THE ENGLISH ARTICLE
FROM COGNITIVE PERSPECTIVE:
TOWARDS A UNIFIED APPROACH

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INTRODUCTION

In the English language the article appears to be the most cognitively-oriented grammatical phenomenon since its traditional explanations have been drawing on various aspects of mental activity: identification, knowledge storage, its activation.

The initial understanding of the articles as exponents of definiteness / non-definiteness implies that the addressee matches definite phrases with particular objects, not just any[1], i.e. captures basic relations between language and perception. This approach is further developed by identifiability theory regarding the definite article as a means of directing the hearer to the referent which he is in a position to identify, i.e. to match with some real-world entity which he knows to exist because he can see it, or infer its existence from something else he has heard[2].

In its turn, the identifying function of the definite article is opposed to the introductory role of the indefinite article which according to the mental space theory is meant to introduce elements into mental spaces[3] while definites point out the elements which are already there[4].

The knowledge-related functions of the English articles are also pinned down to the familiarity / non-familiarity opposition: in this case the definite article is treated as a signal that the entity denoted by a noun phrase is familiar to both speaker and hearer while the indefinite article is considered to be a marker of the absence of such familiarity[5]. This function of the definite article is further elaborated by three familiarity

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[1] Lyons Ch. *Definiteness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. P. 2.
[2] Lyons Ch. *Definiteness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. P. 5–6.
[3] Fauconnier G. *Mental Spaces: Aspects of Meaning Construction in Natural Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985. P. 19.
[4] Fauconnier G. *Mental Spaces: Aspects of Meaning Construction in Natural Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985. P. 20.
[5] Christophersen P. *The Articles. The Study of their Theory and Use in English*. London, etc: Oxford University Press, 1939.

types: immediate situation function with a subtype of visible use; larger situation use based on specific and general knowledge; anaphoric use treated together with the situational functions since it presupposes some specific knowledge of a referent[6].

The idea of situational use of articles is supported in their Cognitive Grammar treatment as grounding elements specifying the discourse status of the nominal referent vis-a-vis the ground which comprises the speech event and its participants[7]. Accordingly, an indefinite nominal gives an instruction for the hearer to imagine an instance of a type, pending the information provided by the clause containing it[8], while a definite nominal implies that within the relevant scope of consideration there is only one eligible candidate or only one instance of the specified type[9].

New distinctions of the nil, definite and indefinite articles are found by the vantage theory drawing on viewing modes, concerning similarity and difference which can be treated as homogeneity and heterogeneity respectively. Within this theory the nil article entails the non-discriminatory mode resting on the similarity of the denoted (SS), e.g. *bread, music, honesty*; the indefinite article indicates similarity followed by difference (SS D), e.g. *a bread, a dry heat*; *a new car;* the definite article stresses difference (DD), e.g. *the sun, to park the car*[10].

The three main modes serve as the basis for the explanation of the borderline cases of article use. For instance, it is claimed that the homogeneous concept of mass, requiring a greater cognitive effort (SS+), underlies the use of the nil form of nouns denoting the status of a person, e.g. *Henry became treasurer*, while the reduced strength of similarity (SS-) is linked to the nil form of nouns in the plural, e.g. *lions, Italians, fractals*[11]. Covering the whole system of articles from one perspective this approach requires further elucidation with respect to its basic concepts of similarity akin to that of homogeneity or uniformity and difference close to the ideas of heterogeneity and diversity.

As can be seen, none of the discussed cognitive approaches explains article use in its own right since each of them relies on separate facets of

[6]Hawkins J. A. *Definiteness and Indefiniteness: A Study in Reference and Grammaticality Prediction*. London: Croom Helm, 1978. P. 122.

[7] Langacker R.W. *Investigations in Cognitive Grammar*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2009. P. 120.

[8]ibidem

[9] ibidem, P. 121–122.

[10] Głaz A. *Extended Vantage Theory in Linguistic Application. The Case of the English Articles*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2012. P. 162.

[11] ibidem, P. 168–170.

human cognition. A successful understanding of articles seems possible if we boil the various interpretations down to one perspective which will allow to reconcile different scholars' intuitions.

What might that perspective be?

Relying on the perceptual foundation for language meaning suggested by R. Langacker[12], it is natural to begin reconciling the different cognitive approaches to the article via the figure / ground opposition as the most basic phenomenon of visual perception, interpreted in Cognitive Grammar in terms of profile, i.e. what a word usually designates, and base, the larger structure which provides for the understanding of a word[13]. With respect to the relations between profile and its base, or figure and ground, there are two scopes of predication: maximal, i.e. the full array of the evoked content, and immediate, comprising those facets of the maximal scope that figure most directly in the characterization of the profiled entity[14]. In traditional linguistic term scope seems akin to the notion of context, and to make the understanding of this paper easier the reader might substitute the term *context* for that of *scope* and deal with immediate and maximal mental contexts in psychological terms related to figure and ground.

