An Analysis of L2 Article Use in English

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, Second Language Education

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Abstract

This paper is a partial replication study of research to investigate an aspect of English articles: the acquisition of 4 nongeneric uses of the definite article in English. Analysis of article use in these four categories (i.e. cultural, situational, structural, and textual) was investigated by Liu and Gleason (2002), and a hierarchy of difficulty and acquisition was proposed based upon the initial results.

This partial replication used the same testing instrument as Liu and Gleason (2002) with additional items included to further investigate the category, cultural use of the article. The participants, 17 low-intermediate, 20 high-intermediate, and 34 advanced ESL learners completed a 100 item test with sentences containing deleted obligatory uses of the as well as distractor items. The results partially supported Liu and Gleason’s original study, and raised many concerns with the test instrument.
I would like to gratefully acknowledge my supervisor, Professor Nina Spada. In addition to encouraging my thesis work, Professor Spada also gave me the invaluable opportunity of actively participating in her research group – an experience which both broadened and deepened my understanding of SLA. Taken together, this thesis and the research group jointly represent a substantial portion of my OISE Master’s work – an experience which was both educational and enjoyable thanks to Professor Spada’s expert tutelage and joie de vivre.

I would also like to thank Yasuyo Tomita for her guidance with statistical software.
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1 Introduction

1.1 On the study of English articles

English articles present a paradox which can be chronically frustrating to both the student and teacher: The simple morphology of English articles is easy to explain but frustratingly difficult for students to master. This difficulty is quickly seen in learners who know a different article system from another language, as well as those who speak other languages with no article system at all (Master 1997, DeKeyser 2005). The problem is further compounded by very subtle differences in article use that potentially produce large differences in meaning. Consider the following sentences: “John and Susan talked about divorce” likely indicates a general conversation topic; “John and Sudan talked about the divorce” probably refers to the specific divorce of an unnamed third party; “John and Susan talked about a divorce” mostly likely indicates their own marital separation. DeKeyser (2005) called this the psycholinguistic difficulty of acquisition, “the difficulty of grasping the form-meaning relationship while processing a sentence in the L2” (p.3).

The implication of this is that the article system is also too complicated to teach in a way that is completely comprehensible and appropriate for all uses. One claim is that exposure to naturally occurring instances of article usage over time should enable students to learn them. However, we also know that even after many years of natural exposure, articles continue to present difficulties for learners of English. Butler (2002) and Master (1997) both demonstrated that article acquisition is, as DeKeyser put it, “strongly resistant to instructional treatments” (2005, p.5). This is particularly true for speakers of discourse languages such as Chinese or Japanese (in which an article system is not explicitly expressed in language but instead assumes that definiteness inferred or assigned through the context of the discourse; hereafter referred to as [-ART] languages.)

If the acquisition of English articles is difficult despite many forms of instruction, then how can the teacher best help the student? The first step towards a better system of teaching articles requires a closer look at when and why students make mistakes.
The purpose of this thesis is to contribute to research on the acquisition of English articles by carrying out a partial replication study that examines the acquisition of 4 nongeneric uses of the definite article in English based upon the work of Liu and Gleason (2002). Details of this study are provided below after a brief review of some of the relevant literature on English articles. This includes a discussion of specific research on the article *the*, and further investigations into various categories of articles use.

1.2 The difficulty of the article *the*

The extremely high frequency of English articles in naturally-occurring speech and print is, unfortunately, no help to lower-level students. (The word ‘*the*’ was listed as the most frequent word in the COBUILD list of English word frequency, although in terms of describing article usage, *the* is actually second to the zero article. The article ‘*a*’ was fifth.) Master (1997) noted that [-ART] students – those whose L1 does not have an article system – seem to acquire the Ø article first. The key here is “seem to acquire”; observers cannot actually know the difference between accurate Ø-article usage and non-use or omission of the Ø article, so acquisition is mostly “by default” (Master 1997, 216). Furthermore, “at the advanced levels… rules may be neither useful nor desirable to learn” (Master, 1997, p.226); and “advanced proficiency English speakers whose first language contained no article system appear to learn articles best as lexical items in context” (p.227).

In the early research on the acquisition of English as a second language there was strong support for a consistent order of acquisition of grammatical morphemes (borrowing from L1 research: Brown, 1973; de Villiers and de Villiers, 1973; for L2 acquisition: Dulay & Burt, 1973; Dulay, Burt & Hernandez, 1973). While the L2 orders were not identical to L1 orders of acquisition, they were similar regardless of the learners’ L1 (Dulay & Burt, 1973) or age of acquisition (Bailey, Madden & Krashen, 1974) – so similar, in fact, that they were boldly called “invariant.” (ibid, p.242) and became part of the Natural Order Hypothesis proposed by Krashen (1985).

Contrary to these findings, Master (1987) found a different order of acquisition for article use that was dependent on the learner’s L1. For example, the so-called [-ART] speakers (in this case, beginner Japanese students) had trouble differentiating Ø and *the*, while *a* was not confused. In general, Master found [+ART] students (e.g. Spanish speakers) to be approximately
one level ahead of the [-ART] students. He interpreted these results to mean that “it takes about one interlanguage level for a [-ART] learner to become aware that such a thing as an article system exists” (1997, p.218). Master also showed that systematic teaching of the article system had clear benefits, but because of the complex, multi-faceted nature of the English article system Master advocated introducing articles gradually, and over a long period of time.

There appear to be different levels of difficulty for different types of English article acquisition and use. Bickerton (1984) proposed a Language Bioprogram Hypothesis which claimed that children have an innate sensitivity to “specificity and nonspecificity” which is functional at a very young age. The situation may be different with adults, however, who come to class with a lack of sensitivity (Jiang 2004) about many parts of speech, especially plural markings and articles. A slightly different problem is seen in students who do have an article system in their L1 (e.g. Spanish, a “morphology-rich language” which automatically gives the listener extra indications of meaning (DeKeyser 2005, p.7). These differences suggest that even the most competent instruction may not target students’ problems. Furthermore, instruction can also be misleading to learners. For example, Butler (2002) carried out a study in which ESL students were tested and then immediately participated in a structured interview to determine the reasons for their article choices. Butler’s research revealed that (mis)conceptions reflected in learners’ metalinguistic knowledge about article use could often be directly related to past pedagogy.

It is the combination of these factors – L1-L2 differences, the psycholinguistic complexity of form/meaning relationships, difficulties in perception and sensitivity and the nature of previous instruction – that help to explain why students have continuing difficulty acquiring articles in English.

1.3 SLA Research on Articles

The body of work about the acquisition of English articles spans the better part of a century. Most publications can be quickly drawn into three common categories: 1) grammatical texts discussing and categorizing the many types of article use; 2) studies on pedagogy and acquisition; and 3) research comparing article use and differences between languages, including difficulties conceptualizing articles.
Beginning with the first category, grammatical texts, a very early source is Christophersen (1939), entitled “The articles: a study of their theory and use in English.” About the same time, Palmer (1939) suggested that there are two forms of the zero article, which have come to be known (more widely publicized via Chesterman, 1991 and then Master, 1997) as the zero article ($\emptyset_1$) and the null article ($\emptyset_2$). The zero article denotes the instance (in speech or writing) where a noun or noun phrase is not preceded by an article; the zero article is generally used with proper nouns, mass nouns, and plural count nouns. Palmer thought it was necessary to create a distinction: the zero article should refer to non-count and plural nouns (e.g. cheese, eggs), and the null article should be used with specific singular count nouns and proper nouns (e.g., New York, or dinner, as in: "If you meet at dinner a man who has spent his life in educating himself you rise from the table richer." -Oscar Wilde). Despite one other commonly referenced work (Jespersen, 1949), it can be assumed that the teaching (and understanding) of articles both for native-speakers of English as well as ESL learners continued more or less as before, until renewed interest in the subject about 30 years ago.

In work related to the second category, pedagogy and acquisition, there are three major theoretical approaches. The first stems from Bickerton (1981) and Huebner’s (1983) work, which focused on noun phrases according to the linked conditions of [+/- Specific Referent] and [+/- Assumed Known to the Hearer]. This system is discussed further below. A second approach follows Master’s (1990) Binary System, which focuses on classification and identification, and features a 6-point hierarchical scheme. Finally, a third approach is found in the work of Gundel, Hedberg, and Zacharski’s (1993) Givenness Hierarchy, yet its complexity seems to have removed it from widespread use.

