Two indefinite articles in Uzbek*

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Syntax of the world's languages III
Berlin, 25.-28. September 2008

1   Introduction

In this paper we provide converging evidence both from a corpus study as well as from an online questionnaire that, contrary to claims that Uzbek does not have definite or indefinite articles,[1] modern Uzbek has two indefinite articles `bir` and `bitta`. Based on the results of the corpus analysis and the questionnaire, we hypothesise that `bitta` has been spreading in contemporary colloquial Usbek to the expense of `bir`. Moreover, the acceptability judgements on sentences containing `bitta` in predicative constructions show that the use of `bitta` is in the process of spreading to the last stage of development into an indefinite article.

2   Two indefinite articles

As pointed out in Beckwith (1998), Uzbek numerals higher than 'one' require a numeral classifier. (1) provides an example of a classifier, (2) is an example of a mensural classifier, and (3) contains the generic classifier "ta" (glossed CL:GENERIC). See Aikhenvald (2000, 116-120) for criteria distinguishing these types of classifiers.

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[1]See Bodrogligeti (2003, 55).

(1) ikki **nafar**   uq'ituvch'i
     two CL:HUMAN teacher
     two teachers

(2) besch **coynak** coy
     five   pot   tea
     five pots of tea

(3) uch'-**ta**   q'iz
     three-CL:GENERIC girl
     three girls

The only numeral which can occur without a classifier is `bir` (one), as illustrated in (4).

(4) Bir zamon-lar **bir**   schoh bu'l-ib u't-gan   ekan. . .
     a   time-PL   a(=one) king be-GER be-PTCP apparently
     Once upon a time there was a king. . .

In this example `bir` is used to introduce a new participant which (i) is presumed to be unknown to the hearer and which (ii) is the subject of further specification in the subsequent discourse. According to Heine (1997, 66-82), this is the second stage in the development of an indefinite article from a numeral. Sentence (5) illustrates that `bir` can be used to introduce a new referent without picking this referent up in the following discourse (Heine's stage III); sentence (6) illustrates that `bir` can be used without introducing a specific referent (Heine's stage IV); and sentence (7) shows that `bir` can be used in predicative constructions (Heine's stage V). The following sentences are from two novels (see next section).

(5) Eshpolatov ichkari-da **bir** erkak-ni   kor-gan. Hayron
     Eschpolatov inside-LOC a   man-ACC see-PRF wonder
     bol-ib   zavod-ga   bor-gan.
     be-GER workshop-DAT walk-PRFT
     Eshpolatov saw a man inside. Bewildered he walked into the workshop.

(6) Uch-av-lar-i   ham **bir** narsa-ning xayol-i-ni
     three-together-PL-AGR also a   thing-GEN think-AGR-ACC
     sur-gan-dek   kor-i-nar   edi-lar.
     do-PTCP-as.if see-AGR-PROG be-PL
     The three looked as if they were thinking about something.

(7)   Hurmat-i   zor   bol-sa   boshqa-lar-ga zor, sen bilan
honor-AGR strong be-COND other-PL-DAT strong 2SG with
men-ga   u   bor-yo'g'i **bir** oshna.
1SG-DAT 3SG be-just   a   friend

If he is very honorable, then only for the others. For you and for me he is just a friend.

We therefore conclude that `bir` has reached the fifth stage of development into an indefinite article.

Uzbek differs from other Turkik languages, e.g. Turkish which also uses the word `bir` as an indefinite article (Kornfilt, 1997, p. 106), in that in addition to `bir` it has developed a second indefinite article, namely `bitta`. (Bodrogligeti (2003, p. 456) suggests that `bitta` derives from the suffixation of `bir` with "ta".) The following sentences illustrate that it has reached the fourth stage of development into an indefinite article. In (8) it is used to introduce a new referent which is then picked up again in the following discourse (stage II), in (9 it is used to introduce a new referent which is not picked up again (stage III), and in (10) it is used without introducing a specific referent (stage IV). In the contemporary novel which we analysed we found no use of bitta in a predicative construction (see next section):

(8)   Ammo **bitta** shart-i-m   bol-a-di:
but   a   condition-AGR-1SG be-FUT-3SG
singl-i-m-ni   bun-dan buyon qimor-ga
little.sister-AGR-1SG-ACC now-ABL from   game-DAT
tik-may-san.
put-NEG-2SG:FUT

But there will be a condition; from now onwards you will not bet my little sister.

(9)   **Bitta** shahar-da ikki-ta imom-domla bol-gan ekan. It   bilan
a   city-LOC two-CL imam-priests be-PRF EVID dog with
mushuk murosa   qil-sa   qil-arkan-ki,   bu-lar
cat   agreement make-COND make-EVID-CONJ DEM-PL
ittifoq bola ol-ish-mas   ekan-lar.
agreed be   take-NOM-NEG EVID-PL

In a city there were two imams. Even dogs and cats could agree, but these two could not.

