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Комісаренко Альони Вячеславівни

Науковий керівник: кандидат філологічних
наук, професор Волкова Лідія Михайлівна

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Term Paper

“Functional peculiarities of articles in Modern English”

ALONA KOMISARENKO

Group MLa 07-19

Germanic Philology and Translation Department

Research Adviser

Prof. L.M.Volkova

PhD (Linguistics)

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INTRODUCTION

This Paper is an attempt to investigate the concept of functional peculiarities of articles in Modern English. The problem of the article in English is one of the most confusing. The articles perform a discourse function, by demonstrating old and new information. The next function of the article is to determine definiteness/indefiniteness.

There is, also, disagreement about the status of the article itself and the status of its conjunction with the noun. The article is related to the noun defining its meaning.

The article is often not determined as an independent part of speech and considered to be a component of the adjective class. Some scientists define the article as a kind of morpheme. Thus, when the article is missing, it is called “zero-morpheme” enforcing in inflected languages to particular forms without grammatical endings and therefore distinct from the forms with their own endings of the same word. Based on the essence of the language it is more appropriate to determine the article in English language as a traditional morphological category, a specific function word performing the function of an indicator of the noun and participating in its meaning.

My research is significant, because of the importance of the article in classification and identification in the language. Furthermore, this concept is one of the most contradicting among grammarians and English learners.

The **aim** of the research is to determine the types and the functions of the article in Modern English.

The object of my term paper is the article in sentences.

The subject of the research is functional peculiarities of articles in Modern English.

CHAPTER ONE. TYPES OF ARTICLES IN ENGLISH

1.1. The linguistic status of the article

Defining the article there are such statements: the article is an independent part of speech and the article is a morpheme.

Determining the article as an independent part of speech it should be taken into account the definite article *the* and an indefinite one *a/an*. But defining the article a morpheme these options are possible: the definite article *the*, an indefinite article *a/an* and zero article or "zero-morpheme" \emptyset in the case when the article is absent.

In the 16th -18th centuries the article was regarded as a noun determiner. Nevertheless, when the article was interpreted as a part of an adjective, there was a different view.

According to G. Mironets, the article was considered as part of the noun, as a separate part of speech and as a particle. The terms "definite" and "indefinite" were first used by J.Howell in 1662 (Рейман Е. А. 1988, p.56).

Some scholars, for example, B. Khaimovich and B. Rogovskaya considered the article a separate part of speech. They point out that the two words *a/an* and *the* form a particular group or class consisting of such features:

- the lexico-grammatical meaning of "(in)definiteness",
- the right-hand combinability with nouns,
- the function of noun specifiers (M. Swan, C. Walter. 2004, p.214)

According to B.Ilyish, the choice between the two options depends on the individual point of view. B.Ilyish is more inclined to share the opinion that the article is a word and claims that "we cannot for the time being at least prove that it is the only correct view of the English article" (B.Ilyish 1971, p.57).

According to M.Blokh "The article itself is a special type of grammatical auxiliary" (M.Blokh 1983, p.85).

There are some statements about English auxiliaries:

- “Auxiliaries occur in a fixed order” (Chomsky 1957, p.65).
- “Auxiliaries have a number of properties which distinguish them from main verbs” (Lasnik 1999, p.105).
- “All auxiliaries do not have the same properties - have and be, for instance, do not share the same behavioural traits" (Johnson 1988, p. 156-167 Kayne 1993, p.3-31).

Articles, in turn, resemble modal and auxiliary verbs, e.g. can, do, will etc. if we are talking about the status. They are regarded as semantically correlated with their so-called “ancestors” : the word “one” for the indefinite article and the demonstrative pronoun for the definite article as well as correlation between some auxiliaries with their predecessors.

Determining the status of the English article a grammatical category must be mentioned. The point is some linguists consider that the English article does not form a grammatical category (“The grammatical categories which are realised by the described types of forms organised in functional paradigmatic oppositions, can either be innate for a given class of words, or only be expressed on the surface of it, serving as a sign of correlation with some other class” (M.Blokh 1983, p.35)).

According to B.Khaimovich and Rogovskaya: «the members of an opposeme must belong to the same lexeme and have identical meanings» (B.Khaimovich and Rogovskaya 1967, p.214).

