**ARTICLE USAGE**

Generic reference.

When we make generic reference, we talk about things in general. There are important differences between how this is done in English and Spanish. In English we do not use an article to make generic reference with non-count nouns or with plural count nouns; in Spanish we use a definite article. Study the examples below to understand this point:

Generic reference with non-count nouns:

*La inteligencia artificial busca simular el**comportamiento humano.*

***Artificial intelligence*** *seeks to simulate* ***human behaviour****.*

Generic reference with plural count nouns:

*Los robots aparecen a menudo en los cuentos y las películas de ciencia ficción.*

***Robots*** *often appear in science fiction* ***stories and films****.*

This contrast between English and Spanish does not occur when we make generic reference with singular count nouns, which must always have some kind of article.

*El ordenador ha cambiado nuestro mundo.*

***The*** *computer has changed our world.*

We have to consider that there is generic reference even when there is an adjective before the noun, for example both "intelligence" and "artificial intelligence"are generic. The case is different when there is modification after the noun, since this tends to create a context of specific reference and so necessitates the definite article:

*Information is stored in memory.*

***The*** *information* ***that is stored in memory*** *may be retrieved*.

The following exercises are designed to give you practice with the use and omission of the articles.

**1. In the following paragraph you must fill in the blanks with "the", "a(n)", or 0.**

Throughout most of history \_\_\_\_\_\_ human beings have relied mainly on their brains to perform \_\_\_\_\_\_ calculations; in other words, they were \_\_the\_\_ computer.\_A\_\_ variety of computational aids such as \_the abacus and \_\_the\_\_ slide rule were invented; they simplified but did not replace \_\_\_\_\_\_ manual computation.

**2. Now do the same in the following sentences.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ mice and \_\_\_\_\_ scanners are \_\_\_\_\_ input devices.

2. \_\_the\_\_ mouse is \_\_a\_\_ pointing device, but \_the\_\_ scanner is not.

3. \_\_\_\_ scanner is used to input text and graphics.

4. \_\_the\_\_ scanners can be divided into \_\_\_\_ hand-held scanners and \_\_\_\_ desktop scanners.

5. \_\_A\_\_ hand-held scanner is quite cheap, but \_\_\_\_ desktop scanners are not.