It was the work of Hawkins (1978) that apparently revitalized the field, presenting a comprehensive and well-organized categorizational rubric referred to as Location Theory to explain the 8 uses of the nongeneric the – a document which became a highly-important benchmark for subsequent work regarding use of the definite article for the present study. “Generic” use is when a definite article refers to a species or race (of living creatures), or people of a nation (e.g. “The Swiss make excellent wine.”). Other use is considered nongeneric. Although the 8 categories of Hawkins’ theory will be discussed further below, they can be briefly summarized as: 1) in instances of anaphoric use (first mention / subsequent mention of a
noun); with nouns that are (2) visible or (3) immediate (although perhaps not readily visible); in situational use relying on (4) specific knowledge or (5) general knowledge; 6) for associative anaphoric use (similar to type 1, but requiring some inferential thinking, i.e. “We went to a wedding. The bride was beautiful.”); attached to noun phrases that have (7) explanatory or (8) non-explanatory modifiers. Further example will be discussed hereafter and in Appendix 1.

Next, Bickerton’s (1981) work was, according to Liu and Gleason (2002) “arguably the most important and enlightening, as it renders a new and unique systematic approach to the analysis of the use of the English article system” (p.2). Whereas previous texts discussed articles in terms of grammar, this new approach sought to systematically explain why English speakers choose to use one article and not another. It is important to remember that article choice is governed by the semantic function of the noun phrase, which is categorized into one of four major types (examples are given below). Huebner (1983) adapted Bickerton’s work into a “semantic wheel”, a visual representation of these situations of article use, which has withstood the test of time and is another frequently-cited touchstone for article researchers. As mentioned, the appropriate article is determined by the semantic function of the Noun Phrase (NP), which can be classified according to two conditions: 1) whether or not the noun is a specific referent [+/- SR] and 2) whether or not it is assumed to be known to the hearer (or reader) [+/- HK]. These combinations yield 4 noun phrase contexts, as seen in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: The Semantic Wheel of English article use**

![The Semantic Wheel of English article use](image-url)
Huebner’s approach was also different from previous work because it did not look only at the presence (or absence) of articles in an obligatory context. It also looked at oversuppliance of the article. This was important because it had been noted in previous research (e.g. early morpheme studies) that inspections of only obligatory contexts were “unable to discern variation in the use of a morpheme in an evolving interlanguage”, and therefore “failed to delineate a complete picture of the acquisition processes” (Lu, 2001, p. 45).

Supplementing Huebner’s 4 types of use, Type 5 was added (Thomas, 1989, and Goto Butler, 2002), to include idiomatic expressions and other conventional uses. Example sentences for each of these five types of use are given in Table 1, below.
Table 1: Environments for the Appearance of a, the, and Ø

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Environment</th>
<th>Articles</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type 1</td>
<td>Generic Nouns</td>
<td>a, the, Ø</td>
<td><em>A paper clip comes in handy.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[-SR, +HK]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>The Grenomian is an excitable person.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ø <em>Fruit flourishes in the valley.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type 2</td>
<td>Referential definites</td>
<td>the</td>
<td><em>Pass me the pen.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[+SR, +HK]</td>
<td>Previous mention</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>The idea of coming to the U.S. was…</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Specified by entailment</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>I found a book. The book…</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Specified by definition</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>The first person to walk on the moon…</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unique in all contexts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unique in a given context</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type 3</td>
<td>Referential indefinites</td>
<td>a, Ø</td>
<td><em>Chris approached me carrying a dog.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[+SR, -HK]</td>
<td>First-mention nouns</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>I keep sending Ø messages to him.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type 4</td>
<td>Nonreferential nouns</td>
<td>a, Ø</td>
<td><em>Alice is an accountant.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nonspecific indefinites</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ø <em>Foreigners would come up with a better solution.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type 5</td>
<td>Idioms</td>
<td>a, the, Ø</td>
<td><em>All of a sudden, he woke up.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other conventional uses</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>In the 1950s, there weren’t many cars.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>His family is now living Ø hand to mouth.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: From Ekiert 2004, Goto Butler 2002, Thomas 1989

Other influential work on article acquisition comes from Master (2002), who outlined three main difficulties for ESL students when studying English articles: 1) the high frequency of articles
both in speech and print (citing Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999), which can ‘bombard’ students, in effect overburdening them with too many examples and too many kinds of usage to make identifying or applying a rule feasible; 2) function words are not normally stressed, making them harder to notice; 3) the article system has numerous uses, but only one morpheme – effectively hiding several forms of use from students who may be prone to look for a “one-form-one-function correspondence in navigating the language until the advanced stages of acquisition” (Ekiert, 2004, p. 1).

Furthermore, since the correct article for a given sentence is determined by the concept and learners often overlook articles while focusing on content words and the meaning of a sentence (Ekiert, 2004), the amount of thought and attention that a student devotes to article use changes over the course of his or her education as comfort and facility with English increase. Several studies to examine the development of article use over time have helped to document this process.

Whereas Huebner restricted his longitudinal study to the acquisition of the article the, Parrish (1987), Master (1987) and Thomas (1989) broadened their work to include the three articles a, the and Ø. In addition, they included analysis of proper nouns and idioms. Despite some differences in their findings, the researchers concurred that a is acquired later than the.

During the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, Peter Master’s substantial body of work established him as the dominant researcher in the field at that time. His work provided 1) a rough indication of a natural sequence of article acquisition, which is highly dependent upon whether or not the article system occurs in the speaker’s L1 (Master 1987); 2) an analysis of corpus data revealing four types of overlapping uses between Ø₁ and Ø₂ (Master 1992); 3) a convincing argument that in general, systematic teaching of the article system gives students a better understanding of the subject; 4) a detailed analysis of Ø₁ and Ø₂ in “set” and “traditional” phrases that demonstrated more specific uses (Master 1997).

In the past few years, a great deal of research has been conducted regarding article acquisition and interlanguage comparisons of using articles to indicate definiteness for speakers of [-ART] languages who are now learning English: Kim (2000) studied Korean learners; Ekiert (2004) worked with Polish learners; Ionin, Ko and Wexler (2004) studied Russian and Korean learners;

Ekiert’s (2004) work with Polish [-ART] learners found that levels of accuracy between Type 1 (generics), Type 2 (referential definites), Type 3 (referential indefinites), Type 4 (nonreferentials) and Type 5 (idioms) varies drastically according to the level of speaker. The results, paradoxically, seem to indicate higher levels of accuracy for idioms and generic article use at the lower levels (p.12). To explain this, Ekiert hypothesized a U-shaped development curve, which is consistent with other types article acquisition: overuse (the so-called “the-flooding”), then underuse, then approximately correct usage.

Ekiert concludes that the notion that the five different semantic uses of a, the and zero have differing levels of difficulty for the students and do not appear to be acquired at the same time (2004, p.16). Her data suggested that Type 1 (generics) and Type 5 (idioms) required the highest level of article use, as they both called for “a skillful placement” of a, the and zero. This conclusion is in line with Thomas’ (1989) work and hypothesis on general article use, and Liu & Gleason (2002)’s category 4 (the cultural use of articles) being the hardest to acquire. Ekiert (2004) observes that generics are generally uncommon in the input students receive, and Goto Butler (2002) suggested idioms are usually acquired as items. Both of these observations help to explain the weaknesses in Type 1 and Type 5 proficiency.

One of the more interesting and practical points to come out of this research was from Ionin et al. (2009), who made the proactive proposal that the mistakes of [-ART] speakers may be predicted according to their L1 and its differences from English. The Fluctuation Hypothesis (Ionin et al, 2004) explained that “non-random article use” is a key transitional state for L2 learners. In other words, the mistakes that students make are extremely consistent. These mistakes are based on the article system that a particular language uses and its differences from the English article system; mistakes are not dependent on a language’s similarity (or lack thereof) with English in general. These mistakes are key indicators of interlanguage development. Ionin’s predictions were tested with data from Russian, Korean and Samoan
speakers (Ionin 2004), and have been partially replicated with Japanese speakers (Hawkins et al, 2006) and Mandarin Chinese speakers (Trenkic, 2008). “The Fluctuation Hypothesis makes explicit predictions for where errors of L2-English article use should occur” (Ionin, Ko and Wexler, 2004, p. 7). This is interesting research that may have great influence on the way second languages are taught in the future.

