

A COMPARISON OF THE MORPHOLOGY OF FRENCH AND ENGLISH NOUN PHRASES

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ABSTRACT

This article highlights the comparison of the morphology of the noun phrases in French and English through the illustration of the similarities and differences in the way they each express gender, number, definiteness, and case. Some possible complexities that French speakers learning English might have with gender, number, and definiteness which I think are more interesting and are morphologically expressed, but this research does not focus on the case since it is similar in English and is syntactically stated.

Keywords: Morphology, Noun Phrases, Gender, Number, Definiteness, Case

INTRODUCTION

“French belongs to the Romance group of Indo-European languages and is closely related to Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Romanian and other Romance tongues. French is much more inflected than English. Though there are some differences between standard French of France or Canadian French, for example, and the standard French of France, but the differences are not greater than those between British and American English; the different standard French dialects are certainly mutually comprehensible” (Swan & Smith, 2001, p. 52).

“Since French is an Indo-European language, and because the Norman contribution to English was so great, there are some similarities between French and English, both in syntax and vocabulary” (Swan & Smith, 2001, p. 52). In addition, unlike English, components in French noun phrases must go along with each other in gender and number (Price, 1986). In this paper, I will highlight the comparison of the morphology of the noun phrase in French and English through the illustration of the similarities and differences in the way they each express gender, number, definiteness, and case. I will indicate some possible complexities that French speakers learning English might have with gender, number, and definiteness which I think are more interesting and are morphologically expressed, but will not focus on the case since it is similar in English and is syntactically stated.

In linguistics, “a noun phrase is a phrase whose head is a noun or a pronoun, accompanied by a set of modifiers. It always includes a noun (e.g. book, truth, elephants) which may be accompanied by a determiner and/or an adjective(s), and/or and adjectival phrase (e.g. ‘a coffee cup’, ‘une tasse à café’) or adjectival clause (e.g. ‘the man who came to dinner’), or a pronoun (e.g. I, him, these, mine, someone, nothing, themselves, who?), some of which may (like nouns, but much less frequently) be accompanied by adjectival expressions, or a noun

clause, i.e. a clause fulfilling similar functions to a noun (e.g. 'I believe what he says' = more or less 'I believe his statement', 'that he is angry distresses me' = more or less 'his anger (or the fact of his anger) distresses me')'(Price, 1986, p.13). Price explains his definition of noun phrases clearly with examples by comparing English and French noun phrases according to their number, gender, case and definiteness. Hence, I will discuss them in details morphologically in this paper.

A COMPARISON OF FRENCH AND ENGLISH NUMBER AND THE PROBABLE DIFFICULTIES FRENCH SPEAKERS MIGHT ENCOUNTER WHILE LEARNING ENGLISH:

French:

In French, singular/plural forms can be shown in both spoken and written language. "In spoken French, most nouns are invariable in the plural that is, there is no audible distinction between singular and plural" (Price, 1986, p. 85-93) e.g.:

(1) le lit. ('bed'), plural les lits, both pronounced [li]

(Price, 1986, p. 85-93)

There are also some exceptions but the main indication as to whether a noun is singular or plural is provided not by the form of the noun itself but by its determiner (article, demonstrative, possessive, etc.), e.g:

(2) la femme [la fam] ('the woman') les femmes [le fam] ('the women')

(Price, 1986, p. 85-93)

"In written language, the plural of a noun is generally formed in French, as in English, by adding -s to the singular." (Whitney, 1887, p. 30 ; Price, 1986, p. 85-93) e.g.:

(3) a. le livre ('book') les livres ('books')

(Price, 1986, p. 85-93)

b. le roi ('the king') les rois ('the kings')

(Whitney, 1887, p. 30)

"Nouns that end in -s, -x or -z in the singular remain unchanged" (Price, 1986, p. 85-93 ; Whitney, 1887, p. 30)

e.g.:

(4) a. le mois ('month') les mois

b. la voix ('voice') les voix

c. le nez ('nose') les nez

(Price, 1986, p. 85-93)

d. le fils ('the son') les fils ('the sons')

e. la noix ('the walnuts') les noix ('the walnuts')

f. le nez ('the nose') les nez ('the noses')

(Whitney, 1887, p. 30)

“Nouns ending in –au, –eau or –eu add –x instead of –s to the singular” (Price, 1986, p. 85-93; Whitney, 1887, p. 31)e.g:

(5) a. le lieu ('the place') les lieux ('the places')

(Price, 1986, p. 85-93)

b. le chapeau ('the hat') les chapeaux ('the hats')

(Whitney, 1887, p. 31)

“Most endings in al and ail change these endings to aux for the plural” (Whitney, 1887, p. 31)

(6) a. le cheval ('the horse') les chevaux ('the horses')

b. le travail ('the work') les travaux ('the works')

(Whitney, 1887, p. 31)

“A few nouns form their plural quite irregularly.” (Whitney, 1887, p. 31)

(7) le ciel ('the heaven') les cieux ('the heavens')

(Whitney, 1887, p. 31)

Mondelli, 1961 also agrees with Price 1986 and Whitney 1887 that, the plural of most French nouns is formed by adding s to the singular.

