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RE-EXPRESSION OF THE ARTICLE CATEGORY IN TRANSLATION INTO AN ARTICLE-LESS LANGUAGE

Yulduzxon Okhunjonova Avazjon qizi
Tashkent State Transport University, Tashkent, Uzbekistan
E-mail: yulduzmakhmudjonova@icloud.com

Abstract:
English marks almost every noun phrase as definite or indefinite by means of *a/an*, *the* or zero. Uzbek has no articles and expresses similar distinctions optionally and in part through the numeral *bir* 'one', demonstratives, possessive suffixes, the accusative suffix *-ni*, the genitive *-ning*, word order and context. This article examines how the information carried by English articles can be rendered in Uzbek translation and where it is lost or altered. English sentences representing the main article uses were compared with their Uzbek translation variants in terms of grammaticality, naturalness and referential meaning. The uses analysed were first mention, anaphoric, associative, situational, unique, generic, predicative and specific indefinite. Most article uses have no overt Uzbek counterpart, and generic, unique and predicative uses in particular are rendered by bare nouns. Overt means appear under specific conditions. *Bir* introduces important new referents, demonstratives and pronouns maintain anaphoric reference with general nouns such as *kishi* 'person', and possessive suffixes render associative uses. The accusative and genitive suffixes distinguish definite objects and possessors from non-specific ones, and word order in existential sentences separates new from known subjects. The accusative suffix is the main source of unintended change, since an English indefinite object marked with *-ni* receives a specific or definite reading in Uzbek. Rendering the English article therefore requires a choice among several grammatical means, most of which serve other functions in Uzbek.

Keywords: Definiteness; articles; article-less languages; differential object marking; English–Uzbek translation; grammatical transformation

1. Introduction

Every English noun phrase that is not a pronoun or a proper name appears as *a cat*, *the cat* or *cats*. The article signals whether the referent is assumed to be identifiable, and English texts rely on it to introduce people and objects and to keep track of them. Hawkins (1978) explained the use of *the* by the hearer's ability to locate the referent in a set shared with the speaker, such as the immediate situation, the preceding text, general knowledge or an object associated with an earlier mention. Lyons (1999) treated definiteness as a grammatical category only in languages that have grammaticalised it. Other languages express identifiability through demonstratives, possessives, word order or case, or leave it unexpressed. Chesterman (1991)

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showed how a language without articles distributes the corresponding meanings over several means. Many languages of this type use the numeral 'one' as an optional indefinite marker (Dryer, 2013a, 2013b). Uzbek belongs to them. It has no definite article, and its indefinite markers *bir* and colloquial *bitta*, both meaning 'one', are optional (Kizilkaya et al., 2022).

Uzbek also has differential object marking, so a direct object may or may not take the accusative suffix *-ni*. Enç (1991) argued that the Turkish accusative marks specificity, understood as a link to a referent already present in the discourse. Von Heusinger and Kornfilt (2005) showed that unmarked Turkish objects are usually non-specific and marked ones specific, and Aissen (2003) placed such systems in a cross-linguistic framework. Kizilkaya et al. (2022) report that in Uzbek definite, demonstrative, pronominal and proper-name objects require *-ni*, while indefinite objects take it optionally and are then usually read as specific. Irimia (2022) links Uzbek object marking to discourse factors. The suffix is therefore never neutral in translation. Added to an object that was indefinite in English, it can make the object specific, and its absence can weaken a definite reference.

Translation theory has used the article mainly to illustrate non-equivalence. Catford (1965) cited it as a category shift. Barkhudarov (1975) and Retsker (1974) showed that its meaning can be conveyed in Russian through pronouns, word order and context but is often left unexpressed, and Baker (2018) leaves the decision to the translator. Research on explicitation provides terms for this decision (Blum-Kulka, 1986; Klaudy, 2003). Rendering *a* as *bir* or *the* as *o'sha* 'that' is explicitation, and omitting the information is implicitation. The two operations are not symmetrical across translation directions (Klaudy & Károly, 2005).

Translation from article-less languages into English, where articles must be supplied, has been studied far more than the opposite direction. For translation from English it is often assumed that the articles simply disappear, and the Uzbek means of marking definiteness and specificity have not been described from the translator's point of view. The study addresses three questions. RQ1 asks by what means the information carried by English articles can be rendered in Uzbek. RQ2 asks in which uses this information must or should be made explicit. RQ3 asks where translation is likely to change the definite or indefinite status of a noun phrase.

2. Materials and methods

The study compares English article uses with their Uzbek translation equivalents. The uses were selected on the basis of Hawkins (1978) and Lyons (1999) and comprise first mention, anaphoric, associative, situational, unique, generic and predicative uses, specific and non-specific indefinites, and definite and indefinite possessors. Existential sentences and negative contexts were included because they interact with word order and indefinite determiners in Uzbek. For each use the author, a native speaker of Uzbek, constructed English sentences that isolate one article use and set out their possible Uzbek translations. The examples illustrate grammatical possibilities and do not represent frequencies. The Uzbek variants were judged for grammaticality, naturalness in written Uzbek and referential reading, with reference to the description of Uzbek object marking in Kizilkaya et al. (2022). An asterisk (*) marks ungrammatical variants and a question mark (?) marks variants that are grammatical but

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marked or unnatural. The examples are grouped in tables by the Uzbek means involved, each with a brief note on the reading it conveys.