1.4  The original study: Liu and Gleason (2002)

Liu and Gleason (2002) proposed that article use can be categorized and analyzed according to four types of use, each with a different level of difficulty. These four nongeneric uses come from a shortened version of Hawkins’ (1978) comprehensive Location Theory. This theory explains the various uses of nongeneric the in terms of eight different categories (Appendix1). For the purposes of their research, Liu and Gleason rationalized the simplification of Hawkins’ system as follows:

“Basically, when an individual uses the, he or she invites the listener or reader to locate the referent by using provided or assumed known cultural, situation, structural, or textual information … Based on this theory, we believe that we can combine some of his categories and classify the nongeneric use of the into four major types. The first is cultural use, where the is used with a noun that is a unique and well-known referent in a speech community. The second is situation use, where the is used when the referent of a first-mention noun can be sensed directly or indirectly by the interlocutors or the referent is known by the members in a local community, such as the only dog in a family or the only bookstore in a town. The third is structural use, where the is used with a first-mention noun that has a modifier. The fourth is textual use, where the is used with a noun that has been previously referred to or is related to a previously mentioned noun.” (p.7)

To investigate the difficulty levels of these four types of article use, Liu and Gleason designed a study in which they measured learners’ knowledge of articles using a paper and pencil test that consisted of 91 sentences containing 60 deleted obligatory uses of the (15 per category, 4 categories) and, as control items 40 zero articles (10 per category) where the is not allowed. The participants were instructed to read the sentences and insert the “wherever they deemed necessary” (pg.1).
To ensure reliability of the test instrument, Liu and Gleason created a number of items following other examples in the earlier work of Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) and Hawkins (1978). A Kuder-Richardson 20 reliability test was conducted on the instrument, which indicated good reliability (0.843). The test format did not leave blanks for the missing obligatory instances of *the*, nor did it have blanks for unnecessary *the* distracters. A sample test was administered to a group of 30 native speakers of English, and some sentences were removed in response to the participants’ feedback regarding possibly ambiguous sentences.

There were 128 participants in the Liu and Gleason study. They were adult students of English representing three levels of proficiency (41 low-, 49 intermediate-, and 38 advanced-level ESL students). None of the low-level students had a (paper-based) TOEFL score above 500. The intermediate and advanced students had a TOEFL score of 500 or above, and they were separated according to their proficiency level by their performance on a (written) cloze test. Liu and Gleason also queried the participants to find out the length of time (years) that they had been studying English. The test participants spoke a total of 18 different languages and they were divided into two groups: Indo-European [+ART] languages (n=27) and all others [-ART] (n=101). The largest group was described as “mostly East Asians” but there was no information on the national origins and first languages of the participants. Because the group size of the Indo-European language group was about one quarter that of the other group, Liu and Gleason admitted that their findings may not be balanced or completely reliable.

The results of the participants’ performance on the written test indicated that:

“(a) The four nongeneric uses posed different levels of difficulty, which suggests that ESL acquisition of *the* is use dependent and follows a natural order;

(b) The participants’ performance on the suppliance of *the* in obligatory contexts for all four uses improved significantly with proficiency level, whereas the overuse of *the* followed a different pattern: an initial worsening followed by an improvement as the subjects’ proficiency level increased.” (p.1)

Liu and Gleason’s analysis revealed a hierarchy of difficulty: *cultural use* was the most difficult, followed by *textual use, structural use*, and *situational use*, in that order. While Liu and
Gleason’s findings support Master (1995), Liu and Gleason’s conclusion that the textual use of the is more difficult than structural use is “not only puzzling but also directly contradicts Parrish’s (1987) findings” (p.15). In Parrish’s study, the use of the definite article in her data was primarily textual. Liu and Gleason speculated several possible reasons to explain the contradiction. They stated,

“whereas the data in Parrish’s study came from narration (subjects telling stories or describing events), our data consisted of participants’ limited response to what they were reading and was therefore essentially a judgment of grammaticality. Different tasks have been shown to cause variation in L2 accuracy. As Tarone and Parrish (1988) indicated, narration – a communicative language production task – requires a speaker to rely heavily on the accurate textual use of the definite article to communicate clearly and coherently. Grammatical judgment, on the other hand, is not a communicative task and the lack of communicative function may result in lower language accuracy.” (p.15)

Liu and Gleason listed other self-acknowledged limitations, stating that speakers of additional languages, a better measure of assessing student proficiency and a wider variety of data were needed. (p.20)

1.5 Comments on Categories of Use

There may have been some small liberties taken by Liu and Gleason in collapsing Hawkins’ 8 categories into 4. The first was the combination of visible and immediate situation uses (types 2 and 3, respectively) in which, Liu and Gleason stated, “the person makes use of information readily available within his or her sensory reach.” Hawkins intentionally separated #3 from the others (“Don’t go in there, chum. The dog will bite you.”) because of the unusual – but entirely possible – situation where the subject is beyond “sensory reach” and yet the logic of the speaker’s knowledge calls for this peculiar type of sentence. The other combinations, however, make sense:

1. In both anaphoric and associative anaphoric use (types 1 and 6 respectively), the listener or reader relies on textual information. (See Appendix 1 for Hawkins’ 8 uses)

2. Type 4 (larger situation use relying on specific knowledge), people in a local community rely on information locally available. In type 5 (larger situation use relying on general knowledge), one identifies the referent by resorting to information considered unique and shared by all the people who speak the language, information we call cultural knowledge.
3. In types 7 and 8, the person locates the referent by using structural information because such information lies in a modifier such as a prepositional phrase, a relative clause, or certain adjectives.

Despite several attempts, Liu and Gleason’s test could not be easily categorized into 15 items per category as described in their article, since many of the sentences could qualify equally for more than one category of use. For example, is existence of the Mississippi River (#70) considered general knowledge or specific knowledge? While many are familiar with the names of most of the major rivers of the world, perhaps the educational systems of other countries do not place an emphasis on learning such international details; the Mississippi would then be considered specific knowledge related to the study abroad experience rather than general knowledge. Then there is the next consideration that a student may know of the Mississippi River in their language, but be unfamiliar with how we refer to it in English. This is an extra layer of education which would be necessary if a student cannot remember the rules of article usage with bodies of water.

Many other test items have greater ambiguity: (#47) *Tom and his friends are playing basketball. Tom says loudly to his friends, “Pass me (the) ball.”* Is this Visible Situation Use (Hawkins #2, Liu and Gleason call it *Situational use*) or is it Associative Anaphoric Use (Hawkins #6, Liu and Gleason call it *Textual use*) since the basketball game has been established and it is common knowledge that you have to have a ball in order to play the game?

I had serious concerns about analyzing my data along the same lines as Liu and Gleason since I had questions about categorizing more than 20% of the test items. Unfortunately, my efforts to contact the authors for additional information about their coding procedures, especially the fundamental question of item categorization, were not successful. Thus, I finally decided to continue with my own assessment of the Liu and Gleason test items. Additional concerns presented themselves as I continued to work the test instrument and analyze my data. These concerns are discussed in the following sections.
1.6 Comments on the original test instrument

The original Liu and Gleason instrument had 91 sentences. The arrangement was as follows: “In 51 of the sentences, there were a total of 60 deleted obligatory uses of *the* (15 per category), with some sentences containing one and others containing more. The remaining 40 sentences were included as distracters or control items (10 per category).” (Liu and Gleason, 2002, p. 9)

The revised instrument (see Appendix 2) consisted of 100 sentences. For this replication, an additional 9 sentences were added to the 91 from the original instrument to test common sentence structures similar to those found in the original proposal and rationale for different article use by Hawkins (1978). Specifically, I included several typical structures of English sentences that could be considered “cultural use,” but were not present in the original test instrument. Six sentences in this cultural use category include commonly referenced places that students would likely find familiar; that is, based on the definition of Hawkins’ 4th category (situational use relying on specific knowledge), *the* is used with a first-mention noun because it is known in the community (e.g., people from the same village talking about *the* church, *the* pub). Sentences of this type were completely missing from Liu and Gleason’s test instrument. Three other sentences were added to the “structural use” category, similar to Hawkins (1978). In category 8 (unfamiliar use in NPs with non-explanatory modifiers), *the* is used with a first-mention noun that does not have an explanatory or identifying modifier in the form of a clause, prepositional phrase, or noun. For example, consider what Liu and Gleason wrote regarding one of Hawkins’ original sentences:

“My wife and I share the same secrets, where the modifier *same* does not inform us as to what the secrets are but “only points to an identity between the two sets of secrets, my wife’s and my own” [Hawkins, p. 148]). “Here *same* is used as a unique adjective that always requires *the*. There are a few adjectives that can be used this way, such as *only* and *sole*.” (Liu and Gleason, p. 6)

Although Liu and Gleason (2002) discuss this type of use, the original test instrument contained only one sentence of this type.

