

Music: Sarajevo's Weapon for Peace

In this exclusive Inter Press Service column, Bosnian musician Vedran Smailovic — who sprang to international acclaim by playing his cello as artillery shells rained down on Sarajevo last year — affirms his faith in the strength of culture despite the horrors of civil war in his homeland.

SARAJEVO — From the beginning of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, I have not stopped playing music in Sarajevo. My weapon is the cello.

I play in the ruins of monuments bombed by the Cetniks, the ultranationalist Serb militia, who target the objects of most importance to our cultural life: the concert hall, the national library, theatres, cinemas, mosques, churches.

I play there to show everybody that while our people are still alive, our culture cannot die — despite the destruction of our monuments, schools, museums and cultural centres because our people is alive. And as I play, other artists continue with their work, and we will continue to work to save our Bosnian culture.

I am protesting against cultural aggression, the cultural killing of Sarajevo before the eyes of the entire world, and the barbaric destruction of our monuments which, though of different religions and ethnic origins, together represent our culture.

I play on Vase Miskina Street, where last May extremists killed 23 persons and wounded 70 waiting in line to buy bread. Each day I dedicate a performance to one of those killed.

All were fellow citizens and I do not know, or care to know, if they were Muslims, Croats or Serbs.

Around Sarajevo there are 1,200 heavy weapons that bomb the city every day, constantly from the beginning of the aggression. A few days ago they bombed a school, where 9 children were killed and 74 wounded. They shoot at the hospital as well.

They shoot at the people waiting in line to get water from public wells after they shut off the water supply to the city. Parts of the city are without water or power for three or four months.

The Cetniks do not only destroy cultural buildings and monuments; they kill people who try to repair or preserve them. They shoot at the people who tried to stop a fire in the National Library, and killed two firemen.

When the war began, I formed part of quartet in Sarajevo. The first violin, my very good friend, Monir Vlasic (a Croat), was killed. Dzvezd Sabanagic (a Muslim) took his place. Three months ago, the second violin, Ostojevic Kamenko (a Serb) was killed and replaced by Tishler Hrvose.

We continue to play our music. Nobody can kill culture.

Now has work stopped in the national theatre. The Kamerini Theatre has kept open and a group of people founded the Sarajevo War Theatre and put on the war's first drama.

The actor Nermintulich, one of my best friends, gave

about 1,000 performances at the Kamerini before he lost his legs in a bombing. Now he is the director of the Young Theatre.

The Sarajevo Symphony Orchestra normally had 55 members but now it numbers just 13.

Some of the members were killed, others are now refugees. But those who are left still work every day, walking six to seven kilometres with their instruments, never knowing if after the next step they will still be alive.

The writer Abdullah Sidran has written a screen play for a film to be called 'Tabut', the name of the Muslim sarcophagus.

In spite of the war, our art does not speak about hate but about love.

I think this is because of our education. The use of firearms at family and national holidays is part of the Serbian and Montenegrin traditions. Bosnian Muslims, however, have never been familiar with this use of arms.

Painters have already run out of artists supplies, so they use paper from the food parcels provided by the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) — adapting their technique to the few colours they have left.

Yet, in a sense, the artistic quality now is better than before. The suffering of the people and the tension the artists feel inside make them express themselves in a more profound way.

Most artists' themes are related to the situation in which

we are living. The artists are now less occupied with intellectual subjects; they have no time for speculation. They are more concerned with the emotional aspects of life.

This is a very cold winter in Sarajevo. Some old people have been already found frozen to death, and if the humanitarian convoys do not reach the besieged cities to bring us help soon, a lot of people will die.

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The Definite Article

Last week we looked at the use of the indefinite article; this week the focus is on the definite article. With each explanation there are a couple of examples, and a space for you to write your own example.

1. 'The' can be used to refer to the whole class of things. It is very similar to the class use of 'a' that we looked at last week. Usually (but not always) you can use 'a' or 'the' and the meaning is unchanged.

Eg * The tiger eats meat.
* The female is usually smaller than the male.

