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ARTICLE IN MODERN ENGLISH COMMUNICATION IN A
COGNITIVE ASPECT

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Abstract

The work is devoted to the cognitive aspect of articles in modern English. Despite the widespread use of the so-called “zero article” and an increase in cases of stylistic disuse of positive articles, which allowed some linguists to talk about the gradual disappearance of this grammatical category in modern English, English articles remain the most important element of communication in this language. The paper shows that this turned out to be possible due to the peculiarities of the historical development of the category of articles in the English language, as a result of which these official words received a special cognitive load. The article studies various areas of the cognitive load of positive articles in modern English at the level of word, utterance and text, examines the new status of the definite and zero articles using the example of cases that in classical works on the English article have always been interpreted as exceptions or as preserved elements of old uses. The author notes the great emotional and semantic role of the opposition of the definite and zero articles, its new influence on the entire system of articles as a whole on the effectiveness of communication and the transfer of the necessary meaning at the level of words, statements and text. The paper draws attention to the need to study the new function of English articles as special emotional markers of discourse. In conclusion, it talks about the emerging tendencies of strengthening the position of this category in modern English.

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1. Introduction

Articles in English, as you know, refer to grammatical words - service words that serve in this language as a grammatical determinant of a noun or indicate the nominative character of a whole group of words (Hawkins, 1991). There are well-known examples of substantivating adjectives and participles, where the grammatical indicator (determinant) of a substantivized adjective with a generalized meaning is the definite article: *the rich, the poor*. In the case of full substantiation of adjectives and participles, and the formation of a lexeme with a nominative meaning, the new noun can be used with an indefinite article. It may even have a "zero article", i.e. meaningful absence of a positive article (Tymchuk, 2005).

2. Problem Statement

The emergence of the "zero article", i.e. its significant absence is a unique feature of the historical development of the English language (Shaklein et al., 2019). In other related languages of the Indo-European group, where the restructuring of the grammatical system from the inflectional form to the analytical form also contributed to the emergence of a new category of service words (Tymchuk & Krasikova, 2018), it is difficult to talk about the existence of a "zero article". Despite all attempts to introduce the concept of "zero article" into the grammar of these languages, it is rather a stylistic or syntactic ban on the use of one of the positive articles - the definite article or the indefinite article (Tymchuk, 2005). In English, the zero article is a full member of the article category. It reflects the linguistic mentality and vision of the world that are characteristic of the English language community.

3. Research Questions

The use of the zero article is not always associated in English with the meaning of abstraction and generalization. For example, it is poorly suited for those cases where there are peculiar "fluctuations" in the choice of a definite or zero article, and deviations from the "norm" are often interpreted as exceptions. We are talking, for example, about the names of countries or the names of diseases, where the variability in the choice of the article may be associated with a special understanding and emotional vision of reality. Consequently, during the study, the following questions naturally arose:

3.1. Can we talk about the new emotional function of the opposition of the zero and definite articles as a further development of the category of articles in English;

3.2. Is the new function of articles in English a consequence of changes that have occurred in the cognitive plan - in the perception and linguistic reflection of the English-speaking community of the physical and mental world?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to show the uniqueness of the article system in the English language in cognitive terms and the possibility of their use in terms of mental and emotional representation and highlighting objects of reality.

5. Research Methods

The work uses general linguistic research methods: a descriptive method, including internal and external interpretation of the meaning of a word in the context of a sentence, a method of discourse analysis, as well as elements of diachronic and synchronic research.

6. Findings

6.1. For purely random reasons of a historical nature, Spanish came closest to the concept of the English "zero" article. In this language, along with stylistic and syntactic prohibitions on the use of positive articles, the function of the emotional use of articles has appeared (Tymchuk & Krasikova, 2018). Positive articles, which were used for emotional emphasis, were contrasted with cases of non-use of these articles, where such emphasis was not observed. It is clear that if the use of positive articles can be caused in a language with a purely emotional function, then their non-use can also receive a certain semantic significance in this language, which is defined as the absence of a characteristic emotional highlighting of an object or object of thought.