1. Method of establishing the scope of predication

The material of the study covers definites, i.e. nominal phrases used with the definite article, and non-definites, i.e. phrases having no definite article. In their turn, the latter are subdivided into indefinites, i.e. noun phrases with the indefinite article, and forms with the nil article, or non-use of articles[15].

The paper applies the method of *establishing the scope of predication*. It consists in relating the meaning of definites and non-definites to the scope of predication, i.e. the mental contexts deriving from the perceptual phenomenon of figure and ground, or in cognitive terms, an array of conceptual content that it specifically evokes and relies upon for its characterization[16].

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[12] Langacker R.W. *Grammar and Conceptualization*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1999. P. 49.

[13] Langacker R.W. *Concept, Image, and Symbol: The Cognitive Basis of Grammar*. Berlin, N.Y: Mouton de Gruyter, 1990. P. 8.

[14] ibidem

[15] Głaz A. *Extended Vantage Theory in Linguistic Application. The Case of the English Articles*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2012. P. 143.

[16] Langacker R.W. *Grammar and Conceptualization*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1999. P. 49.

In Cognitive Grammar the distinction between maximal and immediate scopes treated as mental contexts, is usually illustrated by relating parts of human body with the profile of each noun constituting an immediate scope for the noun that follows: *body > arm > hand > finger > knuckle*[17]. From the cited array of lexical units it is clear that the opposition between maximal and immediate scopes needs further minute specification since a human body has pairs of arms and hands, ten fingers and quite a number of knuckles to be distinguished in the course of communication if need be. This necessity is further supported by the so-called nested constructions which locate the same trajector, i.e. a prominent entity, in smaller and smaller areas, e.g. *Your camera is upstairs, in the bedroom, in the closet, on the top shelf, behind the binoculars*[18]. From this example, it is clear that all the nominal phrases indicate the immediate scope, i.e. the background, not only lexically but also grammatically: the definite article couples with the attribute *top* in the phrase *on the top shelf*. In other words, the immediate scope is evoked by a hierarchy of linguistic means which besides lexical meaning include definiteness and locational attributes. Conversely, the meaning of non-definites depends on the maximal scope evoking a full array of content.

With that said, to explain the choice of definites and non-definites it is necessary to distinguish patterns relating named entities to the immediate or maximal scopes, i.e. mental contexts serving as the background for understanding nominal phrases. In accordance with the Cognitive Grammar prerequisites those patterns should take into account two more dimensions of denoting entities: the level of specificity and salience, i.e. special prominence associated with profiling[19]. In this paper specificity and salience are further elaborated by categorization levels and image schemas.

The levels of specificity at which a situation is construed can be represented by lexical units forming hierarchies with respect to the notion of inclusiveness[20]: basic, at which an object is viewed as perceptual and functional gestalt[21]; superordinate, with the objects

[17] ibidem, P. 51.

[18] ibidem, P. 60.

[19] Langacker R.W. *Concept, Image, and Symbol: The Cognitive Basis of Grammar*. Berlin, N.Y: Mouton de Gruyter, 1990. P. 8.

[20] Rosch E. Principles of Categorization. *Cognition and Categorization*. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1978. P. 30.

[21] Rosch E. Categorization. *Cognition and Pragmatics*. Amsterdam (Phil.): John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2009. P. 45–46.

sharing only a few attributes; subordinate, characterized by bundles of common and predictable attributes reflecting individual instances of a category[22]. From this perspective phrases with the nil article in the introductory function or out of context refer an entity to the superordinate categorization level, e.g. *furniture*; the indefinite article may relate entities to three level: superordinate, e.g. *a mammal*, basic, e.g. *a chair*, or subordinate, e.g. *a kitchen chair*.

At particular caregorization levels the degree of specificity of a denoted entity is captured in finer detail by image schemas, i.e. recurring dynamic patterns of our sensory-motor experience by means of which we can make sense of that experience and reason about it[23].

The degree of salience is rendered by the perceptual schemas COLLECTION – COUNT – OBJECT – MASS, generalizing on the visual images obtained from varying distance and providing for the use of non-definites in the introductory function, e.g. *a herd* (COLLECTION) – *three cows* (COUNT) – *a cow* (OBJECT) – *beef* (MASS)[24].

The level of specificity established relative to the human body is indicated by other four pairs of image schemas: somatic, comprising FRONT – BACK, LEFT – RIGHT, UP – DOWN, CENTRE – PERIPHERY; spatial, placing entities inside or outside a three-dimensional space or relative to its boundaries (OBJECT – SURFACE – CONTAINER – CONTENTS – FULL/EMPTY); kinetic referring to motion (PATH, VERTICALITY, CYCLE); those for force: COUNTERFORCE, ENABLEMENT, BLOCKAGE, ATTRACTION, COMPULSION[25].

