**1. General Overview of the Category of Article in English and French**

**1.1 Article. General notion**

An article is a word that combines with a noun to indicate the type of reference being made by the noun and to specify the volume or numerical scope of that reference. Article can be also thought of as a special kind of adjective, because it combines with a noun and contributes to the meaning of the noun-phrase. Many linguists place the article in the category of determiners. M. Ia. Blokh in his book “Theoretical Grammar of the English Language” says “The article is a determining unit of specific nature accompanying the noun in communicative collocation.” The linguists L. A. Barmina and I. P. Verkhovskaya have the same idea about the article as a determiner. They attribute it to a syntactic class of words called determiners which modify a noun. The dictionary of Thesaurus gives the definition of the word “article” as a determiner that may indicate the specificity of reference of a noun phrase. Webster’s New World College Dictionary refers to the article as used as adjectives. Also in this context we would like to add the words of the linguist B. Ilyish who devoted a whole chapter of his book “Stroi sovremennogo angliyskogo eazika” to the study of the article. He remarks that the article is usually a separate unit which may be divided from its noun by other words, chiefly adjectives.

So, we may conclude that the first feature of the article can be that the article is a determiner of the noun that refers to, that is why it can have some functions of an adjective and it is used as a separate unit.

Another feature of the article is that articles, definite or indefinite, are traditionally considered to form a separate part of speech. V. L. Kaushanskaya in her book “The Grammar of the English Language” specifies the article as a structural part of speech. In E. M. Gordon’s book “A Grammar of Present-Day English” we also meet the notion of a structural word as the linguist gives the following definition of the article: “The article is a structural word specifying the noun”.

According to these two definitions we can define the second feature of the article – it is a structural word.

Judging upon the definitions given by the different linguists and the dictionaries listed above we can draw a conclusion and deduce a general definition for the article that would include all its features: An article is a structural part of speech, which is combined with a noun to determine it.

**1.2 Articles in English**

There are two articles in Modern English which are called the indefinite and the definite article. The absence of the article, which may be called the zero article, also specifies the noun and has significance.

The indefinite article has the forms a and an. The form a is used before words beginning with a consonant sound (a book, a table, a door). The form an is used before words beginning with a vowel sound (an apple, an hour, an aim). The article is pronounced [ə], [ən]; when stressed it is pronounced [eı], [æn].

**1.2.1 The Definite Article in English**

The definite article has one graphic form the, which is pronounced in two ways: [∂ı:] before a vowel sound [∂ı: ΄æpl] and [∂ə] before a consonant sound [∂ə ΄pen]. This article is used before nouns in the plural, as well as before nouns in the singular number.

**1.2.2 The History of the Definite Article in English**

Examining the definite article by M.A. Gashina’s book “English Grammar Higher School” we find some words about its history. The linguist says that the definite article the is a weakened form of the Old English demonstrative pronoun se (nominative se; dative ΄þæm; accusative ΄þone, etc.) which in Old English, besides the function of a demonstrative, had also the function of the definite article. The form “se” was in the masculine gender, “seo”- feminine, and “þæt”- neuter. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English\_articles source gives the information that in Middle English all these kinds of the demonstrative pronoun had merged into þe, the ancestor of the Modern English word the. It says that in Middle English the (þe) was frequently abbreviated as a þ with a small e above it, similar to the abbreviation for that, which was a þ with a small t above it. During the latter Middle English and Early Modern English periods, the letter Thorn (þ) in its common script, or cursive form came to resemble a у shape. As such the use of a у with an e above it as an abbreviation became common. This can still be seen in reprints of the 1611 edition of the King James “Version of the Bible” in places such as Romans 15:29 or in the Mayflower Compact. The article was never pronounced with a у sound, even so written.