English:

In English, the singular/ plural nouns and countable/uncountable nouns are shown in similar ways with some differences. “In writing, most English nouns form the plural with –s. This is

true of nouns which end in most consonants (e.g. road → roads) and the vowels a and e (e.g. area → areas). English does not have very many irregular plurals (e.g. leaf → leaves). Some English nouns are more common in the plural form. These occur in a number of categories e.g. clothing: clothes, jeans, trousers, pyjamas, trunks, dungarees; games: dominoes, darts, cards, and bowls. In English, countable nouns are usually concrete nouns and they can be 'counted': a computer, three computers. Uncountable nouns cannot be 'counted': oil, beauty etc. We do not use a/ an with uncountable nouns, and we do not make them plural e.g. (an advice/ some advice are wrong and some advice is correct) Some determiners change according to whether the noun is countable or not e.g. For good health we should eat **a few vegetables** every day, as well as **a little fruit**. It is also advisable to drink **less alcohol** and eat **fewer sweet things**. Some nouns can be countable or uncountable, but have different meanings:" (Foley & Hall, 2003, p. 249).

noun	countable meaning	uncountable meaning"
Coffee	<i>I'd love a coffee, please.</i>	<i>Do you drink coffee? (=the liquid)</i>
	(= a cup of coffee)	

(Foley & Hall, 2003, p. 249)

COMPARISON:

The number can be shown through singulars and plurals in both English and French. "Number is that property indicating one person, place, or thing, or more than one. They are two numbers, the singular and the plural" (Mondelli, 1961, p. 264). Mondelli says that numbers in nouns have singulars and plurals. This is valid when we have a look at some differences in English and French numbers. "A number of nouns are countable in French and uncountable (mass nouns) in English"(Swan & Smith, 2001, P. 66). According to Swan and Smith, when compared to English, French has some nouns which are countable, whereas they are uncountable in English. Swan and Smith maintain that, some nouns which are countable in French may cause difficulties for French speakers to learn English mass nouns which are uncountable. So, French speakers learning English may produce sentences such as my hairs, your luggage, information, advice, the news is good (Swan & Smith, 2001).

Another difference concerning the numbers in French and English is the plural nouns and singular nouns. "Some things that are designated by plural nouns in English are designated by singular nouns in French" (Swan & Smith, 2001, p.66). Their point is that some plural nouns in English may be singular nouns in French. When we consider the situation of plural nouns and singular nouns in both languages it is possible that French speakers might make mistakes like: a jean, a trouser, a short, a pyjama, the middle age (for the Middle Ages), the custom (for customs), the police is on the phone (Swan & Smith, 2001).

Moreover, some nouns take a plural verb and followed by plural nouns in French but not in English. Swan and Smith report that, "Quantities of money and measure of liquids, solids, and distances typically take a plural verb and are followed by plural pronouns in French" (Swan & Smith, 2001, p. 66). They say that English does not have the same rule for the quantities and measures to have plural verbs and plural nouns. The Advanced Grammar book by Celce-Murcia-Larsen Freeman, 1999, also shows some examples for the English nouns which don't take plurals if they are indicated with quantities and measurements. So, I infer that French speakers learning English will probably make errors in sentences like: "I need another five pence, but I haven't got them. ; Fifteen litres are more than I can carry. ; Six miles aren't far to walk if you're fit" (Swan & Smith, 2001, p. 66).

In some cases when possession is the issue, English puts plural ('s) to the noun but the situation differs in French. "When several people possess the same sort of thing, French often puts the noun referring to the thing in the singular" (Swan & Smith, 2001, p. 66). They say that French has another rule which English doesn't; French nouns take singulars when everyone has the same thing. I believe this is right because in English I have never heard this rule in English and it doesn't make sense when we don't add a plural to a noun that everybody possesses. It is obvious that, French speakers learning English will make mistakes when they form sentences like: 'We all put our coat on and went out' (Swan & Smith, 2001, p. 66). In the example given by Swan and Smith, it is required that we should add a plural -s to the word 'coat' since everybody possesses it.

For French speakers, English noun-noun compounds may lead to problems, where one of the nouns has a plural meaning and a singular form. "a teethbrush, a shoes shop, the publisher of a book" (Swan & Smith, 2001, p. 66). They say that French speakers will have difficulties in learning a noun that has a plural meaning and a singular form which occurs in English. This may cause obvious errors while speaking and writing English.

A comparison of gender in french and english and probable errors french speakers might encounter while learning english:

Gender indicates whether parts of speech are masculine (masculin), feminine (féminin) or neuter. All French nouns have a gender, and all adjectives and articles that modify them must agree with this gender, as must personal pronouns that replace them.

French:

Gender in nouns only occurs in French and not in English. "Unlike English, French nouns have a gender: they are either masculine 'le' or feminine 'la'" (Mondelli, 1961, p.2). Besides, "French nouns are either masculine or feminine. It doesn't matter whether the noun in French is animate or inanimate, they both have genders, what matters is whether it is masculine or feminine. E.g. crayon (m.) / pencil, stylo (f.) / pen" (Mondelli, 1961, p.2; Price, 1986, p.32). According to Price, some nouns which refer to male humans are masculine and nouns referring to female humans are feminine. E.g. un avocat, barrister-masc.; la cantatrice, (opera) singer. "Some nouns however are masculine even when they refer to females, in particular: le docteur ('doctor'); un écrivain ('writer')" (Price, 1986, p.33). What's more, Price says that, there are nouns which are always feminine, even if they refer to the opposite

sex, e.g. la personne ('person'); la recrue ('recruit'). However, there are also some nouns which take either gender, depending on the sex of the person concerned, e.g.: le or la collègue, ('colleague'); le or la concierge ('caretaker'). Price and Mondelli agree that French has gender in nouns and that these nouns may be either masculine or feminine according to their type. We can see that French is a language with gender in nouns.