The application of the method of *establishing the scope of predication* to explaining the meaning of definites and non-definites in English reveals four main patterns: definites as a means of evoking the immediate scope; non-definites triggering the maximal scope; combination of definites and non-definites to relate different scopes of predication; distinguishing phrases with the indefinite and nil articles.

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[22] Taylor J.R. *Possessives in English. An Exploration in Cognitive Grammar*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995. P. 46–47.

[23] Johnson M. The philosophical significance of image schemas. *From Perception to Meaning: Image Schemas in Cognitive Linguistics*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2005. P. 19.

[24] Potapenko S. Cognitive functions of the English articles: An orientational application of image schemas. *From Gram to Mind: Grammar as Cognition.* Bordeaux: Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 2008. Vol. 1. P. 246.

[25] ibidem

2. Definites related to immediate scope

With respect to the self-evidentiality of relation between a profiled entity and its base the immediate scope is structured in two ways: proximal without any additional linguistic means of specification and remote requiring those means.

This opposition is illustrated by placing definite entities inside particular containers. In the following example the definite phrase *the wheel* relates the named entity to the proximal immediate scope represented by a car which is denoted by the noun phrase *one Suburban*: *Floyd took the wheel of one Suburban, Lake in the front seat*[26]. In this very context, the remote immediate scope is denoted by the phrase *the front seat* distinguishing one seat among others. Within the remote scope definites may simultaneously differentiate several entities named in the following example by the phrase *the front and centre*: *He lovingly planted them in the front and centre of his garden*[27].

The remote immediate scope is structured by image-schemas of four groups underlying corresponding patterns of organizing definite phrases: focal, somatic, spatial, and distributive.

The focal definites, based on the CENTRE – PERIPHERY opposition, relate the profiled entity to the remote scope by the adjectives *very, essential, only, main* etc, e.g. *You are not the only one who can howl!* [28].

The somatic definites, associated with the traditional immediate (very much similar to the immediate scope!) and larger situation uses of the definite article[29], are subdivided into frontal, lateral, and vertical, related to the bodily image schemas FRONT – BACK, RIGHT – LEFT, UP – DOWN respectively.

The frontal definites position a profiled entity relative to two bodily coordinates: FRONT (*the front seat, the front entrance, the front desk* etc), e.g. *The billionaire businessman recently landed on the front page of the New York Times*[30], and BACK, e.g. *One little personal in small print in the back of a gay magazine had yielded sixty responses*[31].

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[26] Grisham J. *The Brethren*. London: Arrow Books, 2011. P. 92.
[27] ibidem, P. 86.
[28] Newsweek 28.02.2011. P. 43.
[29] Hawkins J. A. *Definiteness and Indefiniteness: A Study in Reference and Grammaticality Prediction.* London: Croom Helm, 1978. P. 107.
[30] Newsweek 4.06.2012. P. 43.
[31] Grisham J. *The Brethren*. London: Arrow Books, 2011. P. 41.

The lateral definites locate profiled entities on the RIGHT or LEFT of a reference point (*drift to the left, the far-right parties*), e.g. *Although he tried to weaken rivals by cherry-picking ideas and even big names from the opponents on both <u>the left</u> and <u>the right</u>*[32].

The verticality definites place named entities relative to two coordinates of the remote scope: TOP, e.g. *His one obvious rival <u>at the top</u> of the military, Field Marshal Mohamed Abd al-Halim Abu Ghazala, served as defence minister in the 1980s*[33], as well as DOWN encoded by the units *ground,* e.g. *These guys have spent more time <u>on the ground</u> in Abyei than most American officials have*[34], and *bottom*, e.g. *He had chosen <u>the bottom bunk</u>. Beech crawled into the top one*[35].

The somatic definites are very much handy in explaining the anaphoric use of articles by directing the addressee's attention BACK to a named entity within the remote scope represented by a current communicative situation or a piece of writing, e.g. *He pulled out <u>another letter</u> […]. 'Would you like to read it, Ricky boy?' Spicer asked, handing <u>the letter</u> to Beech*[36].

