The Perceptional Image of 'the'

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'The' の知覚イメージ

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ABSTRACT

A review of the literature on the usage of the definite article 'the,' indicates that its functions have been analyzed and organized taxonomically. As a result, the article system is traditionally taught starting with the situational classification of whether the focus is on new or old information (Brown,1973, Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman,1983). A learner may understand and internalized the explanations in this literature; however, very few learners succeed in mastering the article system(Pica,1983). Pica's(1983) research also points out that 'the' has many exceptional usages, which do not follow the rules. In addition, there are a number of idiomatic usages, which seem impossible to classify into a set of rules. Lewis(1986) characterizes this situation as the "catalogue and exceptions approach" and suggests, "instead of emphasizing a catalogue of different uses, from time to time teachers will need to look for similarity in things which are apparently different" (p.13). We, therefore, proposed the question, "What is the 'primary semantic characteristic'(Lewis, 1986, p.83) which can

explain all the various usages of the definite article?" We then hypothesized that there is a set of criteria associated with 'the' which allows us to select it from among the determiners. Using the concept of 'pinspotting,' we have analyzed a variety of examples of the usage of 'the,' and concluded that the basic criterion involved in the usage of 'the,' is the image of 'pinspotting.' At the same time, based on the objective facts, we posit that a speaker chooses an article for the noun that follows it from his/her own viewpoint. The speaker's viewpoint plays an important role in selecting which article to use.

1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

As many interlanguage studies such as Pica (1983) and Duskova (1989) have suggested, mistakes in the usage of the English articles are the most prominent grammatical errors among those made by non-native speakers. From the "communicative language teaching" point of view, recent teaching trends may have focused more on meaning and less on structure or forms of language. Krashen (1981) suggests, and has met with widespread agreement, that in order to lower the affective filters of learners, that is to minimize the fear of making mistakes, teaching functional words should be downplayed, while teaching content words should be encouraged for accuracy by teachers. In other words, functional words have not been regarded as the main point of learning but

rather as an addition or accessory to content words. Such an approach may result in teachers neglecting student errors in using functional words, such as determiners.

However, Petersen's (1988) view of the definite and indefinite article as the basic element of English logical processes reminds us of the significance of learning the functional words. Although it is indispensable to find a way to learn the article system in a classroom situation in order to acquire the process of logic in English (Petersen, 1988), there have been very few learners who have successfully mastered the article system (Pica, 1983).

Traditionally, the article system is often taught using a chart of situational classification, focusing on whether the determiner's head noun is new or old information. Furthermore, although article usage depends on its discourse context for determination of definiteness or indefiniteness, teaching materials usually do not go beyond the sentence level in presenting article usage. (Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman, 1983). While pedagogic emphasis is on specific-endophoric usage for the definite article, in actual speech, there is more exophoric usage (Halliday and Hasen, 1976). The research of Pica (1983) points out that there are many exceptional uses which do not follow traditional rules. Speakers are not always aware of listeners' perception. Besides, there are a number of idiomatic uses all of which seem impossible to classify into a set of rules.

Thus, we come up with the question, "What is a common perceptional image, or set of criteria, which can explain the whole

environment which determines the usage of the article 'the'?"

2. REVIEW OF TRADITIONAL CLASSIFICATIONS OF THE DEFINITE ARTICLE SYSTEM

There are two main streams of classification of the definite article. First, the articles are classified in relation to their noun phrases. Many grammarians (Quirk et al., 1985, Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freemen, 1983, Brender, 1989, etc.) have categorized those noun phrases into proper and common, and then sub-divided common into specific and generic. Secondly, in the framework of discourse analysis for specific references, Halliday and Hasan (1976) locate the references and classify according to their location: endophoric, which is situational and exophoric, which is textual. Then endophoric is divided into anaphoric (relating to preceding text) and cataphoric (relating to following text) according to its location.

Considering the semantic function of 'the', Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1983), Quirk and Greenbaum et al. (1985), Brender (1989), and Halliday and Hasan (1976) all insist on the importance of the function of 'the'; however, they view it more like an agent which helps a noun sharpen its meaning. On the other hand, some semantics researchers seek for a consistent meaning in the use of 'the'. For instance, Platteau (1980) determines the central image/meaning of specific and generic as 'inclusiveness,' Christophersen (1939), as existence and identification, Hawking

(1978), as familiarity and location.

