Articles

Let’s start by defining what articles are:

Articles mark definite (i.e., *the*) and indefinite (i.e., *a)* references (Owens, 2014).

Articles also specify between new and old (i.e., *the*) information (Owens, 2014).

* Note that the article *an* is also used in place of *a* when the primary phoneme of the subsequent word is a vowel, not just when the primary grapheme is a vowel.
* Examples of this rule include: “an elephant,” or “an hour.” It should also be noted that children are not expected to have mastered the use of articles until the age of 42 months as specified by Brown’s Stages.

It is important for clinicians to consider that children with specific language impairment (SLI) may have language characteristics that are different to their typically developing peers.

* According to Owens (2014), children with SLI often use fewer morphemes, especially with function words (i.e., articles).



Ideas for

Intervention

Here you will find resource materials for intervention. These are not programs or recommended methods but are meant to aid you by providing myriad resources and techniques for intervention. We’ve taken the time to research available resources and to offer them for you to consider.

Methods



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The logical progression for teaching articles is to begin with the article *the (*as it is often overused by children) *a,* and finally *an* (Owens, 2014)*.* The article *an* is introduced last because it is the last to be acquired developmentally.

* A recommendation: articles should first be taught in short phrases, followed by sentences, then embedded in reading activities, and finally within conversational speech (Clark, 2015).
* Also consider beginning with pictures of single objects to elicit *a* or *the* from the client. As picture-naming tasks have been shown to encourage the use of *a*, this might be a good starting point for children who are overusing *the* in their speech (Clark, 2015).

If the client is ready to begin using articles within conversation, then naturally, one should consider a Conversational Approach. Owens (2014) described this approach as follows:

* + In this approach, the SLP engages the child during play or while reading a book, for example. In order to prompt for *a*, the SLP could begin by asking what the child sees*.* The SLP can then ask for more information about the object while modeling *the*. For example, they may ask, “I can tell you the doll has a pretty dress. What can you tell me?” This should prompt the child to respond using *the* within a sentence.
	+ It is helpful to use a variety of vocabulary items, so that the child’s use of articles is not limited to trained responses only. An assortment of pictures and toys should be used.



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Another approach is called, conversational recasting; our guess is that you already practice this during therapy…you just might not know it yet! Eisenberg (2014) described conversational recasting as follows:

* + Recasting describes the process in which an adult uses correct grammatical structure to restate the child’s grammatically incorrect sentence.

This is a form of scaffolding and supports can be withdrawn as the child makes fewer mistakes.

Conversational recasting has been shown to increase the number of articles children use in their speech.

* + Evidence base practice suggests that individuals with SLI benefit from this intervention, more so than the use of telegraphic-speech- based approach.
	+ Note: caregivers are excellent change agents!

With proper modeling from the provider (i.e., YOU), caregivers can use conversational recasting within naturalistic environments, and inspire a great deal of contextual change.



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According to Master (1990) children who are considered ENL, it may be beneficial to teach articles using a binary system.

* + This will help you determine whether the client considers articles as identifying or classifying the nouns they accompany.

The article *a* falls into the classifying category (*a* representing “one”) while *the* is considered an identifier (*the* referring to a specific item, person etc.).

The student should be taught that in the English language, classifying articles answer the question, “What is this?” while identifying articles answer the question, “Which \_ is this?”

Resources



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Articles

Books

[*Quick as a Cricket*](https://www.amazon.com/Quick-Cricket-Childs-Play-Library/dp/0859533069/ref%3Dsr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1547563616&sr=8-1&keywords=quick+as+a+cricket), by Audrey Wood

[*The Three Billy Goats Gruff*](https://www.amazon.com/Three-Billy-Goats-Galdone-Classics/dp/0899190359/ref%3Dsr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1547563656&sr=8-2&keywords=the+three+billy+goats+gruff)*,* by Paul Galdone

*Visual aids*

[*Quick Cricket*](https://www.amazon.com/Quick-Cricket-Childs-Play-Library/dp/0859533069/ref%3Dsr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1547563616&sr=8-1&keywords=quick+as+a+cricket)

[*Storyjumper*](https://www.storyjumper.com/book/index/15695612/untitled#page/12)

[*Wordless picture books*](http://www.readingrockets.org/booklists/our-favorite-wordless-picture-books)*:* A lack of words will give the clinician/parent more freedom to shape the discussion and encourage clients to use their utmost imaginations.

*The Article Book: Practice Towards Mastering a, an, and the*- By Tom Cole

This book is available both [online and in PDF print form.](https://www.amazon.com/Book-Practice-toward-Mastering/dp/0472086391)

Games and Activities

Consider creating a flow chart: a visual aid that will help clients differentiate between articles. The target will be highlighted at top then beneath or to the right it flows into a yes/no for is the target referring to “one” (“one” refers to the indefinite non-specific noun)? If yes, then it is referring to “one” noun then the *a* or *an* can be differentiated by examining the first sound in the word *a* if consonant or *an* if vowel. If no, then it is referring to a specific item and therefore *the* is the correct article.

Create conversation [generating flashcards](https://www.eslkidstuff.com/flashcards.htm)

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Articles

Websites

[*A, An, THE- Articles in English*,](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iwfAY0T0ePQ) a YouTube video

[*Toy Talk Strategies: An Instructional Resource*](https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/bitstream/handle/2142/78010/Toy%20Talk%20Description%2C%20Rationale%2C%20and%20Parent%20Handout%2C%20June%202015.pdf?sequence=2) is a parent friendly guide that can be used to teach caregivers ways to use toys to expand noun phrases (Hadley & Rispoli, 2015). The guide provides description of the strategy, the benefits of using this approach, as well as links to further information.

[*Speech and Language Kids:*](https://www.speechandlanguagekids.com/teaching-articles/) Teaching Articles.

Please visit [our Pinterest page](https://www.pinterest.com/sugarlanguage/articles/) for additional resources and activities:

Pinterest Q&A:

What is Pinterest? Pinterest is a social media platform that serves as an electronic bulletin board. Many SLPs use it as a way to electronically “bookmark” (i.e., save) activities for future sessions.

How much does it cost? It’s free! However, you must create an account in order to access the SUGAR Language boards or use the website in general.

How do I use it? Please check-out the following link for an in-depth explanation of all things [Pinterest.](https://www.lifewire.com/how-to-use-pinterest-3486578)

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