

4

DETERMINERS AND PRONOUNS

- 1 Fill in the blanks with the indefinite article, the definite article, or Ø (zero article). Discuss any difference in meaning in case you find that two solutions are equally acceptable. Note that the choice of article should make sense in the context.

When Ø temperatures dropped to one degree Fahrenheit and my pipes froze this week, I was reminded of how lucky we are, under Ø most circumstances, to be able to turn a valve (In this case the definite article could be used. The meaning would then be less general and more specific. It could for instance refer to the main water valve.) and watch copious amounts of Ø clean water flow into our sinks, showers, toilets, and washing machines. In the U.S., we use an average of 100 gallons each day for Ø washing, cooking, cleaning, drinking, and lawn watering. This doesn't account for the water that's required to grow our food, manufacture our computers, or refine the fuels we rely on to drive our cars and keep our homes, and water, warm. In other parts of the world, nearly 900 million people do not have Ø access to the daily minimum water requirement of 5–13 clean and safe gallons, according to the United Nations. (From *National Geographic*)

- 2 Choose the correct alternative in the sentences below. If both alternatives are acceptable, explain any difference in meaning.
 - a. Of course, there will be some/any talk.
 - b. Almost nothing gets built these days without some/any federal support.

The use of “some” indicates some support in addition to other sources, whereas “any” means any support at all.

- c. There are no vegetables ~~some~~where/anywhere.

- d. Hardly ~~somebody~~anybody wants to read only the classics.

- e. Will there be somebody/anybody there with us?

The use of *somebody* might indicate that the speaker expects there to be somebody.

The use of *anybody* makes it a very neutral question.

- f. Peter got him/himself a new laptop.

The first alternative means that somebody else is the receiver of the laptop, while the second means that Peter is the receiver.

- g. I have never met these/those people.

The use of “those” creates much more distance and sounds negative.

- h. He kept his hands in his/(the) pockets.

The first alternative is more natural, as the possessive determiner is generally used with reference to body parts and clothes. However, the definite article is possible, not least to create an impersonal effect, or in the unlikely event that the pockets are not on the clothes he is wearing.

- i. They do not love each other / themselves.

The first alternative, with a reciprocal pronoun, means that individuals do not love each other (mutually) – we may imagine each of them saying “I don’t love you”. The other alternative, with a reflexive pronoun, would mean that some individuals do not love themselves – we may imagine each of them saying “I don’t love myself”.

- j. We are looking for some ~~childrens~~children’s books. (The apostrophe is placed before the s, which marks only the genitive, not the plural, in this word.)

3 Explain the difference in form and meaning between the members of each pair.

- a. 1 We went to church.

- 2 We went to the church.

In sentence (a1) the zero article (no article) is used, whereas in sentence (a2) the definite article is used as a determiner in the noun phrase that functions as adverbial. In sentence (a1) the focus is on the church as an institution. They went to take part in church activities. The definite article in (a2) is used to focus on the building. They went to the church building.

- b. 1 This house is almost 500 years old.
2 That house is almost 500 years old.

The difference in this sentence pair lies in the elements that function as determiners in the noun phrases that function as subjects, namely the demonstrative determiners “this” and “that”. As opposed to “this”, the use of “that” creates distance and could for instance refer to a house somebody is pointing to from a distance.

- c. 1 Did the police ask them any questions?
2 Did the police ask them some questions?

The difference between these sentences is that “any” is used as a quantifying determiner in sentence (c1) and *some* is used as a quantifying determiner in sentence (c2). The question in sentence (c1) is a neutral question because *any* is the neutral choice in an interrogative sentence. The use of *some* in sentence (c2) indicates that the speaker is more inclined to expect a positive answer.

- d. 1 We are all members of society.
2 We are all members of the society.