*

Note that when referring to classes of things, it is more common to use plurals, and in this case there will be no article. The examples above would be 'Tigers eat meat' and 'Females are usually smaller than males'.

2. The other, and the most common, use of the definite article is for specifying. That is, showing that the noun is special in some way. There are three different reasons for making nouns 'special', and in all cases, the specifying information can be found in the context — whether written, spoken or 'understood'.

(a) 'the' is used to specify something that has been mentioned before. The first time something is mentioned it usually has an indefinite article or no article at all because it is not yet 'special' in any way. After the first mention, it becomes 'special' and we need to show that we are still talking about the thing we mentioned before, and we use a definite article to indicate this.

Eg * The tracks of a Bengal tiger were seen near Hiron Point yesterday. The tiger, however, has not been spotted.

* A woman showed me where the library was.... Later, I met the woman again in the auditorium.

*

Note that the definite article can be replaced by some other specific determiner (this, that, my, it, his etc). So in the examples above, 'the tiger' could be replaced by 'it' and 'the woman' by 'her'.

(b) 'the' is used when something is specified in the same noun group. In such noun groups you usually find a superlative form, words like 'first', 'only' or 'next', or some sort of relative clause.

Eg * The last time anyone saw a tiger at Hiron Point was in 1977.
* The best woman got the job.
* The examples I have given should make this clear.

*

(c) Finally, 'the' is used where something is specified by the context. Definite articles used before nouns that have not been mentioned before and are not specified in the noun group almost certainly relate to nouns that are specified by context. The context could either be what we call 'local' or 'global'.

The Saga of an Entrepreneur — III Setting up Shop

by HN Karim

evening however, the board-of-directors' meeting turned into a real-life drama, unfolding scene by scene in rapid succession before our bewilderment eyes (with all the accompaniments of a tear-jerking soap opera). The board-room gang was by now in the hallway, at the far end of which stood the amused employees. I still remember the husband-director trying to maintain his civility and composure as he introduced me to his sobbing wife in a voice choked with excitement and exasperation. We were actually witnessing the post-dramatic episode of a board-room joust that ended in an ugly fist fight. The owners, we later gathered, fell afoul of each other over issues that were as much business related as they were personal.

As the directors wrestled over control of the company a lull of sluggishness permeated the firm. Hands that were once busy with office work now shuffled cards (yes playing cards!) It was during these unsavory days that I received the second letter from Velcro. Over the past few months I had become very good friends with a co-worker, an electrical engineer like myself, who had a contagious smile and a gregarious manner. I intimated to him my predicament over the Velcro executive's intended trip to Dhaka. He immediately agreed to join hands with me to market Velcro products and share costs and profits equally.

Now that the fabric-fastener marketing venture had some finance and manpower, I turned my attention to the fact that we had to have an office even if it were only for the visiting dignitary from the U.S.A. Just when I was about to feel undone I remembered that an uncle of mine had lately set up a garments factory which was yet to go into operation. The factory had an adjoining executive office posh enough even for a 'Chief Executive Director'! Thus the stage was set to receive our first foreign visitor.

In spite of best efforts by myself and my business associate, my first business venture was a total flop. To remind me of this acid test of entrepreneurship, several unopened boxes of fabric fasteners are still counting their days, locked up in the store for unusable items at present.

At work I was increasingly dissatisfied with the way business was conducted as I found out that the so-called 'special skills' the owners promised were only those that harpooned a man's soul and conscience. Making a deal at any expense was the game. However, my job also put me in touch with the chiefs of a number of UN and USAID funded projects who had ready need of computers and had confidence in my expertise. As the firm approached virtual closure due to the battle of ownership I saw an opportunity.

With the would-be clients on my own. Without any hesitation I jumped ship and set about making arrangements to conduct computer business through the now-dormant Technohaven Co.

Two weeks later, towards the middle of July 1986, I was on board a Thai Airways jet en route to Singapore on my first ever business trip. I still shudder in disbelief when I think of that day. The same uncle whose garments factory office I had used earlier to impress the Velcro executive now helped me to get the air ticket on credit. The travel agent delivered the ticket in person only one hour before the scheduled departure of the flight. However, he was good enough to give me a dashing ride to the airport in his Austin 600 mini-car. I was the last passenger to come on board barely fifteen minutes to departure time (these days it would be impossible to repeat such a feat due to enhanced security considerations).

