

## An Example of “Consciousness-Raising”

### Grammar Tasks for Classroom Use

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The two exercises that follow were suggested by readings in Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1983) The Grammar Book (Newbury House, U. S.) and Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik (1972) A Grammar of Contemporary English (Longman, U. K.). In their chapter on the article system, the authors of The Grammar Book state: “Pedagogically, the name of a disease and its article usage pattern should be mastered as a unit if EFL/ESL students are to avoid making recurring errors when they refer to diseases.” I do not feel that it is necessary for students to master article use so much as it is important for them to be conscious that there is uneven usage; to be made aware of this unevenness so that they will be prepared when they meet varied article usage in conversation or in reading. A Grammar of Contemporary English made fleeting reference to “count nouns that take  $\phi$  [equals ‘zero’] article in abstract, or rather specialized use, chiefly in certain idiomatic expressions (with verbs like BE and GO and with prepositions like at and by, etc.” Quirk, et.al. did not address this grammar point in enough detail which encouraged this writer to seek better, more expansive explanations in the literature.

The exercises that follow are deductive. The two particular aspects of article usage chosen to be emphasized were not amenable to an inductive approach, especially the exercise dealing with diseases and bodily ailments. It was also felt that supplying lexical items – and even metalanguage with their Japanese equivalents, was necessary as a short-cut to comprehension. This was especially true of the exercise on diseases. Since most of the difficult lexical items have been given their correlates in Japanese, the exercises are not level-specific. Perhaps a pre-intermediate group would be capable of benefiting from Exercise 1 (nouns in idiomatic expressions taking  $\phi$  article) and an intermediate or middle-intermediate group from Exercise 2 (diseases and ailments and article use). The exercises are completely straight-forward. Exercise 1 begins with a grammatical explanation of article usage with certain idioms – rules and examples are supplied. This is followed by twenty sentences that the student must complete with either  $\phi$  article or 'the'. This in turn is followed by the same twenty sentences filled-in with the correct answer and a sentence paraphrase to further explain the thinking behind  $\phi$  article or 'the'.

Exercise 2 follows much the same format. An explanation about article usage is presented and examples are supplied. This is followed by six short readings which the student is asked to look at and fry to become aware of how  $\phi$  article, 'a'/'an', 'the' is used with disease/ailment nouns. The key word in the approach to these exercises has been 'awareness'. The article system is so complex and so often self-contradictory, that many linguists say it is unlearnable, that it can only be acquired naturally. Perhaps this is so and our students can only

be encouraged (and commiserated with) in their struggle to achieve some form of systematic understanding of English articles. Since linguists agree that mastery is unachievable it is unrealistic to demand perfection from our students. That is why presentation of the following material has been made in such a manner, as it is hoped that students will be able to see some pattern in article usage.

**EXERCISE 1**

In English there are some count-nouns (数えられる名詞) ('apple (s)', 'word(s)', 'chair(s)', and 'idea (s)' are all count-nouns) that do not have articles (冠詞) ('a', 'an', 'the' are articles) in special idioms. A long time ago, Old English did not use 'the' with count-nouns and some of the Old English idioms have been kept in Modern English because of tradition or habit. A lot of these idioms use the verbs (動詞) ('eat', 'walk', 'think' are verbs) GO or BE and the prepositions (前置詞) ('up', 'over', 'from', are prepositions) AT or BY. For example:

BE IN } GO TO }	{ prison { church { class	BE AT } GO }	} home
BE AT } GO TO }	{ school { college { sea	BE IN } LEAVE } GO BY }	} town } train/ carK bus/ svb- } way/ bicycle

A good way to understand idioms that do not use 'the' is to compare these idioms with 'the' + church/ class/ college/ sea/ etc. For example:

a) Paul was in bed before 11 p.m.

b) Paul was sitting on the bed watching the t. v.

Sentence a) Paul was in bed = Paul was sleeping (or ready to sleep) and sentence b) Paul was... on the bed = the place Paul was sitting. In sentence a) we are thinking of 'bed' as an activity ('bed' = sleeping) or a purpose ('bed' = for sleeping) but in sentence b) we are thinking of 'bed' as a place ('bed', not 'chair').

Here are some sentences that you must complete. Please think about the idea of 'purpose' or 'place' -sometimes this is easy to understand, but in some of the sentences it is not so easy to understand. You must decide to use 'the', or if you think 'the' is not needed, please use the symbol  $\phi$  (= 'theta', a Greek letter which means 'zero\_\_\_\_\_').)