The spatial definite phrases locate named entities within the remote scope structured by schemas forming the succession of OBJECT – SURFACE – CONTAINER – CONTENTS (FULL/EMPTY). Arranged in the order from OBJECT to CONTENTS, they reflect a conceptualizer's motion into an entity which is accompanied by its transformation into a three-dimensional space while perceived in the opposite direction they reflect motion outside. The spatial definites locate named entities relative to the boundaries of a remote scope conceptualized as a container which is signaled by the nouns *frontier, line, edge, verge*, e.g. *He was <u>on the verge</u> of arousal when he started reading*[37], while its bottom is indicated by the noun *earth* or its synonyms, e.g. *Aaron Lake could almost feel <u>the earth</u> shake from the bombing*[38]. In addition, the spatial definites locate entities within the remote scope represented by parts of human body, e.g. *He squeezed <u>the wrinkles</u> **in his forehead***[39]; premises, e.g. *<u>The plastic **cafeteria** chairs</u>*

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[32] Newsweek 28.02.2011. P. 44.
[33] ibidem, P. 40.
[34] ibidem, P. 19.
[35] Grisham J. *The Brethren*. London: Arrow Books 2011. P. 72.
[36] ibidem, P. 38.
[37] ibidem, P. 76.
[38] ibidem, P. 27.
[39] ibidem, P. 48.

rattled for a moment[40]; a country which is implied in the following example: *The military needs tons of cash to recruit young men*[41], etc.

The distributive definite phrases arrange the inner structure of the PATH, CIRCLE, SCALE schemas and of clusters formed by source and target within the force schemas of BLOCKAGE, ENABLEMENT, COUNTERFORCE, ATTRACTION, COMPULSION, RESTRAINT REMOVAL[42].

Sequencing definites, derived from the PATH and SCALE schemas, locate named entities relative to three points: beginning, e.g. *Its road painted red for the first time*[43], intermediary, e.g. *Here lies Russia and here lies France, and we are in the middle*[44], or final, e.g. *It may not be the end*[45].

The cluster-related definites locate named entities in the remote scope structured by dyads, triads, or tetrads. The position of a referent within dyadic clusters, consisting of two entities with one of them serving as a reference point for the other, is indicated by the pronoun *other*, the adjectives *adverse, former / latter, opposite, real, right / wrong*, or the abstract nouns *alternative, division, divide* etc, e.g. *Now it seems one of the brightest young leaders of the former Soviet space is on course to destroy the other*[46].

The triadic definite patterns, locating a profiled entity relative to three units, include the superlative degree of adjectives, e.g. *Beech was fifty-six, the youngest of the three*[47], or temporal units *past, present* and *future*, e.g. *The balance had to be right: enough of the past to give the British the reassurance of immemorial continuity; enough of the present and future for them not to feel entombed in their ancestry*[48].

The tetradic definite patterns distinguish named entities within clusters of four by navigation terms *south, north, west, east* and their derivatives, e.g. *Her father sank electoral roots in the south*[49].

It is true that the singled out patterns allow for non-definites but only to name entities against a maximal or extremely vague scope. For

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[40] ibidem, P. 6.
[41] ibidem, P. 27.
[42] Johnson M. *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987. P. 45–48.
[43] Newsweek 4.06.2012. P. 36.
[44] Newsweek 21.02.2011. P. 3.
[45] Newsweek 4.06.2012. P. 49.
[46] Newsweek 15.09.2008. P. 4.
[47] Grisham J. *The Brethren*. London: Arrow Books, 2011. P. 4.
[48] Newsweek 4.06.2012. P. 35.
[49] Newsweek 28.02.2011. P. 44.

instance, the noun *beginning*, usual in definite phrases relating a named entity to a sequence, takes the indefinite article in the following example since the denoted entity is placed against an extremely vague unidentified scope, e.g. *Even poor Robbie below dreamed of <u>a new beginning</u>*[50].

The immediate scope of predication discussed in this section underlies the identifying use of definites which has been around for a while as well as deictic and anaphoric functions traditionally connected with the immediate and larger situation use.

3. Non-definites related to maximal scope

Non-definites relate denoted entities to the maximal scope, or mental context associated with the ground, forming three main patterns: locational, connecting non-definite entities with place or / and time; animate, associating non-definite entities with humans or social activity; inanimate, linking non-definite entities to physical objects or events.

The locational pattern relates non-definite entities to the maximal scopes of two types: place, denoted in the following example by the phrase *on the outside*, e.g. <u>*A friend*</u> **on the outside** *had found it*[51], and time, named by the adverb *then,* e.g. ***Then*** <u>*an entirely new set*</u> *of doctors took over*[52]. The maximal scope serving as the ground for non-definite entities is indicated by the units known in the mental space theory as space-builders[53]: they are the deictic unit *here*, word combinations naming physical locations (*under the door, in the city, in the embassy*), and groups of people (*in the middle of the litigants*), as well as various activities (*on radar jamming*) or parts of human body, e.g. <u>*A large tattoo*</u> *had been applied* ***to his left calf***[54]. Besides *then*, the maximal temporal scope is indicated by the units naming time, e.g. ***The time*** *is perfect <u>for a new strongman, a new dictator</u>*[55], events (*during visitation*) or their frequency (*sometimes, often*), e.g. <u>*No political action committee*</u> ***in recent history*** *had appeared with as much muscle behind*[56].