With only fifty US dollars in cash on me I dared the Singapore immigration counter. I had sixty thousand dollars in bank drafts though, collected as advance payments from my first two clients. I had the drafts made out to a company in Singapore that I only knew by name through the same helpful uncle. After a week I was back in Dhaka having successfully executed both the supply contracts. I also brought back enough cash to give life to a fledgling computer firm.

Within a few days the guest room of our second floor apartment was converted into the proud home to my resurrected enterprise ready to take on the world.

With local context, the specifying information comes from what it is we are talking about, or from our general knowledge of particular situations.

Eg * (1) A rickshaw was involved in an accident in Mirpur Road today. (2) The rickshaw puller was not seriously injured, but (3) the front wheel was badly buckled and (4) the rickshaw had to be taken away for repairs.

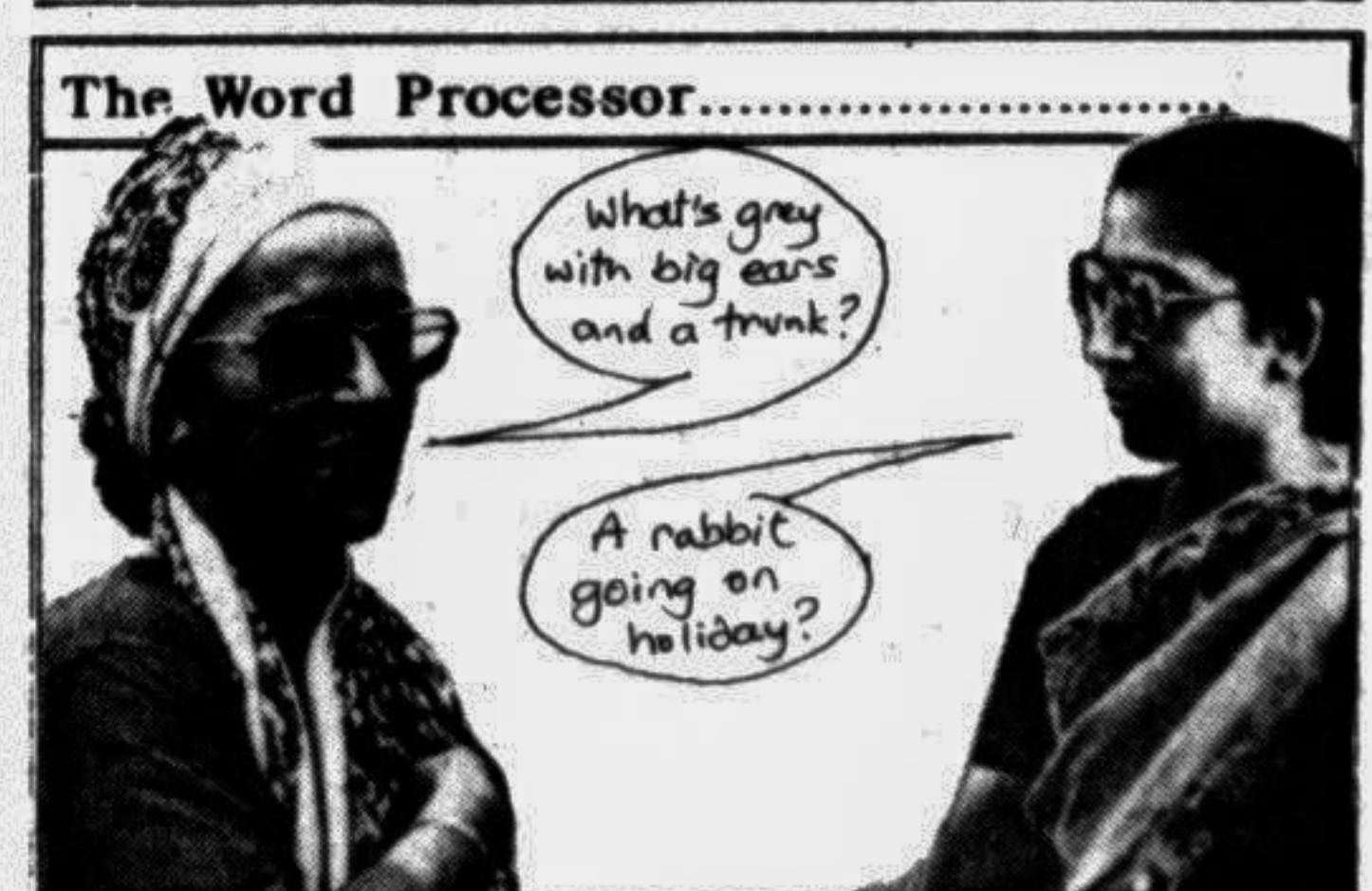
(1) 'a rickshaw' is the individualising use of the indefinite article.
(2) 'the rickshaw puller' and (3) 'the front wheel' have not been mentioned before but they are all in the local context of the rickshaw that has been mentioned, and are therefore specific. We could specify further by saying 'the front wheel of the rickshaw' but this is not normal nor necessary. And to say 'the rickshaw puller of the rickshaw in the accident' would certainly not be regarded as natural English.
(4) 'the rickshaw' is the one that was mentioned at the beginning of the paragraph.