One of the linguists who were interested in the history of the English language - Barbara M. H. Strang, in her book “A History of English” states that the definite article was by 1170 only marginally related to the pronoun system. It had two distinct types throughout the period. In most parts of the country it was indeclinable þe, later the, or at the very most it varied between singular þe and plural þa. However, in the S and SW Mid it was declinable, with three genders in the singular and up to four cases. Where it had declinable forms they were the same as those for the ‘further’- demonstrative, that, since, in fact, they had originated in a special use of that form. The forms set out below were in some parts only demonstrative, in others they had double function; they are presented for reference-purposes, but they tend to suggest far more differentiation than most speakers knew. In the masc sg there were four forms: se, subj; þene, þane, acc; þan, þene, Kt þa(Kentish), later þo, dat (i.e., some speakers reduced the case-system to three even here). The fem sg usually had three forms: seo, si (SW and SE) subj; þa, later þo, enclitic to, oblique; þer, þære, gen. The neuter (like the 3rd person pronoun) had the same form for subj and direct obj þet or þat (according to dialect, but a tended to invade e-areas, as a weak form, or by internal borrowing, or both); the dat was usually þan, the gen þes or þas . In the plural all the genders had subj-obj þa, later þo, dat or oblique þan, gen þere.

The linguist emphasizes that after the very beginning of Middle English period, and outside Kt, case and gender distinctions , in article or demonstrative, occur only patchily, and then in circumstances showing that their historical functions have been forgotten. Otherwise, except for some persistence of plural tho, the definite article has become fully indeclinable by the end of the period.

As the definite article comes from the demonstrative pronoun of Old English it had preserved its demonstrative meaning that is still felt in such expressions as nothing of the (that) kind; at the (that) time; under the (those) circumstances; for the (that) purpose; The lady (= this lady) is waiting to see you.

Thus we can draw the conclusion that the definite article takes its origin from the Old English demonstrative pronoun se which was declinable in conformity with the gender, number and case of the noun it modified. Later in the Middle English it changed into þe with nouns in singular and þa with nouns in plural that became the in the Present-day English. The definite article retained its demonstrative meaning throughout all the periods of the English language development and nowadays its first and most important meaning is one of a demonstrative.

**1.3 The Article in French Grammar**

The etymology of the word “article” comes from Latin articulus and it means “small member”.

According to the French linguist Maurice Grevisse article is a word placed before the noun in order to mark that this noun is taken in its complete or incomplete determined meaning; it also serves to indicate the gender and the number of the noun it precedes.

N.B. Grevisse also says in his book “Le bon usage” that the article can be arranged among the adjectives as it serves to introduce the noun.

Thus, comparing with English we see that in the French grammar the article is also placed before the noun. It also has the function of a determiner. But, as distinct from the English article the article in French besides its determination of the noun semantically has the function of determining it from the grammatical point of view. It serves to indicate the noun’s gender and number. Hence it appears the first difference between the articles in English and in French.

There are two types of articles in French: definite(défini) and indefinite(indéfini).

Note: it is distinguished often the third type of the article in French – the partitif article, but this one can be relevant by its forms to the definite article and by its meaning it can be belonged to the group of the indefinite article.

So, we find out the second difference between the articles of the two languages. The English and the French Languages have three types of articles and we saw that the first two types coincide in their names: definite and indefinite. Speaking about the third type of articles in both languages it should be noted that in English it is called zero article and in written speech it is rendered by the absence of the article but in French it is called the partitif article which has four forms but we will speak about them in greater length in 1.3.3

**1.3.1 The Definite Article in French**

Making the parallel between the English and the French grammar we can observe that in the French language articles agree with nouns they determine in gender and number.

The French definite articles (l’article défini) are:

le – with nouns in masculine, singular, le garçon;

la – with nouns in feminine, singular, la fille;

l’ – with nouns in masculine and feminine in the singular form

beginning with a vowel or mute h, l’arbre, l’ère, l’habitude, l’homme;

les – with nouns in masculine and feminine in the plural form, les enfants.

**1.3.1.1 The History of the French Definite Article**

Speaking about the French definite article one should know that it was a roman innovation. It came from Latin ille(masculine) and illa(feminine) which served as adjectives and demonstrative pronouns as well. In ancient France only the proclitic form of them was preserved that lost early their first syllable and became unstressed.

(il)li>li − Nominative case, masculine, singular

(il)lu(m)>lo was used till the end of the XIth c. and then deafened in le − Objective case, masculine, singular

illī>li, illos>los soon was replaced by les − masculine, plural;

illa>la − feminine, singular;

illas>les − feminine, plural.

The French definite article retains a long time the demonstrative and the determinative meanings:

e.g.: Tresqu’en la mer cunquist la tere altaigne. (Rol.,3)

Jusqu'à la mer il conquist la terre hautaine.

He conquered the lordly land till the sea.

This is an example of the French article’s agreement with the noun in gender, number and case; at the same time the article determines the noun being used as ancient demonstrative: “la mer” means “this sea”= ‘the sea’.

