

# CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH AND INDONESIAN NOUN ARTICLES

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## Abstract

*Almost in all languages, there are terms of countable and uncountable nouns. In order to apply the noun, it should be preceded with an article. The articles that use in each language are different. This research is aimed to find out the different between English and Indonesia noun articles and to elicit which one has the most simple and/or complete. The problems discussed are : how do the articles used ?; what are the differences and similarities ? The discussion shows that the aplication of noun articles should be followed such as the nouns category/shape, the first letter of the nouns, the plural/singular form, etc.; the English article is more simple than the Indonesian article.*

**Keywords:** *noun articles, countable and uncountable noun.*

## Introduction

Almost in all languages, there are terms of countable and uncountable nouns. In order to apply the noun, it should be preceded with an article. The articles that are use in each language are different. For example in English there are : much, many, some, a, an, etc; and in Indonesia there are : beberapa, banyak, se-buah, sebatang, etc.

The purpose of this research is to find out the difference between English and Indonesia noun articles and to elicit which one has the most simple and/or complete among these two languages. There are three main problems discussed in this research : (1) How are the articles used ?; (2) Which one has the most complete or complex articles?

There are three dimensions or axes that will imply the provisional definitions of Contrastive Analysis. They are :

### a. The Generalist and the Particularist

Sampson has pointed out (1975: 4) that there are two broad approaches to linguistics, the generalist and the particularist. "On the one hand, linguists treat individual languages : English, French, Chinese, and so on. On the other hand, they consider the general phenomenon of human language, of which particular languages are examples". Sampson proceeds to warn against seeing either of these approaches as inherently superior to the other, claiming that it is largely a matter of personal taste which approach one favors. He also states that particularist will tend to be anthropologist or philoshopers, while the generalists are likely to have more phi-

losophical interests.

### b. The Comparative

The comparativist (Ellis, 1966), as the name implies, proceeds from the assumption that, while every language may have its individuality, all languages have enough in common for them to be compared and classified into types. This approach, called "Linguistic Typology" has established a classificatory system for the languages of the world into which individual languages can be slotted according to their preferred grammatical devices : so they talk of 'synthetic', 'analytic', 'inflectional', 'agglutinating', and 'tone' languages.

### c. The Diachronic and the Synchronic

De Saussure has distinguished "two sciences of languages" : diachronic as opposed to synchronic. De Saussure (1959: 81) explains the distinction as follows : "Everything the related to the static side of our science is synchronic; everything that has to do with evolution is diachronic. Similarly, synchronic and diachronic designate respectively as language-state and an evolutionary phase".

From the three dimensions above, we might venture the following provisional definition of Contrastive Analysis. It is a linguistic enterprise aimed at producing inverted (i.e. contrastive, not comparative) two-valued typologies (a contrastive analysis is always concerned with a pair of languages), and founded on the assumption that languages can be compared.

Contrastive Analysis uses surface

structure categories as the tertium comparison, such as:

- a. Word order comparison.
- b. Intonation comparison.
- c. Quantifier comparison (grammatical categories comparison).
- d. Passive construction comparison.

Countable noun is a noun that can be singular (only one thing) or plural (more than one thing) and it can be counted by numbers. Uncountable noun is a noun that has only one form (has no singular or plural form) and it cannot be counted by numbers.

Articles are members of a group of words called determiners that are used before nouns and usually come first in the 'noun group' (the noun with the other words, like adjectives, that can come before it). The use of articles is quite complicated, because it depends on some rules.

The rules of countable and uncountable nouns articles are :

- a. Articles a / an, can only be used with singular countable nouns.
- b. Article the, can be used with all kinds of nouns (countable and uncountable nouns).
- c. Plural countable nouns and uncountable nouns can be used with no article, but singular countable nouns can not.
- d. Plural countable nouns should be add with -s / -es (with or with out article).
- e. Plural countable nouns may come after numbers.
- f. Plural countable nouns and uncountable nouns may come after quantities marker.

See table !