There are a number of other potential problems with Liu and Gleason’s test instrument. The first concern is with the design and nature of the test instrument itself. Butler (2002) noted, “the frequency of each error type differs depending on the task performed” (also citing Kharma, 1981; Mizuno, 1985; Tarone & Parrish, 1988). In general, “production tasks, such as interviews
and essay writing have produced lower error rates than objective tasks, such as cloze tests.” (p.455). Liu and Gleason’s instrument is essentially one version of a cloze test. Therefore in a situation where students are explicitly instructed to look for places to add the article *the*, it is possible that many students will have heightened awareness of the need for or possible placement of articles and may recognize many errors that they would otherwise miss in a ‘normal’ class situation, or in their natural speech. While Master (1995) observed that raising a learner’s consciousness level regarding the English article system can be an effective pedagogical tool for advanced learners, a test situation is quite different. If this is the case, students could possibly score slightly higher than on an equivalent unscripted oral production task. The second possibility is that while looking for grammatical errors and other opportunities to use the article, students will attempt to use *the* even when it is not needed – an effect clearly observed by Liu and Gleason with many of the ungrammatical sentences documented in Appendix 3 of their article. The effect, predictably, would produce a score quite different from that of an unscripted oral production task.

Despite Liu and Gleason’s efforts to reduce or eliminate ambiguity in the test instrument, many of the sentences remain ambiguous. This has two effects: The first is that there can be more than one correct answer; the second is that, with different categorizations, student performance can be analyzed in different ways.¹

Therefore, by my estimation the distribution of question types according to Hawkins’ Location Theory is unequal; furthermore the breakdown according to Hawkins’ criteria (Appendix 1) is uneven. A better test instrument would have 4 equal categories, which, if subdivided, would also equally represent the initial 8 categories. Of even greater concern, were categories 4 (Larger situation use relying on specific knowledge) and 8 (Unfamiliar use in NPs with non-explanatory modifiers), which seem dramatically underrepresented with only 2 and 1 test items, respectively,

¹ At the time of writing, there has been no response to my requests for information confirming my evaluation of sentence types.
out of the 91 items given. Equal representation is important if we are to investigate which type(s) of sentences have greater psycholinguistic difficulty of acquisition.

The most problematic category and one that this research addresses is that of Liu and Gleason’s cultural use category. While Liu and Gleason reported that cultural use is the most difficult for students, additional testing and analysis might prove otherwise. Liu and Gleason’s test included no “cultural” items referring to common places like “the church” or “the library” as outlined by Hawkins (1978), instead including numerous test items that discuss malaria, the Plague, the Flu/flu, and polio (#s 58, 74, 79, and 83, respectively); as well as numerous “western” place names (the Lake District, #34; Chesapeake Bay, #65; the Florida Everglades, #78, and many city names). Unfortunately, diseases and some place names actually belong to neither category 4 nor 5 of Hawkins’ Location Theory, according to his definitions of situational use relying on specific (i.e. immediately local, not regional) knowledge or general knowledge, respectively. “Proper names” of places (i.e. “Chesapeake Bay”) do belong in Liu and Gleason’s “Cultural Use” category according to their categorization. Due to the idiosyncrasies of the English language and the infrequent use of medical terms as “the Plague” and (for Canadians) uncommon place names such as “the Florida Everglades,” a new category which evaluates “Infrequent Exceptions” may need to be created, quite distinct from “cultural” use. An argument could be made that this should not be a category unto itself in terms of article usage and conceptualization, but it may serve a more useful purpose in the data analysis process than simply removing questionable test items from the data analysis.2

Given the limitations outlined above, this study was carried out to partially replicate Liu and Gleason’s study on the definite article the to determine whether different categories of article use relate to different stages of development and learners’ L1 backgrounds. The larger goal of this research is to help students to better understand and learn to accurately use articles in English. This replication study began with the following research questions:

2 Despite concerns expressed about the measurement instrument, reliability testing indicated high levels (K-R 20 reliability = .843) during pilot testing. However, most of the concerns raised here about the testing instrument relate more to test validity.
1. Does Liu and Gleason’s 4-category model of article usage adequately capture the students’ knowledge and development of article usage?

2. Are there other factors (e.g. previous instruction) that contribute to students’ English language article use?
2 Methodology and Results

2.1 Participants

The participants (n = 71) included 17 low, 20 intermediate, and 34 advanced ESL students.³ The students were tested in 3 locations in the Toronto area: a small private language school, a large private language school, and one of Toronto’s major universities. Liu and Gleason’s study initially used TOEFL scores to help separate the students into groups for analysis (low, intermediate, advanced). Liu and Gleason’s intermediate and advanced students “all had a TOEFL score of 500 or above and were given a cloze test to demonstrate their current English proficiency” (p.9) – unfortunately, this cloze test was not published with the research, so this replication was unable to recreate this same separation of student levels. While not all of my participants had TOEFL scores, IELTS scores were common and so equivalents were used when possible.

Looking at group of participants for whom I had IELTS scores (n= 45), the majority of them (approximately 83%), by Liu and Gleason’s assessment would be considered intermediate or advanced students.

Table 2: Participants with IELTS scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IELTS score</th>
<th>4.5 – 5 (Low)</th>
<th>5.5 – 6.0 (Intermediate)</th>
<th>6.5 – 7.0 (Advanced)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>3 (6.67%)</td>
<td>32 (71.11%)</td>
<td>10 (22.22%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interestingly, few of these advanced students ranked themselves as “advanced” learners on the questionnaire, instead opting to rate themselves as “intermediate”. This included the woman with the highest score of all of my participants. This particular individual reported studying English for more than 12 years; however the average length of English study reported by my sample group was approximately 7 years. Clearly, there are differences to be considered when

³ Incomplete tests (n = 45) were not analyzed.
comparing my group with that of the original study, whose participants had studied English for 4.4 years, on average.

The other low and intermediate participants for whom I had neither TOEFL nor IELTS scores (n=26) were ranked based upon two factors: 1) their school’s level assessment, and 2) the student’s self-assessment of their speaking ability. Sometimes an individual’s overall ability does not match his or her assigned class level for a number of reasons – limited class size, an individual’s choice of class, or an imbalance between strong understanding of grammar but little experience with the spoken language; combining the two measurements was an attempt to reduce an error in level assignment. Admittedly, it is an imperfect system, but language assessment often is. As these two factors of school assessment and self-assessment were in agreement for 80% (n=21) of these remaining participants, I decided to use the school’s assessments of their students for this study.

2.2 The replication test instrument

As indicated above, several items were added to some of the categories of the original test instrument used by Liu and Gleason. The following table contains a list of the items that I added to these under-represented areas of use.

Table 3: Additional test items for the revised test instrument

**Category 4 – Larger situation use relying on specific knowledge (Hawkins)**
**Cultural Use (Liu and Gleason)**

1. John and Aiko went to *(the) pub.*
2. I couldn’t get in because *(the) building* was closed.
3. Every year *(the) church* has a big festival in September.
4. Last night someone broke a window at *(the) library.*
5. Happy people were throwing confetti and balloons from *(the) bridge.*
6. I’ll meet you after school in *(the) coffee shop.*
Category 8 - Unfamiliar use in NPs with non-explanatory modifiers (Hawkins)
Structural Use (Liu and Gleason)

1. My husband and I love (the) same kind of movies.
2. Since a fire destroyed this building, that one next door is (the) last one of its kind.
3. I gave you (the) only money I had.

2.3 Questionnaire

A short, optional questionnaire was included at the end of the test (Appendix 3). It consisted of questions regarding the students’ cultural and linguistic background, current language level, previous education and test scores, experience in English-speaking countries, and awareness of article usage. The primary purpose of this questionnaire was to determine if the participant spoke a [-ART] or [+ART] language. Since participants’ names and countries of origins were optional, adding this questionnaire was a deliberate ‘back-up’ strategy to obtain basic information about the participants.

2.4 Administration, Coding and Analysis

The format of the instrument is simple. Each sentence is written with one or more instances of the article “the” being removed. Participants were instructed to read the sentence and insert the wherever, in the words of Liu and Gleason, they deem it necessary.