So, we notice that the development of the French language was influenced by Latin which already had some notions of gender, number and case. It should be mentioned that from the previous times the French definite article had the forms of masculine and feminine. It had differentiations between singular and plural forms. Apparently the French article had the same meaning of a demonstrative.

Since English and French are two languages from different linguistic families they were developed differently. The articles have different origins. That is why there are many differences in their characteristics.

Nevertheless, both, the English definite article and the French definite article, take their origin from the demonstrative pronoun retaining the demonstrative meaning till nowadays.

**1.3.1.2 Article élidé**

One of the forms of the definite article in French is used with the apostrophe (l’) and has its own name article élidé (fused article). It is used only with nouns that begin with a vowel or mute h in singular. The definite articles le, la lose their vowels in such cases and take the apostrophe – l’, e.g. l’arbre, l’ère, l’homme, l’habitude.

**1.3.1.3 The Fused Definite Article**

The second type of the French definite article is named article contracté which can be translated into English as the fused article. It comes from the usage of the definite articles in masculine, singular le and plural les with the prepositions à and de. The preposition à has the meaning of direction and the preposition de has the meaning of possession. When these prepositions are used before the definite articles they merge with each other and make new forms, preserving their meanings. The forms of the fused article are:

à + le = au Je donne le livre au professeur. (I give the book to the teacher).

à + les = aux Je donne les livres aux élèves. (I give the books to the pupils).

de + le = du le livre du professeur (the teacher’s book).

de + les = des les livres des élèves (the pupils’ books).

We can presume that the first two forms of the fused article can be translated into English by the form of the Dative case and are rendered by the preposition to. The forms du, des are translated into English by the Genitive case and take the form of ´s and having the same meaning of possession as in French.

**1.3.2 The Indefinite Article in French**

The French indefinite articles (l’article indéfini) are:

un – with nouns in masculine, singular, un garçon;

une – with nouns in feminine, singular, une fille;

des – with nouns in masculine and feminine, plural form, des enfants.

**1.3.3 The Partial Article (article partitif)**

The french partial article has three forms:

du – with nouns in masculine, singular, du garçon;

de la – with nouns in feminine, singular, de la fille ;

des – with nouns in masculine and feminine, in the plural form, des enfants.

The “partitif” article does not have its exact equivalent in English. It is used with mass nouns such as water, to indicate only a part or a non-specific quantity of it. As in the following example :

French : Je voudrais du lait et du pain.

English : I would like some milk and some bread.

French: Voulez-vous du café ?

English: Do you want (some) coffee?

We may assume that the French partial article corresponds to the English indefinite pronoun “some”.

As we mostly are interested in the definite article we will analyze and compare only its forms, its origins in both languages. Scrutinizing the definite articles of the English and the French languages we can find significant differences in their forms. First of all one should remember that the English definite article takes its origin from the Old English demonstrative pronoun se, whereas the French definite article has the Latin origin and also comes from the demonstrative pronoun (ille). Another difference is that the English definite article has one graphic form the,and the French definite article has four forms: le, la, l’, les. One of the most important differences in the definite article between the two languages is that the French definite articles agree in gender and number with the noun they belong to, which is not observed in English. The French definite article besides its four forms le, la, l’, les has another type of article that also belongs to the group of the definite article – article contracté which also has four forms (au, aux, du, des).

**2. Contrastive Study of the Definite Article’s Usage in English and**

**French**

Before speaking about the usage of the definite article with class nouns in English and French languages we would like to present first of all the functions of the definite article in both languages.

**2.1 The Functions of the Definite Article in English**

For revealing the functions of the English definite article we consulted the books of the following linguists as M.Ia. Blokh, E.M. Gordon and Barmina and Verkhovskaya. After studying Barmina and Verkhovskaya’s theory on the article we can ascertain some functions of the definite article. According to the linguists it can have:

* the morphologic function that consists in serving as a formal indicator of the noun: the presence of the article signals that what follows is a noun.
* syntactic function. The definite article may connect sentences within a text by correlating a noun it modifies with some word or a group of words in the previous context. In the example below the definite article has the connecting function.

John has brought a book. The book is interesting.

M. Ia. Blokh mentions that the definite article expresses the identification or individualization of the referent of the noun: the use of this article shows that the object denoted is taken in its concrete, individual quality. E. M. Gordon also mentions the idea of individualization. He distinguishes the following functions of the definite article.