*

With global context, 'the' is used when we assume that everyone knows what we are talking about. There is often no plural (as with 'the sun', 'the moon', 'the Koran'), or else the context is so specific that it is clear which one we are referring to.

Eg * The Prime Minister visited a tea estate near Sylhet yesterday. (Inside Bangladesh it would not be necessary to specify the country of the Prime Minister unless the tea estate was visited by the Prime Minister of a different country.)

Next week: a summary and some reminders.



Contributors: Marina Burns, Dolores Long, Dennis O'Brien, Janet Raynor, Robert Shrubshall

Answers: [Answers](#) [Word Processor](#) [Good for a Game?](#)

The Intro

This week's column has the second in a series on the use of articles (a, the, etc) in English. There is also the usual Wobbly Words puzzle and a Word Processor.

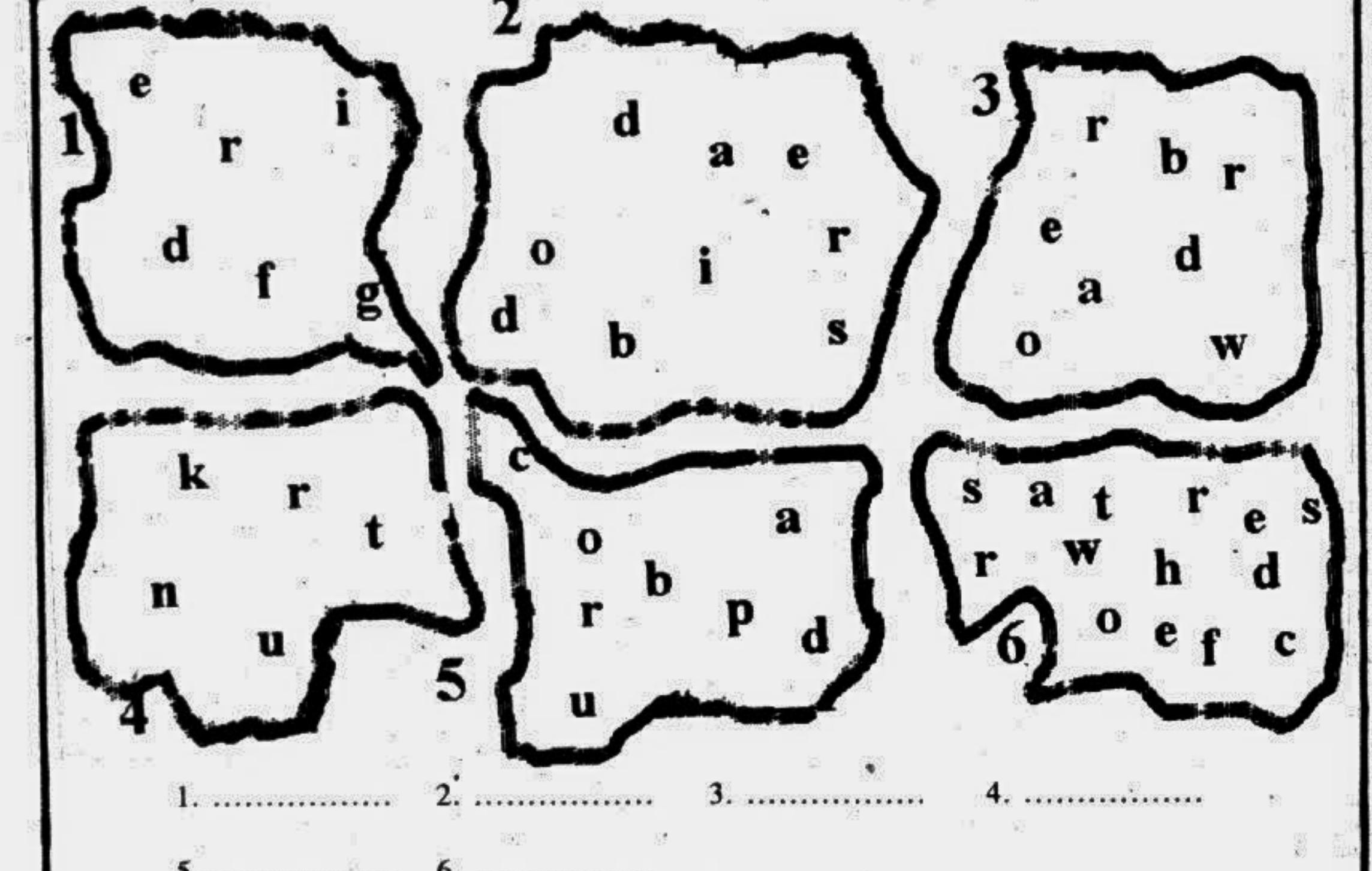
Today we also have a little exercise on idioms in English. Many learners are very fond of proverbs and sayings but in fact these are not commonly used. Idioms, on the other hand are very popular and form an everyday part of people's 'vocabulary'.

The problem with idioms is that they are not easy to understand — you cannot guess from the words themselves and so you have to depend on the context to help you with the meaning.

Another source of help with idioms is a good dictionary. You have to identify the main word and look it up. In a good dictionary the most frequent idioms are listed along with an explanation of their meanings. Try to guess the main word for each of the idioms in the exercise and look in your dictionary.

Wobbly Words

