

|   |   |
|---|---|
| (20) The lion (at this circus) is not dangerous.<br>(21) The lions (at this circus) are not dangerous | (22) The milk (in this bottle) is not good.<br>(23) The life they live is unreal. |
|---|---|

When the specific reference is indefinite, singular count nouns take zero article while plural count and mass nouns take zero article or the quantifier SOME.

|   |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| (24) I bought a house, (25) She bought some books | (26) She bought some milk. |
|---|----------------------------|

.Nationality nouns can be either generic or specific. There is a group which has only one form for each reference.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| (27) The English drink beer (generic). | (28) The Englishmen I know drink beer (specific). |
|--|---|

However, if the word has only one form for both generic and specific reference the + plural can refer to either\* Outside the context, it is not possible to know if the sentence.

|                                    |
|------------------------------------|
| (29) The Brazilians like Carnival. |
|------------------------------------|

It refers to the whole people or to a group of people. There is some connection between tense and reference which should be noticed. Sentences with generic reference are normally in the simple aspect, independent of its notion of countability.

|   |                                    |
|---|------------------------------------|
| (30) The tiger lives in the jungle<br>(31) The English drink tea. | (32) Music is a good entertainment |
|---|------------------------------------|

If the reference is specific, both the progressive and simple aspect can be used.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| (33) The tiger (at this circus) sleeps in the cage.<br>(34) The tiger (at this circus) is sleeping in the cage | (35) "The Englishmen (who are my friends) drink tea."<br>(36) "The Englishmen (who are my friends) are just now drinking tea". |
|--|--|

Names of festivals, seasons and meals when modified take the definite article. In this case they no longer have unique reference, but specific reference.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| (37) I spent the Easter of 75 with my friends. (38) The Summer of 74 was very hot | (39) The dinner she prepared was very good. |
|---|---|

|   |  |
|---|--|
| (49) He goes to school alone. but * He goes to the school alone<br>(50) She goes to church every day. but -*. She goes to the church every day. | (51) They are still in bed. but * They are still in the bed.<br>(52) The students are in class. But *The students are in the class |
|---|--|

Proper names in specific situations take the definite or indefinite articles.

(a) When we want to express that a person or thing has the same characteristics or qualities as the individual bearing the name in question.

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| (40) Ha is a Vila Lobos. | (41) He is the Vila Lobos of the present days* |
|--------------------------|--|

(b) A person bearing the name in question.

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| (42) I have a John in my class. | (43) The John in my class is an immigrant. |
|---------------------------------|--|

(c) Different aspect of one and the same individual.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| (44) He is a different John from the one I used to know | (45) The John I used to know mass a very different person. |
|---|--|

(d)A thing made by the person bearing the name.

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| (46) I have a Portinari | (47) The Portinari I have was a present from my friends. |
|-------------------------|--|

The indefinite article can also be used with proper names when it implies a person who gave his/her name and is unknown or unfamiliar to the hearer.

(48) A Dr. Johnson is here.

### 2.3.2.2. Situational reference

It involves the use of the definite article "with nouns whose reference is immediately understood by the users of the language" (155). When we talk about the sky, there is a presupposition that there is only one sky. The article before it, and also before other words like the earth, the moon, the sun is called "indexical THE" (156). Originally these words had a post modifier but it is so obvious as to be unnecessary. Another type of indexical "THE" is more specific 'being restricted to a society, nation, or other locative expressions" (156) e.g. The drama may refer to the drama of a certain period or author, the radio to the radio of a certain place. The group of nouns with situational reference comprises certain common nouns which take zero article in abstract or idiomatic expressions. For example – school, church, hospital, class, college, bed, university. when their primary purpose is implied. When these words are used without their primary p activity implied they can take the definite or the indefinite articles.

|   |                               |
|---|-------------------------------|
| (53) They passed by the/a school.<br>(55) She lies down on the/a bed. | (54) She admired the/a church |
|---|-------------------------------|

### 2.3.2.3. Unique reference

This reference is restricted to proper nouns, which normally take zero article or rather lack article contrast.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| (56) My name is John Carroll.<br>(57) Mary was here yesterday.<br>(58) Mr. Brown has just arrived | (59) Brazil is a large country<br>(60) Christmas is enjoyable. |
|---|--|

However, some proper nouns take the definite article with

restrictive meaning in post-modified structures. Thus - England - which does not take the article, is used with the definite article in the sentence

|  |  |
|--|--|
| (61) He visited the England of Queen Elizabeth |  |
|--|--|

To the group of words with unique reference, there belong some abstract nouns which assume the characteristics of proper nouns due to their uniqueness. e.g. fate» fortune, heaven, hell, paradise. Geographical names and proper names in the plural take the definite article . In this case, they cease to be proper nouns in the strict sense, e.g. The West Indies, the United States, the Perrys. Attention will also be given to the nouns which constitute exceptions to tie main rule. Proper nouns which derive from a common noun and are either premodified or post modified take the definite article, e.g.the Ford foundation, the Institute of Psychiatry« When there is an ellipted element, the proper nouns take the definite article, since they are still felt as adjectives after which a noun may be added, e.g. the Atlantic (ocean), the Avon (river).The Grand (hotel), the Economist (newspaper).