In French, the situation becomes even more complex when we talk about non-humans. "The relationship between gender and sex is far less close in the case of animals than it is in the case of humans. Most nouns falling into the following categories are masculine: names of trees and shrubs, names of common fruits and vegetables, names of metals and minerals, names of languages, names of colors, names of days of the week, months, seasons, names of weights and measures of the metric system, cardinal numbers, fractions, letters, of the alphabet" (Price, 1986, p. 35-37). In French, according to Price, gender and sex also differs in inanimates and animals but not as much as humans. Price's view indicates that French invests a lot in gender compared to English.

French uses endings to illustrate gender of nouns (Price, 1986). Table 1 is a list of some possible endings in French which has gender.

Table 1	
<p>Generally masculine endings: <i>-er, -ier, -eau, -t, -c, -age, -ail, -oir, -é, -on, -acle, -ège, -ème, -o, -ou.</i></p>	<p>Generally feminine endings: <i>-euse, -trice, -ère, -ière, -elle, -te, -tte, -de, -che, -age, -aille, -oire, -ée, -té, -tié, -onne, -aison, -ion, -esse, -ie, -ine, -une, -ure, -ance, -anse, -ence, -ense.</i></p>

(Price, 1986, p.41)

English:

On the other hand, English nouns don't have gender. "Nouns do not have grammatical gender in English. Some have a 'natural' gender, e.g. woman=female, dad= male. Most nouns for jobs do not imply a gender. To specify gender, we have to say, e.g. a woman doctor. However, some nouns for jobs and roles do refer to males or females, often by their suffix, e.g. businessman (male), manageress (female). It used to be common to use the -man suffix to refer to people of both sexes: That's the view of Sheila Davison, **chairman** of the Institute of Public Relations. A lot of people avoid this now, especially if referring to women, and prefer a form with no implicit gender, e.g. chair, or to match the suffix to the person, e.g. chairwoman: That's the view of Sheila Davison, **chairwoman** of the Institute of Public Relations" (Foley & Hall, 2003, p.248). Foley and Hall's point is that the referents have natural gender and the noun may sometimes change form to reflect that. Their comment shows that for example 'a table' is not female or male in English, but it is in French, The Grammar Book of Celce-Murcia (1999) also agrees with Foley and Hall in that English nouns don't have gender.

One might infer from the data given above that French speakers learning English nouns will probably encounter difficulties in learning because English has no masculine and feminine concepts. Swan and Smith acknowledge this likelihood when they show us these examples of learner errors: I can't find my book- he was on the table a minute ago. This cooker doesn't work as well as she used to (Swan & Smith, 2001, p. 66). Since it might be hard for French speakers to forget the habits of their first language and learn a new one which doesn't require gender, French speakers may use masculine or feminine pronouns in English because of the gender of the referent nouns in French.

Adjectives of French and English according to gender and probable errors French speakers might encounter while learning English:

French:

According to Whitney (1887) and Modelli (1961), an adjective is a word used to describe or to limit a noun or pronoun. Adjectives in French agree with the gender of the noun which does not happen in English. "In general, French adjectives agree in gender and number with the noun they modify. The feminine is generally built by adding an -e at the end of the adjective. e.g: joli, jolie, ('pretty'); vrai, vraie, ('true'); nu, nue, ('naked'); bleu, bleue, ('blue'). Modelli and Whitney endorse the view that in French adjectives agree in gender. In fact, there are lots of sample sentences used in the book of Whitney (1887) about the gender agreement of adjectives which does not occur in English.

- | | |
|--------|-------------------|
| m. | f. |
| petit, | petite, ('small') |
| noir, | noire, ('black') |
| royal, | royale, ('royal') |
| plein, | pleine, ('full') |

(Whitney, 1887, p.47)

In French, possessive adjective agrees in gender and number with the thing possessed (the noun that follows), and not with the possessor. "The possessive adjective has the following forms" (Modelli, 1961, p. 11).

M.SING.	F.SING.	M & F. PLURAL	English
mon	ma	mes	my
ton	ta	tes	your

son	sa	ses	his, her, its
notre	notre	nos	our
votre	votre	vos	your
leur	leur	leurs	their

(Mondelli, 1961, p. 11).

Mondelli reminds us that the possessive adjective agrees in gender and number which do not occur in English. For example, Marie lit mon livre ('Mary reads my book'); Jean aime ses parents ('John loves his parents'). According to Celce Murcia-Larsen Freeman, there is a major difference in the use of possessive adjectives in French compared to English. In English we say her dog, her house if the owner is feminine, regardless of the gender of the objects (which do not exist). Mondelli maintains that French is more influential in gender of possessive adjectives too than in English which doesn't agree.

Demonstrative adjectives in French have gender according to some linguists. "The demonstrative adjectives agrees in gender and number with the noun they modify"(Mondelli, 1961, p. 62; Whitney, 1887, p.69). Mondelli and Whitney agree that, in French, demonstrative adjectives can also agree in gender. When we consider a demonstrative adjective such as *ce* this or that before a masculine singular noun beginning with a consonant (*ce livre*), it is possible to say that they do agree in gender.

"This/that: *ce* or *cet* for masculine (*cet* before a vowel or h), *cette* for feminine. These/those: *ces* for masculine and feminine" (Mondelli, 1961, p. 62) Example:

- a. *ce bébé* ('this/that baby')
- b. *cet homme* ('this/that man')
- c. *cette femme* ('this/that woman')
- d. *ces enfants* ('these/those children')

(Mondelli, 1961, p. 62, Whitney, 1887, p.69).

English:

It can be inferred from the overall data given above that French speakers learning English adjectives may find it difficult to learn a new way of using adjectives in English which has no masculine and feminine concepts. "In English, adjectives are words which give extra information about nouns. They do not change their form to show number or gender"(Foley & Hall, 2003, p. 216). We infer that in the phrases of "a young boy" and "a young girl" the

word "young" doesn't change in English, but it would in French. It is possible to say that French has adjective forms that agree in gender and number which does not exist in English.