The article	<i>A / an</i>	<i>The</i>	<i>No article</i>
Singular	<i>A cat</i>	<i>The cat</i>	/
Countable	<i>An apple</i>	<i>The table</i>	
Plural	/	<i>The cats</i>	Cats
Countable		<i>The tables</i>	Tables
Uncountable	/	<i>The water</i>	Water
		<i>The oil</i>	Oil

Quantity	Numbers	Quantities marker
Plural	<i>Two cats</i>	<i>Many apples</i>
Countable	<i>Three tables</i>	<i>Some books</i>
Uncountable	/	<i>A lot of snow</i>
		<i>Much money</i>

In Indonesian language, the term countable noun are all nouns that can be pluralized by duplicating the words, such as :

- buku → buku-buku ==> books
- rumah → rumah-rumah ==> houses
- burung → burung-burung ==> birds
- pohon → pohon-pohon ==> trees
- desa → desa-desa ==> villages

The term uncountable noun are all nouns that can not be pluralized by duplicating, such as :

- air ≠ air-air ==> water
- kopi ≠ kopi-kopi ==> coffee
- udara ≠ udara-udara ==> air

Morphology of numeral refers to all transformation word that create numeral words (kata bilangan). There are some types of numeral words, they are :

- a. "Kata Bilangan Induk/Pokok" ==> refers to non decimal numbers : 1, 2, 3, 10, 21, 100, 1000, etc.
- b. "Kata Bilangan Pecahan" ==> refers to decimal numbers : 1/2, 1/3, 1/100, 5/1000, etc.
- c. "Kata Bilangan Tingkat" ==> refers to "level" ==> kesatu = first, keempat = fourth, kedelpan = eighth, keduapuluh = twentyth, etc.
- d. "Kata Bilangan Kumpulan" ==> refers to "group of" : berlima = "five of", bersepuluh = "ten of", berseratus = "hundred of", etc.
- e. "Kata Bilangan Tak Tentu" ==> refers to the uncertain numbers : beberapa = some, banyak = many, sejumlah = some, banyak sekali = so many, etc.

Like in English, in Indonesia there is certain form of article that signifies singular noun. In stating singular countable nouns we just need to add prefix se- (se-form) before "Kata Bantu Bilangan" and then it is followed by the nouns.

“Kata Bantu Bilangan” is stated based on the characteristics of the nouns that follow (i.e. shapes and categories), such as :

- batang ==> for nouns that long and round in shape (pohon = tree, rokok = cigarette, pensil = pencil, etc.).
- buah ==> for nouns with uncertain shape (buah = fruit, rumah = house, sungai = river, pulau = island, etc.).
- ekor ==> for animals.
- kuntum ==> for flowers.
- orang ==> for human.

Etc.

Contrastive Analysis of a / an, the and “se-”

We all know that articles a / an, the and se-form are used to express single nouns. Now let’s take a look at these examples :

Plate A.

1. That is an apple. Itu sebuah apel.
2. That is a tree. Itu sebatang pohon.
3. This is a rose. Ini sekuntum mawar.
4. This is an elephant. Ini seekor gajah.

Article a/an is placed not based on the characteristic/shape of the noun but based on the first letter of the noun. If the noun begins with vowel, the article should be ‘a’, and if it begins with consonant, the article should be ‘an’. Different from ‘se-’, the article is placed based on the characteristic/shape of the noun.

Plate B.

1. I have two dogs. I love the dogs very much.  
Saya punya dua ekor anjing. Saya sangat menyukai anjing- anjing tersebut.
2. I love that car. The car belongs to Mulyawan.  
Saya suka mobil itu. Mobil itu milik Mulyawan.
3. The moon looks beautiful tonight.  
Bulan terlihat sangat indah malam ini.
4. The water here is very cold.  
Air di sini sangat dingin.

The used of article ‘the’ is quite clear enough, put near the noun identified specific noun (singular and plural) or noun that there is only one in this world. In Indonesian language there is no such word/terms. If we want to identify specific noun (singular and plural) or noun that there is only one in this world, we just have to write the noun itself without any article.

Contrastive Analysis of Quantifier and “Kata Bilangan”

These articles are used to express plural nouns, except for “satu” and “one”. Now take a look at these examples :

Plate C.

1. I have two dogs in my house.  
Saya punya dua ekor anjing di rumah.
2. Please lend me some money.  
Tolong pinjamkan saya sejumlah uang.
3. Today some of my friends are absent.  
Hari ini beberapa orang teman saya tidak kuliah.
4. I have collected many dictionaries.  
Saya mengkoleksi banyak kamus.

For the English terms (two, some, many), we should pluralize the nouns that follow (countable nouns) the articles, but not with the uncountable nouns. On the contrary, for the Indonesian terms (dua, sejumlah, beberapa, banyak), we do not have to pluralize the nouns that follow the articles either countable or uncountable nouns).

## Conclusion

From the discussion and analysis above, the conclusion can be drawn as follows :

1. There are some rules that we should keep in order to apply countable and uncountable nouns (English or Indonesian), such as the nouns category/shape, the first letter of the nouns and the plural/singular form of the nouns.
2. The English article is much more simple than the Indonesian article, especially concerning about the singular numeral noun forms (“Kata Bantu Bilangan”).

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