### 2.3.2.4. Linguistic Reference

It involves the use of articles before a nouns which has been previously mentioned the noun with the determiner has an anaphoric reference.

|   |
|---|
| (62) "Last year we went to Devon for a holiday. |
|---|

The holiday we had there was the best we've ever had" (HALLIDAY 1976,73). Linguistic reference can also be cataphoric, in which case the presence of the article is independent on a forward reference to a noun, post modified by a prepositional phrase or a relative clause.

(63) The wines of France are very good.

(64) The wines that France produces are very good.

It can thus be concluded that reference is very important as regards article usage. The different possibilities here presented have provided evidence that the use of definite, indefinite or zero article before a noun does not depend only on the class to which that noun belongs. At the same time, the reference attributed to the clause has to be taken into consideration.

## 2.4. ARTICLE USAGE IN FRENCH

We shall not follow the procedure outlined for article usage in English.

### 2.4.1. The definite article in French

French has three forms of the definite article corresponding to the English article "the". They are Le, La and Les. There is also the singular l' used before vowels Usage depends on the gender and number (singular, plural) of the noun.

Le is used with singular masculine nouns.

Le garçon, le train, le problème, le président, etc.

La is used with singular feminine nouns

La fille, la dame, la voiture, la difficulté, la maison

Les is used with plural nouns, whatever gender they may be

Les garçons, les filles, les personnes, les choses, les difficultés, etc.

L' is used in the singular before vowels, irrespective of gender

L'enfant, l'ami, l'amie, l'université, l'option, l'iris

Usage:

Use of the definite article in French is not always the same as use of the definite article in English. In simple defining contexts, usage is similar.

Examples:

The car is in the street - La voiture est dans la rue

The first is the best - Le premier est le meilleur .

However, there are some difficulties to be mastered...

Difficulty! Article usage with plural count nouns in French: There are two ways of using count nouns (nouns referring to items that can be counted) in the plural: a generalising use (i.e. all the items) and a restrictive use (i.e. some of the items). When count-nouns are used in a generalising context in the plural, English indicates this generalisation by omitting the article; French marks it by using the definite article.

Examples:

I like cakes : J'aime les gâteaux.

Children often make a lot of noise: Les enfants font souvent beaucoup de bruit

Snakes can be dangerous : Les serpents peuvent être dangereux Thus a plural count noun preceded by a definite article generalises, a plural count-noun preceded by an

indefinite article is restrictive. Children like sweets : les enfants aiment les bonbons but She has (some) children : elle a des enfants The above examples show that the dividing line between the concepts of "generalisation" and "restriction" is not quite the same in French and English. Difficulty! Article usage with singular non-count nouns in French In French, it is not normally possible to use a noun without a predeterminer of one sort or another. Thus singular non-count-nouns which do not need an article or determiner in English normally require one in French.

Examples:

Water is necessary for life : l'eau est nécessaire pour la vie  
He's studying philosophy : Il étudie la philosophie  
French is a living language : Le français est une langue vivante.  
The definite articles, le, la, les, are basically equivalent to English the. Anytime the is used in English, a definite article will surely be used in French. In some cases, however, French will use a definite articles when English uses no article at all. This includes times when a group of nouns is referred to in its entirety. For example when blanket statements are made about all cockroaches, all humans, or all cars. Les blattes vivent dans les murs et se reproduisent prodigieusement. Cockroaches live in the walls and reproduce prodigiously. Les baleines sont les animaux les plus grands du monde. Les humains, en comparaison, sont très petits. Whales are the largest animals in the world. Humans, by comparison, are very small. Il pense que les voitures sont l'invention du diable. / He thinks that cars are the invention of the devil. ...and when a noun is referred to in a general sense (for example a statement that refers not to a particular war but to war in general). La guerre est horrible. / War is horrible. Il faut cultiver l'amour, et éviter la haine et la colère. / We must cultivate love, and avoid hate and anger. J'aime la cuisine chinoise. / I love chinese food. Il aime l'automne plus que l'hiver. / He likes summer more than winter. Le basket est notre sport préféré. / Basketball is our favorite sport. Names are not usually preceded by articles. However the definite article almost always precedes the names of countries except when it follows the prepositions en and de. la France, l'Egypte, les Etats-Unis, la Chine Je vais en France. / I go to France. Whenever the definite articles le or les follow the prepositions d' or de, the preposition and article fuse together.