Probable errors French speakers may encounter while learning English adjectives because of gender and other reasons:

In French, the possessive adjectives agree with the nouns they qualify. It is possible that French speakers learning English might think that the word umbrella is masculine and my possessive adjective would agree with that as the rule in French. "Do you like my umbrella? He was very cheap" (Ewert, 1943, p. 173) According to Ewert, French has a rule for possessive adjectives which have to agree with the nouns they modify. This I believe leads to the mother tongue interference error. When French speakers produce English utterances they think of the gender rule in their native language and use a possessive pronoun with gender for the nouns in English.

French has a number of adjectives that can be used as singular nouns such as, "un riche 'a rich man', cette belle ('this beauty'), le bon et le vrai ('the good and the true'), les pauvres ('the poor')" (Whitney, 1887, p. 235). Whitney's examples given shows that French speakers might use the English adjectives as singular nouns too. "The poor! (meaning the poor man/woman!) ; The essential is to get the timing right" (Swan & Smith, 2001, p.67) Swan and Smith also say that French speakers might use any adjective without the equivalent of English proform one such as: "which one is your bother? The tall" (Swan & Smith, 2001, p.67) They say that French has the rule to use some adjectives to illustrate singular nouns which may cause a problem if used in English and that French speakers might not use one at the end of the sentence. This shows that French speakers may use adjectives to indicate singular nouns in English which will cause an error in the sentence.

Pronouns in French and English according to gender:

French:

Impersonal pronouns in French agree in gender. "A number of impersonal pronouns vary to agree in gender and number with the nouns they substitute" (Price, 1986, p.149). Price maintains that, gender in impersonal pronouns is more important in French than in English.

Celui qui travaille le mieux, c'est Paul. / The one who is speaking is my wife.

D'autres vont venir. / Others are going to come.

Lesquels voulez-vous ?/ Which ones do you want?

(Price, 1986, p. 174)

Je te parle./ I'm talking to you.

Il va nous donner les clés./ He's going to give us the keys.

Dis-moi ! /Tell me!

(Price, 1986, p. 131)

English:

In English, pronouns don't explicitly have gender but some linguists say that there are some concerns with gender in English. "The fact that English distinguishes gender with him, him, his and her, her, hers can cause difficulty in deciding which form to use after a subject or object not clearly of either gender. He, him or his used to be most common, but many people now object to this" (Foley & Hall, 2003, p. 265). In addition, Foley and Hall assert that "ways to avoid using he, him and his include the use of he/she (him/her, his/her) in writing, or they (them, their) or plurals in speech or writing" (p. 265). In English, according to Foley and Hall, the gender with some pronouns may be confusing when used after a subject or object. This could be possible since in English when we say "a student can achieve his/her/their goal when they study hard" we usually use either his/her or their since we don't exactly know if the student is a female or male.

A doctor always makes decisions according to the best of **his/her/their** knowledge.

Doctors always make decisions according to the best of **their** knowledge.

(Foley & Hall, 2003, p. 265).

Probable errors French speakers might encounter while learning English Pronouns because of gender and other pronoun problems:

According to Whitney (1887), French pronouns are based on the gender of the noun they are associated with. It is possible that French speakers learning English might consider the English pronouns as based on the nouns, too, so they will possibly make errors such as; "I met John and her wife for dinner" (Whitney, 1887, p 251) He says that this is a pronoun problem which results from gender in French and that it will cause French speakers to use the same rule while speaking English. The correct sentence should have been 'I met John and his wife for dinner' but it may be hard to explain this rule for French speakers since they have to forget their old habits and learn a new way of pronouns in English.

French does not express some distinctions between some reflexive pronouns and ordinary object pronouns. Besides, it doesn't also show a distinction between the ideas 'oneself' and 'each other'. Thus, it is possible that French speakers might make an error in English sentences such as; "I hurt me with the hammer. ; We just sat there looking at us" (Swan & Smith, 2001, p. 67) According to Swan and Smith, French speakers apply the same rule for reflexive pronouns and ordinary object pronouns in English. So, I infer that French speakers tend to make errors by using 'me' or 'us' in English sentences where 'oneself' or 'each other' is required.

Articles in French and English according to gender:

French:

Articles in the French language agree with the noun in gender and number. "In French, articles are required on almost every common noun; much more so than in English. They are inflected to agree in gender (masculine or feminine) and number (singular or plural)

with the noun they determine, though most have only one plural form (for masculine and feminine). In none of the three articles (definite/indefinite/partitive) is there a distinction between masculine and feminine in the plural" (Price, 1986, p.18-19). According to Price, definite articles, indefinite articles and partitive articles agree in gender in French. Price maintains that, in French, articles are more important in gender than in English which has none.