Participants typically needed 30 minutes to complete the test, although there was no time limit. The test was administered in school during regular class time.

In a study such as this, the participant’s overall score is not the focus of the research – it is the component scores in each of the categories of use which are revealing. Liu and Gleason’s analysis measured the number of times that the was supplied in an obligatory context, and secondarily, analyzed the different types of overuse.
The four categories of *missed use* have already been discussed. With *overuse*, Liu and Gleason quickly noticed that article mistakes were more difficult to categorize because subjects often inserted the article in unexpected places. The final analysis of missed use had four categories: *cultural*, *general reference*, *structural*, and *ungrammatical* overuse.
2.5 Results: Missed Uses

The number of missed obligatory uses was tallied, per category, with each subject receiving four scores, one for each type of use. Following Liu and Gleason’s methods of analysis, the mean of the missed obligatory uses was calculated for each type of use. Liu and Gleason’s MANOVA results (Table 4) showed a significant difference on univariate and multivariate tests indicating support for their hypothesis that the four nongeneric uses of the have different difficulties of use. However, as indicated in Table 5 and illustrated in Figure 2, the results of this replication study indicated a significant difference only in the structural use category.

<p>| Table 4: Results of Liu and Gleason (2002) MANOVA on missed uses of the across three levels in four types of use |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use type</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Λ</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All four</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>15.37*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use type</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>166.39</td>
<td>83.2</td>
<td>10.14*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situational</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>254.74</td>
<td>17.37</td>
<td>25.27*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>47.58*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textual</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>364.86</td>
<td>182.43</td>
<td>62.06*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05
### Table 5: Results of Venuti (2011) MANOVA on missed uses of *the* across three levels in four types of use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use type</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Λ</th>
<th>$F$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All four</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>1.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Univariate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use type</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>$F$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>84.10</td>
<td>42.05</td>
<td>2.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situational</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>73.45</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>3.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>198.07</td>
<td>99.04</td>
<td>12.79*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textual</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17.27</td>
<td>8.64</td>
<td>3.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .01

Liu and Gleason interpreted their findings as support for their hypothesis that the four nongeneric uses of *the* have different levels of difficulty for ESL students. This may have been an oversimplification as a number of other factors need to be considered and will be discussed further in the following sections.
Liu and Gleason used a post-hoc Tukey test to locate differences between the three proficiency groups in each article use category. They found that “the number of missed obligatory uses of the in all four types of use decreases as the participants’ English proficiency level increases” (p.12-13). The wording of this statement is slightly misleading as this was not a longitudinal study: The same students were not followed over time to track their improvement; it is the cross-sectional averages that improve. Nonetheless, Liu and Gleason’s intended meaning is that, in general, mistakes decrease as proficiency increases. This is a result which is to be expected and hoped for.

While Liu and Gleason (2002) found an “across-the-board significant decrease in missed articles from the low level to the intermediate level” (p.13), this replication did not note the same improvement. The results from this replication do partially support Liu and Gleason’s observation of improvement between the intermediate and advanced groups but again, this similarity was observed only in the structural use category.
Table 6: Means, standard deviations and Tukey test results of comparisons of means between groups (Venuti 2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Cultural</th>
<th>Situational</th>
<th>Structural</th>
<th>Textual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>5.25a*</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9.35</td>
<td>6.20</td>
<td>4.65a*</td>
<td>3.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>7.54</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>1.65*</td>
<td>2.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Means with a common subscript are not significantly different by the Tukey test with p < 0.01. The asterisk in the structural use of the low group and intermediate group compared with the advanced group indicates that the differences in performance here are significant.

Given the significant differences between the means in the Liu and Gleason study, they carried out a pairwise t-test of the three groups’ total means to look for any significant difference between each possible pair. Table 7 presents these results. They indicated significant differences between all pairs which again supported Liu and Gleason’s suggestion of a hierarchy of difficulty among the four types of usage (p.14). Cultural use was found to be the most difficult, supporting Master (1995). Liu and Gleason note that it was surprising to see textual use as more difficult than structural use, previously proposed by Tarone and Parrish (1988).
Table 7: Pairwise t-tests compared

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural vs. Situational</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>11.90*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural vs. Structural</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>10.17*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural vs. Textual</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>6.30*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situational vs. Structural</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>-3.33*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situational vs. Textual</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>-5.59*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural vs. Textual</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>-3.35*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural vs. Situational</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>7.47*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural vs. Structural</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>11.18*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural vs. Textual</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>12.14*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situational vs. Structural</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>5.38*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situational vs. Textual</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>7.16*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural vs. Textual</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>1.56*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05

Liu and Gleason summarized their findings in the following statement, which means that *cultural use* is more difficult than *situational use*, which is more difficult than *structural use*, all of which are more difficult than *textual use*.

Cultural > Situational > Structural > Textual

The results of the pairwise t-tests from this replication are also shown in Table 7. Similar to Liu and Gleason’s findings, the same ranking was found in this replication. However, it is important to remember that these are general results. When one looks closely at the more difficult items on the test, the overall picture changes slightly. In fact, *cultural use* items were not the most difficult ones, only the most frequently missed overall. For the most part, *cultural use* items tend to be ones that students either know or do not know (e.g. names of bodies of water, mountains and other geographic areas). With an item such as #86, however (“I’m sick. I’ve come down with flu.”), students’ difficulty is perhaps related to the use of an idiom and preposition combination (come down with). The expression “the flu” is certainly something that students
have used in class and have heard in casual speech many times previously. An item such as #60 (The President of the United States lives in the White House.) is perhaps more interesting since different cultures use names and titles differently. As it turns out, the most difficult items in this study were related to textual use, as illustrated in Table 8.

**Table 8: The 10 most frequently missed items**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item #</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>% who missed it</th>
<th>Hawkins category</th>
<th>L &amp; G category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100 A</td>
<td>The children</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>1 or 6</td>
<td>Textual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 B</td>
<td>The car</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Textual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34 B</td>
<td>The game</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>1 or 6</td>
<td>Textual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86</td>
<td>The flu</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>5 (general knowledge)</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52 A</td>
<td>The Pacific Ocean</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>5 (general knowledge)</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 B</td>
<td>The White House</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>5 (general knowledge)</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52 B</td>
<td>The world</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>5 (general knowledge)</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>The handle</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>3 (immediate sit use)</td>
<td>Situational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 A</td>
<td>The President</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>5 (general knowledge)</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>The Sun</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>5 (general knowledge)</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While item 100 may have been missed by 85% of the participants partly because it was the last item of the test and fatigue could have been a factor, it is unlikely that fatigue contributed to students missing items 17 or 34.

The assumption that cultural use is generally the most difficult is also challenged when we score other cultural use items on the revised instrument used in this replication study. Table 9 reveals that some cultural items were missed infrequently – which supports my hypothesis that cultural use has a number of disparate elements that should not be conflated into one singular category.

**Table 9: Less frequently missed cultural use items**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item #</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>% who missed it</th>
<th>Hawkins category</th>
<th>L &amp; G category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>The pub</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5 (general knowledge)</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>The building</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4 (specific knowledge)</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>the church</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>4 (specific knowledge)</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>The library</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>4 (specific knowledge)</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>The bridge</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>4 (specific knowledge)</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>The coffee shop</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4 (specific knowledge)</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>the U.K.</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>5 (general knowledge)</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This suggests that future research should separate *cultural use* into categories such as 1) geographic use, 2) names and titles, 3) common usage, and 4) uncommon exceptions.

### 2.6 Missed Use in the Initial Position

When scoring the tests, it quickly became apparent that items that require the article *the* as the first word of the sentence are often missed. Of the 60 test items, 13 require *the* at the beginning of the sentence. Of these 13, 7 are *cultural use* items. While this ratio may represent normal English usage, for the analysis this may add statistical “weight” to the likelihood that a cultural item is missed. Practically speaking, lower and intermediate groups of students may be more likely to rely on grammatical clues in the sentence to decide on the placement of the article *the*; therefore any sentence where the article should appear as the initial word has half the information of another sentence as there are no words preceding the missing article. It seems probable that the combination of cultural use and a difficult location in the sentence is highly likely to result in missed use. This is another factor to be taken into consideration in the development of tests to measure article use.

