МІНІСТЕРСТВО ОСВІТИ І НАУКИ УКРАЇНИ

ОДЕСЬКИЙ НАЦІОНАЛЬНИЙ УНІВЕРСИТЕТ імені І.І. МЕЧНИКОВА

ФАКУЛЬТЕТ РОМАНО-ГЕРМАНСЬКОЇ ФІЛОЛОГІЇ

КАФЕДРА ГРАМАТИКИ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ

Напрям підготовки/спеціальність 7.02030302 - Мова і література (англійська)

Освітньо-кваліфікаційний рівень спеціаліст

Кваліфікаційна робота

КОМУНІКАТИВНО-КОГНІТИВНІ ХАРАКТЕРИСТИКИ ІМЕННИКА У СУЧАСНІЙ АНГЛІЙСЬКІЙ МОВІ

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Рекомендовано до захисту
Протокол засідання кафедри
№ 10 від 15.05.2013 р.
Завідуючий кафедрою
_____ Карпенко О.Ю.
(підпис)

Захищено на засіданні ДЕК 3
Протокол № 37 від 19.06. 2013
Оцінка 93, А, відм.
(за 4-х бальною шкалою, за шкалою ECTS, бал)
Голова ДЕК _____ Карпенко
(підпис)   (прізвище, ініціали)

Одеса 2013

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE, YOUTH AND SPORT OF UKRAINE

ODESSA I.I. MECHNIKOV NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

ROMANCE-GERMANIC PHILOLOGY DEPARTMENT

CHAIR OF ENGLISH GRAMMAR

Specialty 7.02030302 Foreign Language and Literature (English)

Educational-qualification Specialist degree

QUALIFICATION PAPER

Communicative and Cognitive Characteristics of the Noun in Modern English

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Mark ECTS_____
National scale_____
Head of the SEB_____

Odessa 2013

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INTRODUCTION

The noun is one of the most important parts of speech: its arrangement with the verb helps to express a predication, the core of the sentence. As any part of speech, the noun is characterized by certain essential formal and semantic characteristics. Many a scientist investigated functioning of the nouns in speech [1, 8, 13, 16, 23, 25, 28, 46, 47, 50]. But still there is no common point of view as to the principles of classification of the nouns, as to its essential morphological characteristics. The categorial meaning of the noun is still the focus of interest of modern scientists [6, 7, 13, 16, 24, 36, 39, 41, 42, 45].

The subject of this thesis is the cognitive and cognitive characteristics of the Noun in Modern English. Our task is to investigate which place it has among the other parts of speech, its prototypical meaning, what classes of nouns there exist in Modern English, what grammatical categories can be considered essential for its definition.

For instance, the first two questions cannot be answered if one does not start from a definition of the parts of speech. Such a definition, however, agreed upon linguists does not exist. More than forty years ago Ferdinand de Saussure wrote that «distributing of words on nouns, verbs and adjectives and etc is not irrefutable linguistic reality" [20:22].

And here is what V. Belenkaya states fifty five years after: "The questions concerning the classification of words of the English language (as, indeed, of other languages) into parts of speech has not as yet been solved, though this problem is one of the most important problems of linguistics" [22:130]. Some linguists commonly separate words into classes in terms of their meaning, syntactical functions and morphological characteristics, while Charles Fries challenges meaning and established his purely formal divisions of words in terms of their syntactic position relative to other words in the sentence [31:45]. Traditional grammar textbooks for English school single out nouns, verbs and interjections in terms of meaning (names of persons and things, actions and states of being, of emotions), the rest of the parts of speech by their syntactic function, that is by two

division principles meaning (for some) and functions (for the others) [4, 6, 7, 14, 15]. H.R. Cattell, criticizing such approach, has the following to say: "The trouble is that conventional grammar has tried to put words into classes according to the two different criteria. Sometimes the classes are based on meaning, sometimes they are based on function. Now, if you are going to classify anything, you should deal with only **one** criterion at a time" [25:75]. A. Smirnitsky divides words into classes according to their morphological paradigms and their combinability with words of other classes [19:118].

Equally problematic is the question of the number of the parts of speech. A.G. Kennedy accepts in 1935 the traditional eight-parts-of speech classification as practically ideal. Here what he has to say: "More that 900 years ago the West Saxon scholar and teacher Aelfric in his Latin grammar written for Old English countrymen said: «There are eight parts of speech... There remains little more to be said now that he said long ago, in the very beginning of English grammar making" [16:112]. Janet R Aiken and M. Bryant, however, consider such a classification as far from being satisfactory. The eight parts of speech, the pillar of the grammatical arch, J. Aiken points out, are seen under logical analysis to be shaky [17:140]. Twelve years later Margaret M. Bryant writes: "The eightfold division of words into parts of speech is open to criticism, in that it is neither formal nor functional, but frequently arbitrary and lacking logic" [16:121]. Different other systems list from five parts of speech to 12, 13, 14 and even 19 formal divisions [16:72].