In contrast to the Spanish language, in the English language the appearance of a significant absence of one of the positive articles was associated with the appearance of the meaning of generalization, abstraction from a specific object, person or subject of thought. This means its inclusion in the world of the speaker, which is as an important, significant entity, or its exclusion from the world close and familiar things of the speaking person. The definite article, as the most significant member of the categorical opposition of articles in terms of semantic load, acquired the meaning of indicating the certainty of the subject of thought and speech, which, first of all, was interpreted as belonging to the speaker, to his world of things and concepts (Katermina et al., 2019).

6.2. In the course of the historical development of the article category in English in the late New England period around the 18th-19th centuries, a three-term system of categorical oppositions arose, where each member of the opposition had a different semantic load. The definite article, which served as the center of categorical opposition, was used to indicate the most important mental dichotomy of the English-speaking world, dividing physical and mental entities into "own" and "alien", which began to be interpreted as "what belongs to me" and "what is to me does not belong" in terms of ownership.

There is no doubt that the reason for the increase in the importance of the mental dichotomy "own" – "alien" was the economic changes that took place in the English-speaking society of the specified period. The understanding of the personal belonging of things, which is characteristic of any human collective during the period of the separation of an individual as a significant element of this society, was transformed during this period into an understanding of private property. That is the exclusive right to own an object, the right to use a material or intellectual object or objects obtained on the basis of sale and purchase.

6.3. The emergence and consolidation of defining official words in the English language, which could, in addition to indicating the nominative character of the word, indicate what belongs to the speaker or persons, turned out to be very popular and necessary. In this case, some semantic and syntactic prohibitions, for example, the fact that a noun is a proper noun, were not an obstacle to the use of the definite article. For example, it is known that that part of Spain, which was developed by the British as the cheapest

resort area, is called *the Spain* in modern English. Here *the* indicates a particular British perception of this part of Spain. She became "own", which, incidentally, is confirmed with the large amount of property bought by wealthy residents of the United Kingdom in order to spend the rest of their lives in the fertile climate of Mediterranean Spain.

Another example of such a "perception" of the definite article is its use with the geographical name *the Ukraine*. As follows from the illustrative material of the Great Oxford Dictionary, historically this name has always been used with the definite article, because it was a border part of Russia. For example, it is *a native of the Ukraine* (definition taken from the Great Oxford Dictionary). However, it is known that after certain political events, such use caused a negative reaction from Ukrainian politicians who considered it as humiliating, although the history of the appearance of the definite article here is not at all connected with the subordinate position of Ukraine. According to politicians, the definite article indicates some political and economic dependence of the country and its dependence on the United States and Great Britain. The use of the zero article before the geographical name of this country completely changes the situation, as it corresponds to the correct perception of Ukraine as an independent state.

For the same reason, there is a change in the use of articles and a shift towards the choice of the zero option with the names of those countries where historically, for various reasons, the definite article was used: *the Congo, the Lebanon, the Sudan, the Jemen* (Han et al., 2006). The definite article in these cases, in accordance with its modern perception, indicates the additional meaning of "belonging", which can be interpreted as "economic and political dependence", which is inappropriate in modern conditions. However, the fact of using the definite article with these geographical names of countries turned out to be not as politicized as in the case of *the Ukraine*. Therefore, there is some variation in these names, which depends on the traditions of word use and the reason for the appearance of a definite article in the name:

Sudan has been embroidered in civil wars; ... in the extreme north of the Sudan ...; today's writing and discussion about the Sudan ...; On the eve of its independence the Congo inherited a language policy that dated back to the 1948 curriculum reform; Germany then demanded compensation in French Congo.

Another thing is when the territory in question is not a separate state and is historically perceived as a separate area of a single whole, for example, *the Punjab, the Rhineland, the Crimea, the Sudetenland*. In these cases, the definite article, in accordance with its mental meaning, indicates that the given territory is part of a larger whole that makes up a separate political entity.