According to Price it is possible to illustrate to three articles in French according to their gender:

"Definite article: In English there is only one definite article the. In French there are three:" (Price, 1986, p. 19-21)

	Masculine	Feminine
Singular	<i>le, l'</i>	<i>la, l'</i>
Plural	<i>les</i>	<i>les</i>

Le and la are contracted to l' when followed by a vowel or an h. Examples:

<i>le garçon</i>	the boy	<i>la fille</i>	the girl
<i>l'autoroute</i>	the motorway	<i>les chiens</i>	the dogs

(Price, 1986, p. 19-21)

"Like the definite article, **the indefinite article** is also divided into masculine, feminine, and plural in French." (Price, 1986, p. 26-27)

	Masculine	Feminine
Singular	<i>un</i>	<i>une</i>
Plural	<i>des</i>	<i>des</i>

Example 1:

a) *un ordinateur* ('a computer')

b) *une maison* ('a house')

c) *des français* ('Frenchmen')

(Price, 1986, p. 26-27)

"The partitive article (some/any) also changes according to gender and number:" (Price, 1986, p.28)

	Masculine	Feminine
Singular	<i>du, de l'</i>	<i>de la, de l'</i>
Plural	<i>des</i>	<i>des</i>

(Price, 1986, p.28)

Example 2:

a) *du pain* ('some bread') c) *de la viande* ('some meet')

b) *de l'eau* ('some water') d) *des oranges* ('some oranges')

(Price, 1986, p.28)

English:

In English articles don't have gender. According to Celce –Murica, 1999, English articles can be shown schematically below:

Nouns			
Common ↙ ↘		Proper (definite) ↙ ↘	
Count ↙ ↘	Noncount ↓	Sg.	Pl.
Sg.	Pl.	<i>0</i>	<i>-the</i>
Definite	<i>-the</i>	<i>-the</i>	<i>-the</i>
Indefinite	<i>-a/-an</i>	<i>some</i>	<i>some</i>

(Celce-Murcia, 1999, p. 272)

As from the schema of articles in English it is obvious that English does not have gender in articles. In the definiteness part I will explain in detail about the definite, indefinite, and partitive articles in English.

Probable errors French speakers might encounter while learning English articles because of gender in French articles:

In French, the possessive determiners agree in gender with the noun they modify. "I had dinner with John and her sister last night. ; Janet lent me his knife to open the parcel." (Swan & Smith, 2001, p. 66) They indicate that French speakers tend to use their own mother tongue rule for English, too, which is the usage of his and her possessive determiners as same things. I believe this would cause French speakers to make errors when using possessive determiners in all English sentences.

A summary of both gender and number:

GENDER AND NUMBER AGREEMENT IN FRENCH:

Table 1 illustrates gender agreement in French according to Price, (1986); Mondelli, (1961); Whitney (1887).

	"Adjectives in French agree in gender and number with the noun that they qualify." (Price, 1986, p.99, Whitney, 1887, p.46)	
<u>Adjectives</u>	Ces livres sont intéressants.	These books are interesting.
	Ma grande maison verte.	My big green house.
	<i>Exceptions: Adjectives used as adverbs - Invariable Adjectives</i>	
	"Definite, indefinite, and partitive articles each have three forms: masculine, feminine, and plural." (Price, 1986. p.18)	
<u>Articles</u>	le livre, la table, les stylos	the book, the table, the pens
	un homme, une femme, des enfants	a man, a woman, some children
	du fromage, de la salade, des pommes	some cheese, some salad, some apples
	"French nouns are either masculine or feminine . In addition, nearly	

Nouns	all French nouns have different forms for singular and plural " (Mondelli, 1961, p. 2; Whitney, 1887, p. 209)	
	un cousin, une cousine e , des cousins s , des cousines es	cousin(s)
	un invité, une invitée e , des invités s , des invitées es	guest(s)
	un acteur, une actrice e , des acteurs s , des actrices es	actor(s)/actress(es)
Nouns: Compound	"Compound nouns are covered by some rules for pluralization and gender" (Price, 1986, p.66).	
	des oiseaux-mouches	hummingbirds
	des gratte-ciel	skyscrapers
Pronouns: Impersonal	"A number of impersonal pronouns such as <u>demonstratives</u> , <u>possessives</u> vary to agree in gender and number with the nouns they substitute." (Price, 1986, p.149).	
	Celui qui travaille le mieux, c'est Paul.	The one who works best is Paul.
	D'autres vont venir.	Others are going to come.
	Lesquels voulez-vous ?	Which ones do you want?
Pronouns: Personal	"All personal pronouns such as <u>subject</u> , <u>object</u> , <u>stressed</u> vary according to the grammatical person that they stand for." (Price, 1986, p. 131)	
	Je te parle.	I'm talking to you.
	Il va nous donner les clés.	He's going to give us the keys.
	Dis- moi !	Tell me!

A COMPARISON OF DEFINITENESS IN FRENCH AND ENGLISH AND PROBABLE ERRORS FRENCH SPEAKERS MIGHT ENCOUNTER WHILE LEARNING ENGLISH:

Definiteness is the concept expressed by definite articles such as "the", and also by other expressions such as demonstratives ("this", "that") and personal pronouns. "French uses its definite article in a much wider range of contexts than does English to illustrate definiteness. French has three articles: a definite article, somewhat analogous to English the, except it has a plural form; an indefinite article, somewhat analogous to English a or an and some; and a partitive article, somewhat analogous to English some" (Lyons, 1999, p.216).

French:

The definite article in French

According to Price, the definite articles in French, *le*, *la*, *les*, are basically equivalent to English *the*. Whenever *the* is used in English, chances are that the definite article will be used in French. In some cases, however, French will use a definite article when English uses no article at all. Also, whenever the definite articles *le* or *les* follow the prepositions *à* or *de*, the preposition and article combine together.

Masc. sing.	Fem. Sing.	Plur.
<i>le</i>	<i>la</i>	<i>les</i>

a. *le livre* , *les livres* the book, the books

b. *la porte*, *les portes* the door, the doors

(Price, 1986, p. 19)

The indefinite article in French:

The indefinite article in French is somewhat similar to the English indefinite article. "The indefinite article, *un/une*, is used exactly like the English indefinite article- *a/an*. It is used when referring to a single instance that is a part of a group that consists of many entities:" (Price, 1986, p.26).