1. The "yakuza" boss was in \_\_\_\_\_ prison because he killed a man.
2. I will meet you at \_\_\_\_\_ church on the corner.
3. Suzy went to \_\_\_\_\_ college to become a scientist.
4. The children had to go to \_\_\_\_\_ bed; they couldn't watch t. v.
5. Kenzo is the captain of a fishing boat. He'll be at \_\_\_\_\_ sea for two months.
6. The "yakuza" boss had to go to \_\_\_\_\_ court because he killed a man.
7. I go to \_\_\_\_\_ town on Saturday to shop.
8. Three people were sitting at \_\_\_\_\_ table in the corner.

9. Call me tomorrow - I'll be at home.
10. We live in country because it is quiet and clean.
11. Traditionally, Japanese people do not talk when they are at table.
12. The "yakuza" boss' wife visited him at prison every Monday.
13. We were in car for eight hours.
14. Let's meet at new school.
- \*15. John had AIDS. He was in hospital when he died.
- \*16. I was in university for six years before I started working.
17. The "yakuza" boss' wife went to prison by car.
18. He likes swimming only in sea.
19. The judge said: "Silence in court!" when the "yakuza" boss started to shout.
20. Ken will be in class studying grammar from 6-9.p. m.

Did you have any trouble with these twenty sentences? You can see that sentences 15 and 16 have special marks (these marks are called 'asterisks' in English). British English is different from American English in using 'the' with 'hospital' and 'university'. (It is not an important difference, you can use either American or British English, but you should know that there is a small difference.) Please see the next page for the correct answers. Each sentence is paraphrased (他の語で言い換える) to help you to understand 'purpose' and 'place' differences.

#### ANSWERS / PARAPHRASES:

1. The “yakuza” boss was in  $\phi$  prison because he killed a man.  
(The “yakuza” boss was being punished....)
2. I will meet you at the church on the corner.  
(..... the place where the church is.)
3. Suzy went to  $\phi$  college to become a scientist.  
(Suzy studied to become a scientist.)
4. The children had to go to  $\phi$  bed; they couldn't watch t.v.  
(The children needed to sleep.)
5. Kenzo is the captain of a fishing boat. He'll be at  $\phi$  sea for two months.  
(He'll be fishing for two months.)
6. The “yakuza” boss' had to go to  $\phi$  court because he killed a man.  
(He had to stand trial (裁判を受ける).)
7. I go to  $\phi$  town on Saturdays to shop.  
(I buy things in big stores on Saturdays.)
8. Three people were sitting at the table in the corner.  
(Sitting there, in the corner, where the table is.)
9. Call me tomorrow - I'll be at  $\phi$  home.  
(I'll not be away (working at the office / studying at school).)
10. We live in the country because it is quiet and clean.  
(We live where it is not a city.)
11. Traditionally, Japanese people do not talk when they are at  $\phi$  table.  
(... when they are eating.)
12. The “yakuza” boss' wife visited him at the prison every Monday.  
(... at the place he was being punished.)
13. We were in the car for eight hours.

(We were sitting and driving in the car.)

14. Let's meet at the new school.

(Not at the place where the old school is.)

15. John had AIDS. He was in  $\phi$  hospital (Brit. Eng.) } when he died.  
John had AIDS. He was in the hospital (Amer. Eng.) }

(He was being nursed when he died.)

16. I was in  $\phi$  university (Brit. Eng.) } for six years before I  
I was in the university (Amer. Eng.) }

started work.

(I studied for six years.)

17. The “yakuza” boss’ wife went to the prison by  $\phi$  train.

(She used train transport, not car transport.)

18. He likes swimming only in the sea.

(The ocean is the place he likes to swim.)

19. The judge said: “Silence in the court!”, when the “yakuza” started to shout.

(Be quiet in this place!)

20. Ken will be in  $\phi$  class studying grammar from 6-9p.m.

(Ken will be present, listening to the teacher, studying grammar at that time.)

## EXERCISE 2

Words that name diseases or common health problems in English can be a problem. These words are problems because of articles (冠詞) (‘a’, ‘an’, ‘the’ are articles). Some words must have  $\phi$  (no) article –

cancer. Some words have indefinite article (不定詞) ('a', 'an' are indefinite articles), a sore throat. Some words must have definite article (定詞) ('the' is the definite article) – the mumps. Some words can have definite article – the chicken pox – or have  $\phi$  article – chicken pox. It is a very confusing situation. There are no general rules to follow. You must memorize the words and know their article use. (Please check the word list that comes after the exercise.)