6.4. The emergence of the zero article as a third categorical form in the modern English article system is a historical feature of the English language. It is known that scientists interpret the factors that determined such a development of a given language in different ways. Undoubtedly, the most important thing here is the transition from the inflectional grammatical structure to the analytic system, which proceeded simultaneously with the process of loss (reduction) of the endings of the noun and the endings of other members of the nominative group. These processes have led to an increase in the role of word order in determining their function in a sentence and referring to one or another part of speech. This, ultimately, turned out to be decisive for determining the semantics and meaning of these words in cases where there was a coincidence of the forms of different parts of speech, for example, a noun and a verb: *play n - play v.*

Along with other members of the nominative group, the article, as a word that defines a noun and indicates its nominative function in a sentence in English, has undergone the form changes above described. Unlike, for example, German, which has various forms of case, gender and number of definite and indefinite articles, English positive articles have only one form, devoid of differences in case and gender. The nominative function of English articles, i.e. their ability to indicate that a word is a noun turned out to be in demand only when it was necessary to indicate the substantiation of an adjective or participle. In all other cases, it is redundant, since the nominative character of a word or a combination of words is determined in modern English by their place and function in a sentence and utterance.

Under these conditions, the semantic features of the use of both positive articles came to the fore, one of which comes, as shown in comparative historical works, from the weakened demonstrative pronoun *that*, and the other from the numeral *one*. It is clear that, depending on the mental picture of the world prevailing in the English-speaking society in a particular historical period, the semantics of the concepts of certainty and uncertainty could change. As mentioned above, in the period of the 18th-19th centuries, which we conditionally designated as the late New England period, a unique need developed in English society to indicate the belonging of objects of the physical world or the mental world to the speaker or persons. This need was associated with the formation of a new understanding of the concept of “ownership, belonging”.

6.5. With the development of capitalist relations in Great Britain, where the values of a feudal society were largely preserved, a global rethinking of the concept of "property right" took place. Now it included not only the right to property by birth and by right of inheritance, but also the right to private property, which arose on the basis of sale and purchase, which for British and American society acquired an almost “sacred” meaning. This process of rethinking the values of the world entailed the restructuring of the entire mental world of the concepts of the English-speaking community of that period and the division of the surrounding physical and mental world into “own” and “alien”. The definite article turned out to be a very convenient and flexible means of linguistic expression of such a division, since it could cover all nouns without exception, indicating the belonging of physical objects and mental objects to the speaker or persons (Maksimenko et al., 2019).

Simultaneously with the change in the mental picture of the world, there are changes in linguistic forms, which are adapted and adjusted to what needs to be expressed in a given society (Tymchuk, 2005). The loss of gender and case forms in official defining words - articles, which began in the Middle English period due to the merger of two languages with a different grammatical system, made it possible to oppose semantically loaded positive articles to their significant absence - the "zero article". Unlike other languages with articles, where there was no radical disappearance of forms of gender and case, and the so-called "zero article", i.e. its similarity, was associated mainly with syntactic and stylistic prohibitions on its use, the English language received the opposition of positive articles and their meaningful absence. Now the use of articles was not limited to syntactic constructions or features of discourse, but directly depended on their semantics (Besedina, 2019).

6.6. At this stage of development of the article category, a real opportunity appeared to rethink the existing oppositions of categorical forms of the article, which turned out to be a very convenient way of expressing a new mental picture of the world that has developed in the English-speaking society by now. Freed from the need to express the grammatical categories of a noun and remaining a marker of a noun in

an English sentence and text, the article in all its categorical forms was able to emotionally mark the English-language discourse, giving it various emotional shades. In fact, this makes it possible to speak of the article as a marker of the emotional deixis of discourse.

Let us show this using the example of the use of the definite and zero articles when indicating various diseases in English. It is known that modern English interprets this use ambiguously. English names for such formidable diseases as cancer, diabetes, pneumonia, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, heart stroke, despite the seriousness and danger of these diseases for humanity, are never singled out emotionally, for example, with the help of the definite article. At the same time, some diseases are always used with the definite article: *the flu*, *(the) measles*, *(the) mumps*, *the plague*:

“The flu claimed more lives during World War I, for example, than, did battlefield injuries” (Rothfeld & Romaine, 2005, p. 91).

“...is through hand contact such as shaking hands and touching surfaces such as doorknobs and elevator buttons that someone with a cold or the flu has touched” (Rothfeld & Romaine, 2005, p. 91).