### 2.7 Missed articles used with prepositional phrases

A re-examination of the test to locate items which contained prepositions (not part of the original analysis), revealed that 14 sentences had a preposition and a required placement of the article (mistakes of this type are counted as *missed use*). An additional 25 sentences were counted that contained prepositions but did not require the article (mistakes counted as *overuse*). For example, we say “I am going to work soon”, but “I am going to *the* office soon.” And “I am going (*Ø*) home soon.” These small differences are often difficult for students to remember. In the *missed use items with prepositions*, 10 of these 14 were in the *cultural use* category, perhaps again biasing the results. The level of difficulty of these 10 items varied greatly. But another clue may be found in an item of *textual use* missed by 85% of the participants.

100. In their living room at bedtime, the mother says to children, “Turn off television.”
What might have been so difficult about this most frequently-missed item was not the *textual use* in general, but specifically an uncommon use of the preposition “…the mother says to (the) children”, instead of “the mother says to HER children.”

Even more surprising was an analysis that showed that these particular mistakes are more likely to occur as students progress in their L2 development. The advanced students made almost twice as many mistakes around prepositional phrases as their Low-Intermediate and Intermediate counterparts, perhaps suggesting that the advanced students are over-generalizing some of the collocations that they have learned. At higher levels, improved accuracy with prepositions may be the final barrier to achieving accurate use of the article.

2.8 Overuse of *the*

While Liu and Gleason’s data again indicated significant differences in all four categories of overuse (cultural, general reference, structural and ungrammatical), the intermediate students were found to overuse the article *the* more than both low and advanced student participants. Specifically, this pattern of the “the-flooding” was found in the *situational, textual and cultural use* categories, but *cultural use* most of all. Overall, their results suggest “that overuse of *the* still remains a problem for advanced ESL students” (2002, p.17) The results in Table 10 show Liu & Gleason’s findings of significant difference between the three levels of students on all four overuse categories: cultural, general reference (hereafter abbreviated “general”), structural, and ungrammatical. Leaving aside *ungrammatical* mistakes for the time being, “the participants’ overuse in these three categories increased as their English proficiency improved from low level to intermediate level, and then such use began to decrease as their English proficiency improved further.(2002, p.16)
Table 10: Results of MANOVA on overuse across three levels in four types of use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use type</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Λ</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All four</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>8.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use type</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>565.24</td>
<td>282.62</td>
<td>14.41*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Ref.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>241.53</td>
<td>120.77</td>
<td>11.83*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>93.15</td>
<td>46.57</td>
<td>11.60*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ungrammatical</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>162.25</td>
<td>81.12</td>
<td>11.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05

In this replication study, “the-flooding” was highest among the advanced group, which does not support the typical U-shaped effect initially observed by Master (1987). Again, because of my many concerns with the test instrument, I am not confident with the statistical results regarding overuse.

Despite this general concern, the data on overuse from this replication (Table 11) were highly dependable. Pillai’s trace (.002) was satisfactory, and Levene’s test (.01) showed no significant differences with measurements indicating reliable differences between the categories. The only exception was with the ungrammatical use category (.034).
Table 11: Results of MANOVA on overuse across three levels in four types of use

(Venuti 2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use type</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Λ</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All types</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>.847</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Univariate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use type</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>171.42</td>
<td>85.70</td>
<td>4.63*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Ref.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>240.09</td>
<td>120.05</td>
<td>4.60*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.168</td>
<td>.713*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ungrammatical</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>26.38</td>
<td>13.19</td>
<td>7.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .01

Post-hoc Tukey testing (Table 12) revealed that the differences in the structural use category separate the participants into two clear groups: the advanced and intermediate students perform similarly with few mistakes while the low students were far more prone to overusing the article. These results are consistent with the original findings.
Table 12: Means, standard deviations and Tukey test results of comparisons of means between groups (overuse)

(Venuti 2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overuse type</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Cultural</th>
<th>General Ref</th>
<th>Structural</th>
<th>Ungrammatical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8.12</td>
<td>8.76</td>
<td>.35*</td>
<td>2.18</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>.20a*</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>6.81</td>
<td>5.54</td>
<td>.19a*</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Means with a common subscript are not significantly different by the Tukey test with p < 0.01. The asterisk in the structural use of the low group compared with the intermediate and advanced groups indicates that the differences in performance here are significant.
My findings in the *ungrammatical* category are similar to the original study. However, because these mistakes are essentially random and inexplicable and there is no way to compare the location and nature of these mistakes without the original data, the value of this comparison is minimal.

To summarize the differences in *structural use* between the three groups, it may be said that the intermediate group shows two characteristics. First, the intermediate group behaves similarly to the low proficiency group in terms of a high frequency of *missed* uses of the article, but interestingly the intermediate group is similar to the advanced group in terms of a low frequency
of overusing the article. In other words, the intermediate group only makes mistakes of omission in the structural use items. This behavior was not clearly visible with other types of use. This may partly be a function of the test, as logic dictates that high overuse of the article reduces your chances of missing a required instance (and vice-versa). The category of overuse has other complications, which will be discussed in the following sections.

2.9 [+ART] and [-ART] speakers

Unfortunately, only a small number of tests from the [+ART] speakers were completed (n=5). No analysis between the two groups was attempted due to this small sample size.

2.10 Overuse with capitalization, place names, and word choice

The data from this replication study also indicate that many students are confused with capitalization patterns. Besides the discrepancy and inconsistency in the capitalization of disease names in the test (“Malaria” but not “polio” and “the flu”), other capitalized nouns were often a source of overuse for the students. Some examples are: “It’s time to go to *the Grandma’s house.” and “Space Shuttles are launched from *the Cape Canaveral.”; “*the North America” and “*the California” and “*the Sally” were surprisingly frequent mistakes.

While the test instrument certainly contained places that many students would be unfamiliar with (e.g. Wyoming), other locations are famous enough to be acceptable (California, New York). Mistakes of this type probably indicate that, when unsure, students are trying to satisfy the demands of the test and find opportunities to use the article.

These variations, I believe, come close to the heart of the problem: this is a true “Cultural” (with a capital C) difference that complicates language use, and this is one of the reasons for arguing that cultural use be separated into sub-categories. For example, I believe students who are accustomed to attaching honourific titles to certain places are more likely to want to add the article the before a place name (e.g. In the Japanese language, Mt. Fuji is addressed as a person). This instinct probably overrides any lessons students may have had in the past about the names of mountains. In this replication study, the participants would have been exposed to conversation
with other Torontonians who very seldom make reference to mountains, and will probably encounter neither lessons about correct usage in this situation nor casual conversational usage.

With sentences such as “*The Yellowstone Park is in Wyoming”, perhaps students were thinking that this was an adjective (which it is), as in the sentence “The yellow stone park is in big mountainous Wyoming.” The same pattern of use was apparent with “*The Salt Lake City is in Utah.” The city of New York – another name with an adjective – appears twice in the test instrument. This repetition is perhaps unnecessary, but students’ familiarity with New York did not cause any problems. A follow-up interview to explore questions like these would be useful in future research.

Another weakness with the original Liu and Gleason test instrument is that the noun “basketball” appears four times. If a student is tempted to write “*the basketball”, which is incorrect when referring to the sport in general, they will likely make this same mistake repeatedly. Although such consistency is to be expected, it also exaggerates the number of times a student overuses the article, again overestimating the difficulty of cultural use. A similar situation takes place with “next week” (which occurs 2 times) and “dinner” or “at dinner” (which occur 4 times). These repetitions were not eliminated from this replication study; the only changes were those of additional test items.

2.11 Acculturation vs. cultural use

Another consideration when evaluating which sentences to include in a test instrument is how the sentence may be read by a non-native speaker of English. This was drawn to my attention by item #97 which reads “What’s behind door number one?” Many westerners familiar with ‘contest-style’ television game shows can recognize this correct cultural use yet the participants in both the Liu and Gleason and the present study consistently opted to write “*the door #1”. Few students, if any, have been exposed to the type of show that launched this phrase into popular culture (and is no longer popular on television). Furthermore, they have almost no chance of learning about it in the classroom. An item such as this appears to be more a test of acculturation than cultural use. Without a socialization experience of such television programs,
a student carefully reading each sentence word by word would read, “What’s behind door” and think that in English we normally say “behind the” or “the door”, and therefore decide that an article likely belongs in that position. With this consideration in mind, the fairness of item #97 is questionable. Additionally, the use of capitalization in this item (“What’s behind Door #1?”) may also contribute to confusion. This is another problematic test item which should have been removed. This is important to note, as any reliability test that Liu and Gleason conducted with native speakers would not have detected this kind of difficulty.