Try this word puzzle. In each shape the letters are jumbled up. Put them in the correct order. What do they all have in common? Be careful. Some shapes have more than one word.



Good for a Game?

English is full of idioms and idiomatic phrases. These are very difficult because there is usually little or no connection between the actual words and the meaning.

Try this exercise. It was put together by some of the students here at the British Council Teaching Centre. Choose the correct answer from the three possibilities given. But you should not just guess. How do you think you can find out the answer?

1. He knows this town like the back of his hand.

a/ He is very familiar with the town.

b/ He is new in town and knows nothing about it.

c/ He knows the town just by name.

2. I'm feeling a bit under the weather this morning.

a/ The weather is so nice it makes me feel happy.

b/ I feel unwell this morning.

c/ I feel fit and healthy this morning.

3. I've got a bone to pick with you.

a/ I've got nothing to give you.
b/ I want nothing to do with you.
c/ I want to have an argument with you.

4. Well, it's all double Dutch to me.
a/ Everywhere I go there are two Dutch people.
b/ I think this country is overpopulated.
c/ I don't understand any of this.

5. I'll be back in a flash.
a/ I'll be back very soon.
b/ I'll be back after midnight.
c/ I'll be back after the storm.

Finally, 'the' is used where something is specified by the context. Definite articles used before nouns that have not been mentioned before and are not specified in the noun group almost certainly relate to nouns that are specified by context. The context could either be what we call 'local' or 'global'.

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