Not less problematic is the place of the noun in the system of parts of speech of the English language. Most commonly, the noun is considered to be a specific part of speech not related in any way with other classes of words. With M. Bryant the noun and the pronoun fall together as substantives, H. Sweet also speaks of noun-numerals [51:144].

Extremely problematic is also the division of nouns into different classes, such as Proper and Common with further subdivisions or Concrete and Abstract plus additional subclasses. Not less problematic is also the use of different kinds of nouns.

Finally, by far not established has been the content of the Possessive Case. A.I. Smirnitsky states definitely that "the possessive case has a very narrow and limited meaning: it designates belonging. In this connection the term «possessive case» appears more appropriate, than the often used term «genitive case» [19:135]. This, however, is not the only point of view. "The possessive case also called the genitive, denotes ownership, of course, but also origin of source (John's son), extent or duration (a month's leave), and quality or characteristic (an artist's eye)". In 1954 Paul Roberts gives six senses of the Genitive Case. As we see, the semantic content of the Possessive, or Genitive, Case is wider than just "ownership", which actually means that it has not yet been isolated by anglistics [16:111].

Establishing all the connections of a language form with its typical environments is known in structural linguistics as establishing its "distribution". This method appeared to be very effective for our analysis. An adequate inventory of language facts was collected by systematic selecting 1000 examples of the use of nouns in novels by English and American authors about 500 examples were taken non-systematically. Theoretically the work is based on 56 sources.

In accordance with what has been said before, the thesis consists of Introduction, two chapters dealing, respectively, with the problem of classification and definition of the noun as a part of speech and defining of grammatical categories of the noun (of number, case and gender) in the frames of cognitive approach. Conclusions give the main results of the analysis.

CONCLUSIONS

In this work we made an attempt to penetrate into the cognitive content of the noun, find its place among the other classes of words, analyze its kinds and its grammatical categories from the point of view of cognitive approach as well as its actual usage in Modern English.

This could be done only if the linguistic analysis is based in the laws of cognition which places emphasis upon the primary role of reality and experience, reveals the inter relations between the particular and the general, the accidental and the essential, between form and its content.

In accordance with one of these laws that demands a study of all properties of the phenomenon investigated, of all its connections with the other phenomena, the basic selection inventory was mainly consecutive (1000 instances of all the use of different nouns), though many additional examples were selected non-systematically (500).

A thorough study of the examples of the actual uses of the English noun and works of special literature, a checking of what is stated there as well as of the author's hypotheses on the actual language facts permits us to make the following conclusions:

1. The existing classifications of the parts of speech are based on the principles mentioned below. With prescriptivists it was form, which they treated as morphological and syntactic characteristics of a word. Non-structural descriptivists spoke about three principles of classification: form, meaning and function. Though, each separate representative of this trend understood those principles differently and gave preference either to form or to function, usually completely neglecting meaning. Structuralists classified words according to their position in a sentence. Transformational generative grammarians did not concern themselves with classification problems at all. In post-structural linguistics parts of speech are discriminated on the basis of three criteria: semantic, formal and functional. Though, the scientists differ in their evaluation of the role of the each of them.

Classifications of words into parts of speech by many linguists, especially those abroad, are often not based upon the laws of cognition. Thus, Charles Carpenter Fries, having challenged meaning, divides words into formal classes and groups in terms of merely their syntactic position in the sentence; whereas parts of speech, as anything whatever, must be unities of form and content. Even "form" is understood by Charles Fries too narrowly – as position in the sentence, whereas linguistic form is also inherently connected with the morphological characteristics of the classes of words, their inner structure and syntactic valency.

The classification suggested by Henry Sweet with its noun-pronouns and noun-numerals, is not based upon the law of unity of form and content, which explains that the content of a form must be an essential property or properties.

Unconvincing is also the classification traditionally accepted in grammar textbooks for English and American schools in which the noun, the verb and the interjection are separated in terms of meaning, the rest parts of speech by their syntactic function.

2. Parts of speech ought to be considered as unities on the basis of their prototypical meaning and form (linguistic treatment). Accordingly, nouns are words linguistically representing phenomena of the objective reality as substances. The basic essential properties of nouns are: references to substances (the semantic aspect) and the possession of the morphological categories of number and case (the formal aspect).

