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## Lezione 5

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### Articles

#### The Indefinite Article

The indefinite article indicates a general, indefinite thing, not yet known.

Its function is to introduce a person or thing that is not yet known into the story.

Here is the complete declension of the singular indefinite article for the three genders in German, taking into account the four cases: 1. NOM, 2. ACC, 3. DAT, 4. GEN.

Masculine:

1. *ein Mann*
2. *einen Mann*
3. *einem Mann*
4. *eines Mannes*

Neuter:

1. *ein Kind*
2. *ein Kind*
3. *einem Kind*
4. *eines Kindes*

Feminine:

1. *eine Mutter*
2. *eine Mutter*
3. *einer Mutter*
4. *einer Mutter*

#### The four cases in German

The noun in the Nominative case is the subject of the sentence and, together with the predicate, forms

the two essential parts of the sentence.

The nominative answers questions: *Wer?* (Who?) and *Was?* (Was?)

The noun in the Accusative case can be the object complement of a transitive verb to which it belongs directly, i.e. without a preposition.

The accusative as object complement answers the questions: *Wen?* (Who?) and *Was?* (Was?)

The noun in the Accusative case can also be the complement of a movement to a place. In our story, for example, it indicates the places to which the girl moves from one dream to another.

The accusative complement to motion to place answers the question: *Wohin?* (Where to?)

The noun in the Dative case primarily marks the indirect object of a sentence, indicating to whom or for whom something is done. *Wem?* (To whom?)

The noun in the Dative case can be either the complement of location (answering the question: *Wo?* Where?) or the complement of movement from location (answering the question: *Woher?* From where?).

The noun in the Genitive case is the complement of specification. It answers the question: *Wessen?* (Whose?)

## Exercise

Listen to the audio

ein liebes kleines Mädchen (a sweet little girl)

aus einem Traum in einen anderen (leaving one dream just to enter another)

in ein Bergdorf (to a mountain village)

an einen Meeresstrand (to a beach)

in ein wildfremdes Land (to a country far away)

er verwandelte sich in einen fremden Riesenkerl (he became a big ugly stranger)

in einen Zweimetermann (a six-foot giant)

ein armes Würmchen (a poor tiny creature)

ein krankes Engelsgesichtchen (a sweet face like a sick angel's)

der Name eines ausländischen englischen oder amerikanischen Arztes (the name of a foreign doctor, British or American)

## Curiosity: the *es gibt* formula

We have seen that the first part of the story introduces the three main characters: a girl, a giant and a poor tiny creature. None of them plays the role of the protagonist, and all three seem to be positioned in a still image without performing any action. If we were to describe this first part in German, we would use *es gibt*, which literally means 'there is, there are'. The formula *es gibt* is always followed by the accusative.

*Es gibt in Pirandellos Text ein liebes kleines Mädchen, einen fremden Riesenkerl und ein armes Würmchen.*

Es gibt in Pirandellos Text ein liebes kleines Mädchen, einen fremden Riesenkerl und ein armes Würmchen. (In Pirandello's text, there is a sweet little girl, a strange giant of a man and a poor tiny creature.)

## The Definite Article

We have already said that the definite article indicates the gender of the noun and that it is therefore useful to study the definite article together with the noun.

In the text, the most important function of the definite article is to confirm the presence of someone or something that the reader already knows.

Here is the complete declension of the German definite article in the singular and plural, taking into account the four cases: 1. NOM, 2. ACC, 3. DAT, 4. GEN.

Masculine:

1. *der Mann; die Männer*

2. *den Mann; die Männer*
3. *dem Mann; den Männern*
4. *des Mannes; der Männer*

Neuter:

1. *das Kind; die Kinder*
2. *das Kind; die Kinder*
3. *dem Kind; den Kindern*
4. *des Kindes; der Kinder*

Feminine:

1. *die Mutter; die Mütter*
2. *die Mutter; die Mütter*
3. *der Mutter; den Müttern*
4. *der Mutter; der Mütter*

## Imagine a scene (1)

The exercise is to insert the definite article in the cases indicated. We are in the second part of the story.

Listen to the audio

das Zimmer (the room)

die zwei Fenster (the two windows)

auf dem Sessel (in the armchair)

die Mutter ( the mother)

das Kind ( the child)

auf das Bettchen (on the bed)

These elements are enough to imagine the room and the two windows.

In the room we see the mother sitting in the armchair, then we see her get up and put the baby on the bed.

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## The possessive article *mein*

The personal pronoun *ich* has the possessive article *mein*. The gender, number and case are determined by the following noun.

Here is the complete declension of the possessive article *mein* in the German singular and plural, taking into account the four cases: 1. NOM, 2. ACC, 3. DAT, 4. GEN.