In sentence (d1) the zero article is used in the postmodifier in the noun phrase that functions as subject predicative. “Society” is here an uncountable and abstract noun that refers to society in general. In sentence (d2) the definite article is used as a determiner, which makes “society” countable. It then refers to a specific society, for instance the society for Estonian plastic surgeons.

- e. 1 Sarah broke her leg.
2 Sarah broke the leg.

In sentence (e1) the possessive determiner “her” functions as determiner in the noun phrase that functions as direct object in the clause. In sentence (e2) the definite article fills the same slot. The use of the possessive determiner is the neutral and natural choice to indicate that it was her own leg she broke. The use of the definite article can also refer to her leg, but the use of the definite article creates distance and becomes more clinical. The use of the article can also be used to indicate that it was the leg of the coffee table she broke, or another person’s leg.

- f. 1 Paul’s brother is younger than John.
2 Paul’s brother is younger than John’s.

The difference between these sentences is that the *s*-genitive is used twice in sentence (f2) and only once in sentence (f1). In sentence (f2) the possessive determiner

“John’s” is used even if the head noun (“brother”) is omitted. The use of the second s-genitive in sentence (f2) changes the meaning of the sentence. The first sentence is a comparison of Paul’s brother and John, while the second sentence is a comparison between Paul’s brother and John’s brother.

4 Read the following text and answer the questions below:

There was a table set out under a tree in front of the house, and the March Hare and the Hatter were having tea at it: a Dormouse was sitting between them, fast asleep, and the other two were using it as a cushion, resting their elbows on it, and talking over its head. ‘Very uncomfortable for the Dormouse,’ thought Alice; ‘only, as it’s asleep, I suppose it doesn’t mind.’

The table was a large one, but the three were all crowded together at one corner of it: ‘No room! No room!’ they cried out when they saw Alice coming. ‘There’s plenty of room!’ said Alice indignantly, and she sat down in a large arm-chair at one end of the table.

‘Have some wine,’ the March Hare said in an encouraging tone.

Alice looked all round the table, but there was nothing on it but tea. ‘I don’t see any wine,’ she remarked.

‘There isn’t any,’ said the March Hare.

‘Then it wasn’t very civil of you to offer it,’ said Alice angrily.

‘It wasn’t very civil of you to sit down without being invited,’ said the March Hare.

(From *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll)

- a. Identify all the determiners in the text and group them according to their category (see Table 4.1).

There was a (article) table set out under a (article) tree in front of the (article) house, and the (article) March Hare and the (article) Hatter were having tea at it: a (article) Dormouse was sitting between them, fast asleep, and the (article) other two* were using it as a (article) cushion, resting their (possessive determiner) elbows on it, and talking over its (possessive determiner) head. ‘Very uncomfortable for the (article) Dormouse,’ thought Alice; ‘only, as it’s asleep, I suppose it doesn’t mind.’

The table was a (article) large one, but the (article) three* were all crowded together at one (quantifying determiner) corner of it: ‘No (quantifying determiner) room! No (quantifying determiner) room!’ they cried out when they saw Alice coming. ‘There’s

plenty of room!’ said Alice indignantly, and she sat down in a (article) large arm-chair at one (quantifying determiner) end of the (article) table.

‘Have some (quantifying determiner) wine,’ the March Hare said in an (article) encouraging tone.

Alice looked all* round the (article) table, but there was nothing on it but tea. ‘I don’t see any (quantifying determiner) wine,’ she remarked.

‘There isn’t any,’ said the (article) March Hare.

‘Then it wasn’t very civil of you to offer it,’ said Alice angrily.

‘It wasn’t very civil of you to sit down without being invited,’ said the (article) March Hare.

Notes on the words marked with asterisk (*):

- *Two* and *three*: these are numerals, and could function as quantifying determiners. But here they function as head of the noun phrase, that is, there is no following noun.
- *All*: since *round* is not a noun, *all* is not a determiner. (Instead we might analyse *all* as an intensifying adverb in this case.)