(10)   Katta-ng-ga   bor-ib ayt: men-ga **bitta** samolyot
big-2SG:AGR-DAT go-GER say.IMP 1SG-DAT a   plane
bilan bir million pul   kerak.
with a   million money need

Go to your boss and say: I need a plane and a million.

In some contexts, the competition between the two indefinite articles is exploited in order to distinguish between non-specific and neutral uses of NPs. In (11) the direct object NP must be interpreted non-specifically, whereas in (12) this is not the case.

(11)   Professor **bir** student-ni tekschir-moq'-chi.
professor a(=one) student-ACC examine-want-3SG

The professor wants to examine a student. [non-specific]

(12)   Professor **bitta** student-ni
professor a(=one-CL:GENERIC) student-ACC
tekschir-moq'-chi.
examine-want-3SG

The professor wants to examine a student. [specific, non-specific, numeral]

From a diachronic perspective there is evidence that the use of `bitta` has increased significantly, at least in written literary language. In the next two sections we will provide evidence for this, both from a corpus study and from a questionnaire.

3   Corpus study

We compared the use of `bir`/`bitta` in Tohir Malik's novel *Shaytanat* (published in 2001, part four) with the use of `bir`/`bitta` in Abdulla Qodiriy's novel *Otgan kunlar*, which was published in 1926.

In the old novel, we anotated the first 150 occurences of `bir`, `bitta`, `birisi`, `bittasi`. `bir` has been employed in all types of usages, from numeral to predicative constructions. However, in the old novel we did not find `bitta` used as an article (we only found one use of `bitta` as a numeral).

Article	Usage	Occurences	human	inanimate
bir	2	29	14	15
bir	3	29	16	13
bir	4	41	8	33
bir	5	14	11	3
total		113	49 (43%)	64 (57%)
bitta	2	0	0	0
bitta	3	0	0	0
bitta	4	0	0	0
bitta	5	0	0	0
total		0	0	0

Table 1: Use of `bir`/`bitta` in the old novel

In the new novel we anotated the first 200 occurences of `bir`, `bitta`, `birisi`, `bittasi`. The use of `bir` and `bitta` in the new novel (first 200 occurences) is summed up in the following table.

Article	Usage	Occurences	human	inanimate	narrative	direct speech
bir	2	16	2	14	13	3
bir	3	40	8	32	33	7
bir	4	16	3	13	11	5
bir	5	9	2	7	5	4
total		81	15 (12%)	66 (53%)	62 (50%)	19 (19%)
bitta	2	12	2	10	1	11
bitta	3	20	7	13	0	20
bitta	4	12	4	8	3	9
bitta	5	0	0	0	0	0
total		44	13 (10%)	31 (25%)	4 (3%)	40 (32%)

Table 2: Use of `bir`/`bitta` in the new novel

Conclusions from corpus study

- By 1926 the use of `bir` has already spread to predicative constructions (stage V in the development from numeral to indefinite article). By 2001 `bitta` has reached at least stage IV .

- There is a clear increase of the use of `bitta` in written language: In the old novel `bitta` was used only once on the first 85 pages, whereas in the new novel `bitta` was used 44 times on the first 65 pages.

- Out of 66 occurences of indefinite articles in the speaker's narrative, 62 were occurences of `bir`, and only 4 were occurences of `bitta`. From this we can conclude that there is a strong preference for `bir` in the speaker's narrative. On the other hand, out of 59 occurrences of indefinite articles in direct speech, only 19 were occurences of `bir`, compared to 40 occurences of `bitta`. This indicates that in direct speech there is a preference for using `bitta`.

- Our data does not motivate a choice between the two following possibilities regarding the emergence and spread of `bitta`:

  - In 1926 `bitta` was not in use, neiter in written nor in spoken language. It started being used after 1926, and spread since then until today to the fourth stage.
  - In 1926 `bitta` was in use in spoken language but not in (some registers of) written language.

Open questions

- The absence of evidence from our corpus study that `bitta` has reached stage V in the development from numeral to indefinite article is not evidence that it has not reached this stage. Is `bitta` really ungrammatical in predicative constructions, or is it just a coincidence that we have not found any such occurences?

- Has the increasing use of `bitta` led to a decreased/marked use of `bir`? How good is `bitta` compared to `bir` in modern Uzbek?

- Does the use of `bir`/`bitta` depend on stage II to V?