Singular	
Masculine	Feminine
<i>un</i>	<i>une</i>

un garçon	une fille
un ami	une amie

(Price, 1986, p.26).

Like a/an, the French indefinite article is used with a noun referring to a non-specific item, or to a specific item when the speaker and audience don't both know what the item is; so, J'ai cassé une chaise rouge. ("I broke a red chair"). According to Price, unlike a/an, the French indefinite article has a plural indefinite form *des*, which is used when referring to more than a single entity.

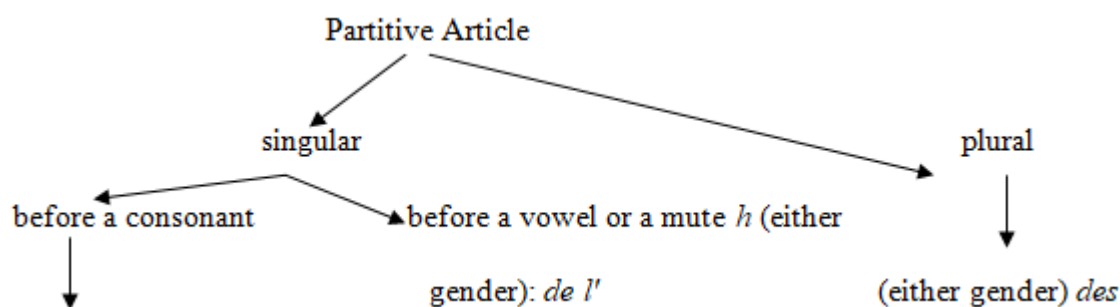
The partitive article in French:

Another important characteristic of French articles is the presence of so called partitives. "A partitive article in French consists of the preposition *de* followed by a definite article (*du*, *de la*). It is frequently used before a singular noun that represents something that can be divided into smaller parts like liquids, wood, food, etc." (Price, 2003, p.30).

Price indicates that, there is no English partitive article; the French partitive article is often translated as *some*, but often simply omitted in English. It is used to indicate an indefinite portion of something uncountable, or an indefinite number of something countable:

J'ai du café ('I have some coffee or simply I have coffee.')

According to Price, it is possible to show French partitive article through a schema:



masculine: *du*

feminine: *de la*

(Price, 1986, p. 28)

The definite article in English:

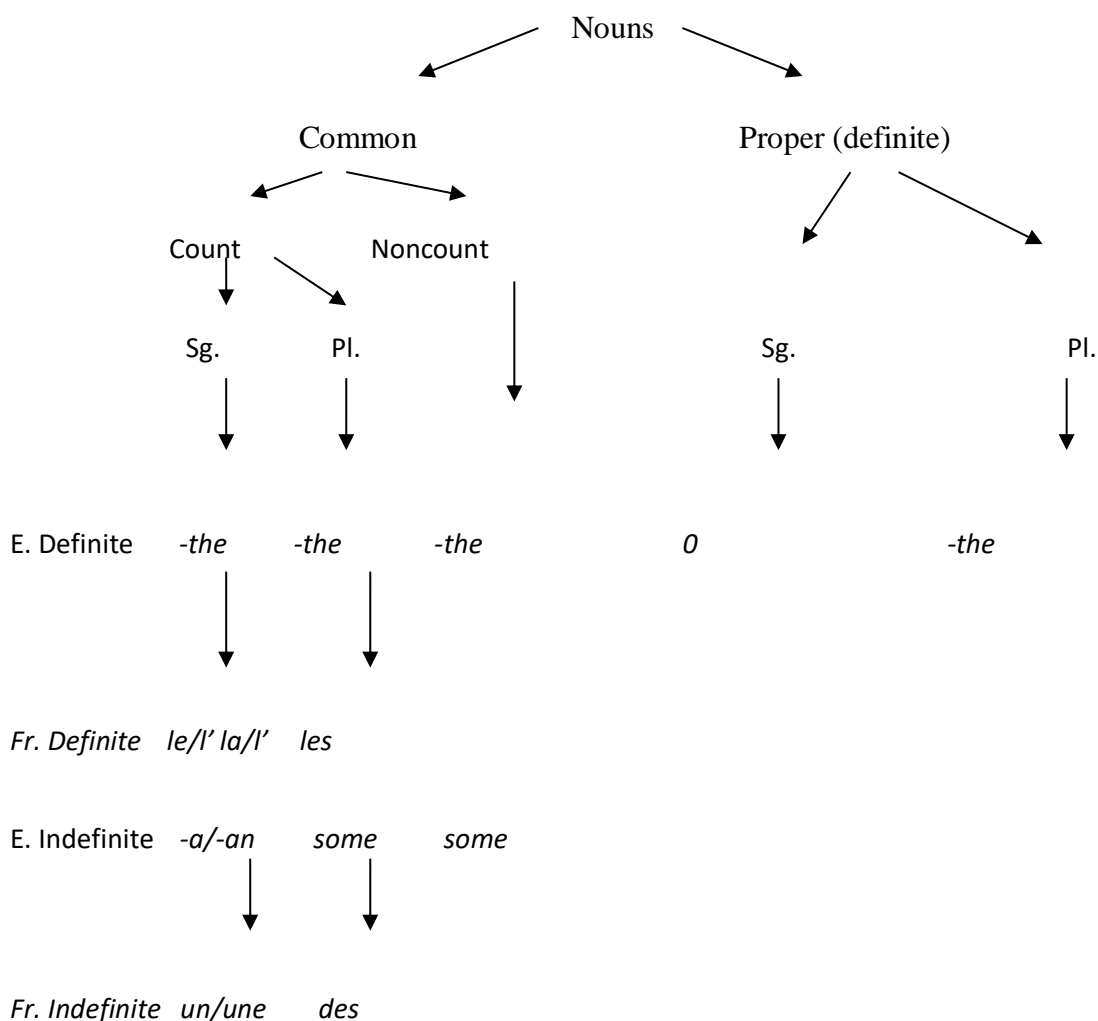
According to Lyons (1999) the definite article *the*, in English, is the most basic indicator of definiteness. In the sentence 'give me the pencil' the definite article 'the' indicates that the