|     |      |              |
|-----|------|--------------|
|     | d'   | De           |
| Le  | Au   | du, de l'    |
| La  | A la | de la, de l' |
| Les | Aux  | Des          |

### 2.4.2. The indefinite article in French

In English, the indefinite articles are a and an. While some is used as a plural article. In French, indefinite articles take on the gender of the noun it precedes if singular, but also has a plural form that is used for either gender. Note that des, like les, is used in French before plural nouns when no article is used in English. For example, you are looking at photographs in an album. The English statement "I am looking at photographs." cannot be translated to French as "Je regarde photographies" because an article is required to tell which photographs are being looked at. If it is a set of specific pictures, the French

statement should be "Je regarde les photographies." ("I am looking at the photographs.") . On the other hand, if the person is just randomly browsing the album, the French translation is "Je regarde des photographies." ("I am looking at some photographs.")

**2.4.3. Partitive article in French**

The partitive article *de* indicates, among other things, the word *some*. As for prepositions, *de le* contracts (combines) into *du*, and *de les* contracts into *des*. Also, *de l'* is used in front of words starting with vowels. When speaking about food, the partitive article is used sometimes, while the definite article (*le, la, les*) is used at other times, and the indefinite article (*un, une*) in yet another set of situations. In general "de" refers to a part of food (a piece of pie) whereas the definite article (*le*) refers to a food in general (I like pie (in general)). The indefinite article refers to an entire unit of a food (I would like a (whole) pie). When speaking about preferences, use the definite article:

|                          |                        |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| J'aime la glace.         | I like ice cream.      |
| Nous préférons le steak. | We prefer steak.       |
| Vous aimez les frites    | You like French fries. |

When speaking about eating or drinking an item, there are specific situations for the use of each article.

| Def. art.                                 | specific/whole items            |
|---|---------------------------------|
| J'ai mangé la tarte.                      | I ate the (whole) pie.          |
| Ind. art.                                 | known quantity                  |
| J'ai mangé une tarte.                     | I ate a pie.                    |
| Part. art.                                | unknown quantity                |
| J'ai mangé de la tarte.                   | I ate some pie.                 |
| J'ai mangé beaucoup de tarte.             | I ate a lot of pie.             |
| Je n'ai pas mangé les tranches de tarte ! | I didn't eat the slices of pie! |
| Part. art.                                | known quantity                  |
| J'ai mangé deux des tartes.               | I ate two of the pies.          |

If the noun taken in a partitive sense happens to be preceded by a qualifying adjective, or a negative verb, then *de* is used alone.

| sing   | fem  | Une | /yn/ (ewn)  | une fille  | a daughter     |
|--------|------|-----|-------------|------------|----------------|
|        | masc | Un  | /œ/ (uh(n)) | un fils    | a son          |
| Plural |      | Des | /de/ (day)  | des filles | some daughters |
|        |      |     |             | des fils   | some sons      |

- un, une, du, de la, des change to *de*.
- for specific quantities; however, the quantity rather than *de* is used.

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Nous avons mangé une tarte.         | We ate a pie.                                 |
| Nous n'avons pas mangé de tarte.    | We did not eat a pie/ We did not eat any pie. |
| Nous n'avons pas mangé deux tartes. | We did not eat two pies                       |

|                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| mangé deux tartes.               |  |
| Nous avons mangé de la tarte.    | We ate some pie.                                 |
| Nous n'avons pas mangé de tarte. | We did not eat some pie/ We did not eat any pie. |

**2.3. CO-OCCURRENCE RESTRICTIONS**

The comparison of the two systems of article usage shows that co-occurrence restrictions between articles and nouns in French differ from those in English. We are led to conclude that the restrictions in each language are related to REFERENCE. Therefore, any consideration of the differences in article usage between French and English has necessarily to deal with classes of nouns in terms of reference. The aim of the following table is to show the co-occurrence restrictions between articles and nouns in English which differ from French.

Table

| French   | English  |
|--|--|
| Les chats mangent du poisson<br>Un chat mange du poisson   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cats eat <del>fish.</del><br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A Cat eats <del>fish.</del>   |
| Les enfants vont dormir<br>Un enfant va dormir   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Children go to bed<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A Child goes to bed  |
| Le bonheur fait partie de la vie<br>La femme Brésilienne<br>Elle est infirmière<br>Du lait c'est bon / Le lait est bon                                   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Happiness is part of <del>life</del><br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Brazilian women<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> She is a nurse<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Milk is good<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I have bought a new ink |
| J'ai acheté une nouvelle ancre<br>Elle vient d'arriver de l'école<br>Elle a visité l'Europe et la France<br>L'hiver est très froid<br>Le souper est prêt | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> She has just arrived from <del>school</del><br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> She visited <del>Europe and</del> France<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Winter is very cold<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dinner is ready                            |
| La Noël est en décembre  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Christmas is in December.  |

**CHAPTER ILL THE FIELD WORK**

The primary objective of the field work carried out was to find out whether the Learners' output confirmed the predictions made by CA. The secondary objective was to find out whether the learners' output revealed the existence of errors in article usage which were only explainable by EA. The following questions were posed:

- To what extent is CA effective?
- Can errors be attributed only to NL interference?
- If not what are the source(s) of the errors made by the learners?
- Do CA and EA together provide better evidence for the analysis of the students' errors?