When used with countable nouns, either concrete or abstract, the English definite article has two distinct functions:

1) It may be used with singular and plural nouns to show that the noun denotes a particular object (a thing, a person, an animal or an abstract notion) or a group of objects as distinct from the others of the same kind. In other words, the definite article serves to single out an object or several objects from all the other objects of the same class. This function is called the individualized function of the definite article.

e. g. The car stopped. Paul got out and stretched himself.

2) The definite article may also have the generic function with countable nouns.

With nouns in the singular it serves to indicate that the noun becomes a composite image of the class.

e.g. The tiger has always had the reputation of being a man-eater.

With uncountable nouns, the function of the definite article can be called restricting.

The definite article restricts the material denoted by a concrete uncountable noun to a definite quantity, portion or to a definite locality (a); it also restricts the abstract notion expressed by an uncountable noun to a particular instance (b).

e.g. a) As we came out into the cold damp air, she shivered.

b) The work seemed to consist chiefly on interviewing young women for jobs in department stores.

We are mostly concerned in the functions of the definite article with countable nouns. Thus, we learned that the definite article has two functions with countable nouns: individualized and generic functions. In the first case it distinguishes one object from the others of the same kind, in the second it serves to present an object instead of the whole class as compared to other classes.

**2.2 The functions of the definite article in French**

1) Speaking about the French definite article it should be known that it serves to indicate a specific noun.

Je vais à la banque. Voici le livre que j'ai lu.

I'm going to the bank. Here is the book I read.

Thus the first function of the French definite article is demonstrative function.

2) Besides its demonstrative meaning it has a possessive meaning:

Alexandre se frotta les yeux avec le revers du pouce, et porta les mains à ses reins. (R. Merle)

Alex wiped his eyes with the back of his thumb, and put his hands on his loins.

From this example is clearly seen that the French use the definite article instead of possessive pronouns in English.

3) the meaning of generalization.

e.g. L’homme est plutôt un animal bienveillant quand il n’est ni jaloux ni inquiet.(A. Maurois) – Man is rather a well-wishing animal when he is neither jealous nor anxious.

We can observe the difference in using the definite article in English and French. In French sentence we have the noun used with the definite article in its generalizing function. The noun in English variant is not used with the definite article as in this case the noun man has a generic sense and no article is used.

4) distributive meaning.

e.g. … Nous ne pouvons vous racheter cela à plus de deux cents francs le mètre .

We can’t buy it more than two hundreds francs per meter.

The definite article used in French sentence is translated by the term per in English with the meaning of each.

5) It can indicate a usual fact that is repeated regularly.

e.g. Comme ça doit vous assommer de vous habiller devant elle, le matin.

Thus you have to assume that you have to dress up before her every morning.

In this example le matin has the meaning of every morning that is why we translate it in English with the indefinite adjective every.

6) Before cardinal numerals it can designate approximation in the meaning of “about”. This refers to the cases when the definite article precedes such nouns as heure (hour), ans, années (years), mois (month), etc.

e.g. Elle avais un visage si clair, un peau si tendre ; elle était bien jolie dans sa robe rose et menue, elle pouvait avoir dans les huit ans.

She had a bright face, a gentle skin, she was beautiful in her fine pink dress, and she was about eight years.

The definite article used in French is translated by the preposition about in the meaning of imprecise number.

After analyzing the use of the definite article in French sentences and studying their translations into English we discover some differences in the functions and meanings of the definite article in English and French. The differences appear in cases when the definite article in French is translated in English by possessive, indefinite adjectives and prepositions depending on the meaning it conveys:

1. possessive meaning of the French definite article;
2. generalizing meaning;
3. distributive meaning;
4. indication of the usual fact;
5. in the meaning of imprecise number.

The only similarity that exists between the functions of the definite article in both languages is that of a demonstrative that serves for denoting a single object from the others.

**2.3 The Usage of the Definite Article with Class Nouns in English**

As it was stated in the paragraph 1.2.1 the definite article is used before the nouns in singular and plural. The definite article can be used with different types of nouns: proper nouns and common nouns. We are mostly interested in the use of the definite article with common nouns namely the use of the definite article with class nouns. Class nouns are the nouns that denote persons or things belonging to a class. They are countable and have two numbers: singular and plural.