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[50] Grisham J. *The Brethren*. London: Arrow Books, 2011. P. 73.

[51] Grisham J. *The Brethren*. London: Arrow Books, 2011. P. 1.

[52] Newsweek 4.06.2012. P. 53.

[53] Fauconnier G. *Mental Spaces: Aspects of Meaning Construction in Natural Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985. P. 25.

[54] Grisham J. *The Brethren*. London: Arrow Books, 2011. P. 3.

[55] ibidem, P. 21.

[56] ibidem, P. 107.

The animate pattern relates non-definite entities to the maximal scope represented by individuals or social groups. At the syntactic level, the animate pattern fills in the subject position with proper names, common nouns or personal deictic units indicating the maximal scope while non-definites function as verb complements.

With respect to the employed maximal scope, i.e. mental context / ground, the animate pattern forms five variants: physical, intellectual, surface, environmental and interpretative.

The physical subpattern relates to the human body perceived as a maximal scope-CONTAINER the non-definite entities represented by consumed products, e.g. *Would **you** like a drink?' Liz asked*[57], or parts of human body, e.g. ***Chenkov** has a brain*[58].

The intellectual subpattern links to the brain / mind conceptualized as a maximal scope-CONTAINER the non-definite entities incorporating decisions and plans, e.g. ***We** decided to gamble by taking a big position in ValueNow*[59]; dreams, desires, intentions, offers etc, e.g. ***Justice Beech** said it relishing a debate with a stock broker*[60]; feelings, e.g. ***Britt** felt a slight propriety interest*[61]; choice of varying entities such as objects, places, people etc, e.g. ***We**'ve elected an unmarried president only once*[62]. Besides, according to this subpattern non-definites denote ideas produced by organizations constituting maximal collective scope-CONTAINERS, e.g. *Most **big investment firms** never had a shot at the stock*[63]. The results of the intellectual activity aimed at structuring the environs are indicated by non-definites denoting PART of the WHOLE represented by time, e.g. *A year later his 13-year-old spaniel died*[64]; groups of people, e.g. *About a fourth of the inmates had been improperly sentenced*[65]; speech flow, e.g. *Teddy Maynard said not a word*[66].

The surface subpattern connecting non-definite entities to the maximal scope represented by the body's external look underlies the description of a general impression produced by people, e.g. ***Teddy** said this with an air of respect*[67]; their attire, e.g. ***He** wore old khakis, a

[57] Steel D. *The Cottage*. London: Corgi Books, 2002. P. 15.
[58] Grisham J. *The Brethren*. London: Arrow Books, 2011. P. 20.
[59] ibidem, P. 8.
[60] ibidem, P. 11.
[61] ibidem, P. 81.
[62] ibidem, P. 31.
[63] ibidem, P. 12.
[64] ibidem, P. 17.
[65] ibidem, P. 34.
[66] ibidem, P. 81.
[67] ibidem, P. 28.

white cotton shirt, a yellow bow tie[68]; behaviour, e.g. **No one** *made an effort to stand*[69].

The environmental subpattern associates with the space surrounding individuals, i.e. the maximal scope-CONTAINER, the non-definite entities represented by people's origin, e.g. **Spicer** *was from a rural country*[70]; their state, e.g. *Right now* **they** *are having a difficult time*[71]; a circle of relatives or acquaintances, e.g. *Said* **he** *had a buddy at Goldman Sux*[72]; as well as personal belongings, e.g. **He** *walked the track every day with a pack of Marlboros*[73], and possessions, e.g. **His family** *has owned banks for two generations*[74].

The complex subpatterns relate non-definite entities to several maximal scope-CONTAINERS simultaneously: mental and bodily in case of speech production, e.g. **You** *make a speech about how weak we're in Asia*[75], mental and physical to describe a choice, e.g. **He** *was pleased to see a parking space*[76].

The interpretative subpattern presupposes the use of non-definites to refer to an entity related to no scope at all, e.g. *Scared of a dangerous world*[77]. This subpattern most frequently requires copular constructions for categorizing a referent as matching a particular situation, e.g. **Whiz** *was a young Wall Street crook*[78], or to define one concept in terms of another, e.g. **Democracy** *is a joke*[79]. The latter function of non-definites also occurs in the apposition giving a different name to a previously categorized entity, e.g. *Its seed money came from a Chicago financier named Mitzger, an American with dual Israeli citizenship*[80]. The explicit interpretative pattern indicates evaluation in different kinds of speech: direct, e.g. *'That's a lie', said* **Wizz**[81], or reported, e.g. **He** *thought it was a solid company*[82].