To answer these questions we designed and performed a questionnaire, the results of which will be presented in the next section.
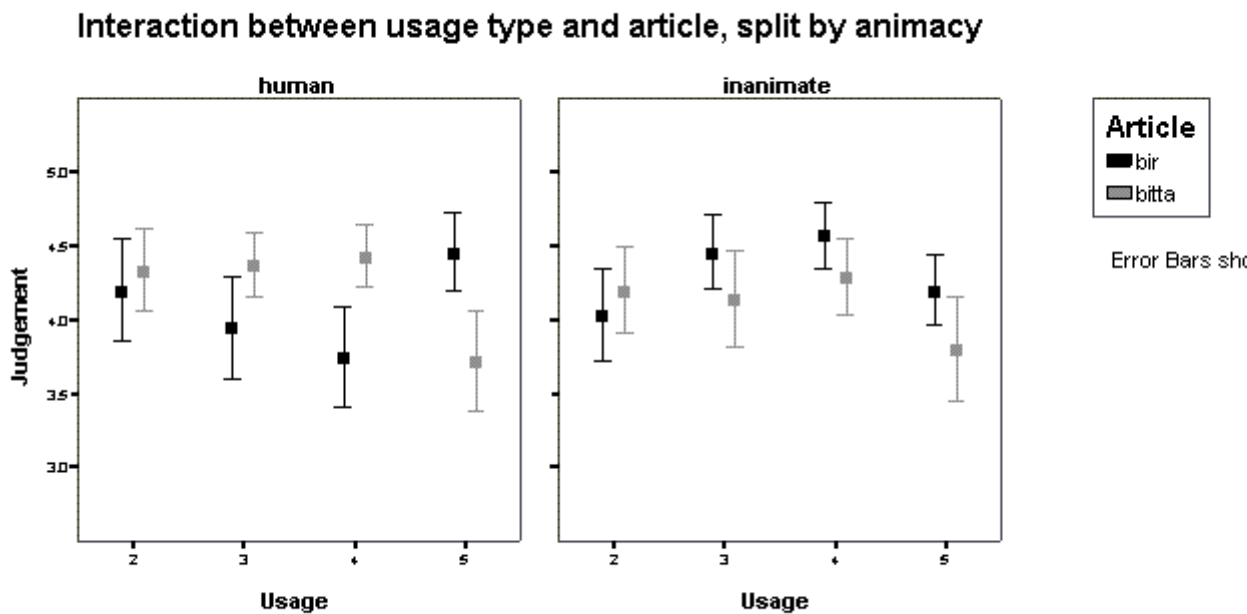
4 Results of questionnaires

The purpose of the questionnaires was to elicit acceptability judgements about sentences containing the two articles in different usages.

- Independent factors: (i) bir/bitta, (ii) human/inanimate, and (iii) five usages

- Dependent factor: acceptability judgement on a scale from 2 (very bad) to 5 (very good)

- 45 participants

- Analysis of variance – the basic idea behind an ANOVA is to estimate how likely or unlikely it is for a given difference in judgements to be due to chance. If it is unlikely that the difference is due to chance, then the difference is called statistically significant. This estimation is based on comparing the variance between two (or more) sets of judgements (e.g. the set of judgements of sentences whose indefinite article is bir with the set of judgements whose indefinite article is bitta) with the variance within these sets of judgements.[2]

There is a significant interaction between the usage type, article and animacy, as the following two charts show:

Interaction between usage type and article, split by animacy

- `bir` is clearly preferred in predicative constructions

- `bitta` is better for humans in stage II to IV

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[2]If the variance between the sets of judgements is high while the variance within the sets of judgements is low, then the difference is likely to be statistically significant. If on the other hand, the variance between the sets of judgements is low, while the variance within the sets of judgements is high then the difference is likely to be due to chance.

- with inanimate referents, there is no clear preference for `bir` or `bitta`, except again at stage V

- while it makes no statistically significant difference whether bir or bitta is used to introduce a human referent which is then picked up again in discourse (stage 2), it makes a significant difference if a human referent is to be introduced, whose referential identity is unknown to the speaker (stage 4) for this usage bitta is significantly better than bir. We interpret this as evidence that the use of bitta with human referents has begun to impact on the use of bir, to the effect that bitta is preferred to bir, resulting in the use of bir for human referents starting to be less acceptable than it used to be (at least in some contexts of use).

5   Conclusion

- In modern Uzbek there are two indefinite articles, `bir` and `bitta`

- the comparison of two novels, of which the first appeared in 1926 and the second in 2001, shows (i) that at least in (certain registers of) the written language `bitta` was not used in the past, whereas now it is used both in written and in colloqual language,and (ii) that `bir` occurs much more frequently than `bitta` in written literary language, whereas `bitta` occurs much more frequently than `bir` in colloquial language.

- `bir` has reached the fifth stage in the development from numeral to article already in 1926, whereas the use of `bitta` appears to be in the process of spreading to the fifth stage in contemporary colloquial Uzbek

- `bitta` is preferred for humans at stage II to IV

- both `bir` and `bitta` can be used for inanimate arguments, except for the predicative construction in which `bir` is used

- in some contexts the competition between the two articles is exploited in order to express semantic distinctions (e.g. in order to distinguish between non-specific and neutral readings)

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