

A CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE USE OF DEFINITE ARTICLES
IN ENGLISH SCIENTIFIC TEXTS AND IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

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This paper is a continuation of the paper by Professor KRAMSKY on the use of the definite article in English.

Professor Kramsky found that the definite article is less used in newspapers than in scientific texts, and is less used in literary texts than in newspapers.

Our analysis of English scientific texts led us to propose a theory which distinguishes in scientific texts two different types of propositions:

- those which convey the scientific message of the author, i.e. the new theory or point of theory he proposes. These propositions we call the language propositions in the text.

- those which are used to explain, illustrate and comment on the language propositions. They help the reader understand and approve of the author's new ideas. These we call discourse propositions.

The definite article is used in these two types of propositions in a different way:

- in language propositions, the definite article introduces the terms or expressions used to designate the concepts operative for the analysis presented by the author.

- in discourse propositions, the definite article is used to introduce the terms or expressions which designate the examples, illustrations which the author refers to in order to explain his theory to the reader.

From this analysis of the use of the definite article in English scientific texts, there can be devised a quasi automatic content analysis of a scientific text, through the analysis of the words introduced by the definite articles in the text.

From this analysis of the use of definite articles in scientific texts, we proceeded to an analysis of the definite article in literature.

We first worked on Victory by Joseph Conrad, and then on the Sonnets by Shakespeare.

From this analysis, we can say that, whether the author of a given text be a scientist or a poet, there is at work a logical process which can be traced through the use of the definite article.

The problem of the difference in the number of times the definite article is used in scientific texts and in literature is due to the fact that the scientist has to demonstrate a theory, which is a purely logical process, whereas the poet aims at creating beauty and an imaginary world which the reader must accept of. That is why there is more emphasis in literature on what we call discourse propositions than on what we call language propositions.

Nevertheless, there can be traced in both types of creative work some similar patterns through which the human mind finds and expresses new things, which can be illustrated by an analysis of the use made by the author of the definite article.