Firstly, the articles do not belong to the same lexeme.

Secondly, their meanings do not intersect with each other: the indefinite article *a/an* has the meaning of oneness while the definite article *the* expresses demonstrativeness.

There is another statement: “There seems to be nothing to prevent us from thinking that a room is an analytical form of the noun room...” (Ilyish B. 1971, p.12). If we consider the article to be a morpheme, an additional category of determination should be established in a grammatical category in a noun. It should contain such specific peculiarities of a grammatical category as common meaning and distinctive meaning.

In the statement given below two nouns *a noun* and *the noun* are limited in meaning and apply to an individual member of the class “*room*”. The difference between them lies in the features of definiteness (“*the room*”) and indefiniteness (“*a room*”).

It must be said that the meaning of the article is not the same as it was formerly. Like all other languages English has its historical development and something has changed. Such components of a language as phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics were influenced by historical processes.

Thus, the article as a part of speech has suffered significant changes.

1.2. The definite article the

According to M.Blokh “The definite article expresses the identification or individualisation of the referent of the noun: the use of this article shows that the object denoted is taken in its concrete, individual quality” (M.Blokh 1983,p.76.).

It turns out that the first function of the article “*the*” is to specify and determine an object. The second variant of use is anaphoric. When we mention an object firstly we do not determine it and it is an “unknown” but mentioning it further means the object becoming “known”.

Here is an example: “He asked her to send him a tape and tell him about her life. She did this. She sent the tape. On the tape, she told the blind man she loved her husband but she didn’t like it where they lived and she didn’t like it that he was a part of the military-industrial thing. She told the blind man she’d written a poem and he was in it”. (Raymond Carver 1981, p.2).

In the first sentence the author introduces *a tape* to readers using the indefinite article *a* and then uses the definite article “*the*” with this noun because the is already “known”. That is what is called direct anaphora: the phrase with the refers back to a previously mentioned item.

There is also so-called indirect anaphora which is different from direct one by not repeating an earlier mentioned noun but using a connected noun.

For instance, “*I bought a house. The/*This kitchen (walls, roof) was extremely large*”. *I sold a house. What can I do with the/this money?*” (F. Gelbukh, G. Sidorov).

The definite article “*the*” with synonyms. For example, “*We saw his black Mazda near the house. The vehicle was nice*”. As well as “Mazda” is a car or using a synonym a vehicle it is clear that in the second sentence “vehicle” means “Mazda” and used with the definite article “*the*” to denote the object as “known”.

Contextual use of “*the*”. If an object is known from the situation, the definite article “*the*” can be used with a noun. It can occur in common general conversations or in discussions about something particular.

For instance, “*Can you give me a plate from the table?*” *Can you close the window? It's so cold*”. Here we have spontaneous conversations where the definite article is used with “known” “clear” items and interlocutors understand each other.

The definite article “*the*” is also used in fixed idiomatic phrases in fixed positions, e.g. on the other hand, in the middle, break the ice, for the sake of.

1.3. The indefinite article a/an

According to M.Blokh “The indefinite article, as different from the definite article, is commonly interpreted as referring the object denoted by the noun to a certain class of similar objects; in other words, the indefinite article expresses a classifying generalisation of the noun referent, or takes it in a relatively general sense.” (M.Blokh 1983,p.76-77.).

In these examples “A cup is on the table. → A cup(not a fork) is on the table”. “I bought a dress (not a shirt)”.

The article deals with the concept of indefiniteness. As Maria Napoli points out “Indefiniteness has been characterized as describing the unmarked status of a given entity with respect to the notion involved in each definition of definiteness.” (Maria Napoli 2013, p.185)

The indefinite article “*a/an*” is used while introducing a new unknown object.

“A Chinese acrobat has fallen to her death during an aerial silks performance, sparking horror and outcry on social media over the lack of safety measures.

“The woman, surnamed Sun, fell to the stage while performing a mid-air routine on Saturday with her husband in a village near the city of Suzhou in central Anhui province. She was taken to hospital but died of her injuries, the Tongqiao district government said in a statement Monday.” (CNN)

The indefinite article “*a*” is used in “A Chinese acrobat” for a definite but unnamed and unknown acrobat. The acrobat is regarded in the following sentences by the definite noun phrase “The woman, surnamed Sun” and pronouns “her”, “she”.