To investigate the above points, a test about article usage in English was; prepared and applied to a selected group of students.

**Preparation of the test**

In the preparation of the test the following points were observed:

- The items were prepared so as to test the -hypothesis

(b) The level of the foreign language knowledge of the population was carefully considered, so that the items presented did not contain anything that was not familiar to the learners.

(c) Each possibility for article usage tested appears with the same number of sentences.

The test was prepared taking into consideration the above points and the references attributed to the nouns. Within each reference there are several possibilities for article usage. The ones selected for the test were:

(1) Generic reference: Count Singular Nouns, Count Plural Nouns, Concrete Mass Nouns, and Abstract Mass Nouns.

(2) Definite Specific reference: Concrete Count Nouns, Abstract Count Nouns, Concrete Mass Nouns

(3) Indefinite Specific reference : Concrete Count Nouns - Mass in English and Mass in French, Mass in English and Count in French, Professions,

(4 ) Situational reference ; Known element Activity implied

(5) Linguistic reference Anaphoric

(6) Unique reference : Proper names Countries, cities and states Parts of the day, Months

Days of the week, Festivals

These possibilities when contrasted with article usage in French yield 32 cases. The sentences belonging to the same group were spaced out so that, e.g. sentences number 1, 20, 41,61 and 81 were taken from the group of COUNT PLURAL NOUNS with GENERIC REFERENCE. The sentences for each type of reference are grouped according to the criterion of "SAME versus DIFFERENCE article usage in English versus French", e.g. COUNT PLURAL NOUNS with SPECIFIC REFERENCE or COUNT PLURAL NOUNS with GENERIC REFERENCE. The test is of multiple-choice and contains 100 items. Its final format is presented in Appendix I. The four options -

(a) THE, (b) A, (c) AN, and (d)ZERO ARTICLE - appear in the same order for all items and the students were instructed to mark only one of the options. The grades obtained by the testees varied from 47 to 89. The test was applied by the class teachers rather than by the investigator. Such a decision was made, considering the need to collect serious data and to avoid the risk of careless responses if the class had known that the test was experimental.

The population

To select the population, the following requirements were established:

(1) The subjects should be either in their fourth or fifth semester of English.

(2) They should have started their course at the College or first semester of English.

(3 ) They should have passed all the stages of the course up to the present.

This population was selected because the investigators were interested in applying the article test to a group of students who had not learnt the grammar of the language systematically in order to find out how far NL interferes with the learning of TL before the pupils start studying the TL grammar systematically. The subjects of the present study are 30 students of English enrolled in a course offered by the College.

## STATISTICAL RESULTS

The statistical results arrived at were obtained through the application of IMGRAM's Item Analysis procedure and LADO's Reliability coefficient.

### 3.2. RESULTS AND COMMENTS

Two types of analyses are presented: quantitative and qualitative. The first consists of tables with numerical results obtained in the test. These tables are organized as follows: items in which article usage is similar in both languages (Tables Ss 1-7), items in which article usage is different (Tables Ds 8-11) and items in which the differences and similarities are not clearcut (Tables SDs 12-14). These tables are arranged in terms of reference. In the second analysis we shall try to find answers to the following questions:

(1) Are all the discrepancies due to transfer of NL structures?

(2) What other factors might be responsible for the learners' errors?

The results will be considered satisfactory if the CA predictions reach the rate of 63% for correct responses in tables S and the same percentage for wrong responses in tables D and SD.

#### Quantitative analysis

The high percentage of correct responses in Tables S confirms the prediction made through CA. The exceptions, as well as any significant facts shown by the figures, will be discussed in the above point. The asterisked numbers indicate unexpected results. C.R. and W.R. stand for correct responses and wrong responses respectively. The notation used in each table is explained immediately after the results, preceded by the number of the group to which it belongs. The number in parenthesis before each sentence corresponds to the item of the test.