The Uzbek means were grouped into seven types: zero marking, indefinite determiners (*bir*, *biror*, *hech qanday*), demonstratives and personal pronouns, possessive suffixes, case marking (accusative *-ni*, genitive *-ning*), word order, and lexical means such as restrictive modifiers. For each article use the analysis records which means are required, which are possible and which alter the meaning.

3. Analysis

The analysis is arranged by the Uzbek means that take over the work of the article, starting with the most frequent one, the absence of any marker.

3.1 Zero marking

Table 1. Article uses rendered without a marker

No.	English	Uzbek	Reading
1	Her father is an engineer.	*Otasi muhandis.*	neutral
		?Otasi bir muhandis.	dismissive, 'just some engineer'
2	The moon was very bright that night.	*O'sha kechasi oy juda yorug' edi.*	unique referent
3	The camel can go without water for weeks.	*Tuya haftalab suvsiz yura oladi.*	generic
4	I bought a new phone last week.	*O'tgan hafta yangi telefon oldim.*	non-specific object
5	An old man was sitting on a bench. The man was feeding the pigeons.	*Skameykada bir chol o'tirardi. Chol kaptarlarga don sepayotgan edi.*	repeated descriptive noun
6	We watched a film yesterday. The film was long and boring.	*Kecha bir film ko'rdik. Film uzun va zerikarli ekan.*	repeated inanimate noun

Predicative, unique and generic nouns are bare in Uzbek, and adding *bir* or a demonstrative distorts them. In 1 *bir* makes the sentence sound dismissive, and in 2 *o'sha* belongs to *kechasi* 'that night', not to the moon. A non-specific object, as in 4, is also left bare. The anaphoric *the* is often unnecessary too: a descriptive noun such as *chol* 'old man' or an inanimate noun such as *film* can simply be repeated, as in 5 and 6.

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3.2 Bir and negative determiners

Table 2. Indefinite and negative determiners

No.	English	Uzbek	Reading
7	A woman knocked at the door.	*Eshikni bir ayol taqillatdi.*	new referent
		?Eshikni ayol taqillatdi.	incomplete
8	We are looking for a teacher who speaks Japanese.	*Yapon tilini biladigan o'qituvchi qidiryapmiz.*	any such teacher
		Yapon tilini biladigan bir o'qituvchini qidiryapmiz.	a particular person
9	There wasn't a single car in the street.	*Ko'chada birorta ham mashina yo'q edi.*	emphatic negation
		Ko'chada mashina yo'q edi.	plain negation

Bir is used mainly for a new person entering the scene as subject. Without it, as in the second version of 7, the reader expects to know who is meant. With objects *bir* separates specific from non-specific readings, a difference that English leaves to context. Sentence 8 is ambiguous in English, and the translator has to decide from the wider context whether the speakers have a particular teacher in mind. In negative sentences *birorta ham* and *hech qanday* keep the emphasis of *a single*. Without them, the sentence remains correct but neutral.

3.3 Demonstratives and pronouns

Table 3. Anaphoric reference with a general noun

No.	English	Uzbek	Reading
10	A man was sitting on a bench. The man was feeding the pigeons.	*Skameykada bir kishi o'tirardi. Haligi kishi kaptarlarga don sepayotgan edi.*	clear back-reference
		?Skameykada bir kishi o'tirardi. Kishi kaptarlarga don sepayotgan edi.	unclear

Demonstratives are needed less often than one might expect. With general nouns such as *kishi* or *odam* 'person', a bare repetition does not clearly point back to the person just mentioned, and Uzbek uses *haligi* 'the one mentioned', *u* or *o'sha*. With descriptive nouns, as in 5, no demonstrative is needed, and adding one makes the sentence sound emphatic.

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3.4 Case suffixes

Table 4. Accusative and genitive marking

No.	English	Uzbek	Reading
11	Turn off the light, please.	*Chiroqni o'chiring, iltimos.*	definite object
		**Chiroq o'chiring, iltimos.*	ungrammatical
12	the doctor's car / a doctor's salary	*shifokorning mashinasi / shifokor maoshi*	particular owner / type
13	She noticed a man at the gate.	*Darvoza oldida bir kishi turganini payqadi.*	indefinite
		Darvoza oldidagi bir kishini payqadi.	specific indefinite
		?Darvoza oldidagi kishini payqadi.	read as 'the man at the gate'
14	That was the first sign of the illness.	*Bu kasallikning ilk belgisi edi.*	unique
		?Bu bir kasallik belgisi edi.	one sign among many

The accusative is obligatory with definite objects, as 11 shows. The genitive separates a particular owner from a type in 12, so *shifokorning mashinasi* is the car of a specific doctor, while *shifokor maoshi* is what doctors earn. These suffixes are also where most shifts in referential status occur. In 13 the first version keeps the man indefinite by making him the subject of an embedded clause, and the second keeps him specific but still new. The third is the version a translator reaches most easily, by putting the English object straight into the accusative, and it reads as if the man had been mentioned before. Sentence 14 shows the opposite shift. The genitive and the ordinal keep the sense of a beginning, while *bir* presents the symptom as one of many.