This last example makes the difference in the attitude of the English-speaking world to colds and flu especially clear. Although everyone knows that an ordinary cold can lead to death and serious complications of an individual's health, this disease in the minds of an English-speaking society is never labeled as *the cold*, except when an indication is made of a specific case of the disease and the definite article appears in its primary meaning - "reference to the known." Influenza is exactly *the flu*, as it can cause a pandemic, strike terror on a global scale, as it was in 1918 with the Spanish flu. As it follows from the above example, taken from the authoritative American encyclopedia, in the minds of English-speaking people, it took more lives than wounds received on the battlefields of the First World War. The definite article in *the flu* indicates that the disease causes the same emotional reaction in the English-speaking community as *the plague* does.

In this regard, it is of interest how the modern English-speaking society perceives a new virus, the coronavirus, which has caused a new pandemic. Here are some examples:

“After the news that Prince Charles has tested positive for the coronavirus with the two meetings 16 days ago at Westminster Abbey ...” (Rothfeld & Romaine, 2005, p. 48).

“The UK’ Prince Charles has tested positive for the coronavirus, displaying mild symptoms ...” (Rothfeld & Romaine, 2005, p. 85).

“Prince Charles has tested positive for the coronavirus...” (Rothfeld & Romaine, 2005, p. 31).

It should be noted that although we have given examples with only the definite article. There are many examples of the use of the word *coronavirus* with zero article in the press, especially in the January and February messages before the WHO announcement of the coronavirus pandemic. Now, as countries are taking unprecedented measures to counter the spread of the disease, the emotional response to it is different. It is a reaction of horror, comparable to the emotional perception of the "Spanish flu" in 1918 or even the plague epidemic. Linguistically, this is fixed with the use of a definite article before the name of the new disease and its causative agent - *the coronavirus*. This use logically fits into a line with the well-known terrible events - the plague and the Spanish flu epidemic of 1918 and the use of the definite article in the language to indicate the emotional perception of the corresponding diseases (*the plague*, *the flu*).

It is clear that subsequent events will show the validity of the use of the definite article with the name of the plague of the 21st century - *coronavirus*. Everything will be determined with the depth and

duration of the unfolding pandemic and the emotional perception of the event by the English-speaking society, which indicates its emotional perception with choosing the definite article the instead of zero article. The latter observation can also be supported with examples that show hesitation in the choice of the article with the word for such a "harmless" childhood illness as *measles*:

“A man who does not know if he has been vaccinated or had the measles can have a blood test” (Rothfeld & Romaine, 2005, p. 54).

“Men who are at risk for contracting measles are those who were born after 1957 and who have never had the measles” (Rothfeld & Romaine, 2005, p. 106).

The use of the definite article is most likely due to the fact that the modern English-speaking world witnessed horrific measles epidemics among American soldiers during the Korean War 1950-1953 (Rothfeld & Romaine, 2005). However, it can be assumed that since these tragic events were generally local in nature, and the creation of a vaccine reduced the danger of contracting this disease to nothing, a neutral attitude towards the disease appeared in the English-speaking society, which was immediately reflected in the linguistic norm. The prevailing use of zero article with the word *measles*, even despite the recent epidemic of measles in the Republic of Congo, which killed at least 140 thousand people, and the epidemic of this disease among children in Ukraine. The average reader of the press in Great Britain or the United States of America poorly knew the events in the Congo and Ukraine, so this did not affect the use of the word *measles* in the language.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, we note that these features of the definite article testify to the new role of this defining word in modern English. In addition to the original function of a grammatical determinant, characteristic of all Western European languages, the article in English received the function of an emotional marker of a noun. In this sense, it restores what was characteristic in diachrony of a weakened demonstrative pronoun in ancient Germanic languages, and expands the function of an emotional marker further to the level of utterance and text. This development is motivated with the ancient semantics of the predecessor of the definite article - a weakened demonstrative pronoun, which, as evidenced with diachronic studies, was the most important marker of the emotionality of a poetic text in the ancient German epic, since it reflected the subjective, author's perception of events and heroes.

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