**Table S 1**

| Type Reference | Group            | Number of Sent. | C.R. % | W.R. % |
|----------------|------------------|-----------------|--------|--------|
| GENERIC        | 1. Count Pl.     | 60              | 60     | 40     |
|                | 2. Count Mass    | 90              | 69     | 31     |
|                | 3. Abstract Mass | 60              | 63     | 37     |
|                | TOTAL            | 210             | 74     | 36     |

#### (G.1) COUNT PLURAL NOUNS

(41) He likes \_\_\_ dogs. (61)  
They hate \_\_\_ cats.

#### (G.2) CONCRETE MASS NOUNS

(22) He likes to drink \_\_\_ tea. (43)  
My parents drink \_\_\_ coffee after every meal.  
(83) You should eat \_\_\_ fruit every day.

#### (G.3) ABSTRACT MASS NOUNS

(44) Nobody can live without \_\_\_ joy\* (84)  
They like \_\_\_ music very much.

**Table S 2**

| Type Reference    | Group           | Number of Sent. | C.R.% | W.R. % |
|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------|--------|
| Specific Definite | 4. Count C.     | 150             | 67    | 33     |
|                   | 5. Count Mass   | 150             | 88    | 12     |
|                   | 6. Abstr Mass/C | 150             | 61    | 39     |
|                   | TOTAL           | 450             | 73    | 27     |

**(G.4) CONCRETE COUNT NOUNS**

( 5) She showed me \_\_\_ letter she received.  
 (24) Lion at the circus is not dangerous.  
 (45) Teachers I have are very good.  
 (65) He lent me \_\_\_ book he bought  
 (85) Americans who are my friends are going to arrive.

**(G.5) CONCRETE MASS NOUNS**

( 6 ) Milk in this bottle is not good.  
 (25) Tea I drank was delicious.  
 (46) Ice cream my mother made was good.  
 (66) Ink she bought is blue.  
 (86) Coffee I made was very strong.

**(G.6) ABSTRACT MASS AND COUNT NOUNS**

( 7) Happy days they lived together did not last very long  
 \*(47) \_\_\_ Stupidity of the man impressed me.  
 (26) They have forgotten \_\_\_ sad moments of their lives.  
 (87) \_\_\_ Life they live is unreal.  
 (67) She will always remember \_\_\_ kindness of her friends.

**Table S 3**

| Type Reference      | Group  | Number of Sent. | C.R.% | W.R. % |
|---------------------|--------|-----------------|-------|--------|
| Indefinite Specific | 7.ConC | 150             | 85    | 15     |
|                     | TOTAL  | 150             | 85    | 15     |

**(G.7) CONCRETE COUNT NOUNS**

(15) She bought \_\_\_ book. It is very interesting. (36) She sold \_\_\_ watch. It belonged to her father.  
 (56) They had \_\_\_ cat. It died last year. (76) My friends want \_\_\_ house. It must be big and comfortable.  
 (96) I want \_\_\_ car. It must be cheap and small.

**Table S 4**

| Type Reference                 | Group   | Number of Sent. | C.R.% | W.R. % |
|--------------------------------|---------|-----------------|-------|--------|
| Definite or Indef. Situational | 8. K.E. | 150             | 88    | 12     |
|                                | TOTAL   | 150             | 88    | 12     |

**(G.8) KNOWN ELEMENT**

(16) He passed by \_\_\_ school yesterday. (37) They u/ant to visit \_\_\_ church.  
 (57) She is sitting on \_\_\_ bed. (77) They are going to visit \_\_\_ neuj prison.  
 (97) His house is near \_\_\_ hospital.

**Table S 5**

| Type Reference | Group   | Number of Sent. | C.R.% | W.R. % |
|----------------|---------|-----------------|-------|--------|
| Linguistic     | 9. Ana. | 150             | 93    | 7      |
|                | TOTAL   | 150             | 93    | 7      |

**(G.9) ANAPHORIC**

(19) She bought a house. \_\_\_ house is new. (40) She received a letter. \_\_\_ Letter was from her father.  
 (60) Mary bought a new dress. \_\_\_ Dress is yellow. (80) He sold a car. \_\_\_ Car was very old.  
 (100) I have a dog. \_\_\_ Dog is black and white.

**Table S 6**

| Type Reference | Group     | Number of Sent. | C.R.% | W.R. % |
|----------------|-----------|-----------------|-------|--------|
| Unique         | 10. PN.   | 30              | 90    | 107    |
|                | 11. CCS   | 60              | 78    | 22     |
|                | 12. Mths. | 150             | 92    | 8      |
|                | 13. CP    | 150             | 71    | 29     |
|                | TOTAL     | 390             | 80    | 20     |

**(G.10) PROPER NAMES**

(48) I am going to visit \_\_\_ Johnsons.

**(G.11) COUNTRIES, CITIES and STATES**

(49) I spent my vacation in \_\_\_ United States.  
 (69) They are going to \_\_\_ Portugal next month.