As for other interpretations, Brown (1973) explains the definite article meaning in eight categories, using the expression "unique by----" ; Christophersen (1939) views the idea with a familiarity-unity theory, adding that the definite article not only determines the function of nouns but provides listeners with the implied image of the referent; Acton (1977) interprets a basic distinction in the article system using the idea of "boundaries" : 1. Concepts not thought of as being bounded (unbounded) 2. Concepts thought of as being bounded (bounded). He distinguishes perceptual images of two kinds of noun phrases. Also, he suggests that to teach articles, the contexts must be provided.

Judging from the above classification, with the exception of "boundaries," there does not seem to be a consistent article image for the purpose of categorization. Chaos results from trying to classify by every function of nouns, articles, etc. It is obvious that speakers are not conscious of such classifications. Pica (1983) and Halliday and Hasan (1976) also indicate that there are many exceptions to the described rules. Since no classification has a consistent rule for article use, it is very difficult to put articles into a set of rules or classification. Christophersen (1939) states that there are no absolutely systematic rules which explain the article system since language is deeply associated with human psychology. Similarly, in Whorf's (1956) view, grammar reflects something of the way English speakers categorize the world, and so choosing between using no article or the definite article often requires us to

understand the native speaker's concept of reality.

3. HYPOTHESIS

Tanaka and Kawade (1989) and Lewis (1986) imply that the same form ('the') ought to have the same fundamental meaning. We, therefore, proposed the question "What is the 'core image' (Tanaka and Kawade, 1989) or the 'primary semantic characteristic' (Lewis, 1986, p.83) which can explain all the various usages of 'the'?" Then, we hypothesize that the basic criterion involved in the usage of 'the, ' is the image of 'pinspotting.'

Quirk & Greenbaum et al. (1985) say, 'the' is one of the central determiners--for example 'that', 'this', 'every','each', 'no', 'some', 'the', 'a', or 'no article'. The central determiners form a set of closed-class items that are mutually exclusive with each other. Thus 'the', as one of the central determiners, is in a relationship of exclusive choice with the other central determiners. When we consider the fact that a speaker chose 'the' before the noun head, instead of another possible central determiner, we need to know the features of 'the' which caused its selection over the other central determiners. These features, or set of criteria, are similar in concept to the term the 'core image' that Tanaka and Kawade (1989) use for the basic verbs and the 'primary semantic characteristic' that Lewis (1986, p.83) uses for tense and aspect. However, there is an essential difference among them. We need only find a criteria set for the usage of 'the' that differentiates it from the other central

determiners. We can call this set an image or semantic characteristic. It is not necessary for the image to be core or primary.

We also assume that the criteria for the usage of 'the' map into a perceptional image in our mind. When we use the same nouns and different determiners, the noun phrases trigger different images. For example, when we use the noun 'apples', and say "Take the apples," the perceptual image that a speaker has in his/her mind is different from when we say "Take some apples," or "Take a few apples." This example shows us that 'the' triggers a certain image that is different from the other determiners.

Following Gattegno (1976), we presuppose:

1) that words trigger images,

2) that images trigger words, and

3) that images generate meanings.

The perceptional image of 'the' in our mind is thus the set of criteria that allows us to select it from among the other determiners. In addition, we claim that the same form of the word 'the' always triggers the same image in our mind and the same image through our perception always triggers 'the'. This means that 'the' has its own perceptional image in our mind that is independent from the following nouns.

In this claim, we take a different position from the grammarian who presumes that articles don't have their own meaning separate from their following nouns because they are dependent on them. Almost all grammarians make the distinction:

nouns are content words, 'the' is a function word. The usage of 'the'is divided into classes according to their following noun. Grammarians have showed us that the meaning of 'the' with common nouns is different from that of 'the' with proper nouns, and that that of specific nouns is different from that of generic nouns. It is true that according to the categories of the following nouns, the noun phrases in which 'the' is used may have differing meanings.