3. Distinction should be made between parts of speech, which is the level of language, and part-of-speech representation of words and groups of words on the level of speech; as noun, as a part of speech, is a noun in all its uses, while any word and word group can be represented in utterances as any part of speech.

4. Nouns are only a subdivision of a wider class of words called here substantives.The prototypical concept of this part of speech is pointing to substance or any other phenomena presented in the English language as substance. The substantive includes into itself nouns, pronouns and numerals: all these refer to substances, have the categories of number and case and are treated syntactically

in the same way. Nouns are substantives referring to specific substances, while pronouns refer to substances without naming them. Numerals are references to quantitative properties of substances.

5. The existing classifications of nouns into classes (Proper, Common and so on) are debatable. In the first place, no one-way classification of nouns is possible on the level of language because, actually, one and the same noun can function as two and more kinds of noun – abstract and concrete, individual and mass and so on and so forth. Different kinds of nouns belong to the level of speech. Not good are the division of nouns into Proper and Common with further subdivisions of the latter as well as into Concrete and Abstract with the subdivision of the former into Proper, Common, collective and mass.

6. On the level of speech nouns are classified as either Concrete and Abstract with further subdivision of each into Common and Unique and then into Proper and non-Proper and so on.

7. The specific morphological categories of the noun are those of number and case. The modern common hypothesis that there is no category of case in the English language is scientifically not grounded.

8. The majority of grammarians do not recognize the category of gender in the English noun. Though, subdivision of nouns into animate and inanimate constitutes the basis for the category of gender in English: person nouns can be either masculine or feminine, while non-person nouns are neuter Speaking about gender as a category of the noun we must mention that this category is a purely semantic category, because it has not regular grammatical expression in the English language

9. The category of number is understood in this work as the opposition of the plural of the noun to the singular form of the noun reasoning from the statement that a grammatical category is linguistic meaning expressed by the opposition of mutually exclusive forms. The markers of plurality are: a) the inflections –s, -es (*dog – dogs*); b) the archaic inflection (-e)n (ox – oxen, child – children); c) internal vowel change in several relict forms (man – men, woman –

women, foot – feet); d) in Latin and Greek borrowing their original plural endings (memorand<u>um</u> – memorand<u>a</u> (lat.), cris<u>is</u> – cris<u>es</u> (gr.). Though there is an increasing tendency for regular –s plurals to alternate with classical plurals (memorandum – memorandums, vortex – vortexes, cactus – cactuses). The category of number is based on countable nouns. These nouns have numeric, discrete structure. They fall into two classes: singularia tantum and pluralia tantum, this characteristic, in our opinion, does not exclude this subclass of the noun from the category of number. Such forms can be called absolute singular forms and absolute plural forms. In case if the plural form of the noun is identical to the singular form we can speak about the grammatical homonymy but not about the absence of the category (sheep – sheep, deer – deer)

10. The essential semantic content of the category of the Genitive (Possessive) Case from the point of view of cognitive approach is pointing to association of the substance denoted by the noun in the Genitive Case with that referred to by the head-noun.

Between the Adjunct and the Head-noun there obtain the following semantic relations, the actual content of which being determined by the semantic properties of the sentence the construction derives from:

1) *Possessor + Possessed,* example: *Jane's doll; Peter's hand; John's sister.* The three constructions illustrate two types of possession: *alienable (Jane's doll)* and *inalienable (Peter's hands; John's sister;)*

2) *Carrier + Attribute, example: Mary's vanity;*

3) *Agent + Process,* example: *the President's arrival;*

4) *Patient + Process, example: John's trial;*

5) *Agent + Effected (Result),* example: *Smith's novel;*

6) *Circumstantial attribute + Carrier, example: an hour's delay;*

7) *Circumstance + Effected,* example: *yesterday's newspapers.*

All these constructions derive from the corresponding semantic sentence types. Construction (1), traditionally called the genitive of possession, is derived from a relative sentence of possession: *Jane has a doll -> Jane's doll;* construction

(2), the genitive of quality is also derived from a relative sentence: *Mary is vain ->* *Mary's vanity;* construction (3), the subjective genitive is derived from a 'doing' sentence: *the President has arrived -> the President's arrival;* construction (4) derives from a 'doing' sentence, too, but it may be also related to a 'happening' sentence: *They tried John -> John's trial; The King died -> The Kings death;* construction (5), the genitive of authorship is derived from a 'doing' sentence: *Smith wrote a novel -> Smith's novel;* construction (6), the adverbial genitive is derived from a relative sentence: *The delay lasted an hour -> an hour's delay;* and construction (7), the adverbial genitive is derivationally related to a 'doing' sentence: *They published the newspapers yesterday -> yesterday's newspapers.*

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Джерела, з яких відбирались приклади для аналізу

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