

Language Awareness for Key Stage 3

8: Determiners

Key Terms	Optional Terms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Article • Definite • Indefinite • Partitive • Count noun • Mass noun • Demonstrative • Agreement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific • Deictic • Concord • Noun phrase

- Introduction: Determiners
 - Today we will take a closer look at another part of speech: determiners
 - As you saw before, this category includes articles (*a, the*) and demonstratives (*this, that*)
 - We will see how different languages have different articles and use them in different ways
 - We will also look at different types of demonstratives
 - Finally, we will look at agreement between determiners and nouns
- Articles
 - In English there are two types of article, the indefinite article (*a/an*) and the definite article (*the*)
 - You may remember, though, that not all languages have both types of article
 - a book / the book (English)
 - leabhar / an leabhar (Irish)
 - bir kitap / kitap (Turkish)
 - liber / liber (Latin)
 - One way that languages with no articles can make the same distinctions is through word order
 - This can be seen in Finnish:
 - Lauloi lintu
sang bird
'A bird sang'
 - Lintu lauloi
bird sang
'The bird sang'
 - The difference between the indefinite and definite articles is not easy to describe
 - In general, using the definite article means that something is more specific or better known than with the indefinite article
 - Have you seen a dog?
(any dog)
 - Have you seen the dog?
(my dog, the dog that you know I have)
 - In some contexts, only one article is possible
 - Sorry I'm late; a man outside kept me talking
 - ~~Sorry I'm late; the man outside kept me talking~~
 - When you're introducing something completely new, you usually need to use the indefinite article

Activity 1:

Look at the sentences below. In groups, try to come up with a description of what it is that makes them odd. It should be possible to express this in terms of a single property, even if you can't find a good name for it.

- John is going to become a chef —
but we don't know which chef
 - Mary wants to marry a Swede with ten children —
but she's almost given up hope of finding one
 - Every morning I read the newspaper —
and by now I almost have it memorised
 - Mrs Smith has been fifty years at this school as the headmaster's wife —
but none of our headmasters has lasted longer than ten years
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- Another difference between the articles is that the indefinite article is used only with count nouns (e.g. *an icicle, a lawn, a dream*) and not with mass nouns (e.g. *ice, grass, dreaming*)
 - Because of this, mass nouns in English are often found without any article at all
 - There's ice all over the roads this morning
 - ~~There's an ice all over the roads this morning~~
 - ~~There's the ice all over the roads this morning~~
 - However, it's still possible to use the definite article with mass nouns when they refer to something known
 - The ice made it hard to drive
 - You can also add the indefinite article to a mass noun, but if you do you're saying that it actually can be counted
 - a coffee
(e.g. 'a cup of coffee', 'a type of coffee')
 - There are some languages that have even more articles than English
 - For example, French has a partitive article used with mass nouns and plurals
 - du thé
'tea'
 - un thé des thé(s)
'a tea' 'teas'
 - le thé les thé(s)
'the tea' 'the teas'
 - The partitive article is formed with the preposition *de* 'of', usually together with the definite article
 - You can see this most clearly in the feminine form
 - Je buvais de l'eau
'I was drinking water'
(literally, 'I was drinking of the water')
 - The idea behind the partitive article is that this quantity is a small part of a larger whole
 - This may remind you of the partitive genitives that we saw in the last lesson
 - Even when different languages have the same types of article, they may use them in different ways
 - For example, German has indefinite and definite articles, like English
 - These are usually used as in English, but there are exceptions
 - Ich bin Arzt
I am doctor
'I am a doctor'

- Er liebt die Musik
He loves the music
'He loves music'
- In some languages, such as Modern Greek, an article is used even with proper names
 - Ο Petros ekhei autokineto
the Peter has car
'Peter has a car'
- Demonstratives
 - As you may remember, demonstratives are words like *this* and *that*
 - Demonstratives are used to point things out, to draw someone's attention to them and their location
 - Another word for demonstratives that you may sometimes hear is deictics
 - Many languages have different demonstratives, corresponding to different positions in space
 - For example, English uses *this* for things that are closer and *that* for things that are further away
 - This car right here is nice, but that car over there is nice too
 - When you're talking about something abstract, it may be possible to use either *this* or *that*, depending on how close it seems in your mind
 - They left suddenly, and this surprised me
 - They left suddenly, and that surprised me
 - (Note that *this* and *that* can be used on their own without a noun, like pronouns but unlike articles)
 - In English there is a two-way distinction between *this* and *that*, but other languages may make different distinctions
 - For example, in Latin there was a three-way distinction:
 - *hic* 'this (near the person speaking)'
 - *iste* 'that (not too far, near the person spoken to)'
 - *ille* 'that (further away, not near either person)'
 - Some English speakers make the same distinction, among *this*, *that* and *yon* or *thon*
 - It is also possible to make fewer distinctions than English
 - In French, *ce* is a neutral demonstrative, which can be translated as *this* or *that*
 - ce livre
'this book'/'that book'
 - A location can still be specified in French, by adding an extra word
 - ce livre-ci
'this book (here)'
 - ce livre-là
'that book (there)'
 - In some places, including Northern Ireland, people do something similar in English
 - this here book
 - that there book
 - This table shows how different demonstratives divide up space:

Latin	<i>hic</i>	<i>iste</i>	<i>ille</i>
English	<i>this</i>	<i>that</i>	
French	<i>ce</i>		

Activity 2:

In groups, take some time to think of any other languages that you might know. What sort of demonstratives do these languages have? How many different categories are there?

Language	Demonstratives	Total
<i>Latin</i>	<i>hic, iste, ille</i>	3

- Agreement
 - Determiners normally agree with their nouns
 - This means that if the noun has a given number (e.g. singular/plural) or gender (e.g. masculine/feminine), then so will the determiner
 - You may hear this behaviour called agreement or concord
 - You can see agreement in English with *this* and *that*
 - this cat / these cats
 - that dog / those dogs
 - If the noun is singular (*cat, dog*), then the determiner will be singular
 - If the noun is plural (*cats, dogs*), then the determiner will be plural
 - In languages where determiners have grammatical gender, they also agree in gender with the noun
 - You can see this with masculine and feminine nouns in French
 - un Français
‘A Frenchman’
 - une Française
‘A Frenchwoman’
 - In some cases, agreement may provide the only visible sign of a noun’s gender
 - un critique
‘a critic’
 - une critique
‘a critique’
 - There are also languages where determiners have separate forms for different cases (e.g. nominative/dative)
 - In these languages, the determiners agree in case with their nouns, as you can see in German:
 - Ein Junge half ihr
‘A boy helped her’
 - Sie half einem Jungen
‘She helped a boy’
 - Sometimes the determiner may be the only visible sign of a noun’s case
 - Ihre Mutter ist ganz gleich
‘Their mother is just the same’
 - Ihrer Mutter ist ganz gleich
‘To their mother (it) is all the same’
 - In many languages, the same marking for number/gender/case will be present on any adjectives as well

- This means that the whole noun phrase shows agreement:
 - une belle Française
‘a beautiful Frenchwoman’
 - des belles Françaises
‘beautiful Frenchwomen’
 - Der kleine Junge half ihr
‘The little boy helped her’
 - Sie half dem kleinen Jungen
‘She helped the little boy’
- Conclusion
 - Today we have looked at two types of determiners, articles and demonstratives
 - Different languages have different types of articles, including definite, indefinite, and partitive articles
 - Indefinite and definite expressions can be specific or non-specific
 - Demonstratives point things out and locate them in space
 - Determiners often show number, gender and case in the same way as nouns
 - When this happens, the determiners agree with their nouns in these properties