However, we claim that the determiner 'the' has its own consistent image that is independent from its following nouns. In order to have a clear criterion of 'the,' it is necessary to separate the noun phrase into two parts: 'the' and the content words. Each of them has its own image independently. The image of 'the' influences the meaning of the whole noun phrase and so does the image of the following noun.

We have extracted a criterion set over all possible usages, for example, 'the apples,' 'the apple' under specific and 'the apple'under generic usage. From this we posit that 'the' has its own criterion, which derives from a perceptional image in our mind, independent from the following nouns.

Through watching how we select a central determiner, we have found that based on objective reality, a speaker chooses an article for the noun that follows it from his/her own viewpoint. The speakers' viewpoint plays one important role in selecting which article to use. Ross (1988) says, "Use 'the' to talk about a specific object, when a speaker expects that his/her listener can understand exactly which object he/she means." This indicates that the usage

of 'the' depends on the speaker's perspective and his understanding of the listener's perspective. Therefore, it is essential to take into account the perception of a speaker who selects 'the' from among the determiners, rather than that of a listener who interprets the meaning of 'the'.

We then posit that a speaker selects 'the' when he/she focuses on an object by observing his/her own behavior. When we focus on an object, our eyes behave as if we were aiming a spotlight at the object. There are two kinds of spotlights: 'pinspot' and 'flatspot.' When all the singers on a stage are highlighted as a whole, the spotlight is called a 'flatspot.' When one singer is highlighted alone, it is called a 'pinspot.' Thus, we hypothesize that the basic criterion involved in the usage of 'the' is the image of 'pinspotting.' As Lewis (1986) says, if complicated examples and so-called exceptions can be analyzed in exactly the same way as simpler examples, the validity of the criterion of 'the' that we hypothesize is supported.

4. THE CRITERION MODEL OF 'THE' WHICH IS INDUCED FROM VARIOUS EXAMPLE SITUATIONS

Almost all the literature says that 'the' is 'definite' in contrast to 'a' is indefinite. The concept 'definite' is used when the traditional grammarian analyzes the usage of 'a' and 'the' by observing only the objective reality that is illustrated in written or

spoken language.　The traditional grammarian does not observe a speaker's mental process when he/she selects 'the' from among the determiners.

　　Halliday & Hasan (1976) explain that 'the' is, as always, a signal of identify and the speaker wants to point out what he/she really means.　Through reading the literature and considering the images that native speakers have, we found that a speaker selects words like 'the', 'this', 'these', 'that' or 'those' from among the central determiners when he/she identifies the object or the objects referred to by the following noun in one way or another.　When we observed a speaker's behavior, we found that when a speaker points to an object(s) by a finger, a hand, a head or something else actually or virtually, he/she uses 'this,' 'that' 'these' or 'those.'　How does a speaker's actual or virtual behavior when 'the' is used differ from that when 'this,' 'that' 'these' or 'those' is used?

　　Petersen(1988, pp.13-23) illustrates 0 that 'no article' like 'rain in Spain' triggers generality; 'a' like 'a rain in Spain' triggers the image that the rain is merely one example and 'the' like 'the rain in Spain' triggers the image that the rain is different from the other rain. While contrasting the rain against the other rain, he focuses on one of them.

　　In addition to Petersen's illustrations about 'the,' some other native speakers shared insightful views concerning when 'the' appears before the noun head.　For example, in the sentence 'I like to walk in the rain,' Balfour sees vivid and clear rain fall because 'the' is used, compared to the image of 'rain' without 'the'in the sentence

'I like to walk in rain'. (From Ross's personal talk with Charlotte Balfour, 1990) From her view, we see that the image of 'the' makes her imagine she is aiming the spotlight at the rain in her mind.

Another example is that Ross sees the snow that lies about five inches or so deep when 'the' is used in the sentence below.

I like to walk in the snow.

Without 'the,' he feels that the whole town is covered with snow from the sentence below.

I like to walk in snow.

He says that the image with 'the' is visual compared to the sentence without 'the.' (P. Ross, 1994) From his view, we see that the image of 'the' has some visual boundary as if the object is highlighted. Through these images of the native speakers, we can extract the criterion that a speaker selects 'the' when he/she focuses on the object(s) visually.