**(G.12) MONTHS**

(30) We have exams in \_\_\_ November.  
 (33) Her birthday is in \_\_\_ May.  
 (53) In \_\_\_ July, u/e went to the mountains.  
 (73) Last \_\_\_ December I went to the beach.  
 (93) August is the coldest month of the ypar.

**(G.13) CARDINAL POINTS**

(13) Santa Catarina is in \_\_\_ South of Brazil.  
 (34) She comes from \_\_\_ Northeast.  
 (54) My house is in \_\_\_ East part of the city.  
 (74) Pará is in \_\_\_ North of Brazil.  
 (94) They live in a town in \_\_\_ West part of the city.

**Table S 7**

| Type Reference      | Group    | Number of Sent. | C.R.% | W.R. % |
|---------------------|----------|-----------------|-------|--------|
| Indefinite Specific | 14.ME=MP | 30              | 53    | 47     |
|                     | 15.MExCP | 30              | 10    | 90     |
|                     | TOTAL    | 60              | 30    | 70     |

**(G.14) MASS NOUNS IN ENGLISH AND FRENCH**

(99) He writes \_\_\_ poetry.

**(G.15) MASS NOUNS IN ENGLISH AND COUNT IN FRENCH**

(39) Mary bought \_\_\_ furniture for her house According to CA, tables D should produce a high percentage of wrong responses per group. However some show a much higher percentage of correct responses than might be expected.

**Table D 8**

| Type Reference | Group      | Number of Sent. | C.R.% | W.R. % |
|----------------|------------|-----------------|-------|--------|
| Generic        | 16.C.Sing. | 150             | 27    | 73     |
|                | 17.AbsM    | 30              | 7     | 93     |
|                | 18.ConM    | 30              | 60    | 40     |
|                | TOTAL      | 210             | 29    | 71     |

## (G.16) COUNT SINGULAR NOUNS

( 2) \_\_\_ Table usually has four legs. (42) Blackboard is to write on.

(21) Chair is usually made of wood. (62) House has windows and doors.

(82) \_\_\_ Car has four tyres.

## (G.17) ABSTRACT MASS NOUNS

(23) How did \_\_\_ life begin?

## (G.18) CONCRETE MASS NOUNS

(63) Gold is a metal.

**Table D 9**

| Type Reference | Group   | Number of Sent. | C.R. % | W.R. % |
|----------------|---------|-----------------|--------|--------|
| Situational    | 9. I.A. | 150             | 23     | 77     |
|                | TOTAL   | 150             | 23     | 77     |

## (G.20) PROPER NAMES

(27) I travelled with \_\_\_ Mr. Brown.

(68) Mrs. Johnson called you half an hour ago.

## (G.21) COUNTRIES, CITIES and STATES

( 9) They went to \_\_\_ Bahia last year. (28) My family visited \_\_\_ Europe a year ago.

(69) The meeting was in \_\_\_ Rio de Janeiro.

## (G.22) DAYS OF THE WEEK

(10) He usually travels on \_\_\_ Sunday. (29)

He visits me on \_\_\_ Fridays

(70) I love \_\_\_ Sundays. (50)

On \_\_\_ Saturday mornings, they go shopping.

(90) I do not like \_\_\_ Mondays.

## (G.23) PARTS OF THE DAY

(71) The bus leaves at \_\_\_ noon.

## (G.24) FESTIVALS

(12) They spent \_\_\_ Christmas with their relatives. (32) My friends are going to spend \_\_\_ Carnival in Salvador.

(52) \_\_\_ Easter was enjoyable. (72) My family will get together to celebrate \_\_\_ Independence Day.

(92) Teacher's Day is in October.

**3.2.2. Qualitative analyses**

By analysing the results presented in each table u/e shall try to find answers to the questions raised in 3.2., namely: Are all the discrepancies due to transfer of NL structures? What other factors might be responsible for the learners' errors?

Table S 1 - Group 1 - COUNT PLURAL NOUNS GENERIC REFERENCE; ZERO ARTICLE in English and French. The total percentage of correct answers should have been higher since article usage is similar in both languages. Why this happened will be here discussed. Item (41) He likes \_\_\_ dogs, - 30% - of the students chose THE while - 13% - chose AN. The reason for the first choice might be attributed to the fact that GOSTAR requires the preposition DE. LIKE was chosen for exactly this reason; it was our intention to see if the students knew the correspondence between LIKE and GOSTAR DE in which case article usage is the same, that is, ZERO ARTICLE in the two languages. It seems that the students use the definite article instead of

## (G.19) NOUNS WITH IMPLIED ACTIVITY

(14) He escaped from \_\_\_ prison. (35) He went to \_\_\_ school alone.