Non-specific use of the indefinite article “*a/an*”.

When the noun phrase does not pertain to any particular object or person “*a/an*” is used.

For instance, “I’m hungry. Can you buy me an apple?” “We don’t have time to do it in time. We need an assistant.” where “an apple” and “an assistant” are non-specific and mean “it does not matter what kind/sort of an apple to choose and what kind of an assistant we need”.

The indefinite article “*a/an*” for categorization.

For example, “His mother is an artist.” In this the indefinite article “*an*” is used to classify the type of profession his mother has. Here it means “his mother works as an artist not as an engineer.”

We can use “*a/an*” to refer generally to what is typical of any member of the group.

For instance, “A teacher is a role model for a student.” Nouns “teacher” and “student” are used with the indefinite article “*a*” and related to the same group.

1.4. The zero article

The zero article or meaningful absent of the article defines total generalisation and abstraction of the entity determined by the noun. The zero article intensifies generalisation and abstraction.

The zero article indicates indefiniteness with uncountable nouns as well as the indefinite article “a/an” with singular countable nouns.

For example, “Mix flour and milk. » “I had work to do so I couldn’t go out.”

Phrases with the zero article usually relate to unspecific and generic meaning using uncountable nouns. However, there are some cases when the zero article is used while the indefinite article “a/an” is expected.

M.Blokh notices: “As for the various uses of nouns without an article, from the semantic point of view they all should be divided into two types. In the first place, there are uses where the articles are deliberately omitted out of stylistic considerations.” (M.Blokh 1983, p.77).

It is common in titles of magazines or newspapers, news headlines or movie titles, e.g. “Daily Mirror”, “Freelancer”, “Python”, “Guardian”, “American Factory”, “Private Life”. It is clear that there is intentional drop of the indefinite article “a/an” which can be easily added at the beginning.

Certainly, if there are expressions with fixed position of articles “a/an” and “the” in some phrases, e.g. “catch a cold”, “a dime a dozen”, “make a note”, there are idioms with the fixed missed article, e.g. “at work”, “to school”, “on fire”, “take place”, “man and wife”.

The zero article is commonly used in phrases where components (nouns) they are consisting of are absolutely identical, e.g. “from time to time”, “one by one”, “face to face”.

Meaningful omission of the zero article. The zero article is used with a countable noun in singular it expresses the most generic meaning of the object declared. In such a case “total generalization” is used, e.g. “Art”, “Medicine” (in general).

Talking about such kinds of objects as Stars, Planets, Comets (relative generalization), Wars (total generalization) we also omit the article.

There is absence of the article when we talk about food in the meaning of institution,

For instance, “Shall we go for breakfast anywhere?”, “- Are they going for dinner or something? - After dinner at the restaurant, we drove back to the hotel” (Foer J.S. 2003, p.84).

The next case is a reference to places as institutions.

For example, “The accident happened in school. (conv) - Which meant they couldn't get to synagogue, of course” (Foer J.S. 2003, p.31).

The definite article “*the*” or the zero article is commonly used when a predicative noun phrase names a special role or occupation.

For instance, “David Cameron appoints Cheryl Gillan as Welsh Secretary.” (zero article) (news). “Brandon Lewis, the Conservative MP for Great Yarmouth, is to head a new committee to oversee reconstruction.” (The definite article “*the*”) (news)

1.5. The functions of articles

Nouns this article can be used with can be countable or uncountable, singular or plural, particular or abstract, e.g. the thing, the animal, the material, the idea, the hats or the plant.

The definite article “*the*” is set before a noun to performs the functions:

1. Defining function, the main aim of which is to indicate (specify) a specific entity or a group of objects among the same type of objects. It also refers to isolation an object or a few objects from other objects of the same group to show the strong distinction between the isolated object and other objects of the same group. Such scholars as G. M. Raikhel and P. Christophersen share the opinion about the isolative meaning of the definite article.

For instance, “Let’s watch the film. Johnny Depp starred in it.” “I’d like to eat the chocolate ice cream. It reminds me my childhood.” “The film” and “the chocolate ice cream” mean “only this particular kind films of ice creams”.