When we focus on an object or objects visually, our eyes behave as if we were aiming a spotlight at the object or objects. As we mentioned before, there are two kinds of spotlights: 'pinspot' and 'flatspot'. When all the objects on a stage are highlighted equally as a whole, the spotlight is called a 'flatspot.' When the single object among them is highlighted alone, or when some objects are highlighted contrasting against the other ones, it is called a 'pinspot.'

When a speaker says, "Look at a singer on the stage," he/she means any one of the singers. So he/she is looking at the

whole stage as if he/she were aiming a 'flatspot.' On the other hand, when a speaker says, "Look at the singer on the stage," he/she means the particular singer at whom he/she is aiming a 'pinspot.' This image also takes care of the characterization that 'the' is definite and 'a' is indefinite. Thus, we hypothesize that a speaker selects 'the' when he/she perceives an object(s) with the image of 'pinspotting'. Using the concept of 'pinspotting,' we are going to analyze a variety of examples of the usage of 'the'.
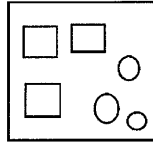
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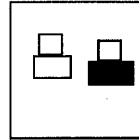
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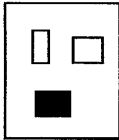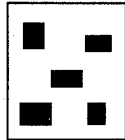
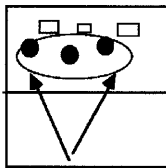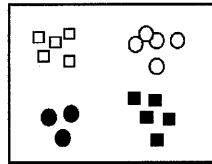picture 1   picture 2   picture 3   picture 4

picture 5   picture 6

5.1 A single object and all the objects

There is the situation where an object has a different characteristic from the others as in picture 1. When a speaker talks

about the object that is different from the others, he/she has to choose 'the' before the noun head. For example,

1. Look at the black square.

Observing the objective reality that there is a single black square in picture 1, and the speaker's behavior that he/she is focusing on it while talking about it, we can say that 'the' is selected because he/she is aiming a 'pinspot' at the object. In another situation, such as in picture 2, there are some objects that share the same characteristic. When a speaker talks about any one of the objects, he/she should use 'a' before the noun head as in the sentence below.

2. Look at a black square.

Observing the objective reality that there are five black squares and the speaker's behavior that he/she is choosing indifferently any one among them, we can say that 'a' is selected because it is impossible to aim a 'pinspot' at a particular one. On the other hand, 'the' is used when the speaker aims a spotlight at all the black squares in picture 2 as in the sentence below.

3. Look at the black squares.

The image of 'pinspotting' is even helpful to explain the reason why a speaker has to select 'the' when he/she talks about all of the objects that have the same characteristic. If a speaker aims a 'pinspot' at all the objects that have the same characteristic, contrasting with the other objects, then 'the' is selected from among the central determiners. When a speaker accepts this assumption, in a given setting as picture 3, he/she can make the sentences as

below with the image that he/she is talking about all the squares in picture 3.

4. The squares are bigger than the circles.

5.2 The object(s) that is modified

We encounter the situation in which there are more than two objects that are exactly alike as in picture 4. If we accept the criterion that 'the' is selected when a speaker aims a 'pinspot' at one of the white blocks, then he/she uses 'the' before the noun head as below.

5. A: Take the white block.

If a listener figures out which one to take by reading the speaker's mind, he/she can show this by taking the white block at which a speaker is aiming a mental 'pinspot.' If a listener doesn't figure out which one to take, he/she may ask,

6. B: Which one?

Then the speaker may answer,

7. A: The one which is on the black one.

When a speaker takes into consideration that it is difficult for a listener to imagine which object(s) he/she is focusing on, a speaker explains about it before being asked which one, as in the sentence below:

8.Take the white rod which is on the black one.