For defining the general rules of the definite article’s usage with class nouns we consulted the books on the English grammar of several linguists: V. L. Kaushanskaya, E. M. Gordon, Gashina, L. A. Barmina and I. P. Verkhovskaya. After looking up Kaushanskaya’s, Gashina’s and Vasilevskaya’s books we singled out the following cases of the usage of the definite article with class nouns.

The definite article can be used with class nouns:

1. When a class-noun denotes an object which is regarded by the speaker as a definite object distinct from all other objects of a certain class. The context or the whole situation shows that the speaker has a definite object in mind and therefore uses the definite article. An object is singled out in the following cases:

a) when the speaker and the hearer know what particular object is meant. No special indication is necessary.

How did you like the play?

That means that interlocutors know which play they are talking about. In this case the is a kind of indicator.

b) when the speaker uses an attribute pointing out a particular object. Such an attribute might be called a particularizing attribute. A particularizing attribute is used to single out an object from all the objects of the class, to point out one particular object or group of objects. A particularizing attribute can be expressed by an “of”-phrase or an attributive clause. It is always used in post-position.

e. g.: He knocked at the door of a very neat house.

The letters that I have here have come to me quite by accident.

When a noun is used with an attribute it is clear that one certain object from the whole group is meant. The definite article precedes the noun thus helping the reader to figure out that object.

c) when the situation itself makes the object definite.

e. g.: The wedding looked dismal. The bride was too old and the bridegroom was too young.

From this example we understand that not any bride and bridegroom are meant, but those from the dismal wedding.

When an object is singled out from all the objects of a given class the definite article retains its demonstrative meaning, and the English use the definite article much oftener than the demonstrative pronouns this or that. This can be explained by the easiness in pronunciation. Analyzing all these three instances we notice that the is used mostly in the function of a determinative to distinguish an object from a number of objects similar to it.

2. The definite article is used with class nouns which denote things considered to be unique, such as the earth, the sun, the moon. Here we have a special case: the class consists only of one representative, and therefore the object denoted by the noun is always definite in our mind.

e. g. The earth and the sky were already beginning to be enriched with the evening (Chesterton).

3. With nouns used in a generic sense.

A singular countable noun with a definite article may represent a whole class of objects, thus becoming a composite image of that class (but not a typical representative). A noun in this function is called a generic singular. A noun used in a generic sense denotes a genus taken as a whole, a thing taken as a type, a genre.

e. g. The violet is a lovely flower.

The tragedy and the comedy first appeared in Greece.

Note 1. It is also sometimes possible to use the indefinite article in similar cases.

e. g. A violet is a lovely flower.

This use of the indefinite article is not to be identified, however, with the generic function of the definite article. The indefinite article is used here in its nominating function, implying any representative of the class. Hence the use of the indefinite article is not equivalent to that of the definite article when the noun is used as a composite image of a whole class. For that reason the indefinite article is not possible in the following sentences:

e. g. Now the horse has been replaced by the tractor.

“In this lecture I am going to speak about the article in English”, said the professor.

Note 2. When the noun man in a generic sense no article is used.

e. g. Silas felt that his trust in man had been cruelly destroyed. (Eliot)

When the noun woman is used in a generic sense it is used with the definite article or occasionally without an article.

e. g. He had always been interested in that mysterious being the woman.

(Bennett)

Woman is man’s helpmate.

A noun used in a generic sense should not be confused with a noun used in a general sense.

A noun used in a general sense denotes an object regarded as an individual representative of a class.

e. g. A detective story helps to while away the time.

(Every or any detective story is meant here).

A noun in a generic sense denotes the whole class.

e. g. Conan Doyle is a master of the detective story.

(The detective story is regarded here as a certain genre).

These are all the cases of the usage of the definite article with class nouns according to Kaushanskaya. Looking over Gordon’s and Barmina’s books on grammar of the English language we can notice that they make a more detailed examination of the usage of the definite article with class nouns used with attributes. E. M. Gordon mentions that since the choice of articles is determined by the context or the general situation, we should take into consideration attributes modifying the noun. He distinguishes two kinds of attributes: limiting and descriptive.

A l i m i t i n g attribute indicates such a quality or characteristic of an object (or a group of objects) which makes it distinct from all other objects of the class.

