

## MASTER'S THESIS

### The acquisition of the English article system by Hong Kong secondary students

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*Date of Award:*  
2003

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**THE ACQUISITION OF THE ENGLISH ARTICLE  
SYSTEM BY HONG KONG SECONDARY STUDENTS**

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**A Dissertation Submitted In Partial**

**Fulfilment Of The**

**MASTER OF ARTS IN LANGUAGE STUDIES**

**HONG KONG BAPTIST UNIVERSITY**

**AUGUST 2003**

## **Abstract**

Chinese learners have difficulties with the article system in English. This study aims at examining the developmental patterns of the students' acquisition of the English article system in the process of interlanguage development.

A cross-sectional design was adopted. Ninety pieces of composition were collected and analyzed. Ninety secondary students, thirty from each of the three proficiency levels, Form 1, Form 3, and Form 5, participate in this study. A corpus of 884 noun phrase contexts were coded according to the Robinson's scheme.

A thorough examination of the data reveals that there is a multiphase acquisition pattern for English articles. In general, the zero article is the first article to be acquired, the second is the definite article and the last is the indefinite article. The result also shows that subjects have a strong tendency in using the zero article. The first language has been found to have a clear influence on the acquisition of the articles.

## 摘要

本論文旨在探討香港中學生習得英文冠詞的學習發展模式。本研究試從中學生在英文寫作時常運用冠詞的模式，藉此驗證學生習得英文冠詞的規則；並探討學習者在學習英語冠詞的過程中，所遇到的問題及困難，同時分析原因之所在。

本研究收集了九十份學生的寫作，分為中一，中三和中五，三個不同的水平程度，而每個程度各取得三十樣本作分析。從匯集資料中找出 884 組名詞詞組，並依據羅賓臣模式表(Robinson's scheme)編成代碼。

驗證結果顯示學習英文冠詞係一種循序漸進的發展過程。一般而言，學習者習得冠詞的次序，先為零冠詞(Zero article)，其次是定冠詞(Definite article)，而最後的是不定冠詞(Indefinite article)。研究結果顯示學生較傾向於採用零冠詞，而不定冠詞為三者中最難掌握的一類。母語(中文)對學生習得英文冠詞有顯著的影響。

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