2.12 Questionnaire Results: Knowledge of L1 article use

The questionnaire included the simple question “Does your language use articles?” This question was added in case some students declined to state their country of origin. The results were unexpected: The response “Yes, my language uses articles” was chosen by 84% of the students. This is interesting for two reasons: First, the majority of these responses came from Chinese students and the Chinese language is, of course, a [-ART] language. Second, these Chinese students were the advanced students in this study. While it may be that the students were indicating that there are other ways of assigning specificity in their language, the answer is still perplexing. Since articles (as a grammatical feature) were not defined in the questionnaire, it is possible that some students were not sure of what was being asked; yet this seems unlikely since the students were, in fact, students of the English language.

Next, many of these same Chinese students responded that their language has both definite and indefinite articles – which is again perplexing. I have two explanations for these unexpected results: First, perhaps EFL teachers in China have been trying to explain English articles by likening them to other elements in the Chinese language which can connote specificity through context and discourse. This would then mean that, while these students understand that Chinese has no articles (which likely they do), for the purposes of relating to the “Western” way of thought they are acknowledging that the Chinese language has elements which can function like articles. Another possibility relates to the fact that all of my advanced Chinese participants were under 20 years old. Perhaps these younger students are part of a new generation of Chinese speakers who have been adapting the Chinese language to include articles. I mention this with respect to a recent program on CBC radio in which it was noted that the Chinese language which normally uses word order to add contrastive stress and definiteness, has begun to use pronouns
and identifiers such as “that man” and “one man” in the same function as a definite article\(^4\). The explanation given was that, due to exposure to outside modes of speech, the Chinese language of the younger generation is evolving to include a feature that was previously absent in the language. On a larger scale, the scholars commented that Chinese was a “linguistically less-developed” language (I paraphrase), which is being forced to evolve in response to the needs of modern communication. Obviously, more study is necessary before either of these explanations can be substantiated.

It is important to repeat that the highest score was \emph{not} achieved by the student who had studied the longest. Those who had studied English the longest (as much as 20 years) did sometimes fare better in terms of overuse, or in terms of missed uses – but not both. This could indicate a generally high level of use, but also indicate set behaviour or the use of memorized phrases which may take precedence over other, more accurate choices.

In the next chapter, the results of the study will be discussed with reference to the specific research questions posed. Implications for future research and L2 teaching are also presented.

\(^4\) I have been unable to locate the original broadcast that was the source of this comment. Not every CBC radio show is made available for public access via podcasting; furthermore, it was not the subject of the show but a comment made as an illustrative example for a larger discussion on how language changes evolve.
3 Discussion

3.1 Research question #1

Does Liu and Gleason’s 4-category model of article usage adequately capture the students’ knowledge and development of article usage?

The primary question that prompted this replication study was whether or not it was appropriate for Liu and Gleason to simplify Hawkins’ 8 categories into 4, particularly in the cultural use category. While no definitive answer emerges regarding this question because of the difficulties and complications with both the original and replication test instruments, I do feel confident arguing that the combination and reduction of 8 categories into 4 is an unnecessary and unhelpful oversimplification. In particular, cultural use seems to have a number of elements which cannot be combined under a larger heading. I would recommend separate cultural assessments for 1) geographic use, 2) names and titles, 3) common usage, and 4) uncommon exceptions – this would be information that is not only useful for research purposes but also helpful to students for gauging progress while learning English. Difficulties with modern cultural use items and other items which represent a lifetime of acquired acculturation to Western culture must be resolved. Considering the results of the replication data and the many concerns raised with respect to the imbalance and inconsistencies of the test items, Liu and Gleason’s conclusion that cultural use is the most difficult is not fully supported.

3.2 Research question #2

Are there other factors (e.g. previous instruction) that contribute to students’ English language article use?

Yes, there are. As detailed above there are a number of linguistic and contextual complications which influence a students’ decision to use or omit the article. My participants indicated that there are significant misunderstandings about articles, their definition and usage, and this is not limited to English articles but also to article usage in the student’s L1. In this replication study, it was the majority of the Chinese participants who indicated a number of conflicting beliefs about
article usage. Unfortunately, my inability to speak any of the Chinese languages, compounded by my limitation of not being able to follow-up with the participants now that the data have been analyzed, means that this is an area of research best followed up by another researcher, at another time.

3.3 Future research

While replicating this study with a larger group of participants may have its benefits, the next logical step would be to reproduce a modified test which focuses on cultural use. Specifically, this test (or questionnaire) would seek to find the differences in “Cultural” use (that is, intercultural differences for names of nouns, especially people, their titles, and place names) and “cultural” use (which often refers to daily conversational use). More accurate categories for analysis may be 1) geographic use, 2) names and titles, 3) common conversational usage, and 4) uncommon exceptions.

Finally, it must be remembered that this written test does not accurately present students’ spoken article production. Ideally, a combination of oral and written tests could be administered including a post-test interview to discuss L2 learners’ understanding of article use and the reasons for their choices on selected test items.

3.4 Pedagogical Implications

Targeting instruction that helps students with the difficult areas of article usage is needed. In addition to the importance of focusing on different categories of cultural use, it would also be useful for teachers to address article use in conjunction with propositions and in instances where the article the is the first word of a sentence. Attention to these particular areas of article use may help students with article use in a variety of situations germane to all aspects of daily life as well as student life.

The observation that article usage generally follows patterns of underuse, then overuse, then finally approximate usage, can be encouraging to both teachers and students as mistakes can be attributed to a naturally developing interlanguage article system. I believe that passing on this
knowledge should be part of our students’ instruction and could serve as a preventative measure against student frustration and loss of motivation.

3.5 Conclusion

It is interesting to observe at the end of my research that this study did not become what I thought it would be: simple quantitative support (or refutation) of Liu and Gleason’s 2002 research, or perhaps an expansion of their research with the speakers of different [+ART] languages. Instead, during the process of analyzing the data, numerous concerns with the test instrument began to present themselves, and I quickly realized that the results and any statistical comparisons that I might draw with the original study were tenuous and inconclusive. Because of this, the data only served as an anchor for a further analysis of the test instrument itself. In carrying out research on L2 development the integrity of testing instruments is crucial to discover answers to our questions. Nonetheless, Liu and Gleason’s test instrument – imperfect as it may be – served to reveal further levels of complexity in the measurement of English article use that can be considered in future research.
References


Appendices

Appendix 1: Hawkins' 8 categories of use

1. **Anaphoric use**: use of *the* when something is mentioned a second time and subsequently (e.g., *Bill was working at a lathe the other day. All of a sudden the machine stopped running*)

2. **Visible situation use**: use of *the* with a noun mentioned the first time to refer to something that both the speaker and the listener can see (e.g., *Pass me the bucket*)

3. **Immediate situation use**: very similar to type 2, the only difference being that the thing referred to may not be visible (e.g., *Don’t go in there, chum. The dog will bite you.* [Hawkins, p. 112])

4. **Larger situation use relying on specific knowledge**: use of *the* with a first-mention noun because it is known in the community (e.g., people from the same village talking about the church, the pub, and so forth)

5. **Larger situation use relying on general knowledge**: use of *the* with something that one can assume people from a country or around the world should know (e.g., *The White House referring to the U.S. government, the moon*)

6. **Associative anaphoric use**: basically the same as type 1, the only difference being that the first-mention *the* is used with a noun that is related to a previously mentioned noun, rather than being the same noun (e.g., *We went to a wedding. The bride was very tall.*)

7. **Unfamiliar use in NPs with explanatory modifiers**: use of *the* with a first-mention noun that has an explanatory or identifying modifier in the form of a clause, prepositional phrase, or noun (e.g., *The movies that are shown here now are all rated R; There was a funny story on the front page of the Guardian this morning; I hate the name Algernon.* [Hawkins, pp. 139 and 147])

8. **Unfamiliar use in NPs with non-explanatory modifiers**: similar to type 7, the only difference being that the modifier does not provide explanatory information (e.g., *My wife and I share the same secrets*, where the modifier *same* does not inform us as to what the secrets are but “only points to an identity between the two sets of secrets, my wife’s and my own” [Hawkins, p. 148]). Here *same* is used as a unique adjective that always requires *the*. There are a few adjectives that can be used this way, such as *only* and *sole.* (Liu and Gleason, 6)
Appendix 2: Test instrument

Your name _____________________________(if you want to know your score)
Your native language __________________________
Number of years you have studied English ______________________

In some of the following sentences, the definite article “the” is missing. Please read the following sentences carefully and insert the article “the” wherever you think it is necessary.