A d e s c r i p t i v e attribute is used to describe an object (or a group of objects) or give additional information about it. This kind of attribute does not single out an object (or a group of objects) but only narrows the class to which it belongs.

The linguist states that nouns modified by limiting attributes are used with the definite article and nouns modified by descriptive attributes may be used with either the indefinite or the definite articles, as the choice of articles for countable nouns is not affected by this kind of attribute. So, we can make the conclusion that in the majority of cases when nouns are modified by a limited attribute it is used with the definite article, but it appears that it can be used with nouns modified by the descriptive attributes.

We examined all the cases when the definite article is used with nouns modified by both kinds of attributes and selected only those that refer to the usage of the definite article with class nouns.

1)The use of the definite article with class nouns modified by adjectives.

The definite article in such case is accounted for by the situation but not by the attribute:

e. g. The woman looked at me shrewdly and there was a glint of humour in the dark eyes.

Adjectives in the superlative degree, however, are always limiting attributes. That is why nouns modified by the adjectives in the superlative degree are always used with the definite article:

e.g. She was the smartest girl.

Some adjectives, adjective pronouns and adjectivized ing-forms always serve as limiting attributes. The definite article is used before the nouns modified by them. The most important of them are: right and wrong, very, only, main, principal, central, left and right, same, coming, following, present, former and latter.

e. g. My mother was the only person whom I told what had happened.

Note 1: Class nouns modified by the adjectives next and last are generally used with the definite article, especially when they are followed by an ordinal numeral the definite article is obligatory.

e. g. We shall probably eat at the next table to him.

Note 2: The definite article is used with a singular class noun modified by other if there are only two objects of the same description.

e. g. He pulled on the other glove and said he would run along to his office.

The definite article is used with a plural class noun modified by other if there is a definite number of objects divided into two definite groups.

e. g. My mother needed me more than the other members of the family.

Alongside to these kinds of adjectives proposed by Gordon Barmina and Verkhovskaya give one more case of the use of the definite article with class nouns modified by the adjectives that are postposed, i.e. they can follow the noun they qualify. Postposition is characteristic for such adjectives and adjectivized participles as absent, present, proper, involved, concerned and some others that function as limiting attributes.

e. g. The delegates present discussed the agenda of the conference.

2) The use of the definite article with class nouns modified by numerals.

If a class noun modified by a cardinal numeral is used with the definite article, this is accounted for by the situation or context.

e. g. By candlelight the two men seemed of an age if indeed not of the same family.

Ordinal numerals are usually limiting attributes, so the nouns they precede are used with definite article.

e.g. “It’s the fourth room down the corridor,” the clerk said.

Note 1: This rule does not apply to the numeral the first. The combination a first night and a

first prize are to be regarded as set phrases.

Note 2: It is important to remember the use of articles in the following patterns with nouns

Modified by cardinal and ordinal numerals: the third chapter but chapter 3 (three), the fifth page but page 5 (five).

3) The use of the definite article with class nouns modified by participles.

The definite article can be used with class nouns modified by participles but it is usually accounted for by the context or the general situation.

e.g. At the corner of the street there shone the lighted windows of a club.

4) The use of the definite article with class nouns modified by ing-forms when they have the limiting meaning.

e.g. He took the path leading to the lonely cottage.

5) The use of the definite article with class nouns modified by infinitives.

Attributes expressed by infinitives tend to be descriptive and the nouns modified by them are used with the indefinite article. Yet, sometimes, depending on the general situation or context, the infinitive may become a limiting attribute. Thus, the definite article is used.

e.g. “May be he is the man to ask about work,” she thought.

6) The use of the definite article with class nouns modified by clauses.

According to Gordon nouns can be modified by two kinds of clauses – attributive and appositive. As appositive clauses modify only certain abstract nouns we are not going to discuss them. But as for the attributive clauses Gordon divides them into non-defining clauses and defining clauses. Non-defining clauses are those that can be removed from the sentence without destroying its meaning. They are marked by a pause separating them from the principal clause. In writing they may be separated by a comma. Non-defining clauses are always descriptive and in the majority of cases are used with the indefinite article.

Defining clauses are so closely connected with the antecedent that they cannot be left out without destroying the meaning of the sentence. There is no pause between this kind of clause and the principal clause, and in writing they are never marked off by comma. Defining attributes may be limiting or descriptive, depending on situation or context.

Barmina and Verkhovskaya do not give such a classification for the clauses. They say that the attributive clauses may be limiting or descriptive.