If we apply the image of 'pinspotting', we can also explain why a speaker has used 'the' when the noun is modified. As we mentioned above, at first a speaker selects 'the' from among the

determiners when he/she aims a 'pinspot' to an object or objects, then he explains which object he/she means by adding more information when he/she takes into account making his/her listener to understand him/her. Ross (1988) says, "Use 'the' to talk about a specific object, when a speaker expects that his/her listener can understand exactly which object he/she means."   This emphasizes the speaker's understanding of the listener's perspective. However, we must also realize that speakers are not always aware of their listeners' perception (Pica, 1983). Besides, in a sentence like "I used to play in the sand," it is not necessary for a listener to understand which sand a speaker means. Thus, the explanation that 'the' is selected because of a speaker's understanding what his/her listener knows, can't apply to all usage of 'the.' If we accept the image of 'pinspotting', we can say that in the example below, a speaker explains more specifically about the object or objects at which he/she aims a 'pinspot' after he/she mentions it. This usage is called cataphora.

9. ...and this room contained ... a table, three or four chairs and the beds. Uncle Henry and Aunt Em had a big bed in one corner and Dorothy a little bed in another corner. (From The Wizard of Oz by L. Frank Baum)

In the example below, a speaker explains more specifically about the object or objects at which he/she aims a 'pinspot' before he/she mentions it. This usage is called anaphora.

10. He was an old man who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream.... The old man was thin and gaunt with deep wrinkles in the

back of his neck. (From The Old Man and the Sea by Ernest Hemingway)

　　　We also encounter the case that a writer uses 'the' very effectively on purpose. For example,

11. "Then you cannot see the bridge from here.

　　"No," the old man said.

(From For Whom the Bell Tolls by Hemingway)

The sentence above is in the first page of the book. The writer suddenly starts talking about a bridge by using 'the' without any explanation. The bridge plays a very important role in this story. In the whole story, the writer refers to the bridge in one way or another. The sentence below is in the last page.

12. "and below Robert saw the road and the bridge and the long lines of vehicles below it."

The author used the article 'the' very effectively here. He took into account that his reader would so curious to know at which bridge Robert and the old man aim the 'pinspot' that he/she would go on reading to find out about it. Then at the last page, it seems that he is telling his reader that now he/she knows very well which bridge he is highlighting. Because we have explained the author's view with the assumption of the image of 'pinspotting', his purpose in his usage of 'the' is clear and easy to understand.

5.3 Proper noun and unique common noun

　　　The image of 'pinspotting' is helpful with a number of other examples traditionally dealt with in a variety of different ways.

There is the situation where a speaker focuses on the single object that exists in his/her whole world. An object unique in all the world like the moon or the earth is usually expressed by 'the' before the noun head, which are called common nouns.

13. Look at the moon.

14. The earth is blue.

However, when a speaker talks about the universe, there are very many moons. Then, he/she may use 'a' before 'moon' since he/she is not aiming 'pinspot' at a particular moon.

Next, a single object unique in all the world as below is expressed by 'the' before the capitalized noun.

15. I saw the Pacific Ocean.

16. Where is the Brookfield Zoo?

For the examples like 'the Pacific Ocean' and 'the Brookfield zoo', Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1983) use the term 'unique common nouns'. But 'the' is not used before the singular proper nouns like 'Jorge' since they are inherently definite. Yet, 'the' is used with proper nouns as the sentence below.

17. The Jorge that called yesterday called. (From The Grammar Book by Celce-Murcia and Larsen Freeman, 1983)

Whether they are called proper nouns or unique common nouns, 'the' is used before them. We need to extract a set of criteria that can apply in both cases. Here again, if we accept the image of 'pinspotting', we can apply the criteria to either proper nouns or unique common nouns and common nouns. Then we can have the

image that a speaker is aiming a 'pinspot' at an object that is unique in the world he/she knows. Whether residents call, for example, Brookfield Zoo with or without 'the' at present, not using 'the' was their choice once before and has become traditional. Other examples are common. For example, whether native speakers say 'the earth', 'the Earth' or 'Earth' with 'the' or not, with capital or not for the meaning 'the planet that we live' is their own choice. It depends on what kind of image he/she wants to convey through that determiner. The image of 'pinspotting' is also able to apply to the case where the proper noun is plural.