1. Fred bought a car on Monday. On Wednesday, he crashed car.
2. I look after a little girl and a little boy on Saturdays. Little girl is smart but boy isn’t.
3. I read a book about New York. Author, however, was from Arizona.
4. Jane bought a ring and a necklace for her mother’s birthday. Her mother loved ring but hated necklace.
5. Space Shuttles are launched from Cape Canaveral in Florida.
6. We rented a boat last summer at a lake. Unfortunately, boat hit another boat and sank.
7. My mother has a white dog and a black dog. White dog is taller than black one.
8. The mother says to her children, “Come on, it’s time to go to Grandma’s house.”
9. I watched several old movies last weekend. I enjoy watching old movies.
10. I have read a few science fiction books this semester. Science fiction books are really interesting.
11. John and Aiko went to pub.
13. At the zoo I saw several tigers. I think that tigers are beautiful animals.
14. While driving in their car to work, the husband asks his wife, “Could you open window please?”
15. Our office got some new computers last week. Someday, I really think that computers will replace people everywhere.
16. Before the examination begins, the teacher says to the students, “Write your answers in blanks.”
17. I saw a man in a car across the street. At first I wasn’t sure, but then I realized man driving car was a friend of mine.
18. Handle of that cup was broken.
19. When I grow up, I want to be a doctor. Medicine is a widely respected profession.
20. Toronto is capital of Ontario.
21. Do you know pilot who flew this airplane?
22. I couldn’t get in because building was closed.
23. Man I met in New York later became my husband.
24. Blue car across the road is very suspicious.
25. Did you hear house we saw last week was burned down last night?
26. I know man who runs this university.
27. Can you turn on light on top of that table?
28. In his office, the boss says to her secretary, “Turn on computer.”
29. Children growing up with both parents are healthier than those growing up with only one parent.
30. Mary is not tall but she plays basketball very well. Usually short women aren’t so good at playing basketball.
31. I’ve heard of parents who don’t give their children enough to eat.
32. People from around the world are meeting here today.
33. Every year church has a big festival in April.
34. We went to a basketball game on Saturday. Players at game were all very tall.
35. Design on this lamp is really ugly.
36. Things of beauty always bring great joy.
37. We went hiking in Lake District last autumn.
38. She is only American woman to have run for vice-president.
39. I generally don’t read newspaper articles from low-class papers.
40. Sally Ride was first woman in space.
41. Professor who teaches the physics class explains things very well.
42. A woman, with her hands full, says to a man standing in front of the office, “Open door for me, would you?”
43. Water in this glass is dirty.
44. Last night someone broke a window at library.

45. A man says to his wife at the breakfast table, “Can you pass me newspaper?”

46. While driving in their car to work, the father says to his son, “Please turn on radio.”

47. Tom and his friend are playing basketball. Tom says loudly to his friends, “Pass me ball.”

48. Shoes in department stores are usually expensive.

49. We went to a wedding. Bride was beautiful and groom was handsome.

50. The manager asks her secretary, “Could you please check schedule for me?”

51. I like to read books about philosophy.

52. Pacific Ocean is the largest in world.

53. Sun is shining. It’s a beautiful day.

54. We got a new television for our house. I enjoy watching some programs, but in general I think that we shouldn’t watch television so much.

55. Happy people were throwing confetti and balloons from bridge.

56. Moon is full tonight.

57. Do you think we can move car that’s blocking my driveway?

58. At dinner, the mother reminds her children, “Keep your elbows off table.”

59. Who is leader of your club?

60. President of the United States lives in White House.

61. My mother likes to have salads at dinner because salads are very healthy.

62. “Ladies of the night” is a euphemism, a nicer name, for prostitutes.

63. Bill caught Malaria (a disease) while traveling in Africa.

64. In a bright sunny room, the woman asks the man “Could you close curtains, it’s too bright in here.”

65. I like to watch movies that are black and white.

66. I’ll meet you after school in coffee shop.

67. The teacher says to his pupils, “Read Chapter Twenty in your book.”

68. There are very poor people who are living in this community.
69. The wife hears a noise, then tells her husband “Doorbell is ringing. Answer door.”
70. Mississippi river runs through Louisiana.
71. There has been a great deal of effort to clean up Chesapeake Bay.
72. A woman says to her friend “Why don’t you come over for dinner tonight?”
73. Jim made a salad to go with dinner. Lettuce and tomatoes are always delicious in salad.
74. Lake Michigan is a large lake in North America.
75. The teacher says to her students, “Don’t forget that your papers are due next week.”
76. I go back to work on Monday.
77. My husband and I love same kind of movies.
78. The man says to his friend “I’m off on vacation tomorrow.”
79. The teacher says to her students, “The meeting will not be held until next week.”
80. A man says to his date, “I’ll see you at eight o’clock.”
81. A lot of people died of plague (a disease) in the 17th century.
82. Mojave Desert is in California.
83. New York Times is a very well known paper.
84. The mother asks the father, “Is baby sleeping?”
85. A plane crashed in Florida Everglades.
86. I’m sick. I’ve come down with flu.
87. The boss says to his employees, “I’m not happy with your work. Things are really going to have to change around here.”
88. This bird is last one of its kind.
89. At dinner, the guest says to the host, “Could you please pass salt?”
90. England is part of United Kingdom.
91. Jill had polio (a disease) when she was a little girl.
92. The daughter says to the mother, “I’ll come visit you in June.”
93. Yellowstone Park is in Wyoming.
94. John’s wife died of cancer in 1996.
95. The wife says to her husband, who is hanging a picture in the room, “Picture isn’t straight.”
96. Salt Lake City is in Utah.

97. The game show host says to the contestant, “What’s behind door number one?”

98. Mount Etna in Sicily is still an active volcano.

99. I gave you only money I had.

100. In their living room at bedtime, the mother says to children, “Turn off television.”
Appendix 3: Questionnaire

1. Please choose one:
   I am a…. beginner / intermediate / advanced … student.

2. Please choose one:
   a. My English skills are better than most of my classmates.
   b. My English skills are worse than most of my classmates.
   c. This class is the perfect level for me.

3. How many years have you been learning English?

4. How long have you been studying in Canada (or other English speaking countries)?

5. In your home country, did you speak English outside of your English class?

6. Please choose one:
   a. At home, my teachers did emphasize using articles in my classes.
   b. At home, my teachers did not emphasize using articles in my classes.

Please tell me your opinion:

7. English articles are too complicated. I’ll never learn! TRUE / FALSE

8. I don’t worry about making small mistakes with “a” and “the”. TRUE / FALSE

9. In my classes at home, we were taught articles… but articles were not as important as vocabulary and other grammar. TRUE / FALSE

10. At home, I never had any good lessons about article usage. TRUE / FALSE

11. At home, article teaching only came from a book, not from the teacher. TRUE / FALSE
12. At home, my grammar books didn’t tell me all the rules of article use. TRUE / FALSE

13. When speaking English, none of my friends used articles, so I don’t worry about them either! TRUE / FALSE

14. Articles are not very important words, so I prefer to think about vocabulary and meaning. TRUE / FALSE

15. At home, it’s possible that my teachers did not know how to use English articles. TRUE / FALSE

16. When listening to English, it is really hard to hear small words like “a” and “the”. TRUE / FALSE

17. When speaking English, articles are not very important because people can understand me even if I make mistakes. TRUE / FALSE

18. It’s too hard to remember all of the article rules. TRUE / FALSE

19. I want someone to tell me an easy way to remember article grammar rules. TRUE / FALSE

20. In your language, do you use articles?
   a. No, my language doesn’t use articles
   b. Yes, my language uses articles.
      If YES, does your language use definite and indefinite articles?
      a. Yes, we have both kinds of articles.
      b. No, there is no difference.
      c. I don’t know.

21. What kind of instruction did you have in your school?
   a. Traditional grammar instruction (and not much practice speaking)
   b. Communicative instruction (mostly talking, not too much grammar)
c. BOTH grammar practice and speaking practice

d. Something else….?

22. Is there a problem with articles that you have and would like to improve? What kinds of sentences are hard for you?