One reason there is a problem with article use is that many words on the word list used 'the' before the twentieth century and some words can still be seen with both  $\phi$  article or 'the'. All the words that sound 'scientific' are  $\phi$  article. Some people think that  $\phi$  article means a medical problem as written in a medical book but that 'the' means the problem is general – the flu (that many people are sick with this week). Other people think that 'the' is unnecessary – had  $\phi$  measles as a child. Still other people think 'a' has a feeling of being special – a headache (of my head), a cold (I have a cold.) Also you can commonly see 'the' used before plural (複数の) names of health problems – the measles, the mumps, the chicken pox.

There are five patterns that you may hear in conversation or see in your reading. They are:

Pattern 1

'the' + (noun) = the flu, the plague, the runs

Pattern 2

'a' / 'an' + (noun) = a cold, a headache, a cough

Pattern 3

'the' + (noun) + (plural) = the mumps, the measles, the chicken pox



Pattern 4

(noun) + (plural) = mumps, measles, chicken pox

Pattern 5

(mass noun) (数えられない名詞) = influenza, cancer, T. B.

It is not important for you to know all the members that can fit both Pattern 3 and Pattern 4. You should know the nouns in Pattern 1, Pattern 2 and Pattern 5 that concern you personally – especially if you plan to study or live in a country where English is spoken.

Here are some reading passages to help you see how  $\phi$  article, 'a/' 'an', 'the' are used with words about health:

1. The three most common causes of death in America are heart disease, high blood pressure and cancer. These diseases are all part of our modern life-style. Many doctors feel that they are environmental diseases – related to what we eat or how we live our daily lives.
2. If you watch television long enough in Japan you will think that the average person is walking around with athlete's foot; is uncomfortable because of indigestion; has hay fever every spring; comes home every night with a pain in the shoulder; has either the runs or constipation and has a gum condition (齒槽膿漏). The television commercials tell us about these common problems almost every hour of the day.

3. Doctor : What's the problem?

Patient : Well, I have a fever...

Doctor : Yes...

Patient : And a sore throat...

Doctor : Uh hunh...

Patient : .. the sniffles, a headache, and a bad cough.

Doctor : Sounds like the flu; everyone's got it. I'll give you some medicine to....

4. AIDS is the modern plague. Just as the Black Death killed many millions of people in Europe in the Middle Ages, many scientists believe, AIDS will kill millions in our own age before a cure is found.

5. When I was a little girl I had all the usual children's diseases – the mumps, chicken pox, the measles, but I never had German measles. Since I am planning to have a baby and I am around children all the time because I am an elementary school teacher, I am worried about the effect German measles might have on my unborn baby. I should go to my doctor to ask about having a shot. (注射)

6. In the poorer and more tropical parts of the world diseases that are rather uncommon in the more developed North are often a part of daily life. Cholera and typhus are common where there is no sewer system (下水管). Malaria causes millions of people living near wet

lands to be sick. Leprosy also seems to be more common in poorer countries. T. B. is another disease associated with poverty, poor food, and overwork. Even common sicknesses such as influenza and diarrhea can kill where people are in general poor health.

## ARTICLE USE WORD LIST

### φ article

chicken pox — 水ぼうそう

malaria — マラリア

measles — はしか

German measles — ふしん

cholera — コレラ

smallpox — 天然痘

leprosy — らい病

typhus/typhoid (fever) — 発疹

### AIDS

T.B./ tuberculosis — 結核

heart disease — 心臓病

diabetes — 糖尿病

cancer — がん

pneumonia — 肺炎

asthma — ぜんそく

athlete's foot — 水虫

insomnia — 不眠症

heartburn — 胸やけ

indigestion — 消化不良

hay fever — 花粉症

nausea — 吐き気

rheumatism — リューマチ

\_\_\_\_\_ -itis (disease or health problems)

-炎

appendicitis — 虫垂炎

tendonitis — かんせつ炎

diarrhea — 下痢

constipation — 便秘

the + medical problem

the mumps — おたふくかぜ

the flu — インフルエンザ

the sniffles — 鼻づまり

the Black Death — ペスト

the plague — 疫痛

the clap (slang) — りん病

the hiccups — しゃっくり

the runs (slang) — 下痢

a/ an + medical problem

\_\_\_\_\_ -ache \* (痛、痛み)

head — 頭

ear — 耳の

back — 背の

stomach — 腹

tooth — 歯

cold — かぜ

cough — せき

\_\_\_\_\_ condition — 状態

heart condition — 心臓病

case of \_\_\_\_\_ 症例

malaria — マラリア

chicken pox — 水ぼうそう

sore \_\_\_\_\_ (body part)

throat — のどが痛い

neck — くびが痛い

back — 背が痛い

have a pain in the / my \_\_\_\_\_ (body part)

back — 背が痛い

stomach — 腹が痛い

knee — ひざが痛い

\* In British English it is possible to have  $\phi$  article.