3.5 Possessive suffixes and word order

Table 5. Possessive suffixes and existential word order

No.	English	Uzbek	Reading
15	We rented a flat, but the kitchen is too small.	*Kvartira ijaraga oldik, lekin oshxonasi juda kichkina.*	kitchen linked to the flat
16	There's a dog in the yard.	*Hovlida it bor.*	new referent
17	The dog is in the yard.	*It hovlida.*	known referent

When *the* points to something associated with an earlier referent, Uzbek attaches a possessive suffix that names the link. In 15 *oshxonasi* means 'its kitchen', and without the suffix the kitchen would not be tied to the flat. In existential sentences word order replaces the article altogether. Place-first order with *bor* introduces the dog as new in 16, and subject-first order in 17 speaks about a dog the hearer already knows.

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4. Results

Most English article uses need no Uzbek counterpart. Predicative, unique and generic nouns and non-specific objects are left bare, and descriptive or inanimate nouns can be repeated without a marker. Overt means appear only under particular conditions. *Bir* introduces new people and separates specific from non-specific objects, and demonstratives such as *haligi* are needed for back-reference with general nouns like *kishi*. The accusative is required with definite objects, the genitive distinguishes a particular owner from a type, possessive suffixes render associative uses of *the*, and in existential sentences word order shows whether the referent is new or known. The case suffixes are also the main source of changes in referential status. An indefinite English object placed in the accusative is read as already known, and a definite noun with an ordinal rendered with *bir* loses its uniqueness.

5. Discussion

Uzbek has no single counterpart of the English article. Its information is distributed over at least seven means, and most article uses need none of them. Generic, unique and predicative uses are rendered by bare nouns, and adding *bir* or a demonstrative to them distorts the meaning. These results agree with Lyons's (1999) view that article-less languages express identifiability only where it is needed and with Chesterman's (1991) observation that such languages spread the meanings of the article over several devices. Most of the overt means serve other grammatical purposes in Uzbek. Possessive suffixes express part–whole relations, the accusative marks the object, and existential word order follows the locative-first pattern. A translator who uses these devices for grammatical reasons also makes decisions about definiteness, intentionally or not. Only *bir*, the negative determiners and the demonstratives are chosen primarily to express reference.

Overt marking forms a gradation. It is required for definite direct objects, associative definites, specific indefinite objects and definite possessors. It is preferred for new human subjects, anaphoric reference with general nouns such as *kishi* and emphatic negation, optional for anaphoric reference to things, and incorrect for generic, unique and predicative uses. In Klaudy's (2003) terms most article information is implicitated in translation into Uzbek, either optionally or because the target grammar requires it. The explicitations that do occur are partly obligatory, as with the accusative and possessive suffixes, and partly pragmatic, reflecting the translator's view of which referents matter. This pattern supports Klaudy and Károly's (2005) finding that explicitation and implicitation depend on the direction of translation. From an article language into an article-less one, implicitation is the default.

The accusative suffix is the point where translation into Uzbek most easily alters the source. An English indefinite object placed in the accusative becomes specific or definite, as in the third version of 13, which is consistent with the account of Uzbek object marking by Kizilkaya et al. (2022) and with the Turkish data of Enç (1991) and von Heusinger and Kornfilt (2005). The shift is easily overlooked because the marked variant is grammatical and natural. It often arises as a side effect of restructuring, when the subject of an embedded clause becomes a direct object. Overuse of *bir* and the loss of uniqueness in noun phrases with ordinals, are further

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risks. All three result from treating Uzbek means as word-for-word equivalents of the English articles. Identifying the use of each English article before choosing an Uzbek form avoids these errors.

6. Conclusion

The information carried by English articles is rendered in Uzbek by a set of grammatical and lexical means. Most article uses, including generic, unique and predicative ones, remain unmarked. Overt marking appears where Uzbek grammar requires it, through the accusative for definite objects, the possessive for associative uses and the genitive for definite possessors. It also appears where the text calls for it, through *bir* for important new referents and demonstratives for anaphoric reference with general nouns. Word order in existential sentences distinguishes new from known subjects. The accusative suffix is the main source of unintended change, as it turns indefinite objects into specific or definite ones.

The analysis is based on constructed examples and the author's native-speaker judgments. It shows what Uzbek grammar allows and prefers but does not measure how often translators choose each option. A corpus study of published English–Uzbek translations would establish these frequencies, and the acceptability judgments for marked variants should be tested with a larger group of speakers.

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