Uzbek and the Nominal Mapping Parameter: what counts as a bare noun in Uzbek?

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Discussing the interpretation and distribution of bare nominals, Chierchia (1998) proposes a model of semantic variation in which nouns and their immediate lexical projection NP are defined by two semantic features, [+/−argument] and [+/−predicate]. Uzbek, a language with a singular/plural distinction and without a definite determiner, poses certain challenges for the Nominal Mapping Parameter because it seems to fit into neither of the two categories of languages without articles: the Chinese type [+arg, -pred,], or the Russian type [+arg, +pred]. Firstly, unlike languages like Chinese, in Uzbek, plurality is marked morphologically, as in (1).

(1) a. Bola kel-di.   b. Bola-lar kel-di.
    child come-PST   child-PL come-PST
    'The child came.'   'The children came.'

However, in sentences with existential meaning, nouns may have 'transnumeral' (Wiese, 2012) interpretation, referring to a singleton or a set of more objects (2).

(2) Quti-ning   ich-i-da   kitob   bor.
    box-GEN   in-3SG-LOC   book   exist
    a. 'There is a book in the box.'   b. 'There are books in the box.'

As seen in the translation of (2), the statement can be interpreted in two different ways. It may be the context which determines the number being specified (SG or PL), not the lexical item *per se*. The interpretation in (2b) can be given as an answer to the question: 'What is in the box?'. On the other hand, when the noun is marked for plural (3a), or its singularity is specified by *bir* (a/one) a number specific, not categorical, referent is established.

(3) a. Qush-lar/birqush   sayra-yap-ti.   b. *Qush   sayra-yap-ti.
    bird-PL a bird   sing-PRES-3SG   Intended: 'Birds are singing.'
    'The birds are/ a bird is singing'.

When nouns function as object, they do not have to be marked plural to receive a plural interpretation, i.e., an unmarked noun can be unspecified for number (4). In such cases nouns have non-specific interpretation.

(4) a. Olma   ol-di-m.   b. Ali kitob   o'qi-di.
    apple   buy-PST-1SG   Ali book   read-PST
    'I bought an apple/apples.'   'Ali read a book/books.'

Uzbek could be assumed to belong to the category of [+predicate, +argument] languages, where case-marked bare nouns can appear in argument positions without any restriction (e.g., Russian). However, this line of reasoning does not apply because Uzbek case-marked bare nouns can have kind or definite interpretation, but they cannot have existential interpretation, i.e., type shifting is not possible.

(5) a. Hasan qiz-ni   ko'r-di.   b. Lola muzqaymoq-ni sev-a-di.
    Hasan girl-ACC   see-PST   Lola ice-cream-ACC love-pres-3SG
    'Hasan saw the/ *a girl.' (def vs. exist)   'Lola loves (the) ice-cream.' (generic, kind)

Given the data in (5), we can assume that covert type-shifters cannot be used with bare nouns in Uzbek if we take case marked nouns to be bare in the relevant sense. The last type of languages in Chierchia's system is the [+pred, -arg] type, where Romance languages belong. The definite article is obligatory with nouns which are used with generic and kind reference.

(6) a. Les   dinosaurs   sont une   espèce   éteinte.   (French)
   art.def.pl.   dinosaur.pl.   are art.indef.sg. species   extinct
   'Dinosaurs are an extinct species.'
   b. L'or   est un   metal   précieux.
      art.def.sg. gold is   art.indef.sg. metal   precious
      'Gold is a precious metal.' (from Dobrovie-Sorin, 2005, p. 6)

In Uzbek, case marking is obligatory whenever nouns express generic and kind reference. This implies that case morphology in Uzbek behaves likeFrench (more generally, Romance) definite articles. Both plural and singular nouns with case suffixes can have generic and kind interpretation in Uzbek (7).

(7) a. Adham   mushuk-lar-ni / muzqaymoq-ni   yoqtir-a-di.   (generic)
      Adham   cat-PL-ACC/   ice-cream-ACC   like-PRES-3SG
      ʿAdham likes cats/ice-cream.ʾ
   b. *Adham   mushuk / muzqaymoq   yoqtir-a-di.
      Adham   cat /   ice-cream   like-PRES-3SG

(8) a. Graham Bell telefon-ni   ixtiro qil-di.   (kind)
       Graham Bell telephon-ACC invent   do-PST
       ʿGraham Bell invented the telephone.ʾ
   b. *Graham Bell telefon   ixtiro qil-di.
       Graham Bell telephone   invent do-PST

Preverbal bare nouns form complex predicate constructions in Uzbek, which can be divided into 3 types:

(9) a.Hasan kitob o'qi-di.   b. Hasan qovoq os-di.   c. Hasan sayohat et-di.
     Hasan book read-PST   Hasan face   hang-PST   Hasan travel do-PST
   'Hasan read a/some book.'   'Hasan got upset.'   'Hasan travelled.'
     (unmarked)   (idiom)   (light verb construction)

Preverbal bare nouns are severely restricted in their distribution; they must appear immediately next to the verb and can have only indefinite non-specific reading (10). Moreover, the nominal element in the complex predicate construction is so "small" in size that it cannot contain any suffixes, i.e., the nominal cannot be marked for plurality, nor can it carry case suffixes. Furthermore, pronouns cannot be used in complex predicate constructions, neither can they contain modifiers of any kind. Furthermore, they take the narrowest scope with respect to other operators (11, 12).

(10)   a. Ali kecha   olma ye-di.   b. *Ali   olma   kecha   ye-di.
          Ali yesterday apple eat-PST   Ali   apple   yesterday   eat-PST
          'Ali ate apples/an apple yesterday.'

(11)   a. Kamol militsiya   ko'r-moq-chi.   b. Kamol qayta-qayta   quyon o'ldir-di.
          Kamol policeman   see-INF-INTEN   Kamol repeatedly   rabbit kill -PST
          'Kamol wants to see policemen.'   'Kamol   killed   rabbits   repeatedly.'
          [want>policemen]   [repeatedly>rabbits]

To sum up, this study proposes that the term bare nominal can be used to refer to Uzbek caseless nominals,singular or plural[1], which appear without any determiner-like elements. Uzbek bare nominals cannot refer to kinds and they can only have a narrow scope interpretation with respect to other quantifiers, and they have a very restricted distribution. Clearly then, Uzbek bare nominals cannot count as [+arg] in Chierchia's system. When not introduced by elements with the "indefinite" meaning (like *bir)*, they can have kind and generic reference, or in an appropriate context, they can be interpreted as definite. All these points lead to the conclusion that case marking in Uzbek has a type-

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[1]Further analysis and distinction between Uzbek singular and plural bare nominals is possible as well; it is the topic of an ongoing research.

shifting property similar to the definite determiner in Romance in that, it turns [+pred] nominals into [+arg] nominals. Uzbek does not entirely exclude bare nouns from argument positions, but they have a very restricted distribution and restricted referential properties.

References

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