Anyway, all the linguists come to the conclusion that when the attributive clauses are limiting, the definite article is used with the antecedent.

e.g. He took the cigarette that Robert offered him.

7) The use of the definite article with class nouns modified by nouns in the common case.

Attributes expressed by nouns in the common case are usually descriptive and the indefinite article is used. The definite article also can be used but this is accounted for by situation.

e.g. Lanny looked at the dining-room window and smiled.

8) The use of the definite article with class nouns modified by class nouns in the genitive case.

The meanings of the definite article used with nouns in the genitive case are the same as with nouns in the common case:

1. the specifying meaning which denotes a particular person or thing, as in: my mother’s picture, the river’s bed.
2. the generic meaning:

I stand in the place of the doctor. The doctor first diagnoses the patient’s disorder (=the disorder the patient suffers from), then he recommends a course of treatment.

9) The use of the definite article with class nouns modified by prepositional phrases.

A prepositional phrase consists of a preposition followed by a noun (at the window). A prepositional phrase may be used as a) a limiting or b) a descriptive attribute. Being used as a limiting prepositional phrase it requires the use of the definite article:

e.g. He always felt ill at ease among the callers at his sister’s house.

Within this type of attributes special consideration should be given to the so-called of-phrase which is very common. Kaushanskaya calls of-phrase attributes as particularizing attributes.

As limiting of-phrase express a great variety of meanings there is no point in classifying them. The most common types of combinations with the class nouns are: the house of my neighbor, the wife of a miner, the foot of a mountain, the collar of a shirt, the shadow of a tree.

If the head-noun denotes an object which is the only bearer of the property expressed by the of-phrase, the definite article is used: the president of the club, the glow of a lamp, the murderer of Caesar, the monitor of the group, etc.

But if there are many objects of the same description, the indefinite article is used.

Sometimes, however, the definite article is used, alongside of the indefinite article, even if there is more than one object of the same description. This occurs when there is a d e f i n i t e number of component parts: the (a)leg of the table, the (a)wheel of the car, the (an) ear of a dog.

* The definite article is found in the following patterns in which an of-phrase is preceded by one, some, any, each, many, most, none, all, several, the last, the rest, the majority.

e.g. “One of the letters is from Tom,” she said.

**2.3.1 Certain Peculiarities in the Use of the Definite Article with Class**

**Nouns**

Besides the cases of the usage of the definite article with class nouns listed above we should remark that there are certain instances of the use of the definite article which are to be regarded as a matter of tradition. E. M. Gordon distinguishes two cases:

1. the definite article used by reason of locality, e.g. with reference to objects that surround the speaker (or the people and things described by him). This usually refers to objects either indoors (e.g. the corner, the window, the table, the door, the wall,etc.) or out- of-doors (e.g. the stars, the trees, the flowers, the houses, the leaves, the birds, the bees, etc.)

e.g. As I came up our street, I saw my mother and my brother waving

from the window.

The trees swayed to and fro under the grey sky.

1. The definite article is used with class nouns denoting objects that are normally found in a particular place. For example, when we speak about the cinema or the theatre we say: “I couldn’t find my seat and asked the attendant to help me.”

**2.4 The Usage of the Definite Article with Class Nouns in French**

The French definite article is used much more often than its English counterpart.

Note: When there are two or more nouns listed in a French sentence, the definite article must be listed in front of each one.

The French for the “class nouns” is les noms concrets - concrete nouns. Having consulted the book of E. K. Nikolskaia and T. Y. Goldenberg “Grammaire Française” we learned that the French definite article is used:

1. Before concrete nouns when they designate a material in their broad sense.

Le bronze est un alliage de cuivre et d’étain.

Bronze is an alloy of copper and of tin.

Thus we see a considerable difference between the notion of class nouns in English and noms concrets in French: the nouns of material also belong to the group of class nouns in French that is not observed in English. So there are differences in the usage of the definite article with class nouns in English and French. Another example of the different usage of the definite article in English and French can be:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| L'essence est très chère en France. | Gas is very expensive in France. |
| J'aime la glace, le chocolat et le gâteau. | I like ice cream, chocolate, and cake. |

These sentences are good examples of the fact when the definite article is used in French with nouns in their general sense whereas in English the given nouns belong to the group of material nouns and they do not get any article when used in general sense.