18. I saw the Great Lakes and the Rocky Mountains from the airplane.
19.The Germans are good musicians. (From The Grammar Book by Celce-Murcia and Larsen Freeman, 1983)

　　If a speaker aims a 'pinspot' at objects like Great Lakes, Rocky Mountains or Germans, then he/she selects 'the' before the noun head as shown above. The image of 'pinspotting' gives us the clear image of the objects against the other ones as in picture 3. When the singers are spotlighted on the stage, the light comes from outside of the stage as in picture 5. This image that a speaker is aiming a 'pinspot' from outside of the given setting can be taken for granted.

　　Petersen (1988) interprets that when a speaker uses 'the'

like 'the Japanese' he/she is not considering the differences among the members, as compared to the usage of 'no article' such as 'Americans' in the examples below.

20. While Americans tend to be concerned with issues of overall fairness, the Japanese prefer to focus on macroeconomic deficiencies in the U. S.

By using the image of 'pinspotting', we can explain Peterson's interpretation for 'the Japanese' vs. 'Americans.' The speaker who is an American is focusing a spotlight on all the Japanese as seen from the United States. Thus he/she use 'the' Japanese so he/she doesn't see any differences among the members. And he/she doesn't use 'the' with 'Americans' because he/she thinks he/she is one of the Americans while staying in the U. S. Acton (1977) supports this explanation by saying that when objects are closer to the self, a speaker selects 'no article' before the noun head like 'Americans' in the sentence above, and when he/she is outside the boundary of the objects, he/she selects 'the' before the noun head like 'the Japanese' in the sentence above.

5.4 Uncountable nouns

The same criterion for 'the' is helpful for us to trigger the image for not only an uncountable noun but also an abstract object. The image of 'the' with uncountable nouns parallels that of other uses of 'the', as in picture 1, in which a single object has a different characteristic from the other objects.

21. What I remember most about our trip is the rain.

22. When I was a kid I spent hours in the sand.

When 'the' is used, the image of an uncountable noun as shown above is visually vivid, clear and limited compared to that without 'the' as previously mentioned by Balfour and Ross. Where a 'pinspot' is aimed at an uncountable object, we can see that the spotlight makes the boundary around the object. The boundary of the spotlight might be the reason why the usage of 'the' gives a limited image to the listener. The same image is extracted from an abstract object when 'the' is used.

23. Look at the truth.

When a speaker knows that there are a lot of truths and talks about one of them, he/she may use 'a' as below.

24. This is a truth.

5.5 A group

The image of 'pinspotting' is a full and systematic explanation of the choice of 'the,' when the object consists of several members as in the picture 6. When a speaker aims a 'pinspot' at one of the groups contrasting with the other ones, he/she may select 'the' from among the determiners as below.

25. The group meets three days a week.

When a given setting is the whole world, the group can be treated as a kind of the class by talking about all the members of that category. If a speaker aims a 'pinspot' at the objects as a whole class, contrasting with the other ones, he/she may select 'the'

before the noun head.

26. The tiger is a wild animal.

27. The potato probably originated in South America.

28. The pen is mightier than the sword.

      Examples such as 'the tiger' and 'the potato' are called generic usage. Ross(1988) says they sound somewhat academic and are not used in everyday life. Here again the 'pinspotting' model can be taken for granted. Because a speaker spotlights the objects from the outside of the stage, he/she is focusing on all the objects as a class from the distance. We can interpret that this image makes the noun phrase with the usage of 'the' sound objective. So do the pen and the sword.

      Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1983) separate the usage of the articles depending on the categories of the following noun, one usage is specific and the other is generic. So when the usage of 'the' does not appear to fit either of these categories, as in the examples below, it is problematic for them.

29. We listen to the news on the radio.

30. I talked to Burt on the phone.

31. Alice took the train to Boston.

      A word like 'radio,' 'television' or 'telephone' has two different meanings. One is a system and the other is a device. For example, when we mean television as a system, the image of 'the television' is uncountable, and when we mean it as a device, it is countable.