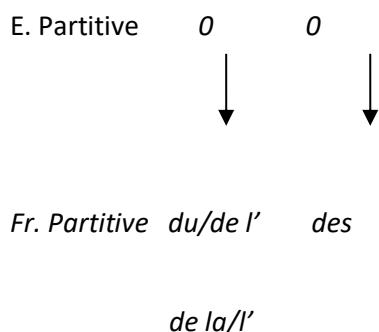
person who asks expects another person to be able to identify that particular pencil. Moreover, according to Dr. Douglas Adams, a professor at University of Idaho, definite articles indicate the old information. e.g. Simon goes to the bar and a guy sits next to him, the guy talks about linguistics. In this sentence 'the' indicates the old information. I agree with Professor Adams since we already know who the guy is.

The indefinite article in English:

Lyons states that the indefinite article a/an, is the most basic indicator of indefiniteness. In the sentence 'give me a pencil' the indefinite article 'a' indicates that the person who asks expects another person to be able to give any pencil. Besides, according to Douglas Adams, the indefinite articles indicate new information. e.g. Simon goes to the bar and a guy sits next to him, the guy talks about linguistics. In this sentence 'a' indicates the new information. I agree with Professor Adams since we don't know who the guy is. We could say that 'a' is the new information and also the indicator of indefiniteness in English.

According to the information given above, it is possible to draw a schema for the comparison of articles that show definiteness and indefiniteness in both languages. In this schema, numbers are also given as a summary of number and definiteness.





(Celce-Murcia, 1999, p.272)

According to Lyons, French articles are far more complex. However, there are certain situations when articles occur in English but not in French and vice versa. Generally speaking, if a definite article occurs in English then chances are there will be a corresponding French article as well but there are some exceptions as in case to express measures of quantity in relation to price, e.g. deux euros le kilo (two euros a kilo).(Lyons, 1999)

Probable errors French speakers might encounter while learning English articles:

In French, it is possible that the definite articles could go with some general nouns. This may cause a problem for French speakers if they use the same rule while speaking English. “I like the Baroque music. ; The whisky is a stronger drink than the sherry” (Swan & Smith, 2001, p.65) In French, according to Swan and Smith, the definite articles accompany nouns which are used in a general sense. Swan and Smith maintain that the French speaker could make generalizations and produce wrong sentences using extra definite articles in front of common nouns because of their mother tongue interference.

French speakers use articles in front of possessive pronouns and some determiners in their native language, so they may use the same rule in English, too, which may cause another problem. “This is the mine and that is hers. ; most people think the euro is a good thing” (Swan & Smith, 2001, p.65). According to Swan and Smith, French speakers might use an extra definite article while making a sentence in English. This I believe is probably because of the rule in French which doesn't occur in English at all.

There are also similar errors depending on the rules of definite articles in French. Learners of French who try to learn English would probably have a hard time in forgetting their old habits, using articles in front of some nouns, and learning a new habit which doesn't require definite articles in English. The Mike's book; what time do you have the dinner? , English is a difficult language; He's coming the next week; The Cambridge University, Princess Caroline; I'm not in the office the Thursday” (Swan & Smith, 2001) Swan and Smith say that French speakers use unnecessary definite articles in front of some nouns in English. Mother tongue interference seems to be the reason for forming such an incorrect sentence.

French does not use articles before the names of professions. “Sarah is teacher” (Swan & Smith, 2001, p.65). According to Swan and Smith, French speakers don't use indefinite articles in front of professions. So, French speakers would probably form incorrect sentences

when they refer to a person's profession or religion in English like; 'I am a teacher. ; He's going to be a doctor etc.'

Besides, in French, the indefinite article can sometimes be omitted after the equivalents of as and without: "I used my spoon as a shovel. ; Did Tom go out without hat?" (Swan & Smith, 2001, p.65) Swan and Smith maintain that the use of indefinite articles can be omitted after as and without in French. This would indicate that French speakers may not use 'a, an' while making sentences since they might confuse it with 'as or without'.

Overall, we can summarize that the article use in French is similar but not identical to that in English. Interference in these areas will lead to mistakes such as:

He is doctor. ; This is the John's car. ; What stupid thing to do! ; The German is easier than the English.

So, French speakers will have problems with showing old and new information.

A COMPARISON OF FRENCH AND ENGLISH CASE:

Case in French is stated syntactically rather than morphologically. In this case, I will just compare both languages briefly according to their syntax since the two languages are very alike. According to Mondelli (1961) and Price (1986), the French sentence structure is similar to English in that both languages use a Subject-Verb-Object formation, except in French when the object is a pronoun, the word order is Subject Object Verb. Example of French and English sentence structure;

I	eat	a pizza.	Je	mange	une pizza.
S	V	O	S	V	O

Examples:

a) "The subject: *The boy is reading a book. / Le garçon lit un livre*"

(Price, 1986, p.14-17).

b) "The complement of the subject, after the verb 'to be' or another linking verb e.g.:"

He is *a doctor* / Il est *medecin*

(Price, 1986, p.14-17).

c) "The direct object: *The boy is reading a book. / Le garçon lit un livre*"

(Price, 1986, p.14-17).

d) "The indirect object: *I am sending my bother a book. / J'envoie un live à mon frère.*

(Price, 1986, p.14-17).