2. The generic function with countable nouns.

Use the definite article “*the*” with **singular countable nouns** means that the selected noun stands as the icon of the group that it is meant as its complex image.

For example, “The fox has always been known for its cunning.” “After reading her novel It should be admitted that the work seems to be wrote by the writer.” Due to the definite article in both statement the nouns are used in the sense of embodying all representatives of the classes in presented options.

Use the definite article “*the*” with **plural countable nouns**. It is used in the case when the notion of community is underlined.

For instance, “The French enjoy cheese.” “The elderly require special attention.” Here “the French” means “a group of people of French nationality” and “the elderly” means “a group of people of old age”.

3. Restricting function. It manifests itself with uncountable nouns. The definite article “*the*” restricts the abstract notion, material demonstrated by an uncountable noun to a particular case, a specific number, a segment or a certain area. For instance, “She was filled with the anger!”

Nouns with **the indefinite article “a/an”** can be used with can be is set before countable, uncountable, particular or abstract nouns.

It performs the functions:

1. Nominating. When we want to specify, name an object. It must be mentioned the grammatical meaning of the indefinite article “*a/an*” which is definiteness. G. Radchenko calls it the category of specification.

For example, “It would be great to get a new phone as a birthday present!”. Use of the indefinite article “*a/an*” in these cases mean “a new phone, not a house, just tis kind of things” and “a birthday present, not e.g. a loan”.

2. To express indefiniteness.

For example, “It would be great to get a new phone as a birthday present!”. Use of the indefinite article “*a/an*” in these case means “there is no reference to its e.g. colour, model etc., it doesn’t matter”.

3. To provide a new, unknown element.

For instance, “An American woman has been arrested in Sydney after arriving on a flight from Los Angeles with 24-carat gold-plated handgun packed in her luggage. The 28-year old woman, who arrived in Sydney on Sunday, did not hold a permit to import or possess a firearm in Australia, the Australian Border Force (ABF) said in a statement.” (News).

In the first sentence “a woman” is a new unknown character and a noun indicating it is used with the indefinite article “*a*”, whereas the same noun is used with the definite article “*the*” for the already known character.

4. Aspective function. The indefinite article “*a*” used with uncountable nouns to uncover a specific aspect of the concept stated by the noun.

For example, “A dull burning anger rose in his chest. He had almost a supernatural courage. Her presence stirred him usually to a shy swift eagerness.”

Nouns with **the zero article**. Its function is similar to the function of the indefinite article “*a/an*” which is nominating. This article is often used with countable plural nouns.

For instance, “There were two stores near our house.”

It is also used with uncountable nouns, abstract and concrete (names of materials).

For example, “It seems to me she feels jealous” where the zero article is used with an abstract uncountable noun to identify, to name the kind of feeling.

Referring to semantic functions of the zero article it must be said that the case of use of uncountable nouns and countable plural nouns with the zero article does not mean the same “complete generalization” which is meaning of use the zero article with countable singular nouns.

Generally speaking, selection of the appropriate kind of article expressing specific meaning and performing particular functions depends on the nature of the

noun it is used with. Because of a large number of polysemantic nouns in English the same noun can express different meanings being used as countable and uncountable.

CONCLUSIONS

In summary, I should say that articles are very significant in English, so that is the reason why should we consider the issue in this term paper drawing attention to their types, meanings and uses. For better understanding examples are provided.

The topic of articles is confusing, that's why it is important to know meanings the article expresses, its origin and relations to other parts of speech.

The English language constantly undergoes changes, as well as other languages, thus, articles are also affected.

In this work I defined all types of articles, their functions and used examples to show their meanings in various contexts.

РЕЗЮМЕ

Курсова робота на тему: Функціональні особливості артиклю у сучасній англійській мові.

Виконала: студентка 4 курсу факультету германської філології і перекладу Комісаренко А.В.

Курсова робота складається зі вступу, одного розділу, висновку, резюме та списку використаних джерел. Розділ складається із п'яти частин. У першій частині представлена інформація про статусу приналежності артикля в англійській мові. У другій, третій та четвертій частині подана характеристика кожного виду артикля, їхні функції та випадки вживання. П'ята частина присвячена більш детальному ознайомленню із функціями артиклю в англійській мові.

У даній курсовій роботі всього:

Сторінок – 18;

Список використаних джерел: 26.

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