(55) He goes to \_\_\_ church every day. (76) They are still in \_\_\_ bed.

(95) The students are in \_\_\_ class.

**Table D 10**

| Type Reference | Group   | Number of Sent. | C.R. % | W.R. % |
|----------------|---------|-----------------|--------|--------|
| Unique         | 20. PN  | 60              | 93     | 7      |
|                | 21. CCS | 90              | 68     | 32     |
|                | 22. DS  | 150             | 69     | 31     |
|                | 23. PD  | 30              | 90     | 10     |
|                | 24. FES | 150             | 21     | 79     |
|                | TOTAL   | 480             | 58     | 42     |

the Portuguese preposition. The choice of AN by four students can only be classified as a "nonce+mistake".- Item (61) They hate \_\_\_ cats, - 16% - chose THE and - 20% - A. The first choice is a transfer error. In French "OS" limits the reference. It might be possible that the learners.

Table S 1 - Group 2 - CONCRETE MASS NOUNS GENERIC REFERENCE: ZERO ARTICLE in English and French. Although the learner's output do not refute the predictions made, we feel that the wrong response should be looked into as English MASS NOUNS, especially when CONCRETE, are the main source of our students' errors. Item (22) He likes to drink '2 \_\_\_ tea, and (43) My parents drink \_\_\_ coffee aSt-Br . every meal, - 20% - chose A. It might be possible that the students have Associated TEA and COFFEE with the expression "a cup of,..". In such a case, the error might be attributed to the generalization of a TL structure. On the other hand, it was observed that for item (43) - 13% - chose THE, which is most likely a "nonce+mistake". Item (83) You should eat \_\_\_ fruit every day - 33% » was caused by the choice of A. It is possible that the learners do not distinguish UMA numeral from the indefinite article and they have, thus, transferred a problem of the NL to the TL. Table S 1 - Group 3 - ABSTRACT MASS NOUNS GENERIC REFERENCE: ZERO ARTICLE in English and French The total percentage of correct answers although higher than for wrong answers is equal to the rate established. In this group, the wrong answers do not follow a consistent pattern. In items (44) Nobody can live Without \_\_\_ joy and (84) They like \_\_\_ music very much we get THE or A, The choice of THE for (44) - 20% might be attributed to transfer of a NL structure. Joy (Algeria) can be used with the definite article when it is the subject of the sentence. There are some grammarians (cf. CUNHA 1972, 151) who say that the use of the definite article before abstract nouns with generic reference is optional. However, if the abstract noun is the complement of the sentence only ZERO ARTICLE can be used. It is thus possible that these learners have transferred article usage with abstract nouns as subject to the same as complement. The choice of A - 20% - seems to be a clear case of overgeneralization as Joy belongs to two classes, namely, MASS and COUNT. Item (84) They like -r- music very much, we find - 24% - with THE and -13% - with A. The use of THE might be regarded as a "nonce-mistake", However, A requires a

different interpretation. We presume that the source of the error comes from the fact that MUSIC, always MASS in English, may either MASS or COUNT in French. Therefore those who put in A most probably thought of a specific piece of music. Thus, this is a case of wrong interpretation. Perhaps, this sort of mistake would not have occurred if the sentence had appeared in a situational context. The "troublesome" items just discussed were seen to be responsible for the figures obtained for this group.

Table S 2 – Group 4 - CONCRETE COUNT NOUNS DEFINITE SPECIFIC REFERENCE: DEFINITE ARTICLE in English and French The results obtained for this group correspond to the predictions made. However there are two striking results: item (5) She showed me \_\_\_ letter she received, shows - 61% - of errors and item (65) He lent me \_\_\_ book he bought, - 60% At first sight these two figures would refute the predictions. But, a careful analysis shows that these are caused by NL transfer through erroneous interpretation of the reference of the item in question. It can thus be concluded that those learners took the reference to be indefinite specific.

Table S 2 - Group 5 - CONCRETE MASS NOUNS DEFINITE SPECIFIC REFERENCE; DEFINITE ARTICLE in English and French, Although very few errors of overgeneralization were observed in this group - item (6) \_\_\_ Milk in this bottle is not good ~ 17% -, (25) \_\_\_ Tea I drank was delicious - 13% (46) \_\_\_ Ice-cream my mother made was very good -17% -, (66) \_\_\_ Ink she bought is blue - 10% - and (86) \_\_\_ Coffee I made was very strong, it is worth analysing the source for the choice of ZERO ARTICLE. Having examined the book used in the course, it was seen that concrete mass nouns appear mostly with generic reference. So, in this case we might say that the high percentage of correct responses was arrived at through NL transfer - this time a positive transfer.

