

The or no the? (1)

The following revision returns to the same text as that discussed in Kibbitzer 47.

Original	Revisions
Borg and Gall (1989) summarise the characteristics of socio-anthropological paradigm as follows:	Borg and Gall (1989) summarise the characteristics of the socio-anthropological paradigm as follows:

Whether or not to use the Definite Article *the* is a constant source of difficulty for non-native users of English. For many years the tendency among language-teaching theorists was to ignore such difficulties: the text could (it was argued) be understood perfectly well if the the articles were used incorrectly, so this could not be counted as a 'communicative' feature of English, and in consequence little attention was paid to teaching their use.

But is the definite article really so 'uncommunicative'? Take the definite article in the revision above, which marks 'the socio-anthropological paradigm' as a distinct (countable) paradigm, different from all other paradigms. Substitute for 'paradigm' the nouns 'theory', 'thought' and 'philosophy' : in each case the definite article is no longer appropriate. . There is not a distinct 'socio-anthropological theory' which is different from all other theories, but instead a general layer of theory (uncountable!) which underpins work in socio-anthropology. Similarly with 'thought' and 'philosophy'. It follows from examples such as these that misuse of the article before modifier+noun nominals may cast doubt on how far the misuser grasps the concept of the noun: a particular danger with nouns such as 'paradigm' which form the framework of thinking in the subject. That is why mishandling of the articles can too readily communicate the impression that the writer is not fully in command of his or her subject.

Here is a short exercise to allow you to test yourself with some of the nouns commonly used in academic writing:

1. Figure 3.11 shows a representative set of results from an experiment using _____ **flame-aversion paradigm**
2. For the better part of a century, _____ **professional philosophy** has been out to "naturalise" mental phenomena by reducing them to physical entities and/or relationships.
3. He compiled a chronicle of _____ **world history**, fitting together the calculations of Greek chroniclers with the indications of date found in the Bible.
4. 'There is a real possibility of affecting _____ **ageing process** with biomedical intervention.'
5. Aspects of _____ **Irish constitution** and its implementation are clearly oppressive as well as offensive to other minorities beside the Protestant one.
6. Members of the working party agreed that some use of animals in _____ **biomedical research** is necessary.
7. The radical restructuring of _____ **British politics** after 1931 lies not in the events of 13th-28th August but in the changing attitudes within the National Government during September and October 1931.

8. As stars move, _____ **Doppler effect** changes the wavelength of the radiation they emit.
9. Ever since _____ **Industrial Revolution** created a mass urban society, the conditions of the poorest city dwellers has given rise to anxiety among the better-off.
10. The theory of natural selection first propounded by Charles Darwin (1958) is a cornerstone of _____ **biological thought**.
11. The main models of _____ **British economy** vary widely in attributing importance to the link between wealth and current spending.
12. In the past, attempts to root out _____ **police corruption** have been hampered by officers' reluctance to accuse their colleagues of wrong-doing.
13. In the early 1980s, at a time when _____ **manufacturing industry** was collapsing and the outlook for the unskilled looked particularly bleak, frustration boiled over in a series of riots in London, Bristol, Birmingham, Liverpool, and elsewhere.
14. The replacements which _____ **chemical industry** is developing for CFCs are also potent greenhouse gases.

Click [here](#) to see the correct answers to this exercise.