1. Before concrete nouns which designate a sort.

L’hirondelle est l’avant-coureur du printemps.

The swallow is the spring forerunner.

This example coincides with the English variant when the definite article is used with the nouns in their generic sense.

1. Before concrete nouns in plural for designating the totality of the objects.

Et la foule de rire, surtout les enfants et les jeunes filles. (By this example the French mean that all the girls and all the children enter to this crowd.)

And the laughing crowd, especially the children and the girls.

1. Before the nouns that are unique : soleil (sun), lune (moon), ciel (sky), horizon (horizon) in case they are not individualized. The same case of the use we find in English as well.

La terre est verte à perte de vue.

The earth is green far and wide.

1. Before the nouns that indicate a certain object.

A noun can be determined by:

1. the context :

Comme Luc arrivait devant l’Abîme, il aperçut à l’angle du pont de bois, deux figures noires et chétives. Son coeur se serra. C’était une femme, l’air très jeune, pauvrement vêtue, et c’était un enfant , de six ans environ à peine couvert, la face pâle, qui se tenait dans ses jupes. Comme Luc s’était arrête à quelques pas de la jeune femme et de l’enfant, il entendit ce dernier qui disait ...

This sentence presents an example of the use of the definite article when it points out a noun determined by the context.

1. the situation in the given circumstances: the interlocutors are familiar with the persons and the objects they are speaking about:

Où peut-il être? Au réfectoire, à la sale de lecture?

Where can he be? Is he in the dining room or in the reading room? (The interlocutors speak about the rooms of the building where they are.)

1. a noun can be determined by the attributive which is expressed by a noun or infinitive used with preposition de:

Esmeralda se dirigea, à travers les spectateurs ébahis, vers la porte de la maison où Phoebus l’appelait, à pas lents, chancelante, et avec le regard troublé d’un oiseau qui cède à la fascination d’un serpent .

Esmeralda made her way through the perplexed audience towards the door of the house where Phoebus was calling her, she went slowly and her look was troubled as of a bird that yielded to the snake’s fascination.

“…towards the door of the house where Phoebus was calling her” stands for ‘…vers la porte de la maison où Phoebus l’appelait’ . In this case the usage of the definite article coincides in both languages. In English it is the case of a prepositional phrase, namely of-phrase which requires the use of the definite article.

1. sometimes a noun can be determined by a relative clause:

J’ai acheté le livre que tu m’avais recommandé.

I bought the book that you recommended me.

This case of the usage of the definite article in French coincides with that in English when a noun is used with a particularizing attribute.

1. a noun can be determined by certain adjectives as premier, dernier, principal, essential, primordial, etc. as well as seul, unique and all the adjectives in superlative degree:

Cristophe se mit à l’abri sous le toit avançant de la première maison . (Roland)

Cristophe hid under the shade of the first house roof.

The use of the definite article in English is accounted for the presence of the ordinal numeral before the noun which has the function of limiting attribute.

1. a noun can be determined by the meaning of the verb:

Je revis la grande cour sèche, le préau, la classe vide. (Fournier)

I saw again a big dry court, a yard, an empty class.

The usage of the definite article in French accounts for the meaning of the verb used in the sentence that implies a repeated action, so the nouns are used with the definite article as they are already known for the speaker. As for English the indefinite article is used as it presupposes the meaning of one.

Judging by the examples presented above we can conclude that the similar cases in the usage of the definite article in the English and the French languages are:

* when it is used as a determinative of a certain object and here are some cases that coincide in both languages:

1. when the context and the situation itself make the noun definite;
2. when the noun is modified by prepositional phrases: of-phrases and other prepositional phrases in English and phrases with the preposition de in French ;
3. when the noun is used with a particularizing attribute;

* when a noun is used in its generic sense pointing out the whole class;
* with the nouns that are unique;
* when a noun is used with ordinal numerals.

As for the differences in the usage of the definite article in French that we do not meet in English they are the followings:

* + - the main difference that appears between these two languages is that in French the group of class nouns contains the nouns that denote a material whereas in English this type of nouns is classified in a separate group and does not have the same rules in the usage of the definite article.
    - the definite article in French can be used with the noun which is determined by the verb denoting a repeated action;
    - the definite article is used in French with material nouns, and it is not used in English.

But taking into consideration all the rest cases of the usage of the definite article in English there will appear many more differences as presented above.