Table 2 - Group 6 - ABSTRACT "MASS AND COUNT NOUNS DEFINITE SPECIFIC REFERENCE: DEFINITE ARTICLE in English and French The total percentage of correct answers although higher than that of wrong responses is still below the rate established for tables 3. ZERO ARTICLE provides the following figures: items (7) \_\_\_ Happy days they lived together did not last very long - 33% (26) They have forgotten \_\_\_ sad moments of their lives - 47% -, (47) \_\_\_ Stupidity of the man impressed me - 20% - (67) She will always remember \_\_\_ kindness of her friends - 17% - and (87) Life they live is unreal - 7% The errors are clear examples of overgeneralization. It should be noted that the nouns in (7) and (25) appear with a premodifier, which seems to have been a disturbing factor, as seen from the comparison between the percentage of errors with those items and that with the other three items.

Table 3 - Group 7 - CONCRETE NOUNS INDEFINITE SPECIFIC REFERENCES INDEFINITE ARTICLE in English and French The results obtained fully confirm the CA hypothesis. The 15% of wrong responses was caused by the learners' choice of THE. The figures per item are: (15) She bought \_\_\_ book. It is very interesting - 23% (36) She sold \_\_\_ watch. It belonged to her father - 37% (56) They had \_\_\_ cat. It died last year - 3% - and (76) My

friends want \_\_\_ house. It must be big and comfortable - 13% -. Item (96) I want \_\_\_ car. It must be cheap and small scored 100% correct responses.

Table 2 - Group 6 - ABSTRACT "MASS AND COUNT NOUNS DEFINITE SPECIFIC REFERENCE: DEFINITE ARTICLE in English and French The total percentage of correct answers although higher than that of wrong responses is still below the rate established for tables 3. ZERO ARTICLE provides the following figures: items (7) \_\_\_ Happy days they lived together did not last very long - 33% (26) They have forgotten \_\_\_ sad moments of their lives - 47% -, (47) \_\_\_ Stupidity of the man impressed me - 20% - (67) She will always remember \_\_\_ kindness of her friends - 17% - and (87) Life they live is unreal - 7% The errors are clear examples of overgeneralization. It should be noted that the nouns in (7) and (25) appear with a premodifier, which seems to have been a disturbing factor, as seen from the comparison between the percentage of errors with those items and that with the other three items.

Table 3 - Group 7 - CONCRETE NOUNS INDEFINITE SPECIFIC REFERENCES INDEFINITE ARTICLE in English and French The results obtained fully confirm the CA hypothesis. The 15% of wrong responses was caused by the learners' choice of THE. The figures per item are: (15) She bought \_\_\_ book. It is very interesting - 23% (36) She sold \_\_\_ watch. It belonged to her father - 37% (56) They had \_\_\_ cat. It died last year - 3% - and (76) My friends want \_\_\_ house. It must be big and comfortable - 13% -. Item (96) I want \_\_\_ car. It must be cheap and small scored 100% correct responses.

Table 2 - Group 6 - ABSTRACT "MASS AND COUNT NOUNS DEFINITE SPECIFIC REFERENCE: DEFINITE ARTICLE in English and French Without further consideration, we might take THE in (15) and (36) to be a "nonce-mistake", as this choice would require a context of situation, such as, for instance, THE BOOK being ONE already mentioned or recommended, or in the case of (26) the knowledge that she had only one WATCH. One of the difficulties in tests of this kind is that we never know what context occurs to the students. It is therefore fair to consider that these results are not indicative either of errors of competence or performance and are consequently irrelevant data, in view of the very high percentage of incorrect responses, with the other items. The wrong responses to (56) and (76) can be attributed errors of competence in both ML and TL.

Table S 4 - Group 8 - CONCRETE COUNT DEFINITE OR INDEFINITE SITUATIONAL REFERENCES DEFINITE OR INDEFINITE ARTICLE in English and French. The results confirm the CA hypothesis. The errors made in items (16) He passed by \_\_\_ school yesterday - 31%\* (97) His house is near \_\_\_ hospital - 17% - can be attributed to overgeneralization. The students must have learnt that they should not use the article before SCHOOL and HOSPITAL. Errors of overgeneralization - ZERO ARTICLE - were also observed to a much lesser extent in items (57) She is sitting on \_\_\_ bed - 3% - and (77) They are going, to visit \_\_\_ new prison - 3% -.

## CONCLUSIONS

It is our belief that this study has proved that the combination of the analysis a priori (CA) and the analysis a posteriori (EA) is a valid approach for studying learners' difficulties, for with CA alone we would not have been able to analyze the source of the errors. Besides, it brings to light a number of elements which had not been thought of, thus opening up prospectus for analysis. An example taken from our experience in this paper is the outstanding role that type of reference plays in article usage. The study is **ONLY** a first step in the investigations of the interference of ML in the learning of a TL as well as of errors only accounted for by EA.

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