The interpretative subpattern of non-definites is meant to characterize people or their activities: appearance, e.g. *Rita Spicer was an attractive*

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[68] ibidem, P. 55.
[69] ibidem, P. 2.
[70] ibidem, P. 43.
[71] ibidem, P. 40.
[72] ibidem, P. 9.
[73] ibidem, P. 43.
[74] ibidem, P. 40.
[75] ibidem, P. 27.
[76] ibidem, P. 16.
[77] ibidem, P. 96.
[78] ibidem, P. 6.
[79] ibidem, P. 21.
[80] ibidem, P. 107.
[81] ibidem, P. 8.
[82] ibidem, P. 7.

woman[83], events, e.g. *It can't be <u>a sexual attack</u>*[84], state of affairs, e.g. *It's <u>a perfect situation</u>*[85], ideas, e.g. *Probably, not <u>a bad idea</u>*[86].

In the inanimate pattern non-definite entities are related to the maximal scope represented by things or phenomena. In the following example, the platform named by the word combination *the hastily built stage* serves as a maximal context / background for the entity denoted by the non-definite phrase *in banners*, e.g. ***The hastily built stage*** *was also covered <u>in banners</u>*[87].

The inanimate pattern has two variants: general, i.e. similar to the animate one, and specific, reflecting the peculiarities of non-animate phenomena constituting the maximal scope. The general pattern structures in terms of WHOLE and PART the maximal scope represented by objects, e.g. *It was **a notebook** <u>with a bomb</u> on every page*[88]; publications, e.g. ***It (an ad)*** *began with <u>a brief glimpse</u> of a row of grim Chinese generals*[89]; documents, e.g. *Tumble **regulations** required <u>a guard</u> to be present*[90]. The surface subpattern reflects the results of object transformations as in the following example where a screen turns into a wall, e.g. ***The screen*** *became <u>a wall</u> again*[91].

The specific inanimate pattern requires non-definite entities which are related to the maximal scope named either by clauses, e.g. *He got his roses from a supplier in Jacksonville, **which** in itself took <u>another box</u> of paperwork*[92], or by separate nominals (*crime, robbery, drinking*), e.g. *His crime had been **the robbery** of <u>a rural mail carrier</u> in Oklahoma*[93]. According to the specific inanimate pattern non-definites also name consequences, e.g. ***The outcome*** *might set <u>a serious precedent</u>*[94], emphasizing them by the verbs *bring, cause, create, depend*, *produce, suggest,* e.g. ***The music*** *whipped the crowd <u>into frenzy</u>*[95].

As the examples above suggest, the use of non-definites in locational, animate, and inanimate patterns interacts with definites resulting into complex sentential patterns discussed below.

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[83] ibidem, P. 45.
[84] ibidem, P. 37.
[85] ibidem, P. 40.
[86] ibidem, P. 113.
[87] ibidem, P. 61.
[88] ibidem, P. 83.
[89] ibidem, P. 64.
[90] ibidem, P. 57.
[91] ibidem, P. 23.
[92] ibidem, P. 86.
[93] ibidem, P. 105.
[94] ibidem, P. 90.
[95] ibidem, P. 61.

4. Relating definites and non-definites

Complex patterns are divided into mixed, combining definites with non-definites, and successive, linking a number of non-definites related to different maximal scopes.

The mixed pattern is implemented by the somatic-animate subtype according to which an individual is placed at the intersection of maximal and immediate scopes. In the following example, the pronoun *he* denotes a man who serves as an immediate scope for the entities named by the definites *the beach* and *the pool* since he interacts with them and as a maximal scope for the non-definite entities designated by the indefinites *a room* and *a chair* which refer to the objects in his imagination, e.g. ***He was tempted to find*** <u>a room</u> *on* <u>the beach</u>, *get* <u>a chair</u> *by* <u>the pool</u>[96]. Similarly, in the utterance below the visitor denoted by the pronoun *he* places *the bartender* and *the door* in the immediate scope since he comes in direct contact with them while the maximal scope is represented by an unexpected *banknote* and an unusual *salute:* ***He paid his tab, tipped*** <u>the bartender</u> <u>another $100</u>, *then flashed* <u>a smart-ass salute</u> *to Prep as he walked out* <u>the door</u>[97].

The successive pattern of the use of non-definites referring to evolving proximal scopes and entities is implemented by three subpatterns: double animate, double inanimate, and animate-inanimate.

The double animate subpattern links the name of a maximal locational scope (*from defense-heavy states*) to two non-definite entities represented by people denoted by the phrases *six senators* and *tough opponents*, e.g. <u>Six senators</u> ***from defense-heavy states*** *had* <u>tough opponents</u> *in November*[98].