Subsequently, it is clear from these samples that the syntax in French and English is precisely alike. Case does not involve the morphology of the noun, but involves the pronoun. I will not talk about the possible difficulties of learners. The complexities with pronouns are explained in the section on pages 14-16. I have already discussed them earlier.

A HIERACHY OF DIFFICULTY FOR FRENCH SPEAKERS LEARNING ENGLISH NOUN PHRASES:

<p><u>I. Breaking old habits</u></p>	<p><u>Pronoun usage(p.16) English: Different French: Different</u></p> <p><u>Indefinite and definite article usage:</u></p> <p><u>English: Different French: Different</u></p>
<p><u>II. Learning a new habit</u></p>	<p><u>GENDER AND NUMBER (p.19 summary)</u></p> <p><u>Nouns (masc. feminine.) English: 0 French : yes</u></p> <p><u>Adjectives (masc. feminine.) English: 0 French : yes</u></p> <p><u>Articles (masc. feminine.) English : 0 French : yes</u></p> <p><u>Pronouns (masc. feminine.) English : 0 French: yes</u></p> <p><u>DEFINITENESS</u></p> <p><u>Patitive articles (p.22) English: 0 French : yes</u></p>
<p><u>III. Keeping old habits</u></p>	<p><u>CASE (p.27)</u></p> <p><u>Subj + Verb + Obj English : Yes French : Yes</u></p>

A brief explanation of the hierarchy of difficulty chart:

In the hierarchy of difficulty chart, I have numbered the breaking old habits as the hardest thus agreed with University of Idaho professor, Dr. Douglas Adams, because I think changing

the habits from the way one has learned before is more difficult than learning a new habit which is related to the negative transfer.

Breaking the old habits part includes some pronoun usage of English and French. On page 16 I have already addressed that French does not express distinctions between reflexive pronouns and ordinary object pronouns but English does. French doesn't also show a distinction between the ideas 'oneself' and 'each other' instead they use 'me' or 'us' in their native language. So, in order to form correct sentences, French learners need to break their old habits and learn a different rule of English pronouns. According to this data I have indicated that the pronoun usages of both languages are different in the chart. Other than pronoun usage this part also includes the usage of definite and indefinite articles which I have mentioned about them earlier on pages 20-25. They both have different usages in both languages so French speakers have to break their old habits and learn the English rules of articles.

The next part includes learning a new habit. I have discussed earlier that nouns, adjectives, pronouns, and articles in the French agree with the noun in gender and number but in English they don't. Therefore, I have written masculine or feminine in front of these components and indicated that French does agree by saying yes and English doesn't by saying no.

For the last part which is keeping the old habits, I have placed the case issue in English and French. Since I have discussed before that the case in French is expressed syntactically thus, compared both languages according to their syntax and concluded that the two languages are very alike. They both have subject + verb + object order. So, I wrote yes for both in the chart to show that both of the languages are similar in syntax.

An assessment of Sources:

In order to analyze the two languages, French and English, I searched the internet data together with some linguistic books that I borrowed from the library and a book from my contrastive linguistics course. The data given in the references part was good in general but they had some specific weaknesses, too.

Some of the books were difficult to comprehend due to the fact that the sources were rather old, especially the book of Mondelli, R.J. (1961). French Conversational Review Grammar. American Book Company and Whitney, W.D. (1887). A Practical French Grammar With Exercises And Illustrative Sentences From French Authors. In a sense, they didn't explain gender, case, number and definiteness clearly. On the other hand, the book of Price was quite informative but was too detailed so I had to summarize all the ideas. However, one thing that I liked in all the old books and Price's new book was that all agreed with each other in plurals, gender, and articles. One advantage that this agreement provided is that I was able to support my ideas with different books.

The strengths were that in all of my data I could find some very useful examples that illustrated the comparison clearly. The two most important ones are by Celce-Murcia, Marianne together with Larsen-Freeman, Diane and by Price, Granville. The first was

English grammar and the second was about French grammar. Both had quite explicit chapters about noun phrases which did help me a lot to compare both languages.

The French speakers who attempt to learn English noun phrases will find some features of it easy and some other features difficult as explained in this project. The easiness comes from the linguistic elements which are similar to the learner's language and the difficulty from those which are different from his native language. To discover and predict this type of learning difficulties needs comparing the English language with the French language as can be seen in this paper and, thus, I believe this research will provide the language teacher with a chance to know what the real learning problems of French speakers using noun phrases.

In my opinion, when used in the classroom, the contrastive study of a language's morphology forms a useful technique, employing the previous knowledge of the learner, informing him about the similarities and differences between his native language and the foreign language he is studying, also warning him about making false analogies and about the mother tongue interference. I believe it is possible to eradicate the errors caused by the differences between L1 and L2 by providing efficient teaching materials, etc. I also suggest that raising our students' consciousness to the problems mentioned in this paper may be a useful way of helping them keep the two languages apart. In other words, English teachers can show the differences between the student's native language and the second language (English) by the help of teaching materials such as charts etc. and then make the students aware of the probable problems they will encounter while learning English. This may help students to pay attention on the probable errors more and thus they may try not to make errors. Languages are much more complex than one might think, so I believe I still have to search more and more. Lastly, if I were to continue this project I would definitely search for more books and see if they support my ideas and the ideas of the linguists that I refer to.

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