Masculine:

1. *mein Finger* (my finger); *meine Finger* (my fingers)
2. *meinen Finger*; *plurale: meine Finger*
3. *meinem Finger*; *plurale: meinen Fingern*
4. *meines Fingers*; *plurale: meiner Finger*

Neuter:

1. *mein Fenster* (my window); *meine Fenster* (my windows)
2. *mein Fenster*; *plurale: meine Fenster*
3. *meinem Fenster*; *plurale: meinen Fenstern*
4. *meines Fensters*; *plurale: meiner Fenster*

Feminine:

1. *meine Hand* (my hand); *meine Hände* (my hands)
2. *meine Hand*; *meine Hände*
3. *meiner Hand*; *meinen Händen*
4. *meiner Hand*; *meiner Hände*

## Imagine a scene (2)

The intimacy between mother and child is suddenly disturbed by the arrival of someone else. The possessive article *ich* reveals the entrance of the absolute protagonist of every dream (or nightmare):

*ich* = 'I'.

We repeat the exercise from before: we add the definite article or the possessive '*mein*', the cases being indicated in brackets.

We only listen to the audio for the three syntagmas that have been added:

mit meinen Fingern vor meinem Mund (with my fingers in front of my mouth)

bei meinem Hauch (at my breath)

das Kind ( the child)

## The possessive article *dein*

The personal pronoun *du* has the possessive article *dein*, which is declined as *mein*. The gender, number and case are determined by the following noun.

*Wo ist dein Mann? Nebenan?* 'Where's your husband? In the other room?'

Wo ist dein Mann? Nebenan? ( Where's your husband? In the other room?)

## The possessive article *sein* (1)

The personal pronoun *er* has the possessive article *sein*, which is declined as *mein*. The gender, number and case are determined by the following noun.

Everything that is part of one's body or private life is always accompanied by the possessive article in German.

Let us look at an exercise that illustrates well the use of possessive articles.

Listen to the audio

der Riese und seine langen Arme ( the giant and his long arms)

der Riese und sein Riesenkörper ( the giant and his giant body)

der Riese und sein breites Gesicht ( the giant and his broad face)

der Riese und sein Riesenbett ( the giant and his giant bed)

None of this is to be found in Pirandello's story. The giant is defined not only physically, but also and above all morally:

1.) with the four nouns *Riesenkerl; Zweimetermann; dein Mann; Riese*

*ein Riesenkerl; ein Zweimetermann; dein Mann; der Riese* ( a big ugly stranger; a six-foot giant; your husband; the giant)

2.) with the four adjectives *fremd; dumm; verkommen; sprachlos*, and the idiomatic expression: *zu nichts zu gebrauchen*

*fremd; dumm, zu nichts zu gebrauchen und verkommen; sprachlos* ( strange; dumb, lazy, and depraved; bewildered )

3.) Then there are two expressions that indicate his almost total exclusion from the scene in the room: *nebenan; in der Tür*

*nebenan; in der Tür* ( in the other room; at the door)

## The possessive article *ihr*

The personal pronoun *sie* has the possessive article *ihr*. The gender, number and case are determined by the following noun.

Let us look at the example in our text:

*Die Mutter hielt das Kind in ihren Armen.* (The mother was holding the child in her arms.)

Die Mutter hielt das Kind in ihren Armen. ( The mother was holding the child in her arms.)

## The possessive article *sein* (2)

The personal pronoun *es* has the possessive article *sein*, which is declined as *mein*. The gender,

number and case are determined by the following noun.

Let us look at the example in our text:

*das Kind mit seinem Engelslächeln noch auf seinem blassen Mündchen* (the child with his angelic smile still on his tiny, pale mouth)

das Kind mit seinem Engelslächeln noch auf seinem blassen Mündchen ( the child with his angelic smile still on his tiny, pale mouth)

## The negative article *kein*

The negative article *kein* is declined as the indefinite article. In our text it is found together with the expression *Recht haben* ('to be right').

*Er hat Recht. Er hat kein Recht. Er hat kein Recht mehr.* (He is right. He is not right. He is no longer right.)

Er hat Recht. Er hat kein Recht. Er hat kein Recht mehr. ( He is right. He is not right. He is no longer right.)

## The use of the word *alle*

The word 'all' in English is translated into German as *alle*.

The word *alle* is used instead of the definite article in PL, NOM or ACC: *die* (all+die=alle).

The word *allen* is used in place of the definite article in PL, DAT: *den* (all+den=allen).

In PL, GEN, the definite article is replaced by the word *aller*: *der* (all+der=aller).

The following passage is from the third part of our text, the final scene.

*Die ganze Menschheit? Alle Häuser? Alle Straßen in allen Städten? Und alle Wiesen und Felder und Berge und Meere? Die ganze Erde?* (The whole of humanity? Every house? Every street in every city? The countryside, the mountains, the sea? The whole earth?)



The expression 'the whole' is translated into German as '*der/die/das ganze*'.

The selected passage contains elliptical expressions because so many elements have been omitted from the syntactic structure of the whole sentence. Out of context, the passage reveals neither the subject nor the predicate. However, the rhetorical figure of repetition, known as anaphora, cannot be overlooked. The word repeated is 'all'.

Die ganze Menschheit? Alle Häuser? Alle Straßen in allen Städten? Und alle Wiesen und Felder und Berge und Meere? Die ganze Erde? ( The whole of humanity? Every house? Every street in every city? The countryside, the mountains, the sea? The whole earth?)

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