The double inanimate subpattern indicates the interaction of an entity linked to the maximal scope (*a check*) with the next non-definite entity consisting of a multitude of components (*a thousand dollars*), e.g. ***I've enclosed*** <u>a check</u> *for* <u>a thousand dollars</u>[99]. In case of an extended chain of non-definite entities some of them can be named in the subordinate clause, e.g. ***She made*** <u>a list</u> *of* <u>twenty French and British companies</u> *that derived at least* <u>a fourth</u> *of their annual sales from the Pentagon*[100]. In the cited sentence the sequence underlying the profile and base alteration is represented by three non-definite phrases with two

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[96] ibidem, P. 100.
[97] ibidem, P. 104.
[98] ibidem, P. 110.
[99] ibidem, P. 36.
[100] ibidem, P. 109.

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of them – *a list* and *twenty French and British companies* – in the main clause and one occurring in the subordinate clause (*a fourth*).

The animate-inanimate subpattern successively relates to a maximal scope representing a place (*next to York*) the non-definite entities: animate (*two men*) and inanimate (*tapes* and *an effort*), e.g. **Next to York were <u>two men</u> who spent their time studying <u>tapes</u> of people in <u>an effort</u> to determine what the speakers really meant** [101].

Alongside links to the maximal scope non-definites differentiate varying prominence of the entities drawing on perceptual image schemas discussed in the following section.

5. Distinguishing types of non-definites

The differences between the indefinite and nil articles are closely connected with mass / count distinction contrasting the entities that can be counted and those which cannot be separated into countable units[102]. The mass / count distinction, intertwined with the determiner system[103], is seen as a scalar rather than binary phenomenon[104]. This idea of mass / count continuum fits very well in with the sequence of perceptual schemas MASS – COLLECTION – COUNT – OBJECT underlying the transformation of images obtained from varying distances due to human ability to focus differently on salient entities and their groups. According to this perceptual sequence, indefinites, i.e. noun phrases with the indefinite article, evoke the OBJECT and COLLECTION schemas representing salient images obtained as a result of concentrating on entities or their clusters perceived as separate units while the nil article indicates entities with fuzzy boundaries perceived as MASS or COUNT.

Indefinites, evoking the OBJECT schema, imply perceiving entities from a close perspective with a conceptualizer successively focusing on separate items within his / her visual or mental field, e.g. *Police searching for <u>a mother-of-three</u>, who went missing while playing with her children <u>in a river</u>, have found <u>a body</u>*[105]. In the cited example the indefinites *a mother-of-three, in a river, a body* successively single out separate entities as they are perceived by police-conceptualizer.

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[101] ibidem, P. 49.

[102] Gomeshi J., Massam D. The count mass distinction: Issues and perspectives. *Count and Mass across Languages*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. P. 1.

[103] ibidem, P. 5.

[104] Grimm S. Individuation and inverse number marking in Dagaare. *Count and Mass across Languages*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. P. 76.

[105] URL: www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-beds-bucks-herts-36863910

Indefinites evoking COLLECTIONS reflect salience of a cluster of objects represented in the following example by a packet of documents: *I will send to your wife, Ms. Glenda Gates, <u>a little packet</u> filled with copies of all letters, photos, etc*[106].

The nil article is found in the phrases denoting entities perceived as COUNT and MASS. Nil forms of plural countables evoke the COUNT schema implying a conceptualizer's remoteness from the scene, e.g. *The pollster worked feverishly at the small conference table upon which he had <u>two laptops</u>, <u>three phones</u>, and more printouts than any ten people could digest*[107].

Noun phrases with the nil article indicate four types of MASS resulting from conceptualizing extra-linguistic entities with fuzzy boundaries: substance-like; destructed; circular; non-perceived.

The substance-like MASS underlies the use of the nouns denoting entities consisting of tiny – barely visible – particles (*sugar, water* etc), e.g. *Abe looked as though there was <u>smoke</u> about to come out of his ears*[108]. This type of MASS seems to derive from a general outlook of substance which is proved by the use of the names of garbage and perfumes. The absence of the need to differentiate waste results into an uncountable use of the words *rubbish, waste, garbage* both with attributes and without them, e.g. *Campaigners fear that the new infrastructure will divert <u>recyclable waste</u> to them*[109]. However, the necessity to distinguish various kinds of perfume and its portions is reflected in the countability of particular nouns (*fragrance – fragrances, perfume – perfumes, scent – scents*), cf. *Contrary to popular opinion, you can't have too <u>much perfume.</u> – "I didn't think that <u>perfumes</u> that come with a hell of a story would be marketable"*[110]. One can expect that in case of need to distinguish different types of waste or its quantities the units under discussion may become countable like the noun *English* which only a decade ago was treated as uncountable[111].