      An American linguist, Tuck (1994), explains that the

meaning of 'the radio' in the sentence 29 and 'the phone' in 30 is 'a device called a radio or a phone.' He claims that 'the' is used when a speaker expects that his/her listener will be able to determine which object he/she means. Then it puzzled him that any arbitrary radio or phone can be used in the situation as in 29 or 30. Then a speaker doesn't need to point to which one to use for a listener by using 'the.' Here again, we have to face a problem, if we accept the rule that 'the' is used when both speaker and listener know which object is meant as Ishida (1994) mentioned.

If we apply the image of 'pinspotting' to the usage of 'the' in the sentences 29 and 30, we can say that the meaning of 'the radio' and 'the phone' is a system called radio or phone. So does 'the train' in 3. Then a speaker gives a system, or the image of a clear boundary by using 'the', and then the system can be discrete from other systems. Where a 'pinspot' is aimed at an object, it makes a boundary around the object. The boundary of the spotlight gives a discrete image to examples like 'the radio,' 'the phone' and 'the train as in the sentence above. In addition, the image of 'pinspotting' gives a clear and vivid visual image to them.

Besides, this criterion for the usage of 'the' makes it simple and consistent to explain why we can use television with or without 'the.' In British usage "we see a program on the television", but in American usage "we see it on television." It is a speaker's choice whether 'the' is used or not depending on what he/she wants to express.

This interpretation also solves the problem that Tanaka

and Kawade (1989) have. They say that 'the' is used when the information is not new for a listener. Their criterion [+old information] for 'the' can't explain why they use 'the' before 'piano' as in the sentence 32 as shown below. They have explained about 'the' for specific usage, but can't find the consistent core image that applies to all the examples that has the same form: 'the.' We can say both the sentences below:

32. I play the piano.

33. I play piano.

The application of 'pinspotting' makes the image of 'the piano' parallel to the image of 'the television.' The system called piano is highlighted by a 'pinspot.' So the usage of 'the' triggers the clear and vivid visual image that contrasts with other systems.

6. CONCLUSION

We illustrated how the criterion model for the usage of 'the' can take care of various examples that include problematic usage of 'the' for others. All of the examples shown above can be understood with the simple explanation using the image of 'pinspotting.' It is helpful for a learner to have such a consistent criterion for the usage of 'the.' So we concluded tentatively that when a speaker aims a 'pinspot' at an object or objects, a speaker selects 'the' from among the central determiners. Then he/she can select 'the' without considering the categories of the noun. Because we extracted the image of 'the' independently from the following

nouns, the criterion is applicable to any usage of 'the' regardless the category of the noun, whether specific, generic, proper, common, concrete, abstract, countable, uncountable or none of these categories. As the result, a speaker has his/her right to select which central determiners to use depending on what he/she wants to express. This will free a learner from having to memorize where to use 'the'.　Cases which are determined by the tradition of local residents are exceptional.

　　　It is true that the image of 'the' and the image of the content words in the noun phrases create images that vary according to the character of their following nouns as traditional grammarians have mentioned.　For generic usage, the image of the noun phrase with 'the' is general, objective, and academic compared to specific usage.　For an uncountable object, that image is visually clear and vividly contrasts with other objects.　The usage of 'the' gives a boundary to an object compared to the one with no article.　For specific usage of a countable object, a listener can tell easily which object a speaker is focusing on because the image of 'the' gives additional definiteness and clearness to an object that is already discrete and specific.　In addition, our claim for the usage of 'the' makes a speaker free from the obligation to figure out a listener's knowledge. It is obvious that a speaker needs to explain specifically to his/her listener when he/she takes into account communicating what he/she means.　When he/she expects that his/her listener can't see at which object he/she is aiming a 'pinspot,' he/she needs to explain more about it.

As for teaching, in order to make our students aware of this criterion for the usage of 'the,' we think we need to present the images through actual situations and pictures as shown above. Acquiring the criterion of 'the,' we hope our students can apply it to various usage of 'the' and improve their own criteria by themselves, too. Since we can speculate that each determiner has its own criterion independent from the following noun, we want to investigate all of them in our future study. Then, we can teach our students the whole article system through using their own perceptional images.

At the end, we must add that the image of the 'pinspotting' is our criterion for the usage of 'the' at present. Tomorrow we might refine it through meeting more examples.

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