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I. Biryuk
Assistant Professor at A. A. Kuleshov State University of Mogilev
Mogilev, Belarus

COMMUNICATIVE AND PRAGMATIC ASPECTS OF ENGLISH ARTICLE

***Abstract.** The issue offers the information which is intended for language students of English. Particularly, it highlights such aspects of the English articles as their role in structuring information and their pragmatic significance. This is expected to facilitate students' mastering the English articles.*

***Key words:** definite article, indefinite article, theme, rheme, communicative dynamism, descriptive attribute, particularizing attribute, utterance interpretation, pragmatic aspect.*

Бирюк И. Б.

доцент Могилевского государственного университета имени А. А. Кулешова

г. Могилев, Беларусь

КОММУНИКАТИВНЫЙ И ПРАГМАТИЧЕСКИЙ АСПЕКТЫ АНГЛИЙСКОГО АРТИКЛЯ

Аннотация. Данная статья предлагает изложенный материал на заметку студентам, изучающим английский язык в профессиональных целях. В частности, рассматриваются такие аспекты английского артикля, которые смогут содействовать более глубокому пониманию данного феномена, а именно, определение роли артикля в структурировании информации и выявление его прагматической значимости.

Ключевые слова: *определенный артикль, неопределенный артикль, тема, рема, коммуникативный динамизм, описательное определение, уточняющее определение, интерпретация высказывания, прагматический аспект.*

Scholars and educators involved into the process of English teaching have been discussing English articles for many years. They have generally admitted that the use of articles often turns into a stumbling block for students, especially for those whose first language is synthetic. Hence, numerous techniques for integrating the system of English articles into their native language have been tried [2, с. 113].

There exist two basic ways of developing the required skills of article usage. The first way is to study the articles and practise their use in natural language environment. The other one is to create a system of rules which can reveal the basic principles of article functioning. The second way seems to be more rational for our conditions of English teaching when we mainly imitate language environment. Actually both ways should complement one another.

The information herein is intended to highlight those aspects of the English articles which are usually overshadowed by the traditional description of their meanings and functions in the language. These aspects are the communicative evaluation of the articles and their pragmatic estimation in the context.

In discussing the English articles *a* and *the* it is substantial to dwell on their role in structuring information, in identifying the relative importance of utterance parts. The article is one of the means of distinguishing between facts already known (the theme) and new information (the rheme). The definite article is a thematic indicator, while the indefinite article introduces the rheme: *Yesterday I saw a dog. The dog was chasing after a cat. The cat was chasing after a mouse. The mouse disappeared in a hole.* Such sentences are known to have progressive structure (Theme + Rheme). It is the most popular way of conveying information in English. In modern Russian the rheme is also usually placed at the end and the main means of expressing actual sentence division is word order. The two Russian sentences *Доктор вышел из кабинета* and *Из кабинета вышел доктор* differ as to the communicative significance of their parts. They will correspond to the English sentences ***The doctor*** went out (*the doctor we previously mentioned about*) and ***A doctor*** went out (*a doctor, not a nurse*) [5].

Such treatment of the English articles will facilitate their conscious perception and determine their correct choice. Russian sentences of the type *Наступил долгожданный праздник* and *Все готовились к празднику с большим энтузиазмом* may not arouse any difficulty in choosing the proper articles if we apply the criterion of communicative significance of utterance parts. The thematic part is that which contributes little to the meaning of the utterance as it reflects what has already been communicated, in other words it has the lowest degree of communicative dynamism. The rhematic part contains new information, which advances the communicative process, and has the highest degree of communicative dynamism. So, the suggested sentences will correspond to the following English equivalents: *A long-expected **celebration** has come* and *Everybody was preparing for **the celebration** with great enthusiasm*.

Another important aspect of the articles in English is their pragmatic estimation which is the study of the communicative functions of utterances in particular contexts of use. In other words the pragmatic aspect of the articles is connected with utterance interpretation. Actually the utterance meaning is derived from the meanings of lexical items of its constituents and its grammatical structure. But it may be interpreted differently depending on the context and background knowledge of the interlocutors. This means that each utterance is estimated in a particular speech situation.

Traditionally the use of articles in written and spoken English is closely connected with the type of attribute the noun is modified. Thus, we distinguish between non-defining, or descriptive, attributes and defining, or particularizing, ones. The former type gives extra information about the nounal referent, which does not require identification. Such nouns are determined by the indefinite article: *She had **a beauty** not often found in one so young*. The latter attribute type gives exact information that helps to identify the nounal referent and the corresponding noun is used with the definite article: ***The beauty** she spoke of was not apparent to me* [4, c.86].

Different intentions or purposes of the speaker may turn to different interpretations of the attributes attached to nouns, thus leading to the alternative article usage. Cf. *I'd like to introduce **a fellow**, I used to work with* (he appeared unexpectedly and this information about him is the first thing I could recollect) and *I'd like to introduce **the fellow**, I used to work with* (we were just discussing the relationship with former colleagues). The communicative background should help to evaluate the information of the utterance from the necessary point of view, and therefore, influence the speaker and the context in this or that particular way. In communication we expect the interlocutor to understand what we say and make relevant responses [4, c.87].

So, we have outlined two aspects of the English articles essential for their effective learning. Communicative evaluation of the utterance and pragmatic estimation of the situation of speech should be regarded as inseparable parts of the general strategy of article study and should be applied to the methodology of article

teaching. This reflects the aim of language study as the use of appropriate language for particular situations.

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