Destructed MASS results from ruining an object due to a steady motion forward since when we come closer to something, for example an animal, at some point its contours overflow the limits of our visual field, so that all we can actually see is an undifferentiated mass of

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[106] Grisham J. *The Brethren*. London: Arrow Books, 2011. P. 133.
[107] ibidem, P. 138–139.
[108] Steel D. *The Cottage*. London: Corgi Books, 2002. P. 19.
[109] The Times 9.04.2012. P. 6.
[110] ibidem, P. 32–33.
[111] *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*. Harlow, 2003. P. 518.

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hide[112]. With the subsequent movement forward the animal is destroyed being transformed into shapeless meat, which in the following sentence is denoted by the uncountable form of the noun *chicken*: *Lake had half a glass of wine, ate <u>baked chicken</u>*[113].

The circular-related MASS rests on conceptualizing the surroundings by looking around which is best illustrated by the noun *furniture* naming a superordinate level entity[114]. This image results from the circular perception of a sequence of entities situated in different directions from an observer since being in the interior one cannot take in all pieces of furniture at a glance, e.g. *Perched <u>on plastic furniture</u>, he drinks <u>a warm can</u> of Heineken*[115]. The cited example shows a difference between the nil phrase *plastic furniture* based on circular conceptualization and the indefinite phrase *a can* naming a referent a person focuses on.

The non-perceived MASS is denoted by phrases with abstract nouns denoting non-visible entities. However, the need to focus on them requires the indefinite article, which is demonstrated by the noun *nostalgia* in the next example: *Like "Think About the Days," much of the first side of the record is tinged with <u>nostalgia</u> – <u>a nostalgia</u> that owes a lot to Love's influence*[116]. In spite of the uncountable status of the noun *nostalgia*, the indefinite article profiles the relation of the denoted concept to the activity of a particular person.

The opposite shift from basic to superordinate categorization occurs when the meaning of a countable noun is broadened, which in the following passage is exemplified by the non-definite uncountable use of the noun *family* whose meaning is extended by the attribute *national*: *The sense of <u>national family</u> returned in a great tide of sentiment*[117].

The approach to differentiating non-definites from the perspective of degree of specificity shows that the opposition between the indefinite and nil articles is brought about by the perception of different phenomena from varying vantages which calls for further research into the nouns denoting different entities and their combinability with articles.

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[112] Langacker R.W. *Grammar and Conceptualization*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1999. P. 228.
[113] Grisham J. *The Brethren*. London: Arrow Books, 2011. P.117.
[114] Rosch E. Principles of Categorization. *Cognition and Categorization*. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1978. P. 31.
[115] Newsweek 28.02.2011. P. 22.
[116] Newsweek 4.06.2012. P. 50.
[117] ibidem, P. 36.

CONCLUSIONS

The interpretation of definiteness / non-definiteness opposition with respect to immediate and maximal scopes of predication treated as background represented by current and distant mental contexts enables combining three contemporary cognitive theories: Cognitive Grammar, categorization and image schemas. The resultant method of establishing the scope of predication treated as a background or mental context reveals four patterns of article use in modern English: relating definites to the immediate scope; linking non-definites to the maximal scope; complex patterns connecting definites and non-definites; distinguishing non-definites. The definites related to the immediate scope are divided into two types: proximal referring to entities directly and remote requiring additional linguistic means of structuring the scope. Non-definites enter three main subpatterns to relate denoted entities to the maximal scope: locational, connecting non-definite entities with place or / and time; animate, associating non-definite entities with humans or social activity; inanimate, linking non-definite entities to physical objects or events. Complex patterns fall into mixed combining definites with non-definites and successive relating a number of non-definites related to different maximal scopes. According to the patterns distinguishing non-definites, indefinites, i.e. noun phrases with the indefinite article, evoke the OBJECT and COLLECTION schemas representing salient images obtained as a result of concentrating on entities or their clusters perceived as separate units while the nil article indicates entities with fuzzy boundaries perceived as MASS or COUNT. The immediate scope underlying the use of definites explains their identifying function as well as deictic, situational and anaphoric use when the scope is represented by a particular situation or textual space. The maximal scope covers the introductory function of non-definites because of the absence of direct relation between a named entity and the scope it is connected with.

SUMMARY

The paper argues that the definiteness / non-definiteness opposition in English reflects the scope of predication treated in Cognitive Grammar as an array of evoked conceptual content, i.e. the mental context represented by background knowledge. Definites locate a named entity within the immediate scope of predication with respect to the level of its specificity or place entering a number of patterns which rest on

image schemas: focal, somatic, spatial, and distributive. Non-definites relate a named entity to the maximal scope according to the locational, animate and inanimate patterns with different forms of non-definites – indefinite phrases, countables in the plural and uncountables – distinguishing varying salience of profiled entities.

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