- b. Identify all the pronouns in the text and group them according to their category (see Table 4.2).

There was a table set out under a tree in front of the house, and the March Hare and the Hatter were having tea at it (personal): a Dormouse was sitting between them (personal), fast asleep, and the other two (indefinite) were using it (personal) as a cushion, resting their elbows on it (personal), and talking over its head. ‘Very uncomfortable for the Dormouse,’ thought Alice; ‘only, as it (personal)’s asleep, I suppose it (personal) doesn’t mind.’

The table was a large one (indefinite), but the three (indefinite) were all (indefinite) crowded together at one corner of it (personal): ‘No room! No room!’ they (personal) cried out when they (personal) saw Alice coming. ‘There’s plenty of room!’ said Alice indignantly, and she (personal) sat down in a large arm-chair at one end of the table.

‘Have some wine,’ the March Hare said in an encouraging tone.

Alice looked all round the table, but there was nothing (indefinite) on it (personal) but tea. ‘I don’t see any wine,’ she (personal) remarked.

‘There isn’t any (indefinite),’ said the March Hare.

‘Then it (personal) wasn’t very civil of you (personal) to offer it (personal),’ said Alice angrily.

‘It (personal) wasn’t very civil of you (personal) to sit down without being invited,’ said the March Hare.

- c. Why is the pronoun *it* used to refer to the Dormouse, rather than *he*?
The effect is that the Dormouse is made less human.
- d. Explain the choice of pronoun/determiner every time *some* or *any* occurs in the text.
The determiner “some” is used in the sentence “have some wine” because it is an offer, and the speaker indicates that there is wine to be had. The indefinite pronoun “any” is used on the clause “There isn’t any, ...” because “any” is the neutral choice in negative sentences.
- e. Translate the clause *and talking over its head* (line 3) into Norwegian and comment on the grammatical changes you need to make.
It can be translated into “og snakket over hodet på den” or “mens de snakket over hodet på den”. In English a possessive determiner is used in the noun phrase “its head”, whereas in Norwegian the same type of possession is expressed through a prepositional phrase with an indefinite pronoun as complement: “på den”.
- 5 Findings from the Corpus of Contemporary American English at <http://corpus.byu.edu/>:
- a. In COCA “to the hospital” is far more frequent. In the BNC “to hospital” is more frequent.
- b. Double negation occurs in the COCA corpus, but it is very infrequent in academic texts. It is more frequent in newspapers and magazines and most frequent in fiction and in spoken language.
- c. Most examples of “you got any” occur in interrogative sentences (*Have you got any...*). Often *have* is omitted, so we get what looks like declarative sentences that function as questions, for example *You got any tips?* Indirect questions also occur, e.g. *So I wondered if you got any viewpoints on that this morning.*
- d. Search for “you got some”. Is it more or less frequent than “you got any”? Does it occur in interrogative or declarative sentences, or both? Positive or negative? If “you got some” occurs in a question (in the top 15–20 hits), why do you think the speaker/writer chose *some* instead of *any*?
You got some is slightly less frequent than *you got any* (292 vs 340 hits, June 2018). It occurs mostly in positive declarative sentences, but interrogative sentences occur. “Some” is then selected because a positive answer is anticipated or expected. *You got some* is also found in *that*-clauses, for example *I read that that you got some culinary training.*

- e. Search for “the leg”. Note how many times it occurs. Look at the first ten examples that appear when you click on “the leg”. What is the effect of using the definite article instead of a possessive determiner?

It occurs 2122 times (as per June 2018 – the number may increase as the corpus is added to). The use of the definite article creates some distance between the person and the leg, which makes it more neutral and impersonal, as in a *compound fracture of the leg*... The definite article is the normal choice if there is also a reflexive pronoun in the sentence, as in *shooting themselves in the leg*.

- f. Possessive determiner + leg occurs 6036 times, which is nearly three times as often as *the leg*. The findings confirm the observations in section 4.5.